

VATICAN DIPLOMACY AND WORLD POLITICS

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SUMMARY

The diplomatic action of the Holy See has been calling the attention of the international community, in particular in recent times, when the late Pope John Paul II was a rising global star. Its growing importance is particularly relevant in areas regarding international morality, the development of International Law and other subjects related with Human Rights, and the promotion of peace and understanding around the world. As the result of the activism of the Holy See, both international mass-media and the scholarly community are conscious of the growing authority of the Holy See and follow with attention its contribution in different fields that are important for the global agenda.

The dissertation tries to show how the Holy See, as a Sovereign State, sustains that in today's world, power and the manipulation of political and economic influence are far from guaranteeing peace. This project aims to show the crucial role the Holy See play in limiting other States' actions in the international arena, in particular those that are guided by the pursuit of power and military might for the preservation of their own national interests. This research wishes to contribute to the construction of a new image of the Vatican, one that goes beyond its role as the religious center and supreme authority of the Catholic Church, and that presents it as a subject of International Law that benefits from a very well-developed diplomatic infrastructure and a vast network of contacts around the globe.

This project analyses the decisive influence of the Holy See in its condition as a *sui generis* subject before International Law. As such, the Holy See works for the universal adoption of principles and mandatory rules that offer the platform for peace, cooperation and

understanding among nations. Crucial to this analysis will be an understanding of the strong bond between natural law and positive law as understood by the Holy See. The Holy See's response to perceived conflicts between natural and positive law is always guided by a perspective founded on Catholic theology and values, and the basic assumption that the world does have a supreme ruler: God.

This dissertation takes a broad view. In four chapters, it covers the behavior of the Vatican whenever it has been faced with major events that changed the shape of world politics. These include the Encounter of Two Worlds in the sixteenth century, the political revolutions of the 18th century and the social ones of the 19th and 20th, as well as the major armed conflicts of the last century. It also reviews important aspects of the pontificates of the popes of the 21st Century. The main questions this dissertation raises concern the nature of the Vatican as an actor in international relations. Is the Vatican a sovereign state, a religious entity, or a combination of both? If it is to be considered a state, then what are its attributes? Does it have a national interest, and if so, how does it pursue it, and through what means? Does the Vatican pursue power in the temporal sense of the word, according to political science and the theory of international relations, or does it exercise influence in order to shape the world according to Christian values? Other important questions that will enter into this inquiry are that of the concept of peace according to which the Vatican acts in the international arena, as well as the particularities of international law according to which the Holy See would like to conduct world politics. All these questions are framed under a general hypothesis in which the Vatican is seen as a *sui generis* actor of the global community which, while denying its active participation in world politics, is a true activist that exercises power in non-conventional ways (soft power) and has an enormous prestige and ability to influence the outcome of different conflicts in International Relations.

The answers to these questions can be found in this work, but with the caveat that the world historical circumstances of each moment and the personal imprint of each pope affect the positions the Church takes as an actor on the international scene. However, a general overview of Vatican behavior confirms certain tendencies that are preserved throughout time, as is exemplified in its gradual acceptance of the liberal order established after the Second World War: even though the Church views this liberal order as atheist and pro-secular, it has come to accept that it must participate in this order so as to exert the influence it seeks in the temporal world. The Church has a history of slowly but surely adapting to temporal circumstances, even though it considers its calling to be of a higher order. Following this trend, it can be observed that, throughout the centuries, it has always been this way: the Vatican is a step behind revolutionary ideas, but it does finally adapt its position to accommodate secular ideas, especially in the twenty-first century.

The dissertation includes the following chapters:

In chapter one, this study offers a general view of the Holy See in world politics in order to frame it according to a specific theoretical approach. Its condition as a state, the concepts of national interest and power, are also studied within the scope of different schools of thought of international relations. The chapter also reviews the way in which the Holy See exercises power using its influence, prestige, and its institutional infrastructure around the world.

International Relations, International Law, History and Sociology are relevant fields of study for this first chapter of the dissertation. The mainstream referential authors are Thomas Hobbs, Hans Morgenthau (Classical realism), Kenneth Waltz (Neorealism), Jack Snyder (Defensive realism), Stephan Walt (Balance and threats) and Jodok Troy (Eclectic), among others. At the same time, some reference is made to historical sociology when addressing specific topics of the Catholic Church, such as its pacifist vocation (Raymond Aron).

Chapter two considers the Encounter of Two Worlds, that is, the arrival of Europeans on the American continent, and the way in which the Catholic Church contributed to the early development of human rights. This chapter pays special attention to the missionary idea of humankind and to crucial historical figures in the development of the rights of Native Americans, both on the side of the friars who came to the Americas and of the intellectuals who remained in Europe, but participated actively in the development of those rights, in particular in the famous Debate of Valladolid in 1540. For better understanding the particulars of this theoretical evolution, this chapter will also address the contributions of Spanish theologian-jurists. At the same time, this chapter presents the counter-movement in regard to human rights that occurred within the Church as a result of the clash between the papacy and protestant movements in Europe. This opened an ideological gap between Rome and the rest of the world, a divide that would be deepened by the political and social revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which had to do with processes of social emancipation and demands for social justice, equality, and the rule of law, in the face of the dominance of absolute monarchies or factual powers, which continued to be backed by the papacy. This chapter therefore reveals the contradiction in the positions adopted by the Church and promulgated by the Vatican in regards to the rights of the Native American populations and the Vatican's real practice of siding with the rich and powerful of the time.

This chapter also addresses in detail the processes of change in Church thought as it adapts to new circumstances. Once again, it would be in the New World where events would shake the minds and consciences of the European establishment, including Church leaders. In the 18th century, the United States' War of Independence and the French Revolution, and, in the following century, Marxist thought, would deeply challenge long-held beliefs in the Church. After the social and political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, international politics shifted its focus onto the importance of human rights and dignity; at the same time, political

life was secularized and detached from the Church. In response, the Holy See, even with its background of teachings, at first adopted a discourse condemning liberal ideas. Faced with social movements, the Vatican insisted that sovereignty does not come from the people, but from God. In a way, the Church's position was a bet against the evolution of politics and social welfare in the world. Taking into account the broad scope of five hundred years of Church behavior in International Relations, this chapter offers a review of the Holy See's position regarding crucial events on the world stage.

Chapter three of this dissertation addresses a crucial epoch in Vatican politics. The always-changing environment in international politics and the progress of the secularization process, prompted the Vatican to adapt to new circumstances, but it always did so at its own pace, for example insisting on the value of "concordats" for dealing with Church-State relations. However, the challenges posed by the Industrial Revolution and the wars of the first half of the 20th century, including the Bolshevik Revolution, demanded that the Holy See adapt to the emerging Wilsonian order, without conceding to the role and mandate given to the League of Nations, which League was too liberal for the Roman Curia. But, the atrocities of the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the use of nuclear bombs by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, could not be denied by the Vatican, even though these events were not strongly condemned by the pope at the time. However, for the world, including the Vatican, it was clear from these events that a new world order would be needed in order to keep peace. Liberal by definition, that new order gave birth to the United Nations Organization. Faced with these developments, the Vatican accepted the new rules of multilateralism and allied itself with Washington in the common fight against totalitarianism and communism. Since then, gradually but consistently, the Vatican has continually endorsed the doctrines of human rights and international law, while still taking distance from any developments of positive law that go against natural law and the teachings of the Church.

In this third chapter is also addressed the publishing in 1848 of the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Despite being a difficult period, it was in 1891 that Pope Leo XIII opened the discourse of the Church, following the philosophical ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas about common good and the principles of natural law by promulgating his encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, which had as a stated goal to restore and perfect the social order according to the law of the Gospel. This process, known as the First Vatican Council, is reviewed in this chapter. Special attention is paid to how the Church, facing the challenge of materialism, began to find a way to modernize itself on subjects such as life, politics, economics, work, trade, industry, progress, and peace. The chapter also addresses the Vatican's posture regarding the exercise of liberties under the framework of natural law, social justice and solidarity.

The major conflicts that would occur in the first half of the twentieth century shook Rome to its core. Enclosed within the walls of the Vatican, the successive popes called for a Christian peace (*omnia instaurare in Christo*), one that would be possible through the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on Earth (*de pace Christi in regno Christi quaerenda*). The Holocaust and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced the Vatican to side definitively with the efforts to establish a new world order following the Second World War, a liberal order that would follow a model similar to the one adopted by the League of Nations in 1919. While the Vatican firmly opposed the League of Nations, was now faced with the need to properly address peace and war under international law and international humanitarian law. The confirmation of this new perspective is that, after being invited in 1964 to join the UN as an Observer State, the Vatican finally accepted that condition in 2004. An important element of the third chapter is its analysis of the fact that, for the first time in history, the Vatican endorsed economic development and social justice as platforms for building a true and lasting universal peace. Accordingly, this chapter reviews the teachings of

very important popes such as Pius XII and others that followed John XXIII's initiative of the Second Vatican Council to change the structures of wealth in the world that had resulted from colonialism and created widespread poverty.

Backed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the new international order demanded that the Church understand international economic justice under different parameters in accordance with the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter. In the always conflictive environment of the Cold War, the Vatican proposed the building of a "Civilization of Love" in which peace would be the result of disarmament, cooperation, and the rule of law. This chapter thus shows the Vatican in a period of massive transition from being a supporter of the rulers to being a supporter of the people. The third chapter concludes with the arrival of Pope John Paul II who played a major role in reshaping International Relations following the collapse of the Cold War. Vatican diplomacy under John Paul II was nurtured by the concept of solidarity and adopted the legacy of the Civilization of Love and added to it the Globalization of Solidarity. Together, both concepts offered a new look towards multilateralism and the role of the United Nations in contributing to world peace.

Chapter Four examines the Church under the papacies of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and the current pope Francis. This chapter studies John Paul II's and Benedict XVI's conservatism regarding the emerging concerns of international society and of common people in their everyday lives. The growing importance of civil society movements and NGO's shaped the pontificates of each one of these three popes and made possible the transition between the first two conservative ones to the current pope, a Jesuit and liberal reformer, who has surprised the world for the progressive nature of his views. Under Francis, the Church's approach to polemic topics such as LGBTQ+ rights, the preservation of the planet, and social justice for the world's poor have made a great difference from his predecessors. Again, as

studied in the preceding chapters, in this fourth chapter, it is clear that the general tendency of following the teachings of the Second Vatican Council by these three popes adopts a more radical agenda under the tenure of Francis.

Benedict XVI stood firmly against terrorism, while at the same time criticizing the United Nations for its lack of commitment to observing natural law, the law that is understood as coming directly from God in the Ten Commandments, while favoring the progressive development of positive law, the law of nations. This German pope needed to address problems that had arisen inside the Vatican walls during John Paul II's tenure, and at the same time denounced the risks of modernity, rationalism, and relativism for Christian and Western cultures. A conservative by definition, Benedict XVI is also presented in this chapter as a revolutionary. He also favored the secularization of the Church, meaning the opening of the Church to more democratic practices in its own governing structures, and, unexpectedly, he resigned from the papacy at the end of February, 2013, setting the pace for a much-needed change in the future role of the papacy for properly addressing issues affecting the world.

Following Benedict XVI's resignation, Jorge Bergoglio was elected pope as Francis I. Coming from Argentina, the new pope immediately challenged the supremacy of the Italian and European claim on the papacy and brought with him winds of change regarding social justice and the urgent attention demanded by poverty. Francis is by all means an original pope, whose narrative has to do with the commitment of Vatican diplomacy to tackling what he calls the "globalization of indifference," a phenomenon which he says leads to social exclusion (in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*), mass migration, and conflict. Francis has openly taken action in favor of accountability and transparency in the finances of the Vatican. He is a natural advocate for the combat against corruption in the world as a

whole. A pragmatic diplomat, in this way similar to John Paul II, Francis brings about what is called “The Francis Effect,” which will be one important subject of this chapter.

This chapter studies Francis’s positions in favor of a more open Church, one that is tolerant and ready to engage in dialogue with minorities and vulnerable sectors of all societies. Francis is also a champion of the fight against climate change and the adoption by the international community of sustainable policies in favor of the preservation of the planet. Francis has shown the Vatican’s strong diplomatic commitment to the international social agenda. He has confirmed, as never any pope before him, that the Church is an expert in humanity. This fourth chapter reveals the ways in which the diplomatic skills of Francis are put to work in favor of those on the Global South. The final section of this fourth chapter makes a brief review of the posture adopted by the Vatican regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for solidarity among the international community to avoid the monopoly of economic and pharmaceutical resources.

For the purpose of this dissertation, it is clear that under the current pope, Francis, the Church is backing the teachings coming from the mendicant friars in the 16th century and the Valladolid Debate, in particular those regarding the need to change the economic structures that create poverty and put the planetary ecosystem at risk.

This dissertation ends with concluding reflections on the behavior of the Vatican in a future that cannot be predicted. However, the Church has proved that it has an enormous influence, that is to say soft power, for consolidating itself as an extremely important actor in International Relations, that cannot be ignored.