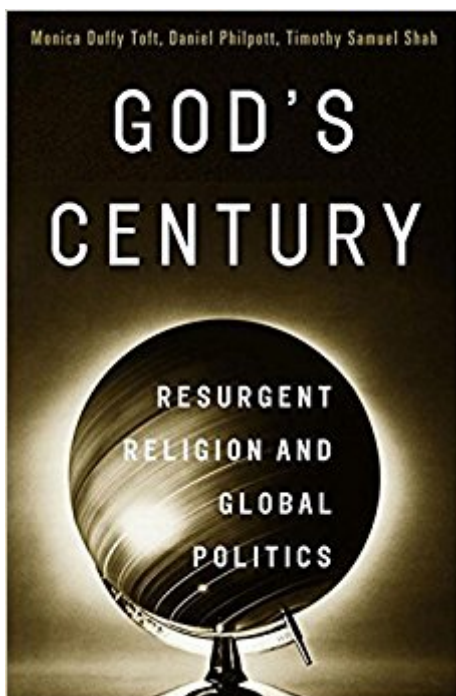


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# God's Century: Resurgent Religion And Global Politics



## Synopsis

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

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

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

Very important book for all those interested in seeing more clearly the condition of changing social structures.

This is quite an amazing read! Everyone conversant with the English language who loves and respects history should read it. Should qualify for college credit!

Arrived early, Great Book!

Great book. Easy read with a bunch of unbiased information and brought anew perspective to other religions of the world. Highly recommended!

## Good Book

The book is so interesting but it has no real page number and can not be used for academic reference. I wish add the real page number for this book too

By the middle of the 20th century, everyone seemed to be predicting an end to religion's influence. In 1968 Peter Berger said that "by the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects" (p 1). Secularism was an unstoppable force; that was the deeply held belief of the intellectuals in the western world, circa 1960. Islam certainly made a fool of them. But there were many factors that proved their theories were full of holes. The Catholic church was reinvigorated by the Second Vatican Council, and by the international policies of Pope John Paul. Hindu nationalism has had a tremendous resurgence, and Buddhism has connected with nationalism in many countries as well. And then, of course, there is Islam. Far from declining worldwide, religion is growing. Some areas have seen a dramatic decline in believers in Christianity, such as Germany. Yet, even there, immigrants from Muslim countries are now altering the numbers of religious adherents. Areas such as Africa and Asia have seen tremendous growth in Christianity. Not only did religion stubbornly refuse to dwindle away, religion proved to be a massive, important element in politics. In most countries - 48 out of some 78 countries studied in this book - religion played an important part in the democratization of countries. This was utterly unexpected by the elite intellectuals. Progress and democracy and religion joined, in ways never foreseen. Nor did the secularists foresee a revitalized Islam, revitalized, not by a democratization as in other countries, but by a fundamentalist step back into the past. The authors conclude that "the more governments try to repress or exclude religion from public life, the more such efforts will be self-defeating" (p 214). Fascinating book.

The secularization thesis has proven false. Rather than declining, the number of people adhering to the major world religions has increased significantly in recent years. Since 1967 religion's influence on politics has grown on every continent. Written by three highly regarded political scientists, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* offers a thorough historical analysis of this global transformation and explores the implications of this trend for politics in the coming years while making a compelling case that the 21st century will be God's century. Religious leaders will benefit from the analysis of how religions became politically assertive in light of their knowledge of these

shifts within their respective faith tradition, from an enriched understanding of the various possible options for relationships between religious and political authority and the relative strengths and weaknesses of each, and from the many examples of religious political influence .In the final chapter (p. 207-223), the authors offer "Ten Rules for Surviving God's Century" Acknowledge that religious actors are here to stay. Do not assume that the activism of religious actors can or should be confined to a "private sphere." Learn to live with the fact that the issue is not whether, but when and how, religious actors will enter public life and shape political outcomes. Do not exaggerate the power of religious actors in public life, thereby replacing secularism with sacralization . . . . but expect religious actors to play a larger and more pervasive role than conventional wisdom anticipates. Accept that the more governments try to repress or exclude religion from public life, the more such efforts will be self-defeating. Acknowledge that the more governments permit religious actors to be autonomous social actors in a system of consensual independence, the more religion will serve as a "force multiplier" for important social and political goods, including democratization, peacemaking, and reconciliation. Take the religious beliefs and political theologies of religious actors seriously because they interact with political structure and context to explain much of the political behavior of religious actors. Accept that if governments fail to respect the institutional independence of religious actors, especially through systematic repression, the more these governments will encourage pathological forms of religious politics, including religion-based terrorism and religion-related civil wars. Appreciate that there is strategic value in pursuing a religious freedom in the conduct of foreign policy.

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