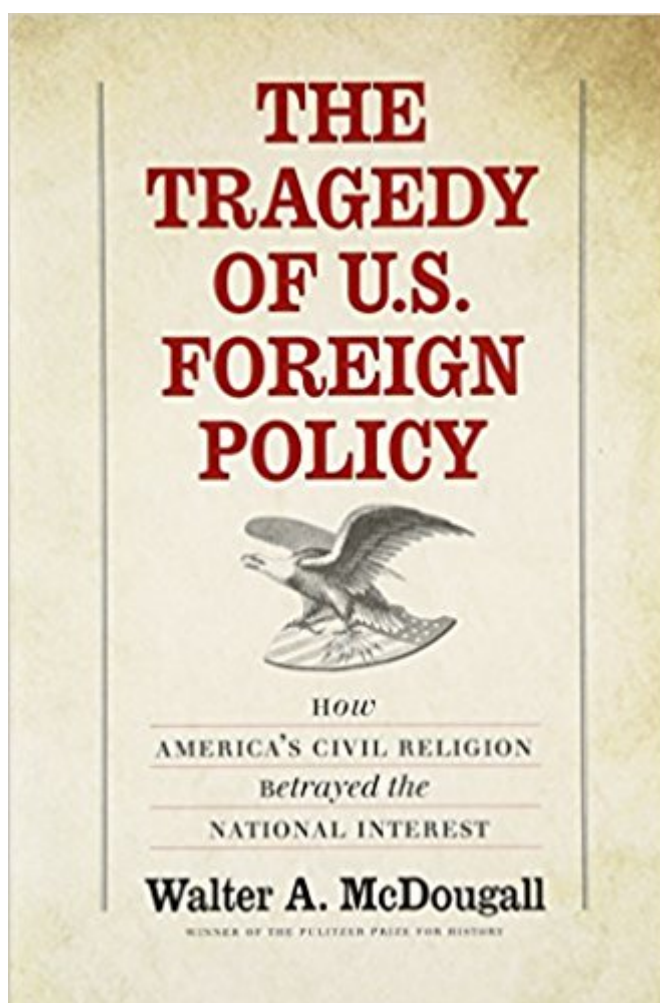


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The Tragedy Of U.S. Foreign Policy: How America's Civil Religion Betrayed The National Interest



Synopsis

A fierce critique of civil religion as the taproot of America's bid for global hegemony Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Walter A. McDougall argues powerfully that a pervasive but radically changing faith that "God is on our side" has inspired U.S. foreign policy ever since 1776. The first comprehensive study of the role played by civil religion in U.S. foreign relations over the entire course of the country's history, McDougall's book explores the deeply infused religious rhetoric that has sustained and driven an otherwise secular republic through peace, war, and global interventions for more than two hundred years. From the Founding Fathers and the crusade for independence to the Monroe Doctrine, through World Wars I and II and the decades-long Cold War campaign against "godless Communism," this coruscating polemic reveals the unacknowledged but freely exercised dogmas of civil religion that bind together a "God blessed America, sustaining the nation in its pursuit of an ever elusive global destiny.

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Customer Reviews

"One of this disturbing book's many strengths is its reminder of a United States before it entered the world's stage. . . . Whether American presidents could conduct foreign relations better without the hype of civil religion Mr. McDougall does not say. But he suggests that the national interest might be a better guide to America's conduct in the world." —D.G. Hart, Wall Street Journal "Walter A. McDougall, . . . who has taken on some of

the broadest themes in American society and won a Pulitzer for his brilliant history of the American space program, warns in *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy* that once in office American presidents are often "susceptible to a utopian temptation." They adopt a language that he describes as "American civil religion," wrapping adventurism in a gauzy, semireligious haze.

—David E. Sanger, *New York Times Book Review* "A book remarkable for its depth, breadth, and intellectual daring."

—Kirkus Review (starred review) "McDougall's well-written, compelling, and provocative book definitely fits in the tragedy genre—one that may help equip future policy makers against lies and against the temptations of the musical."

—Christopher Hemmer, *Air War College, H-Net Reviews* "The Tragedy of U. S. Foreign Policy" is utterly original, brutally honest, and vividly written. Here is a rare example of an American patriot and master historian willing to speak hard truths about his country.

—Andrew Bacevich, author of *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History* "As Americans come to recognize that our foreign policy has led us dangerously astray, many ask how and why this happened. McDougall offers us an insightful and original answer. By recounting and seeking to explain our misadventures, he shows us not only what went wrong, but how America can approach the world more wisely in the future."

—Stephen Kinzer, author of *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War* "The most important book on U.S. foreign policy to appear in many years, Walter McDougall's sobering essay is both social criticism and a warning. It is about how great powers rise and fall, grow corrupted and exhausted. It is a brilliant synopsis of America's still-recent encounter with the world, a lively, riveting historical narrative. *The Tragedy of US Foreign Policy* confirms McDougall's stature as a premier story-teller and perhaps America's greatest living historian."

—David Eisenhower "A lot has been written about U.S. foreign policy since 9/11, but nothing compares to Walter McDougall's wonderfully original new book. Deftly blending diplomatic, religious, intellectual, and political history, and written with stylish wit and penetrating insight, *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy* reveals the historical origins of America's current global predicament. Required reading for anyone interested in American politics, foreign policy, and the future of world order."

—Andrew Preston, Cambridge University

Walter A. McDougall is professor of history and the Alloy Ansin Professor of International Relations at the University of Pennsylvania. His numerous books include the 1986 Pulitzer Prize winner *The Heavens and the Earth*.

Well researched and very readable. Interesting point of view on American Exceptionalism and some downsides to being the "shining City on the Hill."

Outstanding! The first book I have come across on the subject. People will complain that it is not thorough and that it moves too fast. McDougall has several other books that go into detail on American history and foreign policy. This, however, is an explanation of how our civil religion affects and changes our actions in foreign affairs. It is a sobering look into our national psyche that every American, most of all our leaders, should read. Well researched, well written, and well worth it!

A great book that complements Dr. McDougall's previous book, *Promised Land, Crusader State*. His writing style makes reading this dense volume actually enjoyable!

In these times, an important book to read and learn

A must-read

Very disappointed. I expected a thorough, critical history of US Foreign policy. Instead I was reading a book with meandering commentary from contemporaries of each President and era..with little precise explanation of the foreign policy of each President. After getting halfway through I know very little more than when I started. Also the writing style of this author is so dull and lifeless. How a historian can make exciting events such as our foreign policy uninteresting is beyond me. But I doubt I will have the patience to finish this.

Brilliant...and a long overdue explanation of foreign policy mis-adventures.

Too pessimistic a note! Every single diplomatic gesture has a tint of crookedness, and yet the author says FDR was a great masquerader and a failed high priest preaching wrong civil religion. Neither is he willing to give any single credit to Donald Nelson, the WPB chairman, nor to Bill Knudson of the War Department. You may dream an impossible dream and that dream would one day become a phantastic dream nobody would ever have dared to imagine. Contrary to what the author wants to deliver to readers, the U. S. foreign policy has never been pursuing a *fata morgana* but a dream of a juggler whose right hand APPARENTLY KNEW what his left hand does.

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