

**Dr. Douglas Johnston**  
**Wheatley Distinguished Lecture on International Affairs**  
**“Religion and Statecraft”**

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Lecture Participant: Dr. Douglas Johnston (DJ)  
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DJ: Good evening. I just concluded a brief tour of your campus and must say I was mightily impressed. I have long been familiar with BYU’s prowess on the football field, but coming here has been a real treat. Not only is it an honor to be here, but it’s a particular honor for me to be introduced by Dr. Amos Jordan, who I consider to be one of the finest human beings on the face of the planet. Anyone who doesn’t know him should make the effort to do so. He is a man for the ages.

What I would like to do this evening is demonstrate how our own religious heritage can serve as an asset in today’s world – a world that is replete with religious imperatives almost everywhere one turns. For the last 15 years, defense planners at the Pentagon have been wrestling with what they call the asymmetric threat. This term of art is generally used to describe an attack by creative, unconventional means that a disadvantaged opponent uses against a more powerful adversary, much like bin Laden used on 9-11 to rock this nation back on its heels. Suicide bombers are one of the more extreme forms of asymmetric threat. In response to this challenge, the Pentagon has come up with a new concept called “irregular warfare,” which calls for a much tighter coordination between diplomacy, defense, and development. This is all to the good, but I submit that even before the recent economic crisis, there was insufficient money in the U.S. Treasury to protect our country from the full spectrum of possible asymmetric threats. What is needed instead is an asymmetric counter to the asymmetric threat, one that deals with the ideas behind the guns. That sounds straightforward enough, but it is made complicated by the religious nature of those ideas. That is not good news for the United States. As has been abundantly clear from our recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, we as a country have very little ability to deal with religious differences in a hostile setting. Nor do we have any ability to counter demagogues like bin Laden, or before him, Milosevic, who manipulate religion for their own purposes.

Among the reasons for this inadequacy, several stand out. First, we have used our separation of church and state as a crutch for not doing our homework to understand how religion informs the world views and political aspirations of others who do not similarly separate the two. Second is our long-held commitment to the “rational actor” model of decision-making, which has dominated international relations for most of this past century – a model in which religion is deemed to be irrational, and therefore outside the policy makers’ calculus. In short, we simply don’t know how to deal with it. The third reason is that because of our separation of church and state, we have so compartmentalized religion in our lives that whenever industry or government hears the

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word, they head for the hills for fear that they might be accused of favoring one tradition over another. When we then transplant that mindset overseas on an extra-territorial basis, we find ourselves operating with one hand behind our back because of our inability to deal with the religious dimension of the threat. General David Petraeus, who you will be hearing from in a few months, stands out as someone who has not been intimidated by the legal ambiguities of church-state separation and who fully understands that if you have a secular purpose and there's a national security dimension involved, one has considerable room to maneuver.

If you add to all of this the looming specter of religious extremism married to weapons of mass destruction, it makes all the more urgent the need to fill this gap. One approach for doing so that shows unusual promise is a new form of engagement called faith-based diplomacy. And what is that? At the macro level, it simply means incorporating religious considerations into the practice of international politics. At the micro level, it means actually making religion part of the solution in some of today's intractable, identity-based conflicts that escape the grasp of traditional diplomacy. By identity-based conflicts, I mean ethnic disputes, tribal warfare, religious hostilities, and the like.

A deeper understanding of what faith-based diplomacy is can be found in *Faith-based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, published in 2003 by Oxford University Press. This book is a sequel to the book that Joe mentioned in his introduction – *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, which came out in 1994, also by Oxford University Press. Collectively, these two books explore the positive role that religious or spiritual factors can play in actually preventing or resolving conflict while at the same time advancing social change based on justice and reconciliation. So it's not peace for the sake of peace; it's peace for the sake of justice.

Ever since the establishment of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) in 1999, we have been practicing faith-based diplomacy in different parts of the world, beginning in Sudan. In that first experience, there were any number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like ourselves involved in Sudan, but they were all operating in the south, attempting to bring relief to the suffering associated with the conflict and doing as good a job as one could reasonably expect. We, on the other hand, chose to go to the north in order to address the causal factors by establishing relationships of trust with the Islamic regime and from that vantage point inspiring it to take steps toward peace that ~~they would otherwise not~~ <sup>it might not</sup> take.

The conflict in Sudan was a civil war between the Christian and African traditional south and the Islamic north, which at that point in time, had been raging for some 16 years. In doing what we could to help bring it to a halt, we established an Interreligious Council, and under its auspices, a Committee to Protect Religious Freedom. This Council brings top Christian and Muslim religious leaders together on a monthly basis to surface and resolve their problems. What is remarkable about this is the fact that this independent body, which had as part of its mandate holding the

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government accountable for its religious policies, was formed in the context of an Islamic dictatorship.

Not only did the regime agree to the Council’s formation, but it also eventually agreed to leadership for that Council to which they were initially strongly opposed. This particular Muslim leader had been in the forefront of the Islamic movement in Sudan, but became highly critical of the regime when it seized power in a coup in 1989. From that point on, he became a constant thorn in the regime’s side through a weekly news column that he authored. Because he had also been the political science professor for half of the Cabinet, it was in many respects a love-hate relationship. Anyway, under his leadership, the Council facilitated more concrete gains for non-Muslims in the first several months than the churches had been able to achieve operating on their own over the previous ten years.

Finally, the government agreed to take seriously the recommendations of the Council. Darfur notwithstanding, which is a Muslim-on-Muslim conflict, the government has honored that agreement by providing land and money for building new churches and to provide restitution for past seizures of church properties. So that is where we were in Sudan. Meanwhile, back in Washington, we were working behind the scenes to get the Bush administration to force both sides to the peace table; and that bore fruit as well. Although we were by no means solely responsible for bringing the war to a halt, we did play a role.

Our next project was in Kashmir. We were there solely because it was the leading nuclear flashpoint in the world at the time, and nobody seemed to be doing anything. So, we maneuvered our way in. We could not pursue a top-down strategy as we had in Sudan, because there was total political gridlock at the top. In fact, one could make a case that neither India nor Pakistan wants to resolve Kashmir, since it provides both sides with a convenient escape valve for taking people’s minds off of domestic problems.

Instead, we engaged emerging next-generation leaders – college professors, journalists, lawyers, and community leaders. Our goal was to create a cooperative spirit between the Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist regions of that troubled state, and we have pretty much succeeded in doing that. Right now, we are trying to figure out exactly how the “Track One” peace process between India and Pakistan can take advantage of the goodwill we have been able to create at this next level.

While Kashmir was in process, we also became involved in Iran. There, I had the pleasure of being part of an Abrahamic delegation that visited that country in 2003 under the leadership of Cardinal Ted McCarrick, who was Archbishop of Washington at the time. The delegation was Abrahamic in that it included Jews, Christians, and Muslims. While in Iran, we met with a number of religious and political leaders, including several Grand Ayatollahs, the President, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the head of Parliament, and various others. We established relationships, and built a degree of trust. (I must tell you, if you ever have an opportunity to visit Iran,

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you should do so. It is a beautiful country with an incredibly impressive cultural legacy stemming from the Persian Empire. And you come away with the feeling that every Iranian is a poet at heart.)

Two years later, our Center raised the funds to sponsor a reciprocal visit of Iranians to the United States. It too was Abrahamic in its makeup, nine in number, and for ten days - exact reciprocity on all fronts. One of the highlights of that visit was when we sat the delegation down with eight well-informed Congressmen. They addressed all of the hot-button issues; and at one point, one of the Congressmen pointed to the Ayatollah who was leading the group and said, “Tell me, do you think Israel has a right to exist?” The Ayatollah leaned back in his chair, chuckled slightly and said, “Of course Israel has a right to exist, just as we have the right not to recognize it.” That was the level of repartee.

If I were asked to grade the two sides, I would have had to give the higher marks to the Iranians, if only because of the inherent difficulty of defending the double standards to which we sometimes resort. We come down hard on Iran on the nuclear question, while turning a blind eye to Israel. We do the same with respect to their treatment of religious minorities, while ignoring Saudi Arabia, where the plight of religious minorities is far worse. In fact, Iran is the only country in that entire region which protects minority religions in its constitution, specifically Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Baha’is unfortunately do not receive similar protection, because they are considered to be a heretical sect of Islam and suffer mightily as a result. In speaking with the Jewish member of parliament and the Christian Archbishop, who were part of the delegation, they indicated that their respective religious communities had just received one million dollars out of the President’s budget to repair their synagogues, churches and hospitals. The following year, it was to be increased to two million dollars and be funded directly by the parliament. After that, it was to continue on a yearly basis.

After this second visit, I thought that the business of building relationships and trust was all well and good; but I did not think it could get us to where we needed to be as quickly as would be needed in light of the looming nuclear question. So it caused me to ask myself, “What might one do to short-circuit the process?” A couple of years earlier, I had played in a war game relating to Iran; and I began to wonder, what might a peace game look like? So, we then developed that idea into a concept of facilitated brainstorming, in contrast to the kind of scenario-driven exercise one finds in most war games. Under this concept, one would bring together highly capable individuals from both sides to meet for a week under the auspices of a world-class facilitator in order to discuss how the obstacles standing in the way of a cooperative relationship can be overcome. These would be academicians and practitioners from a range of disciplines, including religion, who are not in government, but who are too respected to be ignored by their respective governments.

I then met with Roger Fisher, a former colleague from Harvard days, who wrote the book *Getting to Yes* (in which he developed his now famous “win-win” negotiating

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strategy), and he agreed to serve as the facilitator. When I broached this idea with Javed Zarif, Iran’s then ambassador to the United Nations, he got quite enthused about it because he had read Fisher’s book and, as a former college professor himself, was intellectually curious to see how it would work in practice. In the course of our discussion, I told him that I would rather conduct the Peace Game in Iran than in some neutral location, because it would provide greater incentive for the Americans to participate and, more importantly, would convey a note of humility that was all-too-absent from U.S. foreign policy at the time, i.e. by engaging in such an exercise on their territory. This was just prior to Iran’s presidential elections in which former president Rafsanjani was favored to win. Zarif said, “Well, if Rafsanjani wins, you can do it in Iran. With anyone else, it will probably have to take place in Europe.” When Ahmadinejad won, all bets were off. No one, including Ambassador Zarif, knew where they stood, so the Peace Game idea was tabled for the foreseeable future. Just recently, however, when President Ahmadinejad was back for the annual meeting of heads of state at the United Nations, I was able to present the idea to him, and he expressed his support for it. So now we are attempting to gain the necessary traction on both sides to make it happen.

Our Center’s next involvement was with the American Muslim community. I have long thought that this community represents our country’s greatest strategic asset in the global contest with militant Islam. Not only was it not recognized as such at the time, but we were unwittingly alienating it over time. So in 2006, we convened a conference that brought thirty American Muslim leaders together with a like number of U.S. government officials to explore how they could begin working cooperatively for the common good. More specifically, we sought to determine how our government could capitalize on the extensive paths of influence that the American Muslim community has with Muslim communities overseas, many of them in areas of strategic consequence. We also sought to determine how we could inform U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy with a Muslim perspective. During the Cold War, we used to “red team” everything, by mentally putting on a Soviet hat and figuring out how the Soviets were likely to react to whatever we were going to do. We have not been so enlightened in dealing with religious extremism.

Finally, we looked at how the American Muslim community could play a leadership role in the further intellectual and spiritual development of Islam. When I have tried out that idea on high-level Muslims overseas, there has been considerable receptivity. In fact, there is an undercurrent of belief in some Muslim circles that the “sun of Islam” is going to rise in the West. Perhaps this is because the American Muslim community has greater freedom of thought than any other Muslim community in the world today. It also bridges the gap between modernity and the contemporary practice of Islam on a daily basis.

All things considered, the conference went well, and we convened another a year later to follow up on the recommendations of the first and to explore a number of important new areas. Out of these efforts, American Muslims have formed an advisory

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body called American Muslims for Constructive Engagement (AMCE), and it has been taking steps to provide Muslim-related insights on various foreign policy issues. Also as a result of this initiative, the doors at the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, State, and Defense have opened wider to the inputs of its Muslim citizens, so the progress, while slow, has been meaningful.

In Afghanistan, we have been bringing political and religious leaders together from the various provinces to enlist their cooperation in supporting development assistance. This is strategic because the religious leaders, whose inputs received considerable attention under the Taliban government, are largely marginalized under the current regime. Further, the religious communities are the lifeblood of the Taliban, which is currently sabotaging development assistance. Thus far, we have held three regional conferences; and once we have secured additional resources, will hold two more leading up to a major international conference involving Muslim leaders from other countries as well.

In the Middle East, we are doing something quite different. There, we are bringing American evangelicals together with Muslim clerics and engaging them in faith-based reconciliation seminars, which are three and a half days long. These seminars cause people to think deeply about their own attitudes and perspectives and how they affect others. In the process, we attempt to bring the transcendent aspects of their personal religious faith to bear in overcoming the secular obstacles to peace. Although we never proselytize, we do tell them that what we are teaching are the reconciling principles of Jesus. Looming large in those principles is the concept of forgiveness. These seminars typically end with adversaries actually embracing one other – and I’m talking about people who have been real hard-liners coming in. As you can well imagine, this is a gradual process, in which one starts first with the moderates, and then builds up to include those who are more militant. After working separately with each group of protagonists in this manner, we then bring them together and go through the same process again.

After a spirit of reconciliation has been achieved between these Muslim clerics and Christian pastors, we will then bring Jewish religious leaders into the process. Once a degree of reconciliation has been achieved across all three groups, we will work with them to establish a religious framework for peace upon which political leaders can build. This piece has thus far been absent from all previous Middle East negotiations.

In the past, religious leaders have never been at the table, probably out of a fear that religious absolutism will preclude the kind of compromise that will be needed. There are several reasons, however, why they should be included. First, because they bring with them a moral authority that is not otherwise present. They also provide the expertise to deal with religious issues. A lot of people were puzzled, for example, by Arafat’s refusal to respond to Ehud Barak’s seemingly generous offer when President Clinton brought the two together during the later days of his presidency. In all probability, the reason for Arafat’s reticence was attributable, at least in part, to the fact that he was not empowered by Islam to speak on matters of great consequence to the

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religion, like the final disposition of Jerusalem. He probably felt with more than a little justification that he would be killed if he committed to anything less than total capitulation by the other side. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the fact that if you want whatever political settlement that emerges to be lasting in nature, religious leaders must feel some ownership in that process. Because of their unrivaled influence at the grassroots level, they can make you; or they can break you.

After this brief, once-over lightly, description of our other projects, I would like to speak to you in some depth about our effort in Pakistan, where we have been on the ground for the past six years enhancing the madrasas, including those that gave birth to the Taliban. These religious schools have an illustrious history, of which few in the West are aware. From the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century, they were without peer as institutions of higher learning. In fact, it was European exposure to them that led to the creation of our own university system in the West, of which you are a part. And their influence lingers to the present.

Earlier this year, in the course of receiving an honorary doctorate at a seminary in New York, I told those assembled, “The mortar boards and tassels that we are wearing today, came from the madrasas. The concept of funding a chair in a given discipline also came out of the madrasas, as have so many other aspects of academia today.” However, in reaction to British colonialism and out of a concern that they might lose their Islamic identity, they purged themselves of all subjects that they considered to be secular or Western in nature. Thus today one finds that the majority of these religious schools confine themselves to rote memorization of the Qur’an and the study of Islamic principles.

Our goals in this project have been twofold: first, to expand the curricula to include the physical and social sciences, but with a strong emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights, particularly women’s rights. We don’t pretend to touch the religious core, but our assumption is that, if we do a good job on those two fronts, we will smooth a lot of the rough edges. The results to date have confirmed the validity of this assumption.

The second goal, which is even more important, is to transform the pedagogy in order to create critical thinking skills among the youth. This is important because even youngsters who have memorized the Qur’an from cover to cover, have almost no idea of what it means since they are forced to memorize it in the original Arabic whereas their first language is Urdu. They are not given nearly enough Arabic to understand something as sophisticated as the Qur’an. So, along comes a local militant, who misappropriates a little scripture to recruit them to his cause, and these youngsters, who have no ability to question or challenge, become very easy prey. Most madrasa students are from the poorest of the poor, and feel that they owe their lives to the madrasas, which are providing them with room, board, and a religious education. Absent the madrasas, many of these children would simply go without, so the allegiance runs very deep indeed.

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Thus far, our Center’s efforts have been meeting with considerable success. At this point, we have trained some 2,547 madrasa leaders from 1,533 different madrasas, which stands in marked contrast to the past failed attempts by the government of Pakistan to rein these schools in. The reasons for our success are threefold: first, we are conducting the training in such a way that the madrasa leaders feel it is their reform effort and not something imposed from the outside. In short, they have a lot of ownership in the process. Contrary to the negative stereotypes you might glean from the media, many of these madrasa leaders are bright people who come up with good ideas. Sometimes, however, it is as simple as showing them good things and they ask for more.

Second, we inspire them with their own heritage, not only that of their own institutions, but going back in time to a thousand years ago when a number of the pioneering breakthroughs in the arts and sciences, including religious tolerance, took place under Islam. The more they hear this, the more they internalize it, the taller they walk, and the more they begin to think, “Maybe we can do better.” Third, and probably most important of all, is the fact that we ground all suggested change in Islamic principles so they can feel they are becoming better Muslims in the process. And they are.

While the numbers I gave you sound impressive, they are only the tip of the iceberg, because there may be as many as 20,000 of these schools. Not even the government of Pakistan knows the total number. But because most of the schools with which we’ve dealt have been in the more radical areas, we feel that we have sufficient momentum to take this to scale on a nation-wide basis.

At this point, I would like to share a few anecdotes with you to illustrate how faith-based diplomacy works and the impact it can have. About three years ago, I took two board members with me to Pakistan to visit several madrasas that had been clearly identified with terrorism. Our Center had not previously been involved with them, but was able to gain access based on the work we had been doing with other madrasas in the surrounding area.

To back up for a moment; there are five sects that sponsor these religious schools, of which the Wahhabis and the Deobandis are the two hardest-line. The Deobandi, from which the Taliban come, is far more powerful and influential than all of the other four put together. The first madrasa we visited was a Deobandi madrasa outside of Karachi, which houses some 7000 students and which is thought to provide most of the fighters for Chechnya and Kashmir. It was also known to have spawned the two most violent anti-Shiite terrorist groups. We walked into a room that was filled with madrasa leaders, administrators, Islamic scholars and the like. It was also filled with rage, rage over U.S. foreign policy more generally and over the conflict that was then taking place in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah.

I began by saying, “We are not a government organization, nor have we ever received funding from our government. And while the United States may have made



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some mistakes of late, it's important for you to remember when they intervened on behalf of Muslims in Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, and Kuwait. Left unmentioned in most tellings of Somalia are the more than 100,000 Somali lives that were saved as a result of the humanitarian aspects of that intervention. And while the United States may be fairly accused of operating with a double standard in the Middle East because of its strategic relationship with Israel, so too can Arab leaders be accused of doing the same as they complain mightily of Israeli mistreatment, but then turn a deaf ear to Palestinian pleas for humanitarian assistance. So everywhere you turn, there are double standards – driven by perceived national self-interest.”

What I was trying to do was get past the rage. And then I said, “We are not here to talk about this, though. We are here to talk about religious values that we share in common.” I then quoted several passages from the Qur'an, which I had committed to memory, a consolidated paraphrase of which would go like, “O mankind, God could have made you one had He willed, but He did not. Instead He made you into separate nations and tribes that you may know one another, cooperate with one another, and compete with one another in good works.” I then said, “I and my two colleagues are here to open the competition in good works. The three of us happen to be followers of Jesus and we know you can't be a good Muslim unless you believe some pretty wonderful things about Jesus. So let's ask ourselves, if He were here standing in our midst today, how would He want us to behave toward one another?” By the time that discussion played out over the next hour, the rage had been converted to a spirit of acceptance bordering on fellowship. It was a rather remarkable experience.

We then visited a madrasa near Lahore, which had been identified with the London bombers. Same scenario, same impact. And since then, the leader of that madrasa, who is a rather large, widely-revered, somewhat feared individual, has encountered our project director on several occasions. On each of those occasions, he has made specific reference to the question about Jesus, and said, “It has caused me to ask myself on a daily basis, ‘What would the Prophet have me do?’” And his madrasa, which has not had the benefit of our workshops, is now convening seminars on its own on peacemaking and conflict resolution. So you never quite know where this kind of diplomacy is going to lead.

Following another workshop, one madrasa leader came up to me with his hand over his heart, a smile in his eyes, a smile on his face and said, “You have made me very happy. We thought all Americans hated us.” I thought to myself, “Well, if one took the media as one's guide, one could easily come to that conclusion.” But I assured him that not all Americans hated him.

Another leader came up and said, “There's a situation in my village that I feel a need to address.” A young lady had apparently been caught talking on her cell phone at two in the morning with a young man in another village, in whom she had an interest. The village elders felt this violated their code of honor, so she was to die, and the boy was to lose his nose and his ears.

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The madrasa leader said, “This happens all the time, and I normally wouldn’t get involved. But because of our workshop discussions on human rights, I feel compelled to go back and confront this on religious grounds.” So he did, but not without a degree of trepidation, since he was a relatively young man. He sat down with the village elders, showed them that there was nothing in the Qur’an that prohibited a woman from talking to a man, and by emphasizing the passages that urge the peaceful resolution of differences, he pulled it off and no one was hurt. Hopefully, that can serve as a precedent in that village and perhaps others in the years to come.

It is noteworthy that this was a situation where religion trumped tribalism in a context where not even most Muslims can tell you where one ends and the other begins. And it’s not always a given that religion will trump, because, as tribal members are quick to point out, their customs date back three thousand years; whereas Islam only goes back fourteen hundred years. So one still has to work at it.

In another situation, and getting even more directly to addressing the ideas behind the guns, we were conducting a workshop in the Punjab, which was known to be a major al Qaeda feeder. About 22 percent of their graduates go into al Qaeda, but instead of deploying to fight Americans in Afghanistan, because of the geography, they go to Kashmir and become part of the militant movement there. Toward the end of the session, one of the madrasa leaders asked, “Is waging jihad in Kashmir sanctioned by Islam?” Our project director said, “No it isn’t, but I’m not a religious leader.” So he turned to our Wahhabi indigenous partner, who enjoys at least honorary mullah status, who said, “No, jihad is only justified to defend the religion, never to acquire territory.”

This led to an intense debate between the madrasa leaders who were present, and they came up with a consensus conclusion that the fighting in Kashmir was politically motivated, but not religiously sanctioned. Now they are attempting to tone down the militancy of their graduates. On a later visit to Pakistan, I was surprised to learn that that this particular episode had been carried in the newspapers in Balochistan, halfway across the country.

At another workshop, we were surprised to learn that one of the participants was a Taliban commander of some renown. He was despondent because he had lost two sons in the fighting, and lamented the fact that he didn’t know what America wants. He said, “You come after us with guns and we have no recourse but to respond in kind.” This led to an invitation for me to speak to their senior leadership about what America wants, which I did two months later. In the meantime, I did my due diligence at State and Defense to make sure that whatever I said was consistent with U.S. policy—and I’m here to tell you that the Taliban commanders in Afghanistan are not the only ones who don’t know what America wants. Anyway, I eventually had that meeting with some 57 Taliban commanders, religious leaders and tribal leaders in the mountains of Pakistan.

I told them I was there to see if we could build on religious values that we shared in common to develop a confidence-building measure that could point towards peace. I

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said that for them to be able to participate in this effort, they needed to understand the Western perspective on what was going on. So I told them what America wanted, which was for the Taliban to put down their guns, distance themselves from al Qaeda, and reconcile with the Karzai government. Over the next couple of hours in which a great deal of venting took place, five key questions emerged, the first being “What do the American people want?” At that, I breathed a sigh of relief because it meant they were still cutting us some slack, even though we had reelected the same Administration that was causing all their problems.

I told them that what Americans wanted was peace in the region, with democratically stable governments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then they wanted to know why we were attacking Islam. I assured them that we weren’t, for the same reasons I cited during my earlier visit to the Deobandi madrasa. They then wanted to know why we were attacking Afghanistan, and I said, “Well – putting it in terms that are important to you: hospitality, loyalty, and revenge – before we recognized certain members of al Qaeda as a threat, we welcomed them into our country, and then without warning, they struck. So we wanted revenge. We asked the Taliban government to turn over al Qaeda’s leadership, in order to bring them to justice. They refused, so we attacked. But we did so with a heavy heart, because most Americans have great admiration and respect for the Afghan people, stemming from our common struggle against the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, it’s important for you to recognize that some of your own tribal leaders are now banding together against al Qaeda because it has violated your hospitality.”

They then wanted to know why we attacked Iraq and why we support Israel, and I gave them answers, which time won’t permit me to discuss right now. We then broke for prayer, came back in a smaller group, and developed a confidence-building measure that called for establishing a secure zone in the western third of Nuristan in order to facilitate private development assistance there that would bypass the government and the warlords. Nuristan is the Afghan province directly across the border from where we were holding our meeting. They had noted earlier that despite the billions of dollars being spent in Afghanistan, little, if any, ever makes its way to the villages.

During the course of our extended discussion, I came away with three distinct impressions. First, the Taliban care a lot about the people. Second, they nurse a visceral hatred for the warlords and feel that the warlords frequently co-opt the U.S. military. Finally, they have total disdain for Karzai, because of his failure to keep his promise to control the warlords.

Although we were able to facilitate a degree of additional development in Nuristan, the confidence-building measure itself failed because we were unable to gain sufficient traction with our own policymakers to establish a secure zone. However, when the Korean Ambassador called three months later to ask if there was anything our Center could do to secure the release of the 21 Korean missionaries who were being held hostage by the Taliban, we were able to play an instrumental role in doing so

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through the networking that had resulted from our earlier meeting with the Taliban commanders.

One final anecdote and then I will close. About six months ago, we were conducting a workshop for the leaders of sixteen madrasas surrounding the Swat valley. Near the end of the workshop, one of them stood up and said, “I came here for one reason and one reason only, and that is to discredit everything you have to say. But after listening to what you have had to say, I now find myself filled with rage. Rage, because for 26 years I have been reading and teaching the holy Qur’an the way it was taught to me. I now see how wrong that was. For the first time in my life, I now understand the soul of the Qur’an and its peaceful intent. The way to advance Islam is through peace, not through conflict. I am going to change what I teach my students and tell them why.”

That was pretty brave when you consider how easy it is to lose one’s head in that neck of the woods. A month later we paid another visit and this madrasa leader was doing exactly what he promised. He also made that same statement to a CNN crew that had come along to film our work. That is how courageous these folks are. Once you get past the veneer of rage and hostility and are able to engage them, they often become champions of the change that is being sought. In these tradition-bound, tribal societies, there is not much room for creative thinking; but once these folks engage, they really engage.

Let me close by noting that just as setting a counter-fire is often the most effective antidote for a blaze that’s raging out of control, I submit that religious reconciliation has that same potential for countering religious extremism. In a context in which religious legitimacy trumps all, the best antidote for bad theology is good theology. And this business of making religion part of the solution in intractable conflicts is not without its challenges. It is physically, emotionally, and psychologically draining, and there is more than a little risk involved. There are any number of spiritually-motivated peacemakers who have paid the ultimate price for their efforts: Gandhi, King, Sadat, Rabin—the list goes on. But despite the risks and whatever discomfort one might feel in navigating the relatively uncharted waters of spiritual engagement, the stakes are simply too high for us not to give it our best effort. In Pakistan, those stakes involve undemocratic regime change in a nuclear-capable state.

Thank you for your attention. I will be happy to take your questions.

Q: My question goes to the difficulty of reconciling the United States separation of church and state and how we make progress in that arena in order to foster the kinds of things you’re talking about.

DJ: As one might expect, government officials are not well-equipped to engage in the sort of diplomacy I have been talking about, because of the legal ambiguities of church-state separation and because a public official has to advance his or her government’s political agenda, which takes away from the balanced neutrality that is often needed to

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succeed. However, as I noted earlier, General Petraeus has taken quite a bit of license on the church-state front, and even in his briefings before the Congress, prominent on his briefing charts was the need to engage religious leaders. The military really gets this. They have to take the hill, and will do whatever it takes to do the job. In the State Department, on the other hand, although this approach resonates with many on a personal level, institutionally, the Department continues to be tightly bound in a straightjacket of dogmatic secularism. So we have a long way to go there.

Q: My question is how could a husband and wife team participate effectively in this work?

DJ: We haven't yet tried any husband and wife teams, but there is certainly room to do so. In taking the madrasa project to scale, one of the things we will be doing is expanding our training of the female leaders of girls' madrasas. For the first three years of our involvement with the madrasas, although the women asked for our training, the men were opposed to giving it to them, so we stayed away. Then the men finally reached a point where they asked that we train the women as well. The logistics of doing so are considerably more challenging because of the social constraints of keeping women at home and this sort of thing. But we have been making it work, and, frankly speaking, the women seem to catch on twice as fast as the men.

Another step in taking it to scale is enlisting Pakistani universities in training madrasa leaders. Right now as I speak, we are conducting our second such training program at the University of Karachi, training that will ultimately lead to certification of the madrasa faculty. We have also conducted one at the University of Peshawar, which is in the heart of one of the more radical areas. This initiative is important because in the past there have been no standards or accountability. If you wanted to open a madrasa, you opened a madrasa. But this effort is introducing quality control where none had existed before. And perhaps even more important is the social bridging that it is providing between the madrasas on the one hand – which are isolated, insulated, and feel looked down upon – and the Pakistani elite on the other, including the universities, who do in fact, look down upon them.

When these folks walk through the university doors, the psychological impact of the feelings of acceptance that take place is enormous. In the first such class, we had 29 participants, who were all the sons or stepsons of the owners of the madrasas surrounding Karachi, which have a huge amount of influence. Soon they will be calling the shots; but, more importantly, they all brought their fathers to the graduation. At some point, the government of Pakistan will eventually need to own its madrasas, and I think the best way for that to happen will be through this university involvement.

Q: I wanted to begin by thanking you, Dr. Johnston, for a most stimulating and thought-provoking presentation. I was taken by your comment that you felt that one of our greatest strategic assets is the American Muslim community. My perception is that many people feel that, in response to the terrorism associated with Islamic extremism, the community of moderate Muslims in America needs a higher profile, perhaps disassociating themselves from that, or at least saying that it has an entirely different

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point of view. I wonder if you might expand on that just a bit and describe what efforts might be under way to try to achieve this end.

DJ: One of the problems that American Muslims have—and they’ve complained about this a great deal — is the only way those moderates who are speaking out can get recognized and be heard is if they pay for it. Otherwise, it’s not deemed to be newsworthy. At last count, I think there have been no fewer than 700 fatwas (or religious edicts) condemning terrorism and all that goes with it which have been promulgated by American Muslim religious leaders. There is a lot going on out there that we are not hearing about.

Q: As a student, I was curious as to how students who are interested in this faith-based diplomacy might get involved?

DJ: We have had a number of students get involved. Here, I should mention that there were two principal target audiences for our first book, *Religion: the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (which, as Dr. Jordan mentioned during his introduction, is in its fifteenth printing). One was the Foreign Service Institute which trains our foreign service officers. But the principal target was universities, colleges, and seminaries, because it is your generation that is going to be able to run with these ideas. (Teaching old dogs like me new tricks is simply too hard). Well, the ideas set forth in that book have been exceedingly well received by students, which is one of the reasons it has undergone so many printings. You will find it in numerous graduate and undergraduate curriculums across the country and in many overseas.

We have also had a number of university students serve as interns in our Washington office. We are small and don’t have room for many interns, but just this past summer we had representation from Oxford, Princeton, and Saint Andrew’s in Scotland. We also played a key role in inspiring the Henry Luce Foundation in New York (named after the gentleman who started *Time* magazine) to fund new religion and foreign policy programs at prominent universities across America, which is also having an impact. Aside from all of this, our website at [www.icrd.org](http://www.icrd.org) lists specific ways in which volunteers can help.

Q: We have seven chaplain candidates here at BYU that will be on the ground over in Afghanistan and Iraq in the next three years. What would you recommend that we do when we get over there?

DJ: Well, I am currently working on another book entitled *Religion, Terror, and Error: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Challenge of Spiritual Engagement*, in which I devote a chapter to the kinds of actions that military chaplains can take to move things in a helpful direction. In addition, a recent revision of Joint Operations Publication 1-05 will be forthcoming in another month or so, which is going to update the ground rules for chaplain engagement with local religious leaders and for serving as the principal advisors to their commands on the religious and cultural aspects of all that is going on.

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In 2001, I had the pleasure of leading a team that instructed all Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard chaplains in religion and statecraft. The U.S. Navy bought all 1300 of them a copy of that first book. The idea was to enhance the conflict prevention capabilities of the sea service commands, which are often at the cutting edge of our overseas involvements, so that chaplains aren't relegated solely to dealing with the consequences of conflict after it has taken place. A great deal has also been written by chaplains themselves on Chaplain-inspired initiatives in Afghanistan and Iraq that have been tremendously helpful, so I would recommend that to you as well.

Q: Besides the aspect of the United States' support for Israel and the antagonism which that causes with the Muslim world, it seems like the other thing that the United States is held in contempt for is its lack of religiosity and its immorality. So how effective can the United States be when that perception exists, which, in fact, is probably true?

DJ: That's an excellent question. When I am in remote parts of the world, and turn on the television (if there is one), more often than not I will get the Jerry Springer Show. This is the cultural image we are projecting, which is as offensive to us as it is to them. Yet we seem totally powerless to do anything about it. It causes me to wonder if it might not be time for an amendment to the First Amendment.

I will say this, however. Whenever we invite people with whom we are working overseas to attend the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, which involves about three days of activities surrounding the Breakfast (at which the President speaks along with others), they inevitably express surprise at the degree to which religious faith undergirds our democratic process and say they feel much closer as a result.

The principle problem that Muslims have is with secularists who they perceive as not believing in God. And that's another contributor to misunderstanding one another. When we say “secular”; Muslims hear “Godless” – when what was meant was “freedom to worship as you please.” So we talk past one another. I don't really know how we will address the cultural image problem, but it does need to be addressed.

Thank you again for the privilege of being with you this evening.