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About the Report

For a host of reasons, religious freedom has become more important in international affairs since the Cold War ended. As ideological conflict has receded, incidents of ethnic and religious conflict have increased, as has terrorism motivated at least in part by religion. The global community has become more aware of the importance of promoting human rights, including religious human rights, as a necessary component of sustainable economic and social development. At the same time, transnational contacts and global awareness have grown among religious communities, who have become more active and outspoken against religious rights abuses—and more demanding that governments put pressure on countries deemed serious offenders.

For most religious freedom activists, China is invariably on the short list of serious offenders. Yet the religious freedom methodology of American and international actors has been plagued by a lack of strategic coherence and consistent application. The result has been that conventional religious freedom activism has lost support at home and abroad, and has little clout in China or with other serious offenders. To help address these problems and stimulate a multi-sectoral dialogue about fresh approaches to promoting religious freedom in China and elsewhere, this Task Force Report was commissioned by the Council on Faith & International Affairs (a leadership program of the Institute for Global Engagement).

The goal of the Task Force is to sketch a new framework for both governmental and nongovernmental actors to use in rethinking and strategizing initiatives to promote religious freedom. By focusing on the case study of China, the Task Force does not suggest that we should ignore the fact that other countries (to include the U.S.) have imperfect records on religious freedom. Rather, this report is offered as a first step towards a new dialogue within and between the faith and international affairs communities about practical and forward-looking methodologies, with an eye to expanding the conversation to include key actors inside China and in other countries engaged with China. We also hope to provide a model for conversations about religious freedom in other countries as well.

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The executive editor of the CFIA Task Force Series is Dennis R. Hoover, Ph.D.
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About the Sponsor

The Council on Faith & International Affairs (CFIA) exists to serve scholars and practitioners active at the nexus of faith and international affairs by providing new resources for professional development and by encouraging holistic engagement in global issues through critical reflection, practical action, collaborative scholarship, and interfaith dialogue. In addition to publishing The Brandywine Review of Faith & International Affairs, CFIA sponsors local chapters, dialogues, lectures, conferences, and task forces.

CFIA was founded by a network of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians who, while respectful of their differences, are united in the core creeds and principles of their faith. These emerging and established leaders recognized that the interaction of faith and international affairs is often poorly understood on all sides. CFIA is strategically positioned in the field of international affairs to build effective bridges of understanding and practical points of common departure. It creates a safe place for candid intra-faith discussion, the necessary precursor to constructive inter-faith dialogue.

Principled but not partisan, Christian but not sectarian, CFIA strives for tolerance with integrity, supporting those who take their faith seriously in their engagement of global issues. While the Council cultivates greater awareness among people of faith (Christian and non-Christian) and among secular specialists about the positive contributions of faith-based communities, it also works to address the ways that such communities can cause or exacerbate problems.

CFIA is an initiative of the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), a “think tank with legs” founded by Robert Seiple, the first-ever U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. IGE cultivates sustainable environments for religious freedom and educates emerging leaders in international affairs. A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, IGE works proactively with government and grassroots leaders to advance freedom of religious belief and practice. For more information on IGE, visit www.globalengage.org. For more information on CFIA, visit www.cfia.org.
Executive Summary

The current approach to advocating for freedom of religion and belief in China is out-of-date and ineffective; Americans and citizens of other liberal democracies need a fresh approach. Past efforts have been reactive and sporadic, short-term in focus and impact, and narrowly framed around an artificial policy choice between “engagement” and “sanctions.” The latter polarization has alienated potential allies overseas and multinational businesses, discouraging them from involvement with the American and international rights agenda. Prevailing approaches have not been designed to fit the current Chinese social context or to support the work of those inside China who must make the changes. Rights advocates and the media operate under flawed theories of social change, somehow assuming that moral shaming and political pressure from the outside is sufficient to force China to change overnight. Many Chinese, who tend to be cynical about political ideology of any kind, have concluded that Western concerns—and especially American concerns—about human rights are not genuine, but are aimed at the political goal of weakening or destabilizing China. Overheated rhetoric has fueled anti-Americanism in China and appeared to justify nationalistic government campaigns against “foreign infiltration in the guise of religion.”

But there is an opening for change in Chinese opinion and policy. Younger officials and policy advisers are interested in new approaches to modern, accountable and non-ideological governance. The Chinese public worries about immorality and expresses its outrage over widespread official corruption. Social justice is the flip side of social stability, and the government knows it must pay more attention to public opinion and to civic interests and civil rights. There is a new consensus among Chinese political, social and cultural leaders that China must build a humane civil society and fight corruption through promoting public morality and personal ethics.

Recognizing both the need and the opportunity, this report presents a new framework for multiple outside actors at all levels to use to encourage medium- and long-term cultural and institutional change in China. While it emphasizes that all sides have the most to gain by a gradualist approach, it also preserves room for publicity and advocacy for urgent cases of abuse. Civic and business groups, purveyors of the “soft power” of training and modeling of new values and ways of doing things, often have more influence and access to the agents of progress in China than does the U.S. government with its “hard” political and military power. From this new perspective, the main task of government becomes maintaining good political relations with China and eliminating barriers to nongovernmental interchange of all kinds.

The new framework emphasizes “win-win” diplomacy, striving to show China’s governmental and non-governmental leaders that freedom of conscience, religion, and belief is not only morally right but also in their society’s practical self-interest. Indeed, religious freedom is an essential foundation of civil society, political stability, and security.

This philosophy of engagement rests upon ten complementary principles of action to guide the development of specific projects:
1. Integrate freedom of religion and belief with other human rights and rule of law initiatives.

2. Build consensus and cooperation among outside actors.


4. Promote an understanding of the positive synergy linking religious freedom, sustainable economic development, and a modern society.

5. Address the fears of the Chinese government regarding religious extremism as a threat to social stability and national security.

6. Focus on provincial and local, as well as central actors.

7. Work in cooperation with the Chinese Diaspora.

8. Coordinate regional and international approaches around international norms.

9. Focus attention on improvements at the local level in China.


Creating a sustainable approach that can effectively promote steady progress toward religious freedom in China will require consistent and sophisticated initiatives involving various sectors and actors (Americans and non-Americans alike). In recognition that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to promoting religious freedom in China, this report presents recommendations as to what different social groups could do within their own norms and “subcultures,” honoring their distinct interests, responsibilities, and trade lingo and terms. No single actor leading some “grand coalition” will “own” this new framework. Rather, it is for multiple actors working in multiple channels to use in the cultivation of a shared mindset, with synergistic, parallel actions promoting the goal of freedom of conscience in a healthy civil society. This framework provides a new understanding for all the relevant actors and thus opens new opportunities for “coalitions of the willing” in religious freedom promotion.

New efforts to promote sustainable environments for religious freedom should be complementary to indigenous civil rights trends and sensitive to the organizational “cultures” in each of three major sectors—civic, economic, and political. While by no means an exhaustive list, the following recommendations for practical action are offered so as to illustrate how we might “put legs” on this new paradigm.
FOR CIVIC LEADERS, WHOSE FORTE IS CULTURAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

- Religious institutions and faith-based organizations should use their public voice and presence to proclaim and model the need for, reasons for, and benefits of freedom of conscience for all faiths and beliefs (not just their own). They should clarify through codes of conduct for evangelism that their concern is not just special pleading for their own sectarian agendas.

- Foundations and public benefit nonprofit organizations should provide equal access for faith-based issues and organizations in their programming.

- Educational and cultural organizations should promote new thinking in China about the positive role of religion in society.

- Advocacy and media groups should strive for balance, ethically and factually pointing out abuses while communicating incremental improvements in China and the positive influence religious adherents exert in Chinese arts, cultural events, and social services. (Care must be taken, though, to avoid shaming China for its lessening role in these areas and thereby causing the government to take reactive measures to regain “face” and control.)

- Policy research institutions should play a leading role in building consensus between sectors. They should include cultural and religious policy issues and their interconnection with political stability and national security in their programming for research and visiting scholars.

FOR ECONOMIC LEADERS, WHOSE FOCUS IS THE INTRODUCTION OF EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY IN DEVELOPMENT:

- Companies involved in China should model respect for religious believers in hiring and supervision, and in promotion of zero tolerance of discrimination in the workplace. They should likewise model even-handed inclusion of faith-based groups in their local charitable outreach.

- Business groups, as well as individual companies, should also initiate dialogues or training workshops on ethics and wholesome values, showing respect for the contribution of religions, with counterparts at local, national and regional Asia-Pacific levels of interaction.

- Intergovernmental economic agencies, especially development agencies, should highlight the role of the nonprofit (including faith-based) sector in strengthening society as well as the significant contribution of religion to building social capital, and should ensure equal opportunity for the participation of faith-based groups in agency programming.
FOR POLITICAL LEADERS, WHO HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO POLICY-MAKERS IN CHINA:

- City and state bilateral exchanges, which often include only politicians and business professionals, should include civic leaders, including from faith-based groups, and find ways to discuss or demonstrate the importance of religious freedom in society.

- Federal aid and diplomacy programs should be reviewed for fair inclusion of religious freedom components. The federal government through bilateral exchanges and participation in Asia-Pacific regional organizations should emphasize the connection between religious freedom, social stability, and national security. Improved coordination with U.S. allies and within the UN is necessary to provide better joint approaches to religious freedom advocacy.

The “best next steps” should begin with consensus-building at home and confidence-building with Chinese government and nongovernmental counterparts, which is especially necessary on the issue of freedom of conscience, religion, and belief. This would create a policy environment of increased receptivity to constructive outside efforts to advance religious freedom. Concrete projects can be discussed and planned in forums convened for each sector to consider its specific opportunities and responsibilities.
Introduction

Advocates for religious freedom—and perhaps especially American advocates—need a fresh approach to their engagement of countries like China that have consistent records of egregious abuses. Past efforts to influence such countries have often failed to improve significantly the protection of religious human rights because they have been perceived as foreign impositions, not as opportunities for mutually advantageous cooperation. Nor have prior efforts consistently been designed to fit the current social context of offending countries or to support the work of specific indigenous actors who are positioned to make the changes. Instead, religious freedom interventions have aroused official and popular suspicion of subversive political intent, eroding trust.

A new approach must first recognize that outside actors have a stake in gradual social and political progress. Whether China develops a healthy civil society will determine whether its impressive economic and military development can continue. And China’s potential failure may be more of a threat to American interests than its success. Economic meltdown, social conflict, and political fragmentation in other large, complex nations such as Russia and Indonesia in the late 1990s frightened the Chinese government and populace and caused delay in political reform. But these events should also have underscored to the West how fragile and reversible can be the formal attributes of democracy, including elections, without a strong civic cultural foundation, including respect for differences of culture, religion, and belief.

A major financial-economic crisis in China, which could propel perhaps a million economic refugees overseas, would have a disastrous impact on the region and the global economy comparable to that of any military adventurism. This does not mean outsiders should merely “shore up” the regime at all costs, or uncritically accept Chinese government definitions of “stability and unity” goals. It does mean that the many business and nongovernmental organizations that operate in China should be expending more effort, with greater impact, to promote positive change there.

Such efforts should incorporate freedom of conscience, religion, and belief as a major, not minor component, because these rights are of central importance to the human dignity of Chinese individuals, the health of Chinese civil society, and the continuance of international order. In these connections, some further explanation and definitions are in order:

**HUMAN DIGNITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

The concept of human dignity is central to all the fundamental freedoms; it points to an organic relationship linking the rights of conscience, religion, and belief to other rights such as freedom of expression and association. While there are many components to human dignity, at its heart is the freedom to seek transcendent answers to the most fundamental questions about the origins, nature, and destiny of humankind and the meaning of life for oneself and others. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines this freedom as the “freedom of thought, conscience and religion” which includes freedom to change religion and
belief and to manifest religion and belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Thus, the freedom of conscience or belief logically includes the right to change (convert) freely from one belief system to another, which in turn requires the freedom of others to teach (propagate) such beliefs among those who do not yet know about them. Human rights documents, moreover, define freedom of expression to include the freedom to seek and receive information and ideas of all kinds. Most recently, the June 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action combined these concepts in the right to “freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion.”

Note that in a society like China’s where the elite has a strong tradition of ethics but not supernatural belief, and the populace observes highly diverse syncretistic folk religions, the full terminology of “freedom of conscience, religion, and belief” has greater salience than freedom of religion alone. The latter term carries a sense of exclusiveness, with the implication that only religious adherents deserve certain freedoms and that proponents of religious freedom care only about their counterparts, not the whole package of rights for the whole populace. Narrow focus on religious rights, or even more narrowly on Christian rights, fortifies the Chinese government’s notions that “religious freedom” is not an essential part of human rights and that Christianity is a Western religion.

Theoretically, international norms would protect the right to “proselytize,” which is a neutral term in the dictionary and in legal circles meaning “to make a proselyte,” that is, to convert someone from one religion, opinion, or party to another. But this is not clearly stated in international human rights documents, and the term proselytism has developed a highly negative connotation over time, including in religious circles where it now is used to indicate the use of coercion or manipulation in contrast to the respectful persuasion known as “evangelism”; the imperative to respectfully persuade—to “witness”—is a central tenet and practice in most world faiths. While major statements and documents from world bodies address the difference in general terms, most are vague about what specific practices fall into the categories of acceptable and unacceptable. This ambiguity is highly problematic, because any meaningful definition of human dignity must make room for a robust definition of religious freedom.

**CIVIL SOCIETY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

As China’s government hopes to create human “talents” to build up a globally competitive “knowledge society,” it should pause to consider the important role of religion in human motivation. Individual freedom of conscience, religion, and belief is the *sine qua non* for developing human creativity. As China seeks to circumscribe the exercise of conscience, religion, and belief, it inevitably ends up intervening as well in belief doctrines. Examples include state exercise of an ancient imperial prerogative to adjudicate the final identification by Tibetan religious leaders of the Panchen Lama or Dalai Lama, and state proscription of itinerant evangelism which impinges on the core identity of the Protestant house churches. The real issue at stake is whether and how to sustain state domination over society, or whether and how to encourage the development of an autonomous and vibrant civil society.
Politics is the authoritative allocation of advantage and disadvantage in a society, and various rights are part of the essence of politics because they confer advantage on some members of society, while others are disadvantaged. The wise use of this power is key to building a sense of national unity and ensuring social order. The Chinese state’s effort to privilege some sets of beliefs (atheism plus indigenous Confucian ethics) and suppress others (especially those with strong supernatural components or overseas ties) functions something like a state religion. This approach runs the risk of alienating growing segments of the citizenry. The Chinese people need more, not fewer, religion and belief options for building a just and humane society that promotes both human dignity and social justice. Rights involve important economic and social issues, not just individual or political interests. Public discourse that accommodates competing beliefs and ideational diversity does not foment serious social conflict; it prevents it. Where true religious freedom exists in the public forum, transparency grows, trust is built, civil society matures, and economic success and government legitimacy increase.

INTERNATIONAL ORDER AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

International security interests, including American interests, are best served by China’s continued peaceful economic and social development as it “outgrows socialism.” Suppression of dissent on questions of ultimate concern, however, produces only a façade of order and stability while stoking the fires of unrest that can spill across borders. Disaffected minorities who turn against the state when they experience persecution tend to become radical in doctrine and behavior. A prime example is the Falungong spiritual movement, which expanded suddenly in the 1990s, partly due to the absence of equal access for other belief systems. When suppressed, Falungong became a leading component of China’s international dissident movement.

As noted by Philip Jenkins in his comparative studies of religions, persecuted minorities can disappear, but they often turn into tough, militant groups who create a cult of martyrdom that generates ongoing opposition to the state and leaves them hard to intimidate. They may seek solutions in separatism, or serve as a genuine fifth column in networks manipulated by outside interests. Apocalyptic doctrines come to the fore that elevate the power of authoritarian clergy and portray the state as a tool of Satan, justifying violent rather than peaceful opposition. In other words, persecution that aims to ban entirely whole religious groups tends instead to produce lasting enemies. Rule of religion by law, in contrast, allows more finely-tuned suppression of specific acts of unlawful behavior in ways that have public legitimacy.

Clearly, persuading and assisting Chinese elites to reform policies and practices regarding freedom of conscience, religion, and belief is a “win-win” goal for both Chinese and international interests. Yet prevailing approaches to promoting religious freedom are ineffective in many countries. This is due in part to flawed assumptions about social change, and also to chronic indecision as public debate focuses on the artificial policy choice of either “engagement” or “sanctions.” This simplistic way of thinking about the strategic alternatives falsely pits business against morality (this in an era when ethical business practices have proven to be among the most effective mechanisms for purveying positive values).
This report presents a new framework that is a “both/and” approach that would emphasize new efforts to support medium- and long-term cultural and institutional changes that are so necessary for sustained progress. At the same time, this approach preserves room for publicity and advocacy for urgent cases of abuse. The framework can be used in strategic planning by civic institutions as well as economic actors to promote respect for religious and other rights in China. These nongovernmental actors are purveyors of “soft power” (e.g. cultural power as made manifest in training and modeling important values in new ways), and they often have more influence and access to the agents of progress than does the U.S. government, which typically relies on “hard” political and military power. In an era of global transnational interaction of all kinds, government is not always the best choice to play the leading role in bringing about positive change. For example, individual companies are coming together collectively to set standards that address human rights in their areas of activity. Indeed, many of their customers now inquire about the factories being used in China and ask for varying degrees of assurance regarding the working conditions there.

Thus, no single actor leading some “grand coalition” will “own” the new framework we describe in this report. Rather, it is for multiple actors working in multiple channels to use in the creation of a shared mindset, a consensus on principles for use by organizations and associations in shaping concrete initiatives that reflect the distinctive qualities of their sub-cultures. A shared paradigm of change should help reduce contradictory actions due to different interests. The desired result will be effective parallel actions by government and nongovernmental agencies that are synergistic in the same direction—promoting the goal of freedom of conscience in a healthy civil society in China.

The Opportunity and Necessity for a New Approach

There is rapid change occurring beneath China’s surface appearance of rigid Communist authoritarianism. The operative values for most Chinese are pragmatism, materialism, and national pride. Younger, better-educated officials and policy advisers are interested in new approaches to modern, accountable, and nonideological governance. The government now tolerates previously banned academic research on religion and media reporting on religion as a social and cultural phenomenon. By strengthening cultural, economic, and social engagement in China, those Americans (and others) who are committed to human rights, including religious freedom, can develop constructive ways to help Chinese address their own social tensions in humane ways.

The further opening up of Chinese society, and the growing influence of society on politics, offers an array of new approaches to promoting religious and other freedoms in China. As China prepares to host mega-events connected to the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Shanghai Expo 2010, it will become apparent that government-business-nonprofit sector partnerships are necessary to do the job. Efforts to create the public appearance of religious freedom will give social prominence to newly built or renovated churches, mosques and temples. Meanwhile, Chinese will observe the cultural and spiritual activities of the growing community of expatriates.
In this new context, a more cooperative approach by Americans and other external actors can align with growing domestic rights-consciousness and expectations for democratization under new leaders. There is a rapidly growing self-perception by Chinese as “citizens” who are more conscious of their rights and determined to exercise them. Witness, for example, the successful lawsuits filed against abusive government officials—even suits by farmers. Moreover, as more and more Chinese interact directly with foreigners, outside actors have the opportunity to incorporate religious freedom goals as they engage with the Chinese people. Younger generations, new political, social, and economic elites, grass-roots social groups—all have less vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

The new younger leadership is now paying attention to the need to balance economic growth with social justice measures to better manage the social challenges of transition from a socialist to a market economy: unemployment, mass migration to the cities, and the huge and growing economic inequities between social classes and geographic regions. The Chinese public worries about immorality and expresses its outrage over widespread official corruption. The government knows that state solutions will not begin to meet all the needs, and that it must pay more attention to public opinion and to civic interests and civil rights. Social justice and social stability are two sides of the same coin. There is a new consensus among Chinese political, social, and cultural leaders that China must build a humane civil society and fight corruption through promoting public morality and personal ethics. Indeed, some policy discussions have entertained far-reaching adaptation measures by the regime, to include legitimating religious pluralism, or at least promoting a new more inclusive ethical or spiritual umbrella to replace atheism.

AN OUT-OF-DATE AND INEFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK

During the past fifteen years, prevailing approaches to promoting religious freedom in China have been reactive, sporadic, narrowly framed, and short-term in focus. Many advocates of human rights, including the right of religious freedom, operate under flawed theories of social change, somehow assuming that moral shaming and political pressure from the outside is sufficient to transform China into a free and democratic country overnight. Such activists have relied primarily on a combination of (a) lobbying for “top-down” government-to-government political discussions at high levels, and (b) media exposure of detentions or arrests to pressure foreign governments into concessions regarding religious rights abuses.

To be sure, this has had some positive results in raising the consciousness of U.S. and foreign government officials as well as secular human rights advocates, who now pay more regular attention to the issue of religion. Some educated urban Chinese and Chinese religious leaders have also become more sensitive to international opinion and aware of international norms in this arena. But the approach also has serious limitations. For instance, activist attempts to get the U.S. to slap sanctions on countries that violate religious freedom have not fared well. In fact, both the Clinton and Bush administrations have sought to minimize the use of sanctions. Instead, fairly conventional diplomatic measures have been employed. They have:
• demanded the release of prisoners of conscience in conversations with Chinese counterparts. Officials from the Secretary of State on down regularly raise religious freedom cases that symbolize the worst abuses, such as harassment and imprisonment of independent Tibetan Buddhist, Uighur Muslim, and Catholic and Protestant church leaders.
• conducted official dialogues on human rights, including religious freedom.
• sought (without success for over a decade) the passage of a censuring resolution on China in the annual session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

Despite the diligence displayed in these bilateral efforts, lasting results on the ground have been minimal. Overall, the past efforts have been short-sighted and counterproductive in several respects:

**Short-term Impact**
In response to external criticism and threats, the Chinese government now often makes a few token releases of prisoners of conscience in exchange for tactical gains or avoidance of confrontation during high-level state meetings. It also carries out more extensive public relations efforts in this area. But the government has not changed either its policies or its severe practices regarding the control of religious activity. It has merely concentrated on better timing of police or propaganda campaigns in an effort to keep religious rights off the foreign affairs agenda. Local officials have learned to harass and detain unregistered group leaders using administrative mechanisms, such as short-term (three-year maximum) incarcerations, to avoid the publicity that comes with trial procedures and lengthy sentences.

Improvements in the quality of overseas public advocacy are urgently needed. There is little awareness of practical ways to develop a rule of law for religion that would allow the government to avoid counterproductive coercive measures. Moreover, efforts to mobilize U.S. citizens around the issue of religious and other rights abuses too often have been caught up in vote-getting for partisan political purposes or fund-raising by advocacy groups. A sustained U.S. government effort is difficult given lack of funding and capacity, which has resulted in sporadic religious freedom diplomacy in reaction to spikes in domestic lobbying or to high profile abuses in China. Meanwhile, nongovernmental organizations are rarely educated or encouraged to make their own direct contributions to the effort. When they do, they pursue narrow and immediate agendas: scholars signing petitions on behalf of intellectual dissidents, or Christians writing letters on behalf of house church activists.

**Arousing Anti-Westernism and Anti-Americanism**
Most Chinese citizens still lack access to objective information, and have become cynical about political ideology of any kind. The result is that in response to what they perceive as “China-bashing,” many Chinese have concluded that expressed concerns about their rights are not genuine, but are aimed at the political goal of weakening or destabilizing China as a nation. Given the historical memory of “gunboat diplomacy” and “cultural imperialism” (partly government-sponsored myth and partly historical fact) in the thinking of the Chinese populace, unilateral political pressure will continue to be unhelpful. It fuels hostility to the West generally and America specifically, and appears to justify nationalistic government campaigns
against “foreign infiltration in the guise of religion,” which in turn inhibit nongovernmental interaction. If the goal of some rights activists has been to undermine the legitimacy of the Communist Party, it would appear to have had the opposite result.

Alienating Allies and Multinational Business
External strategies have often focused on seeking unilateral leverage against the Chinese government on the false assumption that outside actors can easily change the situation on their own through blanket economic sanctions. Yet the use of national trade or investment prohibitions has rarely been effective anywhere, except in short-term, highly specific situations where they could be rigorously enforced. That China does not fit such a scenario has been clear since the Clinton administration first linked trade and human rights issues in a set of demands to the Chinese in June 1993, only to de-link them a year later when the deadlines passed with minimal Chinese response. No post-Cold War administration is likely to obtain a mandate to curtail trade with China. As the Chinese economy has developed and diversified, there are many places to buy or sell in the global market. Other governments and international organizations prefer less confrontational methods. Furthermore, most economic leaders resent attempts to hi-jack the economy for other purposes, and are naturally offended as well by assertions that they have no moral sensitivities. The result is simply less inclination on their part to work on the rights agenda.

Weak American Leverage against China
Throughout the 1990s, the U.S. lost leverage as China and Europe coordinated growth of trade and human rights programming, including dialogues, exchanges, and training. Since September 11, 2001 and the transformation of U.S. and European security priorities, the U.S. and its European allies have wanted to keep Asia on the back burner and have been willing to cooperate with China to prevent troubles in Korea or the Taiwan Strait. Such tactical cooperation is superficial and fragile, however, without more basic trust and shared values. If international security cooperation is to be deepened, bilateral discussion and technical cooperation on promoting religious and other human rights should be near the top of the bilateral agenda. Instead, they are further down the list of priorities than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

What’s more, moral condemnation by U.S. government officials will be even less effective in the future, in no small part because trust in American leaders as moral authorities is eroding. In particular, the military prisoner abuse scandal in Iraq has done significant damage to the moral authority of the U.S. government for the near term.

A New Framework to Better Serve Mutual Interests
It is time to let international nongovernmental actors play a major role in bolstering efforts by Chinese citizens themselves to improve human rights. Ethical modeling and practical help will go further than policy prescriptions. Social and cultural institutions, including purveyors of popular culture, should be encouraged to add their resources and influence to promoting a culture of respect for religious and other rights in China. Our framework does not suggest any
“top-down” effort whereby the U.S. government coordinates what other sectoral actors are doing; this is not the way our society works, and in any case, such an effort would only politicize the issue further and elicit suspicion and opposition in China.

Creating a sustainable approach that can effectively promote steady progress toward religious freedom in China will require consistent and sophisticated parallel cooperative initiatives that involve various sectors and actors, Americans and non-Americans alike. In recognition that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to promoting religious freedom in China, the recommendations in this report below offer suggestions as to what different social groups could do within their own distinct norms. The various sectors of society represent a broad array of subcultures, all with differing interests, responsibilities, and trade lingo and terms. Within the business sector, for example, it is appropriate to do things in certain ways but not others.

Another reason for multiple sectoral approaches is that Chinese society is still highly compartmentalized: Chinese who work in government rarely interact with Chinese in business, Chinese in business rarely interact with Chinese religious leaders, Chinese civic organization leaders rarely interact with foreign affairs officials, etc. If foreign actors from a broad spectrum of interests will discuss religious freedom issues with their Chinese counterparts, Chinese who might otherwise have no exposure to religious freedom issues will be enlightened and, hopefully, convinced that this is something relevant and appropriate for their particular sector.

TEN PRINCIPLES OF ACTION FOR SUCCESS

What follows is a set of complementary principles of action to guide the development of specific projects. The roles and interests of organizations in political, civic, and business sectors will differ to some extent, but certain general priorities can serve as criteria for planning measures that will make headway in improving the long-term climate for religious freedom.

(1) Integrate freedom of religion and belief with other human rights and rule of law initiatives.

There is a strong tendency inside and outside China to think of freedom of religion as an issue that only affects those who already are members of organized religions. Chinese state policy and structure reflect the intent that religious rights are to be extended mainly to a small percentage of the population that belongs to small ethnic and religious minorities, including Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, and Christians. This paradigm is sometimes inadvertently echoed in the reports on religious rights from advocacy groups, when in fact the focus should be on the freedom of conscience, religion, and belief due all Chinese citizens. “Mainstreaming” religious freedom concerns can help counter narrow conceptions of religious rights and responsibilities that do not match the reality of China’s traditional widespread practice of folk religion and its modern pluralistic society that includes rapidly growing communities of faith.

(2) Build consensus and cooperation among outside actors.

China has little incentive to meet demands for religious or other rights improvements unless and until it sees evidence of consistent international policies backed by social consensus. Nongovernmental initiatives would indirectly provide needed evidence of widespread public
concern about religious freedom in China. Particularly valuable would be cross-sectoral exchanges that brought together government, civic, and business leaders in discussions or demonstrations of the role of religious freedom and diversity in community building. Such initiatives indirectly would strengthen the hand of the U.S. government and the international human rights community in convincing allies as well as China that freedom of conscience, religion, and belief requires a high priority.

(3) Support indigenous problem-solving.
“Human rights” and “religious freedom” have become loaded ideological terms in the minds of many Chinese, who want these freedoms for themselves but view with suspicion the unilateral promotion by governments of Western ideals that do not necessarily reflect even Western social reality and that seem remote from the Chinese context. But foreign participation is often welcomed if offered in a spirit of cooperation and problem-solving that offers successful working models and best practices for developing healthy civil societies. These will be less intrusive and more effective than normative policy prescriptions. Human rights and religious freedom advocates need to offer ways of developing not only accountable governments but also responsible citizens. Current reporting sometimes condescendingly depicts indigenous victims as helpless, and encourages a culture of martyrdom among religious adherents rather than encouraging Chinese to adopt a stance of conciliation toward the government and other social groups.

Chinese officials and citizens are cooperating in bilateral programs to build the rule of law, civil society, and good governance. Conferences, training workshops, and legal aid and education programs supported by outsiders are becoming standard practice for introducing social change. For example, an October 2004 conference on charitable law in Beijing is explicitly intended to introduce international legal practices that can be used in drafting new regulations and legislation for Chinese charities. Similar practical programs to address mechanisms of accountability in the business and nonprofit sectors are proliferating. These programs need to be strengthened with components that promote the freedom of conscience, religion, and belief.

(4) Promote an understanding of the synergy linking religious freedom, sustainable economic development, and a modern society.
Academic, media, and policy circles need to counter existing anti-religious attitudes in China, where official propaganda counterpoises religious “superstition” and “modern” scientific values. International scholars of religion and society are publishing research highlighting the key role in economic development played by social capital (values and behavior that promote trust and cooperation), and the prominent role of faith-based organizations in creating social capital. For example, this linkage is one focus of the new James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions in the Department of Politics at Princeton University.

In the U.S., nearly half of all associational memberships are church-related, half of charitable giving is religious in character, and half of all volunteering occurs in a faith context. Hong Kong society is similar in nature. Thus, religion as social capital is increasingly viewed as an important national resource, equally desirable and necessary compared with financial or human capital. In fact, one might say that the absence of religion in public life is more dangerous
than an excess of religious passion. Religious freedom is essential to social capital, and social capital is essential to the development of a healthy economy characterized by low corruption and norms of transparency and reciprocity.

(5) Address the fears of the Chinese government regarding religious extremism as a threat to social stability and national security.
Anxiety over social unrest, including the spread of new spiritual sects, coupled with a lack of understanding of religion, makes the Chinese government reluctant to change policy. The international war against terrorism also has fueled the Chinese government’s natural proclivity to suppress rather than dialogue or negotiate with representatives of unregistered religious groups or spiritual movements. Officials need to be shown how the application of the rule of law toward religion could function as an antidote to religious extremism rather than as a cause of it. They need to be shown how to counter the potential for religious conflict in a freer environment.

Introducing positive views of religion and society in China would fit well with the government’s desire to harness “social forces,” vaguely defined, to help with social service delivery as the government withdraws from (some would say abandons) those obligations. Outside resources, including ideas and modeling, could help put flesh on these goals. For example, there could be lessons from post-Apartheid South Africa, where the government encourages the use of religious networks to provide services in rural areas and poor urban areas. Of course, appealing to the state’s utilitarian approach to morality should not be substituted for principled support for human rights. But taking into account the state’s interests provides a rationale for progressive forces on the inside to make headway.

(6) Focus on provincial and local, as well as central actors.
Outside efforts should take into account the interests and needs of provincial and local levels, for China has become too complex and the central government too limited in its reach for lasting change to come solely from the top down. As authority is shared between center and periphery, local interests and circumstances differ more than ever. For example, some of the former revolutionary base areas in China are extreme leftists in politics, still enforcing old Maoist prescriptions to create “100% atheist” cities or counties. Meanwhile, the Beijing City government is starting to improve religious facilities and add new ones for the first time since 1949, to meet requirements for Olympic athletes and spectators in 2008. Of course, it is more difficult to be informed about and interact with 31 regional level governments than one central government. But many outside actors already are engaged in some of these localities, whether as business partners or “sister” cities or provinces.

(7) Work in cooperation with the Chinese Diaspora.
Transnational Chinese business, educational, philanthropic, and religious networks have been the main outside actors quietly transforming Chinese society for the past 25 years. Chinese networks have opened up the market for new values and ideas, along with goods and services. Chinese churches and temples overseas are filled with highly-educated clergy and lay professionals who have family members scattered globally and who interact with counterparts in China on a regular basis. A new modern and pluralistic Chinese cultural identity is being
constructed in the process of globalization. In some West Coast U.S. cities, for example, up to one-third of the Chinese population belongs to independent non-denominational Protestant churches; many others are Buddhist. Mainland Chinese permanent residents in the U.S. would be more likely to visit or return to China if they could count on exercising their freedom of conscience, religion, and belief, thus reversing the “brain drain.” Chinese professionals are best positioned to help the government see the connection between freedom of conscience and belief and its stated desire to promote a “brain gain” to create a knowledge society.

(8) Coordinate regional and international approaches around international norms.
Chinese citizens have high expectations for China to become accepted as a “normal” country, a responsible member of the global society of nations. China’s adherence to international norms and conventions for arms control and economic trade have set the precedent for China to conform to international human rights norms as well. But positive Chinese response to any outside effort is easier to mobilize and justify internally if it is not primarily an American initiative pushing uniquely American values. A regional or international effort instead provides an opportunity for China to engage in internationally accepted behavior on a voluntary basis rather than under duress. When the U.S. is seriously at odds with its allies in Europe or Asia over human rights issues, our influence in China is greatly diminished. The resulting “good cop, bad cop” routine serves European interests and allows China to play one against the others.

A positive environment for religious rights among China’s neighbors, and especially modeling of religious freedom by the Chinese societies of Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, and Taiwan, will be particularly important in shaping Chinese behavior. Unfortunately, however, many nations in the region struggle on this front, and some serve more as a negative than positive lesson for China. Democracy in most of Asia is fragile at best, and religious intolerance seethes below the surface. In Malaysia and Indonesia, for example, non-Islamic religious practice is officially discouraged by restrictive laws and policies.

Americans and other Westerners might use their direct influence in Asia to create regional success stories in dealing with ethnic-religious conciliation and cooperation, which in turn would influence China. To this end, the development of broadly inclusive Asia-Pacific forums to educate and advocate respect for religious and other civic rights for the sake of regional development and stability should be a high priority. These would be more effective than bilateral efforts by the U.S. and its allies, which are perceived as being more political in motivation.

(9) Focus attention on improvements at the local level in China.
Improvements are needed in monitoring and reporting not just human rights abuses but also improvements in human rights. This reporting must be sensitive to that diversity across Chinese second-level localities. (These are the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, special economic zones, and large cities directly under the central government). Current human rights reporting focuses on abuses, with little attention to improvement, and on national policy prescriptions rather than diverse local approaches to implementation. Yet it is becoming more difficult, not less so, for the center to control local behavior; practical local incentives count more.
Information on local human rights situations remains poor, though improving. As such, a fully scientific, quantitative, and comparative ranking of localities is not yet possible. However, it may still be valuable to have a kind of “report card” that would at least compare a given locality’s past and current practices, with each locality competing against itself, so to speak. Progressive localities would become de facto models for the others. Local officials would begin to see it in their interest to pay more attention to the rule of law and to earning positive media stories about ongoing or new efforts to promote respect for human rights. Such stories would provide much needed balance in the way outsiders talk about human rights. The emphasis should be on carrots, not sticks—that is, reporting should be oriented to identifying localities that merit rewards in the form of new investments of resources, rather than calling for boycotts as punishment for abuses. The latter only limits the influence of new ideas brought in by outsiders.

If local governments, who vie for international resources of all kinds, were put on notice that investments of outside resources would depend in part on their reputation for respecting citizen rights, they thus would have a new incentive to adjust their implementation of central policy (and the advice they feed back to the center). They would get the message that outsiders naturally prefer to work with progressive officials who abide by world-class standards. Business risk analyses could link such “rights report cards” to practical questions such as: “Is this local climate predictable? Will these local officials carry out their promises? Can we protect our contract in the local legal environment? Can we get good native or expatriate employees to live here?” The natural consequences of such criteria would amount to customized sanctions, de facto but unofficial and informal, which would be much more effective than empty threats of national sanctions and trade wars.

The initiative to make these changes in reporting could come from either governmental or nongovernmental monitors. With respect to the U.S. government, Congressional appropriating committees would have to revise the mandated format for executive branch reporting. More broadly, complementary UN approaches to monitoring can also be promoted; the Vienna Declaration of 1993 stressed the need to strengthen the monitoring capacity of the UN system.

(10) Provide forums for planning.
Finally, policy research “think tanks” in Washington, DC should provide forums for cross-sectoral discussions to build understanding of divergent interests and roles, and to create more consensus on a common approach among leaders of government, business, and civic organizations. Organizations whose mission is to promote relations between America and China—such as the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations or the U.S.-China Business Council—would be the logical conveners. Such forums would enable candid discussion of how this proposed framework and its principles might be adapted and practically implemented in diverse sectoral sub-cultures.
Recommendations for Key Actors, By Sector

Diverse leaders in global engagement are needed to flesh out concrete projects that incorporate religious rights objectives. New efforts to promote sustainable environments for religious freedom should be complementary to indigenous civil rights trends and sensitive to the organizational “cultures” in each of three major sectors: civic, economic, and political. While by no means an exhaustive list, the following recommendations for practical action are offered so as to illustrate how we might “put legs” on this new paradigm.

THE CIVIC SECTOR

Religious Institutions and Faith-based Organizations

- The lead role in promoting religious freedom overseas should rightly fall to religious associations or faith-based organizations with some international experience. They cannot expect others to take the initiative if they themselves take no direct action, promoting their concerns directly with Chinese parties as well as educating and influencing U.S. civic, economic, and political actors to become more active and effective in the pursuit of religious freedom goals. This must be done carefully, though, to avoid the appearance (or reality) of special interest pleading. Projects should also include actors from other sectors.

- Religious associations could use their public voice to provide guidelines for educating and encouraging initiatives regarding China (and other countries) in all sectors. For example, the National Association of Evangelicals, whose first Statement of Conscience on religious persecution in 1996 challenged the federal government to incorporate religious freedom into its China policy, is now working on a Project for Public Engagement. The project at some point could be expanded to include guidelines for international engagement; ideally, these would be worked out in consultation with counterpart associations such as those in the U.K. or in India, who have a less contentious approach to politics from which Americans could learn.

- Religious associations such as the National Council of Churches, the nationally based U.S. Catholic China Bureau, and similarly representative Buddhist and Islamic groups that interact closely with China’s official religious circles, could sponsor inter-religious dialogue on such matters as acceptance of religious pluralism, commitment to persuasion, and other basic elements of civil society. Educational and training programs in China could include sensitive religious freedom issues such as responsible evangelism and conversion, church-state relations including civil disobedience, or how to understand and handle new spiritual sects. Religious organizations could help Chinese counterparts develop consensus position statements and guidelines on good citizenship to assuage government concerns.

- Religious associations also could design and organize exchanges between broadly-inclusive sets of American and Chinese religious leaders as a follow up to the visit by three religious leaders, representing the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths, who traveled through China in January 1998 on a visit decided personally by Presidents Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin. A Track Two diplomatic effort might resemble
the visit to Morocco of a delegation led by the National Association of Evangelicals (with clergy, government and congressional representatives, and research specialists), perhaps including faith-based foundations and charities as well. These could all touch on the topic of international norms and practices for religion-state relations.

- Religious organizations might sponsor education in the doctrinal basis for religious and human rights, as well as responsible proselytizing and civil disobedience. They might provide training materials for ministries involved in China to use in promoting respect for all religions and rights at the local level. Catholic organizations could seek for ways to explain the impact that the Second Vatican Council and its documents on social justice have had on the Catholic church in general and what potentially positive impact they could have in China.

- Faith-based organizations could make it clear in policy statements and practices that they stand for religious freedom for all people, including believers from all faiths, not just for themselves.

Foundations and Public Benefit Nonprofit Organizations
- Many of the nonprofit foundations and organizations supporting programming in China on education, rule of law, civil society, or economic development have avoided or excluded faith-based issues and organizations. While this was understandable in the past due to the high degree of sensitivity of ideology and religion, the growing openness in Chinese society and government on this front creates new possibilities to support faith-based projects. The considerable contributions by faith-based organizations could be more widely acknowledged and encouraged.

- Faith-based nonprofit organizations involved in charitable work or policy advocacy could cultivate and train partners in China in ways that further awareness of religious nondiscrimination. For example, the Center for Public Justice in Annapolis, Maryland, has pioneered the concept and legislation for “charitable choice,” and could spur discussion of this in China.

Educational and Cultural Organizations
- Cultural and educational exchange groups, such as the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and the Committee on Scholarly Exchanges with China, have greatly influenced the development of Chinese civic institutions through exchanges of prominent professionals in all fields. These organizations could review their programming for balance, and develop exchanges that would promote new thinking in China about religion, including its positive role in society and international affairs, as well as promote the need for a strong nonprofit sector, with a legitimate role for faith-based components, to prevent further conflict and fragmentation of Chinese society.

- Educators engaged in China might inquire into admissions, graduation, hiring, and promotion policies of Chinese partner institutions, pointing out those which discriminate against believers. Faculty and graduate student exchanges could include those teaching and studying religion, and provide tours or events that explore the role of religion in society. Educators in various fields, such as economics, sociol-
ogy, and business management, could seek opportunities to initiate discussions about faith and values.

- Educational institutions and funders could support library and curriculum development, as well as special centers or institutes, for the study of religion in society. Scholars and academic institutions that focus on religion could address the theoretical foundations for human rights in their exchanges with China.

- Even primary and secondary schools, some of which have developed ties in China, can model and share results of their programs to teach ethics and develop character. This is currently of great interest in China.

- Visual and performance artists, including faith-based groups, have been received in China with increasing popularity. By including spiritual themes in their work, they can influence popular opinion and culture in China with both healthy values and a positive attitude toward religion.

Advocacy and Media Groups

- These opinion shapers play a powerful role in cultural and social change, and should exhibit the highest standards of truth and balance in their reporting, publications, and policy statements, especially on such sensitive issues as human and religious rights. Attention should be given not only to abuses—not only the “cup half empty,” but also to the “cup half full”—to reward human rights progress in China.

- More publicity could be given to ways in which religious believers and faith-based organizations are having a positive influence in Chinese society in the arts, cultural events, and social service delivery. (Care must be taken, though, to avoid shaming China for its lessening role in these areas and thereby causing the government to take reactive measures to regain “face” and control.) Balanced and respectful coverage, playing back into China, would help shape a more positive public opinion regarding religion and thus counter official fear-mongering that depicts religion solely as a source of societal conflict and instability.

- Programs to educate and train reporters on the nature of religion and its role in society and international affairs, such as those sponsored by the Fieldstead Institute, would be very helpful, as journalists need solid background information to prevent false assumptions or errors that undermine the credibility of their reports and cause resentment and contempt by the Chinese authorities. Educators and trainers of Chinese journalists can introduce respect for religion as well as principles of nondiscrimination.

- Economic news reporting, risk analysis, and advising could make clear the link between economic and socio-political progress, including rights protection, and regularly look into the social and cultural factors that affect the sustainability of economic growth—from rights abuses and corruption to the need for social capital.

- U.S. religious and human rights groups could strengthen their cooperation and work with regional and international human rights agencies and initiatives, thus helping to emphasize universal, not “American” or “Western” norms.

- Verification of cases of abuse by rights advocates is difficult in closed or semi-closed societies, but there is a great need for more accountability in reporting. “Consumers” of reports lack knowledge and access to make considered judgments on sources
of information. Perhaps mechanisms could be developed to corroborate and document cases in confidence. For example, Human Rights in China might take the lead in setting up a listserv, to include secular and faith-based advocates, for quick communication in checking out new anecdotal reports of religious persecution.

- Consultations among advocacy and media groups could take a closer look at how to publicize religious repression and the growth of religion in China without endangering the people they are writing about. Professional ethics require that deference be given to those in China regarding the release of their names and details. Perhaps a code of conduct could be developed on human rights reporting practices.

Policy Research Institutions

- Policy think tanks, which normally focus narrowly on elite politics and foreign policy, could expand their programming for research and visiting scholars to include social, cultural, and religious policy issues and their interconnection with political stability and national security, such as the issue of conflict and coexistence among religious communities in Asia.

- Think tanks in Washington might take the lead in building consensus behind China policy, through closed or open forums to work out differences and find common ground.

THE ECONOMIC SECTOR

Corporations

- Business operations in China, whether through direct business involvement at the local (city and county) level, membership in the American Chamber of Commerce in China, or involvement in local communities, provide opportunities to model best practices, professional ethics, and humanitarian values, including respect for religious individuals and faith-based organizations. This begins in the workplace, as international businesses with operations in China make principled decisions on how they will treat their employees.

- Besides creating safe and humane conditions, employers can model and provide training in zero tolerance for discrimination on the basis of belief. Anti-corruption and accountability measures, perhaps with rewards for model workers and staff, would indirectly highlight respect for the contribution of religious values. The more staff and employees are involved in creating such office or factory “compacts,” the more learning there will be.

- Labor conditions within facilities wholly or partially owned by U.S. companies tend to be the best of any entities in China, thus attracting the admiration of local Chinese and setting the pace for others, including Chinese companies. However, personnel policies need to be watched carefully, to ensure that Party leaders and members are not allowed to interfere to the detriment of religious believers. This will require training and diligent observation and negotiation by U.S. and local managers, and good communication channels with employees. Managers should be familiar with China’s Labor Law, which prohibits discrimination in the workplace due to religious belief. Article 12 in the law reflects specific norms accepted by
China when it signed and ratified the U.N. International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and which also are required by China’s membership in the International Labor Organization.

- **Corporate Social Responsibility programs** provide the opportunity to influence the host communities of foreign business operations. For example, Proctor and Gamble’s “principal goal is to help improve its consumers’ quality of life. This objective includes helping the communities where the company operates prosper.” Financial, technical, or training support for local charitable non-profit organizations, including those that are faith-based, is one important avenue that influences public opinion and also provides a model for Chinese philanthropy. When companies also encourage their employees to help choose projects and then reward their volunteerism, the base for local humanitarianism is strengthened.

**Codes of Conduct**

- Businesses that buy products manufactured by Chinese factories through contractual arrangements have a greater challenge in setting and enforcing high standards for work conditions within their contract manufacturers’ facilities. The importance of codes of conduct between consumer and supplier companies has been widely publicized. Note, however, that while most codes of conduct demand non-discrimination among workers on issues such as gender and race, not all codes prohibit discrimination based on religion and belief; this is a situation that should be remedied.

- The proliferation of company codes, all with variations in wording, make it confusing and difficult for those Chinese companies who want to comply, and give others the option of dealing with more lenient buyers. Foreign businesses would send a clearer message if they would endorse one basic code, perhaps in addition to more customized and detailed individual statements. These need not be China specific, but can be international in scope. Perhaps the place to start is to develop standard codes by industry or sector.

**Business groups**

- Business associations and organizations have numerous opportunities to model best practices and high moral standards. For example, local U.S.-based business groups could seek out appropriate Chinese counterpart organizations, including local faith-based business associations now existing in China, either for direct involvement or for involvement through sister-city or sister-state/province engagements. Chinese counterpart organizations must be chosen with care, however, as most Chinese business associations are government sponsored cartels—part of the growing number of “GONGOs” in China (government-organized nongovernmental organizations). Party and government officials oversee these business associations; their offices are often co-located. Intended to serve as a tool of control for the state, they also serve, however, as channels through which businesses can pursue their concerns. Local business associations have an advantage over the national or provincial-level associations in that they are more co-equal in influence with local government counterparts.
• U.S. companies also affect China through their participation in **regional business groups**. Through membership in the National Center for APEC, U.S. companies can promote policies and projects with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Membership in the United States Asia Pacific Council (which advises APEC and the Asian Development Bank) as well as their participation in other regional groups, such as the Pacific Basin Economic Council and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, provides business personnel with forums for interaction with Asian leaders in business, government, media, education, and research. This professional fellowship and networking could be used to push forward moral standards of transparency and accountability in business transactions through the enactment and implementation of anti-corruption statutes and non-discrimination codes—all from a broad Asia-Pacific perspective. Pertinent issues such as environmental protection and human resource development, social progress, and the community building that is needed to sustain economic development can open the door for discussing morality, values, and the central role of religion in social capital.

**Intergovernmental Economic Agencies**

• APEC, which consists of twenty-one countries, including China and the U.S., announced that its top three goals for 2004 include “using APEC to help people and societies benefit from globalization.” APEC leaders have acknowledged that sustainable economic development requires the empowerment of people and the strengthening of societies, and that this in turn requires strengthening the private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and **mainstreaming the informal sector**—nonprofit organizations. Thus, now is an especially propitious time to highlight the strong role that nonprofit organizations can have, specifically including faith-based nonprofit organizations, in local communities.

• International financial organizations such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the “World Bank”) could ensure religious nondiscrimination in all their programming and be more assertive in choosing **faith-based organizations for project implementation**. Using the ADB as an example, women’s equality and environmental protection policies manifest themselves in many ADB projects. In the same way, prohibiting discrimination against religious believers could become a component of their poverty reduction projects and their legal and judicial reform projects. The ADB publicizes a desire to work with nongovernmental organizations in community development efforts, and choosing faith-based organizations for project implementation would reflect ADB’s commitment to equality of opportunity. While ADB publications currently acknowledge the potential of faith-based organizations, they also express deference to the ideological preferences of the target countries. Thus ADB may be hesitant to choose a faith-based organization for a project in China on the assumption that this would be unacceptable. But such deference may be out-of-date for many local governments, more open now to pragmatic solutions that meet societal needs and ease social tensions.

• The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been promoting **research on social capital** and social cohesion and community-based projects to
ensure outcomes that sustain economic development, not just short-term growth. So far, however, the extensive section on social capital on the Bank’s website does not reference any of the studies available on religious social capital. Meanwhile, publications that include an element of “risk analysis” such as the IMF’s annual World Economic Outlook rightly should include indicators of socio-economic stability such as trends in the religious and human rights situation.

THE POLITICAL SECTOR

U.S. State and City Governments
- Existing city and state/province exchange relations involving the U.S. and China date back to 1979. These organizations, as well as periodic exchanges of delegations led by mayors and governors, could be reviewed and revised if necessary to include faith-based as well as other civic organizations. Taxpayers’ funds should be used to promote more than trade, which of course is the primary Chinese interest in the programs. Exchanges through the U.S.-China Sister Cities Council, an affiliate of Sister Cities International, explicitly include business, professional, and cultural dimensions. International programs sponsored by the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors provide opportunity to share best practices in social capital development, highlighting interaction with faith-based organizations.
- A state delegation might offer to exchange local experience in legislating and regulating religious entities or seek to support local pilot projects to create more liberal experimental regulations or laws for religion that could demonstrate its benefits for social order as well as social progress.
- Unofficial activities such as local and national prayer breakfasts can build relationships on a personal level and change attitudes toward religion.

U.S. Federal Programs
- The State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development could review foreign aid funding for China (direct or indirect) under current democracy, human rights and rule of law programming, and the new Joint Strategic Plan, to require religious freedom components that correlate with Millennium Challenge requirements. These programs, aimed at rule of law and good governance objectives, provide a ready platform for the U.S. to model religious freedom objectives.
- There is growing awareness of the necessity of countering anti-Americanism world-wide, and this definitely is a need in China as well, as the campaign in China during 2004 against alleged “foreign infiltration in the guise of religion” demonstrates. Public diplomacy could include a major effort to promote a more positive understanding of religion. USIA could review its International Visitor Program for inclusion of Chinese scholars studying religion or law and religion, as well as leaders of religious and faith-based nongovernmental organizations.
- To build trust with the Chinese government and society, there may be a need for government legislation to mandate monitoring and reporting to insure that the U.S. Government is not secretly using staff of American NGOs, business or media for political purposes in China.
• The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) might avoid duplicating existing monitoring and reporting functions, and instead focus on ensuring that religious freedom goals are well-integrated into the programs of government agencies and regional or international institutions to which the U.S. and China belong, so as to promote an external environment with positive incentives for China to protect religious rights. In 2003, steps in this direction included two China Religion Roundtable sessions among government agencies. The delegation’s visit to Hong Kong in January 2004, however, appeared to play into the hands of hard-liners in Beijing who have aborted engagement with the USCIRF and promoted a campaign to oppose overseas “religious infiltration.”

• The Congressional-Executive Commission on China has done a good job in bringing expertise on complex rights-related issues before the Congress, including prospects for religious freedom and the role of faith-based organizations. Its web-based distribution allows widespread access to expert findings. The database now under construction for documenting cases of abuse could include religious freedom cases. Its format might facilitate analysis by type of case and by geographic location.

• Formation of a new Congressional caucus, whether formal or informal, to discuss and create a bipartisan approach to human rights, including religious freedom, would be a positive contribution.

Bilateral Initiatives

• Dialogue and exchanges, such as the newly established exchange mechanism between the U.S. Senate and China’s National People’s Congress (NPC) and the previously established exchange mechanism between the U.S. House of Representatives and the NPC, provide channels for the U.S. government to discuss the importance of religious freedom and the positive role of religion in creating social capital. The State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and the Office of International Religious Freedom’s dialogue efforts have been consistently difficult, in part due to poor cooperation from Chinese interlocutors that do not really serve as exact counterparts but have other mandates. New Track Two mechanisms could be explored that would bring more progressive Chinese nongovernmental actors into the conversation.

• U.S.-China cooperation in law enforcement and anti-terrorism could include explicit analysis of how legislation and law enforcement affect religion, including suggestions of ways of promoting positive inter-religion relations, and methods to avoid or resolve conflict. As the lead actor against terrorism, the U.S. government has a moral obligation to explore and promote peaceful methods of dealing with religious extremism, and to intervene on behalf of the growing number of cases where political or religious activists in China are falsely charged and sentenced for “terrorism.” The U.S. must strive to ensure that China does not use counter-terrorism measures as a cover for religious oppression, and any cooperation must carry the message that (a) religious freedom is the best antidote for religious extremism, since social justice and national security are two sides of the same coin, and (b) those countries that actively promote freedom of religion make the best allies against terrorism.
• New bilateral problem-solving exchanges regarding social policy issues attendant to globalization, such as unemployment, income disparities, and migration all could be designed to highlight the potential contributions of faith-based humanitarian organizations.

Regional Organizations
• The U.S. and others might explore the application to Asia of the model provided by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which links regional security with human rights. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum provides the most likely regional platform for advocating religious tolerance and exploring how religious freedom can help bring stability to social relations and to national and regional security. Members in the forum include all members of ASEAN, plus China, the U.S., Canada, the E.U., and others. A number of the Southeast Asian nations face complex ethnic and religious tensions, as does China.

International Cooperation
• For its part, the U.S. government should start by coordinating approaches to religious freedom with partners most likely to share the concern, including some in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Together, these collaborators could find ways to restructure UN human rights mechanisms to become more effective in advancing freedom of conscience, religion, and belief. The UN Human Rights Commission, through its technical assistance and advisory divisions, can assist China in complying with its international human rights commitments and provide human rights training for Chinese officials working at the local levels. For over a decade, the Chinese have prevented such progress by successfully enforcing a de facto tradeoff whereby it will agree to bilateral dialogue only if the country in question drops its promotion of a China resolution in the annual meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. The U.S. needs to place higher priority on building an alliance to create alternative means to promote the specialized work of the Commission, as well as obtain China’s promulgation of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which it has signed but not yet ratified.
• Humanitarian organizations, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization, or the UN Children’s Fund may also have a role to play, by ensuring cooperation with and support for faith-based organizations. For example, now that the U.S. has joined with others around the world in promoting HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs worldwide (with a May 2004 pledge of $20 billion), the current task at hand is effective and swift distribution of these funds. Competent faith-based organizations should be given equal funding consideration for treatment and prevention programming in China, as elsewhere.
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CIVIC SECTOR

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ECONOMIC SECTOR
Dr. Robert A. Kapp, President, Robert A. Kapp and Associates, Inc.; former President of the U.S.-China Business Council. Mr. Dave Kiersznowski, President, DemDaCo.

POLITICAL SECTOR
Dr. Thomas Farr, former Director, Office of International Religious Freedom, U.S. Department of State.
Mr. John J. Foarde, Staff Director, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Washington, D.C.
Dr. William Inboden, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State. (This review does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of State.)
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