

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SECULARISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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### ABSTRACT

This research work focuses on the comparative analysis of the study of secularism in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The word secularism has been time and again defined but in simple it means a state shall respect all religions, show tolerance to all the religions, keeping religion aside from the political, cultural, economic parts of life. This is what it means to be a secular state. The United Kingdom, United States are secular countries, this research will focus on how secularism differs in all the two countries and also at the same time how they are similar to each other.

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION:**

Before delving into the meaning of secularism it is imperative to understand the origin of this word and how it came into being and gaining an important position in most of the constitutions of the modern world. The word secularism was coined by Holyoake, in the times of dispute between the church and the state in the eighteenth century. Although the notion or the concept or the meaning of the term “secularism”, has always existed in some way or the other, since time immemorial it can be said that British writer George Holyoake had given a word to a meaning.

Holyoake coined the term secularism to express his thoughts regarding separation of religion from the social order but without criticisms and dismissals of any religious beliefs or sentiments.

Holyoake’s definition of secularism differs from its usage by later writers. As the Humanist Heritage website notes, Holyoake provides a definition of secularism “much akin to modern definitions of humanism broader than just atheism”.

As mentioned earlier, the word secularism has its origin since the ancient ages, only that the term had not been defined yet but traces of

secularism can also be found in the Ancient Greece.

In the modern times, there is no universally accepted meaning of this term. However, in simple secularism basically means separation of religious beliefs or notions from the political, social economic spheres of life. A shorthand definition of secularism is that it advocates the separation of Church and state though beyond this there is no universally agreed meaning of the term. Different people mean different things by it and have done since George Holyoake introduced the term in 1846, defining it as “best indicating that province of human duty which belongs to this life.”

The concept of secularism in the modern context has been tailored as per a nation’s requirements, this means that, in each country the word secularism denotes different meanings though the gist of it remains the same.

### **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:**

The objectives of this study are:

- To study and analyze the concept of secularism.
- To analyze the religious beliefs in UK and USA.
- To understand why secularism is important

in UK and USA.

- To comparatively analyze secularism in UK and USA.

### 1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology used in this study is the doctrinal method. The researcher in this study has used various secondary sources such as books, journals, newspaper articles, online sources, research articles etc. which are available relating to the topic of research.

### 1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW:

Anthony Bradney "Religion and the Secular State in the United Kingdom" [https://classic.iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/United Kingdom.1.pdf](https://classic.iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/United%20Kingdom.1.pdf)

The author in this article has clearly described the secular characteristics of the United Kingdom. This article very clearly explains all the details relating to the relationship between the Church and the State, education and religion, several statutes passed by the Britain government in order to promote secularistic views etc. This article has helped the researcher while conducting the research.

Sana Hamid "Secularism in USA- A paradoxical approach?" <https://strafasia.com/secularism-in-usa-a-paradoxical-approach/>

The author in this article has dealt with the political dimension to faith and has helped the researcher understand the exact position that religion plays in the American society and also how diverse the society's views are.

Bhanu Dhamija "Secularism in the United States" <https://presidentialsystem.org/2022/10/07/religion-and-government-in-the-united-states/>

The author in this article has explained the concept of secularism with the help of various surveys and this has helped the researcher gain more knowledge on the topic.

### 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The research questions that this research attempts to answer are:

- Why secularism is important in UK and USA?
- How secularism works in UK and USA?
- What is the role played by religion and belief in UK and USA?
- What are the constitutional safeguards provided to religious beliefs and practices in the various countries?

### 1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:

This study focuses on studying secularism or the secular characteristics of only UK, USA. This study does not extend to study secularism in the other countries.

### 1.7 RESEARCH GAP:

Several researches have been conducted on secularism in UK and USA and also comparative analysis has been conducted. However, there are certain topics in this research which has not been touched other research works in detail. This research has done a detailed study on the historical concepts, studied the Church and State religions and also studied how religion affects the secularistic views of a country.

## CHAPTER-2

### 2.1 CERTAIN MODELS OF SECULARISM:

Secularism means separation of religion and religious beliefs from anything that is related to state. It means to keep the political and religious affairs separate from each other. This is very important for any democracy, as religions or religious beliefs often lead to the rise of sentimental values and this could lead to disturbances in the ordinary way of life. Secularism is that concept which ensures that equal importance is given to all the religions and that no certain religion is more focused upon. This means that there is freedom of religion for all the citizens. Secularism is a very evolving concept and it can be tailored as per a country's requirement. It need not be same for all the countries. And through the examples given below it can be seen how the history, and the societies in general of every country affects the secularism of a country.

### 2.2.1 Laïcité: Secularism à la Française:

Secularism in France is known as Laïcité. According to this principle, or the according to the French model of secularism, there is a strict separation of church and the state. It ensures that the public sphere remains neutral towards all the religions and also ensures that the state does not focus on or promote any one religion. The principle of Laïcité in France is a part of the French Constitution and has been enforced through various laws, including the 1905 law on the separation of the church and the state.

#### PRINCIPLE OF Laïcité:

- State remains neutral: The state that is the French government remains neutral in all the matters of the religion and does not interfere in the religious matters.
- Freedom of conscience: The citizens of France are free to choose and follow a religion of their choice and also have the option of choosing no religion at all. This is considered as a fundamental freedom in France.

### 2.2.2 MULTICULTURAL SECULARISM:

Another model of secularism is considered to be the multicultural secularism; this model of secularism is being followed in Canada. In this form of secularism all the religious beliefs and practices are respected and recognized within its own society. This is done in order to promote the sense of oneness or to create a sense of belonging for the citizens of the country. All the religious beliefs and practices are respected while also maintaining neutrality of the state in the matters of religious affairs.

#### FEATURES OF MULTICULTURAL SECULARISM:

- Religious diversity- The government supports and also promotes the religious activities of all the religious groups including the minorities.
- Religious Freedom- The religious freedom is guaranteed by constitutional safeguards.
- State support- The state remains neutral or does not interfere in any religious activities but at the same time provides support to all the

religious communities.

#### BENEFITS OF MULTICULTURAL SECULARISM:

- Promotes social cohesion and inclusion by fostering a sense of belonging for all citizens.
- Encourages interfaith dialogue and understanding.
- Protects individual religious freedom while safeguarding the neutrality of the state.

#### CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURAL SECULARISM:

- Balancing the needs of different religious communities without compromising the neutrality of the state can be complex.
- Accommodating certain religious practices may raise concerns about individual rights and equality.

### 2.2.3 STATE NEUTRALITY:

This is followed by the United States of America. The American model of secularism follows a more hands-off approach compared to the French model. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion and prohibits the government from establishing a state religion.

#### KEY FEATURES:

- The government does not endorse any one certain religion and gives equal recognition to all the religions.
- The citizens of America have the freedom of religion which is without any interference from the government or the state.
- The Freedom of religion is a constitutional right which is protected by the constitution.

#### BENEFITS OF AMERICAN STATE NEUTRALITY:

- Provides a strong framework for individual religious freedom.
- Minimizes government involvement in religious matters.
- Helps to maintain a diverse and pluralistic society.

## CHAPTER-3

### 3.1 SECULARISM IN UNITED KINGDOM:

Secularism in the United Kingdom is rather complex and very deep rooted in its history. The other European countries may be able to have a definite definition of secularism, however the same is not applicable for the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has an unwritten constitution and similarly does not have a single codified definition of secularism; however, it operates on a set of those unwritten principles and practices that have developed over time through the centuries. Secularism in the UK is underwritten by specific values familiar to the western liberal societies. (A.C. Grayling, *Ideas That Matter: A Personal Guide for the 21st Century* 473 (Pheonix 2010))

The United Kingdom is a democracy and runs on certain democratic values, there is political freedom, i.e. freedom of speech, expression, thought, Freedom of the press, assembly, the citizens of the UK have got rights similar to that of fundamental rights in India, by this it is meant that in the United Kingdom the rights of the individuals are focused upon rather than group beliefs, there is also religious tolerance in the UK.

In the United Kingdom it can be seen that:

- There exists separation between religious beliefs or activities and the state. Both the state and its functions are independent from the religious beliefs and its institutions.
- Everyone is free to practice their faith, change it or not have one, according to their conscience.
- Whether a person has a religious faith or not is their choice, and either of them should not put them at an advantage or disadvantage. In simple words, A person choice of faith must not affect their ordinary way of life with others in whatsoever way.

For understanding the secularism in Britain, the historical context of it cannot be ignored and must be examined in order to understand how secularism evolved through the decades in the

UK

### 3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SECULARISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM:

#### 1. Prior to 16th Century- Pre-Reformation Era-

In this era or in this period of time, The Catholic Church exercised dominance or major influence in both spiritual and political matters in Britain. In this period of time, it can be observed that religious authorities, that is the Catholic Church played a major role in the political scenario or in governance of the country. The power exercised by the church was more than that of the power exercised by the monarchs, the monarchs had to often seek approvals for political legitimacy.

#### 2. In the 16th Century- Reformation and the Church of England-

In the sixteenth century there was a reformation and this was initiated by the then monarch Henry VIII, and this in turn led to the establishment of the independent church of the country which came to be known as the Church of England, this was done by cutting its ties with the Roman Catholic Church. This era is significant because it was in this era, England gained national autonomy in religious matters.

#### 3. In the 17th Century- Civil War and Interregnum-

Interregnum is that period in the English history, between 1649 and 1660. During this time in England, King Charles I was executed which also eventually started the civil war in England. Thus, the word interregnum is used to refer to that period of time in England, when the England had no monarch and there was absence of any recognized ruling authority. After the King was killed, England had become a Republic and was officially referred to as the Common Wealth of England, under the leadership of lord Crowell, who was given the designation of Lord protector of the Common Wealth. During this several debates were held regarding religious tolerance and the role of religion in the governance of the country.

#### 4. Late 17th Century- Glorious Revolution-

In the year 1688 there was a glorious revolution

in England which brought about several changes in the country that were constitutional in nature, such as the power of the monarch was limited to a great extent and the parliamentary authority was strengthened. The Act of Settlement in 1701 underscored Protestantism as a cornerstone of the monarchy, setting the stage for a constitutional monarchy.

**5. In the 18th Century- Enlightenment and Rationalism-** In this period there were movements which brought about reason, individual rights and skepticism toward traditional authority. This era saw the rise of thinkers and philosophers such as John Locke who spoke about separation of church and the state, this primarily laid down the groundwork for the evolution of secular ideas.

**6. In the 19th Century- Victorian Era and Secularization-** In the 19th century a gradual process of secularization could be seen which was due to several reasons, some of them being, industrialization, urbanization, and also scientific advancements. Whereas “secularism” can be summarized as a political philosophy advocating the separation of religion and state, “secularization” is, in a sense, a turning away of society generally from organized religion. More precisely it has been taken to mean “the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance”. During this period it can be observed that traditionally the religious authority that had existed had lost its power and it started to dwindle and the societal norms and also the values saw a range of changes.

**7. In the 20th Century- Religious Disestablishment Debate-** In the 20th Century there were many debates which were revolving around the disestablishment of the Church of England from its position as the state church, however this did not happen and no disestablishment took place but many debates took place which were inclined towards changing the role of religion in the governance of a country.

**8. Mid-20th Century Onwards- Post-War Period and Multiculturalism-** During the post worldwar period, specifically after the World War II, there was massive immigration that was witnessed by Britain mainly from its former colonies which resulted in religious diversity. Hence many policies and programmes were introduced to promote multiculturalism in order to cater to the diverse religious beliefs and create social harmony.

**9. Debates and Challenges in the 20th Century-** In the modern times there were several debates and also doubts as there existed many issues in Britain regarding accommodation of all the religious diversities, also addressing the issue of religion in public life. There still exist many ongoing debates which question the role of the religion in education, public ceremonies etc. In the present times it can be seen that the United Kingdom is still trying to balance its secular principles with the freedom of religion.

### 3.3 SECULARISM IN BRITAIN IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL ASPECT:

To understand and examine the position of religion and secularism in Britain, is no easy task and it cannot be found in a single document, because Britain has an unwritten constitution. To thoroughly examine the position of religion in England, we have to go through various conventions, international treaties, enactments etc. thus, there is a combination of written and unwritten sources which make the UK a secular country, however there exists no concrete statement declaring the United Kingdom as a secular country.

The constitutional framework is characterized by the establishment of the Church of England. The monarch is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and the Church is considered the established or state church. Despite this, the UK is often described as having a secular constitution because the governance and legislation are not overtly influenced by religious doctrine and laws are crafted to be inclusive, reflecting a commitment to treating individuals

equally irrespective of their religious beliefs.

1. **Human Rights Act 1998:** This Act incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into law of England, emphasizing fundamental rights, including freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. It serves as a cornerstone for protecting individual liberties. In principle, the implementation of the Human Rights Act 1998 has radically changed the legal landscape with respect to protecting religious belief and opinion in the United Kingdom. For the first time, there is general protection for religious belief before the domestic courts.

2. **Equality Act 2010:** This act addresses discrimination on various grounds, including religion and belief. It ensures that individuals are treated equally regardless of their religious affiliations, fostering a secular approach in various aspects of public life.

3. **Education Act 1996:** This act governs the education system and promotes a secular approach by requiring that religious education in schools is broadly inclusive, reflecting diverse religious and non-religious beliefs.

4. **Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013:** This Act legalized same-sex marriage, affirming the principle of equal treatment and challenging traditional religious definitions of marriage. This legislation reflects a commitment to secular values of inclusivity and non-discrimination.

5. **Abortion Act 1967:** This Act legalized abortion, separating healthcare decisions from religious doctrine. This legislation reflects a secular approach to reproductive rights, prioritizing individual autonomy and choice.

6. **The Constitutional Reform Act 2005:** Redefined the relationship between the judiciary and the House of Lords, reinforcing the independence of the judiciary from religious influence and contributing to the secular nature of the legal system.

7. **Equality Act 2006 and 2010:** Strengthens anti-discrimination laws and promotes equal treatment in various spheres, including

employment, services, and public functions, irrespective of religious beliefs.

8. **Public Order Act 1986:** Addresses offences related to incitement to religious hatred, demonstrating a commitment to maintaining public order while respecting freedom of expression and belief.

9. **Road Traffic Act 1998:** Sikhs are exempt from legislation requiring the wearing of crash-helmets while riding a motor-cycle. This shows that Britain has passed certain legislations to make people of the country feel more inclusive and to promote the feelings of oneness among one another.

10. **School Standards and Framework Act 1998:** In England and Wales, teachers in schools that do not have a specific religious character have for many decades received protection with respect to their religious opinions and beliefs.

Thus, it can be said that even though there is no single document which makes the UK secular country, however the various legislation's which have been mentioned above show us that how these legislation's when they are combined together, they shape the country as a secular country.

### 3.4 IS UNITED KINGDOM A DIVERSE COUNTRY?

The United Kingdom is characterized by a rich tapestry of religious diversity, reflecting a long history of migration, multiculturalism, and a commitment to the principles of religious freedom. Several religious traditions coexist, contributing to the nation's cultural and social landscape.

1. **Christianity:** Historically dominant, Christianity remains a significant presence. Denominations include Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, and various Protestant groups. The Church of England, as the established church, holds a unique position.

2. **Islam:** Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in the UK. Muslims, with diverse ethnic backgrounds, contribute significantly to the religious mosaic. Mosques and Islamic

community centers are spread across the country.

3. **Hinduism:** The UK has a vibrant Hindu community, with temples and cultural centers providing spaces for worship and community events. Hindu festivals are celebrated nationwide, contributing to the cultural diversity of the country.

4. **Sikhism:** Sikhs form a notable religious community in the UK, particularly in cities like Birmingham and London. Sikh gurdwaras serve as places of worship and community engagement.

5. **Judaism:** The Jewish community, while relatively small, has a longstanding presence. Synagogues and Jewish cultural institutions are integral to the diverse religious landscape.

6. **Buddhism:** Buddhism has gained followers in the UK, with various Buddhist communities and meditation centers. The teachings of Buddhism contribute to the spiritual diversity of the nation.

7. **Other Faiths and Beliefs:** The UK is also home to followers of Bahá'í Faith, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and various other spiritual beliefs. These smaller communities enrich the religious fabric.

8. **Non-religious and Secular Perspectives:** A growing number of individuals in the UK identify as non-religious, atheist, or agnostic. Secular perspectives emphasize the importance of a society that accommodates diverse beliefs and non-beliefs.

9. **Interfaith Dialogue:** Initiatives promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding play a crucial role. Various organizations and events foster conversations between different religious communities, contributing to social cohesion.

In essence, the religious diversity in the UK reflects a commitment to pluralism and inclusivity, fostering a society where individuals of various faiths and beliefs coexist, contribute to the cultural tapestry, and engage in constructive dialogue.

Previously it was seen that the laws in the United Kingdom are crafted to be inclusive and to promote the interests and affiliations of all the communities. Now upon dealing with the religious diversity in England it can be seen that such multiple-cultures can only exist because there is harmony and inclusiveness amongst all the groups.

### 3.5 RELIGION AND EDUCATION IN UNITED KINGDOM:

A country's education system and policies help in determining whether a country is secular or not. Education shapes the minds of young individuals who are the future generation and their thoughts and beliefs determine the future of a country and hence education plays a vital role in this aspect.

### 3.6 DOES THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM FOLLOW A SECULAR FRAMEWORK?

The education system in the UK is a secular one. It provides education in an inclusive and neutral manner for all the students, irrespective of their faith and belief or their religious backgrounds. The public schools in the United Kingdom are not affiliated to the established church or with any other religious institution and the schools include a variety of subjects like math, science, literature etc. and also religious education.

Religious education is a compulsory subject in the United Kingdom. However, it is not indoctrinate in its approach. This subject provides the individuals a deeper understanding of all the religions and makes the individuals aware in order to make them more understanding and acceptive towards all the religions, faith and belief. This subject promotes religious literacy.

### 3.7 EXISTENCE OF FAITH BASED SCHOOLS:

Faith Based schools in the United Kingdom are allowed to exist by following to certain standards and also by following to the national curriculum. These schools are to provide the students with a broad and balanced education that exposes them to varying worldwide views. It cannot be denied that faith-based schools do in

fact have a religious character but they are exempt from the secular principles that underpin the broader education system.

### 3.8 CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM:

Two churches within the United Kingdom are generally thought to be established churches, the Church of Scotland in Scotland and the Church of England in England. For the purpose of this research, the Church of England will be focused upon.

The Church of England and the State share a very intricate and unique relationship. Though there is an established church in the United Kingdom, it is considered to be a secular country. Overtime, the power that was once exercised by the church has diminished but not vanished. It is true that there is still an Established Church, that the King is still its supreme head and defender of the faith; that its law is still the King's ecclesiastical law, and an integral part of the law of England. But, like many other parts of the law and constitution of England, these are survivals of an older order, from which all real meaning has departed.

The UK's church-state relations are evident in royal ceremonies and traditions. While some ceremonies have religious elements, efforts are made to ensure inclusivity and respect for diverse beliefs. Religious symbols, such as the cross, may be present in public spaces but are generally considered as part of the cultural and historical context rather than a manifestation of state religiosity.

However, it cannot be denied that the Church of England has a privileged status constitutionally as compared to other religions. Two of its Archbishops and twenty-four of its bishops sit in the House of Lords, one of the two legislative chambers in the United Kingdom. The legal manner in which the Church of England holds real property is unique to it.

In conclusion it can be said that the United Kingdom is in fact a secular country and several laws passed by the country have in-fact proved

this. The church-state relationship continues to exist because of its very delicate history which is now conserved.

### CHAPTER-4

#### 4.1 SECULARISM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Secularism in the USA is characterized by various factors which will be discussed in detail below, it is also affected by various factors such as the history of the country, the socio-political scenarios etc. However there exists a distinct separation of power between the church and the states.

Secularism in the United States is deeply ingrained in its constitutional framework and cultural ethos. Several key aspects highlight the nation's commitment to the separation of church and state:

1. **First Amendment:** The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution plays a central role in ensuring the separation of church and state. It states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," emphasizing both the prohibition of an established religion and the protection of religious freedom.
2. **Establishment Clause:** The Establishment Clause in the First Amendment has been interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court to prevent the government from endorsing or establishing an official religion. This interpretation forms the basis for the secular nature of the state, preventing the establishment of a state religion.
3. **Free Exercise Clause:** The Free Exercise Clause, also part of the First Amendment, ensures the right of individuals to practice their religion freely without government interference. This further solidifies the commitment to religious freedom within a secular context.
4. **Secular Legal System:** The U.S. legal system operates independently of religious institutions. Laws are enacted based on democratic principles, legal precedents, and



constitutional provisions rather than religious doctrine.

5. **Public Education System:** The U.S. public education system is secular, with no endorsement of religious teachings. While students are free to practice their religion, public schools are expected to maintain a neutral stance and avoid religious indoctrination. Additionally, the Supreme Court has clarified the limits on religious activities in public schools to respect the secular nature of education.

6. **Diverse Religious Landscape:** The U.S. is home to a diverse array of religious beliefs, including various Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and many others. This diversity contributes to a society that embraces religious pluralism while upholding the secular principles embedded in the Constitution.

7. **Political Neutrality:** Politically, public officials are expected to make decisions based on secular reasoning rather than religious doctrine. While individual politicians may hold religious beliefs, the separation of church and state discourages the implementation of policies influenced solely by religious considerations.

8. **Cultural Acceptance of Secularism:** The cultural acceptance of secularism in the U.S. is evident in public discourse and societal norms. The majority of Americans, regardless of their religious affiliations, generally support the idea of a secular government that treats all citizens equally, irrespective of their beliefs.

In summary, secularism in the United States is deeply rooted in constitutional principles, fostering a society that values religious freedom, pluralism, and the separation of religious institutions from the functions of the state. This commitment to secular governance is a cornerstone of the nation's democratic ideals and cultural identity.

#### 4.2 SECULARISM IN THE USA IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL ASPECT:

Secularism in the USA, particularly in the

constitutional and legal aspect, is grounded in foundational documents and subsequent legal interpretations. Here are key aspects highlighting the relationship between secularism and the Constitution:

1. **First Amendment:** The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a cornerstone of secularism, includes two clauses relevant to religious freedom: the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. The Establishment Clause prohibits the establishment of an official state religion, ensuring a separation between church and state. The Free Exercise Clause protects individuals' right to practice their chosen religion without government interference.

2. **Jefferson's Wall of Separation:** Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers and the third U.S. President, used the phrase "wall of separation between church and state" in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802. This metaphor has been influential in shaping the interpretation of the Establishment Clause and reinforcing the idea of secular governance.

3. **No Religious Tests Clause (Article VI):** Article VI, Clause 3 of the Constitution explicitly states that "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." This reinforces the idea that public office should be open to individuals of all religious backgrounds or none, emphasizing a secular approach.

4. **Supreme Court Decisions:** Numerous Supreme Court decisions have clarified and shaped the understanding of secularism in the U.S. Some landmark cases include:

- *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947): Established the "wall of separation" principle and ruled that public funds could be used to transport students to religious schools as long as it served a secular purpose.

- *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971): Introduced the Lemon Test, evaluating whether a law or policy violates the Establishment Clause. It requires that the government action has a secular

purpose, neither advances nor inhibits religion, and does not foster excessive government entanglement with religion.

**5. Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA):** Enacted in 1993, the RFRA reaffirms the commitment to protecting religious freedom. While its intent is to prevent laws that substantially burden a person's free exercise of religion, its implementation involves navigating the delicate balance between religious freedom and secular governance.

In summary, secularism in the USA's constitutional and legal aspect is firmly rooted in the First Amendment, which establishes a clear separation between church and state. Supreme Court decisions and subsequent legislation have further refined the balance between religious freedom and the secular principles embedded in the nation's foundational documents. The legal framework aims to ensure that the government remains neutral and treats individuals of all religious or non-religious beliefs equally.

#### 4.3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SECULARISM IN THE USA:

The historical context of secularism in the United States is deeply rooted in the nation's foundation, constitutional principles, and a commitment to religious freedom. Several key historical factors contribute to the development of secularism in the USA:

**1. Colonial Period (17th-18th centuries):** Early American colonies were often established based on religious principles, seeking freedom from religious persecution in Europe. However, conflicts among different religious groups and a desire for religious autonomy contributed to the idea of religious pluralism.

**2. Enlightenment Influence (18th century):** Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Voltaire influenced the founding fathers with their ideas about reason, individual rights, and the separation of church and state. These ideas became foundational to the intellectual framework that shaped the U.S. Constitution.

**3. Founding Documents:** The U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1787, did not establish a national religion and, through the First Amendment (1791), explicitly prohibited the government from interfering with the free exercise of religion. This separation of church and state laid the groundwork for a secular government.

**4. Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1786):** Authored by Thomas Jefferson, this statute emphasized the principle that religious beliefs are matters of personal conscience and should not be subject to government coercion. It became a precursor to the religious freedom protections in the Bill of Rights.

**5. Federalist Papers:** Writings such as The Federalist Papers, authored by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, elaborated on the importance of preventing the establishment of a state religion to ensure individual freedoms and the integrity of the republic.

**6. Accommodating Religious Diversity:** As waves of immigrants arrived, bringing diverse religious beliefs, the U.S. embraced a secular approach to governance. The Constitution allowed for the coexistence of various religious traditions without endorsing any particular faith.

**7. Landmark Supreme Court Decisions:** In the 20th century, Supreme Court decisions like *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) and *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) clarified the constitutional boundaries between church and state. These decisions established legal tests to ensure the government's neutrality in religious matters.

**8. Cultural Evolution:** Over time, American society has undergone cultural evolution that embraces religious diversity and recognizes the importance of secular governance. This cultural shift reinforces the idea that the government should neither promote nor inhibit religious beliefs.

**9. Social Movements:** Secular principles gained momentum during social movements, such as the civil rights era, where leaders

advocated for justice and equality irrespective of religious affiliations. This reinforced these secular underpinnings of American ideals.

In conclusion, the historical context of secularism in the USA is characterized by a deliberate effort to create a government that respects religious diversity, protects individual freedoms, and maintains neutrality in matters of faith. This context, rooted in the Enlightenment and codified in constitutional principles, continues to shape the nation's commitment to secular governance.

#### 4.4 DOES THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN USA FOLLOW A SECULAR FRAMEWORK?

The secular framework of the U.S. education system reflects the principle of separation between church and state. Public schools, as government institutions, are mandated to avoid promoting or favoring any specific religious beliefs. This commitment to secularism ensures that educational environments remain inclusive and accommodating to students from various religious perspectives, fostering diversity and neutrality in the learning experience. This separation is grounded in constitutional principles to provide a fair and unbiased educational setting for all students.

### CHAPTER-5

#### 5.1 BRIEF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SECULARISM IN THE UK AND USA:

In examining the concept of secularism in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (USA), certain similarities and differences become apparent.

##### Similarities:

1. **Separation of Church and State:** Both the UK and the USA emphasize the separation between religious institutions and the government. This separation is enshrined in legal and constitutional frameworks, preventing the dominance of any specific religion in public affairs.

2. **Religious Neutrality in Public Education:** Public education in both countries is designed to

be secular, meaning it avoids promoting or endorsing any particular religious belief. This neutrality fosters inclusivity, allowing students of diverse religious backgrounds or those with no religious affiliation to engage in education without encountering bias.

#### 3. Legal Protections for Religious Freedom:

Both nations prioritize the protection of religious freedom. Individuals are generally free to practice their religion without interference from the government, contributing to a diverse and tolerant society.

##### Differences:

1. **Establishment of Religion:** The UK has an established church, the Church of England, which is the state church. While the UK is officially Christian, it practices a relatively high degree of religious tolerance. In contrast, the USA explicitly prohibits the establishment of an official state religion through the First Amendment of the Constitution.

2. **Degree of Religiosity:** The USA tends to have a higher level of religiosity among its population compared to the UK. This difference can influence public discourse, policymaking, and societal attitudes toward secularism.

3. **Cultural Context:** Secularism in each country is shaped by its unique historical and cultural context. The UK has a long history of religious pluralism, influenced by factors such as the Protestant Reformation, while the USA's history includes a strong emphasis on religious freedom, evident in its founding documents.

In conclusion, while both the UK and the USA share common principles of secularism, such as the separation of church and state and a commitment to religious neutrality in public education, the nuances of their historical backgrounds and legal frameworks contribute to distinct expressions of secularism in each nation.

#### 5.2 SUGGESTIONS:

The research is of the view that certain steps could be taken to make secularism more

inclusive in the UK and the USA.

Suggestions for making Secularism More Inclusive in the UK and USA:

**1. Diverse Representation:** Promote diverse representation in decision-making bodies and institutions to ensure a variety of perspectives, including those from different religious and non-religious backgrounds.

**2. Education on Religious Pluralism:** Enhance educational programs that foster understanding and respect for religious diversity, encouraging dialogue and awareness of different belief systems.

**3. Public Engagement:** Encourage open and respectful discussions on secularism in public spaces to create awareness and promote inclusivity.

**4. Cultural Competency Training:** Implement cultural competency training for public officials, educators, and service providers to better understand and accommodate individuals from diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds.

**5. Review Policies:** Regularly review policies related to secularism to ensure they align with the evolving demographics and cultural dynamics of the population.

**6. Interfaith Initiatives:** Support interfaith initiatives that facilitate collaboration, understanding, and joint efforts to address common societal challenges.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the secular frameworks in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (USA) share a commitment to religious freedom and the separation of church and state. Both nations prioritize neutral public education and legal foundations that protect the rights of individuals to practice their faith freely. However, distinctions emerge in the form of the UK's established Church of England and the USA's explicit prohibition of a state religion. The differing levels of religiosity among their populations also influence public discourse.

Challenges include ensuring inclusivity, addressing misconceptions, and periodically clarifying legal frameworks. Despite these challenges, both countries strive for secularism that respects diversity and upholds fundamental principles of equality and religious freedom, adapting to the evolving dynamics of their multicultural societies.