

## Religious Freedom Dialogue – Questions for Panelists

Note to each panelist: The panels at these policy dialogues will be different from the panels that you may have experienced at standard academic conferences in that they will be far more interactive. Rather than having each panelist give a prepared statement and then handing the conversation over to the audience, the moderator will actively facilitate a conversation among the panelists through questions and follow-ups directed at each of them. There will be no opening statement but rather questions that the moderator has prepared in advance for each panelist. In order to prepare for the panel, please read the questions that follow and think carefully about what your answer will be. During the last 10-15 minutes, we will open the session to members of the audience for Q&A.

Thursday, October 8, 11:00-12:15: the Case for Religious Freedom Policy

1. As democracies on both sides of the Atlantic seek to incorporate religious freedom into their foreign policies, what evidence is available that religious freedom promotes values that most people share: security, reduction of terrorism, democracy, other human rights, economic growth, the advancement of women's opportunities, etc.?
2. Is it wise for individual states to incorporate the explicit promotion of religious freedom into their foreign policies, say, through diplomatic advocacy? Or is this only likely to backfire, leading other states to complain that religious freedom is being imposed upon them?
3. Recently, a bevy of critics of a foreign policy of religious freedom has arisen who claim that religious freedom is a product of western history and experience and that its spread amounts to neo-colonialism. Does their criticism have merit? Or can a religious freedom policy be defended against it? On what grounds? Is religious freedom rightly regarded as a universal principle, as it is presented in the human rights conventions?
4. If western democracies are to incorporate religious freedom into their foreign policies, what is the best way to pursue such a policy with respect to the structure of governments? Should it be assigned to a bureau in the foreign ministry, for instance, analogously to the U.S., where this policy is assigned to an office in the State Department and an independent commission? Or should religious freedom policy be "mainstreamed" into the "high politics" of security and great power diplomacy so that it plays a part in the most central and important decisions of the government?

Thursday, October 8: 12:45 – 2:15: *Lunchtime Keynote Conversation: Overcoming Differences Between Western Democracies in Developing a Common Religious Freedom Policy*

1. Among the western democracies, the United States has had by far the oldest explicit religious freedom policy, dating back to 1998. What lessons from this policy can be drawn for other western democracies as they develop religious freedom policy? What aspects of U.S. policy ought to be “exported”? Should not be “exported”?
2. How do the domestic political-religious experiences of western democracies result in differences in their religious freedom policies? This might include their historical experience with religion and state, the religious character of their domestic constituencies, domestic dilemmas dealing with religion, features of their constitutions, and the like. For instance, does France’s relatively statist approach to religion result in differences in religious freedom policy from that of the United States, which practices greater differentiation of religious and political authority in the domestic realm?
3. What are the main obstacles to cooperation and multilateralism in religious freedom policy? How can (or should) the western democracies better pursue global religious freedom in concert?
4. What are the relative merits of pursuing religious freedom policy through individual states, perhaps in concert or alliance, and incorporating religious freedom into the policies of international and supranational institutions like the European Union and the United Nations?

Thursday, October 8: 2:30 – 3:45: *How Can Western Democracies’ Religious Freedom Policy Advance National and International Security?*

1. Prescinding from religious freedom for a moment, to what degree does religion cause war and terrorism? Is there a certain kind of religion or “political theology” that fosters violence? Now, what do your answers imply for religious freedom?
2. What is the evidence from around the world that religious freedom reduces terrorism and/or civil war? If there is such evidence, what explains this relationship?
3. If religious freedom tends to reduce terrorism and/or civil war, what does this imply for the policy of western democracies? Should they therefore promote religious freedom overseas more vigorously? Or will this promotion backfire or bring about perverse effects?

4. Is the realization of greater religious freedom overseas likely to reduce threats to western democracies? Is it likely to combat transnational networks that connect extremist groups to cells within the borders of these democracies?

Friday, October 9th 9:00 – 10:30: *The Broader Middle East and the Question of Violent Religious Extremism*

1. Should western democracies concern themselves with religion in their diplomacy towards the Middle East? Is there any way in which they might engage religious leaders or actors in attempting to secure peace and stability in places of violence? To what degree ought religious freedom to be a theme in this engagement?
2. To what degree and in what sense can the violence in Syria and Iraq be attributed to a lack of religious freedom? Most obviously, this might be considered with respect to ISIS' treatment of religious minorities and rival religious communities. But consider also whether the governments of Hafez or Bashar Assad, Saddam Hussein, or the post-Saddam Shiite government in Iraq bear any responsibility for the rise of ISIS and the civil war there, in particularly through their approaches to the governance of religion and their treatment of certain religious populations?
3. Is there a sense in which religious freedom might be part of the formula for peace and stability in countries like Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Libya? If so, is this a long term or short-term prospect? What are the implications for the policies of western powers?

Friday, October 9: 10:45 – 12:00: *India and the Far East*

1. To each panelist: What are the key respects in which religious freedom is curtailed in your country of expertise? Does the curtailment come from the government, from non-governmental actors, or both? Who are the constituencies behind the curtailments? That is, how widespread is support for the curtailment?
2. Ought western democracies to exert diplomatic influence with the specific goal of increasing religious freedom in your country of expertise? If so, what forms of influence would be most effective? What forms of influence are likely to have a negative effect? Why? Can western democracies exert more effective influence if they act in concert?

3. Are there ways in which increasing religious freedom in your country of expertise can also promote other important goals – the reduction of violence, stability, inter-ethnic harmony, democracy, economic growth, and the like? What are these ways?

Friday, October 9: 1:00 – 2:30: *Eastern Europe and Orthodoxy*

1. To each panelist: What are the key respects in which religious freedom is curtailed in your country of expertise? Does the curtailment come from the government, from non-governmental actors, or both? Who are the constituencies behind the curtailments? That is, how widespread is support for the curtailment?
2. Ought western democracies to exert diplomatic influence with the specific goal of increasing religious freedom in your country of expertise? If so, what forms of influence would be most effective? What forms of influence are likely to have a negative effect? Why? Can western democracies exert more effective influence if they act in concert?
3. Are there ways in which increasing religious freedom in your country of expertise can also promote other important goals – the reduction of violence, stability, inter-ethnic harmony, democracy, economic growth, and the like? What are these ways?

Friday, October 9: 2:45-4:00: *Prospects for Transatlantic Cooperation: Policy Recommendations*

1. Looking back over the past couple of days, what are the greatest benefits that the world can realize from greater cooperation among western democracies on religious freedom policy? What are the greatest obstacles to be overcome in realizing these benefits? What are the biggest challenges that western democracies face in promoting religious freedom in the rest of the world?
2. What are the most important recommendations for the governments of western democracies to arise from the deliberations over the past couple of days?