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## Diplomacy in an Age of Faith: How Failing to Understand the Role of Religion Hinders America's Purposes in the World

*Thomas Farr, Ph.D., and Ambassador Terry Miller*

**JENNIFER A. MARSHALL:** Two events this past week remind us that America's religious culture continues to flourish in the 21st century. I'm thinking, of course, of the warm reception to the visit of Pope Benedict XVI and the somewhat cooler reaction to Senator Barack Obama's comments about Pennsylvanians clinging to guns and God. From the sublime to the mundane, both examples show that Americans remain a very religious people.

This thriving religious culture, combined with the American model of religious liberty, is unique in the world. The American constitutional order produced a constructive tension between church and state—not a radical separation as some public debate today would imply. One of the major reasons for the success of the American experiment is that it reconciled the dual authorities of religion and secular government.

This is an important success story that we should be actively telling around the world. These features characterize the American order as much as our political system or market economy, and a proper grasp of them is essential to understanding and implementing America's purposes at home and abroad.

Too often, however, the true nature of America's religious character is poorly understood by policy-makers—whether they deal with domestic or foreign policy issues.

This is one of the reasons that we at The Heritage Foundation are concerned about carefully articulating America's model of religious liberty and culture of reli-

### Talking Points

- The American foreign policy establishment has failed to grasp the significance of the resurgence of religion around the world. It has missed the opportunity to incorporate the U.S. policy of advancing religious freedom to root democracy so that it matures and consolidates, particularly in highly religious societies, and as a means of diplomatically fighting the war against terrorism. I think that this missed opportunity has harmed our interests.
- U.S. diplomats need to be trained to engage religious communities and the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom needs to be allowed to assume its rightful place under law in America's efforts to promote democracy.
- It is vital in the exercise of foreign affairs that we learn how to express our faith, including our religious faith, strongly and confidently. Others must understand that our beliefs are as powerful as their beliefs. Otherwise, they will not respect our beliefs, and they will not respect us.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/hl1099.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/hl1099.cfm)

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(202) 546-4400 • [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

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gious practice. It's critical for communicating abroad about America, and also for understanding religion as a motivating factor in world politics.

In the Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society, we work closely with our colleagues on the Heritage foreign policy team to demonstrate the links between these religious liberty features of our domestic order and U.S. foreign policy goals. We're very pleased to have with us today a guest who will help us focus more carefully on these ideas.

Dr. Thomas Farr is Visiting Associate Professor of Religion and World Affairs at Georgetown University. During his 21-year career in the Foreign Service, Dr. Farr specialized in strategic military policy, political affairs, and religious freedom. He helped develop U.S. strategic nuclear policy during the Cold War, and was part of the U.S. negotiating team in the U.S.–Soviet arms control talks in Geneva. Dr. Farr also served as the first director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, traveling worldwide to engage governments and religious communities on the subject of religious freedom. Dr. Farr is a U.S. Army veteran and has taught at West Point and the U.S. Air Force Academy. He has written widely on America's international religious freedom policy and U.S. national security, as well as on the development of the Catholic doctrine of religious liberty. His most recent article, "Diplomacy in an Age of Faith," appears in the March/April issue of *Foreign Affairs*. It's a terrific piece that's sparked much interest and we look forward to hearing him discuss these ideas further here today.

Also with us today is Ambassador Terry Miller, the Director of the Center for International Trade and Economics (CITE) at The Heritage Foundation. Terry directs the center's ongoing research into the role of free markets and international trade in fostering economic growth around the world. He also manages the center's signature publication, the annual *Index of Economic Freedom*. Prior to joining Heritage in October 2007, Ambassador Miller had a distinguished career as a diplomat and public servant. In 2006, President George W. Bush appointed him as an ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Before that, he served as

a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Global Issues.

—Jennifer A. Marshall is Director of the Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society at The Heritage Foundation.

**THOMAS FARR, Ph.D.:** I'd like to make an argument about American foreign policy, religion, religious freedom, and American national interests. The argument is fairly straightforward. It is that the American foreign affairs establishment has failed to grasp the significance of the resurgence of public religion around the world. Partly as a result, it has missed an opportunity to incorporate into our national security strategy a policy that we have had, at least nominally, for ten years, and that is the advancement of international religious freedom. Specifically, it has missed the opportunity to incorporate the promotion of religious liberty into our democracy promotion strategies, using religious freedom to root democracy so that it matures and consolidates, particularly in highly religious societies, and as a means of diplomatically, if you will, fighting the war against terrorism. I think that this missed opportunity has harmed our interests.

Let me tease this argument out for you in three areas. The first is the American founders and their conception of religious freedom, and of religion and its role in the health of American democracy as they understood it—and, in fact, was widely understood in this country until at least the late 1940s and 1950s. What I'm going to say about the Founders is, ironically, controversial, even though it comes from American history. Secondly, I'd like to give you a little of the evidence for my assertion that U.S. foreign policy has missed the boat on religion and religious freedom. I'll tell you about the character of that problem, and how I believe it has harmed U.S. interests. And then finally, I'll talk about remedies and solutions, and try to provide a few practical suggestions.

First, the Founders' conception of religion and religious freedom. I think there are three basic principles, all of which are intensely controversial today, but were fundamental premises at the founding. The first is probably the most obvious, and that is what we might call the theistic premise. As late as the 1950s, Justice William Brennan said that Amer-

ica is founded on the notion of a supreme being. This, of course, was most famously—somewhat ironically, but famously—articulated in the radical religious truth claim penned by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. That claim was that God created all men equal. It was radical and it was religious.

From this premise much else flowed, especially the idea of natural rights. Men are equal not because governments grant equality but because God created them equal. And men require freedom to exercise the duty of discerning God's will. This God is a just judge who is going to hold us to account at the end of this life. Jefferson himself, the least religious of the Founders, wrote, "I tremble when I reflect that God is just." This is how the Founders understood God and man. I wouldn't ask American diplomats necessarily to agree with this principle—that natural rights derive from a Creator who is a just judge—but I would ask them to recall it, to recover it, to acknowledge it as a fundamental part of American history.

I have found this idea quite useful, frankly, in speaking around the world to religious communities that are not Christian and are opposed to U.S. foreign policy. But when they hear me speak in such language it opens doors to conversation. So, I think the theistic premise and its natural law implications must be recovered as a cornerstone of the American founding. Michael Novak, in his magnificent book, *On Two Wings*, calls this theistic premise a "Hebrew metaphysic." Notice there's no specifically Christian language in this way of describing God and natural rights that derive from God.

All this leads to a theory of human nature, which is the second principle of the founding. It is, quite simply, that human beings are religious by nature and they require freedom in order to live in accord with their nature. James Madison, the father of the Constitution, and also the primary architect of the religion clauses of the First Amendment, said that because we were all created by God, we owe God a debt of obedience; we owe him a duty. In an extraordinary sentence in the *Memorial and Remonstrance*, he wrote that before a man can be considered a member of civil society, he must first be considered as a subject of the Governor of the uni-

verse. Every man, he wrote, owes a duty to God. And here's the key part for our purposes: In order to exercise this duty, he must have freedom.

So, here we have not only the doctrine of natural law derived from God, repeated by Madison, drawing on Roger Williams and others, but we also have a notion of human nature: that human beings are religious by nature, and that they *require* freedom to fulfill their nature. Even Christopher Hitchens is religious by nature by this definition. I'm not sure Madison would have been happy with Hitchens, but he would acknowledge that Hitchens and Richard Dawkins and the others who are assaulting religion today have at least gone through the process of discerning about whether or not God exists, and they have to be protected in that endeavor. Madison might also point out, however, that neither Dawkins nor Hitchens would provide a definition of religious liberty that would protect Madison's more public understanding of religion. That is somewhat ironic and instructive.

So, we have a theistic premise and we have an understanding of human nature, of man being religious by nature and requiring freedom. It's in the DNA, if you will. Those of you familiar with the work of (Kevin) Seamus Hasson will hear some of his language here. We humans are hard-wired to want to know the answers to the religious questions. Even Christopher Hitchens is so wired and has simply come out on one end of the spectrum in answering the question.

The third principle that flows from the first two is a theory of the state and its responsibility to religious individuals and groups. The state's responsibility to its citizens and to its religious communities is to protect and nourish the free exercise of religion, which of course is the focus and the main content of the religion clauses of the First Amendment—or it was for the first 175 years of this country's existence.

The ban on establishment, the second part of the religion clauses of the First Amendment, is designed to protect religion against the state. The Founders believed fervently that the establishment of religion would corrupt religion, and therefore they banned establishment at the national level. The notion that the purpose of the establishment clause was to protect the state against religion is a modern conceit. It

is a distorted interpretation of what Jefferson unfortunately wrote in his 1802 letter to the Baptist Association in Danbury, Connecticut, when he referred to a “wall of separation” between church and state.

A major purpose of the state, as far as the Founders are concerned, is to protect religious freedom, which was deemed necessary to the health and the stability of democracy. All of the Founders believed, from the most religious to the least religious, that morality was necessary for the health of democracy, and that religion was necessary for morality. Again, notice that we’re not using purely Christian language here, although as Novak points out, it’s impossible to understand why the Founders talked in this way and thought in this way without understanding the Jewish-Christian metaphysic which provided the context out of which they operated. But they’re not using specifically Christian language. They’re talking about religious freedom as a natural right granted by God, and the requirement of the state to have moral citizens who derive their morality from religion.

People have gotten in trouble in recent years for using this kind of language, but this is what the Founders believed. Indeed, the most famous evocation of this—by no means the only one, but the most famous—was the farewell address of the first President, George Washington, in which he said, “[L]et us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion.” And he believed that it couldn’t, as did many of the Founders.

Okay, so what? A little lesson in American history. How can we apply this to the world today? How can we transmit these truths which they believed they had discovered, and indeed—I will emphasize it again—on which this country’s democratic experiment was grounded? How can we apply them to the world today?

First of all, I think my brethren in the Foreign Service and all policymakers need to accept the proposition that religion is normative. It is not, to use a fancy word, epiphenomenal, which is to say, it’s not an add-on to the human personality. It’s not like choosing the red Ford or the green Ford or no Ford at all. All of us are religious by this definition in that we seek to understand why we are here, if

there’s something after this life, and if there’s something out there other than me to whom I owe a debt of obligation (in Madisonian terms), to whom I should attune my behavior, who has something to do with my eternal destiny, if there is such a thing.

If I conclude there is such a being, it’s reasonable for me to want to know about him or her or it. It’s reasonable for me to want to commune with that transcendent being. I think for all humans, no matter how educated they are or where they are in the world, religion so-defined is an intrinsic part of their nature. If this is true, it means that we cannot afford to understand human beings and human behavior in purely economic and political terms. This is the way I was trained as a diplomat. This is the way we diplomats understand the world. But the world is operating in a very different way—for better and for worse—today, and we’re missing an opportunity. More on this in just a minute.

Secondly, I would say that from the Founders we can take the lesson that religious freedom is utterly necessary to human flourishing and to the consolidation of democracy. I think this is a terribly important point. Now, so far I’ve just given you some philosophical assertions. Hopefully, you see their logic. But if these assertions are true, one might expect to begin to see something of it in the data, and I think, unambiguously, we are beginning to see two things. One, religion is resurging around the world, every spot on the globe. Anybody who reads or listens knows that this is true. The data show that it’s true.

For example, Todd Johnston and David Barrett, two well-respected religious demographers, have projected 200 years into the future using a sophisticated model. Two hundred years into the future, at a minimum, 80 percent of the human race is going to be associated with some kind of religious tradition. And this does not include all those that have sort of an individual religiosity; in other words, they’re not joiners. I’m sure this is profoundly upsetting to people like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, but it doesn’t seem to be that the atheist movement is growing as much as religion itself.

Second, and even more interesting, is the data on religious freedom itself. Some of you may be famil-

iar with sociologists Brian Grim at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Roger Finke at Penn State University, Rodney Stark at Baylor, or International Relations scholar Dan Philpott at Notre Dame, or economists Robert Barro and Rachel McCleary at Harvard. These people are developing some fascinating data which suggest that religious freedom is highly correlated with other things that aren't normally thought to go along with religion, particularly the consolidation of democracy, but also economic development. It's sort of the Weber thesis broadened to religious freedom. And religious freedom correlates with good social outcomes, for example, low infant mortality and high female literacy. Female literacy is one of the major bellwethers of development in this world. Where it's low, you have big problems; it is an indicator in almost all cases.

Now, those of you who are social scientists will rightly say that correlations don't mean cause and effect. But what the data seem to be showing is that there's something called a "bundled commodity" of fundamental freedoms, and religious freedom is right at the center of those. If you pull it out, it's like a linchpin; the thing collapses. So, what I'm saying is that social science is suggesting what to me common sense suggests: that is, without religious freedom in highly religious societies—particularly in the Islamic world—you're not going to have stable democracies. You can have one man, one vote, one time; you can have a magnificent constitution, but then follow it with a religious civil war. Again, if you don't have religious freedom, you're not going to have the consolidation of democracy.

To sum up, I think there are fundamental principles from our founding that we as American diplomats and American policymakers need to recover. Why haven't we? What are the roots of the problem? What can we say about the U.S. foreign policy establishment, by which I mean the scholars and the practitioners of American foreign policy? Among my brethren at Foggy Bottom—with honorable exceptions, i.e., a few courageous people in various parts of our government, and not just at the State Department—this issue is largely unexamined.

This isn't a conspiracy. I'm not talking about people being necessarily anti-religious or irreligious.

There are many very religious people who fall into the habit of thinking that religion is not normative at all in human behavior and religious freedom is not necessary to democracy. In this view religion is a kind of a personal preference that some people have, and if they bring it into the public square it's going to be divisive. It is antithetical to human rights, and for God's sake, we don't want to put it on the policy table, because all we'll do is end up fighting about it. This is the kind of mindset that we have in the State Department: Religion is a private activity, and it's fine as long as you keep it private. But if you bring to bear religious language or, even worse, religiously grounded moral judgments into the public square, you're causing problems and we have to avoid that.

The not-so-hidden assumption here is that the secularization theory is still alive. I presume most of you have heard of the secularization theory; it's been around for a couple hundred years. It has been the received wisdom in academe and the West for a couple centuries. It holds that, as modernity advances, religion will shrink to the irrelevant margins of human behavior and ultimately will disappear. Well, we need to bury the secularization theory. We need to bury it in academe, we need to bury it in particular in the foreign policy of the United States, because it's harming our national interests.

What's my evidence for that assertion? What's the evidence for what I've called elsewhere a "religion deficit disorder" in American foreign policy? There are lots of examples here. I could talk about Iraq. I could talk about China or Afghanistan or any number of states or trends.

Let me pick two things and focus on them. The first is democracy promotion. The second is the U.S. policy of advancing religious freedom and how it has been carried out.

I suspect there are some in the room who will disagree with me, but I believe that the next President, whether it's John McCain, Barack Obama, or Hillary Clinton, is going to have a democracy promotion policy. The United States has been promoting democracy for many years. In 1982, a man whom I revere, Ronald Reagan, started the National Endowment for Democracy and gave a magnificent speech in which he said that the spread of democra-

cy around the world is in the national security interests of the United States. It's not a "nice to have." It creates stability when it roots. It can create instability when it doesn't. But when it roots, it is very important for the citizens of those countries, who will flourish under democracy in a way that they can't under any other kind of regime. It's good for us because it creates economic prosperity, it creates peace. America needs consolidated democracies.

Well, what have we done since 1982? The National Endowment for Democracy and all of its spin-off organizations—in the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, USAID's democracy programs, and on and on—have done excellent work. I don't have any idea how much money we've spent since 1982; I'm sure we're well up in the tens of billions of dollars. We've created a cottage industry around the world of huge corporations and mom and pop human rights organizations that do good work in seeding democracy, in teaching the procedures of democracy—for example, how to have elections, how to draft statutes, how to have political parties. We have also understood all along what is called the "culture first" argument. You've got to have a civil society of those voluntary associations and non-governmental organizations that teach citizens the habits and the virtues that democracy needs. We've also understood that a robust civil society limits the corruptibility and the power of government.

But there's been one thing missing from our efforts, and of course, it's religion. For most of those 26 years, until very recently, we've proceeded as if religion had nothing to do with democracy or culture, and that somehow if we engage with American money religious institutions and the furtherance of democracy, we're doing something wrong—or worse, unconstitutional. A study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies came out last year on the subject of American diplomacy and the way it treats religion, "Mixed Blessings" ([http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070820\\_religion.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070820_religion.pdf)). I highly recommend it.

It asks the same question I'm asking: Why have we been so hesitant to engage religious communities? And to me the most frightening answer was the

generalized sense that it is unconstitutional for us to do so. This is the Establishment clause come back to haunt us, and I don't know who to blame for this; I suspect Hugo Black has something to do with it. But the idea that we cannot engage religious communities in defense of our own interests is pernicious nonsense and we need to get rid of it. I must say that this antipathy to engaging religious communities in developing the habits of liberal democracy has not been a Republican or a Democratic thing; it has pervaded all four administrations from Reagan, Bush 1, through Clinton, and during the implementation of the (George W.) Bush doctrine.

If you look at the various schools of foreign policy, including the neoconservatives, who are in some fantasies of the left thought to be married to the religious right, the neoconservatives have not paid much attention to religion either. When General Jay Garner arrived in Iraq—he was Jerry Bremer's predecessor, the first American administrator there—he had been briefed by everybody in Washington, including, I presume, every neocon there was in the Administration. When he got there, he didn't know who Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani was. It wasn't his fault; nobody told him that the most important man in Iraq happened to be a religious leader, and that the American administrator needed to know who he was.

Democracy promotion, I would suggest, cannot proceed in a highly religious world without a plan to engage religion. It's not simple and it's not easy. Some religions resist democracy; certainly some traditions within Islam and certain Eastern Orthodox traditions. There are problems in Russia; there are certainly problems in China, which is another issue. If we're going to promote and seed and consolidate democracy, we've got to address religious communities.

Let's turn to my second example of American diplomacy's "religion-deficit disorder," our policy of promoting religious freedom. In 1998, Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act, and this is its ten-year commemoration. Nominally, our policy is to advance religious freedom around the world. There's an office in the State Department, in which I was honored to serve for four years as the first director, and which has had this mission. But in fact, the office has been compartmentalized and

quarantined within the State Department, and it has not been advancing religious freedom in any political sense. It has not been thinking along the lines I've described here today. It's been thinking mainly about religious persecution and how to respond to it by condemning the persecutors.

I have no problem with doing that. I think persecutors should be condemned and we should stand with the victims. But you don't get very far with that. You're not attacking the structures of persecution. You're not creating the building blocks for the destruction and the elimination of religious persecution. Those building blocks, of course, lie in religious freedom.

And here's the most damning piece of evidence as far as I'm concerned. We have had since 9/11 a forward strategy of freedom on behalf of a President who is widely acknowledged, I think, and properly so, as a very religious man. I just left the Catholic prayer breakfast this morning in which he gave a fantastic speech. I deeply admire this man.

But his forward strategy of freedom and his State Department Office of International Religious Freedom have had nothing to do with each other. The policy of advancing religious freedom under the Bush Administration and of advancing democracy were two ships passing in the night, as if there was no relationship between the two, as if there's nothing in American history to make us think that they are connected. Extraordinary. And, I would argue, a source of discouragement, because if it's not going to happen under this President, one could ask, when will it happen?

Let me conclude by suggesting a few solutions. One, I think, is obvious from my comments. I think we need to get over the notion that it's unconstitutional to spend American tax money in engaging religious communities. I'm not suggesting we be stupid about this or unwise about it. We would need to have a strategy. But we have got to include religious freedom in the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the USAID, and all of our democracy promotion efforts. We've got to mandate it, because it's not going to happen unless it is required. The habits of thought are too entrenched.

The Human Rights and Democracy Fund, which operates out of the same bureau as the Office of Religious Freedom in the State Department, has for the last ten years been handing out money—millions of dollars a year—and it has only had one program that directly targeted religious freedom. And the only way that program got in was by sort of disguising itself. It has now been mandated by Congress, in the tenth year of IRFA's existence, to spend \$4 million on religious freedom. That tells you how difficult the mindset is in the State Department. I think we need to think much more broadly about religious freedom and the promotion of democracy.

We also need to elevate the Office of International Religious Freedom and the head of that office, who is an ambassador at large. An ambassador at large is a very senior official in the State Department hierarchy, just underneath the undersecretaries. He's actually a more senior official than the assistant secretaries, who are very powerful policy officials at Foggy Bottom. Every administration treats them a little differently, but the idea is that ambassadors at large usually work for the Secretary of State or one of the undersecretaries.

This particular ambassador at large position has, since its inception, been quarantined under the least mainstream, and therefore least effective, bureau in the State Department, which is the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL). That bureau is peopled with wonderful officers who are deeply dedicated, but they, I think, would tell you they are themselves not in the mainstream. The religious freedom office is in that bureau, and the ambassador at large, far from working for the President and the Secretary of State, which is what the law says he is doing, is in fact working for a lower ranking official—the assistant secretary of DRL.

That sounds like inside baseball, but let me tell you what it communicates inside the State Department: This IRF function is not important. It is not part of the mainstream of American foreign policy, and you can safely ignore it. So when we have senior meetings on Iraq or China or Russia or even engaging Islam, the religious freedom ambassador isn't there. And it's not just bureaucratic isolation that is the problem. If someone says "We need to have the

ambassador in these meetings,” it simply doesn’t compute. Why do we need him there? What does religious freedom have to do with our policy in Iraq or Russia or China? If there’s a bishop who’s about to have his head cut off, okay, let’s get the religious freedom office involved, but not for discussions of policy. This has to change. The first way to change it is to put the ambassador at large in his office where the law ten years ago intended him to be—directly under the Secretary of State.

Let me mention very briefly a few practical steps that might be taken to remedy this situation. The first of course must be policy decisions by a President and a Secretary. They must be accompanied by new training of foreign service officers; opportunities for foreign service officers; changing the career tracks for foreign service officers; inviting them to think about this problem, not making it a hurdle for them to think about this problem; changing our public diplomacy, as opposed to our private diplomacy. Public diplomacy is where we say openly what we believe: this is who we are, this is our pitch to you, the Muslim world or whoever else.

In 2007, there was a national security document on public diplomacy. It was a public document; you can read it. In it were some instructions to ambassadors about religion, and it said, “Avoid using religious language.” Think about it. That’s like saying, when going to Saudi Arabia, whatever you do, don’t speak Arabic. Avoid using religious language? This is nonsense. We have got to get into the guts of religion, we have got to understand religion, we must respect it. But to avoid it in the world we live in is the furthest thing from “realism” in American foreign policy.

Let me stop there and hear from my friend, Terry Miller.

**AMBASSADOR TERRY MILLER:** I want to thank Tom Farr for shining a bright light on the intersection of government, religion, diplomacy, and national security. Whether we like it or not, it is at this intersection that much of the history of the 21st century will be written.

There are few concepts in the American public sphere that are as muddled as our notions of free-

dom of religion. I don’t know how, from reading the Constitution or the writings of the Framers, we have gotten to the point where we argue in the courts about Christmas crèches in public parks. I saw in the news yesterday a report of a Wisconsin high school student who flunked an art assignment because he included a cross in a landscape drawing. What was that teacher thinking? If it was the local school board that prohibited any religious symbols in art, I would invite them to take a walk through any Renaissance museum, in Italy or anywhere.

Politicians seem still to have understood that voters have religious feelings and beliefs—we do, after all, still have a Chaplain in Congress—but we seem to have created a political climate overall in which public discussion of religion is highly inhibited. The example Tom gives in his article in *Foreign Affairs* of the senior State Department official who rejected a memorandum on the subject of religion as “not an appropriate subject for analysis,” is frightening.

Clearly religion and government are different things. This is the core meaning of the First Amendment. But the Framers never intended that religious choice, and freedom from the establishment of religion, should be construed as opposition to religion. The intent was to create an open space for free religious practice, not an empty space. In fact, the official ban on a state-sponsored church has been the source of great strength in American religious practice. As in politics and the economy, free competition in the marketplace of theological ideas keeps our religious ideas and practices vital and vibrant.

Americans are a religious people. We are a moral people. Our rich traditions of religion underpin our concepts of fairness, justice, and charity, our fundamental characteristics as a people. The morality of a typical American is influenced deeply by his or her religious traditions and upbringing. It would be difficult, indeed, for many of us to talk about morality without talking about religion or using religious language and metaphor.

One of the most common misperceptions about the U.S. abroad is that we are an amoral society. This is not surprising given the popular culture’s obsession with sex and violence. While I would hope that sex is not something alien to the lives of most Americans, the perverse forms of it shown on



are neither edifying nor the norm. Violence is something that is by and large missing from the daily lives of Americans, more so than in many other countries. According to the Department of Justice, your chances of being a victim of violence in America (murder, rape, robbery, or assault) are just about 2 percent. The rate has come down sharply and is less than half of what it was in 1973. By contrast, your chances of seeing a violent act on TV or in a movie approach 100 percent. These are the mediums through which most foreigners get their messages about the United States. We are not, by and large, either a violent society or a decadent one, but both our friends and our enemies believe that we are.

We may not be in a religious war today, but we are in a war with people who are very religious and acting on what they understand are religious impulses. We certainly don't want or need to be in a holy war with Islam or any religion. But we do need to confront religious beliefs or practices that are antithetical to our way of life, and which threaten our security.

To do so effectively, we need the powerful combination of knowledge, vocabulary, and faith—the courage of our convictions.

We need to understand the strength of faith of those who challenge us, who even want to kill us. We need to think carefully, for example, about the level of faith that undergirds, however mistakenly, the actions of a suicide bomber. What does this level of faith mean in a contest of wills? Jesus taught that faith even as small as a mustard seed had the power to move mountains. Rare indeed is the battle in which those of weaker faith prevail. I think it is a fundamental question for the American people whether our faith—whether our Christian faith, our Jewish faith, our Muslim faith, or our secular faith in America—is up to the challenge we face today.

I love the dictionary's synonyms for faithful: loyal, constant, staunch, steadfast, resolute. These are exactly the characteristics we as a society need if we are going to defeat those intent on destroying our way of life. The synonyms for faithless are every bit as revealing: false, disloyal, traitorous, treacherous, perfidious. I don't know that we have a crisis of faith

in America. I hope we don't. I know that we have many whose faith in God, and faith in an America that is consonant with God's will, is unshakeable. But sometimes I hear voices of doubt in the land. Or hesitancy and timidity in defending our beliefs. And those weaken us as a country.

It is vital in the exercise of foreign affairs that we learn how to express our faith, including our religious faith, strongly and confidently. We must project our belief and confidence that our god or gods, whoever or whatever they are, are as strong as the god or gods in whose name others are acting. Others must understand that our beliefs are as powerful as their beliefs. Otherwise, they will not respect our beliefs, and they will not respect us. We must not allow the strength of others' convictions to overwhelm us. That is the very definition of appeasement.

I want to be clear. I am not advocating xenophobia. I am not talking about America, right or wrong. One of America's greatest strengths is our ability to question our actions and our beliefs, adjusting and refining them in light of our understanding of the universe in which we live. What I am saying is that we had better be able to identify and articulate a core of belief or beliefs about which we are willing to take a stand. Otherwise, the foundation of our society is nothing more than shifting sand and we are liable, even likely, to be washed away by the tides of history.

Our language about the separation of church and state haunts us unnecessarily. The First Amendment says Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or restricting the free exercise thereof. It doesn't say don't talk about religion. It doesn't say we are not a religious society. It doesn't even say leave your religious principles at the door when governing.

I am particularly struck by Tom's criticism of diplomatic training and capabilities, and agree completely with his points. If we shy away from religious issues or religious debates, we will, in effect, be withdrawing from one of the most important and compelling discussions of the 21st century, a discussion whose outcome will have a profound effect on the lives of Americans.

We must not let our concept of religious liberty deteriorate into the kind of cultural relativism that regards every system of religion, every sect, every voice crying in the wilderness as of equal value or acceptability. Without “establishing religion,” we may, in fact, subscribe as a government to certain religious principles, traits, or characteristics. Indeed, we already do so, and we must do so if we are to maintain our American way of life, as rich in variety as that way is.

Would any argue that we may not, as a society, proscribe murder? A religious prohibition right out of the Ten Commandments! How about violence in general? What if a preacher, or an imam, is promoting violence in the name of religion? It’s not a hypothetical question.

In all areas of liberty, including religious liberty, our fundamental freedoms are not without limits. Perversely, such limits may be an essential element in the maintenance of the freedom itself. Freedom of speech is limited by our laws against libel and slander, by the responsibility not to incite to violence or do public harm, and by limits on the publication and dissemination of material that offends the public decency. The children of the 1960s—I’m one of them—perhaps didn’t learn the lessons of these limits very well, but they are there nonetheless, and absolutely essential to the maintenance of our society. Similarly, we have not learned very well the limits of religious liberty, but there are, and must be, such limits.

We need to rearticulate what they are, and reinforce them both domestically and in our foreign relations.

I’ll suggest just a few:

I’ve already mentioned murder and violence. We cannot accept invocation or incitement to violence, in the name of religion or any other factor.

We cannot support forced conversion, or external sanctions for apostasy.

We need to oppose establishmentarianism, as our Constitution insists. We must promote religious freedom.

We must insist on religious freedom as a freedom to be enjoyed by individuals rather than, or in addition to, groups.

These concepts are not easy. I’ve called them limits on freedom, and they are, but each of them in reality is a limit on the ability of a religion to impose itself on others as an orthodoxy. So although they are limits on freedom, they are at the same time vital underpinnings and necessary conditions of a system in which freedom can be maintained.

Every one of the principles is going to put us in conflict as a society with at least parts of Islam or Islamic thinking. We need the vocabulary and the courage to prevail in that conflict as a war of ideas. The alternative is a war of bullets.

## Questions & Answers

**QUESTION:** What are your thoughts about people, such as some sociologists and so forth, who are promoting religion around the world for the reason that it brings about positive benefits and not necessarily because it’s worth pursuing for its own sake and because it’s true.

**DR. FARR:** I think it’s a perfectly legitimate question. However, I was making an argument about religious freedom, not about particular religions. You’re really talking about the instrumentalization of religion, and much of what I am discussing here, I suppose, can legitimately be criticized on this ground. But the data that I was talking about are connected to the phenomenon of religious liberty. The constitutional, legal, and social embracing of religious liberty by a culture leads to all kinds of other good things. So in this sense, I don’t think that constitutes the instrumentalization that I think you’re referring to. It allows every religious group to make its truth claims in the public square and to compete with others within the kinds of limits that Terry was talking about.

I think the primary limit is no coercion: no private or government coercion that privileges membership in your religious tradition, no coercion to prevent exit or deny entry, no use of coercion to require people to accept revealed truths that are not subject to public reason, using the Rawlsian phrase there. In other words, you can’t have a law that requires people to believe in the Trinity, like South Carolina did in its constitution at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. But you can have people who openly talk about the Trinity or the Qur’an.

I hope that's getting to the issue you were talking about.

**AMBASSADOR MILLER:** If I could just add a very brief word to that, I don't think anyone's talking about promoting religion, per se; for me that would not be an appropriate function for the American government. But I think it is appropriate for us to engage with people of faith in other countries to promote in them or through them an understanding of religion that reflects these fundamental non-coercive principles that Tom and I were both talking about.

**JENNIFER MARSHALL:** And just a final word on that. As our Center engages in exactly this sort of social science, I would argue that in a world that is engaged with questions like, "Does religion poison everything?" it is a part of the religious liberty of believers—and even could be argued to be a part of their truth claims—to put forth the data that say otherwise, that say their religion contributes to the common good.

**QUESTION:** I have a question about the thesis. Does the family unit in any way fit into your recommendation in relation to religion and how it relates to our nation and how, obviously, extending to foreign affairs?

**DR. FARR:** To the extent that a religious community or individual wants to make a claim about the importance of the family as a building block of society as a religious claim—or for that matter, as a non-religious claim, as purely a philosophical or sociological claim—yes, it does. It plays a part in religious freedom, as far as I'm concerned, particularly in some countries where people who make claims about the family and the importance of family are accused of somehow crossing over some kind of constitutional line if they put it in religious language. So, to that extent, yes. Any argument that's grounded in religious norms, put into the public square, including arguments about the importance of the family, is part of religious freedom.

**QUESTION:** My question is regarding China. Should China have been given the Olympics, and what actions should countries be taking now?

**DR. FARR:** People of good will can disagree over whether China should have been allowed to have the Olympics. I tend to come down on the yes side.

However, my feeling about China is that the United States has allowed itself to be put into a pigeonhole by the Chinese on the subject of religious freedom. Our policy largely consists of complaints about religious prisoners. Mind you, the complaint is worth making. We have periodic human rights talks and we hand over lists of prisoners we want to be released. Sometimes they are released and sometimes not. There is in every foreign ministry in the world, including in Beijing, an "America management" division, although it's not, of course, called that. Unfortunately, we are sometimes easily managed.

We don't do a good enough job, in my view, of communicating to the Chinese. They are very much a pre-democratic society, so we don't need to make the arguments about democracy that I was making earlier, because it would scare the Chinese government. What we should be doing is saying: when you do what you're doing in Tibet or doing what you do to Chinese Protestants or the Muslims in Xinjiang Province, you're harming your own self-interests. You are creating precisely the opposite of what you want, which is social and political harmony.

Did you know that you can be a member of the Chinese Communist Party if you're a capitalist, but not if you're a religious believer? Think about that. A capitalist Communist, but not a Christian Communist. This tells you something about what they fear and what they treasure. They treasure economic growth. If we could convince the Chinese that freeing up religious people in China—Chinese people, not American missionaries—to be what they are will add to the economic development of China, then we would be making an argument that would gain a hearing.

**AMBASSADOR MILLER:** One of the problems is that it's traditional in American diplomacy when we engage in what we call a dialogue on an issue like this to walk in and present a list of demands or things we want the other side to do. It's not really a dialogue at all in the sense of a conversation or a give-and-take. On a subject like this, where we're talking about deep philosophical issues and long-term evolution of a society like China, we need to be engaged in a conversation that is deep and sophisticated. We need to be listening as much as we are talking, and we need to have the skills, the knowl-

edge, and the vocabulary to engage in a give-and-take and let that conversation go where it will. It will probably go in many diverse directions before we ever—if we ever—get to the end of it many, many years or decades from now. But that's not the nature of diplomatic dialogue these days; it's something much more sterile than that.

**QUESTION:** Professor Farr, do you have any thoughts on how to avoid religious-based conflict when we start engaging in public policy discussions using religious ideals? I imagine this might be something that could crop up as we start using those kinds of terminologies.

**DR. FARR:** Sure. The first thing to be said is that religious freedom is inversely correlated with religion-based conflict. This is sort of common sense, but the data are showing it as well. Where you have religious freedom you don't have religion-based conflict because religious minorities feel they are part of a culture; they don't need to rebel, they don't need to create conflict. Religion-based terrorism, which is the most pernicious form of religion-based conflict, one that directly affects our national interests, is not going to be killed by military force and good intelligence alone, although I think all of that is utterly necessary and must continue to be the leading element of our counterterrorism policy.

But there is something missing here, and it involves religious freedom for majority Muslim communities. Afghanistan, which is an American-brokered democracy, has a magnificent constitution, for the most part, and a functioning democratic government. But it doesn't have religious freedom for majority Muslims, let alone the minorities, because they cannot speak out about Islam. They cannot write articles or give speeches and say that the Qur'an doesn't really require us to execute people for apostasy. People who do that get charged with blasphemy. This is the absence of religious freedom, but we don't think of it in that way.

When somebody gets charged with blasphemy in Afghanistan, we work behind the scenes to get them sprung. Two years ago Abdul Rahman was charged with apostasy. He was certainly guilty; he had apostasized from Islam and had become a Christian. Now he was going to be executed in this Islamic democracy with a constitution that talks

about human dignity. We responded by putting pressure on the government to let this guy go. He fled for his life, and we declared a victory for religious freedom. But it wasn't a victory, it was a defeat for the long-term goal of advancing religious freedom as a basis for stable democracy.

We need to work to give majority Muslims the opportunity to discuss their own religion. So that, I think, is a critical issue concerning religious violence and the defeat of Islamist extremism. There are Muslims who write about this, there are Muslims who want to express themselves on this subject, but they're afraid to do so and we're not giving them enough help.

**QUESTION:** You've mentioned China and Islam. I was wondering if you could touch on Eastern Orthodoxy, and in particular how it relates to the Russian situation.

**DR. FARR:** Russia is a fascinating case. I've heard cited, and plausibly so, that it's a case where religious freedom can be destabilizing. If you remember, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the gradual movement in the early 1990s towards some form of Russian democracy, the Russians actually passed a very liberal religious freedom law at our urging in 1992. And then, as my friend Bob Seiple says, all the American missionaries threw their Bibles in the back of their Conestoga wagons and went running to Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church, just emerging after its 70-year traumatic experience of Communism, looked around and saw all the Western missionaries. Before long, the Russian Orthodox Church turned back to the authoritarian model, and the government passed another law in the late 1990s which puts severe restrictions on religious freedom.

To me, this is part of the travail of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Obviously the Russian Orthodox Church is different from Greek Orthodox Church, which has been in a democracy for quite a long time. While you can't generalize too much about Orthodoxy, it does have this national problem. It is associated with nationalism in many ways that tend to harm it, because it can make the church want to draw together with an authoritarian state to circle the wagons, and that's what we've seen in Russia.

So here the United States needs to have a very different policy than any other country. We have got

Orthodox Church and make arguments not about American missionaries, but about the flourishing of the Russian Orthodox Church and about Russia, particularly as its democracy becomes ever more fragile. The Russian Orthodox Church could be playing a much more positive role, but it isn't. This is not our fault, per se, but we don't get it, I don't think, and we could be making a contribution here that we're not.

Let me conclude by mentioning that my book, which will be out in October, is entitled *World of Faith and Freedom: Why International Religious Liberty is Vital to American National Security*. Until last week, it also had in the subtitle the words: "*in the 21st Century*." The publisher decided to drop those last four words on the grounds that I'd taken so long to write the book that much of the 21st century had passed. Thank you.