

# Pontifical Diplomacy in the East Asian Region: A Pre-Pope Francis Era (1964-2013)

*Angeli Francis S. Rivera\**

Senior High School, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines

**Abstract:** This article is a humble venture into the pontifical diplomacy of the Vatican II popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, and how their diplomatic styles consistently upheld the nature and mission of the Holy See with the ideals of the Vatican II Council. Through pontifical diplomacy, the Holy See rightly exercises the Church's prophetic office. The author used text-based and author-based analyses to decode and interpret the Addresses to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI from 1968-2012. The author finds that major political events in the East Asian region have formed each papal style. Paul VI established the foundations of modern pontifical diplomacy by tapping on bilateral and multilateral diplomacies' potentials. John Paul II used the same platforms to appeal and conscientize states and institutions to respect the primacy of the human person and to trust the universal and moral foundations of diplomacy. For his part, Benedict XVI focused on truth against moral relativism and dedicated it to the path of openness, forgiveness, and new energies. These unique papal styles are also found to influence Pope Francis' Culture of Encounter (COE).

**Keywords:** East Asian Region, Holy See, Peace, Pontifical Diplomacy, Vatican II

---

\*Angeli Francis S. Rivera, PhD can be contacted at [asrivera@ust.edu.ph](mailto:asrivera@ust.edu.ph).

Papal diplomacy has been effective in the promotion of the spiritual mission of the Holy See ever since the conceptual birth of nation-states in 1648. Joining the United Nations (UN) in 1964 as a Permanent Observer amplified the Holy See's presence in a wider platform—making it the only religious actor to do so until today. In this article, the consequences of the Holy See's spiritual mission in East Asia from 1964-2013 will be showcased, as highlighted by the papal styles to peace by Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI.

Contemporary global politics is “personality-driven.” In other words, the leader's charisma is significant in shaping the political and cultural values of his/her constituents.<sup>1</sup> The pope's character and leadership style have an effect in reviving the moral compass in global politics. Like any leader, he is capable of weighing successes against costs. He can intervene by speaking boldly on issues when state leaders or peace mechanisms are compromised. As someone equipped with two leadership styles (spiritual and secular), he can access several multilateral and bilateral platforms in the different parts of the world.<sup>2</sup>

The author contends that the political gestures and expressions of the Vatican II popes directed the traditions and innovations in Pope Francis' political style. Hence, among the objectives of this article is to prove that papal diplomacy, along with its consistencies, developments, and changes, remains an essential instrument for Church's peace mission in East Asia.

### **The Holy See: Nature And Mission**

The Church, through the Holy See, works for peace by intervening in international conflicts in an effort to resolve these through peaceful means. To be involved in international peacekeeping is a consequence of her spiritual and religious mission. To demonstrate, the nature and mission of the Holy See will be treated briefly in this section.

#### *Nature*

*The Holy See is a sovereign entity.* The Holy See is often confused with the “Vatican City State.” Although the “Holy See” and the “Vatican City State” are political

---

<sup>1</sup> Guy Golan, Philip Arcenaux and Megan Soule, “The Catholic Church as a Public Diplomacy Actor: An Analysis of the Pope's Strategic Narrative and International Engagement,” *The Journal of International Communication* (2018): 16.

<sup>2</sup> Federica Genovese, “Politics Ex Cathedra: Religious Authority and the Pope in Modern International Relations,” *Research and Politics* (October-December 2015): 2-3.

entities interlinked in the person of the pope, these should not be used interchangeably. The Vatican City State is the territory that guarantees the independence of the Holy See. It came to be through the Lateran Treaty between Italy and the Roman Curia in 1929.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the Holy See or “Apostolic See” is the entity that establishes formal relations with states.<sup>4</sup> It has a juridical personality acknowledged by the international community.<sup>5</sup> The composition of the Holy See includes the pope, the Secretariat of State, the Council for Public Affairs, and the Roman Curia.<sup>6</sup>

The diplomatic service of the Holy See is regulated by the 1961 *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations* (international) and the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* (ecclesiastical). Paul VI stated in his apostolic letter, *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*, that the diplomatic service of the Holy See is an “innate right,”<sup>7</sup> in which the authority comes primarily from the spiritual mandate of the Church (“go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations”<sup>8</sup>) and secondarily from the evolving law of nations. The assertion of such rights are reechoed in the *Compendium*:

*The Church has the right to the legal recognition of her proper identity.* Precisely because her mission embraces all of human reality, the Church, sensing that she is ‘truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history,’ claims the freedom to express her moral judgment on this reality, whenever it may be required to defend the fundamental rights of the person or for the salvation of souls.<sup>9</sup>

That excerpt makes it clear that the sovereignty of the Holy See is exercised in the Church’s freedom to express moral judgment on human realities. The ultimate concern—the salvation of souls—is interlinked with the promotion of the fundamental rights of peoples.

<sup>3</sup> Boris Vukicevic, “Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe: Ostpolitik of the Holy See,” *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 49 (2018): 120.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Byrnes’ Three Spheres of Papal Politics mentioned in: Mariano Barbato and Robert Joustra, “Introduction: Popes on the Rise,” *The Review of Faith and International Relations* 4 (2017): 2.

<sup>5</sup> Barbato and Joustra, “Introduction: Popes on the Rise,” 3.

<sup>6</sup> Catholic Church, “1983 Code of Canon Law” no. 361 from [http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic\\_index\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html) (accessed January 14, 2020). Hereinafter abbreviated as *CIC*. See also: Jodok Troy, “The Pope’s Own Hand Outstretched: Holy See Diplomacy as a Hybrid Mode of Diplomatic Agency,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 3 (2018): 526.

<sup>7</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Letter Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*: AAS 61 (1969): 476 in Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Makati City, Philippines: Word and Life Publications-CBCP, 2004), no. 445. Hereinafter abbreviated as “*CSDC*.”

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Matthew 28:16-20. All scriptural references in this article will be taken from the *Catholic Study Bible*, eds. Donald Senior, John Collins, and Mary Ann Getty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> *CSDC*, no. 426.

*The Holy See is one of its kind (sui generis).* The Holy See is an entity that enjoys the same rights accorded to every state by the *Vienna Convention*. Similarly, it is also distinguishable for its non-state merits.

First, the Holy See's diplomatic service is an "ancient and proven practice"<sup>10</sup> that has existed before the birth of the nation-states in 1648. Its diplomatic functions persisted despite the loss of states that would guarantee its independence from 1870-1929.<sup>11</sup> Second, the Holy See's constituents are not limited by geography. It represents the Catholic population wherever it serves.<sup>12</sup> Third, the pope and his legates possess both spiritual and political characters. They can shift from being a pastor to a statesman depending on the political landscape.

*The Holy See offers non-partisan service.* The Church's spiritual mission forms the basis for neutrality or the Holy See's choice for impartiality. The direction of its foreign policy is for the "good of the entire human family."<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy to mention that impartiality does not lead to silence. The Holy See rightly exercises the prophetic office of the Church in matters affecting human dignity and rights. It takes inspiration from the Gospel and the Church's bi-millennial experience.<sup>14</sup>

The non-partisan service of the Holy See was put into practice as soon as it entered the UN as a permanent observer. The permanent observer status is awarded to sovereign states (and non-states with legal personality) that opted for neutrality as their foreign policy direction. As a consequence, they are prevented from voting or participating in the drafting of the resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Even so, the Holy See receives privileges beyond its observer

---

<sup>10</sup> CSDC, no. 445. Papal diplomacy had been used extensively since the time of European Christendom. Orlando Antonini makes an explicit reference of the first papal envoys in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. *Apocrisarios/Reponsales, Missi, Missi Apostolicae Sedis, Legati, Legati a Latere, Legati Missi, Legati Nati, Nuntii*). These envoys represent the Bishop of Rome in Imperial Courts. See Orlando Antonini, "The Diplomatic Activity of the Holy See," Lecture, Megatrend University, Belgrade, December 10, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Roman Walczak, "Papal Diplomacy-Characteristics of the Key Issues in Canon Law and International Law," *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 2 (2016): 496.

<sup>12</sup> Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched," 526.

<sup>13</sup> CSDC, no. 444.

<sup>14</sup> CSDC, no. 63. In the context of international affairs, prophetic voice expresses the Church's moral authority and commitment to work for the common good of peace, particularly in the formation of consciences at the national and international levels. See also Archbishop Renato R. Martino, "The Church's Peace-Making Activity in International Relations," Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, April 1, 2003, [http://www.justpax.it/pls/pgcp/rn\\_pcgp\\_new.r\\_select\\_abstract?dicastero=2&tema=3&argomento=9&sottoargomento=0&classe=1&id=429&lingua=2&rifl=256lunedì](http://www.justpax.it/pls/pgcp/rn_pcgp_new.r_select_abstract?dicastero=2&tema=3&argomento=9&sottoargomento=0&classe=1&id=429&lingua=2&rifl=256lunedì) (accessed December 9, 2013).

status.<sup>15</sup> Up to this day, it remains a trusted moral voice in forums, conventions, and high panel discussions.<sup>16</sup> Because of its “ancient and proven practice,” the Holy See has been granted permission to join debates since 2004. Its judgments are included in the UNGA documents. Even a special seat in the UNGA is reserved for the Holy See.

The Holy See may be prevented from voting or drafting resolutions in the UNGA, but it enjoys the same rights accorded to member-states in other UN-specialized agencies.<sup>17</sup> Its membership status in these specialized agencies indicates the right to vote and take part in the resolutions. Furthermore, membership in these specialized agencies does not dispute the Holy See’s declaration of neutrality, unlike in the UNGA, where the Holy See can be easily branded as associated with a political system.<sup>18</sup>

Currently, the Holy See remains the only religious actor with significant influence in bilateral and multilateral platforms.<sup>19</sup>

### *Mission*

*The mission of the Holy See is primarily spiritual.* Working for peace is constitutive of the Church’s mission. As was stated in the *Compendium*, “The promotion of peace in the world is an integral part of the Church’s mission of continuing Christ’s work of redemption on earth. In fact, the Church is, in Christ, a ‘sacrament’ or a sign and instrument of peace in the world and for the world.”<sup>20</sup> The Holy See might be regarded as a foreign policy agent in the global scene, but its involvement in state affairs is more of a moral than a political commitment. Its endeavors extends the Church’s moral authority as Christ’s sacrament and peace instrument in and for the world. Towards the attainment of these endeavors, the Holy See uses the Church’s Catholic Social Teachings (CST) as a paradigm (or moral compass in global politics) to generate the necessary conditions that would make peace a priority and inspiration in any

<sup>15</sup> John Morss, “The International Legal Status of the Vatican/Holy See Complex,” *The European Journal of International Law* 4 (2016): 945.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Diez, “Diplomacy, Papacy, and the Transformation of International Society,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 4 (2017): 32-37.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Carletti, “Francis’ Style: The Holy See and its New Role in the International System,” Paper presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Conference in International Relations, Giardini Sicili Italy, September 2015.

<sup>18</sup> CSDC, no. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Jodok Troy, “The Catholic Church and International Relations,” *Oxford Handbooks Online*, www.oxfordhandbooks.com (accessed May 30, 2019) and Golan, Arcenaux and Soule, “The Catholic Church as a Public Diplomacy Actor,” 16.

<sup>20</sup> CSDC, no. 516.

political system.<sup>21</sup> Reference to CST as a paradigm in expressing moral judgment is stated in the *Compendium*:

In effect, to teach and to *spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message*, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior.<sup>22</sup>

The Holy See might be identified as a foreign policy actor (or sovereign entity with a transnational character) by states and intergovernmental bodies. But in practice, the Holy See's primary actors do not bring their interests to the negotiation tables. They would act in a way the Gospel teaches, especially when universal moral values have been amputated from the foreign policies of powerful nations.<sup>23</sup> As Paul VI maintains, the proclamation of the Gospel is the first among the Holy See's tasks. It is only by this means that the interests of all peoples are represented: "The Church's policy is nothing other than a keen readiness, a deeply felt demand to carry out her commitment, her mandate, and her vocation to announce the Gospel and to serve the others."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the Holy See (through pontifical diplomacy) pursues the path of dialogue to promote human dignity and the social order built on love, justice, truth, and freedom.<sup>25</sup> The object is to advance the good of humanity and empower multilateral platforms that would safeguard the peace and the fundamental rights of peoples.<sup>26</sup> Collaborating with states that have established formal relations enables looking at social problems and providing solutions together<sup>27</sup> without resorting to

---

<sup>21</sup> CST is a body of key principles derived from the social encyclicals of the popes. The principles evolve when the nature of conflicts change. See Edward P. De Berri, James Hug, Peter Henriot, and Michael Schulteis, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 18-34.

<sup>22</sup> CSDC, no. 67. Emphasis mine.

<sup>23</sup> Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, "Diplomacy and Papacy: How Do the Twain Meet," *Institute of South Asian Studies*, 532 (7 December 2017): 2.

<sup>24</sup> Paul VI, "1972 Address." All of Paul VI's addresses in this chapter were gathered from the Vatican website: <http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it.html>.

<sup>25</sup> CSDC, no. 445.

<sup>26</sup> By practice, the Holy See can form bilateral diplomatic relations, voice out in conference diplomacies and act in international organizations. See Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched," 529-30 and Anna Solarz, "The Holy See's Efforts Towards Reconciliation," *Mysł Ekonomiczna I Polityczna*, 54 (2016): 135.

<sup>27</sup> Walczak, "Papal Diplomacy-Characteristics of the Key Issues in Canon Law and International Law," 496-99.

violence. The Holy See utilizes its public image in constantly reminding its peers that authority is from the moral law, not from nations' "sociological or historical character."<sup>28</sup> This way of thinking sets into motion the protection of the social order from the limiting means of human constructs.

On the same note, the Holy See envisions global solidarity. The Holy See's diplomatic instruments target mutual understanding and healing deep-seated historical wounds. The inspiration is from John Paul II's "healing of memories," the approach that demands learning from the sufferings of the past and approaching the future with a new attitude.<sup>29</sup> "Healing of memories" begins with a "deep, faithful, and courageous reflection on the part of all parties" and ends with an offering and receiving of forgiveness.<sup>30</sup>

*The spiritual mission of the Holy See is reflected in its juridical activities to sovereign states and subjects of international law.* In other words, the Holy See mainly resorts to diplomacy for peacebuilding and settling disputes. The *Compendium* mentions some of these activities, such as, "the right to active and passive delegation; the exercise of *ius contrahendi* in stipulating treaties; participation in intergovernmental organizations, such as those under the auspices of the United Nations; and mediation initiatives in the mediations of conflict."<sup>31</sup> Its activities are functional despite its limited powers as a non-state actor. To keep pace with modern peace mechanisms (e.g. UN) the Holy See adheres to the standards stipulated in the international law,<sup>32</sup> the UN Charter, and the 1961 *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*.<sup>33</sup>

The Holy See sends nuncios and legates<sup>34</sup> whose primary responsibilities are also regulated by the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, to "promote and foster relationships between the Apostolic See and the Authorities of the State," and to "draw up concordants and other similar agreements, and giving effect to them."<sup>35</sup> Promoting and fostering relationships, being the first in the responsibilities under the *Code*, underscore that the Holy See turns to diplomacy in extending the spiritual mission

<sup>28</sup> CSDC, no. 396.

<sup>29</sup> Solarz, "The Holy See's Efforts Towards Reconciliation," 134, and 144-45.

<sup>30</sup> CSDC, no. 517.

<sup>31</sup> CSDC, no. 444. *Ius contrahendi*, or *jus tractuum* refers to the treaty-making power of a non-state with an international legal personality. See Władysław Czapliński, "Recognition and International Legal Personality of NonState Actors," *Pécs Journal of International and European Law*, 1 (206): 8.

<sup>32</sup> CSDC, no. 444.

<sup>33</sup> Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched," 522.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 496.

<sup>35</sup> *CIC*, no. 365. See also the Magna Carta of the Holy See Diplomacy: Paul VI, "*Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*" [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19690624\\_sollicitudo-omnium-ecclesiarum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19690624_sollicitudo-omnium-ecclesiarum.html) (accessed July 10, 2019).

of the Church. While it is true that the Holy See's diplomatic service had existed before the implementation of the modern state system, it needs to keep up with the world so that CST may reach a wider audience. As a "sui generis" entity, the Holy See is legally recognized for its secular and transcendental merits. But above these merits, the Holy See serves as a Gospel peace mechanism that promotes respect for human dignity and unity through reconciliation and mutual forgiveness.

The following section will turn to papal styles in diplomacy by Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. Each style is interpreted from the popes' annual addresses to the diplomatic corps attributed to the Holy See and the UNGA. The author contends that these popes form the face of pontifical diplomacy by their attempts to apply the Vatican II's ideals, especially the positive engagement of the Church with the world. Each style is molded by a pope's person, sense of mission, and political experience. These are learning insights for Pope Francis, whose diplomacy is a continuation of what these popes have started, and the birthing ground of his innovation to pontifical diplomacy (the Culture of Encounter or COE).

### **Vatican II Papal Diplomacy Developments**

Vatican II revamped the role of the Church in peace affairs. Turning to *Gaudium et Spes* as the backbone of the Church's way of dealing with the world, not only was she able to stick to her roots (tradition) but was able to move forward and keep up with the world's improvements (innovation). The Holy See's papal diplomacy is a product of tradition and innovation combined.

#### *Paul VI (1963-1978)*

Among Vatican II popes, only Paul VI received formal training from the Papal Academy for Diplomats. He shared his expertise as a professor in the said academy in 1931 and to then-Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli (later Pius XII) in 1937.<sup>36</sup> His extensive knowledge of pontifical diplomacy was put into use when he succeeded John XXIII in 1963. He carefully projected the infant reforms of Vatican II, especially on peace and religious freedom.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Pontifical Academy of Sciences, *Papal Addresses to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences 1917-2002 and to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 1994-2002* (Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 2003), 176.

<sup>37</sup> Francis Clooney, "Interreligious Learning in a Changing Church: From Paul VI to Francis," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 4 (2017): 271.



*“To Make Peace” as the central point of diplomacy.* His papacy was challenged with the outburst of the Cold War in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Peace, at this point, was caged within the balance of power concept, now defined as the product of counterbalancing between major powers or major and middle powers. Diplomacy during the Cold War lost pivot on positive peace.<sup>38</sup> Paul VI would use his moral authority in swinging diplomacy back to its roots. He defines diplomacy as “the act of making peace,”<sup>39</sup> which pushed for a kind of diplomacy that creates the necessary conditions for peace.

Paul VI borrows from the Gospel’s “blessed are the peacemakers”<sup>40</sup> and underscores the efforts of those who paved the way for God to reign in the hearts of peoples. He used the gospel imperative to encourage diplomats, especially Christian diplomats, to be faithful to their tasks as peacemakers. He also said that peacemakers need to possess the essential traits of patience, prudent realism, and magnanimity to realize a social order instituted on peace, law, and reason.<sup>41</sup>

Since the Cold War established the use of force as among the means of settling disputes, Paul VI appealed to the highest spiritual values (common to all) as “the highest responsibility” for all peacemakers,<sup>42</sup> He advocated for mediation and negotiation which will, “create an atmosphere which should contribute to bringing hearts nearer to one another.”<sup>43</sup>

*Bilateral and multilateral collaborations.* To realize the “bringing of hearts nearer to one another,” Paul VI taps on the potential of bilateral and multilateral collaborations. The term “collaboration” appeared to be a papal favorite, as it was extensively used in his 1969, 1971, and 1973 addresses.<sup>44</sup> Eventually, the pope shifted

---

<sup>38</sup> Positive peace is defined by peace theorist Johan Galtung as the “sum total of other relatively consensual values in the world community of nations—exemplified with the list of ten values (e.g. cooperation, freedom from fear, freedom from want, economic growth and development, absence of exploitation, equality, justice, freedom of action, pluralism, and dynamism).” See Johan Galtung, “Theories of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking” (unpublished manuscript, September 1967), typescript.

<sup>39</sup> Paul VI, “1974 Address.” All of Paul VI’s addresses in this article were gathered from the Vatican website: <https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Matthew 5:9.

<sup>41</sup> Paul VI, “1968 Address.”

<sup>42</sup> Paul VI, “1971 Address.”

<sup>43</sup> Paul VI, “1973 Address.”

<sup>44</sup> “For each people, inasmuch as the Holy See does not seek any personal advantage but rather the advantage of the people themselves, the collaboration normally out to be the easiest possible; what do emporal authorities themselves propose if not the good of their own people?” Quoted in Paul VI, “1969 Address.” “For its part, the Holy See, on its own level is in contact with States the means may differ, but the mission is the same. We thank you, Your Excellencies and dear friends, for

to “solidarity,” a developing Catholic social principle that pursues the direction of integral human development.<sup>45</sup> Paul VI sees solidarity over the differences in the temporal and spiritual orders. He was the first of the Vatican II popes to underscore that both are competently at the service of the human person: “It is a question in mutual respect of competences, to unite efforts aimed at promoting human initiatives and speed works beneficial to all. This seems to us one of the present aims of pontifical diplomacy.”<sup>46</sup> Toward this end, Paul VI pressed for the alignment of the present aims between embassies and nunciatures in bilateral relations<sup>47</sup> and assured that the diplomats may pass the bi-millennial expertise of the Church to their governments.<sup>48</sup>

Papal diplomacy reached another milestone when the Holy See updated by adding multilateral diplomacy in its expertise. Joining the UN as a permanent observer was Paul VI’s understanding of bringing the positive engagement between the Church and the world into fruition. Currently, UN remains the only multilateral platform that receives moral ratification from the Holy See based on similarities in aims.<sup>49</sup> It is worth mentioning that Paul VI’s predecessor, John XXIII, was first in supporting peace mechanisms (or structures of peace) in the social encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*.<sup>50</sup>

*Political distance or neutrality.* Joining a multilateral platform is accompanied by the risk of political courtship. Paul VI had to declare “neutrality” as the foreign

---

the understanding and care with which you are the official witnesses of this fact to your respective governments; your work is done in a shared solitude for disinterested service and active collaboration.” Quoted in Paul VI, “1971 Address.” “We have to define more clearly the frontiers of our respective competence. You can also observe as friendly witnesses, the positions or the lines of action of the Holy See, in order to pass them on to your governments. We have above all to collaborate together for the common good.” Quoted in Paul VI, “1973 Address.”

<sup>45</sup> Jesuit priest Allan Figueroa mentions that Paul VI developed John XXIII’s teaching on solidarity and made it a “fundamental and distinctively Catholic norm of social and economic justice.” See Barry Hurdock, “A Larger Society: Populorum Progressio at Fifty,” *Commonweal*, February 23, 2017, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/larger-solidarity> (accessed on March 1, 2022).

<sup>46</sup> Paul VI, “1971 Address.”

<sup>47</sup> Paul VI, “1969 Address.”

<sup>48</sup> Paul VI, “1973 Address.”

<sup>49</sup> Other similarities include: respect for human dignity and rights, pursuit of peace with ideas and works of peace. Cf. Paul VI “UN Address 1965.”

<sup>50</sup> “Today the universal common good presents us with problems which are world-wide in their dimensions; problems, therefore, which cannot be solved except by a public authority with power, organization and means co-extensive with these problems, and with a world-wide sphere of activity. Consequently the moral order itself demands the establishment of some such general form of public authority.” See John XXIII, “Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty” (*Pacem in Terris*) April 11, 1963, Vatican Archive, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html) (accessed March 3, 2022).

policy direction of the Holy See in his 1970 and 1973 addresses. GS' "the Church is bound to no particular form of human culture, nor any political, economic, or social system"<sup>51</sup> validated the pope's public announcements. By neutrality, he means "political distance," so that the Holy See will be prevented from being allied with ideologies or systems contrary to its nature and mission.<sup>52</sup> Opting for the position of a permanent observer rather than a full-fledged member of the UN serves this interest. The Holy See continues its spiritual mission without being pressured to choose political sides.

*John Paul II (1978-2005)*<sup>53</sup>

During the term of JP II, the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*—which stipulated the developments in modern ecclesiastical diplomacy—was promulgated. The *Code* succeeds Paul VI's *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*.<sup>54</sup>

JP II had the most extended term out of all Vatican II popes. He had seen the Cold War in its peak and fall, the division of the world into two political blocs, the isolation of newly independent states, and the rise of intra-state conflicts. Hence, JP II's diplomacy targeted healing, unity, and adherence to universal moral principles.

*Human-centered diplomacy.* JP II's contribution to diplomacy was to revive a long-forgotten concept in the Cold War: the human person. During the Cold War, state-centered conflicts downsized the human enterprise.

JP II states that human dignity has a transcendent dimension (the dignity of the human person being a universal truth<sup>55</sup>), making it impossible for states, institutions, and ideologies to reduce it to something less important.<sup>56</sup> Together with other universal truths, they form the basis of legal norms. JP II gives a special reference to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, where the universal truths preceded and formed the basis for human laws.<sup>57</sup>

Quoting his encyclical, *Redemptoris Hominis*, in his addresses and associating it with the goals of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), JP II

<sup>51</sup> GS, no. 42 in Paul VI, "1973 Address."

<sup>52</sup> Paul VI, "1975 Address."

<sup>53</sup> Herein cited after as JP II.

<sup>54</sup> Walczak, "Papal Diplomacy—Characteristics of the Key Issues in Canon Law and International Law," 499.

<sup>55</sup> John Paul II, "1989 Address." All of John Paul II's addresses in this article were gathered from the Vatican website: <http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it.html>.

<sup>56</sup> John Paul II, "1995 Address."

<sup>57</sup> John Paul II, "1997 Address."

follows Paul VI in giving UN a moral ratification, indicating that the UDHR is “one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time.”<sup>58</sup> He has praises for the declaration for its “respect [for] the transcendent value of the person”<sup>59</sup> and its commitment to engage in the deeper cause of the violence.<sup>60</sup> JP II conscientizes those whose political interests oppose the ideals of the declaration, expressing that political affairs at the expense of the human person, stain the nobility of the diplomatic service.<sup>61</sup>

*The diplomacy of conscience.* To reach a wider audience, JP II speaks in the language of human rights<sup>62</sup> and appeals to states and institutions to be fluent in “the principles of the natural and moral law.”<sup>63</sup> Utilizing conscientization,<sup>64</sup> he stresses the indissolubility and importance of the aforesaid principles: “The Church contributes its efforts by all the means at its disposal above all by *sensitizing consciences all over the world* about the duty to defend this good [peace].”<sup>65</sup>

Thus, the Holy See is a frontrunner in bridging consciences<sup>66</sup> and recognizing universal truths.<sup>67</sup> The pope communicates that neglect of inherent rights causes systemic violations to peace and shares that a condition of peace acknowledges what is common in human persons.<sup>68</sup> Applying this to the use of force, the pope condemns war and appeals the primacy of the human person.<sup>69</sup>

*The diplomacy of trust.* Cordial relations were threatened when the United States of America (USA) and the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) vied for

---

<sup>58</sup> John Paul II, “UN Address 1995.”

<sup>59</sup> John Paul II, “1988 Address.”

<sup>60</sup> John Paul II, “1979 Address.”

<sup>61</sup> John Paul II, “UN Address 1979.”

<sup>62</sup> “UN Address 1995.” The thought was similar to what he said in his 2003 Address: To avoid falling into chaos, two demands must be met. The first is that, within the State, the primordial value of natural law, which once inspired the law of nations and the first thinkers of international law is rediscovered ... second, the persevering action of honest and disinterested statesmen ... the adherence to deep ethical convictions can legitimize the indispensable professional competence of the political leaders.”

<sup>63</sup> John Paul II, “1999 Address.”

<sup>64</sup> He referred to conscience as an unwritten law that existed ever since: “... the unwritten law of human conscience; of which the ancients already spoke and which is for all, both believers and non-believers, the foundation and universal guarantee of human dignity and life in society.” Cf. John Paul II, “1998 Address.”

<sup>65</sup> John Paul II, “1981 Address.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>66</sup> “1979 Address.”

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* Universal.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

the hegemonic position in the mid-twentieth century. The capitalist and communist ideologies shaped the realist perspective in peace discourse, resulting in peace becoming dependent on power relations rather than collaboration. JP II seeks to revive trust as an essential feature in diplomacy. Using the analogy of family, JP II stated:

... the concept of family immediately evokes something that goes beyond simple functional relationships or the mere convergence of interests. The family is, by its nature, a community founded on reciprocal trust, mutual support, and sincere respect.<sup>70</sup>

JP II suggests learning from the dividing tendencies of past wars. Wars not only neglect the transcendent dimension of the human person (or the unity of the human family), but they also disregard the primacy of universal truths as necessary conditions for creating peace.<sup>71</sup> He insists that all diplomats must become teachers in the art<sup>72</sup> of “healing of memories.” By this, he means “moral and spiritual convictions” and a sense of vision that “peace is possible, desirable, and necessary.” “Healing of memories” is followed by the commitment to “rid a part of history,” associated with “violence, oppression, and contempt.”<sup>73</sup> Resembling conversion, the approach demands recognition of giftedness and commonality.<sup>74</sup>

Along these lines, JP II mentions that arms and weapons “foster hatred and increase the risk of discord.”<sup>75</sup> He advocates disarmament,<sup>76</sup> which possibly creates conditions of trust and confidence if all parties mutually comply.<sup>77</sup> Although the Holy See does not have its own military, it signed the 1997 the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (in the hopes that the whole international community will also reciprocate).<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> “UN Address 1995.”

<sup>71</sup> “1984 Address.”

<sup>72</sup> John Paul II, “1983 Address.”

<sup>73</sup> “1988 Address.”

<sup>74</sup> “1984 Address.”

<sup>75</sup> John Paul II, “2005 Address.”

<sup>76</sup> Disarmament refers to the consistent efforts of UN member-states to reduce—to the objective of completely eliminating—their possession of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction. See Spiegel, Taw, Wehling, and Williams, *World Politics in A New Era*, 694.

<sup>77</sup> “1988 Address.”

<sup>78</sup> John Paul II, “1997 Address.”

*Benedict XVI (2005-2013)*

Benedict XVI's diplomacy was a commitment to truth. His papacy was challenged by the issue of extremism, and indirectly, the role of religion in peace.<sup>79</sup>

*Truth diplomacy.* For the most part, Benedict XVI traces the source of conflicts to failure in acknowledging differences. Diplomatic missions, regardless if bilateral or multilateral, must be committed to the pursuit of truth:

The commitment to truth on the part of Diplomatic missions, at both bilateral and multilateral level, can offer an essential contribution towards reconciling the undeniable differences between peoples from different parts of the world and their cultures, not only in a tolerant coexistence, but according to a higher and richer design of humanity.<sup>80</sup>

The excerpt suggests that truth will compel parties in conflict to lessen their preoccupation with differences and accept differences as reflective of various truths. In this way, parties would come to appreciate the giftedness and ray of truth in every person or culture. Although the pope stands by harmony in diversity, he abides by a category of truth that cannot be relativized. He is a staunch defender of universal truths, and this is manifested in his opposition to stripping the foundations of peace. Similar to his predecessors Paul VI and John Paul II, Benedict XVI emphasizes the universality and unchanging truth in human rights.<sup>81</sup> He said:

Human rights are increasingly being presented as the common language and ethical substratum of international relations...they are based on the natural law inscribed on human hearts... removing human rights from this context would mean restricting their range and yielding to a relativistic conception, according to which the meaning and interpretation of rights could vary and their universality would be denied in the name of different cultural, political, social and even religious outlooks.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, the pope is against subjecting human rights to relativistic conceptions. Removing the universality of human rights brings about segregation,

---

<sup>79</sup> Benedict XVI, "2006 Address." All of Benedict XVI's addresses in this article were taken from the Vatican website: <http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it.html> (accessed May 19, 2019).

<sup>80</sup> Benedict XVI, "2006 Address."

<sup>81</sup> Benedict XVI, "2008 Address."

<sup>82</sup> "2008 Address."

isolation, and irreconcilability. In the same way, he warns against divorcing God from the natural law. He said, “Law can be an effective force for peace only if its foundations remain solidly anchored in natural law, given by the Creator. This is another reason why God can never be excluded from the horizon of man or of history.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, conditions for peace are built by giving credit to God, who unites all things together.

Speaking of peace and religion, the reputation of religious diplomacy (e.g. pontifical diplomacy) waned as Samuel Huntington’s class of civilizations paradigm was used to explain the direction of the global politics post- and post-post-Cold War (1990-2010). The paradigm explains that majority of conflicts will be caused by a clash between nations (and groups) of different civilizations (e.g. Islamic and Chinese civilizations).<sup>84</sup> The paradigm reached to a global hype in the bombing of the World Trade Center in 2001. Thus, with the decreasing reliance on religious diplomacy, Benedict XVI indirectly appeals to all religions and those who exclude the potential contributions of religions to peacebuilding:

I would like once more to state forcefully that religion does not represent a problem for society, that it is not a source of discord or conflict. How can anyone deny the contribution of the world’s great religions for the development of civilization?<sup>85</sup>

Directing all diplomats to the pursuit of truth in peace, the pope expounds that only by acknowledging limitations and errors can peacemakers, peacebuilders, and peacekeepers alike create spaces for trust, openness, and most notably, forgiveness. Forgiveness appears to be an implicit reference to religion’s contribution to settling of disputes:

Surely one of the great goals of diplomacy must be that of leading all parties in conflict to understand that, if they are committed to truth, they must acknowledge errors—and not merely the errors of others—nor can they refuse to open themselves to forgiveness, both requested and granted.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Jeffrey Haynes, “Introduction: The Clash of Civilizations and the Relations Between the West and the Muslim World,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 17, 1 (2019): 2. DOI: 10.1080/15570274.2019.1570756.

<sup>85</sup> Benedict XVI, “2011 Address.”

<sup>86</sup> “2006 Address.”

Mutual forgiveness leads to lasting peace. Benedict XVI believes that diplomacy, for as long as it remains true to its purpose, gives hope<sup>87</sup> and conceives “new energies” for promoting and sustaining peace.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Debut of Papal Diplomacy in East Asia**

The East Asian peace experience since the Holy See’s application as a Permanent Observer in the UN illustrated a remarkable display of competition between capitalism and communism. During this time, East Asian region was gradually treading the path to self-determination. Thus, similar to the Middle East, East Asia’s natural aversion to the West was inevitable.

The surrogate wars in East Asia,<sup>89</sup> the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the continuing war between the two Koreas, and the propagation of Islamic extremism and Jihadi terrorism prove that conflicts have shifted from state-centric to human-centric. The points described would refer human dignity as an overlooked element in the bipolar and post-bipolar world. Thomas Diez writes that even prime international peace mechanisms (e.g. UN) have shortcomings in promoting and protecting human dignity.<sup>90</sup>

The section above discussed the styles peculiar to each Vatican II pope. As a consequence of these styles, significant contributions to East Asian peace will be shown. The object is to demonstrate how papal responses provide an opening for the Church to share her bi-millennial expertise.

#### *Paul VI*

The East Asian countries which have formed diplomatic relations with the Holy See during Paul VI’s pontificate were: the Republic of Korea (1963), Thailand (1968), and Bangladesh (1972). Before he became pope, these East Asian countries—the Republic of China (1942), Japan (1942), Indonesia (1950), and Philippines (1951)<sup>91</sup>—have recognized the juridical personality of the Holy See. Paul

<sup>87</sup> “2008 Address.”

<sup>88</sup> “2006 Address.”

<sup>89</sup> The East Asian region constitutes countries from the East (China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia), and the South East (Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam). See Derek McDougall, *Asia Pacific in World Politics* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2016), 7. The East Asian countries covered in this article included those that have potential or continuing relations with the Holy See.

<sup>90</sup> Diez, “Diplomacy, Papacy, and the Transformation of International Society,” 37.

<sup>91</sup> “Holy See Relations,” [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/secretariat\\_state/documents/rc\\_seg-st\\_20010123\\_holy-see-relations\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/documents/rc_seg-st_20010123_holy-see-relations_en.html) (accessed 15 July, 2019).



VI was the first pope to visit the East Asian region. Indonesia and the Philippines, the powerhouses of Islam and Christianity, received the pope in 1970. The pope's encounter with East Asia was brief but groundbreaking in the history of pontifical diplomacy.

The papal styles distinct to Paul VI are: “to make peace as the central point of diplomacy,” “bilateral and multilateral collaborations,” and the declaration of “neutrality.” The pope demonstrated these styles in his efforts to mediate between US and USSR in Vietnam. The said war escalated in 1968, in the same year the Magna Carta of pontifical diplomacy--*Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*—was issued.

As it was known, the Vietnam War created trouble for a few newly-independent East Asian countries juggling between nation-building and managing external pressures. This could be the reason why Vietnam was the East Asian country-in-focus in Paul VI's addresses. In his 1968 address, he called Vietnam a “cherished nation.”<sup>92</sup> During this time, no formal relations existed between the Holy See and Vietnam yet. Even so, Paul VI reached out by mediation.

He sent personal letters addressed to Hanoi President Ho Chi Minh, Saigon President Nguyen Van Thieu, PRC Chairman Mao Tse Tung, and US President Lyndon Johnson on December 31, 1965, to prove that diplomacy still works.<sup>93</sup> Ho Chi Minh replied, which indicated that Hanoi recognized the moral authority and leverage of the Holy See in mediation:

*It is my hope that your holiness, in the name of humanity and justice, will use his high influence to urge that the U.S. Government respect the national rights of the Vietnamese people, namely peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam.*<sup>94</sup>

Hanoi's request for mediation was reciprocated. The mediation included a series of negotiations between 1968 to 1973. Finally, the mediation led to the signing of the Paris Peace accords in 1973. Upon the signing of the US, USSR, North and South Vietnam, the surrogate war ended. According to Peter Hebblethwaite, the pope's efforts demonstrated humility in service:

---

<sup>92</sup> “1968 Address.”

<sup>93</sup> See letters addressed to the abovementioned in the “1965 Address.”

<sup>94</sup> The full text Ho Chi Minh's reply: George Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers*, ed. George Herring (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983), 474. Emphasis mine.

...illustrates Montini at his diplomatic best. He preferred a private invitation so that neither side could claim propaganda advantage. He was concerned with bringing the parties together, not with gaining prestige with the papacy. It worked... This was Paul VI's contribution to international politics. And it has never been recognized.<sup>95</sup>

While the pope was not the cause for the termination of war, his involvements were contributive to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the East Asian region. The personal letters sent to parties in-conflict demonstrated that neutrality worked in the best interests of the Holy See. First, Paul VI mediated without threats or pressure from the international community. Second, he made it known that the Holy See's involvements are moral than political (e.g. cessation of hostilities and preservation of life). Furthermore, he illustrated that collaboration works. Indeed, solidarity is the way of the Holy See to peace.

Peace in the region was short-lived. Vietnam and People's Republic of China (PRC) vied for influence in the Indochina region. The Third Indochina War initially began at the establishment of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. The war exploded when Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978. Paul VI mentioned about the beginnings of the said war in his 1975 address:

There are other places in the world where peace does not reign and where peoples continue to suffer the horrors of war... at least to the partial indifference of public opinion. We make our own these people's plea for tranquility and justice... in particular of the regions of Vietnam... and of Cambodia, which are witnessing in these days a menacing rekindling of the smouldering coals of hostility and guerilla warfare, tending to endanger the equilibrium that has remained unstable even where agreements had committed all parties concerned to gradual normalization of a situation that had been turbulent for long.<sup>96</sup>

Tensions in the East Asian region escalated once more. The pope once again called for respect for law and reason. Both Cambodia and Vietnam have not yet established formal relations with the Holy See. However, the potential destruction of the peace equilibrium was a global issue and a concern of the Church. The pope did

---

<sup>95</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: the first Modern Pope* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 513.

<sup>96</sup> "1975 Address." Emphasis mine.

not live to see the end of war in the Indochina. His successor, John Paul II, had to deal with the after-effects in the Cold and post-Cold war political environments.

### *John Paul II*

Singapore (1981), Mongolia (1992), Cambodia (1994), and East Timor (2002) were the East Asian countries that formed diplomatic relations with the Holy see during JPII's papacy. Having served for twenty-seven years, it was no surprise that JPII had the most number of apostolic journeys in East Asia: Philippines (1981 and 1995), Japan (1981), South Korea and Thailand (1984), Bangladesh and Singapore (1987), and Indonesia and East Timor (1989). These establish that JPII is a formidable force in developing pontifical diplomacy.

The papal styles distinct to JPII are: "Human diplomacy," "the diplomacy of conscience," and "the diplomacy of trust." These styles had been formed in the rise and fall of the communist empire and the dawn of a new era. JPII witnessed the change in the nature of conflicts. From once state-centric, they transitioned to human-centric. Ethnic and religiously motivated conflicts have proven that the nature of disputes have branched out from political to spiritual and moral. Realizing that humans have been rid of their inherent value, JPII used diplomacy to reinstate the inherent dignity of human persons. His human-centered diplomacy is closely related to his diplomacy of conscience. Both would claim that the causes of peace are the promotion of human dignity and rights (notably, the right to religious freedom).

Since he assumed the papacy at the height of the Third Indochina War, he made frequent references to Cambodia and Vietnam in his addresses. He called the Cambodian situation an "unspeakable prostration" for two reasons: first, the perpetrator of the mass killings was the Khmer government, and second, Cambodia politically isolated itself and invoked the principle of non-interference in their state affairs. The situation intensified when the rift between Vietnam and PRC cascaded to vying for influence in Cambodia. The pope called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces in Cambodia in 1984 and implored the international community to help Cambodia transition to democracy in 1984, 1986, and 1989.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, he pressed the UN to mediate between the parties in-conflict in 1990 and 1991. The successful mediation led to the pope's commendation of the peace mechanism:

---

<sup>97</sup> "You know that the Holy See, as without a doubt...is very concerned about the current situation of...Cambodia... Would it be necessary for foreign occupation forces to be withdrawn, and at the same time, to establish a freely political agreement in the interior of the country," quoted in John Paul II, "1984 Address."

Cambodia has gradually emerged from its isolation and has begun its reconstruction thanks to the tenacious efforts of the United Nations Organization and friendly countries. The commitments assumed in the Paris Agreement laid the path that can lead to true democracy and national reconciliation. It is necessary that no new difficulties arise that challenge these achievements. Peace will only be viable if yesterday's adversaries are encouraged today by the sincere will to achieve it. We also hope that this country that has suffered so much can benefit from the long-term help of an international solidarity that does not falter.<sup>98</sup>

The references to “reconciliation,” “peace,” and “international solidarity” in the excerpt show concrete illustrations of the pope’s diplomacy of conscience. When Cambodia transitioned to representative democracy in 1993, the formal diplomatic relation between Cambodia and the Holy See was established the year after.

Vietnam continued to isolate itself from the international community despite the pope’s plea to its local authorities in his 1980, 1990, and 1994 addresses. JPII invoked for international solidarity to pressure Vietnam out of political isolation.

Expressing his desire to send official delegates to Vietnam in his 1991, 1992, 1995, 1996, and 1998 addresses imply an additional concern apart from Vietnam’s political isolation. The pope was deeply troubled by the religious intolerance in Vietnam. For this reason, he appointed Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy alumna, Pietro Parolin, as the undersecretary of the State for Relations with states in 2002. The said undersecretary led the Vietnam delegation and solidified the contact between the Holy See and Vietnam in 2009.

JPII’s persistent involvement in Vietnam and Cambodia indicated his desire for trust to return to diplomacy. The ideological rivalry of the Cold War raised suspicions not only between countries with different political systems, but also among countries with the same political systems. His appeal for trust manifests in his addresses directed to reconciliation of the Greater China and the two Koreas. In particular, the pope hoped for peaceful integration in his 1997 and 1999 addresses. Toward PRC, the pope also expressed his desire to formally connect with PRC in his 1992, 1993, 1996, and 1998 addresses. The Holy See and the PRC had estranged relations since 1951.

---

<sup>98</sup> John Paul II, “1993 Address.”

As for the two Koreas, JP II followed the dialogues closely in his 1992, 1998, 2000, and 2001 addresses. He applauded the two Korea's cordial efforts in Geneva in 1998. He emphasized that the reconciliation between the two Koreas would create a peace equilibrium not only in the Korean peninsula but in the whole East Asian region:

Its success will *significantly ease the tension in the whole region* and will undoubtedly foster a constructive dialogue between other countries of the region, still divided or antagonistic, thus leading them to adopt a dynamic of solidarity and peace.<sup>99</sup>

After the first inter-Korean summit in 2000, leader Kim Jong-il invited the pope to visit North Korea. The Catholic delegation had been visiting the country four times since 1995.<sup>100</sup> JP II was the first pope ever invited to North Korea since the North-South split in 1953. The invitation was a bright display of trust toward the Holy See's moral authority (and leverage).

Thus, the diplomacy of trust proves that strengthening relationships (over the convergence of interests) would make the pursuit of peace a stronger conviction—enough to heal wounds of the past. But this conviction also requires upholding the principle of truth. This was pursued in the diplomacy of JP II's successor, Benedict XVI.

#### *Benedict XVI*

Malaysia (2011) was the only East Asian country that had formed diplomatic relations with the Holy See during Benedict XVI's pontificate. Following the establishment of cordial relations with Malaysia, the pope also announced that the credentials of the Holy See's appointed Apostolic Nuncio was accepted by the ASEAN.<sup>101</sup> This acceptance implies recognizing the Holy See as a juridical person and a consultative voice in the regional peace mechanism.

The pope did not have the chance to visit the East Asian region in his eight-year term, but he contributed "truth diplomacy" to the evolving nature of pontifical diplomacy. His diplomacy targets reconciliation between parties in-conflict and requires every political decision to adhere to the universal truths (e.g., respect for life and dignity of the human person).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

<sup>100</sup> Author Unnamed. "Now North Korea Invites the Pope," <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/jun/19/northkorea.catholicism> (accessed August 2, 2019).

<sup>101</sup> Benedict XVI, "2012 Address."

For instance, Benedict XVI turned to the principles of truth, freedom, dignity, and rights as imperative to the national reconciliation of East Timor in 2007. The following year, the pope turned to the same principles in the wake of a civil war between the Burmese government and the opposition. Like JP II, he pressured the international community to help Myanmar in its peace talks.

Benedict XVI relies on universal principles as imperative to maintaining peace in Greater China. He was careful toward Greater China in his addresses, expressing his desire to form formal relations with Beijing while keeping friendly ties with Taipei. He commended the peace talks between PRC and ROC in his 2009 address.

The pope also stresses the capacity of religions as actors of truth. For instance, he praised the efforts of Filipino Christians and Muslims in arriving at a peace accord in Mindanao. Furthermore, he warns against compromises that take place at negotiation tables. For example, in the two Koreas, dialogue must be the context of reconciliation, not arms race. If successful, North Korea's agreement to dismantle its nuclear program may lead to possible effects: Conventional weapons possessed by other nation-states may be reduced, and terrorists might lose access to weapons. Thus, actions in the context of reconciliation will prevent gross human rights violations from occurring.

Benedict XVI's resignation in 2013 led to complex peace issues passed on to his successor, Pope Francis.

## **Conclusion**

This article presented the papal styles of popes Paul VI, JP II, and Benedict XVI and its consequences to the East Asian peace. The Holy See's entry to the UN as a Permanent Observer in 1964 broadened its moral presence to peer nation-states and those that do not have formal relations with the Holy See. The inclusion of East Asia in the papal addresses to the diplomatic corps was initially started by Paul VI. JP II and Benedict XVI continued the legacy and contributed their own styles. These Vatican II popes carefully executed the council's ideals (e.g. Church's positive engagement with the world) while maintaining that diplomacy expresses the Church's mission of peace. The papal styles are also formative to Pope Francis' experience as the present leader of the Holy See.

The Holy See makes most of the Church's bi-millennial experience, particularly, her CST. The Church's expertise proved to be useful in the popes' responses to the

peace crises in the East Asian region. For example, Paul VI's peace diplomacy, bilateral and multilateral collaborations, and neutrality policy prevented further casualties in Vietnam. Furthermore, he was able to portray the moral competence of the Holy See in East Asian peace for the first time. Meanwhile, JP II's human-centered, trust, and conscience diplomacies contributed to cushioning the impact of the two political systems that have divided or pushed East Asian countries into isolation. At the collapse of the Soviet regime, JP II's appeal for reconciliation was noticeable in his communications with Vietnam, Cambodia, PRC and North Korea.

Benedict XVI's truth diplomacy was palpable in his passing reference to East Asian countries experiencing both internal and border problems. Formalization of ties between the Holy See and PRC may be far from the vision, yet the delegations to Vietnam and ASEAN were significant steps toward its attainment.

Hence, the diplomatic gestures of these Vatican II popes attest to consistency in upholding the primacy of the human person and trust in diplomacy as a way to settle disputes. The Church's diplomatic service developed amidst the changing political landscapes. Despite the lack of formal accord between the Holy See and countries it intervened for, its leverage in diplomacy is still recognized. Naturally, the Holy See is non-interventionist. The council ideas somehow helped divest Christendom's image from the projection of catholicity.

The Holy See's relations with communist, socialist, and conservative Muslim countries remain a challenge. Since East Asia is a melting pot of civilizations, traditions, and religions, its Catholic constituents' protection in the countries concerned is an inevitable priority. Dialogue proves to be the Holy See's strongest suit in conflict-prevention and resolution. However, JP II's resolute expressions contra communism and Benedict XVI's diminished influence in East Asia are some factors that would make the formalization of ties quite an ambitious task for Pope Francis.

Pope Francis' diplomacy is a continuation of the tasks successfully implemented by his predecessors.<sup>102</sup> He uses the same art of forming and moving consciences that possibly lead to legal consequences (e.g., protection of rights and freedoms, notably, religious freedom).<sup>103</sup> He faithfully executes Vatican II's vision

---

<sup>102</sup> Archbishop Bernardito Auza, "Pope Francis' Diplomacy," to Audience of the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey (1 March 2017), from <https://zenit.org/articles/archbishop-auza-describes-popes-diplomacy-at-seton-hall-university/> (accessed 20 January, 2018).

<sup>103</sup> Antonini, "The Diplomatic Activity of the Holy See," 9-10.

of a global and missionary Church and adds that the Church is outward in her relationships<sup>104</sup> even if she ends up getting “bruised, hurting, and dirty.”<sup>105</sup>

His personal addition to pontifical diplomacy is his culture of encounter, a paradigm that projects a global and missionary Church.<sup>106</sup> This paradigm is supported by four principles: 1) time is greater than space, 2) unity prevails over conflict, 3) realities are more important than ideas, and 4) the whole is greater than its parts. These principles are found in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Pope Francis’ renewed interest in the East Asian region is sparked not only by the last visit of a pope in 1995, but of the changes in the nature of conflicts (from state-centered to human centered). Thus, the pope intends to give religious diplomacy a better reputation. He utilizes a sustainable, action-oriented, and holistic type of diplomacy. In other words, a human-centered diplomacy that anchors on solidarity and rejoices in truth. **PS**

## References

Antonini, Orlando. “The Diplomatic Activity of the Holy See,” Lecture, Megatrend University, Belgrade, December 10, 2014.

Auza, Bernardito. “Pope Francis Diplomacy.” to Audience of the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, South Orange New Jersey, 1 March 2017, <https://holyseemission.org/contents//statements/58ba0b742bc1b.php> (accessed April 5, 2018).

Barbato, Mariano and Robert Joustra. “Introduction: Popes on the Rise” *The Review of Faith and International Relations* 4 (2017): 1-5.

Benedict XVI, “Addresses to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See: 2005-2014” <http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it.html> (accessed May 19, 2019).

---

<sup>104</sup> Richard Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015), 113-114.

<sup>105</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (Evangelii Gaudium)*, 24 November 2013. Vatican Archive, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html) (accessed March 3, 2022).

<sup>106</sup> Richard Gaillardetz’ Theology of Encounter in Meghan Clark, “Pope Francis and the Christological Dimensions of Solidarity in the Catholic Social Teaching,” *Theological Studies*, 1 (2019): 112.



- Carletti, Anna. "Francis' Style: The Holy See and its New Role in the International System" 9<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Conference in International Relations, Giardini Sicili Italy, 23-26 September 2015.
- Catholic Church, "Holy See Relations," [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/secretariat\\_state/documents/rc\\_seg-st\\_20010123\\_holy-see-relations\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/documents/rc_seg-st_20010123_holy-see-relations_en.html) (accessed July 15, 2019).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "1983 Code of Canon Law" [http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic\\_index\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html) (accessed January 14, 2020).
- Chowdhury, Iftekhar Ahmed. "Diplomacy and Papacy: How Do the Twain Meet" *Institute of South Asian Studies*, 532 (7 December 2017): 1-4.
- Clark, Meghan. "Pope Francis and the Christological Dimensions of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching." *Theological Studies* 1 (2019): 102-122.
- Clooney, Francis. "Interreligious Learning in a Changing Church: From Paul VI to Francis" *Irish Theological Quarterly* 4 (2017): 269-283.
- Czapliński, Władysław. "Recognition and International Legal Personality of NonState Actors" *Pécs Journal of International and European Law*, 1 (206): 7-17.
- De Berri, Edward P., James Hug, Peter Henriot, and Michael Schulteis. *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Diez, Thomas. "Diplomacy, Papacy, and the Transformation of International Society" *The Review of Faith and International Relations* 4 (2017): 31-38.
- Gaillardetz, Richard. *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and Renewal of Catholicism*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015.
- Galtung, Johan. "Theories of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking" unpublished manuscript, September 1967, typescript.
- Genovese, Federica. "Politics ex Cathedra: Religious Authority and the Pope in the Modern International Relations," *Research and Politics* (October-December 2015): 1-15.
- Golan, Guy, Philip Arcenaux and Megan Soule. "The Catholic Church as a Public Diplomacy Actor: An Analysis of the Pope's Strategic Narrative and International Engagement" *The Journal of International Communication* (2018): 1-21.

- Haynes, Jeffrey. "Introduction: The Clash of Civilizations and the Relations Between the West and the Muslim World" *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 17, 1 (2019): 1-10. DOI: 10.1080/15570274.2019.1570756.
- Hebblethwaite, Peter. *Paul VI: the first Modern Pope*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.
- Herring, George. *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers*, ed. George Herring. Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983.
- Hurdock, Barry. "A Larger Society: Populorum Progressio at Fifty" *Commonweal*, February 23, 2017, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/larger-solidarity> (accessed on March 1, 2022).
- John Paul II. "Addresses to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See: 1978-2005" <http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it.html> (accessed May 19, 2019).
- McDougall, Derek. *Asia Pacific in World Politics*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2016.
- Morss, John. "The International Legal Status of the Vatican/Holy See Complex," *The European Journal of International Law* 4 (2016): 927-946.
- N.A. "Now North Korea Invites the Pope" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/jun/19/northkorea.catholicism> (accessed August 2, 2019).
- Paul VI. "Addresses to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See: 1968-1978" <http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it.html> (accessed May 19, 2019).
- Pontifical Academy of Sciences. *Papal Addresses to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences 1917-2002 and to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 1994-2002*. Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 2003.
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Makati City, Philippines: Word and Life Publications-CBCP, 2004.
- Solarz, Anna. "The Holy See's Efforts Towards Reconciliation" *Mysl Ekonomiczna I Polityczna*, 54 (2016): 134-155.
- Troy, Jodok. "The Catholic Church and International Relations," *Oxford Handbooks Online*, [www.oxforhandbooks.com](http://www.oxforhandbooks.com) (accessed May 30 2019)

\_\_\_\_\_. “The Pope’s Own Hand Outstretched: Holy See Diplomacy as a Hybrid Mode of Diplomatic Agency” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 3 (2018): 521-539.

Vukicevic, Boris. “Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe: Ostpolitik of the Holy See” *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 49 (2018): 117-41.

Walczak, Roman. “Papal Diplomacy-Characteristics of the Key Issues in Canon Law and International Law” *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 2 (2016): 489-529.



