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IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORLD'S CHANGING RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE FOR THE CHAPLAIN CORPS

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Abstract

The world is growing more religious at the same time as the United States is becoming increasingly secular. Because religion provides the basic worldview and spiritual support for most of the world, this growing divide between the religious world and the secular west promises a future more fraught with misunderstanding and conflict. In order to address this growing divide, the Department of Defense needs to intentionally build capacity for religious engagement, not just in combat and stability operations, but also before conflict begins. By building bridges between the religious world and the secular west, the United States may be able to build peace and prevent war.

Introduction

At the same time the United States is continuing to grow more secular, the World continues to grow more religious. This growing bifurcation between the US and the rest of the world makes it imperative for western nations to develop the capacity to address the religious component of conflict. Beginning, perhaps, with Auguste Comte, the father of modern Sociology, the West has moved away from religious-based worldviews and toward a secular view.[1] Because religious beliefs provide the foundation for way most of the world thinks, this difference in worldview promises a world more fraught with the potential for miscalculation and misunderstanding. In fact, US experience in both Iraq and Afghanistan display the challenge of engagement with unfamiliar religious realities.[2] Therefore, the United Sates must intentionally develop its religious capacity to understand and build bridges with the religious world. In this paper I examine the data on the changing religious landscape of the world, identify some possible implications, and provide suggestion for a feasibility study going forward.

Premise

According to the Pew Forum, the US is becoming increasingly secular while the rest of the world becomes more religious.[3] This is seen in the growth and distribution of those referred to by the Pew Forum as 'unaffiliated.' Pew defines 'unaffiliated' as those who have no specific religious affiliation[4]. The majority of this group consists of Atheists, those who do not believe in any form of God and Agnostics, those who do not believe it is possible to know if God exists. The rest consists of those who have some non-specific religious belief. By 2050, it is projected that the world wide population of unaffiliated people will grow to over 1.2 Billion people.[5] However, this absolute growth does not tell the entire story. While it is true the unaffiliated population will grow in absolute terms, unaffiliated will shrink as a percentage of the overall

worldwide population. Today the approximately 1.1 billion people who comprise the religiously unaffiliated make up 16 percent of the world population.[6] By 2050 that world-wide percentage will shrink to 13 percent.[7] Because of this changing landscape, military Chaplains have a significant role to play in both building peace and supporting operational stability in both today and in the future.

Not only will the percentage of unaffiliateds across the globe shrink in the coming decades, but that population will be increasingly centered in the West, particularly Europe and North America. As one example, consider the United States. As the unaffiliated percentage of the population shrinks worldwide, it will grow in the United States. In 2010 the unaffiliated population of the United States made up 16 percent of the total population. This was on par with the percentage of unaffiliateds worldwide. By 2050, the population of the United States will be 26 percent unaffiliated.[8]

As the world becomes increasingly religious, the United States is an increasingly secular nation. This means the US will increasingly have a culture with, "attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basisis increasingly."[9] In the world of 2050, while most cultures worldwide still look to religious belief to shape their perceptions of the world and activities in it, the US will not. While this is not necessarily a positive or negative development, it is likely to have significant effects.

The growing divide between the secular west and the religious world will lead to increased opportunities for misunderstanding. Each person and culture understands the world around them through what philosophers refer to as a worldview. Dr. Ronald H. Nash describes a worldview as "a conceptual scheme that contains our fundamental beliefs; it is also the means by which we interpret and judge reality." He identifies five core beliefs that shape how the

individual understands the world around him. Those beliefs include God, metaphysics, epistemology, human nature, and ethics. The idea of a worldview is, then, simply the way one views the world. Whether or not God exists is a foundational belief that largely shapes other beliefs. The theist is a person who affirms the existence of a God or Gods. The theist's belief in a God, and what that God is like, will also shape his or her view of mankind, right and wrong, along with a whole host of other decisions. Conversely, the atheist, one who denies the existence of any God, will not look to a religious tradition for this understanding. Starting with such a radically different beginning, theists and atheists are likely to arrive at different conclusions about everyday life. Those differences, on a national level, are likely to shape misunderstanding, disagreement and even war.

As just one example of this difference, S.K. Moore addresses the role of religious practice. In the west, we commonly view religious practice as a private matter. One may choose to worship or not to worship, and that does not impact one's social role. In America we might take the wall separating church and state as an example of this. As a society we have historically preferred to keep government separate from religion. However, that is not true in many other nations. In highly religious countries, such as Mexico or Iran, not only is religious belief likely to be venerated, but it is also going to permeate every level of society from the individual all the way to the government. While secular societies tend to use secular institutions to achieve solutions, religious societies are just as likely to look to religious institutions. In those societies religious leaders are likely to have great credibility and influence with government leaders. As Marshall Breger noted of Iran, "if you want to talk with the Iranians, you have to enter through the portal of religion."[10]

In religious societies, the "indigenous religious leader is one of the more effective resources available to resolving conflict and sustaining peace."[11] Recognizing this reality, Kofi Annan wrote in 2001, "Religious organizations can play a role in preventing armed conflict because of the moral authority that they carry in many communities. In some cases, religious groups and leaders possess a culturally based comparative advantage in conflict prevention, and as such are most effective when they emphasize the common humanity of all parties to a conflict while refusing to identify with any single party. In addition, religious groups could mobilize non-violent alternative ways of expressing dissent prior to the outbreak of armed conflict."[12]

The growing secularization of the west means we will have fewer leaders, both military and political, with personal knowledge and experience with any form of religion. Instead, steeped in a secular worldview, they will find interacting with religiously based societies challenging, at best, and with serious consequences, at worst. While that may not seem to matter in the west, those leaders will be ill-equipped to understand and address many global conflicts. From their secular world-view, western leaders are likely to miss religious aspects of conflict, or to assume religious reasons where they do not exist.[13] This inability to accurately perceive the role of religious belief in conflict will handicap western attempts to promote peace and prevent hostilities. Further, secular leaders will be ill equipped to leverage the power of religious belief in preventing conflict. Of the key characteristics Douglas Johnson and Brian Cox identify as necessary to successfully engage religious issues, one stands out. That one is "a conscious dependency on spiritual principles and resources in the conduct of peacemaking."[14] The earliest example of this practice is none other than Saint Francis of Assisi. During the fifth crusade, Francis sought to prevent European armies from assaulting Muslims in Egypt. Having failed in this mission, he set out to bring peace between the Christian and Muslim forces. To do so,

Francis travelled to Egypt and surrendered himself to Sultan al-Malek al Kamil. Unsure of how he would be received, and accused by the Sultan of espionage, Francis was able to build a relationship of respect with his captor. While much of their interaction is lost to history, the two men shared a mutual respect born of religious devotion. While secular leader may well be able to understand spiritual principles and resources, he or she will not display a conscious dependency upon them. Further, this leader must be more than simply a technical expert on religious issues, but must be one who "understands the psychodynamics of religion . . . because he or she has experienced them personally and has meditated or reflected on them."[15] In short, to be an effective bridge into religiously based communities, the bridge builder must, like Francis, be a person of faith himself.

Opportunities and Challenges

As the bifurcation between the secular west and religious world grows, western leaders and diplomats will become more increasingly ill equipped to understand and address the causes of conflict. This presents a future where conflict, both religious and secular, increases as western governments' voices decrease amidst the growing cacophony of religious nations. In short, an ideological chasm is growing between the US and the world which needs to be bridged. In order to address this change, western governments should build capacity to understand and leverage the power of religious belief as one method of preventing conflicts. This capacity should be holistic. In his paper on Faith Based Diplomacy for the Army War College, Major DeLoia suggested, "Government organizations, international government organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the American clergy."[16] Each of these areas play an important role in promoting peace throughout the world. In the Department of Defense we already possess

a resource capable of bridging the growing gap between the US and the world. This paper focuses on Military Chaplains, who could provide a positive influence upon peace building.

To appreciate the unique capability presented by Chaplains, we need to understand what kind of person is best suited to bridge the gap between the secular west and the religious world. Having seen the unique qualifications Chaplains possess, we turn to a few examples from history that prove their value and finally we turn to the future to consider how the US can best leverage its Chaplains as one tool in the peacebuilding toolbox. While Chaplains cannot address every issue, and are ill-suited to addressing many of the root causes of conflict, they are able to help bridge this religious-secular divide.

In Faith-Based Diplomacy, Douglas Johnston argues for the use of faith in diplomatic relations. In doing so, he presents the concept of a new kind of diplomat, a 'Faith-based Diplomat.' In describing this person, Johnston identifies five key attributes, which we find present in military Chaplains. First, the faith-based diplomat must have a 'conscious dependency on spiritual principles and resources in the conduct of peacemaking.' Second, faith-based diplomats must operate with spiritual authority. Third, faith based diplomats must "have a pluralistic heart." Fourth, faith-based diplomates must take a "transcendent approach to conflict resolution." Fifth, faith-based diplomats must be able to "persevere against overwhelming odds."[17]

Military Chaplains meet all five of these criteria. In order to become a Chaplain, a candidate must meet a few prerequisites. First, they must possess, "Master of Divinity or equivalent theological degree with no less than 72 hours from an accredited institution."[18] This degree, typically earned at a Seminary or similar institution, is a professional degree. As such, it is not simply a degree in religious thought but also training in religious practice. In addition to

the educational requirement, candidates must possess, "Two years of religious ministry leadership experience."[19] This requirement is fulfilled in civilian ministry, ensuring candidates are able to put into practice the lessons they have learned in their education. Finally, candidates must also, "Receive an Ecclesiastical Endorsement from a DoD-recognized endorser."[20] This usually involves an additional process. For the author, it was a three-year long process to receive Ordination, an official recognition of one's role as a religious leader. In short, the path to becoming a Chaplain largely ensures that the men and women of the Chaplain Corps fulfill Johnson's first requirement of conscious dependence upon faith.

In addition to this conscious dependence, Johnson's 'faith-based diplomats' must operate as recognized religious authorities. Of course the process of ordination and ecclesiastical endorsement confers upon the Chaplain that recognition. As a part of the accession process, an ecclesiastical endorser affirms to the department of defense that the candidate for Chaplaincy is a recognized religious leader within his or her religious order. By definition, then, Chaplains meet the second requirement Johnson puts forth.

Johnson's third requirement for the faith based diplomat is a commitment to pluralism. Pluralism is, "a condition or system in which two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., coexist."[21] By its very nature, the Department of Defense is a pluralistic organization. Military members come into the military from a wide variety of religious backgrounds. In order to operate within the United States Department of Defense, Chaplains must also affirm their commitment to pluralism. Within the Chaplain Corps we find Chaplains from many different religious traditions working side-by-side. In order to operate in this environment, Chaplains develop the capacity to team with men and women who may not share their own religious belief. The nature of the Chaplaincy, then, is pluralistic. Chaplains embrace

and live out pluralism as a part of their daily work. Like Francis, this embrace of pluralism enables Chaplains to engage religious leaders outside of their own faith or denomination, but within a religious context not interfering with diplomacy.

A fourth characteristic of this 'faith-based diplomat' is the diplomat's 'transcendent approach to conflict resolution." It goes without saying that Chaplains take a transcendent approach to most things. Already they possess training and experience at conflict resolution in relationships, often coming from a faith-based, or transcendent approach. If we return to our example of Francis, it was specifically his 'transcendent approach' that enabled his work with the Sultan. He approached the Sultan as a Christian, first, one who believed that God is a God of reconciliation.

Finally, Johnston expects his 'faith-based diplomat' will be one with great perseverance. While religious belief is not the sole domain for perseverance, perseverance and faith often go hand in hand. Practically, Chaplains have displayed great perseverance with the multi-year accessions process. After undergraduate, they must attend a seminary (or similar institution), often another 3 year commitment. Having finished their education, they must gain two years of civilian ministry experience before they are eligible to access into the Chaplain corps. From start to finish, a Chaplain has invested almost 10 years in preparation before they become Chaplains. Of course, most faiths also provide a transcendent perspective on perseverance which undergirds the Chaplain's work. For example, in the Christian Scriptures, we find passages like Romans 5:3 & 4 which provide a transcendent view of perseverance. "3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."[22]

The Chaplain's Unique Competencies and Historic Examples

While Johnston's "Faith-Based Diplomat" is not specifically about military Chaplains, he does concede that Chaplains possess all the prerequisites for this role. Of course, there is one enormous caveat which must be considered. While Chaplain's possess Johnston's prerequisites, they are not diplomats. They are Chaplains. As Chaplains they are not just religious leaders, but also military officers. As such, there are likely to be hard limits in how much bridge-building can be accomplished by the Chaplain corps. On the other hand, Chaplains are positioned to assist Commanders with building the bridge to religious communities in their areas of responsibility. With additional training germane to this function as not-quite diplomats, Chaplains are able to assist in this role. In fact, like Francis, Chaplains have performed this role in various situations for over 100 years.

Military Chaplains provide a proven force in being that is beset positioned to begin this intentional capacity building. Throughout history, military Chaplains have been used to engage local religious communities. In 1898, Brigadier General Thomas M. Anderson sent Chaplain William D. McKinnon to engage the archbishop of Manila in peace talks.[23] In the effort to win hearts and minds in Vietnam, Chaplain Calvin J. Croston administered humanitarian assistance to "schools, orphanages, leper colonies, military and civilian hospitals, mission, and district penal confinement centers.[24] During a deployment in 2010, Marine leaders used Chaplains for religious leader engagement. After meeting American Chaplains, one Afghan Mullah said, "Before today I just through that all Westerners were infidels and I was against you. But today I saw something that I'd never seen before . . . I will work with you."[25] In religious communities, Chaplains have already proven the value of using Chaplains to engage indigenous religious leaders.

Chaplains as the Staff Officers

The limit here seems to be the connection with a Command. As a Staff Officer, the Chaplain must engage in these actions at the direction and with the support of, his or her commander. Which means Chaplains will be limited in where and with whom they may build relationships. On the other side, the indigenous leaders will recognize the Chaplains as military officers, thus potentially limiting the degree to which they are willing to trust the sincerity of a Chaplain's efforts.

Not only are Chaplains capable and proven resources for engaging in faith-based peacebuilding efforts, they are also a force in being.[26] Currently there are approximately 4000 Chaplains actively assigned to the Department of Defense. Those Chaplains include Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard, from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. While the government can, and should develop faith-based diplomats, the Chaplain Corps provides a force in being, able to be leveraged in peacebuilding.

As a force in being, Chaplains are also present at many levels. Combatant Command (COCOM) Commanders, whose role often includes engaging with national leadership, have command Chaplains working for them. These Chaplains are able to advise the commander on issues of religious concern, but area also capable of building bridges into the local community and, in some cases, may be better suited to understand and speak to conflicts, particularly in religious based communities where conflicts are based upon religious differences.

As a proven force-in-being with the capabilities to fill a 'faith-based diplomat' role, Chaplains are a ready resource to address conflict. Moving forward, the Chaplain corps should seek opportunities to further train Chaplains while also taking part in efforts to build bridges between the secular US and the religious world. This training could include deeper

cultural/religious studies, international security/diplomacy studies, and similar topics helping to prepare the Chaplain for building bridges into foreign cultures.

Possible Adjustments to the Chaplain's Role

One avenue for leveraging the Chaplain Corps is through humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations. At present, the United States engages in humanitarian assistance missions around the world. These missions involve operations other than war, spanning a wide spectrum from responding to natural disasters to using Civil Engineers to assist in homebuilding projects.[27] These missions exist, in part, to help shape perceptions about the United States and our military. While well intended and fully justified, these missions can be met with misunderstanding. In some instances, the very fact that military members are providing humanitarian assistance undermines the United States' message.[28] This concern is understandable. Yet, by including Chaplains and, perhaps, giving the Chapel opportunity to plan some of these humanitarian operations, under command authority, some trust may be established.

Additionally, many humanitarian Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) prefer to have little or no contact with US forces. By avoiding direct contact, NGOs hope to not simply maintain their independence, but also make sure their customers perceive them as independent. Military humanitarian aid can never be seen as independent organizations. Here another potential roel for Chaplain's arises. As a natural religious-military bridge, Chaplains may be the best staff office to act as bridge between NGOs and local/theater Commanders. This is especially true when thinking about faith-based NGOs. As a point of further study, the potential for Chaplains to bridge the NGO-Military gap should be investigated further.

Having proven the value of using Chaplains to engage indigenous religious leaders during conflict and post-conflict, using them to engage indigenous religious leaders, under specific circumstances, during humanitarian missions makes sense. Using Chaplains in this capacity achieves two key goals. First, it provides Chaplains with the religious engagement experience they may need during their next deployment. Instead of hoping Chaplains have the skills and necessary abilities to engage indigenous religious leaders, humanitarian missions allow for training and exercising the skill set. Second, making Chaplains a key part of humanitarian outreach efforts promises to provide similar benefits to those seen in stability operations. Without the specter of combat hanging over the situation, Chaplains can build relationships with local religious communities, when possible. Those relationships may encourage positive views of the United States that become helpful during future conflicts. Additionally, those relationships may help to prevent conflict by identifying potential sources of trouble which, as a disinterested third party, a Chaplain may help to resolve.

A further way to involve Chaplains in humanitarian missions is in planning. Due to their nature, humanitarian missions do not always achieve purposes that are useful to the local community.[29] Often planned at the COCOM level, humanitarian missions may suffer from many fatal flaws. In some cases that will be due to poor understanding of local needs, while in others it may be constrained by host nation concerns and limitations. By involving the COCOM Chaplain's staff, some of those limitations could be mitigated. Overtime, as relationships with local religious communities develop, it is possible a Chaplain could offer key insight into the value of any given project to the local community. For this reason, COCOM Chaplains should have a knowledgeable and trained Chaplain available to assist with planning humanitarian missions.

A second way to leverage the Chaplain Corps is to adapt Johnson's concept of religious attaché.[30] For Johnston, this individual operates in the Foreign Service and is assigned to countries where religious issues are complex. These attaches would work to build relationships with indigenous religious leaders and groups "in order to understand better and deal more effectively with the religious imperatives of any given situation."[31] Further, this religious attache assists in reconciliation efforts between disputing parties. While clearly focusing upon a State Department Foreign Service Officer, it provides an opportunity to the military Chaplain.

The Air Force selects qualified officers for programs such as the International Affairs Specialist program. In this program, officers receive training to become either a Political-Military Affairs Strategist (PMAS) or a Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS). The goal of the PAS program is to provide future leaders with "valuable political-military education and experience," while the goal of the RAS program is to develop "in-depth regional expertise."[32] Given the growing importance of religion to the majority if the world, the USAF Chaplain Corps should examine the possibility of creating a Religious Affairs Strategist program. This program would seek to develop selected Chaplains beyond the basics of comparative religion and cultural awareness to produce Chaplains able to think deeply and aid commanders in develop peacebuilding plans in religious communities.

A third opportunity for the Chaplain Corps going forward is to provide necessary training for military members to help bridge the religious-secular worldview divide. The Chaplain Corps should develop a broad based religious training program that would introduce military members to: 1) world religions, 2) worldview thinking. The Chaplain Corps could select Chaplains to receive training in both of these areas, who then are tasked with providing that training at various schools and units throughout the department of defense. By helping military men and women not

only understand world religious, but appreciate how religious people think, approach and solve problems, the Chaplain Corps is strategically equipping the future force for success.

In order to maximize the opportunities to train others and to build bridges between cultures, further education is an opportunity to better equip Chaplains for this work. Advanced education in political science, anthropology, and other key areas will ensure selected Chaplain are prepared to engage a broad spectrum of concerns. Developing partnerships with universities so Chaplains can pursue masters and doctoral work in these areas promises to help the Defense Department build the knowledge necessary for addressing religious communities in the future. Pursuant to this goal, the Chaplain Corps College within Air University should continue assessing specific vocational skills and knowledge current and future Chaplains will require and adapt training as necessary. This helps to ensure a well-trained Corps capable of meeting the challenges of religious engagement for the purposes of peace building.

Of course, anytime religious issues are considered, challenges are sure to arise. One of those issues will be the legal boundaries between the Chaplain's role in the military and his or her ability to engage outside. Chaplains exist to ensure military members are able to exercise their religious freedom and to advise leadership. Both of these focuses are internal to the military organization. While Chaplains may be used outside of this realm, the degree to which they ought to be engaged is a serious consideration.

Challenges to Changes in Responsibilities

While Chaplains do possess the key attributes Dr. Johnston describes for the "Faith-based Diplomat" there are at least two key challenges that must be addressed. The Chaplain's role as a religious leader is open to challenge through first amendment concerns. The United States, as a pluralistic nation, does not have a state religion. Moreover, it cannot establish a state religion.

The use of religious leaders, instead of just religiously trained diplomats, is open to challenge as an establishment of religion. On the other hand, Chaplains are also military members which presents another concern. Certainly the Department of Defense can and should examine where the limits can and should be placed on Chaplains as peacebuilders.

As another hurdle that must be considered, Chaplains are religious leaders but they are also military members. The value of their position as religious leaders may be limited, in some contexts, by their military membership. Despite being religious non-Combatants, the dual identity of religious leader and military officer is unlikely to be missed by the leaders with whom they engage. While this has proven beneficial in stability operations, care must be given to bridge the gap between military and civilians when considering humanitarian roles.

Another hurdle that must be considered comes from the Chaplain's role as non-combatant. As non-Combatants, Chaplains cannot be used to gather intelligence or to aide in targeting. However, in religiously based communities, that distinction may go unnoticed. During an introduction to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a speaker noted their preference to not even meet with military Chaplains. The reasoning was simple, despite Chaplain's non-combatant status, they remained military officers. No one watching the interaction would make the distinction, and so it is likely to be assumed that the ICRC is coordinating with the US Military. We might surmise a similar challenge to peace-time humanitarian assistance. Though the Chaplain leads a team to bring aid and comfort, they do so not just as religious leaders but also as military officers.

In order to minimize this, it may be useful to build systems that allow for long-term relationship building. Similar to many faith-groups short-term mission trips, assigning Chaplains

to engage in this role for longer term assignments may prevent misunderstandings through their regular and repeated presence.

Possible Hurdles

Any consideration of adding duties to the Chaplain Corps often meets two responses. One, the fear that more work will take Chaplains away from their core responsibilities. Two, the question of where resources will come from to grow the Chaplain Corps. In order to take on any new challenge, one must either give up other responsibilities or increase resources to meet the new challenge. Involving military Chaplains in this work is no different. The challenge is likely to be met only with more Chaplains and Assistants. The Chaplain Corps exists to provide for the free exercise of religion among military members and dependents, to include government employees on bases outside the contiguous United States. Chaplains provide this both at home station and in deployed environments. Adding any additional duty simply means one more constraint upon the Chaplain's core function. We should not accept any additional duty that will diminish the religious and spiritual care the Chaplain Corps provides for Airmen. Which means the only other option is to expand the Chaplain Corps.

In times of financial burden, any expansion is met with skepticism. Money spent on additional Chaplains is, obviously, money which cannot be spent elsewhere. However, not only is this money well spent, it may not be as costly as one thinks. Any money invested in conflict prevention saves money down the road. It is far cheaper to prevent conflict than it is to fight, win, and rebuild. Far better to invest in this capacity today than to invest in warfighting tomorrow. Additionally, Johnston's research suggested just 30 additional religious workers could address the needs worldwide.[33] While that study was done concerning religious affairs personnel in Foreign Service, it suggests the necessary increase in Chaplains may not be onerous.

There are many potential sources for conflict among people groups and nations. Some of those include power, politics, and religion. Often, where religion is a factor observers assume it is the primary factor. Yet, according to research compiled by the US Institute for Peace, "the relationships between religion and violence is complex and defies any neat account of direct causation."[34] Even in example of violent extremism, religious devotion is a "poor predictor of participation" and "can actually reduce the likelihood of people accepting narrative of violent extremist groups."[35] During an introduction to the work of NGOs in combat spaces, it was observed that even in Rwanda, the major problem between Hutus and Tutsis was not primarily religious, but ethnic and political.

Given this, religious engagement actually presents an opportunity to prevent conflict. Since religious leaders are key leaders in many communities, engaging them before conflict exists or in the early stages of conflict may encourage non-violent resolution of conflict. For this reason, religious leaders should be engaged early and often.[36] Before conflict arises, relationships should be built with these leaders in order to build understanding, so that conflict may be more easily addressed.

Recommendations

In order to address the possibilities presented in this paper, the Air Force should commission a feasibility study to address the possibility of implementing some, or all, of the above suggestions. This study is essential, given the lack of clear consensus on exactly how the Chaplain Corps can best be used in the interests of peace building. As a part of this study, some of the questions to consider include:

1. To what extent, if any, does federal law and Department of Defense regulation, enable Commander to use Chaplain's as peacebuilders?

2. How can Chaplains best serve as Religious Affairs Strategists (RAS)?

3. What additional training is necessary for Chaplains to successful serve as RAS?

4. To what extent may Chaplains engage as a liaison between NGOs and Commanders?

5. What additional training, if any, is necessary to equip Chaplains for that role?

6. To what extent are partner nations already using their Chaplains in a peacebuilding capacity?

Worldwide the religious landscape is changing. As America becomes increasingly secular, the world is becoming more religious. This growing divide between fundamental worldviews promises a future fraught with opportunities for miscalculation and misunderstanding. To help prevent further conflict, the United States needs bridge builders who are able to span the gap between a secular west and a religious world. The best current example of such bridge-builders is the Chaplain Corps. As Clergy-Officers, the men and women of the Chaplain Corps bridge the secular-sacred divided every day. By leveraging their skills and abilities in the interest of peacebuilding, the Chaplain Corps may become key partners in preventing future conflict. In order to bridge this divide and promote peace, the Department of Defense must intentionally development this religious capacity and ability to engage in peacebuilding among an increasingly religious world.

Notes

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