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Graziano, Manlio. *Holy Wars and Holy Alliance: The Return of Religion to the Global Political Stage*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017.

Holy Wars and Holy Alliance: The Return of Religion to the Global Political Stage by Manlio Graziano has the ambition to present a study of “the geopolitics of religions” (p. 3) within a climate of generally secular analysis. In 279 pages, Graziano seeks to treat religion as “a political factor” since “from a geopolitical point of view, each constraint is a political factor” (p. 4). The reader expects a contribution to current discussions about the rise of religion in global politics as well as academic input toward finding a serious way out of the nation-state’s crisis. Geopolitics involves an “analysis of the geographic

influences on power relationships in international relations."¹ Graziano's assumption – suggested by the title of his book – points out a "Holy Alliance" as the counterpart to a "Holy War." "Alliance" is defined in international relations as "a formal agreement between two or more states for mutual support in case of war."² Therefore, Graziano's "Holy Alliance" is expected to be a defender against the "Holy War."

The book is divided into an introduction followed by four parts; one that presents the "complex and paradoxical relationship between 'modernity' and secularization" (p. 6); one which is written to examine "cases where religion and politics started to converge" (p. 7); one about the testing and failure of the central thesis of Samuel Huntington's 1996 book *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*; one which presents the "hypothesis of a 'holy alliance' among the most important faiths in the world" (p. 11); and a closing chapter that presents the conclusions of Graziano's study.

The book finds its starting point in a brief philosophical and historical-based overview of secularization theory and questions of modernization. On the one hand, the author stresses the end of the Westphalian era of international relations, the rise of regional groupings and associated therewith the "invisible religion" (p. 31). On the other hand, the author explains the turn to a "visible religion" (p. 34) due to "urbanization" (p. 36). "The 'return of God' has affected every country that began a cycle of industrial development in the 1960s and 1970s" (p. 37).

The first part of the book seems to be an interesting starting point for the following study since Graziano manages to combine different observations over a long period of time in a brief and readable chapter. Nevertheless, the reader stays clueless about the direction the study will take. Additionally, the starting chapter seems not to provide a theoretical basis for the following studies. This lack of theoretical foundation poses an obstacle for the scholarly reader. In the second chapter, Graziano describes the "awakening" (p. 49) of religion and power in the 1970s. By examining cases where religion and politics started to converge, the author tries to describe the re-sacralization

¹ Daniel H. Deudney, "Geopolitics," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed November 26, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/geopolitics>.

² David G. Haglund, "Alliance," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed November 26, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/alliance-politics>.

of politics. Apparently randomly selected examples like Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, the United States, Iran and Afghanistan paint a colorful picture but seem not to be a result of a theoretical guided analysis. Therefore the case studies do not strengthen the study in an academic way.

By the end of the case studies, Graziano succeeds in bringing together the Islamic Revolution and the power of Khomeini in Iran and the “pope of the new Christianity” (p. 101), John Paul II. The author stresses that John Paul II makes “the Catholic Church [...] the protagonist of the desecularization of the world” (p. 102). By establishing the Catholic Church that way, Graziano manages to lead the reader to the central part of his study, the “Holy War.” The antagonism of Islam and the West seems to be obvious. But in part three of the book, the author proves the weakness of Samuel Huntington’s central thesis about the new world order based in *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*. After explaining the supposed clash of civilisations, Graziano is especially convincing when he answers the question “Why do they [the Muslims] hate us [people of the West]?” (p. 119). Documented on a large scale by empirical, historic and geographic viewpoints, Graziano contradicts some key assumptions about Muslim countries. He is not afraid to write about the “most hotly debated questions of recent years: the role of the Muslim women” (p. 142) or “religion, power and sharia” (p. 148).

Unfortunately, Graziano comes up with some unconnected case studies to substantiate his assumptions on religions in political violence. His switch to “terrorism” (171) as another part of the “Holy War” shows some technical lacks of clarity which remain with the reader. The term “Holy War” stays vague just as the term “Holy Alliance” does, which is the main issue of part four in his book. As already mentioned, the term “alliance” is clearly defined, but Graziano seems to use it recklessly in a political way without any academic reference. In part four, the author wants to present his hypothesis of a “Holy Alliance” among the most important faiths in the world. Again, it remains unclear on which information the “most important faiths the world” refers to.

But nevertheless Graziano comes to the conclusion that the “Catholic Church is institutionally involved in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and [...] embody a strategic will to make a ‘Holy Alliance’ among the world’s great religions the key to a

long-term geopolitical strategy” (p. 207). “The alliance [...] can only be a Catholic-led alliance” (p. 220).

The author illustrates his thesis by explaining the system of the Catholic Church and ends with the impression that “for the church, religions should occupy a larger place in the public sphere, in order to help direct major political decisions and thus eliminate the causes of these conflicts at their roots” (p. 220). Graziano tries to show how the Catholic Church promotes dialogue and how it has used all its resources to reach power. By the end of the book, Graziano presents the solution of what he sees as the most important faiths in the world: the Christian Churches, Judaism and Islam. But “all roads lead to Rome” (247), since the Catholic Church has the power to lead. This power is created by organization, centralism, networks, and solid principles (p. 278).

Within this last chapter the reader finally understands what the author seeks to present – the idea of the leading role of the Catholic Church for peace and understanding. He paints a dark picture, claiming “that tolerance, pluralism, democracy and science have not triumphed as predicted.”³ Ironically the Catholic Church, the institution which gave the world the Inquisition and which has supported “a theological basis for the hostility and persecution inflicted by Christians on Jews for more than fifteen centuries” (p. 221), shall serve as a saviour for an alliance among civilizations and “to promote a return of religion to the centre of public life” (p. 219). Although Graziano emphasises that the Catholic Church “has undergone a profound transformation” (p. 222) toward the Jews, the arguments of a significant role for the Catholic Church are only convincing “in the eyes of the Church” (p. 220). Graziano’s piece, presented as a study of “the geopolitics of religion,” is much more a description of the will to power of the Catholic Church than an explanation of how to deal with religious struggles across the international stage.

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³ Columbia University Press write up for Holy War, Holy Alliance: The Return of Religion to the Global Political Stage, accessed March 15, 2018, <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/holy-wars-and-holy-alliance/9780231174626>.