

Bush, Obama and a faith-based US foreign policy

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US foreign policy in the first decade of the twenty-first century has been dominated by religion in a way that would not have seemed possible for most of the second half of the twentieth. Al-Qaeda's attack on the United States in September 2001, the subsequent US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the upsurge in Islamist militancy and the populist overthrow of despotic US allies in the Middle East all focus attention on the importance of religious actors. For much of this period academic interest has centred on radical Islam and the attempts by western governments, and the United States in particular, to contain Islamism through embarking on the global 'war on terror' in its various manifestations, and supporting pro-western despots in the Middle East. While there has also been much interest in the emergence of elements of the Christian right as foreign policy actors,¹ until recently insufficient attention has been paid to the increasing role played by religious organizations in the delivery of US foreign policy objectives. American faith-based International Relations (IR) scholars and political scientists have successfully agitated for an increased religious dimension to foreign policy, in particular in the areas of diplomacy and overseas assistance and development.² While such an emphasis is designed to further US foreign policy interests, this article argues that such a policy can be counterproductive where these religious actors pursue sectarian rather than secular objectives. Using faith-based initiatives supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a case-study, the article highlights the potential dangers of faith-based foreign policy approaches.

¹ See Esther Kaplan, *With God on their side: George W. Bush and the Christian right* (New York: New Press, 2004); Lee Marsden, *For God's sake: the Christian right and US foreign policy* (London: Zed, 2008); John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *God is back: how the global rise of faith is changing the world* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Kevin Phillips, *American theocracy: the peril and politics of radical religion, oil and borrowed money in the twenty-first century* (London: Penguin, 2007); Barbara Victor, *The last crusade: the influence of the Christian right on American foreign policy* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2005).

² The leading advocate in this move is Douglas Johnston, president and founder of the Center for Religion and Diplomacy based in Washington DC. His edited volume with Cynthia Sampson, *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), his own edited volume, *Faith-based diplomacy: trumping realpolitik* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), and his authored *Religion, terror, and error: U.S. foreign policy and the challenge of spiritual engagement* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011) have become seminal texts. Other contributors to this growing field include Jonathon Chaplin and Joustra Roberts, eds, *God and global order: the power of religion in American foreign policy* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010); Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's century: resurgent religion and global politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); and Eric Patterson, *Politics in a religious world: building a religiously informed U.S. foreign policy* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011).

The article begins with an analysis of how a religiously informed foreign policy is socially constructed and where the two leading candidates in the US presidential election position themselves in relation to this. There follows a description of the historical background to contemporary faith-based initiatives, with an exploration of how the policy was developed by George W. Bush and then by Barack Obama. The faith-based initiative programme, domestically and internationally, has been hugely controversial, and issues surrounding constitutional conflict and the hiring of staff with US government money on the basis of religious belief have dominated discussions of the programmes. After discussing these issues, the article examines the resources made available to faith-based organizations (FBOs) and explores the role of one such organization, Samaritan's Purse, in delivering US policy objectives on the ground, before evaluating the implications of faith-based approaches for US foreign policy objectives.

Constructing a faith-based foreign policy

In a sense religion has been a constant, if under-reported, factor in US foreign policy. As Walter Russell Mead has observed,

Religion shapes the nation's character, helps form Americans' ideas about the world, and influences the way Americans respond to events beyond their borders. Religion explains both Americans' sense of themselves as a chosen people and their belief that they have a duty to spread their values throughout the world. Of course, not all Americans believe such things—and those who do often bitterly disagree over exactly what they mean. But enough believe them that the ideas exercise profound influence over the country's behavior abroad.³

Andrew Preston's vast study of religion and US foreign policy similarly emphasizes the continued involvement of religious actors and beliefs in pursuing American objectives abroad, and in its final sentence warns that 'those who conduct foreign policy ignore it [religion] at their peril'.⁴ What is different in the first decades of the twenty-first century is that religion is being constructed as both the cause of existential threat to the United States and the solution to that threat, while simultaneously being crucial in forming and maintaining national identity. Anthony Giddens's theory of human existence, which seeks to understand the interrelationship of 'ontological security' and 'existential anxiety', offers some assistance here in explaining this new role for religion in US domestic and foreign affairs. For Giddens, ontological security is to do with '[a] person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety.'⁵ Religious belief can provide that sense of safety and trust—trust in God's benevolence, but also trust that those who share your ideals and value systems will do you no harm. Even where there

³ Walter Russell Mead, 'God's country?', *Foreign Affairs* 85: 5, Sept–Oct. 2006, p. 24.

⁴ Andrew Preston, *Sword of the spirit, shield of faith: religion in American war and diplomacy* (New York: Knopf, 2012), p. 613.

⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in late modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), pp. 38–9.

are theological differences, the shared beliefs in God, American values and civil religion provide ontological security. When events such as 9/11 lead to existential anxiety and ontological insecurity, recourse can be had to religion to provide 'a protection against future threats and dangers which allows the individual to sustain hope and courage in the face of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might later confront'.⁶

The increased salience of religion in international relations was highlighted by a report from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs task force on religion and the making of US foreign policy in 2010. The report identified six principal patterns: the growing influence of religious groups around the world; the significant political impact of changing patterns of religious identification; the role of globalization, both benefiting and transforming religion, which has however also become a means of organizing opposition to it; the vital public role played by religion where governments lack legitimacy in difficult economic and political conditions; the use of religion by extremists as a catalyst for conflict and means of escalating tensions with other religious communities; and the deepening political significance of religious freedom as a universal human right and source of stability.⁷ The correct response to this increasing global importance of religion is, according to the Council, to engage effectively with religion and religious communities. The report recommends that engagement take place between the state and religious actors in civil society abroad and that religious actors share knowledge on education, health, energy, democracy, law and religious scholarship. Further suggestions included engaging with religious parties even when they disagree with US foreign policy; the avoidance by US officials of pejorative religious terminology; reaffirmation by officials of the US commitment to religious freedom; and working with multilateral organizations and international institutions to expand and deepen engagement with religious actors.⁸

Douglas Johnston, one of the members of the Chicago Council task force, has claimed separately that the advantage of using faith-based actors not only acknowledges the importance of religion in the world but is one of the most effective means of advancing US foreign policy interests. He argues that 'faith-based NGOs are less likely than secular NGOs to incur charges of governmental co-optation', and that they bring a 'sense of moral authority' to debates that would otherwise be dominated by 'political considerations'. For Johnston, faith-based NGOs have greater 'staying power of commitment and immersion in the community' than their secular counterparts, although he offers no evidence to support this claim. A fourth claim is that, unlike secular organizations, faith-based ones 'have an inherent ability to integrate religious belief and language into their conflict resolution initiatives, which can foster a greater sense of forgiveness and reconciliation between protagonists than would otherwise be possible'.⁹ While

⁶ Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity*, p. 39.

⁷ Chicago Council on Global Affairs, *Engaging religious communities abroad: a new imperative for US foreign policy* (Chicago, 2010), pp. 6–7.

⁸ Chicago Council, *Engaging religious communities*, pp. 66–78.

⁹ Douglas Johnston, *Religion, terror, and error*, pp. 144–6.

Johnston and other advocates of a faith-based approach to US foreign policy rely heavily on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence, they have found a receptive audience at the highest level.

Under Obama's presidency, faith-based approaches have been increasingly adopted within the US foreign policy apparatus. The 1998 International Religious Freedom Act mandates the training of diplomats to effectively promote religious freedom around the world. Within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the Office of International Religious Freedom reports to Congress on the state of religious freedom across the globe. Within Secretary of State Clinton's Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society, a working group on religion and foreign policy was established in October 2011 under the auspices of the Director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Joshua DuBois; the Under-Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Maria Otero; and the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook. The working group brings together diplomats, Foreign Service officials, military leaders and representatives of faith groups to 'engage communities of faith to advance policy objectives'.¹⁰ The group meets quarterly and is designed to increase the religious understanding of those involved in the Foreign Service.

Presidents Bush and Obama have encouraged a discourse in which faith-based approaches are seen as the solution to all of America's, and by extension the international community's, problems. In this discourse, 'big government' is no longer seen as the answer to welfare and humanitarian problems, and secular organizations with strong records of accomplishment in service delivery are increasingly marginalized or less highly regarded than their religious counterparts. The personal faith and experience of both presidents has underpinned a significant shift in resources from secular NGOs to FBOs, based on an implicit assumption that secular organizations are less effective than FBOs. So deeply ingrained has this commitment to faith-based approaches become that should Mitt Romney win the presidential election in 2012, notwithstanding his declared intention to reduce US overseas assistance by \$100 million and link it to US national security objectives, his administration will continue awarding grants to faith-based organizations. Indeed, when he was Governor of Massachusetts, his wife Ann ran the Governor's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives.¹¹

George W. Bush signalled his approach to faith-based initiatives as Governor of Texas. In a sermon to the Second Baptist Church, Houston, on 6 March 1999, the Governor preached:

We learned that government programs cannot solve all our problems. You see, government can hand out money but what it cannot do is put a hope in our hearts or a sense of purpose in our lives. It cannot fill the spiritual well from which we draw strength

¹⁰ See US Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Fact sheet 17 August 2011', <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2011/170635.htm>, and Maria Otero, 'Remarks to the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group', 18 Oct. 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/176344.htm>, both accessed 17 July 2012.

¹¹ <http://www.mittromney.com/issues/spending>, accessed 17 July 2012.

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every day. Only faith can do that. So one of my missions as the governor of this state has been to unleash the compassion of Texas with laws and policies that say to churches and synagogues and mosques and people of all faiths, 'We want you to love your neighbors as you'd like to be loved. We want you to become involved'. And we're seeing proof of our faith in Texas. There are little armies of compassion transforming Texas—one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.¹²

Obama, from his experience of working on Church-sponsored community programmes in Chicago, similarly sees an important role for faith and FBOs in US public life. His call to renewal on 28 June 2006 at a Sojourners conference invited Democrats and progressives to embrace religion. Two years later, speaking in Ohio as presidential candidate on 1 July 2008, he declared his intention of introducing faith-based and neighbourhood partnerships that were better resourced and more inclusive than those of the Bush initiative:

And my Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships will also have a broader role—it will help set our national agenda . . .

We know that faith and values can be a source of strength in our own lives. That's what it's been to me. And that's what it is to so many Americans. But it can also be something more. It can be the foundation of a new project of American renewal. And that's the kind of effort I intend to lead as President of the United States.¹³

Thus we see a continuity across the two presidents in privileging faith actors as deliverers of social, welfare and humanitarian provision. Obama has successfully bridged the religious gap, where the primary identification of Christianity in US politics was with the Republican Party, by encouraging Democrats to engage with religion and making faith a central component of his administration through the introduction of an advisory council on faith-based and neighbourhood partnerships. In this new discourse, rather than asking if faith-based organizations should be involved in delivering public services with federal money, now government seeks opportunities to provide them with more of the limited resources available.

Background to faith-based initiative programmes

Individual churches and denominations have always delivered social and welfare provision both at home and abroad as part of their mission, with varying degrees of success. Prior to the New Deal of the 1940s the federal government was little involved in social welfare provision, but thereafter the relationship between Church and state in providing support in society became more contentious. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society initiatives in the 1960s involved churches in welfare provision through partnerships with government. The churches involved tended to be liberal and were prepared to dilute their religious rhetoric in order to receive government money, effectively functioning as secular organizations. More

¹² David Aikman, *A man of faith: the spiritual journey of George W. Bush* (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 2004), p. 207.

¹³ 'Obama delivers speech on faith in America', *New York Times*, 1 July 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/01/us/politics/01obama-text.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed 17 July 2012.

evangelical and conservative groupings tended to ignore government finance and maintain their independence.¹⁴

By the mid-1990s, politicians were increasingly seeking to deliver public services more cheaply and efficiently. According to the prevailing orthodoxy of free market capitalism, government should outsource welfare provision as much as possible in order to introduce market competition, its own role being primarily to ensure a level playing field. Senator John Ashcroft (later to serve as Attorney General in Bush's first administration) introduced 'charitable choice' provisions as a key element of the House comprehensive welfare reform bill in 1995.¹⁵ Charitable choice was introduced with bipartisan support by the Clinton administration in 1996, enabling religious charitable institutions to receive funding for activities undertaken on behalf of the state. The law exempted religious groups receiving government funds from the obligation to hire employees who did not share the tenets of their belief.¹⁶

In Texas, meanwhile, the newly elected Governor George W. Bush was taking up the cause of welfare-providing FBOs facing difficulties with the state authorities. Bush was incensed by the refusal of the state government to renew the licence of Teen Challenge, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre that failed to meet state guidelines and yet was apparently successful in turning lives around. Bush, whose own life had been 'turned around' dramatically from alcohol dependency following a recommitment to Christianity in 1986, felt that his most important contribution to the state should be to release faith-based groups from state oversight so that they would be free to use non-traditional methods of changing lives.

Bush introduced faith-based initiative programmes across the state, inspired by the example of the Reverend Kirbyjon Caldwell, pastor of Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston. Caldwell's church runs a social service centre known as the Power Center, which includes a school, community college, federal public assistance office, pharmacy, hair salon and bank.¹⁷ Aikman suggests that Caldwell was Bush's closest friend in the ordained ministry.¹⁸ Their friendship extended to the pastor's introducing a biographical video of Bush before the Republican Party convention in August 2000. He was also the pastor to whom Bush turned for prayer before undertaking the presidential candidate election debates. Caldwell maintained good contact with Bush throughout the presidency, but at the end of his term of office transferred his support to Barack Obama, a candidate who would also share his enthusiasm for faith-based initiatives.

George W. Bush was idealistic about the effectiveness of faith-based initiatives and genuinely believed in their ability to transform individuals from the inside out:

¹⁴ Amy Black, Douglas Koopman and David Ryden, *The politics of George W. Bush's faith-based initiatives* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), pp. 36–7.

¹⁵ Black et al., *The politics of George W. Bush's faith-based initiatives*, pp. 51–2.

¹⁶ Aikman, *A man of faith*, p. 144.

¹⁷ Aikman, *A man of faith*, p. 116.

¹⁸ Aikman, *A man of faith*, p. 119.

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When I ran for president, I decided to make a nationwide faith-based initiative a central part of my campaign. In my first major policy speech, delivered in Indianapolis, I said, 'In every instance where my administration sees a responsibility to help people, we will look first to faith-based organizations, to charities, and to community groups.'¹⁹

Within nine days of taking office, Bush established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) under John DiIulio. On 29 January 2001, Bush issued Executive Order 13198 creating FBCI centres in six government departments. On 12 December 2002, Executive Order 13280 extended the scheme to USAID and Agriculture; it was subsequently further extended to cover another four departments. The FBCI centre in USAID was operational in 2003 and expanded faith-based initiatives to the area of foreign policy. USAID had worked with FBOs since its foundation in 1961, and this expansion of the programme to the international arena enabled the centre to reach out to 'new, smaller partners based in and indigenous to native countries'.²⁰ Approximately a quarter of all USAID partners are faith-based and are able to draw upon close connections with indigenous religious actors and their established networks to deliver US assistance.²¹ Across much of the developing world, religious organizations are the best organized and sometimes the only NGOs in any particular area. The FBCI in USAID sought to distribute assistance through FBOs and their local contacts because many of the local religious groups had a record of accomplishment in distributing aid, infrastructure in place, means of circumventing corrupt government officials and a commitment to caring for recipients of assistance on a long-term, continuous basis.

As we shall see, there has been significant criticism of faith-based initiatives both in the United States and overseas. The main criticism from FBOs themselves is that there was insufficient new money to make a substantial difference, and that significant funds remained with some secular organizations and established faith-based actors such as World Vision and Catholic Relief Services. Others argued that there was no level playing field and that FBOs were still at a disadvantage, supported by the White House releasing its report *Unlevel playing field*, which claimed that federal officials resisted engaging with FBOs and listed 15 barriers that still required dismantling.²² Secular actors argued that money from established secular organizations was diverted to FBOs as a payback to religious supporters of the administration. Yet others posited that the FBCI programme contravened the clause of the US constitution stipulating the separation of church and state.

Despite these criticisms, at the end of Bush's tenure the new president was elected, at least in part, on a programme promising to continue the faith-based initiatives. On 1 July 2008, Barack Obama announced plans to expand the faith-based

¹⁹ George W. Bush, *Decision points* (London: Virgin, 2010), p. 279.

²⁰ David Wright, *Taking stock: the Bush faith-based initiative and what lies ahead* (Albany, NY: Nelson Rockefeller Institute of Government, 2009), p. 37.

²¹ Wright, *Taking stock*, p. 37.

²² Wright, *Taking stock*, p. 40; The White House, *Unlevel playing field: barriers to participation by faith-based and community organizations in federal social service programs* (Washington DC: The White House, 2001).

programme under his presidency.²³ Within two weeks of the inauguration, Obama signed an executive order establishing the President's Advisory Council of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships to replace the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. The 25-member Advisory Council, led by Joshua DuBois, was tasked with providing religious advice through a series of six task forces on, respectively: the economic recovery and fighting poverty; inter-religious dialogue and cooperation; fatherhood and healthy families; reforming the faith-based office; environment and climate change; and global poverty, health and development.²⁴ Those who were hoping that the Bush administration had been a religious aberration were to be disappointed as Obama promised to bring more rather than less religion to the decision-making and implementation process. The Reverend Jim Wallis, one of Barack Obama's pastoral confidants, described the new administration's approach: 'There has been an incredible amount of outreach to the faith community from this administration. I've never seen so much before.'²⁵

In the foreign policy field the close relationship established between faith-based providers and USAID has developed further since the Obama administration took office. While retaining the old name of FBCI within USAID, the President's Advisory Council (PAC) made a series of ten recommendations to the President under its Global Poverty and Development remit. While the PAC emphasized 'a new era of collaborative partnership between the US Government and community-based US NGOs',²⁶ the most significant change involved placing faith-based and civil society engagement officers in all USAID missions. These officers would report directly to the chief of mission for that country and would work across government agencies, bringing together 'religious leaders and faith-based and secular non-profits, as well as engaging members of the Diaspora from each country living in the United States in development work impacting their country of origin'.²⁷

The enthusiasm of successive administrations for faith-based initiatives is buttressed by opinion poll data suggesting widespread support among the American public for such initiatives. The Pew Forum's Annual Religion and Public Life Survey for 2009 suggests that such support has remained broadly steady between

²³ Pew Forum, 'John DiIulio previews how faith-based initiatives would change if Barack Obama is elected president', interview 23 Sept. 2008, <http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/John-DiIulio-Previews-How-Faith-Based-Initiatives-Would-Change-if-Barack-Obama-Is-Elected-President.aspx>, accessed 17 July 2012.

²⁴ Pew Forum, 'President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships', 9 Sept. 2009, <http://www.pewforum.org/Social-Welfare/President-Obamas-Advisory-Council-on-Faith-Based-and-Neighborhood-Partnerships.aspx>, accessed 17 July 2012.

²⁵ PBS, 'Religion and Obama's first 100 days', *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, 1 May 2009, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/may-1-2009/religion-and-obamas-first-100-days/2866/>, accessed 17 July 2012.

²⁶ President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, *A new era of partnerships: report of recommendations to the President* (Washington DC: White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, 2010), p. 99.

²⁷ President's Advisory Council, *A new era of partnerships*, p. 106.

2000 and 2009, with approval of faith-based initiatives rising slightly over that period from 67 to 69 per cent and opposition declining from 29 to 25 per cent. Over half the public interviewed were happy for religious charities, Catholic, Protestant and evangelical Churches, and individual houses of worship and synagogues to be eligible for government funds. A majority, however, opposed such funding being available to mosques (52 per cent opposed, 39 per cent in favour) and groups that encourage religious conversion (63 per cent opposed, 28 per cent in favour). Furthermore, opposition to government-funded groups hiring only those who shared their religious beliefs was overwhelming, with only 21 per cent in favour while 74 per cent were opposed to this idea.²⁸

Controversy surrounding faith-based initiatives

Faith-based initiative programmes under Bush and Obama remained controversial in respect of both the Church–state separation clause in the constitution and the issue of hiring based on religious preference. The primary concern for secular commentators has been the first amendment of the US constitution, which states that ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.’ The interpretation of the establishment clause is contentious, but in a foreign assistance context is generally understood to mean that government should not pay for the delivery of religious services or show discrimination involving public money in favour of any religion. Religious organizations could receive government money for service delivery but not for religious activities. This distinction is clearly highly problematic in situations where evangelical organizations are praying for the sick, conducting worship services, and handing out evangelistic tracts while delivering government-funded assistance. The difficulties of differentiating between the individual activities tended initially to make USAID wary of lending in cases where its policy could be challenged as unconstitutional. Under pressure from the administration this reluctance was relaxed, and scores of conferences were held to encourage FBOs to apply for government contracts. David Kuo from the White House OFBCI reveals how the Office got round first amendment issues:

The government could not give a grant to a proselytizing organization. But we could give money to a ‘public–private partnership’ group which in turn could give it to overtly religious groups as long as the overall use of our money seemed to be aimed at the needy. Some people have called it a sophisticated money-laundering operation and others an innovative way to reach as many charities as possible. I believe it was the latter.²⁹

The uncertainty within USAID about the establishment clause and the intention of key officials and reviewers to circumvent it was mentioned in a number of

²⁸ Pew Forum, ‘Church–state concerns persist: faith-based programs still popular, less visible’, 16 Nov. 2009 (Washington DC: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009).

²⁹ David Kuo, *Tempting faith* (New York: Free Press, 2006), p. 213.

reports received by the incoming President reviewing the faith-based strategy.³⁰ Each urged the President to clarify the rules on government funding for services delivered by FBOs. Melissa Rogers became a member of Obama's religious advisory council, and in her earlier recommendations, with E. J. Dionne, she requested that the President clarify restrictions on direct aid and religious activities and provide guidance on the separation between religious activities and activities funded by direct government aid.³¹

An audit of USAID's faith-based and community initiatives by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) reported in July 2009 that 'USAID had funded some religious activities, such as the employment of laborers to rehabilitate mosques in Iraq and programs for African youth that provided curriculums on abstinence and behavior change containing Biblical stories and religious messages'.³² The audit covered nine out of the ten largest faith-based recipients of USAID funding and was reasonably positive in its appraisal of faith-based initiatives; however, the methodology was highly problematic, with auditors relying on self-reporting by FBOs about 'whether they had engaged in inherently religious activities using USAID-provided funding'.³³ Perhaps not unsurprisingly, funded organizations reported that they used the money in accordance with USAID practice. In a series of recommendations, the auditors suggested that USAID should operate a non-discriminatory policy in distributing funds and that USAID-funded service provision should not discriminate against actual or potential programme beneficiaries on the basis of religion or religious belief. USAID funds are not to be used to finance any structures that are used for inherently religious activities. Religious organizations receiving financial assistance from USAID should be allowed to retain religious symbols, references, mission statements and governing documents without forfeiting USAID money.³⁴ Perhaps most importantly in terms of clarification, the auditors stated:

Organizations that receive direct financial assistance from USAID under any USAID program may not engage in inherently religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, as part of the programs or services directly funded with direct financial assistance from USAID. If an organization conducts such activities, the activities must be offered separately, in time or location, from the programs or services funded with direct financial assistance from USAID, and participation must be voluntary for beneficiaries of the programs or services funded with such assistance.³⁵

In response to the reports and appraisals of faith-based programmes cited above, the Obama administration determined to remove some of the anomalies and partisanship of Bush's FBCI programme. At the National Prayer Breakfast on 5 February

³⁰ Wright, *Taking stock*; Melissa Rogers and E. J. Dionne, *Serving people in need, safeguarding religious freedom: recommendations for the new administration on partnerships with faith-based organizations* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2008); President's Advisory Council, *A new era of partnerships*.

³¹ Rogers and Dionne, *Serving people in need*.

³² Office of Inspector General, *Audit of USAID's faith-based and community initiatives*, Audit Report no. 9-000-000-P (Washington DC: Office of Inspector General, 17 July 2009), p. 5.

³³ Office of Inspector General, *Audit*, p. 21.

³⁴ Office of Inspector General, *Audit*, pp. 31–2.

³⁵ Office of Inspector General, *Audit*, p. 31.

2009, announcing his faith-based and neighbourhood partnership programme, Obama stated: ‘The goal of this office will not be to favor one religious group over another, or even religious groups over secular groups. It will simply be to work on behalf of our communities, and to do so without blurring the line that our founders wisely drew between church and state.’³⁶ On 17 November 2010, Obama issued an executive order which endorsed these principles, explicitly requiring each agency administering or awarding federal financial assistance to provide social services to make a referral to an alternative provider whenever a beneficiary objects to the religious character of the organization that provides services under the programme.³⁷

While these changes have widened choice and levelled the playing field for secular organizations, the issue of hiring rights for FBOs has not been satisfactorily resolved. The 1964 Civil Rights Act allows for religious employers to prefer staff who share their religious convictions, and the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act ensures that government is prevented from placing excessive obstacles in the way of a person’s exercise of religion. These laws protect the rights of religious organizations to employ those with the same religious convictions as themselves, but are less clear when dealing with the delivery of federally funded programmes by religious organizations. Towards the end of 2010, House Democrats unsuccessfully sought to prohibit federal funding for religious organizations that pursued discriminatory hiring practices. One hundred religious leaders sent a letter to every member of House and Senate urging them not to amend the law in this way. Signatories included the presidents of World Vision (Richard Stearns) and the Sojourners (Jim Wallis), both members of Obama’s PAC.³⁸ As a presidential candidate, Obama opposed giving funding to FBOs that discriminated in their hiring practices; but once in office he chose to consider these on a case-by-case basis while the Justice Department studies the previous policy and regulations.³⁹

The Interagency Working Group on Faith-based and Other Neighborhood Partnerships produced a further report which effectively clarified earlier practices affecting 15 government departments, including USAID. Programmes supported by federal funds must remain neutral in their treatment of religion: ‘Neither staff nor materials used in these programs should promote, endorse or favor religious belief over non-belief, nor should they disparage religious beliefs in any way. Further, they should not express a judgement with regard to religious belief or non-belief, or seek to influence the belief of participants with respect to religion.’⁴⁰ However, after the federally funded programme has finished, staff may provide a

³⁶ Wright, *Taking stock*, p. 87.

³⁷ Mark Silk, ‘Cleaning up the faith-based rules’, 18 Nov. 2010, <http://blog.beliefnet.com/religionandpubliclife/2010/11/cleaning-up-the-faith-based-rules.html>, accessed 18 July 2012.

³⁸ Richard Stearns et al. (there are over 100 signatories), ‘Allowing regular order and debate for religious hiring rights and religious liberty’, 25 Aug. 2010, [http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/religious-hiring-rights/\\$file/RHR-letter.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/religious-hiring-rights/$file/RHR-letter.pdf), accessed 17 July 2012.

³⁹ Wright, *Taking stock*, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Interagency Working Group on Faith-based and Other Neighborhood Partnerships, *Fundamental principles and policymaking criteria for partnerships with faith-based and other neighborhood organizations*, report to President pursuant to Executive Order 13559 (Washington DC, April 2012), p. 10.

‘brief and non-coercive invitation’ to attend a religious service or programme, and beneficiaries are free to express their religious beliefs, although staff are required to remain neutral.⁴¹

USAID resources for faith-based initiatives

Attempting to track the money awarded to faith-based initiatives by the US government has been notoriously difficult. The number of departments working with FBOs has grown since George W. Bush established the White House OFBCI, and the process of secular and religious grantees subcontracting work to other religious organizations has been encouraged. It is difficult to disentangle monies made available by the government as a whole from those disbursed by specific departments, such as USAID. Different figures are quoted to different audiences: for example, when seeking to attract applications from FBOs at the hundreds of engagement events and grant-writing seminars held with the sector across the country, considerable emphasis is placed on the ‘extra’ resources available. The most comprehensive assessment of USAID contracts with FBOs was made in the course of a year-long survey conducted by the *Boston Globe* in 2006. The survey examined 159 FBOs that received over US\$1.7 billion in USAID prime contracts and agreements from fiscal year (FY) 2001 to FY2005. Catholic Relief Services received over US\$638 million, World Vision over US\$374 million and Samaritan’s Purse over US\$31 million. In addition, scores of conservative evangelical organizations received first-time federal funding for overseas assistance.⁴² During FY2006 and FY2007 USAID had 512 assistance agreements with 136 FBOs, with funding rising from US\$552 million in 2006 to US\$586 million a year later.

Table 1: USAID funding to faith-based organizations, financial years 2001–2007 (US\$m)

FY2001	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	Total
247	260	420	419	375	552	586	2,859

Sources: Boston Globe, ‘USAID contracts with faith-based organizations’, 8 Oct. 2006, http://www.boston.com/news/special/faith_based/faith_based_organizations.htm; Office of Inspector General (2009), *Audit of USAID’s faith-based and community initiatives*, Audit Report no. 9-000-0-00-P, 17 July (Washington DC: Office of Inspector General, 2009).

The *Boston Globe*’s investigative reporting revealed that funds were being awarded to evangelical Christian organizations to operate within Muslim-majority countries. These FBOs had a clear proselytizing agenda, and yet federal money continued to flow to them. Partners Worldwide’s core mission is ‘equipping Christian business people to help the poor and each other’. They received a US\$700,000

⁴¹ Interagency Working Group, *Fundamental principles*, pp. 14, 28.

⁴² ‘USAID contracts with faith-based organizations’, *Boston Globe*, 8 Oct. 2006, http://www.boston.com/news/special/faith_based/faith_based_organizations.htm, accessed 17 July 2012.

grant from USAID's Global Fund Alliance over four years to provide low-interest microfinance for business start-ups, training and mentoring. Partners Worldwide's literature is explicitly evangelistic and identifies the Christian businesspeople it employs and works with as missionaries. Asked about funding for Muslim businesses in Kenya, Martin Mutuku, a programme manager for Partners in Nairobi, excluded Muslims from his vision: 'We started this to help Christian business people to grow their business ... We are using this as a vehicle to spread the word. So if they [Muslims] want to join they may have to convert.'⁴³

For the first five years of the George W. Bush administration, only two out of 159 prime contracts to FBOs were made to Muslim organizations, despite significant assistance work being required during this period in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia (including in response to the tsunami in 2004). This imbalance has continued under the Obama administration, with few US-based Muslim organizations being awarded USAID funding—the notable exception being the Aga Khan Foundation of the USA, which has been awarded 37 grants totalling US\$37.8 million.⁴⁴ Large charitable Muslim organizations including the Islamic American Relief Agency, Islamic Relief USA, Islamic Aid and Islamic Relief Worldwide have received no funding from USAID; however, FBOs which were overtly proselytizing in Pakistan, whether running hospitals or helping earthquake victims, have received grants. Two of these, World Witness and Evangelistic International Ministries, see spreading Christianity as part of their healing ministry. A brochure for the Christian Hospital in Sahiwal, Pakistan, boasted that the 'Jesus Film', a proselytizing tool, is shown to all patients and argues that 'the hospital and staff feel that through Christ, terrorism will be eliminated in this part of the world'. Evangelistic International Ministries celebrated on its website that it had distributed 700 Bibles in Pakistan.⁴⁵

Further opportunities for FBOs to administer USAID assistance were provided with the launch of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2003. This initiative, which was arguably the Bush administration's most significant foreign policy achievement, allocated US\$15 billion over five years to addressing the issue of HIV/AIDS and malaria in five African countries. At the end of his tenure, Bush added another US\$48 billion over five years in funding for programmes to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Africa and 14 Caribbean countries.⁴⁶ In the initial allocation, US\$3 billion had been earmarked for prevention programmes, one-third of which was set aside for abstinence-only programmes.⁴⁷ By the end of 2008, 1.4 million people infected with HIV had received drug treatment, 3 million had been counselled and tested, and 6.7 million had received other care. The programmes represented a considerable commitment of US money and resources.

⁴³ Farah Stockman, 'For those excluded, loan program is no success', *Boston Globe*, 10 Oct. 2006.

⁴⁴ See <http://www.usaspending.gov>, accessed 17 July 2012.

⁴⁵ Susan Milligan, 'Together, but worlds apart: Christian aid groups raise suspicions in strongholds of Islam', *Boston Globe*, 10 Oct. 2006.

⁴⁶ Wright, *Taking stock*, pp. 58–9.

⁴⁷ Michael Kranish, 'Religious right wields clout: secular groups lose funding amid pressure', *Boston Globe*, 9 Oct. 2006.

From the outset FBOs were major partners with PEPFAR in distributing HIV/AIDS assistance, and in particular in promulgating the abstinence-only message taught in a third of prevention programmes. PEPFAR funds are coordinated through the Global AIDS Coordinator's Office and distributed through USAID and another five departments, including Health and Human Services. FBOs were seen as a major non-governmental resource in combating the disease. In many cases, religious organizations not only had churches, mosques, schools and hospitals on the ground, but also had volunteers and infrastructure in place to deliver assistance. Equally importantly, US FBOs were not wholly reliant on USAID funds but also brought considerable financial and volunteer resources of their own to the table. The standing of religious leaders in the community necessitated that PEPFAR engage with these communities to receive their active participation and involvement. Faith and compassion are strong motivators in inspiring the long-term care and commitment needed when working with the sick and dying. The influence of religious leaders could also prove decisive in bringing about lifestyle changes, increasing the respect shown to sufferers in their communities, and easing the acceptance of providers of assistance from outside the community and/or country.

The ABC (abstinence; be faithful; and use condoms as a last resort for couples where one partner was infected) programmes demanded by religious leaders in several African countries were initially successful at reducing HIV infection rates, especially in Uganda, where the rate of infection among pregnant women declined from 21 per cent to 6 per cent between 1991 and 2000.⁴⁸ Such demands were encouraged and supported by US conservative evangelicals and Catholics, who emphasized the abstinence and faithfulness parts of the programme but tried to prevent federal money being used on programmes that sought to use condoms as part of an overall prevention strategy. Members of the Christian right, led by James Dobson (Focus on the Family), and supported by Senator Rick Santorum and Director of the White House OFBCI Jim Towey, forced USAID to require groups receiving funding to sign a pledge renouncing prostitution. The campaign sought to prevent organizations in receipt of USAID money being able to distribute condoms for prostitutes to use with clients, one of the main ways of preventing the spread of infection in Africa. Over 20 congressional representatives complained in a letter to USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, former CEO of World Vision, in January 2005 that funding for faith-based groups was being used for 'anti-America, anti-abstinence, pro-prostitution, and pro-drug use groups'. The campaign eventually succeeded in taking funding away from traditional assistance providers including CARE, International Planned Parenthood, Population Services International and Advocates for Youth, secular organizations which refused to endorse the abstinence-only approach to HIV/AIDS prevention.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Edward Green, *Faith-based organizations: contributions to HIV prevention* (Washington DC: USAID, 2003), p. 6.

⁴⁹ Steven Waldman, 'Is repealing the anti-abortion "Gag Rule" actually a pro-life position?', <http://blog.beliefnet.com/stevenwaldman/2009/01/is-repealing-the-anti-abortion.html>, 23 Jan. 2009, accessed 17 July 2011; Kranish, 'Religious right wields clout'.

The United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008 authorized further expenditure up to 2013. The new Act replaced the requirement for one-third of funds to be devoted to abstinence-only programmes with balanced funding between the three strands of prevention—abstinence, behaviour change and use of condoms—along with a requirement for the US Global AIDS Coordinator to report back to Congress on any countries with HIV infections of epidemic proportions where the A and B components of the ABC strategy received less than 50 per cent of funding. Obama continues the policy and acknowledges the PEPFAR programme as one of the success stories of the Bush administration.⁵⁰

Samaritan's Purse

Samaritan's Purse rapidly became one of USAID's favoured grantees, receiving US\$35.4 million from the department between 2004 and 2010.⁵¹ It was one of nine FBOs to receive funding under the USAID's 'HIV/AIDS Prevention Through Abstinence and Healthy Choice for Youth' programme.⁵² It was also awarded sub-grants by organizations including CARE, whose official overseeing its AIDS contract, Kristin Kalla, reported that USAID was unhappy when CARE sought to partner Muslim or Jewish faith groups. According to Kalla, USAID informed her that Samaritan's Purse was the 'right type of faith-based group', and on that basis CARE awarded it a US\$100,000 grant for work in Mozambique.⁵³ Samaritan's Purse has long been a favoured organization of the Washington administration, first under George W. Bush and now under Obama. In the first three years of the Obama presidency, Samaritan's Purse was awarded 41 USAID contracts worth over US\$20 million.⁵⁴ The organization is led by president and CEO Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham, international evangelist and confidant of presidents throughout the second half of the twentieth century. George W. Bush credits Billy Graham with sowing the seed that led to him dedicating his life to Jesus.⁵⁵ Franklin Graham gave the first inaugural address in place of his father in January 2001 and enjoyed a close relationship with President Bush thereafter. Obama has also been touched by the Graham charisma, and in April 2010 visited the 91-year-old Christian leader and his son for a private meeting.⁵⁶

Samaritan's Purse is a financially strong organization, with income of over US\$320 million for 2009 and total assets valued at over US\$204 million.⁵⁷ It is

⁵⁰ Wright, *Taking stock*, p. 59.

⁵¹ USA Spending, 'Samaritan's Purse international relief summary results', 2011, <http://www.usaspending.gov/search?query=&searchtype=&formFields=eyJJSZWNpcGllbnROeWw1ITGNhc2UiOiU2FtYXJpdGFucyBQdXJzZSBJbnRlIFJlbGllZiBTcGlyII19>, accessed 17 July 2012.

⁵² 'PEPFAR funding: how is the money spent?', 2010, <http://www.avert.org/pepfar-funding.htm>, accessed 17 July 2012.

⁵³ Kranish, 'Religious right wields clout'.

⁵⁴ See <http://www.usaspending.gov>, accessed 5 June 2012.

⁵⁵ George W. Bush, *A charge to keep* (New York: William Morrow, 1999), pp. 31–3.

⁵⁶ Philip Elliott and Mike Baker, 'Obama and evangelist Billy Graham share a prayer', 25 April 2010, <http://ifeyinka.blogspot.co.uk/2010/04/president-barack-obama-and-evangelist.html>, accessed 17 July 2012.

⁵⁷ *Samaritan's Purse ministry report, 2009* (Boone, NC: Samaritan's Purse, 2010), pp. 36–7.

closely associated with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, with which it shares a president and CEO. The organization has become proficient at providing early response to natural disasters: for example, after Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras in October 1998, its reconstruction work included building 1,650 starter homes with a US\$5.6 million grant to schedule by 2001.⁵⁸ When an earthquake devastated El Salvador in January 2001, Samaritan's Purse was among the first on the scene and was awarded a USAID contract of over US\$200,000 to build temporary shelters.⁵⁹ In subsequent years, Samaritan's Purse has been awarded grants for providing humanitarian assistance in North Korea, Darfur, Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Samoa (following the 2009 tsunami) and Haiti, including in response to the 2010 earthquake: its activities here include providing shelters, medical care, clean water and sanitation, distributing food, and undertaking education and training. Although part of this work is funded by USAID, a significant proportion also comes from Samaritan's Purse's own resources and private donations of time, money and equipment.⁶⁰

The Samaritan's Purse annual report for 2009 reveals an organization committed and equipped to provide humanitarian and other assistance throughout the world. In that year, Samaritan's Purse teams provided shelter and comfort to displaced persons in the DRC, distributed food and health education to tens of thousands in Ethiopia, and opened three new nutrition and food distribution centres in Kenya. They trained church leaders in family support and counselling in Liberia, provided food and educational assistance to thousands in Mozambique, and provided food, water and education to over 200,000 people in Darfur. In Uganda, Samaritan's Purse distributed emergency food to 630,000 and provided safe clean water for thousands more. It provided food and clean water in numerous villages in Bolivia; helped build a medical centre in Ecuador; established micro-businesses in Honduras; and built houses for flood victims in Mexico.

In Cambodia, Samaritan's Purse dug wells and provided fruit tree seedlings, chickens, cows and pigs to local people. It finished building a clinic in China, and rebuilt three schools in Burma (Myanmar) destroyed by a cyclone. It equipped medical centres in Burma (Myanmar), Vietnam and North Korea, and trained midwives in Vietnam to improve the survival rates of mothers and babies. In Macedonia, the organization supplied food to marginalized families; it provided basic educational necessities for Roma children in Romania, equipment and therapy for disabled children in Kurdistan, and medical care for disabled children in Jordan. In Lebanon, it provided resources for local people to meet the needs of Iraqi refugees, and in Syria supported a medical centre and dental practice.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Office of Inspector General, *Audit of USAID/Honduras' Hurricane Mitch housing reconstruction activities*, Audit Report no. 1-522-01-006-P (Washington DC: Office of Inspector General, 18 July 2001).

⁵⁹ Center for International Disaster Information, 'El Salvador: earthquake—OFDA-11', Fact Sheet no. 11, 12 Feb. 2001, <http://www.cidi.org/report/5963>, accessed 10 Feb. 2011.

⁶⁰ USA Spending, 'Samaritan's Purse'; DeMoss News, 'Samaritan's Purse leads emergency shelter effort in Haiti during critical time for quake victims', Samaritan's Purse Newsroom, DeMossNews.com, 16 July 2010, http://www.demossnews.com/sp/news/samaritans_purse_leads_emer/ accessed 18 July 2012; USAID, 'Haiti—cholera', Fact Sheet no. 6, 3 Dec. (Washington DC, 2010).

⁶¹ *Samaritan's Purse ministry report, 2009*, pp. 29–35.

Samaritan's Purse has built an impressive network to deliver humanitarian relief across the world and has implemented projects in a timely fashion. When delivering USAID assistance its teams represent the US government and are instruments of soft power, sending out a message of concern and compassion to other peoples at their point of need. At the simplest level, a visual message is sent that America cares about the suffering of other peoples; that, because it is rich and powerful and has more resources than other countries, it sees part of its international mission and values as being to care for those less fortunate. American values of freedom, democracy and market capitalism provide the resources and the motivation to deliver assistance. Clearly, US largess is not purely altruistic but is part of a foreign policy strategy that combines hard and soft power in order to further national interests and achieve foreign policy objectives.

The problem for US strategy in this area arises when favoured organizations such as Samaritan's Purse distort this message by linking it with an evangelistic message that the assistance comes from Jesus. Awareness of the separation of Church and state clause in the constitution enables Samaritan's Purse and USAID to play the game of distinguishing between USAID-funded provision, which should be devoid of religious content, and Samaritan's Purse's separate religious provision, which is subject to no such constraint. Aid recipients or citizens of the countries within which they operate do not recognize the distinction. Indeed, a simple reading of any of the publicity materials supplied by Samaritan's Purse reveals that all activities undertaken by the organization are evangelistic.

In early 2001, the organization was criticized by Catholics in El Salvador for holding evangelistic services before giving earthquake victims instruction in how to build shelters provided with USAID funds. The organization also received US\$830,000 to help build the Evangelical Medical Center in Lubango, Angola. In a dedication service Graham's organization claims to have led 13,496 souls to Jesus. The hospital's staff and clergy are all evangelicals, and according to Minne Prins, Director of Samaritan's Purse, 'all the nurses are Christians ... Nurses will be trained to not only talk about the disease but also talk about Jesus'.⁶² The USAID funding was for construction and so the organization is free to discriminate in hiring practices, employing only evangelicals, and to deliver health provision as they see fit. Angolans could be forgiven for finding it hard to accept such a distinction. Graham's objectives through his hospital programme are clear:

The hospitals we support in Africa bring thousands of people each year to salvation in Jesus Christ ... Knowing the hearts of the doctors and church leaders in Angola, I believe the Lubango hospital will have a tremendous impact for the kingdom of God.⁶³

As God uses the medical ministry of Samaritan's Purse to ease pain and suffering He also enables us to introduce multitudes to the Great Physician.⁶⁴

⁶² Peter Canellos and Kevin Baron, 'A US boost to Graham's quest for converts', *Boston Globe*, 8 Oct. 2006.

⁶³ Quoted in Canellos and Baron, 'A US boost'.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Rick Klein, 'Healing the body to reach the soul: evangelicals add converts through medical trips', *Boston Globe*, 11 Oct. 2006.

Samaritan's Purse entered Iraq and Afghanistan in the wake of the US-led invasions of 2001 and 2003, and in both countries have been involved in medical projects and providing emergency accommodation, seizing the opportunity to gain a presence in Muslim-majority countries. Speaking to Beliefnet about its role in Iraq, Graham said: 'We realize we're in an Arab country and we can't just go out and preach ... I believe as we work, God will always give us opportunities to tell others about his Son. We are there to reach out to love them and to save them, and as a Christian do this in the name of Jesus Christ.'⁶⁵ The opportunity to proselytize in Muslim-majority countries in combat zones relies on the protection of the US military and compromises US mission objectives where the indigenous narrative of a Christian crusade against Muslims is common currency.⁶⁶

Samaritan's Purse ministry reports are replete with details of souls saved and gospel shared as a result of its work in 120 countries around the world, presented without distinguishing between privately sponsored and government programmes. Dr Lydia Engelhardt, a member of the organization's World Medical Mission, describes the organization's vision: 'On the mission field we are literally saving lives ... More importantly, we are giving patients the opportunity to hear about God's plan for salvation through Jesus, something they might not hear otherwise.'⁶⁷ Following the Haiti earthquake in 2010, Dr Dick Furman's diary of working as a medical missionary in the country was featured on the Samaritan's Purse website and confirms the organization's primary motivation and the blurring of first amendment boundaries:

We will give spiritual pamphlets to each patient, and a New Testament to every new believer.

So the day was good. I write this in the evening reflecting back over the day and realize why we are here. I realize why we are different from the secular clinics and prosthetic centers we visited. We are different because of the primary reason we are here.

We have come to share the Gospel, to tell others about Jesus. And our goal is different. We want to help people just as much as all the other organizations do, but our goal is not just helping others. Our goal is Jesus.⁶⁸

One issue is whether this ministry reflects USAID's mission and, if not, whether Samaritan's Purse activities should continue to be funded from public resources when the wall of separation between Church and state is held together by USAID

⁶⁵ Quoted in Deborah Caldwell, 'Poised and ready', Beliefnet, April 2003, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2003/04/Poised-And-Ready.aspx>, accessed 18 July 2012.

⁶⁶ From George W. Bush's unthinking initial description of the fight against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban as a 'crusade' through to the burning of Qur'ans by US military personnel at Bagram air base in February 2012, the 'crusade' narrative has resonated with many Afghans: the latter incident resulted in the death of six US service personnel. In the first half of 2012 there was an increase in service personnel wearing 'infidel' motifs on their uniforms, including patches identifying the wearer as a 'pork eating crusader': see Matthew Cox, 'Troops still embrace "infidel" label', Military.com, 16 March 2012, <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/2012/03/military-com-troops-still-embrace-infidel-label/>, accessed 18 July 2012. For more information on Afghan hostility to proselytizing, see Michelle Vu, 'Afghanistan suspends 2 Christian aid groups', *Christian Post*, 31 May 2010, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/2-church-based-aid-groups-suspended-in-afghanistan-45371>, accessed 17 July 2012.

⁶⁷ Samaritan's Purse ministry report, 2009, p. 23.

⁶⁸ Dick Furman, 'Haiti revisited: a surgeon's diary', May 2010, http://www.samaritanspurse.org/index.php/articles/haiti_revisited_a_surgeons_diary, accessed 17 July 2012.

and Samaritan's Purse maintaining the pretence that there is a clear demarcation between federally and privately funded activities.

A further issue arises when considering Obama's attempts to reach out to Muslim-majority countries in the early years of his presidency in order to undo the perceived damage done by the previous administration to US–Muslim relations. Over the past decade, Franklin Graham has made no secret of his contempt for Islam as a religion. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States on 9/11, Graham, referring to Islam, said: 'I don't believe this is a peaceful religion ... When you read the Koran and you read the verses from the Koran, it instructs the killing of the infidel, for those that are non-Muslim.' Speaking on NBC News in clarification of these comments, Graham went on to describe Islam as a 'very evil and wicked religion', and noted that 'it wasn't Methodists flying into those buildings, it wasn't Lutherans ... It was an attack on this country by people of the Islamic faith.'⁶⁹

Franklin Graham has never renounced his criticism of Islam but has sought to clarify his comments, most recently to Barack Obama when the President visited his father. The Pentagon rescinded an invitation for Graham to speak at the National Day of Prayer in May 2010 because, according to an army spokesperson, his 'remarks about Islam were inappropriate and contradicted the military's inclusive message'.⁷⁰ In an earlier op-ed article in the *Wall Street Journal*, later reprinted in the *Covenant News*, Graham further clarified his objections to Islam:

But as a minister, not a politician, I believe it is my responsibility to speak out against the terrible deeds that are committed as a result of Islamic teaching. The brutal, dehumanizing treatment of women by the Taliban has been well documented and internationally condemned. However, the abusive treatment of women in most Islamic countries is nearly as draconian and falls far short of the dignity, respect, and protection almost universally given to women and mandated by the United Nations. The persecution or elimination of non-Muslims has been a cornerstone of Islamic conquests and rule for centuries. The Koran provides ample evidence that Islam encourages violence in order to win converts and to reach the ultimate goal of an Islamic world. Conversions from Islam to any other faith are often punishable by death.⁷¹

Such comments feed into a broader narrative of perceptions of America in Muslim-majority countries. A report from Search for Common Ground and the Consensus Building Institute asserted that many Muslims 'perceive the US government to be disrespectful of Muslim values, indifferent to Muslim interests, and interested in controlling Muslim countries and regions. Some perceive the US as antagonistic to their religion.'⁷² Douglas Johnston lists a catalogue of grievances he considers

⁶⁹ Charisma News Service, 'Preacher's anti-Islam remarks mobilize White House', Nov. 2001, <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/2001/11/Preachers-Anti-Islam-Remarks-Mobilize-White-House.aspx>, accessed 18 July 2012; M. A. Vu, 'Franklin Graham: Obama's one-sided praise of Islam is horrific', *Christianity Today*, 10 May 2010, <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/franklin.graham.obamas.onesided.praise.of.islam.is.horrific/25877.htm>, accessed 18 July 2012.

⁷⁰ Vu, 'Franklin Graham'.

⁷¹ Franklin Graham, 'My view of Islam', *Wall Street Journal*, 9 Dec. 2001.

⁷² US–Muslim Engagement Project, *Changing course: a new direction for US relations with the Muslim world* (Washington DC, and Cambridge, MA, 2009), p. 33.

that many Muslims harbour against the United States, including the beliefs that the malaise of Muslim society is due to the legacy of European colonialism and US neo-colonialism; that Islamic extremism is a consequence of western imperialist policies; that the West is an aggressor responsible for greater atrocities than Muslims; that western permissiveness is an assault on Muslim values; that by propping up autocratic regimes the United States has shown that it is not genuinely interested in democracy; that the war on terrorism is really a war on Muslims; and finally that US favouritism towards Israel precludes its taking any role as an honest broker.⁷³ Johnston fails to mention Muslim concerns about proselytization, apparently financed in part from federal funds. Tim Winter's study of Arab writings on America's relationship with the Muslim-majority world reveals how problematic this perception has become:

The consequence has been far-reaching: whereas ten years ago Muslims tended to view America as a secular republic containing many religious Christians, the perception is now gaining ground that America is a specifically Christian entity, whose policies on Israel, and whose otherwise mystifying violence against Muslims, whether in occupied countries or in detention, can usefully be explained with reference to the Bible.⁷⁴

Implications for US foreign policy

There seems little prospect of change within US foreign policy regarding the use of FBOs to deliver some foreign assistance. Obama, like Bush before him, is wedded to the idea of increasing the use of such groups on both ideological and pragmatic grounds: ideological, because both presidents are enthusiastic about the role FBOs can play in encouraging individual morality and responsibility at home and abroad in the delivery of HIV/AIDS assistance in particular; pragmatic, because there are considerable advantages to mobilizing the extra resources and economies of scale provided by FBOs that work closely with indigenous faith-based groups and command respect and authority within local communities. FBOs add considerably to grant funds provided by the federal government, supplementing these funds with private donations of money and time. The use of FBOs also enables the deliverers of assistance to be one step removed from US foreign policy, which can prove useful in areas where local populations are hostile to that foreign policy but not necessarily to those providing assistance on the ground. Soft power is always a long-term strategy and goodwill towards US assistance providers might well yield dividends for the US government at a future date.

The attempts by faith-based scholars such as Douglas Johnston to inspire a faith-based US foreign policy emphasize the inclusivity of faith-based approaches. In doing so they presuppose a religious community that is prepared to work in inter- and multifaith forums to an ecumenical agenda based on mutual understanding, as indeed these scholars are themselves. However, such mainstream

⁷³ Johnston, *Religion, terror, and error*, pp. 27–32.

⁷⁴ Tim Winter, 'America as a jihad state: Middle Eastern perceptions of modern American theopolitics', *Muslim World* 101: 3, July 2011, p. 403.

religious voices represent churches, synagogues, temples and mosques that are becoming less numerous and less significant in people's everyday lives across the world. The dominant religious actors enjoying growing membership, support and influence are not voices of tolerance and moderation but the more extreme and intolerant voices of radical Islam and evangelical Christianity, the latter exemplified by Samaritan's Purse.

While the US public are opposed to grants being awarded to FBOs that proselytize, they can be misled by USAID's and FBOs' obfuscation surrounding the separation of Church and state. Whoever delivers US assistance with materials decorated with the Stars and Stripes is inevitably identified with the US government and its people. It matters who distributes such assistance and how they conduct themselves. Conservative evangelical organizations that make clear their contempt for other religions, in particular Islam, feed into a narrative already constructed in war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan that US foreign policy under Bush, at least, amounted to a Christian crusade against Islam. Franklin Graham has been a leading voice in criticism of Islam, and yet his mission to convert Muslims (and others) to Christ continues to be funded by USAID. This could prove increasingly problematic as the United States seeks to win hearts and minds within the Muslim-majority world and to reinvent itself as being on the side of the masses following the overthrow of previously US-backed despots in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

The attention focused on faith-based initiatives risks undermining the standing of long-established secular organizations including Planned Parenthood and CARE, which are as committed as FBOs to meeting the needs of those with whom they work. Providing assistance through FBOs working closely with local churches, mosques, synagogues and temples strengthens the power and influence of those local partners, which may prove problematic if they promote values inimical to those advocated by the United States, and are in competition with other religious and state bodies. In allying US humanitarian assistance with evangelicals rather than Catholics in Lubango, for example, local tensions are exacerbated rather than diffused. In awarding micro-business opportunities to Christians and excluding Muslims in Kenya, the interests of the faith-based organization are being served at the expense of US foreign policy soft power objectives.

Non-governmental organizations delivering humanitarian assistance and seeking to improve the lives of peoples around the world are engaged in a noble pursuit, and there are clear foreign policy benefits for the United States when the Washington government commits resources to such endeavours. Maximum benefit occurs for US interests when such assistance reflects American values. Natural disasters, war, poverty, hunger, starvation, refugees and disease have always been with us, and there is no indication that the need for US governments to engage in overseas development and assistance will subside at any time in the future. In seeking partners to deliver assistance, the next administration should seek out those who not only deliver assistance effectively but do not compromise wider foreign policy objectives, such as winning hearts and minds and establishing

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US bona fides in the Muslim-majority world. Evaluations and audits of USAID should also examine the actual delivery of assistance programmes rather than relying so heavily on self-reporting. This will help to overcome the impression of a smoke-and-mirrors exercise designed to obscure organizations' proselytizing with federal funds. Islamophobic comments by CEOs of FBOs distributing US assistance in Muslim-majority countries undermine US interests and should result in grants being awarded to more culturally sensitive organizations such as International Relief and Development, CHF International or Population Services International. Finally, if assistance as a component of US foreign policy is to be delivered by faith-based and neighbourhood partnerships, there needs to be strict enforcement of the separation of Church and state, whereby US organizations that proselytize when delivering assistance are disqualified from receiving US government funding. Failure to do so weakens Obama's declared objective of building a new relationship with the Muslim-majority world and reinforces suspicions about the motives for US involvement in these regions.