

Religious Diversity: Elusive Dilemmas in the United Kingdom



Nomatter Sande ¹ 

¹ Research Institute Religion Theology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa; Social Anthropology and Migration Studies (SAMS) University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom.

ABSTRACT

Liberal democratic nations like the United Kingdom are compelled to support religious diversity. Religion (in its myriad forms) is lived, experienced and imagined diversely in a multicultural context. Dominant and new unpopular religious and spiritual practises continue to grow and complicate the impact of religious diversity. Immigration is, in significant ways, one of the major factors enhancing internal and external pressures for the dilemma of religious diversity. As religions are polarised and fluid, religious actors, researchers, and policymakers problematise and even struggle to distinguish straightforwardly when religion is a resource or a liability. This paper examined what counts as religion and how the UK manages and regulates religious diversity. This paper used qualitative desktop research and a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. The finding is that the religious variety is influenced by immigration, secularisation, and fluctuating policies due to political changes. The paper concluded that religious diversity brings a more accommodating approach to understanding the dilemmas of religion, security and immigration. It further underscores the need for equitable policies that safeguard religious diversity while promoting social unity. This study recommends that there should be cooperation between governmental authorities and religious leaders, which is crucial to effectively tackle rising difficulties in religious governance. This study contributes to scholarship by improving an understanding of the equilibrium between religious liberty and security issues, the effects of political transitions on faith communities, and the significance of interfaith communication in promoting social cohesion and multicultural integration.

Correspondence

Nomatter Sande

Email:

pastornomsande@yahoo.com

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INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity, diaspora, and migration are critical constituencies of social and political discourse in the United Kingdom (UK). Religious diversity is defined by multiple religions and secularism.¹ Although religious diversity is not a new phenomenon,² scholarly attention has taken a “backseat” to

¹ Peter L. Berger, “Further Thoughts on Religion and Modernity,” *Society* 49, no. 4 (July 23, 2012): 313–16, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-012-9551-y>.

² R. W. Hefner, *The Politics of Islamic Education in Contemporary Indonesia. In Islam, Politics, and Change in the Middle East: A Comparative Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

aspects of racial and ethnic perspective.³ Most nations conceal the abuse of human rights within religious diversity by abusing, censoring, or limiting information.⁴ It is given that religious diversity presupposes increased challenges within faith communities. However, the government often overlooks or ignores them. The former Labour Home Secretary Charles Clarke calls this ‘the too difficult box’ that the government is scared to face head-on.⁵ The challenge is of democracy to strike a balance between individual and collective religious rights, immigrants, race, and ethnicity. Other serious challenges include religious-motivated hatred, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim hatred. This could be the reason why political parties show faith-based partiality and religious prejudice. The UK political parties have far-right and far-left political extremism. In 2021, Lord Walney was appointed to “examine the points at which the activities of such groups can cross into criminality and disruption of people’s lives and draw lessons for the UK from the action taken by international partners.”⁶ It is against this backdrop that this paper examines what counts as religion and how the UK government manages and regulates religious diversity in the UK. The subsequent part addresses the methodology of this investigation. The second section contextualises the study by presenting an overview of the religious landscape in the UK. The third section examines how migration serves as a precursor of religious diversity in the UK. The fourth section simultaneously presents the findings and discussions of the study. Section five presents recommendations about theory and practice. The final section presents the conclusion of the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative desktop and critical discourse analysis methods to examine what counts as religion and how the UK manages and regulates religious diversity. The appropriateness of the techniques for this study is based on their ability to enable a detailed analysis of language, power, and social systems. Qualitative desktop research involves the examination of existing material, such as texts, images, and videos, to extract insights regarding social phenomena. This approach is optimal for examining sensitive or elusive subjects, including racialised discourse and electoral politics. Denzin and Lincoln assert that researchers can discern patterns, themes, and correlations that may be challenging to capture through alternative methodologies by employing qualitative analysis.⁷

Conversely, CDA is a pivotal methodology for the analysis of language and political discourse. CDA is employed to investigate the utilisation of language in the construction and reinforcement of social relationships, power dynamics, and ideologies that sustain migration, religion, networking, and belonging. This study will employ thematic and critical discourse analysis to examine the data. This study used thematic analysis to detect, code, and categorise themes and patterns within the data. A critical discourse analysis will be performed to investigate the language, power dynamics, and social structures that underpin the observed themes and patterns.

While qualitative desktop research and CDA methodologies offer advantages in the investigation of racialised discourse and electoral politics, they also have inherent limitations. A possible limitation is the risk of bias of the researcher, as the analysis is subjective and interpretative. To avoid this risk, the researcher employed a systematic and transparent process for data analysis, using techniques such as coding to ensure rigour and reproducibility. A significant limitation is the reliance on current data, which may not fully capture the complexity of the phenomenon being studied. To address this issue, the researcher will triangulate the data by analysing many sources and using various analytical methods.

³ Nancy Foner and Richard Alba, “Immigrant Religion in the U.S. and Western Europe: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion?,” *International Migration Review* 42, no. 2 (June 17, 2008): 360–92, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2008.00128.x>.

⁴ Katherine Marshall, “Towards Enriching Understandings and Assessments of Freedom of Religion or Belief: Politics, Debates, Methodologies, and Practices,” January 2021, <https://doi.org/10.19088/CREID.2021.001>.

⁵ Clarke, H. D., Goodwin, M. J., & Whiteley, P. *Brexit: Why Britain voted to leave the European Union*. (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁶ Lord Walney, “Protecting Our Democracy from Coercion,” House of Commons, 2023, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940_HC_775_Lord_Walney_Review_Accessible.pdf.

⁷ N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (Sage Publications, 2011).

DISCUSSION

An Overview of the UK's Religious Landscape

Christianity remains a distinguishing factor within the religious, political, and sociocultural milieu. In the UK, there is an intrinsic bias to use the Christian framework to define or consider what counts as religion. Christianity fundamentally represents a religious privilege in Britain. By 2050, global religious demographics are projected to include 2.9 billion Christians, 2.8 billion Muslims, and 16 million Jews.⁸ The proportion of Christians in the UK is diminishing.⁹ Secularisation is cited as the main factor causing the Christian decline. According to The Conversation, they “gradually drifted away from religion, stopped believing in religious teachings, or were alienated by scandals or church positions on social issues.”¹⁰

Additionally, religious adherence may decrease as people place more trust in emerging scientific institutions. There is a general perception that secular populations are not part of faiths.¹¹

In the UK, 55% are non-practising Christians, and 18% are church-going Christians.¹² Up to 70% of the UK's population, especially young adults between 16 and 29, reported having no religion regardless of growing up within religious backgrounds.¹³ A possible explanation for this could be that religious decline is generational, and individuals are likely to be less religious than their parents, which has ripple effects on grandchildren. The UK conditions are not unique in Western Europe; a survey of 15 Western countries showed that 14 of the 15 consider themselves as non-practising Christians.¹⁴ It should be noted that there is a slight change is happening in Christianity's demography. There is a significant shift in the reshaping of churches across the UK, with about a 19% rise in attendance by non-white worshippers.¹⁵ From diverse disciplines and perspectives (mostly immigration, diaspora, and religion), there is a growing literature showing the impact of African churches in the UK and across western Europe.¹⁶

Religious pluralism is growing exponentially regardless of the decrease in religiosity.¹⁷ It is becoming more common for British people to be keener on new worldviews they encounter than on Christianity.¹⁸ The decline of Christianity's prevalence has opened a burgeoning non-religious and

⁸ Vegard Skirbekk et al., “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050,” 2015.

⁹ Pew Research Center, “Christians Remain World's Largest Religious Group, but They Are Declining in Europe,” 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/facttalk/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religiousgroup-but-they-are-declining-in-europe>; Stephen Bullivant, “Europe's Young Adults and Religion Findings from the European Social Survey (2014-16) to Inform the 2018 Synod of Bishops,” 2018.

¹⁰ Christopher Wadibia, “Religious Diversity Is Exploding – Here's What a Faith-Positive Britain Might Actually Look Like,” The Conversation, February 20, 2024, <https://theconversation.com/religious-diversity-is-exploding-heres-what-a-faith-positive-britain-might-actually-look-like-223519>.

¹¹ Stephen Prothero, *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World* (New York: Harper One, 2010).

¹² Skirbekk et al., “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.”

¹³ Bullivant, “Europe's Young Adults and Religion Findings from the European Social Survey (2014-16) to Inform the 2018 Synod of Bishops.”

¹⁴ Skirbekk et al., “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.”

¹⁵ Tomiwa Owolade, “Is the Future of Christianity African? How Immigration Is Revitalising British Churches,” The New Stateman, 2023.

¹⁶ Caroline Knowles, “Nigerian London: Re-Mapping Space and Ethnicity in Superdiverse Cities,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 4 (April 2013): 651–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.678874>; Babatunde Aderemi Adedibu, “Reverse Mission or Migrant Sanctuaries? Migration, Symbolic Mapping, and Missionary Challenges of Britain's Black Majority Churches,” *Pneuma* 35, no. 3 (2013): 405–23, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700747-12341347>; Bisi Adenekan-Koevoets, “Nigerian Pentecostal Diasporic Missions and Intergenerational Conflicts: Case Studies from Amsterdam and London,” *Mission Studies* 38, no. 3 (December 15, 2021): 424–47, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341812>; Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Martin Lindhardt, and Afeosemime Unuose Adogame, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (Regnum Africa, 2015); Amma Kyewaa Agyekum et al., “Barriers to Stakeholder Engagement in Sustainable Procurement of Public Works,” *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management* 30, no. 9 (2023): 3840–57; Nyaradzo Mvududu and Jennifer Thiel-Burgess, “Constructivism in Practice: The Case for English Language Learners,” *International Journal of Education* 4, no. 3 (2012): 108–18; Tony W. Cartledge, *Vows in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East* (JSOT Press, 1992); Stephen Hunt and Nicola Lightly, “The British Black Pentecostal ‘revival’: Identity and Belief in the ‘new’ Nigerian Churches,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 7, 2001): 104–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198701750052523>; Jacob Kehinde Oladipupo, “Religion Crossing the Frontiers: Nigerian Pentecostal Dynamics in the Western World,” no. 1 (2018): 49–68; Robert E Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Baker Books, 2006).

¹⁷ Harriet Sherwood, “UK Secularism on Rise as More than Half Say They Have No Religion,” *The Guardian* 11 (2019).

¹⁸ Linda Woodhead, “Intensified Religious Pluralism and De-Differentiation: The British Example,” *Society* 53, no. 1 (February 15, 2016): 41–46, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-015-9984-1>.

religious worldview.¹⁹ The influx of immigrants of religious backgrounds contributes significantly to this status quo. According to the Pew Research Centre, the Muslim population makes up 6.3% of the UK, making it a growing non-Christian religion.²⁰ Apart from the census conducted in 1851, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), working with the Church of England and other faiths, requested the government to conduct a census on religion in 2001.

Immigration: A Precursor for Religious Diversity

International flows of immigration are distributing world religions across the globe.²¹ Over the past 50 years, the UK's religious demographic has drastically changed; the inward migration of minority faiths is partly responsible.²² The movement of people to the UK is increasing religious diversity.²³ Migration to the Global North from the Global South and other parts of the Global North contributes to the UK's multicultural and religious diversity. The reasons and motivations for people to relocate to different places are complex and can never be reduced to mono-causality. The causes of people's relocation include but are not limited to, escape from poverty, a search for freedom and equality, and a quest for a better life and well-being. People are almost certain to bring their religion, culture, and ideas when they move.²⁴

Immigrants' religions permeate most facets of their lives, influencing behaviour²⁵ and providing social networks. Trans-local and transnational networking of religious groups²⁶ contributes to religious diversity. The religion of immigrants helps them adapt to the host nation as they maintain their identity and pursue a productive future. Self-identification is a product of how one perceives the surrounding religious environment, resulting in a sense of well-being.²⁷ Modernisation processes such as urbanisation, mass education and mass media are also responsible for people encountering different religious beliefs.²⁸ To a greater extent, encounters with other religious worldviews help to "understand ourselves, others, and the world in which we live."²⁹ Religion and migrations are pillars at the centre of cohesion, integration and assimilation.³⁰

Trajectories of Religious Diversity Regulations

The UK governance is unique. England and Wales form the jurisdiction of a single legal system commonly known as English law; the others are Scotland and Northern Ireland. In most cases, the emergence and development of religion in the United Kingdom (UK) are sandwiched by the relationships between parliament. The English Christian church operated under the Roman Catholic church for a long time until King Henry VIII broke this relationship between 1532 and 1536. Saint Augustine of Canterbury is accredited as the responsible missionary to England. The King established the church of England, and he was its supreme head. However, some people followed the Catholic church, and others were commonly known as nonconformists or dissenters (UK Parliament, n.d).

¹⁹ Najuah Sael Basheer et al., "Social Death of the Older Adult Population Reinforced in Pandemic Times," *Revista Bioética* 31 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1590/1983-803420233407en>.

²⁰ Skirbekk et al., "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050."

²¹ Skirbekk et al., "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050."

²² Simon Perfect, Ben Ryan, and Kristin Aune, "Faith and Belief on Campus: Division and Cohesion Exploring Student Faith and Belief Societies," in *Religious London Faith in a Global City*, ed. Paul Bickley and Nathan Mladin (Theos, 2020).

²³ Kristen Allen, "Achieving Interfaith Maturity through University Interfaith Programmes in the United Kingdom," *Cogent Education* 3, no. 1 (December 31, 2016): 1261578, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1261578>.

²⁴ Nomatter Sande, "Interfaith Networks, the African Diaspora and Development: The Case of the United Kingdom," 2022, 289–302, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-89807-6_16.

²⁵ Jason T Downer and Robert C Pianta, "Academic and Cognitive Functioning in First Grade: Associations with Earlier Home and Child Care Predictors and with Concurrent Home and Classroom Experiences," *School Psychology Review* 35, no. 1 (2006): 11–30.

²⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, Lindhardt, and Adogame, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa*; Erin Rooney Riggs et al., "Technical Standards for the Interpretation and Reporting of Constitutional Copy-Number Variants: A Joint Consensus Recommendation of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) and the Clinical Genome Resource (ClinGen)," *Genetics in Medicine* 22, no. 2 (February 2020): 245–57, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41436-019-0686-8>.

²⁷ Skirbekk et al., "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050."

²⁸ Peter L. Berger, *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2014).

²⁹ John Valk, "Religion or Worldview: Enhancing Dialogue in the Public Square," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 14, no. 1 (2009): 1–16, 6.

³⁰ James Beckford, "Religious Diversity and Social Problems: The Case of Britain," in *Religion and Social Problems*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2011).

Appointed bishops and deans of cathedrals sit in the House of Lords and advise the Prime Minister. According to Barnes, Northern Ireland is more religious than the rest of the UK.³¹ Notable tensions are visible between Catholic nationalists and Protestants Unionists.³²

There is no central register for religions or an official body with the duty to recognise groupings or individuals as 'religions.' Without distinguishing religious and non-religious groupings, the government expects both to follow the country's laws. Still, religious groups can register as religious charities and engage in inter-faith dialogues. The 'gift aid scheme' was introduced to encourage religious entities to register as charities, allowing a reclaim of 20% of the Basic Rate income tax money donated to the religious charity. Conversely, not all religious entities register as charities, and some prefer to register aspects of their companies so they can trade as businesses.³³ There is the possibility of registering both as a charity or as a company. In England and Wales, the Charities Commission was introduced to regulate and ensure that charities are accountable for the monies they raise. Religious charities must enhance religion for the benefit of the public.³⁴ In England and Wales, religious institutions make up about 27% of charities.³⁵

Religious entities participate under the Integration and Community Rights, tackling extremism and hate crime. Religion must declare their income to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. To avoid favouritism for Christianity, the Charity Commission's law sought to engage religious diversity and registered religions such as Hindu, Sikh, and Judaism.³⁶ In 2006, the Charity Act adopted religious plurality to embrace religions that believe in one or more gods and religions which do not believe in God. In 1994, the Ecclesiastical Exception Listed Building Order stated that the buildings dedicated as places of worship are exempted from planning control, but government guidance must be sought for any changes affecting places of worship.³⁷

Religious freedom has been necessitated by secularisation and diversification over time. In 1994, the Sunday Trading Act allowed shops to open and trade on Sundays. The Human Rights Act 1998 further reinforces the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations of 2003 reinforces the rights of persons within workplaces. To reduce hatred against one's religion or race, the Racial and Religious Hatred Act was introduced in 2006 (Racial and Religious Hatred Act, 2006). Religious discrimination is prohibited by The Equality Act 2006 (2006). The Terrorism Act 2000 and 2006 was introduced to delineate and regulate all acts of terrorism. Building on the Race and Religious Hatred Act 2006, the UK government lodged a £60 million campaign against anti-terrorism branded 'PREVENT' from 2007-2010. In 2006, the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund received £ 13,8 million; another £7.5 million was added in 2008. O'Toole et al. said this "was easily the largest single investment ever made in British Muslim civil society."³⁸ Such an amount raised eyebrows with other faiths and triggered a debate about whether the UK government sought a peace treaty.

The UK government applies a religious policy window to regulate interreligious and multireligious relationships; it was opened by Tony Blair in 1997. According to Kingdon, a 'policy window is an opportunity' for particular parties (e.g., interest groups, lobbyists, politicians) to advance their favoured 'solutions ... special problems ... project or concern' with respect to 'given initiatives'.³⁹ He further explains that: a window opens because of a change in the political system (e.g., a change of

³¹ Jasmine Fledderjohann and Liberty Walther Barnes, "Reimagining Infertility: A Critical Examination of Fertility Norms, Geopolitics and Survey Bias," *Health Policy and Planning* 33, no. 1 (2018): 34–40.

³² Servais Pinckaers, John R. Berkman, and Craig Steven Titus, *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press., 2012).

³³ Company House, n.d.

³⁴ Charity Commission for England and Wales, n.d.

³⁵ Rachel Wharton and Lucy Las Casas, "What a Difference a Faith Makes," Think NPC, November 29, 2016, <https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/what-a-difference-a-faith-makes/>.

³⁶ Peter W. Edge, *Religion and Law* (Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315244792>.

³⁷ Edge, *Religion and Law*.

³⁸ Therese O'Toole et al., *Taking Part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2013), 20. <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/ethnicity/projects/muslimparticipation/documents/mpcgreport.pdf>.

³⁹ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. (Boston: Addison-Wesley Longman Inc, 2003), 165.

administration ... or a shift in the national mood); or it opens because a new problem captures the attention of government officials and those close to them.⁴⁰

The problem with the religious policy window is that it is modified by different political parties in power. Also, the intersection of societal order, socio-culture, and social services agendas is problematic.⁴¹

The government's discussions on interfaith dialogues started in 1936. The UK government established The Interfaith Network (IFN), a charity that promotes interfaith dialogues in the UK. Its primary goal is to promote interfaith dialogue by engaging diverse faiths to understand one another. Keaton and Soukup propose a pluralistic conceptualisation of interfaith dialogue.⁴² Interfaith dialogue goes beyond understanding differences; it promotes a better society⁴³ and allows participants to learn from others for change or growth.⁴⁴ In 1987, the first interfaith network was coordinated. It represents the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faith groups. The registered networks started with 30; in 2000, their number increased to 100; by 2010, the number increased to 240.⁴⁵ The interfaith movement focused on faith leaders instead of individuals or communities.⁴⁶

In 1997, the Three Faiths Forum (3FF), which focused on the Abrahamic religions was established and in 2004, the 3FF included schools to incorporate the younger generations. The 3FF also extended to atheists, humanists, and other minority religions. By 2007, the 3FF managed to include the undergraduate leadership scheme. The MCB was established in 1997, and legal advisory role remains a "work in progress".⁴⁷ MCB was endorsed by the then Labour government and MCB requested state funding for Muslim schools, which was granted in 1998. By 2020, 12 state-funded Islamic schools and over 160 private schools were reported.

In 2003, the UK government reconfigured the Home Office Race and Equality Unit to spearhead issues to deal with the civic version of faith.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the 2005 London bombing⁴⁹ and September 11, 2001, intensified the urgency for solidifying interreligious relations. Intentionally, "to enable religions, separately and together, to engage the socially excluded, facilitate consultation between them and the state, and promote 'social cohesion', money was made available by different government departments."⁵⁰

The UK government uses the education system as an outlet for religious diversity. The downside is that the place of faith in educational systems is confronted with diverse challenges. The first is the challenge of quality religious education and how students perceive religion. Second, religious diversity requires sensitivity to faith-specific needs and is challenging to balance in educational systems.⁵¹ Tolerance to those of different beliefs and religious affiliations is one of the British values taught in schools.⁵² The UK government has allowed prison populations to reflect a faith-

⁴⁰ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 168.

⁴¹ Jane Lindsay, "Challenging the Secularist Assumption: Religion, Public Policy and Civil Service Culture," *Social Compass* 64, no. 2 (June 27, 2017): 262–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768617697915>; Gavin D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000).

⁴² James A. Keaton and Charles Soukup, "Dialogue and Religious Otherness: Toward a Model of Pluralistic Interfaith Dialogue," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 2, no. 2 (May 2009): 168–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513050902759504>.

⁴³ Platform for Intercultural Europe & Culture Action Europe, *Concepts in Practice Intercultural Dialogue as an Objective in the EU Culture Programme 2007–2013*, 2010.

⁴⁴ Leonard Swidler, *Dialogue Principles* (Dialogue Institute, 2013), <https://dialogueinstitute.org/dialogue-principles>.

⁴⁵ Brian Pearce, "The Inter Faith Network and the Development of Inter Faith Relations in Britain," in *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* (Routledge, 2012), 6.

⁴⁶ J. Lewis and C. Dando, "Faith in the System? State-Funded Faith Schools in England and Human Rights," in *Religion, Equalities, and Inequalities*, ed. D. Llewellyn and S. Sharma (Routledge, 2016), 3–14.

⁴⁷ Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim* (London: Continuum, 2007).

⁴⁸ Sian McLoughlin, "From Race to Faith Relations, the Local to the National Level: The State and Muslim Organisations in Britain," in *Muslim Organisations and the State: European Perspectives*, ed. A. Kreienbrink and M. Bodenstei (Numberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2010).

⁴⁹ Andrew Wingate, "Celebrating Difference: Remaining Faithful-How to Live in a Multi Faith World" (DLT, 2002).

⁵⁰ Lewis and Dando, "Faith in the System? State-Funded Faith Schools in England and Human Rights."

⁵¹ Lisa K Gundry, Laurel F Ofstein, and Jill R Kickul, "Seeing around Corners: How Creativity Skills in Entrepreneurship Education Influence Innovation in Business," *The International Journal of Management Education* 12, no. 3 (2014): 529–38.

⁵² Department of Basic Education, *National Curriculum Statement* (Pretoria, South Africa: Government Publications, 2014).

diverse context.⁵³ Prison systems emphasise that the faith of inmates must be recognised and respected. The government acknowledges the contributions of faith-based deradicalisation and rehabilitation programs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The relationship between religious diversity and security challenges is a consistent issue in this study. In UK party politics, diaspora politics, and the known responses to migration, multiculturalism, and interculturalism, the primary concern of religious diversity is security. In a world that believes that most religions claim to have true believers who are decent and honourable, identifying minority believers whose intent is to harm others is complex. In the UK, the role of religion is ambivalent, with one viewing religion as either a security threat or a safety matter. Thus, two broad extreme themes emerged in this study: first, religious diversity as a security threat, and second, religious diversity as a safety matter.

Religious Diversity as a Security Threat

The increase in global terrorism and extremism is the basis for the increased attention to the need for security. Political actors consistently demonstrate a subtle relationship between religious diversity and terrorism. Immigration and religious diversity cannot be exonerated from geopolitics and security. At times, security threats are brewed by citizens of the host nations. For instance, during the Brexit referendum, race and religious hate crimes increased.⁵⁴ A “far-right British nationalist” murdered Jo Cox, a Labour parliamentarian, for openly accepting refugees.⁵⁵ In the 2016 referendum, immigrant minorities had “higher levels of fear of ethnic and racial harassment.”⁵⁶ Immigrants and their religions are viewed as a security threat.

Although the persecution of Christian minorities in several nations increased in the 1990s, Christians in the UK are hardly persecuted or viewed as a security threat.⁵⁷ Historically, Christianity was central to the UK and the spread of the monarchy. Regardless of the decline of Christianity, subconsciously, it is regarded as the dominant and trusted religion, and all other religions are suspicious. Both media and policymakers have almost singled out Islamist extremism as the most significant threat.⁵⁸ Post the 9-11 attacks and other conflicts have put Muslim migrants under more security surveillance. It is easy to imagine that immigrant religions are viewed as a threat to national security. This is required by the fact that religious diversity goes beyond operating within host nations; it may include reproducing their home country’s religious conflicts within their host nations. Opposing and hostile religious groups, especially when they conflict with one another, raise security alarms. Causes of conflicts include feelings of blasphemy, marriage, leadership, and appropriate women’s roles.

In host countries, immigrants continue to practise religious and cultural values, raising safeguarding and security threats. Religious activities of immigrants are informed by ‘individual’ and ‘contextual’ factors.⁵⁹ For instance, female genital mutilation sometimes has loose connections to religious activities. In the UK, genital mutilation practises are a security matter. The practise is not only violence against women and girls but also an abuse of their human rights. It is expected that

⁵³ HM Inspectorate of Prisons., ““HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2014–15.”, 2015.

⁵⁴ Matthew L Williams, Pete Burnap, and Luke Sloan, “Towards an Ethical Framework for Publishing Twitter Data in Social Research: Taking into Account Users’ Views, Online Context and Algorithmic Estimation,” *Sociology* 51, no. 6 (2017): 1149–68.

⁵⁵ Edward J. Malecki, “Chapter 3 Entrepreneurs, Networks, and Economic Development: A Review of Recent Research,” in *Reflections and Extensions on Key Papers of the First Twenty-Five Years of Advances*, ed. J. Katz and A. Corbett (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2018), 71–116, <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1074-754020180000020010>. P, 20

⁵⁶ Alita Nandi and Renee Reichl Luthra, “The EU Referendum and Experiences and Fear of Ethnic and Racial Harassment: Variation Across Individuals and Communities in England,” *Frontiers in Sociology* 6 (May 14, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.660286>.

⁵⁷ Allen D. Hertzke and Daniel Philpott, “Defending the Faiths,” *National Interest* 61 (2000): 74–81; Allen D. Hertzke, *Freeing God’s Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

⁵⁸ M15 Security Service, “Director General Ken McCallum Makes First Public Address,” M15, 2020, www.mi5.gov.uk/news/director-general-ken-mccallum-makes-first-public-address.

⁵⁹ Ken O’Connor, *How to Grade for Learning, K-12* (Corwin Press, 2009); Frank Van Tubergen, “Religious Affiliation and Attendance Among Immigrants in Eight Western Countries: Individual and Contextual Effects,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45, no. 1 (March 9, 2006): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2006.00002.x>.

“members of some ethno-religious migrant groups find it hard to distance themselves from the religious norms of their communities.”⁶⁰ The Home Secretary, Priti Patel appointed Nimco Ali Obe to “advise the UK government on its pivotal efforts to end violence against women and girls.”⁶¹

Another security issue concerns how to provide religious education. The education system needs to teach faith and religious matters in depth, yet most detailed teachings are found in settings where the religion is practised. For instance, most religions conduct religious education on Saturdays or Sundays. Both Yeshivas and Christians conduct children’s education and ministries on Sundays. According to the BBC, religious teaching in out-of-school settings has poor safeguarding and health safety breaches.⁶² Besides the safeguarding perspectives, the government views out-of-school activities as sources of radicalisation.

Furthermore, faith-based charities are allowed to collect and raise money in places of worship to cover their expenses; the issue of security is needed to ensure that voluntary fundraising is not conducted with the deception, coercion, and exploitation of people who cannot afford it. The problem is not only the exploitation of the victim’s money but also an infringement on the individuals’ freedom over their lives. Although marriages are widely accepted as crucial parts of families, forced marriages are another area that needs control. In England, between 5,000 to 8,000 forced marriages are reported yearly.⁶³

Religious Diversity as a Safety Matter

On the other hand, religious diversity does not create moral tension or threats. Regardless of how people dislike religion, religion plays a profound role in the UK's life. Most UK diaspora communities practise religion as part of their lives.⁶⁴ Religious beliefs are vital to social identity.⁶⁵ There is a consensus among academics and professionals that migrants can renounce everything but are adamant about negotiating their religion because it gives them their identity.⁶⁶ Psychologists view religion as a means for migrants to meet their inner needs. Religious beliefs are a significant source of the conception of self.⁶⁷ Practising one’s religion and being immersed in a context of religious diversity are essential for immigrants. According to Knott, “Religion and places are mutually influential.”⁶⁸ Contextual exposure to religion builds levels of social trust.⁶⁹ In some way, individuals get a sense of security and stability within their religion.⁷⁰ Therefore, the lived religion of immigrants is a non-security matter but a need for settlement, integration, and belonging to multicultural host nations.

Religious diversity brings safety because places of worship are a ‘marketplace’ where pastoral support, spiritual nourishment and life-practical guidance are offered. Religion is the foundation for collective safety. Clementi asserts that the freedom of religion or belief is security.⁷¹ There is ample

⁶⁰ Beckford, “Religious Diversity and Social Problems: The Case of Britain,” 43.

⁶¹ The Guardian, “Nimco Ali Appointed Adviser on Violence against Women and Girls,” July 22, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jul/22/nimco-ali-appointed-adviser-violence-against-women-girls>.

⁶² Noel Titheradge, “Is There a Problem with Unregistered Schools?,” BBC, February 27, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-43170447>.

⁶³ Anne, Peter Keogh, Vijay Kumari, Ruth Maisie, Sally Gowland, Susan Purdon, and Nazia Khanum. Kazmirski, “*Forced Marriage: Prevalence and Service Response.*,” 2009.

⁶⁴ Rishi Sunak and Saratha Rajeswaran, *A Portrait of Modern Britain* (Policy Exchange London, 2014).

⁶⁵ Jack Citrin, Beth Reingold, and Donald P. Green, “American Identity and the Politics of Ethnic Change,” *The Journal of Politics* 52, no. 4 (November 1990): 1124–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2131685>.

⁶⁶ Pasquale Annicchino and Gabriele Fattori, “Diritto Ecclesiastico e Canonico Tra ‘vecchio’ e ‘nuovo’ multiculturalismo,” in *Diritto e Religione. L’evoluzione Della Scienza Giuridica Attraverso Il Confronto Fra Quattro Libri* (Plectica Editrice, 2012), 345–65; Michael A. Helfand, “*Religious Arbitration and the New Multiculturalism: Negotiating Conflicting Legal Orders.*” , vol. 86 (NYUL Rev., 2011); Silvio Ferrari, *Introduzione Al Diritto Comparato Delle Religioni: Ebraismo, Islam e Induismo* (Il mulino, 2008)..

⁶⁷ Henri Tajfel, “Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology,” (*No Title*), 1981.

⁶⁸ K. Knott, “Geography, Space and the Sacred.,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion.* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁶⁹ P. Gundelach and R. Traunmüller, “Beyond Distinction: Religiosity, Religious Environment, and Tolerance in Europe,” *Politics and Religion* 7, no. 4 (2014): 665–92.

⁷⁰ Catarina Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (October 3, 2004): 741–67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00396.x>.

⁷¹ Francis Clementi, “Religious Freedom Is the Cornerstone of All Freedoms, without It There Is No True Security,” Domani, July 19, 2021, <https://www.editorialedomani.it/idee/commenti/liberta-religiosa-stato-vaticano-ddl-zan-libro-gabriele-fattori-de7wgyan>.

evidence that it may not be violent.⁷² This assertion may be explained by the fact that people tend to tolerate other's religious beliefs in a multicultural society. According to Atkinson, "Interfaith dialogue has a potential harmonising and accommodating framework to support unity within the diversity of humankind."⁷³ Faith groups tend to provide trust and confidence in people, especially in times of need and crisis.⁷⁴ Both religious and non-religious people have positive or neutral views towards one another. A conducive religious context enhances civic participation.⁷⁵ The faiths preached within religious communities provide structure and a code of conduct, enhancing solid, cohesive communities. Individuals tend to derive a sense of self from a social group and use conscious or unconscious behaviour tailor-made to protect the group's culture and values.⁷⁶ Regardless of one's religious affiliation, most studies show that religion positively impacts individuals' well-being and success and provides a sense of belonging.⁷⁷ Believers use religion to dismantle authoritarian structures and empower believers by enhancing human rights.⁷⁸

RECOMMENDATION FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

In terms of theory, scholars and lawmakers should transcend a Christian viewpoint. Recognise the increasing religious diversity resulting from secularisation and immigration. Research should examine the nuanced influences of many religious and secular perspectives on British society, specifically regarding their impact on social cohesion, integration, and identity formation. Importantly, multidisciplinary methodologies integrating sociology, religious studies, political science, and migration studies utilise. In addition to simplistic associations that may reflect bias, further investigation into the intersection of religion, security, and counter-extremism is essential. Theoretical models must ultimately consider the tangible reality of religious minorities and the complex power dynamics in interfaith partnerships.

Inclusive policies that protect religious freedom when addressing inequity must be prioritised. In addition to top-down policy, endorse grassroots initiatives that foster interfaith dialogue and comprehension. Religious literacy of public institutions, including education, healthcare, and the criminal justice system, should be improved. Implement robust policies to combat hate crimes and religious discrimination, thereby ensuring equal protection for all individuals. The significant role that faith-based organisations play in social welfare and community development through funding and support must be recognised while maintaining their autonomy. Regularly evaluate government policies regarding religion to ensure they are grounded in evidence and responsive to the changing needs of society.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined what counts as religion and how the UK manages and regulates religious diversity. The growing liberal democracy, globalisation, and multiculturalism inevitably incubate religious diversity. However, the lived religion of immigrants is a significant contributing factor to the religious diversity of the UK. In the context of religious diversity, the UK has an agenda to manage

⁷² Marco Ventura, *Nelle Mani Di Dio : La Super-Religione Del Mondo Che Verrà* (Il Mulino, 2021), <https://www.torrossa.com/it/resources/an/5705000>.

⁷³ Michael Atkinson, "Interfaith Dialogue and Comparative Theology: A Theoretical Approach to a Practical Dilemma," *The Journal of Social Encounters* 3, no. 1 (August 23, 2019): 47–57, <https://doi.org/10.69755/2995-2212.1028>.

⁷⁴ Deepa Naraya et al., *Voices of the Poor. Can Anyone Hear Us?* (ECR-Partnerships & Knowledge (ECRPK), 2000), <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/131441468779067441/voices-of-the-poor-can-anyone-hear-us>.

⁷⁵ Francesca Borgonovi, "Divided We Stand, United We Fall: Religious Pluralism, Giving, and Volunteering," *American Sociological Review* 73, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 105–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240807300106>.

⁷⁶ Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom, Gizem Arıkan, And Marie Courtemanche, "Religious Social Identity, Religious Belief, and Anti-Immigration Sentiment," *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 2 (May 23, 2015): 203–21, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055415000143>.

⁷⁷ Harold G. Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical Implications," *ISRN Psychiatry* 2012 (December 16, 2012): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730>.

⁷⁸ Kenneth Medhurst, "Politics and Religion in Latin America," in *Politics and Religion in the Modern World*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1991), 31; Antonio F. Moreno, "Engaged Citizenship: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in the Post-Authoritarian Philippines," in *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008), 117–44, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230371262_6; John W. De Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy: A Theology for a Just World Order*. (New Africa Books, 1995).

and regulate religions. The UK uses multiple approaches to manage and regulate religious diversity. The main goal is for all religions to sync with the UK's democratic values. Perceptions about the role of religious diversity remain largely ambivalent, being viewed as either a security threat or a safety issue. Religious diversity causes security threats through harmful religio-cultural practises, faith extremism and financial exploitations. Contrary to this, religious diversity, particularly religion, is a source of safety. Religions promote the well-being of people and society. Religious diversity is a resource to promote democratic values. Immigrants often use religion to maintain local and transnational networks.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Nomatter Sande (PhD) is a Research Fellow at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR) South Africa and a Research Associate at the University of Glasgow. His interests include religion, migration, transnationalism, disability studies and gender.