The precarious twentieth century concluded with a false sense of security among many thoughtful people in the United States. The day had come, it seemed, to redefine national security with less of an emphasis on the deployment and use of force. Sadly, 9/11 demolished that ivory tower. Without missing a drum beat, the nation was off to war again in Iraq. Absent a consistent, coherent explanation for the Iraqi campaign, one might have imagined that Samuel Huntington’s shadowy clash of civilizations was already turning out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Or were we only seeing the Project for the New American Century in high gear?

Religion & Security: The New Nexus in International Relations, an engaging collection of ten essays, offers renewed hope that constructive thinking about security—real security—is alive and well. Co-editor Dennis Hoover’s Introduction: Religion Gets Real makes clear that the book focuses primarily on the positive resources of the Abrahamic faith traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—without papering over their differences or denying the misuse of religion in international relations. In fact, parts of several essays do address the negative role of religion in international relations within the broader scope of religious empowerment.

The main theme of the book is that national and international security requires religious freedom. The book’s four sections focus, respectively, on religious violence and repression, religious pluralism and political stability, religious influences on military intervention and post-conflict reconciliation, and religious freedom and civil society. Surprisingly little attention is paid to the relationship between the evangelical movement and the armed forces.

Paulette Otis’s pithy commentary on Religion and War in the Twentieth Century identifies the social dynamics that help explain the recent emergence of religion nearly everywhere as a critical dimension of contemporary warfare. Democratization of religion has encouraged individuals and groups to fashion and enlist their “do it yourself” beliefs on behalf of political objectives, including resorts to violence. Saddam
Hussein suddenly got religious in 1991 and Al Quaeda is trying to hijack Islam. Although the role of religious beliefs and fabrications is pervasive and too often slighted by policymakers, the inspirational role of mainstream theology is limited at best. We therefore face not a clash of civilizations themselves, but, quite the contrary, misuses of them and their foundations as the virus of false religiosity spreads.

Philip Jenkins, in *The Politics of Persecuted Religious Minorities*, confirms Tertullian’s observation that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. Shared suffering begets brotherhood and *umma* of all sorts across the seas. Jenkins concludes his trenchant essay with a welcome nod to the Grotian reconciliation of theology and reason, the view of politics and culture *etsi Deus non daretur*, as if God was not a given. That general source of Enlightenment thinking thus inspired modern international law as well.

Unfortunately, the book does not develop its theme of religious freedom on the legal foundation that has been so essential since the time of Grotius. Greater attention to the religious underpinnings of human rights law and humanitarian law in time of armed conflict as authoritative articulations of religious freedom would have strengthened the book’s exploration of the way in which religion can shape international relations. A gratifying exception to this nonchalance about the role of law in international relations is Kevin J. Hasson’s tribute to the impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in achieving a global consensus on religious freedom. For the most part, however, the essays rely on philosophical and historical insights alone, in effect ignoring a crucial body of conventional and customary law.

For example, Jean Bethke Elshtain, in her *Military Intervention and Justice as Equal Regard*, argues persuasively in favor of a premise in international relations of equal regard for other human beings. She derives this principle from the Greek concept of justice as a premise for the governance of citizens within a polis. As she explains, however, Athenian justice was strictly an internal norm. For non-citizens, might made right. Elshtain’s just war theory rejects this classical dichotomy by adopting a citizenship model for international relations in which justice is universalized as both an internal and external norm for exercising sovereignty. So far so good. However, Elshtain would then substitute her (universalized) principle of equal regard for what she describes as a “victim/victimizer” premise of humanitarian intervention doctrine.

The problem with Elshtain’s theory is two-fold. First, it is unnecessarily and unrealistically hostile to the modern doctrine of
humanitarian intervention. Elshtain sees the doctrine as simply an expression of pity for victims rather than as the basis for restoration of justice on behalf of our equals around the world. But why is that? As Fernando Tesón and others have shown, the foundations of the doctrine—”law” would be a more accurate term—are not some sort of geopolitical extensions of red cross/red crescent rescue operations. Instead, the law of humanitarian intervention—which, of course, can be violated or abused like any law—relies on the very premise of justice within the brotherhood of human beings that Elshtain espouses.

Second, it turns out in Elshtain’s own analysis that her theory doesn’t matter anyway in the real world. Instead, having dismissed a strong role for international law (which she labels a “notion”) and for international bodies (who have simply “defaulted on the use of coercive force in behalf of justice as equal regard”), (121) Elshtain turns to the deus ex machina of the only superpower. Her bottom line is that the likeliest enforcer of her equal regard premise is, precisely, the United States. The last line of Elshtain’s conclusion, in her last footnote, justifies the Iraqi intervention, which surely had little to do with equal regard for the Iraqi people. Even Reinhold Niebuhr, the influential theologian of Realpolitik, might have winced at that explanation of the power play in Iraq, whatever its other justifications. To be sure, the Bush Administration did claim to be rescuing the Iraqi people from a demonstrably brutal dictator and Baathist reign of terror. But in doing so, the Administration adopted the very victim/victimizer premise of intervention that Elshtain so roundly rejects.

Despite the book’s blind spot for the role of international law, if only as a vocabulary, and international organization, if only as a process for marshalling humanitarian assistance, most of the essays are original and effective. They range from Manfred T. Brauch’s scriptural definition of an Abrahamic theological perspective to Marc Gopin’s appeal for greater attention to the role of religious principles and practices, When the Fighting Stops. The reviewer’s own work on migration and minorities issues in the “stans” of the former Soviet Union heightened the appeal of an informative chapter by Chris Seiple and Joshua White on Uzbekistan and the Central Asian Crucible of Religion and Security.

A last example of the cogent analysis in this collection is Kevin J. Hasson’s Neither Sacred nor Secular: A Public Anthropology of Human Dignity, Religious Freedom, and Security. Building upon Mircea Eliade’s writing, Hasson carefully demarcates the contexts in which the religious impulse should and should not be exercised. As he concludes,
“[a] state that accommodates the religious aspirations of its citizenry promotes stability and security for a very simple reason: such a state accurately recognizes who its citizens are.” (160)

James A.R. Nafziger†

† Thomas B. Stoel Professor of Law and Director, International Programs, Willamette University College of Law.