Article

Conversations on Religion and Diplomacy

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Convenings by diplomats and religious studies experts

The Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD) at Georgetown University unites religious studies scholars and foreign affairs officials from Europe and North America to inform diplomatic engagement in global religious affairs. The TPNRD's main events include public, educational conversations and biannual meetings of diplomats hosted by participating foreign ministries. TPNRD members include representatives from the European External Action Service, the US Department of State, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the Order of Malta.

Recent Diplomatic Meetings

The goal of TPNRD biannual conferences aim to equip diplomats to increase religious literacy among key actors in foreign affairs, improve analysis of global developments in religion, and strategize progress towards shared policy objectives.

The Sarajevo Conference (November 15-18, 2023)

Sarajevo conference participants. Source: Religion & Diplomacy.

The European Union delegation of Sarajevo hosted this conference. It included local diplomats, scholars and activists, as well as clerics from the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish traditions. During these meetings, the TPNRD explored issues related to religion and peacebuilding, inclusion, governance, and interfaith collaboration.

The Istanbul Conference (May 31- June 2, 2023)



Istanbul conference participants. Source: Religion & Diplomacy.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople hosted the TPNRD conference in Istanbul. The major discussion points were the Patriarchate's role in global issues such as the war in Ukraine as well as human trafficking, global climate change and interfaith dialogue.

The Rome Conference (June 15-17, 2022)

Rome conference participants. Source: Religion & Diplomacy.

Hosted by the Order of Malta, the Rome conference included an overview of the humanitarian work of the Order of Malta, brainstorming new TPNRD-commissioned policy reports, meetings between TPNRD members and the Vatican, and engagement with a host of religious and civil society leaders based in Rome.

The Strasbourg Conference (November 15-18, 2022).



Council of Europe building. Source: Religion & Diplomacy.

TPNRD's French colleagues hosted the gathering in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe building. This meeting enabled the TPNRD to meet with senior officials at the Council of Europe and judges at the European Court of Human Rights. The conference's discussions pertained to commissioning new TPNRD reports, the relationship between religion and state in the Alsace region, and collaboration between the region's religious leaders.

Public Events

The TPNRD's public virtual events provide opportunities for the insights, expertise, and policy solutions cultivated during the biannual conferences to reach a broader audience.

Governance of Religious Diversity (April 15, 2021)

This webinar focused on the *Routledge Handbook on the Governance of Religious Diversity*. The handbook's editors Anna Triandafyllidou and Tina Magazzini discussed their comparative analysis of state-religion relations with TPNRD director Judd Birdsall.

Vaccinate Thy Neighbor (June 19, 2021)

The topic of this webinar was how governments engaged with faith-based organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion included a diverse panel, including scholars, government officials, and NGO representatives.

Faith, Nationalism, and the Future of Liberal Democracy (August 21, 2021)

This webinar highlighted research by David Elcott, C. Colt Anderson, Tobias Cremer, and Volker Haarmann, authors of *Faith, Nationalism, and the Future of Liberal Democracy* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2021). The book and discussion examined, among other topics, the weaponization of religious identity for the benefit of antidemocratic state actors.

To learn more about the TPNRD conferences and events, visit its website *Religion & Diplomacy.*

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