

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the United States (US), the Evangelical Christian interest groups has always been a key actor within their foreign policy making, whilst working with coalitions that also Christian groups, such as the secular liberals, and Jews, they have heavily influenced policies in issues such as the Sudan civil war, AIDS and humanitarian issues, the International Religious Freedom act, North Korea Human Rights act, Trafficking Victims Protection act, and so on.¹ The feminist perspective itself remains that of a marginalized perspective within evangelicals. This is because even though there is a sub-culture within evangelicalism which are the feminist evangelicals, which draws an egalitarian rhetoric towards the perspective, gender still persists as the central figure of the element which proves a boundary between the subculture and its original identity. A newly profound neo-evangelical movement started around the 1940s when the conservative Protestants have started to relent against the isolationism of churches during that era. The ideals of providing, leading and decision-making husbands with subordinate wives have been the main lifestyle of Americans during the post-war era.² Evangelicals have defined that gender equality has been based on the biblical roles of which God has

¹ Robert McMahon, "Christian Evangelicals and U.S. Foreign Policy," last modified 2006, accessed April 25, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/christian-evangelicals-and-us-foreign-policy>.

² Sally K. Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism," *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 3 (2004): 215.

given to both men and women, whereas many believe also that both are equal in terms of merit but separate in their roles.³

Gender equality is especially an important aspect of American policies. Under the legal scope, both law and gender are considered as social constructs. The Judeo-Christian perspective roots its laws under the Ten Commandments, brought down by Jesus Christ. Christ brought humanity a reign of freedom away from sin; this freedom disregards gender, status and national origin whilst also offering liberty which women especially appreciated.⁴ Although the US was built upon such a premise of religious freedom and liberty, it has struggled with creating an appropriate church-state relation over its history. The government has even showed traces of favoritism over specific religious groups, increasing and exacerbating legal battles which puts a heavy burden under their judicial system.

The activity of the Christian groups and the Christian Right are a concern. For example, Marion Gordon “Pat” Robertson, has had a strong influence within American politics, having created a lobby group which aimed to change US legislations to “better reflect Christian ideals” and other politically affiliated organizations such as the Christian Coalition which specifically has aimed to promote a conservative legislation in the House along with a strict heterosexual definition of marriage, proves the point. During the Bush administration, politicians had often created legislations based on religious ideals as it was apparent that

³ Danielle S Dela George, “THE EVANGELICAL GENDER DILEMMA;,” no. May (2014).

⁴ Lynne Kohm, “A Christian Perspective on Gender Equality,” *DUKE JOURNAL OF GENDER LAW & POLICY* 15, no. 399 (2008).

Christian lobby groups were continuing to push for it. The US government defines its constitution as something that derives its power from the people, as such; Article VI of the constitution puts aside any religious influence for public office whilst the First Amendment gives them freedom of religion in their establishment.⁵

Recently, the Trump administration has shown greater challenges for woman rights and gender equality, having joined more misogynistic authoritarian regimes. Whilst aligning himself with extreme religious anti-choice groups.⁶ This fact calls out the US to start looking to their policies and putting pressure to commit over their promise of liberty especially with this issue being a long standing one where evangelicals have even been showing that they are skeptical towards feminism in history.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the introduction above, this research suggests the following research question:

1. What is the agenda of gender equality in the U.S. foreign policy during Donald Trump's administration?
2. How do the US Evangelical Christian interest groups view the issue of gender equality?

⁵ Scott Kulchycki and Roger Wang, "RELIGION IN UNITED STATES DOMESTIC POLICY," *Religion in U.S. Domestic Policy* (2003): 1–30.

⁶ Françoise Girard, "Implications of the Trump Administration for Sexual and Reproductive Rights Globally," *Reproductive Health Matters* 25, no. 49 (2017): 6–13.

3. How do the US Evangelical Christian interest groups influence the gender equality agenda in the U.S. foreign policy during Donald Trump's administration?

1.3 Research Objectives

The focus of this research is to fitly explain the agenda of the gender equality movements within the U.S foreign policy during Donald Trump's administration. After which, it will dive deeper into explaining how, in theological and psychological terms, the U.S Evangelical Christian groups' view gender equality as an issue or phenomenon and how they have so far affected the gender equality movements on U.S foreign policy during the Donald Trump administration.

1.4 Significance of Research

The result of this research focuses on providing a methodical approach towards explaining and recognizing gender equality as an acknowledged interest group within the U.S foreign policy. To do so, the explanation will use an example by explaining its dynamic with another established interest group. This research will provide International Relations scholars with the understanding of how interest groups may interact and influence each other in a variety of ways, and how in the end it will affect the final results of their political agenda. With that being the case, this research will include a brief explanation of Donald Trump's presidential history and general policies, along with an explanation of the evangelical Christian group as an interest group in the US political landscape. It will also provide a philosophical and theological explanation of how the evangelical Christian group views gender equality.

I hope that this research will be useful towards International Relations scholars who are interested in learning how interest groups within a state can affect each other's political agenda.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter of this research has put a brief explanation regarding the current state of U.S and evangelical Christian's perspective of gender equality which will be further elaborated in the next chapters.

The second chapter provides the underlying foundation of this research which will be presented in two parts: the literature review and the concepts. The literature review will provide a foundation for analyzing the research questions which include the evangelical Christian's views towards gender equality, evangelical Christian group's influence on American politics, and Donald Trump's view towards politics. Along with that will be the explanation of Constructivism, gender equality, foreign policy, pressure groups, and evangelical Christianity.

The third chapter will determine the research methodology which includes an explanation of the research method, data collection technique, and data analysis technique of this research.

The fourth chapter will be the highlight of this research, the presentation of data collected, and analysis will be provided. Following that, chapter four is provides answers of the research questions with the supporting data.

The fifth chapter, as the last chapter, shall conclude this research with a data summary and analysis and highlight the results of the research