

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The United States of America (US) is one of the states where the process of nation-building involves a heavy portion of religion as the base of its constitution. The heavy influence of religion can be found in the first amendment of the constitution written in 1791 that quotes, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ...” The passage was created to acknowledge the strong presence of religion inside the country while ensuring that no political entity could express their power upon them.¹ Reverend William Smith once quoted, “Religion and liberty must flourish or fall together in America. We pray that both may be perpetual” back in 1775, showing the heavy connection between religion and governmental system as a significant part of the nation-building in America.² However, the founding fathers of America realized the diversity of the people and acknowledged the Public Religion - one that the meaning of God is defined by the believer, Allah for the Muslims, Jesus for the Christians, and Yahweh to the Jews, proclaiming America as a religious nation.³

Such explicit implication of religion can be found in the decision to include the phrase “IN GOD WE TRUST” on the currency of the US and the common phrase “God Bless America” by American presidents throughout history,

¹ “The Constitution of the US: A Transcription,” National Archives, accessed December 3, 2020, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>

² Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*, (New York, 2007), 3.

³ Meacham, *American Gospel*, 145.

making it extremely clear that religion is indeed a part of the American lifestyle and is infused in the governmental system.⁴ Despite having religion as a part of the government system, the teachings of the religion help shape the lifestyle of the nation without causing disarray.

In the process of building this nation, the principles of Christianity more than any other religion have become the most important influencer in influencing the social and governmental system. Christianity is the one who shaped the idea of “the Conservatives” which was eventually used as the basis of the creation of the Republican Party as we know it today.⁵ Christianity even made it to the constitution, “the exception of Sundays” in section seven was derived from the Blue Law – a law that restricts or prohibits activities to prioritize worshipping or rest according to the Bible.⁶ In the past, there were decisions taken by the US which were heavily driven by the Christian teachings throughout the history. The examples can be found in a strong message back in 1892 by a unanimous Supreme Court: “We find everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth: ... this is a Christian nation.”⁷

Further actions have been taken in the past, to insert the phrase of “This nation divinely recognize the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Savior and Ruler of Nations, through whom are bestowed the blessings of Almighty God” in the

⁴ Meacham, *American Gospel*, 5.

⁵ Meacham, *American Gospel*, 92.

⁶ “The Constitution of the US: A Transcription,” National Archives, accessed December 3, 2020, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>

⁷ Meacham, *American Gospel*, 144.

amendment of the constitution back in 1947 and 1954 but both have no further support from the government.⁸

Evangelical Christians, as the biggest Christian group in the US, believe that they have the sole duty to spread the “good news of Jesus” to the world and they are sending missionaries around the world to spread the good news.⁹ With such influence and a clear interest, the trace of Evangelical Christians can be traced in some American foreign policy. Back in 1996, Evangelical Christians under the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) pressured the US government to stop their pressure in Sudan.¹⁰ Back then, the US has been imposing sanctions upon Sudan, while bombing and banning them from joining the United Nations (UN). On the other hand, Evangelical Christians have been focusing their ministries in Sudan as part of their ongoing quest to spread the “good news”.¹¹ Evangelical Christians gather in groups and started arranging protests against the government. Eventually, the American government started to relax its policy towards Sudan during the Bush administration.¹²

Evangelical Christians have left a trace of influence in some American foreign policies. During Trump’s administration, the US has made at least three foreign policies on Israel that are controversial while at the same time affecting the dynamic of a lot of countries; (1) the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of

⁸ Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*, (New York, 2007), 175.

⁹ Ivar A. Iversen, “Foreign Policy in God’s Name: Evangelical Influence on US Policy towards Sudan,” Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, (2007): 23-56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep20327.5>

¹⁰ Iversen, “Foreign Policy in God’s Name,” 23.

¹¹ Iversen, “Foreign Policy in God’s Name,” 24.

¹² Iversen, “Foreign Policy in God’s Name,” 24.

Israel, (2) the moving of US Embassy for Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and (3) US decision to withdraw from Iran Nuclear Deal in May of 2018 which gained popular support from the Evangelical Christian in the US.¹³ Thus, I find it interesting to find the Evangelical Christians' ways to influence the American foreign policy on Israel during Donald Trump's administration and the consequences that follow.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of this research introduced above, the author suggests the following research questions to be answered in the thesis:

1. How do Evangelical Christian interest groups influence American foreign policies on Israel during Donald Trump's administration?
2. What are the consequences of American foreign policies on Israel being influenced by Evangelical Christian interest groups during Donald Trump's administration?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to identify the methods and reasons for how Evangelical Christian interest groups influence American foreign policy on Israel. The research also dives deeper into the consequences that arise from American foreign policies on Israel that are influenced by Evangelical Christian interest groups. The outcome of the research would provide the data on how the interest of Evangelical Christian interest groups in America affects the interest of

¹³ Mark Landler, "Trump Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's Capital and Orders US Embassy to Move," Middle East, December 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/world/middleeast/trump-jerusalem-israel-capital.html>

the federal government which in return could influence the political dynamics of other states.

1.4 Significance of Research

The result of this writing focuses on giving the understanding of the importance of learning and recognizing the dynamic of various interest and pressure groups that are driven by religion or any other interests and its relation to the government decisions, especially when the decision involves the affairs outside the states. This writing will be beneficial for International Relations scholars to understand more about how non-governmental actors could affect the foreign policy of a state which could eventually change the course of the global political dynamic. This writing will also show how a long history of ideology battle between Christian conservatism and secular liberalism in the domestic setting could affect the political dynamic of the US, a superpower that controls the dynamic of the global politics, by focusing on Donald Trump's administration. This writing will also give some a different perspective of reasons behind three American foreign policies on Israel under Donald Trump's administration, namely moving the US Embassy for Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the US decision to pull back from the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Therefore, I hope that this analysis and report will be useful to International Relations scholars and those who are interested in learning how a state's internal political dynamic could affect the international world.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis is the foundation of the research. It covers the brief background of the topic, research questions, research objective, and the significance of the research. I hope that the background could pretty much answer the reasons and purpose of this research.

The second chapter provides the substantial foundation of this research and is going to be divided into two parts: the literature review and the concepts. The literature review is going to give a foundation for analyzing the research questions which are: religion in American politics, Evangelical Christian interest groups in the US, and Donald Trump's view towards politics. This is in relation to the theory of constructivism and concepts of interest groups, identity, and foreign policy.

The third chapter talks about the research methodology which includes the explanation of the research method, data collection technique, and data analysis technique in regard to this research.

The fourth chapter is going to be the highlight of this research, the presentation of data collected, and analysis is shown there. Furthermore, chapter four is provided with the answer to this research question with the supporting data.

The fifth chapter, as the last chapter, is going to conclude this research with a summary of the data and analysis and highlight the result of this research.