

DR. LÓRÁND UJHÁZI

**The Catholic Church's Institutional and Ethical Responses  
to Modern Security Challenges**

*Thesis Booklet*

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Religion is a social force that seeks to influence social relations beyond the teaching of the supernatural. The Catholic Church places particular emphasis on the promotion of social justice and peace. Over the past two centuries, the Church's role in crisis management and assessing the ethics of war has been strengthened. This is evidenced by a number of factors, including the literature on the international role of religious communities, theoretical reflection on ethical issues, and concrete missionary engagement.

The Catholic Church stands out from other religious communities and Christian denominations not only in terms of its size but also in its organizational structure, its international legal personality, its centralized leadership, and its complex ethical and social teaching. Its role in crisis management, assessing international relations and security, and addressing ethical challenges is unparalleled by any other religious community. The objective of this doctoral dissertation is to examine the organization, legal regulation, and ethical principles of the Catholic Church in the context of emerging security challenges and the promotion of peace.

The essay is structured around three main areas of investigation:

1. It assesses the positioning, action, and reform of the Holy See's organizations to address new security challenges and war and security-ethics issues.
2. An examination of the statements made by the Church's leadership regarding the new types of security challenges and ethical issues related to war.
3. It presents the structure of the central organizations of the Church and the theological paradigms at the heart of them. Of particular significance is the theological vision that distinguishes the Catholic Church from other international actors and nation-states in the promotion of peace and social justice.

**Methodology of the essay**

The modern approach to security involves several disciplines, including economics, political science, foreign policy and security studies, law, political science, military science, and others. Each discipline employs its own methods and procedures. In this thesis, I have assumed that

the areas that security studies consider challenging are also theological issues. Consequently, from the perspective of the Church, the individual areas of security cannot be considered solely from the perspective of the secular sciences (security policy, international law, or canon law). Nor can the methods and principles of the sacred sciences be disregarded. In this thesis, I have endeavored to adhere to the transdisciplinary method espoused by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, which re-regulates the ecclesiastical universities. In this context, I have chosen to begin with theological reflection, recognizing that the new security challenges cannot be adequately assessed through the tools of theology alone. I have endeavored to avoid:

1. When considering only the methods of the secular sciences, there is a possibility that we will only obtain expert analyses on specific safety issues. This may result in the omission of the most crucial aspect of the Church, namely theological contextualization.
2. Furthermore, using exclusively theological methods may result in a superficial repetition of papal and canonical documents.

A fundamental question is whether the thesis should be considered basic or applied research. Based on the hypotheses and objectives, the work can be classified as basic research. Basic research aims to produce basic knowledge and theoretical insights. The collection of information usually aims to answer theoretical problems. However, basic research will also have practical results that can influence the development and change of methods and knowledge.

The research employed qualitative methods, including primary and secondary sources. These sources were collated and analyzed in the context of the Church's teachings, with the summative assessment applied.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the Holy See's peace activities, I have conducted a critical analysis of the theoretical and historical background and practical aspects of these activities. Despite numerous empirical studies and a substantial body of literature on the Holy See's involvement in security consolidation, there is a paucity of work that simultaneously takes into account theological, security, and legal aspects.

I have formulated inductive hypotheses linked to the research. Inductive logic already assumes experience or a set of data. From its analysis and integration, general theories and conclusions can be drawn. The research's direction and the results' products are drawn from previous research experience and the analysis of the relationship between security and religion.

In addition to testing hypotheses, the objective was to develop integrative models that could be used by the Holy See and the Church, as well as in support of humanitarian work.

### **The hypothesis of his thesis**

1. The Church's participation in international politics and crisis management is based on its theological principles derived from revelation. A more detailed analysis reveals that the Holy See's involvement in international affairs aligns with its theological principles. However, the theological argumentation is only convincing for those with a faith-based perspective.

2. The involvement of religious communities in the international political space is on the rise. However, the limited understanding of religion in international law also represents the limit of faith-based diplomacy. The Catholic Church is an exception to this insofar as the Holy See and the Vatican are entities that can be interpreted in terms of international law. Consequently, the Holy See's role in assessing security challenges, war ethics, and crisis management is likely to increase.

3. The Church is actively addressing new types of security challenges. However, the methods of security policy, international law, and international studies can only demonstrate the effectiveness of Church organizations. To understand the motivation of this activity, theological and ethical reflection based on revelation is required.

### **Structure of the essay**

The thesis is comprised of seven interrelated chapters:

- The initial chapter presents the theological principles underlying the Catholic Church's involvement in crisis management and peace-building. The Catholic Church fulfills the mission entrusted to her by the Founder in three areas: governance, sanctification, and teaching. Acts of merciful charity permeate the triple mission and all the Church's organizations. The chapter illustrates that the Holy See and individual international and local Catholic organizations, while contributing to global and regional crisis management to advance the common good, do so not merely from a security policy-, but from a theological perspective linked to the nature of the Church.

- The second chapter describes the Holy See's relations with international organizations, with a particular focus on the United Nations. The Catholic Church is not far from actively engaging in the international arena. Furthermore, the international organizations that emerged after the Second World War were organized along philosophical lines with which the Catholic Church could identify. These activities are essentially oriented towards promoting peace, managing crises, and addressing social issues in the context of a globalized world, which are often listed later in the broader list of security challenges.
- The third chapter examines the relationship between the Catholic Church and the European Union, focusing on the consolidation of peace. It can be observed that the system of relations between the two entities has consistently been influenced by the public policies announced by integration. However, despite the fluctuations in the relationship between the two entities, peace and its related policies (human rights, poverty eradication, protection of refugees, and promotion of regional security) have consistently remained a close link between them.
- The fourth chapter describes the role of papal envoys in promoting peace. Throughout history, papal envoys have been actively involved in promoting peace. This role is mentioned in the Church's legal system. A closer analysis of these tasks reveals that they all have a security aspect. Peace promotion is, therefore, also a cohesive force in implementing the mission.
- The fifth chapter deals with the reform of the Roman Curia and its role in promoting peace. Of central importance is the relationship between the reform initiated following the election of Pope Francis and social justice. In addition to the interpretative legislation, the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate evangelium* established several new central offices to promote peace and social justice. These include the Dicastery for Evangelization, the Dicastery for the Ministry of Charity, the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, and a new section of the Secretariat of State of the Holy See. The chapter also delineates the organizational principles that facilitate enhanced effectiveness (principle of cooperation, lay role, consultation, etc.).
- In chapter six, the International Charity is introduced. It is important to note that the Church's social teaching cannot remain only theoretical. The strategic mission of the Church is implemented at the operational level by various Church organizations. While many relief organizations bear the Catholic label, the official relief organization of the Catholic Church is Catholic Charity. It is active on five continents in more than 160

countries. Additionally, when national budgets are exhausted, there is also scope for releasing more resources. International Charity collaborates with various international, national, nonprofit, and non-Catholic aid organizations. Its partnership with the armed forces is particularly noteworthy and is the subject of in-depth analysis in this chapter.

- The final chapter addresses the intelligence and counterintelligence activities of the Holy See. In addition to being a religious community, the Catholic Church, or the Holy See, is a sovereign subject of international law. The Vatican is a territorial state with a system of institutions. It requires credible information to support its operations and its role in crisis management. With regard to intelligence and counterintelligence, it is necessary to differentiate between the activities of the Vatican security services and those of the Holy See offices. The security services possess operational intelligence, which they utilize to safeguard the Vatican, the Roman Pontiff, and those within the city-state. The security services of the Holy See rely on their information to a certain extent, but primarily on information from foreign state organizations, particularly Italian ones, in order to conduct their operational and tactical activities.

### **Scientific results achieved**

- 1. A system for understanding and reviewing crisis management and peacemaking in the Holy See has been created, considering general philosophical and theological aspects, positive legal rules, strategic and operational elements of the operation.** Pope Francis has formulated the aspects of the reform in general terms, with theological principles from the post-Vatican II Council. The restructuring of the Curia was carried out through the legislative and administrative procedures of the Church. Nevertheless, by integrating theological and legal considerations within a unified framework, I have established a foundation for comprehending the crisis management and peacemaking of the Holy See.
- 2. I have developed a set of criteria to serve as the theological and security policy basis for evaluating crisis management from the theological, philosophical, and legal perspectives mentioned above.** In some areas, the results can be quantified, whereas in other cases, the results cannot be measured by quantitative methods. I have also considered the diplomatic corps, where results are more tangible. This includes the effectiveness of the Holy See's involvement in managing international conflicts, the

results of recruitment to the Holy See's diplomatic corps, the reform of training and education, and the results of aid agencies involved in crisis management. Furthermore, I have examined the growth of the lay element as an essential aspect of curial reform. This can also be measured by the number of lay Christian faithful appointed by the Pope to each dicastery of the Holy See. However, there are aspects that cannot be detected by impact analysis methods. This is partly due to the specificities of faith-based diplomacy and crisis management since elements such as sensitization based on theological principles are challenging to quantify and measure.

3. The crisis management of the Holy See is theologically based, yet in close cooperation with international and state organizations. It is of particular importance to develop effective cooperation with the armed forces. Based on existing church documents and theological principles, **I have developed a theoretical framework for cooperation, addressing theological and philosophical dilemmas, both strategic and operational.**

### **Opportunities for improvement**

The objective is to extend the boundaries of the current research project in order to provide a foundation for future empirical studies in this field.

Security challenges are constantly evolving, with some threats becoming more pronounced and others receding into the background. By its very nature, the Church has a particular theological and canonical dimension to crisis management in relation to states and international organisations.

- The work primarily focused on elucidating the general aspects of the Holy See's involvement. The primary crisis management objectives were examined, and the relationship with the principal international actors was analyzed. Additionally, the potential of historical examples to enhance operational effectiveness was explored. Notably, numerous international organizations that have played a pivotal role in twentieth-century security have not been subjected to a comprehensive analysis. The OSCE, NATO, and the African Union were only briefly mentioned.
- Several security challenges are also referred to in the individual chapters but have not been included for reasons of space. These include the relationship between the Church and nuclear disarmament, the role of the Catholic Church in migration, the potential use of remote-controlled aircraft capable of measuring strikes, the relationship between

regional security and religious communities, the role of inter-religious and inter-denominational dialogue in crisis management, and the relationship between security schools and the theology of the Catholic Church. Further work will be conducted on these issues in the future.

- It is not only individual security challenges are evolving rapidly; the Church's reflections are also dynamic. It is, therefore, beneficial to continuously assess the individual sub-areas and the overall security policy aspects of the Church. This is the material for organized, coordinated, and even international research. It presupposes theologians, security policy experts, canon lawyers, and international lawyers familiar with the individual sub-areas.
- My research focuses on the Catholic Church. However, it is also worthwhile to examine the social teachings on security issues of the Evangelical Churches, Islam, and the religions of the Far East. This is because the international legitimacy of the Catholic Church and the sophistication of its social teaching are not comparable to those of other religious communities.
- The reshuffle of the Curia occurred in conjunction with the customary hierarchical consultation. I have previously alluded to the hierarchical aspects of this work. It would be beneficial, and in accordance with the tenets of curatorial reform, to ascertain the opinions of the lay public and to incorporate them into the process.
- Methodologically speaking, it is crucial to consider hidden correlates, dependent variables, chance, and counterfactuals. These factors are also evident in the context of curia reform, though their full implications may not be apparent until further research is conducted:
  - The objective is to ascertain the actual capacity of staff and infrastructure on an international scale.
  - Similarly, it would be beneficial to assess the extent to which the reform has facilitated collaboration between the various levels of the Church and the offices of the Holy See over time, if necessary, through interviews.
  - The question of whether cooperation has led to greater effectiveness in regional security merits further investigation. In particular, it would be beneficial to ascertain whether the specific actions of the Holy See in cooperation with local churches (dioceses, bishops' conferences, and the hierarchy of the Eastern Churches) have resulted in a positive shift.

- A distinct research endeavor will investigate the potential for collaboration between representatives of religious institutions, Catholic universities, and non-governmental, governmental, and international organizations in security studies.
- In other words, the objective is to analyze the extent to which the transdisciplinarity envisioned by the Pope has manifested in the field of theology and Christian ethics. This will facilitate not only the further development of each area, but also the advancement of theology as a discipline capable of engaging with the social sciences in the context of security issues.
- Finally, it is worth noting that the Holy See structure has been able to take more serious action in the field of foreign policy due to one of the most important and frequently cited motivations for its establishment. This has resulted in the achievement of some more spectacular results.
- The question remains whether these results are the consequence of the curial reform, which aims to utilise the Holy See's distinctive capacity to promote peace, prevent conflict and manage crises post-conflict, or whether they are attributable to the Pope's charismatic personality. At present, it is challenging to provide a definitive answer.
- Following the Pope's intention, the Holy See will be expected to demonstrate greater effectiveness in its defense of „those in need, the sick and the excluded, (...) victims of armed conflicts and natural disasters, (...) victims of slavery, (...) torture, (...) victims of threats to their dignity” and refugees.
- In this region, there has been a discernible increase in rhetorical action and tangible assistance from local churches and representatives of central offices. Nevertheless, whether this is a consequence of public consensus or hierarchical influence remains unclear.

### **Theoretical and practical use of research results**

The research can be utilized as a pedagogical and research tool for educational institutions affiliated with the Catholic Church, including Catholic and ecclesiastical universities;

For the National University of Public Service, Radicalism and Religious Extremism orientation, and for Research Institute for Religion and Society;

For the Faculty of Theology, Law and Political Science and the Postgraduate Institute of Canon Law at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University;



In terms of the external relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Defence;

For the Hungarian Defence Forces in the training of forces involved in crisis management.