

# ETHNODIVERSITY AND RELIGION IN A SECULAR SOCIETY

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## ABSTRACT

The goal of this project was to create a comprehensive literature review on the topic of religion and foreign policy in the Global North. This literature review examined 69 scholarly sources that examine the topic of religion and foreign policy. The sources included policy briefs, journal articles, literature reviews, and books. Through careful examination I have organized my findings from these articles into six categories: religion as soft power, religion as identity, religion and violence/conflict, religion and security, religious exceptionalism, and religious freedom. The literature review produced from this research project is comprehensive and detailed in its analysis of how religion is impacting international relations.



I am a third year student in Honours International Development with a Minor in Anthropology. Within my Honours International Development, I am in the stream that follows Culture and Society. As part of being in this stream of study, I have several religious studies courses. After taking courses in this topic I became fascinated with religion and development. This project combined development, international relations, and religion.

The objective of this project was to create a comprehensive literature review on the topic of religion and foreign policy in the Global North, as a baseline research for a conference that Professors Cere and Beland are organizing for March 2020. The goal was to analyze the existing literature written on this topic from the year 2000 onwards and to establish key themes, topics, researchers, and scholars, which are contributing to this area of study, and which could potentially contribute to the conference. I set out to establish general ideas, arguments, and/or questions on which the Professors could build the conference off of. I wanted to create a comprehensive report of the existing scholarship that would provide the professors with a thorough analysis of the topic.

This study was approached with a very systematic approach to keep all the information organized and comprehensive. I first made a list of databases that would most likely provide me with the most useful sources. I carefully combed through them and pulled all of the articles that seemed to address the topic of this study. I ended up with 69 written works, including books, journal articles, policy briefs, and government reports. After collecting these articles, I read all of them and took detailed notes on the key arguments that the writers made. After transcribing all of these notes into a document, I created an outline that divided up all of the information into six main topics: religion as soft power, religion as identity, religion and violence/conflict, religion and security, religious exceptionalism, and religious freedom. I then went through all of my notes and connected quotations, ideas, and sources to each topic and the sub-topics that I had created within each main theme. Once this detailed outline was complete, I began writing my report, following the outline I had created and including the arguments and ideas that the writers had presented in their works.

An large amount of the literature written on this topic focused on American foreign policies, particularly post-9/11 narratives and the ensuing War on Terror. Further, significant amounts of study have gone into change and continuity between the Bush and Obama administrations, particularly regarding how they allowed religious influences to permeate into their policy-making. There was also literature on the effects of religion in European foreign policy. As Europe is a more secular society than the US, the majority of the scholarship studying European discourse was centered around how the religions of target states impact Europe's policy towards that target state. While the literature on the US is more centered on how domestic religious influences impact the decisions of policy makers, the literature on Europe focuses more on how foreign religions impact the decisions of policy makers. The discussions of religious freedom and religious exceptionalism also included examples from Turkey, Canada, and Russia.

Religion and foreign policy are becoming increasingly intertwined as religion is resurfacing as an issue of contention globally. Religious vantage points are more prevalent and conflicts are not only involving religion, but their solutions are increasingly being posed in a religious framework. Further, there is a large engagement with religious freedom on behalf of governments in the global North. Many polities are considering it to be essential to democracy and fundamental to human rights, while others see the popularity of this policy as a risk that could worsen or create conflicts. Comparing how and why European nations address religion in their policy-making processes against the corresponding behaviours of the White House is very interesting, as they have very different experiences. Further, relating religious exceptionalism to nationalism and its impacts on international affairs revealed many dynamics that do not receive much attention in the media, further broadening the scope of this study.

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