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## A Mission of Divine Calling: The Chosen Nation's Crusade against Evil

Ashley Harrington

### **Finding Religion**

Throughout time, especially within the Twentieth Century, Republican as well as Democratic administrations advanced a relatively conservative foreign policy, most of which has involved a highly moral fervor. The moralistic and sometimes highly religious view of foreign policy implementation has ingrained a sense of responsibility on the United States of America to the establishment of democracy, peace, and the development of freedom and liberty to other nations while combating those nations suppressing the policy goals of the United States.

For decades, political scientists have and continue to theorize about influences on presidential decision-making and policy implementation. Faith and religious analysis however, remain relatively new to the study of presidential politics. American presidents, typically, claim a religious affiliation. The underlying inquiry is if and how their faith actually influences policy decisions. Some presidents emphasize their faith and God's divine plan for the United States of America domestically as well as internationally. Faith-based influence on presidential decision-making and policy implementation can affect the future and direction of the United States.

Even now, in the recent 2012 Presidential Election, candidates, media networks, potential voters, and citizens in general place a strong interest in a president's faith. The American public continues to question President Barack Obama's religious affiliation and connection to the Muslim Brotherhood as well as former presidential candidate Mitt Romney's affiliation with the Mormon Church, The Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-day Saints. These inquiries on presidential spirituality are focused on future policy implementation and connections internationally, humanitarian aid as one example, and policies such as gay rights, economic

policy, and fiscal policy within the borders of the United States. Due to such emphasis on presidential religious faith, research analysis on spirituality and its connection to developing and implementing policy is critical.

This particular research examines two Republican presidents that had vastly different ideas on combating nations whose policies limited freedom and liberty. However, while both presidents justified increasing the military by invoking religious rhetoric, one was in response to increase the size of the military to counter the buildup of Soviet Union, while the other used military force to counteract terrorism in the Middle East. Both President Ronald Reagan and President George W. Bush's invocation of God, freedom, liberty, and military use against the "Evil Empire" and the "Axis of Evil" have brought on crusading doctrines.

President Reagan and his administration inherited an era of backsliding policies of preceding President Jimmy Carter, whose policies had begun with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and President Lyndon Baines Johnson administrations. Yet, the Reagan Administration faithfully began implementing changes to help lessen economic recession and enhance the power of the United States. President Reagan found himself involved in a Cold War, only a few decades following the end of World War II. Reagan's foreign policy escalation and implementation culminated in the Cold War's complete transformation and eventual conclusion.

On September 11, 2001, a tragic event altered the course of events, shaping another crusading foreign policy. With former President George W. Bush invoking religious rhetoric into speeches, American foreign policy drastically changed. A Neoconservative policy to spread democracy and freedom to other nations and hinder the terroristic tendencies of Middle Eastern countries became the central goal of the United States of America. The Bush Doctrine - a

foreign policy in the aftermath of 9/11 including elements of preventive war to dispose of foreign regimes that posed a threat to the United States, the spreading of democracy around the world to combat terrorism, and pursuing United States military interests unilaterally (The Bush Doctrine 2009) – was founded on faith-based principles.

The religious and moralistic policies incite an on-going, superseding goal to rid the world of “evil” – the culmination of which continues to elude the United States as long as evil exists. It is how religion and the moralistic views of political leaders justify the crusading mission of the United States that is critical to the establishment and implementation of such foreign policies as the Reagan and Bush Doctrines.

### **Literature Review**

Peter Berger claims, “the world today, with some exceptions, is as furiously religious as ever, and in some places, more so than ever” (Gvosdev 2009, 438). Yet, religious affiliation and faith have not previously been given the attention it deserves. Due to obstacles of “social background of professional political scientists, the intellectual origins of the discipline, the sheer complexity of mastering religion as a field of inquiry, and the issue-attention cycle in the discipline” (Wald and Wilcox 2006, 529), faith and religion studies remain relatively new to the field of political science. Furthermore, Jonathan Fox commented on eve of the September 11 attacks that international relations have been given even less attention (Gvosdev, 438).

Defining what constitutes religion is vital to understanding the interpretation of establishing religious rhetoric. Academics credit Robert Bellah with the term “civil religion,” a “distinct set of religious symbols and practices...that address issues of political legitimacy and political ethics but are not fused with either church or state.” Bellah emphasizes what he believes are two dangerous ideas associated with civil religion: “that America is God’s country

and that American power in the world is identical with morality and God's will" (Weaver 2008, 10). Yet, others simply define religion as placing a faith in an "unverifiable, unseen god (or gods)" who rules supreme over all the universe and exercises faith in a church, mosque, synagogue, or some other like. The faith transcends mortal and earthly concerns. In essence, it is a belief in a higher authority or power in which people give their allegiance (Preston 2006, 785). Whether the term poses good or evil tendencies, the underlying current reveals the profound implications on America's national mission and self-understanding of her responsibilities.

Many attribute religious influence to the "religious right" or "conservative evangelicals," yet said influence, according to Andrew Preston (2012) in "Why is American Foreign Policy so Religious?" contributed to liberals or conservatives when analyzing American war and diplomacy. Instead, a shared value has been encompassed within American foreign policy for centuries. Preston states that religious influence does not derive from United States Presidents but from the "prevalence in American politics, culture, and society." Instead, as Preston states, the influence comes from not just presidents but from the American public as well.

This influence from presidential leadership and the American public have brought forth a Neo-conservative movement. Neoconservative ideology is one of an "American righteousness and its mission to the world." Neo-conservatism favors the use of military power and force to promote American values (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004, 50). Much of this particular ideology is linked closely with conservative and/or Republican philosophy. Neo-conservatism originally began during the 1960's and 1970's to protest what was viewed as radicalism of the "New Left" (Homolar-Riechmann 2009, 180). Contemporary neoconservatives, by today's standards, strongly supports spreading American values, such as democracy, individual rights and liberties,

and the free market economy (181). The neoconservative ideology has spread into foreign policy, integrating itself with religious overtones. While many see that neo-conservatism has lessened with the emergence of the Obama Administration, neo-conservatism ideals perpetually ingrain themselves into liberal policy-making (188-192).

In “The Author of Liberty,” John B. Judis notes America’s invocation of the Bible and Christian beliefs are used to explain her role in the world. Furthermore, most presidents have quoted the Bible to justify foreign policy decisions to spread freedom and democracy throughout the world (54). American presidents use foreign policy as a means to implement God’s instructions (57). President George W. Bush, too, embraced the idea of America’s role and responsibilities as God’s chosen nation to carry out God’s plan (Judis “The Chosen Nation” 2005, 6).

With the small increase in religious studies, according to Andrew Bacevich and Elizabeth Prodromou (2004), the reemergence of religion in political science studies has generally been fixated on two questions concerning United States foreign policy. The first question inquires about the conditions religion complicates or facilitates the implementation of United States foreign policy. The second questions the compatibility of the world’s numerous religions with United States national security objectives (44).

Political science research explores and analyzes the questions of religious complications and facilitations on foreign policy. It finds a compatibility between the United States best interests, while analyzing why presidents ask three less complex questions when deciding in what way to proceed in foreign policy implementation. In essence, the United States presidents ultimately inquire, “Is it right? Is it in the national interest? And does it work?” (Sicherman 2007, 113). However, Sicherman states America’s attempt at avoidance of religious issues due

to negative outcomes – those being “war, not peace, and war to the death without compromise” (113).

Wade Clark Roof (2009) dictates a resurgence of “national religious rhetoric within the United States” starting with the Reagan Administration in 1980 (286), which has carried on to the present. Roof perpetuates a myth of a “chosen nation” to perform God’s will, existing in the United States (287). While much of Reagan’s religious rhetoric involved shaping domestic policy, some focused both directly and indirectly on foreign policy, developing a theme of freedom or liberty (290-293). The idea of God having a “chosen nation” would not only be invoked by Reagan but also by later presidents like George W. Bush.

While prior research has dedicated some thought to how religion shapes United States foreign policy, political science research emits enough definitive evidence to fully comprehend faith’s impact on policy-making and decision-making. Preston argues that “in general, deployed religion as an overall theory or method to examine America’s role in the world” is limited if not omitted in some areas (2012, 787). My research helps complete a part of the gap found in international relations by examining Reagan’s depiction of the “Evil Empire” and George W. Bush’s “Axis of Evil” through analyzing their religious overtones and rhetoric in speeches and statements made to the American public. Peter Berger concluded, “In assessing this role [of religion in the world events], there is no alternative to a nuanced, case-by-case approach. But one statement can be made with great confidence: Those who neglect religion in their analyses of contemporary events do so at great peril” (Gvosdev, 453). Therefore, including religion is a necessary aspect of political science research and analysis.

## **Methodology**

Content analysis of Presidents Reagan and Bush's Inaugural Addresses, State of the Union speeches, and other important speeches, statements, and comments will be the approach for analyzing how the Reagan and Bush Administrations implemented and framed American foreign policy. Invoking biblical scripture as well as the "good" versus "evil" philosophy presents a never-ending United States foreign policy. Using the Reagan and Bush Doctrines as the primary focus of what will result from evangelical rhetoric, this research will present the validity of analyzing presidential faith towards deciding and carrying out policies as well as the spiritual impact on the future and direction of United States foreign policy and its effects on the rest of the world. My research presents faith and its influence on foreign policy – specifically, the idea of America as God's "chosen nation" to implement the Creator's "mission" to spread God-given freedom, natural rights, and democracy throughout the world as well as the prevention of terrorism from infringing on those freedoms. Examination of Reagan and Bush's rhetoric and framing, biblical scripture use, and the idea of God's "mission" for the "chosen nation" indicates how presidential spirituality played a substantial role in foreign policy implementation.

## **America's Crusade Against "Evil"**

Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush invoked the term "evil" into their rhetoric as part of the religious and moralistic overtones of their foreign policy implementation. World leaders like Reagan and Bush brought God to the forefront of American minds when advocating their foreign policy to produce positive public attitudes to combat both for the Soviet Union in the Cold War and the Middle Eastern countries during the War on Terrorism. Reagan and Bush take strong stances, never backing down on their belief that America is God's "chosen

nation” nor that the United States had been issued a divine “mission” to spread democracy, freedom and liberty, while eliminating evil in the process.

Reagan entered into an era of great tension and much controversy known as the Cold War. The Cold War (1945 – 1990’s) was not a war of battles, but of tension between the Eastern (Soviet Union and communist allies) and Western (United States and NATO allies) worlds but more a battle of sustained political and military strategy. Religion was not an overly important part of Reagan’s life. Reagan defended religion against those who attacked it and attempted to purge it from public life (Diggins 2007). Before his time as president, Reagan indicated, “I, in my own mind, have always thought of America as a place in the divine scheme of things that was set aside as a promised land” (PBS). Even as he entered his tenure in the Oval Office, he began invoking a morally religious rhetoric at his swearing-in ceremony at his inauguration. Placing his hand on II Chronicles 7:14: “If my people who are called by name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land,” setting a forth a public vision of the United States as God’s people (Siker 1986, 171).

Accepting God’s ideal of a “chosen nation,” Reagan would implement his foreign policy principles: no substitute for American power, a strong defense being the best deterrent, importance of regime type, geopolitical thought, significance of American exceptionalism, and different times call for different strategies (Kaufman 2011). The six “enduring principles of Reagan” would justify the use of military buildup and an end to tyrannical governments opposing freedom and liberty. Reagan would later state in 1984, “1983 was the year more of us read the Good Book. Can we make a resolution here today: that 1984 will be the year we put its

great truths into action? Within the covers of that single Book are all the answers to all the problems that face us today” (Siker, 171).

Reagan spoke of freedom and of an American mission to grant and sustain freedom for the world. In a 1985 “Address to the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly,” he stated, “Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few, but the universal right of all God’s children” (Reagan). In 1982, Reagan implied that America was the hope for mankind in a world of “hatred, economic crisis, and political tension” (Reagan “Remarks at Kansas State University,” 1982). With these words, the Reagan Doctrine would become a divine “calling” to provide freedom to the world. America’s “willingness to speak for freedom is no bargaining chip. It’s an integral part of our foreign policy” (Reagan “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session,” 1982). He would go on just a few short months later, “When we’ve taken up arms, it has been for the defense of freedom for ourselves and for other peaceful nations who needed our help” (Reagan “Remarks at the recommissioning of the USS New Jersey” 1982).

As freedom evolved as the goal for the world through the Reagan Administration, Reagan called out those nations contesting freedom. In one of the most widely known and recalled speeches – “The Evil Empire Speech” – Reagan painted a “good versus evil” picture between the United States and the Soviet Union (1985). Reagan was calling upon one of the observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville who stated, “Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America...America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good; America will cease to be great.” By quoting de Tocqueville, Reagan characterizes the United States and her democracy as a “good” nation and government. He includes families and churches as institutions that help sustain the goodness of America. The values and institutions of church and

family in his speech imply that America will defend not only freedom and liberty but also the institutions that promote them. He continues in his speech,

“I pointed out that as good Marxist-Leninists, the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution.... Well, I think the refusal of many influential people to accept this elementary fact of Soviet doctrine illustrates an historical reluctance to see totalitarian powers for what they are. We saw this phenomenon in the 1930s. We see it too often today.... So, I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority. You know, I’ve always believe that old Screwtape reserved his best efforts for those of you in the church.... I urge you to beware the temptation of pride – the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves about it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire...” (1983).

Reagan implies in his speech the Soviet Union and Soviet totalitarianism is one in which an “evil empire” exercises. In a speech to the British Parliament in 1982, he says,

“It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history.... [It is] the march of freedom and democracy which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people” (PBS).

Differentiating between the Soviet Union and the United States in a manner as Reagan did, a “good versus evil” defense rhetoric was invoked. Further clarification of the Soviet Union can be made in his “Remarks at a Meeting with members of the American Business Conference,” “Terrorism is the preferred weapon of weak and evil men” (Reagan 1986). Linking terrorism with acts of “evil men” and emphasizing the Soviet Union as an “evil empire,” Reagan inevitably named the Soviets a terrorist government, infringing on God-given freedom and liberty.

To fight such an oppressing and “evil empire,” Reagan implemented a policy of defense and military buildup. In his “Address at the United States Military Academy, West Point” in 1981, he says, “A truly successful army is one that, because of its strength and ability and dedication, will not be called upon to fight, for no one will dare to provoke it” (Reagan). He

continues in another speech, “Strength is the most persuasive argument to have to convince our adversaries to negotiate seriously and to cease bullying other nations” (Reagan “Address to the Nation on National Security” 1986). With these words, Reagan justified his reasons for military buildup in order to combat a nation whose goal was to eliminate freedom and liberty, while oppressing citizens. So began, Reagan’s astronomical increase in defense spending which built up a powerful military so big and so strong, that has never before or since been seen.

In a strive for peace and negotiation to defend freedom and liberty, Reagan declares,

“There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” (Reagan “Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin” 1987).

Eventually, the Berlin Wall would fall, and the Cold War would end. With the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union would eventually crumble due to its inability to keep up with the United States military buildup while the Soviet Union’s economy plummeted. Gorbachev would adopt perestroika (restructuring of the country) and glasnost (openness) that led to Russia’s involvement with Western civilization.

Reagan’s final words in his tenure as president is one in which continues a morally religious tone. He states in his farewell address to the nation,

“I’ve spoken of the shining city all my political life....And how stands the city on this winter night?...After 200 years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true to the granite ridge, and her glow has held no matter what storm. And she’s still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness toward home” (PBS).

#### From the Cold War to the Days of Terror

Unlike Reagan, Bush did not inherit a longstanding war of turmoil. Bush found himself thrust into a tragic and altering situation for the country. Before 9/11, Bush while being a seemingly religious fellow, did not summon as much religious rhetoric prior to 9/11 as the American public saw the night following the attack on the nation. After President Bush's first inauguration, he made some direct references to religion in his foreign policy speeches. Of the 26 weeks, Bush spoke prior to 9/11, less than half of the 16 weeks he spoke about foreign policy included religious phrases or terms. In the months following the terrorist attacks, Bush made direct references to religion in every policy speech for 13 weeks (Black 2004, 9-10).

After September 11, Bush began speaking a very moral and evangelical rhetoric. His use of religious and moral rhetoric to emphasize his personal idea of foreign policy is found in some of the most important speeches and policy implementations he delivered during his tenure in office. Bush was an extremely religious man. He states,

Prayer and religion sustain me. I receive calmness in the storms of the presidency...Religion is an important part...I believe that God wants everybody to be free. That's what I believe. And that's been part of my foreign policy. In Afghanistan, I believe that freedom is a gift from the Almighty...And so my principles that I make decisions on are a part of me, and religion is a part of me (Bush 2004).

Almost immediately, Bush was making claims to freedom, self-government, and America's "mission." In Bush's 2005 State of the Union Address, he claims, "The road of providence is uneven and unpredictable, yet we know where it leads: It leads to freedom" (C-SPAN). He continues highlighting that freedom is God's purpose for humankind, stating, "Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity" (C-SPAN 2003) and "the call of freedom comes to every mind and every soul" (C-SPAN "2005 Inaugural Address").

Connecting freedom and divine providence together using past historical events including arguments of defeating “Hitlerism, militarism, and communism” during the early Twentieth Century (C-SPAN 2003) and slavery “by a plan known only to Providence, the stolen sons and daughters of Africa helped to awaken the conscience of America. The very people traded into slavery helped to set America free” (Bush 2003). At a speech delivered at Tsinghua University in Beijing, Bush made a straightforward statement about the importance of religious freedom and the United States’ defense and protection of that right to the Chinese government, whom is one of the worst violators of such freedom (Farr and Saunders 2009, 949). He emphasizes, “God has planted in every human heart the desire to live in freedom. And even when that desire is crushed by tyranny for decades, it will rise again” (C-SPAN 2004).

Bush further outlines his idea of America’s freedom in his 2005 Inaugural Address.

Self-government relies, in the end, on the governing of the self. That edifice of character is built in families, supported by communities with standards, and sustained in our national life by the truths of Sinai, the Sermon on the Mount, the words of the Koran, and the varied faiths of our people (C-SPAN).

He perceives unchangeable values that are vital to life “instilled in us by fundamental institutions, such as families and schools and religious congregations...these unseen pillars of civilization, must remain strong in America, and we will defend them” (C-SPAN 2004). Bush clearly underscores that America will defend her definition of freedom and those institutions that secure and are central to the core of American values like family, schools, church, and other institutions.

Finally, Bush asserts in the 2004 State of the Union Address,

America is a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs. We have no desire to dominate, no ambition of empire. Our aim is a democratic peace, a peace founded on the dignity and rights of every man and woman. America acts in this cause with friends and allies at our side, yet

we understand our special calling: This great Republic will lead the cause of freedom (C-SPAN).

Freedom depends on America with God calling us to defend such liberties and ensure peace. If the United States does not lead the cause, no nation will (Bush “Inaugural Address” 2001).

Defending America’s core values and beliefs as well as freedom is in her best interests (C-SPAN “2005 Inaugural Address”).

With Bush’s philosophy lighting the way, the Bush Administration created the Bush Doctrine, which clearly defined three goals: the spread of democracy, the defense of human rights, and the end of tyranny. The National Security Strategy of 2006 identifies that democracies should do the following:

Honor and uphold basic human rights, including freedom of religion, conscience, speech assembly, association, and press;

Are responsive to their citizens, submitting to the will of the people, especially when people vote to change their government;

Exercise effective sovereignty and maintain order within their own borders, protect independent and impartial systems of justice, punish crime, embrace the rule of law, and resist corruption; and

Limit the reach of government, protecting the institutions of civil society, including the family, religious communities, voluntary associations, private property, independent business, and a market economy.

Bush would unsurprisingly summon a mindset of you are either with us or against us. In an address to a joint session of Congress and the American public just days after the attack on 9/11, Bush received thunderous applause with the following statement, “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime” (2001). Bush clarifies who is “good” and who is “evil.” In another speech on October 11, 2001 at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, Bush describes,

The hijackers were instruments of evil...Behind them is a cult of evil which seeks to harm the innocent and thrives on human suffering. Theirs is the worst kind of cruelty, the cruelty that is fed, not weakened, by tears. Theirs is the worst kind of violence, pure malice, while daring to claim the authority of God. We cannot fully understand the designs and power of evil. It is enough to know that evil, like goodness, exists. And in the terrorists, evil has a found a willing servant.

Evil has taken a face with that of terrorists. With the previously stated rhetoric, all those in opposition of the United States are enemies. Those nations continuing to harbor terrorists are consequentially aligning with “a cult of evil” and are, in essence, “evil” themselves.

He finishes with, “The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them” (Bush “Address to a Joint Session of Congress” 2001). Although America may not fully comprehend the direction in which God leads us, God has made clear and decisive stances on which he aligns Himself – and that is with America on the side of freedom and justice.

### **Aftermath and Consequences**

Employing such an evangelical philosophy as the former Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush invoked, the appeal was not seemingly right-winged, Republican, Neoconservative, making it likely that the faith-based foreign policy implementation legacy would be sustained across party lines. While there is no consensus on how faith should influence policy or if it should at all, those of the American public who desire their religious faith to be more influential when defining policy matters predictably would support the Reagan Doctrine of military buildup against the Soviet Union and the Bush Doctrine and combat in the Iraq War. Furthermore, the implementation of Reagan and Bush policies appear to be “just” and in the best interests of the United States of America and the world to ensure freedom.

While America may be a moral and deeply religious nation, invoking a policy of a crusading doctrine for the United States poses two consequences for the future of America. A crusading spirit means the expansion of military agendas to prevent future wars and evil ideologies from emerging. Since the military is used to prevent the spread of “evil,” it is unavoidable that military force to combat such developments would make more war. Consequentially, if “good” exists, in essence there is also “evil.” If “evil” continues to exist in the world, then America will continuously fight, invoking violence and be at war until the enemy is exterminated (The National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2006).

Another problem is from the “good” intentions the United States emphasizes – some people see – may go too far and go beyond a call for justice. The use of what many would see as immoral actions, such as torture, may be used to achieve a goal to accomplish justice. The world cannot permanently be changed by war. Just war policies such as the Bush Doctrine can only end with absolute victory. Since absolute victory is conquering evil, it ultimately justifies the use of violence on the so-called defined enemy or “evil” in existence. Instead of bringing peace and democracy, more war will inevitably cultivate between the competing nations, each with its own specific goal of annihilating the opposing “evil” force. While I applaud the former President of the United States George W. Bush for his stance on liberty and justice, implementing such a policy as the Bush Doctrine ultimately leads to never-ending wars among nations. Until the “evil” nations of the Middle East are destroyed – such as the elimination of the Soviet Union under President Reagan – evil will continue to exist, and America will remain at war. While America continues to battle overseas in terrorist harboring nations, no end to the War on Terrorism remains to be seen. With the movement of troops to Afghanistan and possibly other Middle Eastern nation-states, the United States military force cannot possibly return home

until “evil” is defeated and justice and freedom are restored to humankind as God’s divine will supersedes.

The crusading spirit of the spread of democracy, the defense of human rights, and the end of tyranny most certainly did not begin with Reagan or Bush since many United States Presidents claim a spiritual or religious affiliation. What is more interesting perhaps is how those presidents have shaped American history and policy through their own personal faith and beliefs, and furthermore, how succeeding presidents have had to handle their predecessor’s policy decisions.

Despite the fact neither president Reagan nor Bush are in office any longer, the foreign policy has not changed dramatically, even though the rhetoric is no longer used in quite such a manner Reagan and Bush exuded. However, because the religious and moralistic undertones were used, foreign policy has evolved in a crusading style, which can be difficult to manipulate and change without consequently taking on a less religious and moralistic tone. Americans need to feel their actions are “just.” A “divine calling” of a “mission” to rid the earth of evil is an extremely parsimonious policy and arguably the best way to achieve support for a crusading war type foreign policy.

One must wonder, however, if such firm religious beliefs and faith could lead a president to pursue an entirely opposing policy – peace. What president, if any, will invoke a policy leading ultimately to peace among the nations of the world? Certainly, that was the intent with the creation of the United Nations, but the United Nations has not been able to accomplish this particular feat since crusading wars still continue today along with military buildups and nuclear weapons testing. Furthermore, what of those religions believing that war itself is “evil?” Will the American public elect a president with such firm beliefs as that of “war is evil”? It remains

to be seen how the American public would respond as well as foreign nations and dignitaries. Until such a president is elected one can only wonder what those consequences would hold for the future of American society and the world as a whole.

Currently, President Barack Obama continues to face day-to-day challenges that began with the Bush Doctrine. Yet, it is how Obama will leave behind his own spiritually guided policies or if he chooses to invoke any religiosity at all for his successor. For some Americans, like Reagan, “If we ever forget that we’re one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under” (Reagan “Remarks at an Ecumenical Prayer in Dallas, Texas” 1984). Therefore, religious invocation will remain, and always remain, an integral part of the American culture.

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