

# AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS INDIA

## STRATEGY OF AID WITH RELIGION

*This article contrasts the American/Western Judeo-Christian culture and its definition of the world with the traditional Asian/Eastern Indic perspective to explain major features of US policy towards developing countries in general and India in particular. American diplomacy so far has been dictated by the national belief in the superiority of biblical monotheism and US outreach is associated with the spread of Judeo-Christianity and the defeat of "paganism". In the name of protecting religious freedom, the American government claims the right to monitor the status of religion in other countries and support Christian missionary organisations. This policy is also a tool to keep India and other countries in a subordinate role by expanding US influence in all fields.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Every civilisation and nation has a view of the universe distinct from that of others based on which it defines its way of life and adds meaning to it. Universalisation of it becomes an ethnocentric attitude and imperialistic goal especially when it denigrates and thinks less of other civilisations and nations. This has become pertinent in the case of Western civilisation and nations led by the United States of America (US). The Western view of the universe premised on a Newtonian/Cartesian deterministic logic, is merely of autonomous and

independent atomic particles with linear, sequential and unidirectional space-time finiteness with a defined beginning and end subject to intellectual and conceptual control. All elements, individuals, animate and inanimate particles are bound, demarcated and partitioned from each other. The dissolution of boundaries and partitions is considered anarchic and chaotic. Non-recognition of the dissolution makes the Western view of the universe absolute, through which it tries to control all things in a mechanical way within its space-time limit. This is where the logic derived from the Cartesian metaphor of controlling the universe as opposed to other philosophies advocating the dissolution of boundaries led to the rise of imperialistic design. In contrast, the Eastern (*dharmic*) tradition of the cosmos advocates the dissolution of boundaries between the material and spiritual world and the fusion of the two as nothing but absolute reality. Everything, every element and every individual is part of the whole, which is immanent and interconnected—like varieties of flowers threaded into a garland. One realm or dimension to another and one individual to another even across multiple lifetimes are connected with a causation that is non-

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linear and non-unidirectional, transcending ordinary space-time confines. The part of the person that is reincarnated entangles with the past and the future of other individuals (animate and inanimate) and transcends boundaries of space and time. This is the Eastern secular scientific view of the universe.

In the Western view, the entire universe is matter to be exploited and expended by the application of science and technology for the inordinate and exorbitant lifestyle defined as development in Western idiom. This view of other civilisations, societies and nations was framed principally by biblical mythology and account of history. According to the *Bible*, after a great flood the descendants of Noah repopulated the earth. On one occasion, Noah who had three sons (Ham, Shem and Japheth) was laughed at for his nudity by Ham. Noah then cursed Ham's descendants who would live in servitude to the descendants of the other two brothers ("Genesis", *Bible*, Chapter 22, Verse 27). This biblical

account of how the world was populated has long been accepted as history by the West and it has tried to impose this version on the non-Western world as well. Western accounts have been constructed to fit all the people of other cultures and civilisations into the biblical framework as the descendants of Ham. In most accounts, the populations of Africa and Asia are described as barbaric, dark skinned, immoral, uncivilised and deserving of servitude (Rajiv Malhotra and S Aravindan Neelakandan, *Breaking India: Western interventions in Dravidian and Dalit Faultlines*, New Delhi: Amaryllis, 2011, p40). According to Biblical historian Stephen R Haynes (*Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), Western predilection to associate skin colour with the character of a people was institutionalised within Christianity from the beginning. For over two millennia, *Bible* readers have blamed Ham and his progeny for everything—from the existence of slavery and serfdom to the perpetuation of sexual license and perversion, to the introduction of astrology, blasphemy, heathenism, heresy, idolatry, magical arts, rebellion, theft, war and witchcraft. Martin Luther the founder of the protestant movement besides being a virulent anti-Semite believed in the biblical account that Ham and his descendants were possessed by satanic and bitter hatred (quoted in Malhotra and Neelakandan, *ibid*). The traditional Western portrayal of the world is vertical, hierarchically situating nations, societies, cultures and civilisations as they were mapped in the *Book of Genesis* authored by Moses, which Thomas R Trautmann (*Aryans and British India*, New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2004, p9 and *Languages and Nations: Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras*, New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006) refers to as Mosaic ethnology. Aristotle's "scale of civilisation" coupled with Mosaic ethnology provide the logic for the West to embrace a hierarchy with the white man enthroned at the apex. This forms the normative building block of the Western paradigm in dominating the non-Western world. India was one of the earliest victims of this process. The works of many colonial Indologists from William Jones and Max Müller to Brian Houghton Hodgson and Bishop Robert Caldwell, who tried to map India in the biblical framework, left modern Indian identities divided, fractured and fragmented.

Even American accounts of India may be traced along biblical lines. Katherine Mayo (*The Face of Mother India*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935) did not hesitate to make a vitriolic indictment of Hindus in her glorification of Mahmud of Ghazni for his violent plunders of the country, whom she compared to biblical figures such as Joshua, Gideon and David. Andrew J Rotter (*Comrades at Odds:*

*The United States and India 1947–1964*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, p35) an American historian at Colgate University, New York, projected onto Indians traits that were loathsome and illicit. “Indians among other things are unsanitary, disorderly, promiscuous and primitive”. Having spent many years studying the cultural assumptions and beliefs related to US policy towards South Asia during the Second World War he wrote:

“Westerners found in Indians the very opposite of their rational self-images, exemplars of the undesirable and forbidden. If order is the *desideratum* of the post-Enlightenment Westerner, the dirt and disorder of India was for the Westerner an object of loathing” (*ibid*, p12).

Even John Stuart Mill the apostle of liberty observed, “In truth, the Hindu like the eunuch excels in the qualities of the slave” (*ibid*, p192). The American Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) profile of Jawaharlal Nehru stated, “His character is weakened by a tendency towards emotionalism, which at times destroys his sense of values” (*ibid*, p194). President Dwight D

Eisenhower believed Nehru’s emotional volatility was the personification of his country (*ibid*, p22)—India lacked reason and order. The prejudice concerning Indians stemmed from the West’s perpetual misidentification and oversimplification of Hinduism as polytheism. This gave rise to misrepresentation in the West of Hindus being regarded as not being amenable to one truth or single authority, rendering them deceitful and unreliable, subject to fluctuation

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and not binding to a position. Rotter (*ibid*) further expounded that American foreign policy had always been driven by the protestant idea of the one and only truth. In 1954, Arthur Dean, the American Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) told an Indian official that the US wanted to base its policy on one of Jesus’ sayings, “He who is not with me is against me” (“Matthew”, *Bible*, Chapter 12, Verse 30). Accordingly, as Hindus believed in polytheism and God was a point of speculation and variation, they were believed to be prone to moral ambiguity and relativism, wobbling between right and wrong. On the other

hand, Pakistanis were preferable as akin to Christians they were monotheistic and therefore more forthright and fixed in a position they thought right. As Rotter (*ibid*) stated:

“Religious thinking helps explain the American decision ... guided by John Foster Dulles to force a military alliance with Pakistan ... having many Gods is equivalent to believing in no God”.

The Americans also equated Hinduism with communism, as they believed both suffered from moral uncertainty. As these misconceptions and reductive characteristics pervaded the Western mind, it was not surprising that misconstrued prejudice became the foundation of US foreign policy towards India.

#### EVANGELISM IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

On the premise of the abovementioned foundation and with a biblical accent, the US carved out its foreign policy towards the non-Western world. The American government has been directly active in foreign evangelism as a part of its foreign policy with the Christian Right behind it. Due to heavy lobbying from the Christian Right, President Bill Clinton enacted the *International Religious Freedom Act* of 1998, on a *quid pro quo* that the Christian Right would support him on various other legislations. The main purpose of the act was to make it imperative on the Christian population in developing nations to associate with Right Wing Christian organisations in the US. In the words of the Allen D Hertzke (“Legislating International Religious Freedom”, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 20 November 2006, online at <http://www.pewforum.org>):

“What were the conditions underlying the legislative initiative? The first condition is the globalisation of Christianity. The tectonic shift of the Christian population to the developing world of Asia, Africa and Latin America ... created a constituency around the world that communicates with an American constituency here at home”.

The other purpose was to impose mandatory sanctions against countries that hamstring Christian proselytising by accusing them of religious persecution. The act was later reviewed giving the president a waiver provision in case he felt that imposing sanctions would be prejudicial to American interests. Critics pilloried the act as interventionist rather than a genuine programme of human rights and pointed out that its implementation was under the control of evangelical Christian institutions.

### *The US Commission on International Religious Freedom*

In India, the main function of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has been to collect data and information on the country's internal religious affairs for the purpose of strategic policymaking by the American government. John R Bolton and Elliott Abrams, two former commissioners were prominent members of the foreign policy establishment under several Republican presidents. Richard Land named by *Time* (7 February 2005, online at <http://content.time.com>) as one of the twenty-five most influential evangelicals in the US and president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission was also a key commissioner. Another commissioner was Nina Shea, author of *In the Lion's Den: A Shocking Account of Persecution and Martyrdom of Christians Today and how we should Respond* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, January 1997) about anti-Christian persecution around the world. She is described on the official website ("Biography", USCIRF, <http://www.uscirtf.gov>) as "one of the activists at the forefront of a movement to make religious freedom abroad a US foreign policy priority". A conference organised by Shea in January 1996, brought hundreds of top Christian leaders together for the first time to address the issue of worldwide anti-Christian persecution. This marked the beginning of church mobilisation that turned into a nationwide movement. *Newsweek* (25 August 1997, online at <http://www.newsweek.com>) credited Shea with "making Christian persecution Washington's hottest cause". Indian protest against evangelical proselytising was initiated by David Gray of the Princeton based Infinity Foundation ("Letter to the USCIRF", 11 September 2000, online at <http://www.infinityfoundation.com>). His polemic against evangelical bias urged for the examination of literature that disparaged another community as "condemned sinners, pagans and heathens" and whether it should be deemed a

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hate speech. Just as it is unlawful to denigrate one's competition in the free market, so it is in the case of sullyng other religions. He even suggested investigating evangelists who used other tangible and non-tangible rewards for proselytising. Swami Agnivesh a liberal and outspokenly anti-*Hindutva* monk while refusing an American invitation to provide testimony was explicit in saying that the US should not arrogate to itself the authority to act as "a world policeman". His press release stated:

"The attempt on the part of US to police freedom in other countries ... amounts to the violation of the sovereignty of other nations. While it is understandable that the US would want to undertake an exercise of the kind, citizens of other nations cannot aid and abet this process without compromising their national pride and patriotism" (*Catholic World News Service*, "Indian Church Opposes US Congressional Hearing on Religious Freedom", 14 September, 2000).

The annual report of 2000 ("India Chapter", *International Religious Freedom*, USCIRF, online at *ibid*) revealed the close relationship between the American Embassy in New Delhi and India based evangelists in monitoring internal religious affairs. While there was little mention of the religious conversion to Christianity, the report stated concern about the reconversion of Christians back into Hinduism. The blame was placed on the Marxist government in the Indian state of West Bengal for its inability to prevent the reconversion of religious minorities. The report however glorified conversion to Christianity as a move to greater freedom and away from Hinduism's slippery darkness. There was no mention about the financial incentives used by Christians, their hate speeches, propaganda material and the impact of their work on the people's sensibilities in the historically and culturally rich pluralistic society. The report vividly described alleged atrocities against Christians without independent verification. It did mention certain acts committed by anti-national militaries such as the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) with close links to the church.

"In Tripura there were several cases of reverse persecution of non-Christians by Christians of the NLFT, a militant tribal group that is often evangelical. For example, NLFT tribal insurgents have banned Hindu and Muslim festivals in areas that they control, cautioned women not to wear traditional Hindu tribal attire and banned indigenous forms of worship" (*ibid*, Section I).

However many atrocities perpetrated by the NLFT were ignored in the report.

"In 1999, on 2 February NLFT terrorists killed eight people in North Tripura District; on 6 August they abducted four senior *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* leaders (Hindu missionaries); on 12 August they gunned down six persons in

Manu, Dhalai District; on 6 September they abducted 16 state government officials from Manu, Dhalai District; on 25 December three persons were killed and 100 houses burnt down in Bishramaganj, West Tripura District, etc” (“National Liberation Front of Tripura”, South Asia Terrorism Portal, online at <http://www.satp.org>).

The USCIRF annual report of 2001 (online at *ibid*) described how the US government’s request to India to allow official visits from the US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom concerned with human rights was rejected. The report was ambiguous and full of double speak. On the one hand it confessed to certain crimes committed by Christians and stated that though the Hindus were the majority religious community in the country, they were in reality the minority in the northeast states. On the other, it “contended that the dominance of Hindus had resulted in the marginalisation of Christians in Tripura” (*ibid*, pp52–3). While atrocities on Hindus were justified and rationalised, the systematic and ethnic purging of Hindus from their religion was overlooked. The report was lopsided and biased in that it gave prominence to the NLFT’s version of events but ignored the Hindus’ side. The report’s bias was further

exposed by its roughshod treatment of numerous exposés by the South Asian Terrorism Portal (online at <http://www.satp.org>), a terrorism watch group run by professional police and intelligence bureaucrats. The annual report of 2002 (USCIRF, online at *ibid*) only reinforced its one-sidedness by ignoring the congeries of violence committed by Christian secessionists like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and the NLFT. The case of Hindu tribal communities (Reang, Jamatia, etc)—victims of Christian terrorist violence—was simply disregarded. Castigating the USCIRF Sumit Ganguly stated, “India ... a proud and democratic nation does not appreciate the US meddling in its internal problems” (quoted in Malhotra and Neelakandan, *ibid*, p27). India’s *Foreigners Act*, which controls the free flow of US evangelists, was vehemently opposed in

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the USCIRF annual report of 2003 (online at *ibid*). As *Tehelka* (online at <http://archive.tehelka.com> ) wrote:

“The 2003 report is a no-nonsense document that conveys the official US policy supporting evangelisation ... US officials have continued to engage state officials on the implementation and reversal of anti-conversion laws”.

The US posture echoed John Dayal’s testimony (“Religious Freedom in India”, Prepared Testimony, USCIRF, 1999, p7, online at *ibid*) before the commission that “it is almost impossible for foreign Christian church workers, preachers or evangelist to come to India unless it is as a tourist.

The Catholic Church, which had so far distanced itself from such reports, suddenly expressed its unhappiness with the US refusal to designate India as a country of particular concern with regard to religious freedom. It openly called for the US to prosecute India for a spate of violence against minority communities. It also wrote to the American Secretary of State asking that India be placed in the category of evangelist religious freedom violators along with states like Burma, China, Iran, North Korea and Sudan. At the time however, in view of its engagement with the *Taliban* in Afghanistan–Pakistan, the US administration did not consider it strategically propitious to adhere to such demands and advised the USCIRF not to press further. During the 2004 hearings, a four member delegation of US Congressmen visited India to report to the American Congress about anti-conversion laws, the treatment of *Dalits* and anti-minority violence (*The Times of India*, “US Congress wants Justice for Riot Victims”, 10 January 2004). While most considered this as meddling in the internal affairs of India, the delegation justified it in terms of British colonial rationale for intervention, that is, on the pretext that certain Indians had invited them. While one delegate Congressman Steve Chabot compared the situation in Gujarat to that of Rwanda, the USCIRF was silent on the reported Christian Naga terrorist atrocities on Buddhists in Arunachal Pradesh.

“The twin militant outfits NSCN (Isak-Muivah) and NSCN (Khaplang) have demanded annexation of land from Buddhist and other indigenous faith followers of Rima Putak, Thikhak Putak, Motongsa and Longchong villages in Tirap-Changlang district in Arunachal Pradesh and have issued a decree for their conversion to Christianity. The militant outfits have left the villagers two options—embrace Christianity or face capital punishment. With death staring at their face most of the adult members have fled the villages to escape torture from both sides, resulting in disruption of agricultural activities” (*The Assam Tribune*, “Arunachal Buddhists allege Militants Harassment”, 23 August 2004).

In 2005, the *Dalit Freedom Network* testified before US lawmakers, urging them to intervene to end caste discrimination and stop atrocities against low-caste Indians. However, as Sudheendra Kulkarni, a leading Indian columnist observed (“Seeking ‘Social Justice’ through US intervention”, *The Indian Express*, 30 October 2005, online at <http://archive.indianexpress.com>):

“If Hindu extremists deserve to be slammed (yes, they do) for indulging in hate propaganda against other faiths, can there be a different yardstick for those who equate Hinduism with ‘spiritual darkness’. ... Doesn’t the overtly anti-Hindu (not just anti-*Hindutva*) propaganda by non-Hindu groups with a thinly veiled agenda of conversion of *Dalits* and tribals harm communal harmony? Recall last week’s violent Muslim–Christian clash in Alexandria, Egypt, on the issue of conversions. Which community is free of deficiencies within and whose obligation is it to effect reforms in one’s religion—that of its own followers or others? Does religious freedom include freedom to slander or belittle other religions, purportedly in the name of reservations? Let’s ponder, honestly”.

Astonishingly, that same year the US was silent on the brutal attacks on the Hindu tribe Dimasa. The religious strife was exposed when other prominent human rights watch groups reported it. While the USCIRF’s annual report of 2005 (online at *ibid*) mentioned that the Dimasa tribes were becoming internally displaced refugees, it failed to state the religious dimension behind the displacement. Major Anil Raman (“The Dimasa–Hmar Conflict: Another Ember in the Fire”, 8 September 2004, online at <http://www.usiofindia.org>), a strategic analyst and commander in the Indian Army in the northeast, explained the role of Western Christianity in the conflict:

“The Hmars are devout Christians while the Dimasas are mainly Hindus. The Hmar church-bodies and social networks, including those abroad, have been heavily involved in directing political activities. The Dimasas lack this external support and are extremely apprehensive and critical of activities of Hmar religious bodies. The unchecked and widespread proselytising by missionary groups to achieve a ‘Christian Belt’ from Meghalaya to Nagaland has brought them into direct conflict with the Dimasas, who are staunch Hindus”.

In the USCIRF annual report of 2006, (p1, online at *ibid*), an incident in Rajasthan reported as an attack on Christian individuals and missionaries was further testimony to the biased view. In March, the head of a Christian organisation operating a number of charitable and educational institutions was arrested on charges of “hurting religious sentiments and insulting the religious beliefs of a community” because of a book that was on sale in one of his establishments. The statement of a police official exposed the distortion of the

American report:

“The Rajasthan Police say they have seized 719 copies of the book, which ‘deliberately denigrates’ Hindu and Jain deities, from the foundation’s library. ‘The book is highly inflammatory’, said AK Jain, Additional Director General of Police (Crime), Rajasthan” (*The Indian Express*, “Rajasthan Cops Launch Hunt for Emmanuel Foundation Chief”, 25 March 2006).

A US based nuclear physicist Moorthy Muthuswamy (“USCIRF’s Disregard for Truth”, Letter to Speaker Dennis Hastert, 7 May 2006, online at <http://www.ivarta.com>) basing the origin of religious conflicts in India on data also brought to the USCIRF’s notice that Christian institutions in India were responsible for waging religious apartheid on the majority in contravention of Articles 23 and 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Studying the annual report of 2006, he concluded that when data and events pointed to the Hindus being at the receiving hands of Christians/Muslims, the USCIRF filtered out relevant details to portray the events in a way it liked.

The annual report of 2007 (USCIRF, online at *ibid*) emphasised the alleged glorification of Hitler by Hindu nationalist groups in Indian textbooks and stated that Social Science books published in Gujarat contained languages minimising the role of Hitler in the Holocaust and belittled religious minorities. Although these were later proven false, they found full coverage in the report without any attempt to unravel the verity (Koenraad Elst, *Decolonising the Hindu Mind*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2007; *Return of the Swastika: Hate and Hysteria versus Hindu Sanity*, New Delhi: Voice of India, 2007; *Saffron Swastika*, New Delhi: Voice of India, 2001 and “The Official Pro-Invasionist Argument at Last”, *Bharatvani.org*, 1999, online at <http://koenraadelstbharatvani.org>). On the other hand, Social Studies textbooks for tenth standard in Tamil Nadu replete with Western implanted racist theories and histories were overlooked as they promoted Dravidian chauvinism thereby opening the floodgates and widening the scope for Christian conversion.

#### LEFTISTS AND THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

Paradoxically, to score points against political opponents, people with close links with Leftist Parties and an ingrained faith in their ideology have little qualms in colluding with the USCIRF. They thus try to pressurise the Indian government to change constitutional provisions that shield the weaker sections

of society from the onslaught of heavy-handed evangelists, even though such a request to the American government grossly affects India's sovereignty. For example, in the wake of Hindu-Christian violence in Orissa/Odisha in 2008, Professor Angana P Chatterji ("Recommendations to the Congressional Task Force on International Religious Freedom", online at <http://www.sacw.net>) at a briefing on "The Threat Religious Extremism poses to Democracy and Security in India: Focus on Orissa" held in Washington DC on 10 December 2008, requested the American government to monitor Hindu groups in the US and if necessary impose sanctions on them. She even asked that it force the Indian government to change constitutional provisions to facilitate evangelism among tribal populations and demanded an annulment of the *Orissa Freedom of Religion Act 1967* (*ibid*). It is ironic that Leftist intellectuals, who roof their political shed by loudly shouting anti-American imperialism slogans, have no problem contradicting themselves by advocating blatant American intervention for the promotion of evangelism and the end of democracy in India.

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### ***Evangelists and Maoists: Strategic Nexus***

In 2009, the Government of India deferred the proposed visit of the USCIRF, a move questioned by the Catholic Secular Forum, an organisation that facilitates Christian campaigns in the country. That same year, the commission bracketed India with Afghanistan on its watch list of "countries of particular concern" (*Rediff News*, "For US Body, India is same as Somalia and Afghanistan", 13 August 2009, online at <http://news.rediff.com>). In October 2009, the USCIRF (online at *ibid*) sent a letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and the American Ambassador handed a copy to the Prime Minister of India, expressing concern

over minorities in Orissa. It stated, “Even though the episode of violence in Kandhamal is over ... Christian leadership outside India is still uncertain about the security of minorities living in India”. Vishal Mangalwadi (“A Radical Proposal for a very Difficult Situation in Orissa”, 2008, online at <http://www.vishalmangalwadi.com>), a noted Christian theologian wrote an article in the French Christian magazine *Journal Chretien* (online at <http://journalchretien.net>) explaining how Christians and Maoists have come together to form a new power structure in the mineral rich eastern state of Orissa. A vitriolic critic of secularism he stated, “Christ and Mao have come together in Orissa because people oppressed for thousands of years have decided to stand up against the Hindu socioeconomic system”. The state of Odisha provides a glaring example of how a well-crafted complicity of both Maoist and evangelical networks became a trigger for violent conflicts. Impoverished communities living in its remote areas became easy targets to coax psychologically and economically into the web of Christian conversion, thus opening the can of communal explosion. When in reaction to the evangelical onslaught indigenous communities started counteracting in 2008, a Hindu monk and four others were killed on a Hindu holiday. While claiming responsibility, Maoists admitted they had committed the acts under pressure from Christians. The invention of a “separate ethnic identity” for the natives by Christian groups to buttress their evangelical interests further inflamed the crisis. A member of the National Minorities Commission visiting the violence ridden areas of the state confirmed that the Maoists were working with Christian organisations (*Nerve.In*, online at <http://www.nerve.in>). Police intelligence also revealed that evangelists were employing Maoists to attack tribals who had not converted to Christianity.

With the ostensible strategy of wooing Maoists into the evangelical game plan Mangalwadi (*ibid* and “Christmas may become (Bloody) Good Friday in India”, 2008, online at <http://masihivandana.com>) appealed to Christian missionaries in India as well the Christian Right in the US to remove Christianity’s bias against the Maoists and align with them in a common fight against Hinduism. He compared this strategy with Mahatma Gandhi’s acceptance of radical Indian freedom fighters Bhagat Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose. In 2009, the Orissa state police unearthed arms hidden in a Christian run rehabilitation centre.

“The firearms include one self-loading rifle and three AK-47 rifles. The arms were looted from the Nayagarh police armoury during the ghastly Maoist raid in February 2008 ... Nearly two hundred converted Christians have been staying at the centre. Police sources strongly believe in a possible link between

the Maoists and some minority community leaders in the riot-hit Kandhamal District. ... Police suspect that the deceased was a core member of Vamsadhara Division of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoists)” (*The Economic Times*, “Arms found from Rehab Centre in Kandhamal”, 1 October 2009).

Insurgency in the Indian state of Nagaland is driven by the demand for a Maoist Christian nation state. In their manifesto, Naga separatist guerrillas pronounce:

“The sovereign existence of our country, the salvation of our people in socialism with their spiritual salvation in Christ, is unquestionable ... We stand for socialism ... We stand for faith in God and the salvation of mankind in Jesus the Christ alone, that is, Nagaland for Christ ... We rule out the illusion of saving Nagaland through peaceful means. It is arms and arms alone that will save our nation” (Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p91).

In 1992, MM Thomas, the Christian theologian Governor of Nagaland had opined that Naga churches pursued “corruption, violence and mutual revenge” (Freston, *ibid*, 89). The church’s influence in the state was undeniably all-pervasive and even peace talks were negotiated through a church appointed peace council (*Frontline*, 19 June 1992). What compounded the problem was the spread of Naga insurgency to the neighbouring state of Arunachal Pradesh, a strategically important Indian state to which China also lays claim (*Frontline*, 19 June 2005).

The church’s authority in Mizoram has never been questioned since the evangelisation of Mizo society in 1903. Its role has been so obsequiously obeyed that the church functions like a state within a state. Instead of being confined to religious bounds, it has intruded into political and institutional spheres. In national and state elections, the church plays a predominant role in selecting candidates and identifying voters. In this context the role of the Mizoram People’s Forum, the church sponsored election surveyor has been controversial. According to David Halloran Lumsdaine (*Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p267):

“The church does not mention names of particular political candidates but highlights what kind of people are trustworthy and have a good reputation in church and society. The church in Mizoram therefore gives Mizo citizens a guide as to elect responsible leaders. Reverend Zaihmingthanga, ex-secretary of the Mizoram Presbyterian Council mentioned, ‘we normally issue pamphlets on the eve of elections encouraging people to cast their votes and utilise franchise responsibly”.



Thus, as the church is closely aligned with the state and there is no separation of church and state, Indian secularism is completely absent in Mizoram. The state and its attendant institutions remain religiously obsequious to the “divine dictates” of the church (N William Singh, “Politics of Divine Edict and Reverse Secularism”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol47 no52, 29 December 2012, pp23–4).

A “red corridor” of the nexus between Maoists and evangelists has also emerged stretching from the Nepal border through India’s heartland to the Indian Ocean in the south. Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha—the hotbeds of Maoism are also the major centres of aggressive Christian evangelism. These two groups have joined forces in their design to destroy the rich, spiritual tradition of the tribals and sever their cord with mainstream Indian culture. Evidencing this nexus, evangelical leader Mangalwadi (2008, *ibid*) reported on his website:

“Besides launching a *jihad* against Animism and Hinduism, the Maoists are also active in supporting evangelists. At times, Maoists escort evangelists into remote villages where police officers are afraid to go. They summon everyone to hear the Gospel. ... Going through the film on Jesus sometimes, they will stop and start lecturing on Maoism. Then following a feast they will go back to their base. ... It is also reliably reported that Maoists and Christians have stayed together for two days of fasting and praying”.

## US RELIEF ORGANISATIONS

**World Vision:** has a strong presence in India both financially and operationally and natural disasters provide it an opportunity to penetrate deep into the rural and tribal areas of the country. As reported by *Tehelka* (VK Shashikumar, “Bush’s Conversion Agenda for India: Preparing for the Harvest”, February 2004, online at *ibid*):

“World Vision projects itself as a ‘Christian relief and development agency with more than forty years experience working with the poorest of the poor in India without respect to race, region, religion, gender or caste’ ”.

However, according to the US-based organisation’s financial statements filed with the Internal Revenue Service, which *Tehelka* has in its possession, it is classified as a church ministry. As “a major player in the economies of several Indian states”, it has been careful to masquerade its proselytising design. “Though none of the literature published by World Vision India even mentions its evangelisation

mission, its foreign publications proudly proclaim its spiritual component” (*ibid*).

**Pew Research Centre:** The organisation’s 2009 report with sensational chapters like “India next only to Iraq” on religious discrimination was outrageously biased and based on secondary sources without exploring primary ones. While it placed blame on Hindu and Muslim groups, it was silent on Christian evangelical propaganda and provocation. While US State Department and USCIRF reports were used to highlight incidents where Hindus were allegedly involved without verifying the truth, there was little mention of incidents where the fact of Christian groups being directly involved had been evidenced in public and the news.

**US Agency for International Development (USAID):** This was the principal agency created by executive order following the success of the *Marshall Plan* after the Second World War. It receives overall foreign policy guidance from the secretary of state. Its main objective is to further American foreign policy interests, through the guise of “expanding democracy and free markets while improving the lives of the citizens of the developing world” (online at <http://www.usaid.gov>). During the Cold War, the US made use of both USAID and transnational evangelical organisations to counter Marxist advances around the globe. According to Shashikumar (*ibid*), USAID, the CIA and evangelicals formed a partnership under the Bush administration to promote American interests particularly in the Indian context. Later in 1999, President Bill Clinton appointed Brady Anderson as administrator for USAID (now with World Vision) who explicitly stated, “in terms of foreign aid the US government has long used Christian organisations ... big time” (D Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals joined the American Elite*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p44). In 1997 Andrew Natsios (“Biography”, USAID,

**A “red corridor” of the nexus between Maoists and evangelists has emerged stretching from the Nepal border through India’s heartland to the Indian Ocean in the south—the hotbeds of Maoism are also the major centres of aggressive Christian evangelism. These two groups have joined forces in their design to destroy the rich, spiritual tradition of the tribals and sever their cord with mainstream Indian culture.**

online at *ibid*), as vice president of World Vision testifying before the US Committee on International Relations welcomed “a renewed partnership with the US government in international assistance programming” and hoped that faith-based nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and the US government would work closely together (Stephen V Monsma, “Faith-based NGOs and the Government Embrace” in Elliott Abrams (Ed), *The Influence of Faith: Religious Groups and US Foreign Policy*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001, pp203–4). Natsios was not only appointed as USAID administrator in 2001 but was assured that evangelists would get full access to government money without having to change their mission (“Faith-based and Community Initiatives 2001–02”, USAID, online at *ibid*). The crisscrossing of career paths between Christian multinational groups and the US government is not coincidental (Lindsay, *ibid*, p214). An overlap of individuals and social sectors can also be found among other evangelical organisations, like the Prison Fellowship Ministries, Christianity Today International and the Fuller Theological Seminary.

USAID has always shown preference for Christian faith-based NGOs working in India. Its former India mission director George Deikun admitted on many occasions to having worked in close collaboration with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Sharan, the YWCA, World Vision, the Salvation Army and St Mary’s hospital, to name a few (USAID, online at *ibid*). In a speech at the sixtieth anniversary of CRS in 2006 Deikun stated, “CRS and its broad network have been valued partners for USAID” in several programmes that reach out to “one million of India’s most marginalised tribal and *Dalit* communities each year”. In 2008, USAID accepted financing of a joint project by the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in the tribal state of Jharkhand (online at *ibid*). By 2007, the US government had slashed thirty-five percent of its direct aid to India and its financial aid through Christian NGOs assumed significance.

#### THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND EVANGELISM

The appointment of the Indian American Rajiv Shah as head of USAID by President Barack Obama in 2010 made many Indians wonder if this signified a shift away from support to Christian evangelism. Given Obama’s predilection for being non-controversial and appealing to a cross section of people, it was

natural for him to do so. While the role of the Right Wing in his election could not be ignored, the politics of pragmatism usually prevail over ideological goals. During Bush and Clintons administrations, the Right penetrated deeply into various government agencies including the departments of agriculture, commerce, homeland security and small business administration. Although Obama has reduced the Christian influence in certain areas domestically, it is a different story in foreign affairs. He has allowed the Christian Right to deepen its influence on foreign religious interventions by the US government. During the presidential elections, the African American Joshua DuBois played key role in swaying votes away from Republican bastions leading to Obama's win and was later made his top advisor on all matters concerning religion. He was also executive director of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighbourhood Partnerships, whose members are mostly drawn from Christian evangelist organisations like Catholic Churches, the Christian Community Development Association, National Baptist Convention, Pew Trust Forum on Religion and Public Life, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance, World Vision, etc.

The White House Office of Faith-based and Neighbourhood Partnerships works with offices throughout the US government in considering how faith-based and community organisations could be involved in economic recovery. The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* of 2009, a well-calibrated economic bailout was projected among faith-based groups as an unprecedented opportunity to receive funding. Even the Obama-Biden comprehensive *New Energy for America Plan* had provisions for faith-based groups to receive government funds. Obama appealed to US based religious institutions to play a role in fighting global poverty, renewing alliances, seeking new partnerships in Asia and talking to friends and foes. While American secularism is understood as the separation

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of church and state into two distinct institutions, in practice prominent government leaders promote what Christians advocate as biblical values. The US sponsored World Bank programme Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics maintains partnerships with faith-based organisations, which in practice are largely Christian organisations. The Obama policy on religion emphatically supports the role of religious groups in social work. The White House religion advisory council in a report stated:

“Religion informs the values and actions of many people around the globe and faith-based institutions make a significant contribution to the delivery of healthcare, education and social services ... Religious communities are potential partners for the delivery of basic services, brokering peace and creating stable societies. US personnel must have a working knowledge of the best means to engage religious communities” (Malhotra and Neelakandan, *ibid*, p292).

It thus recommended expanding US government funding of religious organisations operating in foreign countries, as well as “educating” American officials on religious matters.

“The administration should include multi-religious partnerships among the partnerships in which the US government engages and equip US agencies related to international affairs for those partnerships. Towards this end, the advisory council recommends that the administration request appointment of senior staff for multi-religious engagement in each of the major agencies dealing with international affairs. It also urges President Obama to direct each agency to establish portfolios related to multi-religious engagements and to call for the creation of both intra- and inter-agency working groups on multi-religious engagement” (quoted in *ibid*).

In view of the above, it is not surprising that the US government has “religion-based programmes in five hundred US colleges” in forty cities and at twenty-five American embassies in foreign countries (*ibid*). The Obama appointed religion council advocated, “reviving capacity-building support for development NGOs, thereby helping the faith-based groups not just to carry out programmes, but also get funds to expand their infrastructure in foreign countries” (*ibid*). These statements demonstrated a commitment to inter-religious dialogue, cooperation and understanding. While this augured well in parlance and theory, in practice it was oriented towards giving primacy to evangelism. For example, one recommendation of the council stated that government assistance should be “awarded through partnerships with civil society organisations that have demonstrated commitment to working with poor communities”. However,

the council out rightly rejected the Hindu member's suggestion that "it was imperative that pluralism in other countries be encouraged by respecting native religions". Another recommendation was for the US government to establish a goal that one-third of its development assistance across all departments would be channelled through faith-based groups, which effectively placed government funds in the hands of the evangelists. However, the council also emphatically rejected the Hindu member's suggestion that since American NGOs had an aggressive evangelical agenda in the guise of social service leading to inter-religious tension rather than valuing religious harmony and pluralism, government money should go through organisations that pledge not to trigger religious tension or disharmony. Another policy recommendation was for USAID to appoint a religion and civil society engagement staff liaison at every mission to reach out to and partner organisations on the ground. Again, the Hindu member's suggestion that sufficient care should be taken to avoid staffing that would bring religious prejudice against the predominant faith in a given foreign country suffered the same fate as the previous ones.

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## CONCLUSION

America's foreign policy approach and response to the external world needs to be understood, explained and analysed in the backdrop of its foundational building blocks set according to the Newtonian view of the universe as nothing but matter composed of independent, autonomous and self-sufficing particles. The relationship of these particles to each other is of competition, conflict, clash and collusion, or if the world is likened to these particles, it is a search for supremacy and craving for dominance over the rest, through power both inherent and acquired through the doctrine of manifest destiny. In this sense, the US has applied the Newtonian metaphor in its foreign policy behaviour to dominate and dictate terms to others. Science joined with political science to share the same ontological foundation. Secularism as understood in the West means the separation



of church and state in an institutional sense, away from the medial tradition of the church largely influencing state policy. This institutional separation does not however mean that American policy is impervious to religious inference.

American foreign policy founded on scientific metaphor was reinforced by biblical accounts of black non-Western third world countries as the descendants of Ham cursed by Noah to be the slaves and subordinate to the descendants of the other white two brothers, Shem and Japheth. Thus, both science and biblical accounts reinforced each other in forming the foundation of America foreign policy. In the same way, the Newtonian metaphor of particles was used to explain the biblical accounts of the difference between the descendents of Noah's three sons as the difference between the Western and non-Western world. Thus, the American view of the world as portrayed by biblical accounts and Newtonian metaphor is a divided, fragmented and disjointed one. The self is to dominate over the other, that is, the world was built on the dichotomy of self versus other, friend versus enemy, etc forming the foundation of realism and non-realism.

Science and the *Bible* entwined to frame American foreign policy at the end of the Second World War. The US's hierarchical portrayal of the world in realism/non-realism parlance supported by both biblical accounts and Newtonian science was designed to establish its supremacy, though the former Soviet Union stood in the way during the Cold War period. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the rise of non-Western powers like Brazil, Russia, India and China, the economic crisis in the West, etc have thrown many challenges to American foreign policy. Despite these, the US continues to adhere to its foundational building block. Aid through various organisations like USAID and NGOs under the guise of development has been used as a potent instrument in the fulfilment of foreign policy objectives.

For one to believe that India will get easy access to the status of a great power by striking a strategic partnership on equal footing with the US or by depending on the latter is ludicrous. In world politics, no state is "saintly" in the sense that it would dethrone itself from the centre of power and allow another to be seated in its place. To think so is utopian and far removed from the brutal realities of international politics. Would the US really take steps for its century of hegemony to be replaced by an Indian or Chinese century? At best what Washington may intend is to strengthen India strategically with economic and military wherewithal so that it could be a bulwark against a rising China but not powerful enough to dislodge America of its great power status. Given the threat

of Islamic terrorism which targets both the US and India, the former needs the unequivocal support of the latter, although Washington remains ambiguous on the issue. On the economic front for its own benefit, the US would want major investments through corporations embedded in India and so foreign direct investment continues uninterrupted. Thus, dangling the bait of great power status before India remains a shrewd strategy to cultivate it as a counter to the surge of China and to help contain the Islamic threat while gaining economically.

Underneath the loud voice of the “build up” strategy, the “fragment India” strategy is too feeble to invite attention from Indian policymakers. However, the latter strategy would be far more corrosive in destabilising India, making it less affirmative and determined to play a significant role in world politics independent of the US. As stated above, Washington would prefer continuing its divisive strategy of setting *Dalits* against *Brahmins*, Dravidians against Aryans, minorities against Hindus and women against men. Through such a policy, the US could lessen the prospects of India rising as a competitor like China, enhance the scope for more evangelisation, while American companies continue to outsource by using cheap Indian labour in the absence of an effective Indian state.

Through its divisive policy, the US could inflame the crisis in India’s domestic realm although not wanting to escalate it into a civil war, as this would be against US national interests. Washington would rather dampen India’s long cherished policy of independent action by fostering internal turmoil, which would divert the country’s energy and strength from its quest for a higher status in the world. ❧

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