

***Religion and American Politics. Domestic and International Contexts*, edited by Paulina Napierała.
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Żaklina Dworska¹ 

*Uniwersytet Zielonogórski
Poland*

The United States embodies both religiosity and secularity, functioning as a pluralist democracy with a multicultural identity. Religion significantly shapes the nation's identity, yet its relationship with U.S. politics is complex. This study, divided into four sections, offers distinct perspectives on the role of religion in American politics, both domestically and internationally, in historical and contemporary contexts. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the politology of religion, providing a unique lens on the impact of religion on politics.

The book opens with Paulina Napierała's chapter, which significantly contributes to the politology of religion by providing a comprehensive overview of research approaches and theoretical frameworks used to study religion in American politics. The chapter lays a solid foundation for understanding both institutional and individual religious influences. A notable strength is its advocacy for a mixed-methods approach, acknowledging the limitations of solely quantitative or qualitative methods. It highlights the enduring influence of religious institutions and identities in American politics, especially recent developments where religious groups shaped electoral outcomes and policy debates. The chapter's critical examination of the secularization thesis offers valuable insights into the debate about religion's role in modern politics, encouraging scholars to reconsider theoretical assumptions. This debate is

¹ Żaklina Dworska is a Graduate student in National security and political science, currently a student in Doctoral school in the discipline of political science and administration at the University of Zielona Góra. Her research focuses on the politology of religion, specifically examining the impact of Islamic doctrine on political processes and the interplay of politics with religious norms and practices within Muslim societies, emphasizing the role of women. Contact E-mail: zaklina.dworska@gmail.com

crucial for understanding the evolving role of religion in contemporary politics.

The first part, *Evolving Relations Between Religion and American Politics*, begins with Károly Pintér's chapter, analyzing how Trump's presidency reshaped American Civil Religion (ACR). Pintér examines how Trump's administration redefined ACR symbols and values with nationalist and exclusionary meanings, increasing polarization and societal fragmentation. The chapter highlights the rise of nationalism within ACR, challenging inclusive interpretations and emphasizing American exceptionalism. Pintér explores the clashes between Trump's ACR interpretations and traditional democratic values, providing a nuanced understanding of the resulting tensions. This perspective raises important questions about the future of civic faith in American politics. In the second chapter, James L. Guth and Lyman A. Kellstedt examine evangelical Christianity's significant influence on American conservative populism, shaping its ideology, rhetoric, and mobilization strategies. Religious leaders frame political issues in moral terms, mobilizing support for populist candidates. Collaboration between religious and political leaders, endorsements, and media support bolster conservative populism's legitimacy and appeal. The movement thrives on opposition to secularization and moral decline, emphasizing traditional values. While evangelicals are most influential, mainline Catholics and Protestants also contribute, showcasing a broad religious foundation for conservative populism. Their analysis of evangelical influence, religious framing, leader alliances, media networks, and opposition to secularization offers a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between religion and politics.

The second part of the book, *Constitutional Dimensions of Religious and Political Debates in the United States*, begins with Sebastian Kubas's chapter, analyzing how the Christian Right leverages religious passion and organizational strength to influence legal interpretations and judicial appointments. It highlights their efforts to place sympathetic judges in key positions, ensuring ideological representation in the judiciary. By framing legal matters in religious terms, they sway public opinion and judicial outcomes, resonating with followers and justifying their strategies. The chapter details political and legal tactics, including lobbying and strategic litigation, demonstrating the Christian Right's significant and sustained impact on U.S. judicial review and constitutional practice. Jerold L. Waltman provides an insightful analysis of the evolving landscape of religious freedom in the U.S. The chapter highlights the judiciary's trend towards expanding religious freedoms, the influence of legislative actions like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and the complex balancing act courts perform between religious rights and other societal interests. It examines the political context's impact on judicial decisions, offering a comprehensive

understanding of how shifts in political and judicial leadership shape free exercise jurisprudence. Waltman suggests that free exercise jurisprudence will continue to evolve, with ongoing debates about the boundaries of religious freedom and its intersection with other constitutional rights. Emily R. Gill's chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the complex relationship between religious freedom and marriage equality in the United States. It highlights the legal and social challenges of balancing these rights, particularly through crafting exemptions and accommodations. Significant legal developments, such as *Obergefell v. Hodges*, are discussed alongside ongoing legal battles over religious exemptions. The impact on religious institutions and the polarized public discourse are examined. Gill suggests that future legal and social conflicts will continue to shape the evolving landscape of religious liberty and marriage equality, with court decisions and legislation playing crucial roles in defining the balance between these rights. Elad Ben David explores the intricate relationship between the First Amendment's religious clauses and the Muslim community in the U.S. post-9/11. The chapter analyzes the complexities in interpreting these clauses, the impact of heightened scrutiny on Muslims, and Yasir Qadhi's efforts to reconcile Islamic principles with American values. It discusses the legal and social challenges faced by American Muslims and underscores the influential roles of religious leaders. Ben David suggests that ongoing legal and social changes will continue to shape the landscape for American Islam, marking this work as a significant contribution to understanding contemporary religious and political dynamics.

The third part, *Religion, Race, and Politics: The Political Role of the Black Church*, begins with Paulina Napierała's analysis of the church's historical significance during the Civil Rights Movement and its ongoing commitment to advocacy. The chapter underscores the church's role in political mobilization, community leadership, and the intersection of faith and activism. The analysis reveals the church's influence on broader social movements and suggests its continued relevance in addressing contemporary issues, cementing its legacy as a cornerstone of Black Church activism. Cristobal Serran-Pagan y Fuentes emphasizes Martin Luther King's use of a moral and ethical framework grounded in Christian theology to critique social evils and advocate for systemic change. King's critique of capitalism focuses on how economic exploitation and inequality contribute to poverty and perpetuate racism. His vision for a just society is articulated through his advocacy for nonviolent resistance, economic equality, and the eradication of racial discrimination. The chapter underscores the importance of addressing social evils collectively to achieve a just society. Michael McLaughlin provides an insightful analysis of the intersection

between religion and politics within the Black Power Movement. Focusing on the Black Panthers' use of church kitchens for community programs, the chapter highlights the essential role of religious institutions in supporting social activism. It discusses the symbolic and practical roles of religion, the importance of coalition building, and the creation of cultural and political identity. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the enduring legacy of the Black Panthers' strategies and the continued relevance of religious institutions in contemporary social justice movements.

The fourth part, *Religion, International Politics, and Global Issues*, begins with James L. Guth and Brent F. Nelsen's chapter examining the nexus between religious beliefs and support for Trump's policies. Highlighting strong evangelical support due to shared values and policy priorities, the chapter underscores growing religious polarization and the significant influence of religious leaders. It explores the role of theological beliefs in aligning with Trump's agenda and how cultural and political identity integrates with religious convictions. The chapter concludes by examining the enduring impact of the Trump era on religious-political alignments, suggesting a persistent bond between certain religious groups and the Republican Party. Husan Mohamad provides a comprehensive analysis of how evangelical Christians have shaped U.S. foreign policy. Rooted in theological beliefs, their support for Israel has led to significant policy outcomes, including the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Political mobilization and alliances with political figures have amplified their influence, aligning U.S. policy with Israeli interests and complicating peace efforts with Palestinians. The chapter suggests that evangelical influence on U.S. foreign policy is likely to endure, reflecting a deep and persistent ideological commitment. Lyman A. Kellstedt and James L. Guth examine the interplay between religious beliefs and climate change attitudes in the U.S. The chapter identifies significant differences across religious groups, noting that evangelicals display more skepticism compared to other denominations. Theological beliefs, particularly dominion theology, and political alignments heavily influence these attitudes. The chapter underscores the role of religious leaders in shaping environmental perspectives and the potential for religious movements to advocate for climate action. The chapter suggests that increased religious engagement and shifts in theological emphasis could bolster support for addressing global warming within religious communities.

In conclusion, *Religion and American Politics: Domestic and International Contexts* significantly contribute to the politology of religion, offering new perspectives and methodologies for multidisciplinary exploration of religion and politics, while providing focused analyses for narrower interpretations. Although

the primary focus is politology of religion, it integrates perspectives from other disciplines. The book offers a comprehensive multilevel analysis of religion-related political processes in the U.S. Contributors adopt an interdisciplinary approach, enriching the discourse on religion and politics beyond strict political science. The volume includes research on religion and politics in the U.S., using qualitative and quantitative analyses. Contributors draw on legal, sociological, historical, theological, cultural, and political studies. This book is highly recommended for scholars, both from the U.S. and internationally, seeking to understand the intricate dynamics of religious influence on political structures and processes in the United States.