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Research Report

The religious right in the United States: The base of the Bush-Administration?

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Josef Braml

The Religious Right in the United States

The Base of the Bush-Administration?

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**The Religious Right in the United States.
The Base of the Bush-Administration?**

In the United States of America religious attitudes have more of an influence on political choices than in any other “western” democracy. Religious and moral attitudes will be a key factor in the Congressional and Presidential elections on November 2. What role do interest groups of the Religious Right play in delivering political majorities for Republicans in both houses of Congress and for the White House? Does the Religious Right succeed in translating its electoral clout into political representation and policy-making? Does this yield an impact on Washington’s foreign policy positions and, particularly, the transatlantic relationship? How should German and European decision-makers react to this and what, if anything, can they and should they do?

This study has five main conclusions:

1. The political awakening of conservative Evangelicals and fundamentalist religious movements since the early 1980s is one of the most important cultural changes in the U.S. as it establishes new political structures that influence domestic and foreign policy-making. Given the sheer number of potential voters and its organizational support for the election campaign, the so-called Christian Right is key for Republicans trying to hold on to power on Capitol Hill and in the White House. Societal changes as well as changes in the political system (e.g. campaign finance reform) may explain this political phenomenon.
2. The Christian Right’s voters and interest groups (political action committees, grassroots organizations and think tanks) not only have an impact on elections, but also influence the policy agenda of the U.S. In terms of foreign policy, “true believers” are advocates for America’s military might and its unconditional protection of Israel.
3. National security issues and the fight against terrorism play a central role for another reason: They may strengthen the cohesion of a heterogeneous electoral coalition and, thus, help to establish permanent Republican control over Congress and the White House. The would-be architects of an encompassing Republican coalition continuously face the

tricky challenge of trying to integrate the Religious Right without alienating other voters.

4. Even if the incumbent Bush is not reelected, the organizational infrastructure of the Christian Right, built over decades, and its world view will remain powerful—especially through caucuses and networks of like-minded Representatives and Senators in Congress. Therefore, the Christian Right is and will remain a relevant foreign policy player that U.S. presidents, and those international partners dealing with them, must take into account.
5. The religious/moral engagement of the Christian Right is polarizing the United States and has caused and will continue to cause some ruptures in the transatlantic relationship: not only when deliberating about whether to use military force or diplomatic means, but also when taking concrete steps to deal with conflicts, especially in the Middle East.

Based on these findings, the recommendations for German and European decision-makers are as follows:

1. Europeans should take into account the political influence of the Christian Right in the U.S. Its political leverage limits the foreign policy choices an American president can make when dealing with key issues, especially in Middle East policy-making. The European demand for more pressure on Israel will only be rhetorically met in Washington with regard to the immediate electoral consequences an actual engagement may have, but also, in a Republican-dominated Washington with a longer term view of creating a lock on permanent electoral majorities. These domestic disincentives endanger common, transatlantic projects such as the “Road Map.”
2. Given this arrangement of U.S. politics, the transatlantic divide could widen even further, especially when considering how to deal with Syria and Iran—which from the Christian Right’s perspective are two countries who directly endanger the security of Israel and America. German and European decision-makers should anticipate this potential for conflict when trying to find a consensus and thus include activists and representatives of the Christian Right early on in their diplomatic consultations.
3. Moreover, European policy-makers as well as NGOs should seek to engage in a broader dialogue with leaders of Christian Right organizations, for the simple reason of learning their views of reality—in order to identify future transatlantic challenges and to develop strategies for making compromises.

The Political Christian Right in the U.S.

The “imagination”¹ of the American nation is based on the independence from the Old Continent with its state churches and rulers installed by the grace of God. At the same time, when arriving in the New World, the settlers were inspired by the conscious desire to create “God’s own country.” This ambivalent positioning between rejecting state churches on the one hand and believing in a divine mission on the other is also reflected in the First Amendment: The Constitution prohibits churches run by the state and establishes religious freedom of worship. This institutionally guaranteed freedom opens the door for religious pluralism and invites Americans to a continuous struggle to find a commonly accepted position for religion on the continuum between the private and the public/political spheres of American society.

Since de Tocqueville’s account of “Democracy in America”, the relationship between freedom, religion and democracy has long been an issue of political and academic debate. This study will scrutinize and put into perspective the empirical findings contributing to the understanding of the Christian Right’s political activities.

This study is based on the observation that religious Americans have been increasingly politically active during the last three decades. More and more, they align themselves with Republicans, which is in no small part due to the grassroots political work of Christian Right organizations.

Religion in American Society

The religious landscape in the U.S. is characterized by its diversity and the percentages of various denominations within the population as a whole have remained relatively constant (see Table 1, p. 28). Altogether, over 80% of Americans identify themselves as Christians. Protestants constitute the largest denomination with over half of the entire population. The more conserva-

tive (white) Evangelicals have become the largest single group with 25.4%, relegating the more liberal Mainline Protestants (22.1%) to second place. The percentage of black Protestants has also shrunk since the 1960s: to barely 8% in 1996. 21.8% of Americans are Roman Catholic.

The secularly-oriented segment of the population has grown the most since the mid-1960s and today stands at 16.3%, almost twice as much as in 1965. This secularization trend mobilized committed religious leaders—especially Evangelical Protestants—to counter the “decadence” and “disintegration of moral values” in society. Evangelical Protestants, and foremost among them the traditionalists, share an individualistic belief system that is directed towards the afterlife. They do not believe in social-reformist ideas. Rather, their activism is mainly focused on restoring traditional values and beliefs, and defending them against modernity and liberalism. “True believers” are advocates for “traditional American family values;” this means fighting secularism, feminism and relativism. In the international realm, Evangelicals are eager to make sure that America retains the necessary military means to defend itself and Israel.

In the last three decades, American observers have noted a “diminishing divide” between religion and politics:² “True believers”, especially white Evangelical Protestants, have become politically more active. White Evangelical Protestants now comprise about one quarter (2000: 24%) of registered voters.³ They have become the main component of the Republican base: Within three decades (1964–2000, see Figure 1, p. 31) the percentage of Republicans among white Evangelicals has increased both among the “committed” (from 42% to 74%) and among the “others” (from 30% to 49%). This trend has been especially pronounced since the mid-1980s.⁴ In addition, the

² See Andrew Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide. Religion’s Changing Role in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

³ In 1987 the percentage was 19%. See Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide* [see footnote 2], p. 4.

⁴ See Clyde Wilcox, *God’s Warriors. The Christian Right in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Lyman Kellstedt et al., “Grasping

¹ See Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation. Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzepts* (Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus, 1988).

percentage of Republican voters among Catholics has doubled among the “committed” as well as among “others.”

In addition to denomination membership, the depth of personal belief and degree of activism are important indicators of ideology and political behavior. “Committed” or practicing members distinguish themselves from “others” through factors such as frequency of churchgoing and prayer, the exceptional role faith plays in their everyday life and adherence to traditional credos such as the belief in heaven and hell.⁵ Committed congregation members generally display more conservative political outlooks and have a markedly higher affinity to the Republican Party. In contrast, the less committed tend to prefer the Democratic Party.

The president’s campaign strategists have taken notice of this connection. The head of these strategists, Karl Rove, enjoys the President’s trust. “First of all”, emphasizes Rove, “there is a huge gap among people of faith. [...] You saw it in the 2000 exit polling, where people who went to church on a frequent and regular basis voted overwhelmingly for Bush. They form an important part of the Republican base.”⁶

Accordingly, the self-image and self-confidence of Christian Right⁷ political strategists such as Gary Bauer, President of the organization American Values,

the Essentials. The Social Embodiment of Religion and Political Behavior,” in: John Green et al. (eds.), *Religion and the Culture Wars: Dispatches from the Front* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).

⁵ Kohut et al. developed this distinction by adding the aforementioned factors to a total index. See Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide* [see footnote 2], p. 164.

⁶ Quoted in: Nicholas Lemann, “The Controller. Karl Rove is Working to Get George Bush Reelected, But He Has Bigger Plans,” *New Yorker*, May 12, 2003, p. 81.

⁷ The academic literature differentiates “new conservatism’s two varieties.” The more intellectual “neo-conservatism” à la Irving Kristol—formerly left-wing thinkers who converted to the Right—as well as the conservatism of the “Religious Right,” synonymously referred to as the “Christian Right.” Both were interpreted as “reactions to drastic and rapid social, economic, demographic, domestic and foreign policy changes in the 1960s and 1970s.” Both varieties of the “newer conservatism” are distinguished from the “older conservatives” (who used to be called “Rockefeller Republicans”) who are mainly attached to economic interests. See Peter Lösche, “Thesen zum amerikanischen Konservatismus,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B49 (December 1982), pp. 37–45. Michael Minkenberg also sheds light on “newer conservative groups and movements in the context of social and cultural change:” Michael Minkenberg, *Neokonservatismus und Neue Rechte in den USA* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1990).

is highly developed: “The [label Christian Right] to some in the liberal media is almost a cursed word, but it is an accurate description. Really, it is nothing more than people who regularly attend church and who are politically conservative and that is a fairly significant portion of the American population and it is a major percentage of the Republican vote. [...] People who attend church once a week or more frequently voted overwhelmingly Republican. And people who seldom or never attended church voted overwhelmingly for Al Gore. So it is a very big dividing line in American politics.”⁸

Empirical regression analyses—which illustrate the specific influence of distinct factors—show that in the U.S., “the influence of religious affiliation on voting behavior is substantial, rivaling that of demographic factors such as income and education.”⁹ A historical review reveals (see Figure 2, p. 31) that religious factors have increasingly been influencing Americans’ voting behavior since the 1980s.

According to a national poll in 1994, 38% of registered voters indicated that their religious beliefs were the main criteria when casting their ballot. Republicans (47%) and people from the South (47%) in particular identified this religious motivation for their votes.¹⁰

In the absence of massive economic problems and a severe deterioration of living conditions, religiously motivated moral issues are likely to play a decisive role in the November 2004 elections: Asked to choose between a candidate who is trusted to improve the economy but who does not share their moral views and a candidate who is not trusted to improve the economy but with whom they agree on moral issues, 55% of Republicans and only 38% of Democrats would vote for a candidate with moral competence.¹¹ In a November 2003 survey, about half (48%) of the Republicans or leaning Republicans mentioned that religion is an important factor influencing their voting decisions—compared with only 28% of Democrats.¹²

⁸ Interview J. B. with Gary Bauer, President, American Values, July 22, 2003.

⁹ See Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide* [see footnote 2], pp. 86–87.

¹⁰ See Tarrance Group and Mellman, *Lazarus & Lake for U.S. News and World Report*, March 1994 opinion poll, quoted in: Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide* [see footnote 2], p. 63.

¹¹ Opinion poll, conducted November 14–16, 2003 among registered voters. See David Moore, “Poll Suggests Close Race in 2004,” *Gallup-Analysis*, November 25, 2003.

¹² See Albert Winseman, “Bringing Faith into the Voting Booth: Part II,” *Gallup-Analysis*, December 16, 2003.

According to a Gallup poll conducted in March 2004, religion will be a decisive factor for two-thirds (64%) of registered voters in America.¹³ White Evangelical Protestants are especially keen to vote and 70% of them identify themselves as Republicans (23% as Democrats and 6% as Independents). White Evangelical Protestants are likely to remain an important Republican constituency: 74% of them indicated that they are going to vote for George W. Bush in the November presidential election. Senator Kerry's prospective share appears relatively small: Only one out of four (23%) white Evangelical Protestants stated that they would vote for him in November.¹⁴

Some conservative observers have looked at the other side of the political aisle, the "unreligious left", and seen a "party of irreligion", a "secularist party."¹⁵ In fact, there is a secularizing trend among Democrats, which can be explained as a political reaction to the increasing clout of Evangelicals.¹⁶

Thus, on both sides of the political spectrum there are centrifugal forces at work, which cause both parties to distance themselves from each other ideologically, thereby polarizing American society. E. J. Dionne, Jr., an expert and longtime observer of religion and politics in the U.S., sums it up writing: "Up in heaven, Abe Lincoln must be shaking his head in astonishment. The country he sought to keep united is pulling apart politically, and largely along the same lines that defined Honest Abe's election victory in 1860."¹⁷ The driving force of polarization on the right end of the political spectrum are organizations of the Christian Right, which pushed the core group of Evangelicals to become politically active.

The Christian Right as a Driving Force of Political Realignment

It is important to note that into the 1960s many of the devout shunned politicking—indeed to this day, many Evangelicals are still wary. However, the Supreme Court decision on abortion (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973) and the questioning of tax benefits for Christian schools in 1978 politicized many faithful.¹⁸ Furthermore, in the 1970s and 1980s, the emergence of feminist political activism, the gay rights movement, civil rights activists and environmentalists mobilized those who perceived a threat to traditional values. In this environment, political activism among Evangelical Protestants has become religiously acceptable.

The Christian Right's political affiliation with Republicans has only evolved over time.¹⁹ Communism provided for a common enemy for the Religious Right and Republicans. It was considered to be an external threat to national security and also viewed as a secular counter-ideology to the "American way of life." Moreover, the United States seemed to be threatened by a domestic enemy: In the eyes of the Christian Right liberalism was seen as the source of the inherent decadence of a hedonistic American society.

The dissolution of Roosevelt's New Deal Coalition, first and foremost the dealignment of Evangelical Protestants, and to a certain degree Catholic voters' joining forces with the Republicans, is one of the main reasons for Democrats' losing political ground since the 1960s.²⁰ This dealignment occurred at an accelerated pace in the South.

¹³ See Linda Lyons, "Political and Religious Convictions," *Gallup-Analysis*, March 2, 2004.

¹⁴ The general share between Bush and Kerry was 46:43. According to a poll, March 16–April 4, 2004; see Anna Greenberg and Jennifer Berkold, "Evangelicals in America," *Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly*, April 5, 2004, Questionnaire, p. 13.

¹⁵ See Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio, "Our Secularist Democratic Party," *Public Interest*, Fall 2002. See also Geoffrey Layman, *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹⁶ See Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide* [see footnote 2], pp. 89–90.

¹⁷ See E. J. Dionne, Jr., "One Nation Deeply Divided," *Washington Post*, November 7, 2003, p. A31.

¹⁸ See Byron Shafer and William Claggett, *The Two Majorities. The Issue Context of Modern American Politics* (Baltimore et al.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Geoffrey Layman, "Culture Wars in the American Party System. Religious and Cultural Change among Partisan Activists since 1972," *American Politics Quarterly*, no. 27 (1999), pp. 89–121.

¹⁹ For instance, 1976 Democratic contender Jimmy Carter, himself a Southern Evangelical, succeeded in gaining the sympathy and votes of the Religious Right, and defeated the incumbent Republican President Gerald Ford. Contrary to the expectations of Evangelicals, however, Carter boosted women's civil liberties, even tolerated "feminist excesses," and, from the Christian Right's perspective, failed to thwart "moral decadence" and "Godless communism," and finally did not side resolutely enough with Israel. People even made efforts to "pray him out of his office."

²⁰ The "New Deal Coalition" existed until the 1960s and, in addition to Catholics, Jews, black and Mainline Protestants, included Evangelicals. See Lyman Kellstedt and Mark Noll, *Religion, Voting for President, and Party Identification, 1948–1984*,

Several driving forces caused this reorientation:²¹ First, after World War II, many African Americans living in the countryside in the South began migrating to the Northeast in search of jobs and, generally speaking, a better life. Conversely, many Whites were lured to the South by promising economic development. In protest against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, numerous “Dixiecrats,” conservative Southern Democrats who were in favor of racial segregation, changed sides to the Republican camp.

In the past few decades, the Republican party has been able to make significant inroads into the so-called Bible Belt in the South—the region with the largest population of Evangelicals. Today, the Evangelical strongholds are in the rural South and to a certain degree in the Midwest among older, somewhat less educated citizens. However, contrary to what might be expected, income is not a factor that distinguishes Evangelicals from other segments of the population. (See Table 2, p. 29.)

A more in-depth analysis of case studies—South Carolina, Virginia, Texas, Florida, Michigan, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington, Maine²²—, individual states where the Christian Right has been “in contention”, allows one to come to the following conclusions: The Christian Right is strongest in the South—in South Carolina, Virginia, Texas, and Florida—and has evolved into an established, even dominant part of the Republican Party organizations in those states. The Christian Right is also very influential in the Midwest and plays a prominent role in the Republican Party organizations in Michigan, Iowa, Kansas, and Minnesota.²³

It is important to note that Florida, Michigan, Iowa, and Minnesota are so-called “battleground states”,

in: Mark Noll (ed.), *Religion and American Politics. From the Colonial Period to the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

²¹ For more information see John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation. Conservative Power in America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

²² John Green, Mark Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox, *The Christian Right in American Politics. Marching to the Millennium* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–7. According to John Persinos, the Christian Right is the dominant faction in 18 state-level Republican Party organizations and a strong faction in 13 other states. See John Persinos, “Has the Christian Right Taken Over the Republican Party?,” *Campaigns & Elections* (September 1994), p. 23. See also Mark Rozell and Clyde Wilcox (eds.), *God at the Grass Roots. The Christian Right in the 1994 Elections* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995).

hotly contested states in presidential elections,²⁴ where every vote counts and where the Christian Right’s organization and mobilization of potential voters can decide victory or defeat. (For more information see pp. 11ff.)

The Republicans and the Christian Right: A Pragmatic Symbiotic Relationship

“If the GOP needs religious conservatives, the converse is true as well: Evangelicals, social-issue conservatives, and particularly the Christian Right need the Republican Party. Religious conservatives are most effective when they participate in a broader conservative coalition, and the Republican Party is the most accessible institution for this purpose.”²⁵ This pragmatic understanding lays the groundwork for the symbiotic relationship between the Republican Party and the grassroots organizations of the Christian Right.

The Christian Right has moved from its marginal position in society into the center of political power struggles. Two-thirds (65%) of Americans see Evangelicals as part of the mainstream, and 60% think they have influenced American society.²⁶

For their part, 72% of Evangelicals believe that they have managed to change society. Seven out of ten are also convinced that they can influence the Bush Administration. This perception is very important for the Christian Right to remain politically active and to align with Republicans: Evangelicals who believe to have “a lot” of influence on the Bush Administration, are also among the strongest supporters for the incumbent in the upcoming elections.²⁷

This development caps a long and winding learning process both for Republican strategists and for the Christian Right, which led it from fundamentalist sectarianism to political pragmatism. Political figures enjoying religious authority and deep respect among Evangelicals, such as Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell,

²⁴ For a more detailed discussion of “battleground states” see Charlie Cook, “The Cook Report—Great Lakes Will See Plenty of Bush, Kerry,” *National Journal*, February 14, 2004.

²⁵ See John Green et al., “Murphy Brown Revisited. The Social Issues in the 1992 Election,” in: Michael Cromartie (ed.), *Disciples and Democracy. Religious Conservatives and the Future of American Politics* (Washington, DC/Grand Rapids, MI: Ethics and Public Policy Center/Erdmans Publishing, 1994), p. 64.

²⁶ See Greenberg and Berkold, “Evangelicals in America” [see footnote 14], p. 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Franklin Graham, James Dobson, Paul Weyrich, Gary Bauer or Ralph Reed, to name but the most prominent—yet who are not very well-known in the general population,²⁸ gave the abstract concept of the “Christian Right” a higher profile and cohesion by creating organizations and networks on the grassroots level.

Organizations of the Religious Right

Already in the early 1970s, Paul Weyrich, a Catholic, was developing strategies to bring together various denominations together into a political ecumenical movement. At a meeting in Lynchburg, Virginia organized by Reverend Jerry Falwell in 1979, Weyrich proposed organizing a moral majority in America. The “Moral Majority” was thus christened as a movement across denominational lines seeking to engage itself politically on the basis of a common issue platform: “pro-life, pro-family, pro-traditional moral, pro-America and pro-Israel.” As a result, abortion was no longer an issue just for Evangelicals or Catholics. From the viewpoint of this political, faith-based alliance, abortion had become a moral issue that cut across denominational lines. In the words of Jerry Falwell, the “Moral Majority” did not see itself as a purely Christian organization but was willing to cooperate with anyone “who shared our views on the family and abortion, strong national defense, and Israel.”²⁹ Thus the Christian, or rather Religious Right occupied key political territory.

In the late 1970s, only about half of the Evangelicals were registered voters (the average percentage of registered voters in the total population was slightly more than 70%). In order to mobilize the enormous potential of approximately 60-70 million voters, the churches became involved in voter registration initiatives. It paid off: Today, white Evangelical Protestants are even more active than the average population in America: More Evangelicals are registered to vote (82% versus 77% of the national average), and white Evangelicals are more active voters: 65% (versus 61% of the national average)

²⁸ “Evangelicals think very highly of their leaders”—such is the finding of an opinion poll among Evangelicals (March 16 to April 4, 2004). See *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁹ Quoted in: Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters. Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001), p. 193.

indicated that they had cast their votes in the two recent elections in 2000 and 2002.³⁰

Even though, the Moral Majority vanished as an organization, the idea of cultivating a moral majority has been passed on to a new set of politically even more active professional organizations.³¹ (See Table 3, p. 30.)

The following grassroots organizations, political action committees (PACs), think tanks and interest groups of the Christian Right are very active in election campaigns and the legislative process. Their importance is reflected in the fact that the office of powerful Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay gives them a great deal of attention.³²

The **Christian Coalition** represents according to own estimates two million believers spread across all 50 states, organized in over 1,500 chapters. Under the leadership of Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition evolved into one of the most powerful organizations of the Christian Right. In addition to usual domestic policy hot buttons like abortion, judicial nominations and pornography, the Christian Coalition also devotes itself increasingly to foreign policy issues. It fights for worldwide “rights of religious freedom” and is a very active advocate of Israel. (The salience of Israel for the Christian Right will be discussed in more detail below, see pp. 19ff.)

Gary Bauer’s³³ organization **American Values** also leaves no doubt about how close Israel is to the Christian Right’s heart.³⁴ In the 1990s, The People’s Republic of China haunted Gary Bauer’s worldview “as the world’s gravest threat to American values and national security.”³⁵ In Bauer’s estimation, the Clinton Administration’s China policy was one of the greatest failures of American foreign policy in the last century. To correct these life-threatening mistakes, Bauer

³⁰ Greenberg and Berkold, “Evangelicals in America” [see footnote 14], p. 14.

³¹ For an overview of the Christian Right’s network and its key operatives in the 1980s and 1990s see Michael Minkenberg, “Die Christliche Rechte und die amerikanische Politik von der ersten bis zur zweiten Bush-Administration,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B 46 (2003), pp. 24–26.

³² Interview J. B. with Deana Funderburk, Policy Analyst, Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX), July 16, 2003.

³³ Gary Bauer was already part of the Reagan administration as Head of the Office of Policy Development and Reagan’s advisor on domestic policy issues.

³⁴ See website of American Values (http://www.ouramericanvalues.org/issues_foreign.htm), accessed on November 4, 2003.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

demanded that the special bilateral trade relations (Most Favored Nation, MFN-Status) be discontinued and that China be expelled from the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In 1996, Bauer founded the second largest political action committee (PAC) in the U.S., the **Campaign for Working Families PAC**. According to his own estimate, Bauer was able to raise seven million dollars from over 90,000 individual donors in the first two years alone. These funds were used to support the campaigns of like-minded conservative candidates. For the November 2004 presidential election, the PAC has earmarked the resources for hotly contested Mid-western states.

In 1983, James Dobson founded the **Family Research Council (FRC)**. Gary Bauer, who had been aboard from the outset, became the organization's president in 1988. In the ten years up to his presidential candidacy, he turned the three-man operation with an annual budget of one million dollars into one of the biggest think tanks in Washington, D.C. Under the leadership of Tony Perkins, the FRC today employs 120 staff members, and the annual budget is 14 million dollars. Kristin Hansen, Media Director of the FRC, describes her organization as "a lobbying voice for families and also a research tool for members of Congress and others who are seeking to defend the family and are looking for research to support their convictions."³⁶ With the "American Renewal" the FRC added a so-called "legislative action arm" to ensure that the think tank's policy recommendations would be put into practice and established the tax law basis for doing so. Hansen emphasized that the FRC had a voice in President Bush's 15 billion dollar initiative to fight AIDS/HIV in Africa: "As an organization, we were instrumental in actually being a kind of speed bump in the road of that getting passed, because we wanted to make sure that a certain percentage of that was going towards prevention efforts."³⁷ Ever since opponents of abortion have become convinced that the Global Fund had used funding to support forced abortion and sterilization in China, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has also been the focus of the FRC's criticism. (See below, pp. 21ff.)

Focus on the Family, James Dobson's other organization, with an annual budget of approximately 130 million dollars (2000) is the most financially powerful

organization of the Christian Right. In addition to a training center, Dobson also oversees a media empire: his television churches being his "televangelism's" most effective instruments. In Colorado Springs, approximately 1,300 staff members provide, in nine languages on a daily basis, 100 television channels and 3,000 radio stations worldwide with the audio(visual) "Gospel" of Doctor Dobson. American citizens are urged to support "pro-family" candidates in primaries and elections; with regard to foreign policy, the focus is on the "Chinese threat" and the protection of those persecuted for religious reasons.

As a reaction to the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling on abortion in 1973 the **National Right to Life Committee (NRLC)** was founded. With over 3,000 local chapters in all 50 states, the NRLC is the largest "lobby for unborn life." All political activity is coordinated by the **NRL Political Action Committee** with the aim of helping to get "pro-life" candidates elected. As a "single-issue" organization the NRLC's foreign and domestic policy focuses are exclusively the issue of abortion, and it does not address other questions of sexuality and morality.³⁸

The organization **Concerned Women for America (CWA)** considers itself to be America's "largest public policy women's organization." Through "prayer and activism" it seeks to help 500,000 female and like-minded male members "to bring Biblical principles into all levels of public policy."³⁹ The CWA possesses a network of experts and activists in small towns and big cities all over America, organized into 500 regional groups. The daily radio show "Concerned Women Today" is broadcast nationally by 75 stations. It reaches an estimated audience of over one million listeners a week. Before elections, "nonpartisan voter guides" help voters identify the candidates who support policies in line with CWA's agenda. The CWA's foreign policy focus is on "religious persecution and forced abortions" in China, freedom of worship rights "in the United States and other nations" and America's sovereignty, which is threatened in CWA's view by the United Nations.⁴⁰

The **Eagle Forum** is a small grassroots organization highly regarded in conservative circles because of its pioneering role in fighting "excessive feminism." The Eagle Forum has according to its own estimates 80,000

³⁶ Interview J. B. with Kristin Hansen, Media Director, Family Research Council (FRC), July 11, 2003.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ See Mission Statement of NRLC: (<http://www.nrlc.org/Missionstatement.htm>), accessed on November 13, 2003.

³⁹ See website: (<http://www.cwfa.org/about.asp>), accessed on November 6, 2003.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

members in 45 chapters. The **Eagle Forum Political Action Committee** is a lobby for “traditional family values” and for national sovereignty: “We oppose all encroachments against American sovereignty through treaties (such as the International Criminal Court) and United Nations conferences.”⁴¹ The organization also encourages its members to speak out against any bills normalizing bilateral trade relations with China (MFN-Status). Critical Congressional votes are monitored and made public through “scoreboards”: “We score a number of those[...]so that Representatives and Senators know, that their constituents will see exactly how they voted.”⁴² This personal voting record of Congressmen will eventually prove significant when they run for reelection.

Electoral Strategy for the Christian Base

On March 27, 2002, President Bush signed the campaign finance reform bill into law. The law is the most fundamental rewriting of the political rulebook in the U.S. since the 1970s. It seems that the reform has given the motivated special interest groups, especially large organizations with strong ideological and political motivation, considerable influence in campaigns and thus in political opinion-shaping and decision-making in general.⁴³ A number of individuals with strong convictions are needed who are willing to put their money where their mouths are, and organizations are needed to collect and channel these funds. The Christian Right’s network is a perfect example of such organizations.

In the last Congressional election campaign in 2001/2002, the parties were able to raise half a billion dollars in “soft money”: large donations from wealthy individuals, companies, unions and other interest groups. The new law prohibits parties from raising or spending this type of funding on the national level. This massive restriction of previously unlimited soft money (often in the millions of dollars) as an important funding source will further reduce the national party organizations’ potential power, which in the

American system is already weak. Only if the parties can adapt will they be able to take advantage of the new legislation. They must now establish organizational structures suitable for raising many small donations, so-called “hard money”, on the grassroots level. Individuals may donate up to 2,000 dollars directly to a specific candidate or up to 25,000 dollars to a political party. This arrangement gives the organizations of the Christian Right more opportunities to bring their “family values” into the political process.

Under the new rules, external organizations, including those of the Christian Right, with the capability to collect and channel individual donations gain more influence on both the local and party organizational level. Most prominent in this context are the political action committees (PACs). The Christian Right organizations are prepared: Lori Waters, Executive Director of the Eagle Forum, which also underwrites the activities of the Eagle Forum PAC, is convinced that “the campaign finance bill and law actually put PACs back on the playing field.”⁴⁴ Gary Bauer’s Campaign for Working Families or the National Right to Life Committee also wield their PAC power, and the Christian Coalition is also preparing to create a PAC.

The Campaign Finance Reform in 2002 reinforced a development, which had been initiated three decades ago: The regulations of campaign financing in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal had already contributed considerably to the Christian Right’s possibilities for political organization.⁴⁵ Both the number and size of donations to PACs rapidly increased—especially those of the Christian Right, spearheaded by the National Conservative Political Action Committee, the National Congressional Club and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress—later renamed as the Free Congress PAC.⁴⁶

Already in the 1970s, the pioneers of the Christian Right communicated with sympathizers via “direct mail” channels. The most recent campaign finance reform also restricts advertising via radio and television, another factor leading campaign strategists to focus on “individual mass communication.”

Target group specific means of communication which reaches the desired audience with a good deal

⁴¹ See website: (<http://www.eagleforum.org/misc/descript.html>), accessed on November 5, 2003.

⁴² Interview J. B. with Lori Waters, Executive Director, Eagle Forum, July 14, 2003.

⁴³ For more information see Josef Braml, *From Softball to Hardball? Die Reform der Wahlkampffinanzierung in den USA*, SWP-Aktuell 14/02 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, May 2002).

⁴⁴ Interview J. B. with Lori Waters, Executive Director, Eagle Forum, July 14, 2003.

⁴⁵ See Michael Minckenberg, *Neokonservatismus und Neue Rechte in den USA* [see footnote 7], pp. 112–113.

⁴⁶ See Larry Sabato, *PAC Power. Inside the World of Political Action Committees* (New York/London: Norton, 1985).

of precision, such as direct mail appeals or email, are very suitable for cost-effectively mobilizing the (religious) voter base and for raising campaign funds.

Experts like Anthony Corrado welcome this development as a democratization of campaign finance, since the power of small donors has increased.⁴⁷ For instance, many Democrats are using the Internet to complain about George W. Bush's track record. They also put their money where their mouths are. Modern communication tools enabled challenger John Kerry to somewhat catch up to the Republicans' traditional advantage in raising funds. Kerry's wellspring of new funding consisted primarily of individual contributions made over the Internet.⁴⁸

Republicans are also seeking to broaden and mobilize their (especially religious) base of individual donors with the help of the Internet. Another advantage lies in the fact that the exclusive, relatively individualized messages directed to the religious base does not alienate more moderate voters or help one's opponents to mobilize its own base, as had been the case with earlier, broader campaigns on television.

In the meantime, the Christian Right presents with Ralph Reed a youthful, moderate face. Reed is the pragmatic head of the Christian Right, Republican Party chief in Georgia and campaign advisor to George W. Bush. He explains the new strategy as follows: "This is the first time I know of that an incumbent president has undertaken a true grass-roots effort that penetrates precincts and neighborhoods instead of relying entirely on image and media."⁴⁹

In sum, the Christian Right's organizational network at the grassroots is helpful in two key respects: providing financial resources and directly mobilizing voters in the permanent campaign.

⁴⁷ Quoted in: Linda Feldmann, "In Politics, the Rise of Small Donors," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 28, 2004.

⁴⁸ See Thomas Edsall, "Kerry Breaks Bush Record for Pace of Fundraising," *Washington Post*, June 17, 2004, p. A1; Jim VandeHei and Thomas Edsall, "Democrats Outraising the GOP This Year. But Republicans Still Have Financial Lead," *Washington Post*, July 21, 2004, p. A1.

⁴⁹ Richard Stevenson and Adam Nagourney, "Bush '04 Ready for One Democrat, Not 10," *New York Times*, September 29, 2003. For more information on the so-called "ground war" in election campaigns see J. Quin Monson, "Get On Television vs. Get On the Van: GOTV and the Ground War in 2002," in: David Magleby and J. Quin Monson (eds.), *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), pp. 90-116.

The Continuous Campaign

In comparison to their European counterparts, U.S. political parties have an institutionally weak position. In political campaigns, a Representative or Senator is less seen as a member of a political party, but as an individual political entrepreneur, whom interest groups finance and define to a large degree based on his or her personal voting record. Well organized interest groups representing a multitude of members have a strong voice in the political debate and policy-making through their efforts to bundle funding and mobilize voters.

Issue ad campaigns, which are also run by religiously motivated PACs and other organizations of the Christian Right, are another important political tool that has an impact on both election campaigns and policy-making. Another especially effective means of influencing the legislative process and reelection are "scorecards" and "voter guides." Like many other organizations, the Christian Coalition, the most prominent Christian Right organization, takes great pains to inform its members about the voting behavior of individual Members of Congress. Accompanying a scorecard distributed during the last campaign in Fall 2002, the "How to Use This Scorecard" read: "Christian Coalition is distributing millions of these scorecards across the nation so that pro-family Americans will know how their federal legislators voted on issues of importance. [...] The future of our families depends on concerned citizens like you getting involved. Remember to vote November 5th!"⁵⁰ The voter "informed" with the help of a scorecard can draw his or her own conclusions based upon a scale from 0% to 100% about who was a 100% supporter or even forerunner of the good cause.

This external influence plays a significant role, especially in Congressional elections. Representatives and Senators in the U.S. act like individual entrepreneurs and are not subject to party discipline, but also cannot hide behind it. The individual Congressman is constantly in danger of being attacked for his policies during high profile campaigns and being held personally responsible when running for reelection. He or she thus carefully considers how each vote could affect him or her in the next elections. For example, when the UNFPA (the financing of the World Population Fund, in more detail below, pp. 21ff) came to a vote, the Eagle Forum was but one Christian Right

⁵⁰ Quote of original "Scorecard."

grassroots organization that presented representatives with a dilemma of conscience: “The UNFPA vote will be tomorrow”, explained Eagle Forum Executive Director Lori Waters. “So we do this alert and it gets emailed out to all of our members and to anyone else who signs up for it on the website and it tells them to call their representative today: ‘The vote is going to be extremely close, so urge your representative to vote for this amendment.’” The Eagle Forum will publicize the representative’s vote on a “scoreboard”, Lori Waters continued: “When Congressmen and Senators see that they are on a list they start paying attention and note that they have to take some sort of position.”⁵¹

These issue campaigns carried out by a multitude of interest groups, grassroots organizations and advocacy think tanks of the Christian Right are well orchestrated and coordinated via networks in order to improve the political leverage in the process of political decision-making and to reduce potential counter-productive effects, which may endanger the cohesion of the Republican electoral coalition.

⁵¹ Interview J. B. with Lori Waters, Executive Director, Eagle Forum, July 14, 2003.

Issues and Networks of the Religious Right

What are the main political requirements for Republicans and the Christian Right to maintain political power? It has always been and will remain a particular challenge for party strategists to integrate the Christian Right without jeopardizing party cohesion, given that the purpose is to be an umbrella for a broad spectrum of Republicans, from those with morally and economically libertarian outlooks to the morally conservative pole. That succeeds only when the focus remains on unifying economic and foreign policy, especially national security issues in the fight against terrorism. Domestic culture wars over politically tricky issues such as abortion need to be limited and moved into a foreign policy context, especially since foreign policy battles have become more promising and less risky for the cohesion of the political camp. Diverse and diverging issue positions are coordinated and harmonized through networks.

Domestic Agenda

Issues dealing with sexual morality such as abortion or homosexuality make it difficult to find a common political denominator. If the electoral platform moves, for example, too close to the position of strict pro-life activists, people with a less rigid pro-life or even pro-choice attitude may feel alienated. The issue of gay marriage or civil unions is close to the heart of gay, morally libertarian Republicans. The “culture war” of “true believers” against “modernity” pushes away libertarians who are primarily interested in economic matters.⁵² In fact, those who had hoped that Bill Clinton’s sexual escapades would lead to electoral gains for Evangelicals and Republicans were bitterly disappointed. On the contrary, the witch hunt against Clinton alienated many moderate Republicans and proved to be an unintended boost for the Left to mobilize its voters. After this disappointment, Paul Weyrich, one of the leading strategic thinkers of the Christian Right, even declared that the “culture war”

⁵² Duane Murray Oldfield, *The Right and the Righteous. The Christian Right Confronts the Republican Party* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1996).

was lost and that the goal of a “moral majority” was beyond reach.⁵³

These experiences led Republicans and leaders of the Christian Right to act more pragmatically, engaging in legislative battles more carefully and one at a time. For instance, President Bush scaled down further expectations after he succeeded in signing the so-called “partial birth abortion ban”⁵⁴ pointing out that Americans were not yet ready for a comprehensive ban on abortions. For George W. Bush, this partial legislative victory is politically less dangerous than a comprehensive ban on abortion, because partial birth abortion is widely reviled by the general public. In the words of a Republican Congressional staffer: “This has perhaps been the most successful pro-life issue in the past decade, in terms of both mobilization of the rank and file and PR. [...] It’s one of those issues that rallies the base but doesn’t alienate the center.”⁵⁵ An uncompromising position in the ongoing debate on abortion would risk moderate voters and endanger the cohesion of the electoral coalition.

There is a consensus among Republicans in favor of reducing the government sector. “Defunding the government” is the common denominator: Economically libertarian Republicans believe in the unseen hand of the market. For many born-again Christians and devout Evangelicals, personal weaknesses and immoral behavior are the causes of economic failure in this world. The idea of social welfare does not figure prominently in their thinking.

The moral network is thus linked to economic policy: Grover Norquist, President of Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) and who is also close to Karl Rove, organizes in his offices in downtown Washington a

⁵³ See Paul Weyrich, “Separate and Free,” *Washington Post*, March 7, 1999, p. B7.

⁵⁴ The so-called “Partial-Birth Abortion Ban” outlaws an abortion procedure which kills the fetus when the upper body is already outside of the woman’s womb. The bill, entitled the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, was signed into law by President Bush on November 5, 2003 (P.L. 108-105, 117 Stat. 1201).

⁵⁵ Quoted in: Linda Feldmann, “The Impact, and Limits, of Abortion Bill. Passed by the Senate, a ‘Partial-Birth’ Ban May Satisfy Conservatives—Yet Still Be Struck Down,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 23, 2003.

weekly “Wednesday Meeting” with 100 to 150 legislative and executive decision-makers as well as interest groups and grassroots organizations to discuss principally fiscal and foreign policy. Chairman and CEO of the Free Congress Foundation Paul Weyrich’s “Lunch Meeting”, with approximately 70 participants, also takes place on Wednesdays near Capitol Hill; and focuses on moral issues of social policy, national security and other foreign policy themes. The meetings are timed so that participants of one can also attend the other. Representatives of the aforementioned organizations of the Christian Right are key players. Norquist’s and Weyrich’s networks operate on the edge of the political playing field but also get directly involved in discussions in the central decision-making mechanisms. Conversely, the leading lights of the legislative and executive participate in these Wednesday meetings to bounce around tactics for pending bills or to discuss the team make up for future campaigns and present political newcomers from their own ranks.

Policy-making within the legislative branch is also organized through networks of people with similar beliefs or interests. Because of the institutional weakness of political parties, networks, informal groups, so-called caucuses or congressional member organizations, have a prominent, central role in the legislative process.⁵⁶ Caucuses can have bipartisan impact or strengthen certain alliances within a party. Belonging to such groups is an important point of orientation for voters and interest groups: “When we need votes”, explains business lobbyist Jeffrey DeBoer, “we don’t have to start from scratch. We have a ready base of support.” Or “one-stop shopping”, as business professionals likes to call it.⁵⁷ The party leadership also appreciates these groups’ predictability when it comes to gauging and forging majorities for specific Congressional votes.

Morally and fiscally conservative congressmen are very well organized. One of the most influential groups in Congress is the 85 member Republican Study Committee (RSC) in the House of Representatives. Until the mid-1990s, it was headed by current

Majority Leader Tom DeLay—in cooperation with Jim Backlin, now Chief Lobbyist of the Christian Coalition. Moral values are held high and the group considers itself the “conservative conscience” of the Republican Party.⁵⁸ The proximity to leadership in the House of Representatives enables the RSC to play an important role, especially when mediating between economically libertarian/socially liberal and morally conservative party members.

The morally conservative Representatives, numbering about 40, have joined together in the Value Action Team (VAT). Headed by Representative Joseph Pitts, the VAT mediates and coordinates the positions of various interest groups, think tanks and other external actors in the legislative process. According to Eagle Forum’s Lori Waters, 30 to 40 organizations, especially those of the Christian Right, regularly participate in this informal network. Conversely, the political leadership in the House of Representatives can muster support on the grassroots level to influence morally charged issues in its favor.⁵⁹

The recently established counterpart in the Senate is headed by Senator Sam Brownback.⁶⁰ Here, too, like-minded Senators or their senior staff members meet on a weekly basis to coordinate their legislative work with religious interest groups. Senior staffers of the House of Representatives are also team, to better coordinate the activities in both chambers. Senator Sam Brownback and Representative Joseph Pitts compare notes regularly and hold weekly briefings for their respective groups in the Senate and the House about upcoming issues and positions.⁶¹

The network’s influence reaches all the way to the Senate leadership. “We have a good relationship with [Majority Leader] Frist’s office”, Kristin Hansen, Media Director of the Family Research Council, confirms. “And he appointed a staff member, who was formerly very instrumental within the Values Action Team, so that indicates to us that Bill Frist recognizes the importance of the social conservatives within the Repub-

⁵⁶ See for example Charles Caldwell, “Government by Caucus: Informal Legislative Groups in an Era of Congressional Reform,” *Journal of Law and Politics*, no. 5 (1989), pp. 625–655.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey DeBoer, President and Chief Operating Officer of the Real Estate Roundtable; quoted in: Alan Ota, “Caucuses Bring New Muscle to Legislative Battlefield,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, September 27, 2003, pp. 2334ff.

⁵⁸ Alan Ota, “Republican Study Committee Revels in Conservative Clout,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, September 27, 2003, p. 2338.

⁵⁹ Interview J. B. with Lori Waters, Executive Director, Eagle Forum, July 14, 2003.

⁶⁰ Interview J. B. with Cindy Diggs, Legislative Assistant, Representative Joseph Pitts (R-PA), July 17, 2003.

⁶¹ Interview J. B. with Deana Funderburk, Policy Analyst, Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX), July 16, 2003.

lican Party.”⁶² The working groups on both sides of the Capitol consist of about one-third Congressional staffers and two-thirds external players: grassroots organizations, interest groups, lobbyists and think tanks.⁶³ These issue networks or advocacy coalitions have become increasingly concerned with foreign policy issues.

Foreign Policy Agenda

Moral positions play an increasingly noticeable role in foreign policy. By putting domestic hot issues such as AIDS/HIV or abortion on the political backburner and moving them in the foreign policy arena (more details will follow below, pp. 20ff), Republican strategists have provided the Christian Right with a wide political playing field, without running the risk of losing moderate voters. “The American electorate was split right down the middle on these cultural wars, and nobody was going to win them”, stated Richard Cizik, Director of the National Association of Evangelicals in Washington, to explain the strategic reorientation away from static warfare at the domestic front towards international fights. The new international efforts, according to Cizik, are “going gangbusters.”⁶⁴

In another aspect, foreign policy is an important means for establishing consensus—within the party’s own ranks and within the electoral coalition. Terrorism created a sense of threat, making it absolutely necessary to stand together in order to fight the external enemy.

The War in Iraq

For President Bush and his loyalists the call-to-arms against Iraq was only another battle in the long-term war against terrorism. Nonetheless, it was not clear before the military intervention whether Americans were ready to follow their Commander-in-Chief.⁶⁵

Americans did not unanimously stand by their president; they had widely differing viewpoints on Iraq: 84% of the President’s partisans supported a war, yet only 37% of Democrats were prepared to follow George W. Bush’s lead.⁶⁶

Given the lack of bipartisan support from the general public, George W. Bush had to rely even more on his “base.” Much depended on how he would prepare his charges so that they would follow him into battle against the Iraqi dictator. In order to accomplish this goal, George W. Bush linked the situation in Iraq with the existential threat posed to America by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists. Furthermore, he reminded his countrymen of America’s historic mission: “And we go forward with confidence, because this call of history has come to the right country. [...] Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity. We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not know—we do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history. May He guide us now. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.”⁶⁷

Especially after this State of the Union Address on January 28, 2003, which set the stage for war, white born-again Protestants gave the President a significantly higher job approval rating than the rest of the population did. (See Figure 3, p. 32.)

In Mid-February 2003, 59% of the American public approved of war, including 70% of those who identified themselves as “a member of the Religious Right.” Hence, in addition to party affiliation, the depth of religious belief was a solid indicator of support for the war: 62% of those Americans who deem religion to be “very important” in their lives supported the war,

⁶² Interview J. B. with Kristin Hansen, Media Director, Family Research Council (FRC), July 11, 2003.

⁶³ According to the assessment of Jim Backlin, Chief Lobbyist of the Christian Coalition of America; Interview J. B. with Jim Backlin, July 16, 2003.

⁶⁴ Quoted in: Nicholas Kristof, “The Evangelicals. International Aid, for Heaven’s Sake,” *International Herald Tribune*, May 22, 2002, p. 6.

⁶⁵ For more information on U.S. public opinion in the run-up to the Iraq war see Josef Braml, *Amerika vor dem Krieg*.

Welchen Rückhalt genießt die Bush-Administration in der eigenen Bevölkerung?, SWP-Aktuell 8/03 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Februar 2003), (http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?id=113).

⁶⁶ Gallup Opinion Poll, February 17–19, 2003. See Frank Newport, “Support for War Modestly Higher among More Religious Americans. Those Who Identify with the Religious Right Most Likely to Favor Military Action,” *Gallup News Service*, February 27, 2003.

⁶⁷ See George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 28, 2003, (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>)

compared with 49% of those for whom religion “is not very important.”⁶⁸

With his trailblazing State of the Union Speech, the Commander-in-Chief prepared his followers for war. This discourse, as much as it may baffle Europeans, has a calming effect on many of Bush’s countrymen. George W. Bush is not the first president to use such vocabulary to legitimize his actions and rally support. Especially in times of crisis—America has viewed itself as being at war since September 11, 2001—“historic” speeches by American presidents have used religious motifs to give meaning. Moreover, by employing such religious language, the President (and his head speech writer Michael Gerson)⁶⁹ reveals himself to the Evangelical Christians as one of their own.⁷⁰

This identity-giving discourse puts the “almost chosen by God” America (as Abraham Lincoln had already said) in the immediate proximity of the chosen people of Israel.

“A Common Destiny Shared by Jews and Christians”

By going after terrorists with “moral clarity”, President Bush’s followers view him as standing shoulder to shoulder with Israel—a crucial matter for the Christian Right and for the Jewish lobby. Before the historic events on September 11, even the Republican’s own ranks had several critical voices reminding the President and the public of the differences between Israel’s and America’s national interests every time America appeared too partisan in favor of Israel. Following the traumatic attacks on September 11, 2001, more Americans have emphasized the “shared destiny of Jews and Christians” seeking common security in the fight against terrorism.⁷¹ They feel exposed to the same hostilities and just as vulnerable as the Israelis in their own country.

Especially for Evangelical Christians, Israel’s well-being has become a matter of national security: “If we

68 Opinion poll, February 17–19, 2003; see Frank Newport, “Support for War Modestly Higher among More Religious Americans. Those Who Identify with the Religious Right Most Likely to Favor Military Action,” *Gallup News Service*, February 27, 2003.

69 Gerson has a degree in theology, and became versed in the scriptures at Wheaton College, among other places.

70 See also Joan Didion, “Mr. Bush & the Divine,” *New York Review of Books*, vol. 50, no. 17 (November 6, 2003).

71 See also Dana Allin and Steven Simon, “The Moral Psychology of US Support for Israel,” in: *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Fall 2003), pp. 123–144.

fail to protect Israel,” Jerry Falwell warned “we will cease to be important to God.”⁷² In a nutshell, this is what Falwell has been pointing out since the beginning of the 1980s as the “destiny shared by America and Israel.” Twenty years later, Republican Congressman Tom DeLay, a practicing Evangelical Christian from Texas and House Majority Leader, also stressed the “destiny shared by America and Israel.”⁷³

The Christian Right’s political engagement in the Middle East, particularly for the protection of Israel, is due to several factors. The traditionally anti-Semitic attitude of fundamentalist Christians has become unacceptable since the Holocaust. According to Grover Norquist, the influential Republican strategist, conservative Christians see their support for Israel as an opportunity to shed their intolerant image: “They’re tired of being branded anti-Semites.”⁷⁴

Another reason is that many Christian Zionists see the founding of the state of Israel as a sign of the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy: Jesus Christ will only reappear when Israel is anchored in its Old Testament boundaries. Only then is the stage set for Armageddon, the final struggle when “good” definitively vanquishes “evil.”⁷⁵

Even if one does not wish to follow this eschatology, Gary Bauer believes in the fundamental moral issue—which is easier for the general public to comprehend—concerning the struggle between good and evil: “Among Christian Zionists there is a very strong belief in what is called the Abrahamic Covenant.[⁷⁶] They would be upset over any land being given up for the promise of peace. But I think there is a bigger group of Christians whose opposition to giving up land would be based more on a moral idea rather than a religious idea, the moral idea being that you should not make concessions to bad guys.”⁷⁷

72 Ed Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and Edward Hindson (eds.), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon. The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1981), p. 215.

73 See Howard Fineman and Tamara Lipper, “A Very Mixed Marriage,” *Newsweek*, June 2, 2003.

74 Grover Norquist, quoted in: *ibid.*

75 For more detailed information on the Christian Right’s prophetic ideology and its relationship with Israel, see Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics. The Secret Alliance Between Israel and the U.S. Christian Right* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1989).

76 The term “Abrahamic Covenant” refers to God’s pact with Abraham and his descendents offering blessings and promise of land (Genesis 12, 15, 17).

77 Interview J. B. with Gary Bauer, President, American Values, July 22, 2003.

Elliott Abrams also stresses the importance of the Jewish Community learning to understand that “tomorrow’s lobby for Israel has got to be conservative Christians because there aren’t going to be enough Jews to do it.”⁷⁸ Elliott Abrams, in his capacity as Senior Director in the National Security Council (NSC) is responsible for Middle East policy issues. Before entering the Bush administration he headed the Center for Ethics and Public Policy (CEPP). The CEPP is a religious think tank that aims to reconcile the differences between Jews and conservative Christians. Abrams belongs to a core group of neo-conservative critics of the peace process for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Christian Right’s political interest in the Holy Land “has translated itself into a sharp increase in pro-Israel support in the last 10 years.”⁷⁹ In conjunction with the already powerful pro-Israeli lobby, the political influence of the Christian Right has markedly reduced the President’s room for maneuver in Middle East policy: “A U.S. Administration that wants to take a tough stance with Israel knows it will be automatically criticized, and perhaps undercut, by Congress.”⁸⁰

Christian Right leaders throw their entire political weight in the balance to ensure that Israel can deal with its terrorist threat in the same way that America can: “We feel that what has been called the Bush Doctrine on terrorism is very good. That is that you should never negotiate with terrorists, you should never make concessions to them, that any nation that harbors, subsidizes or in any way promotes terrorism is just as guilty as the terrorists are.”⁸¹

One example aptly illustrates the political pressure this lobby may exercise: In April 2002, Evangelical Christians were up in arms when President Bush gave the impression of putting the actions of the Israeli army in the West Bank on the same level with the Palestinian suicide bombings. Furthermore, they criticized Bush for not being vehement enough about removing Yasser Arafat. Even worse, he dared to send his Secretary of State Colin Powell to a meeting with

Arafat. “That was more than those of us who support Israel could take”, Gary Bauer recalled.⁸² The White House was subsequently bombarded with thousands of emails and letters. Gary Bauer, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and other Christian Right leaders orchestrated an urgent appeal to leave Sharon alone and drop Arafat. When Congressmen, Senators and neo-conservatives within the Bush administration and in sympathetic think tanks aired their displeasure as well, Ari Fleischer, then White House Spokesman, had no other choice but to call Sharon a “man of peace.”⁸³

The International Fight Against AIDS/HIV

In international AID/HIV policy, as well, the Christian Right engaged in massive lobbying and gained the attention of the President and his advisers: “Under previous Republican administrations, they would take our calls and often return them. [...] In this administration, they call us. They say, you know, ‘What do you think about this?’”⁸⁴

This became evident when the President presented his initiative to provide for 15 billion dollars, 10 billion of which was new funding,⁸⁵ to help the most affected African and Caribbean countries to reverse the trend of an ever increasing spread of the AIDS. “This nation can lead the world in sparing innocent people from a plague of nature,” George W. Bush declared in his State of the Union speech.⁸⁶

A closer look, however, reveals that pre-marriage abstinence figured very prominently in the aid package: one third of all bilateral help to prevent AIDS/HIV must be used for abstinence programs. It was Congressman Joseph Pitts (R-PA), head of the

⁷⁸ Elliott Abrams quoted in: Michael Dobbs, “Back in Political Forefront. Iran-Contra Figure Plays Key Role on Mideast,” *Washington Post*, May 27, 2003, p. A01.

⁷⁹ So says Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), one of the foremost experts on the U.S. political system. Quoted in: James Kitfield, “The Ties That Bind, and Constrain,” *National Journal*, April 20, 2002.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Interview J. B. with Gary Bauer, President, American Values, July 22, 2003.

⁸² Gary Bauer quoted in: Howard Fineman and Tamara Lipper, “A Very Mixed Marriage” [see footnote 73].

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ According to Richard Land, who is close to Karl Rove and who represents the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Quoted in: Elisabeth Bumiller, “Evangelicals Sway White House on Human Rights Issues Abroad,” *New York Times*, October 26, 2003.

⁸⁵ P.L. 108-25, 117 Stat. 711 (H.R. 1298): The United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003. The total of 15 billion dollars for the next five years is indeed remarkable and would serve as a good example for other nations. Yet, so far this is only an authorization for money which still needs to be annually appropriated.

⁸⁶ George W. Bush, *State of the Union*, January 28, 2003 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>).

Value Action Team (VAT), who introduced the bill in the House of Representatives.⁸⁷

Again, President Bush denied more funding for the multilateral Global Fund to fight AIDS/HIV. Instead, national religious organizations received more government funding; they are allowed to renounce the provision of condoms in the fight against the epidemic. By using national channels (in particular the U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID) the U.S. is now in a position to control the ways and means of help: For instance, no funds will be provided for organizations, which in some form or another support abortion.

Abortion and Development Aid

One of George W. Bush's first measures after his inauguration was to reactivate the so-called "Mexico City" policy,⁸⁸ which had been suspended during the Clinton Administration. This policy bans USAID funding for organizations which do not rule out abortion in their family planning programs.

In July 2003, the Bush Administration froze the congressionally appropriated 34 million dollar contribution⁸⁹ to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), when pro-life activists insinuated that the Fund had financially supported forced abortions and sterilization in China. The measure became effective, even though Secretary of State Colin Powell had disputed the allegations based on a fact-finding mission conducted by the State Department.⁹⁰ In September 2003, the funds that were withheld from UNFPA were re-assigned to national organizations (the Child Survival and Health Programs Fund of USAID). Another attempt to authorize 50 million dollars for UNFPA

both for fiscal year 2004 and 2005 failed because of the President's veto threat.⁹¹

Overall, religious activists give their President a high grade for these achievements: "Since the Bush administration came in, we've seen a dramatic 180-degree turn away from the direction of the Clinton delegates," confirms Wendy Wright, Concerned Women for America's Senior Policy Director.⁹² On the one hand, the Christian Right owes these political results to the President; on the other hand, these achievements are also due to its own pragmatic engagement and professionalism.

⁸⁷ See "\$15 Billion AIDS Package Clears House," *National Journal*, March 5, 2003.

⁸⁸ The so-called "Mexico City" policy dates back to the Reagan administration. In 1984, it was officially announced in the context of an International Conference on Population in Mexico City and requires all NGOs that receive U.S. government funds to not support any form of abortion in their international birth control efforts. The measure was abrogated in 1993 by President Clinton.

⁸⁹ P.L. 107-115 (FY2002 Foreign Operations Appropriations).

⁹⁰ See Kerry Dumbaugh, *China-U.S. Relations: Current Issues for the 108th Congress*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, September 15, 2003), p. 14; and Todd Purdum, "U.S. Refusal on Population Fund Is Blow for Powell," *International Herald Tribune*, July 24, 2002, p. 3.

⁹¹ See Fall Agenda: Foreign Relations Authorization Act. Bills: HR 1950, S 925, *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, August 30, 2003, p. 2078.

⁹² Wendy Wright quoted in: Gregg Sangillo, "Abortion: Going Global," *National Journal*, January 11, 2003.

Impact on the Transatlantic Relationship

How important and sustainable is a foreign policy platform designed to help consolidate the alliance between Republicans and the Christian Right? Are these kinds of Christian Right based power structures significant for the transatlantic relationship? A foreign policy focus remains important for the incumbent President in order to sustain permanent Republican majorities that are built on the Christian Right. The fight against terrorism could establish a political power and value system, which will remain powerful in the long term: Such a religious establishment would not only continue to try to change the world view and the direction of U.S. foreign policy but also foster domestic support for the implementation of its values, by military force if necessary. This would lead to an even greater domestic polarization in America and would produce divergences in transatlantic relations.

A Religious/Moral World View

It remains a tricky balancing act for Republican strategists to please the Christian Right, to mobilize its potential voters and funding in elections without losing the support of more moderate, morally libertarian Republicans. For its part, it is also a tightrope walk for the Christian Right to maintain the close alliance with the Republican party. Striving for political power requires concessions. In domestic debates in particular, there is the risk of sacrificing moral principles that were key when mobilizing one's base to begin with—the pre-requisite for political activities. Christian fundamentalists hold on to strict dogmas, which allow them to see the world in terms of “good” and “evil.” In the political spectrum, however, compromises need to be found in the pragmatic gray area, which does not encompass a dichotomous worldview.

A common denominator in foreign policy is important to forge a durable electoral coalition. National security issues provide a sustainable platform where all sorts of conservative elites and voters can gather, and a glue to strengthen the cohesion of a broader Republican majority. In light of the terrorist threat, standing together at home to face an external enemy

seems to be a necessity. From President Bush's vantage point, on September 11, the terrorists attacked the “American way of life”, a way which the Almighty presaged. To be sure, America feels struck. Yet it is also well-prepared and certain to defeat “evil”—under the strong leadership of its President.⁹³ Reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's pugnacious declaration against the “Evil Empire”—made while speaking to a group Evangelicals—George W. Bush similarly mobilized America to fight against the “Axis of Evil.”

Karl Rove, head of strategy and confidant of the President, is trying hard to establish a permanent Republican majority. Such a structural majority would assume a so-called realignment, an enduring change in the electorate and voting behavior.⁹⁴ In addition to economic and moral issues, it would be above all driven by national security. The new threat to America offered an opportunity for the President to base his election campaigns on his resolute fight against terrorism. National security figured as the critical issue in the 2002 midterm elections⁹⁵ and it will continue to have priority in the reasoning of both the electorate and electoral strategists of the President.

The 9/11 attacks' explosive force in political matters becomes even more obvious if one takes into consid-

⁹³ “These terrorists kill not merely to end lives but to disrupt and end a way of life”—such was the assessment of President Bush in his speech before Congress on September 20, 2001. See: “A Nation Challenged. President Bush's Address on Terrorism before a Joint Meeting of Congress,” *New York Times*, September 21, 2001, p. B4.

⁹⁴ As it is commonly referred to, the term “realignment” characterizes a lasting phenomenon. Therefore, it is only possible to observe such a change with the benefit of hindsight. Nonetheless, one can a priori analyze structural factors that would lead to such a change and point out the potential for a realignment. See James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System. Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1993), pp. 5–6.

⁹⁵ For a comprehensive analysis of the midterm elections see Josef Braml, *Freie Hand für Bush? Auswirkungen der Kongresswahlen auf das innenpolitische Machtgefüge und die Außenpolitik der USA*, SWP-Aktuell 55/02 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 2002), (http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?id=406).

eration that historical political realignments were effects of national crises.⁹⁶ In addition to the 30 million people who earn their living in the security sector,⁹⁷ there are moreover those innumerable Americans who fear for their lives. 9/11—the new threat and its perception—is likely to drive tectonic movements in the electorate, if the President and his party succeed in the eyes of Americans, by acting determined in the war against terrorism and protecting the country from further attacks.

In the probable scenario, assuming that the fight against terror will continue for a long time, Republican campaign strategists and above all the Christian Right will continue their efforts to keep “existential” issues of national security and moral as well as religious issues high on the political agenda, thus determining the basic parameters in the struggle for political power in the United States.

From the historically well-informed vantage point of Walter Russell Mead, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, and one of the most astute observers of American foreign policy, the increasing political clout of conservative Evangelicals and fundamentalist-religious movements represents one of the most significant cultural developments in the U.S. It provides the groundwork for a new foreign policy establishment. This new religious establishment will increasingly try to add political muscle and military power to its world view: “To the extent that American foreign policy comes to revolve around a struggle with Middle Eastern fanatics who believe themselves to be fighting a war of religion against the United States, the conservative Protestant religious leadership of the United States will [continue to] play a major role in articulating the values and ideas for which many Americans will be willing to fight.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ See Jerome Clubb, William Flanigan, and Nancy Zingale, *Partisan Realignment: Voters, Parties, and Government in American History* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980).

⁹⁷ According to the analysis of the Brookings Institution and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), even in times of peace in the U.S. there are about 30 million votes at stake when dealing with the issue of national security: active duty military personnel, veterans as well as employees in the industrial military complex—whose family members are not even included in this number. See Dana Allin, Philip Gordon, and Michael O’Hanlon, “The Democratic Party and Foreign Policy,” *World Policy Journal*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 7–16.

⁹⁸ Walter Russell Mead, *Power, Terror, Peace, And War. America’s Grand Strategy in a World at Risk* (New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 2004), p. 95.

As a result of this struggle, the forces for a potential realignment remain powerful both in the national and international context. The symbiosis of power joining the Religious Right and Republicans would make sense—both figuratively and literally: It could establish a polarizing world view in the American political debate, which would affect the real world.

Limited Room for Diplomatic Maneuver

The Christian Right’s impact also limits the President’s room for maneuver when dealing with foreign policy issues that are important to his base. The most recent publication of a longitudinal analysis by the Pew Research Center shows that Republicans and Democrats disagree on national security issues more than ever before. National security is much more salient for the Republican electorate, which also becomes evident, if one considers their more favorable attitude to the use of preemptive military force and the sacrifice of civil liberties in the fight against terrorism. By contrast, Democrats—owing in no small part to the war in Iraq—increasingly reject the use of military force. For example, 69% of Republicans view “the best way to ensure peace is through military strength”, whereas only 44% Democrats prioritize the use of military force. In 1997, the ratio was still 65% versus 56%; reflecting the fact that in the mid-1990s there were many more “hawks” among Democrats.⁹⁹

Republicans remain more inclined to use military force—especially the hard core of Evangelical Christians. Compared with the national average, they prefer military strength over diplomatic means to secure peace.¹⁰⁰ According to opinion polls, so-called “strength issues”—military might and rigor in the fight against terrorism, against “evil”—play a key role: Keeping America’s military strong is “extremely/very important” for 93% of white Evangelicals.¹⁰¹

Moreover, the Christian Right remains convinced that “peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved by means of legalisms, diplomatic gestures, and good feelings.” According to Gary Bauer, “only a strong and viable Israel in concert with a powerful and resolute

⁹⁹ Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, *Evenly Divided and Increasingly Polarized. 2004 Political Landscape*, November 5, 2003, pp. 27–32.

¹⁰⁰ See Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide* [see footnote 2], pp. 130–133.

¹⁰¹ See Greenberg and Berktold, “Evangelicals in America” [see footnote 14], pp. 18–20, Questionnaire, pp. 6–8.

United States will achieve peace.”¹⁰² Accordingly, the Christian Right also welcomed President Bush’s uncompromising action against the tyrannical regime in Baghdad.

The President could also count on the support of his religious constituents on the political home front in the run up to the Iraq War. Given the polarization of the American public on the question of Iraq, this support was even more important for him in order to implement his foreign policy goals. At the same time, this support also compels the Commander-in-Chief to stay his course.

After the invasion in Iraq, the domestic front-lines have hardened even further. President Bush’s war against terrorism does carry political risks: The war in Iraq will help to mobilize the potential voters of the challenger Senator John Kerry. The Iraq issue is on the minds of nine out of ten Democrats, according to an opinion poll: This issue is “very important” for 40%, and “extremely important” for another 48% when they consider their vote on November 2.¹⁰³

It remains therefore a high priority for President Bush to reassure his base—by demonstrating the necessary relentlessness in the fight against terrorism and by remaining resolute in Iraq. Only a few months before the November elections, eight out of ten party supporters of the President think that the Iraq war was worth it. (79% of Democrats do not think so.)¹⁰⁴ According to a study by the Pew Research Center and the Council on Foreign Relations in August 2004, only 44% of the Democrats are of the opinion that preemptive war against potential enemies is justified, while an overwhelming majority (88%) of Republicans would approve of the use preemptive military force.¹⁰⁵

Religious attitudes also play a significant role when judging the war in Iraq: People who go to church frequently tend to remain more supportive of the war

than less religious Americans.¹⁰⁶ White Evangelical Protestants in particular firmly believe that war in Iraq was “justified”, and seven out of ten (72%) Evangelicals endorse the idea of preemptive warfare.¹⁰⁷ This will surely have an effect on the President’s ability to make compromises when tackling existentially important issues regarding the national security of America and Israel.

Divergences in Transatlantic Relations

The Christian Right’s growing influence, if not even the Christian Right’s legitimization of the Bush administration has contributed to the transatlantic estrangement. Dissonance became evident above all regarding the war in Iraq and the conflict in the Middle East.¹⁰⁸ These differences cannot be explained by rhetoric lapses by some of the protagonists or the political style of acting governments, but reflect deeper structural fissures, which are rooted in the society and political system of the U.S.¹⁰⁹

Seen with this backdrop, the transatlantic relationship is facing, and will continue to face, immense challenges. Most Europeans want to loosen their ties with the U.S. Even citizens of traditionally close U.S. allies wish to pursue a foreign policy course that is more independent from the U.S. in security and diplomatic matters. For example, in a poll conducted in April/May 2003 by the Pew Research Center, 45% of the British population, the majority (57%) of Germans and three-quarters (76%) of the French prefer to distance

102 Website of American Values (http://www.ouramericanvalues.org/issues_foreign.htm), accessed on November 4, 2003.

103 Gallup opinion poll, February 6-8, 2004; see Frank Newport, “The Potential Impact of Iraq on the Election. Iraq Issue Is of Particular Importance to Democrats,” *Gallup News Service*, March 19, 2004.

104 Gallup opinion poll, July 8-11, 2004; see Joseph Carroll, “American Public Opinion about the Situation in Iraq,” *Gallup Analysis*, July 13, 2004.

105 Pew Research Center opinion poll conducted in cooperation with the Council on Foreign Relations, “Eroding Respect for America Seen as Major Problem. Foreign Policy Attitudes Now Driven by 9/11 and Iraq,” August 18, 2004, p. 26, (<http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/222.pdf>).

106 See National Annenberg Election Survey, “Blacks, Hispanics Resist Republican Appeals But Conservative White Christians Are Stronger Supporters than in 2000,” July 25, 2004, pp. 2, 5, 7, (http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes/2004_03_religion-release_07-26_pr.pdf).

107 John Green, *The American Religious Landscape and Political Attitudes: A Baseline for 2004* (Washington, DC: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, September 2004), p. 34, (<http://pewforum.org/publications/surveys/green-full.pdf>).

108 There are also serious transatlantic disagreements on how to best deal with AIDS/HIV and how to allocate development aid. These issues, however, have not yet figured prominently on the transatlantic agenda.

109 This paper does not address geopolitical changes from the end of Cold War. In addition to the cultural cleavages discussed here, these represent another significant factor that fundamentally altered the basis of the transatlantic relationship.

themselves from the U.S.¹¹⁰ This trend has become even more pronounced: Not even one year later, in February/March 2004, Europeans' desire to distance themselves from the U.S. has become even more accentuated. 56% of the British, 63% of the Germans and 75% of the French want Europe's military and diplomatic matters to be more independent from the U.S..¹¹¹ A more recent German Marshall Fund (GMF) poll confirms this trend: Three-Fifths of the European public (59%), first and foremost the French (73%), but also the Germans (60%) do not want the U.S. to assume leadership role in world affairs.¹¹²

A more differentiated analysis shows that this alienation is mainly due to the policy of the incumbent President: Almost three-quarters (74%) of the French and Germans as well as 59% of the British population are not generally critical towards the U.S., but aim their criticism to President George W. Bush in particular.¹¹³ This "Anti-Bush-Factor" figured again in the most recent GMF study: Three-quarters (76%) of the European public (Germany: 86%) are against the Bush administration's foreign policy.¹¹⁴

Middle East initiatives still bear a high risk of failure, not least because of the political leverage of the Christian Right in the U.S. It forms an effective alliance with neo-conservative adversaries of the two-state solution, which was prescribed in form of a "Road Map" by the so-called "Quartet"—which includes the U.S., the EU, the Russian Federation and the United Nations. Neo-conservative masterminds, which

used to be disregarded as "Chiefs without Indians",¹¹⁵ now realize that they have a substantial power base in Congress and in American society at large. If President Bush went beyond his formalistic commitment to the "Road Map" and actually made demands and put political pressure on both parties in the conflict to simultaneously embark on a way towards a peaceful solution without any pre-conditions, this would lead the U.S. President and his party followers in Congress into an electoral dead end. Even from a longer-term perspective—keeping Republicans' control over the White House and Capitol Hill, even after his reelection—Bush would not want to spend too much political capital on the Middle East peace process.

In the future, transatlantic rifts could become even deeper: In addition to its political opposition to the "Road Map," the Christian Right also engages in sustained lobbying to impose sanctions against Syria and Iran.

On September 16, 2003, the Bush administration signaled through Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton that it would no longer oppose Congress'—especially the Jewish and Christian Right lobbies'—demands for tougher measures: "Our preference is to solve these problems by peaceful and diplomatic means", Bolton explained in a Congressional hearing. "But the president has also been very clear that we're not taking any options off the table."¹¹⁶

Christian Right policy-makers like Tom DeLay hold Damascus responsible for attacks by Hizbollah and other terrorist groups. Therefore, Syria must stay on the State Department's list singling out countries that support terrorism. Moreover, it is assumed that Syria's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic weapons systems threaten security in the Middle East as well as the national security interests of the United States of America.

Encouraged by Senator Sam Brownback, authoritative coordinator of the Value Action Team in Congress, opposition groups in Iran as well as dissidents—especially Iranian broadcasting and television in the U.S.—should receive financial and "moral" support. At the moment, the Christian Right is considering even more far reaching measures: According to the *Washington Post* ("U.S. Faces a Crossroads on Iran Policy"), Senator

¹¹⁵ See for example Kevin Phillips, "The Neoconservatives: Chiefs without Indians," *Washington Post*, August 26, 1979.

¹¹⁶ See Gayle Putrich, "White House and Congress Join in Show of Force on Syria Sanctions Measure," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, October 11, 2003, p. 2522.

¹¹⁰ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Views of a Changing World* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, June 3, 2003), p. 29.

¹¹¹ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *A Year after Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, March 16, 2004), p. 8.

¹¹² German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends 2004. Top-Line Data* (September 2004), p. 8, ([http://www.transatlantictrends.org/apps/gmf/ttweb2004.nsf/0/461EA7D25CC77DA185256F020059C76D/\\$file/Topline+with+logo+final.pdf](http://www.transatlantictrends.org/apps/gmf/ttweb2004.nsf/0/461EA7D25CC77DA185256F020059C76D/$file/Topline+with+logo+final.pdf)).

¹¹³ George W. Bush's unpopularity in Europe has also increased: In February/March 2004, 57% of the British, and 85% of the French and Germans, respectively, had a negative opinion of him. See The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Views of a Changing World* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, June 3, 2003), p. 22; The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *A Year after Iraq War* [see footnote 111], p. 21.

¹¹⁴ Opinion poll, June 6–24, 2004; see German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends 2004. Top-Line Data* [see footnote 112], p. 23.

Sam Brownback is reportedly generating congressional pressure for “regime change” in Iran—using the paradigm of the Iraq Liberation Act.¹¹⁷

These initiatives—which are contrary to the political concepts of German and European intermediaries—are a clear indication that the U.S. executive’s room for maneuver in Middle East policy is also determined by the Christian Right’s interest groups and representation in Congress. The Christian Right will make sustained efforts to gain leverage on the executive via the legislature: “The conservatives seem to—social conservatives seem to be getting more involved in some of those issues over there in the Middle East,”¹¹⁸ says Jim Backlin, the Christian Coalition’s Chief Congressional Lobbyist.

117 See Robin Wright, “U.S. Faces a Crossroads on Iran Policy,” *Washington Post*, July 19, 2004, p. A09.

118 Interview J. B. with Jim Backlin, Legislative Director, Christian Coalition of America, July 16, 2003.

Conclusion

The Christian Right's political clout in terms of voters and election engineering is essential for Republicans to maintain power in the White House and in Congress. Its influence on American policy-making will remain, regardless of the outcome of the upcoming elections. European foreign policy-makers should be aware that the Christian Right has both power and staying power in the United States.

If the incumbent President Bush will not be re-elected, the Christian Right would not be able to count on like-minded comrades-in-arms in the White House when facing "Armageddon" against terrorism and a domestic "culture war." Yet even in this case, the organizational network which has been developed over the past few decades would remain powerful in American society: namely via its organizational transmission belt linking it to networks and caucuses of like-minded Representatives and Senators in Congress. For the foreseeable future, Christian Right leaders remain powerful domestic and foreign policy actors, which American presidents—and those international partners dealing with them—should take seriously.

German government officials, who deserve credit for their stronger engagement in Middle East policy, must also reckon with the Christian Right's impact on the possible course of U.S. foreign policy.

The religious-moral influence of the Christian Right will continue via the legislature and its political work at the grass-roots level, thus co-determining the options of American presidents—especially if there are political initiatives that impact the "Holy Land."

German and European decision-makers would be well advised to take this involvement into consideration, if they think more comprehensively about the remaking of the "Greater Middle East."

Particularly in light of a common approach towards Syria and Iran, Europeans should also seek a dialogue with political leaders of the Christian Right and their interest groups and should make an effort to somehow bring together the diverging views of reality and policies.

The common fight against terrorists does offer a potential basis for transatlantic rapprochement in other regions. The pacification in Afghanistan was held up as the "test case" of NATO—the traditional

pillar of transatlantic dialogue and agreement. If we succeed to continue common projects and initiatives in this region, this would serve as a good example to those in charge on both sides of the Atlantic of a solid base to foster further collaboration towards a more stable and secure world.

On both sides of the Atlantic, government officials and representatives of the respective civil societies should try to soften the hardening positions beyond the transatlantic value divide: To prevent religious reasons and world views of the Christian Right in the U.S. from allowing us to see the common ground for shared interests and future challenges and become a serious long-term charge for transatlantic relations.

Appendix

Table 1
Denominational Segments of the Total Population, 1965 versus 1996 (in %)

	1965	1996		1965	1996
<i>Christian</i>			<i>Non-Christian</i>		
Protestant			Jewish	2.4	2.0
Evangelical (total)	23.9	25.4	Muslim	*	0.5
Baptist	13.5	13.6	Other Non-Christian	0.1	1.0
Reformed, Confessional	2.4	3.9	<i>Secular</i>		
Nondenominational	1.3	3.9	Atheisten or Agnostic	0,1	1.0
Pentecostal	2.3	2.3	No preference	9,6	15.3
Churches of Christ	1.4	1.2			
Other Evangelical	3.0	0.5			
Mainline (total)	27.2	22.1			
Methodist	11.2	8.8			
Lutheran	4.5	3.6			
Presbyterian	4.2	2.1			
Episcopalian	2.4	1.6			
Congregational	1.8	1.0			
Other Mainline	3.1	5.0			
Black (total)	9.6	7.6			
Baptist	5.5	4.0			
Methodist	1.8	0.7			
Other	2.3	2.9			
Mormon	1.3	1.6			
Other Christian	1.3	1.5			
Roman-Catholic	23.9	21.8			
Eastern Orthodox	0.4	0,4			

* The number is too small for a reliable estimate.

Source: 1965: Gallup; 1996: Pew Religion Survey; quoted in: Andrew Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide. Religion's Changing Role in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 18.

For more detailed information on the denominational categorization, see Lyman Kellstedt/John Green, "Knowing God's Many People. Denominational Preference and Political Behavior," in: David Leegge/Lyman Kellstedt (eds.), *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1993); Lyman Kellstedt et al., "Grasping the Essentials. The Social Embodiment of Religion and Political Behavior," in: John Green et al. (eds.), *Religion and the Culture Wars* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).

Table 2
Profile of (White) Evangelical Protestants (in %)

	<i>Committed</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Average within total population</i>
Percentage of total population	16	8	
Age			
18–29	16	18	22
30–44	31	29	33
45–64	31	30	27
65 and older	20	23	17
Geography			
Northeast	10	9	21
Midwest	25	27	25
South	52	44	34
West	13	20	21
Urban population	13	18	20
Metropolitan area inhabitants (Suburbs)	17	15	22
Smalltown population	40	41	36
Rural population	29	25	21
Education			
Without high school diploma	20	27	17
High school diploma)	38	38	35
Some college (university education)	24	23	26
College graduate (university degree)	18	13	21
Income			
Less than U.S. \$ 20,000	25	32	25
20,000–30,000	19	19	19
30,000–50,000	28	26	27
More than 50,000	19	17	21
Party affiliation/affinity			
Republican	62	51	44
Democrat	31	42	46
Independent	7	8	9

Source: Pew Research Center, Summary of Survey Data, 1994–1996; quoted in: Andrew Kohut et al., *The Diminishing Divide. Religion's Changing Role in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp. 130–133.

Table 3
Overview of Christian Right Organizations

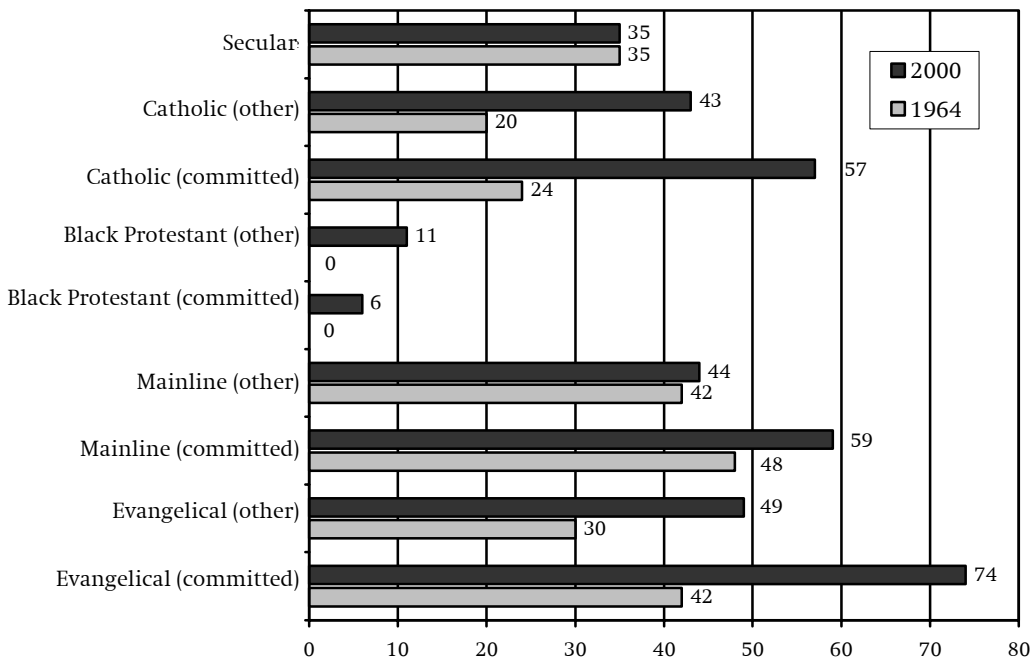
<i>Organization</i>	<i>Type/Legal status^a</i>	<i>Founded</i>	<i>Budget (in Mio. U.S.\$)^b</i>
Alliance Defense Fund	LAG	1994	15.4 (2001)
American Center for Law and Justice	Advocacy Group	1990	12.1 (2001)
American Family Association	GRL	1977	11.4 (2000)
American Life League	GRL	1979	6.9 (2000)
American Renewal (Lobbying-Filiale des FRC, s.u.)	GRL	1992	
Americans United to Preserve Marriage	PAC	2004	
American Values	GRL	2000	
Campaign for Working Families PAC	PAC	1996	0.8 ^c
Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-Fam)	Think Tank	1997	
Christian Coalition	GRL	1989	3.0 (2000)
Concerned Women for America (CWA)	GRL	1979	12.7 (2000)
Council for National Policy	Elite Network	1981	
Eagle Forum	GRL	1972	2.3 (2000)
Family Research Council (FRC)	Think Tank	1983	10.0 (2000)
Focus on the Family	Think Tank & GRL	1977	128.8 (2000)
Free Congress Research and Education Foundation	Think Tank	1977	11.4 (1997)
Leadership Institute	PTZ	1979	8.2 (2000)
Madison Project	PAC	1994	
National Right to Life Committee/NRLC PAC	GRL	1973	12.4 (1998)
Samaritan's Purse	Evangelical Support Organization	1970	
Stand for Israel	GRL	2002	
Traditional Values Coalition	Church Umbrella Organization	1980	

a GRL = Grassroots-Lobby, LAG = Legal Action Group, PAC = Political Action Committee, PTC = Political Training Center.

b Financial data quoted, if available, from the website of People for the American Way:
(<http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=3147>).

c Campaign donations 2001–2002.

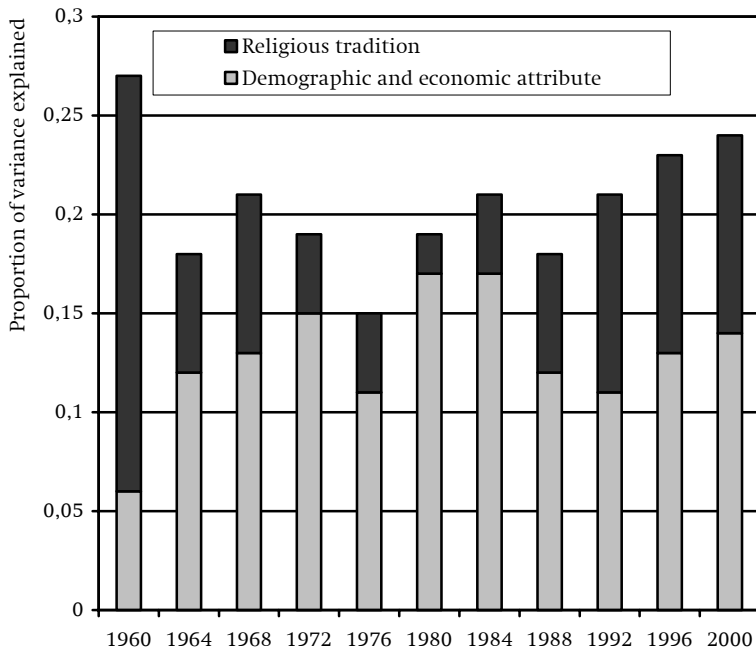
Figure 1
Percentage of Republican Voters (in %), 1964–2000



The denominations illustrated above represent the following percentages of the total population: committed Evangelical Protestants 16%, other Evangelical Protestants 8%, committed Mainline Protestants 5%, other Mainline Protestants 17%, committed black Protestants 5%, other black Protestants 3%, committed Catholics 9%, other Catholics 12%, Seculars 16%.

Source: John Green and Scott Keeter; unpublished analysis of “National Election Studies” data.

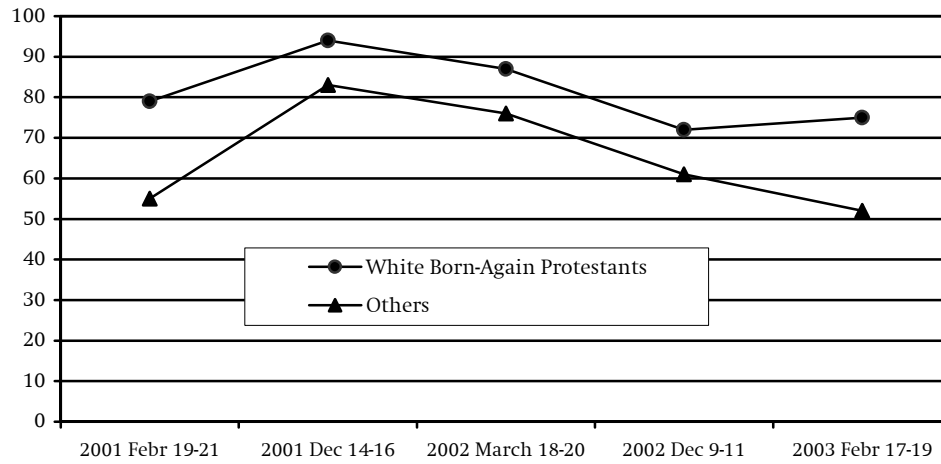
Figure 2
Effect of Religious Tradition and Demographic Factors on Presidential Voting



Source: John Green and Scott Keeter; unpublished analysis of “National Election Studies” data.

I thank John Green and Scott Keeter for the stimulating discussion and their updated information.

Figure 3
President Bush's Job Approval Rating (in %), February 2001–February 2003



Source: Frank Newport/Joseph Carroll, "Support for Bush Significantly Higher Among More Religious Americans," *Gallup Poll Analyses*, March 6, 2003.

Abbreviations

AEI	American Enterprise Institute
ATR	Americans for Tax Reform
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEPP	Center for Ethics and Public Policy
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CWA	Concerned Women for America
FRC	Family Research Council
GMF	German Marshall Fund
GRL	Grassroots-Lobby
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
LAG	Legal Action Group
MFN	Most Favored Nation
NRLC	National Right to Life Committee
NSC	National Security Council
PAC	Political Action Committee
RSC	Republican Study Committee
PTZ	Politisches Trainingszentrum
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VAT	Value Action Team
WTO	World Trade Organization