Welcoming the Other through

Just and Harmonious Societies

Good people serving the common good must have good policies

INTRODUCTION

In a hurting world full of global challenges, the opportunity to live out the values of one's faith has never been greater. This paper focuses on the opportunity before faith communities worldwide, presenting a strategic logic for how they might approach and apply their values, together, amidst the multiple challenges that all peoples of this planet share.

The key is citizenship. If it is understood as a means of both civility and stability – within and among all communities – then social harmony can result.

Three realities form and inform any practical understanding and strategic engagement to effect positive, sustainable solutions to today's complex global challenges. First is the acknowledgment that these challenges cannot be singularly addressed by a government, a nongovernmental organization, a business, or a faith group, or any entity acting alone. Second, every challenge will require a coordinated response of many partners, especially those who live in closest proximity to the challenge at hand.

Third, partnership structures are needed that institutionalize the relationship between governments and the grassroots. Good people serving the common good must have good policies that protect and promote two essentials: 1) the right of different groups, including religious communities, to contribute to public policy and practical action; and, 2) the responsibility to engage one another with civility across deep and even irreconcilable political and theological differences. Without the latter the former becomes impossible.

To enable and accelerate practical action, however, the process of partnership should demonstrate that people of great political and theological difference can work, *together*. The process of partnership provides the opportunity to model how we live with our deepest differences. Before any of us even get to a particular global challenge, we – as representatives of our faiths, our institutions, our governments – must demonstrate a philosophy or theology of the "other" – an ethic not of thin relativism but of robust principled pluralism that yields courteous candor and genuine mutual respect.

The fundamental questions of our times are these:

> › *Can we live with our deepest differences?*
> › *Can the best of faith defeat the worst of religion?*
> › *Can we acknowledge that, in a globalizing era, all of our faith groups are in the minority somewhere, and hence protection of minorities everywhere is a matter of basic justice, fairness, and reciprocity?*
> › *Can we treat each other honorably and fairly as fellow citizens, and do so because of our faiths/worldviews rather than in spite of them?*

I. GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENSHIP

As we seek to discuss citizenship in the context of the world as it is, and as a practical concept that enables an engagement process that strengthens the civility of society, and the stability of the state, we must ask the following questions:

1. Is there a "safe space" within which to build the spiritual architecture necessary for an ongoing dialogue, whatever the issue/challenge of the hour may be, that leads to positive and practical action?

2. What is the narrative that potentially gives permission to all parties to participate in a new paradigm of positive change?

3. What is the product of such a space, architecture, and narrative?

QUESTION ONE

Is there a "safe space" to build the spiritual architecture necessary for an ongoing dialogue – per the issue/challenge – that leads to positive and practical action?

Every social context needs a "safe space" to talk about mutual respect for each other, in order to talk about a common future. Such a setting should provide an environment where people who would not otherwise meet – representing a broad cross-section in terms of religion, gender, age, professional field, or other differences – do meet regularly, discussing how best to move forward.

Put simply, there must be talk before there can be trust. And with trust comes the possibility of civic consensus about the tangible actions needed to move toward a better future.

Two factors are key to the eventual success of the "safe space." First, government and grassroots leaders must be present. One without the other is unsustainable. Sustainable change can only occur when policy and people are in intentional and transparent interaction.

Second, as people get to know one another across sectors, ethnicities, and religious traditions there emerges an opportunity for people to share what it is that motivates them. Often that motivation will be faith. And while faiths can have irreconcilable differences, they do share a belief in something greater than the human condition.

In other words, as the safety of the space deepens, participants recognize and welcome all theological points of departure, as long as each contributes to a spiritual/moral architecture that frames and enables service to the common good, acknowledges full equality of rights and responsibilities in public life for all, and builds social harmony.

Once safety is established, other possibilities result. People will seek good scholarship to inform their policies and practical action. That scholarship, in turn, will contribute to the need for a new standard of training and education, through which behavior might be changed. The only way to change behavior is to change a mindset. As the common spiritual architecture works on a change of heart, education and training will change behavior the only way behavior can be changed – by changing the mindset.

Over time, the end-result of such a process is a networked structure of energized and informed stakeholders who, despite different backgrounds, have a common understanding and appreciation for each other, and what needs to be done. Positive change is now possible, as well as sustainable.

QUESTION TWO

What is the narrative that potentially gives permission to all parties to participate in a new paradigm of positive change?

Once there is a space with a spiritual architecture, a platform is necessary that anyone can access, especially those who have not given such issues any previous thought. That platform is the narrative of citizenship.

The word "citizenship" can be a sensitive term. In some polarized contexts, words like "co-existence" may be needed for a time, building readiness for later usage and embrace of the word "citizenship." But the larger point is this: what is a common public narrative that allows all parties – including those who have been a significant part of previous challenges – to begin thinking differently, together.

Any discussion of citizenship is inherently a conversation about governance, of the link between policy and people, and the rights and responsibilities of all. The state is no better than the citizens who run it, and society is only as good as the laws and policies that enable it.

The definition of citizenship varies according to context, existing on at least four levels: spiritual, ethnic, state and global.

At the individual level, if there is a belief in something greater than oneself, there is a spiritual citizenship. Second, citizenship might refer to an ethnic or "national" identity, i.e., a people group ("nation") with which one identifies.

Next, there is the state itself. It is vital to note that there is no such thing as a "nation-state," i.e., one people group within one set of internationally recognized boundaries.

What actually exists worldwide are states that each contain many nations. Given the de-stabilizing potential of changing the borders of states, most boundaries will be in place for the foreseeable future. The results are states that need social harmony among the ethno- and/or religious groups who have specific spiritual and ethnic identities, but also carry the passport/citizenship of a particular state.

Finally, there is an increasing sense of global citizenship, especially on issues ranging from climate change to sex-trafficking to religious freedom to terrorism. These issues do not respect the previous arenas of citizenship; and, in order to effectively engage, require some sacrifice of sovereignty pursuant practical partnerships that transcend identities and borders.

The interrelationship between and among these "citizenships" is also tricky, but the choice can be reduced to some simple questions for the society's people and the state's policies.

For the individuals of society, the choice is whether to tolerate or celebrate those who do not look, act, or pray as they do. Tolerance is not good enough. Tolerance allows for the mere existence of the other, engaging the other on a quid-pro-quo transaction. Tolerance is brittle, and unsustainable. Celebration, on the other hand, encourages people to share the essence of their identity with others, as essential to the state's identity. Celebration sees active engagement with those dissimilar as a transformation opportunity to not only respect but be rooted in the other.

For the institutions of the state, the choice is to establish policies that assimilate or integrate those not of the majority culture. In this context, "assimilate" suggests that all minorities must act like the majority. On the other hand, "integrate" suggests that all minorities – because of who they are, not despite who they are – will be treated as equal citizens under the rule of law, with equal opportunity.

Thus, social harmony – that is, the civility and stability of society and the state – results when the *government* has policies that intentionally integrate, while at the same time the *grassroots* has people that consciously celebrate differences. The result is a public policy process where all are invited to bring the very essence of who they are – spiritual, ethnic, state, and global – to any and all conversations about governance.

QUESTION THREE

What is the product?

If the "safe space" deepens and expands through a common exploration and resulting narrative of citizenship, what kinds of "products" can we expect in support of that citizenship? There are four results to keep in mind, most of which happen simultaneously, over time.

First, the product is the process. This result is imperative if the "safe space" for candid discourse and relationship-building did not previously exist. If the space becomes routine, allowing for different moral and theological points of departure, and reveals a means by which the common good can practically transcend different divides – through the discussion of what a "citizenship narrative" means in that particular context – then there is a basis for all further discussion.

Second, the space is the *sine qua non*. If it is established in the aforementioned manner, then it does not matter what the issue is that convenes people to the space. What matters is that social harmony has a chance to actually be lived out in practice, with equal standing and dignity across all sectors – including the religious sector.

Just as priceless is the trust that eventually results between and among people who would otherwise not meet from different sectors. Therefore, it is not *what* but *how* the process is conducted, particularly in the early stages. As with any new relationship(s), the reason one returns to the possibility is because one feels relatively safe to express concerns, and one cares about the topic at hand. The right facilitation is also key to the early development of a space, if trust is to emerge.

Once developed, the trust must be stewarded carefully. For trust can be applied to any situation, often on short notice. If there are people from very different sectors of society who now trust each other enough, they can – by working *together* – help defuse and/or preempt crisis situations from developing.

The third result is scholarship regarding the issue being discussed. Initially, the issue(s) that convene the space have to be of great self-interest to the various parties that have not previously met. This is particularly the case, as is most likely, if there is no trust between and among the parties. But once the issue is established, scholarship about it, in the particular context, will also emerge.

This scholarship is quite critical because it provides, hopefully, three of its own results. First, a neutral and comparative point of reference emerges. As people from a particular place consider the experiences of others, it gives permission to think out loud – pointing to the examples from outside the country – without giving away their own particular position. This is especially important in early meetings, when one does not know who to trust. Next, scholarship reveals the kind of baseline knowledge needed for engaging the issue, and therefore presents standards of training and education for those who will be engaging the issue.

The last result is that should the trust emerge, there is good thinking and scholarship to undergird any eventual policies and actions, by those who have been trained. This final result is twofold. Over time, sufficient consensus develops among people who would not otherwise meet about how to institutionalize new thinking on a critical issue in which all parties have a stake. More vital still, as a result of this self-interested conversation, sufficient consensus emerges about what it means to steward a common country, or what it means to be citizens, *together*.

Two more questions remain: Are government and religious leaders and their respective communities ready and equipped to engage in a "safe space" about a particular issue that is also about developing a common narrative of citizenship? And, is there a supporting infrastructure of mutual engagement, of interlocking "safe spaces" at various levels of society, where the discussions can take place?

Suffice it to say that it is rather rare where government officials have been prepared to engage religious communities, and rarer still that religious communities have prepared themselves to engage the government. Therefore the first "safe space" often needed is one of education and training within a particular community, preparing individuals for engaging other communities and perspectives in the common "safe space."

No matter one's own experiences or opinions of the above, the fundamental question of our times requires this conversation: will we citizens of faith and the world be able to live with our deepest differences?

The remainder of this paper examines these issues in three contexts: (1) migration, integration and social cohesion; (2) religious freedom and protection of minorities; and (3) religion and violence.

II. MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND SOCIAL COHESION

The International Organization for Migration defines migration as "the movement of a person or group of persons, either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification."[1] This section will focus especially on ethnic and religious minority groups, many of whom are migratory in nature.

The term "social cohesion" has been explored in academia and policy venues since the mid-1990s, but to date there is no consensus over its exact meaning.[2] This paper's definition of "social cohesion" will be based largely on that used by the OECD in its *Perspectives on Global Development* report: "A society is 'cohesive' if it works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility."[3]

In the same way, the term "integration" as applied to ethno religious minorities can mean different things. This paper's definition is based on IOM's description of integration as a "dynamic two-way process of mutual accommodation."[4] The ideal end-state is when the minority group is loyal to the country while the state fashions a narrative of citizenship that respects the contributions of all of society's members. Minorities and their unique cultural characteristics are celebrated and not merely tolerated. In this context, the opposite of integration is assimilation in which minority groups are expected and compelled to think and act like the majority culture.

In general, migration typically tends to weaken social cohesion, at least in the short term.[5] Migrants often bring with them values, beliefs, and worldviews which can be vastly different from the majority culture. For countries whose national identity is predominantly based upon a particular ethnicity, religion, or common set of values, the presence of ethnic and/or religious minorities presents a challenge, forcing both state and society to grapple with questions of national identity, citizenship, and social contracts in the face of an increasingly diverse populace. These issues will only become more pronounced as globalization trends facilitate greater movements of people both across and within borders.

Some of the challenges that ethnic and/or religious minorities face include economic marginalization and social exclusion due to both the inherent difficulty in fully participating in an unfamiliar culture as well as discrimination or xenophobic reactions from the majority group. When governments choose an assimilationist approach in response to weakening social cohesion, they not only risk damaging economic growth and development,[6] but in more serious cases, social instability or violent conflict can also occur.

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1   See *Key Migration Terms*, http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/about-migration/key-migration-terms-1.html#Migration.

2   Jenson, *Defining and Measuring Social Cohesion.*

3   OECD, *Perspectives on Global Development 2012.*

4   IOM, *Dialogue for Integration.*

5   Lanzarotta, "Robert Putnam on Immigration and Social Cohesion."

6   Easterly, *Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth.*

ROLES NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE

Successful integration of minority groups into the overall society often requires both government and the grassroots to work in concert with each other. In order for this to occur, a "safe space" must be created in which government officials and legitimate representatives from the minority group can engage in honest and open dialogue over all issues. This space allows people who would otherwise not meet to get to know each other, and in the process break down stereotypes and build up trust.

From this space, local scholarship is produced that makes the case for a narrative of citizenship that welcomes the "other" that is consistent with the majority culture's self-conception. Upon this scholarship, standards of training and education can be developed to work towards changing mindsets and behaviors of both the state and society overall. "Alumni" of these training programs gradually form a structure of advocacy which is able to influence both legislation and public opinion towards minority groups.

In order to implement the above strategy, the following roles are needed:

› **Government officials:** For any systemic change to occur, the state with its monopoly of power must be involved. The key is to recognize that governments are not monoliths and to identify particular agencies or individuals who are both influential and who see that it is in the state's interest to ensure that minorities are integrated instead of assimilated.

› **Religious leaders of minority and majority communities:** Since minority groups often predominantly identify with a particular religion, religious leaders tend to be viewed with great respect and honor by members of the minority group, sometimes more so than their nominal political leaders. Thus, minority religious leaders must be engaged and included. At the same time, majority religious leaders must also be at the table, else the process will have little chance of becoming locally "owned," i.e., seen as consistent with the local culture and in the enlightened self-interest of all.

› **Local scholars and experts:** Academics and experts belonging to the majority group who are like-minded in favoring integrationist over assimilationist approaches play an important role in producing scholarship and commentary which can effectively argue from the point of view of the majority culture how welcoming the "other" is not only beneficial, but also genuine to the culture. This is crucial for influencing the general public and countering xenophobic narratives.

› **Global scholars and experts:** The presence of scholars from around the world who can offer analyses and lessons learned from their own countries' experiences provide a politically safe way for local participants to reference international cases as a way of commenting on their own nation's policies.

› **A trusted third party:** Finally, a third party actor that is trusted by all the stakeholders and skilled in relational diplomacy is usually needed to bring all the people to the table, especially in situations where there is a great deal of mistrust and suspicion between the government and the minority group.

RELIGION, MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND SOCIAL COHESION

Lack of spaces for trust- and relationship-building between migrant populations and government officials	Lack of comprehensive and nuanced scholarship on integration, national identity, and social cohesion	Lack of educational and training standards on engaging and integrating ethnic and religious minorities	Lack of advocacy structures for influencing popular attitudes and government policy towards migration and social cohesion
↓	↓	↓	↓
Government and religious leaders (from both majority and minority populations) who view engagement as a strategic means towards enabling integration and greater social cohesion	Researchers and institutional support (governmental and nongovernmental) for research that examines the benefits of integration vis-à-vis assimilation	Multi-vocational and multidisciplinary educational programs designed to change mindsets regarding ethnic minorities and their place in society	Self-sustaining networks of indigenous leaders across government and civil society (including faith-based civil society institutions) who support integration and respect towards ethnic minorities

EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

› **Dialogue for Integration: Engaging Religious Communities (DIRECT).**[7] This International Organization for Migration project took place from 2010 to 2011 and consisted of two major components: the first performed fact-finding on the role ascribed to religion in EU member states' national level integration policies and performed surveys of migrant religious communities in six EU countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, and Spain). The second component held multifaith forums in the six countries that brought together migrant religious communities and host country representatives to exchange ideas and knowledge and produce joint recommendations. One of the project's important contributions to the field is the highlighting of the importance of engaging religious leaders in the EU member states' efforts to integrate migrant populations.

› **"Muslims and a Harmonious Society" project.** From 2008-2010, the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) and its Chinese government think tank partner, the Institute for Ethnic Minority Groups (IEMG), convened four conferences in China. The first three were held in Gansu, Shaanxi, and Xinjiang and focused on the Muslim population in China's western provinces. The conferences brought together local government officials, religious leaders and scholars, and Chinese scholars of religion and ethnic minorities. The conferences focused on the positive contributions that China's Muslims were making to society and how those lessons could be applied to other provinces, which was especially relevant with regards to Xinjiang's Uighur population. The fourth and final conference was held in Beijing and summarized the conclusions from the previous three conferences in a publication which has been published in both Chinese and English.[8]

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7   For more information about the DIRECT project, see: http://www.iom.fi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=95&Itemid=82.

8   The English-language version of this publication can be accessed here:
http://globalengage.org/content/1209_IGE_MuslimSociety_singlePage.pdf

› **RfP Myanmar.** In June 2012, religious communities in Myanmar came together to form *RfP* Myanmar as the country's first full-fledged representative and action-oriented inter-religious body for reconciliation, peace and development. *RfP* Myanmar consists of Myanmar's historic religious traditions and organizations including the Buddhist Sitagu Sayadaw community; the Ratana Metta Buddhist Organization; the Myanmar Council of Churches; the Catholic Church; the Hindu Community and the Islamic Center of Myanmar. *RfP* Myanmar mobilizes its existing infrastructure of diverse religious communities and offers a platform for religious leaders on joint advocacy, coordinated program response and training around issues of shared concern. *RfP* Myanmar has dispatched multi-religious rapid reaction mission to conflict areas and engaged in strategic humanitarian assistance aimed at promoting inter-communal harmony. Its project to save vulnerable children is being implemented through the *RfP* Myanmar multi-religious taskforce on child protection.

III. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Minority groups – whether cultural, ethnic, or religious – often find themselves in the position of being marginalized, excluded from mainstream society, and without equal representation, voice, or treatment. While minority cultures, minority ethnic groups, and minority religious communities have all historically found themselves in a position of deference to the majority, with limits placed upon what most would argue are their most basic rights, it is religious minorities that have been especially vulnerable.

Religion has often served as the greatest and strongest divider of people groups – dividing nationalities, neighbors, and even families. This divide has, at its core, the frailty of human relationships with the "other," even when that "other" might share one's territory, national history, language and physical attributes. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rising tide of religious freedom violations around the world.

Though this reality has served as the historical narrative of societies for centuries, it also traditionally goes unchanged until such time as the minority group decides or is given a platform to stand in strong opposition to the majority regarding its treatment and position in society. The scale and form of this reaction depends on the historical position of the minority group within the geo-political and religio-social landscape.

However, if the dominant majority continues to ignore the needs and voices of the minority groups, feelings of anger and resentment typically result, which at best may become a danger to the minority-majority relationship, and at worst threaten the security of the majority and the stability of the state. Several chronic conditions often characterize a social context in which no mitigating action is taken to address root causes of religious freedom violations and tensions involving religious minorities:

› Ignorance and/or feigned ignorance by leaders, and avoidance of problems;
› Negative stereotypes, misunderstanding, and lack of trust;

› The minority's social/economic withdrawal under the majority's pressure and manipulation;
› Government and faith groups' lack of openness to positive change, and their zero-sum attitude about engagement and compromise.

Adding to the difficulty of many religious freedom challenges around the world is that minority religious status often overlaps with other minority identities, such as ethnic, racial, and/or political identities. The challenge of religious freedom restrictions is far more than a matter of formal law; it is also a complex historical, religio-cultural, ethnic, political, and geo-political issue.

ROLES NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE

Religious freedom and the protection of minorities must be examined through the aforementioned lens of minority-majority relationships. Sustainable transformation of conflicts that involve religious freedom limitations and minority oppression requires a comprehensive analysis incorporating the local perspective, history, and environment. Such transformation also requires the holistic engagement of *all* parties/stakeholders.

While traditional approaches focus on empowering minority groups to raise their voice and advocate for their own freedom, one of the most critical yet often missing elements is inclusion of the majority perspective, voice, and presence in a relational process. In order to successfully change the behavior of the majority towards the minority, the majority mindset of "we have the right to make decisions for you [the minority]" must first be changed. To move towards a new reality for the minority, members of the majority must be inspired and educated such that they may bravely and generously embrace the minority and learn to live with the differences that underscore their marginalization of the other.

At the same time, if minority religious and ethnic groups are to assert their rights as a legitimate member of the national populace, they must also be inspired and educated to constructively engage other religious groups and government officials, and to embrace their responsibility to contribute positively to the common good – a primary necessity for a harmonious society.

In addition, the concept of citizenship must also be examined as the bedrock for a society that is both *just* and *harmonious*. In a "just and harmonious society," everyone must be valued and positioned as an equal stakeholder, not just a subject of the majority position and values, where all peoples, religious, ethnic, and cultural groups have equal standing, equal civil liberties, and equal civil rights. Taken to its logical conclusion, justice becomes simple fairness, a level playing field allowing societies to move from a current state of conflict or oppression to social "harmony." This social harmony, though, requires a high tolerance for diversity and difference. If everybody is "equal" only when color, creed, or belief is the same, social harmony is not present. This false assumption of justice or social cohesion belies the true state of social harmony, which accepts diversity under transparent and just rule of law.

With the above as backdrop to identifying and implementing practical solutions, one must ascertain how to best equip and mediate the two groups in order to develop mutually beneficial solutions as well as mutually owned processes. In addition, convincing the minority to patiently and constructively deal with conflicts with the majority should not be underestimated. What's needed is a process of relationship-building, objective inquiry, and practical problem solving – with a strategic array of actors involved. As noted in the prior section on migration and social cohesion, these actors should include

the government, religious leaders of minority and majority communities, local scholars and experts, global scholars and experts, and one or more trusted third-party facilitators/change agents. The specific key roles that often need to be performed/facilitated by a trusted third party include the following:

› Facilitating recognition and naming of problems;
› Creating safe spaces for listening and understanding;
› Equipping and networking;
› Educating and empowering.

The chart below summarizes the main challenges and key roles in the context of religious freedom diplomacy.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES: A PROTECTION PLAN/AGENT OF CHANGE

Ignorance and avoidance of problems	Negative stereotypes, misunderstanding, and lack of trust	Minority's withdrawal under the majority's pressure and manipulation	Government and faith groups' lack of openness to positive change, and their zero-sum attitude
↓	↓	↓	↓
Facilitating recognition and naming of problems	Creating safe spaces for listening and understanding	Equipping and networking	Educating and Empowering

EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

› As a wave of struggle swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, *RfP* Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Council convened more than 70 senior religious leaders from the region committed to stand in solidarity with all vulnerable communities in MENA, to advocate for full religious freedom across the region and to call on all religious believers to become a united force to help ensure that governments honor, protect and serve all of their citizens without exception. To operationalize this, *RfP* MENA Council committed itself to develop materials related to United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18, religious freedom, protection of minorities and citizenship and widely distribute them across the region.

› *RfP* European Interfaith Youth Network is taking a stand against the rise of hate crimes against Muslims, Jews and Roma. In 2012, the group sponsored a conference entitled "Who is my Neighbor? Migration and Xenophobia in Europe," which drew students from across the continent to Valletri, Italy. The students forged ties with peers from other faiths, learned about the plight of migrants and religious minorities, and generated ideas for ongoing collaboration – including a plan to teach primary school students to respect the fundamental dignity of others.

› In Israel, The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel – a *RfP* affiliate – brings together Israeli and Palestinian teenagers to engage in dialogues about peace, violence and social responsibility. The program, "Face to Face | Faith to Faith" helps participants nurture an understanding of other religions, cultures and people; and increases their ability to collaborate across lines of religion, culture, class and ethnicity.

› The Institute for Global Engagement has collaborated with the Vietnamese Government's Committee for Religious Affairs to conduct multiple training seminars for government authorities and registered and unregistered Protestant church leaders on religious freedom. Held in the rural northeast and northwest provinces, these events focused on religious rights, civil obligations, the government's existing provisions for the protection of religious freedom, and ways to bolster cross-ethnicity unity.

IV. RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

In the mid-20th century many international relations specialists began to assume that religion was on a historical trajectory toward socio-political irrelevance. The Cold War paradigm seemed to suggest that ideology had superseded other forms of identity like religion as a source of conflict. At the same time, many social scientists were enamored with secularization theory – which assumed that as modernization advanced, religion would be profoundly weakened if not eliminated entirely.

Even before the end of the Cold War there were many signs that such assumptions were incorrect, but the aftermath of the Cold War saw a marked resurgence of religious identity politics and of religiously-motivated warfare and terrorism. Accordingly, religion made a sudden return to the analytical foreground. Samuel Huntington famously argued that a "clash of civilizations," one defined largely along religious lines, was now determining the primary contours of conflict around the world. Huntington drew particular attention to conflict between the West and Islam. Since 9/11, there have been plenty of people inclined to adopt this Huntingtonian perspective. Empirical research on the relationships between religion and violence has added still more weight to the pessimist side of the scale. For example, empirical data show that religious conflicts are rising as a proportion of all conflict, and that they last longer and involve more fatalities than other types of conflicts.

In short, for anyone inclined to believe that religion is a big part of the problem when it comes to violence, the post-Cold War period has served up plenty of damning evidence. Two critical dynamics need to be emphasized, however.

First, a great many of the causes of religious violence are not rooted in supposedly essential "civilizational" differences but rather in failures in the precise areas discussed in the previous sections of this paper – namely: the failure of both governmental and religious leaders to establish legal and social norms of citizenship that are inclusive of all religious groups – a failure made especially manifest in the areas of integration and social cohesion, and religious freedom.

Second, while religion is part of the problem, it is also part of the solution. The most obvious examples in this regard are the numerous religious groups who see peace-building and conflict resolution as an ethical imperative and an essential part of living out their faith. Such groups have played important and positive roles in many conflict environments.

But the relevance of religion does not end with the activities of groups organized explicitly for "faith-based peace-building." Rather, religion's relevance extends to the cultural and systemic preconditions for sustainable security. *Sustainable* security means not merely the absence of imminent threats to physical safety, but also as the presence of the conditions (socio-economic, political, psychological, spiritual) necessary for long-term political stability and social well-being. The critical concept here is "human security," which recognizes the inherent connection between a failure to meet core human needs and the likelihood of violent conflict. The freedom to adopt and live out religious faith (or to reject religion), is one such core human need.

Unfortunately, the legacy of 9/11 has too often been a mindset that sees repression and social exclusion of certain religious minorities as justifiable in the name of "security." This rationalization is of course used disingenuously by many authoritarian leaders who have other motivations for their repression. But even in cases where this logic is sincerely believed, it is profoundly short-sighted, as repression of religion is counterproductive to security in the long term; repression frequently just radicalizes rather than pacifies. While governments must of course resort to coercive means in some extreme circumstances, the long-term plan for preventing such dire circumstances from arising in the first place must be the creation of a culture and legal regime of robust citizenship, within which all receive and contribute to human security.

ROLES NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE

Framed in the more holistic terms of human security, the question is not just how to restrain and reduce religious violence, but how to transform the environment that gives rise to religious violence in the first place. The set of needed roles for this more ambitious and long-term transformational process encompasses all that has been previously discussed in this paper, and really brings us back to the core opening questions: How do we live with our deepest differences? And what is an actionable strategic logic and theory of change by which we can help cultivate a sustainable environment of equal citizenship, justice, and social harmony?

One framework for conceptualizing the needed roles is a "4 S" approach – Space, Scholarship, Standard, Structure.[9]

› **Space.** Safe and recurring *spaces* for dialogue and relationship-building between government officials and religious groups, i.e., a holistically "top-down/bottom-up" process bringing together the public and private sectors.

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9   Chris Seiple, "Building Religious Freedom: A Theory of Change," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Volume 10, Number 3 (Fall 2012): 97-102.

› **Scholarship.** Multi-disciplinary *scholarship* conducted on both a local and global/comparative basis that is designed to empirically demonstrate the conditions under which religion either exacerbates security problems or helps solve/prevent them.

› **Standard.** Comprehensive multi-disciplinary educational and training *standards*, i.e., innovative curricula and educational initiatives that inspire and equip leaders in both the public and private sector, building capacity for practical engagement of these issues.

› **Structure.** New social *structures* of support for positive policies and programs in both the public and private sector, i.e., networks of likeminded leaders from across different faiths, agencies, and disciplines who are positioned and prepared to act as agents of constructive change and consensus-building, so that positive norms and policies regarding religion, citizenship, and security become fully "owned" by the mainstream political culture.

RELIGION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF VIOLENCE INTO SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SECURITY

Lack of spaces for trust- and relationship-building in contexts of religion-related conflict	Comprehensive and nuanced scholarship on the roles of religion in security	Lack of educational and training standards on religion and security that are relevant across faiths, disciplines, and sectors	Lack of social structures of support for positive norms and policies regarding religion, citizenship, and security
↓	↓	↓	↓
Leaders in both the governmental and religious sectors who are intellectually and morally/spiritually equipped, and institutionally supported, to take the initiative in new processes of space-creation	Researchers and institutional support (governmental and nongovernmental) for research that examines the full complexity of religion's roles vis-à-vis violence and sustainable peace, stability, and social well-being.	Educational programs designed to transcend silos and change mindsets regarding the big-picture of religion-and-security, and thereby leading to new and better training within specific professional/vocational contexts	Self-sustaining networks of leaders across government and civil society (including faith-based civil society institutions) who fully understand not just the peril but the promise of religion vis-à-vis security

EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

› To prevent the recurrence of religiously motivated violence, *RfP* Inter-religious Council of Thailand conducts inter-religious non-violence education and conflict resolution workshops, convenes people of faith with representatives from government, army, police, and civil society organizations, and dispatches multi-religious delegations to conflict affected areas in the south. *RfP* Thailand has received the Official Development Assistance from the government of Japan for its project entitled "Advancing Human Security through Inter-religious Cooperation in Thailand," through which civil society, government, religious leaders and actors, including women and youth, address the misuse of religious identities to fuel conflict in the south of Thailand. The project provides intensive training for religious leaders and actors on practical approaches to advancing human security, fa-

cilitating inter-religious dialogue and engaging in inter-religious action. Approximately 100 youth leaders from the southern-most provinces are given action-oriented training on conflict prevention and implement inter-religious actions in their respective communities.

› "Religion, Peace, Security and Co-existence," Myanmar. Held 30 September to 5 October 2013 and organized jointly by the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy and the Institute for Global Engagement, the "Religion, Peace, Security and Co-existence" conference brought together a cross-section of religious leaders from within Myanmar and also from the broader region (including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Singapore, and the Philippines). In particular, representatives from ethnic and religious minorities such as the Rohynga, Rakhine, and Karen were convened and given a chance to freely speak on their situations in an international forum.

› "Religion, Security, and Citizenship in Central Asia," Kazakhstan. Held 29-30 May 2013 and sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Nur Otan Institute for Public Policy, and the Institute for Global Engagement, the conference discussed a range of issues, including religious extremism, religious education, religion in the media, and religion's role in the public sphere. The conference included religious groups and NGOs that are normally excluded from public dialogue, giving them a safe space to discuss their views with government officials responsible for religion policy.

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