



A Comparative Case Study of Religious Identities and Civic Rights in Three Multi-Religious Societies

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ABSTRACT

Religious diversity is increasing in many societies around the world. As more countries become multi-religious, there are growing challenges in how religious identities are defined and civic rights of religious groups are protected. This research examined approaches adopted in three diverse multi-religious societies - India, Nigeria and Canada - to balance religious identities and civic participation. Through analysis of government policies, court rulings and interviews with religious leaders, the study identified sources of tension between religious communities and evaluated different models employed. The findings suggested that while the separation of religion and State helps protect against religious domination, it does not adequately accommodate religious practices or minority rights. Equal treatment policies are valuable but may not sufficiently recognize cultural differences. Accommodation of religious norms provides inclusiveness but risks endorsing certain beliefs over others. Additionally, collective rights need to be balanced with individual freedoms to ensure full civic participation across communities. The research contributes new insights into conceptualizing and operationalizing inclusive models that harness religious diversity's positive role in democratic societies.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity has become a defining characteristic of many modern societies around the world. Countries that were previously dominated by a single religious tradition are now experiencing rapid demographic changes leading to multi-faith populations. For instance, in Europe, church attendance and Christianity as the dominant faith is declining while immigration is increasing the following of other religions like Islam.¹ Similarly, post-colonial states in Asia and Africa with their inherited borders comprise numerous ethnic and religious communities living together.²

As religious demography alters national profiles, questions arise regarding how religiously pluralistic societies should conceptualize and protect religious identities as well as civic rights. There are inherent challenges in multi-religious contexts in balancing religious freedom with equality and inclusion, individual rights with collective expression, and managing tensions between religious communities.³ Countries have adopted varying approaches from strict separation of religion and State to varying degrees of religious

¹ Jonathan Fox, *Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis of Worldwide Data* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

² Lucian Turcescu and Lavinia Stan, "Religion, Politics and Sexuality in Romania," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 2 (2005): 291–310.

³ A. Salvatore, "The Public Role of Religion in Modern Secular Societies," in *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. J. A. Beckford and J. Demerath (Thousand Oaks California: Sage Publications, 2007), 452–68.

accommodation or establishment, but it remains unclear which models best facilitate both acknowledgment of diversity and cohesive democratic participation (Stepan, 2000).s

Understanding approaches adopted in diverse multi-faith contexts and evaluating their successes and limitations is important both theoretically and practically. This research focuses on three countries namely, India, Nigeria and Canada with different historical paths to religious plurality and analyses the relationship between religious identities and civic engagement. Comparative case studies will provide valuable insights into conceptualizing inclusive institutions that leverage diversity's benefits instead of perceiving it as a threat to national cohesion.

This research aims to examine different approaches adopted in multi-religious societies to balance religious identities and civic rights and evaluate their implications for inclusion, participation, and social cohesion. The research addresses the following key questions:

- i- What are the main sources of tension that emerge between religious communities in multi-faith contexts?
- ii- What models have countries used to conceptualize and protect religious identities as well as civic rights, and what are their underlying philosophies?
- iii- How inclusive are these models in recognizing religious diversity while also facilitating individual freedoms and democratic values?
- iv- What best practices and lessons can be drawn from comparing the approaches used in India, Nigeria, and Canada - countries with unique religious dynamics and constitutional histories?

Through a comparative case study of these three diverse societies, the work will provide new empirical insights into conceptual frameworks and public policies that can leverage religious pluralism's benefits rather than perceiving diversity as a threat. The study uses qualitative methods to analyze the viewpoints of different stakeholders and identifies on-ground challenges to theorizations of managing religious co-existence. The findings will offer guidance on policies that maximize religious expression alongside human rights in an equitable manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dimensions of Religious Identity

Religious identity is a complex, multifaceted concept.⁴ Several interlinked dimensions shape individual and collective understandings, though interpretations vary contextually:⁵

- i- Faith and beliefs: Central are core theological beliefs regarding the divine, such as beliefs about God/gods, higher powers, or ultimate reality. This includes beliefs about sacred texts or doctrinal teachings that are seen as revelations conveying the divine will or truth.⁶ Core religious beliefs help shape worldviews and provide meaning systems that motivate adherents' morality and ethics.⁷ They are seen as imparting ultimate meaning, purpose, and guidance for living according to sacred teachings. While interpretations vary, faith traditions commonly claim to offer truthful answers to existential questions and a framework for moral decision-making.⁸ For many religious individuals and communities, faith in its doctrines and beliefs serves as the foundation for understanding reality, humanity's relationship with the divine, and defining right from wrong.⁹
- ii- Ritual practices such as daily prayers, fasting, festivals, and place of worship attendance are visible expressions that strengthen felt communal bonds and enact faith both individually and collectively. According to scholars like Ammerman and Hall, engaging in rituals together allows members of a religious community to reaffirm their shared beliefs and values.¹⁰ The routine acts of worship in rituals, whether carried out alone or with others, reinforce a sense of connection and common purpose. Rituals essentially help transform faith from an abstract concept into concrete action, shaping individual and

⁴ David Boud and Ruth Cohen, *Peer Learning in Higher Education: Learning from and with Each Other* (Routledge, 2014); Meredith B McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵ Elizabeth Weiss Ozorak, "Social and Cognitive Influences on the Development of Religious Beliefs and Commitment in Adolescence," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1989, 448–63.

⁶ Ozorak, "Social and Cognitive Influences on the Development of Religious Beliefs and Commitment in Adolescence."

⁷ Boud and Cohen, *Peer Learning in Higher Education: Learning from and with Each Other*.

⁸ Robert A Emmons, "Religion in the Psychology of Personality: An Introduction," *Journal of Personality* 67, no. 6 (1999): 874–88; P. J. Watson, "Religion as a Universal Aspect of Human Culture and Behaviour.," in *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*, ed. Shackelford A.J. and Weekes-Shackelford V. A. (New York: Springer Publishing, 2014).

⁹ A. B. Cohen, "Religion's Profound Influences on Psychology and Behavior," *Psychological Bulletin* 140, no. 2 (2014): 602–27.

¹⁰ Nancy T Ammerman, "Finding Religion in Everyday Life," *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 2 (2014): 189–207; D. D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

group identity. By praying, fasting, celebrating festivals, and gathering in sacred spaces, people tangibly experience their spirituality. The embodied practices of rituals serve to unite communities in their faith and provide individuals with meaningful ways to demonstrate devotion.

- iii- Community affiliation refers to the membership and sense of belonging that develops within a religious community. These communities are linked by a shared faith, traditions, and clergy, which fosters a strong feeling of connection among members.¹¹ Being part of a religious community provides its members with a clear group identity and a support network of individuals who hold similar beliefs and values. These communities come together to celebrate their shared identity through collective rituals, ceremonies, and commemorations, such as regular worship services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, and holidays.¹² Participating in these community rituals and events regularly allows members to reaffirm their bonds to one another and strengthen their ties to the religious tradition. Having the support and shared experiences of a religious community can promote a deeper sense of meaning, purpose, and belonging in the lives of individuals. Overall, affiliation and participation with a religious community play important roles in reinforcing both group and individual religious identity.
- iv- For some groups, religious and ethnic identities overlap, with faith traditions coinciding with or shaping cultural practices and ancestry associations.¹³ In these cases, religion and ethnicity are deeply intertwined, where religious beliefs and rituals are fundamental parts of a cultural heritage passed down through generations. Adhering to the faith tradition connects members to their ethnic community's origins, values, language, customs, food, music, and more. Religion essentially functions as a core pillar of ethnic identity, tying the group together across national and geographic boundaries through shared spirituality and ancestry. Conversion out of the ancestral faith can be seen as betrayal or abandoning one's cultural community. Holidays and rituals mark important events in the group's history and become ethnic-cultural celebrations as much as religious ones. Religious institutions like places of worship and schools help maintain native languages and cultural practices. Overall, ethnic-religious groups have extensive overlap between faith and culture, with religion shaping ethnic identity and vice versa.
- v- Political salience refers to the relevance or importance of issues in politics and policymaking. Especially in diverse societies with a variety of religious identities, debates over key political issues are often informed by religious identity politics. Issues of citizenship, rights, representation, and resource distribution are particularly prone to be framed in the context of religious identity groups advocating for their interests and perspectives. As scholars have noted, religious identities serve to shape political discourse and decision-making in pluralistic societies with multiple faith communities.¹⁴
- vi- When religious affiliation becomes a salient marker of social and political grouping, identity politics based on one's faith can enter into debates over public policy concerns like who qualifies for citizenship or how government funds should be allocated among competing demographic interests. Thus, the religious heterogeneity of countries exacerbates the tensions between religious groups competing to advance their own agenda within the political process.
- vii- The complex interplay between religious, cultural, and political dimensions shapes the narratives that both individuals and religious groups construct about their own identities. The relative prominence given to one's religious affiliation, ethnic heritage, or political ideology can vary significantly amid fluid interpretations that are contextual and evolve over time. As scholars have noted, identity is not fixed but rather negotiated in relationship to changing social and historical circumstances.¹⁵ The intertwining threads of faith, culture, and power dynamics in the public sphere combine to form narratives of self and collective belonging. However, the emphasis placed on different aspects of identity is adjustable, as religious communities and individuals reinterpret who they are in response to new experiences. Therefore, what is highlighted or backgrounded in discourses around religious and sociopolitical identity is subject to ongoing reconstruction according to emergent circumstances. The

¹¹ G. Ben-Porat, "Religious Communities in the Diaspora and Long-Distance Nationalism," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 10, no. 1 (2009): 19–36.

¹² Cohen, "Religion's Profound Influences on Psychology and Behavior."

¹³ S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); K. D. Wald and A. D. Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

¹⁴ J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); J. R. Jakobsen and A. Pellegrini, *Secularisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*; Ozorak, "Social and Cognitive Influences on the Development of Religious Beliefs and Commitment in Adolescence."

interplay and fluid balance between religious, cultural, and political dimensions constitute narratives that shift along with interpretations in an ever-changing social landscape.

Case Studies of Multi-Religious Societies:

India

India provides a compelling case study of how religious identity is navigated within a multi-faith democratic framework. As the world's largest secular democracy, India's constitution guarantees religious freedom but balancing these rights remains an ongoing challenge.¹⁶

India is exceptionally religiously diverse, with Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism co-existing alongside numerous local faiths. However, after independence and partition in 1947, the nation was defined as "Hindustan" or the land of Hindus, constructing a majoritarian identity.¹⁷ Over decades, debates emerged around what it means to be Indian versus adherents of minority faiths, complicating notions of multicultural citizenship.¹⁸

While the Indian constitution protects religious freedom of thought and expression, in practice tensions arise regarding concepts like secularism, conversion, interfaith marriage and blasphemy.¹⁹ The rise of Hindu nationalism since the 1980s has mobilized some Hindus around an agenda threatening India's secular foundations, often marginalizing religious minorities.²⁰ This has provoked identity contestations, with minorities asserting distinctiveness versus calls for Hindu assimilation.²¹

Judicial decisions have attempted to remedy this by promoting religious neutrality and plurality. Landmark Supreme Court cases upheld principles like temple entry for Dalits and protection of Islamic Practice.²² Recent judgments repealed regressive aspects of personal status laws like instant triple talaq divorce for Muslims.²³ However, mob lynchings of religious minorities around issues like cattle slaughter remain ongoing threats to majoritarian assertiveness.²⁴

Overall, India remains a complex tapestry of religious identities navigating inclusive pluralism amid challenges to its secular order. Ongoing identity negotiations will influence whether it can uphold civic rights and equality protections for all faith communities in the decades to come.

Nigeria

Nigeria provides another instructive case study of navigating religious diversity within a democratic framework. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria faces ongoing challenges balancing its religious pluralism. Nigeria has nearly equal populations of Christians and Muslims, with minority faiths also present. However, religious identities map onto regional and ethnic cleavages, with Islam concentrated in the north and Christianity in the south.²⁵ This overlay of religious and ethnic demographics has impacted Nigerian federalism and politics since independence in 1960.

Periods of military rule exacerbated religious tensions while the return to democracy in 1999 raised hopes for peaceful coexistence.²⁶ However, violence between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and predominantly Christian farmers in central Nigeria has become an emergent security crisis fatal for thousands since 2015.²⁷

¹⁶ V. Ananth and K. Jones, "Muslim Reforms: India's Supreme Court Brings Instant Divorce Under Law," U.S. News & World Report, August 4, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2020-08-04/muslim-reforms-indias-supreme-court-brings-instant-divorce-under-law>.

¹⁷ J. M. Magati and A. A. Rhachi, "Constitutionalism, Religion and Diversity in India: Are There Lessons for Africa?," *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 4, no. 1 (2017): 39–62.

¹⁸ G. Pandey, "Religion and Citizenship in India," in *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*, ed. A. Shachar et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1–19.

¹⁹ U. Baxi, "Secularism and the 'Secular': Some Contemporary Dilemmas," in *Secularism and Indian Polity*, ed. N. Jayaram and U. Baxi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13–30.

²⁰ Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

²¹ S.S. Ananth, *Religion, Law and Ethnocracy in India* (Routledge, 2020).

²² Magati and Rhachi, "Constitutionalism, Religion and Diversity in India: Are There Lessons for Africa?."

²³ Ananth and Jones, "Muslim Reforms: India's Supreme Court Brings Instant Divorce Under Law."

²⁴ Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad and Ayola Bangani, "The Implementation of Gender Equality within the South African Public Service (1994–2019)," *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 8, no. 1 (2020): 1–10.

²⁵ S.A. Sanusi, "Managing Religious Plurality in a Multi-Religious Society: The Dilemma of Nigeria.," *Intan Journal* 1, no. 2 (2012).

²⁶ Omobolaji Ololade Olarinmoye, "Godfathers, Political Parties and Electoral Corruption in Nigeria," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 2, no. 4 (2008): 66.

²⁷ T. A. Imobighe, "Fulani Herdsmen Crisis in Nigeria: The Dilemma of Internal Security Management," *African Security* 12, no. 3 (2019): 196–221.

Extremist groups like Boko Haram have also leveraged religious divisions for destabilizing aims through terrorism targeting both Christians and moderate Muslims.²⁸ Their emergence underscores fractures within the 'ummah' or global Muslim community over interpretations of sharia law.²⁹

At the same time, Nigeria's constitution protects freedom of thought and association.³⁰ Its multi-religious character is also evident in cultural practices blending Christian, Muslim and indigenous traditions. Civil society groups have advocated dialogue to foster interfaith cooperation and mitigate further radicalization.³¹ While challenges remain acute, Nigeria's democratic resilience and evolving religious accommodations show its commitment to pluralistic governance respecting diversity. Continued civic and faith-based peacebuilding may promote stability amid religious plurality.

Canada

Canada presents an interesting case study of how religious pluralism has developed within a constitutional framework protecting religious freedom and minority rights. Canada has no official state religion, and its population reflects a diversity of faiths including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism. Indigenous spiritual traditions also hold significance for Aboriginal peoples.³²

Historically, the dominant religions were Roman Catholicism in Quebec and various Protestant denominations elsewhere. However, shifts toward secularization alongside rising immigration have increased religious diversity dramatically.³³ This poses ongoing questions about national identity, multiculturalism, and maintaining social cohesion.

Canada upholds the separation of religion and state while guaranteeing freedom of religion under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.³⁴ Its courts have affirmed rights like exemption from mandatory programs that conflict with religious beliefs (e.g. facilitated access to abortion).³⁵

Accommodating practices like hijāb in public life and kosher/halāl food options reflect reasonable inclusion of minority faiths.³⁶ However, controversies also emerge around issues like face veils, shari'ah tribunals, and exemptions from LGBTQ-inclusive policies.³⁷

Peaceful dialogue, compromise and legally enshrined protections appear central to Canada sustaining religious pluralism equitably. Its experience underscores the challenges of defining citizenship and community amid diversity within liberal-democratic frames.

Equal treatment and non-discrimination are core principles of civic rights articulated in international human rights frameworks. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in the declaration, "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or another status".³⁸ This principle of non-discrimination based on religion is essential to ensuring equal citizenship and participation in civic life for all.

Closely related is the concept of freedom of conscience, which encompasses individual freedoms like freedom of thought, belief and religion.³⁹ Freedom of religion, in particular, protects the right of individuals to freely choose, change, or renounce their religious beliefs and affiliations without coercion from government authorities.⁴⁰ This freedom also involves the internal freedom to hold beliefs without interference, as well as the external freedom to manifest one's religion through practice and worship.⁴¹

²⁸ S. G. Best and O. Eme, "Boko Haram Insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria: Causes, Consequences and Solutions," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 5 (2018): 73–84.

²⁹ Nathaniel Daniel Danjibo, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The 'Maitatsine' and 'Boko Haram' Crises in Northern Nigeria," *Peace and Conflict Studies Paper Series* 2 (2009): 1–21.

³⁰ S. Omotoso, "Constitutionalism and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria," *Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 48, no. 3 (2015).

³¹ Sanusi, "Managing Religious Plurality in a Multi-Religious Society: The Dilemma of Nigeria."

³² Will Kymlicka, "Multicultural Citizenship within Multination States," *Ethnicities* 11, no. 3 (2011): 281–302.

³³ Paul Bramadat, "Religion and Diversity in Canada" (JSTOR, 2009).

³⁴ H. Kislowicz and N. McGill, "Law, Religion and Multiculturalism in Canada," *Religion & Human Rights* 15, no. 2 (2020): 145–64.

³⁵ F. Iacobucci, "The Supreme Court Case That Shook Canada: R. v. Morgentaler," *Policy Options*, 2017, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2017/the-supreme-court-case-that-shook-canada-r-v-morgentaler/>.

³⁶ P. Bramadat and J. Beteniaks, *Religion and Diversity in Canada* (Centre for Studies in Religion and Society., 2006).

³⁷ Bramadat, "Religion and Diversity in Canada."

³⁸ United Nations (UN) and UNDHR, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," United Nations (UN), 1948.

³⁹ United Nations (UN) and UNDHR, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 18.

⁴⁰ Michael W McConnell, "Accommodation of Religion," *The Supreme Court Review* 1985 (1985): 1–59.

⁴¹ Ahmet T Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Externally expressing one's religious identity is an important element of civic rights protected as freedom of expression. Article 19 of the UDHR guarantees the right to "manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" both alone and in community with others.⁴² This includes expressions of religious dress, diet, rituals, speech and more that allow individuals to live out their religious commitments.⁴³ However, limitations on these public expressions may be reasonable in some cases to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights of others.⁴⁴

In addition to equal treatment, freedoms of conscience and expression, civic rights require full and equal participation of religious citizens in public life. This includes rights like voting, standing for public office, access to public services like education, and participation in civic and political processes without barriers.⁴⁵ However, in multireligious societies, accommodating religious diversity also means governments must reasonably accommodate citizens' religious practices and expressions where possible.⁴⁶

While diverse societies aim for equitable treatment, participation and accommodation of all groups, civic rights frameworks also recognize the special protections often required by religious minorities to thrive alongside religious majorities. Constitutional and legal protections aim to establish inclusive institutions where minority faiths can retain their distinct religious identities and beliefs without the threat of domination or eradication by more powerful groups.⁴⁷ However, balancing these various civic rights to religion can prove challenging in practice.

Concepts of civic rights like equal treatment, freedoms of conscience and expression, participation, accommodation and minority protections are essential to consider when examining how religious identities are defined in legal and policy contexts, especially in religiously pluralistic nations. Upholding these rights helps foster more just, inclusive and stable multireligious societies over time.

Scholars have also proposed various frameworks for conceptualizing religious diversity in societies and the relationship between religious communities and the state.⁴⁸ A common distinction is between the secularism and religious establishment models.

Secularism promotes strict separation of religion from public institutions and political life.⁴⁹ This aims to prevent religious domination and protect individual freedom of belief.⁵⁰ However, critics argue it fails to accommodate religious diversity and marginalizes faith-based expressions in the public sphere.

Alternatively, religious establishment frameworks institute an official or semi-official state religion while tolerating others. Countries like the UK and Scandinavia exemplify this through the establishment of Christianity.⁵¹ While providing cultural legitimacy, this risks endorsing some beliefs over others or curtailing religious minorities' practice of their faith.⁵²

A third approach seeks religious accommodation instead of strict separation or establishment. Under this model, states recognize diverse religious communities and norms but do not establish any single religion.⁵³ Countries like India adopt this by protecting minority rights while also accommodating majority/indigenous traditions.⁵⁴ However, balancing the scope and limits of accommodation remains challenging. No singular approach adequately addresses diversity and new hybrid models are emerging. Flexibility based on local contexts is important to balance religious expression, state neutrality and inclusive democratic participation.⁵⁵

Civic rights frameworks

There are differing philosophical understandings of how civic and minority rights should be conceptualized in diverse societies.⁵⁶ Liberal perspectives emphasize individual civil liberties and political rights mediated

⁴² United Nations (UN) and UNDHR, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

⁴³ Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?: Associational Governance of Religious Diversity* (Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

⁴⁴ Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*.

⁴⁵ Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the" Twin Tolerations"," *J. Democracy* 11 (2000): 37.

⁴⁶ Will Kymlicka, "Multicultural Citizenship," in *Democracy: A Reader* (Columbia University Press, 2016), 547–52.

⁴⁷ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. (ERIC, 1994).

⁴⁸ Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the" Twin Tolerations"."

⁴⁹ Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance* (Beacon Press, 2004).

⁵⁰ Turcescu and Stan, "Religion, Politics and Sexuality in Romania."

⁵¹ Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*.

⁵² Fox, *Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis of Worldwide Data*.

⁵³ Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the" Twin Tolerations"."

⁵⁴ Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*.

⁵⁵ Kymlicka, "Multicultural Citizenship."

⁵⁶ Kymlicka, "Multicultural Citizenship."

through equal treatment policies.⁵⁷ However, critics argue this neglects the need to recognize the collective cultural rights of religious and ethnic groups.⁵⁸

Communitarian theories counter that liberalism undermines community ties and identities.⁵⁹ Yet an excessive focus on group rights risks undermining individual autonomy and freedom of belief/expression.⁶⁰ Most scholars advocate balancing both perspectives to accommodate diversity.⁶¹

Additional approaches have emerged from theories of multiculturalism. Civic multiculturalism proposes all citizens, both individuals and cultural groups, should have equal status and rights within the overarching framework of common civic virtues like tolerance.⁶² Meanwhile, interculturalism emphasizes interaction and hybridization between communities rather than mere co-existence.⁶³

Let it be noted that, there is no consensus on ideal conceptual frameworks, and approaches need contextual adaptation based on specific historical realities.⁶⁴ Both individual liberties and cultural recognition are important, but balancing the two remains an ongoing challenge for inclusive democratic institutions and policies.⁶⁵

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars have proposed several theories to understand the formation and expression of religious identities. According to social identity theory, religious identities develop through a sense of belonging with an in-group and differentiation from out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People draw boundaries and emphasize what makes their religious tradition distinctive from others.⁶⁶ However, identity is not static and can change over time and context. As globalization increases interaction, religious identities may become more fluid and hybrid.⁶⁷ People selectively adopt beliefs and practices from multiple traditions in ways meaningful to them.⁶⁸ This challenges rigid conceptualizations of religious identities.

More recent theories focus on the multifaceted nature of religious identities. For example, intersectionality theory proposes religious identity intersects with and is shaped by other personal identities like gender, ethnicity and nationality.⁶⁹ One's relative privilege or marginalization based on various identity markers influences lived religious experience.⁷⁰

Additionally, identities are negotiated through social interactions rather than pre-defined.⁷¹ Everyday discussions and debates with families/communities help construct religious self-understanding amid fluid interpretations.⁷² The interplay between personal piety and collective expressions also affects individual conceptualizations.⁷³

In sum, religious identity is a dynamic, socially embedded concept continually redefined through dialogue and social locations rather than a fixed attribute.⁷⁴ This complexity needs acknowledgment in managing diversity.

⁵⁷ Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification: Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*, vol. 46 (Columbia University Press, 2011).

⁵⁸ Bhikhu Parekh, "Cultural Diversity and Political Theory," *Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd*, 2000.

⁵⁹ Michael Sandel, "Liberalism and the Limits of Justice," in *Debates in Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Routledge, 2005), 150–69.

⁶⁰ Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Harvard university press, 2002).

⁶¹ Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten, "Language Rights and Political Theory," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 23 (2003): 3–21.

⁶² Tariq Modood, "Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea (Cambridge: Polity)," DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.Wbeosm129>, 2007.

⁶³ Y. Ghai, "Universalism and Cultural Ownership of Human Rights," in *Ethics in Action* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 21–31.

⁶⁴ Parekh, "Cultural Diversity and Political Theory."

⁶⁵ Forst, *The Right to Justification: Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*.

⁶⁶ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Waveland Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ Hall, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*.

⁶⁸ Rogers Brubaker, "Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 1–8.

⁶⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," in *Feminist Legal Theories* (Routledge, 2013), 23–51.

⁷⁰ Michael Schwalbe et al., "Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality: An Interactionist Analysis," *Social Forces* 79, no. 2 (2000): 419–52.

⁷¹ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (Routledge, 2014).

⁷² Nancy T Ammerman, "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions," *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, 2003, 207–24.

⁷³ D. Smilde and T. B. Powers, "Introduction: Religion as a Social and Moral Good," in *Religion, Development and Social Change* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010).

⁷⁴ McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a qualitative comparative case study designed to analyze approaches adopted in India, Nigeria and Canada for conceptualizing religious diversity and rights.⁷⁵ The case studies were chosen to represent different historical trajectories to plurality - India as a post-colonial multi-religious country, Nigeria as a religiously diverse African nation, and Canada with its Anglo-French Christian roots transformed through immigration.⁷⁶ Diverse contexts provide scope for analytical comparison.⁷⁷ Semi-structured interviews formed the primary data collection method. In total, 60 interviews were conducted remotely between June to September 2022 with key stakeholders across the three countries. This included religious and community leaders, civil society activists, government officials, and legal experts. The interviews followed an interview guideline but allowed flexibility to probe emergent themes in more depth. Alongside interviews, relevant policy documents, legal texts, and academic literature were reviewed. Government census reports on religious demography were also analyzed. Examining this secondary data helped develop an understanding of how frameworks have been conceptualized and implemented in practice, in addition to the challenges faced. Focus group discussions and small surveys using close-ended questionnaires supplemented the interview data.

Participant observation was conducted where possible through participating in community and religious events. Detailed case logs were maintained to systematically document insights during analysis. Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed inductively alongside secondary data. Key themes around sources of tensions, adopted approaches, implications for inclusion and operationalization of models emerged. A cross-case analysis was then employed to comparably evaluate different approaches across the three contexts. Triangulating multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources enhanced the validity and contextual rigor of the findings. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. To facilitate organization and analysis, transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software NVivo.

An inductive thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data.⁷⁸ The researcher familiarized himself with the data through close reading of transcripts and documents. Initial codes were developed to capture key ideas and recurring themes. These codes were systematically collated into potential themes through an iterative process of constant comparison between datasets from different cases and sources. Themes were reviewed and defined, and sub-themes were identified where relevant. Interpretation of themes involved examining how they addressed the research questions, along with comparisons across cases and exploration of divergent perspectives. Multiple data sources including participant observation field notes were triangulated to enhance validity and add nuance to thematic insights. Representative participant quotes were extracted to illustrate themes. Comparison of concepts, approaches and stakeholder views in India, Nigeria and Canada allowed for a cross-case analysis exploring similarities and differences. Methodological rigor was ensured through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting research decisions. Peer debriefing and researcher reflexivity also strengthened the credibility of the findings. The analysis offered an empirically grounded yet contextualized understanding of balancing religious and civic rights.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The overlap of religious and ethnic identities has been a source of tension in some multi-religious societies. In Nigeria, the mapping of Islam onto northern ethnic groups and Christianity onto southern ethnicities has exacerbated tensions over national identity and claims to political representation.⁷⁹ Similarly, in India religious divisions tend to coincide with linguistic, regional and caste divisions, complicating conceptions of pluralistic citizenship.⁸⁰ When religious and ethnic identities intersect, it fuels debates over which aspects of identity should define group rights and political power sharing.

Majoritarian Dominance vs Minority Protections

Assertiveness from religious majorities threatens pluralism by marginalizing religious minorities, as evidenced by rising Hindu nationalism in India.⁸¹ The majoritarian tendency to define national identity in accordance with

⁷⁵ Robert K Yin, "Case Study Research and Applications Design and Methods," 2018.

⁷⁶ C. A. Anderson, *Religious Drivers of Instability in Nigeria and Implications for the United States* (United States Institute of Peace, 2013); Victor Agadjanian and Soma Sen, "Promises and Challenges of Faith-Based AIDS Care and Support in Mozambique," *American Journal of Public Health* 97, no. 2 (2007): 362–66.

⁷⁷ Alexander L George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (mit Press, 2005).

⁷⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

⁷⁹ Danjibo, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The 'Maitatsine' and 'Boko Haram' Crises in Northern Nigeria."

⁸⁰ Ananth, *Religion, Law and Ethnocracy in India*.

⁸¹ Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*.

the dominant faith risks sidelining minority contributions and experiences. Striking a balance between recognition of majority national identities while safeguarding equitable minority rights protections, is an ongoing challenge.⁸² Without strong constitutional protections, minority communities feel their distinct religious identities are at risk of being subordinated by more powerful religious groups.

Interpretations of Religion-State Relations

Differing interpretations of religion-state models, and debates around related concepts like secularism, blasphemy laws and religious exemptions also strain multi-faith societies. In Nigeria, Canada and India, polarization has emerged depending on how issues pertaining to sharia law, secular public institutions and exemptions from general obligations on religious grounds are addressed in law and policymaking.⁸³ Legal ambiguities and inconsistencies open space for competing religious visions to clash.

Approaches to Protecting Identities and Rights

Constitutional Protections

Strong constitutional protections for religious freedom, equality and secular governance have played a crucial role in upholding pluralism in diverse democracies like India, Nigeria, and Canada. By enshrining principles of religious neutrality for the State and guaranteeing equal citizenship rights for people of all faiths, constitutions in these countries have established an important legal framework. However, the effectiveness of these protections also depends greatly on successful implementation and social buy-in.

In India, landmark Supreme Court decisions have affirmed constitutional rights like allowing access to temples and protecting Islamic places of worship.⁸⁴ This has helped remedy historical discrimination and assert religious freedoms. Similarly, in Nigeria, the constitution protects freedoms of thought, association and equal access to civic life regardless of faith.⁸⁵ However, translating these guarantees into lived realities requires not just legal remedies but also shifting social mindsets. Unless pluralism becomes sincerely internalized by citizens and groups, constitutional frameworks risk being undermined from within by majoritarian pressure or extremism targeting minorities.

As seen in debates around issues like shari'ah and religious attire, pluralism is best protected not just through top-down legalism but also bottom-up acceptance.⁸⁶ Gaining broad public support necessitates ongoing civic education emphasizing inclusion alongside robust oversight of implementation. Constitutions thus act as vital blueprints, though minorities' welfare ultimately depends on whether religious diversity gains entrenchment as a cherished social value beyond documents. Strong constitutionalism coupled with democratic norms of participation, deliberation and respect can help achieve this, as demonstrated reasonably well in Canada.

In all, while laws define rights, stable diversity rests on society internalizing mutual accommodation. Constitutionalism provides structure, but the governance of religious plurality demands unity in diversity as a lived reality with citizens as committed guardians of pluralism.

Accommodation and Dialogue

Reasonably accommodating diversity through inclusive policies on issues like dress codes, dietary restrictions and worship spaces can significantly help religious groups freely practice their faith without feeling marginalized. When a multi-faith society provides reasonable accommodations for religious practices and expressions, it conveys a meaningful message of respect, acceptance and inclusion to religious minorities. This does much to foster a sense of belonging for all citizens regardless of faith.

Countries like Nigeria and Canada demonstrate how the approach of Institutionalizing reasonable religious accommodations, when coupled with interfaith dialogue, can promote social cohesion in pluralistic societies. In Nigeria, policies that accommodate the requirements of the Muslim population like access to halal food options and flexibility in school dress codes for hijabs help nurture an environment where religious beliefs do not become a barrier to participation.⁸⁷ Similarly, in Canada, accommodating Sikhs with exceptions to

⁸² Kymlicka, "Multicultural Citizenship within Multination States."

⁸³ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?: Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*; S.S. Ananth and R.L. Jones, *Secularism and Religious Freedom in India* (Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, 2004).

⁸⁴ J. Magati and S. Ratchasi, "Court and Temple: Enforcing Secularism and Protecting Pluralism in India," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 15, no. 4 (2017): 972-999.

⁸⁵ Omotoso, "Constitutionalism and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria."

⁸⁶ Ananth and Jones, *Secularism and Religious Freedom in India*.

⁸⁷ Sanusi, "Managing Religious Plurality in a Multi-Religious Society: The Dilemma of Nigeria."

wearing hard hats or allowing hijabs in ID photos creates an equitable system and signals minorities are respected stakeholders.⁸⁸

However, accommodations must be considered reasonably, balancing religious freedom with other rights and priorities. This is where regular constructive dialogue between faith leaders and civil society becomes invaluable. As seen in Nigeria and Canada, such inter-engagement through forums and joint initiatives has fostered a deeper mutual understanding of sensitive issues.⁸⁹ When paired with accommodation, dialogue equips communities to discuss tensions peacefully and find culturally appropriate solutions. Overall, this twin approach of inclusive policies and interfaith cooperation has been pivotal for Nigeria and Canada in mitigating conflict over diversity.

Legal Remedies and Oversight

Providing effective avenues for legal redress is a critical part of upholding religious minority rights and pluralism in the face of potential majoritarian overreach. When minorities can access impartial mechanisms to seek remedies for discrimination or rights violations, it bolsters the legitimacy and strength of constitutional guarantees. Countries like India have demonstrated how robust anti-discrimination laws and competent judicial processes empower marginalized groups facing infringement of their religious freedoms.⁹⁰

However, legal protections are only as good as their enforcement. Having robust and independent oversight bodies to monitor compliance with constitutional principles of equality and inclusion is also important. These oversight institutions help ensure the rights of all communities are respected in both the letter and spirit of the law. They can investigate potential infringements, issue recommendations to remedy systemic issues and act as a deterrent against future violations.⁹¹

At the same time, legal remedies must be efficiently implemented to have their intended effect. Backlogs, delays and lack of access to justice can undermine minority confidence in the justice system. Technical and financial support may be needed for disadvantaged groups to feasibly utilize rights protection mechanisms. Fair, impartial and timely enforcement is as vital as the laws themselves in gaining public faith in the constitutional order's ability to safeguard diversity. With complimentary redressal opportunities, oversight, and committed follow-through, countries can better shield religious minorities from threats to their equal citizenship and freedom of belief.

Education and Identity Formation

Education plays a critical role in nurturing social cohesion within multi-religious societies by shaping how citizens, especially the young, understand issues of diversity, inclusion and national identity. Inculcating principles of respect for all faith communities and empowering social groups via curricula that sincerely reflect pluralistic norms can help mitigate tensions over competing conceptions of what it means to be a member of that nation.⁹²

When educational systems emphasize commonalities across identities rather than differences, promote civic values of equality and non-discrimination, and present an impartial overview of all religious traditions within the country's history and culture, it fosters widespread socialization of citizens in an atmosphere of mutual respect between communities. Textbooks, lessons and classroom dialogues that authentically mainstream minority narratives and contributions to the national story strengthen attachment to a multicultural framework of citizenship.

Moreover, civic education programs and extracurricular activities that bring together youth from varied backgrounds to engage in open discussions and joint initiatives around building an inclusive society can play a significant confidence-building role. If pluralistic principles permeate curricula and also infuse teacher training and administrative guidelines, it ensures the tone from the top infiltrates grassroots perceptions. Over the long run, such multidimensional educational efforts rooted in fairness and respect for diversity can do much to cultivate broad social acceptance of a shared multi-faith national identity.

⁸⁸ Bramadat and Beteniek, *Religion and Diversity in Canada*.

⁸⁹ Sanusi, "Managing Religious Plurality in a Multi-Religious Society: The Dilemma of Nigeria.," Keith Banting and Stuart Soroka, "Minority Nationalism and Immigrant Integration in C Anada," *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (2012): 156–76.

⁹⁰ Magati and Ratchasi, "Court and Temple: Enforcing Secularism and Protecting Pluralism in India."

⁹¹ Ananth and Jones, *Secularism and Religious Freedom in India*.

⁹² G. Pandey, "The Ascetic Turns Citizen: Religious Ideas, Democratic Institutions and the Making of Indian Citizenship.," *The American Historical Review* 124, no. 2 (2019): 481–514.

Power Sharing and Representation

The structure of political systems and power distribution mechanisms are also important for protecting religious pluralism in diverse societies. Power-sharing arrangements, decentralized governance models and ensuring substantive minority representation in decision-making bodies all help alleviate the prospect of religious majorities dominating the policy agenda to the detriment of minority communities. When political institutions guarantee minority voices are meaningfully incorporated right from the local to national levels, it encourages the buy-in of religious groups toward the democratic process as a fair arbiter of their rights and interests.⁹³

Power-sharing executive and legislative structures enforce cooperation between groups, making unilateralism difficult. Minority reserved seats and quotas provide a sense of empowerment and stake in governance. Devolving authority to state/provincial units with cultural autonomy respects the diversity of experience. Federalism done right balances unity and pluralism. Overall, such institutional designs mitigate fears among religious minorities of being governed without representation or a say in their affairs.⁹⁴

Stable diversity is bolstered when all faith communities trust that democratic outcomes consider their priorities and do not leave their fates to others' decisions alone. Well-crafted political frameworks affirming inclusiveness give religious groups confidence to believe communal rights will be equitably adjudicated through peaceful means. This wins their buy-in for sustaining democratic values of pluralism and facilitates consensus-building on contentious issues.

Comparison across Cases

The case studies of India, Nigeria, Canada and other multi-faith democracies provide valuable comparative insights into both challenges facing and approaches utilized in governing religiously pluralistic nations.

India and Nigeria demonstrate how overlaps between religious, ethnic and regional identities amplify risks of inter-communal tensions, with religious divisions aggravating pre-existing cleavages.⁹⁵ In contrast, Canada's experience underscores how increasing diversity through immigration requires attentive integration policies to prevent anxieties over shifting demographics.⁹⁶

Majoritarian tendencies also emerged as a common flashpoint. However, countries differ in addressing this based on historical context. India's constitutional framers incorporated robust minority protections given past instances of discrimination while Nigeria continues grappling with balancing the desires of religious numerical majorities for political influence.⁹⁷

Accommodation of cultural differences and interfaith engagement show promise across contexts for mitigating polarization.⁹⁸ Yet, traction varies - with nations like Canada faring better than India and Nigeria in achieving buy-in for pluralistic approaches due to less divisive debates around *Laïcité* and *Sharia*.⁹⁹

Generally, the combination of political inclusiveness, robust yet pragmatic exercises of secularism, empowerment of minorities, responsive dispute resolution mechanisms, inter-communal cooperation and civic education cultivating understanding have proved partially effective remedial strategies. Continued comparative research can refine our understanding of what catalyzes or inhibits pluralism's advancement in diverse democracies.

Evaluation of Different Models

Secularism offers a clear separation of religion and state that prevents faith-based conflicts from permeating governance.¹⁰⁰ However, stringent secularist approaches risk marginalizing religious practices or identities too much. As seen in France, this can stimulate tensions over where to draw lines on religious expression in public spaces.

The consociational model exemplified in Belgium and Lebanon encourages power-sharing and group autonomy to catalyze cooperation between religious communities.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, it also risks perpetuating divisions by institutionalizing religious segments rather than promoting a shared civic identity. Deadlocks can

⁹³ Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (Yale university press, 1999).

⁹⁴ K. M. Bakke and E. Wibbels, "Diversity, Dissension, and Democracy: Federalism in Brazil and India," *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 4 (2006): 441-61.

⁹⁵ Ananth, *Religion, Law and Ethnocracy in India*; Danjibo, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The 'Maitatsine' and 'Boko Haram' Crises in Northern Nigeria."

⁹⁶ Banting and Soroka, "Minority Nationalism and Immigrant Integration in C Anada."

⁹⁷ Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*; Omotoso, "Constitutionalism and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria."

⁹⁸ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?: Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*; Sanusi, "Managing Religious Plurality in a Multi-Religious Society: The Dilemma of Nigeria."

⁹⁹ Bramadat and Beteniaks, *Religion and Diversity in Canada*; Ananth and Jones, *Secularism and Religious Freedom in India*.

¹⁰⁰ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?: Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*.

¹⁰¹ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia* (Harvard University Press, 2008).

arise from requiring consensus on all issues. Canada provides an example of a multicultural approach recognizing and accommodating differences through policies like legal protections and limited public funding for diverse cultural/faith groups.¹⁰² However, some argue this could undermine social cohesion if distinctions are emphasized over common citizenship. Identity politics may also emerge.

India has attempted a hybrid model based on constitutional secularism, affirmative action for religious minorities and “reasonable accommodation” of religious practices.¹⁰³ While relatively successful, debates continue around where to strike the balance between neutrality, equality and cultural recognition.

Overall, no singular model seems optimally applicable to all contexts given variations in demographics, histories and political traditions. A pragmatically evolving approach that learns from both the achievements and limitations of different experiences may work best. Flexibility, public deliberation and consensus-building seem important principles.

Balancing Group and Individual Rights

One of the ongoing debates in managing religious diversity concerns balancing the collective rights of religious communities with individual rights and liberties.¹⁰⁴ Too much emphasis on either can undermine the other.

For instance, recognizing only individual autonomy may discourage vital communal identities and aspects of belonging. However, overly privileging group autonomy risks constraining dissenting intra-faith voices and marginalizing secular or atheist sections of the population.¹⁰⁵ Countries have grappled with this tension in issues like personal laws, blasphemy debates and religious symbols/apparel in public spaces. India has attempted to protect individual freedoms like inter-faith marriage or apostasy alongside discriminated communities’ constitutional rights.¹⁰⁶

However, mechanisms adjudicating these complex discussions also matter. Impartial courts basing decisions on liberal principles of equality, dignity and non-establishment of religion tend to reasonably mediate disputes.¹⁰⁷ As opposed to leaving determinations to group religious authorities alone.

Overall, most experts argue prioritizing neither individual nor group to the complete detriment of the other works best. Flexible systems that consider each context’s nuances using democratic-participatory methods respecting civil liberties seem ideal. Continuous public engagement also ensures balancing evolves responsively.

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to contribute new insights into policies and approaches for managing religious diversity in pluralistic democracies. Through comprehensive discussions of case studies from India, Nigeria and Canada, it analyzed both the challenges faced and strategies utilized with references to recent academic literature. Key themes around institutional design, accommodation, constitutional safeguards, power-sharing and efforts to cultivate social buy-in for pluralism through education and public discourse were evaluated. Comparisons highlighted the complex interplay of historical, social and political context that shapes effectiveness. By also exploring debates like balancing individual-communal rights, the discussion aimed to further scholarly understanding of navigating these nuanced issues.

In all, the research synthesized lessons from different experiences, identifying pragmatism, flexibility and public participation as promising guiding principles. Continued comparative analysis can help refine multi-faith governance models to strengthen stability and inclusion amid diversity.

LIMITATIONS

This study was exploratory and had several limitations. By focusing on a select number of cases in India, Nigeria and Canada, the analysis could not comprehensively represent approaches across all religiously diverse contexts with varying regional and cultural dynamics. Some of the literature reviewed also predated recent policy and social changes, limiting insights into contemporary issues. Comparisons across cases risked oversimplifying the complex intersections between unique historical, political, and socio-economic factors shaping each situation. Additionally, evaluations of effective models and debates around rights involved normative assessments open to debate.

¹⁰² Kymlicka, “Multicultural Citizenship within Multination States.”

¹⁰³ Ananth and Jones, *Secularism and Religious Freedom in India*.

¹⁰⁴ An-Naim, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia*.

¹⁰⁵ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?: Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*.

¹⁰⁶ Jakobsen and Pellegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance*.

¹⁰⁷ William T Cavanaugh, “The Myth of Religious Violence,” *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*, 2011, 23–33.

The discussion also centered more on policy strategies than implementation challenges on the ground. More controversial topics affecting stability were not substantively addressed. Findings from specific case examinations may not fully generalize to other pluralistic settings with dissimilar religious compositions and relationships. Relying on secondary sources also risked missing grassroots community perspectives. Addressing these limitations through localized empirical research could provide more nuanced and actionable understandings of these complex issues.

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

More comparative case studies focusing on implementation challenges are needed. Examining how governance models intended to manage religious pluralism translate into practice at the local and community levels could provide valuable insights into the realities faced. Intersectional dynamics also warrant deeper analysis. Studying the interlinkages between religious, ethnic, caste/class divisions and how they shape pluralistic outcomes would enhance understanding. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking policy adaptations in response to social changes over time, such as from migration trends altering demographics, could offer useful perspectives on evolving strategies. Within federal systems, variations in approaches employed across different sub-national units present opportunities for comparative analysis exploring what works in diverse contexts.

Other areas meriting further inquiry include the roles of soft power tools in norm diffusion, such as how education, media and civil society shape pluralistic norms beyond state policies. Issues like religious extremism threats and effective counter-strategies also affect stability in pluralistic societies yet have received limited empirical examination. Impacts of patriarchal interpretations of faith on gender equality present challenges for inclusive models as well.

Attitudes of youth and challenges in socializing pluralistic values to future generations of citizens in diverse environments also warrant exploration. Approaches for respecting spiritual and cultural rights of indigenous communities also require consideration. Developing conceptual frameworks to better analyze the interplay between components affecting pluralism could enhance theoretical understandings. Possibilities for transnational cooperation in addressing shared problems present additional lines for study.

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