

RB4013: Interfaith Dialogue, Technology and Pluralism

2020

Assessment Cover Sheet for the Portfolio

Assessment Due Date: 2020

Please complete the following

I confirm that this assignment which I have submitted is all my own work and the source of any information or material I have used (including the internet) has been fully identified and properly acknowledged as required in the school guidelines I have received.

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Word Count	2,104 words

Proposed theory on pluralism: Although religious pluralism and co-existence is achievable, there must always exist a dominant cultural, religious or ideological framework within which minorities reside.

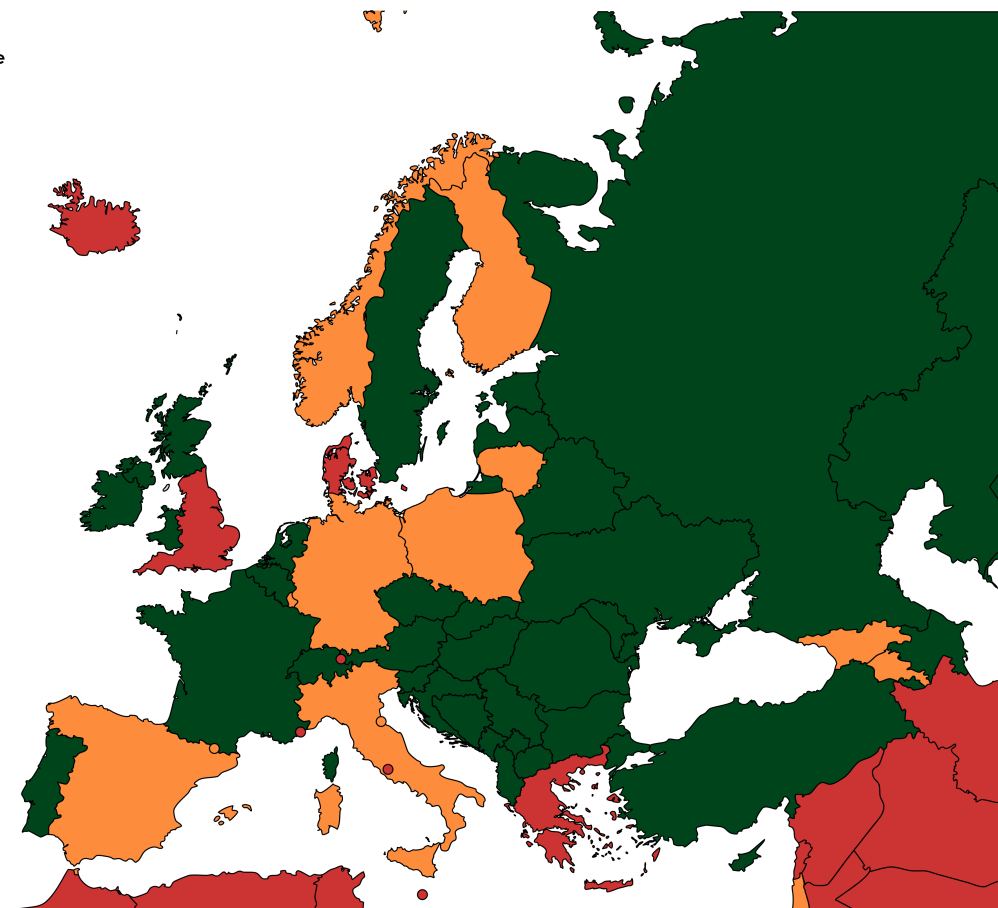
The theory on pluralism that I wish to propose is what I have termed as “dominationism” or “domination theory”. Domination theory would state that even though religious pluralism can and should exist in a modern society, it can only be sustained if it exists within a dominant framework. This framework may have a religious, secular or atheistic slant, but it is nevertheless the dominant framework in which religious pluralism exists. Although the idea of domination of one framework and religious pluralism may seem contradictory, an example of this can be found in almost every country. For example, in the United Kingdom, we live in a pluralistic society within a religious framework slanted towards Anglicanism (Bradney, 2015). In the United States, they live in a pluralistic society within a secularistic framework (Rosentiel, 2007). In the UK’s case, Anglicanism is the framework in which religious pluralism exists and in the US, secularism is the framework in which religious pluralism also exists. In both countries, religious pluralism is readily upheld, however, both have systems or frameworks that are characterised by a dominant ideology or religion.

The argument that dominationism is proposing is that religious pluralism cannot exist in and of itself as there must be a dominant framework for it to exist within. An example of where this theory is being tested is in the case of Nigeria that has an almost equal population of Christians and Muslims. In that country, secularism must be the dominant framework for the country to continue to exist as it is split along religious lines between its north and its south (Reinhart, 2019). Dominationism essentially states that whether a country is religious or secular or atheist, there will always exist a dominant framework by which a country is run and through which it identifies in the majority, whether that be religious, secular, or atheistic.

Applied to a democracy, dominationism states that a democratic system is geared towards the dominant majority but in which religious pluralism is likely to still exist due to the liberal nature of the society (e.g. France and Germany) (Schieder, 2015). In an authoritarian state, dominationism is existent in the dominant minority who possess political and often military power (e.g. North Korea and China) who often don’t allow open practice of religion at all. This does not mean to say that France and Germany are anything like North Korea and China, but this comparison demonstrates the two extremes of the applicability of domination theory and how there can exist a variety of shades of dominationism between these two extremes. To illuminate the domination theory further and to make a deeper link to pluralism and interfaith interactions in relation to the domination theory, I have selected a total of eleven photos for the portfolio.

Separation of church and state
at constitutional level

- Fully secular
- Ambiguous
- State religion



Author: u/FWolf14
Created with mapchart.net ©

(Reddit, 2020)

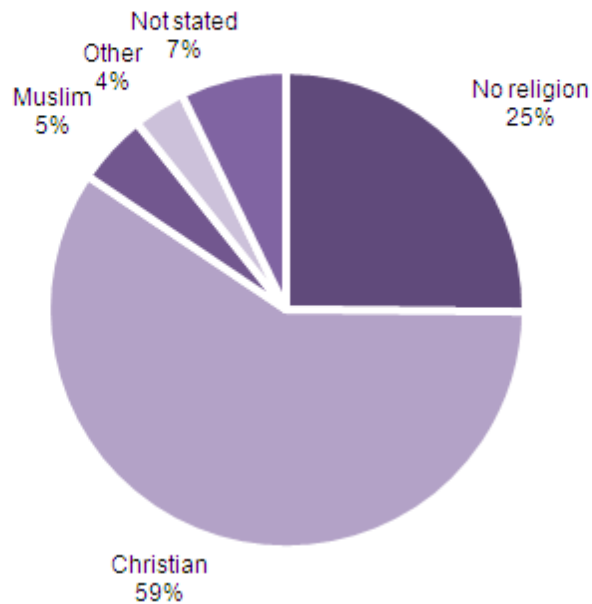
This map demonstrates the separation of church and state in European countries. It not only shows England to have a dominant state religion intertwined with the government, but despite that, the UK has a religious pluralism policy in place. It also shows that Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland and other countries have ambiguous status with regards to the separation of church and state, demonstrating that there is likely a dominant religion in these countries that is intertwined with the government despite the fact that many of these countries embrace religious pluralism. These countries mentioned are some of the most tolerant of minority religions relative to the rest of the world yet they still struggle with the maintenance of their own traditional religious identity being intertwined with the government, hence the ambiguity. The very fact that countries like the United Kingdom, Denmark, Greece and other minor European nations have state religions yet continue to uphold the principles of pluralism and interfaith interactions conveys the domination theory in action. However, focusing on the UK, The Church of England nevertheless has an unmatched relationship to the monarchy that has granted it not only widespread adherence and wealth, but also influence throughout England.



(E! Online, 2015)

Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, with Queen Elizabeth II, as a metaphor for the close connection between the Church of England and the Monarchy. This is a demonstration of dominationism in action by the fact that religious pluralism is still upheld in the UK meanwhile The Church of England is openly favoured by the most powerful institution in the country, the Monarchy. Not only is The Church of England favoured by the Monarchy, but its connections are deep engrained with the history of the British Monarchy's reign. Despite this, the United Kingdom operates a robust religious pluralism ethos nationwide in which schools, employers etc. do not discriminate according to a person's religious affiliation.

Figure 1: Religious affiliation, England and Wales, 2011



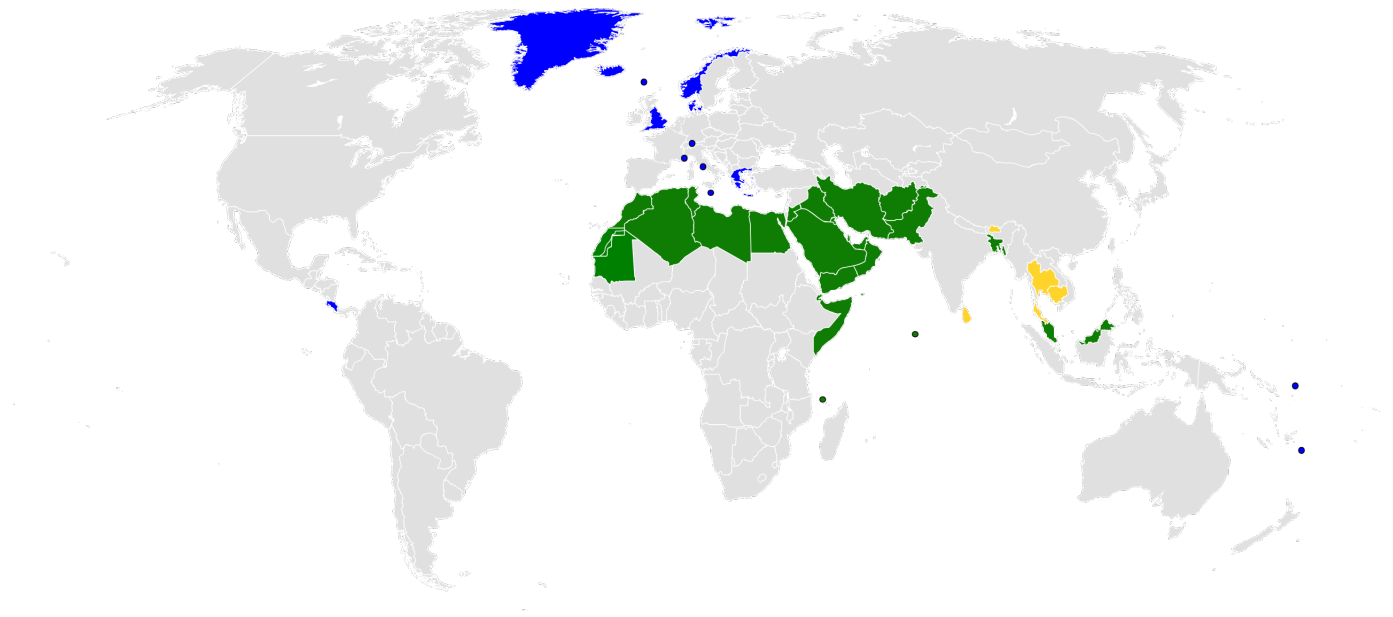
(Office for National Statistics, 2013)

This image of the UK 2011 Census demonstrates that the UK is still a majority Christian country, but one that not only acknowledges religious pluralism, but embraces it. The very fact that people in the UK are given the freedom to choose to state their religion as one that isn't the dominant faith or as no faith at all is a key demonstrator of the UK's pluralistic culture and societal ethos. This epitomises my domination theory in the sense that although a variety of minority religious communities exist in the UK, the dominant faith and culture remains centred around that of Christianity. It could be argued that the UK is moving towards an entirely secular culture in the future, but if that were the case, the domination theory would still be upheld as the mantle would only pass from Christianity as the dominant culture to secularism as the dominant force, hence there must always be a dominant system, whether it be a religious or secular one. As such, members from these different faiths are interacting in society on a regular basis.



(Ivarfjeld, 2013)

As proven by the figures from the UK's last census, there is a thriving set of religious minorities in the UK. These minorities are constantly interacting with each other and one example of such interfaith interaction is the image above. It shows an Anglican priest with a Muslim imam who came together to host an event called "Chrislam" in an effort to bring the Muslim and Christian community together for interfaith interaction, interfaith education and to promote community cohesion between two faiths. Not only does this photo demonstrate the dominant religion interacting with a minority religion in an effort to sustain religious pluralism, but it also highlights how faith leaders have an important role to play in leading and engaging their congregations to engage with other faith communities. Therefore, it can be understood as one of the main responsibilities of a faith leader in the UK to ensure that building connections with other faiths is achieved in order to create a more harmonious society.



(Skov, 2017)

This world map highlights countries that have a state religion i.e. those which are not secular. Notably, the UK has a state religion in The Church of England as that church is intertwined with the monarchy and the government. This further demonstrates how the Church, the monarchy and the government of the United Kingdom are interconnected which has been the case for centuries. However, despite the majority of the countries of the world adhering to secularism, they nonetheless also embody the dominationism theory by the fact that they are instead functioned by a system of cultural and ethical values that although may not be related to just on religion, is nevertheless a dominant force in those countries. As such, whether that dominant force/culture is religious or secular, the postulation remains that a country must possess a single dominant culture, religion and/or system for it to function successfully which is the essence of my theory.

10 What is your religion?

◆ This question is voluntary.

◆ ✓ *one box only.*

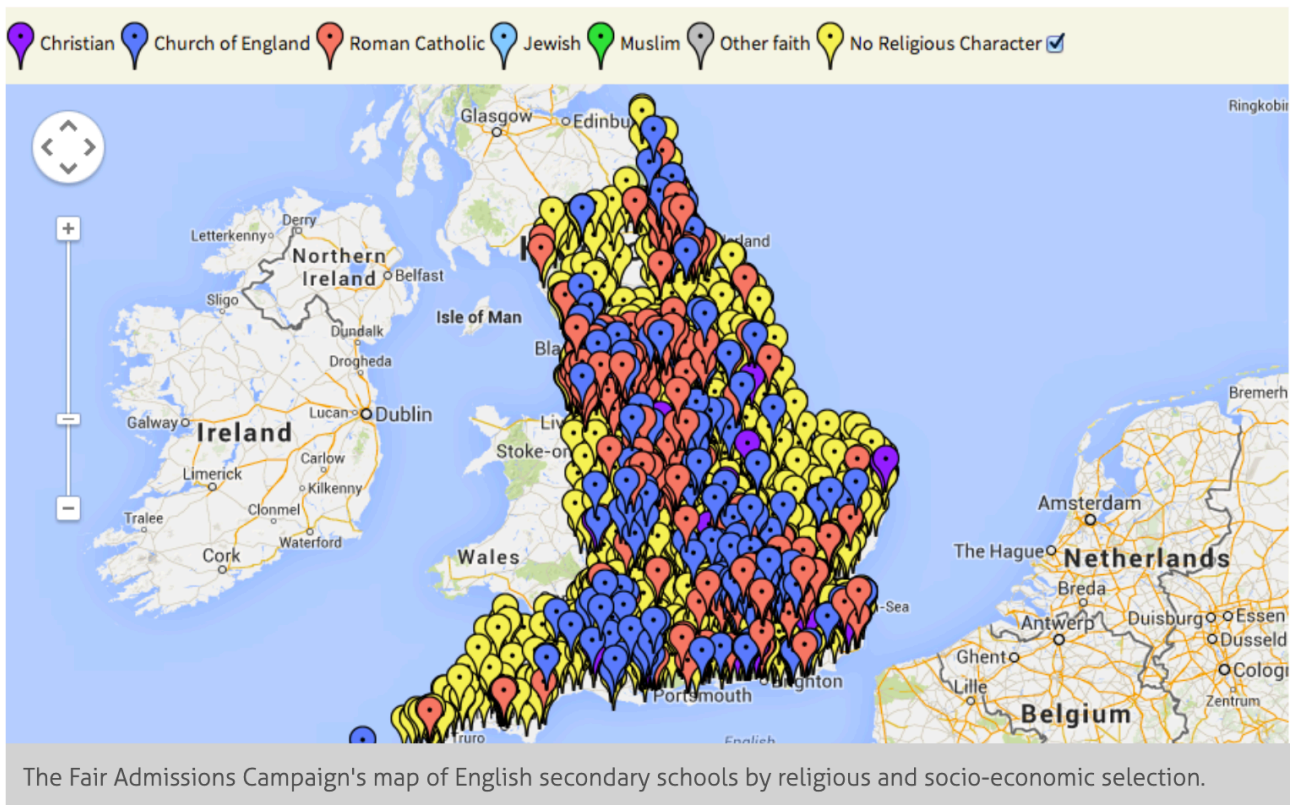
- None
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion, *please write in*

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(Office for National Statistics, 2011)

A census in the UK demonstrating the fact that people with no faith are also included in the religious pluralism policy. It is becoming increasingly important to include those individuals of no faith, agnostic, or those searching for a faith in the religious plurality debate, particularly this proportion of the population is fast-growing in the United Kingdom. Without the same protections afforded to religious groups extended also to those unaffiliated with a religion, the aim of pluralism is undermined. Despite the variety of religious denominations in the United Kingdom, there is only one that is deeply intertwined with the Monarchy.



(Pellot, 2013)

This map above shows that about half of all secondary schools still function under an Anglican or Roman Catholic ethos in England which means that half of all schools are governed according to a particular religion's values and principles. Although this map demonstrates plurality of school governance between Christian denominations, the consensus is still that Christian culture is dominant even though all individuals attending such schools may not be actively practicing Christians. Due to the nature of religious education in the UK being granted to discretion of individual schools, the extent to which pupils learn about other religions in a school governed according to a particular religion's ethos is at the least questionable. Despite the fact that a large proportion of secondary schools in the UK are still run according to a Christian ethos highlights how the influence of Christianity at the political and monarchical of society filters through to influencing make-up of English secondary schools.



(The Church of England, 2015)

The conference of Anglican bishops headed by Queen Elizabeth II as another example of the interconnected status between Church of England and the monarchy in the UK. This is yet another demonstration of the necessity for a state to either have a dominant religious culture or a dominant secular one, as is propounded by the domination theory that I am suggesting is evident around the world, but is particularly pertinent in the United Kingdom.



(BBC News, 2015)

The Church of England has bishops in the House of Lords which highlights the power conferred to Anglican leaders in UK parliament. This image particularly focuses on the political power and dominance of the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom and is emblematic of The Church of England's role as the state religion, particularly as it holds positions not conferred to members of other religions. This highlights how in a non-secular country the role of faith leaders is valued to the extent that they have some influence or a significant amount of influence in the political affairs of the state. Such a privilege conferred to the Anglican Church can be seen as an undermining factor of the United Kingdom's commitment to religious pluralism.



(Best Places, 2011)

Buildings and their positions in a city are also signifiers of the dominant force of a particular organisation. In this image, we see how Westminster Abbey, an Anglican church, is positioned right next to the British Parliament as symbolic of the dominant position of the Church of England. This is perhaps the most pertinent visual example of the intertwined status and superior position that the Church of England possesses.

In conclusion, the domination theory proposed in this essay is visible in all countries of the world, but our focus on the United Kingdom in the portfolio is a pivotal example of how a country that upholds religious pluralism still necessitates an dominant religious identity. Although this identity may shift in the future to one of a truly secular nature or one of another religion, the theory of domination maintains that there must always be one dominant system in a nation. In countries where the religious landscape is diverse and no dominant system prevails, secularism is the most appropriate option to ensure the civil liberties of all citizens.

However, even countries that do embody secularism still remain governed by a dominant ideology or culture, examples of which include the Christian culture of the secular United States and the atheistic ideology of Communist China. Finally, religious pluralism and interfaith action play an important role in ensure that those religious communities in the minority in a country still retain the liberty and dignity to practice their faith without fear of persecution. As such, particularly from the example of the UK, enough though a dominant religion exists (The Church of England), the UK is characterised by its diversity of faiths as well as the liberty to have no faith. This shows that even though we live within the framework of an Anglican country, it is still very much possible to celebrate other faiths and to allow them to flourish.

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proclaiming-its-a-Christian-country-in-its-name-ignore-the-cross-on-flags-like-Islamic-countries.
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