Title: “Comparative Perspectives: Religion, State and Democracy beyond the United States”

Author: Michael D. Driessen

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Abstract: Although many students of democracy in the United States take for granted that democracy requires separation of church and state, this chapter argues that there are a wide range of religion-state arrangements present in other democracies, including some which offer significant privileges to their majority religion, which also protect religious liberty. The chapter explores how these variations affect the structure and context of national religious markets, political policies and welfare politics. Rather than assume that the only way to preserve religious liberty is through separation of church and state, the chapter concludes that US foreign policy makers need to take these differences into account in order to craft effective policies and partnerships with religious actors and religious regimes abroad.

Keywords: Religious Liberty, Separation of Church and State, Religious Democracy, Christian Democratic Parties, Muslim Democracy, Religious Market Theory, Twin Tolerations, No Establishment Clause

Many students of democracy in the United States take for granted that democracy requires separation of church and state. After all, the idea of religious liberty is enshrined in the American democratic experience and the first amendment to the US constitution begins by promising that Congress will make no law establishing religion or “prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Religious liberty, in other words, which is typically recognized as a universal human right to be protected by all liberal democracies, is assumed to imply separation of church and state.

Comparative scholarship on religion and democracy, however, has increasingly articulated the multitudinous and complex ways by which democracies outside the United States institutionalize their relationships between religion and state, while still retaining a high level of democratic rights and privileges (Stepan 2001, Madeley 2003, Fox 2006, 2008, Driessen 2010, 2014a).
many democracies, “religious liberty” does not signify “separation of church and state,” at least not in the way that the US Constitution and American society understands it. These various understandings of the proper relationship between religion and state reflect important cultural and historical differences which have been embedded into nations’ institutional foundations, and they continue to have an important impact on states’ social, religious and political life.

This chapter explores these comparative patterns of religion, state and democracy in light of the American experience. The first section surveys the wide range of religion and state models present in democracies across the globe. It argues that many of these models, including some that institutionalize significant privileges for their majority religions, successfully protect and promote the democratic rights and liberties of their citizens. The second section of the chapter explores how these alternative models of religion and state impact the political and social life of these democracies by affecting the structure of their national religious markets, political policies and welfare politics. Finally, the third section argues that a greater understanding of these variations and their consequences is important for US foreign policymakers as they reach out to foreign counterparts with notably different religious institutions and histories from the United States.

**Religion, State and Democracy’s Twin Tolerations**

To a casual European observer of the United States, American politics might appear fully saturated with religious claims and debates. Some of the most charged recent political debates in the United States, after all, have revolved around whether, how and which religiously inspired values should inform current legislation. While these charged political controversies debate the role that religious values play in American political culture and society, they do not call into
question the bedrock American principles of religious liberty and the institutional separation of church and state. Most believers and non-believers in the United States would agree that the Federal Government of the United States should not pay bishops and pastors’ salaries; finance the building of new synagogues; require the US President to be a practicing Lutheran; or finance a new translation of the King James Bible. Across the political and religious divides of America, the showing of institutional favoritism towards one or several religious denominations, the arbitration of right theological belief or the blurring of functions between religious and elected political authorities are clearly understood to be unfair, inappropriate and harmful to democratic rights and privileges.

In 2001, Alfred Stepan, one of the leading theorists of democracy in the field of comparative politics, wrote a landmark article on the role of religion in democracy which directly challenged the general applicability of this US approach to religion and state. Stepan began the article by defining the “minimal” or “procedural” standards of democracy that political scientists employ to rank, classify and compare democracies across the world, namely, that there be present 1) regular, free and fair elections and 2) the basic protection of political rights and civil liberties. Stepan argued that these definitions say very little about the role of religion in democracy. They require, on the one hand, that religious authorities not block or impede the authority of elected officials and, on the other hand, that religious individuals have the freedom to advance their values collectively in public as long as those values do not violate the liberties and rights enshrined in the constitution.

In deriving these conditions—what Stepan termed the twin tolerations religion and democracy owe one another in a liberal democracy—Stepan took particular aim at normative
recommendations, which he associated with John Rawls, to keep political institutions and policy debates free of religious language and references (Stepan 2001, see also Rawls 1997, Bailey and Gentile 2015). The institutions and procedures of democracy, Stepan contested, do not require such avoidance and, he argued, most democracies in the world had not followed the example set forth by the United States’ experience. The American combination of no establishment and free exercise, Stepan went on to claim, represented the unique founding conditions of the American Republic, not a universal model of religion-state relations required of all democratic constitutions. In the absence of one dominating religious denomination in the early American colonies, as scholars like Gill (2008) have argued, early US legislators were primed to negotiate an agreement that prohibited any denomination gaining mastery or state favoritism over the others, leading to the adoption of a strong version of religious liberty and institutional separation of church and state in the constitution.

In most of the democracies of Europe, in contrast, the state had been historically associated with one major religious tradition. These traditions’ leaders, Stepan argued, successfully bargained to maintain privilege and authority within state and society, either by keeping their status as established churches (as in Denmark, Greece and England today) or by securing major financial support through taxes (as in Germany, Austria, and Italy today).

Stepan’s article cast important light on a growing body of comparative scholarship that attempted to measure, map out and analyze the diversity of religion-state arrangements worldwide and theorize that diversity’s relationship with the return of religion to politics at the end of the 20th century. Stepan’s work, and this body of scholarship, in fact, had important implications for the then developing debate about Islam and democracy, and whether Islamic
understandings of political authority which seemed to reject the Western (Christian) model of separation of religion and state impeded democratization in the region, as Samuel Huntington had argued (1996). Stepan claimed that the empirical reality of church-state religions in Western democracies did not support a Universal Western model of “separation of religion and state” and, therefore, could not be the main criteria that distinguished Muslim and Christian nations with respect to democracy. There was historically very little separation of church and state in Europe over the last two millennia and very few western democracies could be said to really apply separation of religion and state even today. Why then should Muslim countries not be able to democratize simply on the (questionable) claim that they did not possess this religious-political tradition?

Further work on religion-state typologies enabled social scientists to advance a more nuanced understanding of the varieties of religion-state arrangements in democracies as well as the impacts of these varieties on political, social and religious life. New cross-national databases on religion and state arrangements (Grim and Finke 2006, Fox 2008), for example, began to code, profile and track over time the precise numbers of laws, policies, constitutional clauses and political practices by which states and religions institutionally linked themselves to one another. The hundreds of different variables included in these datasets illustrated the complexity of means and purposes embedded in various religion-state arrangements. They also allowed scholars to identify some of the underlying features of common religion-state patterns. Working from the data, for example, scholars made the important theoretical distinction between government regulation of religion, which captures the extent to which states restrict and regulate religious beliefs and institutions, as opposed to government favoritism of religion, which captures the
extent to which states fund, identify with and promote one or more religious traditions over others (Grime and Finke 2006).

This distinction between regulation and favoritism proved useful for charting out the kinds of religion-state arrangements that separate democracies from non-democracies as well as the variations which exist within democracies themselves. Recent scholarship based on this data, for example, has found that government regulation of religion is a significant predictor of whether a regime is likely to be democratic while government favoritism is not (Driessen 2010, 2014a, Sarkissian 2012). While almost all democracies (with the exception of the United States) measure some non-separation of religion and state (Fox 2008), very few of them place high levels of regulation and restrictions on religions, be they minority religions or a majority religion. Variations on the non-separation of religion and state in democracy, therefore, tend to take place within the range of government favoritism of religion. Many democratic states, including Iceland, Bolivia, Greece, Israel and Spain, have instituted relatively high levels of government favoritism while avoiding the overbearing restrictions or regulations of religion which might violate basic political rights and civil liberties (Madeley 2003, Mazie 2004, Driessen 2010, 2014a).

**Democratic Models of Religion and State and their Consequences Beyond the US**

Within democracies who respect Stepan’s twin tolerations, we can make a basic distinction, therefore, between those who institutionalize more as opposed to less religious favoritism. Further distinctions can be made depending on how this favoritism is applied. Table 1 names five religion-state categories found in democracies today according to these distinctions. It should be emphasized that these categories are not definitive ones and that other categories could be added
or modified. This section briefly examines each of these patterns and, for each one, highlights a social or political consequence which scholars have argued can distinguish them from religion and state dynamics in the United States. Thus, the rest of this section examines 1) models of *laïcité* and how they have shaped policies designed to protect citizens from hegemonic religions; 2) established religion models and how they have impacted national religious markets; 3) preferred religion models and how they have accommodated religious political parties and their welfare politics; and 4) positive cooperation models and how they have allowed for sub-national variations on family laws.

**Table 2: Patterns of Religion-State Arrangements in Democracies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secular Democracies</th>
<th>Religious Democracies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Assertive Secularism</td>
<td>3) “Respect All, Positive Cooperation, Principled Distance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Passive Secularism</td>
<td>4) Established Religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France, Mexico, Turkey</td>
<td>England, Denmark, Israel, Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States, Kenya, Australia</td>
<td>Italy, Ireland, Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senegal, Indonesia, India</td>
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**Assertive Secularism and Passive Secularism Models**

The first two patterns listed in table 1 could be described as “secular democracies,” of which the United States is a prime example. In secular democracies, the datasets register little to no institutional entanglements between the state and any religion and, particularly, no religious favoritism shown to religious institutions. In this group of countries, the government does not regulate or restrict private religious thought, worship or organization, nor do they fund religious
institutions either. Not all secular democracies look the same, however, and this secularism could be designed to be more or less friendly to religious institutions. In France, for example, the laws of laïcité govern religion-state relations. Laïcité was not originally designed to protect an individual’s freedom to be religious as much as it was designed to protect an individual’s freedom from religion. In part born as a reaction to the Catholic Church’s opposition to liberalism and its support for the monarchy, laïcité was meant to liberate French society and political institutions from religious influence (Kuru 2009).

Ahmet Kuru (2009) has defined French laïcité as a form of “assertive secularism” which is quite different from the “passive secularism” espoused by the United States and born of different historical contexts. France’s historical move to protect itself against an undemocratic, hegemonic Catholic Church has led it to more guardedly protect the public sphere from anything that might imply state-endorsed religious influence or illiberal religious machinations. It is only in this light that we can understand public approval in France for legislation that bans the wearing of (Muslim) headscarves or (large) Christian crosses in public schools, as well as the banning of all burkas (veils which cover the entire face except the eyes) in public. This aggressive secularism is defended on the grounds of protecting democratic equality and liberty. Because the state must not privilege one citizen’s religious worldview over another, laïcité has been taken to mean that single officials representing the state should not use their public position of power to endorse a religious position or persuade others to do so. Teachers and students, as a result, are required to keep a religiously neutral classroom setting. Assertive secular arrangements can be found in other democratic environments, often in places with similar national pasts to France, in which a traditional, hegemonic religion which had helped legitimize the ancien régime was seen to be an intolerable obstruction to the advancement of liberalism and
modernity. Religion-state arrangements in places like Turkey, Mexico and Uruguay fit this description.

In countries with passive secular religion-state regimes, like the United States, secularism was understood to be an institutional arrangement intended to protect individuals’ freedom of religious beliefs as well as protect religious organizations’ corruption from political interference. As I will come back to, in many countries with passive secular religion-state arrangements, partly as a result, secular political institutions coexist with dynamic levels of religious growth.

*Established Religion Models*

We can contrast secular democracies with what some scholars have termed “religiously friendly” or “religious democracies” (Soroush 2001, Driessen 2014a, Cesari 2014). Religious democracies, like some of the countries in the chart above, democratized in such a way that retained or even further promoted the identification of the state with one religion or several religions. Like their secular counterparts, religious democracies come in distinct varieties which reflect different historical and political trajectories that may have more or less in common with more secular varieties.

One subgroup that is often quite close to some of its more secular counterparts is the established church model, into which we could place several of the Northern European Protestant countries, like Denmark, England, Norway and, until recently, Sweden. The established religion model also characterizes some predominantly Orthodox countries like Greece, the Jewish state of Israel, and some of the Muslim majority democracies, although within very different political and religious frameworks.
England here is particularly interesting to contrast with the United States especially because on so many other parameters it is so similar, and when it differs from the United States in religious matters we tend to (rightly) assume that it is less religious than the United States. In England, however, there is the established Church of England, and it is the Queen who appoints its highest governor, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and all other officials within the Church on advice of a commission which includes lay and church members.

This relationship, of course, reflects an historical arrangement struck nearly 500 years ago by King Henry VIII’s break with Rome. Furthermore, the religious reach of the Church of England within England today is not especially strong: regular church attendance in Great Britain, for example, is less than half that of the United States according to the World Gallup Poll.

Sociologists of religion, in fact, have built one of the most powerful contemporary theories of religious growth and decline around these low levels of religious participation associated with established church-state arrangements in countries like England and other Northern Protestant countries (see, especially, Finke and Stark 2000). In what is sometimes referred to as religious market theory, these scholars argue that religious regulation in favor of a religious monopoly, such as the Church of England, creates uncompetitive, moribund religious environments. Religious competition in a free market, on the other hand, as in the United States or Kenya, produces a much more dynamic stream of religious entrepreneurs who more successfully meet the demands of religious consumers.

Religious market theory has uncovered many insights about how different religion-state arrangements shape the vitality of religious behaviors in places like the United States, England and Denmark. It has had more difficulty explaining the high levels of religiosity found in other
established religion contexts, especially (although not always) in the Muslim majority world (Norris and Inglehart 2004, Driessen 2014b). This has led some scholars (Norris and Inglehart 2004) to dig deeper for explanations of religiosity in secularization theories, which tend to see variation in economic structures as the main determinant of national religious dynamism. In this case, it could be argued that established religions do worse in the West because of income levels, while something of the opposite might be true in the Muslim world. Other scholars (McBride 2008, Driessen 2014b) have theorized how state support for religion in democracies, in combination with other factors, including the presence of transnational religious networks and religion-based social capital structures, can stimulate religious demand. In some Persian Gulf countries, like Kuwait, who boasts robust rates of religiosity in addition to one of the globe’s highest standards of living, leaders have combined high levels of religious favoritism with gradual political liberalization and protections on religious liberty. By contrast, scholars have argued that too much religious regulation in countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran has had a negative impact on their religious markets and led to a relative decline in religious dynamism (Tezçür and Azadarmaki 2008).

Preferred Religion Models

A similar category to the established religion model are those democracies which do not make one religion an official state religion, but which do endow it with a special place in the country’s identity, culture and understanding of itself. Many Catholic democracies, such as Ireland, Poland and Italy, fall into this category, but others, including the Buddhist kingdom of Thailand, fit this description as well. One important difference in many Catholic countries with respect to the classical establishment arrangements is that the Catholic Church maintains fuller institutional
autonomy from the state in the organization of its ecclesiastical hierarchy. Reflecting the Catholic Church’s nature as a transnational organization, throughout the transition to democracy in Europe the Catholic Church insisted on retaining the right to name its own Bishops even as it won special financial and political privileges from the state. These privileges might include special mention in the constitution, the adoption of national religious holidays, public religious education and the collection of national church taxes. Like their Muslim counterparts, many of these religiously friendly Catholic democracies have also been capable of maintaining relatively high levels of religious dynamism.

In other important ways, these religion-state arrangements resemble those of England, Denmark, Tunisia and other established religions in that, in all of them, the state simultaneously proclaims religious freedom for all individuals while giving one religion favorable institutional recognition. The Italian constitution, for example, recognizes (Art. 3) that all citizens, “are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion,” while at the same time recognizing the Lateran pacts (Art. 7), a set of treaties signed between the Church and the Italian state in 1929 which provide significant political and cultural privilege to the Catholic Church. To compare with the American example, we might say that the constitutions of these states agree with the free exercise clause of the US Constitution, but do not agree that free exercise necessitates “no establishment” or the institutional neutrality of the state with respect to its religious traditions.

In the Catholic experience, Christian Democratic parties in both Europe and Latin America played an important role in advancing arguments in favor of this religiously friendly version of democracy. In doing so they offered an incorporation based solution based for resolving the tensions between majority religious traditions and liberalism which drove states like France and
Turkey to banish religion from politics. In her comparative analysis of Christian Democracy, Carolyn Warner (2000), for example, has argued that by crafting a religiously friendly constitution, through the Lateran Pacts, Italy was able to win over the Catholic Church and Italian Catholics in support of democratization. Without such support, scholars have argued, democracy would not have been successful in Italy (Driessen 2014a). Some scholars (Schwedler 2011, Nasr 2005, Tezcür 2009, Driessen 2014a) have claimed that this pattern of democratic bargaining also characterizes the most successful democratic experiences in the Muslim world today, including in countries like Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco and Kuwait, among others.

Although Christian Democratic parties continue to exist in Europe, many have argued that they are the empty shell of their former selves and that, like the Queen of England’s claim as the head of the Anglican Church, the “Christian” prefix in these parties’ titles merely serve as a reminder of a bygone heritage. If one analyzed the public religious identity and rhetoric of Christian Democratic parties in Europe today, this claim might appear correct. However, it would be inaccurate to assert that the religious political architecture Christian Democratic parties constructed in post-war Europe no longer has any impact on European societies. In this respect, Germany is a good case to study how this architecture continues to buttress social and political reform.

Germany has higher levels of religious participation than the most secular countries of Europe, i.e. England and Sweden, but less than some of the more religious ones, i.e. Italy and Poland. Germany is also, in effect, a multi-confessional state which recognizes its longstanding religious traditions through its national church tax. Finally, the German Christian Democratic Party dominated German elections following WWII and a Christian Democrat, Angela Merkel, is
Germany’s current Chancellor. The early dominance of Christian Democracy allowed CDU members to translate many Christian Democratic ideas into law in German democracy’s formative period. One important example of how these laws have had an enduring legacy on German politics is in the German welfare system. Following the principle of subsidiarity, championed by Christian Democratic parties, the expansion of the German Welfare state did not result in an expansion of the state’s public welfare service. Instead, the German welfare system was built on an expansion of (subsidiary) non-profit and, especially, faith-based non-profit welfare providers. Catholic and Protestant associations, as a result, continue to act as major welfare providers for the German state (Anheier and Seibel 2001, Hein Forthcoming). German Caritas, for example, the Catholic Church’s flagship charity association, employs 559,000 workers in Germany who, together with an estimated 500,000 volunteers, endow Caritas with a one million person workforce in Germany alone.iii

Scholars of immigration in Europe have also focused on Germany’s religion-state arrangement and articulated how it creates different opportunities for the integration of religious minorities than those of more secular states like France. Fetzer and Soper (2005), for example, argue that Germany’s multi-confessional church-state model has provided Muslim immigrants there more fertile grounds on which to make a case for their own public recognition of and aid by the state, something which is more difficult to do according to French laïcité. Rather than an historical impediment, the state’s religious aid and recognition in places like England and Germany have proved to be of some use as states attempt to relate with and manage new religious communities. Other scholars have challenged such a clear distinction emanating from the historical divergences of these states’ institutions alone (Laurence and Vaisse 2006, Laurence 2012). Jonathan Laurence (2012), for example, has argued that despite laïcité, France’s Ministry of
Religious Affairs has similar goals to its institutional homologues elsewhere in Europe and has similarly invested in administrative innovations to regulate its permanent presence of Muslim immigrants.

*Respect All, Positive Cooperation, Principled Distance Models*

In some ways, the German, English and Italian models increasingly resemble those of other religiously friendly democratic systems, like Senegal, India and Indonesia, whose constitutions define separation of religion and state as a guiding democratic principle but who also host a predominant religion. In this latter group of countries, however, the state provides both the predominant religion and other religious confessions with financial, symbolic and political recognition. While countries like Italy or Germany recognize minority religious rights, they do not, for example, provide any compulsory paid national holidays for them. In Senegal, Indonesia, and India, on the other hand, there are a substantial number of compulsory national holidays and privileges for both the minority and majority religions of the country (Fox 2008, Stepan 2011). Senegal, for example, funds annual Hajj pilgrimages for a number of Muslim citizens as well as a quota of pilgrimages for Catholic citizens to Rome (Stepan 2011). Stepan (2011) has named this the “Respect All, Positive Cooperation, Principled Distance” model as it combines political and financial cooperation between state and religious institutions, respect for religious minorities, and a principled distance of the state from the organization and ideas of religious institutions. Bhargava (2012) has argued that these countries’ “deep religious pluralism,” which was present at the very birth of their democracies, is of a different order than that of Europe’s more homogenous Christian populations and requires a stronger form of religious recognition of these religious communities’ aspirations in order to avoid religious conflict.
Different from their European counterparts, in the “Respect All, Positive Cooperation, Principled Distance” model of Senegal, Indonesia and India, family law, including the regulation of marriages, divorce, inheritance and adoption, are decided according to a citizen’s religious tradition. In Indonesia and India this has produced a remarkable level of sub-national variation among regions with different religious histories. In Indonesia, for example, the only Muslim majority country considered to be a consolidated democracy by scholars (Lussier and Fish 2012), several regions, including the Aceh province, have effectively instituted Shari’a law (Fox 2008).

This sub-national variation in religion-state policies within a federal democratic state mirrors that experienced at the supranational level in the European Union. Given the diversity of religion-state relations described above in Europe and the various ways they impact and respond to different cultural, ideological, institutional and religious contexts, it might be odd to imagine that the European Union could exercise any coherent religious liberty policy. In the following section, the chapter explores how the European Union has attempted to do so, how that differs from the American approach, and what that means for EU and US foreign policymaking.

*Implications for US Foreign Policy Making*

In 1998, US Congress signed the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) into law. The law recognized the importance of promoting religious freedom as an integral part of US foreign policy and, among other things, it authorized the issuing of sanctions to foreign countries which violated religious freedom (Farr 2012). As world events rapidly pushed religion to the forefront of global politics and the United States found itself increasingly trying to engage religious actors as a consequence, the exact nature of this mandate to promote religious liberty became urgent.
Partly as an attempt to clarify its meaning, the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs published (2010) an important policy brief which dealt with how to engage religious communities in US foreign policy. The brief came up with several guiding policies, some of which were institutionalized by President Obama following his 2009 Cairo speech. The briefing, for example, wrote how the United States should promote democracy in such a way which could also recognize the “legitimate aspirations of religious communities,” including those raised by religious parties.

At the same time, however, the document continued to struggle with how to define, and thus promote, religious liberty in these relationships. In particular, the briefing could not make up its mind about the “no establishment” clause. While it was clear that violent forms of religious persecution represented violations of religious liberty, more delicate was the question of how to approach states, including US allies in the Middle East, who publically sought to promote and preserve a national religious tradition. In general, the Chicago document places “no establishment” as a normative policy goal and, in doing so, it endorses a universal model of religious liberty which implies separation of church and state. This position, however, spawned a minority dissenting opinion in the document itself and a broad academic debate about the applicability of the no establishment clause and its normative place in foreign policy promotion (see Sullivan, Hurd, Mahmood and Danchin 2015). Some scholars have defended the IRFA and the pressure it exerts on states to end the persecution of religious minorities (Farr 2012, Philpott 2014). Other scholars have argued that the IRFA’s American centric understanding of religious liberty has damaged its ability to promote religious liberty abroad (Mahmood and Danchin 2014, Sullivan, Hurd, Mahmood and Danchin 2015). Failing to recognize the varieties of unsecular
religion and state arrangements highlighted above has unnecessarily alienated potential allies who seek to promote religious liberty but also to protect their religious traditions.

Given the wide variety of religion-state arrangements present in its borders, the European Union simply cannot agree to any universal model of religion, state and democracy and, unlike the Unite States, simply has to accept that religious liberty can be encased in different religion-state arrangements.

In one sense, this lack of religion-state coherence within the European Union is an enormous disadvantage when it comes to promoting religious liberty abroad and can frustrate the expectations of potential partners looking hopefully to the European Union’s policies. When the current government of Turkey, for example, brought a ban on the wearing of headscarves in public schools before the European Court of Human Rights, it had hoped that the Court would rule against the ban in the name of religious liberty. It has been argued that the Court’s failure to do so represented a key reason for the Turkish government’s subsequent loss of enthusiasm for EU membership (Stepan and Kuru 2012).

In another sense, however, this very diversity also represents a potential advantage for EU foreign policy making and its engagement across the religious divides separating out much of the global South and East from the global North and West. This diversity allows the European Union to recognize, in a more substantive way, the “legitimate aspirations of religious communities,” and the legitimate bandwidth of un-separation of church and state possible in a democracy that also respects religious liberty. What the European Union is more effectively placed to do is to accept these possibilities of religious democracy, and, at the same time, try to channel their existing policies of freedom and democracy. As Joe Weiler (2010) argued was the case in his defense of the crucifix in Italian public schools against the European Court of Human Rights,
“The Europe of the Convention represents a unique balance between the individual liberty of freedom of and from religion, and the collective liberty to define the State and Nation using religious symbols and even having an established Church… It is also a balance which can act as a beacon to the rest of the world since it demonstrates to countries which believe that democracy would require them to shed their religious identity that this is not the case.”

A more active and powerful advocacy for religious liberty, in other words, might come from a more empathetic religious challenger, who contains within itself multiple experiences of countries who have grounded their nation’s religious liberty in both religious and secular roots.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the comparative politics of religion and state arrangements in democracies across the globe. It has argued that there are a wide variety of religion and state arrangements which differ from the American model and yet are still capable of sustaining religious liberty for its citizens. The chapter further explored the consequences of these varieties of religion and state relationships on the social, political and religious life of their countries. Finally, it argued that US foreign policy making needed to take these differences into account, rather than assume that the only way to preserve religious liberty is through a strict separation of religion and state. Even as the American public and its policymakers largely supports an understanding of religious liberty rooted in the concepts of “free exercise” and “no establishment,” recent institutional developments have proven that US foreign policy making is capable of becoming more sensitive to these comparative dynamics. As the United States has
gained experience dealing with religion, in fact, it has evolved in its institutional ways, creating new diplomatic positions like the Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (in 2008), the Special Representative to Muslim Communities (in 2009), and the US Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs (in 2013). As the strategic interests of the United States leads it to continue to engage with religious actors and communities abroad, more comparative scholarship and study will be necessary to insure that these new US policies are best suited to balance its commitment to religious liberty with its respect for national differences.

**Biographical Note:** Michael D. Driessen is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at John Cabot University in Rome. His research explores the nature of public religion in Catholic and Muslim societies, and he has recently published the book *Religion and Democratization* with Oxford University Press (2014).

**Bibliography**


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1 As evidenced, for example, by its enshrinement in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2 Who in 2000 disestablished the Lutheran Church in Sweden.

3 See http://www.caritas-germany.org/aboutus/servicesandstaff/servicesandstaff.aspx. For comparison, Volkswagen, Germany’s largest private company and the 19th largest company in the world, employed “only” 549,763 workers according to Forbes in 2012, less than half of whom, however, work in Germany. Siemens, another German giant, “only” employs 115,000 workers in Germany. German Caritas is even bigger than the German postal service who employs 467,088 workers and is one of the largest postal services in the world.