

THE WIDOW'S TORMENT: INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND AMERICAN NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	851
II. The Return of God: The Resurgence of Public Religion	854
III. The Religion-Avoidance Syndrome Within American Diplomacy	859
IV. Employing Religious Freedom to Advance American Security	862
V. Conclusion: The Way Forward	870

I. INTRODUCTION¹

United States policymakers do not typically believe that low levels of international religious freedom pose a threat to America's fundamental national interests. Nor, for the most part, do Americans at large. Everyone deplores religious persecution, including in places that are vital to our interests. We are outraged when we read of the seventy-five-year-old widow in Saudi Arabia sentenced to forty lashes and four months in prison for admitting two males into her home (they were bringing her bread).² We deeply sympathize with Tibetan Buddhist monks brutalized and imprisoned by Chinese police for revering the Dalai Lama.³ We

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1. Much of this essay is drawn from THOMAS F. FARR, *WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM: WHY INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IS VITAL TO AMERICAN NATIONAL SECURITY* (2008) [hereinafter FARR, *WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM*]; Thomas F. Farr, *Diplomacy in an Age of Faith*, FOREIGN AFF., Mar./Apr. 2008, at 110; and Thomas F. Farr, *Islam's Way to Freedom*, FIRST THINGS, Nov. 2008, at 24.

2. See *Saudi Arabia: Lashes for 75-Year-Old Widow*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 10, 2009, at A11.

3. See, e.g., Jim Yardley, *Tibetans Clash with Chinese Police in Second City*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 16, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/16/world/asia/>

mourn for the Christians in India's Orissa province who were slaughtered by Hindu extremists, and for the survivors driven from their homes.⁴

Such atrocities make us angry, and justifiably so. Some of us will write our congressmen or call a radio talk show, demanding that the United States "do something." In fact, most Americans would like to see their government take action in defense of those who are suffering for their religious beliefs. We rarely see, however, that such action is necessary to our own national well-being.⁵ Many of us view persecution as a humanitarian tragedy whose relationship to our vital interests is tenuous at best. We are "realists" in the sense that we recognize there are limits to what the United States is capable of achieving in a fallen world, even with deep resources, trained soldiers and diplomats, and the best of intentions.

For their part, American diplomats also tend to see their mission in "realist" terms. They are trained to manage state-to-state relations rather than engage sub-state actors such as civil society or religious leaders. They seek to achieve national objectives by employing economic, political, and military incentives in negotiations with foreign government officials. Many diplomats, of course, are not averse to pressing for human rights in a particular country. But this humanitarian inclination rarely contends successfully for policy attention against the need to pursue what are considered vital national interests. Few would argue, for example, that the United States should place at risk its important relationship with Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah in order to help the seventy-five-year-old widow—or, for that matter, the thousands of others in the desert kingdom with similar stories. Even the expected liberal internationalist proclivities of the Obama Administration are, at this writing, taking a back seat to traditional realist calculations.⁶

16tibet.html.

4. See, e.g., Emily Wax, *Christians Face Hindus' Wrath: Violence in Indian State Tied to Conversions, Economic Strains*, WASH. POST, Sept. 15, 2008, at A16.

5. See, e.g., INT'L CRISIS GROUP, DO AMERICANS CARE ABOUT DARFUR? AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP/ZOGBY INTERNATIONAL OPINION SURVEY (2005), available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3492&l=1> (discussing a poll that showed broad support among Americans for protecting Sudanese under siege in Darfur, but much less support for a permanent United States presence).

6. See, e.g., Posting of Aaron Friedberg to Shadow Government, <http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com> (Mar. 9, 2009, 11:58 CST) ("Obama's foreign policy team . . . seems to have abandoned the Democratic Party's traditional liberal internationalist playbook in favor of hard-headed (some would say hard-hearted) realism. Instead of emphasizing international institutions, international law, and the defense of universal values, the administration has made clear its willingness to

However, an exclusively humanitarian view of religious persecution—and human rights in general—is terribly shortsighted. The widow’s fate is both a humanitarian tragedy *and* a national security issue. Unless it is an isolated and unusual case—and it is not—stories such as hers indicate an utter absence of religious freedom. In Saudi Arabia, there is no freedom to reject a Wahhabi Koranic interpretation that forbids an unrelated male from visiting the home of a single, elderly woman.⁷ There is no freedom to argue publicly against such a cruel and state-sanctioned punishment for the infraction.⁸ For American interests, the issue is this: systemic religious persecution, especially in highly religious societies, indicates a political and cultural void that must be addressed if, in the twenty-first century, nations are to be internally stable and at peace with their neighbors. In many nations, the achievement of religious freedom, or at least religious toleration, is a necessary antidote to the continued incubation and exportation of religious extremism. In short, the widow’s torment both reflects and portends the kind of radicalism that gave us Osama bin Laden.

The problem of religious freedom is acute in non-democratic nations such as Saudi Arabia and China, as well as in authoritarian systems with quasi-democratic procedures, such as Egypt and Iran. It is equally serious in nations whose ongoing struggles to establish or “root” democracy directly affect American interests, such as Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Indonesia, and Russia. In these countries, the achievement of religious liberty is necessary if they are to have stable, durable self-governance—governments that can yield political, social, economic, and religious benefits to all their citizens and eliminate or contain religious persecution, conflict, and violence. Both history and contemporary research suggest that only democracies grounded in religious freedom may effectively counter Islamist terrorism.

Vital American interests require that United States diplomacy engage the world as an agent of economic and political stability, and to facilitate

downplay human rights and to make whatever deals it can with Iran, Syria, Russia, and China. In keeping with the recommendations of many foreign policy realists, the administration appears to be de-emphasizing the ‘war on terror,’ backing away from any commitment to help build a strong, reasonably democratic central government in Afghanistan, and moving with all deliberate speed to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq.”).

7. See FARR, *WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM*, *supra* note 1, at 223 (indicating that in modern Saudi Arabia, where there is “no differentiation between religion and state,” there is no opportunity to “propose religion-based arguments . . . to influence public policy”).

8. See *id.*

and encourage the kinds of democratic governments that can endure. This approach does not exclude “realism” or traditional state-to-state diplomacy. Indeed, if it is to succeed, United States foreign policy must adopt a “religious realism” about the world and learn to advance religious freedom effectively. Although it has attempted the latter task for over ten years, the United States has not come close to success. Our policy has been dominated by a narrow, humanitarian approach to religious persecution.

In this Article, I will lay out an argument for a new policy of religious realism, one that harnesses the advancement of international religious liberty to the pursuit of vital American interests. I will make my case in three sequential but overlapping parts. First, the world in recent decades has witnessed a resurgence of public forms of religion that have had an impact, for better or worse, on every part of the planet and on virtually every transnational issue, from terrorism to the spread of democracy, and from HIV/AIDS to economic globalization.⁹ Second, the American foreign policy establishment has been slow to adjust to the resurgence of public religion. American diplomacy suffers, in effect, from a “religion-avoidance syndrome” that has harmed our national interests.¹⁰ Third, United States diplomacy may alter this religious-avoidance syndrome and advance American interests by promoting religious freedom properly understood.¹¹

II. THE RETURN OF GOD: THE RESURGENCE OF PUBLIC RELIGION

The evidence of religion’s reappearance on the world stage—what some scholars call the “desecularization of the world”—is overwhelming. One need only peruse the polls regularly conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life,¹² or a recent Gallup poll in the Muslim world,¹³ or countless other measures to see the consistency of the findings. With

9. *See infra* Part I.

10. *See infra* Part II.

11. *See infra* Part III.

12. *See, e.g.*, PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUB. LIFE, U.S. RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE SURVEY 5 (2008), *available at* <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf> (indicating that 83.1% of all American adults are religiously affiliated, whereas approximately 16.1% of all Americans are religiously unaffiliated).

13. *See* DALIA MOGAHED, SPECIAL REPORT: MUSLIM WORLD: ORDINARY MUSLIMS 2 (2006), http://www.muslimwestfacts.com/mwf/File/109483/Ordinary_Muslims.pdf (showing that religion is a key component in the lives of Muslims, but not such a key component for Western Europeans) [hereinafter MUSLIM WORLD].

the exception of certain populations in Western Europe, people all over the world are resolutely, and sometimes maddeningly, religious.¹⁴

Of course, “being religious” can have several meanings. It usually means being born into or joining a religious community and accepting its claims as true. Sometimes, it means the religious community is a source of identity, much like ethnicity or nationality. For example, many members of the Russian Orthodox Church associate Russian nationality with Orthodoxy. Many Indian Hindus associate Indian nationality with Hinduism. In Saudi Arabia, all citizens are de jure Muslims.

Occasionally, religious motives are falsely attributed to individuals. P.J. O’Rourke once observed that in the conflict in Bosnia, the three combatant groups were of the same race and spoke the same language.¹⁵ Their only real difference was religion—in which none of them actually believed.¹⁶ I am reminded of a story about the conflict in Northern Ireland:

A man walks down a dark street in Belfast, when a gunman jumps out of a doorway, holds a gun to his head, and asks: “Are you Protestant or Catholic?” The man stutters, “Well, actually I’m an atheist.” “Ah, yes,” says the gunman, “But are you a Protestant or a Catholic atheist?”¹⁷

The reality is that there are not many atheists in the world.¹⁸ Most people are religious and belong to religious communities. Most embrace

14. See, e.g., Peter L. Berger, *Secularism in Retreat*, NAT’L INT., Winter 1996/1997 at 3, 3 (“The world today, with some exceptions . . . is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever.”) [hereinafter *Secularism in Retreat*]; Timothy Samuel Shah & Monica Duffy Toft, *Why God Is Winning*, FOREIGN POL’Y, July/Aug. 2006, at 38 (discussing the effects of modernization, globalization, and democratization on religion); Edward Cody, *Poll Finds Surge of Religion Among Chinese*, WASH. POST, Feb. 8, 2007, at A15 (citing a Chinese government-sponsored survey indicating “the number of religious believers among [China’s] 1.3 billion people is far higher than generally known”); see also JOHN L. ESPOSITO & DALIA MOGAHED, WHO SPEAKS FOR ISLAM?: WHAT A BILLION MUSLIMS REALLY THINK 5–7 (2007) (discussing the conclusions of MUSLIM WORLD, *supra* note 14); Peter Berger, Professor, Boston Univ., Religion in a Globalizing World, Pew Forum Presentation, (Dec. 4, 2006), available at <http://pewforum.org/events/?EventID=136> (discussing the influence of globalization on religion).

15. See *Secularism in Retreat*, *supra* note 15, at 11.

16. *Id.*

17. *Id.*

18. The World Christian Encyclopedia puts this figure at 2.5% in 2000, and projects a slight decrease to 2% in 2025 and 1.9% in 2050. 1 DAVID B. BARRETT ET AL., WORLD CHRISTIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA 4 (2d ed. 2001).

teachings that have some bearing on the way they live their lives and on the way they wish their societies to be organized. One might call this set of beliefs a “political theology,” or the application of religious beliefs to issues of public policy.¹⁹ Some political theologies are wicked, such as bin Ladenism.²⁰ Others are humane and productive, such as the Protestant emphasis on freedom of conscience and the laws necessary to protect it.

The reappearance of public religion on the world stage has complex implications. “Religion has both bolstered and undermined stable self-government.”²¹ It has advanced political reform and human rights but has also induced irrationalism, persecution and terrorism.²² In China, an explosion of religious devotion deeply worries communist officials, and they respond periodically with religious persecution.²³ Religious ideas and actors affect relations between nuclear powers India and Pakistan,²⁴ the consolidation of democracy in Latin America,²⁵ and the fate of sub-Saharan African peoples.²⁶ Even in Western Europe, which has seen itself as a laboratory for secularization, “religion, in the form of Islam and pockets of Christian revival, simply will not go away.”²⁷

The most significant negative dimension of the worldwide resurgence of religion—and the one with the greatest impact on American security—is the rise of Islamist terrorism.²⁸ While it may be fed by a number of political, economic, and social pathologies, this form of terrorism is energized by radical interpretations of Islam.²⁹ In particular, the pernicious ideas of “Wahhabism, which have provided much of the theological oxygen for Al Qaeda,” are still dominant in Saudi Arabia and have been exported

19. See Daniel Philpott, *Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion*, 101 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 505, 507–09 (2007). For a very different take on political theologies, see MARK LILLA, *THE STILLBORN GOD: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND THE MODERN WEST* (2007).

20. See, e.g., Amir Taheri, Op-Ed., *The Death of bin Ladenism*, N.Y. TIMES, July 11, 2002, at A23 (discussing the key elements of bin Ladenism).

21. FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 38.

22. *Id.*

23. See, e.g., U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, *China, in 2008 REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM* (2008), available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108404.htm>.

24. See FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 37.

25. See *id.* at 90.

26. See *id.*

27. *Id.* at 37.

28. See *id.* at 35.

29. See *id.*

to Sunni communities internationally.³⁰ Interestingly, Wahhabism has for decades been an intellectual force among Muslims in Western Europe and the United States.³¹

Wahhabism is not the only example of radical political Islam that has major implications for United States security. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood represents a strain of Islamism that has spawned or nourished such radicals as Sayyid Qutb, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Osama bin Laden, although the Brotherhood now operates as a democratic political party.³² Hamas, an offshoot of the Brotherhood, has put Islamist extremism at the center of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.³³ Hezbollah has emerged as a major player in Lebanese democracy, even as it is funded by Tehran and continues to threaten Israel.³⁴ There is also Iran itself, where the revolutionary Shiism bequeathed by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini has combined with Iranian nationalism to create a potentially lethal policy combination—support for Islamist terrorism and a nuclear weapons capability.³⁵

More broadly, religion has had a bivalent effect on the growth of democracy around the world. Some majority religious communities have retarded democracy by employing the powers of the state to maintain a religious monopoly. We have seen this with the Russian Orthodox

30. See *id.*; see also HAMID ALGAR, WAHHABISM: A CRITICAL ESSAY 50–54 (2002) (describing the expansion of Wahhabism); DAVID COMMINS, THE WAHHABI MISSION AND SAUDI ARABIA (2006) (arguing that communications technologies are shattering the isolationism and exclusion of other views under which Wahhabism has thrived in Saudi Arabia); CTR. FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM & INST. FOR GULF AFFAIRS, SAUDI ARABIA’S CURRICULUM OF INTOLERANCE: WITH EXCERPTS FROM SAUDI MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TEXTBOOKS FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES 17–18 (2006), available at http://crf.hudson.org/files/publications/CRF_SaudiReport_2006.pdf (examining Islamic studies curriculum and textbooks).

31. See ALGAR, *supra* note 31; see also COMMINS, *supra* note 31, at 190–93 (explaining the global influence of Wahhabism); CTR. FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, SAUDI PUBLICATIONS ON HATE IDEOLOGY INVADE AMERICAN MOSQUES 12–13 (2005), available at <http://crf.hudson.org/files/publications/SaudiPropoganda.pdf> (discussing the “global reach” of Wahhabism).

32. See generally Robert S. Leiken & Steven Brooke, *The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood*, FOREIGN AFF., Mar./Apr. 2007 (describing the Brotherhood’s history and ideological constitution); Ken Silverstein, *Parties of God: The Bush Doctrine and the Rise of Islamic Democracy*, HARPER’S MAG., Mar. 2007, at 33 (discussing the development of Islamic democracy).

33. See Leiken & Brooke, *supra* note 33, at 116.

34. See Silverstein, *supra* note 33, at 40.

35. See VALI NASR, THE SHIA REVIVAL 119–45 (2006).

Church,³⁶ certain strains of Hindu nationalism,³⁷ and Islamic communities in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Iraq.³⁸

On the other hand, some religious communities have made the rooting of democracy more likely. The Protestant emphases on the individual's relationship with God, the critical need for literacy, the importance of hard work and self-discipline, and the call to faithfulness in marriage have energized democratic development in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.³⁹ The development of doctrine represented by the Catholic Second Vatican Council—in particular, its Declaration on Religious Liberty—as well as the pontificate of John Paul II has provided the impetus for much of what Samuel Huntington labeled the “third wave” of democratization, and what George Weigel called “the Catholic human rights revolution.”⁴⁰

There are encouraging democratic developments in the Muslim world as well. In Turkey, the ruling Justice and Development Party is demonstrating that Islam-based parties need not veer into fanaticism. It has succeeded with good governance, good economic policies, and the development of an Islamic governing philosophy with significant liberal elements.⁴¹ In Indonesia, Islamic communities are resisting extremism and making significant contributions to civil society and democratic governance.⁴² However, while Freedom House ranks Turkey and Indonesia high on political freedom and civil liberties in general, both remain weak on religious freedom.⁴³ Consolidation of democracy in each

36. See FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 37 (“[Russian] Orthodoxy’s temptation has been to ally with antidemocratic forces to regain its privileged position in Russian society.”).

37. See *id.* at 36–37.

38. See *id.* at 35–36.

39. See Robert D. Woodberry & Timothy S. Shah, *The Pioneering Protestants*, in WORLD RELIGIONS AND DEMOCRACY 117–31 (Larry Diamond et al. eds., 2005).

40. See SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON, THE THIRD WAVE: DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY 76 (1991); George Weigel, *The Catholic Human Rights Revolution*, CRISIS, July/Aug. 1996, at 36, 37.

41. See Mustafa Akyol, *The Crisis in Turkey*, AMERICAN, June 19, 2008, available at <http://www.american.com/archive/2008/june-06-08/the-crisis-in-turkey>.

42. See generally Robert W. Hefner, *Muslim Democrats and Islamist Violence in Post-Soeharto Indonesia*, in REMAKING MUSLIM POLITICS: PLURALISM, CONTESTATION, DEMOCRATIZATION 273–301 (Robert W. Hefner ed., 2005).

43. See RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE WORLD app. f at 487, 489 (Paul A. Marshall ed., 2007).

will require progress on that front. Interestingly, that prospect seems to be increasing—not decreasing—with the democratic involvement of Islamic communities.

In sum, the world is overflowing with religious ideas, actors, communities, and movements, with very public consequences. There is little reason to believe this state of affairs will change any time soon. Two leading demographers of religion, Todd M. Johnson and David B. Barrett, have concluded there is strong statistical evidence for the resiliency of religion during the next 200 years.⁴⁴ More to the point, the world in which American diplomacy engages is often highly influenced by religious factors, both at popular and official levels. The implications are complex but profound. United States foreign policy should be paying very close attention. Unfortunately, it has exhibited a troubling disarray and confusion about religion, a problem to which we now turn.

III. THE RELIGION-AVOIDANCE SYNDROME WITHIN AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

One could make the case that the United States should not engage religious ideas and actors, or attempt to advance religious freedom, because its diplomats are neither trained nor motivated to do either. Such an argument is wrongheaded. The mission of United States diplomacy is to engage the world in defense of American interests. If the world is highly influenced by religious forces, American diplomacy should adopt a classical form of realism—understanding things as they really are and calling them by their right names. To achieve this goal, however, one must understand the dimensions of our country's own diplomatic deficiency.

United States foreign policy is beset with a religion-avoidance syndrome. This does not mean that America's diplomats are irreligious or anti-religion. Most diplomats, religious or not, *instinctively* set religion aside as a category of analysis for a host of reasons that cut across our red-blue cultural divide. This largely unexamined habit of thought cripples our diplomacy and harms our national security.⁴⁵

The intellectual substructure for American diplomacy's disarray over religion is the secularization theory—the centuries-old, largely discredited

44. See Todd M. Johnston & David B. Barrett, *Quantifying Alternative Futures of Religion and Religions*, 36 FUTURES 947, 959 (2004).

45. See FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 11–12, 47–77.

idea that with the advance of modernity, science and reason will relegate religion to the margins of human existence.⁴⁶ Many of the men and women who now lead American diplomacy have been steeped in the secularization theory, both in the academy and in the corridors of Foggy Bottom.⁴⁷ Secularization has been a dominant theme among international relations scholars for years and has only recently been challenged.⁴⁸

The major schools of foreign policy have assumed secularization is the appropriate approach to diplomacy, albeit for very different reasons. Modern realists see authoritarian regimes as partners in keeping the lid on radical Islam, and have almost nothing to say about religion except as a drive to power.⁴⁹ Liberal internationalists are generally suspicious of religion's role in public life, often viewing it as antithetical to human rights and too divisive to contribute to democratic stability.⁵⁰ Neoconservatives emphasize American exceptionalism and the value of democracy, but most have paid little attention to religious actors or their beliefs.⁵¹ The George W. Bush freedom agenda was seriously weakened as a result.⁵²

The net effect of this secularistic climate of opinion in American diplomacy is an underappreciation of the role of religion in people's lives. It has also led to a gross underestimation of the importance of religious freedom to the rooting of democracy, or of religious tolerance to long-term stability in a place like Saudi Arabia. It is important to understand how this problem has harmed United States interests.

In 1998, Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act (IRF), which ostensibly put the advancement of religious freedom at the center of United States foreign policy.⁵³ Unfortunately, the State Department has tended to see IRF policy more as an ad hoc effort against persecution, with the goal of freeing religious prisoners, than as a strategy of actually advancing religious freedom in a political and cultural sense.⁵⁴ This means that foreign governments do not see our policy as a serious,

46. *See id.* at 12.

47. *See id.* at 10–11.

48. *See id.* at 11–12 (citation omitted).

49. *See id.* at 54–61.

50. *See id.* at 61–66.

51. *See id.* at 66–77.

52. *See id.*

53. International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-292, 112 Stat. 2787 (codified at 22 U.S.C. §§ 6401–6481 (2006)).

54. *See Farr, Diplomacy in an Age of Faith, supra* note 1, at 111.

long-term initiative connected to American interests. They believe, with some justification, that they can “manage” American IRF policy by releasing a few prisoners from time to time. Securing prisoner releases is a worthy enterprise no matter how infrequently it occurs. However, if the United States could convince foreign governments and religious communities to embrace religious freedom, it would not only reduce persecution far more effectively than the release of prisoners has, but embracing religious freedom would also help nations to construct one of the necessary pillars of stable democracy and to eliminate or contain religious extremism.

Consider Afghanistan. In 2003, the United States overthrew the vicious and theocratic Taliban regime.⁵⁵ The Afghans elected a democratic government and adopted a democratic constitution, which at least paid tribute to the ideal of religious freedom.⁵⁶ Religious persecution dropped dramatically after the overthrow of the Taliban.⁵⁷ To this day, however, the Afghan government continues to bring charges against apostates and blasphemers, including officials, journalists, and scholars seeking to debate the teachings of Islam.⁵⁸ Instead of seeing such cases as serious obstacles to the maturing of Afghan democracy, the State Department has treated them as humanitarian problems.⁵⁹ It declared a victory for IRF when U.S. pressure freed Christian convert Abdul Rahman from an apostasy trial (and from certain execution), permitting him to flee the country out of fear for his life.⁶⁰

The Rahman case was actually a defeat for United States IRF policy because it ignored the real problem. Afghan democracy is unlikely to endure, and to have the strength to defeat extremism, unless it defends the right of all citizens to full religious liberty—including the rights of Muslims to debate what Islam requires of them, its views of freedom and the public good, the role of shari’a, and the religion–state relationship. This kind of sustained discourse is vital to the success of any Islamic democracy and to overcoming Islamist radicalism. In other words, American foreign policy on religious freedom contributes directly to the rooting of democracy—and therefore, to the containment of Islamist radicalism—by convincing

55. See FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 4.

56. See *id.* at 5.

57. See *id.* at 3–4.

58. See, e.g., *id.* at 4 (discussing Afghani apostasy charges against a Christian convert).

59. See *id.* (citation omitted).

60. See *id.* at 4.

Afghans that religious freedom is in their interests. But the United States is not even attempting to advance such a policy in Afghanistan or elsewhere in the Muslim world. Our IRF diplomacy lacks the resources, training, bureaucratic clout, and the policy mandate to engage governments and societies on the advantages of religious liberty.

IV. EMPLOYING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TO ADVANCE AMERICAN SECURITY

What is to be done? How can American diplomacy begin to think about religion in ways that yield concrete policy steps and enhance America's vital interests, including its national security? The answer lies in a more comprehensive approach to advancing international religious freedom. If the United States advances IRF in the fullest sense, addressing in particular the public aspects of religious expression, it can do a great deal of good for the people and governments it assists, their neighbors, the world, and, most importantly, the security and well-being of the American people.

Let us begin with a working definition of religious liberty for use in foreign policy.⁶¹ For our purposes, there are three overlapping levels of religious freedom. The first is one's interior right to believe or not to believe.⁶² This is the foundational aspect of religious liberty; the interior element of the right that is absolute in the sense that it is grounded in the nature and dignity of every person, and cannot legitimately be restricted by governments. It is also important because it encompasses the right *not* to believe.

The second level of religious freedom protects the rights of individuals to enter or exit religious communities, and of religious communities to conduct within civil society all the acts natural to them, including communal worship, building houses of worship, training clergy, raising children in the faith, forming religious schools, inviting others into

61. See generally *id.* at 22–25 (defining freedom of religion and discussing the definition's implications).

62. Some refer to this as the “right of conscience” which, in the West, historically included a right to act or to refuse to act in accord with a well-formed religious conscience. Ironically, this aspect of the right is in greater peril in the West than elsewhere. The classical understanding of conscience is under challenge. See, for example, the Obama Administration's removal of conscience protections on the issue of abortion. Obama Moves to Block Abortion “Refusal” Rule, Agence France Presse, Mar. 6, 2009, available at http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i-IFTkBZWtKLiRwd-_8sDmWfQJzA.

the community, and defending against the loss of its adherents and its identity. Note that three aspects of religious freedom are in tension at this level: the individual's right to enter religious communities and to exit them, otherwise known as apostasy; the right of communities to invite others in, otherwise known as proselytism; and the community's right to resist apostasy and defend itself against proselytism, especially against violent or rapacious methods. Public discussion of these issues sometimes elicits charges of blasphemy or defamation, but such charges are usually pretexts for protecting a religious monopoly.⁶³ However, the tensions among these rights cause difficulties for all religious traditions and democratic states. To be stable and enduring, a democracy must resolve them.⁶⁴

The problem of balancing these rights is particularly acute in Islamic nations, although it threatens democratic stability in places like Orthodox Russia and Hindu India as well.⁶⁵ It is worth recalling that medieval and early modern Latin Christianity, including parts of the early or "magisterial" Reformation, viewed apostasy and proselytism as many Muslims view it today—as, in effect, treason or suborning treason, and therefore punishable by the state, usually by execution.⁶⁶ A critical lesson of Christian history, taught first by the radical Anabaptist Reformation, is that solving the problems of apostasy and proselytizing must be detached from the police power of the state and from coercion of any kind.⁶⁷ Some restrictions are legitimate, such as banning the use of coercion by missionaries. Every religious community has a right to defend itself against those who would steal its sheep and undermine its identity. However, if democracy is to endure, religious communities must learn to retain their adherents and gain new members by peaceful competition, better teaching, and better preaching—not by private or state coercion.

63. See, e.g., Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, *Combating Defamations of Religions*, Issues Brief submitted to the U.N. Office of the High Comm'r for Human Rights 1 (June 2, 2008) (stating that "defamation of religion" laws tend to "empower ruling majorities against weak minorities and dissenters").

64. See FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 22–25.

65. See *id.* at 36–37.

66. See Brian Tierney, *Religious Rights: An Historical Perspective*, in RELIGIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES 17, 30–34 (John Witte, Jr. & Johan D. van der Vyver eds., 1996).

67. See generally William G. McLoughlin, 'Enthusiasm for Liberty': *The Great Awakening as the Key to the Revolution*, in PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY 69, 86, 89–90 (1977) (discussing the emergence during the Great Awakening of the rejection of state coercion in support of religion).

Importantly, the work of sociologists such as Brian Grim, Roger Finke, and Rodney Stark suggests that the absence of state restrictions on proselytism—that is to say, free religious competition—not only helps root democracy, but also benefits religious communities over the long run by sharpening their capacity to compete.⁶⁸ Convincing Muslim and other powerful religious communities to accept this reality is a tall order, but is vital to American security.

The third level of religious freedom encompasses the public political expression of religious individuals and communities. It is the right to contend in the democratic public square on the basis of religiously informed moral principles. Here, as in the second level, we must pay due attention not only to the content of the right itself, but also to the appropriate limits that may legitimately be imposed by governments to serve the common good. For example, the right of a majority religious community to contend in the public square is limited by the principle of equality under the law for all religious communities. The laws may not, therefore, privilege membership in the majority community or require its forms of worship. Such laws constitute a substantial problem in democratic Iraq and Afghanistan, let alone in authoritarian states like Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

In a functioning democratic society, however, every person and every community has the right, within due limits, to attempt to influence the laws and policies under which they will live on the basis of religious arguments. This is the payoff, as it were, for religious communities: it is a primary means by which illiberal religious groups may be enticed by the bargain of democracy. As Michael McConnell has put it, “I see religion as deeply and inevitably political (though of course transcending politics as well). If God cares about justice . . . religious belief will have implications for political opinion.”⁶⁹ Again, the limits are critical: no one may legitimately argue for

68. See RODNEY STARK, *THE VICTORY OF REASON* 199 (2005) (“[R]eligion thrives in a free market [of religions], where many religious groups vie for followers and those [religions] lacking energy or appeal fall by the wayside”); Brian J. Grim, *Religious Freedom: Good for What Ails Us?*, *REV. OF FAITH & INT’L AFF.*, Summer 2008, at 3, 4–5 (2008) (stating that research shows governments that “do not erect barriers to religious competition” experience less religious violence and have greater stability); Brian J. Grim & Roger Finke, *Religious Persecution in Cross-National Context: Clashing Civilizations or Regulated Religious Economies?*, 72 *AM. SOC. REV.* 633, 654 (2007) (stating government regulation of religion tends to stem from social pressures and “can set up a vicious cycle of [religious] persecution once unleashed”).

69. Michael W. McConnell, *Five Reasons to Reject the Claim That Religious*

policies that undermine public order, morality, or the fundamental rights of others.

Unfortunately, for many in the United States foreign policy establishment a key goal for democracy is to prevent religious arguments from entering the public square at all. John Rawls, the most influential political philosopher of the late 20th century, argued that banning what he called “comprehensive doctrines” from democratic debate was necessary to the success of democracy.⁷⁰ However, the privatization of religion in a democracy is a departure from the critical principle of equality under the law. As a goal of foreign policy, it simply will not work in a religious world, especially in the lands of Islam. It is difficult to envision a Muslim democracy in which Islamic norms are not in play. The question for American foreign policy is how to encourage the development of liberal Islamic norms grounded in the principles of religious freedom.

Let us turn now to that question. Can American foreign policy succeed in advancing religious freedom broadly construed, especially in highly religious societies such as the lands of Islam, Russia, and even China, and thereby reenergize our flagging efforts to promote stable, durable democracies around the world? Can it use religious freedom policy to help defeat Islamist extremism and terrorism? In nations where the achievement of religious freedom is not yet feasible, such as Saudi Arabia, is it possible to advance more modest ideas of religious tolerance, which would include, at a minimum, legal protections for religious minorities?

The answer is that such a project would be extraordinarily difficult, in part because of our own diplomatic religious myopia, and in part because of the enormous suspicion that attends our IRF policy abroad, where it is often viewed as cultural imperialism designed to undermine majority religious communities. However, the project is worth undertaking because of the contribution it can make to vital United States interests. A refurbished IRF policy can overcome many of these scruples and contribute to United States national security by appealing to the self-interest of both majority religious communities and civil authorities. We must convince struggling nascent democracies—such as those in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Russia—that democracy becomes stable and lasting

Arguments Should Be Excluded from Democratic Deliberation, 1999 UTAH L. REV. 639, 643.

70. JOHN RAWLS, *A THEORY OF JUSTICE* (Belknap Press 1999) (1971); JOHN RAWLS, *JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS: A RESTATEMENT* (Erin Kelly ed., 2001); JOHN RAWLS, *POLITICAL LIBERALISM* (1993).

only when it is grounded in religious freedom in all its dimensions. We should make the case that China cannot continue consistent economic growth and maintain political stability without reversing its policy of repressing the natural, productive religious expressions of its huge and growing religious population.⁷¹ We must encourage the reforming tendencies of Saudi King Abdullah and other Saudi moderates by helping them accept a fundamental reality—the continued loosening of the Wahhabi straightjacket in the kingdom will, over the long term, benefit Saudis and Saudi Islam.

Saudi Arabia is in many respects a closed society that shares some characteristics with other authoritarian nations. It has a narrowly based economy that yields few jobs outside the oil industry.⁷² Education focuses on engineering and rigid interpretations of Islam, with little or no emphasis on history, social science, or the other liberal arts. Its ruling regime, the House of Saud, has long been allied with the Wahhabi establishment as a means of protecting the regime's power.⁷³ Recent moves by King Abdullah suggest this alliance is in flux and that political reform may begin to emerge.⁷⁴ As it does, the United States must be in a position to encourage reformers—especially religious leaders—who understand or are capable of understanding that religious tolerance, as a first step toward full religious liberty, is necessary to stable reform.

Our diplomacy may employ at least two arguments in these tasks. First, history strongly suggests that majority religious communities will flourish if they accept religious freedom and that they will fail if they do not.⁷⁵ Consider the Roman Catholic Church. For much of the nineteenth century it resisted both democracy and public manifestations of religion by non-Catholics.⁷⁶ It insisted the interior right of religious freedom had to be protected for all persons, but public expressions of religion by non-Catholics must be limited by the State in order to protect the common good.⁷⁷

71. See generally FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 273–307.

72. See BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, BACKGROUND NOTE: SAUDI ARABIA, Jan. 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3584.htm>.

73. See *No Time to Lose*, ECONOMIST, Feb. 21–27, 2009, at 10, 11.

74. See *id.*

75. See, e.g., FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 102–07.

76. See *id.*

77. See *id.*

In the mid-twentieth century, however, the Second Vatican Council acknowledged the Church's need to pursue its truth claims without state support.⁷⁸ It formally declared the right of every person, and of every religious community, to an immunity from coercion in civil society on matters of religion.⁷⁹ What it demanded in return was state support for *libertas ecclesiae*—the freedom of the church to be a teacher of citizens. Consistent with the principle of equality under the law, it demanded this right for all other religious communities within society.⁸⁰ This is the development of Catholic doctrine that energized the third wave of democratization in the 1970s and 1980s, three-quarters of which took place in countries with Catholic majorities.⁸¹

In practice, this Catholic development has spurred both religious freedom and stable democracy. In Latin America, for example, the Catholic Church has been losing converts to Pentecostal communities for years. The Church's first impulse was to revert to "altar and throne" arrangements, seeking laws that benefited Catholics and disadvantaged non-Catholics. Gradually, however, that has begun to change. In a few countries, the Church has begun to engage in genuine religious competition for souls, fomenting a "battle" that is taking place peacefully and without violence.⁸² It is providing a lesson in the true meaning of religious freedom—what John Courtney Murray called "creeds at war intelligibly"—within a democratic civil society.⁸³ This is helping democracy to root in Latin America. It is good for those countries, for the region, and for the United States.

78. See *id.* at 106.

79. See *id.*

80. See Robert P. George & William L. Saunders, Jr., *Dignitatis Humanae: The Freedom of the Church and the Responsibility of the State*, in CATHOLICISM AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS ON VATICAN II'S DECLARATION ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY 1, 6 (Kenneth L. Grasso & Robert P. Hunt eds., 2006).

81. See HUNTINGTON, *supra* note 41, at 76.

82. See generally Martin Poblete, *Chile: From the Patronato to Pinochet*, in RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND EVANGELIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA: THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM 220, 232 (Paul E. Sigmund ed., 1999); Andrew Downie, *Behind Brazil's Catholic Resurgence*, TIME, May 8, 2007, available at <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1618439,00.html>.

83. JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY, WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS: CATHOLIC REFLECTIONS ON THE AMERICAN PROPOSITION 125 (1960).

Consider, however, a contrary example: how the absence of religious freedom has harmed democracy and placed the majority religious community at risk. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church decided to cast its lot with political authoritarianism to maintain its religious monopoly in Russia. It has sought and obtained laws that disadvantage other religious groups.⁸⁴ While this has brought short-term gains, Russian Orthodoxy is losing its credibility over the long term as a vital religious community and its capacity to compete for souls. And by aiding antidemocratic forces, it is retarding the consolidation of Russian democracy.

Consider what might have happened had the United States spent the last two decades attempting to convince the leaders of Russian Orthodoxy that they would lose ground by rejecting religious freedom and democracy—that they and their adherents could flourish by engaging in the competition of religious pluralism, with better teaching and better preaching. While some legitimate restrictions on foreign missionaries are conceivable, the Orthodox Church can defend itself far better—and without state coercion—by emphasizing in a persuasive and peaceful manner its own truth claims. United States foreign policy might have influenced the Russian Church to accept this logic by employing private and public diplomacy, foreign aid, democracy funding, and Track II diplomatic efforts, but we have barely attempted to do this. It is impossible to know whether we would have succeeded, but surely it remains a project worth undertaking in Russia and elsewhere.

The second argument we might use to convince others that religious freedom is vital to stable democracy is the data of sociology and economics, including the pioneering work by sociologists such as Brian Grim at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and Roger Finke at Penn State University.⁸⁵ Their data, as well as work by international relations theorists and economists, is demonstrating that democracy cannot root without religious freedom, especially in highly religious societies, which is to say most societies in the world today.⁸⁶ Their data shows that stable democracy requires a “bundled commodity” of fundamental freedoms that

84. See, e.g., U.S. COMM’N ON INT’L RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, RUSSIA: POLICY FOCUS 15 (2006), available at http://www.uscirf.gov/images/stories/pdf/Policy_Focus/Russia.pdf (stating that the Russian Orthodoxy, exercising its preferential status, “has agreements with a number of government ministries on guidelines for public education, religious training for military personnel, and law enforcement decisions”).

85. See Grim, *supra* note 69, at 3–5; Grim & Finke, *supra* note 69, at 654.

86. See Grim, *supra* note 69, at 6.

cannot function properly without religious liberty.⁸⁷ Absent that right, societies are highly vulnerable to democracy-killing religious conflict, persecution, and extremism.⁸⁸

All of this suggests that if the United States wants to root democracy in religious societies—the kind of democracy that will endure and yield benefits to its citizens and the United States, especially the elimination or containment of Islamist extremism—our foreign policy must advance religious freedom in the sense it is defined in this Article. In authoritarian societies such as China or Saudi Arabia, where democracy and religious freedom are not yet realistic possibilities, we must develop strategies that move those countries toward forms of religious tolerance that not only help religious minorities but also develop civil society as a precursor to further political reform.

A final word on Islam: many in the United States believe Islam lacks the resources for such an evolution.⁸⁹ They should consider three points. First, there are traditional Muslim jurists and leaders who believe Islam must defend religious freedom.⁹⁰ Their views suggest political-theological evolution is possible. We must learn to discern which Islamic leaders can bring about this kind of evolution and support them in doing so. The alternatives to this strategy are bleak: continue to support the authoritarian regimes that will ensure the continued incubation and exportation of Islamist extremism, or develop a containment policy for some fifty Muslim nations and 1.3 billion people. Neither is a realistic alternative. Second, the democratic experiments of Turkey and Indonesia are encouraging. Both are lagging in religious freedom, but that is all the more reason to target them in our IRF policy. Finally, before concluding that Islam cannot embrace religious freedom, we should recall the history

87. *See id.*

88. *See id.* at 5.

89. *See, e.g.,* Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, FOREIGN AFF., Summer 1993, at 22, 32 (arguing that “the principal beneficiaries” of democratization in the Arab world have been anti-Western, Islamist movements).

90. *See, e.g.,* ABDULLAHI AHMED AN-NAIM, TOWARD AN ISLAMIC REFORMATION: CIVIL LIBERTIES, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW (1990); Abou El Fadl, *The Human Rights Commitment in Modern Islam*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN WORLD RELIGIONS 113 (Joseph Runzo et al. eds., 2002); Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, *Freedom of Conscience and Religion in the Qur'an*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CONFLICT OF CULTURES: WESTERN AND ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY 53 (Frederick M. Denny ed., 1988).

of Catholic struggles with religious freedom and democracy, as well as that of certain Protestant denominations.⁹¹

V. CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

There are changes needed if the United States is going to integrate IRF into its national security strategy. First, United States diplomacy must adopt a broad principle: religion is normative in human affairs, not a mere add-on to human nature. Second, the United States must broaden its current emphasis on countering religious persecution as a humanitarian matter by adopting an explicit policy of advancing political regimes grounded in religious freedom. This will require policy changes by the President and Secretary of State. Bureaucratically, it means moving the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and his office out of their current isolation, and giving the Ambassador the authority to mainstream this issue within United States foreign policy.⁹²

Mainstreaming will require efforts from more than one office and one ambassador. The State Department will need to integrate this issue into the powerful regional bureaus where much of our foreign policy is controlled and implemented. Training at the Foreign Service Institute will need to be revamped, and Foreign Service Officers given incentives and opportunities to focus on religious actors and ideas. This means assignments, promotions, and career opportunities must be available to those who do this kind of work. The Foreign Service should also develop a career subspecialty in religion and religious freedom under the major career tracks of politics and economics.⁹³

We must refurbish our public diplomacy as well. In 2007, the National Public Diplomacy Strategy of the United States instructed our diplomats to “avoid using religious language.”⁹⁴ This strategy exemplifies

91. See, e.g., MICHAEL NOVAK, *THE UNIVERSAL HUNGER FOR LIBERTY: WHY THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS IS NOT INEVITABLE* 155–89 (2004).

92. See generally Thomas F. Farr & Dennis R. Hoover, Berkley Ctr. for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs & Ctr. on Faith and Int'l Affairs, *The Future of U.S. International Religious Freedom Policy: Recommendations for the Obama Administration* (2009), available at <http://repository.berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/IRFPolicyReport.pdf> (explaining the changes needed in the Executive Branch to integrate IRF).

93. See *id.* at 2.

94. POLICY COORDINATING COMM., U.S. NAT'L STRATEGY FOR PUB. DIPLOMACY AND STRATEGIC COMMUN 25 (2007), available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/87427.pdf>.

the problem. Avoiding religious language is like telling our diplomats who are going to Saudi Arabia to avoid speaking Arabic. We must become as adept at understanding the religious realities in key countries as we are at understanding those countries' political and economic realities. Moreover, our public diplomacy must make it clear that for America, religious freedom does not mean the privatization of religion or its relegation to the margins of politics. If politics means how we order our lives together, then democratic politics must include all citizens and communities, including the religious.

Finally, the United States must alter the way it spends its money on democracy promotion. For too long, the grants made by organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy or the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund have focused on the secular aspects of democracy building, such as village elections, drafting of constitutions, women's movements, and trade unions.⁹⁵ All of these are indeed vital to democracy, but so too are the prime drivers of political culture in most of the world—religious ideas and religious communities. This is beginning to change, but it is changing too slowly. We must develop comprehensive strategies to encourage religious communities—such as Russian Orthodoxy or Afghan Sunnis—to engage in the democratic process, and to do it as a matter of exercising and defending religious freedom.

Let me conclude by recalling a bit of American history. In the 1660s, American colonial Congregationalists tortured and hanged Quakers on Boston Commons. Just over a century later, Americans embraced a system of religious liberty that was and remains unprecedented in history. That system did not result from the Enlightenment alone, or the separation of religion from politics, but from the tandem development of theology and politics. Surely that system has contributed to the fact that American Muslims, subject to Wahhabi influences for decades, have not been radicalized in the way that many of Europe's Muslims have. The *Economist* recently noted the irony: "The strange thing is that when America has tried to tackle religious politics abroad—especially jihadist violence—it has drawn no lessons from its domestic success. Why has a country so rooted in pluralism made so little of religious freedom?"⁹⁶

95. See FARR, WORLD OF FAITH AND FREEDOM, *supra* note 1, at 7–8.

96. *The Lesson from America: The Super Power Has Mastered the Politics of Religion at Home, but Not Abroad*, ECONOMIST, Nov. 3–9, 2007, at 21, 22.

Why, indeed? Our policy must change. If we are to engage the world in defense of American interests, if we are to hear the widow's lament and defeat Islamist radicalism using the institutions of stable democracy, we must supplement sound military strategy, good intelligence, vigorous law enforcement, and state-to-state diplomacy with what has, until now, been the missing link. Ordered liberty demands realism about human nature. If democracies are to succeed in highly religious societies, they must be grounded in religious freedom.