

Should Religion and Politics be Kept Separate in U.S. Foreign Policies?

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Religion's Influence Perspective

Politics in the U.S. has remained the same, where the Democrats and Republicans have had a fair share of leadership. The battle for the White House heavily relied on a candidate's foreign policies and association with religious groups. Leaders have been able to win elections by aligning religion with foreign policy. Morel provides an example of Abraham Lincoln, who was able to rule America because of his strong religious values. Lincoln was a Christian, and throughout his campaign, he demonstrated how he would change the country while observing Christian values. Marsden points to the role in which religion helped to improve Obama's social identity. Obama was known to be a Muslim but adopted civil religion as a means of wooing voters. By unifying the two religions, Obama was elected the president of a country where religious issues are integral to society.

Religious Stand Perspective

Religious groups continue to have a stand on issues affecting the country. In the U.S., Islam and Christianity continue to influence the political landscape. Evangelists and Protestants have a greater say in the affairs affecting the country. Hero, in his article, notes that the evangelical church has been involved in the swearing-in of leaders. It is through such involvement that religion finds its way into foreign policies. Bellah and Philip emphasize the role that the Protestant church has played in advocating for freedom. The article draws a line on how religion interferes with democracy and how it can avoid meddling with government functions. Putnam points out the role that religion plays in influencing foreign policy. The author provides an example of Methodists and Baptists preaching peace messages to influence the positions of the government on foreign policy. Religion influences foreign policy through a large number of people who follow certain religions. If religious leaders are unhappy with foreign policies put in place by the government, they will always voice out their opinions to have the government retract or make necessary changes.

Middle East Perspective

The Middle East perspective provides an overview of the role religion has played in foreign policies seeking to invade countries in the Middle East. The government has always maintained its stand on world peace and taking retrogressive actions against countries that threaten world peace. Baumgartner et al. note that religion helped support the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Religious groups played a huge role in convincing the public of the significance of maintaining peace in the Middle East. Green further provides an example in which the National Council of churches opposed the government's invasion of Iraq. The opinion of these religious groups served to highlight the manner in which the government either supports or ignores advice from religious organizations. Jaden, on the other hand, provides a different perspective on the influence of religion in foreign policy. At some point, the church supports the government owing to the religious history of Israel and Christianity. The church additionally moves to caution the government from meddling with other countries as it would spark further retaliatory attacks. The position of religion on foreign policy remains shaky as leaders fail to take a stand on the issue. Smidt ends by noting that religion influences U.S. foreign policy due to the Christian belief of Islam as a violent religion.

America's Political Religion

America as a country has been described as a religion on its own. The decisions made by the government on foreign policy throughout history have placed America as a country that is based on certain ideals. Lipset points out that the United States is a unique country that stands out from the rest of the countries. The advancements that the country has made in different fields indicate that values have developed over time. The U.S. was established on strong religious grounds, and its views of foreign policy have remained the same throughout its history. McCrisken adds that the position the U.S. took when it comes to the Vietnam War has made it be recognized as a political religion. The foreign policy of the U.S., according to the two authors, is rooted in its rich religious history.

Civic Function Perspective

Religion has a role in keeping a check on government and pointing out the various injustices perpetrated by the state. On foreign policy, religious leaders often speak out or laud government foreign policies. Gentile criticizes the manner in which religion can be used to create dictatorial regimes. The author notes that countries where religion and state work together face numerous challenges when it comes to regulation and check the government. Verba adds that religion has a role in keeping the government in check. Religion prevents the government from taking all the powers. If religion is incorporated as part of the leadership, then foreign policies will be greatly influenced by religious views. Even if religion plays other roles in society, it should remain actively involved with matters of governance to prevent the government from amassing excess powers. However, Witte and Joel criticize religious leaders who have put much interest in politics, disregarding their role in fighting for human rights. (National Archives, 1787) (National Archives, 1791) (U.S. Department of State, n.d.)

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