

## RELIGION & FOREIGN POLICY – THE EUROPEAN UNION

### Contemporary attitudes to religion in the EU

- Secularization in EU exceptional in mainstreaming religious world
- EU policy/decision makers do not assign relevance to religion, are skeptical re. its significance and question its role in the public sphere and politics - secular values, largely derivative of Christian anthropology, take an "absolute" precedence. EU nervous of acknowledging collective, corporate expression of religious identity.
- Historical factors shaping contemporary understanding of religion in public life - Treaty of Westphalia and the dominant political ideologies of Modern Age - revolutionary France & Marxism/Leninism.
- Increasing world trend: religion becoming increasingly visible and definitive factor in international relations.
- The religious dimension to many active and influential organizations operative in the field of international relations.
- Internal challenges of the EU forcing policy-makers to reflect on religion as a key contributing factor to creating the society of the future and as a factor in creating political identity and determining attitudes to a wide range of political and social topics.
- 2013 EU guidelines on freedom of religion and belief (CEC & COMECE contribution to inner reflection on this subject)
- Interest of EP on the issue of religious freedom, of the role of religion in shaping society and determining the approach to specific social issues. In particular, EU asylum law recognizes religious persecution in third countries as ground for seeking asylum is worth noting.
- The unique role of the Pope and the Holy See in international relations, always operating on the basis of a religious belief system and an ethical framework inspired by the Christian gospel.

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