

## Article

# Of Pride and Prejudice—A Cross-National Exploration of Atheists' National Pride

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**Abstract:** This paper explores how atheism relates to national pride. Previous research reports the strong positive relationship between religiosity and national pride. Inversely, it can be assumed that atheists feel less national pride. Whether this assumption holds true and whether the perceived relevance of religiosity for values perceived as fundamental for national pride is a national-specific or a global phenomenon will be investigated here by examining attitudes towards atheists and assessing cross-nationally how proud atheists truly are of their countries. The data reveals cross-country differences in both respects. In highly religious countries, prejudice against atheists is pronounced, while atheists' feelings of national pride indeed tend to be weaker. But what exactly predicts atheists' feelings of national pride? For a Multilevel Analysis of this question, this article uses the ONBound database offering cumulated and harmonized data from international survey programs as well as linked country-level data on national identities and religion. Results identify countries' ideological background as one of the crucial country-level predictors for national pride among atheists. In highly religious countries, people who deny religion also seem to possess ambivalent feelings towards their country. In turn, if the state ideology opposes religion, atheists tend to support the combination of anti-religiousness and patriotism.



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## 1. Introduction

There was recently a startling reminder of the importance of national pride as an area of research in exploring societies' political climates when on 6 January 2021, the world watched stunned as a nationalist group calling itself the "Proud Boys" figured prominently in the storming of the U.S. Capitol. Many studies have appeared lately on the interplay between nationalism, patriotism, and religiosity (see e.g., Muldoon et al. 2007; Brubaker 2012; Trittler 2017). Recent waves of migration have brought religion back into the debates regarding what constitutes a nation in Europe. As a result, right-wing national-populistic parties have made attempts at addressing religious people by implying proximity to religious content and teachings. The focus of this research is typically on national context-specific religions or denominations and on the question as to how they moderate values. In many Western countries, the most rapidly growing group can be labelled "those who do not believe" or "atheists<sup>1</sup>" who, nevertheless, have thus far not gotten much attention in this respect. This article seeks to fill this gap by assessing atheists' national pride.

*"No, I don't know that atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God."*

George H.W. Bush, press conference in August 1987<sup>2</sup>

This statement was made by Bush more than thirty years ago, not least because he knew that a large proportion of his potential electorate would agree. Indeed, ongoing public debates as well as social surveys have shown that in the US there was and remains the widely held belief that atheism and patriotism are mutually exclusive (see e.g., Milne 2012).

Previous research has evinced a strong relationship between religiosity and national pride (see e.g., [Brubaker 2012](#); [Trittler 2017](#)). Especially true for the US, but also for other countries, data shows that religious people tend to be particularly proud of their countries. At the same time, prejudices regarding atheists are multifaceted and prevalent. It is a commonly shared assumption that people who do not believe in any kind of god inevitably also do not believe in the set of values perceived as fundamental for being good citizens and are therefore not expected to feel national pride ([Gervais 2013](#)).

This article will explore the openly discussed assumption, found predominantly in the US, that atheists are no patriots and determine, first, whether this is a largely American or a global phenomenon and, second, whether there is some truth to this and atheists really are less proud of their countries. If they are, the obvious question is: why? To answer this last question, I will look for factors that shape societies on a country-level such as the countries' ideological background, the effect of church and state relationship, the general societal level of religiosity, and religious pluralization for atheists' feelings of national pride.

The analyses are based on various international survey data as well as societal-level data sources that were cumulated, harmonized, and linked by ONBound Project<sup>3</sup>.

As mentioned above, the section following the introduction defines atheism and explains atheists' internationally varying appearance and their perception by others. To give an idea about the nature of prejudices against atheists, the third section provides an overview of cross-national attitudes towards atheists, while shedding some light on their roots. The next section considers the interplay of (non-)religiosity and national pride. Thereafter, Section 5 provides an exploration of the theoretical assumptions of why and how individual-level and country-level indicators might predict atheists' national pride, and hypotheses are formulated accordingly followed by the data and method section. The results section starts with some descriptive analyses of atheists around the globe and their levels of national pride as well as national attitudes towards them based on ONBound data, before turning to a Multilevel Analysis on what predicts atheists' national pride. In the last two sections, I will discuss the results and suggest an outlook.

## 2. Defining Atheists

The word "atheism" comes from the Greek words "a" meaning without and "theos" meaning god. It describes either the lack of belief in the existence of a god or the belief in the non-existence of a god or gods ([Blackburn 1996](#), in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*). As simple as this definition seems, as heterogeneous are individuals' manifestations of unbelief, which may be as complex and diversified as religious belief itself ([Pruyser 1974](#), p. 195). Consequently, terms for non-religiosity used in scientific literature and public discourse over the last decades are also numerous: atheism, new atheism<sup>4</sup>, agnosticism, non-religion, a-religion, irreligion, secularism, non-theism, anti-religion, unbelief, existential cultures, and humanism, just to mention the most prominent terms. To make the situation worse, these terms may mean different things to different people at different points in time. This is because they were made up by different social actors and not by social scientists within one systematic conceptual framework.<sup>5</sup> All of which entails a measurement challenge for social science research.

Previous research based on different methods found different types of non-religious people in survey data ([Chaves 2010](#); [Bechert 2018](#); [Davie 1990, 1994, 2000](#); [Edlund 2013](#); [Jones et al. 2011](#); [Pearce and Denton 2011](#); [Stolz et al. 2014](#); [Voas 2009](#)). Three main types can be distinguished<sup>6</sup>. Type 1 does not belong to any church but believes in a god. Grace Davie explored this phenomenon of "believing without belonging" in great detail and called these people the "nones" ([Davie 1994, 2012](#)). In addition, the reversed phenomenon exists (Type 2): people who do not believe but belong for different reasons ([Davie 2012](#)). Ethnic affiliations might be one of these reasons. Both groups clearly distinguish themselves from Type 3, those who neither believe nor belong. In this paper, I am focusing on Type 3 and under the term "atheists", collect all those who do not belong to any church, do not believe in any god or gods, and do not hesitate to say so. However, it must be considered

that atheists appear differently around the globe. In religious research, they are usually distinguished as either passive or active atheists.

Passive atheists may or may not refer to themselves as atheists; they tend to be rather indifferent towards religion; may be uninformed and/or perhaps may have never actually been confronted with the question of believing or not; or simply do not care at all about religion. They are, what Lüchau (2010) describes as not anti-religious but simply areligious. Or, as Weber expresses it so poetically, “religiously unmusical” (Svatos et al. 1998, p. 548). Active atheists, in contrast, are much more likely to speak of themselves as atheists. They very consciously chose to reject religion and tend to openly react against religion in the public sphere. Whether a person becomes a passive or active atheist highly depends on socio-cultural background.

Several researchers have observed these different types of atheists across countries and found a clear pattern: religious cultures produce more active atheists than secular cultures (Bruce 1996; Zuckerman 2012). Zuckerman (2012), for example, contrasted irreligious orientations in the US and Scandinavia. He found that American atheists much more frequently label themselves as atheists and tend to be much more critical and negative about religion and religious people. One reason, he argues, is that many American atheists—and that is most certainly generally true for atheists in religious countries—might have gone through a rather painful process of apostasy. Apostasy describes the individual process or the very moment of losing faith, often accompanied by the hurting feelings of loss and anger about having believed in what is now perceived as lies. It is usually accompanied by a coming-out towards family and friends that involves coping with their reactions. All this creates strong emotions that need a sort of release valve, frequently found in active atheism and in the attempt to convince family and friends of a secular worldview. This mechanism is reflected by the appearance of the “New Atheism” movement at the beginning of the 21st century. It became visible as a predominantly American countermovement against religious fundamentalism and garnered attention especially by producing a huge body of literature that criticizes religion as irrational and proclaims a common-sense based worldview (see, for example, Harris 2005; Dawkins 2006; Hitchens 2008). The New Atheism movement even has the political agenda to reduce the influence of religion in the public sphere (Kettell 2013), which is causing polarization in American society.

Reacting only matters, however, if there is something to react against. In secular countries, there is usually no religious socialization during the childhood years, neither is there any social pressure to be religious. People who did experience religious socialization tend to “grow out of it” as they become older and more reflective (Zuckerman 2012, p. 10). But this development, though, proceeds quietly and sometimes even unnoticed. Mostly, there is no anger, no fight, and no reason to proselytize to others on behalf of atheism since religion and churches usually are not perceived as doing them any harm. There is then no reason for hard feelings and no reason for the individual to reflect in great detail upon what being non-religious actually means. Bullivant (2012, p. 100) gets right to the point by stating: “After all, it would be strange to take one’s atheism seriously in a society where no one took theism seriously.” Riis (1994) states in this context that “most secular Americans are more likely to be convinced atheists, whereas most secular Scandinavians are more likely to be lukewarm agnostics<sup>7</sup>”.

*Why did I not come up with a less ideologically occupied term?* Regardless of the term used for survey categorization or what type of non-believers people would declare themselves to be, and regardless of whether active or passive, essential for the research subjects in this article is that they do not believe in any god (a-theos). I could have come up with another term for the research group, one less ideologically occupied, though that would have been a sham, since it would not have changed the essential. What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that when it comes to people’s attitudes towards atheists, we do not know what kind of atheist respondents have in mind. We can only assume that it is the type that is prevailing in their countries, partly dependent on the general level of societal religiosity pervasive in that country.

### 3. Cross-National Attitudes towards Atheists

*What do people really think about atheists?* A great many research studies over the last decades have found anti-atheist attitudes across the world. This also pertains to formerly atheist countries such as the Russian Federation where national or ethnic identity is closely connected to the majority religion of Orthodox Christianity and where we see a lack of ideological pluralism (Knorre 2014; Karpov et al. 2012). Nevertheless, the research field is most prominent in the US. A Gallup poll conducted in 1999 asked Americans if their party would nominate a generally well-qualified person, whether they would vote for that person, if it was a woman (95% agreed), a black person (92% agreed), a homosexual (59% agreed), or an atheist. Only 49% agreed on voting for an atheist (Gallup 2000, p. 54). In the “Faith Matters Survey” of 2011 (Putnam et al. 2011), 9% of respondents disagree strongly and another 20% somewhat disagree with the statement that atheists should be allowed to teach in public schools. Mudd et al. (2015) state that “Atheists are among the least liked, least desired, and most excluded individuals in America” and underpins this statement with different studies, offering a variety of evidence for anti-atheist attitudes, including the study of Edgell et al. (2006) who find that atheists are less likely to be publicly and privately accepted than any others from a long list of ethnic, religious, and other minority groups. They find that Americans are reluctant to let their children marry an atheist (47.6% would disapprove) because they view atheists as the group that least agrees with their vision of American society. According to data from “The American Mosaic Project” (Stewart 2014), atheists in America moved to second last place in both respects in 2014, right after Muslims. These findings demonstrate that although acceptance for atheists has somewhat increased during the last years, anti-atheist attitudes were and remain prevalent in the US.

Compared to American research in this field, cross-national studies are rare. Gervais et al. (2017) found anti-atheist attitudes across religiously diverse societies, including countries with Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and non-religious majorities, thus demonstrating that they are not exclusive to Abrahamic or monotheistic majority societies (Gervais et al. 2017, p. 3). Notably, they also find global intuitive anti-atheist attitudes among atheists themselves. The reason for this might be based in the cross-culturally varying distribution of “active” and “passive” atheists as explained above. In countries where passive atheism prevails, even passive atheists may reject active atheists because they do not comprehend anti-religious actions of whatever kind as they see no threat in religion. We will see later what kind of cross-national attitudes ONBound data reveals.

*Where does this obviously deep-rooted aversion emanate from?* An answer can easily be found in the literature: It arises from deeply rooted distrust against people who do not feel their actions to be morally judged by any god and, thus, do not fear facing any consequences for amoral actions (see e.g., Gervais 2011; Mudd et al. 2015). This question of whether there can be morality without religious belief has been discussed for a long time, from the ancient Chinese philosopher Mozi to Plato and Dostoyevsky (for a more detailed overview, see Gervais et al. 2017) until the present, where the question “Can you be good without God” does not seem to lose its relevance in American public debates<sup>8</sup> (see e.g., Smith and Halligan 2020; Zuckerman 2012). Durkheim got to the heart of the issue by defining religion as “moral community” (Durkheim [1912] 2001). In his line of argumentation, the religious community sets the behavioral norms every member needs to comply with. That makes religion the most important condition for social integration and social cohesion (Siegers 2019). People who do not belong to the “moral community” and therefore are not bound to conform to the community’s behavioral norms inevitably provoke distrust, mixed with feelings of anger, and, last but not least, envy towards the liberty these individuals are perceived to take. Thereby, it seems secondary whether it is one’s own moral community or based on another religion, as long as it is a rule-based moral community, as shown by studies which found that there is generally more trust towards believers of other denominations than towards non-believers (Hall et al. 2015).

One reason why anti-atheist attitudes are so deeply seated may be early religious indoctrination. In countries where there is a close church and state relationship, the church

has a strong influence on children in their phase of socialization via the school system, which transports the fundamental belief of the inextricable interlinkage of moral values and religiosity. Many school systems around the world such as in Ireland and Russia (Hyland and Bocking 2015; Mawhinney 2015; Köllner 2016) have been strongly criticized for systematic early religious indoctrination.

In a nutshell: moral values are generally perceived as fundamental for being part of any community. Consequently, those who are religious may perceive a doubled group-threat towards atheists. First, they are not part of the religious community. Second, as atheists are assumed to lack loyalty and the will to comply to social rules, they are also not discerned as members of the national community. This also explains why they are not expected to feel national pride.

#### 4. Religion and National Pride

The core question this paper asks is whether atheists identify with their countries, more specifically, whether they feel national pride. National pride, also referred to as patriotism (e.g., Rose 1985; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989), is one component of the multidimensional concept of national identity, the measurement of which is an endeavor in itself (see, for example, Sinnot 2005). National pride taps into the affective dimension of national identity by addressing “feelings of closeness to and pride in one’s country and its symbols” (Citrin et al. 2001, p. 74). The concept is of general interest since positive emotions towards one’s country may serve as a uniting element for societies. This mechanism, however, also has a dark side. While love and affection towards one’s own country and people carries a positive connotation, borders with the concept of nationalism, called “the bloody brother of patriotism” by Schaar (1981, p. 285), are blurry. In contrast to patriotism that stresses in-group favoritism, nationalism includes out-group hostility and sentiments of superiority towards others (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989, p. 271). These “others” can be other countries or, according to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), people within society identified as the out-group. Studies have shown that strong feelings of national identity tend to increase the trust individuals have in their fellow citizens (Miller 1995, p. 140), making them value group welfare over individualism in decision-making processes (Kramer and Brewer 1984, p. 1045; Doosje et al. 1999) or making it more likely that individuals feel empathy and engage in “helping behavior” towards those regarded as in-group members (Theiss-Morse 2009). At the same time, they might, however, lead to the exclusion of other parts of society such as—depending on the nature of the society—atheists or religious people. To what extent patriotism and nationalism are actually separable is the topic of an ongoing debate. The argument against the theoretical separation is that identity development based on in-group solidarity hardly ever takes place without any out-group differentiation.<sup>9</sup> A web-probing experiment conducted in 2014 supports this argument by convincingly showing that capturing both concepts separated from each other through measurement is unrealistic. Qualitative interviews demonstrate that respondents perceive an overlap of concepts within the question whether they are proud of their country (Meitinger 2018).

*What about the interplay of religion and national pride?* Based on results from cross-national European data analyses, Wright and Reeskens (2012) claim that these go hand-in-hand. Especially when societal religiosity is high, they find religious people to be proud of their countries because they identify with its religious tradition (Wright and Reeskens 2012, p. 20f). Storm (2011) sees a link based on similar underlying values and points out strong correlations that have been found between nationalism and conservatism, traditionalism, obedience, intolerance of ambiguity, and authoritarianism (Altemeyer 1981; Jost et al. 2003; Schwartz 1992).

The historic roots for the connection between religiosity and national pride run deep. First, religion facilitated modern state-formation (Wright and Reeskens 2012). In Israel, it even builds the fundament, but in many other countries, religion served as a unifying element in the process of nation-building after times of occupation. While it is still the



case in many Asian and African countries, in the past, European countries were also uniformly religious and churches were closely bound with the political elite. The fiercest wars between nations were and are on the question of which faith is the one true faith. For Europe, the Northern Ireland conflict might be the most current example. Despite ongoing modernization and secularization, many countries around the world still have an established state religion. Even many of the rather secular Nordic countries still have (or had until very recently) a Protestant state-church that is strongly integrated in public life throughout traditional rituals and/or ceremonies. For cultural customs and traditions, even in secular countries, it is quite common to include religious elements such as services or hymn singing.

The strength and visibility of the connection between nation and religion or, to put it differently, state and church, varies greatly across countries. Political rhetoric and symbolism mainly achieve this visibility (Donahue 1975). While U.S. presidents from Richard Nixon to Joe Biden ask God in official speeches to “Bless America”, other political leaders show less emotional positive linking or even ensure careful avoidance of religious symbolism, sometimes moving all the way to outright ideological rejection of any religion in socialist or communist states.

Finally, what religious and national communities have in common is that they are “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991, p. 6) in the sense that most of their members will neither know, meet, or hear of each other. While religious communities are based on shared belief, doctrine, rules, and tradition, which are more or less consistent across national borders within denominations, national communities are to a large degree self-constructed (Wright and Reeskens 2012). This means that there is no comprehensive consensus in society on what “nation” actually means. To some extent, it might be used by individuals to protect their own identities and values. The attachment towards country and fellow citizens, which fuels national pride, therefore might partly be based on very individual concepts of what the nation represents. Storm (2013) found in a qualitative British study that while people with a strong religious identity tend to distinguish clearly between their concepts of religion and nation, less religious and “religiously fuzzy” people tend to include religious aspects into their concepts of nationality (Storm 2013, p. 35), thereby strengthening patriotism.

This construction of nation by including religion presumably works much better in religiously homogeneous societies in which there is little doubt that fellow citizens, if they include religion in their self-concept of nation, follow the same religion.

On the basis of these theoretical considerations, the following section expounds the theoretical basis of how the predictors moderate the relationship of atheism and national pride and develops the hypotheses.

## 5. Predictors and Hypotheses

### 5.1. Individual Level

#### Age, Education, and Gender

Based on the findings of previous cross-national research, age, education, and gender will be assessed as predictors for the analysis of atheism and national pride on the individual level. There is consensus that older people tend to be nationally prouder than younger people (Smith and Kim 2006; Citrin and Sears 2009; Norris 2000; Inglehart 1997). A reason may be that younger cohorts have been socialized in a more globalized context than older cohorts and therefore might not rate national attachment that high.

If education is not impacted by national or religious ideology, it is supposed to increase pupils’ ability for reflection which usually results in questioning national or religious authorities. In social research, education has been shown to not always be a significant predictor for national pride. If it is significant, however, the educated tend to be less proud of their nation in most countries (Smith and Kim 2006; Citrin and Sears 2009).

Gender is a more ambiguous indicator. In some countries, men, and in other countries, women have been found to show more national pride. Evans and Kelly’s explanation for

this phenomenon is that men and women feel proud of different societal areas, such as men for international sporting events and women for cultural treasures (Evans and Kelley 2002).

## 5.2. Country Level

### 5.2.1. Religious Pluralization

People tend to project their own religious values on their community (Wright and Reeskens 2012), which by extension is the nation. For non-atheists, that should encourage patriotism. This projection, however, is assumed to be more effective in denominationally homogeneous societies because which religion otherwise holds the monopoly for this projection remains in doubt. Consequently, in denominationally heterogeneous countries with no common understanding that the nation carries religious attributes, atheists should not feel any need to distance themselves from the nation only because they want to distance themselves from religious ideas.

### 5.2.2. Church and State Relationship

The stronger the church and state relationship, the more intuitive the projection of religious values on the nation state. Citizens do not necessarily know any law that constitutes the church and state relationship, such as regulations on tax reduction for a certain denomination, to form a clear perception of the church and state relationship. Indicators such as positive portrayals by state-run radio and television or local and national politicians asking God to “bless the country” are unmistakable indicators for a close church and state relationship, which are visible for everyone. Then again, if there is a common understanding that both spheres are intertwined, atheists may show a counter-reaction against both and will appear less nationally proud.

### 5.2.3. General Level of Societal Religiosity

The level of societal religiosity has a great impact on shaping society in general. Concerning individual feelings of national pride, it may serve as an amplifier for the mechanisms described above. If the lack of religious pluralism discourages national pride among atheists, this effect should become stronger the more religious the society. Moreover, if the church and state relationship is close, atheists’ reflex of rejecting the comprehensive intertwined package of religious and national ideas may also become stronger in more religious countries. In both cases, atheists will appear less nationally proud the more religious the society.

Following Durkheim’s idea of religion as “moral community” (Durkheim [1912] 2001), another factor for a high level of societal religiosity that decrease atheists’ national pride is the social pressure exerted on atheists. In highly religious countries, churches’ social control of moral and social attitudes is strong. To be part of the community, people need to follow the rules by adhering to the community’s religious beliefs and follow the moral and social rules. Deviant behavior may be sanctioned by suspension from the group, which in religious societies may have significant consequences not only for the individual but for all family members. Facing such sanctions may provoke even stronger counter-reactions and thereby increase the gap between atheists and non-atheists’ pride, or as Siegers (2019, p. 497) puts it, “the differences between religious and non-religious individuals should be less pronounced in less religious societies”, which here implies that there is a more pronounced difference in the levels of national pride between atheists and religious people in religious societies.<sup>10</sup>

### 5.2.4. Ideological Background

A country’s ideological background is a crucial factor for societal levels of religiosity as well as individual religiosity. People who are socialized within a socialist or communist regime, in which religion is suppressed by the state and anti-religious ideology is transmitted through the school system, tend to stay distanced from religious ideas, provided they do not receive any religious socialization from somewhere else. Atheists comply

with the state ideology. Not being religious connects them with their fellow citizens. That means atheism here fulfills the same role as religion in religious countries. Consequently, in countries that currently have a socialist or communist regime, we would expect atheists to show more national pride than religious people. The breakdown of a socialist regime and a concomitant enactment of freedom of religion might make some people turn towards religion; most, however, will not. Atheists in former socialist or communist countries that remain secular have no reason to become less proud.

These considerations lead to the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1) (based on public assumption).** *Atheists tend to show less national pride than religious people.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *A socialist or communist societal background, in which the past or prevalent national ideology rejects religion, has a positive impact on atheists' national pride.*

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *A close church–state relationship and low religious pluralization, combined with a high level of societal religiosity, have a negative impact on atheists' national pride.*

## 6. Data, Measures, and Method

The data was generated using the ONBound Harmonization Wizard offered by the ONBound project. This project provides a database that enables researchers to analyze the interrelations of religious and national identities across a wide time span. For this purpose, a vast array of existing individual-level and contextual data from this field was collected. Following a guided selection process via the Harmonization Wizard, researchers are able to construct a customized cumulated, harmonized, and merged data set according to their specific analytical needs.<sup>11</sup> My ONBound dataset (Bechert et al. 2020) is based upon data from seventeen survey programs<sup>12</sup> and two macro sources<sup>13</sup> that contain the relevant variables as described in the following paragraphs. It covers 99 countries, of which for 35 countries, all crucial micro and macro-level variables necessary for the Multilevel Analyses are available and a considerable number of atheists could be observed. For the time span analyzed, from 1981 to 2018, this selection yields almost three million respondents, of whom almost 700,000 from 11 surveys answered a question on national pride.

*How can atheists around the globe be identified in the data?* In social surveys, respondents are usually asked to choose between several given categories that describe religious orientations (for a classification of categories, see Ischinsky and Bechert 2020) or, if there is no suitable category, some surveys offer the option to give an open answer. In the customized database, 16,336 respondents self-defined as atheists. Others may have wanted to do so but did not have the option.

Based on the definition developed in Section 2, atheists are all “those, who do not believe in any god(s)”. For the analysis, this includes respondents who described themselves as atheists in response to an open question or assigned themselves to a given “atheists” category. Additionally, it includes those who reported not belonging to any denomination AND answered at least one of the following belief items in the most strongly god-denying way possible:<sup>14</sup>

1. Which of these statements comes closest to your beliefs? Answer: **I don't believe in God.**
2. How important is God in your life? Answer: **Not important at all.**
3. How would you describe yourself? Answer: **Not religious at all.**

The remaining respondents were assigned to two more comparative groups: the “fuzzy” and the “religious”. Based on Voas' concept of “fuzzy fidelity” (Voas 2009), those who are moderately (non)-religious or inconsistent in their response behavior were categorized as fuzzy. This is also where the very small number of self-defined atheists who showed signs of religiosity in one of the belief items ended up. The measure for the “religious group” mirrors the atheists' measure. Reporting to belong to any kind of de-



nomination is the first prerequisite to be defined as religious. Respondents also must have answered on one of the belief items listed above with the most extreme positively religious answer (“I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it”, “Very important”, “Extremely religious”). Those respondents offering no hint regarding the nature of their religiosity in the data were excluded from the analyses.

The hypotheses imply that religious people who feel represented by their governments tend to feel proud of their countries. A prerequisite for this assumption, however, is that the religious individual belongs to the countries’ majority religion that is represented, if there is such a thing as a clear majority religion. Therefore, for the analysis, all those who are religious but belong to a minority religion in non-pluralistic countries have been excluded.

### 6.1. Individual-Level Indicators

The dependent variable on national pride is a harmonized four-point scale variable including data from 62 survey waves<sup>15</sup>. All respondents were asked: “How proud are you being [and then the respective nationality was entered, such as American, Swedish, etc.]?” Response categories vary between “Very proud” and “Not proud at all”. Measuring national pride is only distinct based on the responses of national citizens. Responses of non-citizens cannot be interpreted clearly since they might not be proud of their country of residence but of their home country. There is no way to clarify this retrospectively. To exclude as many of these ambiguous responses as possible, all identifiable cases of non-citizens were deleted.<sup>16</sup>

For control indicators, I will consider age, education, and gender. Age is a continuous measure covering respondents from 14 to 123 years old. Education and gender are categorical variables. Education is split into three categories: low, middle, and high education as reference category. Gender is dichotomous, female being the reference category.

### 6.2. Time

The time aspect is handled very simplistically here as this paper does not contain a trend hypothesis. As discussed later, these would be extremely heterogeneous across countries. Societal value change does not happen suddenly. It is a slow process that should become visible in the data with some time delay. The data suitable for analysis span the years from 1981 to 2018. At first, I included them as four decade-dummies in the analysis. After the subdivision showed no substantial information gain, I decided on bipartition into “before 2000” and “after 2000”.

### 6.3. Country-Level Indicators

The three country-level indicators of church and state relationship (CHST), religious pluralization (RDI), and the societal level of religiosity (GLOR) were combined in an additive index.

Measuring something as complex as the relationship between church and state is not an easy endeavor. As a basis for the measure, I am using an indicator provided by the Religion and State Project that assigns countries’ state and church relationships on a scale from 0 (specific hostility of state towards the church) to 13 (religion is mandatory for all), based on several public as well as academic sources (Fox 2019). For the index, I rescaled this indicator to range between 0 and 100. When the relationship changed during the time span of my analysis, I weighted the value according to the number of years the church–state arrangement was in place. Since I do not arrogate for myself as being able to do the country coding, I did not implement any missing values for certain time periods. In that form, the state and church relationship indicator is an admittedly rather crude measure representing one third of the index, next to religious pluralization and societal religiosity.

The measure I created to capture religious pluralization is based on the logic of the RDI (Religious Diversity Index), provided by the Pew Research Center (Liu 2014). The original index calculates the religious diversity scores of societies based on percentages for each denomination to which people in societies belong<sup>17</sup>, as taken from PEW research data.

Index scores theoretically range between 0 and 10, in which the higher the score, the higher the level of religious diversity in society. Considering the PEW RDI index is a snapshot of the year 2010, I used data from the Religious Characteristics of States Dataset Project that offers estimates of religious demographics by country for, in some cases, more than a hundred years prior to 2015. For the measure I took the starting point of the analyses, 1981, estimated average percentages over time per country and the denomination until 2015<sup>18</sup>, and calculated RDI values based on the PEW RDI formula. As a last step, the resulting values were rescaled to range between 0 and 100.<sup>19</sup>

As an indicator for the general level of religiosity in society, I took the mean values per country between 1981 and 2015 of the percentages of “non-religious people (of all kinds)” indicated by the Religious Characteristics of States Dataset Project. These numbers give at least a rough measurement for the level of secularization and thus, reversed, the level of religiosity.

All three indicators provide country means across the whole timespan. They vary between 0 and 100, wherein 0 theoretically indicates mandatory religion for all, zero religious pluralization, and a zero percentage of non-religious people in society.<sup>20</sup>

Whether or not a country has a socialist or communist background<sup>21</sup> was coded based on comprehensive research considering various sources analyzing historic and contemporary state ideologies and policies. The dichotomous measure indicates a socialistic background if there is/was a period of practically a one-party socialistic regime any time since 1881 (a hundred years before the collection of the first data). For countries indicated as having no socialist background, this makes it impossible that a respondent in the data had directly been socialized within a socialist regime; at least, not in the country in which the individual took the survey<sup>22,23</sup>.

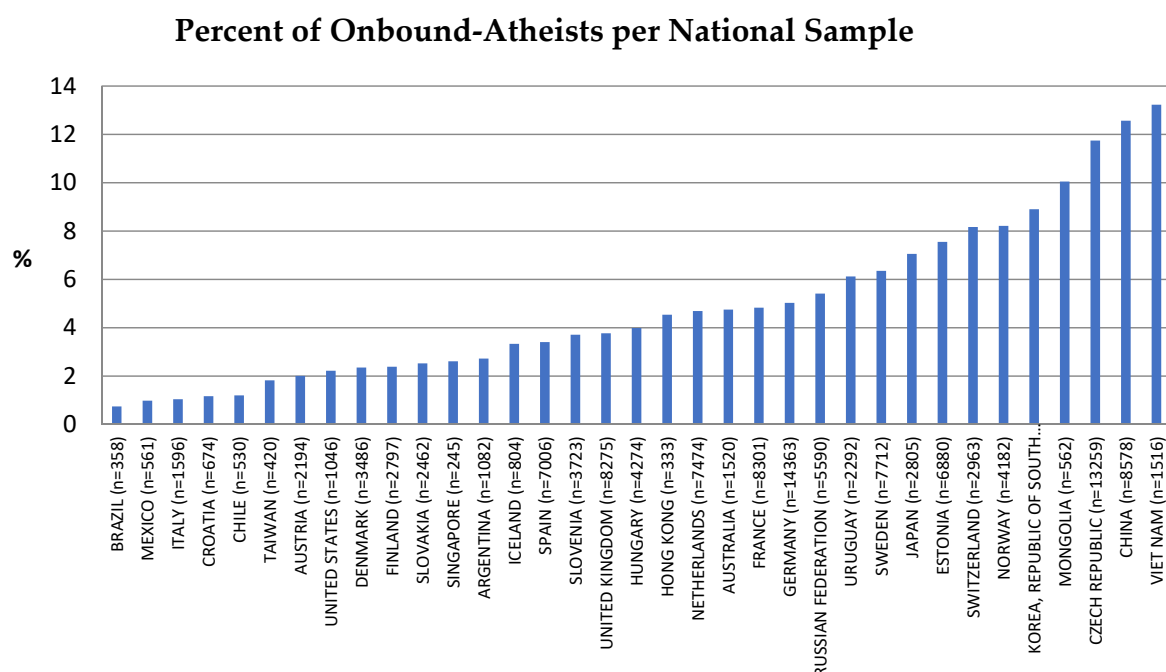
#### 6.4. Methods

The empirical analyses start descriptively and lead into the Multilevel Analysis in the process of answering my research questions. To examine H2 and H3, Multilevel Analysis is the method of choice because it allows to examine relationships between indicators on different hierarchical levels. The model in this paper contains two levels: an individual and a country level. Individuals are clustered in countries. Considering that in this study I focus on cross-sectional aspects, the time factor is included as control variable and not as a separate hierarchical dimension. The interaction effects for socialist background and atheism on national pride, and the CHST\_RDI\_GLOR index and atheism on national pride are calculated in separate models considering that naturally a socialist regime and a positive state and church relationship are exclusive.

The first questions to answer, however, focus on the research subjects, the atheists<sup>24</sup>.

### 7. Results

*Where are the atheists?* Across the 35 countries within the time period analyzed, altogether 132,539 atheists were identified within the ONBound data. Figure 1 shows the number of atheists per country and the respective percentage per sample. The least number of atheists found were in the US, while the most atheists appear in Germany<sup>25</sup>. The percentages of atheists per country/sample puts these numbers in the correct relation to the sample size.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 1.** ONBound atheists in percentage of the 35 country samples across all surveys and years.

Proportionally, Vietnam indicates the most atheists, followed by China and the Czech Republic. It is notable, albeit not very surprising, that the four countries with the highest proportion of atheists can be found in countries with a socialistic imprint. It is also unsurprising that highly religious countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Italy are among the countries with the lowest number of atheists.<sup>27</sup>

*Who are the atheists?* Atheists' demographic characteristics from the ONBound data confirm results from previous research. In all countries, the proportion of atheists is higher among men than women and for 33 of the 35 countries in the mean, they are younger than non-atheists. Additionally, they are more highly educated than their fellow citizens in 34 of the 35 countries.<sup>28</sup>

*What do people<sup>29</sup> think about atheists?* Section 2 offered an overview of literature on attitudes towards atheists, mainly based on U.S. American studies. I am using the cumulated ONBound data to look at other countries. The International Social Survey Programme of 2008 and 2018 (ISSP Research Group 2018; ISSP Research Group 2020<sup>30</sup>) asks generally about attitudes towards atheists: "What is your personal attitude towards atheists or non-believers?" Across 20 countries in 2008, the average percentage of those who answered (somewhat or very) negative was 20%; however, there were big differences between countries. While in countries such as France, the Netherlands, and Russia, this percentage remains below 7%, in Turkey it is 60%, and in the Philippines even 68%. Compared to 2008, in 2018 (across 33 countries) in most countries participating in both surveys, respondents appeared slightly more tolerant towards atheists. Now, the country average is at 17%. Yet, it is still the same countries in which positive attitudes prevail and in which negative attitudes prevail. At 26%, the US also displays slightly above-average negative attitudes towards atheists but is by no means an outlier.

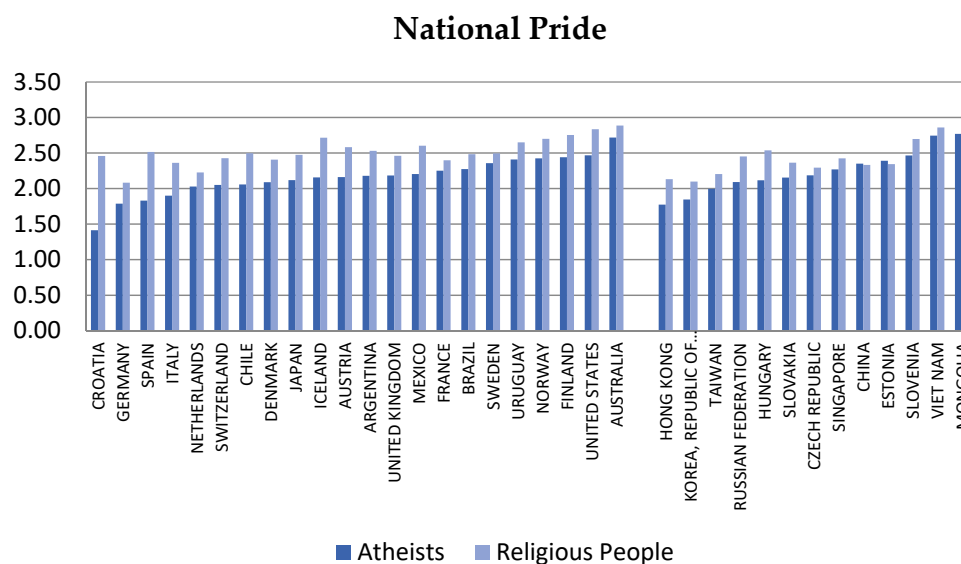
Sounding out a bit more of the political direction, some surveys<sup>31</sup> ask respondents whether they agree or disagree that "politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office". Here, as well, opinions vary greatly across countries. While in Andorra, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands, (strong) agreement does not exceed 5%, it is above 80% in Georgia, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Egypt. The average (strong) agreement across the 91 countries this variable is available for is 37%. At 34%, the US comes fairly close to this average.

Another item<sup>32</sup> implicitly reveals respondents' opinions on how well atheism and patriotism go together. Respondents were asked how important they think religion is "for being truly [NATIONALITY]". Of the 57 countries the variable provides data for, on average 47% answered religion to be very or at least fairly important. Again, variation between countries is pronounced. While in China only 10%, in the Netherlands 11%, and Sweden 15% answered that way, support is almost comprehensive in societies such as the Philippines (88%), Turkey (89%), and Thailand (97%). Again, the US comes in a bit above average with 54% of responses for very or fairly important.

A question asked by the Arab Barometer (Jamal et al. n.d.)<sup>33</sup> comes closest to my research question, as it concretely asks respondents in ten countries whether they agree or disagree that religious or denominational differences should NOT be a reason for doubting patriotism. Across all Arabic countries that took part in the survey, most people show tolerance and (strongly) agree. On average, only 13% (strongly) disagree. The question remains whether respondents involve atheists in "denominational differences".

The data shows a similar heterogeneity between countries in terms of the presence of professing atheists and attitudes towards the very same. Not surprisingly, but now proved with numbers, in religious countries there are less atheists and attitudes towards them appear significantly more negative. The US might be an outlier for the Western World, by showing comparably negative attitudes. But they are by no means exceptional across the world. Considering the US is actually an exceptionally religious country in the Western world, this suggests that the level of religiosity is most important for negative attitudes towards atheists and the US is only such a prominent example because the topic is so hotly discussed and so many studies are conducted addressing this topic.

*So, are they less proud than the rest of the society and especially religious people?* Figure 2 gives a provisional descriptive answer to that question formulated also as H2.



**Figure 2.** Mean national pride of atheists and religious people, numbers in Table A1 (Appendix A).

In most countries, atheists do indeed appear less proud than non-atheists. However, this descriptive analysis shows significant differences in the size of these gaps across countries. In countries having a socialist background, national pride among atheists seems to be more common than among atheists in countries without such background. To investigate these relations in more depth, the next step is a Multilevel Analysis. Table 1 presents the model results.

**Table 1.** Multilevel Analysis results.

Model		M0	SE	M1	SE	M2a	SE	M2b	SE	M3a	SE	M3b	SE
Random Effects Variances Fixed Effects Coefficients	Intercept	2.386	0.042	2.233	0.037	2.236	0.048	2.243	0.049	2.211	0.094	2.264	0.094
	Country	0.061	0.015	0.042	0.010	0.042	0.010	0.043	0.011	0.041	0.010	0.041	0.010
	Gender (male) <sup>34</sup>			0.004	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.005	0.005
	Age			0.003	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.003	0.000
	Education <sup>35</sup>												
	Low education			0.089	0.006	0.088	0.006	0.087	0.006	0.088	0.006	0.088	0.006
	Mid. education			0.074	0.006	0.073	0.006	0.073	0.006	0.074	0.005	0.072	0.006
	Religious Type <sup>36</sup>												
	Atheist			−0.233	0.009	−0.231	0.009	−0.260	0.010	−0.231	0.009	−0.437	0.023
	Religious			0.073	0.005	0.074	0.006	0.072	0.006	0.074	0.006	0.119	0.014
	Time (after 2000) <sup>37</sup>					0.065	0.007	0.065	0.007	0.065	0.007	0.065	0.007
	Ideological background (socialist)					−0.003	0.072	0.066	0.075				
	Index CHST_RDI_GLOR									0.001	0.003	−0.001	0.003
	Interaction effect 1 <sup>38</sup>							0.129	0.021				
	Atheist*Soc. background												
	Interaction effect 2 <sup>39</sup>												
	Atheist*Index											0.006	0.000
	CHST_RDI_GOR												

**Note:** N = 130,720; cell entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Not significant ( $p > 0.1$ ) coefficients are indicated in grey. All significant coefficients are  $p < 0.01$ .

Model 0 is a null model without any covariates. It provides information on the variance. The *total variance*<sup>40</sup> is 0.58 and the *Intra-class correlation coefficient*<sup>41</sup> is 0.11. This indicates that 11% of the variance can be attributed to differences between countries, while 89% of the variance is between respondents. This variance partition gives a good justification for conducting a Multilevel Analysis.

Model 1 reports the fixed effects of all individual-level variables, the control variables of gender, age, and education, as well as the core variable indicating the religious type, i.e., being religious, fuzzy (reference), or atheist. While the coefficient for gender is not statistically significant, the results for age and education confirm previous research. Older people tend to be prouder than younger people and the less educated tend to be prouder than the better educated. The effects, however, are not very strong. The coefficients for the religious type confirm H1 and the results of the descriptive analyses: when controlled for age, gender, and education, atheists remain significantly less proud of their countries than religiously fuzzy and religious people.

Model 2a is the first of two country-level main effect models. Beyond the individual-level indicators, it includes the macro-level variables of time and socialistic background. It was revealed that only the time aspect proved statistically significant. People in the two decades after 2000 were generally a bit prouder than in the two decades before 2000.

Model 2b includes the interaction effect of socialist background and religious type. The presence of this interaction effect (1) implies that the effect of socialist background depends on the religious type. The interaction term of “Atheist\*Soc. Background” represents the changes in the effect of socialist background of atheists toward the fuzzy group, with an estimate of 0.1339. These results confirm H2: a country’s socialist background, has a positive impact on atheists’ national pride.

Models 3a and 3b address the index combining church and state relationship, religious pluralization, and societal religiosity. While the main effect model (3a) shows no statistically significant direct effect of the index on national pride, model 3b shows that there is an interaction effect (interaction effect 2). Compared to those being religiously fuzzy, a loose church and state relationship, combined with a high level of religious pluralization and low general societal religiosity, has a statistically significant and positive effect, even if not very strong, on atheists’ national pride. To put it the other way around, a strong and positive church and state relationship within a religiously homogeneous and generally religious society has a negative impact on atheists’ national pride, and thereby model 3b confirms H3.



## 8. Discussion

The first thing to keep in mind when interpreting the results above is that the analyses are all based on a large, harmonized dataset combining data across several survey programs and covering over four decades. This dataset provides an exceptionally large sample size. Harmonization, however, always comes at the cost of detail, such as the concrete wording of the question across variables or mode effects across surveys (Granda et al. 2010).

Second, the analysis shows trends across 35 countries that are in many respects diverse. It is hardly possible that measuring instruments work equally well for so many different countries over four decades. Using them must be considered the trade-off between accepting a certain degree of inaccuracy in favor of the possibility to compare (on cross-national (in)-comparability of measurement instruments, see e.g., Bechert 2018). The categorization of countries' ideological background over time contains some degree of inaccuracy. For countries such as China that follow the same state ideology throughout the whole timespan, data is available and the indicator works perfectly well. However, in most countries analyzed in this paper and coded as "with socialist background", socialism ended at the end of the 1980s with the collapse of the Soviet regime. One consequence was the cessation of the state suppression of religion. Societies reacted differently to this release. While some societies such as Estonia remained almost uniformly unreligious, in other countries such as Croatia and Russia, the literature even speaks of a post-socialist religious revival (Köllner 2020, p. 122); public affiliation with religion and the church increased, as well as the churches' influence on various areas of society increased, from the education system to the military (Knorre and Zygmunt 2020). It is difficult to disentangle which age cohort in which country was socialized under anti-religious ideology and might therefore have stayed atheistic in the new regime, which, depending on the church–state relationship of the new regime, might encourage national pride or the counter-reaction. Younger generations were not socialized under a religion-oppressing regime. However, they might still be shaped by a secular society. It is individually different which influence is and was the strongest and what this means for the actual feelings towards the country and people. By indicating a country's socialistic background, I could only indicate long years of anti-religious influence, which analyses have proven to have an impact people's national pride. Disentangling all these factors for each country may be a difficult but worthwhile analytical approach to get more profound results for the mediation effects of atheism and societal ideological background on national pride.

A comparably clear example provides the case of Germany, in which about one third of the population lived under a socialistic regime from 1945 to 1990 in the German Democratic Republic. Now united, the country legally has a separation of church and state by federal law. Apart from a few cases concerning the then divided Berlin, respondents could be assigned according to the ideological background of the part of Germany they lived in at the time the survey was conducted. For the vast majority of respondents, that is also the part of Germany where they grew up. Table 2 shows country-specific effects of atheism and a country's ideological background on national pride in Germany. The picture that results in the single-country simple regression is even clearer than that for the Multilevel Analysis.

The age effect is identical with the multilevel model. However, in line with the theory, men tend to be significantly prouder than women. In addition, the negative effect of education on national pride is much stronger in the reduced model. There is a strong and statistically significant negative effect of atheism on national pride and a positive effect of religiousness. Notably, while the main effect of the ideological background is statistically insignificant, the interaction effect of atheism and socialistic background on national pride is very convincing. Atheists who were socialized in Eastern Germany tend to feel more national pride than atheists socialized in Western Germany.

**Table 2.** Regression Analysis for the German sample.

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>
Gender (male) <sup>I</sup>	−0.155	0.031
Age	0.003	0.001
Education		
Low education	0.293	0.047
Mid. education	0.283	0.033
Religious Type		
Atheist	−0.331	0.046
Religious	0.106 **	0.041
Ideological background (socialist)	−0.114	0.071
Interaction effect 1		
Atheist*Soc_background	0.476	0.093

<sup>I</sup> Reference category: female. **Note 1:** There is no coefficient for time because the variation of pride across decades for Germany is too small to be captured by the regression analysis. **Note 2:** N = 3314; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.57; dependent variable: national pride; grey cells = estimate not statistically significant, \*\* Religious  $p < 0.050$ ; the interaction term of Religious\*Soc\_background is not significant.

Regarding pride, there may also be some national specific factors interacting in the cross-national analysis. In some countries, strong identification with the region encourages regional pride at the expense of pride towards the nation. Examples include Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain or Scotland in Great Britain, in which even separation from the main country is openly discussed.

Another national specific example in which pride patterns deviate from other countries is, again, Germany, showing particularly low levels of national pride. In the case of Germany, this is rooted in a “guilt-effect” which took hold after World War II that prevents especially older German cohorts from feeling proud of a country and a people responsible for committing atrocities such as the Holocaust. To this day, many Germans associate the expression of national pride with right-wing ideas (Meitinger 2018), creating a pride-barrier. U.S. survey data will show during the next months whether the “Proud Boys” storming the Capitol in Washington might trigger a probably much weaker but similarly structured effect in the US. I would not be overly surprised if we witnessed a decrease in expressed national pride among the many who despise this action.

Another issue that challenges the cross-national analysis is that there is good reason to believe that also atheism has country-specific characteristics. In Section 2 I discussed the different characteristics of atheism that result from being socialized in religious or secular countries. However, the countries’ dominant religion or denomination might also make a difference, even if the individual does not believe in it. Demerath (2000) coined the term “cultural religion” in order to capture the remaining attachment among individuals to a particular religion that is nationally and historically important for society, combined with the attachment to the respective community, without compelling active belief. This concept goes beyond Davie’s concept of “belonging without believing” (discussed in Section 2) by not including nominal belonging to a church. Cultural religion implies the “shaping of personal identity” by the impact of religious traditions without partaking in its beliefs or rituals (Demerath 2000, pp. 127, 136). Individuals shaped in this way may therefore be called (or even already call themselves) cultural Catholics, cultural Protestants, cultural Jews, etc. Demerath even claims that perhaps “the most fundamental distinction in Northern Ireland is between cultural Catholics and cultural Protestants” (Demerath 2000, p. 131). From cultural religion it is only a small step to what could be described as “religiously coined atheism”, in which there is zero belief but still attachment, as Demerath (2000, p. 131) quotes a Northern Irish person saying: “Even when you are an atheist, you are either a Catholic or a Protestant atheist.”<sup>42</sup>

## 9. Conclusions and Outlook

This article explores the nature of prejudices against atheists and atheists' national pride cross-nationally. It contributes to the large research field of "how religion moderates individual values" by occupying a hitherto under-studied niche of "how non-religion moderates individual values" and assesses which societal-level factors interact with this relationship.

*Can atheists be regarded as patriots?* was the trigger question for this article. Based on the available data, it was not possible to determine whether atheists around the globe are regarded as patriots in their countries. What did become clear is that negative attitudes towards atheists, the perception that religion is a crucial element for citizenship, and the perspective that "the right" religion is a prerequisite for public office is by no means an exclusively American phenomenon. Furthermore, these attitudes correlate highly with the general societal level of religiosity and thereby with the presence of active and passive atheists in society. My second endeavor was to investigate whether atheists around the globe actually are less proud of their countries. The answer is, "yes, they are". That means that the publicly shared assumption that atheists tend to feel less national pride cannot be dismissed. However, first, the extent of the difference between the levels of national pride among atheists compared to non-atheists by no means justifies the pronounced prejudices that could be observed in some countries. Second, the analyses show that regarding a lack of belief in God as the decisive reason for missing national pride is too short-sighted.

Through exploring the question of why atheists tend to be less nationally proud, I found that societal-level factors, such as the country's ideological background in particular and the general level of societal religiosity, the countries' relationship of church and state, and the level of religious pluralization interact with atheists' feelings of national pride. What this paper thereby demonstrates is that even atheists cannot escape the influence of religion; they might in terms of individual contacts, but hardly on the indirect, societal level. The more religious the society, the stronger the impact.

Although, harmonization might have blurred some survey effects and no one-hundred percent accurate predictors are directly available given the very different historical developments in countries during the last decades, the Multilevel Analysis based on large sample sizes shows clear trends. Indicators can be more finely calibrated now for individual countries to gain individual country insights on the interdependencies. Another worthwhile follow-up analysis would be to explore the predictors of prejudices against atheists. Although my analyses remain on the descriptive level, the assumption is obvious that the same societal-level indicators play crucial roles here. Finally, while atheists proved to have very similar demographic characteristics across countries, what being an atheist means with respect to different religions remains largely unexplored. For future research on atheism's impact on values, possible differences caused by the formative effect of the societies' dominant religions should be considered.

The essential question for the interpretation of the relationship between (non)-religiosity and national pride is: what does a lack of national pride mean for society? Does it mean a lack of loyalty towards the community, as some assume? The "Proud Boys" involved in the storming of the U.S. Capitol on that January day, to the dismay of the majority of the society, may have been loyal to their president but demonstrated that the "national community" is a matter of subjective perception.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Surveys and respondents across countries and years (1981–2018), number and percentage (by survey) of respondents who answered the national pride item.

Surveys	N	National Pride (n)	National Pride (%)
AmericasBarometer (AmericasB)	31,388	26,568	3.8
Asia Europe Survey (ASES)	11,214	10,768	1.6
AsiaBarometer Survey (AsiaB)	16,378	16,145	2.3
Asian Barometer Survey (AsianB)	48,157	37,478	5.4
Candidate Countries Eurobarometer (CCEB)	44,650	19,514	2.8
Eurobarometer (EB)	1,477,847	173,785	25.1
European Values Study (EVS)	136,451	127,115	18.4
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)	332,302	56,926	8.2
Latinobarometro (LatinoB)	151,496	83,196	12.0
Pew Global Attitudes Survey (PewGAP)	188,984	12,628	1.8
World Values Survey (WVS)	135,096	127,434	18.4
Total	2,573,963	691,557	100.0

**Table A2.** Religious types.

Country	National Representative Sample		Atheists			Religious People			Fuzzy People			Macro	
	N	Mean Pride	N	%	Mean Pride	N	%	Mean Pride	N	%	Mean Pride	GLOR	RDI
ARGENTINA	39,716	2.43	1082	3	2.18	10,805	27	2.53	14,550	37	2.43	5	11
AUSTRALIA	32,000	2.67	1520	5	2.72	3238	10	2.89	2703	8	2.77	16	30
AUSTRIA	109,283	2.38	2194	2	2.16	7632	7	2.58	7336	7	2.46	11	22
BRAZIL	48,452	2.38	358	1	2.27	21,255	44	2.48	11,233	23	2.31	6	15
CHILE	44,203	2.45	530	1	2.06	10447	24	2.50	13,201	30	2.40	8	13
CHINA	68,275	2.30	8578	13	2.35	1870	3	2.33	5790	8	2.37	48	52
CROATIA	57,868	2.33	674	1	1.41	4758	8	2.46	2356	4	2.08	5	9
CZECH REPUBLIC	112,934	2.08	13,259	12	2.18	3949	3	2.29	8245	7	2.19	42	36
DENMARK	148,495	2.33	3486	2	2.09	6250	4	2.41	11,323	8	2.43	8	17
ESTONIA	91,133	2.02	6880	8	2.39	2927	3	2.34	7019	8	2.42	52	38
FINLAND	117,410	2.47	2797	2	2.44	7363	6	2.75	8368	7	2.66	13	19
FRANCE	171,833	2.20	8301	5	2.25	10,341	6	2.40	12,048	7	2.35	20	36
GERMANY	285,865	1.81	14,363	5	1.78	18,133	6	2.07	18,386	6	1.89	23	34
HONG KONG	7336	1.94	333	5	1.77	409	6	2.13	778	11	1.89	19	53
HUNGARY	107,153	2.39	4274	4	2.11	7409	7	2.54	7894	7	2.33	10	17
ICELAND	24,115	2.52	804	3	2.16	1694	7	2.71	3126	13	2.55	2	5
ITALY	153,516	2.25	1596	1	1.90	12,521	8	2.36	5942	4	2.22	15	24
JAPAN	39,789	2.08	2805	7	2.12	3540	9	2.47	7360	18	2.21	13	46
KOREA, REPUBLIC OF	30,073	2.07	2676	9	1.85	4092	14	2.10	4498	15	2.01	1	43
MEXICO	57,233	2.56	561	1	2.20	21,126	37	2.60	13,708	24	2.47	4	8
MONGOLIA	5593	2.76	562	10	2.77	2161	39	2.78	1242	22	2.75	29	42
NETHERLANDS	159,350	2.08	7474	5	2.03	9611	6	2.23	11,217	7	2.19	37	41
NORWAY	50,910	2.37	4182	8	2.43	6030	12	2.70	10,037	20	2.65	5	10
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	103,328	2.12	5590	5	2.09	13046	13	2.45	11877	11	2.34	33	47
SINGAPORE	9379	2.37	245	3	2.27	2134	23	2.42	1730	18	2.34	15	62
SLOVAKIA	97,673	2.19	2462	3	2.15	10,020	10	2.36	4885	5	2.23	12	19
SLOVENIA	100,314	2.53	3723	4	2.47	6152	6	2.70	8191	8	2.44	10	17
SPAIN	205,673	2.35	7006	3	1.83	21,559	10	2.51	26,302	13	2.35	17	25
SWEDEN	121,430	2.28	7712	6	2.36	3990	3	2.49	10,741	9	2.49	29	37

Table A2. Cont.

Country	National Representative Sample		Atheists			Religious People			Fuzzy People			Macro	
	N	Mean Pride	N	%	Mean Pride	N	%	Mean Pride	N	%	Mean Pride	GLOR	RDI
SWITZERLAND	36,278	2.23	2963	8	2.05	8496	23	2.43	10,163	28	2.33	12	22
TAIWAN	23,021	2.05	420	2	2.00	3026	13	2.20	3871	17	2.04	4	41
UNITED KINGDOM	219,644	2.39	8275	4	2.18	14,596	7	2.46	12755	6	2.39	17	31
UNITED STATES	47,115	2.66	1046	2	2.47	13,111	28	2.83	3041	6	2.61	12	27
URUGUAY	37,451	2.57	2292	6	2.41	6407	17	2.65	12,126	32	2.56	39	39
VIET NAM	11,465	2.79	1516	13	2.74	1507	13	2.86	3336	29	2.81	19	60

Table A3. Atheists' demographics.

Country	Gender (% Male)			Age (Mean)			Education (% Low)			Education (% High)		
	Non-Atheist	Atheist	Total	Non-Atheist	Atheist	Total	Non-Atheist	Atheist	Total	Non-Atheist	Atheist	Total
ARGENTINA	46.7	67.8	47.3	43.1	37.1	42.9	53.2	34.0	52.8	20.5	39.9	20.9
AUSTRALIA	47.5	57.4	48.0	49.5	47.2	49.4	35.6	29.3	35.4	28.3	33.4	28.4
AUSTRIA	44.5	58.4	45.2	46.5	41.6	46.2	49.0	19.5	47.2	10.8	19.4	11.3
BRAZIL	46.9	71.5	47.0	39.7	36.5	39.6	64.2	57.0	64.2	12.6	25.6	12.6
CHILE	44.1	70.0	44.4	43.4	36.6	43.4	42.8	24.1	42.7	19.2	36.5	19.3
CHINA	48.8	52.4	49.4	42.6	40.5	42.2	49.3	47.9	49.3	13.0	24.8	13.4
CROATIA	43.6	60.3	44.1	45.0	47.2	45.0	30.0	12.5	29.6	16.3	30.8	16.7
CZECH REPUBLIC	44.1	52.8	46.0	47.5	44.4	46.9	30.5	16.8	27.5	12.1	11.2	11.9
DENMARK	48.9	61.8	49.6	46.9	43.4	46.7	21.1	20.6	21.1	33.1	35.3	33.4
ESTONIA	38.5	52.4	40.7	47.7	45.7	47.3	25.1	23.6	24.8	22.5	22.3	22.5
FINLAND	45.6	63.8	46.8	48.8	42.2	48.4	30.8	19.7	29.9	24.9	31.4	25.5
FRANCE	47.1	53.2	47.7	47.4	44.5	47.1	39.1	23.6	36.8	26.3	24.1	26.0
GERMANY	47.9	56.6	48.7	47.3	46.1	47.2	42.9	25.1	40.1	19.0	20.9	19.3
HONG KONG	45.2	52.9	45.5	46.3	42.4	46.1	45.6	48.2	45.7	19.4	15.4	19.2
HUNGARY	41.9	54.5	42.8	48.8	42.1	48.3	44.1	20.0	42.3	12.8	17.3	13.1
ICELAND	46.8	62.0	47.8	46.3	36.5	45.6	30.7	26.4	30.4	36.4	39.4	36.6
ITALY	46.4	62.9	46.8	44.7	42.5	44.6	46.3	30.2	45.7	14.4	20.6	14.6
JAPAN	47.0	53.5	47.5	50.5	43.7	50.0	20.5	14.1	20.2	22.8	32.4	23.3
KOREA, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH	47.9	59.9	49.1	42.6	40.2	42.4	17.1	14.0	16.8	37.5	38.0	37.5
MEXICO	48.6	60.2	48.7	38.7	33.9	38.6	52.8	47.6	52.8	18.2	29.0	18.3
MONGOLIA	44.0	51.2	44.7	40.3	37.5	39.9	28.9	21.4	28.2	33.9	33.1	33.8
NETHERLANDS	46.0	54.7	46.9	47.1	45.6	46.9	46.7	34.7	44.6	22.9	31.2	24.4
NORWAY	49.4	61.9	50.5	45.7	40.8	45.2	29.1	16.0	27.6	32.7	39.3	33.5
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	39.5	61.1	41.4	45.2	42.5	45.0	21.0	19.1	20.8	26.2	26.7	26.3
SINGAPORE	47.4	55.1	47.6	40.3	41.1	40.3	39.2	24.1	38.8	22.0	28.6	22.1
SLOVAKIA	41.9	58.9	42.7	46.0	42.7	45.9	36.0	13.5	35.1	12.0	19.1	12.3
SLOVENIA	44.7	53.6	45.3	45.9	44.9	45.9	37.4	14.7	36.0	14.2	24.9	14.9
SPAIN	46.8	60.8	47.6	46.3	39.0	45.9	56.9	40.6	55.8	18.5	25.9	19.0
SWEDEN	47.5	59.4	49.4	49.3	44.7	48.6	38.8	19.6	36.2	30.5	25.8	29.9
SWITZERLAND	46.1	58.0	47.1	49.0	41.9	48.4	31.4	17.8	30.3	19.8	28.3	20.5
TAIWAN	50.5	57.9	50.6	45.1	40.7	45.0	34.2	29.4	34.1	27.9	42.5	28.1
UNITED KINGDOM	45.0	55.3	45.8	47.8	44.6	47.5	52.1	35.8	50.3	20.5	27.3	21.3
UNITED STATES	45.8	65.6	46.3	47.6	44.2	47.5	17.8	10.5	17.8	29.8	41.3	29.9
URUGUAY	44.1	60.5	45.2	46.1	41.2	45.8	68.3	57.0	67.6	15.6	25.7	16.2
VIET NAM	48.8	57.5	50.0	39.6	36.7	39.2	48.1	27.6	44.9	13.8	23.2	15.3

Table A4. Attitudes towards atheists.

Country	ONBound Variable: Rel_stachu1a (Agree + Strongly Agree in %)	ONBound Variable: Natid_bound5a (Fairly Important + Very Important in %)	ONBound Variable: Relnat_1 (Disagree + Strongly Disagree in %)
ALBANIA	39	16	-
ALGERIA	78	-	11
ANDORRA	3	-	-
ARGENTINA	35	29	-
ARMENIA	54	55	-
AUSTRALIA	13	34	-
AUSTRIA	17	45	-
AZERBAIJAN	-	33	-



Table A4. Cont.

Country	ONBound Variable: Rel_stachu1a (Agree + Strongly Agree in %)	ONBound Variable: Natid_bound5a (Fairly Important + Very Important in %)	ONBound Variable: Relnat_1 (Disagree + Strongly Disagree in %)
BANGLADESH	71	-	-
BELARUS	29	47	-
BELGIUM	7	24	-
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	29	-	-
BRAZIL	49	-	-
BULGARIA	29	73	-
BURKINA FASO	49	-	-
CANADA	18	33	-
CHILE	32	52	-
CHINA	-	10	-
CROATIA	26	53	-
CYPRUS	38	-	-
CYPRUS without Northern Cyprus	48	-	-
CZECH REPUBLIC	8	30	-
DENMARK	3	26	-
EGYPT	88	-	11
ESTONIA	15	26	-
ETHIOPIA	49	-	-
FINLAND	11	24	-
FRANCE	9	19	-
GEORGIA	82	68	-
GERMANY	12	31	-
GHANA	73	-	-
GREECE	37	76	-
GUATEMALA	59	-	-
HUNGARY	15	47	-
ICELAND	8	23	-
INDIA	45	60	-
INDONESIA	88	95	-
IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)	75	-	-
IRAQ	87	-	4
IRELAND	18	49	-
ISRAEL	16	68	-
ITALY	15	58	-
JAPAN	8	24	-
JORDAN	75	-	11
KOREA, REPUBLIC OF (SOUTH)	13	44	-
KOSOVO	60	-	-
KYRGYZSTAN	36	-	-
LATVIA	20	27	-
LEBANON	-	-	10
LITHUANIA	20	65	-
LUXEMBOURG	12	-	-
MACEDONIA, THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF	33	-	-
MALAYSIA	64	61	-
MALI	59	-	-
MALTA	42	-	-
MEXICO	33	57	-
MOLDOVA, REPUBLIC OF	44	-	-
MONTENEGRO	30	-	-
MOROCCO	73	-	-
NETHERLANDS	4	11	-
NEW ZEALAND	10	34	-
NIGERIA	82	-	-
NORTHERN CYPRUS	33	-	-
NORWAY	5	19	-
PAKISTAN	95	-	-
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY	-	-	22
PERU	39	-	-
PHILIPPINES	68	88	-
POLAND	16	63	-
PORTUGAL	15	54	-
PUERTO RICO	65	-	-
ROMANIA	49	78	-
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	21	53	-
RWANDA	44	-	-
SAUDI ARABIA	-	-	25
SERBIA	36	63	-
SERBIA without Kosovo after 2008	83	-	-
SLOVAKIA	17	49	-
SLOVENIA	10	30	-
SOUTH AFRICA	49	79	-
SPAIN	12	37	-
SUDAN, THE REPUBLIC OF THE	-	-	12
SWEDEN	4	15	-

Table A4. Cont.

Country	ONBound Variable: Rel_stachu1a (Agree + Strongly Agree in %)	ONBound Variable: Natid_bound5a (Fairly Important + Very Important in %)	ONBound Variable: Relnat_1 (Disagree + Strongly Disagree in %)
SWITZERLAND	13	28	-
TAIWAN	10	26	-
TANZANIA, UNITED REPUBLIC OF	66	-	-
THAILAND	64	97	-
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	68	-	-
TUNISIA	-	-	15
TURKEY	61	89	-
UGANDA	63	-	-
UKRAINE	39	-	-
UNITED KINGDOM	14	32	-
UNITED STATES	33	54	-
URUGUAY	13	29	-
VENEZUELA	52	71	-
VIET NAM	18	-	-
YEMEN, REPUBLIC OF	-	-	15
ZAMBIA	55	-	-
ZIMBABWE	54	-	-

## Notes

- Utilizing the term “atheists” for the research subjects in this paper is quite controversial, given that the term is strongly ideologically occupied. Public debates show that everyone seems to have an idea for atheism at hand only that these ideas are as heterogeneous as are individual beliefs. Thus, I decided to keep the term “atheists” anyway for two reasons: first, this is what the American public debate is about: atheists’ feelings about their country and people and, second, atheism is what describes non-belief most precisely. To avoid any misunderstanding, I dedicated the first section of this paper to a profound definition.
- The statement made in an interview with the journalist Robert I. Sherman on 27 August 1987 was printed by several sources. The background is explained here: <https://www.secularism.org.uk/33034.html> (accessed on 1 May 2020).
- For more information on the project and the link to the ONBound Harmonization Wizard see <https://www.gesis.org/en/services/processing-and-analyzing-data/data-harmonization/onbound> (accessed on 1 January 2020).
- For a political–theoretical assessment of the “New Atheism” movement, see [Roseneck \(2021\)](#) in this special issue.
- This does not mean that no attempt for a conceptualization was ever made. For an overview, see [Zuckerman \(2012, p. 8\)](#).
- All classifications I am aware of only cover monotheistic religions.
- One might wonder why I chose atheists and not agnostics as research subjects. Following Richard Dawkins’ argumentation, agnosticism is an ambiguous concept. Agnostics do not believe in god(s), which is what makes them atheists. If there was proof that god(s) exist, agnostics would become believers and so would atheists ([Dawkins 2006, p. 69](#)).
- A Google search gives approximately 1,920,000,000 hits for this phrase.
- See on the issue of the inseparability of patriotism and nationalism also the introduction of this volume.
- The competing argument here would be the “religious defence” thesis, assuming larger differences between religious and non-religious people in secular societies, as being religious in secular societies requires more individual effort (see [Siegers 2019, p. 498f](#)).
- For more information on the technical processes, see [May et al. \(2020\)](#). Detailed documentation on the individual and country-level data provide [ONBound \(2020a, 2020b, 2020c\)](#).
- See Table A1.
- The Religious Characteristics of States Dataset ([Brown and James 2019](#)) and data from the Religion and State Project ([Fox 2019](#)).
- It is “at least one question” because not all three questions are available for each respondent. However, there is no reason to believe that a religious person would respond to any of the three questions in the most god-denying way possible. Since the variables are harmonized by the OnBound project, there is no unique question text. For the references to the original questions, please see the [ONBound \(2020b\)](#).
- See [ONBound \(2020b\)](#) for more details.
- Citizenship information is available for about 50% of cases but differs significantly across countries. The average non-citizen rate among those who answered for national pride, however, is 1%. Consequently, on average, there is probably 1% of unidentified non-citizens left in the data. Since it is predominantly the nationally very homogeneous countries such as Vietnam or China in which citizenship was not asked, or countries where the sample was drawn from a register based on citizenship, the non-citizen rate presumably is even lower. Either way, these represent less than 1% and should have little impact on the results.
- For the detailed methodology, see <https://www.pewforum.org/2014/04/04/methodology-2/> (accessed on 1 August 2020).
- Only very few survey data entries go beyond that point of time.

19 The correlation of the original RDI provided by PEW and my measure covering almost four decades is 0.902.  
 20 Pairwise correlations for the three components: self-constructed RDI/CHST = 0.522; self-constructed RDI/GLOR = 0.747; and  
 GLOR/CHST = 0.386. Chronbach's Alpha for the index = 0.733.  
 21 From here on I will shorten the phrase as "socialistic background" for space reasons.  
 22 The decision was made to code Germany as non-socialistic considering most respondents were socialized in West Germany.  
 23 An overview on values for all macro indicators per country is found in Table A2.  
 24 For the reasons stated above, no distinction can be made between active and passive atheists.  
 25 The rather high number of atheists in Germany are the result of, first, a high density of social surveys in Germany for the whole  
 time period and, second, a systematic oversampling of the eastern part of Germany after 1989. If statements are made on the  
 representativity of the whole German population, these data are weighted down according to the East–West population size.  
 26 See also column 4 and 5 in Table A2.  
 27 To check for representativeness, the percentage of atheists in society were compared with RCS data (2019) based on official  
 statistics. The standard deviation across countries is 2.4, which is rather small. The largest deviations are for South Korea (0%  
 atheists according to RCS–9% ONBound), Vietnam (6% RCS–13% ONB), Estonia (15% RCS–8% ONB), Russia (11%–5% ONB),  
 and Sweden (11% RCS–6% ONB).  
 28 See Table A3 for demographic information on atheists across 35 countries.  
 29 People in this respect means respondents to the following surveys, which includes atheists and non-atheists as they appear in  
 societies.  
 30 For comprehensive distributions on the variables, see (GESIS 2018, p. 214ff; GESIS 2020, p. 260ff).  
 31 ONBound variable: rel\_stachu1a including ISSP 1991; EVS 1999 and 2008; and WVS 2001 and 2006, see the numbers in Table A4.  
 32 ONBound variable: natid\_bound5a including ASES\_2001; EVS\_2017; IntUne\_2007; IntUne\_2009; ISSP\_1995; ISSP\_2003; ISSP\_2013;  
 and PewGAP\_2016. See the numbers in Table A4.  
 33 See the numbers in Table A4.  
 34 Reference category: female.  
 35 Reference category: high education.  
 36 Reference category: fuzzy.  
 37 Reference category: before 2000 (1981–1999).  
 38 Interaction term of Religious\*Soc\_background is not significant.  
 39 Interaction term of Religious\*Index CHST\_RDI\_GLOR = −0.002.  
 40 0.061156 (intercept country variance) + 0.515529 (Residual) = 0.576685.  
 41 0.061156/0.576685 = 0.11.  
 42 Earlier research has already examined specific religions in this respect. The phenomenon of "Orthodox atheism" is examined by  
 Ładykowska (2016). For the phenomenon of Jewish atheism, see Berlinerblau (2013).

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