

Comparative Religion Policy: Understanding Patterns of Religious Participation in Public Policy

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Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction of key concepts
2. Analytical perspective: process of interactive choice
3. Reasons for close political-religious interactions
4. Evaluation: faith-based initiative, general implications

Defining Key Concepts

Religion Policy: All legal, regulatory, financial, and symbolic activities undertaken by public officials that involve cooperation with leaders of religious organizations, or which have direct or indirect impacts on religion

Faith-Based Organization: organizations specializing in delivery of some particular form of service (food, shelter, education, health care, personal rehabilitation, etc.) and base some aspects of their programs on religious inspirations or personnel, such as

- Mission of program is shaped by religious doctrine or beliefs
- Content of program includes religious rituals or is influenced by religious doctrine
- Intended beneficiaries are co-religionists or targeted for conversion
- Reliance on financial support from religious organizations and/or individual volunteers from religious community
- Religious specialists are managers or form majority of oversight board
- Explicit religious terms incorporated into the name of the organization

Policy Networks consist of public, private, voluntary, and community-based organizations that interact to determine and implement public policy on some substantive issues

Extent of Faith-Based Contributions in Selected Issue Areas

Assessment of FBO Component	Domestic Policy Networks in the U.S.	International or Global Policy Networks
Integrated into Policy Networks	Health Care Social policy (welfare)	Humanitarian Aid Health Care
Important but Mostly Separate Systems	Education Media, Culture	Missionary/Proselytism Transnational Communities
Specialized or Selective Roles	Civil Rights, Immigrants, Anti-poverty Rehabilitation (and some job training) Community Development Environmental Issues ("creation care")	Development Assistance Social Reconciliation (esp. local) Mediation and diplomacy Human Rights (religious rights, anti-trafficking) Debt (Jubilee 2000) Economic Development
Minimal to Non-Existent FBO Contribution	Budgetary Issues Military, Homeland Security Infrastructure	Peacekeeping Operations Global Commons

Sequence of Decision and Selection in FBO-Government Relations

- 1. Expression:** Many believers engage in policy-relevant activities (charity, education, activism) or proselytism.
- 2. Entrepreneurship:** Specialized organizations (FBOs) established to improve program effectiveness in one or a few related issue areas; organizational forms follow established patterns.
- 3. Regulation/Manipulation:** Public officials use policy tools to encourage shift in emphasis of FBO programs towards their own priorities (such as mobilizing voters).
- 4. Selection/Networking:** Some FBOs (old or newly established) become full partners in policy networks and conform to established norms, becoming virtually indistinguishable from secular partners, while others remain more recognizably religious in nature.

Result: diverse forms of FBOs and relationships with public authorities

Patterns of FBO Participation in Policy Networks (U.S. and Global)

Domestic Policy Issue Areas

- **Social welfare:** initially responsibility of churches and local governments, later national government got involved in partnerships with FBOs
 - Catholic, mainline Protestant FBOs integrated for long periods of time,
 - African-American Protestants later integrated in urban areas,
 - Evangelical Protestants especially suspicious of government involvement
- **Education:** early schools taught Protestant Bible, Catholic schools established to protect immigrant communities, now many alternatives: public, private, Catholic, Lutheran, other Christian, home-schooling, with many controversies on role of religion
- **Health care:** early involvement of religious orders, technical requirements have made public, religious, and for-profit hospitals increasingly indistinguishable
- **Job training, prisoner rehabilitation, and community development:** uneven participation from religious organizations, closely connected to government or business programs

International/Global Policy Issue Areas

- **Humanitarian relief:** Long tradition of missionaries, later transformed into professionalized service providers well-funded by national governments and IGOs, expansion beyond just humanitarian aid; continued importance of proselytism by evangelical missionaries
- **Health care and education:** early missionary efforts, current system not well-integrated
- **Development assistance:** Religious NGOs slow to emphasize long-term development
- **Peace and reconciliation:** traditional peace churches and local inter-faith coalitions

How Policy Priorities of Religious Communities Change with Relative Size

Size of Religious Community:	Very Small	Moderate	Predominant
Worship and Proselytism	Unlimited religious freedom and innovation	Freedom of expression for recognized faiths; Regulate cults or minority faiths	Incorporate religious symbols in civil ceremonies; Limit proselytism
Education	Self-protection, exemption from public education	Support private religious schools to protect moral values	Impose religious values and beliefs in public curriculum
Social Services	Self-help; Services focused on fellow believers	Outreach to rest of community; Potential basis of separatism	Potential rival to state's ability to reward supporters
Advocacy	Withdrawal from society	Moral campaigns; Opportunistic coalitions	May undermine state authority
Institutional Interests	Protect privacy and right to violate social norms	Limit government intervention in all religious matters	Protect accumulated property; Establish theocracy

Effects, Tensions and Responses

Effects of Religious Belief, Behavior or Organizations		Positive Contributions (As Seen by Political Leaders)	Potential Sources of Tension with Public Authorities	Policy Instruments Available to Influence or Incentivize Religious Leaders
Primarily Apolitical Activities (Indirect Effects on Politics)	Conversion, participation can change individual beliefs, behavior	New members may be open to influence Links to foreign support	Converts may take resources away from existing groups Links to foreign support	Legal limits on methods of proselytism Support “deprogrammers” [Criminalize conversion or proselytism]
	Members enjoy increased social capital (and education)	Emphasize morality in own lives More secure individuals make better citizens Practical experience in self-governance	Some groups may choose to withdraw from society; Religious communities may foster authoritarian attitudes Internal disputes may escalate or become violent	Allow/support religious education Require participation in public schools Protect isolated groups Allow internal disputes to be litigated, or limit financial liabilities [Restrict rights to certain faiths]
Partially Apolitical Activities (Direct Effects on Policy or Politics)	Provide social services to community	Volunteers provide services at lower costs Unique advantages of FBO programs Allows authorities to focus elsewhere	Proselytism Discrimination in hiring or service delivery Distinctive aspects of FBO programs too religious? Undermine responsibility of public officials for services	Provide tax breaks for charitable causes & religious organizations Award conditional grants, contracts Strict oversight of FBO programs [Shirk responsibility, let FBOs do it all]
	Civil Religion	Legitimacy of political regime, leaders Support morality, peace, prosperity Reinforce systems of morality, faith	Some groups offended Disputes concerning limits on acceptable public symbols Religion in public schools Religious and social morality may contradict each other	Emphasize certain public symbols Limit religion’s role in public education Make school curricula faith-friendly Criminalize some religious practices [Require registration of religions; refuse to let some operate legally]
Direct Political Participation	Prophetic voice	Moral standards enhance public discourse Inspire fundamental reforms	Intensity of emotions evoked may foster intolerance; May set unrealizable expectations	Enact needed reforms Promote tolerance; prohibit hate crimes [Enforce religious legal codes]
	Involvement of groups who might otherwise not participate in political process	Empower excluded groups Significant blocks of new voters Highlights new issues	May lack knowledgeable, unwilling to compromise, unreasonable expectations Some religious leaders may dominate followers and gain too much power or influence	Highlight issues, implement policies Mobilize opponents Promote civic education Regulate religious media Enforce laws on corruption [Let religious leaders rule: Theocracy]

Policy Instruments Commonly Used in Religion Policy

Legal status

- Guarantee individual rights of religious expression
- Define stratification of religions: official, privileged, tolerated, suppressed
 - Maintain separate legal systems (esp. family law for religious communities)
 - Limit participation of religious members in political processes (voting, public offices)
 - Criminalize conversion or proselytism
 - Determine who can establish religious schools

Regulatory

- Impose limitations on religious practices to protect public order and safety
- Intervene in internal religious disputes or grant autonomy
- Grant exemptions from laws (anti-discrimination in hiring, zoning, etc.)
- Set guidelines, limits for educational curriculum (in public or religious schools)

Financial

- Deliver public services (police and fire protection, water, transportation, property rights)
- Grant exemptions from property or other taxes (or even collect taxes for churches)
- Give tax deductions for charitable contributions
- Award grants, vouchers for specific service programs (education, welfare, etc.)
- Earmarks, patronage, and other rewards for partisan support

Symbolic

- Incorporate symbols of dominant religion(s) into public ceremonies (including schools)
- Limit public expressions of practices that threaten religious sensitivities
- Protect citizens arrested abroad for violations of local religion laws

Faith-Based Initiative: Policy Evaluation

- **Charitable Choice** provisions included in 1996 PRWORA workfare reform
- Jan. 2001 **Pres. Bush** set up “Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives,” designed to “level the playing field for federal contracting”
- FBOs (“armies of compassion”) could be **mobilized** to improve policy outcomes, because
 - Reliance on volunteer labor enables them to operate at **lower costs**
 - Integration of religious content into programs can **improve effectiveness**, by (1) more holistic approach to personal transformation, or (2) because front-line providers are more caring and less bureaucratic, or (3) giving converts a support network
 - **Uniquely positioned** to connect to hard-to-reach needy groups
- Doing so required **change in public policies**, specifically
 - **Eliminating bias** against service organizations with strong religious connections
 - **Assistance** to help applicants cope with government paperwork, regulations
 - **Allowing FBOs to discriminate in hiring** to protect religious nature of programs, yet maintaining protections against discrimination in delivery of services to clients
- **Consequences:** meager, yet the program has been continued
 - Potential contribution was greatly exaggerated, motives suspect, negligible oversight
 - Example: increase in FBO contracts from 11 to 12%, but decrease in overall budget
 - **Ironic dilemma** identified by Monsma: faith-based programs can only become large with public funding, but funded programs tend to lose their autonomy

Implications of FBO Integration in Policy Networks

Benefits to broader community

- Cheaper implementation of some programs (volunteers)
- Access to resources of religious organizations and individual donors
- Access to suspicious, marginalized communities
- Moral inspiration, legitimation, & persistence in intractable situations

Costs to broader community

- Misplaced priorities and unrealistic expectations
- Mystification and diversion from practical considerations
- May reinforce divisions among communities
- Weaken separation of church and state

Benefits and costs to actors within a policy network

- Insulation from routine scrutiny of media and oversight agencies
- Heightened vulnerability to scandals and to criticism from excluded groups
- Continuing source of misunderstanding within the network

Religion as Competing Source of Legitimacy or Authority

In *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*, Stephen Carter asks us to go beyond “God as a hobby” attitude that any religious belief is fine, as long as religion is not used as a serious basis for policy proposals. Here is the crux of his position:

"Religions are in effect independent centers of power, with bona fide claims on the allegiance of their members, claims that exist alongside, are not identical to, and will sometimes trump the claims to obedience that the state makes. **A religion speaks to its members in a voice different from that of the state**, and when the voice moves the faithful to action, a **religion may act as a counterweight to the authority of the state**. ...

A religion ... is not simply a means for understanding one's self, or even of contemplating the nature of the universe, or existence, or of anything else. **A religion is, at its heart, a way of denying the authority of the rest of the world**; it is a way of saying to fellow human beings and to the state those fellow humans have erected, "No, I will *not* accede to your will." This is a radically destabilizing proposition,..."

– Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief*, 1993, Basic Books, p.35, 41 (italics in original, bolding added)

Is this good or bad for democracy?

Irony: continued vitality of undomesticated religions may be essential to long-term health of democracy, even though no political processes can satisfy their utopian aspirations

Supplemental Slides: Research Agenda for Comparative Religious Policy

Promising Types of Explanatory Factors

- **Strategic interactions** between agents of religious and political orgs.
- **Substantive issues** (Nature of goods and most relevant dilemmas of collective action)
- **Religious tradition** (content of doctrines, rituals, prescriptions; salience of proselytism)
- **Regime type** (democracy/autocracy; welfare state; legal system)
- **Policy styles** (what kinds of policy instruments are typically used?)
- **Configuration:** Distribution of adherents (dominant faith vs. a few or many equal ones)
- **Relationships with foreign powers or IGOs** that support particular religious traditions
- **Path-dependent effects** (example: religious distribution during era of state-building)

Initial Expectations

- **Networks within an issue domain** (across countries or regime types) will be more similar than patterns within a given country or regime type (for different issue domains)
- **Distribution of adherents** more significant than doctrine or forms of religious organization
- **Legal status of religion will increase with proportion of adherents**, conditioned on government sensitivity to external support of minority faiths
- As number of adherents grows, **increased number of FBOs** in each policy area
- **Pattern of religious stratification** dependent on path of state-building process and distribution of religious adherents during that era
- **Protectionist pressure** higher in authoritarian or a democratic regime in predominant religious culture

Supplemental Slides: Defining Religion and Its Public Consequences

Religion: An identifiable group of individuals who share most if not all of the following:

- Beliefs and doctrines, often related to things unseen or unknowable
- Participation in rituals
- Familiarity with symbols, narratives, stories, modes of understanding
- Reverence for sacred objects (scriptures, places, persons, etc.)
- Appreciation of legitimacy of certain codes of conduct
- Procedures for selecting leaders and making common decisions
- Identification as members of a trans-generational community
- Common experiences, social ties, social networks

Religious organizations produce public goods for society as a whole:

- **charity:** provide public services at lower or no cost, especially to marginalized groups
- **morality:** support moral values, legitimize political regime, divert potential revolutions
- **prophetic voice:** enhance public discourse, reform; peace and justice, legitimacy
- congregational form nurtures **experience in democratic self-governance** (Tocqueville)
- important source of **volunteers** for community engagement and of philanthropy
- **liberty:** essential manifestation of personal liberty, freedom
- **Public “bads” include** diversion of resources from pressing concerns to pursue unrealistic aims, and potential to spread extremism & intolerance

Supplemental Slides: Private and group/club goods/bads associated with religion

Private benefits/costs to members/adherents/believers/worshippers:

- social insurance: source of comfort or assistance in times of need,
- sense of meaning or purpose, better understanding of world,
- access to membership services (child care, emotional support), social capital, reputation
- assurance of salvation in after-life, may be seen as being of infinite worth
- reinforcement of moral conduct, increased self-esteem, better health?
- may require avoiding activities pleasurable in absence of religion-generated guilt
- practical experience with skills involved in congregational governance
- requires investment of time, money, effort that might be better directed elsewhere
- may generate false sense of security or righteousness, leading to megalomania in leaders

Group (club) benefit/costs to members as a group:

- enhanced quality of rituals and shared beliefs, especially if high costs involved
- mutual protection, insurance, social capital
- trust among members lowers transaction costs within, increase for ties with outsiders
- low cost access to services (for self or others) in forms consistent with shared tastes
- narcissism of small differences: disputes arise over minutia and dissipate resources
- danger of being misled into tragically misguided pursuits

Supplemental Slides: Linking Policy Instruments to the Core Components of Religion

Beliefs and Doctrines

- Protect freedom of religious expression
- Religious test for office (early states)
- Criminalize proselytism or conversion
- Undermine or accommodate religious beliefs in public school curriculum

Rituals

- Coerce participation in church services
- Criminalize rituals to protect order, safety
- Grant exceptions from criminal law for selected rituals (ex: drugs)
- State-sponsored prayer at public events

Symbols, Stories, Sacred Texts

- Accommodate usage of generic phrases of majority religion (so help me God, etc.)
- Use religious symbols in civil ceremonies

Sacred Places, Persons

- Tax exemptions for religious organizations
- Protect churches from zoning laws or sacred sites from public takings
- Enforce anti-blasphemy laws (hate crimes)

Codes of Conduct

- Enact moral codes into law (prohibition, abolition, anti-abortion)
- Encourage or subsidize faith-based service programs (welfare, hospitals, relief)
- Criminalize behaviors to protect order, safety (example: plural marriage)

Processes for Collective Decisions, Leaders

- Defer to autonomy of religious organizations (leadership, property, doctrinal disputes)
- Separate legal systems

Identification with Transgenerational Community

- Allow religious schools to operate, subsidize them directly or indirectly (vouchers)
- Allow or subsidize release time from public school for religious instruction
- Allow or prohibit visible symbols of religious identification (headscarves)

Social Networks

- Protect right of assembly
- Allow or prohibit religious political parties
- Allow deprogrammers to target cults

Supplemental Slides:

Estimating the Magnitude of Faith-Based Contributions to U.S. Welfare Policy (Excluding Health, Education, and International Components)

- **Steven B. Stritt**, “Estimating the Value of the Social Services Provided by Faith-Based Organizations in the United States,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 37:4, December 2008, 730-742. All figures in 2006 dollars.
- **Congregations:** \$24.25 billion (\$16.69b expenditures, \$7.56b estimated value of volunteer labor)
- **FBOs:** \$25 billion (\$20b National Network FBOs, \$5b Freestanding FBOs)
- **Total Faith-Based Sector: approximately \$50 billion**

- **Total Governmental Expenditures on social services: \$138.2 billion**
 - Estimated from budgets of US Depts. of Agriculture, HHS, HUD, Labor
 - Of this, approximately 11.2% awarded to FBOs under competitive grants, so around \$15b (out of the \$25 billion budget of FBOs)
 - Estimated **1 in 6 service providers are FBOs**, or 7,000 out of 42,000 (IRS data)
- Total of \$175b (\$140b from gov, \$35b or **20% from religious sources**)
- **30% of expenditures go through FBOs** (government or own funding)