I can detect the near approach of the storm, I can hear the moaning of the hurricane, but I can't say how, when or where it will break forth... I don't think they know themselves what they will do, or that they have any plan of action except resistance of invasion of their religion, and their faith.¹

Religious groups of all kinds face increasing persecution, restriction, harassment and marginalization in much of the world. According to the non-partisan Pew Research Center, 75% of the world’s people — three out of every four human beings on the planet — live in countries in which there are severe governmental or societal restrictions on religious practice. As numerous analysts have demonstrated, where repression of any discrete group is systematic, violent, severe, and sustained, that group is far more likely to respond in kind — with an organized, militant response that is systematic, violent, severe, and sustained. The widespread and growing global crisis of religious persecution — targeting Muslims in Thailand and Burma, Christians in Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Syria, and Buddhists in China and Vietnam, to name just a few cases — is creating a spin-off global crisis of reactive religious militancy.

History tells us that the most violent, system-wide global security upheavals tend to arise when the fuel of radical ideology is thrown on the fire of a "revolution in rising expectations." A revolution in rising expectations occurs when widespread popular expectations about social circumstances are rising, while actual social conditions are stagnant or declining. By themselves, such revolutions can be severe and destabilizing. When such mismatches are interpreted through a certain kind of ideological grid, however, the results can be downright cataclysmic, throwing up severe threats to the global status quo — witness the English Revolution, American Revolution, French Revolution, Russian Revolution, and Iranian Revolution, all of which combined rising (yet disappointed) expectations with radical ideologies.

Religious militancy is among the most dangerous and pervasive global security challenges that fits this category because numerous factors have fueled a rising expectation on the part of religious communities everywhere that they should exercise greater influence in their societies, while the reality is that numerous factors have conspired to block or reduce their influence or repress them altogether. Indeed, the reality is that there is today what could be called a growing, gaping global religious freedom deficit. The combination of rising expectation and worsening reality is a combustible mix that is generating a growing number of violent religious ideologies and movements — and has been doing so at an accelerating rate across the globe for most of the last one hundred and fifty years. All of which prompts the following questions:

(1) Why is religious militancy becoming a pervasive and dangerous problem today? Why might new and violent forms of religious militancy be reasonably expected to develop in the next five years?

(2) In what specific contexts are religious insurgencies likely to emerge within the next five years and with what consequences for global security? And what plausible storylines — including causes and trajectories — lead to the emergence of violent forms of religious militancy and insurgency in particular cases?

(3) Are there prominent examples of religious communities responding to persecution in ways other than militancy? Given the availability of alternative responses, what mitigation strategies have policymakers pursued to counter religious militancy, and what strategies have proven most effective?

(4) How does all this relate to economic development? That is, how do policies that provide basic religious security and religious freedom for all people, and therefore dampen religious militancy, help to lay the foundations for economic freedom, growth and prosperity?
(1) **Why is religious militancy becoming a pervasive and dangerous problem today, and why might new and violent forms of religious militancy be reasonably expected to develop in the next five years?**

Particularly nasty and destructive revolutionary movements are likely to occur when three factors come together:

(a) A group has “great expectations” that it should enjoy real and growing power, freedom, security, and/or glory. These expectations may be fueled by circumstances, ideology, or both.

(b) The group with great expectations encounters great opposition; i.e. it becomes the victim of intense, persistent, and/or growing opposition, repression, and persecution. This opposition may not pose an existential or survival-level threat (though it may), but the key point is that it decisively thwarts or radically disappoints the group’s “great expectations.”

(c) The group with great expectations facing great opposition possesses great capacity to respond; i.e. the repressed group has the will and capacity to respond to the opposition it is encountering in a serious, systematic and sustained manner.

As the study of revolutions going back to French social thinker Alexis de Tocqueville’s classic analysis of the French Revolution has emphasized, it is not mere repression that triggers revolt and rebellion. What is far more likely to trigger rebellion is a situation in which a group with great and rising expectations experiences severe repression and hence the severe disappointment of those expectations. And revolutionary rebellion is even more likely to result, I would contend, when a religious ideology combines with circumstances to inflate the desire and expectation of a given group that it should experience greater freedom, power, and security rather than severe repression. Religious ideology is an especially powerful trigger of reactive violence in the face of severe repression because it often gives groups not only a great expectation but a transcendent expectation (if not a divine, prophetic promise) they can and will prevail against even overwhelming opposition — that a transcendent power guarantees their eventual success, however unpromising immediate circumstances may be. Religious ideology also widens the sense of an intolerable normative gap between the way things are now, in which the religious group is severely repressed and stymied and unable to carry out the will of God, and the way things would and should be, in which a religious vision provides a picture of perfect peace, harmony, and fulfillment of the divine will.

Certain religious ideologies, in other words, give some religious groups a belief that they act in God’s name, with a confidence in God’s power, and a firm expectation of God’s victory.

What particularly fuels the intensity of revolutionary militancy, then, is not the gap between the group’s actual circumstances of repression versus some abstract ideal of democracy or versus abstract human rights standards or versus the status quo ante (when they were not repressed or when their repression may have been less severe) but rather the yawning gap between the group’s actual repression and its ideologically charged aspirations and expectations. As Tocqueville pointed out long ago, this explains why revolutions may well occur in contexts in which political and economic conditions — including levels of repression — are less dire by certain objective standards than in other contexts that see no revolutionary violence. The real trigger for revolutionary violence is not objective conditions but the subjective (and ideological) framing of those conditions.
The reason that revolutionary religious militancy is becoming a greater global challenge today is very simple and follows straightforwardly from this analysis:

(a) A vast and growing number of the world’s religious groups have great expectations of freedom, security, power, and/or glory — expectations fueled partly by circumstances but especially by religious ideology. These growing expectations are partly a matter of circumstances. With the worldwide spread of modernization and democratization, more and more of the world’s people — including the world’s religious groups and communities — are experiencing modernity and political freedom. But also, even when they do not experience the fruits of modernity to a high degree, people everywhere are experiencing a rising expectation that modernity and democracy can, will, and should sweep over their societies. With the dramatic global expansion of democracy in the so-called “third (big) wave” of democratization (ca. 1974 – ca. 1991), which brought electoral democracy to large parts of Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe, and subsequent “fourth (mini) wave” of democratization (ca. 1991 – present), which has brought electoral democracy to other parts of Asia as well as some parts of North Africa and the Middle East, more people have a greater expectation that they are entitled to exercise significant influence over the political shape and destiny of their societies than any time in world history. Indeed, there is perhaps no region or large body of people in any part of the world in which this rising expectation of political influence is not present and operative. The recent events of the Arab Spring are testimony to the pervasiveness and power of this rising expectation.

At the same time, religious ideology combines with these democratizing trends to further heighten the political expectations of religious communities all over the world. Virtually all of the world’s religious communities have developed increasingly assertive and in some cases militant political theologies over the last two centuries and particularly in the last one hundred years. Space does not permit detailed exploration of this trend here, but every major religious tradition has witnessed the displacement of relatively quiescent and passive political theologies by more activist, engaged, and sometimes militant political theologies and religio-political movements, with Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, Hindu revivalism and nationalism, Christian Democracy, Christian “liberation theology,” modern Islamism, militant forms of Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity, and “Engaged Buddhism” being just a few prominent examples.

Among other factors, including endogenous dynamics within the religious communities, the challenge of Western colonial expansion and the opportunities and demands of competitive political systems have contributed significantly to the rise of these politically assertive religious ideologies and movements. One way to describe this phenomenon is to say that religious groups the world over have been “primed” to incorporate assertive and activist ideologies and organizational forms into their cultural toolkits in order to negotiate a variety of growing geopolitical, political, and social pressures. In any case, with the spread of these theologies and movements, more religious groups feel a divinely sanctioned right and duty to order and transform their societies (in some cases by peaceful, in other cases by violent, means) in accordance with their religio-political visions.

(b) Violently thwarting, and radically contrary to, their great expectations, a vast and growing number of the world’s religious groups face great opposition, persecution, and repression. In a September 2012 report, “Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion,” the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life reported trends on religious freedom from 197 countries. The report covered the period between mid-2009 and mid-2010. It found that up to mid-2010, 75% of the world’s population lived in countries with high religious restrictions, either in the form of government
restrictions on religion or high levels of social hostility involving religion. This was five-percentage-points higher than the level of global religious persecution reported just one year earlier. From mid-2007 to mid-2010, the number of countries with very high religious restrictions nearly doubled, from 10 to 18. The number of countries with very high social hostilities also increased, from 10 to 15. Meanwhile, the proportion of countries with high or very high restrictions on religious freedoms rose from 31% to 37%, while the proportion of countries with low levels of government restrictions decreased from 59% to 48%. Such restrictions affect members of every major religious tradition, though Christians and Muslims face persecution in more countries than any other groups.

The events in Egypt in recent days are a powerful and highly dangerous instance in which a powerful religious group with great, long-accumulating expectations has been subjected to massive popular (and, crucially, military) opposition. And this opposition culminated in the severe, shattering disappointment of those expectations with the forcible removal of their leader, Mohamed Morsi, as the President of Egypt — the first President in Egyptian history, moreover, who had been chosen in a free and fair election. The 80-year-old Muslim Brotherhood, perhaps the largest, most powerful, and most widely dispersed Islamist organization in the world, after achieving its greatest political success has just suffered its greatest political setback. Given its enormous ideological and organizational capacity (discussed below), we should expect the great disappointment of these great expectations to generate a great and widening backlash of Islamist militancy in Egypt and beyond.

(c) A vast and growing number of the world’s religious groups enjoy great capacity to mount an organized and violent response to the severe and growing opposition and repression they are experiencing. This capacity includes organizational sophistication, communications and messaging capabilities, networking capabilities, and financing capabilities. Religious communities have sophisticated organizations, which sometimes combine paramilitary capability with effective systems of community outreach and humanitarian assistance (e.g. Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the political arm of Lashkar-e-Taiba; the Muslim Brotherhood; the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh; Hizballah; and Hamas). Furthermore, the global spread of small arms makes it possible for more religious groups to acquire a paramilitary capability. In other words, religious groups have not only the ideology but also the global reach, the transnational networks, the resilience, the access to weapons, and the organizational capacity to become dangerous if and when they are pushed to do so.

Modern history provides numerous instances in which the combination of these three factors has generated violent revolutionary upheavals posing severe security threats to global great powers. The first great modern revolution, the Puritan Revolution, provides the paradigm, as it began with rising religious expectations following the English Reformation, followed by rising religious (and of course political) repression under Charles I and Archbishop William Laud, which was then interpreted through the lens of an ascendant and militant English Puritanism, which, in turn, succeeded in doing what was then unthinkable: sweeping away (for a time) the English monarchy. Space does not permit the detailed exploration of further examples, but they would include, inter alia:

- The American Revolution, in which a radical religious ideology seeded by the First Great Awakening gave colonial Americans a lens through which to interpret and condemn as intolerable British rule;
- The French Revolution, in which a combination of rising expectations and radical Rousseauan republicanism — a “political religion,” as Tocqueville rightly described it — triggered the violent overthrow of the Ancien Regime;
- The Great Mutiny of 1857, which was essentially a religious uprising, in which the rising expectations of Hindu and Muslim sepoys were radically disappointed by growing (and partly Evangelically
inspired) British intolerance and repression, and in which religion inspired the mutineers and their supporters to believe that the English would be “easily overpowered” by “divine prowess” and the “unseen power” because of English enmity towards the faith of the sepoys.²

- The Madhist revolution in Sudan in the late 19th century. Building on grievances about severe repression, Mohammed Ahmed fought the colonial Egyptian government of the Sudan supported by Britain and proclaimed himself the Mahdi. For a time (1881-1885), Ahmed defeated Egyptian and British forces and established an Islamic state in the Sudan.

- The mid-twentieth century Buddhist revolution, in which the great expectations unleashed by the 2500th Buddha Jayanti — the 2500th year after the Buddha’s passing into nirvana — fueled massive Buddhist political mobilization, particularly in countries with large communities of Theravada Buddhists, including Ceylon (today’s Sri Lanka), Burma, and Vietnam. This mobilization was followed by severe religious repression of Buddhists in South Vietnam, which led to the famous self-immolations of Buddhist monks that severely undermined the legitimacy of the US-backed government of Ngo Dinh Diem. These revolutions helped make the *sangha* (assembly of Theravada Buddhist monks) an important vehicle of religious militancy in both countries and helped to create the conditions that eventually led to Sinhalese-Tamil strife and civil war in Sri Lanka and the establishment of a military junta in Burma.

- The Iranian Revolution, which resulted in part from the severe and prolonged repression Shi’ite Muslims (especially clergy) experienced under the secularist and secularizing dictatorships of Reza Shah (1925-1941) and his son Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979). The systematic persecution and marginalization of formerly quiescent Shi’ite community led some of its leaders to develop a militant, millenialist political theology, which then helped to inspire a violent revolutionary movement, which in turn helped to inspire modern Islamist movements throughout the world.

(2) In what particular contexts and following what specific trajectories and “storylines” are violent forms of religious militancy and insurgency likely to emerge in the next five years, and with what consequences for global security?

I am tempted simply to say, with Captain Martineau in 1857, that “I can detect the near approach of the storm, I can hear the moaning of the hurricane, but I can’t say how, when or where it will break forth... I don’t think they know themselves what they will do, or that they have any plan of action except resistance of invasion of their religion, and their faith.” But the following are some kinds of militancies that are likely to appear, and plausible storylines tracing their origins and development.

(a) Organized Christian militancy in the Middle East, Africa, and/or Asia. In the last two decades, even as there has been a rising tide in global democracy and some other indices of freedom, the world has also seen a rising tide of global persecution of Christians. Historical precedents are instructive concerning the possible consequences of such persecution. In the 1920s, Mexico's new revolutionary government sharply curtailed religious freedom, triggering a full-scale violent uprising, "La Cristiada." The resulting civil war took the lives of nearly 100,000 people and threatened American regional and oil interests before it ended in 1929. In post-independence India, ethno-religious groups, mostly Christians, mounted violent insurgencies against the Indian government in northeastern India over more than fifty years (from the early 1950s to the early 2000s), in which the total number of Indian security forces killed rivaled the number who have been killed in Kashmir.

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Today, Christian persecution appears to be spreading. Between 2006 and 2010, according to the Pew Research Center, Christians faced governmental or social persecution in 139 countries. And it is particularly concentrated in a few places. Increasingly severe pressure on large Christian minority populations in Egypt, with about 5 million Christians, and Syria, with about 2 million Christians, raises the prospect of a modern-day "Cristiada," perhaps organized and funded with the help of nearby Lebanese Christian militias. Christians in Syria, who are 10% of the country’s population, have been the focus of increasingly vicious attacks in the ongoing civil conflict, as they are among the only communities without an organized paramilitary. If pressures on them — and on other Christians in other places — persist, that can be expected to change, possibly further escalating and internationalizing these conflicts in ways that will directly affect global security.

One particular plausible storyline whereby repression of Christians may generate a reactive violent militancy with severe consequences for the US is in the current context of rising repression of Coptic Christians in Egypt. The Copts have an ancient and glorious history; they have a credible claim to being the original Egyptians. They are not a foreign, colonial offshoot. They participated with great enthusiasm in the revolt against Mubarak, partly incensed and mobilized by the Alexandria bombings of a Coptic church a few weeks before the uprising (on New Year’s Day, 2011). They have had great expectations, along with other Egyptians, that the overthrow of Mubarak would bring real change, freedom, and democracy. However, these great expectations have been followed by great disappointment. Copts have suffered growing repression and increasingly numerous violent attacks as the political power of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist groups have increased in post-Mubarak Egypt. Moreover, rhetoric about Copts as a “foreign” fifth column doing the bidding of Western powers — rhetoric that in the past was reserved only for the extreme fringe of Egyptian politics — is now a feature of mainstream Egyptian political discourse (a fact that is not surprising in a context in which powerful Islamist parties are seeking any possible advantage in competitive electoral processes).

Today, Coptic repression and disappointment have reached crisis levels, and it is now plausible to anticipate that — sometime in the next five years — they could generate an organized and sustained militancy in response. One can already trace a steady escalation in the Coptic response to chronic repression. In the past, Coptic church leaders and ordinary Copts seldom responded at all — at least publicly — to Muslim violence against Coptic targets or government repression of Copts. But about ten years ago, Copts who became the target of mob violence began to throw rocks in response. In the aftermath of Mubarak’s overthrow and with the rise of Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist power, there are now growing reports of Copts carrying and using small arms (including instances in which Copts have fired at and killed Muslims). In a “democratic” context in which Copts are far too small a population to buy “normal” political protection — especially when the democratic context is one that is actually an Islamist-majoritarian illiberal democracy — enough Copts may reasonably conclude that they have no reasonable option other than to organize a violent militant movement to defend themselves and secure at least the minimal political objective of survival. The presence of a large and wealthy Coptic diaspora — which includes disaffected wealthy Copts such as Naguib Sawiris who under pressure have either recently emigrated or are slowly withdrawing their business and other interests from Egypt — may help funnel financial and other resources to fund the organization of such a movement.

Making this prospect even more likely was the crossing of a red line in the Coptic imagination that up till now was always unthinkable: the direct attack on the Coptic Cathedral during a funeral procession on Sunday, April 7, 2013. The Coptic Cathedral is the See of St. Mark and the cathedral of
the head of the Coptic Church, the Coptic Pope, who is believed to be the successor of St. Mark (currently Pope Tawadros II), just as the head of the Catholic Church is believed to be the successor of St. Peter. Indeed, Copts view the Cathedral of St. Mark as their Vatican. During an incident (in which the details are somewhat murky) that came after Muslim violence against Copts the previous week, in which (on April 5), an imam called on Muslims to kill Christians, Muslims attacked a funeral procession at the Cathedral, and police seem to have joined in the attack by firing tear gas canisters directly onto the Cathedral grounds. By all accounts, such an attack never occurred before in Coptic history and has thus shattered a psychological threshold. Pope Tawadros, who has normally been restrained in his rhetoric, issued a fierce condemnation of the attack and briefly went into seclusion — traditionally the most dramatic form of protest a Coptic Pope can issue.

The uniquely proud history of the Copts and their valiant role in the 2011 revolution give them a religiously charged and high expectation that they deserve far better than the escalating violence they now face. I suspect that there is now a better than 50% chance that some Copts will begin to form an armed militant resistance as the only means available to secure their survival and freedom in contemporary Egypt. If the answer to such a prospect is that it is improbable because it would mean a certain bloodbath for Egypt’s Copts, many Copts are already saying that such a bloodbath could not be worse than the slow-motion bloodbath they are experiencing now. My own contacts close to the Coptic community inside and outside Egypt confirm that this is how Copts are in fact talking now. Indeed, Copts on their own are discussing the prospect of an organized violent response. The widespread and growing availability of small arms in Egypt — some coming from Libya, some home-made — makes it easy to imagine that the Copts are already taking steps to stockpile weapons, at least on a small scale.

If an organized militant response does appear, the consequences for global security and stability would be dire. Organized Coptic violence could well attract the support of other liberal forces in Egypt, and the result could well be a sustained insurgency and perhaps a full-blown civil war. The US and other Western countries have gone out of their way to avoid siding with the Copts and their concerns in any public way, because of the their felt need to placate the Egyptian government given other strategic equities (particularly the Egypt-Israel relationship). An open conflict could make it politically difficult if not impossible for Western powers to continue their public (albeit tepid) support for the Egyptian government, and could threaten the entire US-Egyptian relationship, the Egyptian-Israeli relationship, and the entire architecture of Western policy in the Middle East. Such a conflict could also create an ideal recruiting context and headquarters for Islamist militants the world over — a golden opportunity to kill “Crusaders” in untold numbers. One suspects that radical Islamists in Egypt are fully aware of what an opportunity this could be, and are organizing violence against Copts precisely in the hope of goading them to undertake reactive violence, against which Islamists can in turn react even more violently.

Of course, the recent overthrow of Morsi creates a somewhat different context, one that is likely to see some relaxation of pressure on Copts and other minorities and liberal forces, if only in the short term. However, it is also possible if not likely that whatever government and political coalition eventually emerges is going to have to include Islamist and even ultra-Islamist elements, and that the Copts will therefore continue to face a variety of formal and informal pressures and modes of repression. In other words, it is all too predictable that we are due for yet another cycle of great expectations and great disappointment — one that, in the end, has a high probability of generating a great religiously militant reaction. For one thing, in the immediate, present context, the Muslim Brotherhood is likely to bear its fangs in one way or another to express its fury over the dismissal of
Morsi, and it may well do so through a campaign of organized violence against the Copts, whose vulnerability and visibility in the anti-Morsi coalition now make them ideal targets of Islamist violence. Such violence may go beyond even the extreme and escalating violence we have seen in recent months, and trigger in turn an even more organized and violent response from Copts, creating a potentially devastating and highly destabilizing vicious cycle.

(b) Revolutionary ideological militancy in sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing rising expectations given the developmental and economic success of some of its major countries (Nigeria, South Africa, Botswana, Rwanda). Plus, there is an inchoate sense that, sometime soon, Africa deserves a shot at rapid growth and development. Yet Africa’s overall developmental indicators — corruption, economic growth, democratization, conflict resolution — all remain poor and in some cases even declining. Given the extent to which state power in sub-Saharan Africa is frequently captured by particular tribal, ethnic, or religious groups at the expense of others, groups left out in the cold are likely to be ripe for violent, radical, and destabilizing mobilization. The Islamist insurgency in Mali, which seemingly came out of "nowhere," must be understood in this context. Given sub-Saharan Africa’s rising expectations, depressing trajectory, and innumerable axes of conflict, such radical insurgencies should be expected to multiply, with potentially dangerous consequences for American security.

One particular plausible storyline is in Nigeria. Violent Christian paramilitary gangs have already appeared, and become increasingly active, in the face of Islamist violence in Nigeria. In the face of the activities and unrestrained violence of Boko Haram, which has increasingly targeted defenseless Christian churches and neighborhoods, it is plausible that wealthy Nigerian Christians could work with existing Christian paramilitary gangs to create a more organized Christian militant movement in northern Nigeria. If Nigeria’s security forces prove inept or otherwise incapable of stopping Boko Haram, Nigerian Christians may seek to do the job themselves. It is conceivable that some Nigerian Christian politicians could or would even quietly or publicly support the formation of Christian militias to defend their Christian constituents if they cannot be defended in any other way. The involvement of Nigerian Christian converted to Islam in the attack on a British soldier in Woolwich on May 22, 2013, has horrified Nigerian Christians, and will almost certainly intensify a sense that Nigerian Christians must do something radical to oppose the threat of militant Islam.

The consequences for global security would be far-reaching. A quasi-religious civil war (on the scale of the Biafran war in the not-too-distant past, for example, in which there were some religious elements) could threaten America’s growing oil and natural-gas interests in Nigeria. Furthermore, just as in the scenario described for Egypt, a widening Christian-Muslim conflict in Nigeria could be an ideal way to increase recruitment to Islamic militancy in sub-Saharan Africa, strengthening radical Islamic movements throughout the region.

(c) Reactive Islamic militancy in Myanmar. One product of the mid-twentieth century Buddhist revolution described above was the mobilization of a highly politicized and militant Theravada Buddhist clergy in what is now the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. This had a “positive” side, in that Buddhist monks organized an attempted “Saffron Revolution” to challenge the ruling military junta in 2007. But with the dissolution of the junta and the advent of competitive politics, the main expression of Buddhist mobilization has been a violent and unstinting campaign against the Muslims of Myanmar, led by the monk Wirathu, who has referred to himself (!) as the “Buddhist Osama bin Laden.” Wirathu’s “969” Buddhist-nationalist campaign has whipped up extreme anti-Muslim sentiment and increasingly severe violence against Myanmar’s Muslims.
Muslims in Myanmar make up somewhere between 4% and 5% of the country’s population, and, like the rest of the country, have experienced rising political expectations following the end of the junta. However, many Muslims in Myanmar are members of the Rohingya ethnic group, and the Rohingya have not been eligible for citizenship since 1982. In southwestern Rakhine state, more than 100,000 Muslims from the Rohingya ethnic group have been driven from their homes.

Buddhist-inspired violence against Muslims in Myanmar has now reached a crisis point. It poses perhaps the primary challenge to Myanmar’s democratic transition, to its efforts to attract foreign investment, to its relations with Western countries, and potentially to its relations with its large neighbors India and China. If current trends continue, the prospects for improvement appear dim. Even if all of Myanmar’s Muslims were enfranchised, religious and ethnic prejudice against them is so severe, and their population is so small, that they would not likely enjoy political security in any consolidated democratic political system that is likely to appear in Myanmar.

If so, it is possible that some Muslims in Myanmar will join with Islamic radicals in other parts of Southeast Asia to organize a militant and violent campaign against the government of Myanmar and Buddhists in the country. In early May, Indonesian security forces foiled a plot by radical Islamic elements in Indonesia to bomb the Burmese embassy in Jakarta. At this point, the probability of an organized Islamic militant campaign arising in Myanmar may well be less than 50%. However, the violence against Myanmar’s Muslims has been so severe and sustained, and this community remains so disenfranchised, that there is a growing chance that Islamic organizations outside the country could link up with Muslims inside the country to create a violent insurgency or militant movement. With some of the recent violence occurring near the border with China, it is possible that a Muslim insurgency could affect trade with China. It is also possible that a Muslim insurgency could complicate relations with India, which may feel growing political pressure (from its large and vocal Muslim minority) to intervene on behalf of Myanmar’s Muslims in some way, especially to avoid an influx of refugees. China, in turn, may feel pressure to increase its support for the Myanmar government. In such a struggle, the United States is likely to be faced with an unpalatable choice between ignoring the interests of a persecuted Muslim community and losing influence with the new government of Myanmar and driving it closer to Beijing.

(3) How can religious communities and policymakers — perhaps working with each other — avoid or counter religious militancy? Are there prominent examples of religious communities responding to persecution in ways other than militancy? And what mitigation strategies have policymakers pursued to counter religious militancy, and which have proven most effective?

In terms of consequences for global security, recent history demonstrates that today’s failures to take pro-active measures against the growing epidemic of global religious persecution are sowing the seeds of tomorrow’s threats to global security and stability. For example, among today’s most severe threats to global security — radical Islamist extremism and terrorism — arose as a direct consequence of the failure of the world’s leading powers (especially the US) over several decades to hedge against the long-term dangers of global religious persecution in general and the repression of Muslims in particular. Today’s radicalization of some Sunni and Shi’ite forms of Islam (a phenomenon and threat that is far from having played itself out) occurred in important measure as a reactive response to severe repression of revivalist Muslim communities in Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia in the course of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1940s through the 1970s.
Given the dangers and pervasiveness of revolutionary religious militancy as a global security challenge, it must become a leading priority for the US intelligence and policy communities to closely monitor and pro-actively counter the radicalization of religious groups (not just Muslim groups) throughout the world. The danger of reactive religious militancy deserves hedging against not only because of its seriousness, but also because policy tools and strategies can work effectively across all the major cases of religious persecution, no matter which religious community happens to be the specific victim.

However, it must first be understood that the challenge of religious militancy requires focused, proactive measures that go beyond general democracy promotion or pro-development strategies. In particular, democratization is not a sufficient counter-radicalization strategy. Many religious communities are facing serious and potentially radicalizing religious persecution even in democratic or democratizing countries with at least some track record of competitive elections — such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Myanmar, and Egypt.

Religious groups can be tempted to eschew the path of militancy only if they are given meaningful voice in the political process. Of course, this is as simple to enunciate as it is difficult to implement. But there are no shortcuts. In other words, the only meaningful strategy is one of robust religious freedom promotion, in which the US works systematically with the countries concerned to give all religious communities not only basic protection and security from violence but also real freedom to exercise public voice and influence in the political systems and processes that shape these countries’ futures. This is the only way to short-circuit the destructive vicious cycles and security dilemmas whereby threatened religious groups follow the path of militancy, which only causes governments to respond in ways that further reduce the freedom and security of the religious groups in question, which, in turn, only further fuels violent militancy and exacerbates conflict (a vicious cycle that has been on vivid display in the last several decades).

The country of Senegal provides important lessons concerning possible alternative pathways to short-circuiting religious conflict and militancy. Senegal contains many factors that have led to religious violence in other countries, including a dominant religious tradition, a wide variety of ethnic groups, and a sizable religious minority group. Despite the presence of such factors, the country’s long-running separatist conflict has not resulted in a radicalization of its minority or majority populations, and it has maintained a relatively high level of political stability. Indeed, Senegalese religious ideas and actors are involved in political life, and religious politics are of a moderate and tolerant nature. While numerous factors undoubtedly contributed to the development of a tolerant and liberal society, the ability of religious groups to function freely and independently of the government likely prevented the rise of radical elements that would have generated violent religious extremism in the country.

In fact, historical and contemporary social factors might well create the expectation that Senegal should be experiencing violent religious extremism. Senegal is a multi-ethnic state that emerged from colonial rule in the last century, a combination of factors that in other countries has contributed to civil war. Islam has played a prominent role in Senegalese politics, a factor that has helped generate radical Islamist movements in other Muslim countries. Moreover, Senegal has a regional ethno-religious divide: a significant Christian population resides in the western and southern parts of the country. Similar religious divides have laid the groundwork for conflict elsewhere. Like many African countries, Senegal is a multi-ethnic state whose modern borders arose in part through the policies of colonial powers. France took control of Senegal in the mid-1800's and ruled the country until independence in 1960. Post-independence Senegal was composed of several ethnic groups, none of which constituted a majority of the population. Additionally, its early history was marked by failed attempts to unify with neighboring
states. Upon independence, Senegal and Mali were joined in a confederation that lasted only a few months, and Senegal later formed a confederation with Gambia that existed from 1982 to 1989.

Senegal is also a majority-Muslim state with a history of Islamic involvement in politics. After independence, the country’s Sufi orders became a dominant force in Senegalese politics, wielding significant power over political decisions. In recent years more conservative Islamic groups have become active in Senegal, such as the Islamist “Ibadou Rahmaine” movement, which provides social services and education throughout the country. Finally, Senegal is home to a significant Catholic minority population. The country is 94% Muslim, 5% Roman Catholic, and 1% animist. Senegal’s Catholic population is concentrated in the western and southern parts of the country, leaving it for the most part geographically separate from the Muslim majority.

Yet Senegal is a remarkable case of “the dog that didn’t bark.” Despite circumstances that in other nations have combined to generate high levels of violent religious extremism, Senegal has not experienced violent extremism to any significant degree. Potentially extremist Islamist groups operate in Senegal, but they have had less impact on Senegalese politics than the more moderate Sufi orders. A separatist conflict exists in the Christian-dominated southern region, but it has not taken shape as a religious conflict, even though similar circumstances have produced severe religious or ethno-religious conflict in other countries. Most importantly, despite some setbacks, Senegal has managed to maintain a relatively robust democratic civic and political life.

Islamist groups are active in Senegal but have had little influence on Senegalese society. Senegal’s majority religion is marked by what some observers term a “tranquil and moderate Islam” fed by the country’s powerful Sufi orders. The Sufism of Senegal has historically been very tolerant of religious differences and not prone to violence. Islamist groups have struggled to organize themselves successfully and have failed to alter the tolerant quality of religious discourse in the country. Furthermore, even though a separatist conflict has been raging for decades in the Christian south, it has not taken on a religious dimension and has not risen to the levels of brutality characteristic of other ethno-religious conflicts. The conflict between the government and the separatist Movement of the Democratic Forces of the largely Catholic Casamance region began in the early 1980’s and continued through the 2000’s. Fighting has resulted in approximately 1300 deaths over the course of the conflict, although the intensity has declined in recent years and the conflict appears to be dissipating. Despite its duration and the nation's ethno-religious divide, the fighting has not radicalized the population or taken on a religious character. Indeed there have been very few instances of religion-related hostility in the country in the past several years.

In sum, notwithstanding its ethno-religious divides, its religiously-influenced politics, and its political violence, Senegal has maintained a relatively stable political system, and relatively high levels of religious freedom, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. Although Senegal had only two presidents between its independence and 2000, an open election was held in 2000. Another presidential election was held in 2007, which helped to strengthen the democratic process in the country. Despite problematic developments in recent years — the current President has taken steps to consolidate his rule at the expense of political competition — the country's political system remains relatively open when compared to others in the region.

While numerous factors underpin Senegal's relatively successful political system, the status of religious freedom has very likely contributed to it. The post-independence autonomy of religious leaders vis-à-vis the state and the mutual cooperation characterizing their relationship have precluded the kinds of
conflicts that have arisen from Islamist activism in other states. The provisions for religious freedom in the country’s legal system have prevented religious grievances from emerging on the part of either the Muslim majority or the Christian and animist minorities. Non-religious political and socioeconomic factors undoubtedly played a large part in averting the rise of violent extremism, but it would be difficult to ignore the role of religious freedom.

There has been a long history of separation, cooperation, and accommodation between the country’s religious and political leaders. Sufi orders in Senegal wield significant influence over society, with a presence in most facets of the economy, culture and politics. However, the country’s religious groups did not use their power to contest the state for control of society. Senegal’s Sufi orders worked with French authorities in the colonial period, and then established a close relationship with the country’s first President, who was Catholic. A relationship of mutual dependence has resulted. Political leaders rely on religious orders for support and Sufi orders look to the state for the freedom to operate. Although increased opposition to Senegal’s ruling elite from the 1980’s on put some strain on this relationship, it has for the most part persisted to the present.

Despite the importance of Islam in Senegalese politics, the state is a secular one, with serious and effective constitutional provisions for religious freedom for both majority and minority faiths. There is some government involvement in religion, including its operation of Islamic schools and the voluntary use of Islamic law for marriage and inheritance. Despite these provisions, state limitations on religious freedom are relatively minimal. Senegal is one of the few Muslim countries that ranks “low” in both government restrictions on religion, and social hostilities toward religion, in the Pew Research Center’s global studies of religious freedom and religious restrictions.

Other factors besides religious freedom likely contributed to this outcome, but Senegal’s liberal allowance for robust religious participation in civil and political life has undoubtedly played some role in the country’s relative absence of violent religious extremism. Senegal’s officially secular constitution makes it difficult for political elites to manipulate religion for political gain, and make it difficult for any religious community to feel it is politically vulnerable or otherwise on the back foot, while the prominence of Senegal’s Sufi order limits the government’s ability to ignore or undermine the country’s religious elements. Finally, the minimal restrictions on religious practice have probably prevented radical elements of the country’s Muslim and Christian communities from dominating discourse. The absence of violence arising from Senegal’s religious groups, and their participation in Senegalese civil and political life, very likely helped a stable and liberal democratic political process to emerge.

The implications of the foregoing are clear. The more religious repression frustrates the political expectations of religious groups of all kinds around the world, the more likely it is that numerous, dangerous forms of religious militancy will continue to appear and re-appear. Of course, the ideologically charged expectations of some groups are not reasonable and can never be satisfied without detriment to the freedom and security of others. But even in such cases, the most intelligent response to the danger of religious militancy is a determined policy of religious security that pledges to safeguard the physical safety, social standing, and political voice of all religious groups in society on terms of equality. For example, it is a mistake to respond to the assertive mobilization of Islamists or Coptic Christians in Egypt with harsh, sweeping crackdowns on either group. Such crackdowns are likely to intensify the sense of religious and political insecurity and vulnerability that generated the mobilizations in the first place, and they may then assume an even more dangerous, militant form. On the other hand, a policy of comprehensive religious security, consistently and courageously applied, is likely to make the path of religious militancy seem far less desirable and necessary in the eyes of the
vast majority of ordinary people, and it is likely to make the task of defeating hardened religious militant networks and organizations far easier.

(4) How does all this relate to economic development? That is, how do policies that provide basic religious security and religious freedom for all people, and therefore dampen religious militancy, help to lay the foundations for economic freedom, growth and prosperity?

So it is clear that, especially amidst rising expectations, a lack of religious security and a lack of religious freedom are likely to generate dangerous forms of religious militancy. On the positive side, something else is worth noting. The presence of religious security and religious freedom are likely to promote economic freedom, growth and prosperity.

At the beginning of the 17th century, Thomas Helwys, the English founder of the Baptist denomination, moved to the Netherlands because of its greater toleration and the potential economic and social benefits. “Behold the Nations where freemde of Religion is permitted,” wrote Helwys in 1612, “and you may see there are not more florishinge and prosperous Nations under the heavens then they are” (Helwys 1998 [1612]). Later in the 17th century, William Penn consistently argued for religious freedom on the basis of its economic and political advantages (Penn 2002). In the mid-18th century, the governors of the British Board of Trade observed that a “free exercise of Religion is so valuable a branch of true liberty, and so essential to the enriching and improving of a Trading Nation, it should ever be held sacred in His Majesty’s Colonies.”

As political scientists Anthony Gill (2008) and John Owen (2010 and Forthcoming) have noted, economic and political arguments such as these contributed in significant ways to the growing acceptance of religious liberty in Great Britain, the American colonies, and the independent United States in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Their recent work and that of other scholars suggest a strong correlation between religious freedom and societal flourishing across a range of critical cases.

Furthermore, nations that rank high on measures of religious liberty also tend to be the most economically developed and most politically free. Taking GDP per capita (nominal) as a reliable proxy for average wealth levels, of the top 30 nations in the world as measured by the International Monetary Fund, 26 of them generally respect religious freedom. More fine-tuned statistical analysis reveals strong correlations between measures of religious freedom and levels of economic and political development (cf. Grim 2008, Grim and Finke 2011, and Alon and Chase 2005). For example, sociologists Brian Grim and Roger Finke (2011) have analyzed the cross-national relationship between religious liberty, on the one hand, and, numerous indicators of economic development and political freedom, on the other, including basic civil liberties, gender empowerment, longevity of democracy, lower poverty, economic freedom, lower inflation lower income equality, and foreign direct investment. They found that the correlations between religious freedom and all of these indicators are statistically significant, with particularly robust relationships between religious freedom and political freedom, freedom of the press, civil liberties, gender empowerment, longevity of democracy, lower poverty, and economic freedom.

These strong and highly significant correlations suggest that religious freedoms, other freedoms, and economic development are closely intertwined. But they do not establish causality. What is the nature of the relationship? When and how might religious freedom shape wider economic and social development? The scholarly literature suggests that religious freedom may promote economic development under some conditions through at least five causal pathways. In some of the pathways, which are enumerated below, there is a fairly direct relationship between religious freedom, on one
hand, and economic freedom and prosperity, on the other. In others, there is an indirect relationship, which runs through a number of intervening variables, mechanisms, and processes.

(a) **The Ideas Pathway:** One way religious freedom fosters societal flourishing in its economic dimensions is the mechanism of religious ideas. Religious freedom makes it possible for religious ideas that promote economic development (as well as social and political development) to take hold and shape society for the better. One form of this mechanism is relatively direct. Religious liberty allows various religious ideas to be propagated in society. To the extent that religious liberty permits certain religious ideas, values, or norms conducive to economic growth and political freedom to flourish, economic development and political democracy are likely to ensue.

No work in the social science canon better represents the link between religious ideas and economic outcomes than Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1992 [1904/1905]). A Calvinist ethical code that downplays consumption in favor of self-discipline and thrift allowed financial capital to pool in places heavily influenced by this theology, most notably northern Europe. A variant of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination argued that those favored by God would be favored in the present time with worldly success, thus providing people an incentive to work hard as a means of demonstrating they were among the elect. Moreover, according to eminent British historian H. R. Trevor-Roper, a Calvinist ethos was most able to flourish in areas of northern Europe such as the Dutch Republic and England, which enjoyed higher levels of religious toleration (Trevor-Roper 1967). Environments of relative religious openness allowed the economically beneficial ideas of Calvinism to spread and exercise a significant societal influence.

However, does not religious liberty make it possible for all kinds of ideas to persist and spread and therefore potentially undermine societal flourishing? In one sense, yes. But the point is that it is only an environment of full religious security or full religious liberty that creates the kind of context in which a wide variety of religious ideas can be tried and tested for their societal consequences. *Over the long run, the open and competitive social environment created by religious freedom enables ideas that are growth promoting and freedom promoting to be recognized and accepted as conducive to societal flourishing.* For example, according to Robert Woodberry’s research on religious competition between Protestant missionaries and other religious communities over the last two hundred years in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, many non-Protestant groups over time learned to recognize some Protestant beliefs and practices as conducive to societal flourishing. These ideas included voluntarism (Woodberry 2012). Environments of relative religious liberty made it possible for Protestant ideas such as this to be introduced and to spread to many societies, and made it possible for non-Protestant groups to absorb and replicate them. The result of such freedom and inter-religious competition, over time, was that socially beneficial religious ideas became more and more widely accepted and practiced. The spread of these ideas, in turn, had a measurable impact on economic development, not to mention political democratization.

One way to describe this mechanism is that religious liberty fosters a variety of “natural experiments” or “social laboratories” that reveal the social effects of different religious ideas. Given enough time, this disclosure effect also serves to help some religious ideas win more adherents and social influence than others. Through a kind of sociological natural selection in which pro-developmental religious ideas gain acceptance and exercise widening social influence, while less socially beneficial ideas decline, religious liberty may enhance long-term economic prosperity and political freedom.
(b) The Skills Pathway: Religious groups often promote organizational and other economically and politically useful human capital skills among their members. The freer those religious groups are to pursue their activities, therefore, the more they will enhance the overall pool of human capital conducive to economic prosperity and political freedom.

Being religious is not solely a matter of holding religious ideas. Most religious traditions encourage communal activities that derive from religious ideas and doctrines (such as obedience to God, charity, virtue) but also require organization. People must hone leadership skills, find ways to coordinate their activities, develop interpersonal skills, and acquire self-discipline. Add to this a whole host of organizationally specific tasks such as bookkeeping, providing childcare, and even janitorial or landscaping services, and one quickly recognizes that religious organizations often serve as low-cost schools for individuals to develop economically and politically useful habits and skills.

To the extent that religious organizations rely on and train volunteers to perform these organizational tasks, religious adherents gain skills that are transferable to the secular economy and polity, possibly stimulating entrepreneurial activity, enhancing productivity, or fostering civic skills. For example, proselytizing religions often require a cadre of trained volunteers who are capable of “selling” (preaching) a “product” (a set of theological beliefs) to potential “consumers” (adherents). These interpersonal skills are potentially transferable to the secular worlds of commerce and politics. To the extent that religious liberty permits proselytizing, more missionaries will be trained and provided with essential human capital that will benefit the entire economy.

More importantly, attracting new believers requires making the proposed faith credible and attractive. Given that missionaries are trying to convince unaffiliated individuals to seek intangible spiritual goods, they often use tangible benefits to enhance their credibility. While the proffering of benefits can be exploitative, it can also generate positive economic results. Missionaries teach people a variety of skills — from reading to better farming techniques — as a means of building trust. To the extent that such skills develop human capital (or even physical capital) and are useful in promoting other economic activities, missionaries create important conditions for economic growth.

Woodberry’s (2012) landmark thesis on the relationship between “conversionary Protestants” and democratic development also demonstrates the logic and importance of causal pathways linking religious liberty, portable skills, and economic and political development (see also Gallego and Woodberry 2010). Woodberry calls attention to the vigorous efforts of Protestant missionaries to spread a variety of concrete skills, such as literacy, because reading the Bible was a main component of their theology of personal salvation. This also required the skills and technologies associated with mass printing. Gill (1998) noted a similar pattern in Latin America. As Protestants entered the region in the early to mid 1900s, they attracted members of the lower classes by offering a variety of educational opportunities (e.g., literacy training, communication skills) that were soon replicated by the Catholic Church in an attempt to retain the allegiance of a previously neglected population (another form of peaceful religious competition). Elizabeth Brusco (1995) also found that the skills imparted to men by evangelical churches led to an almost immediate improvement in the financial situation of households. In a similar vein, Willems (1955) demonstrated how Protestants encouraged many Latin Americans to abandon counter-productive habits, while Shah and Shah (2010, 2013) more recently showed how evangelical values led to self-empowering economic behavior among the poor in India. Likewise Becker & Woessmann (2009) and Blum and Dudley (2001) argue that Weber’s “Protestant ethic” was based not so much on a shift in economic ethos or
values as on the promotion of certain skills — literacy again being crucial — that built human capital and economic prosperity (cf. Woodberry 2012 and Woodberry and Shah 2004).

This relationship between religion and the development of civic and economic skills is closely connected to religious freedom. The more religious groups enjoy freedom to perform organizational and recruiting functions independently of control or financing by other institutions, particularly the state, the more they will depend on their own organizational capacity and a wide range of individual volunteers, who will in turn need to develop skills that are readily transferable to the economic and political realms.

(c) The Charity/NGO Pathway: Markets often misallocate resources and promote inequities that lead to social conflict and hence diminish the possibility for growth. When they enjoy religious freedom and security, private religious charities and NGOs can ameliorate these problems and alleviate poverty in a way that is more practical and efficient than government action alone. Religious charities may also serve as a more effective — if not the only effective — means of dealing with other social ills that diminish the possibility of economic development and societal flourishing (e.g. alcohol and drug abuse). Important among economically relevant social ills are those pertaining to the family. For example, in the U.S., there is significant evidence that children of single parents are far more likely to be poor than are children in married families (Haskins and Sawhill 2003).

Hunger, poverty, disease, crime, drug abuse, out of wedlock births, family breakdown, poor educational systems, and other social maladies prevent numerous societies and billions of people from flourishing. In modern times, there have been two major means of dealing with these and other social problems: private organizations or government-organized social welfare. Historically, religious organizations have been instrumental in mobilizing and delivering private charity and other goods. Nearly every major religious tradition has some commandment to help those in need, usually through some form of charitable giving to the poor (Malloch 2009). The early Christians organized medical care for the needy, and orphanages and elder care were activities managed by churches or monasteries during the Middle Ages (Stark 1996). Today, religious groups and faith-centered NGOs provide an array of social services to those in need.

The links between religious liberty and economic development are straightforward. Private religious communities compete in a “charitable market” for donations and volunteers. Sometimes they mobilize their donations and volunteers to organize social services in a way that is more efficient than other entities, such as the state, or they provide services other institutions are unable or unwilling to provide. They also compete with secular ideas and organizations to define common moral and social norms. If greater religious liberty enhances the capacity of religious communities to organize and maintain private organizations and promote positive moral and social norms by reducing the political and social costs imposed on faith-based activity, society will benefit economically.

Furthermore, to the extent that governments are less efficient or effective in meeting all or some social needs, affording the religious sector the freedom to meet these needs can lower the burden on government finances and promote economic development and overall societal flourishing. For example, to the extent that religious communities enjoy the cultural and political freedom to promote strong and stable marriages as well as remedy social ills such as alcoholism, this kind of exercise of religious liberty can have the effect of fostering the economic well-being of families as well as overall societal flourishing (Brusco 1995, Shah and Shah 2010).
Is there significant evidence that private religious organizations often address social and economic needs that would otherwise be unmet, or that they often address them more efficiently than do non-religious institutions? The literature on religious organizations and social welfare is extensive, with the bulk of it appearing in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It demonstrates that religious charities provide an array of social services, including food banks, homeless shelters, education, emergency relief, financial assistance, and even banking services (cf. National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions 1997). Printz (1998) reports on a survey of 266 congregations in the greater Washington, D.C. area, which accounted for over 1,000 types of social services amounting to over $19 million in value.

Ample research demonstrating the magnitude and efficiency of faith-based social services can be found in Cnann, Wineburg, and Boddie (1999), Faver (1986), Johnson (2012), Mapes (2004), Hodgkinson, et al. (1993), Jackson et al. (1997), Monsma (2004), Monsma and Soper (2006), Netting (1984), Reese (2001), and Wineburg (1993). Recently, Davis and Robinson (2012) offered a global perspective on how religious groups provide social welfare by looking at cases within four faith traditions, including the Muslim Brotherhood, the Sephardi Torah Guardians, Communion and Liberation, and the Salvation Army. Some of the literature suggests that religious NGOs sometimes address poverty, disease, and social inequality more effectively and efficiently than government entities (cf. Gugerty and Prakash 2001).

In order to demonstrate that there is a “charity/NGO pathway” linking religious freedom and economic development, however, it is not enough to demonstrate that faith-inspired charities and social services are effective. The second step is to point to evidence that religious freedom strengthens the ability of religious individuals and organizations to provide social services. That is, the less a society imposes restrictions on such activity, the more it will experience this activity and its beneficial consequences.

It turns out that this claim, too, finds widespread support in the literature. For example, Stephen Monsma (2012) has argued that hiring criteria that violate the principles of conscience of religious charities can dampen their effectiveness or compel them to stop offering certain services. Restricting what services religious charities can offer and where they can offer them also potentially limits their effectiveness.

(d) The Migration Pathway: Individuals with productive skills are attracted to regions that are marked by high levels of religious security or religious freedom. When they migrate, as they have throughout history and often do today, they bring human capital that is crucial for economic prosperity.

Human capital is the knowledge, training, and ingenuity that human beings possess, and it is a key ingredient in economic development (Becker 1994 [1964]). A society can build its human capital in two ways: it can invest in education, or it can attract individuals with desirable skills from elsewhere. Religious freedom contributes to the first route by making it possible for religious communities to organize educational programs and institutions, as we noted above in the “charity/NGO pathway.” But religious freedom also contributes to the second route by adding to the qualities that potential immigrants are likely to find attractive in a host country.
In other words, an environment of religious security or religious freedom can add to the incentives that draw people to one society rather than another. Such incentives may include higher living standards, greater economic opportunity, stability, and general conditions of political freedom, and the freedom to express one's religious beliefs in private and public life. To the extent that intelligent, entrepreneurial, and hard-working individuals are drawn to a society and expand its productivity by making more efficient use of its resources, they will enhance economic development and growth. This is true not only in terms of attracting migrants to settle in a territory but also in attracting merchants with whom to trade.

William Penn and other advocates of religious freedom understood this logic as far back as the 17th century. Penn appealed to the King of England to allow religious freedom in Pennsylvania on economic grounds. Around the same time, the Netherlands increasingly realized that toleration of various sects, including Huguenots fleeing France, helped to generate a boom in trade, productivity, ingenuity, and overall economic prosperity (Owen 2010). Those who uproot themselves from their traditional homes and flee to a new region are often risk-taking individuals with significant material and intellectual resources — attributes useful for innovation and entrepreneurship. When the Dutch sailed to the New World, they brought with them the realization that religious liberty, migration, and trade were interconnected. The settlement of New Amsterdam in the American colonies was above all a commercial venture that came with it the explicit instruction that colonists not restrict the freedom of those with different faiths to practice their religion because it was understood that religious persecution would be bad for business and bad for settlement (Haefeli 2012; Smith 1973; Zwierlei 1910).

In fact, the empirical patterns underlying the best-known argument linking religion and economic development — Max Weber’s “Protestant Ethic” thesis noted above — probably had more to do with the magnetic attraction of relative religious security or religious freedom than Calvinism. Based on a comparative analysis of numerous regions in early modern Europe, H. R. Trevor-Roper argued in a classic article on the Weber thesis that greater religious toleration was the core reason some Protestant regions of northern Europe surged ahead in terms of economic growth and trade. Why? It was because of their higher levels of religious security or greater religious toleration that these regions were able to welcome religiously diverse merchants and entrepreneurs — Calvinist, Jewish, Lutheran, and Catholic — fleeing Catholic areas such as Spain and Flanders that had become less tolerant and more socially rigid after the Counter-Reformation. According to Trevor-Roper, what was new in this era “lay not in the entrepreneurs themselves, but in the circumstances which drove them to emigrate” (Trevor-Roper 1967).

The connection between religious liberty and immigration was re-emphasized in later centuries as the need to attract labor in the latter half of the 19th century prompted greater toleration for both Catholics and Jews. As Chiswick (2008) notes, the religious freedom provided by America provided an attractive environment for many Jewish immigrants who subsequently went on to achieve great economic success. Gill (2008) demonstrates that a number of Latin American countries began to make the connection between religious tolerance, migration, and economic commerce, including the highly trade-dependent nation of Chile (Collier 1997). While not technically dealing with cross-border immigration, Koesel (2012) has observed that Chinese entrepreneurs are driven to opportunities affiliated with greater freedom of spiritual conscience.

In sum, the literature shows that the connection between religious liberty and economic development through the pathway of immigration is strong. Most societies that seek to be
economically prosperous need skilled immigrants and brisk commerce. But the evidence suggests that societies lacking religious freedom will find it more difficult to attract either.

(e) The Networks Pathway: The freedom of religious groups encourages the formation of independent associations, networks, and social capital, which contributes to economic activity, an engaged citizenry, and autonomous organizations that can check the state and promote freedom.

In terms of political freedom and democracy, the freedom of religious association contributes to social capital and a higher density of groups in civil society, which reinforces both the functioning of democratic institutions and their legitimacy. Freely operating religious communities also often draw otherwise disenfranchised or voiceless groups into the political process, making the political system more inclusive and responsive. As Verba, Schlozman, and Brady showed, involvement in certain kinds of churches plays a crucial role in giving Americans of low socio-economic status a sense of political efficacy and a strong impetus to civic participation (1995). Furthermore, religious individuals and communities operating freely in civil society limit the powers of government. Conversely, restrictions on freedom of religious association atomize and weaken civil society, leave state power unchecked, and weaken political legitimacy.

There is abundant historical and contemporary evidence that the freedom of religious communities to operate independently of civil authority gives them the capacity to challenge regimes that are lacking in freedom and to serve as the "leading edge" of historical change that brings about liberal democracy. Looking at the historical long haul, one could argue that the Church's demand for its institutional and associational autonomy — i.e., its freedom — under the Roman Empire created an independent sphere of civil society that paved the way for the separation of powers and for government authority to be accountable to a higher law, both essential features to modern liberal democracy (Garnett 2010). The emergence of religious freedom in Christian circles following the religious wars, especially in England and America, can also be seen as the "leading edge" of progress towards democratization that followed — in England in the 1688 Glorious Revolution and in the American Revolution, culminating in the Constitution of 1789. Following Emile Perreau-Saussine, the French Catholic Church's assertion of autonomy vis-à-vis the pope and its influence in creating a differentiated civil authority helped to further the evolution of a separation of powers (Perreau-Saussine 2012). Finally, in the third wave of democratization, religious actors who enjoyed a modicum of religious freedom under dictators and demanded expanded religious freedom were often pivotal in bringing down dictatorships and ushering in democracies (Philpott 2004, 2007).

In other words, there is evidence that beachheads of religious security and diversity laid the foundations for the development of other fundamental freedoms at a later point in time. And the key mechanism whereby this often occurs is through the formation of autonomous and sustainable religious networks and associations. As several different strands of research have suggested, there have been cases in which the autonomy, independence, and freedom of religious institutions at one point in time proved a beachhead from which these religious institutions successfully advocated for an expansion of other freedoms at a later point in time. Philpott and Shah (2006) and Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011) analyze numerous Western and non-Western cases that suggest that where religious actors enjoy at least some institutional independence from political authorities and to that extent some measure of institutional religious freedom, these religious actors are more able and willing to undertake pro-democracy activism and work for wider fundamental political and economic freedoms in their national contexts, as well as political reconciliation, making the consolidation of stable democracy more likely.
In terms of economic development, the presence of vibrant religious communities in economic and civic life can limit the expansion of government and guard economic freedom. The freedom of religious association contributes to social capital in terms of social networks and social trust, which can facilitate economic exchange and reduce corruption, and, in turn, promote economic growth.

**Conclusion**

*There is, in other words, no viable strategy in the face of the threat of religious militancy than what might be called a strategy of comprehensive religious security, i.e. a strategy of aggressively promoting religious security for all groups in every society that is of significant importance for global security. Such a strategy is likely to reap a wide array of benefits. On one hand, it is likely to diminish the likelihood of religious militancy, violence, and political instability — dangerously interrelated dynamics that are now all too intense and common in our world of rapidly rising expectations, and all too likely to develop even in contexts in which they have so far been absent. On the other hand, a strategy of comprehensive religious security is also likely to enhance the world’s prospects for more rapid and complete economic development, along with social development and political democratization.*

Such a policy is easier to preach than to practice, to be sure. However, in our impoverished, unstable world, which walks a knife’s edge of dangerous threats, there is no substitute.
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