Since the end of the Cold War, religion has become an ever more explicit and institutionalised focus of US foreign policy across multiple domains. From the 1990s onwards, new offices, appointees, strategies and initiatives have been put in place to monitor religious freedom and promote it globally, draw on faith-based organisations to deliver humanitarian and development aid abroad, fight global terrorism by seeking to reform Muslim societies and Islamic theologies, and engage with religious actors to solve conflicts and crises around the world. Simply put, religion has become a systematic subject and object of American foreign policy in ways that were unimaginable just a few decades ago.

These changes raise a number of puzzling questions. What explains this growing attention, sustained across multiple different administrations (Clinton, Bush Jr, Obama, and now Trump), given to religion in US foreign policy? In what ways are the boundaries between religion and state, faith and politics, being redefined by these foreign policy changes? What are the global effects of the growing entanglements between the sacred and the foreign policy of, arguably, still the most powerful state in the international system today?


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