Religious Freedom Index
Project Proposal

Abstract

There is no verified, reliable, readily updateable or transparent index of international religious freedom. I propose to construct and assess such a Religious Freedom Index (RFI). I hypothesize that the RFI will be formed by averaging (or adding) weighted composite measures of religious freedom’s three hypothesized regulators: Societal Attitudes, the Legal/Policy Framework, and Religious Demography. I also propose and will test hypotheses about how existing international surveys and scales that deal with religious freedom correlate with the RFI. Finally, I will present examples of how the RFI can be used in further substantive research, specifically exploring the relationship between religious freedom and U.S. foreign aid, human development, terrorism and war. Definition of key terms is offered since there are no agreed upon definitions for ‘freedom,’ ‘religion,’ or ‘religious freedom.’

The data used to conduct this analysis will be my quantitative coding of the qualitative reports on the 195 nations covered in the US State Department’s 2003 annual International Religious Freedom Report, to be available in December. Such data obviously represent an American viewpoint (and bias). The coding approach described in this document, however, can be used by anyone adequately knowledgeable about a nation. The State Department data are used here because of their fresh currency, breadth of coverage and depth of inquiry specifically related to religious freedom. The Pennsylvania State University’s Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the “Construction and Validation of an International Religious Freedom Index” (IRB#17073) using these data as summarized in this abstract.
Construction and Validation of an International Religious Freedom Index

Introduction

Contrary to the predictions of secularization theory, religion is not fading away. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the main tripwire for war was restrung along religious lines. The violent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the current ‘war on terror’ are cases in point.

Therefore, the study of religion is no longer confined to religion specialists. It is the subject of serious work among sociologists (Ammerman 1997, Chaves et al 1994, Finke 1997, Sherkat and Wilson 1997; Stark and Bainbridge 1987), political scientists (Gill 1994), and economists (Gwin and North 2002; Iannaccone 1997; Neitz and Mueser 1997). In spite of the debate over the veracity of Max Weber’s (1930) Protestant Work Ethic, modern economists are once again taking the connection between religion and economy seriously (Barro and McCleary 2003). These researchers represent a new direction in the study of religion (Warner 1993). They begin with the proposition that the human side of religion can be understood (Stark and Finke 2000) by drawing on the understanding of other human phenomena such as competitive commerce and strategic conflict. For example, religion reacts to regulation and responds to choice (Finke 1990, Iannaccone 1991) as well as grows as a result of careful
planning and strategic allocation of resources (Barrett and Johnson 2001, Finke and Stark 1992).

In a world with shifting economic tensions (Firebaugh 2003) and seismic religious realignments (Jenkins 2002), better measures of international religion are called for. For example, a descriptive measure of religious freedom within a nation that allows for comparisons between nations will be especially useful in understanding the development situations for nations and regions. This is especially so if Amartya Sen’s (1999) proposition is correct that freedom itself is a bundled commodity (see “Other Hypothesis” g on p. 36 below).

In addition to being of value to researchers, a valid and reliable measure for religious freedom is important to policy makers. When a religion holds either a commanding (monopoly) or besieged (discriminated against) position in society, it can easily be used to send legions or minions on a ‘holy crusade.’ Religious freedom, therefore, can be a safeguard of peace. As President Jimmy Carter notes, because “religion can be such a powerful force for good and evil, the protection of religious rights becomes critically important” (1996:x).

The contradictory relationship of religion and peace points to the fact that religion is a unique human endeavor. It is unique in that religions (a) make exclusive claims that transcend borders and (b) rely on supernatural explanations of
reality (Stark and Finke 2000, Stark 2003). These two characteristics categorically set religion apart from non-religious freedoms of speech, belief or assembly. Religious freedom is a unique type of freedom.

The view that religious freedom is a distinct freedom is supported by strong international and national efforts to recognize that religious freedom is a basic human right. Religious freedom is established as a right in most national Constitutions as well as in a number of major international declarations and conventions. Article 18 of the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

The U.S. International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 even established a legal framework for the United States to make aid decisions to foreign nations based on religious freedom.

Before continuing, a note is in order on how current researchers deal with the spiritual side of religion. On the one hand, the spiritual side of religion does not lend itself to scientific study because it is not directly observable; thus the spiritual component of religion may be a source of error in any study of religion. On the other hand, to the degree that
religions pursue vested worldly interests such as power, prestige, property, programs, professions, etc., religious phenomena can be explained without reference to spiritual forces -- as lamentable as that may be to devout believers.

The Problem

There is no verified, reliable, readily updateable or transparent index of international religious freedom in spite of the existence of various indices (Barrett 1982; Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson 2001; Bates 1945; Marshall 2000).

Definition of Terms

A study on religious freedom must begin with the definition of terms because there are neither universally shared nor sufficiently precise definitions in the literature.

1. Freedom

Freedom is defined as the dialectical social process of ‘mutual submission’ which provides the ‘real opportunity’ for choice. Note that freedom, as used here, is a social construct not to be confused with independence, which implies social separation. Unpacking the definition a bit, a ‘real opportunity’ for choice differs from a theoretical opportunity to the degree

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2 Dialectic meaning that the contradiction between two conflicting forces is viewed as the determining factor in their continuing interaction. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition 2000, sense 4.
that people of similar situation actually make that choice. If the opportunity to do something is postulated but no one ever does it, the opportunity is not real. ‘Glass Ceiling’ propositions exemplify this concept.

‘Mutual submission’ differs from subjugation in that each party works for the best interests of the other party. When this happens, collaboration results, not control. Where this is not the case, some are dominated. Politically, this is the dialectic between those governed and the government. Freedom exists to the extent that the two continually submit to each other. When the government refuses to submit to those it governs, totalitarianism results. When the governed do not submit to the government, anarchy results. Both are breaches of mutual submission, and thus adversely impact the real opportunity for choice. Specifically, totalitarianism proscribes choice, while anarchy prescribes choice.

Mutual submission specifically recognizes the benefits gained in economies of scale, public goods, predictability, shared responsibilities, equal opportunities, etc. When mutual submission is practiced, then real choice keeps these benefits from becoming communistic or monarchial. The benefits of mutual submission are always dialectical in nature, i.e., they involve

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3 Anarchy prescribes (or forces) choice in that predictable social expectations are lost and unexpected choices are forced upon all.
a process of give and take (exchange) with outcomes that present new conditions that the parties must again respond to. Freedom is therefore a dynamic, not static, state.

2. Religion

To date, there is no agreed upon definition for the term religion among social scientists (Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto 2002) or among those involved with Human Rights law (Lerner 2000). Most definitions erect a canopy so large that atheism and most college sororities would qualify as religions. Such a broad definition obfuscates rather than elucidates what religion is. In the balance between all inclusive generality and specificity, it is better to err on the side of specificity; otherwise, the concept of religious freedom will become nothing more than a type of free speech, thought and/or assembly. Due to the nature of religion (see introduction above), those are quite different freedoms.

A useful definition of religion recognizes that there is more variation within religions than between religions. Islam on the nomadic steppes of Central Asia has little in common with Islam in monarchial Saudi Arabia. Rather than conceptualizing religion as five big mammoths striding round the planet, it is more useful to see religion as a plethora of phenomena with characteristics that are best operationalized in the concept of a religious brand.
Using elements from Rodney Stark’s (2003) revision of the definition of religion offered in Stark and Finke (2000), I define a **religious brand** as an organized group of committed individuals that adhere to and propagate a specific interpretation of explanations of existence based on supernatural assumptions through statements about the nature and workings of the supernatural and about ultimate meaning. Thus, a religious brand is not merely an isolated individual’s belief. Neither is it a philosophy that does not have supernatural assumptions. This also speaks to the enduring nature of religious brands as opposed to more temporal political philosophies such as Communism or even Liberation Theology.

3. Religious Freedom

The vast majority of cases of abuse to religious freedom today are not due to the private beliefs people hold; rather, the abuses are either due to the religious brand to which people belong or towards which they dissent. Religious freedom is then less a matter of a person being able to choose a belief (or no belief), but more a matter of freedom to make a choice for or against a particular religious brand.

In China, for example, association with Falun Gong attracts persecution, not the individual practice of Falun Gong, which is difficult to discern from traditional Chinese Qigong. Likewise, religious freedom is abused in contexts where only one
particular religious brand is officially allowed, as is the case in Saudi Arabia for Wahhabi Islam. Even in Indonesia where citizens are required to join one out of a set of approved religious brands, abuses of religious freedom overwhelmingly occur due to hostilities between the religious brands. Thus, the verifiable test of religious freedom is whether there is freedom to choose freely among religious brands, as appears to be the case among Muslims in Senegal who choose from various brands of Islam.

Accordingly, religious freedom is the dialectical social process of 'mutual submission' that provides the 'real opportunity' for religious brand choice. A 'real opportunity' for religious brand choice differs from a theoretical opportunity to the degree that people of similar situation actually make that choice. Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom are much less telling than whether, for example, people from the same ethno-linguistic group can freely and without adversity choose from a variety of religious brands. Real choice keeps one religious brand from monopolizing the society. And in religion, choice is natural. As exciting as nirvana, a whirling dervish or an ecstatic utterance may be, it is a safe bet that they do not fit to everyone’s religious preference.
The concept of ‘mutual submission’ means that all social players involved respect the full right of others to be active just as they are active. The old saying, *one man’s freedom ends where another man’s freedom begins*, captures part of this. Mutual submission implies that all social players support the best interests for each religious brand, particularly brands other than their own, and do so as if the interests were their own. Another old saying speaks to this concept as well -- the Golden Rule. *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* Religions themselves see this as a source of freedom.

Mutual submission specifically recognizes the benefits gained from having level playing fields, recognizing human fallibility, having religious reformation, hearing ‘God’s message’ for today, having a diversity of callings, etc. This mutual submission aspect of religious freedom recognizes that religion is itself a dynamic social phenomenon that continually addresses the changing realities of the world; religion is not some static relic of a bygone era. In religious terms, the ‘spirit of God’ is living and active.

Finally, mutual submission is always dialectical in nature in that the outcomes of mutual submission are new developments in the world of religion to which all social parties involved must again respond. Otherwise, once-and-for-all mutual submission could become the comity agreement of tomorrow’s New
England religious cartels (Finke and Stark 1992) or could lead to another Beirut or Cypriot Green Line.

The Research Process

1. Research Hypothesis

I hypothesize that a nation’s Legal/Policy Framework, Societal Attitudes, and Religious Demography each impact the real opportunities for religious brand choice when they violate the dialectical principle of mutual submission by discriminating against (regulating) or preferring (subsidizing) a certain religious brand(s). Figure 1 is a simplified version of the more detailed hypothesis in Appendix B (page 53).

Figure 1: Hypothesis of the Key Factors Affecting Religious Freedom

Other researchers have focused primarily on Legal/Policy issues (Gill forthcoming; Gwen and North 2002). According to the hypothesis above, a Legal/Policy focus will reveal a large portion of variation in religious freedom, especially as it operates at the political level. If societal attitudes and
religious demography have a similar impact on religious freedom as the legal/policy framework of a nation, then a measure using just the legal/policy effect might give an accurate reading of the religious freedom level. But limiting the measurement of religious freedom to only the legal/policy effect has serious conceptual and methodological disadvantages.

First, conceptually, it limits the explanatory power of the index. Measuring one dimension will not offer the discrimination necessary to explore or explain why real choice happens even under restrictive regimes. If we are to understand why, for example, Falun Gong and Christianity are growing so fast in China in spite of severe legal/policy restrictions, societal attitudes and religious demography must be included in to have an explanatory index of religious freedom.

Second, concentrating only on the legal/policy effect provides a unidimensional measure of a complex social phenomenon. To have only one dimension not only makes the index less powerful and less predictive, but it decreases its construct validity. Construct validity will be picked up again below (see point 7, Index Construction).

One type of validity directly related to the problems of explanatory power and unidimensionality is face validity. The index should, on it face, show that it takes into account what a variety of potential users of the index would consider important
factors affecting religions freedom. Anyone who has lived beside a Friday mosque or along a Buddhist funeral route to the hills (both of which I have done) can attest to the fact that more things than the legal/policy framework of a nation affect the real opportunity for religious brand choice.

2. Data

The primary data used for this study will be my quantitative coding of the qualitative reports on the 195 nations covered in the US State Department’s 2003 annual International Religious Freedom Report, hereinafter referred to as Reports. The data are to become available December 2003.

The Reports (see Figure 2) are qualitative studies that cover the following standard reporting fields: religious demography, legal/policy issues, restrictions of religious freedom, abuses of religious freedom, forced conversions, improvements in respect for religious freedom, and the US Government’s actions. It is a loosely structured, retrospective, qualitative survey of the nations of the world.
The utility and the bias introduced by the method used to collect these data must be understood. I will comment on important strengths and weaknesses of State Department data in the following paragraphs using James P. Lynch’s (1996) categories.

**Coverage, Populations and Samples.** The Reports have wide coverage (195+ nations), however, they are primarily produced by Embassy officials in national capitals and other cities with US Consulates. Thus, the population they can see is limited and the Reports may be biased by the groups with either the largest presence in those cities or the loudest voice nationally. For example, the more remote parts of countries are less visible and less reported, e.g., the situation among the six million Muslim
Uygurs in Xinjiang (China’s far west), gets less attention than Falun Gong.

**Bounding.** The Reports are bounded, i.e., they report on the situation for the current year. This is an advantage since it produces bounded longitudinal data. More on this below.

**Reference Period.** The report reference period is one year, but it is not clear when the start and end dates are. This adds a bit of fuzziness that is unnecessary.

**Survey Component.** The Reports do not have a systematic interview or survey component. Of course, nations with the worst record on human rights and religious freedom regularly prevent survey on topics pertinent to the Reports (see Appendix A).

**Series incidence and repeat victimization.** The Reports do tend to pick up and follow repeating problems, which is important since a pattern of discrimination or oppression is clearly more important on the national level than isolated or one-off incidences. One danger is when high profile cases attract primary attention and the overall situation is blurred. For example, Falun Gong is a political challenge to Beijing, and it may be oppressed due to its political activities and not religious activities. To track this one movement as an overall litmus of religious (un)freedom can bias the results.
Panel Effects (Lauritsen 1998). In compiling a Report for countries each year, staff may grow accustomed to the continuing abuses in a country and unconsciously under-report problems. Equally, the reporting staff could grow accustomed to a country having few problems and thus unconsciously overlook problems, treating them as aberrations rather than something to report. One additional problem is with stereotyping. Once a country is cited for abuses, staff preparing each subsequent report will begin with an understandable bias. Equally, as van der Zouwen and van Tilburg (2001) point out, different observers (or interviewers) see (or say) different things. Certainly US politics and strategic interests cannot help but bias the data.

Interviewer effects. Certainly this is a concern. Any report carried out by the US Government is subject to the political and ideological bent of its sponsor.

Multi-modality. Some mutli-modality is approximated in the Embassy’s efforts to be involved in inter-faith dialogs in many countries and even targeted focus groups. For example, one such focus group-style panel was recently held in Indonesia, with pollster John Zogby participating. The Reports at times report local survey data unavailable to Western researchers. In addition, the US Commission on Religious Freedom assists the State Department conduct research that feeds into these reports.
Nonresponse. Nonresponse is not a serious issue for these data. Quantitative survey data, though, continually wrestle with the problem of nonresponse (Curtin et al 2000; Groves et al, 1992; Keeter et al (2000; Lin and Schaeffer 1995; Teitler et al 2003). Especially in international survey data where less research on research exists, nonresponse may have special and/or unidentified dimensions. For example, in countries where there is higher trust among strangers, like the USA, response may be higher and more truthful than in countries where trust of strangers is lower, like Japan (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994).

Nearness and Remoteness. Due to the Reports being put together in large part by trained staff living in each country, the data reflect a positive balance between nearness and remoteness. Expert analysis by trained staff resident in each country where the United States has an Embassy can be a source of bias, but it is a strength as well. Theoretically, having interviewers or observers different from the society being studied has merit. Georg Simmel made the argument for the objectivity of differentness in his essay on the social type of “the stranger.”

... the proportion of nearness and remoteness which gives the stranger the character of objectivity also finds practical expression in the more abstract nature of the relation to him. That is, with the stranger one has only certain more general qualities in common, whereas the relation with

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organically connected persons is based on the similarity of just those specific traits which differentiate them from the merely universal ([1908] 1971: 146).

Longitudinal Data. David R. Johnson (1988) notes that researchers who use over-time data are required to make “fewer untestable assumptions than are needed when only cross-sectional data are available” and that they also get a “better measurement of change” (p. 949). The US State Department has been compiling these Reports annually since 1997. In 2001, they took on a reporting format that seems to be the standard that will continue to be used. More is said in the last section of this proposal about the benefits of and possible future uses longitudinal data related to religious freedom.

3. Missing Data?

It is important to note that the Reports vary in length. For example, the 2002 web Report for Indonesia is 13 pages long while many countries in the Caribbean have Reports of less than three pages. Rather than view the shorter Reports as a problem of missing data, the assumption in this study is that if abuses or restrictions were not reported, then they were negligible or nonexistent.

While this assumption may be a source of error in the case of undiscovered abuses, there is some reason to believe that abuses were negligible or nonexistent due to the way the Reports
are constructed.\textsuperscript{5} Each US Embassy is charged with the task of preparing a Report for their host country. The Reports follow a common set of guidelines and training is given to Embassy staff who investigate the situation and prepare the Reports. Once an Embassy completes a Report, it is then vetted by various State Department offices with expertise in the affairs of that country and human rights. The Reports also incorporate information from other human rights reports. They are then arranged and vetted under the supervision of the special U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom.

\textbf{4. Quantitative Coding & Codebook}

The coding process seeks to make use of the maximum information contained in the data. To do this I have prepared a 193-item \textit{Codebook} (separate attached document), which is essentially a survey questionnaire. The aim is to code items with as much variance as possible. In order to make the index readily updateable and transparent, I propose (and will test whether) six to nine key substantive scales combine to make a valid and reliable measure of the relative degree of religious freedom across nations (see Appendix B).

\textsuperscript{5} also see ‘Data Source’ in the Codebook
5. Coding Reliability

I used cognitive interviewing techniques (Presser and Blair 1994) to check the reliability of the Codebook using the “Think-Aloud” strategy described by Willis et al (1999:3). Two different coders and I coded five different 2002 Reports. After independently deciding on a rating for each of the items, we then each described our own decision-making processes. We particularly discussed areas of discrepancy. After agreeing on a criteria for putting a nation into one category or the other (by adjusting the item or discovering what we missed in the data), we then proceeded on to the next item. Areas of incongruity related almost entirely to question wording and were easily remedied. Any unmeasured variables of interest were also added during this process. The Codebook will go through at least two more tests before coding begins.

I anticipate that two coders will independently code all 195 Reports; I will be one of the two and will code every nation. A third coder will code up to 10% of the Reports chosen at random, and a fourth coder will do spot checks. Coders will meet after coding three Reports, and then meet or communicate after coding every ten Reports. Procedures for training coders and coding practices are stated in the Codebook and these will be strictly followed. Inter-rater reliability statistics will be produced.
6. Expert Input

Expert input will be used to inform the construction of the RFI. This will be done informally by seeking feedback from three different knowledgeable persons in the area of international religious freedom with whom I have contact.\textsuperscript{6}

Due to the nature of obtaining expert feedback, it is important to prepare for the meeting(s) as would be done for a formal, open-ended elite interview (Acherman et al 1975; Acherman and Rockman 2003) with a judgement sample of purposefully chosen experts (Kalton 1983:90-91).

Jeffrey M. Berry (2001, 2002) outlines a strategy for elite interview situations. He first notes the key difference between a quantitative survey and a qualitative interview. While it is essential to have a clear question route, “the best interviewer is not one who writes the best questions. Rather, excellent interviewers are excellent conversationalists” (2001:2). This observation is similar to other qualitative research situations, e.g., focus groups, where “the moderator delivers the ‘survey’ in a conversational manner that allows for probing, elaboration, regressions, and brain-storming” (Grim 2003:26).

Berry suggests that: (a) multiple sources should be interviewed, (b) the interviewer should be as knowledgeable as possible about each person being interviewed,
(c) the subjects should be asked to critique their own work, (d) the subjects should also be asked about other participants and organizations, and (e) the interviewer should move to questions that have the highest payoff as soon as possible in the interview. Figure 3 shows the questions of interest for this project. I will also discuss with them the proposed factor analysis in Appendix B.

Figure 3: Elite Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The State Department treats Religious Demography, Societal Attitudes and Legal/Policy Framework [cf. Appendix B] as key factors that influence religious freedom. What do you think are the key indicators of religious freedom (or critical things to incorporate into a measure of religious freedom)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. From what you know and from your own experiences in coding religious freedom, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the State Department Reports?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are there any systematic biases in the reports?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Should they be supplemented with measures from other data?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What would you suggest as future areas of research that either (a) use the index or (b) carry on into a new area of research?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The advice from these experts will be used in the same way as advice from my thesis committee – to guide and inform my research process.

7. Index Construction

Social Scientists have created thousands of scales and indices to measure aspects of society ranging from cost of living to personality type to political action (Miller 1991).

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6 Two are published experts on religious freedom; the third is with the US Government.
Such indices and scales are methods to quantify social phenomena. Quantification permits ready and useful comparisons and models. The valid comparisons are dependent on the reliability and reliability of the indices or scales used.

For the purpose of constructing an international Religious Freedom Index, I will examine the empirical relationships between the coded items. This includes conducting various bivariate and multivariate statistical analyses of the coded data. At this point, the research hypothesis (point 1 above) would be tested using confirmatory factor analysis; also, more robust scales may be constructed. For this statistical analysis, I will use SPSS and possibly MicroCase software for ordinary least squares regression and AMOS software for confirmatory factor analysis.

Earl Babbie (2000) distinguishes between an index, which gives a score by adding or averaging a variety of potentially disparate indicators, and a scale, which gives a score by ranking indicators by intensity on an single measure. Babbie’s distinction echoes that of Lazarsfeld and Rosenberg who used the term index to refer to “a combination of several indicators into one measurement” (1955:16), and Bonjean, Hill, and McLemore who observed that a scale is “designed to reflect only a single dimension of a concept” (1967:2).
The ideal index (a) is scale-like (Babbie 2000) and (b) uses data triangulation (Denzin 1970; Webb et al 1966, 1981).

Scales. Scales are ideal components of an index because of the nature of the information that a scale conveys. The information contained in an increasing scale of intensity is richer than unscaled indicators. For example, in measuring the social attitudes towards minority religions, a simple index could be constructed that adds together indicators such as the presence or absence of anti-religious brand graffiti, burnings and murders. A simple index assigns each indicator a score of “1” and then adds them together to obtain an overall score. However, a scale would be better.

Social attitudes towards religious brands (as reflected in levels of violence) are quite scaleable. The logic is that more weight is given to higher intensity indicators. Also, a high score on the scale is possible even if the lower intensity indicators are not present or observed. Consider Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Religious Violence (Substantive Scale) [o.relvio]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the highest level of religious violence reported?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0. none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. anti-religious brand graffiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. vandalism to religious brand property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. bombing or burning or religious brand property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. beating, rape or physical assault of person(s) due to religious brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. torture or killing of person(s) due to religious brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. massacre of and/or war between religious brands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the Religious Violence Scale, religiously related killing indicates greater societal animosity than graffiti, vandalism or burning, which are all crimes against property. So even if graffiti, vandalism or burning are not a problem, the scale captures the intensity of the situation by assigning a score of “5” rather than just a “1” for a killing, which is a crime against a person.

Violence towards religious brands is only one way religious freedom is effectively regulated. An index, however, must incorporate wider dimensions of religious freedom if it is to be a valid measure.

**Triangulation.** An ideal index uses ‘data triangulation,’ i.e., the employment of distinct measures of the key conceptual dimensions of a proposed concept that ‘address’ the causal mechanisms underlying the phenomenon. While causation cannot be directly determined, dimensions that are plausibly causal should be incorporated into the measure. Triangulation applies to both method and measure. “The fact that each indicator has not an absolute but only a probability relation to our underlying concept requires us to consider a great many possible indicators. ... We must use many indicators to get at it” (Lazarsfeld 1958:103). If a concept is measured along only one
dimension, it will be a unidimensional, flat picture. “In fact, in most instances the only defensible way on which to create viable models is to use multiple measures of each construct assessed” (Maruyama 1997: 131). Norman K. Denzin specifically sees index construction is “one strategy of triangulation” (1970:117) that increases validity. His assertion is supported by Webb et al who argue that once

a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced. The most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes. If a proposition can survive the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures … confidence should be placed in it (1981:35).

In other words, a strong index will be made up of various measures, even various sub-indices. The Human Development Index it the classic example of a general index being formed from the averaging of component indices.

In the case of religious freedom, it is doubtful that a single scale or unidimensional index can represent the phenomena. The research hypothesis proposes that three main factors impinge upon religious freedom, i.e., these three

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7 The need for multiple vantage points is supported by the reality that different research modes can yield different results (Aquilino 1994; Epstein, Barker and Kroutil 2001; Holbrook, Green and Krosnick 2003; Tourangeau and Smith 1996; Wright, Aquilino and Supple 1998).

8 The HDI is a frequently used composite measure of the level of a nation’s development. It is formed by averaging scores for education, life expectancy, and GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) dollars. Though still a rough measure of development, it has more granularity than merely comparing national GNPs or per capita incomes. Specifically, its component parts say something about the processes and opportunities that undergird development.
factors can act in ways that diminish the opportunity for real religious brand choice and/or subvert the dialectical social process of mutual submission.

Thus, I propose to use confirmatory factor analysis to triangulate and appropriately weight the sub-indices of societal attitudes, demographic factors and the legal/policy framework of nations (See Appendix B). The sub-indices, if constructed from scales, will each be stronger than the mere accumulation of indicators. Factor analysis overcomes the problem of multicolinearity that occurs with ordinary least squares regression and allows a number of different measures to be included (Maruyama 1997).

This also allows for additional validity checks.

To the extent that any set of indices similarly correlate with an outside variable, convergent validity is established. To the extent that each discriminates between different events, discriminate validity is established. Ideally, both types of validity should be met by an index (Denzin 1970:117).

Ultimately there is a balance between the explanatory power of including sub-indices and the unwieldiness of having too many multiple measures. As Lazarsfeld and Rosenberg said, the “choice of appropriate indicators is very much a matter of ingenuity, to be exercised anew in every empirical study” (1955:16). Of course, if the sub-indices are not strongly correlated with each other but are individually correlated with
the same external indicator(s), this could also be reason for their inclusion in an index. This is especially true if there is strong theoretical justification.

Thus, it is the aim of this project to create a religious freedom index through the triangulation of sub-indices formed using scales that measure various dimensions of religious freedom. I anticipate that there will be three sub-indices measuring the three hypothesized factors directly affecting religious freedom in a nation: societal attitudes, demographic factors and the legal/policy framework. In Denzin’s terms, these three factors will discriminate between the different ways religious brands are either regulated (discriminated against) or subsidized (preferred) in a given nation. Confirmatory factor analysis can be used to determine whether they converge or load onto the same general latent factor -- Religious Freedom.

If I find that the three sub-indices (or factor loadings) load well onto the latent factor of religious freedom (indicating construct validity), then I foresee that the slope coefficients that result from the confirmatory factor analysis “could be used as weights in index construction” (Jackson and Curtis 1968:131). See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Weighting of sub-indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Attitudes</th>
<th>$X_1 = a_1 F + e_1$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal/Policy Fr.</td>
<td>$X_2 = a_2 F + e_2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel. Demography</td>
<td>$X_3 = a_3 F + e_3$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religious Freedom for a Nation: $F = b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3$
This would utilize the triangulation of measurements but weight them based on their empirical relationship to the latent variable (see Appendix B).

8. Substantive Scales and “Loop Scales”

As discussed above, scales are particularly valuable in an index. Accordingly, based on theoretical considerations and my knowledge of the data, I anticipate using substantive scales to construct the sub-indices of the religious freedom index.

(a) Substantive Scales. In contrast to scales that measure a range of opinion or attitude, substantive scales focus on empirically observable actions or patterns of behavior.

Two key Societal Attitudes scales in the Codebook (Figure 5 above and Figure 6 below) are substantive scales, i.e., they measure the increasing intensity of social attitudes according to substantive observations. (0 indicates religious freedom).

Figure 6: Receptivity to Foreign Missionaries or Minority Clergy (Substantive Scale) [o.mssy]

The Report mentions the following about foreign religious missionaries and/or clergy from minority religious brands in this country:

6. they are killed, banished, or completely prevented from entering the country due to their religious capacity
5. they are physically abused or imprisoned
4. they are harassed
3. they experience concrete restrictions on their activities
2. they experience bureaucratic delays because of their religious brand
1. they have similar visa or residency problems as other expatriates
0. only positive observations
(b) Loop Scales. Loop Scales are substantive scales with the unique feature that they can accommodate two different and seemingly paradoxical routes to the same outcome. More precisely, a loop scale measures one dimension of a proposed concept that plays out differently depending on the context.\(^9\) Other than that, a loop scale is like any other scale, i.e., a higher score represents a stronger degree of the variable measured. I use Loop Scales to code several Legal/Policy Framework and Religious Demography factors. Since loop scales are a new coding and measurement technique, some explanatory comments are needed.

W. Cole Durham, Jr. (1996) credits George R. Ryskamp (1980) with identifying the loop-like relationship of different religious freedom variables.\(^10\) Ryskamp noticed that religious freedom paradoxically decreased with either persecution (regulation) or support (subsidy) of religion in Spain. Durham further elaborated this concept by “identifying some of the ‘way stations’ along the continuum” (1996:18,n35). My innovation incorporates this loop relationship into one robust scale rather than two opposing scales (Figure 7).

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\(^9\) Loop Scales may prove useful in other situations where two distinct paths result in the same outcome, e.g., marital breakdown (growing apart vs. irreconcilable differences).

The religious legal/policy framework primarily responds to:

1. the needs and aims of most religious brands
2. concerns that certain religious brands cause violence, instability or perceived threats to the minds of some citizens
3. the needs and aims of the historically established religious brand(s) of the country
4. concerns that certain religious brands cause violence, instability or perceived threats to the order of society
5. the needs and aims of one religious brand above all others
6. concerns that certain religious brands cause violence, instability or perceived threats to the legitimacy of the Government
0. the ideal of assuring that no religion is established either by regulations or subsidies (favoritism), and that diversity in religious brands is a constructive social phenomenon

The two alternate routes result in the same outcome—diminished religious freedom. Note that even though the two paths are on one scale, the numeric coding preserves which side of the loop the country tends towards. It also gives stronger weight to concerns about violence based on theoretical considerations. A clear advantage of loop scales is that they make coding easier for diverse situations where the same underlying concept is in operation.

Another Legal/Policy issue that lends itself to loop scales is the imposition of religious law. It can either be in the whole or be in a part of the country (see Figure 8). It can also vary in degree.
What best describes the position of Religious Law (e.g., Shari’a, Canon Law, The Decalogue) in the country?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>it is the unqualified law in <em>all regions</em> in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>it is the law in <em>all regions</em> in the country, but <em>some groups are exempt</em> from certain of its applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>political or social movements now <em>advocate</em> its adoption for the entire country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.</td>
<td>it does not rule the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>political or social movements now <em>advocate</em> its adoption for <em>some regions of the country</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>it is the law in <em>some regions</em> in the country, but <em>some groups in those regions are exempt</em> from certain of its applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>it is the unqualified law in <em>some regions</em> in the country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of either whole or part adoption of religious law is the restriction of religious freedom for all. To incorporate both realities into a single scale has an explanatory advantage over two separate scales.

The loop scale draws attention to the fact that religious freedom decreases even for those who do not live in the part of the country under the rule of religious law. Once one part of the country imposes religious law, the remaining parts live anticipating its spread. People in parts outside the religious law zone(s) must carefully consider the potential liabilities associated with traveling or moving into the religious law zone of their own country! In Nigeria, where this is the case, such hegemonic pressure can clearly be seen in the fact that Nigeria’s purported secular Government has joined the 56-nation
Organization of Islamic Conference, in spite of the fact that the population is less than half Muslim.

Religious Demography is a key factor, particularly when religions have a long history and/or sacred places in a nation. To most Americans this is a foreign notion, but it is not to Native American Indians.

A nation is defined -- more than anything else -- by the land it occupies (see Figure 9). Any threat to the land is a threat to State sovereignty. Whether the threat is external or internal, religious freedom will be limited if the threat involves religion. This scale shows that the presence of holy sites is a restriction on religious freedom comparable to an external threat to geographic sovereignty.

Figure 9: Holy Sites and Religious Land Disputes (Substantive using Loop Scaling) [o.land]

What best describes the relationship between land and religion in the nation?

6. There is an inviolable international holy site(s), the defilement of which would result in certain and uncontrollable international violence.
4. There is an inviolable national holy site(s), the defilement of which would result in certain and uncontrollable national violence.
2. There is an inviolable local holy site(s), the defilement of which would result in certain but limited violence.
0. There are neither inviolable holy sites, nor land or property disputes where the Government sees certain religious interests as a threat to the prevailing State interests in the matter.
1. There are unresolved property disputes with religious significance.
3. There are unresolved internal land or border disputes with religious significance.
5. There are unresolved international land or border disputes with religious significance.
For example, Saudi Arabia, by being the “guardian” of Islam’s two most holy sites (Mecca and Medina), has no freedom to allow a Christian presence in those cities. If they did, Iran among others would declare immediate jihad and invade Saudi Arabia to reclaim the sites. Thus, the presence of a holy site limits religious freedom just as would any other land dispute involving religion.

Finally, the issue of religious monopolization can be manifested in two different ways (Figure 10). Regional or national monopoly both act to constrain religious freedom. Regional monopolies often result in conflict while national monopolies certainly result in religious controls.

Figure 10: Religious Brand Monopoly (Substantive using Loop Scaling) [o.relmon]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What best describes the religious coverage of the country?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>all</em> of the country is monopolized by <em>one</em> religious brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>most</em> of the country is monopolized by <em>one</em> religious brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. the country has <em>one historically established</em> religious brand that seems control the majority share of the religious market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0. no religious brand has a majority share or monopoly over all or parts of the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. the country has <em>several historically established</em> religious brands that seem to control the majority share of the religious market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>some</em> parts of the country are monopolized by <em>different</em> religious brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>each</em> part of the country is monopolized by <em>different</em> religious brands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Additional Testing & Validation of the Index

Construct validity will be established through confidence tests of the factor analysis that indicate whether the “data are
consistent with the theoretical model” (Maruyama 1997:139), i.e., using goodness of fit indicators. In addition, the model will be tested for external validity. I will seek to externally validate\textsuperscript{11} the RFI by comparing it to other available ratings related to religious freedom. Specifically, I hypothesize that existing international surveys\textsuperscript{12} and measures that deal with religious freedom will correlate with the RFI as follows:

(a) \textbf{Citizens’ perception of their nation’s religious freedom} (Pew Global Attitudes Project). I expect that this will not have a strong correlation with the RFI because most nations today offer religious freedom to the majority faiths, and in a representative national sample the majority’s voice will speak the loudest. Unfortunately the Pew survey does not over-sample religious minorities.

(b) \textbf{Citizens’ perception of the need for order vs. freedom} (World Values Survey, Inglehart 2000). I expect that this will have a strong positive correlation with the RFI if it is true that freedoms are a bundled good. In these representative national samples the majority’s preference for ‘order’ above ‘freedom’ will predict lower religious freedom.

\textsuperscript{11} criterion-related validity or predictive validity (Babbie 2000:143-144)
\textsuperscript{12} also see Appendix A
(c) **Expert assessment** of governmental religious 'regulation' or 'inducements'—both theoretically detrimental to religious freedom (Barrett et al’s 2001 *World Christian Encyclopedia*, *WCE*, categorical rankings). I expect that the *WCE* scale will positively correlate with the RFI, controlling for Communism. The Religious Liberty Index used by the *World Christian Encyclopedia* was initially developed during the Cold War era when state-supported atheism was a primary limitation on free expression of religion.

(d) **Religious Freedom Ratings** from Freedom House. Freedom House (Marshall 2000) had country experts complete a detailed survey on each nation in their sample (only 70 nations). Their ratings are influenced by their substantive focus on Legal/Policy issues. I would expect their ratings to positively correlate with especially that part of my index.

(e) **The Persecution/World Watch List** of missionary Open Doors. Open Doors has country experts complete a detailed survey on each nation they evaluate. It will have a certain bias since it is looking at freedom for Christians as opposed to religious freedom in general. However, I would expect that it will generally correlate with the RFI. Their survey instrument is not publicly available, but I have some of their measures; these can be looked at to help explain bias or differences.
(f) The State Department’s ‘Offender Lists’ of the nations that commit the worst offences against religious freedom. I expect that the offender lists will have a positive correlation with the RFI, especially since I am using their individual country Reports as the data to be coded with the RFI. Their lists may be biased away from ‘friendly’ nation offenders, i.e., those nations in strategic partnerships with the USA that nonetheless commit abuses.

10. Other Hypotheses to be Tested

(g) Based on the concept of “freedom as development” (Sen 1999), countries high in religious freedom would also be high on such measures as the Human Development Index. When there is development, basic opportunities and processes work to give citizens more freedom as they have more resources to face the challenges and vagaries of life. Particularly, I would expect a correlation since freedom is a bundled commodity, i.e., where one freedom exists, others do as well (Sen 1999).

(h) Religious freedom will not correlate well with foreign aid spending or foreign trade despite U.S. policy because overriding security priorities and historical relationships diminish the ability of the U.S. government to make religious freedom a primary foreign aid or trade criterion.
(i) Low religious freedom will be positively correlated with war or ongoing violent conflicts, including terrorist activity.

Possible Research Directions for the Future

1. The Mosque-ing of the World

Understanding the spread of modern Islam is a curiously under-studied topic. Somewhat coinciding with the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, a rather separate phenomenon is occurring: the ‘mosque-ing’ of the world.

Today in the United Arab Emirates, mosques are ubiquitous. Less than a generation ago Emiratis lived primarily on the sand and had relatively few concrete mosques. Similarly, Martha Brill Olcott (1987, 1995) showed that the traditionally Muslim Kazaks were not even very Muslim in their pre-modern state and that they only developed the organized vestiges of religion when they were forcibly settled by the Soviets in the 1930s. In the post-Soviet era, however, there has been a massive effort to fund mosque and religious school construction from outside Kazakhstan. This modern spread of Islam is an untold and developing story.

2. The Historical Dimensions of Religious Freedom

An historical analysis of change in religious freedom over time would be a useful follow-up since causal processes are
better (only?) understood when viewed over time. Note that the
data used in this study already represent a trend study, i.e.,
the data have been collected on each nation since 1997 and are
required by Congress to be collected and reported annually.

Two existing historical data sources for religious freedom
are the files of David B. Barrett and M. Searle Bates.
Barrett’s work is familiar to many in the form of the World
Christian Encyclopedia.13 Bates’ data are less well known.

M. Searle Bates, working with specialists throughout the
world, produced the first international assessment of
international religious freedom in the 1940s for the Foreign
Missions Conference of North America. A 600-page Report was
published.14 The major countries of the world were rated on a
scale of 1-5. China, at that time, was placed in level 1: “High
degree of freedom from preferences and discriminations.” Today,
I anticipate that China will score at the lower half of RFI, but
the societal openness to religions in China is important to
understand. It explains why Falun Gong and Christianity are
growing so rapidly. Interestingly, the nations scoring the
lowest continue to be low: Afghanistan, Arabia and Tibet.

13 This data includes the ‘one million’ documents being archived by David B. Barrett and Todd
M. Johnson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts.
14 131 archival boxes of Bates’ papers are stored at the Yale University Library, Divinity Library
Special Collections, totaling 55’ linear feet.
http://webtext.library.yale.edu/xml2html/divinity.010.con.html
3. Development of International Religious Data

It is important that there be further development of projects such as the World Christian Database <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>, also that the American Religion Data Archive <http://www.thearda.com/> be expanded to include survey data related to international religion. The value of accurate and current information is inestimable.
References


of Religious Switching and Apostasy.” Social Forces 73:993-1026.


Appendix A: International Survey Modes & Quality

Four issues related to mode affect data quality: confidentiality, anonymity, satisficing and self-presentation. “Confidentiality reflects respondents’ belief that their responses will not be revealed to others and that they will not be identified at any time after the interview. ... Anonymity of responses refers to whether or not responses become known to the interviewer during the interview” ([italics mine] Aquilino 1994:212). Satisficing can be thought of as using cognitive shortcuts, i.e., giving a good-enough answer to get through a survey. Self-presentation and/or social desirability is the attempt to presents oneself in a socially acceptable light (Holbrook, Green, and Krosnick 2003:81-87).

The three surveys I plan to use in testing the external validity of the Religious Freedom Index use a combination of modes. I will comment on each.

1. Pew Global Attitudes Project (GAP)

The GAP survey used a probability sample of between 500 and 3000 respondents in 44 different countries and was administered in more than that number of languages between July and October 2002. It is a dual-mode survey: face-to-face interview with cue cards vs. telephone. The telephone version was used in 8
primarily industrialized nations. The other 36 nations used the face-to-face mode. The questionnaire had a core of questions asked of all respondents, but it contained regional versions for countries that prohibited what they deemed politically sensitive questions.

Considering the possible decrease in data quality using telephone mode (due to satisficing, multi-taking, and insecurity over anonymity & confidentiality) the use of face-to-face interviews in the 36 less developed countries is a definite advantage since the traditions of free speech are less robust. For developed nations, telephone surveying is more acceptable since free speech is more of a norm. Additionally, there are ways to draw a random sample of telephone numbers that is fairly representative of the population; this is not practical in less developed nations.

2. World Values Survey (WVS)

The WVS is a popular survey, but its methodology is less rigorously controlled. The survey has several waves, and the data I plan to use came from the 1995-97 survey which included 53 nations. It is a confederated project of “equal partners” with each national research center carrying out the survey among a representative national sample of their own nation. “One

15 For example, the survey in Uganda was administered in 9 different languages.
consequence of this strategy of striving for inclusiveness has been that the quality of fieldwork varies cross-nationally” (Inglehart et al 2000:6). In spite of this disadvantage, face-to-face interviews were used in all cases. This limits the effect of multi-modes. In light of the findings by Holbrook, Green, and Krosnick (2003), the face-to-face mode can be expected to give higher quality responses (i.e., less satisficing).

3. World Christian Encyclopedia (WCE)

The WCE is the most unique of the surveys in that it is a conglomeration of disparate surveys and other information-gathering activities of churches and religious workers around the world. Its data are more on the census level.

This annual megacensus costs the Christian world a little over US $1.1 billion, which is 0.4% of organized global Christianity’s total annual income. It is not however a single coordinated endeavor. It consists in fact of many thousands of separate, decentralized, uncoordinated censuses. Many, paradoxically, are global censuses portraying their own denomination as either the main one in the world, or the most significant one, or in several cases the only one. (Barrett et al 2001:vi)

The mode of data collection is primarily denominational paper-and-pencil surveys. This mode seems most appropriate in that the data of interest are overwhelmingly statistical. For example,\(^\text{16}\) the Catholic “Annual General Statistical

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\(^{16}\) Though the examples given here are Catholic (the largest single ‘denomination,’ they are typical of Christian organizations in general, all of whom place a premium on the ability to count.
Questionnaire” (Univeralis Ecclesiae Annuus Census) sent to 3,500 bishops early each year has 20 descriptive questions “and no less than 141 distinct statistical questions” (Barrett et al 2001:vi).

The response rate tends to be high since these tend to be administratively-required reports. The Catholic “Annual General Statistical Questionnaire” has a return rate of 95% within 2 months (Barrett et al 2001:vi). Primary mode effects that could influence data quality include satisficing and confidentiality.

**Satisficing:** If the primary focus of those who complete such surveys is ambivalent towards statistics, then satisficing could be a problem. Though there is no way to know the extent of this problem, it may not be so large since religious organizations tend to employ a variety of professional personnel, and given that the report is administrative, the person (or office) most suited to complete the survey could be given the task. The satisficing effect caused by the involuntary nature of the survey may therefore be counterbalanced by the professional orientation of offices required to complete the survey. These may cancel each other out, leading to a null effect of mode.

**Confidentiality:** On Sunday, September 28, 2003, Pope John Paul II publicly named 30 new cardinals. The 31st cardinal, however, went unnamed, or more specifically, named "in pectore,"
or in his heart. This term is used for appointments in countries where the church is not free. This demonstrates one of the difficulties of collecting international data on religion. In many countries, especially countries restricting the practice of certain religions (which most do in one way or another), religious leaders may not publicly report data either because it is unavailable or because its publication could endanger those who believe in the proscribed religions(s).
Appendix B: Regulators of Religious Freedom
Proposed Factor Analysis

Religious Freedom
(Unmeasured, Latent Factor)

\[ F = b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3 \]

Societal Attitudes \[ X_1 = a_1 F + e_1 \]
Legal/Policy Fram. \[ X_2 = a_2 F + e_1 \]
Rel. Demography \[ X_3 = a_3 F + e_1 \]