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# Security Policy Challenges in Europe from the Perspective of the Catholic Church

## Introduction

At first glance, it may seem strange to hear that the Catholic Church is interested in questions of hard and/or soft security. However, a further analysis and reflection reveals that this interest is both natural and in keeping with the Church's mission.

"Security" is, in fact, a biblical term and concept. There are numerous references in the Bible to "security", which is understood in a multi-faceted way. The understanding of biblical "security" can range in meaning from peace with surrounding peoples and nations, as is frequent in the Old Testament, to eternal salvation, as is prevalent in the Psalms and, especially, in the New Testament writings.

The Catholic Church views the Scriptures, as well as Tradition, as the two principal sources of revelation. Hence, if the Bible speaks of "security", the Church must necessarily have "security" as part of her mission. Might this not have been one of the inspirations behind the wonderful and provocative beginning of the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*? The Document opens with the words: *"The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history"* (no. 1).

Because of her religious mission, which is universal in nature, the Catholic Church feels deeply committed to assisting today's men and women in advancing the great cause of justice and peace and security so as to make our world ever more hospitable and human. These are noble ideals to which people eagerly aspire and for which governments carry a special responsibility. In what follows, I will attempt to trace briefly the history of the Catholic Church's involvement in "security" questions, from the perspective of the diplomacy of the Holy See, as well as to indicate some of the major themes to which the Catholic Church dedicates special attention in this part of her mission.

## **1. Foundation and history of the Holy See's diplomatic activity**

I believe that it was Dag Hammarskjöld, former Secretary General of the United Nations, who once said: "When I ask for an audience at the Vatican, I am not going to see the King of Vatican City, but the Head of the Catholic Church." A Secretary General of the UN, Vatican City, the Pope, the Catholic Church: all show the complexity of the topic and reminds us that the Catholic Church is the only religious institution in the world to have access to diplomatic relations and to be very interested in international law. She owes this to her universal and transnational organization. She owes it to her head on earth, the Pope, who, from the moment of his election in the conclave, assumes an international character. Above all, she owes it to her history.

In effect, it is important to make clear at once that the subject who enters into contact with the leading figures in international life is not the Catholic Church as a community of believers, nor Vatican City State – a geographically small support-State that guarantees the spiritual freedom of the Pope with the minimum territory – but the Holy See, namely, the Pope and the Roman Curia, universal and spiritual authority, unique centre of communion; a sovereign subject of international law, of a religious and moral nature. The place of the Holy See on the international scene is justified to the extent to which it is the supreme authority of the Catholic Church that, in turn, by means of the Holy See, is in possession of true international status.

It is interesting to discover historically that it is in an ecclesial context that we find the beginning of the relations between the Holy See and the international community, namely with the celebration of the Ecumenical Councils. This was long before the Popes had at their disposal true temporal power! In fact, the person of the Apostolic Nuncio, in the modern sense of the term, namely, Ambassador of the Pope, invested with an ecclesial mission (to the local

Church) and a diplomatic mission (accredited with the government) already existed in 453, at the end of the Council of Chalcedon. In fact, once the Council was concluded, Pope St Leo the Great asked his Legate, Julian of Cos, who had followed the work of the Council, to stay there to apply the decisions of the assembly. To this end, he provided him with two Letters of Credence: one to accredit him with the local hierarchy, represented by the Patriarch Marcion, and one for the Emperor of Constantinople, Theodosius. This practice of the Holy See's Nuncios or Ambassadors presenting two Letters of Credence, one to the Government and one to the local Church, continues today.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, international life underwent an important change: the Nation-State emerged and acquired a well defined personality. This State did not hesitate to attack neighbouring States with ever greater violence. Diplomacy had to adapt to this new reality; in place of the "secret agent", there was now the "informer agent" who made himself known and who tried to gain the confidence of his dialogue partners. The princes adopted the formula that the Republic of Venice refined with its credit institutes and its commercial agencies. The Popes immediately adapted to the new situation also inspired by the Venetian model. This explains the appearance of the first Apostolic Nunciatures with at their head an Archbishop sent from Rome: in 1500 in Venice and Paris; in 1513 in Vienna. Pope Clement XI had a great intuition: in 1701 he established the Academy of Noble Ecclesiastics for the purpose of forming clerics for the mission of being pontifical representatives.

If, after the Treaty of Westphalia and especially in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, pontifical diplomacy had a lower profile because of the recurrent invasions of the Papal States, the Congress of Vienna of 1815 restored all its prestige. It is interesting to note that the personal recognition granted to the Pope (who in this period was still a temporal sovereign) was prompted by the fact that he was first and foremost the Spiritual Head of the Catholic Church, as Talleyrand pointed out when he presented a motion to the editorial committee of the Congress which was, moreover, approved without the slightest difficulty: "with regard to the religious princes and the Catholic powers (Austria, France, Spain and Portugal), nothing about the Pope should be changed" (it concerned the papal representative's right of precedence).

It is clear from this rapid historical retrospective that what the international community had taken into consideration was the papacy as a moral power *sui generis!* This is confirmed by the events that followed: between 1870 and 1929 (the year of the creation of Vatican City State), when the Popes were stripped of all temporal power, they continued to exercise the rights of active and passive legation.

Since the late Middle Ages, no one has contested the international legitimacy of the Holy See; neither the Soviets in the recent past, nor the Chinese today. There is no doubt about the Holy See's full belonging to the international community. A single statistic is enough: in 1978, when Pope John Paul II was elected Supreme Pontiff, the Holy See had diplomatic relations with 84 countries; today, this number has risen to 177, in addition to diplomatic relations with the European Union and the Sovereign Order of Malta, as well as relations of a special nature with the Russian Federation and the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine.

The Holy See, which enjoys international juridical status, is thus presented as a sovereign and independent moral authority – and as such takes part in international relations. Within the community of nations its action as a moral authority aims at furthering an ethic of relations between the different protagonists of the international community. This is principally carried out through two channels:

- bilateral diplomacy (that is, relations with the 177 countries just mentioned; the signing of Concordats, treaties that are in solemn form or Agreements on specific subjects, etc.);
- multilateral diplomacy (that is, relations with 33 international organizations and 10 regional inter-governmental organizations, essentially the United Nations and its agencies, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States and the Organization for African Unity).

The principal actor of papal diplomatic action is the Pope himself. With his pastoral ministry, his words, his travels, his meetings – that involve the earth's peoples and those who govern them – he can inspire political leaders, give an orientation to a great many social initiatives and, at times, contest systems or ideas that corrode the dignity of the person and thus threaten world peace. However, the Holy See's daily action on the international scene is obviously developed through diplomatic law and international law and the classical instruments resulting from them. It is to these that I would now like to turn, as they also provide a snapshot of what the Church sees as the principal security questions of the day.

## 2. Security challenges and the contribution of the Catholic Church

Through its daily relations with countries and international organisations, the Holy See never ceases to recall certain priorities, or rather, certain principles, without which there can be no true human civilization and, hence, no security. These principles are:

- *The priority of the human person, of his dignity and rights:* These rights include: the right to life in all stages of its development; the right to work, and to the just share of profits earned; the right to culture; the right to freedom of thought; the right to freedom of conscience and of religion. All this is not because these rights originate with the State, but because they are universal and inherent in the human person. This insistence on the human person enables the diplomats of the Holy See to explain to their partners in dialogue that the human person must always be the focus and goal of all political activity.
- *The promotion, and when necessary, the defence of peace:* the rejection of war as a way of solving disputes between States; concrete initiatives to reach effective disarmament. It is worth remembering that the Holy See signed and ratified treaties on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1971), on banning the use of anti-personnel landmines in Ottawa (1997), the convention prohibiting the use of chemical weapons (1999). More recently, the Holy See was among the first to sign and ratify the Convention against Cluster Munitions (2008), a document which also has the aim of reaffirming international humanitarian law. On the other hand, while noting with concern the signs of crisis appearing in the area of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, the Holy See has continued to reaffirm that peace cannot be built when military expenses divert enormous human and material resources from projects for development, especially the development of the poorest peoples.

All this is undertaken to support with moral authority those dedicated to fostering "a culture of peace", whose herald the Church is honoured to be. This also explains the Holy See's interest in the Middle-East peace process, the Papal mediation in solving the controversy that flared up between Argentina and Chile in the southern region, and, finally, the words of John Paul II at the time of the Gulf War in 1991: "War: an adventure with no return!". The Holy See has always sought on all occasions to encourage all parties to give priority to dialogue and negotiation, the only

instruments worthy of humans that can solve the inevitable conflicts between people and nations.

- *Support to all institutions that foster democracy as the basis of political and social life:* everyone knows the dedication with which the Holy See works for the development of democracy in the societies of Central and Eastern Europe. I am also thinking of all that Pope John Paul II said and did for Cuba and, more recently, what Pope Benedict XVI said and did for Africa on the occasion of his recent Pastoral Visit to that continent. The Holy See recalls that democracy guarantees the participation of citizens in political decisions and permits governments to be sanctioned by citizens. Democracy means participation and co-responsibility. The Popes have often repeated that for democracy to be fruitful, it must be supported by human values. *"Authentic democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person ... if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated, for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism"* (*Centesimus annus*, n. 46).

In this context, the Holy See is pleased to note that the hope of peace is alive once again in Cyprus, where negotiations for a just solution to problems associated with the division of the Island have resumed. As for the Caucasus, the Holy See wishes to affirm once more that the conflicts involving the states of the Region cannot be settled by recourse to arms; and, in thinking of Georgia, the Holy See expresses its hope that all the commitments subscribed to in the cease-fire of last August – an agreement concluded thanks to the diplomatic efforts of the European Union – will be honoured, and that the return of the displaced to their homes will be provided for as quickly as possible. Finally, with regard to the South-east of Europe, the Holy See pursues its commitment to stability in the region, and hopes that conditions will continue to be created for a future of reconciliation and of peace between the populations of Serbia and Kosovo, with respect for minorities and commitment to the preservation of the priceless Christian artistic and cultural patrimony which constitutes a treasure for all humanity.

- *The establishment of an international order that is founded on justice and rights.* Food, health, culture and solidarity are necessary conditions for citizens to participate with responsibility and conviction in a plan for society that guarantees an equal opportunity to each one. The Holy See has

always expressed its esteem for international law. Today, as never before, we have in our hands so complete and refined a legal patrimony that is the result of so many tragic human experiences. I am thinking, for example, of the founding texts and resolutions of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. I also want to mention new concepts that have fortunately entered into international law today, such as the duty of humanitarian intervention, and the formulation of the rights of minorities. The Holy See is of the opinion that if the law had been applied in all circumstances, a great many past and present crises would have been avoided.

Furthermore, to build peace and security, the Holy See is convinced that the international community needs to give new hope to the poor. So many individuals and families are hard pressed by the difficulties and uncertainties which the current financial and economic crisis has provoked on a global scale. The food crisis and global warming make it even more difficult for those living in some of the poorest parts of the planet to have access to nutrition and water. There is an urgent need to adopt an effective strategy to fight hunger and to promote local agricultural development, all the more so since the number of the poor is increasing even within the rich countries. In this perspective, the Holy See is pleased that last year's Doha Conference on financing development identified some helpful criteria for directing the governance of the economic system and helping those who are most in need. On a deeper level, bolstering the economy demands rebuilding confidence. This goal will only be reached by implementing an ethics based on the innate dignity of the human person. This is a demanding task! Today more than in the past, our future is at stake, as well as the fate of our planet and its inhabitants, especially the younger generation which is inheriting a severely compromised economic system and social fabric, which have implications for security considerations.

- *All nations are equal*: none are great or small. All have equal dignity. Each has the right to safeguard and defend its own independence or cultural identity and to conduct its own affairs in autonomy and independence.
- *These same nations are equal in showing solidarity*. The Popes frequently use the expression "family of nations". There is also an "international common good".
- In this context, *war must always be rejected* and priority given to negotiation and the use of international legal instruments;

Thus the activity of the Holy See has often helped to create a climate of greater trust between international partners, and made it easier to plead for the introduction of a new philosophy of international relations that must lead to:

- a gradual decrease in military expenditure;
- effective disarmament;
- respect for cultures and religious traditions. Religion has risen to be a political and security topic of the first rank. The increasing Muslim immigration to Europe has helped to put once again the religious question in the public sphere ;
- solidarity with the poorer countries, helping them to become the architects of their own development;

As can be noted, the Popes and their co-workers, while carrying out their mission on the international stage, are guided by the following simple convictions:

- Armed violence will never solve conflicts between human persons or groups; violence - as all can see - only breeds violence;
- If a race, a religion, or a political party is idealized or "sacralized", before long the logic of the tribe or the law of the strongest begins to prevail. The identification of terrorism with any nationality or religion must be firmly rejected;
- A person cannot affirm and defend his own legitimate rights while trampling upon the rights of others;
- Men and women are all members of the same family; no nation can guarantee its own security and well-being by isolating itself from the others.

### **3. The promotion of religious freedom as a special security challenge**

I would now like to turn my attention to a particular challenge to security in the modern world, namely, the promotion of religious freedom. The question of the peaceableness of cultures, of peace in matters of religion, is a political and security theme of the first rank. As was said earlier, freedom of conscience and of religion is a primary and inalienable right of the human person; what is

more, insofar as it touches the innermost sphere of the spirit, one can even say that it upholds the justification, deeply rooted in each individual, of all other liberties. Of course, such freedom can only be exercised in a responsible way, that is, in accordance with ethical principles and by respecting equality and justice, which in turn can be strengthened, as mentioned before, through dialogue with those institutions whose nature is to serve religion.

The Catholic Church is not confined to a particular territory and she has no geographical borders; her members are men and women of all regions of the world. She knows, from many centuries of experience, that suppression, violation or restriction of religious freedom have caused suffering and bitterness, moral and material hardship, and that even today there are millions of people enduring these evils. By contrast, the recognition, guarantee and respect of religious freedom bring serenity to individuals and peace to the social community; they also represent an important factor in strengthening a nation's moral cohesion, in improving people's common welfare, and in enriching the cooperation among nations in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

In addition, the wholesome implementation of the principle of religious freedom will contribute to the formation of citizens who, in full recognition of the moral order, *"will be obedient to lawful authority and be lovers of true freedom; people, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgment, and, in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort"* (*Dignitatis humanae*, no. 8).

Moreover, if it is properly understood, religious freedom will help to ensure the order and common welfare of each nation, of each society, for, when individuals know that their fundamental rights are protected, they are better prepared to work for the common welfare.

Respect for this principle of religious freedom will also contribute to strengthening international peace which, on the contrary, is threatened by any violation of human rights, as pointed out in the aforementioned UN address, and especially by unjust distribution of material goods and violation of the objective rights of the spirit, of human conscience and creativity, including man's relation to God. Only the effective protection of the fullness of rights for every individual without discrimination can guarantee peace down to its very foundations.

## Conclusion

The Holy See will always seek to bring together the forces of goodwill, so that on every occasion the law may be applied to prevent the weak from becoming victims of the bad will, violence or manipulation by the strongest. It is absolutely necessary that the "force of law prevail over the law of force"! I say so with deep conviction in these days when once again contempt for life, armed violence, rejuvenation of the arms race, growing desire for nuclear supremacy, etc. are leading entire regions of the world towards the abyss. All this requires a vision of the human person that takes into account all his or her dimensions: respect for human life from conception until natural death; the dignity of the human being; respect for his freedoms, especially freedom of conscience or religion. All these values obviously belong to the Magisterium of the Church, which the Holy See tries to promote in the world of international affairs in the conviction that these values are fundamental for the construction of a comprehensive security architecture.

I hope I have been able to illustrate in some small way that the Holy See is at the service of people and nations, to help them walk together on the paths of life and hope and security. I would like conclude my remarks by citing a reflection of the principal architect of papal diplomacy. On January 9, 2006, in his Address to the Diplomatic Corps which came to offer him best wishes for the New Year, Pope Benedict XVI observed that "*...many [of the] grave problems that afflict today's world ....are of concern also to the Holy See and the Catholic Church throughout the world, which is in solidarity with every form of suffering, with every hope and with every effort that accompanies human history. Hence we feel united as in a common mission, which confronts us with ever new and formidable challenges. Yet we address them with confidence, eager to support one another - each according to his proper responsibility - on our path towards great common objectives.*"