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Exiting Violence: the role of religion. From Texts to theories

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“Figure Out What the Hell is Going On”: The Conceptualization and Operationalization of Religion in Trump’s Foreign Policy

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This paper will explore how President Trump and some of his senior advisors are conceptualizing and operationalizing religion, particularly Islam, in US foreign policy. By way of background and comparison, the paper will first summarize key elements of the Bush and Obama approaches to religion and foreign policy. Then the paper will look at the origins and initial implementation of the Trump approach—an approach that has a certain domestic appeal but stands in stark contrast to that of Trump predecessors. Finally, the paper will offer ways the Trump Administration can learn from scholars and policy analysts who have spent considerable time and effort over many years trying to “figure out what the hell is going on” with respect to religion and violence.