

MIXED BLESSINGS

U.S. Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict-Prone Settings

A Report of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project
Center for Strategic and International Studies



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Our working group participants helped us to refine insights into how the U.S. government currently engages with religion in conflict settings and to consider practical guidelines for improved approaches (see appendix A for a full list of these participants).

The content and judgments made in this report are solely those of the authors and project directors.

Introduction

Until recently, many leading scholars of religion and society theorized that modernization would bring a decline in religion. Instead, they have been surprised by “an age of explosive, pervasive religiosity.”¹ Experts have noted an increase in the number of adherents to the world’s major religions, along with a rise in the religiosity of many of their followers.² In many countries, political liberalization has coincided with an increased role for religion in political life.³

Global religious dynamics increasingly influence U.S. involvement overseas. Faith-based groups in the United States have driven foreign policy in places such as Sudan and China, while religiously motivated transnational groups such as al Qaeda have threatened U.S. national security. International religious movements have also mobilized at unprecedented levels to do important development work overseas. For its part, the U.S. government has recently undertaken reconstruction efforts in societies where religion plays a critical role, notably in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a world heavily influenced by religion, U.S. government intelligence, military, diplomatic, and development tools must be properly prepared to engage these religious elements. Although so-called religious conflicts are often driven by a number of other, underlying factors, religion is a strong source of identity that can be used to mobilize constituencies and called upon to justify extreme action.

American interests will be better met through increased awareness and recognition of how religion affects international affairs, including through the faith and religious beliefs of politicians and elites; the belief structures that underlie national and international views; and the impact of religious organizations.⁴ Religious leaders, organizations, institutions and communities can mobilize religion to sanction violence, draw on religion to resolve conflicts, or invoke religion to provide humanitarian and development aid. To engage successfully, government analyses, policy, training, and programming must fully incorporate an understanding of the varied roles for religion in conflict-prone settings.

1. Peter Berger, “Religion in a Globalizing World,” *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, December 4, 2006, <http://pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=R136>. Two thirds of world citizens who participated in a Gallup International survey declared themselves to be religious. “Voice of the People 2005: Religiosity around the World,” Gallup International survey, 2005, <http://extranet.gallup-international.com/uploads/internet/Religiosity%>.

2. Timothy Samuel Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, “Why God Is Winning,” *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2006.

3. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

4. John D. Stempel, “Faith and Diplomacy in the International System,” University of Kentucky, March 2000.

The U.S. government is becoming more aware of religion's significance in conflict-prone places, but officials still struggle to find an effective way to address religious trends systematically, strategically, and across government. As will be discussed in the following section of this report, miscalculating religion's role has sometimes led to failure to anticipate conflict or has actually been counterproductive to policy goals. It has kept officials from properly engaging influential leaders, interfered with the provision of effective development assistance, and at times harmed American national security.

For more than a year, the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) Post-Conflict Reconstruction (PCR) Project, with support from the Henry Luce Foundation, has been surveying U.S. government approaches to religion abroad and considering ways for government resources and energy to better account for religion.

The researchers approached several broad questions:

- Who in the government is thinking about religion in conflict-prone settings? What offices are working on these issues?
- How does the U.S. government think about religion? What attitudes shape the government approach?
- What initiatives explicitly account for religion or engage religious actors on the basis of their faith?
- How have Washington-based efforts and frameworks affected the conduct of diplomacy and operations abroad? What do efforts look like on the ground?

In pursuing these questions, the PCR Project performed an assessment of U.S. government approaches, including a review of hundreds of books and articles and participation in dozens of conferences. PCR Project staff examined policies and programming across the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy, focusing on the Executive Branch agencies, and conducted a total of 240 interviews in Washington and abroad.

Project staff also carried out a field case study in Nigeria, selected because of the country's strategic importance to the United States and to Africa, its current critical leadership transition, and the centrality of religion in Nigerian society. Forthcoming case studies planned and conducted by the PCR Project will give an increased understanding of the effectiveness of U.S. government activities on the ground. In March of 2007, the project also hosted a small-group brainstorming session, including 27 officials from the State Department, USAID, the military, the intelligence community, and the Hill, to discuss potential recommendations. Appendix A includes a list of session participants.

The research conducted to date indicates that the U.S. government's approach to religion in conflict-prone settings has in fact improved in recent years. Parts of the intelligence community address religion as a transnational concern; the military services are increasingly developing doctrine and training on approaching religious leaders and communities in stability operations; USAID works with faith-based organizations and incorporates religious sensitivities into some development programming; and State Department officials promote international religious freedom and are focused on improving relations with the Muslim world.

Still, a long history of both perceived and actual limitations to approaching religion prevents U.S. government officials from engaging more strategically. In response to domestic pressures, for example, the U.S. government reluctantly created initiatives to support international religious freedom, an issue that remains marginalized within the human rights framework. Government efforts have also belatedly and not entirely successfully considered religion's role in promoting terrorism, while a public diplomacy campaign has scrambled to assure Muslim communities abroad of shared values, without always listening to the different priorities of various communities.

With the notable exception of some recent U.S. government approaches to Islam,⁵ policymakers and practitioners have largely been wary of directly addressing religion. Government officials remain concerned about developing and implementing religion-related policies abroad in part because legal guidelines on the applicability of the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses⁶ to foreign policy are still evolving. In general, U.S. government initiatives with a secular analysis or outreach may be limited or misplaced in responding to actors with a theologically based worldview. Both secular caution and threat-focused analyses of religion can prevent positive engagement with religion's potential for resolving conflict.

Overall, CSIS has identified the following strategic and operational obstacles in U.S. engagement with religion in conflict-prone settings:

- U.S. government officials are often reluctant to address the issue of religion, whether in response to a secular U.S. legal and political tradition, in the context of America's Judeo-Christian image overseas, or simply because religion is perceived as too complicated or sensitive.
- Current U.S. government frameworks for approaching religion are narrow, often approaching religions as problematic or monolithic forces, overemphasizing a terrorism-focused analysis of Islam and sometimes marginalizing religion as a peripheral humanitarian or cultural issue.
- Institutional capacity to understand and approach religion is limited due to legal limitations, lack of religious expertise or training, minimal influence for religion-related initiatives, and a government primarily structured to engage with other official state actors.

In short, policymakers have not developed clear guidance for addressing religion abroad, and U.S. efforts have not managed to fully reduce religious risks, account for religious dynamics, and engage religious partners effectively. As many parts of the government have already recognized, a reactive approach to gauging and engaging religious dynamics abroad is insufficient. This report aims to contribute to the debate on how ob-

5. Promotion of moderate interpretations of Islamic law could be understood as advancing a particular theological position, despite potentially applicable legal rulings that government programming should neither advance nor inhibit religious practices. See *Lamont v. Woods*, 948 F.2d 825, 842 n.20 (2d Cir. 1991). See p. 44 of this report for a fuller discussion of this issue.

6. The Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution state, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." See U.S. Const., Am. I, cl. 1.

stacles to proactive engagement with religion can be comprehensively addressed, particularly at a time when the U.S. government is wrestling with these issues.

This report provides a four-part summary of the first year of the project. First, it considers the dangers of overlooking religion's role in conflict-prone settings and describes how religion may be critical to U.S. diplomatic, development, and security policies. Second, it surveys and identifies critical gaps in current U.S. government approaches to religion in foreign policy and conflict management, including a case study of Nigeria. Third, the report analyzes the main obstacles to more effective government engagement. Finally, it concludes with recommendations and areas of further inquiry for the U.S. government to achieve a more balanced, nuanced, and effective approach to religion in conflict-prone settings.

Religion in Conflict-Prone Settings

In 1994, the seminal book *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, edited by Douglas M. Johnston and Cynthia Sampson and published through CSIS, launched a dialogue in Washington on the costs of overlooking religion's critical role in international affairs.⁷

The book highlighted cases that demonstrated the necessity of understanding religious and spiritual factors in conflict and conflict resolution. One chapter recalls a U.S. embassy effort in the 1950s to reach out to Iranian mullahs with an International Visitors Program conference at Princeton. The author notes, "It was so inappropriate a way of dealing with the mullahs that the result was that Washington was perceived as trying to modify Islamic fundamentalism.... The context was entirely Cold War, not a religious dialogue. American diplomacy made no serious connection with religious leaders in either Iran or Pakistan."⁸

This diplomatic failure was indicative of poor U.S. government understanding of the religious dimension of Iranian politics, one of a number of U.S. intelligence oversights that left officials shocked when, in 1979, a Shiite-led uprising produced the first modern Islamic republic and contributed to a deepening Sunni-Shi'a split across the Middle East.

Another of the book's examples considers U.S. government failure to ascribe proper weight to religious elements in Nicaragua in the 1980s. As the chapter's author explains,

Washington's refusal to listen to the Nicaraguan church on the potential for revolution in the country, its failure to estimate correctly the strength of the clerical and lay forces of the Nicaraguan Christian Democratic party, the consequent failure to work with the church, and then the failure to see the role (strongly pro-Sandinistan) being played by young clerics among the people, were among the factors that contributed to the original victory of the Sandinistas.⁹

In the 13 years since the publication of Johnston's and Sampson's book, the U.S. government has continued to struggle with the salience of religion in conflict, peacemaking, and politics, resulting in poor conflict anticipation, counterproductive policies, and missed opportunities for religion-related solutions.

The most apparent recent example has been the U.S. government's underestimation of the potential for sectarian violence in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraqi invasion. Bob Grenier, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency's Counter Terrorism Center in charge of synthesizing intelligence collection and analysis prior to the Iraqi invasion,

7. Douglas M. Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

8. Stanton Burnett, "Implications for the Foreign Policy Community," in *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ed. Johnston and Sampson, p. 288.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

noted that because of the secular character of Saddam Hussein's regime, analysts had "an under-appreciation for the extent to which religion would manifest itself once repression had been removed."¹⁰

Although policymakers and military leaders are now aware of the pervasive sectarian divisions in the area, they remain at a loss about how to respond. The 2006 Sunni bombing of the Shi'a shrine in Samarra further weakened American credibility among Shi'a and Sunni groups, both of whom increasingly take matters into their own hands. The United States continues to try to contain violence without addressing the differences that lead to bloodshed.¹¹ Meanwhile, insights into both the motivations and inspirational ability of key religious leaders, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr, have been insufficient.

Another recent example comes from Pakistan in 2006, where a January missile strike killed 18 villagers celebrating an Islamic holiday and an October air raid targeting a religious school killed 80 people—both reportedly conducted in cooperation with U.S. intelligence. Anti-American attacks, including one against a USAID-funded local nongovernmental organization, or NGO, quickly followed. A peace deal, intended to be signed the same day as the attack on the religious school occurred, was abandoned. Attacks on religious institutions and gatherings "alienated those with the will to conciliate and handed the local Taliban the popular legitimacy of freedom fighters."¹²

In Somalia in 2006, the U.S. government initially refused to encourage negotiations between the Islamic Courts Union and the Transitional Federal Government because it was worried about an extreme Islamic state being established in Somalia that might link up with al Qaeda in the future. Although this concern may have been legitimate, it kept the United States from considering ways to work with the moderates within the Union, or diplomatically capitalizing on the divisions in the organization. This approach only succeeded in bolstering the more fundamentalist wings of the Union, which benefited from Somali perceptions that the United States was "anti-Islam."

Misunderstanding religion can therefore lead to missed opportunities. When U.S. government officials do not consider religion a factor in the success or failure of conflict mitigation, it is not incorporated into diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts or development projects to rebuild communities. Underestimating religion's role can endanger or interfere with national security and prevent agencies from reaching diplomatic and development goals.

Where religion is more comprehensively accounted for, U.S. government officials have frequently made more informed choices. In Indonesia, for example, U.S. government activities have often successfully incorporated religious realities. A former ambassador to Indonesia said that when Megawati Sukarnoputri was up for the presidency in 1999, he was unsure how a female president would be viewed by the populace. After conferring with a conservative Islamist—a representative of the opposition party—who told him that having a female serve as

10. Bob Grenier (managing director, Kroll Inc.), interview with the authors, February 26, 2007.

11. Prepared testimony of Vali R. Nasr before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, January 17, 2007, http://www.cfr.org/publication/12437/prepared_testimony_before_the_senate_committee_on_foreign_relations.html.

12. Rebecca Haines, "How to Dismantle a Peace Deal on Pakistan's Frontier," Institute for Global Engagement, <http://www.globalengage.org/media/article.aspx?id=3580>, March 15, 2007.

president would not be a violation of Islam, the ambassador was able to take wiser diplomatic actions.¹³

An improved understanding of potential threats and opportunities is central to U.S. government conflict-prevention and reconstruction efforts in fragile states. Sensitivity to and acknowledgment of religion's role overseas may also improve America's image abroad. Overall, U.S. effectiveness will be increased through awareness and recognition of the roles religion plays in conflict, peacemaking, and humanitarian and development work.

Religion and Conflict

Religion can contribute to conflict in numerous ways: communal strife among different faith communities, repression of minority religious groups, and conflict between the government and religious groups over control of the state.¹⁴ In addition, U.S. representatives intervening in holy places or within religious communities can inflame religiously based tensions or offend religious actors. As one Afghan said about foreign troops, "They come with their boots into our mosques. This is why everyone is fighting against them."¹⁵ Similarly, Iraqis protested the U.S. invasion of Najaf in part because of its importance as a holy city.¹⁶

Such examples reinforce the need for an understanding of the political, sociological and historical contexts of religiously motivated violence. Countering the appeal of religiously driven violence requires a deep understanding of the motivations behind this type of aggression. Beyond theology, it is critical to consider how feelings of humiliation and societal oppression may manifest themselves as expressions of religious violence.¹⁷ This is central to understanding how leaders motivate support, including in the context of transnational religious movements.

Perhaps the most important lesson for U.S. government practitioners is not to view religious actors and groups as monolithic entities. For example, although al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood share common ideological origins in conservative Sunni Islam, the two international movements differ extensively over politics and tactics. Merely recognizing that groups share certain religious beliefs, then, is not a detailed enough level of knowledge to predict the actions, understand the political agendas, or combat the tactics of a particular extremist religious group.

It is equally important to recognize when religion is not a driver of conflict. As John Siebert has noted, "Absolute claims to truth, religious or otherwise, in and of themselves, are not a threat to peace and security."¹⁸ Although both violent extremists and nonviolent

13. Ambassador J. Stapleton Roy, interview with the authors, March 9, 2007.

14. U.S. Department of State, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad to the Secretary of State and to the President of the United States*, released May 17, 1999, http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/990517_report/table.html.

15. Mark Sappenfield, "Afghans Caught in War's Rising Tide," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 7, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0307/p01s03-wosc.htm>.

16. Ambassador Roy, interview.

17. Jonah Blank (policy adviser on South Asia, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee), interview, July 21, 2006.

18. John Siebert, "Religion and Conflict: A Practitioner's Functional Approach," delivered at "Peace-building Dialogue" hosted by the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, May 11–12, 2006.

fundamentalists may use similar interpretations of religious texts, a better understanding of the approaches and resources of the two groups can be used to undermine the former and encourage the latter.¹⁹ Appreciation for the diversity of viewpoints within a particular religion or sect can help outsiders to approach religiously based conflict in a more strategic manner.

Religion and Peacemaking

In addition to religion's potential to contribute to conflict, religious groups and leaders can often be particularly effective track-two diplomats, thanks to their credibility with local communities, their unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, their local and international networks, and their willingness to sacrifice public recognition. The faith-based community of Sant'Egidio, an international humanitarian movement of 50,000 individuals, was especially effective in resolving conflict in Mozambique because it did not have vested interests in the conflict and was thus viewed as neutral by both sides.²⁰ High-level Vatican diplomacy and unassuming Mennonite peacemaking alike have both achieved long-term reconciliation.

Religious means of redressing grievances can help achieve post-conflict healing, especially through authentic fora for discussions of tolerance within a faith community and among those of different faiths.²¹ The International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, a Washington-based NGO, has facilitated cooperation among the next generation of leaders in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist regions of Kashmir through a series of faith-based reconciliation seminars.

Even when religious actors are not acting as peacemakers themselves, religion is still often relevant to many aspects of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Although there are certainly many reasons why the Oslo Accords were unsuccessful, some experts suggest that, like other secular political processes, they failed in part because they did not address or incorporate the range of religious instincts that define Israeli and Palestinian identities.²²

Religious peacebuilding can sometimes be prevented by the failure of religious leaders to understand or enact their potential peacebuilding roles, and this problem can be compounded by insufficient engagement of these actors by international players.²³ Engaging

19. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Gregory F. Trevorton, Heather Gregg, Daniel Gibran, and Charles W. Yost, *Exploring Religious Conflict* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2005).

20. David R. Smock, ed., *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking*, Peaceworks No. 55 (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace, January 2006); Scott Appleby, "A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict," *Religion and Peacebuilding*, ed. Harold Coward and Gordon S. Smith (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2004); Andrea Bartoli, "Mediating Peace in Mozambique: The Role of the Community of Sant'Egidio," *Herding Cats: Multi-Party Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999). Also PCR Project staff interviews with senior Sant'Egidio mediators in Rome.

21. Smock, ed., *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking*.

22. Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* (New York: William Morrow, 2001).

23. R. Scott Appleby, "Building Sustainable Peace: The Roles of Local and Transnational Religious Actors," presented at Georgetown University conference, "New Religious Pluralism in World Politics," March 17, 2006.

religious leaders and making conflict resolution locally relevant and culturally appropriate can greatly increase the probability of successful U.S. engagement.

Religion in Humanitarian and Development Work

Religion can also be instrumental in conflict-prone settings thanks to the social support structure that religious and faith-based groups provide to vulnerable populations. By supplying basic services, building transparent and participatory governance institutions, and developing a vibrant civil society, faith-based organizations often fill a vacuum where governments fail to provide for basic public needs, though their systems may run parallel to the state's.

The director of the World Bank's Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics has emphasized that virtually every religious tradition has a major focus on the world's poor and excluded, and charitable traditions have been shaped and driven by religious organizations.²⁴ Such groups mitigate the effects of famine, epidemics, human trafficking, and the collapse of government-provided services. More than 50 percent of the hospitals in Africa are operated under the auspices of faith-based organizations.²⁵ The Mennonite Central Committee ships food to North Koreans and, with the American Friends Service Committee, runs agricultural exchanges between North Koreans and Mennonite farmers.²⁶ The Asian-Muslim Action Network has been operating in 18 Asian countries since 1990, focusing on human rights, pluralism, justice for religious and ethnic minorities, and the education of youth.²⁷

However, religious groups can sometimes impede conflict-prevention work when they mix humanitarian goals with other objectives. Hamas provides a well-known illustration of a group coupling charitable works with support for military objectives. Meanwhile, proselytization activities can compromise both the delivery of the aid and standards of non-promotion of religious beliefs.²⁸

Other local religious groups simply have limited capacity for this type of work. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP) works with local churches to provide both food and education to children in parts of southern Sudan, but these churches are often hindered by corruption and inefficiency.²⁹ Deeper understandings of these dynamics can help American officials make sound decisions to improve development and humanitarian work in conflict-prone settings.

24. Katherine Marshall, "Tense Debates: Religion and Development," presented at Georgetown University conference, "New Religious Pluralism in World Politics," March 17, 2006.

25. Ibid.

26. See <http://mcc.org/northkorea/>.

27. Thomas Michel, "Transnational Religious Identities in a Globalized World," presented at Georgetown University conference, "New Religious Pluralism in World Politics," March 17, 2006.

28. However, many faith-based organizations have taken steps to mitigate this possibility. The more moderate groups adhere to a strict self-imposed conditionality regarding proselytizing, enshrined in the various codes of conduct developed by the main international NGO consortia, such as Interaction, ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies), and VOICE (Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies); http://www.sphereproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=84&lang=English.

29. "Implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams," speech, CSIS, March 27, 2006.

Current U.S. Government Approaches

In the past decade, religion has become a more explicit element of U.S. foreign policy, especially in response to domestic pressure from religiously driven groups and in the context of the Global War on Terror.

Recent *National Security Strategy* reports provide initial evidence of a new willingness to explore these issues at the broad policy level. President Bush's first *National Security Strategy* (2002) refers to religious issues—including religious freedom, religiously driven conflict, and efforts to eradicate terrorism in the Muslim world—four times. In contrast, the 2006 *National Security Strategy* includes 19 references to these same issues.³⁰

Although many U.S. government officials and offices acknowledge the importance of religion in the formulation and implementation of U.S. policy in conflict-prone states, a survey of the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy reveals that the government as a whole is not proceeding strategically on this issue. Lack of strategic thinking has left American practitioners without a clear set of policy objectives or tactical guidelines for dealing with emerging religious realities. Offices, programs, and initiatives are more often haphazard than coherent.

The following overview examines the major ways that the U.S. government has addressed religion in its (1) diplomacy, (2) humanitarian and development work, and (3) security initiatives, including both military and intelligence activities. Although the interview-focused methodology sought to get a sense of ad hoc and informal work done around these issues, the survey is generally limited to assessing official activities and initiatives.

Diplomacy

Critical gaps in U.S. government diplomatic engagement with religion include the following:

- International religious freedom initiatives are more concerned with reporting violators of religious freedom standards than with promoting religious tolerance.
- Although the international religious freedom issue has received increasing attention within the State Department, it remains marginalized in diplomatic programming and is not well integrated with the geographic bureaus.

30. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002*, <http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:pXNg78DR5XAJ:www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf+national+security+strategy+2002&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=2>; *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2006*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>.

- Diplomatic training related to religion is limited.
- Despite exchange programs and cultural diplomacy, much of public diplomacy remains one-way rather than focused on mutual dialogue.
- Government officials are overly cautious about working with certain religious groups and leaders.

U.S. diplomats have long dealt with religious factors, whether through traditional partnerships with powerful religious leaders or through assessing religion's role in conflicts abroad. President Bush has stressed that the government should reach out to religious leaders, and Washington officials and embassy representatives alike often meet with influential religious actors.

Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes, for example, spoke at an interfaith meeting at Istanbul's Topkapi Palace about the high-level impetus for this type of diplomacy. She said, "One of the things that President Bush, my boss, told me as I began this job was to take the time to reach out and meet with religious leaders—because faith is such an important part of life for so many Americans and so many people across the world."³¹

However, such sentiments do not seem to have translated into a comprehensive diplomatic strategy for engaging religion. Although high-level diplomacy often recognizes religion's role and many individual diplomats have developed awareness of religious dynamics, no formal and mainstreamed structure has developed to ensure that diplomats fully account for religious factors. Despite some new diplomatic initiatives and offices approaching the issue of religion, training on religious dynamics for Foreign Service and State Department officials is limited. Some officers noted that they explored religious dynamics in their regional studies programs prior to being posted abroad, but many said that the inclusion of religious factors was at best ad hoc.³² Those U.S. government diplomatic efforts that do deal directly with religion often approach it as either a peripheral issue—especially through the lens of international religious freedom—or as an element of efforts to improve relations with the Muslim world.

International Religious Freedom

The 1998 enactment of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) was one of the first ways that religion was codified in U.S. foreign policy in the past decade. IRFA established the promotion of religious freedom as a U.S. foreign policy objective, mandating the creation of an Office for International Religious Freedom (IRF) in the State Department, requiring embassies to produce annual reports on religious freedom, and establishing the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to give independent policy recommendations to the president, secretary of state, and Congress. Religious freedom is also the main issue addressed in religion-related training conducted by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), beyond a nod to overall cultural dynamics in the area studies department. The issue has also been institutionalized on Capitol Hill through an

31. See <http://www.state.gov/r/us/2005/54106.htm>.

32. For example, Thomas F. Farr (former director, Office of International Religious Freedom), interview, Washington, D.C., July 11, 2006.

International Religious Freedom Working Group within the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.³³

Many government officials surveyed, including those who have worked on religious freedom, believe the issue has been limited conceptually and structurally. At a 2006 event, the first director of the IRF Office outlined IRFA's goals of opposing religious persecution, freeing religious prisoners, and promoting religious freedom, adding, "The first two are so dominant in the way the department has implemented IRFA that the third, promoting religious freedom, has been overshadowed. Over the long term, this almost exclusive focus on persecution and prisoners puts all three goals at risk."³⁴ This finding is especially relevant because religious freedom is the primary way the State Department formally analyzes and approaches religion in conflict-prone settings.

The religious freedom agenda was promoted in the mid-1990s by activists who focused on the importance of preventing Christian persecution abroad, and a broader coalition of faith-based and human rights groups rallied around the larger religious freedom issue. The original bill introduced in the House was titled "Freedom from Religious Persecution Act."³⁵ Many in the government affirmed that current religious freedom activities remain overly focused on addressing religious persecution and that religious freedom policy has sometimes been viewed as Christian-biased.

The original 20-member Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, which was formed by Secretary of State Warren Christopher in November 1996 and helped design IRFA, included a subcommittee on conflict and conflict resolution. The committee's final report also included sections "Conflicts Involving Religion" and "Conflict Resolution Involving Religion."³⁶ Many interviewed who were involved with the committee said that the current government approach to religious freedom does not fully implement their recommendations on conflict analysis or resolution.³⁷

The office now produces the "Annual Report on International Religious Freedom," which describes the status of religious freedom, any host-nation policies that violate religious belief and practices, and U.S. policies to promote religious freedom in each country.³⁸ State Department programs to promote religious freedom abroad, which vary widely, can be grouped into three broad categories.

33. The International Religious Freedom Working Group is cochaired by Representative Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) and Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.). The Congressional Human Rights Caucus (CHRC) holds briefings to address human rights concerns with members of Congress and makes appeals on behalf of victims of political, religious, ethnic, and racial persecution; "About the CHRC," <http://lantos.house.gov/HoR/CA12/Human+Rights+Caucus/About+the+CHRC/>.

34. Thomas F. Farr, "Legislating International Religious Freedom," event transcript, *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, November 20, 2006.

35. The bill was introduced by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) and Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.). The bill ultimately signed into effect was introduced by Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) and cosponsored by Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.).

36. U.S. Department of State, *Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad*.

37. For example, Dwight Bashir (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom), interview, July 26, 2006.

38. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, International Religious Freedom Office, *Country Reports*, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/rpt/>.

The first category—religion’s role in peacebuilding—includes interfaith workshops that engage religious actors in development goals and religious reconciliation initiatives. Efforts to contain extremism, which compose the second category, include federal regulations against working with extremist groups. The third group of activities aims to protect religious minorities—for example, by funding projects that directly benefit religious minorities, putting pressure on governments that legislate discrimination against religious groups or religious minorities, using the media to build religious tolerance, and promoting religious exchange programs that showcase the role religion plays in U.S. society.

In Nigeria, the U.S. mission has made, according to its annual report, an especially strong effort to promote religious reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. Among other activities, the mission hosted Iftar³⁹ dinners in Abuja, Lagos, and Kwara State that brought together both Muslim and Christian participants.⁴⁰ In Indonesia, embassy outreach to emphasize the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in a democratic society has included speaking tours throughout the country for U.S. scholars to address religious tolerance and human rights issues.⁴¹

However, the current IRF director said that development programming and religious awareness activities are not directly related to the religious freedom issue.⁴² Although IRFA refers to the broad concept of advancing religious freedom, it puts into place structures that are focused more on problem identification and opposing religious persecution than on tolerance and prevention.

Tensions also exist between USCIRF’s conceptual approach to religious freedom and the way that State Department officials and those at the IRF office view their mandate. USCIRF reports often include recommendations that fall outside the type of activities in which State officials engage. For example, the commission’s 2006 report notes, with respect to recommendations about refugee and asylum programming for religious groups, that “the Department of State has not yet acted on or responded to these recommendations.” Ambassador-at-Large John Hanford said that he at times removed his name from commission publications because of the different approaches, noting, “I spend way too much of my time arguing with them than I would like,” and adding, “but out of that has come some good things.”⁴³

Meanwhile, the main policy tool used by the government to enforce international religious freedom is to report states that have engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. Then, the government may choose to levy sanctions against those Countries of Particular Concern (CPC).⁴⁴

39. Iftar is the evening meal for breaking the daily fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

40. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, International Religious Freedom Office, *Nigeria: International Religious Freedom Report 2005*, November 8, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51489.htm>.

41. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, International Religious Freedom Office, *Indonesia: International Religious Freedom Report 2005*, November 8, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51512.htm>.

42. Stephen Liston (director, U.S. Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom), interview, July 20, 2006.

43. John V. Hanford III, comments, in “International Religious Freedom: Religion and International Diplomacy,” *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, May 8, 2007.

44. The current CPCs are Burma, China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan. U.S. Congress, *International Religious Freedom Act of 1998*, H.R. 2431-29, 105th Congress, 2nd session, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/2297.pdf>.

At the same time, this tool is rarely used. A presidential waiver in IRFA specifies that actions need not be taken against a CPC if “the exercise of such waiver authority would further the purposes of this Act.”⁴⁵ Although the commission regularly reports these violators (including, most recently, Saudi Arabia, China, and Iran), only one country—Eritrea—has been formally punished by the United States government for this specific reason.⁴⁶

The government’s approach is also limited by the religious freedom issue’s lack of integration with other foreign policy goals. For example, a former IRF director pointed out that Congress’s 2005 Advance Democracy Act did not tie religious freedom to democracy promotion.⁴⁷ Some officials said the office’s placement in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) distances the issue from the regional desks.⁴⁸ IRFA created an ambassador-at-large for religious freedom, who reports to the assistant secretary for DRL, although other ambassadors-at-large report to under secretaries of state.⁴⁹ Effectively, the issue is relegated to a staff of 22 that dedicates almost half of each year to publishing an annual report.⁵⁰ Although the reporting requirements focus embassies on making religious contacts and examining religious dynamics, the work is usually done by junior political officers and often receives less attention from senior diplomats.

Outreach to Muslim Communities

Beyond religious freedom, official diplomatic initiatives that relate to religion have mostly focused on Muslim communities abroad, but ineffective government programs suggest that some efforts have misunderstood faith-based audiences.

Since September 11, U.S. government diplomatic efforts have reprioritized outreach to majority Muslim countries. In early 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice launched the Transformational Diplomacy Initiative, repositioning Foreign Service Officers from Europe to difficult assignments in the Middle East and Asia.⁵¹ From 2004 to 2006, total spending on public diplomacy abroad increased 21 percent, from \$519 million to an estimated \$629 million; 92 percent of this increase went to countries with majority Muslim populations.⁵² Government officials said that the Policy Coordinating Committee for

45. International Religious Freedom Act, <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/intlrel.htm>.

46. “Secretary of State Rice in September 2005 announced the denial of commercial export to Eritrea of defense articles and services covered by the Arms Control Export Act....” U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Annual Report*, May 2006, p. 84.

47. Thomas F. Farr, “The Diplomacy of Religious Freedom,” *First Things: A Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life*, May 2006.

48. Staff of U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom, interview, Washington, D.C., July 14, 2006; Liston, interview.

49. See <http://foia.state.gov/masterdocs/01FAM/01FAM0010.PDF>.

50. Liston, interview.

51. See <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/59339.htm>.

52. Jess T. Ford, Testimony before the Subcommittee on Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations, May 3, 2006, in U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Persistent Challenges*, GAO-06-707T, May 2006.

Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication (which was formed in April 2006 and replaced the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee, formed in 2004) now leads a Pilot Country Initiative, targeting majority Muslim countries with specially designed outreach programs.⁵³

The State Department has outlined strategic objectives for public diplomacy in these regions, including to “undermine [extremists’] efforts to portray the West as in conflict with Islam by empowering mainstream voices and demonstrating respect for Muslim cultures and contributions” and to “foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world.”⁵⁴ However, many government officials said they do not receive clear guidance on implementing such policies, and initiatives in recent years have struggled to convince Muslim communities abroad of shared American values.⁵⁵ Initiatives may be further hindered by insufficient U.S. capacity to engage diplomatically with Muslim communities. For example, 30 percent of Foreign Service officers staffing language-designated public diplomacy positions in countries with significant Muslim populations lack proficiency in relevant languages.⁵⁶

In 1999, the United States Information Agency was closed,⁵⁷ and the State Department introduced the position of under secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs. Under Secretary Charlotte Beers, who began in the position in 2001, tried to counter negative images of the United States in the Muslim world with the Shared Values Initiative; it included an advertising campaign depicting religious tolerance and moderate Muslims in the United States (which several Arab nations refused to run). Other major initiatives targeting Muslim audiences include *Partnerships for Learning*, a focused exchange program to help young Muslim students experience American culture and education, and *Hi*, an Arabic language magazine targeting Muslim youth.⁵⁸

Based on the theory that conflicts can be diffused by emphasizing similarities between groups, these programs sought common ground between American society and Muslim

53. Jess T. Ford (director, International Affairs and Trade Team, GAO) and Michael M. Tenkate (senior analyst, International Affairs and Trade Team, GAO), interviews, February 12, 2007.

54. See Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, <http://www.state.gov/r/>.

55. U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Persistent Challenges*, GAO-06-535, May 2006.

56. *Ibid.*, 37.

57. USIA was an independent foreign affairs agency within the executive branch of the U.S. government. USIA explained and supported American foreign policy and promoted U.S. national interests through a wide range of overseas information programs. The agency promoted mutual understanding between the United States and other nations by conducting educational and cultural activities. See <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/factshe.htm>.

58. “In December 2005, State suspended publication of *Hi* magazine pending the results of an internal evaluation, which was prompted by concerns over the magazine’s cost, reach, and impact, according to State officials.” GAO, Report to the Chairman, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences*, 12.

audiences and avoided topics on which these communities would differ.⁵⁹ *Hi* magazine, for example, which was launched in 2003, focused on articles with subjects like Internet dating, sandboarding, and yoga and was criticized at home and abroad for lacking substance. One commentator said the magazine demonstrates that the United States “has no substantive reply to sincere questions about U.S. policy, or even to adult questions about U.S. society and culture.”⁶⁰ *Hi* and the other shared-values programs have been largely suspended or terminated. According to the State Department, *Hi* was suspended “to assess whether the magazine is meeting its objectives effectively.”⁶¹ Under Secretary Beers left in 2003 and was replaced by Under Secretary Margaret Tutwiler, who left the job after just half a year.

More recently, current Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes has introduced several major initiatives aimed at outreach to Muslims abroad. Recent efforts have also been made to collaborate with the private and nonprofit sectors on public diplomacy efforts to Muslim communities. For example, the State Department has expressed interest in programming produced by Layalina Productions, Inc., a Washington-based NGO that aims to address controversial issues affecting U.S.-Arab relations.

Ambassadors are now encouraged to reach out to media outlets to engage moderate Muslim audiences, and Hughes’s office has created a Rapid Response Unit that monitors press from, among other sources, pan-Arab media outlets and produces a daily assessment for dissemination to policymakers, embassies, and military ground commanders.⁶² One sample outreach program aims to “promote the compatibility of democracy with Islam and increased political engagement with Muslims who knowledgeably and authoritatively draw on Islamic principles to support democratic change.”⁶³

The Broadcasting Board of Governors, responsible for U.S. media campaigns abroad, has been shifting funding away from Voice of America programming and reallocating resources for networks such as Arabic-language Radio Sawa and Al Hurra television station, created in 2004.⁶⁴ However, many government officials said that efforts such as Radio Sawa have mostly featured pop culture over substantive issues. Al-Hurra, meanwhile, has seen recent controversy with the June 2007 resignation of editorial leader Larry Register. Register, who had just joined Al Hurra in October 2006, had increased coverage of U.S. policy, leading to criticisms that the station was misusing U.S. taxpayer money to support terrorism. In December 2006, the station aired a live speech by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and soon after, the Broadcasting Board of Governors sought a review to examine Al Hurra’s programming. Register claimed in his resignation letter that he was the victim of a smear campaign.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, polls of the Muslim world suggest that U.S. public diplomacy does not fully account for core identity issues, specifically religion. For example, a recent Gallup

59. Elliott Colla and Chris Toensing, “Never Too Soon to Say Goodbye,” *Middle East Report Online*, September 2003, http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/colla_interv.html.

60. Ibid.

61. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman, “Suspension of ‘Hi’ Magazine,” December 22, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/58401.htm>.

62. Karen Hughes, remarks at Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., May 10, 2006.

63. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Human Rights and Democratization Initiatives in Countries with Significant Muslim Populations*, see <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/42056.htm>.

64. Leon Shahabian (vice president and treasurer, Layalina Productions), interview, June 26, 2007.

65. “News Chief Quits Arab Language Network,” The Associated Press, June 9, 2007, http://www.denverpost.com/nationworld/ci_6103317.

poll of the Muslim world found that when asked how the United States can best change Muslim attitudes toward America, the number one answer was to show respect for people of faith.⁶⁶ Many government officials suggested that public diplomacy may miss some of these dynamics, remarking that government-run audience research informing outreach efforts was minimal.⁶⁷

The U.S. government has begun to incorporate perspectives on religion into their outreach programs. For example, the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP), which reports to Under Secretary Hughes, has been sending increasing numbers of American religious scholars and leaders—currently between 20 and 30 religiously affiliated individuals a year—on speaking tours abroad.⁶⁸ The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) also brings participants from other countries to the United States for, among other activities, discussions about religious diversity and tolerance. Participants in these programs generally promote awareness of religious freedom in the United States, although they have occasionally participated in conversations about U.S. foreign policy.⁶⁹

The under secretary's office has also expanded exchange programs targeting clerics, Muslim scholars, journalists, and women leaders. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty⁷⁰ has recently launched an online "Religion and Tolerance" project that aims to highlight examples of religious tolerance and explore the reasons behind intolerance in those countries where the station is broadcast. At the same time, the main criticism of dialogue efforts with the Muslim world, including from government officials themselves, remains that they are focused more on talking than listening.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Critical gaps to U.S. government engagement with religion in the areas of humanitarian and development programming include the following:

- U.S. government officials are wary of legal consequences for supporting Islamic charities and other Muslim groups.
- U.S. government officials have trouble identifying and directly supporting local religious groups for collaboration.

66. John L. Esposito, "Muslims and the West: A Culture War?" The Gallup Poll, February 13, 2006, <http://www.galluppoll.com/content/?ci=21454>.

67. For example, Ford, interview.

68. Although some reports have alleged that public diplomacy officials have "vetted" speakers for their political opinions (Jonathan S. Landay, "State Department Vetted Speakers for Criticism of Bush Administration," *McClatchy Newspapers*, November 1, 2006, <http://www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/15903402.htm>), those who spoke with CSIS staff stated that speakers are neither screened nor censored by the bureau.

69. Michael Seidenstricker (director, Speaker's Programs, International Information Programs, State Department), meeting with the authors, February 16, 2007.

70. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) is a radio and communication organization funded by the U.S. Congress and operating in Europe and the Middle East. Its official mission statement is "to promote democratic values and institutions by disseminating factual information and ideas."

- Development programming has been uneven in accounting for religious dynamics in societies abroad or fully considering how programming may affect religious divides or tensions.

U.S. government efforts have increasingly taken religion into account in humanitarian and development work, and officials have recognized that faith-based organizations are well positioned to increase access to services and build sustainability. For example, a 2007 President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Web site article acknowledges that faith-based organizations have special influence within communities by building on relationships of trust.⁷¹

Although the U.S. government recognizes the utility of working with faith-based groups and addressing religious dynamics in peacemaking and development, it remains restricted in the practical means for doing so strategically. Despite significant programming with religious groups and communities, obstacles remain to working with non-Christian local religious groups in particular, and many at USAID said that implementation of religion-related programming remains limited.

Assistance to Faith-Based Groups

USAID's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, established by executive order in 2002, works to make faith-based groups aware of opportunities for government funding. Policy shifts in the past few years have changed the rules to enable increased partnerships with these religious organizations. For example, they can now conduct services in the same space that they use to hand out government aid, as long as the prayers occur before or after aid distribution.

Examples of successful partnerships with international and local faith-based organizations abound, including with groups that encourage religious reconciliation as a step toward economic and social progress. The USAID mission in Ethiopia partnered with Save the Children to sponsor capacity-building conflict management workshops among religious leaders focusing on descriptions of conflict in the Koran and Hadiths.⁷² In Burundi, the USAID mission worked with Catholic Relief Services to encourage the establishment of a peace and reconciliation commission comprising members of various ethnic and religious orientations.⁷³

A recent *Boston Globe* article found that the percentage of U.S. foreign aid funds going to faith-based groups nearly doubled under President Bush to almost 20 percent in 2005.⁷⁴ However, the head of the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Office at USAID could not say whether the faith-based initiative led the agency to develop many new relationships with new types of organizations. Of the \$1.7 billion identified going to faith-based organizations from 2001 to 2005, 98 percent went to Christian groups. Of the 160 faith-

71. "Working with Faith-based and Community-based Organizations," January 2007, <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/80248.htm>.

72. U.S. Agency for International Development, Ethiopia Mission, <http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/ss02/ethiopia5.html>.

73. Catholic Relief Services, Burundi, http://www.crs.org/our_work/where_we_work/overseas/africa/burundi/church.cfm.

74. Farah Stockman, "Bush Brings Faith to Foreign Aid: As Funding Rises, Christian Groups Deliver Help—with a Message," *Boston Globe*, October 8, 2006.

based organizations that were awarded prime contracts from USAID during that period, only two were Jewish and two were Muslim.⁷⁵

Government officials said that working with Muslim organizations in particular has been an issue not only with U.S.-based groups, but also in USAID's local partnerships. Several USAID officials spoke of fear that if, for example, a suicide bomber were to come out of an Islamic orphanage that has received U.S. funding, whoever made the funding decision could be held personally liable. One official pointed out that this would simply not be the case with funding a Christian charity.⁷⁶ This type of fear was highlighted in a March 2007 House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing. Chairman Tom Lantos, referring to recent USAID educational programming, told Administrator Tobias that "the notion that USAID funds organizations and individuals engaged in terrorism or the glorification of terrorism is deeply disturbing. The students who receive scholarships could be participating in the university chapters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, all the while receiving money from AID. This outrageous support for terrorism must and will end."⁷⁷

A culture of fear has also created logistical and bureaucratic obstacles. The U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) publishes a Specially Designated Nationals list, which cites individuals and organizations whose properties are blocked by sanctions programs.⁷⁸ If, for example, USAID wants to work with one of these groups, and even if the groups are not criminal or terrorist, a permit would be required from the Treasury Department. A USAID official said that he has not known anyone within his agency to seek this permit. He summarized the bureaucratic obstacles: "Getting a clearance probably requires the Secretary's signature, and the distance between here and the Secretary's office is about a million miles."⁷⁹

Other than Islam-specific issues, U.S. officials said they have trouble supporting, and even identifying, local religious groups for collaboration. Federal regulation states that any religious organization can compete for USAID funding for development projects as long as there is no discrimination for or against the beneficiaries of this funding, and the objectives of the organization's project match the objectives of the agency.⁸⁰ However, officials said that smaller, decentralized faith-based organizations often do not meet USAID accounting requirements, or they do not have the capacity to deal with the bureaucratic contracting process.⁸¹

75. Ibid.

76. Helen Glaze (Conflict Management and Mitigation Office, U.S. Agency for International Development), interview, July 5, 2006.

77. Representative Tom Lantos, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, statement verbatim as delivered, "Hearing: Foreign Assistance Reform," March 8, 2007.

78. The three main antiterrorist financing measures are Executive Order 13224 (September 23, 2001), the USA Patriot Act (October 24, 2001), and the Treasury Department's "Anti-Terrorist Financing Guidelines: Voluntary Best Practices for U.S.-Based Charities," November 2002.

79. Michael Miklaucic (Democracy and Governance Office, U.S. Agency for International Development), interview, June 30, 2006.

80. U.S. Agency for International Development, Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives, "Participation by Religious Organizations in USAID Programs," 22 CFR Parts 202, 205, 211, and 226, October 19, 2004.

81. Islamic charities in particular are often not similar in structure to Western charitable organizations. "Global Assessment and Strategy Session on Faith Communities Accessing Resources to Respond to HIV/

Religion-Related Programming

Beyond direct funding, USAID also incorporates religion into its development and conflict management programming by assessing religious dynamics in conflict and working with religious leaders and communities toward conflict prevention and post-conflict objectives. For example, a USAID report, “Conducting a Conflict Assessment,” includes a checklist of critical questions that calls for officials to consider ethnic and religious divisions:

- Is the relationship between ethnic/religious groups characterized by dominance, potential dominance, or high levels of fragmentation?
- Where do these groups live and in what numbers? Are they concentrated in regional pockets or dispersed? If they are concentrated, do they form a majority or a minority in the area?
- What is the history of relations between groups? Is there a pattern of systematic discrimination or have relations been relatively peaceful and inclusive?⁸²

However, the willingness to directly address religion’s role in development has come recently and gradually. When the Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) Office recently launched a lecture series on “How Development Programming Interacts in Religious Contexts,” they faced delays because of USAID’s legal concerns regarding the appropriate approach to religious issues.⁸³ The vice president of the Asia Foundation said that when her organization first submitted a proposal to engage with Muslim civil society groups in Indonesia, they faced significant pushback from USAID about references to religion in their documents.⁸⁴ Today, this program is one of USAID’s most successful examples of working with religious groups to promote democratization. The program encourages Indonesian organizations such as the People’s Voter Education Network, a network of Islamic and interfaith organizations, to conduct comprehensive voter education programs, provide information booths in morning markets to reach women, produce party platform guides for different constituencies, and broadcast television and radio debates.⁸⁵

Since September 11, many other efforts have focused on religion-related work in the Muslim world, including workshops for Islamic political activists in Nigeria and Islamic radio programming in Afghanistan.⁸⁶ For example, USAID sponsored a conference, “The Role of Religion in Promoting Peace and Social Partnerships,” that convened Islamic religious leaders and government officials from four Central Asian republics. According to USAID’s Web site, this was the first time the region’s religious leaders met as a group since

AIDS: Taking Action for the Future,” conference hosted by Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Geneva, January 18–20, 2005.

82. U.S. Agency for International Development, “Conducting a Conflict Assessment: A Framework for Strategy and Program Development,” April 2005, p.38.

83. Helen Glaze (Conflict Management and Mitigation Office, U.S. Agency for International Development), interview, June 26, 2007.

84. Nancy Yuan (vice president, Asia Foundation), interview, July 10, 2006.

85. U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, *Summary Assessment of the Islam and Civil Society Program in Indonesia: Promoting Democracy and Pluralism in the Muslim World*, PPC Evaluation Brief 13, February 2006.

86. David E. Kaplan, “Hearts, Minds, and Dollars,” *U.S. News and World Report*, April 25, 2005.

the breakup of the Soviet Union. The leaders discussed cooperation on social issues in Central Asia, including madrassa reform and countering extremism.⁸⁷

One USAID-sponsored research effort in 2005, “The Muslim World Series,” explored topics such as philanthropy, education, economic growth, and governance for Muslim communities. For example, “Economic Growth in the Muslim World: How Can USAID Help?” offered ideas on banking reform, economic policy, and ways to integrate women into domestic economies—all specifically tailored to work in predominantly Muslim countries. The report mentioned the importance of conducting “interventions in partner countries without challenging Islamic governance or orthodoxy.”⁸⁸ These reports were later removed from the USAID Web site, apparently because they had not been properly vetted.

Religion-related programming has been carried out in other parts of the world. A recently launched USAID initiative, “Fostering Religious Harmony in Albania,” trains religious leaders in conflict resolution and provides technical assistance and small grants to help religious leaders manage interfaith community development projects. The project is based on the premise that “the spiritual leaders of each community are in the strongest position to encourage dialogue and tolerance with their own faithful.”⁸⁹

Despite many new efforts, USAID officials confirmed that development programming does not systematically account for religious dynamics abroad or fully consider how programming may affect religious tensions. An official in USAID’s Democracy and Governance Office explained that his department does not address religion directly, despite their work on political processes, rule of law and human rights, civil society and the media, and governance. He characterized his office’s approach to religion as one of “benign disinterest. Religion and government are separated constitutionally, and that is kind of how we treat it in the Democracy and Governance programs. We are agnostic about it.”⁹⁰

Other anecdotes suggest that there are sometimes more explicit efforts on behalf of government officials to avoid religious themes. In March 2007, a Peace Corps Volunteer in El Salvador received funding from USAID to print an environmental storybook she had created. Shortly after, she was told that USAID was retracting funding for the project because, as she put it, she had used the Salvadoran Christian foundation as the context for her environmental message.⁹¹

Security

Critical gaps to U.S. government engagement with religion on security-related issues include the following:

- The intelligence community largely limits religious analysis to future transnational problems and terrorist threats, with less attention paid to religion in specific conflicts and societies.

87. See http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/press/success/2006-08-05.html.

88. U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, *Economic Growth in the Muslim World: How Can USAID Help?* Issue Paper Number 3, June 2004, http://www.cgdev.org/doc/commentary/timmer_USAIDw.pdf.

89. See http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/press/success/fostering_religious_harmony.html.

90. Interview with USAID official, summer 2006.

91. Written communication, Maria A. De la Cruz, Peace Corps volunteer, El Salvador, April 6, 2007.

- Religious analysis focuses on the threat of Islam, approaching it as an ideology rather than a faith.
- Although military training related to religion is expanding, it still focuses on basic information about Islam as it is practiced in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Although religion is mentioned in many military doctrine publications, it remains unclear how personnel should take religion into account during operations.

The intelligence and military communities have mainly focused on how Islam may contribute to terrorist and insurgent activities, though they have also been improving their understanding of larger religious themes in analysis, policy, and programming. Intelligence analysts have especially focused on how Islam factors into the “roots” of terror, while the military focuses its energy on incorporating basic knowledge about Islam into its operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Intelligence Community

Religion is not directly addressed in the bulk of intelligence collection, analysis, and products. Although the roots of extremism remain a focus, collectors are rarely required to acquire or use a more holistic range of information on religious groups, leaders, and movements, or explicitly factor such information into conflict analysis.

Religion is approached in those offices responsible for long-term estimative intelligence, transnational issues, and counterterrorism. To the extent that religion is perceived as a relevant geographic or tactical issue, individual regional or country analysts and military intelligence personnel will collect, analyze, and use intelligence on religion on their own initiative.

Importantly, there appears to be deep expertise and understanding of Islamic theology, history, and sociology inside the intelligence community. But intelligence officials said that specifically religious analysis rarely makes its way into intelligence products dealing with Muslim countries, communities, or actors.⁹² A focus on extreme versions of Islam could also be preventing broader applications of religious expertise in intelligence work.

A Long-Term Transnational Issue and the Focus on Islam

Within the intelligence community, the National Intelligence Council (NIC)⁹³ has probably considered religion the most extensively. According to Ambassador Robert Hutchings, former NIC director, the NIC has been holding conferences and preparing and commissioning studies “with a sociopolitical focus” for several years. A conference in 2005, for example, conducted a panel on demographics, religion, and identity in Latin America. In its 2004 report, “Mapping the Global Future,” the NIC points to a worldwide “deepening

92. Anonymous interviews with former intelligence officials, fall 2006.

93. The NIC provides the president and senior policymakers with analyses of foreign policy issues that have been reviewed and coordinated throughout the intelligence community. See the NIC Web site, http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_home.html.

religious commitment,” arguing that growing radicalization among religious populations may lead to social and political turmoil in coming years.⁹⁴

Outside the NIC, the office most consistently cited by current and former analysts as the center of energy on religion-focused study and analysis is the CIA’s Office of Transnational Issues (OTI). OTI is currently attempting to conceptualize religion in ways that are useful to practitioners who work in conflict-prone regions and need to understand how religion factors into politics and social change.⁹⁵ Within OTI, the Global Information and Influence Team studies methods of communication with citizens in target countries. Recently, the office has focused on China, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Venezuela.⁹⁶

However, intelligence products and interviews with analysts also reveal that most transnational analysis of religion has been limited to Islam. Ambassador Hutchings noted that after September 11, the NIC produced a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on “Political Islam” to elaborate on its role in violence and that much of the work on religion since has focused on Islam.⁹⁷ “Mapping the Global Future” singles out radical Islam for special concern, saying that it “will have significant global impact...rallying disparate ethnic and national groups and perhaps even creating an authority that transcends national boundaries.”⁹⁸ A 2005 NIC report, “Mapping the Future of the Middle East,” considers the implications of Islamic evangelism and describes a discussion about Islamists’ commitment to democratization, specifically considering the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s cooperation with secularists.⁹⁹

The intelligence community’s consideration of religion in conflict analysis continues to focus on Islam. The January 2007 NIE on Iraq discusses religious and sectarian divisions within Iraqi society and refers to the religious components of the regional political landscape.¹⁰⁰ The analysis includes Saudi Arabia’s and others’ “fears of being perceived by their publics as abandoning their Sunni co-religionists in Iraq,” which “have constrained [their] willingness to engage politically and economically with the Shi’a-dominated government in Baghdad and led them to consider unilateral support to Sunni groups.”¹⁰¹

Terrorism Specialists

The focus on Islam carries over into counterterrorism analysis. The two major centers of analysis for terrorism-related issues inside the intelligence community are the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the Counterterrorism Center (CTC) at the CIA. Both the NCTC and the CTC study Islam through various approaches to understanding

94. National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council’s 20/20 Project* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 2004).

95. Brian Walsh (Office of Transnational Issues, Central Intelligence Agency), interview, Washington, D.C., June 30, 2006.

96. Kaplan, “Hearts, Minds, and Dollars.”

97. Ambassador Robert Hutchings, interview.

98. National Intelligence Council, “Mapping the Future of the Middle East,” Conference Report, August 2005, available at http://www.dni.gov/nic/confreports_mideast_future.html.

99. Ibid.

100. National Intelligence Council, “National Intelligence Estimate: Prospects for Iraq’s Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead,” January 2007, <http://www.dni.gov>.

101. Ibid.

al Qaeda and its affiliated groups and admirers. In 2004, the CTC formed a specific unit to examine political Islam.¹⁰²

Terrorism specialists tend to view Islam as an ideology. For example, one expert developed the “Ziggurat of Zealotry,” which “arrays Islamists into a pyramid...with each ascending level representing a leap in radicalization.”¹⁰³ The pyramid depicts growing dedication to violent extremist goals and methods, which could be ascribed to terrorist groups with any ideology—religious or secular.

In those offices that do explicitly consider religion’s role in terrorism, considerable debate remains over appropriate models for understanding religion’s motivational functions. One analyst involved with the CIA’s political Islam analytic unit commented that, much like with the “Ziggurat of Zealotry” model, his unit is “not as focused on religion as on the process of radicalization.”¹⁰⁴ This analyst said that the office does not see religion as a key driver of radicalization or recruitment for terrorist groups, at least initially, and that they find people will often feign religious beliefs in order to gain access to a group’s privileges and benefits. Religious indoctrination, he said, often happens after absorption into the organization.

Military Intelligence

Military intelligence agencies examine religiously motivated violence and terrorism in their efforts to anticipate and understand aggression against the United States and its allies. The Defense Intelligence Agency, in particular, appears to have begun devoting resources and attention to the religious dimensions of conflict and violence largely because of operational experiences in the Balkans and more recently in Iraq, and in response to the threat posed by al Qaeda.

Discussions with two former heads of the DIA demonstrate the recent change in religion-based analysis. The director of the DIA from 1991 to 1995 said that he could not recall any discussions about religion at the senior level.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, DIA’s director from 2002 to 2005 said that during his time in the position as well as with the Joint intelligence staff beginning in 1999, teams of “well-schooled” analysts worked with a number of cultural anthropologists and other world religions specialists. He said that they commanded a sophisticated understanding of the role of theology in shaping al Qaeda’s attitudes and goals.¹⁰⁶

Intelligence about religious sites, leaders, and practices has become even more important to the military since September 11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Military intelligence analysts have been exploring the operational relevance of cultural information about host populations. Most of this work is applicable for stability or “phase four” operations in a post-intervention environment, where intelligence officials combine peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism information and techniques. As a former DIA director said, “In the threat environment we’re in now, understanding village dynamics is critical.”¹⁰⁷

102. “U.S. Still Lacks Understanding of al-Qaeda,” Reuters, September 20, 2006.

103. Jonathan Shainin, “The Ziggurat of Zealotry,” *New York Times Magazine*, December 10, 2006.

104. Anonymous interview with intelligence official, fall 2006.

105. Lieutenant General James Clapper, U.S. Army (ret.), interview, February 21, 2007.

106. Vice Admiral Lowell E. “Jake” Jacoby, USN (ret.), interview, March 13, 2007.

107. Lt. Gen. Clapper, interview.

In response to recent military operations that include close contact with local populations and a mixture of traditional and counterinsurgency tactics, a growing literature on the utility of “ethnographic intelligence (EI),” “cultural intelligence,” and “human terrain intelligence” for the battlefield has emerged. This new group of cultural intelligence advocates considers religious groups to be a critical empowered network, with “key personnel and groups [that] have become the new key terrain. These may comprise religious clerics . . . or anyone with influence over a large or important constituency.”¹⁰⁸ Although these analyses do not delve into subtleties of religious belief, organization, rivalry, or affinities, they do acknowledge the importance of religious leaders as nodes within a larger social network.

Notional uses for cultural intelligence have found their ways into some official service practices. Several Joint Doctrine documents require some intelligence on religious factors in operational areas. One publication mandates the increased use of human intelligence collection (HUMINT) as well as “a focus on adversary system factors,” including religion, that affect military operations.¹⁰⁹ Another document requires that intelligence collection for unconventional warfare missions include information on local religious customs.¹¹⁰ Joint Doctrine on Special Operations mission planning also mandates that intelligence collection for unconventional warfare missions include information on local religious customs, and Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations requires assessment of religious factors.¹¹¹

The Department of Defense and the Military

Military understanding of how religion factors into planning and operations has been uneven.¹¹² Efforts to operationalize religion are still limited to boutique programs and discrete job functions. Because religion is still often a secondary consideration, the interpretations and articulations of religion in military doctrine and training vary significantly. Religion appears repeatedly but not centrally in doctrine, and training on religious matters, though expanding, remains limited to largely theatre-specific, pre-deployment programming focused on Islam. While there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of religion especially in Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations,¹¹³ only a few, limited specialties within the military are explicitly charged with gaining and using knowledge of religious elements and actors.

Training and employment of military specialists differ significantly among the services. Subsequent “stovepiping” prevents a streamlined, joint approach to religion in

108. Major Laura Geldhof et al., “Intelligent Design: COIN Operations and Intelligence Collection and Analysis,” *Military Review*, September–October 2006. Reprinted from the original publication in *Special Warfare*, May–June 2006.

109. U.S. Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations,” September 17, 2006.

110. U.S. Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 3-05.2: Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Operations Targeting and Mission Planning,” May 21, 2003.

111. *Ibid.*

112. While this overview considers U.S. military approaches to religion through the various military specialists who deal with religious factors, a deeper analysis of military engagement with religious actors at the operational level should be conducted.

113. The U.S. Joint Forces Command recognizes that “religious ideology is a powerful, driving social and political force.” Department of Defense, “Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept,” December 2006.

planning and operations, instead producing a variety of tactical methods through uneven and specialized channels.

Responsibilities and Doctrine

The four main specialists responsible for religious knowledge, analysis, and liaison work are (1) foreign area officers (FAOs), (2) civil affairs personnel, (3) psychological operations personnel, and (4) chaplains. Some doctrine provides models for sophisticated analysis of local religious factors to be prepared by specialists skilled in cultural and political mission sets.¹¹⁴

The first three specialties each engage with religion in a limited way. Recently revitalized by Department of Defense Directive 1315.17, foreign area officers are trained as the services' regional and cultural attachés.¹¹⁵ FAOs fill a variety of assignments at the staff and planning level, but religious expertise and liaison roles do not appear to be central. Civil affairs forces are also required to possess operationally relevant cultural knowledge. Personnel are often responsible for assisting and educating American troops in a foreign nation's social, cultural, religious, and ethnic characteristics.¹¹⁶ Although civil affairs personnel are changing to meet current needs, the civil affairs component of the armed forces is still fairly limited, and its religion-related duties are vaguely defined.¹¹⁷

Psychological operations (PSYOPS) forces use factors of human perception to influence and inform a population. Joint doctrine on PSYOPS forces explicitly states that they must "possess a thorough and current knowledge" of local religious issues.¹¹⁸ Doctrine, however, does not detail the types of religious knowledge useful for psychological operations. In addition, PSYOPS, like FAOs and civil affairs forces, appear to be in limited supply. In the past few years, anywhere from 74 to 96 percent of the Army's PSYOPS forces have been in the reserves.¹¹⁹

The bulk of operational religious work falls on the shoulders of the military chaplains. As official representatives of religious denominations, chaplains are the *de facto* experts in religion on the battlefield. Recent Joint Doctrine has required that the chaplains of the U.S. military, traditionally responsible for the spiritual well being of American forces, also advise commanders on local religious issues.¹²⁰ Although the Chaplain Corps has performed

114. The armed services are still determining how such knowledge should be used in practice. Much of the strategic implementation of religious knowledge today is occurring at the Joint Intelligence Operations Centers and the regionally focused Combatant Commands; additional research into these military planning sites is recommended.

115. U.S. Department of Defense Directive 1315.17, "Military Department Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program," Washington, D.C.: April 28, 2005.

116. U.S. Department of Defense, "Joint Publication 3-57.1: Joint Doctrine for Civil Affairs," April 14, 2003.

117. Bruce B. Bingham, Daniel L. Rubini, and Michael J. Cleary, "U.S. Army Civil Affairs—The Army's 'Ounce of Prevention,'" *The Institute of Land Warfare Papers* 41, Association of the United States Army, Arlington, Va., March 2003.

118. U.S. Department of Defense, "Joint Publication 3-53: Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations," September 5, 2003.

119. See "Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command," GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/ca-psyop.htm> and "4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne)," GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/4psyopgp.htm>.

120. U.S. Department of Defense, "Joint Publication 1-05: Religious Support in Joint Operations," June 9, 2004.

these advisory and assessment functions for years, official doctrine did not previously require chaplains to play a strong advisory role.

Despite doctrinal codification, much debate remains over the idea of chaplains as advisers on local religious customs and as liaisons to religious organizations. Chaplains themselves are often concerned that they risk being seen as spies, thus compromising their noncombatant status under the Geneva Convention. As Chaplain (Col.) Steven Moon asked, “When does information between faith groups become targeting information?”¹²¹ Some argue that not all chaplains are trained or necessarily competent to advise on local religions or liaise with other interagency groups or outside organizations. Chaplain (Maj.) Charles Owen explained, “Bias is also a concern—it may be hard for some Chaplains to assess a certain area objectively.... Some think that secularly-oriented officers would be best, since they might run into fewer bias issues.”¹²²

However, others point to the unique position chaplains occupy in the armed forces, arguing that chaplains are particularly effective messengers during foreign operations. Douglas Johnston writes that chaplains’ “multifaith experience, interpersonal skills, temperament, and education uniquely equip them for the complex challenges of prevention.”¹²³ Of all military personnel, military chaplains are best suited for religious liaison work, according to a report from the U.S. Army’s Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute.¹²⁴ Chaplain Owen said that it may be possible to strike a balance: “Instead of being the lead team member, perhaps the chaplain should just be part of the assessment team.”¹²⁵ Currently, however, the chaplain-as-liaison function is not a major element of contemporary operations.

Training

As understanding of the relationship between cultural knowledge and mission success has evolved, training has spread throughout the services and the ranks. The army requires all personnel at major rank and above to participate in a six-hour core course in cultural awareness for operations,¹²⁶ and the Marine Corps aims to train every Marine to understand and use cultural knowledge to their advantage, reflecting “the growing view among top commanders that . . . troops at all levels must be taught how to win the allegiance of the local population.”¹²⁷ At the same time, cultural awareness training throughout the services remains uneven and focused on immediate contingencies.

The army is the leading service on training for cultural and religious awareness and operational skills, with the Marine Corps emulating the army’s efforts. The army’s Training

121. Chaplain (Col.) Steven Moon (director, Plans, Policy Development, and Training, Army Chief of Chaplains), interview, February 26, 2007.

122. Chaplain (Maj.) Charles “Bob” Owen, U.S. Army, interview, December 6, 2006.

123. Douglas M. Johnston, “We Neglect Religion at Our Peril,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 2002.

124. Chaplain (Col.) William Sean Lee, ARNG; Lt. Col. Christopher J. Burke, USAF; Lt. Col. Zonna M. Crayne, ANG, “Military Chaplains as Peace Builders: Embracing Indigenous Religions in Stability Operations,” U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, 2004.

125. Chaplain Owen, interview, fall 2006.

126. John Carey, U.S. Army ret. (instructor, Joint Multinational Operations, Command and General Staff College), interview, January 18, 2007.

127. Julian E. Barnes, “A New Assignment for Younger Troops,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 2006.

and Doctrine Command (TRADOC),¹²⁸ based at Fort Leavenworth, has a Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) as well as a Culture Center at Fort Huachuca. Together, the two centers provide research and training on operationally relevant cultural knowledge. The TRADOC Culture Center conducts culture and country studies and offers a course on religious terrorism.¹²⁹

The Marine Corps' Training and Education Command (TECOM) maintains the Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning (CAOCL), which provides in-person training and distance learning modules to support troops in pre-deployment and deployment. Because of the emphasis on training for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, CAOCL has been filling the need for basic education on Islam as well as appropriate religiously sensitive conduct for Marines.¹³⁰ CAOCL is working toward training all Marines for cultural aptitude, and currently all incoming second lieutenants receive a basic culture primer.¹³¹

The Naval Postgraduate School maintains the Leader Development and Education for Sustained Peace program, which works "to provide military and civilian leaders an educational program [that] focuses on U.S. objectives, regional geopolitical, and cultural frameworks,"¹³² including religious awareness and knowledge. Courses at the graduate level are provided to pre-deployment commanding officers to aid them in areas of operations. For example, a recent program on Afghanistan was presented to the 218th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) in January in Shelby, Mississippi. Coursework included an hour on the culture of Afghanistan and an hour-and-a-half on "the theology of Islam," taught by a Canadian chaplain.¹³³ The Naval Postgraduate School also houses the Regional Security Education Program, which provides forward training to deployed personnel on the cultural contexts in which they will operate.¹³⁴

At the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, the army is focusing training on skill sets needed for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The center uses a simulated Iraqi village to integrate cultural awareness training throughout 14 days of realistic operational scenarios that involve up to 1,600 "villagers." In these scenarios, religious dynamics are incorporated into the overall environment to reflect the complex web of sociocultural factors that can affect military missions. As a recent article in the *Military Review* explains, "Each role player is influenced by respective tribal and religious leaders and maintains familial, social, and business relationships throughout the rotation."¹³⁵ The Marine Corps has a similar facility nearby to train battalion-sized groups on a continual basis, and such training continues to be developed.

128. See <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/>.

129. See <http://www.universityofmilitaryintelligence.us/tcc/default.asp>.

130. Pauletta Otis (academic director, Marine Corps CAOCL), interview, January 10, 2007.

131. Max Boot, "Navigating the 'Human Terrain,'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 2005.

132. LDESP home page, <http://www.ldesp.org/public/home.cfm>.

133. See 218th LDESP Agenda, January 12–14, 2007, provided by Col. (ret.) Bob Tomasovic, LDESP program manager, Naval Postgraduate School.

134. See <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/rsepProgram/>.

135. Brig. Gen. Robert W. Cone, U.S. Army, "NTC: The Changing National Training Center," *Military Review*, May–June 2006.

Nigeria Case Study

The site of religious conflict between Muslim and Christian populations in recent years and home to a number of groundbreaking interfaith peacebuilding programs, Nigeria is a particularly relevant case study for this project. A regional leader and strategically important country to the United States,¹³⁶ Nigeria is currently in a key transition phase. May 2007 marked the first time in the country's history that a civilian president handed over power through democratic elections.

In November 2006, CSIS conducted a 19-day field visit to Nigeria that included nine cities: Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Jos, Abuja, Owo, Akure, Ibadan, and Lagos. Researchers conducted interviews (structured one-hour conversations) with 115 people, including Nigerian government officials, religious leaders, journalists, and lawyers; international and local scholars and nongovernmental and civil society organization leaders (including many from faith-based organizations); and U.S. government representatives.

This chapter offers a background overview of some of the current issues in Nigeria and then discusses major U.S. government diplomatic, humanitarian/development, and security activities related to religion in-country.

Background: Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding in Nigeria

Recent Religious Tensions

Nigeria's population of 138 million is believed to be almost evenly divided between Muslims and Christians, although the most recent religion census dates from 1963. Clearly, however, both Islam and Christianity have been gaining adherents in the past half century. In 1953, a third of the population still belonged to other religions, but the number of Christians has since risen dramatically, chiefly among Pentecostal and charismatic movements. Nigeria also has one of the largest and most diverse Muslim populations in Africa.

Most Nigerians identify themselves by their religion first. In a recent Pew survey, 91 percent of Muslims and 76 percent of Christians said that religion is more important to them than their identity as Africans, Nigerians, or members of an ethnic group.¹³⁷ Affinity groups—including religious identities—have become increasingly important in political

136. One in five Africans is Nigerian, and Nigeria is the fifth-largest exporter of oil to the United States.

137. Robert Ruby and Timothy Samuel Shah, "Nigeria's Presidential Election: The Christian-Muslim Divide," *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, March 21, 2007.

organizing and service provision over the past 20 years, as the functions and structure of the state have deteriorated.

The 1999 election of Olusegun Obasanjo, a Christian Yoruba from southwest Nigeria, exacerbated religious divisions by heralding the end of decades of northern political control and intermittent military rule. The military itself was reorganized to represent the population because the officer corps had been drawn predominantly from northern Muslim elites. Concurrent with the loss of political dominance, the North's economy suffered, further destabilizing the region. The North's political dynamics facilitated the extension in 2000 of Shari'a into criminal law in 12 northern states, most with significant Christian minorities. Non-Muslims protested the use of government resources to champion Islamic religious law.

With the rise in identity politics, many economic, historical and political tensions—exacerbated by corrupt leadership—have led to sectarian violence. Internal migration has brought Christians and Muslims to live alongside one another in an increasing number of “fault line” cities throughout Nigeria. Fighting over land ownership and political representation has led to the deaths of tens of thousands since 1999, and “Christian” and “Islamic” militias have sprung up to defend sectarian interests. Once religious overtones have been introduced, religious and political leaders have proven adept at motivating violence along these lines. One Muslim religious leader estimated that 40 percent of all religious leaders have strong ties to political actors, damaging the credibility of these leaders to act as a viable opposition to corrupt leadership.¹³⁸

Critical religious fault lines exist within the northern cities of Kaduna and Kano and in the Plateau, Borno, and Yobe states. In 2000, violence broke out between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna and neighboring areas following a march to protest Shari'a law. Ethnic and religious clashes continued in the following years, with an intensification of violence surrounding the 2003 presidential elections and infamous religious attacks surrounding the controversial “Miss World” pageant. In 2004, large-scale religious-based killings occurred in Plateau state.

Religious tensions remain a prominent factor in civil strife in Nigeria. Only 36 percent of Christians recently surveyed in Nigeria said they have a favorable opinion of Muslims, while 73 percent associate Muslims with the trait “violent.”¹³⁹ These dynamics were reflected in CSIS interviews throughout the country, especially in cities where recent religiously motivated conflict has occurred. Some interviewees reported that churches and mosques have stocked small arms in anticipation of future conflict. Yet neither the Muslim nor the Christian communities have been monolithic in their response to conflict. The Jos chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), for example, has been divided due to intra-religious Christian divisions.⁵

Religion and Peacebuilding

In recent years, religious and political leaders have harnessed religion's capacity for positive social mobilization.

138. Sheikh Abdullah Aziz (Jamaat Nasril Islam), interview, November 2006.

139. Interestingly, Nigerians Muslims gave Christians a 63 percent favorability rating. “Conflicting Views in a Divided World,” The Pew Global Attitudes Project, Pew Research Center, 2006.

Indigenous groups such as the Interfaith Mediation Center, based in Kaduna, have done important interfaith conflict resolution work. In February 2007, Christian and Muslim leaders met at a peace summit in Abuja, sponsored by the Interfaith Mediation Center and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and with the support of the Christian Association of Nigeria and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. Religious leaders were trained in conflict prevention, integration, and confidence building, and they drafted eight resolutions denouncing religiously based violence and calling for fair elections. Nationwide, church and mosque leaders encourage voting and frequently speak out against corruption and poor political leadership, arguably Nigeria's principal challenges. Even the issue of Shari'a law, which has been a frequent source of conflict, has also become an important platform for discussions about the democratization of gender relations.¹⁴⁰

The Nigerian government has begun to capitalize on the influence of religious leaders. In 2000, the federal government sponsored the formation of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC). This senior-level committee was established to address issues of religious conflict, but has become less active since early 2006. One innovative example of the Nigerian government's role in this area is the recent selection of Reverend Father Matthew Kukkah, a well-respected Catholic priest from northern Nigeria, to mediate between ethnic militias and oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region. State governments have also frequently worked with committees of religious leaders to address violent conflict, usually in a reactive manner. For example, the Governor of Ondo state has interactive sessions to discuss current issues with religious leaders and receive their advice.¹⁴¹

Major umbrella religious organizations in Nigeria, notably the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Jamaat Nasril Islam (JNI), and Nasrul Lahi Il-Fathi (NASFAT), play a key role in peacebuilding work including education reform, good governance, and economic development. The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), whose huge network includes millions of women, runs education programs throughout the country. Along with the Muslim League for Accountability, FOMWAN conducted a large-scale monitoring effort in the 2003 presidential elections. The Catholic Justice, Development, and Peace Commissions have been extremely active on youth and women's issues. The Interfaith Coalition of Nigeria, initially established to address sectarian violence among youth, has expanded its agenda to include efforts to fight HIV/AIDS, educate the faith community to combat stigma, promote empowerment of women and girls, and advocate for the rights of those living with HIV.

Religious movements themselves have been cited as contributing to recent socioeconomic development. Pentecostalism, one Nigerian scholar argued, has transformed people's sense of what they can achieve, empowering them to rise from poverty.¹⁴²

Future Concerns

At the end of May 2007, President Obasanjo, a born-again Christian, was succeeded by Umaru Yar'adua, a Muslim from northern Nigeria. This religious and regional power transfer reflects the centrality of religious identities to Nigerian politics, with interfaith alliances equally important to success in nationwide elections.

140. Dr. Adigun A. B. Agbaje (University of Ibadan), interview, November 2006.

141. Bishop Opinmoye, interview, November 2006.

142. Dr. Oka Obono (University of Ibadan), interview, November 2006.

Unfortunately, by most accounts, these recent elections were fraudulent, rife with ballot stuffing, intimidation, and direct police intervention.¹⁴³ Many candidates were kept off the ballots, and, most notably, Vice President Atiku Abubaker was not allowed to run until a few days before the election. This left the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which had consistently missed deadlines for voter registration and election preparation efforts, only several days to print approximately 70 million ballots.¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile, five state governors were impeached over the span of a year; at least some of them are perceived to be victims of Obasanjo's misuse of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in an attempt to keep the country in a state of emergency. Significantly, many religious leaders across the country played a key role in denouncing corrupt electoral practices and minimizing election-related violence, as demonstrated by the peace summit sponsored by USIP and the Interfaith Mediation Center. However, not long after this goodwill summit, northern extremists stormed police headquarters in Kano, supposedly in an attempt to avenge the assassination of a popular conservative cleric. The violence raised tensions in the city's already fragile Muslim-Christian relations.

In this time of transition, many describe their country as a "time bomb," often citing religious fault lines as particularly ripe for manipulation. In vulnerable cities such as Jos, established religious leaders and regular citizens alike said that they would vote for a crooked co-religionist over an honest candidate from the "opposing" religion. One Jos pastor added, referring to the possibility of renewed religiously based conflict, "I have a friend who is Muslim. Would I save his neck? I'm not sure, even though I'm a pastor. The way they killed our people—the wounds are not healed."¹⁴⁵

Violent civil conflict remains a significant possibility in Nigeria, and religion will be a factor worthy of attention by the international community and the U.S. government in particular.¹⁴⁶

Current U.S. Government Approaches

Current U.S. government activities address the role of religion in conflict and peacemaking in Nigeria, but these efforts are often ad hoc and do not represent an integrated strategy.

Critical gaps from the Nigeria case include the following:

- Outreach to the predominantly Muslim North is extremely limited.
- The U.S. government is perceived as anti-Islam or as a Christian nation, hindering engagement efforts with a considerable portion of the country.
- A minimal foreign assistance budget has little funding for religion-related programming.

143. Steve Morrison, "CSIS Strategy Hour on Nigeria," May 4, 2007.

144. Nathan Van Dusen, "Nigerian Elections: What Went Wrong," International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), May 2, 2007, <http://www.ifes.org/features.html?title=From%20the%20Field%25%20Nigerian%20Elections%25%20What%20Went%20Wrong%25>.

145. Anonymous interview, November 2006.

146. John Paden, "Religious Identity, Democracy & the 2007 Nigerian Elections," *Global Studies Review*, spring 2007.

- Public diplomacy efforts that teach about the American religious character do not provide a sufficient forum for two-way dialogue.
- Myopic security postures affect engagement, and unclear rules may constrain USAID funding of legitimate Islamic organizations.
- U.S. government officials lack a systematic and regular forum for consultation with interfaith groups and religious leaders.

Although many U.S. efforts—examples of which are included below—have been significant, CSIS interviews revealed obstacles inhibiting U.S. government diplomacy, humanitarian and development work, and security activities.

Diplomacy

Sample initiatives:

- The embassy conducts outreach to and has good baseline contacts with both Muslim and Christian religious leaders, sometimes through faith-based efforts such as Iftar dinners or interfaith efforts.
- U.S. officials have increased nonreligious outreach efforts targeting Muslim communities, such as technical education programming in Lagos, the publication of a Hausa language magazine, and one-time events such as bringing African-American Muslim rap musicians to perform in northern Nigeria.
- As part of new “transformational diplomacy” priorities, an American Muslim woman has been recently hired as a political officer to focus on northern outreach.
- The American Corners program¹⁴⁷ has established new resource centers in northern Nigeria as a low-cost outreach tool.
- Academic exchange programs are held on religion-related issues related to peace and security.

In the absence of significant foreign assistance to Nigeria or credible threats of sanctions, the greatest leverage of the United States in Nigeria may come through public diplomacy. U.S. government engagement with religious actors has certainly improved since shortly after September 11, when brochures produced about the terrorist attacks offended and alienated many of the Nigerian Muslims to whom they were distributed. Although the U.S. government has developed more sophisticated engagement strategies, especially for

147. The American Corners is a program, initiated in October 2000, whereby a library in a host country provides space, staff, and overhead expenses for the United States to offer publicly accessible research facilities and information on U.S. culture; http://www.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33062_20050902.pdf. According to May 2006 State data, there were approximately 300 American Corners in the world, including more than 90 in the Muslim world, with another 75 planned (more than 40 to be established in the Muslim world). GAO, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences*.

Muslim religious actors, it still lacks a systematic and regular forum for consultation with interfaith groups and religious leaders.

Nature of Outreach

Overall, 67 percent of Nigerian Muslims have an unfavorable opinion of the United States, while 89 percent of Christians have a favorable opinion.¹⁴⁸ CSIS's interviews suggested that this discrepancy may be in part explained by the fact that Nigerian Muslims and Christians view the United States as a Christian nation engaged in a global war against Islam, with language identified as a key factor contributing to this perception. Many Nigerians mentioned U.S. presidential vocabulary such as "Islamofascist," a term that has been poorly received by Nigerian Muslims. Many Nigerian Muslims also perceive a bias against them in the U.S. visa process. Two Muslim religious leaders invited by Condoleezza Rice to attend a White House Iftar dinner were unable to participate because they could not obtain visas to enter the United States. Overall, Muslims were especially vocal in speaking against U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. In contrast, the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria reported that many Nigerian Christians supported U.S. actions at Abu Ghraib because they saw the situation as a Muslim-Christian clash.

Renewed U.S. outreach to Nigerian Muslim populations aims to dispel this view of the United States, among other goals. Iftar dinners held by the embassy, for example, were mentioned by many interviewees. These efforts, though mostly small in scale, appear to have been quite successful, and U.S. attempts to spread awareness of the U.S. Muslim population seem to have received a warm reception from Nigerian Muslims. U.S. government outreach to Muslims used to be more event-driven, such as dinners, conferences, and speeches, but has recently shifted in focus to more sustained relationship-building projects that address concrete issues.

U.S. political officers, both Muslim and Christian, remarked that references to religious scriptures or theology were extremely effective in establishing relationships, building credibility, and changing opinions. Overall, embassy officers remained uncertain of how they were supposed to address religion. Although some said they felt intuitively that Nigerians would respect and relate to people of faith, they said that they had not been trained to engage in faith-based diplomacy¹⁴⁹ and did not see an official place for this in the U.S. government approach. In general, the level of training for embassy officers was low on religious issues, and several political officers thought that it would have been helpful to have been briefed on religious flashpoints in the country before being posted.¹⁵⁰

Many outreach efforts related to religion are overly focused on educating Nigerians about religion in America, and many Nigerians interviewed said they did not think that the United States was interested in learning about the Nigerian religious character. This contrasted with outreach done by the British Council, such as sending British filmmakers to help Hausa youth make films (later screened in the UK) about their lives.

Another conceptual issue has been religious freedom, cited by many Nigerians as a source of conflict but considered by several senior U.S. government officials in-country as not particularly relevant for Nigeria. The U.S. Commission on International Religious

148. Ruby and Shah, "Nigeria's Presidential Election."

149. Faith-based diplomacy is diplomacy rooted in religious texts, practices, and traditions.

150. Interview with U.S. foreign service officer, Lagos, November 2006.

Freedom, however, has placed Nigeria on its “Watch List” for countries that require close monitoring because of the nature and extent of violations of religious freedom.¹⁵¹ The United States was able to avoid a backlash on the issue of Shari’a criminal punishments by focusing on the importance of due process. The British Council, which has a more established cultural presence in the North than does the United States, took a slightly more proactive role on the issue, commissioning local scholars to look at women’s rights in Shari’a law and promoting an awareness campaign around this work. A British Council representative said that in her years in the office, no U.S. government representatives had come to ask the office staff about the types of programs they ran, perhaps indicating an opportunity for better learning and collaboration on these issues.¹⁵²

Scope of Outreach

U.S. efforts remain focused on traditional hierarchies of religious leaders. Traditional elites are certainly very influential in Nigeria, but many suggest a gap between these traditional leaders and the growing youth population. For example, a young Abuja imam, with a mosque of 1,000 worshippers and a well-developed sense of his role in preventing conflict, said that he has not had any contact with the U.S. government in Nigeria but that he would be interested to engage.¹⁵³ Because of shifts in Islam in the North, traditional leaders have lost authority to religious leaders with whom U.S. government officials have very little contact. Many of these leaders are willing to engage and eager to have access to U.S. representatives. Some embassy officials said their approach is to work through elites to reach out to the broader community, but follow-up remains an issue.¹⁵⁴

The U.S. government also has limited outreach even to those religious leaders within the traditional system. According to some embassy officials, geographic inaccessibility, security concerns, and some unwillingness to travel hinder comprehensive outreach efforts. The low-cost outreach tool being used to fill the geographic gap—the “American Corners” program—sets up small resource centers around the country with information on American history and society. In Kano, however, Nigerian youth came to use the Internet or find books on commercial subjects, law, and information technology, none of which are currently available at that center.¹⁵⁵ Many Nigerians said that exchange programs and scholarship options for Nigerians, and especially for Muslim students, lag behind opportunities offered by some other Western countries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Sample initiatives:

- USAID supports the Community Action for Participation in Social Services (COMPASS) program, which conducts education reform in Islamiyya schools (in addition to public schools).

151. United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Annual Report*, May 2006.

152. Roli Majiyajbe, (British Council, Kano), interview, November 2006.

153. Imam Mohammed Nura (Abuja), interview, November 2006.

154. Brian Browne (consul general, U.S. Consulate General, Lagos), interview, November 2006.

155. Maryam Adamu Maishanu (American Corner coordinator, Kano), interview, November 2006.

- The United States supports education, health, and other forms of development through locally based religious organizations such as FOMWAN and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).
- USAID has begun to seek involvement from relevant religious leaders to sanction and help promote certain health initiatives, such as polio vaccinations.
- Conflict Management and Mitigation Regional Councils, with support from USAID, have been recently established.

U.S. government foreign assistance to Nigeria is approximately \$100 million annually, or less than \$1 per Nigerian a year. Funding of \$11 million is allocated for democracy and governance priorities, with \$4 million for economic growth, \$20 million for social sector services, and the largest portion—\$64 million—for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Given limited resources, USAID has tried to implement some creative programs that could help promote religious tolerance and prevent conflict. USAID has also worked indirectly with a number of mainstream faith-based organizations to achieve development objectives. Resources have recently been shifted to northern Nigeria, but overall assistance in Nigeria remains minimal.

Assistance to Faith-Based Groups

A senior USAID official mentioned that there has been a major push from Washington for the USAID missions to work with faith-based organizations, but without enough follow-through to effectively implement the initiative.¹⁵⁶ According to some government officials in-country, it is especially difficult to find Muslim partner organizations. In this, local information resources seem underutilized. For example, Bayero University in Kano, together with a research institute called Mambayya House, recently undertook a mapping exercise of faith-based organizations in the North, interviewing 600 ulema.¹⁵⁷ They said that the U.S. government has not expressed an interest in this survey, though it is unclear whether U.S. officials knew about the study.

Negative perceptions about being affiliated with the U.S. government do not seem to be as critical a factor in Nigeria, but religious leaders and organizations are sometimes seen as being “bought” by the United States. For example, researchers were told that the FOMWAN director in Kano has been harassed by members of the ulema for her involvement with the U.S. government.

U.S. government designation of certain groups as terrorist has affected USAID involvement in Nigeria, but the U.S. government has not transparently or persuasively communicated evidence of these groups’ terrorist affiliations to the Nigerian public. One program discontinued its engagement with a Muslim organization that had been placed on a designated list for organizations with potential terrorist ties. Other Islamic charities closed as a result of terrorism financing issues, which has created a vacuum in social provision in some communities. Many Nigerians recognized that the loss of services was due to U.S. policy, which can negatively impact public diplomacy efforts.

156. Ann Oden (U.S. Agency for International Development, Abuja), interview, November 2006.

157. The term *ulema* refers to the educated class of Muslim scholars engaged in the several fields of Islamic studies.

Religion-Related Programming

USAID has focused on improving education in Nigeria. A senior USAID official explained that before September 11, there was a U.S. government attitude that working in Muslim schools amounted to the educating of Islamic radicals.¹⁵⁸ Now (in addition to its work in public schools), USAID is working to bring English literacy, math, and the social sciences into private schools, including Islamiyya schools that teach both Koranic and secular subjects. Work with Islamiyya schools has important implications for female education, because girls disproportionately attend Islamiyya schools over public schools. The work of Community Participation for Action in the Social Sector (COMPASS) Project has been notably effective in Kano because employees are all Muslim locals who speak the language, and all classroom materials must go through a state government official to ensure that they are culturally and religiously sensitive. The work of COMPASS does not address the increasingly problematic Koranic school system, where almajurai students are sent to live with a mu'allam, or teacher, with whom they generally study only rote memorization of the Koran and have to beg for sustenance. This system is being addressed by umbrella organizations such as JINI, but remains a significant problem in northern Nigeria.

Engaging religious leaders has proved important for sanctioning and promoting certain health initiatives. Religious institutions provide well-established networks through which critical health information can be disseminated to communities and can be natural allies for the U.S. government in fighting stigma and promoting care for the sick. In 2004, suspicions of Western intentions led three states in northern Nigeria to suspend the World Health Organization's polio vaccination campaign, leading to fresh outbreaks within Nigeria and in neighboring countries. Through sustained dialogue with religious leaders and a more comprehensive, consultative approach by the U.S. government, along with other donors and the Nigerian federal government, the polio eradication campaign appears now to be gaining ground.

Some U.S. government officials also seem to have recognized the critical role that religious institutions can play in promoting good governance and democratic awareness. The Nigeria country director for the International Republican Institute (IRI) noted that religious institutions have played a key role in voter awareness and voter registration, but added that IRI does not have formalized relationships with these actors.¹⁵⁹ One individual interviewed by CSIS suggested that an interfaith coalition of election monitors could fill a critical need in the upcoming elections and help strengthen perceptions of balance and integrity of the process.

Security

Sample initiatives:

- A new U.S. interagency northern Nigerian outreach strategy is being formulated, based on an assessment report considering the potential for religious extremism.
- The Department of Defense (DOD) and the CIA have conducted research about religious extremism considered potentially threatening to U.S. national security.

158. Oden, interview.

159. Matthias Naab (country director, International Republican Institute, Abuja), interview, November 2006.

Emphasis on Terrorist Threat

Especially since September 11, the U.S. government approach (particularly among defense and intelligence officials) to understanding religious violence in Nigeria has focused on radical Islamic groups in Nigeria and their potential to threaten American national security. Analysts have viewed Nigerian religious dynamics through the lens of the Global War on Terror and are concerned with transnational terrorist groups wielding influence in Nigeria. One study commissioned by the CIA's Global Information and Influence team notes that "the Nigerian protests in October 2001 against the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan were the most militantly anti-American of any across the world. Bin Laden is seen as a hero in much of the North."¹⁶⁰

American preoccupation with Islamic extremism in Nigeria has the potential to skew U.S. policy and compromise other goals in the country. Experts say that Nigerian politicians have been able to manipulate this fear by exaggerating the extremist threat and presenting themselves as the moderate allies of the United States. Importantly, a recent U.S. interagency assessment conducted jointly by the Department of Defense and USAID found little evidence that there is currently a growing terrorist threat in northern Nigeria.

The finding suggests that the narrow perspective on religion as a source of potential terrorist threat neither allows for a fuller understanding of the complicated nuances of inter- and intra-religious dynamics in the country, including political implications, generational shifts, and urban/rural splits, nor does it recognize the capacity of domestic Nigerian society to absorb radical elements. At least partly as a result of the study, U.S. government concern about the "Nigerian Taliban" has subsided.

Other Security-Related Efforts

Overall, the U.S. military presence in Nigeria is a minor portion of American engagement with the country. The U.S. military approach to religious issues and groups is mainly limited to humanitarian operations and the various counterterrorism programs funded by DOD. Such humanitarian assistance for 2006 was approximately \$400,000, a small percentage of the defense budget for Nigeria; it was used mostly for digging wells and providing food security in the North.¹⁶¹ American military presence and strategy in Nigeria may change in the near future, with the recent establishment of the DOD Unified Combatant Command for Africa. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Theresa Whelan has said that the command will likely perform civil affairs and humanitarian functions in coordination with actors in-country.¹⁶² This command could potentially have significant access to religious actors in Nigeria, but will need to work carefully to build trust and allay suspicions of U.S. military intentions. Africa Command (AFRICOM) could also present an opportunity for new kinds of interaction, including an emphasis on religious expertise.

160. Jeffrey Herbst, "Strategies for U.S. Public Diplomacy: Nigeria," *Strategies for U.S. Public Diplomacy*, Global Information and Influence Team, Global Challenges Group, The Brookings Institution, March 7, 2005.

161. Mark Ellington (director, West Africa Policy, OSD-Policy, Department of Defense), interview, December 15, 2006.

162. Jim Garamone, "Officials Weigh Need for Africa Command," American Forces Press Service, December 6, 2006, <http://www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2327>.

Crosscutting Obstacles

Even as some new policies and initiatives have been significant, the U.S. government still needs to develop better analytical tools and coherent strategies for approaching religion in conflict-prone settings. Although efforts can be hindered by external obstacles, such as religious groups' reluctance to work with the U.S. government or host nations' restrictions on local religious organizations,¹⁶³ improved engagement is ultimately contingent upon overcoming three broad obstacles:

1. **Culture:** U.S. government officials are often reluctant to address the issue of religion.
2. **Conceptualization:** Current U.S. government frameworks for approaching religion are narrow.
3. **Capacity:** Institutional capacity to understand and approach religion is also limited.

1. CULTURE: U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE OFTEN RELUCTANT TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF RELIGION.

The secular U.S. legal and political tradition can discourage government officials from engaging with religion.

Many government officials remain skeptical or concerned about engagement with religion abroad because of the domestic legal and political tradition surrounding the separation of church and state. As Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford said, "There is a concern—I see as excessive—about the separation of Church and State that has led to a lack of comfort in dealing with religion."¹⁶⁴

Some officials said they believe that the Establishment Clause categorically limits government activities related to religion, while many others said they were not sure of the specific ways the clause should shape their actions and decisions. This lack of clarity on the rules regarding religion can hinder proactive engagement. Some government officials said they are sensitive about approaching religion because they fear being personally attacked—via litigation or public opprobrium—for possibly violating the Establishment Clause. Although usually unclear on the legal parameters of this engagement, government officials are often certain of the political risks involved.

163. Arif Lalani (Canadian Foreign Ministry), interview, May 23, 2006.

164. Hanford, comments, in "International Religious Freedom."

Similarly, many government officials believe that the United States has no right to interfere with the issue of religion and that religion has little role in a foreign policy concerned with political, economic, and security interests. While teaching about international religious freedom at the Foreign Service Institute, the former director of the State Department's IRF office found that Foreign Service officers are often uncomfortable drawing on their own religious experiences.¹⁶⁵

Religious actors, when approached abroad, are often addressed only as political, not spiritual, leaders. For example, although some U.S. diplomatic and assistance efforts in Nigeria have focused on more fully assessing critical religious dynamics, this work remains somewhat stymied by a continued reluctance to approach the issue of religion directly. One official suggested, "Religious leaders don't have any special leverage other than as politicians or social leaders,"¹⁶⁶ despite many CSIS interviews with Nigerians suggesting the special authority of spiritual leaders.

Domestic religious groups can shape U.S. activities and image abroad, which can impede government effectiveness.

Despite official U.S. separation of church and state, religious interest groups and lobbies have been effective in promoting their agendas, sometimes contributing to skepticism about an impartial U.S. government role on religion-related issues abroad. Nigerian Christians interviewed for this study said that they believed the United States was on their side because of a perceived common religious background; Nigerian Muslims also saw the United States as Christian-motivated but took a negative view of many U.S. actions. These perceptions relate to how many Americans see themselves. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 67 percent of Americans believe that the United States is a "Christian nation." Evangelical influence in American life has grown notably in the last few decades. In the past few years, evangelicals have shifted their focus to conflict-prone areas abroad, encouraging President Bush's focus on AIDS in Africa, driving legislation targeting human trafficking, and promoting the Sudan Peace Act of 2002 and the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004.¹⁶⁷ Evangelical support for Bush has provided the president a welcome audience for his invocation of religion as a practical and rhetorical tool in foreign policy.

Neither a growing role for American religious communities in informing foreign policy nor an increasing comfort with issues of religiosity among some of the U.S. political elite has necessarily translated into a better understanding of religion in the many conflict-prone places where the United States is involved abroad. In many cases the two factors have hindered effectiveness by shaping perceptions about U.S. loyalties. U.S. support for Israel, for example, has been sometimes seen as religious favoritism in other parts of the world. The promotion of religious freedom has been viewed as a tool of U.S. interest groups and an issue held captive by the religious right.

As often as the United States has been accused of endorsing a global Judeo-Christian vision, it has also been viewed as promoting amoral secularism. Many foreign audiences

165. Farr, interview.

166. Interview with U.S. government official, Abuja, November 2006.

167. Howard LaFranchi, "Evangelized Foreign Policy?" *Christian Science Monitor*, March 2, 2006.

in Muslim-majority countries, including 63 percent of Pakistanis and 95 percent of Jordanians, continue to see the United States as “not religious enough.”¹⁶⁸

Government officials often perceive religion as too complicated or sensitive, which can prevent analytic rigor.

Many in the government see religion as a dangerous or divisive issue best left out of analysis. Government officials expressed the sentiment that saying the wrong thing about religion, because it is such a sensitive topic, is worse than saying nothing at all.

One former government official noted that “many good civil servants, fearing political incorrectness, are uncomfortable openly assessing foreign cultures on the basis of religious or cultural beliefs.”¹⁶⁹ Although the National Intelligence Council took on religious issues in the report on its 20/20 Project, an earlier attempt to examine religious developments worldwide was rejected “out of concern that such analysis might be considered insensitive and unintentionally generate ill will toward the United States.”¹⁷⁰

In her recent book, *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs*, former secretary of state Madeleine Albright writes, “To lead internationally, American policy-makers must learn as much as possible about religion, and then incorporate that knowledge in their strategies. Bryan Hehir [noted theologian and professor] has compared this challenge to brain surgery—a necessary task, but fatal if not done well.”¹⁷¹

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION: CURRENT U.S. GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORKS FOR APPROACHING RELIGION ARE NARROW.

The tendency to see religion as a problem prevents fuller engagement with religion as a solution, and the overemphasis on Islam prevents more holistic approaches to religion and faith-based analysis.

An overemphasis on religion’s divisive or violent roles prevents a more holistic approach to the complicated religious dynamics in most societies. According to the former director of the DIA, “Religion is not important to [intelligence analysts] unless it has some effect on behavior—usually negative. Then people get interested.”¹⁷²

Despite the fact that religion is seen as powerful enough to fuel conflict, policymakers less often engage with its peacemaking potential. The current focus on extremism has skewed official U.S. policy toward viewing Islam through a threat lens, rather than as a community of actors who may also be able to play a positive role in international relations.

168. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, “Many Americans Uneasy with Mix of Religion and Politics,” August 24, 2006, <http://pewforum.org/docs/index.php?DocID=153#2>, and “U.S. Image Up Slightly, but Still Negative,” June 23, 2005, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=247>.

169. Ellen Laipson, “While America Slept: Understanding Terrorism and Counterterrorism,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2003.

170. Ibid.

171. Madeleine Albright, *The Mighty & The Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

172. Lt. Gen. Clapper, interview.

A policy of blaming religion, rather than focusing on understanding religious dynamics, can paralyze decisionmaking and lead to poor analysis.

In particular, current U.S. government attention to religion is focused on Muslim extremism, and the military's cultural and religious training has largely been driven by soldiers' experiences on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, where religious dynamics have impacted counterinsurgency operations. According to one former career intelligence analyst, "At least after 9/11 we could start saying the words 'Islam' and 'religion' out loud. The problem now, of course, is that most people [inside the IC] are looking through the 9/11 lens. There is very little understanding of history or larger patterns of radicalization."¹⁷³

When U.S. policymakers and analysts discuss religion, they are most often considering an extremist version of Islam, limiting the way both Islam and religion more broadly are approached. To some degree, the recent focus on Islam has been to the exclusion of other religions, producing a myopic and undisciplined engagement with religious ideas, actors, and political influences. In places such as the Sudan and Nigeria, for example, U.S. frameworks concentrate on Muslim-Christian divides and can overlook the complex role of African traditional religions. In a group interview of U.S. officials hosted by the Consul General in Lagos, the lack of understanding of the role of African traditional religions in Nigeria was cited as one of their greatest analytical failings. Although outreach to Muslim actors is a priority because of a poor U.S. image in some Muslim communities, overemphasis on one religion can lead officials to ignore or gloss over others.

When not viewed through a threat lens, religion is largely approached as a peripheral humanitarian or cultural issue.

In doctrine, training, policy, and legislative documents, religion is usually one of a long list of peripheral considerations that provide context to an issue without shaping it or driving U.S. actions directly. The international religious freedom issue is limited in scope to human rights, produces more reports than action, and is not incorporated into wider policy debates and priorities. Critics have suggested that the International Religious Freedom Office allows the State Department to feel it is addressing the role of religion abroad, while the office itself actually has a much more narrow focus.

Perhaps because religion is not often considered a core security issue, policies related to religion are often overly general and difficult to implement. A former ambassador to Indonesia said, "The State Department couldn't send an instruction that was geared to Indonesia's circumstances."¹⁷⁴ The U.S. ambassador to Nigeria lamented that Washington's conceptual categories often don't fit the "sloppy" reality on the ground in a place like Nigeria, where religion is integrated into most aspects of society.¹⁷⁵ Many government officials were concerned about the lack of clear guidance on how to put into practice new and imprecise rhetoric dealing with religion. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report in May 2006 assessing the effectiveness of U.S. public diplomacy efforts in engaging with the Muslim world. The report found that the State Department has not yet developed written guidance that gives details about how Under Secretary Hughes' new strategic framework should be implemented in the field. Target audiences have not been clearly defined, field post efforts are not directed toward a core message or theme, and field posts

173. Anonymous interview with intelligence analyst, fall 2006.

174. Ambassador Roy, interview.

175. Ambassador John Campbell (U.S. Embassy, Abuja), interview, November 2006.

lack coherent plans for implementing strategies. The report discusses the Nigerian post's goal paper on public diplomacy, which describes its strategy in just one sentence and uses only three to describe how the strategy will be implemented.¹⁷⁶

Religions are overgeneralized and seen as monolithic rather than pluralistic.

Chris Seiple, president of the Institute for Global Engagement, writes that “religious groups are not static entities that can be assigned permanently to ‘good’ and ‘bad’ categories.”¹⁷⁷ Such generalizations can fail to account for the pluralism inherent in almost all faith traditions. Although many U.S. government officials can now articulate the distinction between Sunni and Shi’a, they do not always understand the differences between, for example, Afghan and Saudi Sunnis. In general, the “war of ideas” approach to the Muslim world may be an inappropriately simplistic framework for dealing with a decentralized, complex religious tradition of 1.3 billion followers, or one in every five global inhabitants.¹⁷⁸ The South Asia policy adviser to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee remarked that the government needs to stop defining “good” Muslims as those who support all of U.S. foreign policy and espouse Unitarian-leaning theology.¹⁷⁹

3. CAPACITY: INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPROACH RELIGION IS LIMITED.

There are legitimate legal limitations and a lack of clarity about the extraterritorial application of the Establishment Clause.

The Establishment Clause states, “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The application of the Establishment Clause domestically is regulated by the “Lemon Test,” which stipulates that a statute must have a secular purpose, the primary effect must neither advance nor inhibit religion, and it must not foster “an excessive government entanglement with religion.”¹⁸⁰

However, little case law exists regarding the extraterritorial application of the Establishment Clause. Perhaps the most relevant case, at least regarding funding issues, is the *Lamont v. Woods* (1991) decision, in which taxpayers sued USAID for violating the Establishment Clause by funding Jewish and Catholic schools abroad. The court found that “the operation of the Establishment Clause strongly indicates that its restrictions should apply extraterritorially,” but implied that the analysis may be different than it is domestically.¹⁸¹

In particular, the court proposed a balancing test in which even where U.S. funds are going to a pervasively sectarian foreign organization, the government will be permitted the opportunity to “demonstrate some compelling reason why the usually unacceptable risk attendant on such funding in such an institution should, in the particular case,

176. GAO, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences*.

177. Chris Seiple, “Memo to the State: Religion and Security,” Institute for Global Engagement, 2007.

178. Farr, interview.

179. Jonah Blank (policy adviser on South Asia, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee), interview, Washington, D.C., July 21, 2006.

180. *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971).

181. *Lamont v. Woods*, 948 F.2d 825, 835 (2d Cir. 1991).

be borne.” In other words, exceptions could be made, for example, for issues of national security.¹⁸²

Because there are not clear guidelines to U.S. government interaction with religious issues and organizations overseas, this leaves undefined the extent to which the United States can take sides in the perceived “war *within* Islam” and whether the U.S. government can appropriately promote Islamic principles that support democracy. Some government programming could be understood as supporting moderate interpretations of Islamic law. For example, a USAID-funded radio network in Indonesia has the specific mission of countering religious fundamentalism and militancy.

Interestingly, a position in *Lamont v. Woods* cites an academic: “If the government chose to support the teaching of a moderate version of Islam rather than science education, the result would be different Neither the government’s interest in thwarting Communism and Islamic fundamentalism, nor the importance of respect for other cultures, could outweigh the offense to the religion clauses posed by such a governmental endorsement of the doctrines of a particular religion.”¹⁸³

Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) officials said that after September 11, the State Department’s legal branch advised, after much deliberation, that outreach efforts should limit direct engagement with religious issues.¹⁸⁴ But while legal principles do place some restrictions on government activity, they leave particular room for information collection and analysis on religious issues. Former lead counsel to the CIA Jeffrey Smith stated, “I see no reason why we shouldn’t be able to penetrate, collect, and report” on religious groups.¹⁸⁵

The Department of Justice’s Office of Legal Counsel, the highest authority on these issues for Executive Branch officials, has yet to make a determined ruling on the extraterritorial applications of the First Amendment. Many government officials and implementing partners therefore do not fully understand the limits of engagement.

Agencies do not prioritize religious analysis or expertise.

Although mainstreaming religious awareness across the government will be critical to improving engagement abroad, many government officials mentioned the lack of religious experts as a particular problem. Hiring of religious experts has recently been emphasized by some government officials, but their use has been ad hoc and resource-constrained,¹⁸⁶ and there is often a lack of incentive for these experts to join the government.¹⁸⁷ The former director of State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research said that “within the intelligence community, it’s important to have people who have a deep understanding and knowledge of particular religions that are foreign policy-relevant,” adding that the current level of personnel is “probably not anywhere approximating what we need.”¹⁸⁸

182. Jessica Powley Hayden, “Mullahs on a Bus: The Establishment Clause and U.S. Foreign Aid,” *The Georgetown Law Journal*, 2006.

183. *Lamont v. Woods*, 948 F.2d 825, 842 n.20 (2d Cir. 1991).

184. Interviews with IIP officials, February 16, 2007.

185. Smith, interview.

186. Matt Vaccarro (National Defense University), interview, February 16, 2006.

187. Blank, interview.

188. Ambassador Roy, interview.

According to one source, as of October 2006, the State Department had only hired one person with extensive academic training (a Ph.D.) in any area related to Islam, who was hired specifically to apply that training. He began work in January 2006, approximately 12 to 18 months after he was hired.¹⁸⁹ Short-term expertise has been sought in lieu of full-time hiring, but those without internal government knowledge may have limited usefulness.¹⁹⁰

Religious expertise is also an issue in the intelligence community. In August 2006, the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy found that “our intelligence community is not organized to provide operationally-relevant socio-cultural knowledge to the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.”¹⁹¹ Neither civilian nor military intelligence agencies appear to have specific policies or standards requiring that collection, analysis, or products consider religious factors in conflicts or violence. Several analysts in the intelligence community said that analysts are not expected or required to develop or implement an understanding of religious movements or leaders. Use of intelligence on religions and religious actors is thus a top-down, boutique effort inside the intelligence community instead of a comprehensive or community-wide priority.

A diversity of religious experiences and traditions among government officials could strengthen U.S. policy in conflict-prone settings, but has not been the reality. In his role as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and previously as ambassador to Afghanistan and Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad provides a noteworthy but rare example of an American Muslim in an influential position, able to inform U.S. foreign policy in areas of the world where the U.S. government has little expertise. It is particularly difficult for Muslims to gain government security clearance, and many Muslims are increasingly disinclined to work for a government whose policies they do not support.¹⁹²

Officials have little training, particularly on the full range of religious backgrounds.

Limited training on religion within U.S. government agencies is often overly focused on doctrine and theology or addresses “cultural issues” instead of religion specifically. For example, officers in many Marine and Army units have recently instituted study programs in basic Islam, and they also attend courses on the local cultures of places such as Iraq and Afghanistan where they may be engaged in nation building.¹⁹³ In the spring of 2006, the Command and Staff College in Quantico, Va., trained Marines for the first time on negotiations in cultural contexts but did not focus explicitly on religious issues raised in dealing with religious leaders.¹⁹⁴ Updated Marine Corps curricula include a robust “Culture and

189. Anonymous interview, fall 2006.

190. Blank, interview.

191. Interim Progress Report on DOD Directive 3000.05.

192. According to a May 2007 Pew poll, 75 percent of American Muslims say that the United States made the wrong decision in using force against Iraq, compared with 47 percent among the U.S. general public. “Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream,” Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007, <http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf>.

193. John Kifner, “Tough G.I.s Go to War Armed with Afghan ABC’s,” *New York Times*, February 16, 2006; Lisa Eakman (U.S. Air Force general counsel, Alternative Dispute Resolution Sector, Negotiation Center of Excellence, Washington, D.C.), interview, April 19, 2006.

194. Negotiations Training Exercises, U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, May 25–26, 2006, Quantico, Va.

Interagency Operations” program, but religion is an underrepresented subtopic within the cultural program.¹⁹⁵

Although resources are often limited, the provision of sufficient training relies on a thorough understanding of what personnel need to know and how they should apply that knowledge. For example, the duty descriptions of the military Chaplain Corps are changing as commanders need immediate religion-related knowledge and diplomacy during operations. But although chaplains are increasingly responsible for performing these roles, no systematic training program exists to support such activities. Overall, even when courses or pre-deployment materials on religion are available, such training is often simplistic, Islam-focused, and too vague to be tactically useful.

The U.S. government is structured to prioritize official, government actors and states more than non-state actors.

In fragile states, nongovernmental organizations and non-state or even transnational actors can play critical roles. In many situations there may be no formal (or too many decentralized) religious structures with which to work, but religion is still an important motivating force among communities.

The U.S. government, however, is structured to deal primarily with official or political actors. Charlotte Beers has called the State Department “a clumsy camel” of an agency—skilled, even brilliant, at dealing with other governments but shy and slow-footed at taking its case to the masses.”¹⁹⁶

In short, the U.S. government often fails to reach out to critical religious networks, and there are many groups with whom U.S. government officials are afraid to work or with whom they do not know how to work. Engaging effectively in the field is also difficult because of high turnover in the embassies and the regular loss of institutional knowledge.¹⁹⁷ Many tours in the Muslim world and in conflict-prone states inhabited by traditional religious groups last only one year.¹⁹⁸

Religion-related initiatives are low priorities and have minimal influence.

U.S. government activity on religious issues must also be evaluated in the context of the available resources put behind various initiatives and the relative influence of relevant offices.

Public diplomacy efforts focused on religious dialogue remain under-prioritized. The public diplomacy budget in 2006 was too low to cover much-needed exchange programs, expand speaker programs around the world, or ensure that public diplomacy officers receive the language training they require. Although Hughes’s office received an increase of \$68 million in 2007, it is evident that public diplomacy remains a low priority from within the administration and among appropriators.

195. Maj. William Vivian and Maj. John Sullivan (U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico), interview, May 25–26, 2006.

196. David E. Kaplan, “Hearts, Minds, and Dollars,” *U.S. News and World Report*, April 25, 2005, http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/press/success/2006-08-05.html.

197. Ambassador David Shinn, interview, July 5, 2006.

198. GAO, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences*.

International religious freedom also has not been prioritized. Structurally, religious freedom issues are not mainstreamed and have minimal influence on diplomatic matters. The lack of integration with the State Department's geographic bureaus is one of the most significant obstacles to field implementation.

Recommendations

The following four steps should be followed if the U.S. government is to address the obstacles to engagement and improve its approach to religious issues abroad:

1. **Create** a policy imperative that encourages broad public discussion;
2. **Provide** clarity and give legal guidance for engaging with religion;
3. **Increase** knowledge of religious dynamics; and
4. **Sensitize** programming to religious realities.

Over the next two years, with the support of the Luce Foundation, CSIS will work to assist with and enable the implementation of these steps. CSIS will enlist the help of an advisory group—including government officials and nongovernmental and academic experts—and will consult with bilateral and multilateral partners to help refine concepts and promote innovative approaches.

1. CREATE A POLICY IMPERATIVE THAT ENCOURAGES BROAD PUBLIC DISCUSSION

The political urgency for engaging with religion in conflict settings must be established to improve U.S. government analysis, policy, and programming. Enhanced leadership and clear vision statements from Congress and key administration officials are required.

To consider all of the roles religion can play in conflict-prone settings, the government must expand beyond a threat-based, Islam-focused analysis of religion and embrace a broader understanding of world religions. The perception that America is a Christian nation that favors and discriminates on that basis must also be addressed. At the same time, the State Department should broaden its approach to international religious freedom, prioritizing religious tolerance and conflict prevention.

Sample action steps:

- **Set the agenda.** Presidential, executive, and congressional leadership should deliver major speeches that establish the importance of religion in conflict-prone settings, speak to America's need for increased engagement on these issues, and prescribe a balanced way ahead.
- **Advance government dialogue.** Religious expertise and viewpoints should be represented at four key levels of the U.S. government: (1) The under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs should be responsible for representing the religious dimensions of a cultural view at the principals level; (2) the ambassador-

at-large for religious freedom should be present at senior interagency policy meetings and regular senior staff meetings at the State Department; (3) the geographic bureaus at the State Department should be tasked with expanding religious expertise; (4) International Religious Freedom office representatives should participate in interagency meetings.

- **Expand the debate.** Public engagement on this issue should be promoted through the establishment of a national commission consisting of policymakers, career officials, and civil society leaders, perhaps with the assistance of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Online networks and communities can be engaged to widen the network of participants in the dialogue.

2. PROVIDE CLARITY AND GIVE LEGAL GUIDANCE FOR ENGAGING WITH RELIGION

Policymakers and practitioners will need to be made aware of and comfortable with parameters for engagement. This will require an examination of the extraterritorial application of the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses and the clarification of current guidelines, whether explicit or merely assumed.

Sample action steps:

- **Define boundaries.** The Department of Justice should convene constitutional and legal experts to clarify the legal parameters of engaging with religious issues in foreign policy and programming. The meetings should include officials from the Office of Legal Counsel at the Department of Justice, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, legal advisers from USAID, the State Department, and outside experts to discuss the applicability of any legitimate guidelines for compliance with the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the U.S. Constitution, along with other relevant statutes.
- **Promote new initiatives.** The State Department should develop a series of procedures and structures that address acceptable involvement and legitimate legal obstacles regarding religion abroad, providing authority for programmatic initiatives that address religious issues. For example, a manual of examples of successful religion-related programs could be published, similar to USAID's forthcoming "Religion and Conflict" toolkit.
- **Provide answers.** The State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, working in conjunction with the International Religious Freedom Office, the broader State Department, and the Department of Justice, should be responsible for rapid responses to policy and operational questions on religious issues that might arise in conflict and post-conflict settings, utilizing Web-based and other new communication tools.

3. INCREASE KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS

To normalize government thinking on religion while avoiding the compartmentalization of this issue, training and education are needed by all U.S. government branches and among the community of experts. Analysts in the intelligence and policy communities, officers who participate in stability operations, chaplains serving as religious liaisons, diplomats, and humanitarian and development officials could all benefit from increased understanding of the many roles religion plays. Deep religious expertise outside the government should also be drawn upon to improve engagement abroad.

Sample action steps:

■ Build government expertise.

- All U.S. officials should receive a broad overview of sociological and political implications of religious dynamics and of particular religious traditions before being stationed overseas. In particular, the religious training curriculum at the Foreign Service Institute and military training institutes, such as the National Defense University, should be expanded. Training should also be offered for mid-career professionals.¹⁹⁹
- A religion subspecialty should be developed within the political, economic, and public diplomacy career tracks for Foreign Service officers. Training should be developed for all ambassadors, career and political, that deepens their understanding of religion's role in international affairs in general, and in their country of assignment in particular.²⁰⁰
- Incentives should be established for foreign policy bureaucrats to pursue religion-related issues and for academic experts on religion to enter all relevant branches of government service. Intelligence agencies should focus on hiring at least one anthropological or comparative religion specialist per regional team, and the State Department should include religious experts in each geographic bureau. Hiring of these new experts could first be tested through a pilot program for a critical region.²⁰¹

■ Expand outside partnerships.

- Government agencies should provide rapid, temporary clearances to outside experts to review and comment on analytic reports and development programs. Anthropologists, world religions scholars, theologians and philosophers

199. One example of a resource that could be added to these curricula is the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding's recent publication *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*. This compilation of case studies explores commonalities in peacemakers' techniques.

200. Farr, interview.

201. Although legal constraints prohibit hiring based on religion, it is important to hire for religious expertise, which will likely break down barriers to particular religious groups' involvement in the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy. Expertise will be required not only from particular religious perspectives, but on the dynamics of those religions in relevant national and cultural contexts.

of religion, and other religion experts in the academic community could evaluate diplomatic and development programming.

- Government officials should strengthen links with centers of academic expertise, promoting programs and courses on national security and foreign assistance issues in religious studies departments, divinity schools, and theological seminaries. Where appropriate, development programming should also support the creation of religious studies departments or sociology of religion courses in foreign universities.
- The State Department should expand foreign exchange programs that increase religious understanding and also utilize participants in these programs as a resource for informing U.S. policy and programming.
- The U.S. government can promote and engage a cottage industry of domestic and foreign nongovernmental organizations and think tanks that are addressing the tough questions about religion.²⁰² For example, initiatives could fund researchers to undertake historical and contemporary case studies of international actors' engagement with religion in conflict settings.
- **Link the community of experts.** The U.S. government should contribute funding to a private sector– or nongovernmental–driven initiative to share information and best practices through virtual centers of knowledge broadly accessible to government officials, academic experts, and other nongovernmental actors. Perhaps as part of a broader conflict-focused forum, participants can collect and share relevant information on religious groups, movements, and actors through the Internet, using Web 2.0 tools, such as wikis and social networking.²⁰³

4. SENSITIZE PROGRAMMING TO RELIGIOUS REALITIES

The ultimate test of progress will be improved implementation in conflict-prone settings. Although new initiatives may best be tested as pilot projects, all programming in conflict settings should explicitly account for any relevant religious dynamics.

Sample action steps:

- **Take a pragmatic approach.** Policymakers can overcome the problems of over-generalization by understanding religions not as monolithic, static doctrines, but

202. See “Appendix C: Related Organizations” for a list of groups working at the intersection of religion and international affairs.

203. A database horizontally available to all relevant personnel could include examples of past successful and failed engagement activities with religious leaders and nongovernmental organizations, along with a pool of experts available to those in the field. This project could be first tested in a conflict-prone setting such as Nigeria before expanding to other regions. See Rebecca Linder, *Wikis, Webs and Networks: Creating Connections in Conflict-Prone Settings* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2006).

as dynamic theologies and varied practices. A dynamic “lived religion”²⁰⁴ approach to analyzing and developing policy for a particular conflict-prone setting would answer such questions as:

- How is religiously sanctioned violence viewed?
- Which religious groups will cooperate with each other and why?
- How have religious practices and actions evolved over time in the face of conflict?
- How are the religions of international intervening parties perceived?
- How do religious beliefs motivate support for certain leaders?
- How do religious traditions see themselves as accommodated by, and accommodating, liberal democratic governance grounded in religious freedom?

U.S. officials may also consider using marketing or audience research to better understand and reach faith-based audiences in conflict settings.

- **Engage a broader range of leaders.** Programs should seek a fuller range of religious representatives abroad and engage with less traditional—and possibly less welcoming—religious leaders and audiences, recognizing not only “religious moderates” but also “religious conservatives” as opinion leaders and possible drivers of change. Although some of these leaders may be unwilling to engage with the U.S. government for ideological or political reasons, others may be more inclined to dialogue with U.S. officials if there is a shift in American rhetoric. U.S. officials should carefully consider the public use of sensitive language, particularly the impact of religious versus secular terminology. To help transform the American discourse on Islam in particular, the U.S. government should help reduce public and official *Islamophobia*.
- **Increase work with faith-based groups.** The U.S. government should enable increased partnerships with previously excluded faith-based groups abroad, actively pursuing them as partners in facilitating inter- and intra-faith dialogue; hosting conflict management workshops for religious youth leaders; supporting transitional justice; developing partnerships with conventional peacemaking institutions; and supporting democratization and civil society.

An important step will be assisting faith-based groups to adopt accounting structures that make them eligible for U.S. funding. For example, since 2002, U.S.

204. A growing number of historians of religion, sociologists of religion, and theologians have embraced the concept of “lived religion” in recent years. David Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

officials have trained U.S. pastors to manage federal grants, initially to work on substance abuse and mental health issues. This experience could be modified to support administrative procedures of Islamic charities abroad so that they too can benefit from dedicated U.S. government funds. Government pilot programs that attempt to engage faith-based organizations could also work with religious groups in more indirect ways, especially where groups may be wary of a public connection to the United States. In these cases, officials should consider subtle ways to provide support, focusing less on getting credit and more on desired outcomes.

The Way Forward

The action steps outlined here are intended to help the U.S. government find a constructive space for officials to engage pragmatically with religion. Although these steps are not comprehensive, they propose a way forward that will equip U.S. government agencies with the organizational culture and capacity to account for changing religious realities abroad. Such a dynamic context will require U.S. officials to be more innovative and take more risks. By creating a policy imperative for approaching religious issues, clarifying guidance for engagement with religious dynamics, and increasing religion-related knowledge, the U.S. government can avoid repeating past mistakes and increase effectiveness in conflict-prone settings.

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CLAS

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Springfield World Outreach Ministries

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Saratu
Program Officer, American Corner

Sadeeq Hona
Project Coordinator, Plateau State, Interfaith Mediation Center

Tor
Coordinator, American Corner

Youth Service participants (3)

Related Organizations

This list, though not exhaustive, offers an introduction to the groups researching religion and conflict or conducting faith-based work in conflict-prone settings.

Research Institutes and Faith-Based Peacemaking

- | | |
|--|--|
| Abraham's Vision | George Mason University, Institute for |
| Appeal of Conscience Foundation | Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Cen- |
| Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America | ter for World Religions, Diplomacy, and |
| Bharat Sevashram Sangha | Conflict Resolution |
| Boston University, Institute on Culture, Re- | Georgetown University, Berkley Center for |
| ligion and World Affairs | Religion, Peace, and World Affairs |
| Center for Interfaith Studies and Dialogue | Georgetown University, Edmund A. Walsh |
| (Nazareth College) | School of Foreign Service, Prince Al- |
| Center for the Study of Islam and | waleed bin Talal Center for Muslim- |
| Democracy | Christian Understanding |
| Clingendael Netherlands Institute of Inter- | Harvard University, Forum on Religion and |
| national Relations | Ecology |
| Columbia University, School of Interna- | Institute for Global Engagement |
| tional and Public Affairs, Center for In- | Institute for Theology and Peace |
| ternational Conflict Resolution, Research | Institute on Religion and Public Policy |
| on Religion and Peacemaking | Interfaith Alliance |
| Community of Sant'Egidio | Interfaith Center at the Presidio of San |
| Council for America's First Freedom | Francisco |
| Council on Faith and International Affairs | Interfaith Encounter Association |
| Coventry Cathedral/London, International | Interfaith Voices for Peace and Justice |
| Center for Reconciliation | Interfaith Youth Core |
| Ecumenical Institute of Bossey | International Association for Religious |
| Episcopal Peace Fellowship | Freedom |
| Ethics and Public Policy Center | International Center for Religion and |
| Foundation for Reconciliation in the Mid- | Diplomacy |
| dle East | International Coalition for Religious |
| Freedom House, Center for Religious | Freedom |
| Freedom | International Fellowship of Reconciliation |
| General Board of Church and Society of the | International Forum for Islamic Dialogue |
| United Methodist Church | International Institute of Islamic Thought |

International Interfaith Center	St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace
Islamic Networks Group	Syracuse University, Department of Religion
Jesuits for Debt Relief and Development	Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding
Jewish Peace Fellowship	Temple of Understanding
JUSTPEACE Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation (of the Methodist Church)	Three Faiths Forum
Karamah	United Religions Initiative
Life & Peace Institute	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
Lutheran Peace Fellowship	United States Institute of Peace, Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution
Muslim Peace Fellowship	United States Institute of Peace, Centers of Innovation, Religion and Peacemaking
Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Religion & Politics Program	United States Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East
Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Religion & World Affairs Program	University of Notre Dame, Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Program in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding
Rice University, Boniuk Center for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance	World Council of Religious Leaders
Rice University, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Research on Religion and Culture	
Salam Sudan Foundation	
Southern Baptist Convention, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission	

Faith-Based Relief and Development

Action for Churches Together	Asociacion de Religiosas Carmelitas Terciarias Descalzas del Santa Teresa de J.
Adventist Development and Relief Agency	Assist International
Advocates International	Association of Besancon Sisters
African Methodist Episcopal Service and Development Agency	Ateneo De Manila University
Aga Khan Foundation/Development Network	Ave Maria College
Agudath Israel for America	Bandhua Mukti Morcha
American Committee for Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, Inc.	Bay Area Council for Jewish Rescue and Renewal
American Friends Service Committee	Blessings International, Inc.
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee	Bread for the World Institute
American Jewish World Service	Brother's Brother Foundation
American Leprosy Missions International, Inc.	Buddhist Peace Fellowship
American Near East Refugee Aid	Bulawayo Baptist Church
American Ort Federation	Caritas Internationalis
Amigos Internacionales	Cathedral College, Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation
Amity Foundation	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
	Catholic Medical Mission Board, Inc.

Catholic Near East Welfare Association	Global Health Ministries Foundation
Catholic Relief Services	Global Links
Chalmers Center	Global Operations and Development
Channel for All Nations	Habitat for Humanity
Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus	Haiti Vision, Inc.
Children of God Religious Institute	Hands Along the Nile Development Ser-
Children's Hunger Relief Fund, Inc.	vices, Inc.
Christian Aid	Harvesters Reaching the Nations
Christian Association of the Blind	Healing Hands International
Christian Children's Fund, Inc.	Holt International Children's Services
Christian Missions Aid	Holy Family Hospital
Christoffel Blindenmission	Hope Worldwide South Africa
Church of Bible Understanding	HOPE worldwide
Church World Service	Interchurch Medical Assistance, Inc.
City Hope International, Inc.	Interchurch Organization for Development
Community of Caring	Cooperation
Compassion International	International Aid, Inc.
Convoy of Hope	International Catholic Migration
Coprodeli USA	Commission
Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social	International Cooperation for Develop-
Services	ment and Solidarity
Creighton University	International Foundation for Education
Cure International	and Self-Help
DanChurchAid	International Justice Mission
De La Salle University	International Orthodox Christian Charities
Development and Peace	International Relief Teams
Diakonie Emergency Aid	Knights of Columbus
Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society	LDS Philanthropies
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance	Lutheran World Relief
EIRENE International Christian Service	Map International, Inc.
for Peace	Marquette University
Enterprise Development International	Matthew 25 Ministries, Inc.
Equip Liberia	Medair
Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe	Medical Benevolence Foundation
Evangelistic International Ministry	Mennonite Central Committee
Evangelistic Ministries International	Mennonite Economic Development
Fabretto Children's Foundations, Inc.	Associates
Faith, Hope, Love	Mercy Ships
Feed the Children, Inc.	Mission of Mercy
Five Talents International	Mission without Borders International
Food for the Hungry	Missionary Sisters—St. Sacramento
Food for the Poor, Inc.	Monseigneur Cortbawi Institute
Forman Christian College	Mothers' Union
Franciscans International	Muslim Aid
FreshMinistries, Inc.	Muslim American Society
Fundacion Ambos	Nazareth Project, Inc.

Northern Great Lakes Synod	Tearfund
Northwest Medical Teams International, Inc.	Trocaire
Norwegian Church Aid	Uganda Christian University Partners
Oasis International School, Inc.	United Board for Christian Higher Educa-
Operation Blessing International relief and	tion in Asia
development Corporation	United Methodist Committee on Relief
Opportunity International	United Religions Initiative
Opportunity International, Inc.	Universidad Tecnologica De Loja
ORT S/Africa Operational Trust	Universite Catholique de Louvain Center
Pax World Service/Mercy Corps	for Research on the Epidemiology of Dis.
Peace Council	Vellore Christian Medical College Board
Prison Fellowship Ethiopia	USA, Inc.
Progressio	Voice of the Martyrs
Religions for Peace/World Conference on	White House Office of Faith-Based and
Religion and Peace	Community Initiatives
Sagesse High School Mary Mother of	World Concern Development Organization
Wisdom	World Conference of Religions for Peace
Saints Coeurs Association	World Council of Churches
Salesian Missions of the Salesian Society, Inc.	World Emergency Relief
Salvation Army	World Faiths Development Dialogue
Samaritan's Purse	World Relief
Shelter for Life International	World Share
St. Anthony of Padoue School	World Vision International
St. John Bosco Secondary School	World Vision Zambia
St. Pierre College	World Witness Board of Foreign Missions
Swedish Pentecostal Mission	

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