



God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics

By Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, Timothy Samuel Shah

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A fresh and illuminating perspective on the surge in religion's political influence across the globe.

Is religion a force for good or evil in world politics? How much influence does it have? Despite predictions of its decline, religion has resurged in political influence across the globe, helped by the very forces that were supposed to bury it: democracy, globalization, and technology. And despite recent claims that religion is exclusively irrational and violent, its political influence is in fact diverse, sometimes promoting civil war and terrorism but at other times fostering democracy, reconciliation, and peace. Looking across the globe, the authors explain what generates these radically divergent behaviors. In a time when the public discussion of religion is overheated, these dynamic young scholars use deeply original analysis and sharp case studies to show us both how and why religion's influence on global politics is surging. Finally they offer concrete suggestions on how to both confront the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities posed by globally resurgent religion. 10 black-and-white illustrations

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Political scientists Toft (The Geography of Ethnic Violence), Philpott, and Shah explore the recent burgeoning political influence of religion in a timely treatise. The authors contend that religion's waning influence in politics—which dated from the Enlightenment and peaked in the 1960s—has seen a 40-year reversal; at present, "major religious actors... enjoy greater capacity for political influence today than at any time in modern history—and perhaps ever." This revival—manifested in developments like the "Islamic resurgence" and the rise of the religious Right in the U.S.—was rooted in a crisis in such secular ideologies as socialism, and has been nurtured by globalization and modern technologies like the Internet. Despite some occasional hyperbole and inconsistency—the authors shrill, "God's partisans are back, they are setting the political agenda, and they are not going away," and in the next breath, they caution policymakers not to "exaggerate the power of religious actors in public life"—this is a lucid and surprisingly seamless collaboration that should appeal to serious students of modern politics. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

This book's claim is that the twenty-first century is God's Century. The term is a convenient way to capture religion's effect on politics; the focus is global and encompasses all major religions. The authors' favorite phrase throughout is religious actors, which include individuals or groups that have political pursuits alongside their religious beliefs and practices. Al-Qaeda, the Catholic Church, the National Association of Evangelicals—all are religious actors. The authors have observed a significant rise in the role of religion in global politics and are convinced that the trend will continue. Early chapters cover background matters, like the politics of religion, to help the uninitiated comprehend the basic issues. The core sections are devoted to focused areas, like democratization. There are also chapters covering religious civil wars, terrorism, and the push for peace and justice. Breaking up the text are tables or charts illustrating in a user-friendly way events or trends taking place. The book is filled with enough details and examples to satisfy serious researchers; appended are a 14-page bibliography and ample endnotes. A solid fit for academic collections and sizable public libraries. --Wade Osburn

About the Author

Monica Duffy Toft is associate professor of public policy and director of the Initiative on Religion in International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

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