

overviews, each chapter is buttressed by empirical analyses that test the modern-day relationship of religion to nationalism, using public opinion data, periodicals, and elite rhetoric to demonstrate the relative stability of each country's model.

In generating a parsimonious model of religion's influence on narratives of nationhood, the book succeeds in answering the questions it poses. Some critics might say that the research sacrifices depth for parsimony, while other critics might argue the book fails to address a diverse audience within the nationalism literature and thus does little to bridge the gap between the political science sub-disciplines. The book's defense lies undoubtedly in its well-grounded theory and breadth of analyses to examine the important religion-nationalism intersection. Overall, the book takes great care to thoughtfully demonstrate that the relationship between religion and nationalism can indeed be explained on a global scale, providing an important contribution to the field of religion & politics.

This book is well written, offers a cogent argument, and makes use of multiple methodologies to lend credence to its claims. The book does not end the debate over what shape the religion-nationalism intersection takes in every country around the world. However, it provides profound new insights into how we might begin to understand the development of countries' religion-nationalism nexus as well as its reproduction in both institutional and ideological settings—a praiseworthy achievement that many works have been unable to offer so succinctly while covering such a wide terrain.

***A Living Tradition. Catholic Social Doctrine and Holy See Diplomacy.***  
**By A. Alexander Stummvoll. Eugene: Cascade, 2017. XVIII+211pp. \$**  
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Jodok Troy  
*University of Innsbruck*

*A Living Tradition* examines the normative sources of Holy See diplomacy and the dilemmas it confronts in political practice. Consequently, the book is an endeavor in history and political science. In both regards, the book is

well suited for students of the current history of religion and international relations. The main question the book tackles is how Church teaching translates into Holy See foreign policy, focusing somewhat reductively on Catholic Social doctrine as the main inspirational source. Relying on Alasdair MacIntyre's narrative theory, the author argues that in order to approach any kind of answer to such a question, the Church's body of teachings have to be defined as a "living tradition". A "living tradition" is a set of "historically extended, socially embodied arguments about the 'good life'" (p. 6). Facing inevitable contingencies of political conduct, a "living tradition" primes prudent and pragmatic foreign policy. This conclusion aligns with other research, pointing out the Holy See's realistic conduct in political practice rather than doctrinal rigidity.

Still, at least since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Holy See has been eager to present itself as a moral, rather than a political actor on the world stage. The contribution of *A Living Tradition* is one of illustrating that it is not possible to separate the Holy See's religious and political qualities. The author illustrates his argument through four case studies. (1) The Holy See's promotion of peace during the Vietnam War. (2) John Paul II's attempts of converting Communism in Poland during the Cold War. (3) The Holy See's struggle with secularist and non-principled Liberalism during the United Nations conferences in Cairo and Beijing. (4) The Holy See's criticism of Capitalism during the international debt crisis.

Throughout, the book illustrates the Holy See's dilemma: whether to speak out for moral reasons or remain silent for prudential considerations. Far from being trivial, this conclusion illustrates that "religious traditions provide meaning, significance and context for action which elicit practices that, in turn, shape and reshape the underlying tradition" (p. 11). What is more, this conclusion, reached by a methodology of political theory, illustrates the value for political science analysis. For too long the latter has been fixated on doctrine as a static carrier, constructing mechanic relationships between doctrine and action. Not surprisingly, this take on religion and politics led to swaths of experts, formulating ever more "correct" interpretations of religious texts and traditions, presumptuously defining what is religious and what is not.

Stummvoll evades this trap by focusing on agency and an orthodox take on tradition, asking questions of "how", "when", or "where" there are relations between doctrine and action, rather than "why". Although not a sufficient condition for specific political conduct, *A Living Tradition* illustrates that "tradition", and thus doctrine, is nevertheless a necessary

condition. In this regard, Catholic social teaching does not determine practice in the sense of a “national interest.” As expected, such an approach is strong in explaining the bigger picture of the Holy See’s involvement in international politics but weak in explaining specific outcomes. Arguing that tradition, individual agency, and contingency matter, inevitably leads to the question how a “living tradition” affects the institution of the Holy See. Despite all the argument’s diligent efforts, readers might be left wondering how it effects the very structure of the Catholic Church.

Certainly, the fluid nature of the “living tradition” results in a legitimate reluctance to introduce a rigid framework to categorize diplomacy in ideological schemes or periods. However, at certain instances the study is smitten with bold claims nonetheless. This is, for instance, the case with the author’s take on the Church’s stance on human rights, claiming that religious freedom “has been part and parcel of the Catholic worldview” (p 176) since the Second Vatican Council. That might be true in terms of the Holy See’s rhetoric. However, it is at least doubtful if this Catholic “part and parcel” has been so clear-cut ever since. Moreover, the assumption of such a clear-cut introduction of a new “part and parcel” of Catholic worldview is opaque, even with regard to an adapting, because “living”, tradition.

Stummvoll wants to appeal and challenge a variety of readers: liberals who downplay the role of doctrine, reducing it to teachings of peace, war, and economic justice and conservatives alike who focus on traditional values in the sphere of moral theology. *A Living Tradition* seeks to overcome this tension with an orthodox take on Catholic social doctrine as “a coherent and consistent whole that transcends the divide between liberals and conservatives” (p. 27). In fact, in the case studies, particularly regarding Pope John Paul II’s involvement in Poland during the Cold War, Stummvoll is able to point out the value of this coherent take. John Paul II’s alliance with the U.S. did not support a hawkish Cold War rhetoric, nor did the Pope support Western capitalism.

Still, it is doubtful if the author can come through to liberals and conservatives alike. John Paul II is the main protagonist in three of the four case studies and it would be interesting to see what the author has to say about the legacy of Benedict XVI or Francis. The best guess is that both, relying on an orthodox take on Catholic Social doctrine, confirm the argument of a “living tradition.” But then again, this could be said of most of the recent popes because how a “living tradition” plays out in practice is a matter of degree.

A core strength of the book is its “insider” approach, borrowed from classical Realist and English School scholarship that seeks to anticipate agents’ thoughts. Current studies on religious issues and actors in the political realm focus on “soft power” and take an “outsider”, that is to say spectator, point of view on the topic. *A Living Tradition* is therefore a welcomed contribution to the study of religion and politics. The success of the book’s methodological approach is also indebted to its rigorous archival work. Based on archival work, the book’s case studies add another strength, which sets the bar high for future studies on the Holy See that want to avoid reiterating well-trodden and empirically thinly backed arguments on the Holy See’s foreign policy.