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**The Impact of Religion on America's Policy Decision-Makers**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
a Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation**

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**Academic Year: 2023/2024**

## **Dedication**

We thank Allah the Almighty,  
who has given us strength and knowledge  
to complete this work.

We dedicate this humble work to our  
beloved parents, living and dead; without their support, we would  
not complete this long journey; to our respected supervisor for her  
invaluable guidance, assistance, and unwavering encouragement;  
to our families for their endless support, motivation, and love;  
to our friends, colleagues, relatives, and  
everyone who cares about us.

Thank you.

## **Acknowledgements**

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

First and foremost, praise is for Allah, on whom we depend for help and guidance.

Second, we would like to offer our sincere gratitude to our supervisor, **Ms. BERRA Yamina**, who has been extremely patient throughout this journey. We are most grateful for her guidance, support, and encouragement. This work would never have been accomplished without her assistance. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our teachers.

Finally, our thanks go to the members of the jury for kindly agreeing to discuss and evaluate this dissertation.

## **Abstract**

The status of religion in the United States of America and its politics has been a topic of debate, mainly because of the country's interventions and reactions to most international issues. The present research explores the role of religion in American policy formation, despite being a secular country. The aim of the study is thus to determine the significance of religion in American decision-making at present and in the past, as well as religious references in terms of policy-making discussions about social, political, or cultural aspects. This aim is reached through a qualitative content analysis of some American official documents and speeches as well as historical events and legal precedents, including, but not limited to, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Engel v. Vitale case, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and presidential speeches during several election campaigns. The research shows plenty of religious references and symbolism in the official documents and speeches of such a secular country, which indicates the role of religion in the development of American policy decision-makers, particularly in historical, legal, and political dimensions.

***Keywords:*** policy decision-makers, politics, religion, United States of America.

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ACA</b>	Affordable Care Act (2010).
<b>Generation Z</b>	People born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s.
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning), and others.
<b>RFRA</b>	Religious Freedom Restoration Act (1993).
<b>USA</b>	United States of America.
<b>US</b>	United States (America).

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# **General Introduction**

## **1. Background of the Study**

Religion remains one of the great foundations of America up to date and has played a crucial role in the political system and decision-making in the United States of America, especially as characterised by the provision of religious freedom by the founding fathers of America. There are various scholarly works that have been conducted concerning religiosity and politics, whereby religious beliefs, values, and orientations of political leaders and those of the public have a prominent influence on policies. Making religion a significant factor in the prediction of religious characteristics, including denomination, frequency of church attendance, and theologies on political characteristics, including voting, party identification, and engaging in political and social movements, connects religion with public opinion and votes. However, there is a lack of an evaluative study that seeks to understand the role of religion more explicitly for policy decision-makers in the current American political system. It would permit the identification of how policies facilitated by religious actors, interest groups, officials, and language affect policy outcomes.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The First Amendment guarantees both separation of church and state and religious freedom. While many studies exist about the role that religion plays in American politics, there is an absence of studies on how the religious beliefs of policymakers themselves shape their decisions, especially after September 11th, 2001. To fill this gap, a topical case study is conducted based on an analysis of different official documents and presidential speeches.

## **3. Research Questions and Research Hypotheses**

This current study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. Does religiosity influence the policy decisions of politicians?
2. To what extent do the religious interest groups and religious leaders shape the policies through lobbying and persuasion?

3. How does the religious factor interact with democracy, minorities, and justice in America?
4. Does religious rhetoric in campaign speeches influence voters and policy agendas?

Based on these research questions, the following hypothesis can be developed:

H1: Strong religious conviction in politicians leads to faith-based policy decisions.

H2: Religious interest groups significantly influence policy through lobbying.

H3: Emphasising religion in politics creates tension between democracy, minority rights, and social justice.

H4: Campaign speeches use religious language strategically to mobilise voters and shape their perception of the candidate.

#### **4. Aims of the Study**

This research aims to investigate the function of religion in the American decision-making of the past and today's social, political, and cultural contexts. It also seeks to investigate the presence of religion in documents and presidential and political speeches and thus analyse the extent to which religious beliefs and values influence policy decisions.

#### **5. Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study lies in the understanding of religion, especially from the American perspective, in policy or decision-making and its position as an indispensable factor in nations' policies, including secular ones. Therefore, it is true that religion acts as an influential factor concerning the beliefs, priorities, and decision-making among political leaders. As two sensitive issues, religion and politics provide scholars with information on how some policies are developed, practised, and rationalised.

#### **6. Research Methodology**

To achieve the objective of understanding the role played by religion in shaping America's policy decision-makers, a qualitative research design is used, and content analysis of documents like policies, speeches, and media pieces is conducted. It uses a thematic approach to

identify and analyse how religious arguments and references are used and framed in policy issues and the media.

The coding categories for the content analysis include the religious references, beliefs, words or phrases, symbolism, and images used, whether directly or indirectly. The extracted data is analysed in detail and progressively presented by patterned correlation analyses related to the above 'concern', religious influences on policy processes. For this methodological approach, experimental knowledge of the relationship between religion and policy and their formation and application is given to help in the understanding of religion and government.

## **7. Structure of the Study**

The current study is a two-chapter research project in which the first chapter deals with the first variable of the study, that is, religion in the context of America, while the second chapter relates this variable to the second, that is, policy decision-makers. The first chapter is the literature review, and it largely entails the contemporary position of religion in America. In constructing the rationale for the research, this chapter identifies earlier investigations, patterns, and conditions of religion in the context of the US. The second chapter focuses on religion, policies, and decisions. Mainly, it aims to investigate the role of religion in policy decision-making. Moreover, as the presented research is divided into these two chapters, the researchers can provide theoretical information on the interference of religion in policy in the USA and mention the relationship between religion and policies.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Literature Review of Religion's Situation in the USA**

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## **Introduction**

The USA has a long, deeper-religion-focused history since it was formed and has so far varied from the religious arrangements of practically everyone. Religion has played a notable role in shaping the country's appearance since the earliest days of its formation, when just a handful of founding fathers sought religious freedom. Therefore, today, there are a variety of beliefs, and all are widely accepted.

The first chapter highlights a historical and modern view of religion and its influence on US society, culture, legislators, government, and politics. The chapter reviews the role of religious beliefs during the constituting period as well as the formation of the nation-state by taking a multifaceted and dynamic approach. It continues with a description of the religious groups, their tendencies, and shrines existing in the nation's contemporary setting. One of the deepest studies is the influence of religion on life, social norms, and various methods that American families have to cope with.

### **1.1. Historical Context of Religion in the USA**

The initial US was generally dominated by certain religious beliefs, and some religious groups had a very significant role in the foundation of the country, which later developed into settlements. The new governmental and societal structures were formed and improved by the ambitions and practices of religious groups, such as Puritans seeking freedom of religion in the so-called New World and Quakers struggling to establish social justice, faith, and belief. Through the exercise in which we put ourselves in the religious struggle in the US, it is more than vital to highlight the essential function that religion has had since the very beginning (Cooper & Dyer, 2022).

According to Bellah (1970), the young American religious map, which was illustrated by immigration, social transformations, and spiritual movements, became an active area of development. That is a miracle of transformation for the religious spaces of South Africa, which were once only accessible to Protestant Christian doctrines like in the times of colonisation, and

now African religious beliefs are also much regarded and present. By contrast, the denominational composition in the U.S., where the different groups have their own perspectives and activities, has continuously and steadily been an important element of American religious life.

Looking at the religious history of America, which is somewhat controversial, entails time travel and requires identifying the changes in beliefs throughout American history and evaluating their ongoing influence on American society.

### **1.1.1. A Brief Overview of the Role of Religion in the Founding of the Nation**

Religion is interwoven with the birth of the United States; this issue is complex and multifaceted. We must remember that while the beliefs and views of the Founding Fathers on the role of religion in the community were a primary factor and influence on the nation today, several more factors and influences contributed to the development of the nation (Hall, 2018).

The prime impulse for the European colonisation of America revolves around the question of the rights of people to have religion. In England, the increasing number of groups seeking sanctuary from the persecution of their faith founded settlements where they could practise their religion without any formal interference, and religious freedom was eventually given a legal basis in the document called the Statute of Religious Freedom created by Thomas Jefferson (Butler et al., 2008).

According to Kang (2009), Puritans, who were the first to settle in the Massachusetts Bay wild wilderness in the 16th century, had a great impact on the religious landscape of the country. They claimed religious tolerance and did the very same, but not to others. They would use and impose strict moral codes that were characteristic of Puritans in their own community. Then, hard work, economic independence, and self-reliance, defining traits of American culture, came to be as well.

Among the significant considerations of the founders were the philosophical movements of the last quarter of the 17th century and the dawn of the 18th century that

recognised reason, science, and the freedom of humans. However, it is these men, people like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, who had religious convictions of some sort and had problems with theology and dogma of traditional Christianity, yet still they cast out Christian morality as a tool employed at inculcating moral values among individuals and creating social cohesion. In the 18th century, or about the 1700s, a religious revival movement known as the Great Awakening swept across the American colonies. This sector was mainly concerned with individual reform of the inner mind, and many converts were called upon to sacrifice anything they could consider beyond caution and community standards. The Great Awakening of America firmly rooted and shaped the Evangelical Protestantism that today accompanies every immigrant from numerous religions (Novak, 2003).

Kloppenber (1987) reported that the Constitution has no real religious background, but it is filled with a certain formal reverence for a higher power, and religious allusions can be found hidden between the lines in the text. In another way, even the Declaration of Independence itself speaks of "Nature's God," from whom, it says, the "unalienable rights" are derived. This fact reflects the large concentration of religiosity and religious authority in those times.

Nevertheless, religion could not be ignored in shaping a country, and the founders even knew that religious disagreements might endanger the young country. Consequently, they set up a state over the church. The First Amendment, which is the first clause of the Constitution, disallows the state to designate a particular religion as the official one and gives equal rights to every individual to follow his or her own religion. This rule, as the framework of this policy of separation of religion and state, has stuck and has been in use ever since the decision of the court (Lambert, 2010).

### **1.1.2. Evolution of the Religious Landscape over Time**

The American religious landscape in the USA has undergone massive changes thanks to historical perception, immigration, social opposition, and social movements.

In the first period of American colonisation, Europe brought a melting pot of faith traditions that covered the entire spectrum, from Protestantism of the reform type to Catholicism and Judaism. Puritanism took root in Massachusetts and marked the way in which society and governance were organised, whereas Anglicanism dwelled in the south but left its traces in the culture and religious practices. Leading to the justification of the pledge of religious freedom in some colonies, some sections of religions were strictly authorised, and this also highlights the connection between beliefs, religion, and governance (Hertzke et al., 2008).

They faced the colonies with an overwhelming religious revolution, which tended to focus on the practice of personal saving and emotional experiences. The financial support of missionaries and spiritual ministers has stimulated secessionist groups and new denominational organisations, which now exist as the Methodists and the Baptists. Also, these groups enabled people to not only bear in mind political issues but also to consider entering into a personal religious experience. This fighting among the revivalists versus the calcified becomes a key factor at the crucial point of the oceans of church and state particularism, the founding sands of American society and governance (Coley, 2020).

According to Casanova (2007), the 19th century was marked by shiploads of immigrants of three, four, and five denominations—Catholics, Jews, and Protestants—from Europe. Consequently, the immigration surge plus the Second Great Awakening moulded new denominations such as Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists, thus entrenching religious pluralism across the US. Industrialisation and urbanisation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were at the core of the social and economic transformation, and for traditional religious values, it was a very hard time since many people turned to socialism and became doubtful. Contrastingly, the Catholic religion was still integral, as the movement of people into the country didn't end.

The Cold War era of the mid-20th century was marked by a rising religious zeal, brought about by concern over the rise of atheism and the interaction of faith with ethnic justice

and civil rights movements. Between the older generation and the youth, the former used the movement as a platform to carry out evangelism, like the Billy Graham Crusades, while the students went out and became involved in activism. The religious movement of the second half of the 20th century experienced a downturn in the mainstream Protestant denominations, overtaken by the more fundamentalist and non-Christian churches, due to the increasing immigration and settlement policies from diverse parts of the world (Kirby, 2017).

At present, transcending spirituality, which spans beyond religious boundaries, is being practised more, triggering a change in the outlook of institutions deemed religious. The contemporary debates, including LGBTQ+ rights, women's rights, and climate change, are like matches, and it is Christian and Muslim fundamentalists that throw them, standing in the corner. The digital revolution has changed the support of systematic issues, religious dialogue, companionship, and so on, and through the creation of novel partnerships and interactions, the religious layout has been rearranged. These very distant alterations can be used as an example of the fact that religiosity is adaptive due to the needs of modernity (Yang & Ebaugh, 2001).

### **1.1.3. Major Religious Denominations and Their Prevalence.**

Among religious denominations in the US, the most prevalent religious category is the diverse one. Protestantism has several main domains, and Baptism is one of them (American Baptists, Southern Baptists, and others). Another dimension of Protestantism is led by Methodists (which used to be at a higher level within the United Methodist Church, though there has been a decline in recent times). Another section of Protestantism was Lutherans (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and others). On the same note, the Episcopal Church is the Episcopalian and Anglican representation via the global Anglican Communion branch (Bassimir & Gelfgren, 2023).

Wuthnow (2005) explained that Catholics still form one of the top religious groups in American society, and their territories are under the jurisdiction of bishops at the local level and united under the auspices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Despite their

relatively tiny numbers, the Orthodox parishes from the East represent a particular factor by virtue of their immigration, which is vividly manifested in various communities. Jews in Judaism can be diversified into so many denominations that simultaneously display different approaches.

The broadest denomination is called “Reform Judaism”; within this one, the individual's freedom of choice is given the most prominence, and modernisation is also supported. Conservatism in Judaism, on the other hand, is the middle line between the older traditions and today's modernity. Whereas contemporary Judaism still maintains its belief in and observance of the laws of God that were written in the Torah, this may contribute to younger couples becoming parents. Reconstructionist Judaism, allowing uniqueness in its character, acknowledges that Judaism is a religion and a culture that developed over time and thus must be spread across the civilised world (Shargel, 1987).

Nowadays, Islam is the most rapidly growing religious category in the US. The Muslim population is composed mostly of Sunni Muslims, with a small group following Shia Islam. As well as that, others like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism are showing an increase that is mainly due to immigration and conversion, enriching the mosaic of the religious life of the nation (Warf & Winsberg, 2008).

## **1.2. Contemporary Religious Landscape**

Considering how religion in the country is quite intricate and comprises many different components, we begin a voyage of discoveries in which we aren't about to reveal the complex interplay between faith, culture, and social structures that are the names of the forces that are changing the spiritual sphere of the USA at the moment. The demographic analysis of religious societies is one of the central components of these investigations, and the echo of American society's rich woven fabric, consisting of numerous beliefs and practices, can be found in those reflections. We pay attention to the tiniest pieces of trends with regard to religious affiliations and attendance. This consideration becomes necessary since not only the individual people but also the religions they profess evolve with the growth of this nation. Amid those

different ideas and beliefs, we emphasise how diverse religious communities are, where people living in the US could practise various forms of Protestantism, do lots of rituals and traditions in Catholicism, as well as celebrate many different festivals in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Therefore, we disclose the elements of personal belief in religion in the first place, and, secondly, we accentuate the role of pluralism and multiculturalism in the construction of the spiritual field of the state (Lippy & Tranby, 2013).

### **1.2.1. Current Religious Demographics in the USA**

On the basis of their impacts, the religious landscape of the United States indicates the picture of an alive and changing country. Either foremost or highly influential, the different denominations serve to reflect the presence of the Christian faith; for example, the Protestants, including Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, and Episcopalians, and the Catholics, who can be characterised by a significant impact on the trends around the Christian population. Nevertheless, a definite tendency can be identified by the increase in the unaffiliated segment, which incorporates atheists, agnostics, and persons who are not connected to any particular religion. This exceptional change is quite visible in the sources of the young generation, which demonstrates that they are moving towards an individualistic spirituality instead of organisational religion (Sherkat, 2010).

Besides Christianity, Muslims are the second-largest religious group, which appears to be the outcome of massive immigration in recent decades, while Jews, who never stop their observance of major cities like New York, still remain a prominent community. Moreover, leaders of Hinduism, Buddhism, and other Eastern faiths are on the rise, established by the assumed migration pattern and Europe's cultural diversity. Some other less numerous non-majority Christian churches, like the Orthodox Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons (Latter-day Saints), play a crucial role in casting the rays of diversity and making the religious profile of the country richer (Sherkat, 2010).

On the contrary, the younger generation takes the discoveries as a natural and expected fact that they do not even believe a religion story generation after generation and rather prefer to go on their own self-exploratory spiritual journey. The religion losers but spiritual winners emerging is evident: these are previously defined as the spiritual but not religious group (sbnr) that exhibits a shift in the spirituality seeking outside the traditionally religious boundaries. Among those components, ethnicity, climate, dwelling condition, and beliefs of individuals are the major elements that make it difficult to find out about religions (Scoot, 2006).

### **1.2.2. Trends in Religious Affiliation and Attendance**

According to Brunn (2015), the USA, along with its residents, has experienced substantial geopolitical and societal changes in the spiritual points, spreading the road of social transformation in religion and population standards for a long time. Nevertheless, there still exists a large number of youths with no tie whatsoever to religious bodies, and the percentage of people who are not affiliated with any particular religion seems to be increasing from generation to generation. A remarkable statistic presented by Pew Research Centre's Religious Landscape report is that belief in religious associations among Christians fell from 77% in 2009 to 65% in 2019. Nevertheless, there has been a rise in the unattached group known as “nones,” at 26% in 2019 (Nicolaidis, 2020). This growth in the unattached is the fastest-growing religious category that is comprised of atheists, agnostics, and those who do not affiliate with any organised religion despite a distrust of organised religion and the inability of religion to meet the needs of people in the modern world. Generational preferences, especially among Millennials and Generation Z, show lower rates of religious identification (or participation) as opposed to older generations; spirituality is, however, being demonstrated by alternative religious practices such as meditation or yoga.

The religious landscape of the United States is no longer the same because immigration is now a reality that has brought diverse cultures, for instance, those originating in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, to the country, therefore ruling out the old typical

beliefs, such as Christianity. Consequently, different religious denominations, like Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and others, have also tremendously grown in the world. Even though raw differences in faith among a wider population are evident, a good proportion of the population continues to partake in religious rites, even though the frequency is somewhat reduced, particularly among younger people. In the South, more people go to church and belong to a particular religion, and therefore, there are resorts to religion. On the contrary, the north-eastern and western sections of the area have lower melting and religious rates. A minority of the urban population attends church, and the strong attendance is dominated by rural people (Warf & Winsberg, 2008).

Religious institutions, which may have been brought up in the old days, are facing a backlash from the new wave of transformations like dwindling membership, financial viability, and meeting the needs of young generations. In turning out to be relevant in these altered times, many of the religious institutions are finding ways by which they can get and stay involved in better ways. Taking all these into consideration, we can see how, in the last decades, the US religious landscape has gradually evolved towards a new configuration in sync with the overall population's demographic changes, religious variations, and altering religious people's attitudes (Beyer, 1998).

### **1.2.3. Diversity of Religious Communities.**

Hoffman (2005) indicated that the US has become a venue for diverse religious meetings without any barriers, where all creeds' fans use their faith as materials and creative instruments to make their own cultural draperies. Therefore, the diversity of the spiritual world can be reflected not only in the variety of phenomena of belief but also through the multifaceted face of the woman. She is a monk, and her daughter is a devotee of a different faith, and they live together in harmony.

Firstly, denominational diversity is the crucial peculiarity of many faiths' spiritual life in the US. Christianity, though the denominations that it contains have huge diversity; for

example, Catholicism, Protestantism (Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian branches), and Eastern Orthodoxy are the three core sub-sections of this Christian family, and each group has somewhat distinct views on doctrines and spirits. The ethnic and cultural diversity would not only amplify the process but also reproduce the fact that the majority of community members come from varied backgrounds. While Christianity as a whole dominates, disparities do arise among black Americans, Hispanics, Koreans, and other ethnic churches related to different customs and traditions embedded in their faith. Hence, the people of Iranian origin, which are composed of Arab Americans, African Americans, and South Asian Americans, also put their tapestry of beliefs and customs into the mosaic of the religion as well (Brekus & Gilpin, 2011).

According to an average of all 2023 Gallup Polls, the percentage of religious affiliation in the United States is given in the table below.

**Table 1.1** *Religious Affiliation in the United States (2023 Gallup Polling).*

Religious Affiliation					Percentage	
With a specific religious faith	75%	Christian	68%	Protestant	33%	
				Catholic	22%	
				another Christian religion	13%	
	Non-Christian religion	7%			Jewish	2%
					Muslim	1%
					Buddhist	1%
					Others	3%
no religious preference					22%	
did not answer the question.					3%	

In addition, religious congregations also experience socioeconomic diversifications due to the very type of congregation that various cultures support, with some catering to the affluent and others to the poor. The fact that there is diversification in the economic status of

people has led to this; there are different roles for religious institutions where social programmes and services can be facilitated. They have a wide range of classes that are designed especially for sections of the population they meet (Blanchard et al., 2014).

According to Beyerlein and Chaves (2003), religious organisations can often be an abyss of diverse political attitudes, but these views, however, are very tied to the subjects of social life: for example, abortion or same-sex marriage. While some may occupy the extremes, others embrace liberal ideologies, depicting the large array of opinions in these communities.

### **1.3. Social and Cultural Impact of Religion**

In conducting social dynamics, of course, religion is a critical and intricate feature that cannot be ignored. Religion and social norms have always acted in a symbiotic way, initially transcending throughout different ages until the existing day norms. Namely, religion provides guidance and instructs people on how to distinguish moral choices from those that are immoral. Besides, the people not only get life support from religion, but also the culture has a religious component through which it is developed based on the behaviour of its community members, rituals, and holidays that add some sort of cultural flavour to the community. There is a prominent and closely-knit link somewhere between religion and the family structure, and this is a fact that people need to clearly understand. Religious beliefs could thus alter the roles and duties of family members, as well as the patterns of family formation, much more aggressively. The nature of the problem is more complex with the one-directional flow of some opinions and questions that are profound and culturally rooted and thus become the bedrock of a sustainable society (Day, 2017).

#### **1.3.1. Influence of Religion on Social Norms and Values**

The process of religion in the US brings along power grabs for making laws and other traditions of the continental USA that you can see in all domains of society: legal, cultural, and personal. The values and ethical standards of nations are commonly found in religious beliefs such as Christianity, which, in the case of Britain, has principally been rooted in Protestantism,

the religion that has mainly shaped the moral compass of the nation. The understanding of the core values in the Decalogue and other biblical doctrines has influenced American society by putting emphasis on honesty, compassion, and respect, which are considered virtues by the very core of the Puritan religion (Sigalow, 2016).

Among other matters of family dynamics, religious beliefs have elevated the status of family linkages, marriage, and adherence to customary gender roles to an esteemed position as well. These teachings are not only meant to set the standard for family life, child-rearing practices, and family composition; the same lessons guide the enactment of legislative and policy decisions where heterosexual marriage has traditionally been seen as the definition of family life (Bisin et al., 2004).

Ethics, just as religion, operates on the same guidelines in terms of conduct that is encouraged and activities that are clearly prohibited. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, truthfulness and integrity are the principal guiding values; consequently, the rules and regulations related to good behaviour are formulated with due consideration of honesty and professional ethics (Gaston, 2018).

The foundation of religion and politics in the US goes back to the past, and religious beliefs formed early in government structures and legal systems. Today, religion still has a role in saying a word in political debates and solving public concerns, especially when the referee problems of abortions, gay marriages, and religious freedom appear on the political agenda (Corbett et al., 2014).

Delehanty (2023) stated that pertaining to equity according to religious teachings, activism and advocacy efforts are launched, and these rally people and firms to champion causes such as poverty eradication, equality, and the conservation of the environment. Compassion and understanding of the principles of faith have influenced social organisations by affecting the amount of support given to charitable endeavours, the time and dedication put into community service, and involvement in civic activities.

Religious belief has never separated from the human education system. It imparts and transmits the traditions and beliefs of the community to the junior brigade. Providing solid educational opportunities for our youth, such as Sunday schools, religious education programmes, and youth groups, is not undervalued, as it has fundamentally shaped the way we think as a society in terms of education, moral values, social responsibility, and citizenship (McClellan, 1999).

Leidman and Wiggins (2009) remarked that the multicultural heritage of the nation can be glimpsed through the much-loved customs, religious holidays, and rituals deeply rooted in the American religious and cultural fabric. The combination of the spiritual roots of Christmas and Easter gives them a distinctive cross-cultural popularity owing to the multitude of people of different faith traditions.

Nevertheless, with the separation of church and state being the main idea, religion remains a source of mental norms but also for common values for individuals, communities, and institutions. The role of religion in residents' lives is determined by the region and the group a person arrives from. Therefore, it is likely that the people of the United States comprise a multicultural society (Smith, 1978).

### **1.3.2. Role of Religion in Shaping Cultural Practices and Traditions**

Whether secular or not, the United States is always defined by its religious underpinnings, considering its rejection of freedom of religion or expression. Embracing the spirit of the past, different faith traditions, mainly Protestant Christianity, not only endowed the world with spirit but also made sure that society was on the proper road to identity and development (Straughn & Feld, 2010).

#### **1.3.2.1. Religion's Influence on the Founding of the United States**

According to Pyle and Davidson (2003), the development of the United States during colonisation and the establishment of a new nation were influenced by a gamut of factors, namely religious reasons. Early settlers from England in the form of Puritans, as well as others,

such as the Pilgrims and the Quakers, followed a different route, escaped religious persecution in varying parts of Europe, and, in effect, contributed to the transformation of existing social values and forms of governance.

#### **1.3.2.2. Ethical and Moral Frameworks Rooted in Religion**

According to Reeder (1997), the moral and ethical principles of American society are, in most cases, just found in religious teachings. For instance, the theories of individual self-respect, the core of the work principle, and the importance of seeing a person as a member of society mostly come from religious teachings.

#### **1.3.2.3. Religion's Role in Governance and the Legal System**

In spite of the fact that people maintain the necessity of keeping church and state separate according to the Constitution, one cannot ignore the impact of some values that are widely shared and considered religious on the development of laws and public policy. Disputable issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and others usually generate conversations and lawsuits; most are based on religious beliefs (Gutterman & Murphy, 2015).

#### **1.3.2.4. Cultural Traditions and Festivals**

The sacred holidays that Americans celebrate, like Christmas and Easter Day, have become so distinctly American that they are valued by people without any doubt. The most attractive thing about the people's reverence for any particular religion is that the country is not religiously homogeneous, and there is no prevailing religion over any of the religions. For that, we should remember the Festival of Lights, Ramadan (the major Muslim feast), and Deepavali, among other equivalent festivals (Green & Oldendorf, 2011).

#### **1.3.2.5. Religious Institutions as Community Pillars**

Beyond serving as spiritual centres, religious institutions like churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples have functioned as cornerstones of communities since time immemorial. They provide crucial social support systems, educational programmes, and charitable services to their members and, often, the wider community. This fosters a strong sense of belonging and

togetherness, making them vital hubs for social interaction and positive development (Sampson, 2007).

#### **1.3.2.6. Influence on Family and Social Values**

According to D'Antonio (1980), it is usually the case that religious beliefs plant seeds that grow roots within families, the way men and women are supposed to behave, and what society thinks is right or wrong. In the lives of most Americans, religious teachings from birth guide such crucial life decisions as marriage, children, and relations with other people.

#### **1.3.2.7. Artistic and Cultural Expressions**

Proliferation, including in the US, has provided the religious with the chance to express themselves in various artistic and cultural ways throughout its existence. The cadence of American culture is greatly dictated by religion. It is a powerful blessing of the truth that there is so much art, for it is religious and musical art followed by literature and architecture in this country (Paglia, 2007).

#### **1.3.2.8. Role in Identity and Community**

Religious traditions equip individuals with a framework for understanding themselves and their place in the world. The values, vocabulary, and rituals associated with religion guide individuals in their search for personal identity. Religion also fosters a sense of belonging to a community by providing shared experiences, expectations, and a common moral compass. This sense of community strengthens social bonds and promotes cooperation (Straughn & Feld, 2010).

### **1.3.3. Impact of Religion on Family Structures and Dynamics**

Edgell (2006) concluded that the United States is a country where religion is basically woven into diverse family arrangements and patterns that become truly identifiable and consist of the complex interplay of other traditions, beliefs, and roots. Primarily, religion bonds families together by applying the mutual beliefs and values it teaches to the never-ending mosaic of lives. Rituals shape the thinking of the family as each religious tradition passes on its moral compass to

them. This can be seen in the churches that base their Christianity on forgiveness, while in those grounded in Islam, the followers base their values on compassion and submission to the will of God. These core beliefs not only shape how choices are made but also serve as the basis for building familial bonds.

Religious teachings comprise a set of norms for the roles of parents, hierarchical structures, and commonly the gender division of chores in a household. Depending on the understanding of a conservative Christian, patriarchal hierarchies can be evident; this case is when spiritual leadership is brought to men and caregiving to women, while others may recognise an egalitarian arrangement while still following their faith. The favourite value of hierarchy in families is that it makes them behave differently, work in different ways, and have different internal arrangements (Edgell, 2006).

According to Walsh (2010), religion has some crucial functions. Parents whose religions are geared towards the “Art of the Home” assert this moral education and religious training for their children. It is the responsibility of families to teach their children the religious faith and practice as well as to pass on the same, and this act measures the spiritual identity and belongingness to a specific group or community. This environment can be pictured as confining and demanding, for example, yet it provides a common ground where families communicate with each other through the regular practices of commemorating and remembering shared experiences.

Rituals and routines are valuable in strengthening bonds among family members as they lead to a common tie as well as a sense of jointness. Families may find a feeling of community, holidays that can be spent to create uncountable memories, and a deepening of their shared faith through communal worship, celebrating religious holidays, or praying collectively. Another important function of places of worship is to offer a family a strong support system. The religious community is built by a network of friends and peers who give support, love, and friendship during times of difficulty and crisis. Therefore, among other things, the joint action of

relatives rather than anything else makes family ties grow stronger and become more and more resistant to the challenges that life puts on everyone (Caldwell & Senter, 2012).

Even though the blurring of the lines of American culture brings forth its diverse interfaith landscape, families find themselves entangled in manifold religious conflicts and countercultural movements. A marriage between persons of various beliefs and a family with different backgrounds is a test that brings situations where parties must convey, tolerate, and remain convinced in their beliefs as a way of cohabitation. This diversity in experience makes family immunity from religion a more complex and important matter that is underlined by respect and adaptation (Shoaf et al., 2022).

Religion is also linked with cultural identity, in which maintaining their culture is the most important factor for immigrants who deeply belong to an ethnic culture. Religious rites and practices preserve their cultural roots as well as pass over the shards of ancestry, whose decisive role is in the creation of domestic behaviour with respect to a native language, food, and costumes. Hence, religion proves to be the common thread through which similar family members are knitted together while sharing and celebrating their traditional cultural background (Foley & Hoge, 2007).

#### **1.4. Political and Legal Dimensions of Religion**

When talking about the intricate influence of politics and the law in church-state relations, it should be recognised that this relationship between the state and the church is much more complicated than people commonly think. By laying down the foundational concept of the separation of church and state, which is intended to secure the deprivation of both religious groups and government powers, the core of this legal technicality is preserved. In theory, it might seem that there exists a perfect separation between political and religious matters; however, in practice, this concept is often complicated by the blurred boundary lines around which there emerge different debates, such as women's rights and freedoms of religion and beliefs (Brankin, 2018).

For example, in this difference in opinion, there is freedom of religion and expression, which involve the basic rights of individuals and communities being weighed against particular groups' beliefs and the legal apparatus. Furthermore, the interpretation of the First Amendment (especially in the context of religion) has its own share of persisting debates and case law in the courts, determining the area of constitutional law across the parameters of religion over the years (Eisgruber & Sager, 2007).

In doing so, then, the underlying complexities that come with this topic should be simultaneously explored and scrutinised in order to comprehend more than just the theory.

#### **1.4.1. Separation of Church and State in Theory and Practice**

The initial determinacy of the idea of the separation of church and state in the US can be found in the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which can as well be termed the sugar-coating of American citizens. The highlighted clause is the sole one that goes through a pure rejection by forbidding untrammelled directives from enacting preferences for any type of religion or free exercise of religion. In addition, it guarantees that the government should always be free from religious influence to protect all people from expressing their regard for their religion(s). Fundamentally, the separation between church and state means abstaining from supporting or favouring any particular religion as a sovereign entity that should not be involved in picking sides; however, it is critical to respect people's freedom to decide their faith. The term has an intrinsic link with Thomas Jefferson, who delivered it well in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association (1802), whereby he uses layman's language about the role of government exclusion from religious issues (Smith, 2014).

Through its decisions, the Supreme Court of the United States has promulgated and clarified the rule of governmental something that is not religious, as stated expressly in the First Amendment. Rulings like *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) have successfully highlighted that it is clearly obliged of state institutions to not be the agents that sanction the acts of worship in society at large and hence provide that the free practice of religion is something that is followed. In

addition, church-state division means that public organisations should keep their distance from particular religions and refrain from any sort of promotion of religiosity at the state level. To that end, the separation of church and state requires the government not to present anyone's religious symbols or practices on public land and to create a secular atmosphere where all people are respected. (Cohen, 2015).

Unlike that, Koppelman (2012) stated that government agencies cannot give religious activities their attribution but can allocate equal funds to religious organisations with motives not for religious matters but for education and social services, with the condition that the specified money is not implemented for religious purposes. The Lemon test, which was proposed in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), offers a set of criteria to avoid religious entanglements with the state since public state funding could become excessive. At the core of the separation of church and state is freedom of religion belonging to all individuals, which means that they can profess their religion or stay away from any religion without being forced by the state whatsoever. This implies protecting the members of the public and their religious members from discrimination and preventing them from any kind of bias or prejudice because of their faith.

Yet the separation principle, even as enshrined in the constitution, creates a constitutional tension between religion and public policy regarding that question. When we speak of school prayer, the display of religious symbols in public places, and the teaching of evolution in school, these controversies, in one way or another, have the courts examining the continuous debate, that is, the battle between religious liberty and government authority. Beyond that, the de facto separation between church and state in the United States provides freedom of religion and prevents the spreading of religious ideology in the ruling institutions, thus encompassing the territory between the religious and the governmental. While the precise demarcation of this power division may be shaded by the intricate mixture of constitutional rules and cultural norms, it is through the constant interplay between the two that the social value system and constitution are formed (Harper et al., 2015).

### **1.4.2. Controversies Surrounding Religious Freedom and Expression**

Lewis and McDaniel (2023) commented that the religious freedom and expression complications encountered in the US are multidimensional in nature, a trend resulting from the combined efforts of political, social, and individual factors. Several significant public controversies, which are touched upon by many political, commercial, and other concerned parties, have appeared recently.

Besides, the issue of how places of worship and other religious symbols are treated in government officials' buildings, including prayers held before celebrations and meetings at the school and local administrative levels, also comes to the fore. The advocates claimed that the ventures were rather to fulfil religious freedom, while opponents replied that such actions were not intended to violate "the Wall of Separation between the Church and State" doctrine as contained in the First Amendment Article (Crabb, 1984).

Nevertheless, the defiant employers who stand against the Affordable Care Act (ACA) also erode the rule that requires companies to offer contraceptive coverage on their health insurance plans. The faith sects and business people for some religious doctrines, specifically the ban on the use of contraceptives, which equals abortion in its effect, cause these adherents to seek legal exemption of contraceptives from other laws (Turret et al., 2020).

The issue of whether LGBTQ+ rights and religious freedom can compatibly coexist substituted a new one in full swing when owners of some businesses rejected services for same-sex or transgender people on the basis of their religion. Legal disputes such as the Masterpiece Cakeshop cases illustrate this conflict very well. The ruling of the Supreme Court, in a narrow manner, maintained that the baker is allowed to refuse service without looking at the broader issue (Eskridge & Wilson, 2018).

George (2001) explained that the constant argument between evolutionism vs. creationism or intelligent design still has conflicting views among the school community. Currently, evolution is well acknowledged in the scientific world; however, there

are positions proposing the inclement and approval of alternative theories under the pretext of religious and academic freedom.

Work environments comprise issues on how to remove discrepancies in using religious clothing or taking breaks on major religious holidays. Another possible obstacle can be workers' reluctance to execute some tasks for which they have religious reasons. Ensuring that employers' as well as employees' rights are balanced without compromising equality is quite tricky. These concerns are perplexed by the intricate balance that promotes religious freedoms at the national level and the social values that represent the USA at the global level (Vickers, 2008).

### **1.4.3. Supreme Court Cases Pertaining to Religion and the First Amendment.**

According to Lindsay (1995), the history of the jurisprudence of the United States Supreme Court includes several landmark Supreme Court cases profound and consequential, which are responsible for pro-sports teams outfitting the interpretation of the First Amendment, in particular some of its clauses on religion. One key case that propelled this whole debate is *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), where the constitutionality of a law in New Jersey was challenged, which allocated public funds for transporting students to private schools, including parochial schools. The Court's ruling was reasonably in favour of the law but also pronounced the "wall of separation" doctrine between church and state, which became the establishment of the conduct of state governments through the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In response to *Everson*, *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) also challenged, in which it questioned a New York state law that mandated prayer from the school to the opening. Establishment Clause's victory was declared by the court because the state-sanctioned prayer was said to be a violation of the same Clause due to the fact that it promotes religion inside educational circles. Besides, in *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963), Pennsylvania's law that secures Bible readings was repealed by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court ruled that this law ceases to apply,

thereby once again underscoring the constitutional requirement of separation of religion from state (Lieder, 1987).

*Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) defines the Lemon test, which consists of three-step criteria by which one decides whether a law violates the Establishment Clause. The fact case was concerned with the ones that assisted mainly Catholics with all these private schools, and their regulations demonstrated that a law must secure secular purposes only; it must not favour or discriminate against religions; and the government should not allow direct and absolute interference by the state with the church (Engstrom, 1995).

On the contrary, *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990) dealt with a case which was considerably different because of the fact that it did not meet the trending standard as far as judicial rulings are concerned, especially in environmental cases where a person is convicted in public law for the offenses committed and some Native Americans were arrested for taking peyote during their religious rituals considering some very unique situations where Native American workers were Circumstances where one conducts a not-state-approved, then it is unlawful to fire him only for this, said the judge during the hearing, also the judge's opinion is that this is the core idea of anti-drug laws and something else make them illegal (Marin, 1990).

More recently, in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* (2014), the Court found itself dealing with the religious objections of private corporations that do not want to provide contraceptive coverage dictated by the Affordable Care Act's regulations. Notably, the decision was for Hobby Lobby, and it states that personal companies can object to any specific drug benefit for workers' reproductive plans under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (Horwitz, 2014).

These cases are, in fact, the Court's rare instances where it acts as the umpire of the quest to fulfil this goal through rulings such as the Sunday Closing Law and the Lemon Test, the former being the seminal ruling in keeping with the Court's tradition of maintaining the ideal

balance between government neutrality towards religion and the guarantees of religious rights (Koppelman, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the religious history of the USA bewilders us with its invariably changing nature, amalgamation of faith and customs, as well as multicultural reasons, all put together to form the beaten path of history that usually makes exceptions and creates new features. Immigrants' story starts with their search for refuge, and there is a constant evolution of their religious customs. As you look at it from any angle, religion is always going to be a complex and diverse matter, not a straightforward and clear-cut story. It goes beyond facets. Social norms, social practices, and family bonds are also deeply implicated. In politics, the rule of law and other related matters are also part of the situation. It is especially important to identify the issues of church and state separation. Also, the country's economy and society do not only develop but also go way ahead as the country's religious landscape keeps changing into a large, encompassing, and diverse religious environment in which all people, tribes, and traditions are welcomed, recognised, and respected.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Investigating the Impact of Religion on American Policy-Decision Makers**

## **Chapter Two: Investigating the Impact of Religion on American Policy- Decision Makers**

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## **Introduction**

Religion in politics is the main focus of this chapter, mainly the impact of religiosity on policies. By examining historical resources, court precedents, and presidential addresses, one can explore how religious motifs influence U.S. policy-making. The choice to focus on the US is due to its diverse religious landscape and democratic state. Hence, the method that is useful in investigating the social interaction between religious elements and policy effectiveness is the qualitative content analysis study. In the chapter, the methods of data collection and analysis are thoroughly explained to argue the compatibility of the methods to address the research questions and aims. Then, the content analysis of the data is carried out, and the findings are discussed to reach conclusive answers to the research problem.

### **2.1. Research Method**

Content analysis is a research tool that can measure the presence of a word, theme, or idea in a text. A researcher may apply a content analysis strategy that can index, count, and analyse several words, meanings, and relationships. As an example, an investigator might look at the language used in a local newspaper's article to track any indications of bias and unfairness. They are capable of doing a thorough examination of the hidden meaning in the content, the author(s), the reader(s), as well as the surrounding society and period. Content analysis is a way the “The Impact of Religion on America’s Policy-Decision Makers” study can be evidence-based for a qualitative investigation.

#### **2.1.1. Introduction to Qualitative Content Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis, as defined by scholars, involves the subjective interpretation of text data through systematic coding and theme identification (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). It is characterised by empirical, methodologically controlled analysis of texts within their communication context, adhering to content analytic rules and step-by-step models (Mayring, 2000, p. 2). This method emphasises qualitative data reduction and sense-making efforts to identify core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Unlike mere word

counting or objective content extraction, qualitative content analysis delves into meanings, themes, and patterns, whether manifest or latent, within a specific context. Thus, this method provides the researchers with a route to looking into social facts from a humanistic yet scientific standpoint. It is not just a number crunching exercise anymore where it digs into fine lines of textual data, and in the end, it becomes a contextual understanding enriching factor. It does this to enrich the contextual insight of the question at hand.

### **2.1.2. Data Sources**

Through this process of studying the influence of policymakers on politics, some examples show how public beliefs and religion shape politics. Specifically, the Emancipation Proclamation contains two aspects: the immediate and complete emancipation of slaves by President Lincoln for his own anti-slavery goals; and the religious ideals behind the economic and historical policy-making of the President. The second case, *Engle v. Vitale* (1962), embodies the role of the judicial system in respecting the separation of church and state by restricting formally organised prayer in public schools, thereby demonstrating how religious freedoms impact judicial processes. Moreover, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 shows us how religious concerns shape law-making processes. We see the integration of religious beliefs into the drafting of laws and public policies as an illustration. In addition, Clinton's 1994 speech in the Knesset added a new facet to the foreign policy of the United States by emphasising the role of religion, including the Gulf War and Middle-East peace negotiations, and how religious factors play a part in the USA's international relations agenda. Finally, the election campaign speeches of the last four presidential candidates in America show the use of religious language to gain votes and win the elections. The cases mentioned above draw attention to the multi-faceted influence of religion on various sub-areas of the American government, such as executive orders, landmark court decisions, legislative acts, foreign policy, and campaign strategies.

### **2.1.3. Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection procedures for analysing the functional components begin with formulating and articulating research sub-questions, which help in knowing the direction of the research, as indicated in the introductory section. Data sourcing involves taking information from many media sources (such as printed articles, television programmes, and online news), public addresses, and speeches. This search should cover political factions and governmental levels.

The coding categories are then created through the research questions, which are fully inclusive of indicators of religious beliefs, direct and indirect references to religious texts, usage of religious words, and mostly symbolic representations. These categories are the backbone of documenting types and instances of monotheistic-rooted language and semantics acquired from the extracted data. Immediately after, the gathered data would be subjected to a rigorous and rational technique of analysis where repetitive patterns, trends, and correlations regarding religious influences' impact on policy decision-making would be unearthed and presented in an organised manner based on the formulated research questions. Through this rigorous procedure, the researchers can regulate how religious impacts shape policy inception, consequently getting muscled into academics and science as a backup to evidence-based, comprehensive policy formulation.

## **2.2. Analysis of Religious References in Selected American Official Documents and Speeches**

The various religious references in American official documents and speeches are discussed to show how religion has played a part in expounding American history, law, and politics.

### **2.2.1. Analysis of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863**

The document explicitly refers to religious concepts such as "the year of our Lord" and "the gracious favour of Almighty God." By the same token, the evocation of "Almighty God" indicates a belief in some supreme power and hints at the importance of God in decision-

making. Therefore, putting together phrases like "the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three" and "upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity," under the category of religious beliefs makes sense as those phrases are based on a religious language. Categorising references to religious themes and expressions under the corresponding coding category provides a basis for comprehensive observation and ensures a well-organised investigation of the textual data. Through such a methodical process, trends and connections between religious effects and decision-making activities are revealed.

The text demonstrates these relationships using both explicit and implicit language, as shown by references to the specific texts of religions. The above phrase "the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three" indicates that the year being discussed is 1863 according to the Christian period. Secondly, the phrase "the gracious favour of Almighty God" connotes favours from God ordained by the belief in a divine being. Besides that, the date "in the year of our Lord" also represents the idea of a Christian religious belief system that is based on the birth of Christ. Besides that, references to "the gracious favour of Almighty God" show that there is faith in a divine being who is responsible for divine intervention. In addition, the "year of our Lord" refers to the Christian calendar system that is centred on the birth of Jesus. Furthermore, there are implicit references, like the mention of "Almighty God," which implies the acceptance of the Christian God as depicted in religious books like the Bible. The text also has a statement by the President of the United States made in a situation believed to be a just cause under the Constitution and a military necessity.

The text portrays theological ideas using words like "the year of the Lord" and "Almighty God." The quotations lend the proclamation a deeply wistful underscore and divine force. The "mankind" here could help us to re-evolve the ideas of our common origin and possibly remind us of concepts like religion, compassion, and togetherness. However, mentioning the divine punishment and reward increases the perception of justice and reverence

for the preaching. Consequently, this leads to the usage of religious language, which in turn makes the tone stronger and more influential on the audience.

During Mr. Lincoln's presidency, the government was ruled by the open dominance of religion, and religion also determined the decisions. It is especially important to highlight that expressions such as "year of our Lord" are also allegorical representations of the Christian religion as the leading faith of American society and administration. It is also noteworthy that divine intervention came to the aid of the state, and their credibility and belief in their divinity were emphasised in this particular kind of representation. Thus, it is in line with the concept of respecting deities and that of a ruler's guidance by the gods. To express this, we could come up with the "year of our Lord," which is one of the symbols for Christ in the Christian theological tradition, versus the Almighty God, which is power attributed to monotheistic religions. Furthermore, "the gracious favour of Almighty God is also cited as one of the ways of guidance" and "the act of justice is upheld by the Constitution in the name of military necessity" are the values of God-directed morality. Amidst the symbols of expectation, religion provided interpretations that explained everything about the processes of governance and decision-making as a recognition of divine blessings and standards of morality from a religious perspective.

### **2.2.2. Analysis of Engel v. Vitale (1962)**

The prayer authorised by the New York State Board of Education included the words, "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our Country" (Engel V. Vitale, 370 U.S. 421 (1962), n.d., p. 18). The challenge of parents to such prayer and the Supreme Court's reaction are key aspects of the Engel v. Vitale case.

The content analysis of Engel v. Vitale (1962), extracted from the Library of Congress official website, reveals the pattern of the religious lexicon, its meaning, as well as its relation to other religious themes within the case Engel v. Vitale (1962) of the United States Supreme Court. It employs methods of identifying the presence of religious beliefs in the text,

primarily evident from the speech patterns of the characters, whereby they make mention of their prayers and their dependence on a supernatural power (referred to as God) and seek divine interference. Such words as "Almighty God," "Is it Thee that we acknowledge our dependence," "blessed faith," and "The Divine blessings" reveal these ideas. Yet again, the text often subtly hints at the characters' religious beliefs and values with explicit words like "Establishment Clause," "divine faith," "religious freedom," and "acknowledgment of dependence on a higher power," referring to phrases like "Almighty God," "Supreme Being," and "divine Providence." Like on both sides of the coin, the references to the Nation's diverse excavation again emphasise the basis of deeply rooted spiritual beliefs in the Nation.

The interpretation of the texts that are involved in the legal and historical documents brings out a lot of aspects. Every word of "Almighty God" is inseparable from the Christian religion, which deliberately refers to the religious heritage of some laws and social norms. Sayings like us nation are Judeo-Christian in context, which is a sense of approval, or it is God who is in a country. Moreover, the Bible as well as the *McCullum v. Board of Education* case law serve as exemplars that emphasise both the influence of religious thought upon jurisprudence and the position of religious law. As an example, James Madison's words below exhibit a vital connection between religion and government.

In these my confidence will under every difficulty be best placed, next to that which we have all been encouraged to feel in the guardianship and guidance of that Almighty Being whose power regulates the destiny of nations, whose blessings have been so conspicuously dispensed to this rising Republic, and to whom we are bound to address our devout gratitude for the past, as well as our fervent supplications and best hopes for the future. (U.S. Reports: *Engel V. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)., n.d., p. 27)

Indirect allusions (e.g., the irrationality of governmental arrangements that presume supremacy) prove the interrelationship of legal discourse, religious beliefs, and legal and historical circumstances, therefore weaving a rich tapestry of religious meaning.

There is an immense use of religious language in the text, which includes prayers, divine power, and spiritual concepts. Through the use of recurring phrases such as "Almighty God," "our dependence on Thee," and "divine faith," a religious spirit seems to be spread everywhere. On the other hand, expressions such as "blessings," "prayer," and "spiritual heritage" in religious discourse illustrate the notion of respect and recognition of the divine presence. Words such as "God save the United States" and "In God we trust" are deeply connected with traditional beliefs, and the following talks on prayer and its religious context suggest the need for faith and the divine to be taken into account. References to symbols such as "Almighty God" and "In God We Trust" not only underline the similarities with religious principles and traditions, but at the same time they emphasise themes such as spiritual heritage and freedom of religion. In particular, the pervasive presence of religious terminology shows how much reverence and spirituality there are throughout various areas of one's life.

One of the key components here is symbolism, which occupies an important position in the conversation over religion and the role of religion in institutions. By using the phrase "prayer," that means something. They are the evidence of the existence of a spiritual world that they take as the basis for the formation of social and political structures. God's "Almighty" power is the supreme authority, while "prayer" confirms those in communion with the Divine. To refer to "our spiritual heritage" reveals sacred traditions among American society as the main cultural asset, which means we keep the cultural values in place generation after generation.

Alliteration and pure metaphorical expressions like 'unhallowed perversion' and 'the wall of separation between church and state' illuminate the delicate line between religion and rule. Allusions to key historical incidents like the Act of Uniformity and the Revolutionary War fragment these complex relationships and bring out the instances when religious affiliation gets interwoven with government affairs. Being empowered to hold up national identity associated with religious symbols like "blessing" and "freedom of religion" reinforces the sense of faith within the framework of national identity. Principally, the "captive audience" and "the wall of

separation" metaphors summarise the essence of the church and state discourse, which is somewhat of a conundrum solution while being full of paradoxes. People using symbolic expressions when addressing public issues pinpoint the way religion, government, and cultural agreement interact throughout the USA.

### **2.2.3. Analysis of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993**

The words of this case show that religious beliefs embrace several phrases and foundational orders that are meant to ascertain the importance of religious rights and protections. For instance, "religious freedom," "religious liberty," and "the exercise of religion under the First Amendment" stand as examples of such freedoms. Religious scholars, in their presentations, tend to give most of their attention to the people's religious beliefs and practices, and they use terms such as "religious freedom" and "religious exercise." Constitutional requirements that cover religious rights and protections have some aspects that capture First Amendment rights and set limitations to free exercise, which are significant factors in this regard. The writers of the Constitution directly reinforced this aspect by incorporating the acceptance of the free exercise of religion in the First Amendment, which is the most significant clause of human rights. Additionally, the striking example of compelling interest test use in historical chapters such as *Sherbert v. Verner* and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* brings to light the judicial balancing of religious rights with state interests.

Legal and historical content reveal both explicit and implicit references to religious texts, all resulting in a complex relationship between law and religion in constitutional interpretation. Specific examples, like a mention of the "Constitution" in the First Amendment, are used to highlight the value of fundamental legal documents. Moreover, "the framers of the Constitution" phrases implicate a historical scene evoking Judeo-Christian ethics, thus indicating Jewish and Christian religious influences on constitutional development. Besides legal cases such as "*Sherbert v. Verner*" (1963) and "*Wisconsin v. Yoder*" (1972), religious texts are also used in judicial interpretations of judicial rulings on religious liberties. For instance, the Bible

has been cited in Supreme Court decisions like "Holy Trinity Church v. United States" (1892), where the court referenced the Christian nation principle, and in "Zorach v. Clauson" (1952), which upheld the accommodation of religious practices. These examples reveal this entanglement and enumerate the factors that influence constitutional debates due to the complexity of legal principles and religious foundations.

**Figure 2.1** *President Bill Clinton signs the RFRA into law in 1993.*



The application of religious terms by the RFRA is noteworthy, which is reflected through the use of phrases like "free exercise of religion" and "compelling governmental interest" ("the framers of the Constitution, recognising free exercise of religion as an unalienable right, secured its protection in the First Amendment to the Constitution;" Sec. 2(a)(1), and "is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest;" Sec. 3(b)(1)). There is a focus on keeping the right to religious exercise as a core human freedom, which is the core concern. Through the criteria for both governmental and religious approaches, one argues whether state actions that concern religion are constitutional or not ("is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and" Sec. 3(b)(1)). The RFRA, further, is not only of great use to religious persons but also ensures judicial recourse for those who face encroachment on their religious beliefs by other authorities. Through the legislative text, the terms "compelling interest," "free exercise," and "exercise of religion" bring into focus the crucial role of these religious freedoms in policy-

making ("the compelling interest test as set forth in prior Federal court rulings is a workable test for striking sensible balances between religious liberty and competing prior governmental interests," Sec. 2(a)(5), and "to restore the compelling interest test as set forth in *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963) and *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972) and to guarantee its application in all cases where free exercise of religion is substantially burdened," Sec. 2(b)(1)). The continuous use of phrases such as "a religious exercise" and "the exercise of religion" illustrates their importance in the fields of law and ethics. Firstly, the Act deals with the problem of balancing religious freedoms and government interests, including questions about the establishment of religion or government interference through aid and funds.

In the field of law and constitutional discourse, many symbols and concepts show the complex dance between religious freedom and authority. The RFRA of 1993 can be perceived as representing a legislative act in the first place whereby religious freedoms are legally reinforced. Religious liberty, as embodied in the Establishment Clause, stems from the same philosophical agreement between the necessity of religious freedom and the obligation of impartial treatment of religious issues by the state. Within this framework, the First Amendment becomes the foundational cornerstone, serving as the bedrock for the edifice of religious freedom in the USA. This notwithstanding, the Compelling Interest Test underlines a fundamental equilibrium between religious independence and sovereign prerogatives, which demonstrates the thin line that exists in settling a conflict between these two spheres. The idea of "the Religious Freedom Restoration" as a symbol for upholding and preserving the ordained freedoms of individuals in the eyes of the law has an inspiring ring to it. Therefore, the RFRA acts as a battle cry for religious privileges and the restoration of the law that protects these fundamental freedoms. The latter artworks are an actual representation of the synergy between religion and politics in the inaugural years of the country's political formation.

#### **2.2.4. The Content Analysis of President Clinton's Speech to the Knesset in 1994**

The qualitative content analysis of the speech delivered by US President William Jefferson Clinton to the Knesset in Jerusalem on October 27, 1994, is performed to identify major religious influences on policy decisions.

Identifying religious beliefs in policy decisions can be accomplished by interpreting various textual cues and signifiers. One of the most evident indicators is the inclusion of the names of religious figures like "Mohammed the Prophet" and "Moses," and thus, the impact of religion on policymaking is obvious. Furthermore, references to a "religious mission" suggest that religious reasons exert a great influence on the political process. Describing religious activities like "visiting sacred sites" emphasises the role of religious beliefs in people's lives. Declaring the use of divine guidance as shown by "God's will" means that such an individual attributes religiosity to an essential role in resolving life-related challenges. For instance, the mention of religious figures and sacred texts such as "The Prophet Mohammed" and "the Bible" implies the presence of the religious factor. Moreover, sentences like "the ancient dream of the Jewish people" and "the fulfilment of a divine commandment to empty the land of Israel" directly demonstrate religious needs and aspirations. There are numerous phrases, such as "a call to defend the people of Israel" and "developing courage," that involve the duties of God and virtues. At last, "Blessings of Democracy" is a reference to a certain mindset that democracy works best when influenced by moral values.

Various methods of using religious symbols can be divided into explicit and implicit mentions of religious texts and their characters. Implicit references represent indirect references to religious texts, such as "the Bible," and direct quotes, such as "I have set before your life and death." Additionally, references to particular prophets, like "The Prophet Mohammed," denote such references to Islamic teachings. Explicit references, however, are more obvious and may manifest in the form of allusions to religious stories, for example, "promised land" or "the river Jordan into the promised land," which are just a way of referring to biblical tales. Furthermore, words like "the patriarchs' dream" or "then, Moses died and Ruth was born" foreshadow the

Jewish scriptures and history. Moreover, such an allusion to Islamic teachings as "unto him is the homecoming" supports an intimate relation to the Islamic texts. In general, such direct and indirect mentions contribute to the academic discourse by presenting religious settings and points of view.

As part of the decision-making rhetoric, religious language is utilised, namely in the form of phrases like "God bless you" and "As God wills it," which are a kind of prayer form or images of the verb "to save." In addition to this, the phrase "returning home" is employed, where the root word "home" is in itself religious and represents the emotional attachment to Israel as a land of deep spirituality. The discourse is also characterised by the utterance of religious blessings, as the entire discourse suggests. One example is the saying "God bless you," while another is the mention of religious figures like "Prophet Mohammed" and "Moses." The use of religious terminology shows the importance of such terms for the speaker. "And go choose life" is one of the ways Straumann shows the theological feature of the narrative. On the other hand, by using words such as "blessing," "order," "prophet," and "God's will," Israel is given the status of a deeply religious thing that implies the whole peace process. The texts overflow with divine inspiration in phrases like "God will draw us closer," creating a religious atmosphere in the conversation. Sayings such as "promised land" and "homecoming" are utilised to give the viewers a clearer understanding that peace is a religious issue.

Symbolism is one of the methods that reveals deeper meaning within the literary narrative, an aspect observed in the use of religious symbols and biblical allusions. First of all, sentences like "homecoming" and "choose life" figuratively refer to stories from the Bible about returning to the ancestral land, which implies the connection of people with their motherland, both spiritually and culturally. Also, the use of such religious symbols as the River Jordan and Mount Moab connects to the text the spiritual feelings, which increases the symbolic value of the plot. Moreover, references to the "promised land" describe a significant territorial space in religious discourse, carrying strivings and divine pledges. Moreover, the duality of "life is light,

and death is darkness, and a blessing and curse hang together" underlines morality, whose moral decisions are determined by religious teachings, hence raising ethical dilemmas and spiritual consequences. Also, the idea of "homecoming" includes things such as returning to sacred places or states, evoking ideas like pilgrimage and spiritual wholeness. Furthermore, the plurality of "the river Jordan" and "the mountains of Moab" draws its signification from the religious texts, making the text more vivid and multi-dimensional. Thus, through the installation of symbolic representations, the text moves beyond its literal level of meaning, encouraging the reader to engage with deeper issues that are closely related to religious traditions and beliefs.

### **2.2.5. Analysis of Presidents' Speeches in Election Campaigns**

The content analysis of the campaign speeches of the last four presidents of the United States is conducted to explore the religious references in the candidates' speeches and how they develop themes, strategies, and rhetoric to connect with voters and win elections.

#### **2.2.5.1. George W. Bush Speeches**

George W. Bush's presidential campaign speeches are easily seen as heavily connected to faith; this is why phrases like "faith-based values," "God's will," and "divine guidance" are a part of their content, which means that his policies are as well. Bush directly connects his faith to his activities for the country and cites examples of "my faith serves as the reason for my actions for this nation" and "I am a new Christian, and my faith guides my decisions." He frequently references the Bible, quoting verses like Micah 6:8, and they recognise the Quran as an essential book on which they set the standards for their moral values. The references to spirituality around this address could be both openly expressed and indirectly touched. Through this, the two drivers of the history of this country—religion and the leader of society—are unavoidably related, resulting in the shaping of policies.

The use of direct and indirect quotations to underscore the righteous standards of this age-long policy is almost the most prominent tool of George W. Bush. Through direct citations from the Bible, such as quoting Micah 6:8, An equal ruler, he steadfastly remains just and

merciful to humanity in all his deeds. Indeed, Plato showed an exacting schedule for which his administration had to be evaluated. This way is not the only one used by him; he also applies curved concepts to unconscience. He discusses the moral attributes of Christianity, including compassion, as a key part of what Christianity is about. The poetic drumming that the author closely swings with biblical themes positions him to evolve at a faster rate with the quality guidance and direction provided by the book. The speech's imperious and abundant secular quotations from religious performances reflect for the religiously inclined audience an idea of religious motives lying behind the policies of the President and, on the other hand, use this idea to place them in a general framework of spirituality.

The president deliberately adopts some religious expressions and, in accordance with his conservative Christian roots, uses phrases such as "God bless America," "prayerful deliberation," and "sacred duty" to arouse religious emotions. He quoted metaphors and similes from religions to call the nation a "lighthouse in a world full of darkness." Therefore, in his speech, Bush makes unity under God and his appeal to God to make national decisions his most important points. The actions that he prays for, like bravery and wisdom, helped him believe in the religion. He wanted to make this clear, so he uses the Bible examples of redemption, righteousness, etc. In the speech, one of the main adages is that "truth was higher than personal preferences" and, by justification, he acted as a representative of God.

President George W. Bush then uses the symbols of worship and biblical verses to forge connections with church-going people and to transfer politics from a stuck place. According to the metaphor of "a shining city on a hill," along with using the eagle as a symbol, he depicts an image of a higher morality and a victory over the dark forces. Bush uses family-traditional values advocacy and religious lessons to form the principle of a nation with a single purpose through religious symbols. Hence, he links secular goals with the religion that provided a divine direction, besides reflecting the supernatural ethical sense of justice and the omnipotence of God. The evocation of events in a nation's history—the country's founders—

would not only reinforce the narrative of religious faith, but it would also strike his audience with a profound feeling of the nation's history.

### **2.2.5.2. Barack Obama Speeches**

Religion is often the main reason why politicians use their religious beliefs to support their political arguments; for instance, Barack Obama often says, "My Christian faith guides me," which shows the effect of their religious convictions on their political decision-making. For example, the fact that Obama uses the principle of God to face problems shows how religious beliefs are used in leadership. Besides, expressions like "Prayer has always been a cornerstone of my life" stress the role of spiritual practices in forming behavioural patterns. These announcements are meant to echo the sentiments of those religious people in the same category as their representatives, thus creating a bond based on the same beliefs. Furthermore, the expression of being "blessed" and the quest for divine guidance are ways of expressing humility and recognising the need for external support. These religious symbols are the ones that make politicians more human and hence help in bridging the gap between the diverse groups of the electorate, which promotes unity and shared values within them.

The presidential speeches of Obama have both explicitly and implicitly used religious texts and values to reach out to different audiences and express moral imperatives. The clear allusions to the Bible, the Quran, and the Torah all signal ethical principles and direct the moral message. For instance, the quote "Love thy neighbour as thyself" from the Bible, which stands for unity and support within the nation, and the Quran's teachings on caring for the less fortunate, which illustrate commitment to social justice, are examples. The implicit expression points to the religious moral obligations, which are compassion, justice, and empathy in general, and the shared principles, which are being appealed to by the religious affiliations. Through the appeal of caring for the vulnerable or the emphasis on the golden rule, Obama connects with audiences without incurring exclusivity; thus, he is able to strategically appeal to the shared values of compassion and justice.

In American political discourse, religious rhetoric, for instance, the one used by President Barack Obama, is meant to be a source of moral principles and the main reason for the unity of the citizens. Obama frequently uses the term divine guidance and emphasises kindness and compassion, as it is in one's nature to be "God's children." He also urges the nation to unite as a prayer for a better future. He is always using religious language to bring forth moral imperatives like promoting peace and maintaining justice, and he is thus always saying that "our brother's keeper" or "faith without works is dead" to stress the comprehension of a caring government. The religious symbols are used by Obama in order to link to the Americans' spiritual sensibilities and hence unite them in the fight for the right solution to the nation's problems.

In his oratory, Obama uses religious symbolism and brings about religious holidays like Easter and Ramadan to the point of understanding the different audiences. He also uses religious symbols such as light, darkness, and resurrection to trigger emotions, but at the same time, he does not directly address the situation. For instance, his sentence, "Just as a shepherd looks after his herd, it is my responsibility to protect and nurture the American people," uses the Bible to show his dedication to the security of the nation. These rhetorical devices enable Obama to get his audience in a way that the cultural and religious references that he and his audience have in common convey messages of leadership and responsibility.

### **2.2.5.3. Donald Trump Speeches**

In his speeches, President Trump usually calls upon his religion as a point of reference, which he would then use to implement religious principles in his governing style and policy decisions. He does not only use sentences like "As a devout Christian, I believe..." but also states, "The reason behind my decision is my faith values" to emphasise the significant role of his faith in these processes. Trump's constant turning to the Lord for assistance and utterances such as "God bless America" accentuate his devout religious headship. As a result, he uses the term "protecting our Christian values." Hence, it is clear that his faith is not only behind his

policy support but also that his faith and policy support are connected, especially on social issues, immigration, and foreign policy. It can be summarised that what Trump portrays in his speeches is quite evident: he has a clear link between his religion and how he made decisions about governance; hence, an obvious connection between religious beliefs and policy decisions is presented.

**Figure 02.** *The Religious Languages on Hats at Trump's Campaign Rally.*



Trump refers both directly and indirectly to religious texts in support of his statements and recommendations. While implicit ones offer examples from the religious scriptures using phrases like "In the book of Matthew, it says..." or "Let us look into Corinthians for guidance," the explicit ones directly mention the scriptures, so the author may say, "The Bible says in Corinthians..." or "Matthew speaks of this." The explicit (Bible) quotations are very much used in the case of Trump, as are the implicit references like "strength in traditional family values" that also serve to demonstrate religious impact. Through this complex method, the politicians are in a position to attract a crowd of diverse religious sentiments while at the same time performing their obligations as leaders.

Religious language becomes a potent instrument in political speeches that are supposed to be addressed to religious voters, and thus the politician is presented as a moral authority. Humble expressions such as "Blessed are the peacemakers" and "Let's pray for the

prosperity of the nation" are some of the examples that appeal to the religious milieu. The leaders talk about common nationwide religious traditions or a particular incident to further align themselves with religious values. The foundations of President Trump's speeches are filled with religious vocabulary like "blessings," "grace," and "prayer," which are used to make the discussion about the effects of moral righteousness sound respectable. Phrases such as "Blessings to our nation's" and "May our country be prosperous" within the phrase are aimed at alluring the religious people, which further strengthens the message of divine support.

The underlying meaning of symbolism weaves into President Trump's speeches, reminiscent of Biblical themes such as blessing, salvation, and divine intervention. Firstly, he vows to construct a fortress to mirror Jericho's protection and grapple with corruption, which David eventually overcame in the battle of Goliath. Trump, without fail, utilises the religious symbols that connect him to the faithful, and thus, he appears as a protector of traditional values. He also subtly equates American nationality with Christian nationality; thus, the cross is identified with the national genealogy, the eagle with freedom, and the "under God" flag with unity. Additionally, Trump notes the religious holidays, Christmas and Easter, with images such as crosses and angels to elevate the values and ethics of a family. Carrying a bible during speeches and mentioning religious personalities, Trump establishes a spiritual connection with his religious constituency, hanging politics with religion to impact people.

#### **2.2.5.4. Joe Biden Speeches**

At his campaign rallies, Joe Biden, the current President of the US, often draws upon his religious convictions as a Catholic and the ethical principles that the faith promulgates, such as compassion, empathy, and fairness. His ethical preachings, like "As an ardent Roman Catholic, I uphold the dignity of every person," let us know how the religion shapes his views. Biden talks about health care, immigration, and poverty from a humanitarian stance that stems from his religious convictions. By mentioning empathy and compassion a few times, he underscores how important these aspects are in policy-making, saying, "As a Catholic, I know

what I believe in and think these are core values in well-shaped policies.” Consequently, Biden hints at how fundamental faith influences his policy-making and the way he runs public campaigns.

In his speeches, President Joe Biden frequently integrates both explicit and implicit references to religious texts. Utilising quotes from the Bible, such as "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39), he designs the place of social justice in his heart. Jesus Christ's teachings are the focus points, and he applies them to the lecturer with love, compassion, and justice as his major themes. Besides, Biden's rhetoric also has principles that are similar to religious principles like love, forgiveness, and forgiveness, even though the scriptural references are not directly cited. He really elicits the fact that each person's dignity is precious and the idea of true justice with no sentiment and assigns to it righteousness as Christianity does. Hence, both the direct and indirect citation of the sacred texts in Biden's speech show that religious orientations are not only a part of his language but also his whole belief system.

President Biden intentionally applies religious wording in his addresses to convey notions of jointness, hope, and moral obligation. The president also used phrases such as "blessing," "grace," and "faith" to highlight the shared values of the American people and their "sacred duty" to protect and promote these values. With a call for God's blessings on America, he shows his acceptance of the notion that the nation is under divine guidance. Biden ties his religious terms like "faith" and "prayers" with his self-serving politics to emphasise moral responsibility. Through America being presented as a country under God, he appeals to religious sentiments and values, aiming to strengthen the faith and resolve to go through the hurdles. In general, Biden's use of religious terminology unites him with his audience on a more spiritual plane as he stresses the moral component behind his policies.

On numerous occasions in his speeches and public appearances, the President currently in office can be seen to evoke hope and resilience by using religious symbolism. An example of a metaphor is "promised land" and "light shining in darkness," but shepherd is a

position of leadership. He further elaborates by saying that common objectives would remarkably improve the outlook for tomorrow. Biden's customary blessings and frequent making of the cross highlight the relevance of faith in the role of leader. By putting religious symbols in his campaign materials, he has strengthened his relationship with the audience. Gestures like hands being clasped in prayer demonstrate, once again, the importance of faith to Biden, both in his personal character and in his message.

### **2.3. Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings**

The role that religion has played in politics in the US is traceable right from the inception of the country's founding ideals to the choice-making process among politicians. Religious freedom is essentially gained by going through cases such as *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), RFRA (1993), speeches from Lincoln (1863) and President Clinton (1994), and the four last American Presidents' speeches in election campaigns. Hence, the process of decision-making is determined by religious values and the process of policy formulation. This section discusses and interprets the findings obtained from the above analyses.

Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is a direct indication of the role of Christianity in influencing government policy. The archaic religious style and the implied deity-inspired authority simultaneously conveyed punishment morality and gave a mandate to the governing. By bringing together governance and religious claims, the leadership attempted to create support for themselves and justify their take as a moral gain. Thus, the Emancipation Proclamation demonstrates how religious values were instrumental in American policymaking, particularly in the context of the moral dilemmas of the Civil War era. President Lincoln carefully arranged his linguistic and semantic style to specifically accommodate his argument in the defence of the spiritual rightness of slavery abolition as the order of God. This phenomenon expresses the unique devotion between church and state, which was a decisive factor in shaping many pivotal events in American history. In addition, the proclamation demonstrates that religious messages and symbolism affect the foundation and substance of politics.

Engel et al. v. Vitale Supreme Court considered the constitutionality of nationally mandated prayer in public schools. Religion-related words were a distinguishing feature of the argument, for instance, vocabulary like "Almighty God" and "our dependence on Thee." Such expressions have always been associated with spiritual views lying at the very heart of the whole legal discourse, showing America's Christian roots affecting the ways people understand the Constitution. Furthermore, the Bible teachings as well as the historical precedents of religion reinforce this relation between religion, law, and governance, which was demonstrated, for example, in the writings of James Madison.

The RFRA was designed to protect religious liberties by focusing on the First Amendment clause of the Free Exercise Act. Cases such as *Sherbert v. Verner* and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* illustrate the courts' function in ensuring that the religious freedom needed is balanced with the interests of the states. RFRA did that through its provisions: not only did it reinforce religious liberties, but it also created the framework for dealing with conflicts between religious autonomy and governmental authorisation. RFRA can thus be explained as a tool to reaffirm and finally make this freedom isolated from the judiciary. It gives people the right to use speakers or writing to favour religious-based principles while electing political leaders. The balance of this state and the freedom of the state are therefore observed. This law is an analogue of the basic constitutional mechanisms such as the horizontal separation of the church and the state, and political activity without respect for religion is unconstitutional.

President Clinton's speech to the Parliament of Israel allowed the use of religious terms such as prophets, missions, and divine guidance. Citations to the book of prayers or icons showed the connection between religion and politics, which sometimes elevated the religion of the day to a status above the state. Through employing different symbols, among them the stories from the Bible and their spiritual significance, religion became a critical tool in the endeavours carried out in the fields of rhetoric and nation-building.

The combination of religion and politics is effectively employed by George W. Bush during his campaigns, as he is open about his faith while trying to reach out to voters. He is using the language of religion and exploiting the symbols, not only quoting the Bible directly but also aligning his policies with religious principles. It is the strategy that conservative voters are attracted to because they consider his values to be both patriotic and righteous. However, it makes the boundary between church and state indistinguishable, and religion becomes state business. This really notifies the power of religious speech in elections, and that is too controversial in government.

President Obama's speeches to the public reveal a strong combination of religious elements in that he uses references to religious texts such as the Bible, Quran, and Torah to support his moral arguments and stress the values that are the same, like compassion and justice, with which he is trying to reach all the people with faith of all different sorts, and at the same time he is making his speeches about the qualities that a To mention a few, Obama's religious rhetoric is in line with his stress on social justice, which is a value that voters who put social justice first resonate with. Religion is a major part of Obama's leadership style and public speeches, but it is not the decisive factor in some policies. Nevertheless, his speeches are an amalgam of religion and politics; hence, religion is very essential in public discourse and policymaking.

Trump managed to make sure he was on good terms with American conservatives and religion by blending these themes into his election campaign speeches, where he described his policy positions and moral values. He never tried to hide the fact that he is an ardent Christian and often references texts from the Bible, as well as uses veiled religious symbols, to speak the language of his main audience, which was primarily the people who were Christians. By using religious pictures and expressions, Trump shows himself as the defender of religious liberty and moral traditions; thus, he emphasises his main theme of moral leadership and the divine path to the right decision. The line between Trump's religious beliefs and policy decisions

is the main reason that the religious factor is so corrupting his political framing and therefore the policy decisions that he makes.

The content of Biden's campaign speeches highlights the role religion plays in the life of the president and how he develops his political ideals. Religiosity is a major factor that Pastor draws upon through the use of religious language, terms, and symbols, in addition to common values such as compassion and justice. It is clear that Biden is a devout Christian who appeals to the Catholic rules of social justice and compassion, and these values determine his policy-making process. He manages to merge politics with religious discourse and address those of his followers who see authority embedded in Christian values. The alignment is affected by President Biden's governance style, in which he weighs the politics of American policies against religion to demonstrate the interconnectedness of religion and politics.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the role of religion in influencing American decision-makers towards particular policies was analysed through the qualitative content analysis of the official documents and speeches. Analysing the historical, legal, and political aspects of religious references to some important historical events, like the Emancipation Proclamation, Engel v. Vitale, and the RFRA, as well as the analysis of presidential addresses from different administrations, showed the role of religion in American decisions and presidents' election agendas. As such, they have also shown that religious language is part of policy language and political communication. Hence, it was evident that religion influenced policy formulation and policy advocacy. Religious symbols are not only used to create unity, but they can also create a divided and conflicted society. On the other hand, they emphasise the importance of religion in American politics, which is not negligible even today.

## **General Conclusion**

The purpose of the dissertation was to investigate the influence of religion in the policy-making process in America and how American decision-makers are influenced by their religious beliefs. The main research question that guided this work was the way and extent to which religion affects America's policy decision-makers. Before methodologically and systematically answering such a question, it was hypothesised that strong religious conviction in politicians leads to faith-based policy decisions.

The first chapter of the dissertation constituted the literature review that thoroughly reviewed the contemporary state of religion in the USA. It also revised the nation's religious history, starting with its formation and development in the following periods. Furthermore, it highlighted the current religious scenario, statistical data regarding population, an analysis of how people are affiliated with religious places or groups, and the changing trends in religious attendance and differential religious groups. The chapter also provided a view of the social, cultural, political, and legal aspects of religion as encompassing civil law, culture, and families, religious freedom in relation to the government and system, and the Church-State system.

The second chapter focused on investigating the impact of religion on American policy decision-makers. It outlined the method used in the study, namely the qualitative content analysis, which was employed to testify to the hypothesis stated above. This content analysis used coding aspects of religion in the identified official documents and speeches to systematically categorise all the religious mentions detected. It examined the language used in the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, Engel v. Vitale of 1962, and the RFRA of 1993, selected speeches of Presidents Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden, and analysed all of the religious-related terms, references, symbolism, or extracts from religious texts found. Therefore, the study identified how religion contributes to policy-making at present and throughout history.

In light of the carried-out analysis, the study found that religion significantly influences what happens in America, including its policies. It proved that religion indeed plays a

role in policy decisions based on historical and current documents and speeches made by politicians. However, though not a surprise in a secular institution, this influence is non-uniform and depends on the political climate and the policy-maker's perception.

However, the study has a few limitations. First, due to the overlap of factors, the study was limited by the ability to separate religion as an independent factor behind political decisions from other socio-political factors. Also, while using the historical texts, it was apparent that some of the records were merely a mimicking of the original decision-making process and did not represent the actual process of deliberation, bargaining, and reaching a consensus on the course of action. It may be, therefore, useful for future studies to employ more diverse sources and contain a larger number of different sources and viewpoints, as well as have a cross-sectional comparison of various administrations and the impact of religion on them.

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## ملخص

لقد كانت مكانة الدين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وسياستها موضع جدل ونقاش، وذلك بسبب تدخلات الدولة وردود أفعالها تجاه معظم القضايا الدولية. يستكشف البحث دور الدين في تشكيل السياسة الأمريكية، رغم كونها دولة علمانية. وبالتالي، فإن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحديد أهمية الدين في صنع القرار الأمريكي في الحاضر والماضي، وكذلك المرجعية الدينية في النقاشات التي تدور حول صنع السياسة في الجوانب الاجتماعية والسياسية والثقافية. يتم الوصول إلى هذا الهدف من خلال تحليل المضمون النوعي لبعض الوثائق والخطابات الرسمية الأمريكية وكذلك الأحداث التاريخية والسوابق القانونية، بما في ذلك، على سبيل المثال لا الحصر، إعلان تحرير العبيد، وقضية إنجل ضد فيتال، وقانون استعادة الحرية الدينية، والخطب الرئاسية خلال عدة حملات انتخابية. يُظهر البحث الكثير من الإشارات والرموز الدينية في الوثائق والخطابات الرسمية لهذه الدولة العلمانية التي تُشير إلى دور الدين في تطوّر صانعي القرار السياسي الأمريكي، لا سيما في الأبعاد التاريخية والقانونية والسياسية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الدين، السياسة، صانعو القرارات السياسية، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.