



## Different types of secularism (part 2) – Secularism around the world

### KEY QUESTIONS ??

- What different types of secularism are there?
- How do these differences relate to political and historical circumstances?
- Why do people support or oppose secularism?
- Where does secularism come from?

### EXERCISES

- Q1.** Sort the cards to complete the set for each country.
- Q2.** Which country do you think this set is referring to, and why?

### EXERCISES

- Q3.** Did you correctly match the set?
- Q4.** Why or why not?
- Q5.** How is this country's approach to secularism similar or different to others?
- Q6.** Do you agree with the positive viewpoints on this country's approach to secularism?
- Q7.** Why or why not?
- Q8.** Do you agree with the critical viewpoints on this country's approach to secularism?
- Q9.** Why or why not?

### **Positive viewpoint OH**

The country's intellectual founders were very aware of the potential for conflicts and persecution resulting from religious control of states and sought to create a secular republic in which the government could make no law "respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". This effectively established the separation of religious and state institutions and formed the basis for the country's religious pluralism. Despite a strong and diverse tradition of religiously motivated politics, the state is not meant to favour one religion over others or religion over irreligion.

### **Critical viewpoint LM**

Critics of the country's approach to freedom of and from religion come from different directions. In the view of some critics, while claiming not to favour one religion over others, the state allows for the religious motivations of the majority to form public policy, while not truly protecting freedom of and from religion for religious and non-religious minorities, resulting in marginalisation. Others argue that the separation of religion and state creates competition between religions, which drives polarisation.

### **Model of secularism SS**

Essentially the country operates a "free market" approach in which a plurality of religious institutions and denominations compete, with no one denomination officially privileged over any other. In theory the state acts as an honest broker and establishes the parameters within which this competition takes place. No religion has any formal power in the public sphere, but the state is not hostile to religion and many political groups in government pursue policies motivated by religion. The country has traditionally taken a separationist approach to secularism with a separation of church and state. In recent history the country has taken a more accommodationalist approach, with the state partnering with and supporting religious organisations without officially privileging any one particular denomination.

### **Country description NU**

This federal republic is the second largest democracy in the world. The executive branch is headed by the president who is formally independent of both the legislature and the judiciary. The legislature is bicameral (it consists of two chambers of congress). Republicanism, formal belief in equality and freedom of speech have long been established national political values. Taken together, Christian denominations form the largest religious groups, with significant and diverse religious and non-religious minorities.

### **Positive viewpoint XP**

This country has a long history of religious diversity. Many centuries ago the first emperor to unite the country promoted tolerance and observed that "one should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others". The British Empire claimed to bring a new equality before the law for all, regardless of religion. At independence in 1947, this country was declared to be a secular state. Its first leader, who was not religious, saw secularism as the route to modernity. The constitution provides for "liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and of opportunity".

### **Critical viewpoint EK**

This country has faced difficulties over reconciling the separation of state and religion with the principles of freedom and equality of religion. The state has intervened in religious practices and institutions on a number of occasions, for example, in making laws to protect the conditions of life of those deemed untouchable in the caste system. Similarly, laws to create a uniform civil code clashed with Sharia law as practised by some Muslims. Recently there has been a resurgence of Hindu nationalism, which is challenging what it sees as "pseudo-secularism". The prime minister has talked of "cleansing" the country of "foreign" religions like Islam and Christianity and challenging the place of secularism in the constitution.

### **Model of secularism AX**

Whereas other models of secularism focus on protecting religion from the state, or individuals from religion, this country's model seeks to protect different religious groups from each other. This concern is rooted historically in the cultural value of religious pluralism. The approach is fundamentally accommodationalist in that the government treats religious organisations as partners.

### **Country description CX**

With 1.025 billion citizens, this country is the biggest democracy in the world. It is a federal parliamentary republic. It has a ceremonial president as head of state and a prime minister as head of government. The constitution defines the powers of both central and state governments. There is a bicameral legislature, consisting of an upper house representing the states of the federation and a lower house which represents the people as a whole. Hindus form the significant religious majority, with a significant Muslim minority. Christian and other religious and non-religious groups form smaller minorities. Given the country's large size, religions with relatively small percentages of the population still represent numerically large groups.

### **Positive viewpoint RS**

This country was the first Muslim majority country to declare itself secular. For six hundred years it was at the heart of the extensive Islamic Ottoman empire and its leader, the sultan, was both a political and a religious figure. All sultans claimed to be "caliphs", divinely ordained to inherit the authority of Muhammad. But the Ottoman empire collapsed after the First World War and the country's new leader ended theocratic rule, abolished the caliphate and brought in secularist reforms, declaring the country "*laiklik*". The present constitution declares "individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of... philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations" and also "everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction".

### **Critical viewpoint MK**

In practice this republic does not have freedom and equality on grounds of religion or belief. Certain Muslim sects are prevented from opening mosques or publicly manifesting their religion. There is a government ministry to control religious institutions. In the past sixty years of democracy, the secularism of the modern state's founding father has been diminished. Culturally the people do not value secularism as much as the ethnic nationalism in Ataturk's original vision. The election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his AKP party in 2002 began a further retreat on secularist values and a move towards making this an Islamic country with an explicitly religious constitution.

### **Model of secularism DU**

The country is a case study in the introduction of secularist institutions by a powerful leader but without the full support of the vast majority of ordinary people. Its model of secularism is similar to *Laïcité*, with a focus on protecting the individual from religion, and separationism, with a focus on protecting state institutions from religion. The model is largely associated with the urban class and the political elite. Consequently, over time the population has used the democratic processes secularism introduced to vote for parties with anti-secularist agendas.

### **Country description BF**

This country is a parliamentary representative democratic republic with a prime minister as head of government and a president as head of state. The prime minister is chosen by the president. The president is elected every four years on the principle of universal suffrage and does not need to be a member of parliament. A reform was passed in 2017, substantially increasing the powers of the president. The overwhelming religious majority is Muslim (with Sunnis the largest group and a significant minority of Shias); there are also other small religious and non-religious minorities.

### Positive viewpoint OC

17th century thinkers from this country, notably John Locke, were instrumental in establishing Enlightenment ideas of the separation of church and state. Although this never formally happened in this country, the power and influence of the established church has in practice massively declined and secularist values are mainstream in this country's culture. Less than two percent of the population choose to attend established church services in any given week, and there is a strong commitment to freedom of speech. In 2012 the monarch as supreme governor of the established church declared that it "has created an environment for other faith communities and indeed people of no faith to live freely." During the 20th and 21st centuries, progressive liberation movements secured rights for range of marginalised groups including women and religious, ethnic and sexual minorities.

### Critical viewpoint PU

Religious organisations exercise control over approximately one third of state funded schools and use this platform to lobby for religious interests. The country still has the same established church with the monarch still as its head as well as being head of state. The state continues to be involved in the appointment of church bishops, some of whom have *ex officio* places in the legislature through membership of the upper house of parliament, the House of Lords.

### Model of secularism OZ

The country is an example of the slow development of secularism over centuries. With the powers of the established religion being reduced over time, other denominations acquired equality before the law and a culture of tolerance grew eventually to include all faiths as well as non-religious and irreligious worldviews. From the latter 20th century, the country has emphasised more secular democratic principles such as pluralism and human rights. In other ways the state has become more accommodationalist, with religious organisations receiving support and privilege but specific denominations being treated more favourably.

### Country description NI

This country is a constitutional monarchy with an established church and a parliamentary democracy. It is actually a union of countries comprising four members, three of which have devolved parliaments or assemblies. The role of the monarch as head of state is largely ceremonial, with real power being exercised by the prime minister, who is conventionally the leader of the largest political party in the House of Commons. The largest religion or belief group are the non-religious, hovering at around 50% with a significant Christian minority and other smaller religious minorities.

### Positive viewpoint TW

From the philosopher Confucius onwards, this country has had a long cultural history of scepticism and "this-worldliness". It now has the world's largest non-religious population. The country's communist government is officially atheist, but unlike in the erstwhile communist Soviet Union, religion is not banned, and religious freedom is nominally protected. A 2015 Gallup poll revealed that 61% of the population are convinced atheists, 29% were "not-religious", and just 7% claimed to be religious. Official recognition is given to five religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism.

### Critical viewpoint ZZ

In authoritarian communist states, Marxism often operates in the same way as religion does in theocracies. A specific ideology of the state is exclusively promoted as the only permitted orthodoxy of belief, with freedom and equality denied to other religious or non-religious worldviews. Despite the constitutional promise of freedom of religion in the country, in fact all religions and alternative non-religious worldviews are subject to severe restrictions and state controls. In order to be a member of the Communist Party, an individual must not have a religious affiliation. Freedom of thought and expression are very restricted.

### Model of secularism US

While the country incorporates some aspects of separationist secularism, it is in practice not really a secular state. It has a cultural background of irreligion in thought and practice, but since 1949 it has been to varying extents a dogmatic authoritarian state largely promoting a particular brand of Marxist atheism. Religious organisations are highly regulated and restricted where they are seen as a challenge to the state ideology.

### Country description YJ

This is a socialist republic run by a single party, the Communist Party. No other parties are permitted. The offices of President (head of state), General Secretary of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Central Military Commission have been held simultaneously by one individual since 1993, giving him *de jure* and *de facto* exclusive power over the country. The large majority of the population is non-religious or follows traditional, folk religious or spiritual traditions. There is a significant Buddhist minority and there are smaller minorities of Christians, Muslims and other religions. Given the country's large size, religions with relatively small percentages of the population still represent numerically very large groups and are the majority in some provinces.

### Positive viewpoint LO

National law does not *officially* require all those living in the country to adhere to a specific religion and government policy *theoretically* allows other religions to be practised in private. Some argue that the ideological view of the state best reflects that of its citizens (formal citizenship can only be held by Sunni Muslims) and provides a basis for an ordered society.

### Critical viewpoint AA

Non-Muslims, foreign Muslims and others whose beliefs are held not to conform to the official interpretation of Sunni Islam are vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, detention and imprisonment. Freedom of speech is vigorously suppressed. Blasphemy and apostasy are punishable by death. Women do not have the same rights as men. A version of Sharia is rigidly enforced as law, and public corporal and capital punishments, including crucifixions, floggings, amputations and beheadings are common. Religious and state powers are inextricably intertwined.

### Model of secularism LD

As both a constitutional and practising theocracy, the state takes an almost completely anti-secularist approach to freedom of and from religion. In recent years however, there have been some signs of movement towards modernity in the social position of women, who are now allowed to drive for example, and also a curtailment of the intrusive activities of the religious police. While religious and non-religious groups other than the approved religion face severe persecution, there have been some efforts towards accommodating them.

### Country description XV

This country is an Islamic theocratic monarchy with an official religion of Sunni Islam forming the basis of laws. The royal family dominate the political system and balance authoritarianism at home with now a more open image abroad. Partly this is driven by the need to find alternative businesses in the face of the depletion of the country's oil reserves, which have been its main economic driver. Citizens are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, but analyses of the religious make-up of the country does not include the large population of foreign workers living in the country.

### Positive viewpoint PA

The 18th century European Enlightenment was promoted by many of this country's philosophers, who argued against the authoritarian dogmatic control over national political and social institutions exercised by the Roman Catholic Church, in close cooperation with the aristocracy. In 1789, a revolution swept away the old regime of church and monarchy in its entirety. The concept of *Laïcité* emerged as a republican ethic to protect the rights and freedom of conscience of every citizen from religious interference. The current Fifth Republic is built on the rigid separation of church and state. Freedom of religion and belief are seen as purely private matters.

### Critical viewpoint MU

*Laïcité*, seen as the underpinning of this republic's key values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, has at its heart a historical antireligious animus. This has led some to see this country as "militantly secular". In 2010, the government implemented a ban on the wearing of the Muslim burka in all public spaces. This was much criticised internationally as a violation of individual liberty.

### Model of secularism HH

The country's model of secularism has a focus on shared values and identities. Freedom of religion is considered primarily to be a matter for the private sphere, with freedom from religion dominating the public sphere.

### Country description WH

This country has a hybrid presidential/parliamentary system of government. The president is head of state and shares power with a prime minister, chosen by the president who is the head of government. Democratic elections are held for members of the National Assembly, the lower house. The upper house, the Senate, has senators elected by an electoral college of local elected officials from across the country. This country has a nominal Christian majority, with a significant non-religious minority. There are smaller minorities of other religious groups, with Muslims being the largest of these. As part of its commitment to the separation of religion and state, the government does not collect official statistics on citizens' religious views.

### Positive viewpoint YZ

This state was created in 1947 after it won independence from British colonial control. Although intended as a country mainly for Muslims, it began in principle as a secular state. Its founding ruler, Jinnah, told his people: "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed. That has nothing to do with the business of the state. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state." Earlier he had said, "Religion should not be allowed to come into politics. Religion is merely a matter between man and God." Very quickly however, Islamic influence over government began to grow, although religious minorities were given freedom to profess and practise their faiths, something which is still formally guaranteed by the constitution.

### Critical viewpoint ZD

This nation was originally divided into two separate countries, East and West. But in 1971 the eastern part became a separate country, and popular support for Islamist parties in the remaining western part increased. Subsequently, under various leaders, aspects of Sharia law were progressively introduced. The second prime minister, Khawaja Nazimuddin declared: "I do not agree that religion is a private affair of the individual, nor do I agree that in an Islamic state every citizen has identical rights, no matter what his caste, creed or faith be." Freedom of speech about religion continues to be severely restricted by harsh blasphemy laws carrying the death penalty.

### Model of secularism JK

The country makes minimal accommodations for freedom of and from religion, but in practice the dominant religion is closely tied with the state and enforced on citizens.

### Country description MZ

Under the 1973 constitution, the country is called an Islamic Republic. Officially it is a federal multiparty parliamentary democracy, but army generals have always exerted considerable power over government policies. During the 20th century, several military coups were staged which overthrew democratic regimes. The overwhelming majority of the population are Muslim, with small religious and non-religious minorities.

### TAKE IT FURTHER

- As members of the United Nations, all six countries have said they will abide by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Compare and contrast each country's approach to secularism with their responsibilities under Article 18 of the declaration *"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."*. Of these six countries only Saudi Arabia abstained on the vote to ratify the declaration, claiming that Article 18 was not consistent with Islam.
- Look up Mandarin, Chinese, Turkish, French, Urdu, Hindi and Arabic words most analogous to the English word secularism. They might not be direct translations and there might be multiple translations. What do the usages of these words tell us about the different approaches to secularism in the countries above?
- Divide into groups. Each group should pick one of the eight countries and create a poster or presentation on how this country approaches secularism or the relationship between religion, society and the state. The presentation/poster should include the strengths and weaknesses of the country's approach.
- How does each country's approach to secularism affect religious privilege, tolerance and discrimination?