



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Alignment, realignment and dealignment in multi-party systems : a conceptual and empirical study

Federer, H.

Citation

Federer, H. (2012, April 4). *Alignment, realignment and dealignment in multi-party systems : a conceptual and empirical study*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18669>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18669>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/18669> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Federer-Shtayer, Hila

Title: Alignment, realignment and dealignment in multi-party systems : a conceptual and empirical study

Issue Date: 2012-04-04

CHAPTER 6

VOTER ALIGNMENTS ALONG THE CLASS AND RELIGIOUS CLEAVAGES

“Electoral alignments reflect socioeconomic and cultural division, and political cleavages translate into party organizations.” (Caramani, 2004:9)

This chapter deals with voter alignments along cleavages. It studies the most prominent socio-structural cleavages – those of class and religion. Namely, it examines the persistence of voter alignments along these two cleavages and attempts to identify whether these alignments have changed, causing realignments (and new alignments) or dealignments along these cleavages to occur.

The term ‘cleavage’ has been assigned different meanings in Political Science literature, as was described in the third chapter. In this chapter, I examine the concept of ‘cleavage’ as defined by the socio-structural approach. According to this approach, a cleavage is a socio-structural division between people. It underpins voters’ interests and demands, and therefore is a site of political conflict. The clearest and most inclusive definition can be found in Bartolini and Mair’s (1990) discussion, which argues that a cleavage has three aspects. Firstly, it involves a social division that separates people who can be distinguished from each other through key social-structural characteristics. Secondly, the group involved in this division must be aware of its collective identity and be willing to act on its basis. Thirdly, every cleavage is expressed by particular institutions and organisations. Only when these three divides – structural, attitudinal and institutional – exist can one speak of what Deegan-Krause (2006:540) called a “full cleavage”. (For similar definitions, see (Elff, 2007:278; Franklin, et al., 1992:5; Knutsen, 2004:2); for a discussion of the necessity of each of the three conditions, the reader is referred to (Deegan-Krause, 2006; Zuckerman, 1975:237-8).

This chapter focuses on the status of the two most dominant cleavages – those of class and religion – and poses two questions:

- Which cleavage has shown stronger voter alignment? And
- Has the voter alignment with either of these cleavages persisted over time?

Most other research on voter alignments along class and religious cleavages has used survey data, neglecting the usage of aggregate data. This study addresses this deficiency by discussing patterns of party support based on individual-level data, and by scrutinising the election results for party families or blocs of parties that represent these cleavages.

The use of election results facilitates the recognition and examination of cross-national patterns of voter alignments along cleavages over long periods of time, which research based on survey data is not always capable of doing. The strength of cleavages is tested by measuring the proportion of Bloc Volatility (BV) in the Total Volatility (TV), or the Cleavage Salience (CS) index (for an explanation of the index, see Appendix A). In this chapter, I examine the cleavages' strength by employing a modified index – the Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience Index (WCS) – that controls for electoral support of the blocs of parties that represent each cleavage in the political system (BES). In this way, this study extends, updates and amends Bartolini and Mair's (1990) study, which securitised the existence of an alignment along the class cleavage by employing the Cleavage Salience index (CS).

Last but not least, this chapter includes the empirical results of voter alignments along the class and religious cleavages. It does so for the eleven party systems under investigation in this research, over the alignment period (1950-mid 1960s), and considers the persistence of these alignments from mid 1960 until 2010. The empirical research is based on individual-level data (i.e. national election surveys) and aggregate data (i.e. official national election results).

This chapter begins by outlining the empirical debate over class and religion as salient cleavages and the later debate over the persistence of voter alignments along these

two cleavages. It then discusses the drawbacks of existing approaches in the literature for studying class- and religiously-driven voting. It concludes by recommending the use of a modified index in the study of cleavages (the WCS), and publishes and discusses the results of this thesis's empirical study.

6.1 Debates over Cleavage Salience and the Stability of Voter Alignments along the Class and Religious Cleavages

After the identification of the crucial role of socio-structural cleavages in explaining stable patterns of party choice and party system structure, a discussion arose about which cleavage is the most influential in this respect. While scholars such as Lipset (1981) and Alford (1963) asserted that the owner-industrial (class) cleavage is the most important, others found that the state-church (religious) division, rather than class, is "the main social basis of parties in the Western world today" (Rose & Urwin, 1969:12). This dispute was well summed up in Lijphart's (1979:443) article: "[r]eligion and social class have been recognized as prime determinants of party choice from the very beginning of comparative voting behaviour research, but no consensus has emerged about which of the two variables is the *better* predictor" (italics in original).

In both early (Dogan, 1995:526-7; Rose, 1974:14) and more recent research (Dalton, 1996; Evans, 2000:404; Knutsen, 2004:82, 232), scholars have found that the predominant religion in each country is a crucial factor in identifying the cleavage most influential on voting behaviour. While the class cleavage is found to be more important in predominantly Protestant countries (such as Britain and the Scandinavian countries), in predominantly Catholic and in mixed countries (such as France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland), the influence of religion on voting behaviour is much stronger. A somewhat different conclusion was presented by Nieuwbeerta and Ultee (1999:147-8), who showed that in countries with high religious and ethnic diversity the level of class voting is low, but that a high density of union members in a country is accompanied by a high level of class voting.

Since the 1970s, however, new arguments have been put forward suggesting that the role of both these cleavages is in decline. Clark and Lipset (1991:404), who used the

Alford index¹ to study five Western democratic countries over the period 1947-1986, claimed that “the Alford index has declined in every country.” Ingelhart (1977:216) stated that “religious issues have faded in intensity during the twentieth century.” Dogan (1995:536) argued that since the 1960s the importance of the two cleavages has been in parallel decline, and Gallagher, et al., (2006:283), who studied the issue for the period 1950-1990s, found that “class and religion may now have less impact on voting behaviour.” Dalton (1996:171, 181), who examined the same period, identified a decline in class differences and predicted that although the religious cleavage is strongly related to partisan preferences, this division is expected to follow the same pattern of decline. According to Knutsen (2004:233), who investigated a more recent period (i.e. 1970-1997), “[t]he impact of the religious and class cleavages are, however, approaching each other in most countries because the cleavages that traditionally had the largest impact demonstrate the clearest sign of decline”; see also (Knutsen, 2006:182). On the basis of their research of twenty Western industrialised countries in the period 1945-1990, Nieuwbeerta and Ultee (1999:147) argued that the decline of class voting is substantial and “the countries slowly converged into a situation where class was relatively unimportant to voting behaviour.” Evans (2000:412), however, held that it was only in Scandinavian countries during the 1960s that high levels of class voting declined to a level “more like those of other Western European societies.” In a similar fashion, Brooks, et al., (2006:110), who tested three cleavages (those of class, religion and gender) in five different Western democratic countries for the period 1970-1990s, showed that “[p]atterns of cleavage change tend to [...] be specific to countries.” They found evidence of a decrease in class voting in Britain and Germany, and some indication of a similar decrease in the Netherlands and Australia. Further, they found evidence of a downturn in religious voting only in the Netherlands, while in the other countries, no monotonic patterns could be identified.

As a result of these findings, two different scenarios of change have been proposed in the literature. The first assumes that since the 1970s, a realignment has occurred – i.e., that there has been a shift in the basis of party support away from the traditional cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan, and towards new cleavages. As I

¹ Alford index measures the difference between the percentage of manual workers that voted for Left parties and percentage of non-manual workers that voted for these parties (Alford 1963:79-80).

discussed in Chapter Two, over the years several new cleavages have been proposed: the Materialist/Post-Materialist cleavage (Inglehart, 1977, 1987), the libertarian vs. authoritarian cleavage and the globalisation cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008a).

The second scenario proposed to explain voting patterns focuses on dealignment, suggesting that since the 1970s the connections between voters and political parties have diminished, but no alternative connections have formed (Curtice, 2002; Dalton, 2000; Dalton, et al., 1984c; Dalton, et al., 2000; Dogan, 1995). Instead, this argument goes, voters began to vote according to other factors, such as issue voting or voting for a specific candidate (Dalton, 1996; Dalton, et al., 2000). In Manin's words (1997:219), "[v]oters tend increasingly to vote for a person and no longer for a party or a platform".

Others, however, insist that the two cleavages of class and religion remain influential. On the basis of empirical research into the class cleavage between 1885 and 1985, Bartolini and Mair (1990:105) stated that this cleavage was, and still is, the most salient. Elff (2007:280-1), on the other hand, who examined seven European countries² between 1975 and 2000, discovered that between 1995 and 2002 class impact on electoral behaviour has been in decline in some countries (France, Great Britain and Denmark), while the impact of church attendance has been almost stable. Only in France did Elff identify an unambiguous downward trend.

6.2 Pitfalls in the Study of Voter Alignments Along the Class and Religious Cleavages: Its Drawbacks and an Alternative Approach

There are two main traditions in the study of the class and religious cleavages and particularly their impact on voting behaviour, which focus on the voter alignment of different social groups. The first involves examining the association between voters' socio-structural characteristics and their electoral behaviour based on individual-level data, i.e. surveys. This is the most common method of studying this subject, but it has several drawbacks.

² The countries are Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and West Germany.

The main drawback of studying the influence of the class and religious cleavages is the fact that social-demographic and economic changes (such as socio-economic mobilisation, the development of the welfare state and the secularisation process) necessitate the use of different operational definitions for each of the cleavages over the years. Thus, for the religious cleavage several subdivisions are applied. The first is between different religious groups, for example between Catholic and Protestants, and the second is between religious and secular people (Knutsen, 2004:44; Lybeck, 1985:107). The study of the class cleavage has seen more diverse subdivisions. Early research used a two-class schema between manual workers and all other classes, using the Alford index. Later research used the so-called Erikson/Goldthorpe's class schema. This differentiates between several employee classes: those who are involved in a service relationship with their employers, and those whose employment relationships are essentially regulated by a labour contract. A service relationship is recognised for employees required to exercise delegated authority or specialised knowledge and expertise. All in all, the Erikson/Goldthorpe's class schema distinguishes between six classes: the higher-level service class, the lower-level service class, routine non-manual workers, petty bourgeoisie, farmers and the working class (Knutsen, 2006:14-5).

More recent research has identified a new middle class or what is called a "salariat", which consists primarily of salaried white-collar employees (Dalton, 1996:168-70). These important changes in the class structure have triggered a debate about patterns of political orientation and party support amongst the service class.

Goldthorpe (1982:180) held that the service class constitutes "an essentially *conservative* element within modern society", while others argued that the service class is divided. The 'new class' approach divides this class between the managers in administrative hierarchies, and professionals who exercise specialised knowledge, the latter being divided into technical experts ('technocrats') and social and cultural specialists (Kriesi, 1998; Kriesi, et al., 2008a :12-3). Knutsen (2005), for example, who studied eight West European countries,³ showed that public sector employees are more likely to support Left-wing parties and Greens than private sector employees,

³ These are Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, West Germany, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands.

who tend to support non-Socialist parties, apart from the Christian Democrats; see also (Knutsen, 2001). Other scholars have stated that public sector workers (Kitschelt, 1994:26-30) or socio-cultural service professionals (Kriesi, 1998) tend to be libertarians and support New-Left and Green parties. This, they argue, suggests that this last segment constitutes “a possible structural foundation” for new value cleavages – the Post-Materialist vs. Materialist cleavage, or the libertarian vs. authoritarian cleavage (Kriesi, 1998:171). It remains unclear if the study of class and sector voting supports traditional arguments of voter alignment along the class cleavage, or whether it indicates the decline of class voting and a realignment along a (new) cleavage.

The second drawback of this tradition is the interpretation of indicators. As explained by Lane and Ersson (1999:63): “[c]hurch attendance is a sign of religious devoutness, but devoutness may imply different patterns of attendance in different churches.” Esmer and Pettersson (2007:492) even proposed that in many places, this can be interpreted as a social rather than a religious commitment. Hence to interpret all indicators in the same way, without any differentiation, allows potential misinterpretation of voters’ religious commitment. For this reason, Manza and Wright (2003) distinguished between four separate religious cleavages: church attendance, doctrinal beliefs, denominational groups, and the local/contextual aspect of congregational membership.

Yet another problem is this tradition’s reliance on surveys. Studying political behaviour on the basis of surveys means studying voting behaviour on the basis of respondents’ reports of their party support. This, however, is problematic, as studies have already shown: voting choice is often misreported, with respondents reporting support for the winning party (the so-called post-election “bandwagon”) (Traugott & Katosh, 1979; Weir, 1975; Wright, 1993).

Moreover, there is a problem with availability of data. No survey data exist that covering the period before the 1960s, a period considered to have been less stable than the 1960s onwards. As a result, the study of patterns of voting behaviour along cleavages begins in a period that is also assumed to be the period of change.

In this investigation, I examine the influence of voter alignments along cleavages on party choice by studying this subject not the association between social-group affiliation and party vote, but rather this association's "importance and weight within the general context of electoral behaviour of a given country and/or period" (Bartolini & Mair, 1990: 44-5).

To this end, I have examined the electoral support for the party families or blocs of parties that represent the chosen cleavages. The study of party families – Social Democrats and Communist parties, and Christian Democratic parties – that represent the class and religious cleavages respectively, is based on an extensive number of criteria. In this way, I addressed the problem of using several different categories that require adaptation to accommodate socio-economic changes. In addition, the use of official election results assists in solving two additional issues related to the study of surveys. Firstly, as explained in Chapter Four, the patterns of party support were corrected by using political probability weight variables (computed according to the official election results) to 'correct' the patterns of (frequencies of) party support. Secondly, as mentioned above, this study makes use of two types of datasets: surveys and official election results. The latter functions as the reference line for a period not covered by the survey datasets, and also as the main data source for cases for which national data surveys are not available.

This study of alignment along cleavage based on patterns of electoral support for blocs or groups of parties based on aggregate data, i.e. election results, is not new in the literature. Rose and Urwin (1970) conducted similar research when they tested the change of electoral support for party families (the working class and middle class parties). In more recent research, Bartolini and Mair (1990) examined the strength of alignment along the class cleavage regarding the cleavage's closure of electoral mobility. They suggested that the cleavage's strength can be measured by "*the amount of electoral interchange occurring across the line which divides parties which represent the opposite side of a cleavage*" (Bartolini & Mair, 1990:41) (italics in original). This is achieved by using the Cleavage Salience index (CS), obtained by measuring the proportion of Bloc Volatility index (BV) (which measures volatility between blocs of parties instead of between individual parties) of the Total Volatility (TV) ($BV/TV \times 100$) (see Appendix A for supplementary explanations of these

indices). According to Bartolini and Mair, using the CS index as an index for the strength of alignment facilitates the estimation of the proportion of electoral interchange across the cleavage line from within the amount of interchange in the system as a whole, at any point in time.

6.3 Methodology and Hypotheses

This research uses the CS index to study the subject of voter alignments along the class and religious cleavages. It is novel in four respects. Firstly, this study examines both the class and the religious cleavages, while Bartolini and Mair studied only one cleavage type (class). It is not sufficient to study cleavage relevance by analysing only one cleavage, making no comparison to any other cleavages, especially not in the context of the discussion of the dominance of the class and religious cleavages (mentioned above). Secondly, this investigation extends and updates Bartolini and Mair's study, which covers a period ending in 1985. Thirdly, the data used to calculate CS values for each election year is not only based on election results (as in Bartolini and Mair's research), but also on individual-level data (where available). Fourthly, and most importantly, this research employs a modified index by adding another component – the electoral success of the various party blocs – to Bartolini and Mair's CS index.

Another component has been added to the CS index to address its shortcoming. Bartolini and Mair (1990:41) assumed that “[t]he stronger the cleavage, therefore, the less frequent is the exchange of votes across the dividing line.” Following this logic, the most salient cleavage is the cleavage with the lowest CS values. The weakness of the CS index is that it entirely based on TV and BV measures that do not take into account the actual, absolute level of electoral support for the cleavage bloc parties. Consequently, when a bloc of parties representing one side of a cleavage is composed of only marginal or small parties, the CS values of this cleavage may be low, not only due to the low proportion of voters who cross the cleavage line but also because of the low electoral support for these parties in the first place. Likewise, when the bloc includes parties that gain a high proportion of electoral support, the value of the CS index might be high. The explanation for this problem is the BV values' variance range. When marginal or small parties represent the cleavage in question the range of

variance of BV values is also small. The range of variance of BV values is large when a cleavage is represented by a bloc of parties that received high electoral support.

Table 6.1 demonstrates this problem. In the first case, the cleavage parties are large and the increase in support for this cleavage will lead to a CS value of 20, suggesting a fairly strong cleavage. In the second case, the cleavage is represented only by small parties, but the CS index again reaches 20, indicating a cleavage of similar strength to the first example, even though the already low electoral support for these parties decreased further to half of its previous size! Intuitively, it is obvious that the first cleavage should have much more salience or strength than the second cleavage.

Table 6.1: Calculation of Cleavage Salience measures				
		Election 1	Election 2	Index
Cleavage 1	Cleavage Party Bloc 1 (A)	30	32	+2
	Opposite Party Bloc 1 (B)	70	68	-2
	Bloc Volatility (BV)	(Δ _A + Δ _B)/2		2
	Total Volatility (TV)			10
	Cleavage Salience (CS)	(BV/TV)*100		20
	Bloc Electoral Support (BES)			32
	Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience (WCS)	(1-[BV/TV])*BES		25.6
Cleavage 2	Cleavage Party Bloc 2 (A)	4	2	+2
	Opposite Party Bloc 2 (B)	96	98	-2
	Bloc Volatility (BV)	(Δ _A + Δ _B)/2		2
	Total Volatility (TV)			10
	Cleavage Salience (CS)	(BV/TV)*100		20
	Bloc Electoral Support (BES)			2
	Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience (WCS)	(1-[BV/TV])*BES		1.6
Note: Lower CS values and higher WCS values indicate higher cleavage salience.				

This problem has its roots in an oversight of the CS index regarding parties' electoral support. It is now clear that the CS index is missing an essential component – the proportional electoral support of the cleavage (Bloc Electoral Support, BES) that was gained by parties that represent this cleavage.

To solve this problem, I modified the CS index and together with Dr. Michael F. Meffert, I developed a modified index. First, we weight (or ‘correct’) the CS index values by the relevant Bloc Electoral Support (BES) for the cleavage parties, defined as the electoral support for the cleavage bloc parties in the election of interest. For each time-point or election year, the original CS index is simply multiplied by the BES of the respective bloc of parties in that election. Because the directions (of ‘strength’) of the CS and the BES are opposite, a second adjustment is necessary. The second modification is a reversal of the original CS scale in order to make the interpretation of the CS values more intuitive: higher values should reflect a higher salience or strength. Formally, we simply subtract the CS score (BV divided by TV) as a fraction from 1. The latter value is then multiplied by the BES value. The WCS index can range between 0 (low cleavage strength) to 100 (high cleavage salience).

The formula of the Bloc -Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) is:

$$WCS = \left(1 - \frac{BV}{TV}\right) * BES$$

Low values of WCS indicate low cleavage strength, that is, high volatility across the cleavage line and/or low electoral support for the cleavage parties. High values, on the other hand, indicate high cleavage salience due to low volatility across the cleavage line and/or high electoral support for the cleavage parties. When we employed the WCS for the theoretical example, we received better results: the WCS for the first cleavage is 25.6 and for the second cleavage only 1.6, suggesting that the first cleavage is more salient than the second cleavage.

The empirical study of this research consists of two stages. For the period 1950-1964 (a period which is generally agreed to have been a stable period), I test which of the two cleavages – class or religion – influenced voters the most; that is, I seek to identify the cleavage with the strongest voter alignment. On the basis of the earlier findings mentioned above, I expect the alignment along the class cleavage to have more influence and to be stronger in the predominantly Protestant countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), and the alignment along the religious cleavage to have more influence and to be stronger in predominantly Catholic or mixed countries (Austria, Belgium – in this research, Flanders and Wallonia, Italy,

Germany, Luxemburg,⁴ and the Netherlands), thus leading to the following hypotheses:

H1: For the predominantly Protestant countries during the period 1950-64, voter alignment along the class cleavage will be found to be stronger than voter alignment along the religious cleavage.

H2: For predominantly Catholic or mixed countries during the period 1950-64, voter alignment along the religious cleavage will be found to be stronger than voter alignment along the class cleavage.

The strength of voter alignment is determined by the WCS index: the bigger its value, the stronger the alignment along a specified cleavage.

In the second stage, I test the persistence of voter alignment along the dominant cleavage over time. A change of voter alignments along these two cleavages can take several forms. The first scenario is a switch between the dominant and the weaker cleavage, or, a *realignment* along the dominant [class or religious] cleavage. This scenario was described as follows in Schattschneider's volume (1960:65):

"A shift from the alignment AB [the old cleavage] to alignment CD [the new cleavage] means that old cleavage must be played down if the new conflict is to be exploited. [...] The new conflict can become dominant only if the old one is subordinated, or obscured, or forgotten, or loses its capacity to excite the contestants, or becomes irrelevant." (italics added).

When expressing cleavage salience in terms of WCS, I expect to identify a new voter alignment when the cleavage that was less important in the previous period (that with lower WCS values) has become the dominant cleavage (that with higher WCS values) over this period (a period of at least ten years and over at least three successive elections). Alternatively, a new voter alignment can be created when the alignment

⁴ Luxemburg is not explicitly studied in either of these investigations, but is assigned to this group since it is a pre-dominantly Catholic country (International Religious Freedom Report (2004) (www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35469.htm)).

along the less important cleavage also becomes strong. In this scenario, the WCS values for the two cleavages will be found to be equal, if the WCS values of the dominant cleavage are not lower than those measured in the previous period and this situation remains durable and persistent for a period of at least ten years and over at least three successive elections.

H3: A voter realignment occurred and a new alignment appeared during the period 1965-2010: the voter alignment along the cleavage found to be weaker in the first period will strengthen so as to become more dominant than the other cleavage, or at least at the same level as it for a substantial period.

The second scenario is a weakening voter alignment along the dominant cleavage; this is considered to be a *dealignment* along either the class or religious cleavage. In this scenario I expect that the voter alignment along the dominant cleavage will become weaker than in the first period, and that no strong alternative voter alignment will emerge.

H4: A voter dealignment occurred during the period 1965-2010, where the dominant voter alignment loses its strength and the voter alignment along the other cleavage is not found to be dominant.

A period of voter dealignment is identified when the WCS values of the dominant cleavage drop below those measured in the first period; the WCS values may even be equal for the two cleavages. This situation should remain for at least ten years and over at least three successive elections.

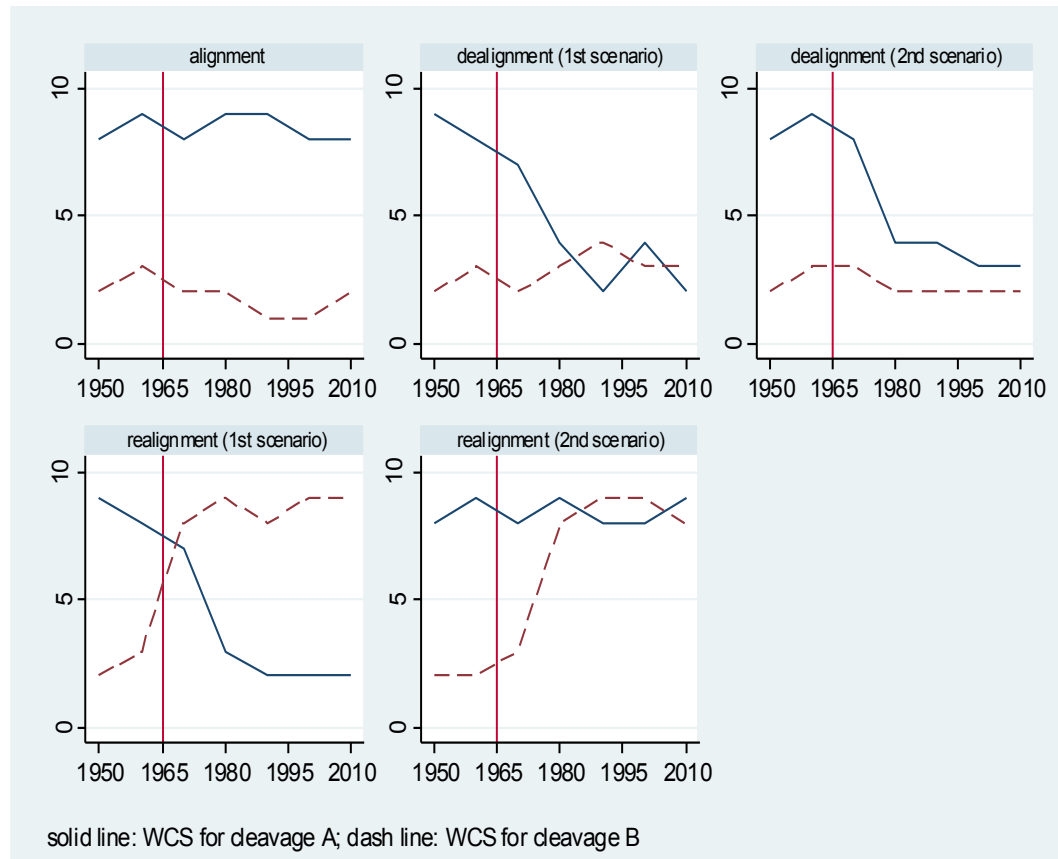
In the final scenario, the voter alignment along the cleavage that was found to be dominant in the first period continues its dominance; no changes occur.

H5: No change occurred during the period 1965-2010: the voter alignment of the cleavage found to be stronger in the first period holds its dominance for the entire period.

A persistence of voter alignment is identified when the cleavage with high WCS values displays equally high or higher values than in the first period.

These five different theoretical scenarios are presented in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: The five different theoretical scenarios of voter alignment along a cleavage



The dominance of a cleavage and the scenario involving a switch or shift (i.e. realignment) are tested by comparing the WCS values of both cleavages.

The scenario involving the erosion of voter alignment along a cleavage (i.e. dealignment) is examined by employing two methods. One is a comparison test, in which I consider the WCS levels of the dominant cleavage over the first period as a reference line, equal to the average score minus one standard deviation. The WCS value for each cleavage in each election year is compared to this reference line. If a

weakening of the voter alignment along this cleavage occurs during the period after 1965, the WCS values should be lower than this reference line.

The second method incorporates an analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each case, in which the WCS values for the dominant cleavage are the dependent variable and the independent variable is a dummy variable of two periods of 'stability' and 'change'. For each election year from 1965 onwards, the time variable was assigned score 0 for all time-points up to this election, and 1 for that election and for all time-points afterward. For each election year from 1965 onwards, the time variable scored 0 for all values up to this election, 1 for that and all subsequent elections, (model of moving time frames or a moving *t*-test, which is commonly employed in disciplines with repeated measurement over time such as meteorology or geology). Since the observations are not independent from each other, I used an ANOVA model, which assumes repeated measurements and does not assume that all the treatment populations have the same variance (homogeneity of variance).

If a weakening of the voter alignment along this cleavage occurs during the time period since 1965, the ANOVA coefficient should be negative and statistically significant. This should be found in at least two successive elections.

I emphasise, however, that since the subject of this research is cleavages as reflected by electoral support for different party families, conclusions can be drawn only about voter alignment along the class and religious cleavages, and not regarding changes relating to any other cleavage. In addition, the different scenarios of voter re/dealignments along cleavages are not equivalent to the terms 'class realignment' or 'class dealignment' (Evans, 1999); see also (Crewe, 1983; Knutsen, 2007); both these concepts imply a change in the socio-structural characteristics of those voting for class parties with no necessary implications in electoral terms (i.e. party support).

6.4 Results

Strength of voter alignments along cleavages: Hypotheses 1 and 2

The first aim was to identify which cleavage had more influence on the electorate in each country between 1950 and 1964. According to Hypothesis 1, I expected that in the predominantly Protestant countries, the levels of WCS for the class cleavage would be higher than those for the religious cleavage.

Table 6.2 presents a comparison of the WCS values of the two cleavages in three Scandinavian countries, based on official election results. Survey data for this period is available only for Sweden.

In Denmark between 1950 and 1969, no religious party participated in elections. Therefore, a comparison of the two cleavages is irrelevant, as no party represents the religious cleavage in this time period.

Table 6.2: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) for the class and religious cleavages in the predominantly Protestant countries, 1950–64

	WCS	Mean	s.d.	period (N)
Denmark (aggregate data)	class	27.88	14.97	1953-64
	religious	-	-	(5)
Finland (aggregate data)	class	40.08	9.36	1954-62
	religious	0.30	0.37	(3)
Norway (aggregate data)	class	50.01	0.65	1957-61
	religious	8.77	0.99	(2)
Sweden (aggregate data)	class	37.84	16.60	1956-64
	religious	0.26	0.52	(4)
Sweden (individual-level data)	class	34.12	1.13	1960-64
	religious	1.39	-	(2) 1964 (1)

Table 6.2 reveals that during the period between the mid 1950s and the mid 1960s, the average of the WCS values for the class cleavage is higher than for the religious cleavage in all three predominantly Protestant countries. Figures 6.2 and 6.3, which depict the WCS values based on official election results and survey data (respectively) for both cleavages, confirm these trends. They show that in the three

predominantly Protestant countries, the WCS values for the class cleavage were higher than those for the religious cleavage in all time-points between 1950 and 1964.

Figure 6.2: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) in Protestant countries, based on aggregate data

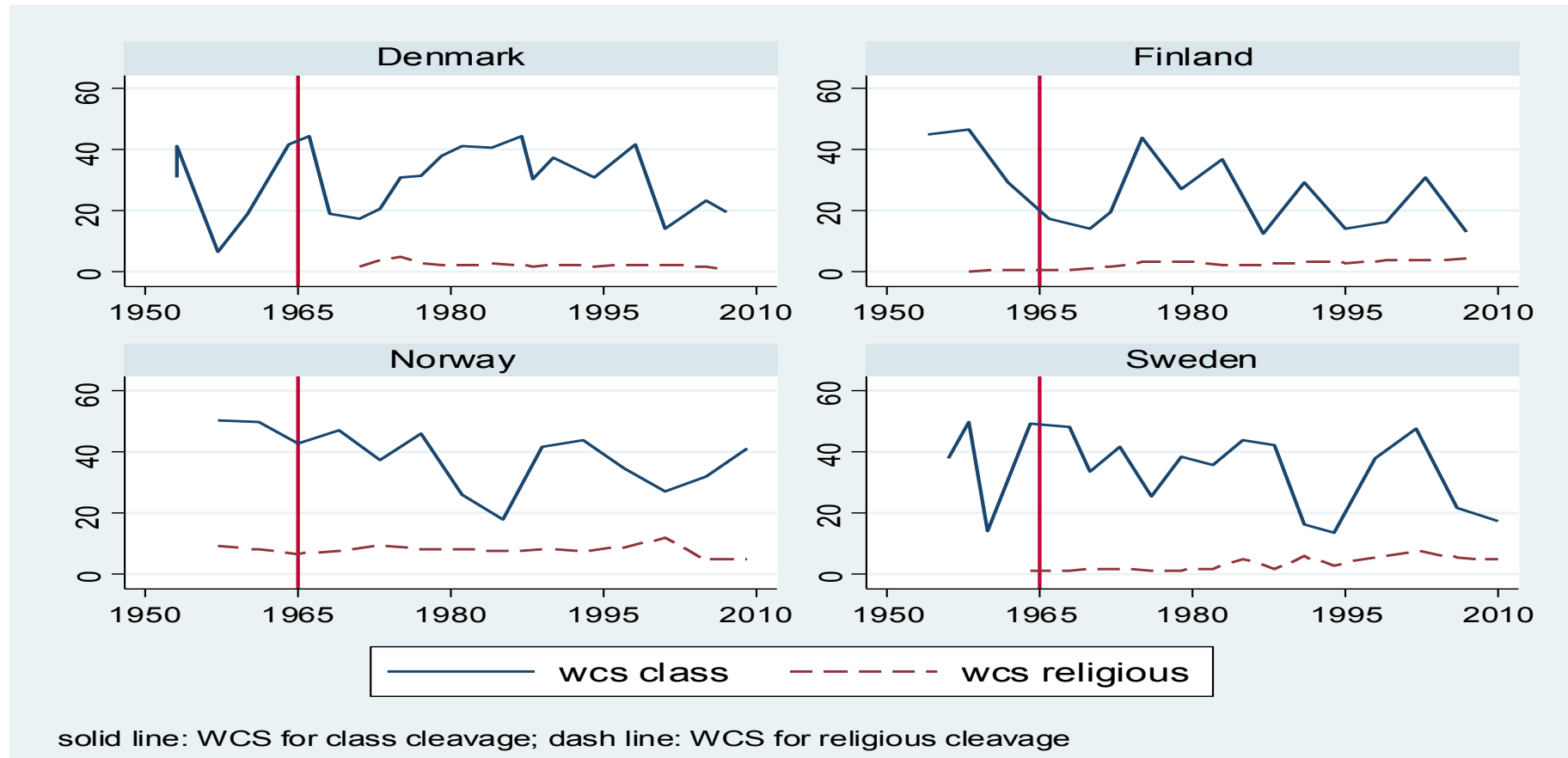
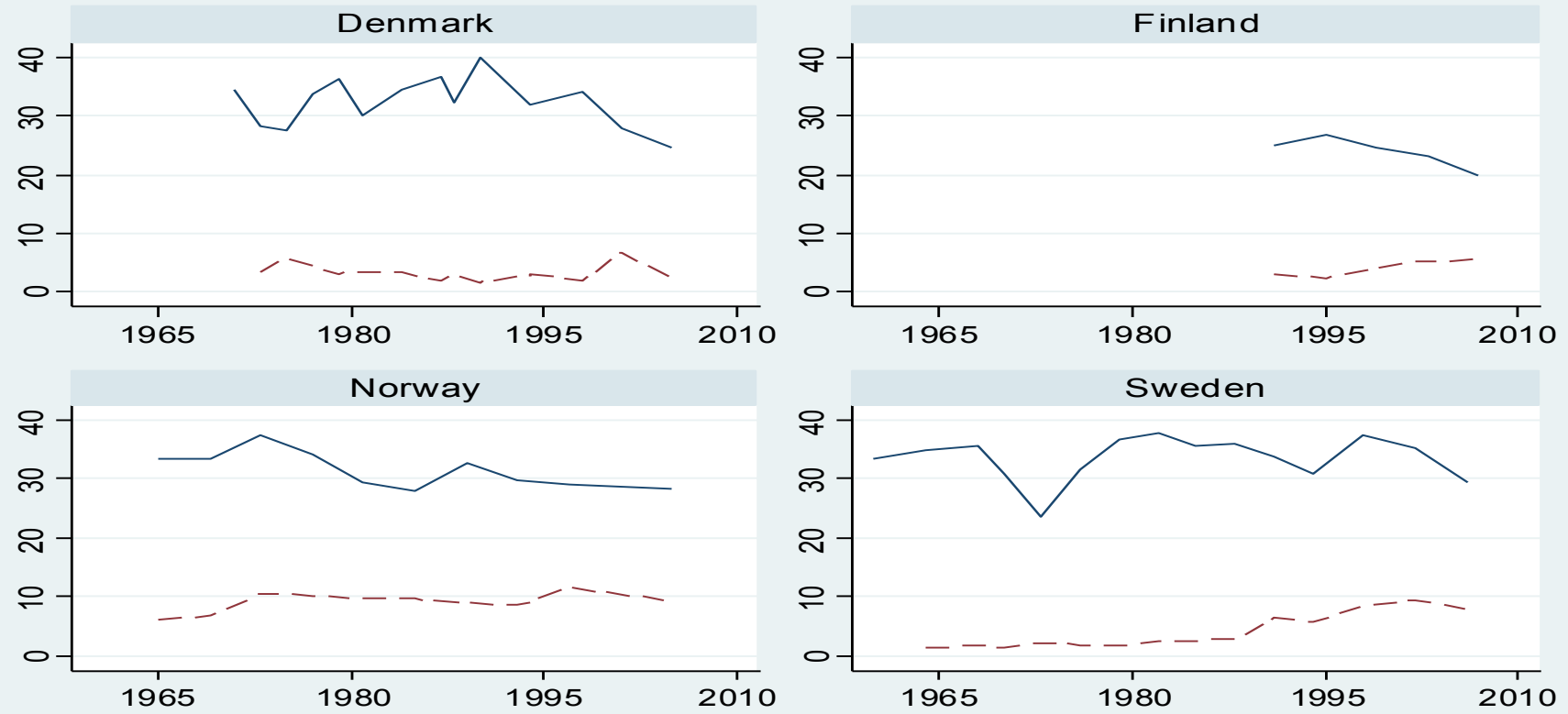


Figure 6.3: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) in Protestant countries, based on individual-level data



solid line: WCS for class cleavage; dash line: WCS for religious cleavage

With regards to H2, I expected that in predominantly Catholic or mixed countries the WCS average values for the religious cleavage would be higher than those for the class cleavage. The WCS mean values for the two cleavages in predominantly Catholic or mixed countries between 1950 and 1964 (based on official election results) are compared in Table 6.3. Individual-level data is not available.

Table 6.3: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) for the class and religious cleavages in predominantly Catholic or mixed countries, 1950–64, based on aggregate data

	WCS	mean	s.d.	period (N)
Austria	class	34.75	14.23	1956- 62 (3)
	religious	11.52	4.60	
Flanders	class	18.82	8.14	1954- 61 (3)
	religious	3.25	3.11	
Germany	class	21.20	-	1961 (1)
	religious	30.05	-	
Italy	class	29.24	5.45	1958- 63 (2)
	religious	25.13	7.73	
Luxembourg	class	29.76	9.06	1954- 64 (3)
	religious	22.38	10.29	
the Netherlands	class	20.90	6.77	1956- 63 (3)
	religious	41.24	9.45	
Wallonia	class	26.64	13.83	1954- 61 (3)
	religious	3.98	3.58	

I received mixed results for the first period. Only in two countries – Germany and the Netherlands – was the data consistent with my expectations, namely the WCS mean values for the religious cleavage were higher than that for class. Figure 6.4 (which presents the WCS values in Catholic and mixed countries based on aggregate data) shows that the WCS values for the religious cleavage were higher than for class in the 1961 German election (the only election in this period, as I excluded the 1953 election from my dataset: see Chapter Four on data and methodology) and in all three Dutch elections during this period.

Austria, and the two sub-national Belgian party systems – Flanders and Wallonia – reveal an opposite pattern. In these three cases, the WCS values for the class cleavage

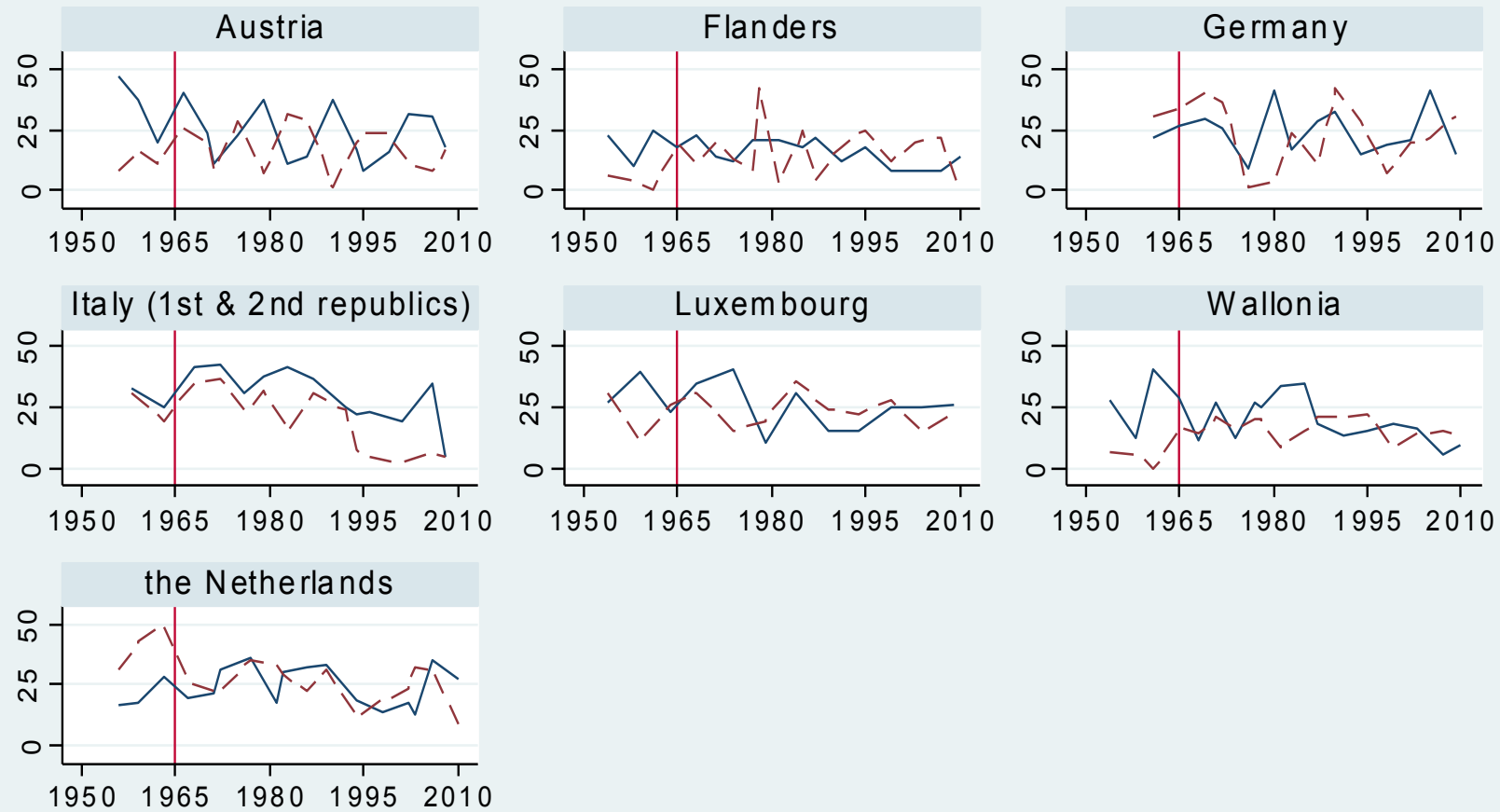
were higher than the values for the religious cleavage over all periods, as is shown in Figure 6.4. The differences between the average values, listed in Table 6.3, are high – 23.23, 15.57 and 22.66 points difference respectively.

In Italy the WCS values for the class cleavage were higher than those for the religious cleavage, but there is only 4.11 points difference between the mean values, indicating that the WCS values for the two cleavages were very close.

In Luxembourg, too, I found an interesting situation. In the first and the third elections (1954 and 1964) the WCS values for the religious cleavage were a bit higher than those for the class cleavage. However, in the 1959 election, the WCS score for the class cleavage was much higher than for the religious cleavage. Moreover, the average of WCS levels for the two cleavages is close, (7.38 point of difference respectively).

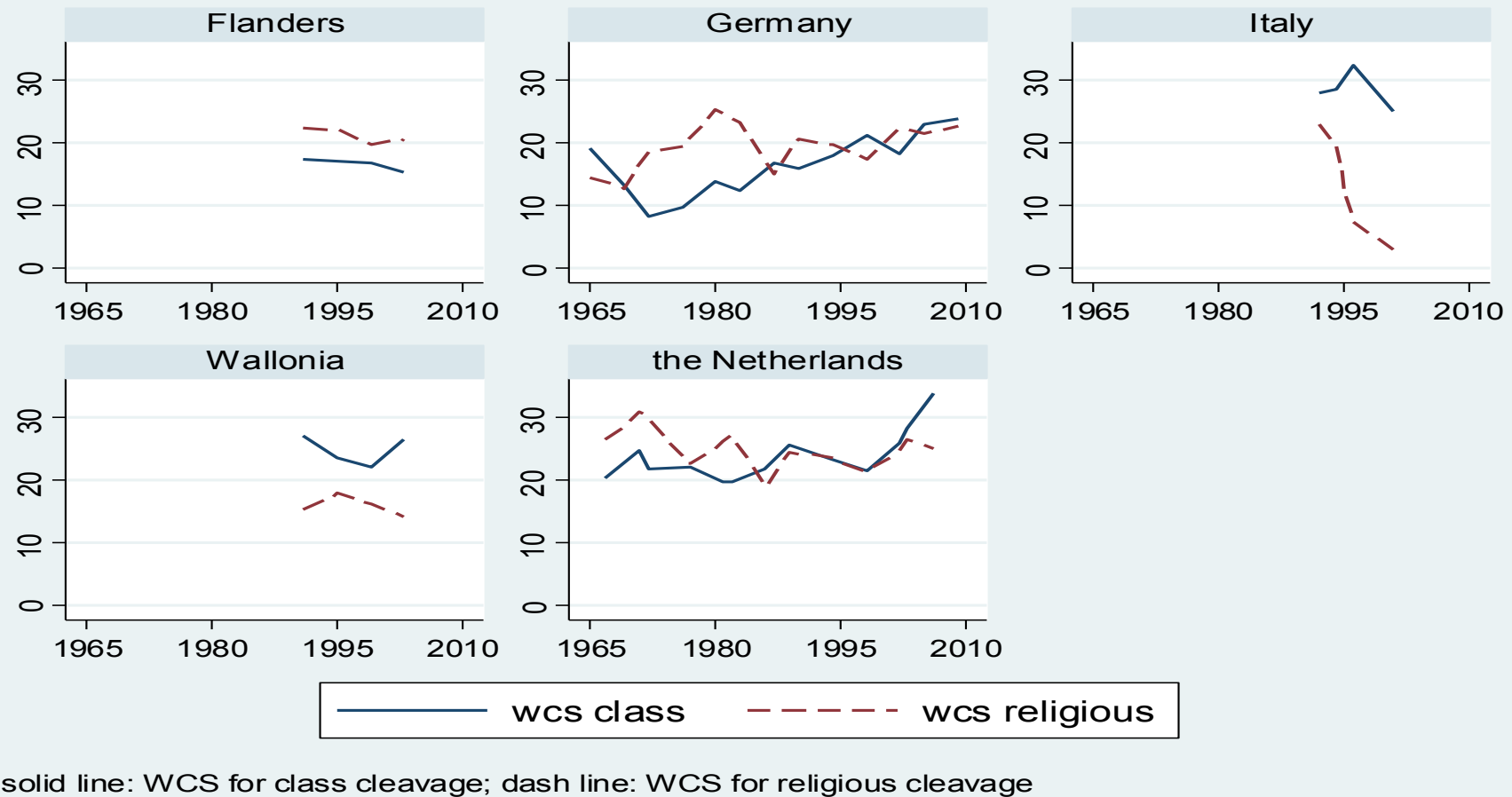
Overall, then, in the predominantly Protestant countries as well in three predominantly Catholic party systems – Austria, Flanders and Wallonia – the WCS values for the class cleavage were much higher than those for the religious cleavage. This indicates that between 1950 and 1964 voter alignment along the class cleavage was stronger than voter alignment along the religious cleavage. Voter alignment along the religious cleavage was stronger during this period in the Netherlands and in the 1961 German election, as the WCS values for the religious cleavage were higher than those for the class cleavage. For the other two predominantly Catholic countries, Italy and Luxembourg, the WCS values for the two cleavages were very close, suggesting that voter alignments along the two cleavages were equally strong for both divisions from 1950 to 1964.

Figure 6.4: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) in Catholic and mixed countries, based on aggregate data



solid line: WCS for class cleavage; dash line: WCS for religious cleavage

Figure 6.5: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) in Catholic and mixed countries, based on individual-level data



Persistence of voter alignments along the class and religious cleavages within countries over time: Hypotheses 3, 4 and 5

The next question is: are we able to identify a realignment and a new voter alignment or a voter dealignments along the cleavages from 1965?

I begin my analysis by comparing the WCS values for the two cleavages in predominantly Catholic and mixed countries, for which I found mixed results in the first period. In three cases – Austria, Flanders and Wallonia – the WCS values for the class cleavage were higher than for the religious cleavage. In two cases – Italy and Luxembourg – the WCS values for the two cleavages were found to be at the same levels: no statistically significant difference between them was found. Germany and the Netherlands were the only cases for which the WCS values for the religious cleavage were higher than for class over the first period.

Figures 6.4 & 6.5 present the WCS values over the selected years, based on aggregate and individual-level data respectively. They indicate that in none of the three polities in which one cleavage (class or religious) was found to be dominant over the first period – Austria, Flanders, Germany, the Netherlands and Wallonia – did the less important cleavage have higher WCS values than the other cleavage in the previous period. On the contrary, the two figures show fluctuation in the cleavage with the highest WCS. This fluctuation began in Austria with the 1975 election, in the Netherlands with the 1977 election (based on aggregate data) or with the 1986 election (based on individual-level data), in Germany with the 1976 election (based on aggregate data) or with the 1987 election (based on individual-level data) and in Flanders between the 1965 and 1987 elections. In Wallonia the WCS values for the religious cleavage were slightly higher than for the class cleavage in the 1968 and 1974 elections; the differences are only 3.18 and 3.78 points. Nevertheless, the fluctuation period began with the 1987 election.

For all these cases except Flanders, this fluctuation, however, does not indicate that voter alignment along the less important cleavage became stronger, as the scenario of realignment suggests. Rather, the comparison test (presented in Figures 6.6-6.8) and the ANOVA model results (presented in Table 6.4) demonstrate that during or slightly

before this period of fluctuation, the WCS values of the dominant cleavage lowered from those measured in the first period, as is expected in period of voter dealignment.

Table 6.4: ANOVA models for Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) for the dominant cleavage, in periods of ‘stability’ and ‘change’

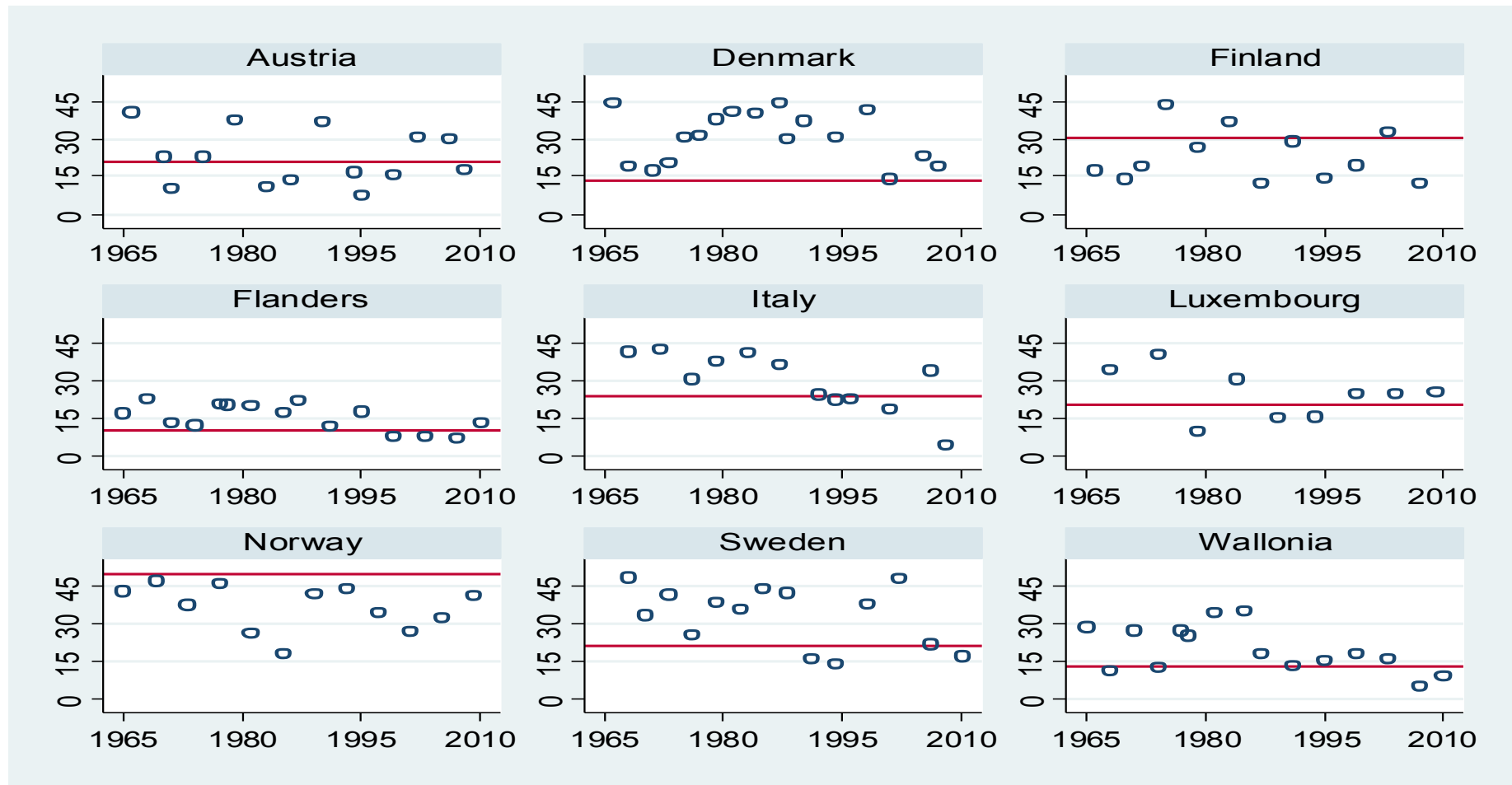
	Dominant cleavage		1 st election year	2 nd election year
Austria	Class	election year	1970	1971
		stability period Mean (s.d.)	36.23 (11.98)	33.58(11.95)
		change period Mean (s.d.)	21.07 (10.08)	20.91 (10.51)
		ANOVA	F(1,4.4)=5.26*	F(1,6.74)=4.25*
		AIC	120.9	122.3
		BIC	122.5	123.9
		period (time-points)	1956-2008 (17)	
Denmark	Class	election year	2001	2005
		stability period Mean (s.d.)	31.91 (10.84)	31.01 (11.28)
		change period Mean (s.d.)	18.90 (4.67)	21.35 (2.78)
		ANOVA	F(1,6.34)=12.57**	F(1,6.12)=9.12**
		AIC	156.8	158.6
		BIC	158.9	160.8
		period (time-points)	1953-2007 (22)	
Finland	Class	election year	1966	1970
		stability period Mean (s.d.)	40.08 (9.35)	34.44 (13.61)
		change period Mean (s.d.)	23.21 (10.46)	23.73 (10.81)
		ANOVA	F(1,3.39)=7.43*	F(1,4.46)=2.02
		AIC	105.1	108.0
		BIC	106.5	109.4
		period (time-points)	1954-2007 (15)	
Flanders	Class	election year	1985	1987
		stability period Mean (s.d.)	18.40 (5.02)	18.33 (4.77)
		change period Mean (s.d.)	13.28 (5.50)	12.67 (5.64)
		ANOVA	F(1,14.4)=4.16*	F(1,11.3)=4.85**
		AIC	106.7	105.7
		BIC	108.5	107.5
		period (time-points)	1954-2010 (18)	
Italy (1 st & 2 nd republics)	Religious	election year	1976	1979
		stability period Mean (s.d.)	30.46 (7.66)	29.08 (7.32)
		change period Mean (s.d.)	14.88 (11.46)	13.91 (11.72)
		ANOVA	F(1,8.5)=8.73**	F(1,11.7)=8.86**
		AIC	97.9	97.2
		BIC	99.1	98.4
		period (time-points)	1958-2008 (14)	
Italy (1 st & 2 nd republics)	Class	election year	1983	1987
		stability period Mean (s.d.)	35.34 (6.79)	36.17 (6.57)
		change period Mean	25.73 (11.63)	23.53 (10.61)

		(s.d.)		
		ANOVA	F(1,11.5)=3.76*	F(1,10)=7.18**
		AIC	95.4	92.9
		BIC	96.7	94.2
		period (time-points)	1958-2008 (14)	
Luxembourg	Class	election year	1979	1984
		stability period Mean	32.97 (8.07)	29.17 (11.77)
		(s.d.)		
		change period Mean	21.07 (7.41)	22.88 (6.18)
		(s.d.)		
		ANOVA	F(1,8.27)=6.79**	F(1,7.57)=1.34
		AIC	76.7	78.8
		BIC	77.6	79.8
		period (time-points)	1954-2009 (12)	
the Netherlands	Religious	election year	1967	1971
		stability period Mean	41.24 (9.45)	37.43 (10.84)
		(s.d.)		
		change period Mean	24.76 (7.99)	24.66 (8.31)
		(s.d.)		
		ANOVA	F(1,2.65)=7.91*	F(1,4.15)=4.71*
		AIC	113.3	115.6
		BIC	115.0	117.3
		period (time-points)	1956-2010 (17)	
Norway	Class	election year	1965	1969
		stability period Mean	50.01 (0.65)	47.63 (4.15)
		(s.d.)		
		change period Mean	36.43 (9.12)	35.84 (9.33)
		(s.d.)		
		ANOVA	F(1,11.6)=25.84***	F(1,8.19)=10.18**
		AIC	89.0	91.9
		BIC	90.3	93.2
		period (time-points)	1957-2009 (14)	
Sweden (based on aggregate data)	Class	election year	1991	1994
		stability period Mean	38.33 (10.36)	36.62 (11.68)
		(s.d.)		
		change period Mean	25.75 (13.84)	27.68 (14.54)
		(s.d.)		
		ANOVA	F(1,7.91)=3.87*	F(1,6.1)=1.51
		AIC	131.4	134.0
		BIC	133.2	135.8
		period (time-points)	1956-2010 (18)	
Wallonia	Class	election year	1987	1991
		stability period Mean	25.52 (9.66)	24.90 (9.47)
		(s.d.)		
		change period Mean	14.26 (4.83)	13.51 (5.00)
		(s.d.)		
		ANOVA	F(1,15)=10.26**	F(1,13.7)=10.39**
		AIC	119.9	113.0
		BIC	113.5	114.7
		period (time-points)	1954-2010 (18)	

* $p \leq 0.1$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$ (in two-tailed)

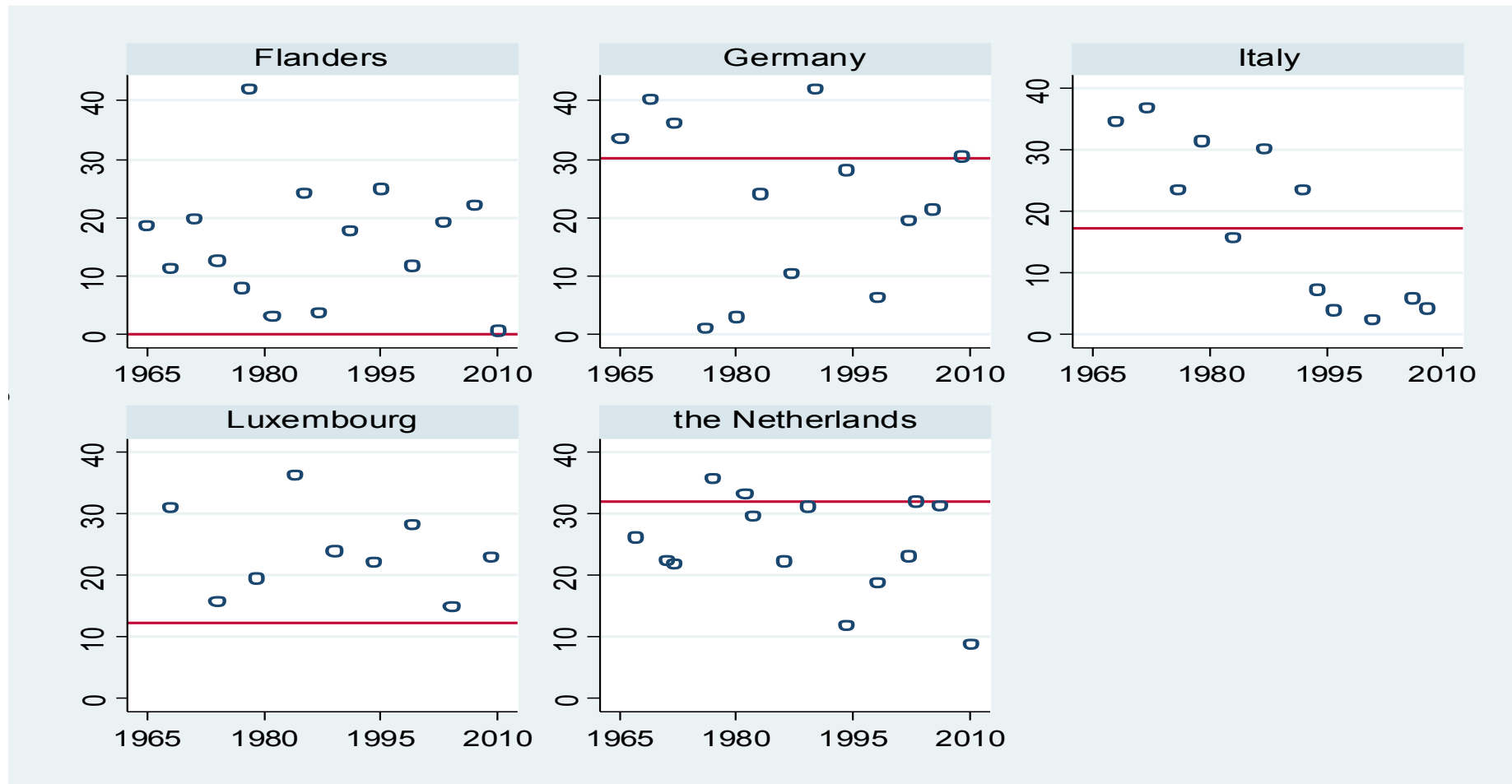
Note: The time variable was scored 0 for all time points up to this election, 1 for that election and for all time-points afterward. This table presents only the results for the first two elections, which are statistically significant in each case.

Figure 6.6: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) for the class cleavage in comparison to the reference line, based on aggregate data



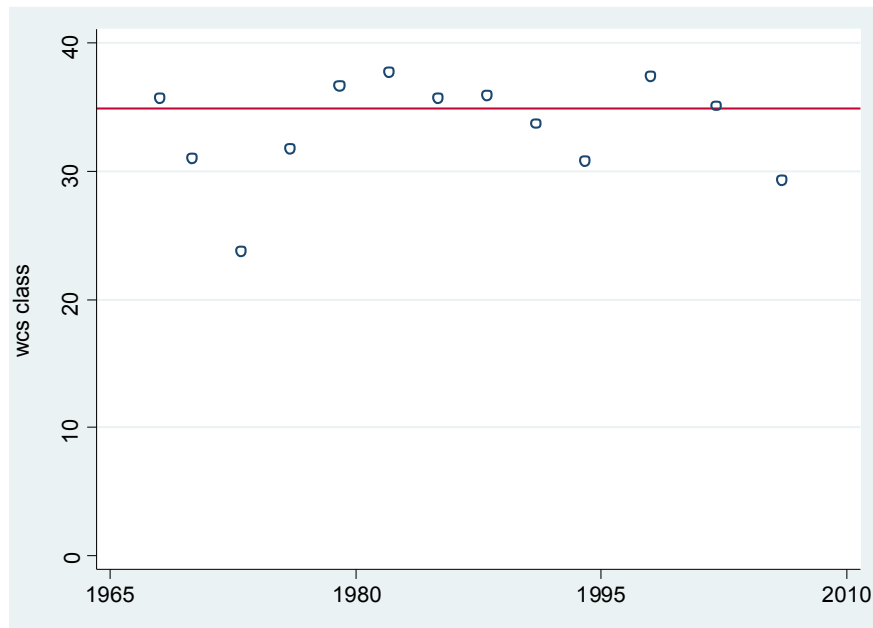
Note: the reference line is the average WCS level between 1950 and 1964 minus one standard deviation

Figure 6.7: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) for the religious cleavage in comparison to the reference line, based on aggregate data



Note: the reference line is the average WCS level between 1950 and 1964 minus one standard deviation

Figure 6.8: Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS) for the class cleavage in comparison to the reference line, for Sweden, based on individual-level data



Note: the reference line is the average WCS level between 1950 and 1964 minus one standard deviation

In Austria, WCS values for the dominant cleavage – the class cleavage – were lower than those found in the alignment period. This includes the first period (1950-1964) and the period from the 1970 election onwards, with some exceptions – the 1975, 1983-1986 and 1995-1999 elections (see in Figure 6.6). However, Figure 6.4 indicates that at these exact time-points, the religious cleavage had higher WCS values than the class cleavage, which suggests that at these time-points, voter alignment along the religious cleavage was stronger than voter alignment along the class cleavage. Table 6.4, which presents the ANOVA coefficients for the two periods of ‘stability’ and ‘change’, provides statistical support for this change. The ANOVA model coefficient for the WCS of class cleavage in the 1970 and 1971 elections is statistically significant, indicating that the average WCS value for the period from the 1970 election onwards is significantly lower than the average for the previous elections. In summary, there was a decrease in the WCS values for the class cleavage from 1970 onwards.

In the case of Wallonia, the ANOVA model suggests that the average WCS value for the period from 1987 onwards are significantly lower than the average value for the earlier period, as the ANOVA coefficient in the 1987 and 1991 elections are

statistically significant. The comparison test, however, indicates that the WCS values are below the reference line only in the last two elections (2007 and 2010). However, Figure 6.4 demonstrates that based on the aggregate data, in the 1987-1995 elections the WCS values for the class cleavage were already much lower than those for the religious cleavage.

Weakening of voter alignment along the strongest cleavage also occurred in the Netherlands, where the religious cleavage is found to be dominant during the first period. Figure 6.7 reveals that the WCS values for the religious cleavage were below the reference line from the 1967 election onwards, apart from the 1977 and 1981 elections. Even for these two elections, the two datasets suggest that the WCS levels for both cleavages were at almost the same level (as can be seen in Figures 6.4 & 6.5): the individual-level dataset indicates that in the 1977 election the difference between the two WCS values is only 0.47 point difference, and the aggregate dataset demonstrates that in the 1981 election the difference is only 1.26 point difference.

The second method – the ANOVA model – supports this finding, as the model coefficient in the 1967 election and in the following election of 1971 is statistically significant. This suggests that in average the WCS values for the religious cleavage have been lower from 1967 onwards than those for the period 1950-1964.

For Germany, I uncovered intriguing results.⁵ The comparison test indicates that the WCS values for the religious cleavage only in some of the elections – 1976, 1980, 1987, 1998 and 2002 – were much smaller than the WCS value in the 1961 election. The smallest difference with the reference line is 10.66 points difference (in the 2002 election), and the biggest difference is 28.8 points difference (in the 1976 election).

In addition, the official election results dataset suggests that the religious cleavage lost its dominant position in the 1976 and 1980 elections and again in the 1987 and 1998-2005 elections, when the WCS values for the class cleavage were found to be higher than those for the religious cleavage. The national survey dataset, by contrast, indicates that for the period between 1976 and 1983 the WCS values for the religious

⁵ I did not run an ANOVA model on the German dataset, due to a very short period of ‘stability’ (i.e. one election year).

cleavage were higher than those for the class cleavage. This datasets indicates that only from the 1987 election onwards did a fluctuation in the cleavage with the highest WCS value begin. This is confirmed by the almost identical mean values (class Mean=19.45, religious Mean=19.88), and *Sign* test ($N=7$, $p=1.00$). These last findings demonstrate that from 1987 onwards the WCS values of the religious cleavage decreased, according to both datasets.

Flanders is an exception, however. In this case I found that the WCS values for the religious cleavage have increased from 1965 onwards. Between 1965 and 1987 there was a fluctuation in the cleavage with the highest WCS and then, from the 1991 election until the 2007 election, the WCS values for the religious cleavage were much higher than those for the class cleavage (based on both sorts of data, as is shown by Figures 6.4 & 6.5). The comparison test for the religious cleavage demonstrates that over the whole period, the WCS values for this cleavage are much higher than the reference line, with the exception of the last election (2010). In addition, none of the ANOVA coefficients indicate that the WCS values were significantly lower in any split between two periods. On the other hand, the ANOVA model affirms the decrease of the WCS values for the class cleavage. In the 1985 and 1987 elections the average WCS score for the period of 'change' is lower than for the period of 'stability' and the ANOVA model coefficient is statistically significant. All of this demonstrates that between 1965 and 1981, the WCS of the religious cleavage increased to the same level of the class cleavage, and from 1985 onwards the WCS values for the class cleavage declined while the WCS values for the religious cleavage remained high.

I then examined the two cases wherein both cleavages were found to be equally salient over the first period – Luxembourg and Italy. In both polities, voter alignments along both cleavages eroded over time.

In Luxembourg, the erosion of voter alignment along the class cleavage began with the 1979 election. The comparison test shows that in the 1979, 1989 and 1994 elections the WCS values for the class cleavage were lower than the reference line. The ANOVA model suggests that since the 1979 election were the WCS values significantly lower than those of the previous years. In addition, when I compared the WCS values for both cleavages in each election year, I discovered that for the period

between 1979 and 1999, the WCS values for the religious cleavage were much higher than those for the class cleavage. Concerning voter alignment along the religious cleavage, the comparison test demonstrates that the WCS values for the religious cleavage were never lower than those of the first period, as all the values are above the reference line. Yet, as Figure 6.4 shows, in the 2004-2009 elections the WCS values for the religious cleavage were lower than those for the class cleavage, indicating that the religious cleavage lost its dominance over the class cleavage from the 2004 election onwards.

In the Italian case, the aggregate dataset and the individual-level data (with the exception of the last election) indicate that the WCS values for the class cleavage were continually higher than those for the religious cleavage over the whole period, in both the first and the second Italian Republics. However, the comparison test and the ANOVA model indicate that voter alignments along both cleavages – class and religious – weakened over time.

As Figure 6.7 shows, the WCS values for the religious cleavage are below the reference line in the 1983 election and then from the 1994 election onwards (with the exception of the 2006 election). The ANOVA model indicates that from the election of 1976 onwards, the mean WCS values for the religious cleavage were significantly lower than those in the earlier years.

Concerning the class cleavage, in the 1983 and 1987 elections the ANOVA coefficient for the class cleavage are statistically significant, yet the comparison test demonstrates that only from the 1994 election are the WCS values lower than the reference line. This indicates that only in the second Italian Republic did more voters cross the line of the class cleavage; from this point, Italian voter alignment along this cleavage erodes.

I now turn to my analysis of the results for the predominantly Protestant countries, where the level of WCS values for the class cleavage were found to be lower than those for the religious cleavage during the first period.

The results for the four Scandinavian predominantly Protestant countries – Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden – are clear: over the entire period, the WCS values for the class cleavage were higher than those for the religious cleavage. This is true for all the time-points based on both datasets, as can be seen in Figures 6.2 & 6.3.

The comparison test and the ANOVA model demonstrate that the erosion of voter alignment along the class cleavage had already begun in Finland and Norway in the mid 1960s.

In both countries, the WCS values for the class cleavage are lower than the reference line in most of the election years since 1965. In Finland, there are a few exceptions, in which the WCS value is higher than the reference line. This is the case in the 1975 and 1983 elections. Nevertheless, the ANOVA model confirms that the WCS values from the 1965 election onwards were lower than those in previous elections, as the model coefficient for the first two Norwegian elections is statistically significant. Concerning the Finnish case, the ANOVA coefficient is statistically significant only for the first election. This is probably due to the three deviate elections, which were identified by the comparison test.

Concerning the Swedish case, the ANOVA coefficient only for the 1991 election (based on aggregate data) is statistically significant. The comparison test, however, suggests that the WCS values were lower than those measured in the first period. The timing is different between the two datasets. The WCS values produced by individual-level data are already lower than the reference line in the elections between 1970-1976, and then again in the 1994 and 2006 elections. However, for the test based on the aggregate data, the WCS values dip below the reference line slightly later, in the 1991, 1994 and 2010 elections. All in all, the comparison test (based on the two types of datasets) together with the ANOVA model of the aggregate data suggest that the WCS values were lower than those in the previous elections from 1991 onwards.

With regard to Denmark, Figure 6.6 shows that the WCS values for the class cleavage in Denmark over the second period are much higher than the reference line. In addition, none of the ANOVA models indicates on significant difference in mean ETP

between the two periods. Together with the results of the comparison test, this demonstrates that the WCS values did not decrease over the entire period.

6.5 Voter Alignment, Realignment and Dealignment along the Class and Religious Cleavages: Discussion

This chapter has examined stability and change of voter alignments along the class and religious cleavages, as measured by the Bloc-Weighted Cleavage Salience index (WCS). The index computes Bloc Volatility as a fraction of Total Volatility (i.e. the Cleavage Salience index (CS) and also controls for the size of the bloc of parties. This facilitates the WCS to neutralise sensitivity to this component, which the original CS index fails to do. The WCS index is constructed in such a way that it renders high values if the alignment of a cleavage is strong. These high values are drawn from that fact that of all the voters who change their party support between two successive elections, few will choose to cross the dividing cleavage line and switch their support to a party on the other side of this line.

This empirical research supports Hypothesis 1. Between 1950 and the mid 1960s in the predominantly Protestant countries, the WCS values for the class cleavage were much higher than those for the religious cleavage. This indicates that fewer voters crossed the divide between the class parties and the non-class parties, when compared with the estimation of voters who changed their electoral support between religious parties and non-religious parties or the other way around. This means that voter alignment along the class cleavage was stronger than alignment along the religious cleavage.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that during the period between 1950 and the mid 1960s in predominantly Catholic or mixed countries, voter alignment along the religious cleavage was more dominant than alignment along the class cleavage. This hypothesis was verified only in the cases of Germany and the Netherlands. In both cases, I found that the WCS values for the religious cleavage were higher than those for the class cleavage. For the other two cases – Italy and Luxembourg – the WCS values for the two cleavages the same, suggesting that voter alignments along both cleavages were equally strong. In the other three cases – Austria, Flanders and Wallonia – the results

contradicted my expectations. Surprisingly, I discovered that the WCS values for the class cleavage were higher than those for the religious cleavage. Based on this, I conclude that voter alignment along the class cleavage was stronger than alignment along the religious cleavage during this period.

Examining the levels of WCS values for the class cleavage (between 1950 and 1964) in countries where this cleavage was the salient cleavage, reveals that the average values for predominantly Protestant countries are higher than those for predominantly Catholic and mixed countries. For the first group it ranges between 27.88 (in Denmark) and 50.01 (in Norway) and for the latter group only between 18.82 (in Flanders) and 34.75 (in Austria).

Three rival hypotheses were tested using data from 1965 onwards. The first hypothesis posited a realignment: a switch of or a change in the dominant cleavage. The second hypothesis posited a dealignment: an erosion (or weakening) of the dominant cleavage without voter alignment along the other cleavage becoming stronger. The third hypothesis posited continuous voter alignment along the dominant cleavage.

The data regarding the stability and change of voter alignments along the class and religious cleavages were fed to three tests – a comparison of the WCS values between the two cleavages in each election year, a comparison test of the WCS values in each election year against a reference line, and an ANOVA model (of WCS values split into two periods of ‘stability’ and ‘change’). The results are summarised in Table 6.5. This Table shows that a difference in the strength of voter alignment between the two groups of countries did not influence the persistence or change of alignments. In two predominantly Protestant countries – Finland and Norway – strong voter alignment along the class cleavage diminished from the mid 1960s onwards. In most of the predominantly Catholic and mixed countries, this alignment began to erode slightly later, in the 1970s-1980s. Yet, in two cases – Italy (a predominantly Catholic country) and Sweden (a predominantly Protestant country) – this erosion commenced only in the early 1990s. Interestingly, with the exception of the Netherlands, the weakening of voter alignment along the religious cleavage only began in the mid 1980s – much later than the class cleavage’s weakening.

Table 6.5: Stability and change of voter alignments along the class and religious cleavages

<i>Voter alignment along class or religious cleavage, in the period 1950-1964</i>			
	Class	Religious	Class & Religious
	Austria Denmark Finland Flanders Norway Sweden Wallonia	Germany the Netherlands	Italy Luxembourg
<i>Voter alignment, realignment (and a new alignment) or dealignment from 1965 onwards</i>			
	Class	Religious	Class & Religious
Alignment	Austria (until 1970) Denmark (until 2007) Flanders (until 1985) Italy (until 1994) Sweden (until 1991) Wallonia (until 1987)	Germany (until 1987) Luxembourg (1979-2004)	Italy (until 1983) Luxembourg (until 1979)
Dealignment	Austria (1970 onwards) Finland (1966 onwards) Flanders (1985 onwards) Italy (1994 onwards) Luxembourg (1979 onwards) Norway (1965 onwards) Sweden (1991 onwards) Wallonia (1987 onwards)	the Netherlands (1967 onwards) Germany (1987 onwards) Italy (1983 onwards) Luxembourg (2004 onwards)	
Realignment (and a new alignment)		Flanders (1965 onwards)	

The erosion of voter alignment(s) along the dominant cleavage(s) was evident in most of the countries, regardless of which cleavage was dominant. Denmark and Flanders are the only exceptions here. The trend in Denmark suggests a continuity of alignment

along the class cleavage. A possible explanation for this is the electoral support of the new class – the white-collar strata (in particular public sector workers) for the Social-Democratic parties. This explanation was supported by Kunsten (2005), who found that the Danish public sector (which is the largest European public sector, relatively) tends to vote for Left Socialist parties. Moreover, he discovered no significant differences between voters in the private and the public sectors regarding support of the Socialist-Democratic (SD) party; Kunsten explained that in Denmark, the former category is mainly employed in the services sector, rather than in the industry related spaces, as is the case in other European countries.

In Flanders I uncovered a different process, i.e. voter alignment along the class cleavage in conjunction with a new alignment based on the religious cleavage, and later a dealignment from the class cleavage. Here, the strength of voter alignment along the religious cleavage, captured by the WCS index, has grown stronger than the class cleavage from the mid 1960s. This reveals a realignment phase – the party system has aligned along both cleavages since the mid 1960s. During mid 1980s, the WCS of the class cleavage decreased not only in comparison to the religious cleavage's WCS value, but also in comparison to the overall WCS values measured in the first period. These changes indicate erosion or dealignment concerning the class cleavage, but not for the religious cleavage, which maintained its position, as is measured by the WCS index.

The realignment that I identified only in the case of Flanders can be explained by the creation and institutionalisation of the sub-national party system. The new alignment along the religious cleavage, which emerged in the mid 1960s, occurred at the same period during which the Catholic Party (CVP/PSC) became the first Belgian party to split into two separate parties (in 1968). Both alignments were maintained during the period of party system establishment, when other Belgian parties – the Liberal party (PVV/PLP) and the Socialist party (BSP/PSB) – split (in 1971 and 1978 respectively). After the sub-national party system became institutionalised in the 1980s, erosion of the alignment along the class cleavage began, while the (new) alignment along the religious cleavage has remained strong.

6. 6 Conclusions

This chapter shows that voter alignment along the class cleavage was stronger than or at least as strong as the alignment along the religious cleavage in almost all the studied countries, regardless of their dominant denomination. The only exceptions are Germany and the Netherlands, in which I have identified that voter alignment along the religious cleavage is stronger than that along the class cleavage.

I also found that the religious distinction between Protestant countries and Catholic and mixed countries contributed to the strength of voter alignment along the class cleavage, as I discovered that the alignment along the class cleavage in predominantly Protestant countries was much stronger than in predominantly Catholic and mixed countries. These findings support Nieubeerta and Ultee's (1999:136) argument that the Scandinavian countries (and the U.K.) had relatively high levels of class voting in the studied periods, when compared with other European countries.

The level of voter alignment strength, however, is not helpful in predicting the point in time when voter alignment begins to erode. In some pre-dominantly Protestant countries the strong alignment along the class cleavage began diminishing in the mid 1960s, while in predominantly Catholic and mixed countries this alignment eroded in the 1970s-mid 1980s. In two cases, drawn from both groups of countries, voter dealignment along the class cleavage did not commence until the early 1990s. The weakening of voter alignment along the religious cleavage occurred, by contrast, much later – from the mid 1980s. A possible explanation for this is that the salience of moral issues, including marriage and divorce, birth control, abortion, sex education, pornography and so on, has been “especially important since the late 1960s” (Lijphart, 1980:83); see also (Kriesi, et al., 2008a).

The only cases in which alignments along the religious or class cleavages still persist are Denmark and Flanders. It seems likely that the persistence of the alignment along the class cleavage in Denmark can be explained by class-sector support. The establishment and institutionalisation of the sub-national party system in Flanders in the mid 1960s may account for its realignment along the religious cleavage.

Overall, I found that there has been a decline of alignment along the class cleavage, in contrast with Bartolini and Mair's (1990) argument that the levels of Bloc Volatility of the class cleavage "*offer strong confirmation of the freezing hypothesis*" (Bartolini & Mair, 1990:101) (italics in original). I believe that these contradictory empirical findings are rooted in two explanations. Firstly, the time frames for each study differed. Secondly and more importantly, the methodology also differed. The employment of the WCS index allowed me to demonstrate that signs of the erosion of class-based voting were evident in some of the countries as early as the mid 1960s - 1970s.