

***Toward a Bipartisan Foreign Policy:
What Can Religious Leaders Contribute?***
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TRANSCRIPT

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We put this panel together based on who could be really effective in dealing with the issue of religious factors in foreign policy, but also domestically, too. Our focus is conflict prevention and resolution, but to be effective in considering the role of religion as it affects foreign policy and as a possible asset, also implies a certain amount of consensus building among people in this country.

I want to start by saying that I've worked in the field of religion and foreign policy for almost 20 years when I joined the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and worked with Doug Johnston, who left CSIS to found the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy. He authored *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. Since that time, there has been a gradual dissemination in the Washington consciousness that religion is a factor. Maybe one of the more significant events was Madelyn Albright's publication in 2006 of a book called *The Mighty and the Almighty* based on her first-hand experience as Secretary of State dealing with religion as a factor.

But there's also a great cultural inhibition to considering religion. There's a fear verging on terror among certain academic professors. And the students they produce to later populate government agencies don't know how to deal with religion. Some of us are just terrified that we're going to be required to *be* religious. The goal of the people on this panel would be fulfilled if we could just get acknowledgment that religion as a factor can certainly be manipulated to cause great destruction, but is also a great potential asset for peace-building. If we can accept that – we don't have to go to church or to the mosque or synagogue – it will be a big step forward.

Marc Gopin is a person I call my Rabbi, and he's been an inspiring partner. He has done work in his track II initiatives in Syria to seek out Palestinian and Syrian Imams, Muftis and Sheiks to share the religious values that bind the Abrahamic family.

Richard Land has been involved in very important efforts – bipartisan and transpartisan – to take a sensible approach towards Iran in the first place, and the Muslim world in the second place. He's a member of the Leadership Group of the US-Muslim Engagement Project.

Ahmed Younis is one of the brightest and most winning of the young American Muslim Arabs who has worked with Evangelical Christians, and as executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, has been an important spokesperson for Muslims in America.

Marc Gopin

Thank you for having me. I want to focus on the major topic that this was presented as. There are many different angles we could approach here, but I want to stay focused on faith-based initiatives, bi-partisanship, the question of a bi-partisan foreign policy, and the role religion can play as a divider or as a game changer.

I've spent a lot of years on the outside of government struggling with the hopeless divides of the United States on the question of religion, and the ways in which those divides have paralyzed foreign policy and the training of foreign diplomats. On the negative side there have been great costs in places that we don't realize. Just by positive counter-example, in the four years I've been working in Syria under very difficult circumstances there have been heroic diplomats. The only American had to do it completely secretly so his department didn't know. The other diplomats were all European, and they were stellar. And none of them were religious. They simply had a training that said culture and religion matter. Maybe its 500 years of experience with empires that seeped into the foreign policy consciousness of European diplomats. But something allowed them to be both non-religious and to see the value and importance of culture and religion in the formation of social change; to see the value of non-state actors who actually had an enormous impact on the future; that psychology matters; that people in democracies and dictatorships actually have power. Even the most authoritative leaders can't do things that are completely against the will and the sensibilities of his people, and that therefore cultural conflict resolution and multi-religious conflict resolution matter, that they help.

I'm a professor full-time, but on my own time and money I'm a citizen diplomat. Citizen diplomats don't have any budget; they do things based on friendships and initiatives that sometimes stay on the ground, and sometimes go to the highest levels. You never know where your friendships are going to go.

In all circumstances, a diplomat from any country who valued your work was a godsend, because they understood that you were doing something important, even though they couldn't publicly acknowledge it. And then you fed them knowledge, which then got passed on so that the social network of intelligence gathering was increased. Fortuitously, in the Jerusalem-Damascus-Washington nexus, we forestalled a war. There were people who really wanted a coup in Syria the same way it happened in Iraq. All of our information suggested it would have been a massive humanitarian catastrophe, and a destabilization of the entire region with Israel fighting two fronts in 2006 instead of one. And then there were serious diplomats, serious people in Washington to didn't want to see that happen. We were part of that because people took religion seriously. They realized that Sheiks, Imams, and Muftis mattered, that they could stop riots. They created initiatives to calm things down with Iraqi refugees in Syria. All of this was under the radar of the news.

The news only likes to report religion and violence. This is one way in which our foreign policy is so skewed, because it only reports the bad news. And the instinct is from the old saw of the American divide on separation of religion and state, that every time there's a religious riot somewhere, that proves that we have to go on with our simple divides. But it doesn't tell the whole story. We're always gathering information from Pakistan and India: people within the Saudi family now realize the catastrophe they wreaked on Pakistan. They are now only funding madrassas that reject violence.

You only learn these things from the ground, only from taking religion seriously. Then your foreign policy can adjust itself to extend funds to people who really want peace and co-existence. Instead of always talking about the riot in Hyderabad, find out about the 2000 villages where they've existed together for centuries and even take care of each other's ritual spots. This would give you a different and more nuanced picture of Islam and Hinduism in India. This is all

reality, but it's only reality if your government allows you to see it. And at the present time, there's too much of a divide in the United States between two very different points of view about faith-based programs.

And I want to say something controversial: We are all partisans here. I'm a life-long democrat. I love the Democratic Party. I'm not crazy about faith-based anything, but I'm very crazy about aiding people who are religious to become part of peace, of co-existence, of civil-society building, of health. My feeling is that we have to continue to have a good, clear argument about religion in the public space in the United States, about teaching one religion over others, or the danger of that. But we need to mature and grow up about the value – even scientifically – of understanding a world of multi-religiosity in how we train ourselves, in how we study, in how we train our diplomats, our chaplains. All of this can have very exciting possibilities for the future that we've already experimented with and that go well when people take it seriously. The time has come for a bi-partisan American foreign policy that grows up about co-existence and equality of religions as something to be taken seriously in the social change work that we're hoping is going to happen under this new administration.

Richard Land

Toward a bipartisan foreign policy: what can religious leaders contribute? Going back to our founding, the questions of foreign policy have sometimes been pretty bitter, and pretty partisan, and have been divisive. We can just take, for example, the deeply personal disagreements between Jefferson and Hamilton over our relationships with France and the United Kingdom. It got pretty personal, it got pretty bitter, and it was not bi-partisan. But there are things that can be done in a bipartisan way, and there have been bi-partisan segments of our foreign policy. I want to talk about the influence that religious leaders can make, and the people of religious conviction can make.

It seems to me that this is a foundational starting point for a bi-partisan foreign policy in that America is an intensely religious place. Indeed, among the developed nations of the world, it is the most religious. And it is emphatically the most religiously pluralistic country on the face of the earth. I believe the Declaration of Independence embodies our national ethos. In drafting that document, Jefferson began by providing the essence of the argument for freedom. He appealed to two sources for human liberty, with the first premised on the second. Specifically, in the first sentence, Jefferson relies on the laws of nature and of nature's god to sustain the break with Great Britain. This dual foundation for independence and elaboration of our fundamental rights is consistent. I'm not saying you have to be religious to believe in human rights.

In Jefferson's mind, and in many American minds today, that human freedom, human rights, are based upon a belief in a creator who endowed us with those rights, and that government can't grant them; government can only seek to protect and guarantee them. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These claims draw on a very specific understanding of the nature of human kind, on a belief that human beings are created by a creator in his image, and therefore have inherent dignity that comes from being a child of the Almighty. It draws on rich Biblical traditions that enumerate the rights of all in society, with particular focus on the poor, the weak, and the marginalized, and the value of a single human being. While it is true that Jefferson himself was not an orthodox, Trinitarian Christian, he was not the deist of popular imagination. He was more of a muscular Unitarian who believed that God was interested in the affairs of men, and that he was particularly interested in the United States.

The Declaration was written to reflect a consensus view, and this view was formed in the context of overwhelming agreement on the nature of man vis-a-vie his maker in American society. Specifically, as understood in America, rights were not sourced from human reason alone, and were not sourced from a monolithic church-state enterprise. Rights in America, as understood broadly in the American context, were sourced from the Creator and were granted to every individual. And that's why it's not surprising that when the Bill of Rights was adopted, right after our constitution was ratified, religious freedom was the first freedom enumerated. This right is, in the American construct, not merely a right among others, but the necessary precursor for all other rights, because all other rights are sourced from the Creator.

I would posit this concept continues to define the construct of the American approach to human rights. At the very least, it's what binds us as faith communities in our approach to international human rights, and continues to strongly influence the way in which America approaches our foreign policy obligations. If there is a fundamental theme to American foreign policy, it must be this: Our role in the world is to use the influence we have as a nation to expand the freedom of every human individual. This theme has transcended times, and transcended administrations.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy put our central foreign policy objective as follows: "That is our conviction for ourselves—that is our only commitment to others. No friend, no neutral and no adversary should think otherwise. We are not against any man – or any nation – or any system—except as it is hostile to freedom. Nor am I here to present a new military doctrine, bearing any one name or aimed at any one area. I am here to promote the freedom doctrine." May 25th before the Congress of the United States. In saying that, he was echoing the themes of Lincoln, of Wilson, of FDR, and presaging the themes that would later be articulated by Carter, Reagan and the Bushes. We cannot take these high-minded statements merely at face value. It is clear that while essential human rights we describe as freedom are and should be a core foreign policy objective, they are not our only objective. We should be aware, as always, that the United States has security and economic interests around the world. That will always be part of our foreign policy. We are a country. But most Americans, I believe, still believe that America is more than just a country, it is a cause, and that cause is freedom—human rights, human dignity, and freedom. Every major security threat to this nation over the last century, came from ideologies that were intensely hostile to human rights. From Nazi Germany to imperial Japan, from the Soviet Union to communist China, From the Taliban to Iran, abuses began at home before they were exported. And there is a reason. The same lawless approach to human beings that justifies gulags, arbitrary detentions, torture, and state-sponsored murder, permits waves of aggression, confiscations of property, and support of terrorism.

Dr. Brian Grim at the Pew Forum, among others, has studied the correlation between religious freedom, security and prosperity. His conclusion speaks to why we as people of varying faiths in the United States and as a society must view human rights not as a nice addition to our foreign policy, but rather the foundation of our foreign policy. I quote Grim: "First, religious freedom is part of the “bundled commodity” of human freedoms that energize broader productive participation in civil society by all religious groups, which is conducive to the consolidation of democracy and to socio-economic progress. Secondly, religious freedom reduces conflict and increases security by, among other things, removing grievances religious groups have toward governments and their fellow citizens. In sum, religious freedom promotes stability, helps to consolidate democracy, and lessens religious violence. Based on an analysis of the data, it is clear that religious freedom is much more than an American pet peeve; religious freedom is a universal aspiration." It isn't that other nations don't have religious freedom. Many of them do. But there is arguably no other nation whose experience, identity and values are so thoroughly shaped by our dedication to the cause of religious freedom. And there is no other nation at this point in history better positioned to advance the cause, because we have lived pluralism.

In 1998, the United States took a remarkable step through Liberals, Conservatives, Democrats, and Republicans working together to pass the International Religious Freedom Act. This act created a new office in the State Department, a new position on the National Security Council, and it created the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. I have been privileged of serve on that Commission since 2001. I am not here speaking in my capacity as a commission member. It is unique in the world, by the way—an official government body that is independent of other sections of the government that is there by mandate to advise both the Congress and the President on ways in which our foreign policy can promote religious freedom and human rights in the world. It is made up by statute of three presidential appointees, three US senatorial appointees, three US house appointees. It is set-up in such a way that if you have a Democratic president, you have five Democratically appointed members and four Republicans members and visa-versa when you have a Republican president. So it is bipartisan. You have nine American citizens, who are very much activists, at this moment we have a Muslim Imam, three Protestant Christians, two Roman Catholics, a Hindu, one Orthodox Christian, and a chairman who is Jewish. In the history of the Commission, we have had Mormons, Bahá'ís, and Buddhists.

When it comes to first principles about basic human freedom and religious freedom, and human rights we have been able to come to amazing agreement. Now we have robust discussions, but there is not discernable Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or Hindi way to advance human freedom—no uniquely Democrat or Republican way to achieve our goals. And this gives me hope when we consider how the faith community at large can approach human rights concerns on the international stage in the years ahead. There is simply more that binds us together in our views on these issues than those things that drive us apart. And even when we do disagree it is not necessarily due to our theologically or politically divergent perspectives. I believe this focus on religious freedom, soul freedom – Pope John Paul II called it “the first freedom without which other freedoms are irrelevant” – and its consequent emphasis on individual dignity and individual human rights is the foundation for a bipartisan foreign policy that all Americans can support.

Ahmed Younis

Thank you. In the name of God, most magnificent, most merciful, it is an honor to be here with my friends. We have spent two years together, trying to think hard about the great challenges that face our nation, vis-à-vis Muslims globally, led by

Rob Fersh and Search for Common Ground and the Consensus Building Institute. I strongly suggest for everyone to take a copy of our publication, *Changing Course*, which is a very unique attempt at offering a pithy and erudite response to a lot of chatter in the air.

According to our data, as Dr. Land said very accurately, the world is quite religious except for Western Europe. That religiosity spans a spectrum. For example, in Muslim majority societies, in Saudi Arabia for example, when we ask if religion is an important part of your daily life, 98% say yes. Muslims globally are very diverse and so countries like Turkey look much more like Western Europe; countries like Iran look much more like the United States than they do Saudi Arabia or Syria, etc. There is a great diversity amongst people around the world.

Although religiosity is very high, I would posit the proposition that a more amplified role for religion as identity as opposed to religion as religiosity is something that we rarely speak of. If you think back to the Danish cartoons, aside from burning embassies, etc., amongst the vast majority of very reasonable Muslims there was great offense taken. I would posit to you that there is no distinction in the level of offense vis-à-vis the individual's religiosity. So the cat that has a beer with his friends at the end of the day wasn't OK with the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad, but the guy who prays five times a day was extremely pissed off. That is probably not the reality amongst Muslims in their response to that provocation. And that speaks to the proposition that identity for Muslims globally sometimes, or often, supersedes Islam as religiosity. So one could not be fasting, but 100% identify as a Muslim in the public square. One could not be adhering to these various rules and restrictions. So those public identities, or viewing religion as identity in the public square, tends to necessarily govern and articulate one's beliefs and actions on this earth.

The data is actually very interesting. When we ask people around the world "which of the following did you feel a lot of the day yesterday," religious people, or people that say I have attended a place of worship in the last seven days and religion is an important part of my daily life, they express more enjoyment, more love when asked about the emotion that they felt much of the day yesterday. And they also express significantly less stress, less boredom and less anger. So there is something to be said about religious people globally as a collective that have a series of common denominating factors that bring them together that is not specifically their "religion."

The world is also quite surprising in terms of the extent to which it expects religion and religiosity to play a role globally, except for Western Europe, particularly in the United States and Muslim majority societies. Populations believe that there should be a significant role for the Sharia in the drafting of legislation. Americans believe that there should be a significant role for the Bible in the drafting of legislation. And Americans and Muslims globally also share in common their beliefs that there should be a significant role for religious leaders in the governance of their societies. So the proposition that "those of us burdened with a legal education sleep and worry about the Establishment Clause coming to eat up the rest of the Constitution if it is not respected" is not really fortified by the people's opinion. Rather, Americans see a significant role to play for religion and religiosity in assessing how our nation should move forward on a myriad of issues.

In my mind that requires something very unique. Approaching the challenges that our country faces today requires for us to reassess our level of education. I believe personally that there is a great literacy movement that needs to happen amongst Americans generally. We need to be more literate about our history. We need to be more literate about the core narrative of our nation. We need to be more literate about the religions of the world and the great diversity that religions show within themselves. That literacy is a necessary prerequisite for leading global movements for change and to leading governments and communities around the world to really get their act together on things that are central to human dignity, like as religious freedom for all people in all countries, regardless of their religious identity. So I would posit fortifying an American pluralism that yields opportunities for communities of faith to be a part and parcel of the solutions necessary for the many problems that we face, is something that is very, very important.

I am reminded of the Prophet Mohammad, Peace Be Upon Him, and he says, "Man is on the dean of his companion, so be wary of whom you bring close to your heart." *Dean* in a superficial sense is translated as *religion*, but with more depth dean is translated as a way of life. The word for religion in the classical Arab is actually *mazhab*. So the Prophet says you are necessarily identified by those whom you bring close to you, by those whom you decide to hold hands with to change the world as you think that it needs to be changed. One should be very wary and aware of the people that you bring closest to your heart. Certainly one could say that for people of faith there is greater comfort in dealing with another person of faith than in dealing with a person who does not recognize faith or God generally. When I deal with Dr. Richard Land, I know his relationship with God is a part of our interaction. I know that some point in time there is a line or a series

of lines will not be crossed because of his relationship with God. He is not a Muslim. But you better believe that for me that when I sit down and think, "Let's approach Iran. Let's engage with Marc Gopin on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or engage with Israel and Syria or with Catholic University and rabbis and Ayatollahs from Iran coming together to talk about track two diplomacy." And I think, "Let's embark upon this project." And someone asks me who the Muslim leaders should be a part of this initiative. The first question I am going to ask is "who is a part of the initiative?" And if I know that they are people who have amplified faith identities in the public square, I know that I will be able to get a higher caliber participant to engage on that effort than if I was otherwise allowed to.

I am reminded that after 9/11 one of the primary problems that the American-Muslim community faced (in those days we did not work for great organizations like Gallup and travel the world business class) was the shutting down of American-Muslim nonprofits that were engaged in charitable giving. There was very much a post-9/11 reaction in the charitable community generally, not just amongst Muslims, about the series of guidelines that the Treasury Department was issuing and beginning to engage communities with their adherence to those voluntary guidelines. In that process, the American-Muslim community's leaders experienced a significant learning curve. There were so many things that they had never deal with, there were so many things that had never engaged or reconciled. I remember the Wise Giving Alliance, a lot of the Christian Evangelical communities that are very expert in financial transparency and how their institutions function, and how the money is dispersed. There was a significant experience in the American-Muslim community of learning and growth because of that interaction.

I remember as a young kid we always used to tell people when we were giving Friday sermons that Rosa Parks informs your American-Muslim identity, Cesar Chavez informs your American-Muslim identity. If you feel that you are oppressed now, that is OK, but you must see it as part and parcel of an American trajectory, of a narrative or a history of our country. Clark Lobenstine can talk to you about that and the Interfaith Conference. There is an American narrative, and if a young person sees themselves part and parcel of that narrative, their ability to reconcile the oppression that they feel becomes much more significant. They are aided much more strongly in their attempt to reconcile those fundamental issues. That experience amongst young American-Muslims in the post-9/11 world was very serious.

Religion is also a significant tool in combating terrorism. When we talk in the context of Muslim majority societies, I can remember very clearly when I was in Central Asia for extended periods of time for the Bush Administration for Under-Secretary Karen Hughes, who did accomplish significant things in her tenure although it was not a perfect experience and much could have been done better. I remember begin in madrassas in Osh, Kyrgyzstan in the South which sits is the Fergana Valley, which is the place where Abu Hari comes from—the person that that the largest compendium of narrations of the Prophet Mohammad, Peace Be Upon Him, a very significant place for Muslims, although a very forgotten place for Muslims. There were girls' sections in the madrassas that did not have windows, but the boys' sections had windows. When you walked into these madrassas the only thing that the Imams wanted to talk about was their ability to counter the extremism and the extremist thoughts and ideology that was coming against them. The only tool that they really had in these societies was Islamic literacy. In a society that has experienced so much of a Soviet culture, there really is a prima facie engagement with Islam and the structures and ideas that revolve around Islam. So someone from Hizbul Tahrir with come to a young person and says I will give you this amount of money. You have two options. You can take this money from me as your Muslim brother or you can take the money that the American Christian missionaries are bringing to you. So which is it that you are going to take? Well of course, I will take the money from the Muslims. I really need the money, my family really needs the money. So I will take the money from the Muslims. So we are going to give you the money, we are going to give you more than the missionaries give you but there is just one caveat. Did you know that the Prophet Mohammad, Peace Be Upon Him, believed, x, y, and z in terms of theories of governance and how an Islamic state should be set-up? The only prerequisite of you taking this money is for you to recognize that this is the approach that as a society want to have in terms of the governance of our society in a post-Soviet reality.

It is the nexus between a very real experience of life and the lack of an ability to counter the thinking, sourcing it in religion. In those communities where there is religious education, there is literacy, they are able to read the newspaper and engage in a global economy, they are able to go online, and there is literacy of the religion in order to combat the ideas of the people who are coming and claiming to be the carriers of authenticity or the carriers of a classical understanding.

I will make two more points very quickly. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned of Qatar has decided to invest a significant amount of money in creating 100 million jobs in the next twenty years for Arab youth. This project of course has many endeavors, but the title of the initiative reflects the greatest component of it. It is entitled, Silatech, meaning "your connection." The connection of young people to enterprise, young people to market and capital, young

people to become entrepreneurs and young people to shift mindsets in society that need to happen in order for their role and their weight to be amplified. That initiative is led by an American Christian and an American Muslim. There is a reason why those are the two people running it. They are two people who were presidents of the youth groups where they grew up, they were the two people who understood pluralism on teams and understand core missions in bringing people together of varying identities and varying faiths on a common cause, on a common initiative, that is sourced in goodness and that is sourced in something great than this worldly experience that we are having together. There is will be a time, God-willing, when teams like that will be organic in that part of the world. But it would be a tragedy for us as Americans as we approach this new era in our support of the President to change many of the realities that exist between our country and the rest of the world. It is so important that we harness these core structures, these models that are, as Dr. Land said, fundamentally American, necessarily organic to where we come from. After the genocide in Rwanda, they did not set-up courts like we have them here in the Federal District Court. They set-up a *gachacha* process, justice on the grass, a process that is organic to the people that are grieving and organic to the people that are seeking remedy for their grievances. The Loya Jirga process in Afghanistan worked to a large extent because it is organic in its conception and the way in which we approach the whole structure. So the proposition that there is something organic to America that is for export, and is not sourced in a hegemonic or disrespectful view of the other.

Finally, I'll mention the Founders, as the mentions are significant. There is something that I love that I mention frequently: Alexander Hamilton when the *Federalist Papers* were being written, wrote a paragraph that ended up being the first paragraph on the first page of the first *Federalist*. He said something to the effect of: "It seems to have been left to the people of this nation by their conduct and example to determine the question whether man will be forever be destined to be ruled by fear and force, or whether we can build a constitution, a way of life, that is sourced in reflection and choice." That in my mind is the mandate of our country. I remember once being in a Muslim majority society and leading the Friday sermon in the central mosque in the capital and mentioning in the sermon this quotation of Alexander Hamilton. A young Muslim girl came up to me afterwards, she waited a long time in a line of handshakes, and she said, "Brother Ahmed, which part of the Koran was that thing you said about reflection and choice." That's the hope. That's why we and you dedicate ours lives to this conversation. So thank you.

Joseph Montville

I would like a brief response to the key points about the organic nature of this adage towards human kind, which we can certainly trace to our Founding Fathers. My project, *Toward the Abrahamic Family Reunion* is a part of that. Also a lot of interest in political psychology. How do overcome resistances to engagement of people of different faiths and religions? One thing we do not do in our project is talk about the validity of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity or any number of issues. But we do talk about is shared ethics and pro-social values. One of the very important products, perhaps the most important one, is a study of the pro-social values and ethics in the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels, and Koran, that really focus on the points that Richard was making about, not freedom per say, but on human rights and human dignity. Human dignity is very, very important from the psychological point of view. Self-respect and values of others is really critical to international and interpersonal relationships. Human rights really are the guidelines for maintaining that level of self-respect. In religious terms, the idea that humans were made in God's image is one of the most valuable in the Abrahamic traditions. Caring is really what it is all about.

I received recently a large mailing from a Democratic candidate for governor, Brian Moran. One of the things that struck me about his letter was that he described being the Chairman of the Democratic Caucus and traveling all over the Commonwealth of Virginia and meeting many, many people. He said, "I saw firsthand that intelligence and ability are distributed equally across the Commonwealth, but investment and opportunity are not. I was in rural Virginia at a free dental and health care event at the Wise Fairground Guarantee health care. I saw hundreds waiting and more than thousands turned away. We are not doing right by our fellow Virginians until we guarantee basic health care and services to every child." Now that is a very unusual thing to find in a campaign solicitation letter. It is very important for Virginia, and very important for North-South white relationships. Another Virginian politician, Jim Webb, wrote a passionate book called, *Born Fighting*, about the Scots-Irish, how deeply rooted the Scots-Irish are in America, and how much poverty has affected that community. It is a neglected community. That is what struck me about Moran.

I saw him recently at an event and I told him how impressed I was by this expression of caring for essentially Scots-Irish or Evangelical Christians in the southwest of Virginia. He was really caring about a very important issue. I affirmed that he was Boston Irish. (There are many Boston Irishmen in Northern Virginia taking over politically in Northern Virginia.) He said that it is especially important for the Boston Irishmen to go to southwest of Virginia and tell the poor whites, the Scots-Irish, the Baptists and show that you care about them. I think that really is what the message ultimately is that binds

the three. I am really pleased to see that Lynn Kunkle, who put together this study of the three sacred traditions, is in the audience. It is one of the most important documents in helping to prove that humanity of Jews, Christians, and Muslims is a basis for conceiving mutually respectful relationships, which is a pretty important foundation for building a diplomacy of peacemaking.

QUESTION & ANSWER

Sahar Aziz

There is a reason why we have the first amendment and the Establishment Clause, which is so the government does not choose a particular religion or sect. My question is how do you balance preserving that principle, and it is a fundamental principle, meanwhile incorporating or including the experiences of and the value added by religious communities? Particularly, concerning Islam and America concerning this relationship with counterterrorism policy. There is a risk that “professional Muslims” have no representative backing within the community yet they state what people want to hear and their voices become louder. How can we make sure the government includes religious communities, but does not de facto favor particular interpretations, sects, religions within each community? I would like to direct this question to Ahmed, because I believe that this becomes somewhat of an issue.

Sally Steenland

Marc, I have a question for you. When you were talking about the good work beneath the radar that religious communities do and that the media tends to report on religion as a contributor to violence instead of the good stuff: Do you think that while that good work is going on, does it need to be beneath the radar? Or, if in fact it was publicized and people knew about it, would it not be as effective? Does that matter? And if so, how should it be talked about later?

Gerry Dunphy

Can I say that this has been inspiring? Violence is something that is imbedded in most religions. I will just talk about my own religion because I don’t want to get into trouble. The Catholic religion is one of the most violent things. It was born in blood and throughout history has caused more trouble than good. I mean how many Catholic kids remember, “Bathe me in Thy Precious Blood.” This is what we used to say. This is how I was brought up. Why don’t you go after our bishops and talk to them?

Richard Land

One of the neglected stories in the 20th century has been the emergence of Roman Catholicism in general. The Vatican in particular is perhaps one of the most eloquent spokesperson and one of the most eloquent movements for religious freedom and for soul freedom. Pope John Paul II has spoken eloquently about religious freedom and rejecting coercion in matters of faith. The post-Vatican II Roman Catholic movement is one of the friends of freedom and friends of diversity and of religious pluralism in the world. As a Baptist, I am a strong supporter of the First Amendment. Going back to the first question, I think that is one of the reasons why religion has flourished in the United States, one of the reasons why we have many different faiths living side-by-side. I don’t want the government to sponsor religion. Government-sponsored religion is like being squeezed by a python. It squeezes all of the life out of you and you fall over dead. Because when the government sponsors it, they think they can tell you how to run it. And one thing the government does not know much about is religion and how to run it. So, I think that the protection of the First Amendment is very important. But it is important to remind ourselves as Americans that there are two clauses to that Amendment of religious freedom. First is the Establishment Clause that government is not to get into the religion business. Second is the Free Exercise Clause, which says that the government is not interfere with the people’s right to practice their faith, and that includes bringing their faith to bear on public policy, as did one of my personal heroes, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He cannot be understood apart from the fact that he was a Baptist minister and the Montgomery bus boycott began in the basement of his Baptist church across the street from the capital of the Confederacy.

Marc Gopin

I think that it was a really good question, and I think that it depends on the circumstances. In terms of when things should be public or when things should be secret, there is great value to the power of symbol and symbolic exchange. One of the hallmarks of our work in Israel-Palestine and also in Syria more successfully is that some things are very private in terms of exchange of information and ideas across enemy lines. And then there are more public ceremonies that symbolize the change that you are overall trying to institute, and bringing along millions of people with you through that process. When we had a dinner here a couple of years ago that I arranged with King Abdullah of Jordan and 100 rabbis from the East Coast—that was a highly symbolic gesture before the Jewish holidays. It meant a great day what he said and how he said it. It had a very broad impact and it was meant to. And the things that have gone on through Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya in

Syria have also had great impact because of the symbolic approach to apology and acknowledgement of harm done. The more the United States is influenced by multiple religious approaches to acknowledgment of harm done and sins that people are capable of, the more that we are going to see a reciprocal process from other parts of the world. We have engaged in that quite publicly ourselves. I have, and many of my colleagues, and we see the results of that. All of those are symbolic moments that require the media to be there. It takes an art and also a willingness and an investment to believe that that is important. At the same time, there are some things that are better left to be exchanges that are quiet and cautious.

As far as Catholic violence is concerned, I agree with the gentleman that the history is pretty, pretty awful for a lot of major religions. But the whole point – I believe a non-literalist, non-fundamentalist approach – to the understanding, the scientific understanding, of world religions is that they are infinitely variable in history. Just because one person has the hermeneutic interpretation of their religion being bathed in blood, and we all know examples of that historically and today, the fact is that hermeneutics can shift on a dime based on leadership and leadership that is respected in the world. We have an unprecedented time in human history of starting with Protestants in the 1880s starting a parliament of world religions. We now have a competition among conservative leaders from the Pope to the King of Saudi Arabia organizing interfaith conferences. This would have been unheard of fifty years ago, even ten years ago no one would believe that the King of Saudi Arabia would do that.

Why did it happen? What the Koran calls “the competition of goodness.” First, the Jordanians did it and then the King of Saudi Arabia could not be outdone of course and he could do it with first class tickets. There is a way that history shifts taking religion seriously and taking religious leadership seriously. But of course, as Richard said, not giving the table over to government and religion. That is the single greatest catastrophe in human history is the combination of governmental and religious power. More and more of my friends in the Middle East, from Muftis in Syria to high Imams in Iran, are also coming to that conclusion. There is more and more of a consensus of people with bad experiences of religion in the public space and know that freedom of and from religion is best the path to spiritual authenticity. I think that it is possible, but it is a tough road, even in the present churches, so I am not having any illusions about the right wing of the church today, but this is an ongoing process.

Ahmed Younis

I dedicated three years of my life to the home of Stonewall Jackson and General Robert E. Lee out of respect for the law, so I have paid my dues and respect to the First Amendment. I have no beef with the First Amendment, but at the same time I do have a significant issue with government agencies and officials that use it as an excuse to not do their work in including communities that are representative of many ideas that are very mainstream. The proposition that we are engaging with a few organizations and they are just professionals who wear cufflinks and ties and they do not represent anybody—that is an old story in American history. You know who they are, you know who the communities are, you know who the organizations that represent those communities are. *This book calls for engaging Iran.* This book sets out a series of criteria that help policy makers determine which nongovernmental entities in the world that have a reputation for violence should or should not be engaged.

So the proposition that we are going to endorse this, parse this American-Muslim group out of the meeting and include this American-Muslim group into the meeting. Well that is just outrageous. I am not an activist anymore, and thankfully I am not engaged as much as I used to be with those issues. That is just a double standard that is difficult to swallow. If government was engaging these issues correctly, there would be a multitude of forums. There are regularized meetings with those organizations that are organized and have business cards and logos, and there are programs for the public that allow for people to come to the mosques and engage, there is funding for community centers that allow people to engage on sports or education.

Government has a great job to do. It has done some of that very well, for example post-September 11th the Justice Department’s Civil Rights division and the Department of Homeland Security’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. But here is my issue: I want someone to be engaged with these issues that does not have the words civil rights in their business card title. We need Muslims to be a part of stuff that is not just specific to Muslims; we need interfaith delegations that go to resolve geo-strategic conflicts and not to just go preach religion. A good friend of mine is a very well-known TV Evangelist in the Muslim community. And he says that when the West comes to Egypt, they want to talk about religion, but when the West goes to China they talk about jobs. Let’s use some religious leaders to talk about jobs and the realities they live instead of engaging them on these fallacies that we have.

Thankfully, now we have data to disabuse us of who we thought that they were. On this issue of violence, yeah there has been violence in every religion, but who is violent and why were they violent? When we ask Muslims around the world "was September 11th completely justified," 7% say yes. When we ask them why, not a single person says religion. Not a single person says anything about religion, or religiosity, or the Koran, or the Prophet says go kill them if they kill you. No. It's all geopolitical strategic realities. I am from LA. When I studied Latin American politics and the relationship between Latin America and the United States, it was the exact same tone and the exact same conversation: Economic inequity, globalization that has gone awry, acute conflicts that you are a part of, political domination that you are a part of in my society, and religious and cultural disrespect that you are apart of. It is not about religion. When you ask all of the rest of the people that say 9/11 was totally unjustified, "why?" Everybody says religion—to the point where in the questionnaires people by hand write the verses of the Koran into the questionnaires: "The killing of an innocent life is like the killing of all of society." Everyone is inclined towards violence, everyone is inclined towards these things, but what is the source and how can we cut it at its source to ensure that it does not proliferate?

Richard Land

When we were doing the dialogue that produced this document, it was a purposefully diverse group, as you would imagine. One of the things that we had to work out was that in the original draft it said that one of the things we should do was to support secular reform movements in the Islamic world. Some of us raised objections to that and said that this is a subtle indicator of a secular bias in American society. You cannot disqualify religious reform movements particularly in significantly religious societies. As long as it is a reform movement in region that is based in religion and respects human rights, it cannot be disqualified as long as it is religious. The draft was corrected so that we did leave room for religious reform movements. I think that that is part of a secular bias that is still a part of American society at the present time. Somehow, reform and religion almost seem to be contradictory. That simply has not been the case in our experience, and that has not been the case in many experiences around the world. I do think that this is something that we have to guard against in our society because in some ways, it not only impacts our domestic politics, but also can do harm or be counterproductive to our foreign policy overseas.

Question

I have two questions. One might be more for Dr. Land than others. It is about some of what you presented in the context of the American experience. If we look at the sweep in the last 40 years here in the United States, and the aspect of religion and how it plays out in international affairs: on the religious side, if we think of the 1970s, the religious environment seemed to be more ecumenical in nature and the desire for compatibility and harmony across religious faiths was very prominent in the public arena anyway. Whereas if you look in the last decade plus, the environment seems to be far more polarized. Instead of a healthy pluralism, it is an unhealthy polarization of which maybe the latest Episcopal Church schism is one more example of. The adherence to doctrinal absolutism seems to be far more prominent. Is that a reality in how you see it, because you have been studying it particularly? How does that equip us as a nation, because we are a nation-state interest here, to be a positive energetic advocate for human dignity, human freedom, etc. in a more religious context with the rest of the world? Or are we more hampered down in terms of our political will which would be far more fragmented, almost without the ability for consensus in terms of how we approach the rest of the world on this religious basis than it would have been thirty or forty years ago?

In terms of the new State Department that we are looking forward to with the Designated Secretary of State, for those of you who interact with the Department, and I realize some of you are from the State Department, do you foresee a cultural shift in the State Department context that would be far more favorable to the positive impacts around these issues of recognizing the religious power of intervention in other parts of the world in a way we have been hampered for the last eight years or more?

Jim Vitarello

I have been involved in Middle East peace efforts in the Washington area for many years, particularly with mainline Protestant churches. On Israel-Palestine, I have a particular question for Dr. Land about the inter-contractions within all religions, but in particular the Abrahamic religions, about exclusionism versus inclusivism. By that I mean those who believe more in a universal God and an acceptance of all people and then of course the more exclusivists among us we call extremists, some people call them fundamentalists who believe for example the schism in Israel-Palestine. Particularly, Christian Fundamentalists, and this is for you, Dr. Land, and many Baptists who believe that all of the land of Israel belongs to the Jews and that the Palestinians should somehow melt away or be driven away. There are of course Jewish Zionists who believe that, but I feel that a lot of Fundamental Christians honestly believe that strongly. I don't know how you feel about it. But they never talk about Palestinian human rights, they never talk about Palestinian

freedoms. I think that there is a similar strain in Islam with Hamas and the more radical Islamic groups. I would like to talk about that. It is nice to talk about generally about how we love freedom, but let's get down to reality and this particular conflict, which I think is the most contentious conflict in the Middle East.

Susan Thistlethwaite

My question is, with all due respect Joe, it sounded like you were saying we stick with ethics and philosophical concepts, such as human dignity and freedom and so forth, and that this is the way to go forward. But this has been my experience: that when we dig down into some of the theological, certainly not Trinitarianism, I will give two examples of terrific goods of collaborative peacemaking can happen when deal with the theological concepts as well. A joint Muslim-Christian antinuclear statement that I worked on that was based on the Doctrine of Ghent. Or I would submit the good work that has been done recently on the environment based on the Doctrine of Creations. It seems to me that we need to get past saying, "Can't we all get along on ethics." I think, though difficult, a lot of the goods of creative peacemaking happen when we deal at the theological level.

Joseph Montville

The document that Lynn Kunkle prepared is full of citations from sacred literature. It is very much theologically oriented, but it does avoid some of the most contentious issues. The Trinity is one of them for Muslims and Jews. By all means, the initiative of the National Association for Evangelicals to take on creative care on environmental issues is critically important. There are so many citations in this document. I think that you will be happy when you see it.

Richard Land

I seem to be the flavor of the month here. First of all, I think that it is true that the nature of American Protestantism in terms of the numbers has changed dramatically since the 1970s. The mainline denominations have declined and Evangelical numbers has grown rather significantly so that in terms of sheer numbers, American Protestant Christianity is different. I think that there are two kinds of unity you can have. One is based upon, "Well, you have your beliefs and I have my beliefs, and there really is not much difference and we are not really going to resolve this so let's all just get along."

There's another one based upon people who are more conservative who say, "Well, I believe that this is true." But I also believe, as Roger Williams did, that for any man to coercively try to interfere with a man's faith is soul rape, that a man or woman's faith is so important, so sacred, their relationship with their creator, that no human being has a right to coercively interfere with that faith. So you have a respect of differences based upon your commitment to soul freedom, to human freedom, and to dignity. You can have Muslims, Christians and Jews who are serious about their faith to the extent that they think their way is the preferred way or the only way. But they also respect the beliefs of others who disagree with them: "We understand that you have the right to this belief, as long as you don't try to coercively interfere with another person's belief."

On the question of inclusiveness and exclusiveness, I believe that God has a continuing covenant with the Jews that he does not have with me as a gentile, and that it involves a right to the land. George W. Bush is an evangelical, and yet he is the first American President to endorse officially a two-state solution. I have no problem with a two-state solution, and I certainly believe that the Palestinians have a right to live in the Holy Land. And I believe the best way for that to happen is to have a two-state solution, where they live side-by-side as neighbors. I happened to be in Israel at a meeting with Rabbis and Imams in the West Bank with Laura Kerry as part of the peace process, and a Rabbi took the hand of his Muslim neighbor and said: "I believe that God gave this land to me and my people. But there's nothing in my bible that says I can't give part of the land to my neighbor if it will bring peace between us."

Over the years, I've been increasingly disturbed by an increasing Israeli hostility to Palestinian rights. I think that's one of the things that drove Sharon to say that you can't occupy people forever. Israelis have told me that the occupation has brutalized them. You can't occupy people for a lengthy period of time without brutalizing yourself. I'll close with Shimon Peres. He said there are three facts that require a two state solution: 1) Between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, there are about 6 million Jews, 5.5 million Arabs; 2) We're going to remain a democratic state; 3) We're going to remain a Jewish state. Those three facts require a two-state solution. He ended by saying that the terrorists are fighting a war against modernity. They will lose. The only question is how many people will die before they lose.

Marc Gopin

Conversations were taking place in the Middle Ages, and as recently as the nineteenth century in Italy, where even the Trinity was not an issue. There were good relations between Italian Catholics and Italian Jews. There were Jewish philosophers thinking about how the Trinity was an interesting idea. They have a three-part God, and we have a ten-part God, in terms of Jewish mysticism. But they made a mistake with incarnation. In fact, maybe the Orthodox Church would agree with them because they believe that the incarnation was not in the body literally. There were all sorts of nuances in Christian history that were almost exactly where the Jewish philosophers were about the person of Jesus. I mean, who would think? Then, there are the organized religions. The fact that Joe has to be very careful about trying to create consensus on ethics issues, you are not going to touch the Trinity at this point.

I have to say that the biggest problem is things that are universal to conflict-- the idea that everyone becomes regressed and tries to focus on what Freud called the narcissism of small differences. Suddenly, I need to find a reason to hate the other, and it is because his cloth is cut this way and not that way. I am going to kill this person from this madrassa and not that one because my guy from my madrassa told me to kill those. It is exactly what is going on in the Jewish world and other places in the world-- that is the narcissism of small differences. Then, the fact that you guys are not offended by pigs, I am going to use the pigs against you. That horror of behavior, ethical behavior, is where the Abrahamic faiths have fallen down. It is not about theology.

That is where the secular constructs of diplomacy are making a mistake. They are losing the opportunity to engage even the most fundamentalist people who make up wonderful ideas about good behavior. Saying they are too far and we are not going to touch them is exactly wrong. Those are exactly the symbolic people that need to be in the circle of civilized society, namely very religious people who are extremely engaged-- Jews, Christians, and Muslims with the shared behaviors of compassion, of equality, and of everyone created in the image of God as the most important. There are a lot of people like that and they are not being included in diplomacy not at all, and that is a huge mistake all over the world, and especially in the Middle East. That shift in priority is going to fix a lot of your problems with Palestine and Israel. According to the Pew Polls, fifty percent of Evangelicals agree with a two-state solution. The fact is, however, that Congress is throttled by many who are poisoned by a completely exclusive approach, some in the Evangelical community and some in the Jewish community. Again, who is representative here? Who is deciding what the essence of the Jewish position is, or what the essence of Evangelical position is? I say right now it is the people with the loudest mouths. A creative approach to diplomacy and social change is marshalling very decent people on the ground, who happen to be starving because nobody pays them, nobody helps them. Jewish, Christian, or Muslim individuals who are on the right side of this, and who are saints, and who are just waiting for the international diplomatic community to hold them up to the cameras and say, "This is the future." That will shift the balance of power here and who is louder.