

# **The Link Between International Religious Freedom and National Security: Ensuring a Safe America While Pursuing Our Ideals**

---

**April 2018**



**Prepared for:**

Center for Christianity and Scholarship  
Durham NC

**Prepared by:**

Mary Rzepka  
The Sanford School of Public Policy  
Duke University

**Faculty Adviser:**

Thomas W. Taylor, J.D.  
Professor of the Practice of Public Policy

*Disclaimer: This 2018 student paper was prepared in partial completion of the graduation requirements for the Master of Public Policy Program at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. The research, analysis, and policy alternatives and recommendations contained in this paper are the work of the student who authored the document, and do not represent the official or unofficial views of the Sanford School of Public Policy or of Duke University. Without the specific permission of its author, this paper may not be used or cited for any purpose other than to inform the client organization about the subject matter. The author relied in many instances on data provided by the client and related organizations and makes no independent representations as to the accuracy of the data.*

# Table of Contents

---

	Page
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	ii
<b>Section 1: Policy Question and Background</b> .....	1
1.1 Policy Question.....	1
1.2 Policy Overview.....	1
1.3 The Link Between International Religious Freedom and National Security.....	1
1.4 Legislative History of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.....	3
1.5 Key Components of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.....	4
<b>Section 2: Problems with International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) Implementation</b> ....	6
2.1 Reporting Structure for the IRF Ambassador and Office of IRF.....	6
2.2 Religious Freedom Training for State Department Personnel.....	6
2.3 The State Department’s Anti-Religion Culture.....	7
2.4 Undefined Relationship Between State Department and USCIRF.....	7
2.5 Support from Top Administrative Leadership is Critical and Lacking.....	8
2.6 Unfilled Position for NSC Adviser to the President on International Religious Freedom.....	9
2.7 IRF Promotion Requires an Interagency, Whole-of-Government Strategy.....	9
2.8 Effective Diplomacy Goes Beyond “Name and Shame” and Requires Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations.....	9
2.9 IRF Policy has Historically Received Little Funding from Congress.....	10
<b>Section 3: Previous Attempts to Address the Problems</b> .....	12
3.1 The Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2015.....	12
<b>Section 4: Policy Alternatives</b> .....	13
<b>Section 5: Criteria for Policy Alternatives</b> .....	15
<b>Section 6: Analysis of Policy Alternatives</b> .....	16
<b>Section 7: Policy Recommendations and Conclusion</b> .....	22
<b>Appendix 1: Policy Alternative Evaluation Matrix</b> .....	23
<b>Appendix 2: 2015 Global Religious Restrictions</b> .....	24
<b>References</b> .....	25

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

**Policy Question:** How can the United States improve its effectiveness in promoting international religious freedom to accomplish its related foreign policy and security objectives?

**Recommendation:** I recommend that Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback prepare a persuasive presentation for incoming Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on why international religious freedom (IRF) should be a priority within the State Department; President Trump appoint a Special Adviser for IRF to the National Security Council; the National Security Adviser create a Policy Coordination Committee for IRF on the National Security Council; and that the State Department and President request increased appropriations from Congress for nongovernmental organizations that specialize in IRF policy.

**Background:** In 1998, President Bill Clinton signed into law the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). The law's stated purpose was "to express United States foreign policy with respect to, and to strengthen United States advocacy on behalf of, individuals persecuted in foreign countries on account of religion" and "to implement appropriate tools in the United States foreign policy apparatus...to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples" (International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, [IRFA], 1998, Preamble & H.R. 2431-4). At the time IRFA passed, more than one-half of the world's population lived in countries that either severely restricted or prohibited religious freedom (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-3). Evidence from the Pew Research Center demonstrates that limits on freedom of religion have worsened during the 20 years since the law passed. A Pew study reported that as of 2015, "79% of the world's population lived in countries with high or very high levels of religious restrictions" (Cooperman, Kishi, & Schiller, 2017). The continued deterioration of religious freedom internationally demonstrates that IRFA and the structures it created have not been effective or sufficient in addressing this global crisis. This paper reviews the challenges that have hindered IRF policy at the State Department and Executive Branch and makes recommendations for how to address them. Further, it argues that effective IRF policy is necessary not only for upholding American values and human rights but for ensuring U.S. national security.

**IRF Policy and National Security:** It is critical to U.S. national security that the federal government has an effective strategy for promoting international religious freedom. Research from the past decade identifies associations between religious freedom and societal goods like political stability, economic growth, and improved health (Testimony of Thomas Farr, December 2017). Additionally, a lack of religious freedom within a society is associated with higher levels of religious violence (Grim and Fink, 2007). Many of the countries with significant levels of religious persecution are Middle Eastern states dealing with Islamist terrorism (Testimony of Thomas Farr, December 2017). Promoting peace and stability within this region of the world continues to be one of America's top security priorities (National Security Strategy, 2015).

**Policy Alternatives:** Based on a thorough analysis of the academic literature covering U.S. IRF policy and interviews with academic, government, and non-profit personnel working in IRF policy, I identified four alternatives to improve U.S. IRF promotion:

1. Have Ambassador Brownback prepare a persuasive presentation for incoming Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on why IRF should be a priority within the State Department.
2. Appoint a Special Adviser for IRF to the National Security Council, consistent with the sense of Congress expressed in IRFA and the Frank R. Wolf Act.
3. Create a Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), chaired by the Special Adviser for IRF, on the National Security Council to specifically manage IRF policy.
4. Request increased appropriations for NGOs that work with civil society to promote IRF.

**Criteria:** The four alternatives are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Gainers support from senior administrative leaders.
- Contributes toward a whole-of-government strategy for IRF policy.
- Promotes long-term sustained progress in countries with religious persecution.

## **SECTION 1: POLICY QUESTION AND BACKGROUND**

---

**1.1 Policy Question:** How can the United States improve its effectiveness in promoting international religious freedom to accomplish its related foreign policy and security objectives?

### **1.2 Policy Overview**

In 1998, President Bill Clinton signed into law the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). The law's stated purpose was "to express United States foreign policy with respect to, and to strengthen United States advocacy on behalf of, individuals persecuted in foreign countries on account of religion" and "to implement appropriate tools in the United States foreign policy apparatus...to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples" (IRFA, 1998, Preamble & H.R. 2431-4). At the time IRFA passed, more than one-half of the world's population lived in countries that either severely restricted or prohibited religious freedom (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-3). Evidence from the Pew Research Center demonstrates that limits on freedom of religion have worsened during the 20 years since the law passed (see Appendix 2 for a global map of religious restrictions). A Pew study reported that as of 2015, "79% of the world's population lived in countries with high or very high levels of religious restrictions" (Cooperman, Kishi, & Schiller, 2017). During this same time period of degenerating religious freedom conditions internationally, practitioners, academics, and oversight bodies discussed the need for reforms in IRFA and in the United States foreign policy strategy toward promoting religious freedom.

### **1.3 The Link Between International Religious Freedom and National Security**

It is critical to U.S. national security that the federal government has an effective strategy for promoting international religious freedom (IRF). Research from the past decade identifies associations between religious freedom and societal goods like political stability, economic growth, and improved health (Testimony of Thomas Farr, December 2017). Additionally, a lack of religious freedom within a society is associated with higher levels of religious violence (Grim and Fink, 2007). Many of the countries with significant levels of religious persecution are Middle Eastern states dealing with Islamist terrorism (Testimony of Thomas Farr, December 2017). Promoting peace and stability within this region of the world continues to be one of America's top security priorities (National Security Strategy, 2015).

Religious freedom is one of America's core values and an affirmed human right within Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, IRF has implications beyond humanitarianism and is vital to the United States' national security interests. A growing body of empirical research is confirming what many policy practitioners have hypothesized for decades: religious restrictions are highly correlated with violence, conflict, and terrorism. William Inboden, former Senior Director for Strategic Planning on the National Security Council, wrote that government violations of religious freedom "can serve as a diagnostic tool or type of early warning system revealing nations which are irresponsible actors and even potential security threats" (2008, 42).

While anecdotal evidence supporting the relationship between religious freedom and security has been available for decades, empirical research has bolstered this hypothesis during the past 10-15 years. In their 2007 study, Brian Grim and Roger Finke identified a strong association between regulation of religion and religious persecution, which they defined as “physical abuse or displacement due to one’s religion” (634). Additionally, a study by the Hudson Institute Center for Religious Freedom found that high levels of religious liberty are associated with lower levels of armed conflict (Grim, 2008).

Nilay Saiya and Anthony Scime investigated the relationship between religious liberty and religiously motivated terrorism, specifically. Their work, which utilized data-mining techniques, indicates that “a county’s level of religious restrictions is the most significant variable predicting the onset of religious terrorism – twice more important than any of the other variables” they investigated (2014, 506). Their study also found that a nation’s wealth has no association with religious terrorism, which contradicts assumptions that poverty is a driving force behind terrorism (2014, 505). These findings suggest that promoting religious freedom internationally is arguably one of the most effective ways to ensure peace, stability, and security throughout the world.

Saiya and Scime’s findings are consistent with social theories which have previously attempted to explain the forces behind terrorism. Theories from the human rights and conflict resolution fields explain terrorism, and other forms of violence, as responses to “structural violence.” Structural violence refers to a lack of “cultural, social, economic, [and] political” institutions through which individuals gain freedom of expression and access to their basic needs (Mertus and Helsing, 2006, 68). When states suppress freedom of religion, which strikes at the core of many people’s identity, violence may be seen as the only viable option through which the system can change (Saiya and Scime, 2014).

Lastly, historical evidence reinforces the conclusions of recent empirical studies. Inboden, in his 2012 article *Religious Freedom and National Security* stresses that the connection between religious freedom and security threats is not a 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon, but that it can be seen in every major war the United States has engaged in since World War II. He recounts that Nazi Germany, North Korea, North Vietnam, Sadaam Hussein in Iraq, and the Cold War battle with the Soviet Union all dealt with nations and regimes that severely violated religious freedom (2012).

Given the clear connection between violations of religious freedom and violent conflict, it is essential that the United States has a clear and effective policy for incorporating religious liberty promotion into its foreign policy strategy. However, Dr. Thomas Farr, President of the Religious Freedom Institute and the first Director of the Office of International Religious Freedom, stated last October in Congressional testimony that IRF policy “has been overlooked as a means of promoting stability and national security” (2017, 2).

## 1.4 Legislative History of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998

In his book *Freeing God's Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights*, Allen Hertzke recounts the history of how global religious movements combined with human rights actors to birth a coalition for religious freedom policy in the U.S. Religious Freedom activists, many of whom arose from movements sprung during the Cold War, came to prominence in the mid-1990's as Christian groups became increasingly vocal about persecuted Christians abroad. Nina Shea (human rights lawyer and religious freedom activist) and Michael Horowitz (former general counsel at the Office of Management and Budget under Reagan and religious freedom activist, not to be confused with the current Inspector General of the Justice Department) emerged in the mid-1990's to lead efforts at increasing the U.S. government's involvement in responding to religious persecution abroad (2004).

At the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) conference in January 1996, facilitated by Freedom House, Michael Horowitz worked with Nina Shea to draft a "Statement of Conscience," which was issued by the conference. The document highlighted the problem of Christian religious persecution in foreign countries and made recommendations for government actions, such as making a significant Presidential address renouncing anti-Christian persecution, appointing a special adviser to the President for religious freedom, and recommending that U.S. ambassadors meet with religious dissidents (Hertzke, 2004).

Following the NAE's publishing of its Statement of Conscience, Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ), Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the House International Relations Committee, held hearings focused on Christian persecution abroad. These hearings resulted in Congress passing a resolution in 1996 requiring the State Department to report on the persecution of Christians abroad and to catalog U.S. policies supporting religious freedom. These events served as the impetus for developing legislation that Congress ultimately passed two years later in 1998 (Hertzke, 2004).

The process of passing IRFA was long and contentious and required reconciling competing perspectives on how the U.S. could most effectively combat religious persecution. Leading proponents and authors of the legislation on Capitol Hill ultimately brought together a diverse group of constituents to endorse the legislation, including many Christian Evangelical groups, Jewish groups, the Southern Baptist Convention, Tibetan Buddhists, the Dalai Lama, the Catholic Church, and a bipartisan group of Congressmen who served as sponsors. Prominent opponents of the legislation included corporate lobbyists (concerned with sanction provisions incorporated into the bills), mainline Protestant churches, and the Clinton Administration (backed by strong opposition from the State Department itself). The Clinton Administration and Madeline Albright argued that sanctions included in an early draft of the legislation would mandate the President to punish countries, such as Saudi Arabia, with which the U.S. had important diplomatic relationships. However, when the legislation proved resilient despite attempts to kill it, the Clinton Administration joined in the negotiations for the final bill (Hertzke, 2004).

The legislation that ultimately passed was a merger between the House and Senate bills, which represented competing views of how the U.S. should confront religious persecution. The House bill focused on punishing countries with the most egregious violations of religious freedom through sanctions, while the Senate bill proposed a range of diplomatic responses that built up to sanctions so that the President could vary the severity of his response, according to the particular situations of individual countries. The Senate bill also proposed creating a new office within the State Department headed by an Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom (Hertzke, 2004).

Proponents of the House bill, the most vocal of which was Horowitz, believed the Senate option would allow an apathetic State Department to respond to religious persecution with weak actions that had no real impact but satisfied legislative requirements. Proponents of the Senate bill criticized the House bill for creating an extremely high threshold for government action by focusing on the most egregious violators. Senate bill proponents argued that only rogue regimes, such as Sudan and North Korea, would meet the threshold for action in the House bill (Hertzke, 2004).

The final bill incorporated components of both the House and Senate versions and was considered by many to be better than either of the original options. After a divisive and heated process that lasted nearly two years, the final bill passed unanimously in both the House and Senate (Hertzke, 2004).

## **1.5 Key Components of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998**

Passing IRFA was an important first step in responding to the global crisis in religious freedom. IRFA created two bodies, which were primarily charged with carrying out Congress's directive of promoting religious liberty as part of United States foreign policy: the Office of International Religious Freedom ("Office"), within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the Department of State, and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) ("Government Accountability Office", [GAO], 2013).

Congress created the position of Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom (IRF Ambassador) to head the Office within State. The IRF Ambassador's four main responsibilities include "(1) promote religious freedom, (2) serve as a principal adviser to the President and Secretary of State on religious freedom issues abroad, (3) represent the U.S. government diplomatically in matters relevant to religious freedom abroad, and (4) report on the status of international religious freedom annually" (GAO, 2013, 5).

As part of the annual reporting process, the Office recommends countries with "systemic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom" to be designated as "Countries of Particular Concern" or "CPCs" (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-5). The President is directed to review each of these recommendations, designate CPCs, and take actions against CPCs. Among the President's potential actions are public and private demarches, public condemnation, denying or cancelling state visits, withdrawing or limiting development assistance, and various financial and trade sanctions (IRFA, 1998). The President may waive his responsibility to take action if (1) the



country in question ceases its violations, (2) Congress's intentions within the Act will be furthered through exercising the waiver, or (3) "the important national security interests of the United States" necessitates a waiver (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-22).

The USCIRF, also created by the Act, is comprised of nine commissioners, who are appointed by the President and the Congressional leadership of both political parties to ensure bipartisanship. The IRF Ambassador serves as a non-voting member of the USCIRF. The USCIRF's primary duties include (1) reviewing "the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom," and (2) "making policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress" regarding appropriate responses to violations of religious freedom and progress by nations that are actively working to improve religious freedom (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-11-12).

The remaining key directives of IRFA include developing training programs on religious freedom for Foreign Service Officers and creating an international religious freedom website (GAO, 2013).

## **SECTION 2: PROBLEMS WITH IRFA IMPLEMENTATION**

---

### **2.1 Reporting Structure for the IRF Ambassador and Office of IRF**

After the initial passage and implementation of IRFA took place, practitioners and oversight bodies started identifying problems with its effectiveness. In 2003, during a review of the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) noted in its report that the Ambassador at Large, "would report to and through the DRL Assistant Secretary," and that the arrangement seemed inconsistent with Congress's legislative intent, as well as the Department's organizational policy within 1 FAM 014.2 (2003, 6). OIG elaborated in explaining that the only other two Ambassadors at Large within the Department have direct reporting relationships with the Secretary of State. OIG stated that the IRF Ambassador's reporting relationship, given his/her legislative mandate to act as an adviser to the President and Secretary, "undermines his role," and, "implies a role for his office different from that intended" (2003, 7). OIG further noted, that the unusual reporting structure was detrimental to the Office's performance (2003). In OIG's follow up report on this issue, the State Department responded by saying that "the Secretariat has a long-standing goal to avoid growth in...the reporting relationships to the Secretary" (2005, 18). Based on this response, OIG closed the issue, but urged the Department to reevaluate the structure in six to twelve months, as OIG did not consider the problem fully resolved (2005).

State's decision to disregard the OIG's recommendation resulted in ongoing criticism and commentary on this organizational structure for many years to follow. Farr frequently critiqued the IRF Ambassador's inferior reporting position within the State Department. In several of his publications and Congressional testimony, he has repeatedly called out the inferior designation of the IRF Ambassador and recommended that he be given a direct reporting relationship with the Secretary of State (2009, 2012, 2013, 2014). Similar recommendations regarding the IRF Ambassador's access to the Secretary of State have been made by Tad Stahnke of Human Rights First (2014); Katrina Lantos Swett, Chair of the USCIRF (2014); Robert Smith, Managing Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (2014); and the Government Accountability Office (2013), among others.

### **2.2 Religious Freedom Training for State Department Personnel**

Among the requirements of IRFA is the establishment of training for Foreign Service Officers on international human rights, and in particular "instruction on the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion, the nature, activities, and beliefs of different religions, and the various aspects and manifestations of violations to religious freedom" (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-9). The State Department primarily met this requirement by incorporating religious freedom information into preexisting mandatory courses in 1-hour, 45-minute, and 90-minute sessions, depending on the specific course. The only course designed to exclusively address religious freedom is an optional 3 to 4-day course developed by the Foreign Service Institute in 2011 (GAO, 2013). The lack of mandatory training, specifically designed to address religious freedom issues, is another area where a consensus of practitioners advise change. The complete witness panel at the 2014 hearing of the House Oversight & Governmental Reform's

Subcommittee on National Security recommended making religious freedom training mandatory at State (Farr, 2014; Lantos Swett, 2014; Smith, 2014; Stahnke, 2014).

### **2.3 The State Department's Anti-Religion Culture**

During a series of interviews with experts in IRF policy, one of the most frequently mentioned barriers to successfully implementing IRF policy was the pervasive anti-religion mentality within the broader State Department. Experts consistently reported that the State Department looks down upon religious freedom (and human rights generally) as a soft foreign policy issue (J. Bryson, personal communication, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018; T. Farr, personal communication, February 1, 2018; K. Bigelow, personal communication, February 7, 2018; W. Inboden, personal communication, February 6, 2018; E. Cassidy, personal communication, February 16, 2018). Jennifer Bryson, Director of the Islam and Religious Freedom Action Team at the Religious Freedom Institute and former staff member at the Department of Defense, described the State Department as having a “pathological allergy” to religion (Jennifer Bryson, n.d.; J. Bryson, personal communication, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Kit Bigelow, who worked in human rights and religious freedom advocacy for several decades, said that being religious in the State Department is akin to being gay or part of another marginalized group (Kit Bigelow, n.d.; K. Bigelow, personal communication, February, 7, 2018). Multiple individuals said that State employees have long considered a move to the IRF Office as a career ending decision (E. Cassidy, personal communication, February 16, 2018; J. Bryson, personal communication, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018; T. Farr, personal communication, February 1, 2018).

Farr says that this biased mentality has existed for decades within the State Department. He draws on Madeleine Albright’s testimony within her book *The Mighty and the Almighty*. In her book, Albright says that diplomats from her era were taught to avoid subjects that “invite trouble,” and that religion was viewed as the most “inherently treacherous” (“Madeleine Albright on the Intersection of Religion and Foreign Policy,” 2007). This has resulted in a culture at State where the geographic bureaus are the most powerful and can trump human rights offices in arguments, unless the Secretary of State is personally invested in promoting human rights (E. Abrams, personal communication, February, 13, 2018).

### **2.4 Undefined Relationship Between State Department and USCIRF**

In the Government Accountability Office’s (GAO) 2013 report on the implementation of IRFA, their primary finding and recommendation related to the undefined nature of the State Department’s Office of IRF and the USCIRF (2013). An amendment to the 1998 Act directs the USCIRF to cooperate with State in promoting religious freedom and in carrying out its duties; however, it does not specify how this should be done (GAO, 2013). Consequently, the level of interaction between these two bodies has varied significantly over the years. Different interpretations of the IRF Ambassador’s role as an ex-officio non-voting member of the USCIRF have also contributed to inconsistent communication between the groups (GAO, 2013). GAO noted that every Ambassador they interviewed, and many of the commissioners, said that State and the USCIRF, “have never jointly defined how they should interact” (GAO, 2013, 29). This

situation has, at times, led to inconsistent messaging to foreign-government officials that State later had to mitigate. In fact, all three Ambassadors that GAO interviewed recounted situations where USCIRF relations with foreign-governments “created bilateral tensions” (“Government Accountability Office, 2013, 31). One Ambassador discussed a situation where the USCIRF made a recommendation that nearly “ruined State’s diplomatic efforts to address religious freedom in Laos” (GAO, 2013, 32).

## **2.5 Support from Top Administrative Leadership is Critical and Lacking**

Another prominent consideration is the importance of having support from top-level leadership in the Executive Branch, particularly from the Secretary of State and the President (J. Fox, personal communication, February 7, 2018; K. Bigelow, personal communication, February 7, 2018; E. Abrams, personal communication, February, 13, 2018; E. Cassidy, personal communication, February 16, 2018). The degree to which the Secretary of State sees religious freedom as a priority, and the Ambassador at Large’s relationship with him, significantly affect whether State will prioritize the issue in its meetings with foreign leaders (E. Abrams, personal communication, February, 13, 2018). Elliot Abrams, who previously served as Reagan’s Assistant Secretary of State, George W. Bush’s Deputy National Security Adviser, and Chairman of the USCIRF, also said that the support from the Secretary of State affects whether the IRF Office can effectively leverage support from the geographic bureaus. If the other bureaus see IRF as a priority to the Secretary, they are more willing to engage with the IRF office and prioritize its requests (Elliot Abrams, n.d.; E. Abrams, personal communication, February 13, 2018).

Abrams also emphasized that foreign countries notice and pay attention to whether particular administrations prioritize religious freedom. He noted that when Presidents leave the position of IRF Ambassador vacant for multiple years, and/or nominate unqualified or low profile persons to the position, it signals to other countries that the administration does not take religious freedom seriously in its foreign policy. In contrast, if the President promptly fills this role with an experienced and qualified person and takes time to meet with foreign religious leaders (such as the Pope and Dali Lama) during his travels, it sends the message that the President is serious about religious freedom (E. Abrams, personal communication, February, 13, 2018). These actions and signals influence the U.S.’s ability to seriously engage foreign governments on the topic of religious persecution.

Following his confirmation in January 2018, Sam Brownback became only the fifth person to hold the position of Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, The Trump Administration did not nominate Brownback until March of 2017, and then the Senate failed to confirm him before the end of the year. This required the White House to resubmit Brownback’s nomination in January 2018 (Annual Report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, [Annual Report of USCIRF], 2017; Shellnut, 2018).

The nearly yearlong vacancy in the IRF Ambassador’s post during President Trump’s first year in office follows a long history of prolonged vacancies in the position. When George W. Bush and Barak Obama each assumed office, the IRF Ambassador position had been “vacant for 16 and 28 months, respectively” (Annual Report of USCIRF, 2017). As previously stated,

allowing these prolonged vacancies in the IRF Ambassador's position undermines U.S. credibility abroad as a serious proponent of religious freedom.

## **2.6 Unfilled Position for NSC Adviser to the President on International Religious Freedom**

Another aspect of IRFA implementation that has received attention is the unfilled director-level position on the National Security Council (NSC). IRFA amended the National Security Act of 1947 by adding that, "it is the sense of Congress that there should be within the staff of the National Security Council a Special Adviser to the President on International Religious Freedom" (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-14). However, in USCIRF's 2017 Annual Report it stated that "no administration since the law's enactment has named an adviser focusing only on international religious freedom; instead all have assigned the issue to an NSC director as part of a broader human rights and multi-lateral affairs portfolio" (11). The perpetual absence of a religious freedom specific adviser on the NSC further reinforces that Executive leadership has not made IRF a high priority foreign policy issue.

## **2.7 IRF Promotion Requires an Interagency, Whole-of-Government Strategy**

IRF experts also highlight the need for an integrated religious freedom strategy that leverages all the resources of the federal government (J. Bryson, personal communication, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018; T. Farr, personal communication, February 1, 2018; W. Inboden, personal communication, February 6, 2018; E. Cassidy, personal communication, February 16, 2018). Will Inboden, who was responsible for incorporating religious freedom policy into George W. Bush's 2006 National Security Strategy, said that in an ideal world the IRF Office would not need to exist. Religious freedom policy would be fully incorporated into the strategic planning that takes place within the existing State Department bureaus and the National Security Council. Unfortunately, the reality of how the federal bureaucracy functions makes a special office necessary to ensure consideration of religious freedom in foreign and national security policy. However, successful religious freedom policy still depends on the IRF Office working effectively with other State Department bureaus and Executive agencies that play critical roles in national security, such as the Pentagon, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Security Council, and the Intelligence Community.

## **2.8 Effective Diplomacy Goes Beyond "Name and Shame" and Requires Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations**

The current strategy pursued by the IRF Office to try and influence foreign governments is prescriptive and punishment-oriented (Testimony of Thomas Farr, December 2017). The President has issued sanctions in response to countries being placed on the list of CPCs. However, Farr argues in his recent Congressional testimony that sanctions are rarely effective, and that they have been unsuccessful in changing government's when they have been attempted for international religious freedom (December 2017).

Additionally, Robert Seiple, who served as the first IRF Ambassador, argues that positive promotion techniques are more successful than punishment oriented methods (2008). After completing his service at State, Seiple went on to found the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), a nonprofit working with foreign governments to enhance religious freedom through “relational diplomacy” (Frequently Asked Questions). IGE argues that “Track 1.5 Diplomacy,” where public and private entities collaborate together with foreign nations, will accomplish the most sustainable improvements in religious freedom (Seiple, 2012).

IGE utilizes a long-term strategy of relationship building with local religious and government leaders. Through their “4-S” strategy, they work with foreign partners to help them see that greater religious freedom is in *their* best interests and is not just a U.S. priority. The four components of the 4-S strategy include (1) creating *space* where religious ideas and beliefs can be openly discussed (often this is through academic conferences), (2) cultivating local *scholarship* that demonstrates the value of religious freedom in society, (3) generating *standards* based on this scholarship for developing local training and education programs, and (4) creating a *structure* among participants in conferences and trainings, through which governments can develop improved legal structures governing religious freedom. This overall strategy aims to first make the concept of religious freedom socially acceptable and then moves towards making legal changes (Seiple, 2012).

IGE’s recommended public-private approach to building religious freedom internationally is consistent with recommendations from William Inboden. In an article discussing how the George W. Bush Administration implemented religious freedom into its National Security Strategy, Inboden argues that religious freedom should be integrated into U.S. foreign aid by providing funding to religiously based NGOs (2008). Additionally, he argues that promoting religious freedom should be incorporated into other democracy promotion programs (2008).

During interviews with IRF experts, the State Department’s need to increase its support for and collaboration with religious freedom non-profits and NGOs was the most consistent point raised. Interviewees agreed that State plays a vital role in IRF promotion by working directly with governments and monitoring religious freedom conditions throughout the world and reporting on them annually. However, interviewees also broadly agreed that successfully fostering long-term religious tolerance in other cultures requires direct and consistent engagement with civil society. Non-profits and NGOs excel in this work and have a greater capacity than State for direct and long-term engagement on the ground in foreign countries (J. Bryson, personal communication, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018; T. Farr, personal communication, February 1, 2018; K. Bigelow, personal communication, February 7, 2018; W. Inboden, personal communication, February 6, 2018; J. Daugherty, personal communication, February 13, 2018; E. Abrams, personal communication).

## **2.9 IRF Policy has Historically Received Little Funding from Congress**

Limited funding has negatively affected the IRF Office’s ability to promote international religious freedom. The budget for religious freedom programs has historically been around \$4

million annually (Testimony of Thomas Farr, October 2017). Last year, thanks in large part to former IRF Ambassador David Saperstein, this amount increased to \$25 million (Byrd, 2017). However, in his Congressional testimony from October 2017, Farr pointed out that this amount is still inconsequential relative to other national security programs. The recently passed Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 maintains the same levels of funding as last year.

## **SECTION 3: PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS**

---

### **3.1 The Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2015**

On December 16, 2016, President Obama signed the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2015, the first major overhaul of IRFA since it was initially passed in 1998 (Strode, 2016). The legislation amended the 1998 Act and sought to address many of the criticisms discussed above. Among the legislation's key components are: (1) providing the Ambassador at Large a direct reporting relationship to the Secretary of State; (2) creating a new designation category for "entities of particular concern" for non-state groups that severely restrict religious freedom; (3) establishing a "designated persons list" for individuals who severely violate religious freedom, and authorizing the President to issue sanctions against such individuals; (4) creating a list of religious prisoners overseas; (5) mandating religious freedom training for all foreign service officers; and (6) establishing a minimum full-time staff limit for State's IRF Office (Strode, 2016).



## **SECTION 4: POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

---

Based on the research documented within Sections 1 - 3, I identified four alternatives to improve U.S. IRF policy:

**1. Have Ambassador Brownback prepare a persuasive presentation for incoming Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on why IRF should be a priority within the State Department.**

The recent departure of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson creates a unique opportunity for IRF Ambassador Sam Brownback to garner renewed interest and support from senior administrative leadership for IRF policy. As the principal adviser to the President and Secretary of State for IRF, Brownback has a responsibility to inform the incoming Secretary of State about the critical role that IRF plays in U.S. national security. Brownback should use the intervening period prior to Mike Pompeo's (the announced replacement for Rex Tillerson) Senate confirmation to prepare a presentation demonstrating the association between religious persecution and increased violence and societal instability (Baker, Harris, and Landler, 2018).

The Religious Freedom Institute works with several academic fellows whose research demonstrates the link between religious persecution and violence. Tom Farr, President of RFI, has expressed a desire for his organization to serve as a think tank in support of the IRF Office at the State Department (Tom Farr, personal communication, February 15, 2018). Farr and his team can provide valuable assistance to Ambassador Brownback in preparing his presentation to incoming Secretary of State Pompeo by developing the appropriate arguments and evidence to demonstrate the critical link between religious freedom and national security. By effectively leveraging and presenting the empirical evidence demonstrating this link, Ambassador Brownback can demonstrate to the new Secretary of State that IRF is more than a "soft" foreign policy or human rights issue, but that IRF promotion is an essential factor in securing peace and stability in the world.

**2. Appoint a Special Adviser for IRF to the National Security Council, consistent with the sense of Congress expressed in IRFA and the Frank R. Wolf Act.**

The National Security Council has become one of the primary mechanisms of policy integration for matters of national security ("The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress," 2017). Understanding the important role of the NSC in shaping national security and foreign policy, Congress included in IRFA its sense that the NSC should have a director level position that serves as a "Special Adviser to the President on International Religious Freedom" (IRFA, 1998, H.R. 2431-14). In the Frank R. Wolf Act, Congress expressed that the Special Adviser for IRF "should assist the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to coordinate international religious freedom policies and strategies throughout the executive branch and within any interagency policy committee of which the Ambassador at Large is a member" (Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2015, [Frank R. Wolf Act], 2016, 130 Stat. 1432-1433).

**3. Create a Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), chaired by the Special Adviser for IRF, on the National Security Council to specifically manage IRF policy.**

Within the current structure of the NSC, Policy Coordination Committees (PCCs):

Are established by the Deputies Committee [comprised of the deputy heads of departments] and are responsible for day-to-day management of national security matters on a given region or topic at the Assistant Secretary level from relevant agencies. These [committees] are chaired by members of the National Security Staff whose subject matter portfolios are relevant to the issue at hand (“The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress,” 2017).

The role of PCCs is to “provide policy analysis for consideration by the more senior committees of the national security system and ensure timely responses to the President’s decisions” (National Security Policy Memorandum-4, “NSPM-4”, 2017, 6). Additionally, “the Chair of each PCC...shall invite representatives of other executive departments and agencies to attend meetings of the PCC where appropriate” (NSPM-4, 2017, 6-7).

**4. Request increased appropriations for NGOs that work with civil society to promote IRF.**

In “Sec. 401 Assistance for Promoting Religious Freedom” of the Frank R. Wolf Act, Congress states that

The President *should request* sufficient appropriations from Congress to Support –

(1) the vigorous promotion of international religious freedom and for projects to advance United States interests in the protection and advancement of international religious freedom, *in particular*, through *grants to groups* that -

(A) are capable of developing legal protections or promoting cultural and societal understanding of international norms of religious freedom;

(B) seek to address and mitigate religiously motivated sectarian violence and combat violent extremism; or

(C) seek to strengthen investigations, reporting, and monitoring of religious freedom violations, including genocide perpetrated against religious minorities (Frank R. Wolf Act, 2016, 130 Stat. 1432-1433, emphasis added).

NGOs dedicated to IRF are among the most effective groups working to accomplish the above stated objectives, through their unique access to and relationships with foreign civil and political leaders. However, despite Congress’s expressed desire that the President request funding for these group, appropriations for IRF-specific programs remain woefully low in comparison to overall democracy funding from the Federal Government. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 allocated “\$2.3 billion for democracy and human rights programs abroad” (Lee, Ferguson, and Oprysko, 2018). However, only \$25 million, or 1%, of this amount was designated specifically for religious freedom related programs (Byrd, 2018).

## **SECTION 5: CRITERIA FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

---

Three criteria, explained below, were used to evaluate potential policy solutions. These criteria were developed based on insight from academic research, Congressional testimonies, review of IRF legislation, and interviews with IRF experts.

- **Garners support from senior administrative leaders.** Interviews with experts strongly emphasized the importance of support from senior executive leadership in advancing IRF policy. Buy-in from the Secretary of State, President, and Principal members of the National Security Council is necessary for IRF to become a foreign policy priority.
- **Contributes toward a whole-of-government strategy for IRF policy.** Effective IRF policy requires an inter-agency and inter-departmental strategy that leverages all resources of the federal government. IRF policy affects national security, human rights, democracy promotion, international aid, and a number of other foreign policy programs. As such, it is necessary for staff from each of these agencies and departments to collaborate and coordinate efforts to improve IRF.
- **Promotes long-term sustained progress in countries with religious persecution.** Existing policies and practices within the State Department have not effectively reduced international religious persecution. Sanctions employed by the President have been ineffective in generating sustained progress within foreign countries. Efforts to release prisoners held for religious reasons, while important and laudable, do not contribute towards overall societal improvements in religious freedom and tolerance.

## SECTION 6: ANALYSIS OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES

---

This section assesses how effectively each policy alternative meets the criteria for analysis. For a complete evaluation matrix of all four policy alternatives, refer to Appendix 1.

**Alternative 1:** Have Ambassador Brownback prepare a persuasive presentation for incoming Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on why IRF should be a priority within the State Department. For a complete evaluation matrix of all four policy alternatives, refer to Appendix 1.

POLICY OPTION	CRITERIA		
	Garners Senior Leadership Support	Contributes to Whole-of-Government Strategy	Promotes Long Term Progress
<b>1. Amb. Brownback presentation to Sec. State</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Criteria Assessment Key: 0 = fails to satisfy, 1 = partially satisfies, 2 = mostly satisfies, 3 = fully satisfies</b>			

### Garners Senior Leadership Support

Gaining the support of the Secretary of State is the first critical task of Ambassador Brownback. The Secretary of State holds the necessary authority and influence with the President and National Security Council (NSC) to help shape the foreign policy agenda of the Trump Administration. Having the Secretary of State’s support for IRF policy will help acquire buy-in from the President and other NSC members too. Through his role as a permanent member of the NSC, the Secretary of State can bring the issue of international religious freedom into conversations on national security policy occurring at the highest level of government.

### Contributes to a Whole-of-Government Strategy

The NSC’s principal function is to “advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the Armed Forces and the other departments and agencies of the U.S. government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security” (“The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress,” 2017, 7). As the global geopolitical landscape has increased in complexity, “whole of government” responses have become increasingly important. “Much of the needed policy synchronization is now occurring at the NSC rather than at lower levels due to insufficient interagency coordination mechanisms” (“The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress,” 2017, 11). The Secretary of State is one of only five statutory members of the NSC (“The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress,” 2017). With the NSC playing an increasingly prominent role in integrating policy responses related to national security, having the Secretary of State’s buy-in on the importance of IRF policy is essential to ensuring a “whole of government” response to the issue.

**Promotes Long-Term Progress**

Persuading the new Secretary of State that IRF policy is critical to U.S. national interests also has the potential to contribute towards long-term change in countries with oppressive religious freedom policies. If the Secretary of State is invested in prioritizing IRF policy, he will be more likely to include this as a regular talking point when he meets with foreign leaders and dignitaries. As discussed previously, foreign countries notice when senior executive leaders, like the Secretary of State, prioritize IRF policy. By demonstrating a commitment to this issue, and regularly engaging with foreign governments on IRF, the Secretary of State can lay the groundwork for civil society organizations in those countries to begin dialogue with their leaders about increased religious tolerance.

The success of the IRF Ambassador largely depends on the degree of support he receives from the Secretary of State, who serves as the President’s principal foreign policy adviser and representative to foreign countries. As such, it is critical for Ambassador Brownback to make a persuasive pitch to the incoming Secretary of State as to why IRF policy is an essential component to U.S. national security.

**Alternative 2:** Appoint a Special Adviser on IRF to the National Security Council, consistent with the sense of Congress expressed in IRFA and the Frank R. Wolf Act.

POLICY OPTION	CRITERIA		
	Garners Senior Leadership Support	Contributes to Whole-of-Government Strategy	Promotes Long Term Progress
2. Appoint IRF NSC adviser	1	3	1

**Garners Senior Leadership Support**

Despite recommendations from Congress, USCIRF, and other IRF advocates that the President fill the Special Adviser position, it has remained vacant since its inception, and IRF has been assigned to an NSC staff person as part of a larger policy portfolio (refer to Section 2.6). Filling this position will go a long way toward demonstrating senior leadership’s support.

Filling this position alone, however, is not sufficient to garner support from senior administrative leadership. The position Congress created is only at the director level, which is among the lowest levels of leadership in the NSC hierarchy. Additionally, the number of staff on the NSC has significantly expanded in recent history, growing from approximately 50 people during the George H.W. Bush Administration to between 300-400 people in 2017 (“The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress,” 2017). In this large staff environment, a director level position on an obscure policy topic may easily be ignored, unless there is already broader support for IRF among the Deputies and Principals of the NSC.

## **Contributes to a Whole-of-Government Strategy**

Having a Special Adviser for IRF on the NSC will contribute towards establishing a whole-of-government strategy for IRF. The NSC is placed at the nexus of executive leadership resources for national security policies. NSC meetings in the Trump Administration, under National Security Policy Memorandum (NSPM) 4, regularly include representation from the Departments of Defense, Energy, State, Treasury, Justice and Homeland Security; members of the Intelligence Community; and the Representative of the U.S. to the United Nations (“The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress,” 2017). Having a Special Adviser for IRF present at NSC meetings will allow for IRF to be discussed outside the narrow confines of the Human Rights Bureau of the State Department and ensure that other pertinent actors on IRF policy can be incorporated into a whole-of-government strategy.

The case of U.S. involvement in Syria provides an excellent example of why an IRF Adviser is necessary to effectively identify and coordinate the expertise of other NSC members to develop a whole-of-government approach to IRF policy in that country. Since 2014, USCIRF has recommended that Syria be designated as a CPC (although it is not included on the State Department’s official listing), and as of 2017, also recommends that ISIS be designated as an “entity of particular concern” (Annual Report of USCIRF, 2017).

The conditions within Syria, since the beginning of its Civil War, have become extremely complex with numerous actors and organizations vying for power. These conditions have life and death implications for the various religious groups within the country. President al-Assad’s regime has intentionally targeted and bombed Sunni Arab-populated areas and the UN has found him guilty of repeatedly using chemical weapons in rebel-controlled zones (Annual Report of USCIRF, 2017). ISIS, meanwhile, terrorizes and attacks anyone (Muslim or non-Muslim) who does not adopt its extremist version of Sunni Islam. The group has committed “mass beheadings, rape, murder, torture of civilians and religious figures, and the destruction of mosques and churches” (USCIRF 2017 Annual Report, 92). Armed government opposition groups, on the other hand, are comprised of “approximately 100 armed opposition groups in Syria, each of which follows its own norms of behavior,” and “areas of control of the armed opposition do not have formal or consistent policies toward Christian or non-Sunni Muslims” (Annual Report of USCIRF, 2017, 94). While Christians are not banned from rebel-controlled areas, many have left the country or gone to government-controlled regions. Meanwhile, Druze members report being more vulnerable to kidnappings by armed groups as a result of their distinct religious identity (Annual Report of USCIRF, 2017).

These complex and hostile circumstances necessitate a coordinated U.S. policy that considers religious persecution in Syria. The NSC is best positioned to develop such an approach. The Secretary of Defense is responsible for the military personnel working with armed opposition groups in Syria. The U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. has a critical role to play in coordinating with the U.N. and international organizations present in the country. The Secretary of Energy is essential to Syrian policy planning because of al-Assad’s frequent use of chemical weapons, and the Treasury Department is responsible for tracking the financial networks of terrorist and rebel groups in the country. And, of course, the Secretary of State is ultimately responsible for the U.S. Embassy and diplomatic relations in the country.

Each of the above named NSC members has a critical role to play in U.S. policy in Syria. However, the Syrian conflict is largely driven by sectarian and religiously motivated differences. As such, it is essential that the NSC have a Special Adviser on IRF present in Syrian policy debates to provide context to the many religious factions that complicate Syria’s war. Understanding the multitude of rebel and government factions in Syria (which is only one country), and their associated religious motivations, is a serious challenge and underscores the necessity of having an NSC Adviser specifically dedicated to providing this insight. It is unrealistic to expect that incorporating IRF policy into a broader human rights policy portfolio (which has historically been the practice on the NSC) will allow for the necessary level of expertise for someone to advise on religious conditions in conflict countries like Syria.

**Promotes Long-Term Progress**

Appointing a Special Adviser for IRF will not directly contribute towards long-term progress on religious persecution in foreign countries. However, a Special Adviser can indirectly contribute to sustained progress by helping the Executive Branch develop a coherent, whole-of-government strategy for IRF. The U.S. has a military and/or diplomatic presence in many countries with complex religious environments where religious freedom is limited or severely restricted, as evidenced by the Syria example. For nations like Syria that are steeped in sectarian and religious violence, the U.S. must have a clear understanding of the role that religion plays in both government and civil society to ensure that our involvement contributes towards peaceful outcomes, as opposed to further division and violence. This is why USCIRF recommended in its 2017 report that the U.S. government “ensure[s]...planning for post-conflict Syria...includes consideration of religious freedom and related human rights, and that USCIRF and other U.S. government experts on those issues are consulted” (Annual Report of USCIRF, 2017, 90). A Special Adviser for IRF on the NSC can ensure that such considerations are incorporated into U.S. policy from the initiation of our involvement in foreign conflicts to their termination.

**Alternative Three:** Create a Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), chaired by the Special Adviser for IRF, on the National Security Council to specifically manage IRF policy.

POLICY OPTION	CRITERIA		
	Garners Senior Leadership Support	Contributes to Whole-of-Government Strategy	Promotes Long Term Progress
3. Create NSC PCC for IRF Policy	2	3	2

**Garners Senior Leadership Support**

An IRF PCC will contribute towards gaining senior leadership support. Having a team dedicated to analyzing and considering the foreign policy and security implications of religious freedom conditions abroad will ensure that senior members of the NSC are apprised and aware of how IRF policy fits into broader US strategic objectives. Receiving regular support from a dedicated PCC may garner greater support from senior leadership as they grow in awareness of

how IRF policy is relevant to national security. However, senior leaders may need to be convinced of IRF policy’s importance to national security *before* they will consider creating a PCC specifically dedicated to IRF policy.

**Contributes to a Whole-of-Government Strategy**

A dedicated IRF PCC is an ideal vehicle for establishing a whole-of-government approach to IRF policy. PCCs are the workhorses of the NSC and incorporate representatives from various executive agencies and departments to bring the full resources of the executive branch to bear on a particular topic. An IRF PCC that incorporates members from the Intelligence Community, State Department (both human rights and relevant geographic bureaus), DOD, and USAID would create a more comprehensive team of individuals with the necessary expertise on policy issues related to IRF policy. Many countries with restrictive religious freedom policies (e.g. Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria) have members from each of these U.S. agencies present on the ground (Annual Report of USCIRF, 2017). In nations that have been designated by USCIRF and/or State as CPCs or Tier 2 countries, “defined by USCIRF as nations in which the violations engaged in or tolerated by the government are serious and characteristic of at least one of the elements of the ‘systemic, ongoing, and egregious’ CPC standard,” all agencies with a role in U.S. policy there need to have an awareness and understanding of the role that religious freedom plays in the country’s conflicts and culture. A PCC dedicated to IRF is the ideal mechanism to ensure this understanding exists and is incorporated into broader U.S. policy initiatives.

**Promotes Long-Term Progress**

In the same way that a Special Adviser for IRF on the NSC can contribute towards long-term progress in countries with poor religious freedom conditions, so too can a PCC dedicated to IRF policy. A Special Adviser for IRF will be far more effective at incorporating IRF policy into national security and foreign policy debates if he has a PCC support staff working for him. The PCC will complete the necessary research and analysis to inform the IRF Special Adviser and senior decision-making bodies of the NSC. The IRF Special Adviser, who would direct the PCC, can then ensure that policy decisions made by senior NSC leadership incorporate IRF considerations. Policies that encompass critical cultural factors like the role of religion in society will have better long-term outcomes for both U.S. interests and the people of the countries with whom we are engaged.

**Alternative Four:** Request increased appropriations for NGOs that work with civil society to promote IRF.

POLICY OPTION	CRITERIA		
	Garners Senior Leadership Support	Contributes to Whole-of-Government Strategy	Promotes Long Term Progress
4. Request increased appropriations for NGOs	2	3	3



## **Garners Senior Leadership Support**

Requesting and receiving increased appropriations from Congress can significantly enhance support from senior leadership by drawing their attention to IRF policy programs. Congress has the ability to communicate, through appropriations, where its priorities lie. A spike in appropriations designated for IRF programs would communicate to the Executive Branch that this is a policy area that demands greater attention.

## **Contributes to a Whole-of-Government Strategy**

Collaborating with and financially supporting NGOs who have established presences in foreign nations and relationships with both civil and political foreign leaders is an essential component to a whole-of-government strategy. In an interview with Jared Daugherty, who previously worked with IGE on their East Asia partnerships, he explained how IGE was able to leverage relationships with U.S. government officials, Vietnam government officials, and local religious leaders in Vietnam to create a “whole-of-society” response to religious persecution. In this way, IGE is able to take both a top-down (government to civil society) and bottom up (civil society to government) approach to building religious tolerance and open dialogue in Vietnam. As of 2012, IGE was the *only* IRF NGO that the Vietnam government would work with (Seiple 2012). Circumstances like this demonstrate how critical it is for Congress to appropriate resources to organizations that have unique access to the civil and political leaders who are capable of affecting change within their countries.

## **Promotes Long-Term Progress**

NGOs are also uniquely positioned to support long-term sustained change in foreign countries. In my interview with Daugherty, he emphasized that sustainable progress can only occur when foreign governments are convinced that religious freedom will *serve their interests*. Otherwise, any changes or improvements that take place will not last beyond the country’s current leadership. This is why it is essential to help foreign leaders make the connection between religious freedom and lower levels of violent extremism, greater community flourishing, and enhanced security (Jared Daugherty, personal communication, February, 13, 2018). NGOs can assist in this capacity.

NGOs like the Religious Freedom Institute work with scholars whose research demonstrates the relationship between religious restrictions and conflict. For example, Religious Freedom Institute Senior Fellow Nilay Saiya’s research demonstrates that “by and large, countries that engage in...religious discrimination tend to experience higher levels of terrorism than countries that do not” (Saiya, 2016, 11). Congressional support for NGOs sponsoring this kind of scholarship is essential to maintaining an authoritative body of research that can persuade foreign leaders as to the efficacy of permitting greater religious freedom.

## **SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

---

I recommend implementing policy alternatives 1 – 4. Recommendations 1 through 3 should be implemented sequentially. There is a natural progression that takes place from acquiring the Secretary of State’s support, to filling a new NSC position, to creating a PCC under the leadership of that position. Alternative 4 should be implemented as part of the regular Congressional appropriations process, through preparation of the President’s Budget Request. Alternative 4 will be more successful if support from the Secretary of State has been secured, as he is principally responsible for the State Department’s budget requests, which are submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for incorporation into the President’s Budget. With the State Department currently under budgetary pressure, securing the Secretary of State’s support for IRF policy is even more important. He will need to be thoroughly convinced that it is worthwhile to expend political capital to secure increased IRF appropriations in an environment where the State Department is facing across-the-board budget cuts.

## **APPENDIX 1: POLICY ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION MATRIX**

---

Policy alternatives were scored according to how effectively they met each criterion.

<b>POLICY ALTERNATIVE</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>Acquires Senior Leadership Support</b>	<b>Contributes to Whole-of-Government Strategy</b>	<b>Promotes Long Term Progress</b>	
<b>1. Amb. Brownback prepares persuasive presentation to Sec. State</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. Appoint IRF NSC adviser</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Create NSC PCC for IRF Policy</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Request increased appropriations for NGOs</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>

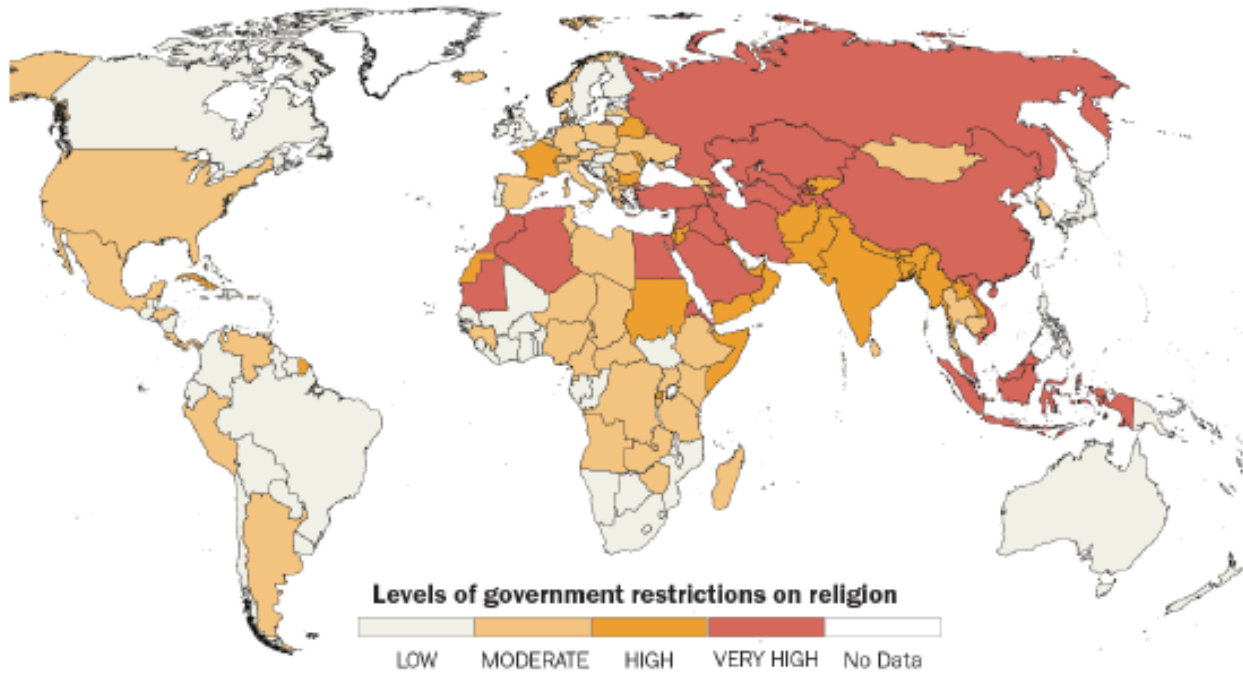
<p><b>Criteria Assessment Key:</b>  <b>0 = Fails to satisfy</b>  <b>1 = Partially satisfies</b>  <b>2 = Mostly satisfies</b>  <b>3 = Fully satisfies</b></p>
--

## APPENDIX 2: 2015 GLOBAL RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS

---

### Government restrictions on religion around the world

*Level of government restrictions on religion in each country as of December 2015*



**Source:** Pew Research Center

## REFERENCES

---

- Advancing human rights to combat extremism: Hearing before subcommittee on Africa, global health, global human rights, and international organizations of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, U.S. Senate, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong. (December 2017) (Testimony of Thomas Farr). Retrieved from <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA16/20171206/106698/HHRG-115-FA16-Wstate-FarrT-20171206.pdf>.
- Annual Report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2017.USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>.
- Baker, P, Gardiner, H, & Landler, M. (2018). Trump fires Rex Tillerson and will replace him with C.I.A. chief Pompeo. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/13/us/politics/trump-tillerson-pompeo.html>.
- Byrd, D. (2017). Federal appropriations law includes funds for D.C. vouchers, international religious freedom. *Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty*. Retrieved from <https://bjconline.org/new-federal-budget-includes-funds-for-d-c-vouchers-international-religious-freedom-050817/>.
- Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, H.R. 1625, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/hr1625/BILLS-115hr1625eah.pdf>.
- Elliot Abrams. (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2018 from <https://www.cfr.org/experts/elliott-abrams>.
- Farr, T.F., & Hoover, D.R. (2009). The Future of U.S. International Religious Freedom Policy (Special Report). Retrieved September 21, 2017, from <https://globalengage.org/faith-international-affairs/reports/the-future-of-u.s.-international-religious-freedom-policy-special-report>.
- Farr, T. F. (2012). Religious freedom abroad. *First Things*, (221), 21-23. Retrieved from <http://proxy.lib.duke.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/925793062?accountid=10598>.
- Farr, T. F. (2013). Our Failed Religious Freedom Policy. *First Things*, (237), 35-40. Retrieved from <http://proxy.lib.duke.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1448416475?accountid=10598>.
- Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2015, H.R. 1150, 114<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/1150/text>.

“Frequently Asked Questions.” *Institute for Global Engagement (IGE)*,  
[globallengage.org/about/faq](http://globallengage.org/about/faq).

“FY2018 State & Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill Approved by Subcommittee | United States Senate Committee on Appropriations.” *Majority News Release | Majority News Releases | News | United States Senate Committee on Appropriations*, 6 Sept. 2017,  
[www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/majority/fy2018-state-and-foreign-operations-appropriations-bill-approved-by-subcommittee-](http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/majority/fy2018-state-and-foreign-operations-appropriations-bill-approved-by-subcommittee-).

Government Accountability Office. (2013). *INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT: State department and commission are implementing responsibilities but need to improve interaction* (Report Number: GAO-13-196). Retrieved from:  
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/653335.pdf>.

Grim, B. J., & Finke, R. (2007). Religious persecution in cross-national context: Clashing civilizations or regulated religious economies? *American Sociological Review*, 72(4), 633-658. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200407>.

Jennifer S. Bryson. (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2018, from <https://www.jenniferbryson.net>.

Grim, B.J. (2008). Religious Freedom: Good for What Ails Us?. *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 6(2). 3-7. doi:10.1080/15570274.2008.9523330.

Inboden, W. (2008). Presidential Promotion of International Religious Freedom. *Review of Faith & International Affairs*. 6(2), 41-45. doi:10.1080/15570274.2008.9523336.

Inboden, W. (2012). Religious freedom and national security. *Policy Review*, (175), 55-68.  
Retrieved from  
<http://proxy.lib.duke.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1115478157?accountid=10598>.

International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, H.R. 2431, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. (1998). Retrieved from  
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/2297.pdf>.

Kit Bigelow. (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2018, from <https://www.kitbigelow.com/>.

Lee, M., Ferguson, H. T., & Oprysko, C. (2018) Pro bill analysis: H.R. 1625 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018. *PoliticoPro*. Retrieved from  
<https://www.politico.com/pro/blog/pro-bill-analysis-h.r.-1625-consolidated-appropriations-act-2018>.

“Madeleine Albright on the Intersection of Religion and Foreign Policy.” (2007). Retrieved March 9, 2018 from <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/madeleine-albright-on-the-intersection-of-religion-and-foreign-policy>.

Mertus, J.A., & Helsing, J.W. (2007). *Human rights and conflict: exploring the links between rights, law, and peacebuilding*. New York: United States Inst. Of Peace Pr.

“Mission and Purpose.” (n.d.). Retrieved November 19, 2017, from <https://www.christianityandscholarship.org/about-2/>.

National Security Presidential Memorandum – 4. (2017) Retrieved from

<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3536323/2017-07064.pdf>.

“National Security Strategy.” *NSS Archive*, The White House, 1 Feb. 2015, [nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf](http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf).

*Protecting International Religious Freedom: Hearing before Subcommittee on National Security of Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee*, House of Representatives, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2014) (Testimony of Katrina Lantos-Swett). Retrieved from <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/protecting-international-religious-freedom/>.

*Protecting International Religious Freedom: Hearing before Subcommittee on National Security of Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee*, House of Representatives, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2014) (Testimony of Robert T. Smith). Retrieved from <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/protecting-international-religious-freedom/>.

*Protecting International Religious Freedom: Hearing before Subcommittee on National Security of Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee*, House of Representatives, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2014) (Testimony of Tad Stahnke). Retrieved from <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/protecting-international-religious-freedom/>.

*Protecting International Religious Freedom: Hearing before Subcommittee on National Security of Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee*, House of Representatives, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2014) (Testimony of Thomas F. Farr). Retrieved from <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/protecting-international-religious-freedom/>.

*Review of the U.S. Government’s Role in Protecting International Religious Freedom: Hearing before Subcommittee on National Security of Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee*, House of Representatives, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong. (October 2017) (Testimony of Thomas Farr). Retrieved from <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/review-u-s-governments-role-protecting-international-religious-freedom/>.

Saiya, N., & Scime, A. (2014). Explaining religious terrorism: A data-mined analysis. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 32(5), 487-512. doi:10.1177/0738894214559667.

Saiya, N. (2016). Religion, state, and terrorism: A global analysis. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2016.1211525.

- Seiple, C. "Building Religious Freedom: A Theory of Change." *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 3, Sept. 2012, pp. 97-102. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/15570274.2012.706437
- Seiple, R. A. (2008). Methodology, Metrics, and Moral Imperatives in Religious Freedom Diplomacy. *Review of Faith & International Affairs*. 6(2), 53-56. Doi:10.1080/15570274.2008.9523338
- Shellnut, K. (2018). Sam Brownback finally confirmed as America's religious freedom ambassador. *Christianity Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/january/sam-brownback-is-ambassador-international-religious-freedom.html>.
- Stode, T. (2016, December 16). Congrats, Frank Wolf: Obama Approves Expansion of International Religious Freedom Act. Retrieved September 22, 2017, from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2016/december/congrats-frank-wolf-obama-expansion-irfa-religious-freedom.html>.
- The National Security Council: Background and issues for Congress. (2017). *Congressional Research Service*, Report No. R44828. Retrieved from <file:///Users/maryrzepka/Downloads/801051.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, Office of Inspector General. (2003, September). *Report of Inspection: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor* (Report Number: ISP-I-03-48). Retrieved from: <https://oig.state.gov/system/files/146416.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, Office of Inspector General. (2005, September). *Compliance Follow-up Review of Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor* (Report Number: ISP-C-05-41). Retrieved From: <https://oig.state.gov/system/files/121867.pdf>.
- Cooperman, A., Kishi, K., & Schiller, A. (2017). Global restrictions on religion rise modestly in 2015, reversing downward trend. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2017/04/24102207/Pew-Research-Center-Religious-Restrictions-2017-FULL-REPORT.pdf>