

# Four worlds of morality politics: the impact of institutional venues and party cleavages

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## **ABSTRACT**

The most prominent theory accounting for variation of morality politics across Western Europe is the so-called Two Worlds framework. According to this approach, the presence or absence of a secular–religious cleavage in national party systems strongly affects the degree of conflict intensity and the framing of morality policy issues. This article shows that the explanatory power of the Two Worlds model could be enhanced significantly by introducing a second analytical dimension that captures the institutional venue (party politics vs. parliamentary politics), in which moral conflicts take place. This is useful because there are instances in which a religious cleavage is lacking, but moral conflicts are nonetheless highly intense and party-based (the *traditionalist* world), and there are cases in which the religious cleavage formally exists, but moral conflicts are nonetheless resolved in the parliamentary arena (the *unsecular* world).

**KEYWORDS** Morality politics; French politics; same-sex marriage; LGBT rights; framing; political parties

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, scholars of political science have discovered morality politics as a new area of scientific inquiry (Engeli *et al.* 2012; Knill *et al.* 2015; Mooney 2001; Tatalovich and Daynes 1998). Despite varying conceptualisations, scholars broadly agree that morality policies trigger conflicts that are based on the clash of incompatible first principles. Such conflicts are often observable in debates over issues such as abortion, euthanasia, LGBT rights, drug use, or prostitution. What makes policy-making on these issues so difficult is their connectivity to basic social values, which can hardly be negotiated. As a corollary, morality policy struggles are often very intense and stable compromise solutions are very hard to achieve.

One of the most prominent and parsimonious theoretical frameworks to understand how moral issues enter political agendas in Western Europe has been put forward by Engeli *et al.* (2012). The authors advance the idea that the extent to which moral contestation over the selected issues emerges can be traced back to one particular country-specific factor: the institutionalization of a religious–secular cleavage in a country’s party system. More specifically, moral issues are particularly prone to enter the political agenda in countries whose party systems feature an established Christian democratic party (the religious world), whereas countries in which the religious–secular divide is lacking (the secular world) experience fewer and less intense political conflicts on moral issues.

In this contribution, however, we argue that the model’s static setup and its unidimensionality prevent it from covering important empirical cases and that the introduction of a second analytical dimension on the relative relevance of party politics vs. parliamentary politics as main institutional venues for morality politics would greatly improve the model’s explanatory power. In order to arrive at this refined theoretical framework, we first identify a deviant case that contradicts the predictions of Engeli *et al.* (2012). While France qualifies as a prototype of the secular world, it has recently experienced intense political and societal struggles concerning the legalisation of civil unions and later the introduction of same-sex marriage and adoption rights. Within the political arena, members of parliament deliberated for over 170 hours. At times, the already tumultuous debate deteriorated into shouting matches, trading of insults and almost escalated into physical confrontations (Agence France-Presse 2013). The accompanying votes were strongly split along party lines, which clearly identifies France as a country that does not fit the secular world (Hildebrandt 2016: 417). Instead, France displays patterns of conflict that strongly resemble the controversies usually found in the religious world of morality politics, although the conflicts lack a clear foundation of religious or religiously derived values (Hildebrandt 2016).

Based on this in-depth investigation of the French case and a tentative exploration of other cases, we propose a fourfold typology in which the secular and religious worlds are complemented by the *traditionalist* and the *unsecular* worlds. In particular, we argue that national morality politics can unfold in different institutional venues for moral conflict resolution. If a religious cleavage is lacking, but moral conflicts are nonetheless based on partisan confrontation, we find ourselves in the traditionalist world of morality politics. As our case study on France shows, countries in the secular world can move into the traditionalist world if party politics replaces parliamentary politics as the main mode of moral conflict resolution. In this world, traditionalist and progressive forces of the party system are strictly separated; moral issues are highly politicized and parties are highly cohesive on moral issues. Yet, in some instances, the religious cleavage still exists, but it has lost relevance due to the increasing use of ‘unsecular’ (Kalyvas 2003; van Kersbergen 2008) frames by the Christian democratic parties. To secure its survival in a context of societal modernization and secularisation, Christian democracy has embarked on a delicate balancing act between the modern and secular position. In this unsecular world, the lines between religious and secular parties are hence increasingly blurred and parliamentary politics has replaced the formerly fierce partisan confrontations of the religious world.

The article is structured as follows. First, we introduce the reader to the current state-of-the-art research on morality politics and describe the Two Worlds framework in some detail. Second, we discuss our methodological approach and our case selection. Third, we analyse the political process leading up to the adoption of same-sex marriage legislation in France in order to identify the blind spots in the Two Worlds framework. In the final section, we discuss some additional cases and propose an extension of the existing theoretical framework that helps to increase its empirical leverage.

### **The politics of morality policy and the Two Worlds framework**

Research on the politics of morality policy has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years (Budde *et al.* 2017; Engeli *et al.* 2012; Hurka *et al.* 2016; Knill 2013; Knill *et al.* 2015; Mooney 1999; Mucciaroni 2011; Studlar *et al.* 2013). Much of the theoretical work has been focusing on the question of whether or not morality policies constitute a genuine policy type and what factors differentiate them from other policies. While some argue that morality policies differ from other policies, mainly through the activation of more institutional venues due to the high controversy they cause (Studlar *et al.* 2013), others doubt that morality policies can be identified a priori and argue that framing matters (Mucciaroni 2011). More recently, a

distinction between *manifest* and *latent* morality policies has been advanced in order to understand different patterns of policy-making (Knill 2013; Knill *et al.* 2015). While clashes of first principles are argued to be the only central mode of political conflict in manifest morality policies like abortion or euthanasia, rational-instrumental conflict dimensions are simultaneously present in the latent morality policies like drugs or gambling. Thus, although no general consensus on the nature of morality policies has yet emerged, most scholars would probably agree that there is a core of political issues that contain more potential for moral contestation than others.

Engeli *et al.* (2012) focus on a core set of manifest morality policies and develop a parsimonious theoretical framework to explain cross-national variance in patterns of agenda-setting on moral issues. In their theoretical model, the authors put forward the argument that a high politicisation of morality issues should correlate with the presence of Christian democratic parties in the party system. The religious world, which is characterised by a party conflict between at least one religious (i.e. Christian democratic) party and other, secular, parties, is prone to high politicisation of moral issues and a conflict definition that emphasises party politics. Accordingly, the secular parties in this party system will try to advance secular positions against the Christian democratic party. In return, the latter increasingly resorts to ‘unsecular’ framing strategies, which differ from explicitly religious ones, but still speak to confessional voters and beyond (Engeli *et al.* 2012: 13f.; Kalyvas 2003; van Kersbergen 2008). Yet, as we will argue in more detail below, it is precisely the Christian democrats’ objective to reach beyond their confessional voter base that blurs the lines between them and the secular forces of the party system. As a result, party politics is weakened as the main institutional venue for moral conflict resolution and cross-party coalitions and conscience voting becomes more important than party discipline. Accordingly, we will argue that these countries are better placed under the category ‘unsecular’ rather than ‘religious world’.

The counterpart to the religious world is the secular world. Contrary to its antipode, none of its parties have a religious background or reasoning, which implies an overall lower potential for politicisation. If they emerge, political conflicts are resolved in the parliamentary arena and the competing positions cut across party lines. While in the religious world, morality conflicts are highly congruent with existing cleavage structures of party competition, this is not the case for the secular world. Accordingly, the potential for politicisation beyond the subsystem level is much lower in the secular world. Yet, as we will show in the remainder of the article, countries in the secular world are not immune to partisan confrontations over moral issues.

The Two Worlds model provides a straightforward and parsimonious way of explaining differences in the political processes driving the evolution of morality policies. Yet, despite its intuitive appeal, the model has at least two shortcomings. First, it is a static model and, in some instances, allocating countries to either the religious or the secular world is very difficult, or even impossible. Second, even if it is possible to place a country unambiguously into one of the two worlds, the model's empirical implications are sometimes wrong. We argue that the explanatory power of the Two Worlds framework can be improved without rendering it overly complex. By introducing a second dimension on institutional venues to the hitherto unidimensional Two Worlds model, we are able to cover cases which do not feature a religious cleavage in the party system, but still politicise morality issues both in a highly conflictive fashion and along party lines. Furthermore, this second dimension also allows us better to capture instances in which the religious cleavage still exists on paper, but moral issues have nonetheless been transferred to parliamentary politics as the main institutional venue for conflict resolution.

### **Case selection**

In order to advance our understanding of morality politics, we identify a prominent case that deviates from the existing theoretical state of the art and study it in depth (Seawright and Gerring 2008). In other words, we looked for a case that could be clearly allocated into one of Engeli *et al.*'s two worlds, but violated the world's respective empirical implications. We argue that the French approach towards the regulation of same-sex partnerships and marriage constitutes such a deviant case. According to Engeli *et al.* (2013: 349), France belongs to the secular world, which implies that we should expect a relatively low degree of politicisation around moral issues. In France, state and church have been separated since the 1905 separation law, making France one of the countries with the most advanced secularisation process, although the Catholic Church in particular has gained public recognition in recent years (Minkenberg 2003). While there has been a historical conflict between religion and secularism in France, we do not find any (significant) Christian democratic parties in the French party system and political conflicts typically unfold along the classic left–right dimension. Therefore, in theory, France should be an ideal example of a country of the secular world according to the

Two Worlds framework.<sup>1</sup> However, it does not show the expected low degree of attention towards moral issues and conflicts are clearly party based.

**Table 1.** *LGBT rights as an issue of party politics in France.*

Party	Election	Topic		
		Civil union	Same-sex marriage	Adoption rights
French Communist Party	2002	0	0	0
French Communist Party	2007	-	+	+
Left Radical Party	2012	-	+	+
The Greens	2002	+	0	+
The Greens	2007	-	+	+
The Greens	2012	-	+	+
Socialist Party	2002	0	0	0
Socialist Party	2007	-	+	+
Socialist Party	2012	-	+	+
Front National	2002	-	-	0
Front National	2007	.	.	.
Front National	2012	+	-	-
Union for the Presidential Majority	2002	0	0	0
Union for a Popular Movement	2007	+	-	-
Union for a Popular Movement	2012	0	0	0

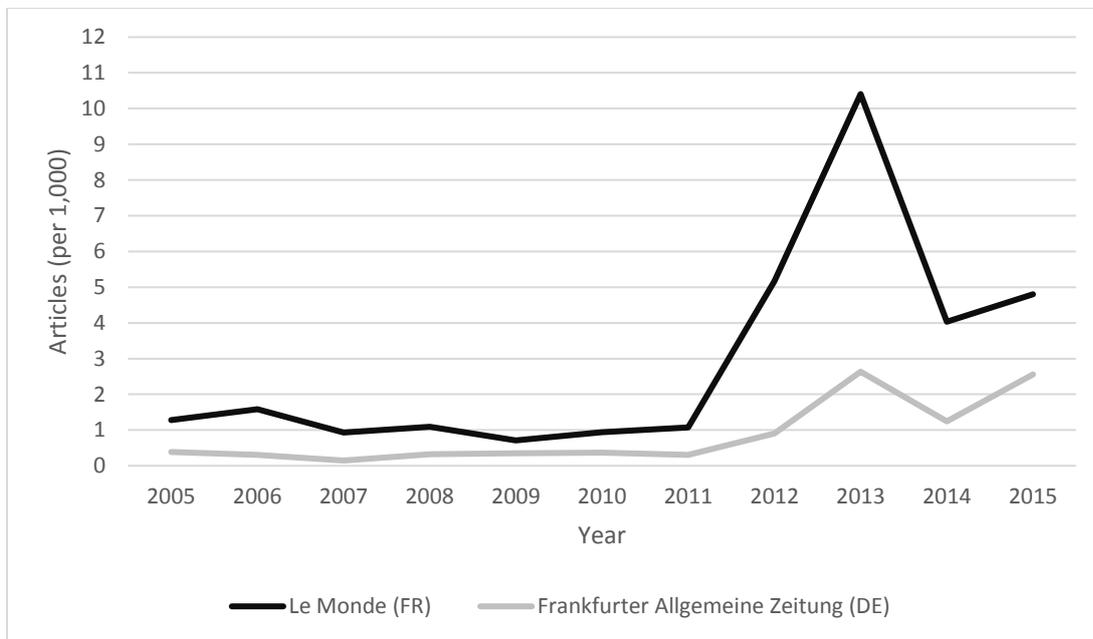
*Source:* original electoral manifestos retrieved from the Comparative Manifestos Project Database (Volkens *et al.* 2016). +: mentioned positively, -: mentioned negatively; 0: not mentioned; .=missing data.

As Table 1 shows, LGBT rights have featured prominently in the election manifestos of all major party families in France in at least one election between 2002 and 2012, which we should not expect to see in a country of the secular world, where ‘none of the major partisan actors has a particular interest in drawing attention to these [moral] issues during, for instance, election campaigns’ (Engeli *et al.* 2012: 21). The table also shows very clearly that the issue divides the French party system into two parts: the left-wing parties that support same-sex marriage and adoption rights and the right-wing parties that oppose both. Thus, the issue invites partisan confrontation in spite of the absence of a religious–secular cleavage. Figure 1 illustrates media attention towards same-sex marriage in the leading newspapers of France (*Le Monde*) and Germany (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) between 2005 and 2015. The data show remarkable cross-national similarities in the rise and fall of media attention towards same-sex marriage over the years, but they also demonstrate that the overall volume of media attention has consistently been higher in France (secular world) than in Germany (religious world). Thus,

<sup>1</sup> It is important to emphasise in this context that the Two Worlds framework is agnostic with regard to the role religion plays on a societal level, e.g. in terms of church attendance. The central criterion for the distinction is the existence of a religious cleavage in a country’s party system.

same-sex marriage has not only received considerable political attention in French election manifestos, it has also attracted a great deal of attention in the news media, and thus from the public.

**Figure 1.** Media attention towards same-sex marriage in France and Germany.



Source: own compilation based on data for *Le Monde* in Nexis (<http://www.nexis.com>) and for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in FAZ biblionet (<http://faz-archiv-approved.faz.net/intranet/biblionet/>). Search terms in French: “mariage\* homosexuel\*” OR “mariage pour tous” OR “mariage\* gay”. Search terms in German: Homoehe\* OR Homo-Ehe\* OR “gleichgeschlechtlich\* Ehe\*” OR “Ehe für alle”.

In sum, these considerations suggest that the politics surrounding civil unions, same sex marriage and adoption rights in France constitutes a promising case further to improve our understanding of morality policy-making. Given that we can exclude the religious–secular cleavage as an explanation, what accounts for the enormous degree of politicisation of LGBT rights in France?

### **Civil unions, same-sex marriage and adoption rights in France: liberté, égalité, fraternité?**

The following case study analyses the French path towards marriage equality between the mid-1990s and 2013, when same-sex marriage was legalised. It first presents a timeline of the most important events during this process. The second subsection presents the partisan actors, their argumentative frames and how they were employed in the highly intense political debates accompanying the introduction of civil unions and same-sex marriage in France. In line with Engeli *et al.*'s (2012) approach, we focus on the main parliamentary debates, which we identified and accessed on the website of the French National Assembly

(<https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr>). Since parties hardly ever publish clear party positions on moral issues, parliamentary debates are the most comprehensive source to study framing by party representatives. Moreover, parliamentary debates have the advantage of being longer than news reports and less distorted by third party interpretations.

### *The French path towards same-sex marriage*

As in other European democracies, the French path towards same-sex marriage started with demands for the introduction of civil unions. After a decade of unsuccessful reform initiatives (Borrillo 2001: 478ff.), the Civil Solidarity Pact (*Pacte Civil de Solidarité*, PaCS) was introduced in parliament in 1998 by the representatives Jean-Pierre Michel (then *Mouvement des Citoyens*, MDC) and Patrick Bloche (*Parti Socialiste*, PS). At the time, France's political system was in the midst of its third period of *cohabitation*.<sup>2</sup> From 1997 to 2002, President Jacques Chirac's conservative government was complemented by the socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. The resulting power struggles between the executive and legislative branch visibly affected the progression of events, leading to 'the longest parliamentary debate since the Constitution of 1958 was enacted' (Stychin 2001: 351). An acceptance of the proposed law by the predominantly left-wing members of the National Assembly in December 1998 was promptly followed by a rejection by the conservative majority in the senate on 17 March 1999. A revised version of PaCS was approved for a second time by the National Assembly on 8 April 1999 and dismissed by the senators only a month later. Following a number of changes, the text was approved for the third time by the national assembly on 15 June, but was once again voted down by the upper house two weeks later. On 13 October 1999, the National Assembly approved PaCS for the fourth time by a majority of 315:249 votes (four abstentions). President Chirac officially ratified the law on 15 November 1999. The new law allowed two adults to enter a civil union, regardless of their gender, and benefit from special rights regarding heredity, tax alleviation and social security. At the same time, civil unions also implied mutual obligations such as reciprocal financial support and sharing of debt.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, as was the case in many other countries, the introduction of civil unions proved to be only the prelude to a more general debate on same-sex marriage. In the years leading up to 2012, socialist politicians in particular became very vocal about their support for opening the institution of marriage to same-sex couples. This verbal support materialised as an election

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<sup>2</sup> This constellation of the French political system is characterised by the coexistence of a Prime Minister and a President from different parties.

<sup>3</sup> *LOI no 99-944 du 15 novembre 1999 relative au pacte civil de solidarité (1)*.

promise, when the socialist presidential candidate François Hollande included the legalisation of same-sex marriage in his ‘60 point plan’ for the presidency (Zappi 2012). Following Hollande’s election to office on 6 May 2012, Minister of Justice Christine Taubira was designated to supervise the law’s proposition on same-sex marriage. Yet the progress of the bill was delayed due to an avalanche of administrative proceedings initiated by numerous members of parliament from the opposition (Bekmezian 2013). On 7 November 2012, the bill was presented to and agreed upon by the cabinet. Under pressure from political and societal forces, the government decided to leave the most controversial amendment concerning medically assisted procreation out of the bill (Dupont 2013). The parliamentary session on 29 January 2013 opened the text up to plenary debate. Outnumbered in the national assembly by the left-wing coalition, the opposition used all available administrative resources to delay the adoption of the bill – as illustrated by over 5000 filed amendments (Zaretsky 2013). On 23 April 2013, the law was passed in the lower house by a 331 to 225 vote (Assemblée Nationale 2013a), a success later repeated in the senate – albeit by a much smaller margin of 170 votes in favour and 165 ballots against (Vignal 2013). Same-sex marriage was officially legalised in France on 18 May 2013.

### ***Partisan actors and their frames***

The timeline above makes evident how difficult both the adoption of PaCS and the introduction of same-sex marriage were. When analysing the actor constellation during the first debate on PaCS, two factions can be distinguished: on the one hand, the supportive parties spearheaded by the Socialist Party (*Parti Socialiste*, PS), and the opponents around the centre-right parties *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and *Union pour la Démocratie Française* (UDF). The socialists introduced both PaCS and same-sex marriage legislation into the National Assembly, and both times a socialist government and their lower house majorities managed to pass the bill. In 1999, the left-wing faction of the parliament consisted of the PS group, the group of the French Communist Party (*Parti Communiste Français*, PCF), and the joint group of the Radicals, Citizens and Greens (*Radicaux, Citoyens et Verts*, RCV).

In 2012, the left-wing party landscape had not changed drastically. The PS was still the most sizeable left-wing party in the National Assembly, but now the party was complemented by the environmental party, the Democratic and Republican Left (GDR, previously PCF) and the new Radical Left (PRG, previously PRS). During the same-sex marriage debate, the PS was now challenged by the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (UMP), which had come into existence in 2002 after the merging of the RPR and UDF. Furthermore, the *Front National* (FN)

also played a vocal role during the debate over same-sex marriage. Since the FN held only three seats in the National Assembly at the time of the plenary deliberations in 2013, the party had very limited speaking time. Therefore, most of the FN's statements were made via the media or on its own communication channels.<sup>4</sup>

Of the 315 ballots in favour of PaCS, only five were cast by members of the RPR and the UDF and only one member of the leftist parties voted against the civil union (Assemblée Nationale 1999). Likewise, the vote on the same-sex marriage bill 14 years later was clearly split along party lines, with only few defections on both sides (Assemblée Nationale 2013a). These voting results show that in France the conflict over same-sex partnerships is clearly party-based and does not follow the parliamentary logic we should expect in a country of the secular world. This observation confirms recent empirical research on the dimensionality of party conflicts in France (Stimson *et al.* 2012). Yet how can we account for these party-based voting results in a secular setting that should involve much cross-party cooperation? In the following, we aim to address this question by analysing the argumentative frames that were brought to bear during the parliamentary debates.

### *The progressive frame*

In a report for the National Assembly, the initiators of the PaCS motion, Jean-Pierre Michel and Patrick Bloche, stressed their willingness to end discrimination against homosexuals by giving couples legal recognition (Michel and Bloche 2001). Michel and Bloche (2001) further elaborated that the legislation was an overdue adjustment reflecting present-day realities, while bringing about equality before the law as a fundamental constitutional principle. These arguments translate to pragmatic and anti-discrimination frames, which were later re-activated during the same-sex marriage debate. To some extent, the PaCS controversy led to the questioning of the family entity as a whole, therefore opening the door for the subsequent debate on adoption rights in 2012 (Johnston 2012: 148).<sup>5</sup> Herein lay the main point of contention between proponents and opponents of the same-sex marriage bill.

In the parliamentary session opening the proposed law up to deliberation on 29 January 2013, Minister of Justice Christiane Taubira and several other members of the left-wing coalition put forward their considerations. More than 13 years after the initial PaCS debate, the PS framed same-sex marriage as a logical consequence of the evolution of norms and family

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<sup>4</sup> Please consult the online appendix for two graphs on the positions of the represented political parties in terms of the general left–right dimension and the ‘new politics’ dimension (Polk *et al.* 2017).

<sup>5</sup> *LOI n° 2013-404 du 17 mai 2013 ouvrant le mariage aux couples de personnes de même sexe.*

structures, pointing out that ‘love and individual choice are, today, at the heart of the institution of marriage’ (Clergeau in Assemblée Nationale 2013b). Similarly, it was argued that the concept of family had evolved to include ‘couples without the desire to conceive; marriages without children; [...] families with one child; single parents; blended families; opposite-sex families’ (Clergeau in Assemblée Nationale 2013b). It was therefore considered logical and necessary to include same-sex families in that evolved definition and ‘[legally] secure their situation’ (Clergeau in Assemblée Nationale 2013b). Legal recognition of same-sex couples on a par with opposite-sex unions thus ‘illustrates the Republican maxim [of liberty, equality and fraternity]’, since it ‘won’t take anything away from heterosexual marriages’ (Taubira in Assemblée Nationale 2013b).

Along with the anti-discriminatory ambitions, much of the defence revolved around the well-being and rights of the children raised by homosexuals, which is a concern constantly repeated by the opposition (see below). Those children, that ‘[the conservative faction] refuses to see’ (Taubira in Assemblée Nationale 2013b), are left in ‘a precarious situation [caused] ... by the legal recognition of only one of their parents’ (Bertinotti in Assemblée Nationale 2013b). Bertinotti continued (in Assemblée Nationale 2013b), stating that ‘filiation cannot be reduced to procreation’ especially when keeping in mind that ‘adoption rights and medically assisted procreation have been legalised for heterosexual couples’. The parliamentarian Erwann Binet (PS) later added that ‘the overwhelming majority [of studies concerning children raised by same-sex parents] have come to the conclusion they are neither better nor worse off than children of heterosexual couples’ (Binet in Assemblée Nationale 2013b).

In sum, the left framed the same-sex marriage debate – and every issue ensuing from it – in a progressive way, highlighting the legal vacuum around the reality of homosexual couples and their children in France. Moreover, they stressed France’s long-standing commitment to defending and enforcing human rights and pointed out the former reluctance around similar projects (ranging from the rights of divorcees to single parent adoption). Thus, the left essentially portrayed same-sex marriage as the logical progression towards equality that resulted from the introduction of the civil union 14 years earlier. This progressive frame built on general norms of equality, which are, in the French case, closely linked to Republican principles.

### *The traditionalist frame*

In contrast to the progressive frame put forward by the left-wing faction of the national assembly, their opponents argued that the proposal constituted an attack on the very foundation

of French society. The UDF and the RPR coordinated their administrative procedures and showed a united front in the senate. One of the politicians opposing PaCS was Christine Boutin, at the time a member of the UDF. Boutin was well known for her religious affiliation with diverse Christian organisations and became an emblematic figure of the opposition to LGBT rights, but also to other morality issues like euthanasia and abortion. During the PaCS debates, she underlined her opposition to the new law by waving a bible in plenary (Borrillo 2001: 482). Yet, aside from Boutin's continued religiously inspired criticisms of any legal recognition of same-sex couples, religiously based opposition remained the rare exception, rather than the rule, at least in the parliamentary arena. Instead, the main argumentative frame of the traditionalist side was centred on highlighting the potentially adverse consequences of same-sex unions and marriage for society at large, and for children in particular.

Both during the parliamentary debates on PaCS and during the controversy over same-sex marriage, the right-wing faction adopted a firm stance against the recognition of same-sex couples. The corresponding parliamentary debates featured inflammatory rhetoric. For instance, the representative Philippe de Villiers from the UDF went on record stating that 'introducing PaCS means returning to a barbaric state' while other representatives compared homosexuality to bestiality and zoophilia, considering it the 'legalisation of a perversion' (Grosjean and Perrignon 1998). Right-wing members of parliament made such critical statements on numerous occasions during the plenary debate.

Moreover, the presentation of the proposed law on same-sex marriage by the government was followed by the use of all available parliamentary instruments by the conservative members of parliament. Questions to the government, motions to reject the bill, motions to prove the bill's unconstitutional nature, motions to force a referendum and the registering of over 5000 amendments reinforced the tug-of-war between the factions. Using the speaking time allocated to each of the aforementioned procedures, the centre-right expressed its many objections to the law. For the conservatives, introducing same-sex marriage and adoption rights was equivalent to 'extending rights to same-sex couples which weren't given to them by nature' (Guaino in Assemblée Nationale 2013b).

It was argued that marriage, at its core, is 'the union of man and woman to have children' (Dassaut in Assemblée Nationale 2013c). According to the opponents of same-sex marriage, the left was trying to promote 'the fiction that same-sex parents can substitute a father and a mother' to the reality of 'natural procreation' (Dassaut in Assemblée Nationale 2013c). Yet, 'man and woman are needed to conceive and guide the child' (Guaino in Assemblée Nationale 2013c) and 'no better environment exists than that offered by [the biological parents]' (Poisson

in Assemblée Nationale 2013c). Furthermore, it should not be the law's ambition 'to organise ... a deprivation [of one of the two opposite-sex parents]' resulting in 'the voluntary exposure of the child to identity struggles and personality disorders' (Zimmermann in Assemblée Nationale 2013c). On the matter of legitimacy, the opposition maintained that, in cases with such a profound impact on society, 'the choice to hold a referendum becomes an obligation' (Guaino in Assemblée Nationale 2013b). Thus, the traditionalist frame centred on a conservative view of marriage and families and mainly highlighted concerns over the usage of assisted reproductive technology by same-sex couples.

While for a long time the conflict between traditionalists and progressives was led by the two main parties of France (PS and UDF/RPR, later UMP), recent years have witnessed an increasing involvement of another political party, the Front National. The party's stance on same-sex marriage is consonant with that of the other right-wing parties. Whilst the FN has voiced support for the civil union, it rejects same-sex marriage on the grounds that it includes adoption rights. The FN leader, Marine Le Pen, stated that she considered same-sex marriage, adoption and Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) to be an institutionalisation of the 'right to have a child', which in turn sacrifices 'the children's rights, and primarily that to have both a father and a mother' (Marine Le Pen as cited in LeMonde.fr 2013). Furthermore, she added that demands for same-sex marriage came from a minority of militants and were not supported by a majority of homosexuals. For the FN, ART practices and surrogacy are 'a commercialisation of the child' and an 'attack on women's dignity' (Bay 2015).

Parallel to the framing employed by the other opposition parties in the National Assembly, the frames put forward by the FN were traditionalist more than they were religious. First, the concept of the traditional family, while similar to the Christian teaching, is rooted in a Gaullist, patriarchal view of the world. For many French people, it is the Republic, not the family, which plays the most important part in the education of children and turns them into good citizens. Therefore, the frame regarding the protection of children should be interpreted as a nationalist sentiment. Secondly, the FN's tradition is anti-clerical and based on secularism. Its most recent party programme contains measures to further the secularisation of France, such as a modification of the French Constitution to include a passage that 'the Republic does not recognise any [religious] community' (Front National 2012: 106). Moreover, there have never been any institutionalised or semi-formal links between the Church and the party.

Thus, the traditionalist frame put forward by various actors during the debates over PaCS and same-sex marriage strongly resembles the religious frame often used in countries of the religious world, in terms of the language used and the intensity with which opposition is

organised. What is lacking, however, is a strong religious background for the argumentation. Instead, the traditionalist frame draws upon general notions of societal order and stability. In that sense, it is similar to the ‘unsecular’ framing that is nowadays often employed by Christian democratic parties in many countries of the religious world, but the actors that use the traditionalist frame do not necessarily share the religious origins of the actors that use the ‘unsecular’ frame. In other words, they do not develop their arguments in deliberate emancipation from the (Catholic) Church, but draw upon their conservative, traditionalist and sometimes even reactionary ideology. The case of the FN impressively demonstrates how strong secularism can coincide with strong traditionalism.

**The four worlds of morality politics**

The investigation of French politics into LGBT rights suggests that party-based conflicts over moral issues are not necessarily an exclusive characteristic of the religious world of morality politics. Instead, partisan confrontations also occur in countries which lack a religious party cleavage. In some of these countries, we observe a significant divide between traditionalist and progressive forces of the party system, which essentially serves as a functional equivalent to the religious cleavage that drives the politicisation of moral issues in the religious world. It thus seems that bringing in the institutional venue used for the resolution of moral conflicts as a second dimension has the potential to increase the empirical leverage of the Two Worlds framework (Table 2). Yet two important issues remain to be resolved. First, a single deviant case does not necessarily warrant the alteration of a theoretical framework, which is why we need to explore the plausibility of the new typology with some additional empirical evidence. Second, next to the traditionalist world, there is a fourth world, which we label the unsecular world of morality politics, which combines the (formal) existence of a religious cleavage with parliamentary politics.

**Table 2.** *The four worlds of morality politics.*

		<b>Institutional Venue</b>	
		Party politics	Parliamentary politics
<b>Religious cleavage</b>	Yes	<i>Religious world</i>	<i>Unsecular world</i>
	No	<i>Traditionalist world</i>	<i>Secular world</i>

Regarding the first issue, there is some tentative evidence to suggest that the party-based patterns of moral conflict we identified for France are not only also relevant for other areas of morality policy in France, but also seem to be increasingly relevant in other countries of the secular world. Abortion policy is a case in point. In 1974, France liberalised abortion for the first time and voting records suggest that, at this point in time, France could indeed be considered a country of the secular world in line with Engeli *et al.* (2012). The reform was a compromise drafted by Minister of Health Simone Veil, ‘a woman of the conservative centre’ (Allison 1994: 229), and received a significant amount of votes from the right side of the political spectrum in the National Assembly (Allison 1994: 231). While party conflict was present, reaching across the aisle proved nevertheless possible, despite the value-laden environment. Twenty-six years later, the National Assembly voted on another permissive (but much less encompassing) reform of the French abortion law, but this time the vote was almost perfectly split along the party lines discussed above (Assemblée Nationale 2000). This small example demonstrates that countries can move from the secular to the traditionalist world, if a dormant cleavage between traditionalists and progressives becomes activated.

In addition to France, other countries of the secular world also show patterns we would rather expect to see in the religious world. In Australia, for instance, 22 bills on marriage equality have been introduced in the federal parliament since 2004, none of which succeeded (McKeown 2017). Thus, the failure to introduce same-sex marriage in Australia can hardly be attributed to a lack of attention to the issue, which we would expect in a country of the secular world. In fact, both the Australian Greens and the Australian Labor Party strongly pushed for same-sex marriage in their 2013 party election manifestos (Volkens *et al.* 2016). In other countries, we increasingly observe the politicisation of moral issues by right-wing populist parties. In Norway, for instance, the (confusingly named) Progress Party strongly opposed the introduction of same-sex marriage in 2008 and joined the Norwegian government in 2013. Regarding other areas of morality policy, one of the first measures of this new government was making access to abortion more difficult (Zeldin 2014). However, movements from the secular to the traditionalist world are not taking place everywhere. In the United Kingdom, for instance, parliamentary politics is still the main institutional venue for the resolution of moral conflicts. In general, moral issues have a comparably low salience in party manifestos (Larsen *et al.* 2012) and positions cut across party lines, which can be observed clearly in the votes of conscience of the House of Commons, where especially the Conservative Party is often divided internally. On the vote for marriage equality in 2013, for instance, the Tories were evenly split between

proponents and opponents (Plumb 2015: 541), indicating that the issue is treated in a completely different manner than in France, although both should be countries of the secular world.

However, the introduction of a second analytical dimension implies that we are left with an additional category, which we label the ‘unsecular’ world of morality politics (see Table 2). In this unsecular world, a religious cleavage still formally exists, but parliamentary politics has nonetheless substituted party politics as the key institutional venue for moral conflict resolution. A case in point is Germany, which is traditionally considered a country of the religious world. However, if we take a closer look at the way the country resolves moral conflicts at the institutional level, we find stark differences over time. In the post-war period, the religious cleavage between Christian and social democrats clearly dominated morality policy debates and decisions, for instance over abortion in 1975 (Gindulis 2003). In more recent years, the party groups in the German Bundestag have increasingly lifted group discipline in order to allow their legislators to vote with their conscience. For instance, parliamentary votes on the liberalisation of euthanasia have featured cross-party coalitions, despite the existence of the religious cleavage in the legislature (Preidel and Nebel 2015). In a similar vein, recent decisions on preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) are not clearly split along the religious–secular divide (Baumann *et al.* 2015). Finally, Chancellor Merkel even lifted the voting discipline on same-sex marriage, enabling representatives from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) to vote with their conscience. On 30 June 2017, 75 CDU representatives (a share of 24%) voted for the introduction of same-sex marriage, clearly demonstrating that the formerly strong divisions between religious and secular parties in the German party system have eroded significantly. While these tentative examples are clearly not exhaustive, they illustrate the usefulness of the second analytical dimension we introduced in this article and suggest the necessity for more research in order to test the broad applicability of the framework.

The classification we propose in this article also helps to resolve the status of Italy, which experienced a breakdown of its party system in the early 1990s, leading to the erosion of the formerly strong religious–secular cleavage. While the status of Italy as a country of the religious world before the party system transformation is uncontroversial, Engeli *et al.* (2012: 189) argue that Italy has since been ‘moving in the direction of the secular world’, while admitting that the party-based clashes over moral issues have anything but disappeared with the demise of Christian democracy. In order to rescue their argument, Engeli *et al.* (2012) claim that non-confessional conservative parties emerged as functional equivalents to the Christian Democratic Party. Yet, in our view, this argument is problematic for two reasons. First, Engeli *et al.* (2012) contradict their own coding rules for classifying countries as

belonging to the religious or secular world. If a party system lacks relevant confessional parties, a country formally belongs to the secular world and not – as they argue for Italy – to the religious world. Second, we maintain that there is a crucial difference between non-confessional and confessional Conservatives. While the latter remain strongly constrained by their confessional voter base, this is not the case for non-confessional parties. They have much more leeway for framing morality issues. And, contrary to their confessional counterparts, which usually shy away from politicising moral issues, non-confessional parties might have stronger incentives for pushing towards more restrictive morality policies. To sum up, while we observe a move from the secular to the traditionalist world in France (and hence a shift from parliamentary to party politics on moral issues), the Italian case reflects a move from the religious to the traditionalist world (with a shift from the presence to the absence of a religious–secular cleavage in the party system).

## **Conclusion**

This article has departed from the observation that French politics on same-sex partnership strongly deviates from the expectations derived from the theoretical state of the art regarding the politicisation of moral issues in Western Europe (Engeli *et al.* 2012). Although France is clearly a country of the secular world of morality politics, it does not behave according to the logic of this world. In fact, France rather behaves like a country of the religious world in disguise. Conflicts on moral issues are very intense, party based, but almost free from religion, at least as far as the parliamentary arena is concerned. More specifically, the partisan conflict we observe can be described as a conflict between progressive and traditionalist forces of the party system, which are clearly distinguishable empirically.

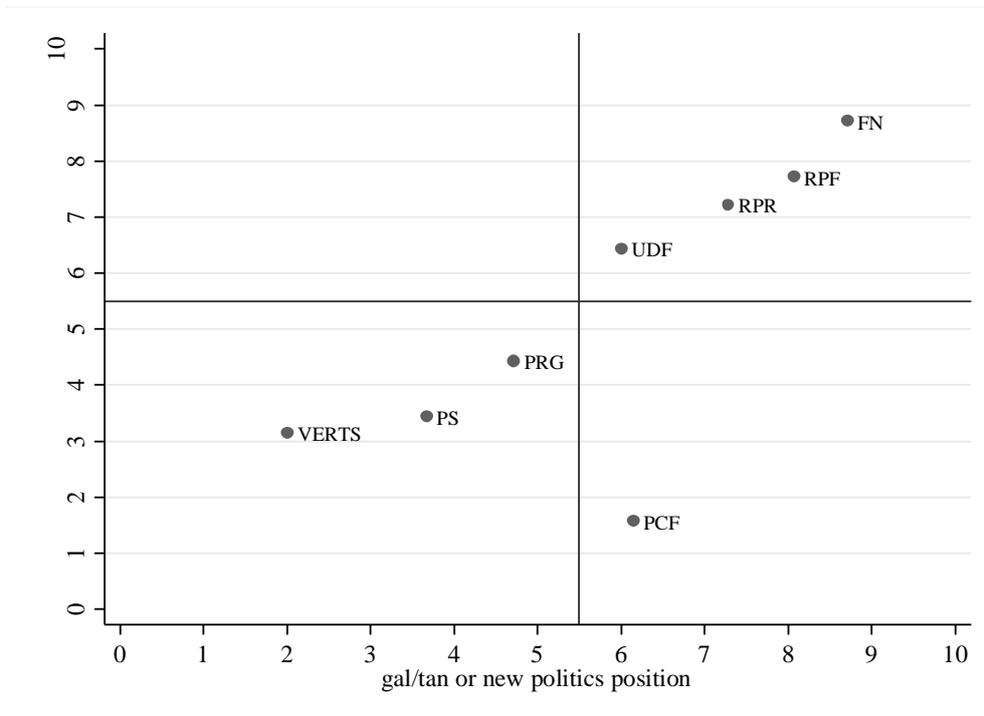
Departing from this deviant case, we argued that explanatory potential of the Two Worlds model could be enhanced significantly by introducing a second analytical dimension that captures the institutional venue (party politics vs. parliamentary politics) in which moral conflicts take place. Following this expansion of the model, we added two additional worlds: the traditionalist world, in which a historical religious–secular cleavage is absent, but moral conflicts are subject to party politics; and an unsecular world that is characterised by the combination of a religious–secular cleavage and parliamentary politics.

We argued that countries can move between these worlds, although we do not claim that this occurs very often. However, since both party systems and modes of conflict resolution are not permanently set in stone, we think that a more dynamic theoretical perspective is required, especially in long-term analyses of policy change. As the French case and some others

demonstrate, states can change the institutional venue in which they resolve moral conflicts and, as cases like Italy suggest, even religious–secular cleavages in the party system can disappear. Therefore, we consider it more useful to expand the theoretical framework in order to cover these cases, instead of forcing them into the existing framework by overstretching the concepts of the religious and the secular world. While our approach is based on exploratory and inductive reasoning, more encompassing investigations are needed in order to put the typology on a broader empirical basis.

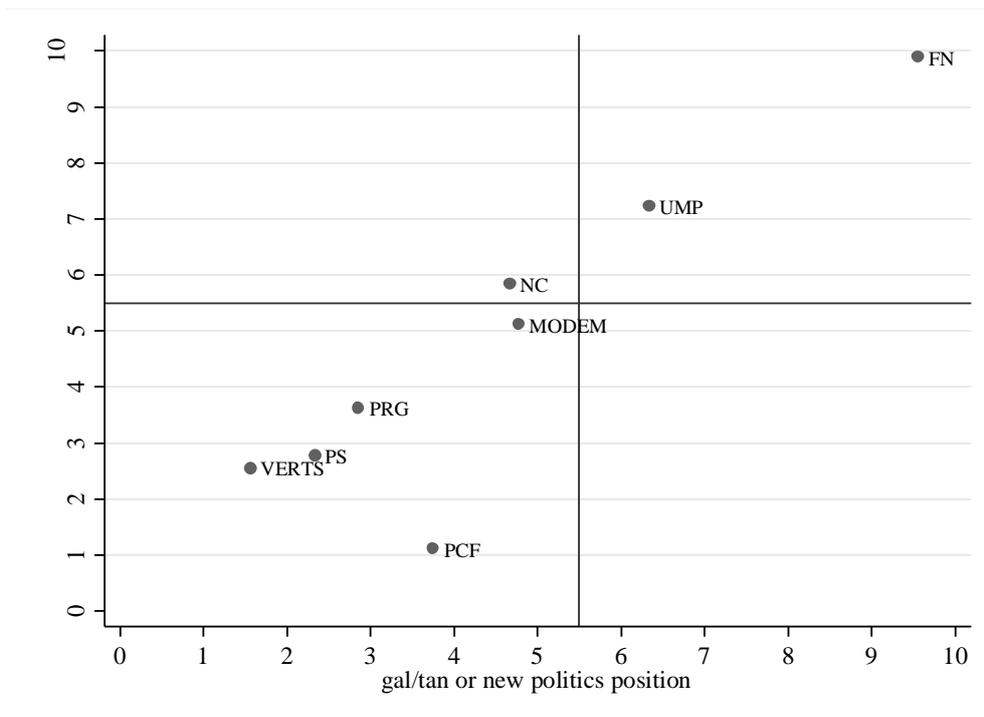
## Appendix

**Figure 2 (online appendix):** *Party positions in the National Assembly in 1999*



Source: Polk et al. (2017).

**Figure 3 (online appendix):** *Party positions in the National Assembly in 2010.*



Source: Polk et al. (2017).

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