

CATHOLIC INFLUENCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS: FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION AND THE HOLY SEE

Sabine DEGUET

Liberato “Levi” C. Bautista, president of CoNGO

Marie-Charlotte Stohr, founder of Inspired Change Corporate

Michel Saloff-Coste, special Adviser to the President Catholic University of Lille





Table of content

02

INTRODUCTION

How have international relations been influenced by Catholic mores from the outset? The creation of the UN and the resurgence of faith in today's society

05

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Creation, operation and influence of Catholic Faith-Based Organizations as NGOs at the UN

08

THE HOLY SEE

A special status as a permanent observer and a dual existence between state and religion

12

RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD AND AT THE UN

Distribution of the world's religions and their representation at the UN

15

FORESIGHT

And if the UN were to change, what would happen to the Vatican? Projection in 2 scenarios

17

CONCLUSION

Religions bring together but also put the differences to light : UN had to learn how to deal with that

INTRODUCTION

FROM THE TREATY OF WESTPHALIA....

The interplay between religion and international relations has been a significant theme in the development of the global political order. As the professor of political science and the author Daniel Philpott notes, "Religion has been a major force in the history of international relations, shaping the ways in which states interact and understand their own sovereignty"[1]. The Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, is a perfect example of this interplay as it marked the end of the Thirty Years' War in Europe while laid the foundational principles for modern international relations. In fact, it established the concepts of state sovereignty and non-interference, which reshaped the political landscape of Europe by recognizing the independence and territorial integrity of states. This treaty was revolutionary in promoting the idea that states should not interfere in the internal affairs of other states, a principle that remains a cornerstone of international law today and one of the foundations of the UN, as we shall see. As well as laying the foundations for international relations as we know them, the Treaty of Westphalia had the secular intent to separate church and state. Despite this premise, it is clear from studying the text that it had deep Catholic roots. First of all, catholic diplomats and statesmen played significant roles in the negotiations, including Cardinal Mazarin of France and representatives of the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, the original terms of agreement in international relations resulted in a game of compromise and influence between the state and the Catholic Church. That's one of the reasons the treaty's emphases on legal equality among states but also the inviolability of treaties drew on Catholic doctrines of justice and order, which had been articulated by scholars such as Thomas Aquinas. These principles underscored the importance of peaceful coexistence and the rule of law, reflecting the Catholic Church's long-standing emphasis on moral and legal order in international affairs.

However, searcher like Leo Gross have highlighted that the Treaty of Westphalia's enduring legacy lies in its establishment of a diplomatic framework that balanced power among diverse states, thereby preventing the dominance of any single religious or political entity[2]. Historian Peter H. Wilson notes in fact that the treaty's provisions for religious tolerance, while limited, were influenced by the Catholic Church's evolving stance on religious diversity[3]. Therefore, while the Treaty of Westphalia was a landmark in the secularization of international politics, its Catholic influences are evident in the moral and legal frameworks it established, which continue to underpin international relations to this day as one of the inspiration sources for the creation of the UN.

- [1] Philpott, D. 2001. *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*
[2] Gross, L. 1948. "The Peace of Westphalia, 1648-1948." *The American Journal of International Law*
[3] Wilson, P. H. 2010. *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy*

... TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Effectively, the creation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 can be traced back to the foundational principles established by the Treaty of Westphalia, particularly regarding state sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. These Westphalian principles were integral to the formation of the UN, which was designed to foster international cooperation and prevent future conflicts. The UN Charter reflects these ideas, emphasizing the sovereignty and equality of all its member states and promoting peaceful coexistence through non-interference in their internal matters. However, this charter does not include the religious aspects of the treaty. The UN's decision to adopt a secular stance was influenced by the need to create an inclusive organization that could accommodate the diverse religious and cultural backgrounds of its member states. This secular approach ensures that this international organization remains neutral and unbiased, allowing it to mediate conflicts and promote human rights effectively without being swayed by religious considerations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, epitomizes this commitment to secularism by advocating for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion as universal human rights. In a way, although written in part by cardinals, the treaty had the same purpose, as we saw earlier in the work of Leo Gross: " the treaty's legacy lies in its establishment of a diplomatic framework that balanced power among diverse states, thereby preventing the dominance of any single religious or political entity ". This principle ensures that all member states, regardless of size or power, had an equal voice in the General Assembly. Furthermore, the decision to maintain a secular approach was also influenced by the Enlightenment ideals that shaped modern governance. The Enlightenment emphasized reason, individual rights, and the separation of church and state, principles that were enshrined in the governance of the United States and later adopted by the UN.

These various UN positions and decisions on national sovereignty and secularism allows it during a time to navigate the complex religious and cultural landscape of international relations, promoting policies and initiatives based on common human values rather than religious doctrines. However, while society had been moving away from religion for several centuries, the end of the Cold War and other contemporary phenomena have led to a resurgence of religions in different parts of the world, creating a new factor for the UN to consider.

Religion or Spirituality?

While we have been talking about the impact of religion on the history of international relations, it is important to distinguish between spirituality and religion. As the subject of this study is the influence of the Catholic religion on the UN, it is necessary to differentiate spirituality and religion before we can understand how religion has re-emerged strongly in society. The impact of spirituality and religion on the world and so on the UN's decisions can be distinguished by their different focuses and expressions in society.

Spirituality generally refers to an individual's personal and internal experience of the divine or the sacred, often emphasizing personal growth, inner peace, and a sense of connection to a greater whole. It tends to be more inclusive and flexible, allowing for a broad range of beliefs and practices without the need for formal structures or doctrines. The impact of spirituality on the world often manifests in movements that promote holistic well-being, mindfulness, and ethical living. Kenneth Pargament, a prominent psychologist of religion, defines spirituality as "the search for the sacred," which includes both personal and communal dimensions and is not confined to traditional religious contexts.[1]

Religion, on the other hand, is typically more organized and institutionalized, with specific doctrines, rituals, and community structures[2]. It provides a collective identity and a shared set of beliefs and practices that unify its adherents. Its impact on the world is more pronounced in shaping cultural norms, social institutions, and political systems. Nowadays, religious institutions often play significant roles in education, healthcare, and charity, as well as in the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. Historically, religion has also been a powerful force in both uniting and dividing societies, influencing laws, governance, and international relations.

As we can see, spirituality is a freer and broader concept, so it can be complicated and subjective to analyse and evaluate its impact on a society or political organization. For this reason, we will focus our study on religion throughout the review.

[1] Pargament, K. I. 1999. "The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality? Yes and No." *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*

[2] Durkheim, E. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.

The resurgence of religion

So, as we said before clarifying these different terms, the post-Cold War[1] world has seen a resurgence of religion in society. This phenomenon was marked by several factors, including globalization, which facilitated the spread and exchange of religious ideas across borders, but also by the retreat of the ideological constraints imposed by the superpower rivalry, allowing religious groups to reassert their influence. First of all, globalization played a critical role by enhancing communication and transportation networks, allowing religious movements to reach a global audience. That's why this era saw the rise of transnational religious networks and the proliferation of religious media, which enabled religious leaders and groups to mobilize followers and spread their messages more effectively. Moreover, migration patterns contributed to the diffusion of religious practices and the creation of multicultural societies where multiple religions coexist and interact. But behind these positive effects of freedom and sharing, the post-Cold War period also witnessed a rise in religious radicalism and fundamentalism. In many regions, religious identities became a focal point for political and social movements, often in reaction to perceived threats from secularism, modernity, or foreign influence. This radicalization was sometimes fueled by economic disparities, social injustices, and political instability, leading to the emergence of extremist groups that sought to impose their religious ideologies through violence and terrorism. Additionally, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the decline of communist regimes in Eastern Europe created a vacuum that was often filled by religious organizations seeking to provide social and moral guidance.

This era has had a profound impact on global politics and society. It has led to the formation of new alliances and conflicts, influenced international relations, and shaped the policies of nation-states. Religious organizations have become key players in humanitarian efforts, conflict resolution, and advocacy for social justice. They've done so in the last 30 years by influencing national policies, shaping both domestic and foreign agendas. Inevitably, they play a major role in guiding public opinion, directing the actions of religious institutions, and influencing the legal frameworks under which religious politics are practiced. For instance, in 2007, the Rio de Janeiro Security, Environment, and Air Conditioning (RIO SEAC) initiative highlighted the significant role faith-based organizations (FBOs) can play in public policy.

This initiative demonstrated how religious communities could be mobilized to address environmental concerns effectively, showcasing the potential for faith-driven activism to influence policy outcomes.

According to Ted G. Jelen and Mark J. Rozell [2], "religion is construed broadly to include public opinion, religious institutions, and the legal frameworks under which religious politics are practiced." In their study, "politics" is considered the dependent variable, illustrating how deeply religion can influence political outcomes. This dynamic is particularly evident on the global stage, where the United Nations serves as a focal point for global public policy, engaging a multitude of countries, subjects, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Also, Banchoff (2008) [3] notes that globalization has led to the emergence of more active religious transnational communities, creating a powerful force in international relations. As states lose some of their power to a range of important transnational non-state actors—such as business enterprises, the World Bank, the European Union, and international financial institutions—there is also more space for religion and FBOs to expand their influence. So, the participation of religious actors in these discussions is more and more legitimate and needed to respect equity. Today, international relations are characterized by a "renewed openness to questions of the spirit," reflecting what is described as the postsecular era. This term, coined by King (2000), denotes a renewed openness to religious matters, marking a significant shift in how global affairs are approached.

Historically, faith was often considered a private matter that should not interfere with the pursuit of national unity and political stability based on democratic principles. This view prevailed until the 1970s and 1980s, during the end of the Cold War. However, the contemporary landscape shows a significant shift. For example, in the United States, religious groups have played pivotal roles in shaping policy debates on issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and climate change. Similarly, in countries like India and Turkey, religious nationalism has become a driving force in political life, influencing both domestic policies and international relations. As a result, the role of religion in the contemporary world is complex and multifaceted, encompassing both positive contributions to social cohesion and development, as well as challenges related to radicalism and intolerance.

[1] Dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991

[2] Haynes, J. 2014. *Faith-based organizations at the United Nations*

What about

Despite the diverse array of religious beliefs held by member countries within the United Nations, the organization could no longer ignore the significance and impact of religion on global diplomacy and policy-making. Recognizing the growing influence of faith communities, the UN began to actively engage with these voices to ensure a more inclusive and representative dialogue.

This research aims to delve into the role of Catholicism within this framework, examining several key dimensions: the activities and influence of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) at the UN, the impact of the Holy See in shaping international discussions and policies, and the broader presence of Catholics both within the UN system and across the globe. Furthermore, the study will adopt a prospective approach to explore the potential changes in the UN's structure and how these might affect the place of Catholics in global governance. In conclusion, the research will provide a comprehensive analysis of how Catholic influence intersects with international diplomacy and what this might mean for future interactions between faith and global institutions.

now ?

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS



Economic and Social Council Chamber
<https://www.un.org/ungifts/economic-and-social-council-chamber>

Among the various Catholic influences present at the UN, faith-based Catholic organizations are the most diverse and numerous. These organizations are present thanks to their official status as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) accredited by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The status of NGOs under the United Nations Economic and Social Council is a critical mechanism for engaging civil society in global governance since 1946. ECOSOC, one of the principal organs of the UN, grants consultative status to NGOs. That's mean they're allowed to participate in the work of the UN, contribute to discussions, and advocate for issues aligned with their missions. This consultative status is essential for providing NGOs with access to various UN platforms and enabling them to influence international policy. Rapidly, organizations with religious foundations wished to take advantage of this status and in 1948, the first religious NGO was accredited by ECOSOC: it was the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), known formally as the Religious Society of Friends. Since this precedent, several religious organizations were able to obtain this status and, although officially NGOs, they were unofficially named Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). So, their emergence at the United Nations has been significantly facilitated through their status as NGOs under ECOSOC. As a simple NGO, this status allows them to engage actively in UN processes, contributing to global policy discussions and advocating for issues aligned with their religious values. While "FBO" is not an official term within the UN framework, it serves as a crucial means for these organizations to self-organize and self-identify, maintaining their distinct religious identities while participating in the international arena.[1] Thus, despite the informal nature of the term "FBO," these organizations can present themselves under this name in their activities and interactions. However, within the context of the UN, they are formally recognized and referred to as NGOs. The ECOSOC accreditation process is essential in this regard, providing FBOs with the necessary legitimacy and access to various UN platforms and events as said in the 1996/31 ECOSOC resolution. According to this text, through ECOSOC, FBOs can participate in UN meetings, submit written statements, make oral presentations, and collaborate with other NGOs and international bodies. This inclusion is part of the UN's broader commitment to inclusivity and the recognition of diverse voices in addressing global challenges. The presence of FBOs at the UN has brought a unique perspective to international policy discussions, often emphasizing moral and ethical considerations rooted in their religious traditions as underlined by the Director of Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Thomas Banchoff.[2]

As we saw earlier, the post-Cold War period has seen a resurgence of religion and a post-secular context in international relations, and so that's leading to increased attention to FBOs. This resurgence has highlighted their importance in addressing global issues through a moral and ethical lens. However, due to their typically small and medium-sized nature, FBOs often need to engage in coalition building to have a significant impact on UN policy. They generally adopt two strategies: alliance formation and specialization. These strategies help them amplify their voices and achieve their goals within the larger framework of international governance. The two strategies they do not necessarily include an alliance between organizations of the same religion. In fact, even within the same religious tradition, FBOs can have vastly different ideologies. For instance, the socially conservative Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute contrasts sharply with the liberal Catholic for a Free Choice. Through his research, the sociologist Petet L. Berger highlights that this ideological diversity means that alliances are often formed with secular actors who share similar liberal or conservative goals, rather than solely along religious lines.[1] In this mindset, he defines religious NGOs as having a "religious *raison d'être*," emphasizing their foundational religious motivations. However, the term "faith-based" is often preferred over "religious" to better include a wider range of traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, which might not align with conventional Western notions of religion but still engage deeply with spiritual and ethical matters.

The history and archives of the UN have shown that FBOs have played pivotal roles in advocating for social justice, human rights, and environmental sustainability. They bring a moral imperative to these discussions, often rooted in their faith's teachings on compassion, stewardship, and human dignity. This has been evident in various global initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where FBOs have been active in promoting goals related to poverty alleviation, education, and climate action.[2] The flexibility of the term "FBO" allows these organizations to navigate their dual identity effectively. While they can operate and present themselves as FBOs within their communities and networks, their formal recognition as NGOs at the UN ensures they can engage fully with the UN system. This dual role enhances their ability to influence international policy and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including other NGOs, government representatives, and UN agencies. Moreover, the presence of FBOs at the UN reflects the broader trend of increased engagement of civil society in global governance. As globalization has led to the rise of transnational non-state actors, including business enterprises, international financial institutions, and NGOs, FBOs have also found a place to develop and exert their influence. This inclusion of religious voices in global policy discussions is part of a post secular trend, characterized by a renewed openness to questions of spirituality and ethics in international relations. To understand the growing importance, they are acquiring and the increasing influence that Catholic FBOs are having on the UN, it is important to understand how they appear and how they operate. In order to do this, we will study the case of the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), a prominent catholic FBO

[1] UN Economic and Social Council. (2019). Basic Facts about ECOSOC Status

[2] Banchoff, T. (2008). Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics

[1] Berger, P. L. (2003). The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics.

[2] UN SDGs. (2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations.

Story of an FBO: The Catholic Relief Services (CRS)



First of all, Faith-Based Organizations typically emerge from a collective desire to address specific social, ethical, or humanitarian issues based on religious teachings and values. The process of creating an FBO involves several key steps: identifying a mission, organizing a structure, securing funding, and establishing partnerships. Let's take a look at these different phases for CRS.

This organization was founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States. Its initial mission was to aid survivors of World War II in Europe and its creation involved a clear identification of its mission, rooted in Catholic social teaching that emphasizes human dignity, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor[1]. The organizational structure was designed to ensure accountability, efficiency, and alignment with its religious values. The governance model includes a Board of Directors composed of clergy, laypeople, and experts in various fields relevant to its mission. This structure ensures that the organization remains true to its Catholic identity while also being responsive to the needs of those it serves. Funding for CRS initially came from the Catholic Church and its congregants, but over time, it expanded to include donations from individuals, governments, and other institutions. With this money, CRS decided to operate by focusing on several key areas: emergency response, health, agriculture, education, and peacebuilding. Each of these areas is approached through the lens of Catholic social teaching, which guides the organization's strategies and actions. For instance, in its emergency response efforts, CRS provides immediate relief to those affected by natural disasters, conflicts, and other crises. This involves distributing food, water, shelter, and medical care, while also working on long-term recovery and resilience building. In order to be more efficient and maximize its impact, CRS works in partnership with local organizations, governments. This collaborative approach ensures that the aid provided is culturally appropriate, sustainable, and effective. A significant aspect of CRS's operation is its emphasis on capacity building – empowering local communities to manage and sustain development projects independently[2]. One example of its work is its initiative in Rwanda, where it collaborates with local partners to promote agricultural development. By providing training, resources, and support to local farmers, the program helps increase food security and economic stability in the region. This project also aligns with the broader goal of promoting integral human development, which seeks to improve the holistic well-being of individuals and communities[3]. Another example is CRS's involvement in health initiatives, such as combating malaria and HIV/AIDS. Through education, prevention, and treatment programs, CRS works to improve health outcomes in vulnerable communities, emphasizing the interconnectedness of health and overall development.

[1] Website Catholic Relief Services. (2023). About Us

[2] Website Catholic Relief Services. (2022). Annual Report

[3] Website Catholic Relief Services. (2021). Rwanda Project

In 2014, CRS was granted observer status at the United Nations, further enhancing its ability to influence global policy. This status facilitates its collaboration with other NGOs, governments, and UN agencies, amplifying its impact on international policy discussions[1]. However, like many FBOs, CRS faces challenges such as ensuring consistent funding, navigating complex political environments, and maintaining its religious identity in diverse cultural contexts. To address these challenges, it has adapted by diversifying its funding sources, engaging in advocacy to influence policy, and continuously reflecting on and integrating its Catholic values into its operations. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, CRS quickly adapted its programs to address the new realities. This included shifting to remote training sessions, providing personal protective equipment, and launching awareness campaigns about health and safety measures. The flexibility and resilience demonstrated by the organization highlight its capacity to respond to evolving global challenges while staying true to its mission.

[1] Website UN General Assembly. (2014). Observer Status for Catholic Relief Services in the General Assembly



So, the creation and operation of an FBO like Catholic Relief Services illustrate the essential role such organizations play in addressing global challenges through the lens of faith. By grounding their work in religious teachings and values, FBOs like CRS provide a unique and valuable perspective in the field of humanitarian aid and development. Their ability to adapt and respond to changing circumstances ensures they remain effective and relevant in a rapidly evolving world. This organization is also a good example because it illustrates the area in which Catholic FBOs have the most influence: human rights.

Catholic NGOs at the UN:

Balancing Advocacy, Controversy, and Influence in Human Rights

In fact, Catholic NGOs are the most prominent in this sector, they tend to have this significant impact on human rights issues at the UN for several reasons. Firstly, the Catholic Church's extensive global network allows these organizations to operate in diverse regions and contexts, giving them a broad perspective on human rights violations and the ability to mobilize resources effectively. Secondly, the moral authority and ethical teachings of the Catholic Church often lend credibility to their advocacy efforts, resonating with both policymakers and the public. Additionally, Catholic FBOs often have a long-standing presence and reputation for their humanitarian work such as the Red Cross, which further enhances their influence. One recent example of their impact on human rights at the UN is the advocacy by Caritas Internationalis on the issue of migrants and refugees. Caritas has been actively involved in promoting the rights of migrants and refugees, emphasizing the principles of human dignity and the need for compassion and solidarity. Then, in 2018, Caritas played a crucial role in the negotiations leading to the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, advocating for the protection of migrants' rights and the humane treatment of individuals fleeing conflict, persecution, and poverty.[1] Another notable example is the involvement of the Holy See in the discussions on human trafficking and with it a lot of Catholic FBOs. The Holy See, through its Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations that we will study later in this research, has been a vocal advocate against human trafficking, calling for comprehensive measures to combat this modern form of slavery. The Vatican has organized numerous conferences and events to raise awareness about human trafficking and has worked closely with other NGOs and governments to push for stronger international legislation and cooperation to protect victims and prosecute perpetrators[2]. Besides these examples, catholic FBOs are also perceived positively in other fields due to their commitment to social justice and development. For instance, as we saw before, the CRS and its work in health care, education, agricultural development and its initiatives in Africa, have been recognized for their effectiveness and sustainability.

However, the influence of Catholic FBOs is not without controversy. In some instances, their advocacy on certain issues, such as reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ rights, has been met with resistance and criticism. For example, the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) has been active in opposing policies and programs that support abortion and LGBTQ+ rights, arguing that such policies are contrary to their religious beliefs. This stance has led to tensions with other NGOs and stakeholders who advocate for broader human rights protections[3]. Despite these controversies, Catholic FBOs continue to be influential players in the human rights arena at the UN. Their ability to mobilize resources, their moral authority, and their extensive networks enable them to advocate effectively for the protection and promotion of human rights. Moreover, their long-term presence and reputation for humanitarian work often lend them credibility and respect in various international forums. In fact, their influence is also shaped by the complex interplay of their religious beliefs and the broader human rights agenda, leading to both collaboration and contention with other actors in the international community.

[1] Website Caritas Internationalis. (2018). Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

[2] Website Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations. (2020). Human Trafficking

[3] Website C-FAM. (2023). Mission and Issues



<https://ciscoblog.fr/index.php/2020/12/02/quest-ce-quun-reseau-informatique/>

Not only for the human rights catholic Faith-Based Organizations are among the most prominent and active NGOs at the UN. The Catholic Church's extensive global network, comprising dioceses, parishes, and affiliated organizations, provides a robust infrastructure that supports the activities of Catholic FBOs. This network facilitates the mobilization of resources and personnel, enabling these organizations to maintain a continuous and influential presence at the UN. Furthermore, there from a long history of engagement in international diplomacy and advocacy. The Holy See, the central governing body of the Catholic Church, has maintained a permanent observer status at the United Nations since 1964. This status allows it to participate in UN General Assembly debates and to observe all meetings, which significantly enhances the visibility and influence of Catholic FBOs. The strategic use of alliances and coalitions also enhances their presence. By forming partnerships with other NGOs, religious groups, and secular organizations, Catholic FBOs can amplify their voice and influence. This coalition-building is crucial, particularly for addressing complex global challenges that require collaborative efforts. For example, CRS has partnered with various secular and religious organizations to advocate for climate justice, reflecting the Catholic Church's emphasis on environmental stewardship as outlined in Pope Francis's encyclical "Laudato Si'"[1]. Moreover, Catholic FBOs have garnered significant support within the UN due to their commitment to addressing global issues through a moral and ethical lens. Their work is often perceived as being driven by a genuine concern for human dignity and social justice, which resonates with many UN member states and agencies. These factors collectively enhance the influence and effectiveness of Catholic FBOs within the UN. The synergy between Catholic FBOs and the Holy See not only amplifies their impact but also ensures a consistent and powerful voice in international policy discussions.

[1] Pope Francis. (2015). Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home.

THE HOLY SEE

The prominent role of Catholic Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) at the United Nations is closely tied to the unique status and historical legitimacy of the Holy See as a sovereign entity. The Holy See's long-standing presence and active participation in international diplomacy lend considerable support to Catholic FBOs, amplifying their influence and effectiveness within the UN framework. However, it is important to understand the history and legitimacy of the Vatican as a member of the UN with special status, which is currently only shared with the State of Palestine.[1]

[1] Le 29 novembre 2012, l'Assemblée générale a accordé à l'État de Palestine le statut d'État observateur (résolution A/RES/67/19).

The Holy See, often referred to as the Vatican, is the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Rome and the central point of reference for its spiritual and administrative leadership. Its status as a sovereign entity is rooted in a history that dates back to the early days of Christianity. Thus, the Holy See's legitimacy as a country is grounded in its historical continuity, international treaties, and recognition by other states. The origins of its sovereignty can be traced back to the establishment of the Papal States in the 8th century (756). These territories in central Italy were governed by the popes and provided a temporal foundation for their spiritual authority. The political landscape of Europe during this period saw the popes acting as both spiritual leaders and temporal rulers, with significant influence over secular matters. This dual role at the time already underscored the unique nature of the Holy See as an entity with both religious and political dimensions as pointed by the American historian Thomas F. Madden [1]. Before the re-emergence of religion at the end of the Cold War, as we saw above, many religions experienced a sharp decline, including the Vatican. In fact, the sovereignty of the Holy See was significantly challenged in the 19th century during the unification of Italy. In 1870, the Papal States were annexed by the Kingdom of Italy, leading to a period of tension and uncertainty regarding the status of the Holy See. This issue was resolved with the signing of the Lateran Treaty in 1929, an agreement between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy[2]. This accord recognized the independence and sovereignty of the Holy See, establishing Vatican City as an independent state and ensuring the pope's temporal authority within its boundaries. It not only solidified the Holy See's status as a sovereign entity but also laid the groundwork for its modern diplomatic relations as we know it. Today, the Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with over 180 countries and is an active participant in numerous international organizations, including the United Nations as we will explain just after.



The Holy See's legitimacy as a sovereign entity is further reinforced by its unique moral and ethical authority. As the central governing body of the Catholic Church, the Holy See represents over a billion Catholics worldwide (1,390 billion by 2022), giving it a significant voice on issues of global importance. Its advocacy on matters such as human rights, social justice, and peace is grounded in a rich tradition of Catholic social teaching, which emphasizes the dignity of the human person and the common good. This moral authority enhances the Holy See's influence in international diplomacy and lends credibility to its interventions on the global stage (Weigel, 2019). In addition to its diplomatic activities, the Holy See's engagement in humanitarian efforts and development projects through its affiliated organizations further bolsters its legitimacy. The extensive work of Catholic FBOs in areas such as poverty alleviation, health care, and education reflect the Holy See's commitment to addressing global challenges and promoting human dignity. These efforts are often carried out in collaboration with other international organizations, including the United Nations, highlighting the Holy See's active role in fostering international cooperation and development. **So how is the Vatican's special status recognized at the UN and what power does it legitimately have?**

[1] Madden, T. F. (2017). The Church and the Modern Era (1846-2005): Pius IX, World Wars, and the Second Vatican Council.

The Holy See's status as a Permanent Observer at the United Nations

The Holy See's status as a Permanent Observer at the United Nations is a unique state arrangement that underscores its influential role in international diplomacy, unique until 2012 when it was accorded to the State of Palestine who share the same privilege now but for others reasons. As a state, this status allows them to participate in General Assembly sessions, engage in debates, and contribute to discussions on a wide range of global issues, despite not being a member state.

The Holy See's Permanent Observer status was formally granted in 1964 after it request the same year. The journey to obtaining this status began in the aftermath of World War II, when the Holy See increasingly engaged with international organizations to promote peace, human rights, and humanitarian efforts. In 1945, with its creation, the UN became a central platform for these activities and the Holy See's moral and ethical leadership, grounded in Catholic social teaching, resonated with the UN's mission to foster global peace and cooperation. This alignment of ways and goal paved the way for the Holy See to gain a formal role within the UN system. In 1964, under the papacy of Pope Paul VI, the Holy See was officially granted Permanent Observer status by the United Nations General Assembly. Its important to highlight that even if it can attend all sessions, participate in the work of the General Assembly and its committees and had its flag along with the others member's countries of the UN (slightly to the side), it does not have voting rights and isn't in the alphabetical list of the UN. The Holy See uses its Permanent Observer status to advocate for peace, justice, and the protection of human dignity. Its interventions often focus on issues such as human rights, disarmament, migration, and development. The Holy See brings a moral perspective to these debates, emphasizing ethical considerations and the importance of addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations. For instance, the Holy See has been a vocal advocate by these statements for the protection of migrants and refugees, calling for compassionate and humane policies in line with Catholic social teachings.

In addition to its advocacy, as we pointed out, the Holy See collaborates with a wide range of international organizations, NGOs, and member states to promote its values and objectives. This includes participating in international conferences, submitting written statements, and engaging in diplomatic negotiations. Its contributions are often informed by the extensive on-the-ground experience of Catholic FBOs, which provide vital insights into the needs and challenges faced by communities worldwide. The current Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, continues this tradition of active engagement. Appointed in 2019, he has brought renewed energy and focus to the Holy See's mission at the UN.



Climate change

One significant example of the Holy See's influence is during the 2015 Paris Climate Conference (COP21). Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* played a pivotal role in shaping the discourse on climate change. The encyclical highlighted the moral imperative to address environmental degradation and climate change, calling for urgent action to protect the planet and the poor. The Pope argued that climate change is not just a scientific or economic issue, but fundamentally a moral one, affecting the poorest and most vulnerable populations disproportionately. This moral framing resonated with many delegates and civil society groups, contributing to the adoption of the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Poverty

In addressing global poverty, the Holy See has consistently emphasized the importance of equitable economic development and the need to support the marginalized and disadvantaged. For example, during the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development negotiations, the Holy See advocated for goals that prioritize human dignity and the eradication of poverty. Archbishop Caccia, in the Holy See's statement during the negotiations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the UN General Assembly, highlighted the necessity of inclusive economic policies that ensure all people, especially the poor, have access to essential resources and opportunities.

Impact in international affairs

Under Archbishop Gabriele Caccia leadership, the Holy See has actively addressed pressing global issues such as climate change, poverty, and human trafficking. The Holy See emphasizes the moral and ethical dimensions of these challenges, advocating for comprehensive solutions that uphold human dignity and the common good. Archbishop Caccia's diplomatic skills and deep commitment to social justice have further solidified the Holy See's role as a vital and respected voice in international affairs as illustrate by these examples:

Human trafficking

In 2020, the Holy See made a significant statement at the UN regarding human trafficking. Again, it's the Archbishop Caccia who emphasized the need for coordinated international efforts to combat this modern form of slavery, focusing on prevention, victim protection, and prosecution of traffickers. His address underscored the ethical responsibility of nations to protect vulnerable populations, leading to increased collaboration among member states and a renewed commitment to implementing stronger anti-trafficking measures. This advocacy by the Holy See has helped to keep the issue of human trafficking at the forefront of international policy discussions, resulting in more robust global responses.

The Holy See's involvement in these different areas result on a tangible impact on international policy. By framing these issues within a moral and ethical context, the Holy See has influenced the way countries approach global challenges, encouraging solutions that are not only effective but also just and compassionate. Through its persistent advocacy, the Holy See continues to provide a moral compass in international relations, reinforcing the importance of ethical considerations in global governance.

Difference between Catholic FBOs and Holy See

Discussion with the President of CoNGO,

The Rev. Dr. Liberato C. Bautista



<https://ngocongo.org/liberato-bautista-elected-new-president-of-congo/>

As we saw, the Holy See's role and influence at the United Nations is distinguished by its unique status as a sovereign entity rather than a faith-based organization (FBO). This distinction is crucial to understanding why the Holy See does not want to be seen as an FBO and how it supports FBOs while maintaining its independent status. To be precise, it is not only that it wants to maintain an "independent status" but rather that historically the Vatican has always been a city state. The Holy See is the seat of the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, who is also the Head of State. It is to this dual character that the Holy See cannot be included in the list of FBOs even as the priests, bishops and cardinals are faith-based actors.

The Holy See's reluctance is reflected in its interactions with other organizations at the UN. For instance, as explain by the president of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CoNGO) Liberato Bautista, if you approached Holy See officials wanting to talk to faith-based NGO's, you would most likely be referred to one of their religious orders with an NGO status. This approach maintains the Holy See's position as a sovereign entity while still allowing it to support and influence the work of Catholic FBOs. The Holy See's preference for being recognized as a state rather than an NGO is further reinforced by the fact that it is not listed as an NGO in the UN's computer systems.

However, the Holy See's support for FBOs is significant and multifaceted. Through its extensive diplomatic network, including papal nuncios (ambassadors of the faith) in countries of the world, it provides guidance, support, and a unified voice for Catholic NGOs. These papal nuncios play a critical role in fostering relationships between the Catholic Church and local governments, advocating for policies aligned with Catholic teachings, and supporting the activities of Catholic FBOs. This diplomatic presence enhances the capacity of Catholic NGOs to operate effectively and influence policy at both national and international levels.

This *modus operandi* emphasizes the universality of religion, another key aspect of its identity and influence. In fact, the Holy See, through the Pope, speaks on behalf of the entire Catholic Church, which underscores its universal reach and authority. This concept of universality is vital to the Holy See's diplomatic and moral authority, distinguishing it from other religious organizations that may not have the same centralized structure. For instance, while the Holy See claims universality based on its representation of the global Catholic community, other Christian denominations, such as the Methodist Church, might view universality as encompassing all FBOs collectively, even from different religions.

The distinction between the Holy See and other FBOs is also evident in their respective approaches to international advocacy. While Catholic NGOs, dependent on the Roman Church, emphasize the universality of the Holy See, they operate within the framework and guidance provided by the Holy See's diplomatic mission. This relationship ensures that Catholic NGOs' activities and advocacy efforts are aligned with the broader goals and teachings of the Catholic Church. In contrast, other FBOs, such as those from Protestant denominations, may operate more independently and advocate from a broader ecumenical perspective, reflecting their diverse theological and organizational structures.

TAKING STOCK: RELIGIONS AT THE UN AND IN THE WORLD

FBO compare to the world

In 2012, a study by Carrette and Miall[1] highlighted that 75% of registered FBOs were Christian and North-based, originating from North America or Western Europe. This statistic underscores the dominance of Christian FBOs within the UN system. The study also noted that post-September 11, 2001, Muslims were widely perceived in the West as being associated with illiberal and authoritarian views, which may have influenced the representation and reception of Muslim FBOs at the UN. Three structural characteristics of international relations further encourage the involvement of North-based Christian FBOs at the UN according to the same study. Firstly, the international political system has developed from Judeo-Christian beliefs, which align with the principles and values advocated by these organizations. Secondly, the UN's modus operandi tends to favor certain types of religions and religious NGOs, often those with established organizational structures and a history of engagement in global governance. Lastly, there is an unofficial convention at the UN not to talk explicitly about religion or in religious terms, which may align more comfortably with the operational styles of Christian FBOs.

[1] Carrette, J., & Miall, H. (2012). Religion, NGOs and the United Nations: Visible and Invisible Actors in Power

More than ten years after this study, how FBO represent the world ?

If we look at the different numbers, the representation of Faith-Based Organizations at the United Nations closely mirrors the global distribution of religious adherents, reflecting both historical patterns and contemporary demographic trends. According to data from Canadian psychologist and author Jordan Peterson[1], in 2010, approximately 10% of NGOs with consultative status at the UN were FBOs, with between 58% and 75% of these 300 organizations being North-based and Christian. As we saw in this study before, this significant presence of Christian FBOs aligns with the historical influence of Western Christianity and the robust organizational structures of these groups in the Global North. However, South-based FBOs, representing religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, were notably less present at the UN during this period. This disparity can be attributed to various factors, including differences in organizational capacity, access to international forums, and historical geopolitical dynamics that have favored Western Christian organizations in global governance structures.

[1] Haynes, J. 2024. Faith-based organizations at the United nations

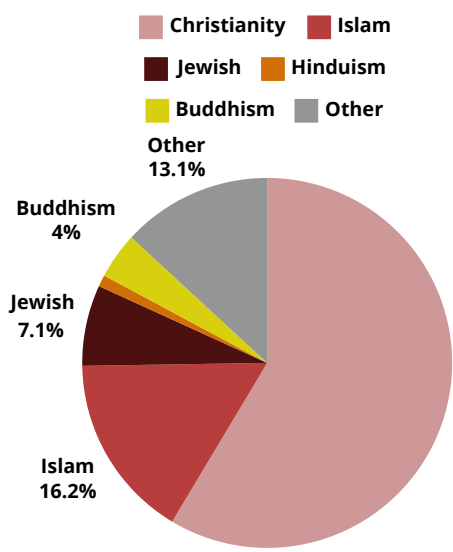


Fig. 1: FBOs at the UN in 2010. Jordan Peterson

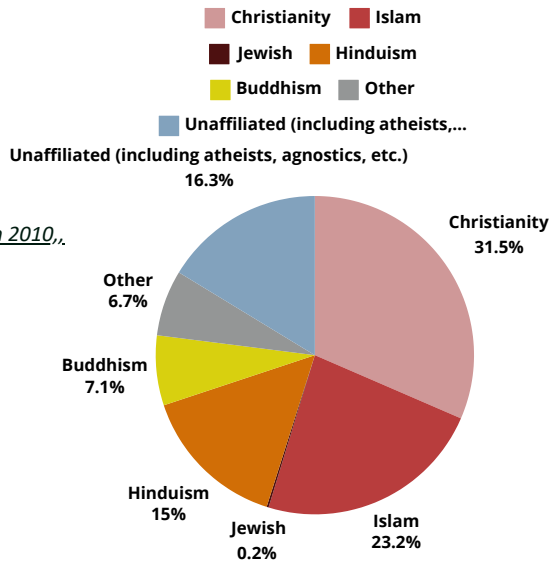


Fig. 2: World religion population in 2010. Pew Research Center 2010

Over the past decade, there has been a notable evolution in the presence of FBOs at the United Nations as much by the importance given to their voices as by their number. By 2023, the number of FBOs with consultative status had increased significantly from 355 in 2010 to 1035, representing 14% of all NGOs at the UN[1]. This growth reflects a broader trend of increasing recognition of the role that religious organizations play in addressing global challenges such as poverty, human rights, and sustainable development. Despite the increase in the number of FBOs, the distribution of these organizations still mirrors the global religious landscape, albeit with some shifts. Christian and Islamic FBOs have become more prominent, reflecting the significant global populations of these faiths. In the case of our study, however, it is necessary to take a step back as the data does not distinguish between Catholic denominational organizations and other Christian organizations. However, in view of the Vatican's influence within the UN, Catholic FBOs remain the ones most often highlighted. This is consistent with the vast global network of the Catholic Church and its historical involvement in international diplomacy and humanitarian efforts

[1] Website, NGO Branch

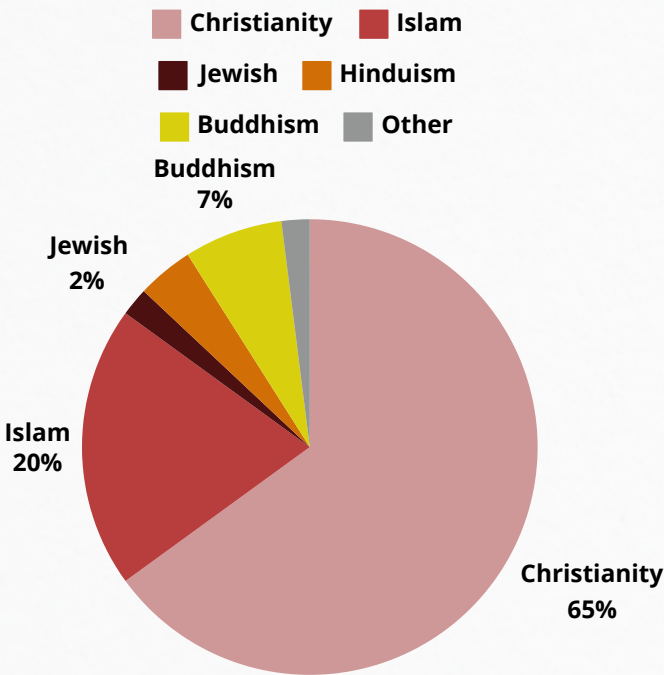


Fig. 3: FBOs at the UN in 2023.
NGO branch website

It is important to highlight the significant presence of Jewish FBOs in 2010, when the global Jewish population is low, and the changes that this percentage has undergone. In fact, by 2023, the percentage of Jewish FBOs has become much smaller and more in line with the world population. This drop in representation within the UN and in the world can be linked to the fact that the Jewish religion has had its homeland (Israël) in conflict for decades, and so the Jewish people have been dispersed around the world, with the result that their practices and traditions have also dispersed and lost their impact on practitioners.

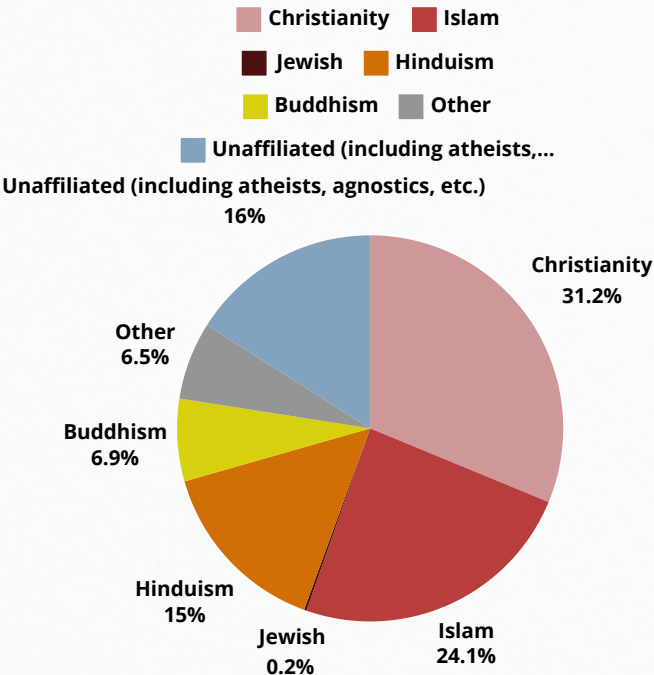


Fig. 2: World religion population in 2023
Pew Research Center's 2023.

The continued dominance of Christian FBOs, especially those based in the Global North, highlights the ongoing influence of these organizations at the UN. However, there has also been an increase in the presence of South-based FBOs, including those representing Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. This shift points to a more diverse and inclusive representation of religious voices in global governance, aligning with the broader demographic trends and the growing recognition of the importance of these religions in addressing global issues. The increase in FBO representation at the UN from 10.5% in 2010 to 14% in 2023 indicates a fairer representation of global religious demographics within the UN's consultative framework. This trend reflects the UN's evolution towards inclusivity and its responsiveness to the changing dynamics of global religious landscapes. As the number of FBOs continues to grow, it will be essential to recognize the nuanced differences within these groups, including distinctions between Catholic and other Christian organizations, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their contributions and influences

Why Holy See and not another religious State ?

The Holy See's significant influence and presence at the United Nations, in contrast to other religious states, is linked to several unique factors that distinguish it from other entities. One of the most crucial elements is the existence of the Vatican as an independent country, which ensures its impartiality. Unlike other nations, the Holy See does not have political, military, or economic interests, allowing it to act as an impartial mediator in international conflicts. This impartiality is further reinforced by its objectives to promote peace, respect human rights, and protect the global Catholic community. Thanks to this impartiality, Holy See has extensive diplomatic network, which includes apostolic nuncios in 183 countries, even in some at wars. These nuncios are some of the oldest ambassadors in the world, with a history of effective diplomacy. For instance, Cardinal Antonio Samoré played a pivotal role in averting a war between Argentina and Chile, demonstrating the Holy See's ability to mediate high-stakes conflicts[1]. This huge network allows the Vatican to have a direct line of communication with nearly every government in the world, enhancing its ability to influence global policy.

As the example of Cardnial Samoré show, the Holy See is often the only entity capable of engaging with some countries, particularly the one in conflict. Record show they can persuade dictators to consider peaceful resolutions. Its unique position as a moral and ethical authority enables it to communicate with parties that other states or organizations might find challenging to engage with. For example, during the Cold War, the Holy See maintained diplomatic relations with both sides, fostering dialogue and reducing tensions. This capacity for dialogue and persuasion is unmatched, making the Holy See a vital player in international diplomacy. In addition, its lack of direct political, military, and economic interests, allowing it to focus solely on humanitarian and ethical issues. This singular focus enables the Holy See to advocate for peace and human rights without the complications of national self-interest. Its goals are clear: to promote peace, respect for human rights, and the protection of the Catholic community worldwide.

The presence of other religious states, such as Iran or Saudi Arabia, at the UN highlights contrasting approaches and influences compared to the Holy See. While these states also represent significant religious traditions (Shia Islam and Sunni Islam, respectively), their influence is often intertwined with national political and economic interests. For example, Iran's and Saudi Arabia's advocacy on religious issues at the UN is frequently linked to their broader geopolitical agendas, which can sometimes lead to perceived biases or conflicts of interest. In contrast, the Holy See's historical and diplomatic legitimacy and impartiality, rooted in centuries of consistent presence and influence in international relations, sets it apart from other religious states.

So how can the second most numerous religions in the world make its voice heard without being tied to political considerations and thus complement the religious influence present at the UN?

[1] Weigel, G. (2019). *The Irony of Modern Catholic History: How the Church Rediscovered Itself and Challenged the Modern World to Reform*

Organization of Islamic cooperation

The influence of religion at the United Nations is significantly impacted by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which serves as a powerful voice for the Muslim world within the international arena. The OIC, the second-largest intergovernmental organization after the UN, was established in 1969 following a summit in Rabat, Morocco, in response to an arson attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The organization seeks to be "the collective voice of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world"[1]. Its entry into the UN system began in 1975 when it was granted observer status. This status allows the OIC to participate in General Assembly sessions and other UN activities, although it does not have voting rights. Despite these limitations, the OIC has been very active at the UN, advocating for the interests of its member states, which include 57 countries from across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

Historically, the OIC has used its platform at the UN to address a wide range of issues affecting the Muslim world. These include advocating for Palestinian rights, combating Islamophobia, and promoting the socio-economic development of its member states. The OIC has also been instrumental in shaping resolutions related to the protection of religious sites, cultural heritage, and the rights of Muslims around the world. Its influence is evident in its ability to mobilize support for various initiatives and resolutions. For example, the OIC has played a crucial role in the passage of resolutions condemning discrimination against Muslims and promoting interfaith dialogue. Its efforts have also extended to humanitarian aid and disaster relief, where it coordinates responses to crises affecting Muslim-majority countries. So like the Holy See, the ICO fights for and influences issues that concern human rights for the most part.

One of the key strengths of the OIC at the UN is its ability to act as a collective voice for the Muslim world. This unity provides the OIC with significant leverage in negotiations and decision-making processes within the UN. The organization's permanent observer status enables it to participate in a wide range of UN activities, including debates, conferences, and special sessions, allowing it to continuously advocate for the interests of its member states

To come back more precisely on our study, the involvement of the OIC in the UN highlights the broader trend of religious organizations and groups playing an increasingly prominent role in international relations. As global issues become more interconnected and complex, the perspectives and contributions of religious organizations like the OIC become essential in fostering peace, security, and development.

[1] Website Organization of Islamic Cooperation. (2023). About OIC



FORESIGHTS

As we have seen throughout this study, religions, and the Catholic religion in particular, are having an increasingly important impact at the UN. However, we have based our analysis on the UN's past and present situation. There is every reason to believe that this world organization cannot remain as it is, and numerous discussions and debates are taking place to try to adapt the UN to our contemporary society and make it more effective. If changes really do take place, what will become of the Holy See? Is its special status in danger?

We will take as our starting point 2 of the prospective scenarios for the UN envisaged by the Australian consultant Keith Suter for the NGO Democracy without Borders and imagine the place that the Vatican would have in these scenarios.

Scenario 1: "Steady State"

In this scenario national governments remain in control of their destiny and they are unwilling to work together on common problems. This means that despite all the talk of global governance, the basic nation-state structure will remain; it may have its problems but it is the best of the options. National sovereignty is here to stay because governments are unwilling to surrender it. The UN will be around to help pick up the pieces but otherwise politicians will not expect it to do too much. They will continue to starve it of financial resources. Disneyland for example has more employees than the UN Secretary-General.

In this scenario, the Holy See's role at the United Nations would have to adapt to these changing dynamics. With global governance weakened and the UN increasingly underfunded and sidelined, the Holy See's unique position as a moral and ethical leader could become more pronounced and somewhat more important than the UN itself.

In my mind, with its long-standing diplomatic tradition and impartial stance, Vatican would likely emerge as a crucial mediator in a world where nation-states are entrenched in their sovereignty. As we said before, unlike other entities, the Holy See's primary objectives are not tied to political, military, or economic interests, but rather to promoting peace and human rights and protecting the global Catholic community. This impartiality could enable the Holy See to act as a trusted intermediary in conflicts where other nations might struggle to be seen as unbiased. Given the UN's reduced capacity, the Holy See might take on more responsibilities in humanitarian and ethical issues. However, the limited financial resources and political support for the UN would necessitate that the Holy See adopt innovative approaches to diplomacy and advocacy. Leveraging its network of apostolic nuncios, the Holy See could continue to influence international relations through behind-the-scenes diplomacy and coalition-building with other non-state actors and like-minded countries. Historically, the Holy See has shown a capacity to mediate effectively, this role could expand in a future where national governments are less cooperative. In fact, its diplomatic network, recognized by almost all countries, and its non-partisan stance would make it a key player in peace-building and conflict resolution efforts. Despite its small size, the Holy See's influence would be amplified through strategic partnerships with other entities that share its goals. So, in fine, in a certain way, I believe that the Vatican could even have more power and impact if the UN's power were reduced as explain in this scenario.

Scenario 2 : “Earth Inc”

In this scenario national governments lose control over their countries and transnational corporations fill the vacuum. With the decline of the UN and the nation-state system, the only organizations capable of driving the pace of change are transnational corporations, which then knit the world together into one market as they fill the UN and governmental vacuum. National governments will not necessarily disappear (any more than the rise of national governments necessarily caused all forms of local government to disappear). But national governments and the UN will need to get used to the way that the nation-state system is over and that corporations are the major player in world affairs.

With money as the measure of all things, national identity ceases to be such a major issue (except where it can be commodified, as in corporations manufacturing support for sporting teams); people are principally consumers or aspiring consumers rather than patriotic citizens.



In this scenario, the Holy See would face significant challenges and a considerable loss of power at the United Nations. As corporations become the primary drivers of global change, the Holy See would need to adapt to a world where economic interests overshadow traditional political and moral considerations. In fact, the rise of transnational corporations would lead to a significant shift in global governance, diminishing the influence of nation-states and the UN. In this new landscape, the Holy See's moral and ethical authority would struggle to maintain its previous level of influence. The Holy See's primary objectives—promoting peace, human rights, and protecting the global Catholic community—would face stiff competition from the profit-driven motives of corporations. Adapting to this scenario would require the Holy See to rethink its strategies. Historically, the Holy See has leveraged its unique diplomatic network and moral standing to influence international relations. However, with the decline of nation-states and the UN, these traditional avenues of influence would be severely curtailed. The Holy See would have to find new ways to assert its moral voice in a world dominated by corporate interests.

One potential adaptation could involve the Holy See increasing its engagement with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. By advocating for ethical business practices and sustainability, the Holy See could influence corporate policies from within. This would involve forming alliances with corporations that share its values and working to embed ethical considerations into the fabric of global commerce. However, this approach would be challenging, as the Holy See would need to balance its moral imperatives with the profit-driven motives of corporations. Also, its efforts to promote human rights and ethical standards would be further complicated by the rise of consumerism. In a world where people are primarily seen as consumers rather than citizens, the Holy See's messages of moral and ethical responsibility might struggle to gain traction. To remain relevant, the Holy See would need to harness modern communication technologies and digital platforms to reach a global audience increasingly influenced by corporate messaging.

Despite these challenges, the Holy See could still find ways to assert its influence. By leveraging its extensive network of apostolic nuncios and engaging in grassroots advocacy. Additionally, the Holy See could play a crucial role in fostering dialogue between corporations and civil society, ensuring that ethical considerations are not entirely sidelined in the pursuit of profit. However, ultimately, the shift from nation-state to corporate dominance would represent a significant loss of power for the Holy See at the UN.



CONCLUSION

The current place of the Holy See and Catholic Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) at the United Nations is a reflection of their historical engagement and adaptive strategies within the global governance framework. The Holy See and Catholic FBOs work both with state and non-state actors, leveraging Article 71 of the UN Charter, which allows NGOs to consult with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This has been pivotal in their involvement in the UN's deliberative processes. The Holy See's persistent influence at the UN is achieved through regularized and institutionalized access to opinion formers and decision-makers. Its vast diplomatic network, coupled with its moral authority, enables it to effectively engage in public diplomacy, network with key stakeholders, and collaborate with various UN entities. Thanks to this influence, the Holy See and Catholic FBOs often participate in significant global events, such as the World Conference on Religion and Peace, to advocate for their causes and promote ethical governance.

Despite the UN being primarily an intergovernmental body accountable to its 193 member states, FBOs have carved out a significant presence within the organization. This is exemplified by the fact that the first UN meetings were held in a Methodist church, highlighting the historical interplay between religious institutions and the UN. FBOs, including Catholic ones, must navigate the UN's liberal-secular ethos by adopting its language, codes, and modes of engagement. They must appropriate UN-sanctioned language, engage in public diplomacy, network extensively, and collaborate with various UN entities. This dual strategy of maintaining their religious identity while aligning with the UN's secular framework has enabled FBOs to remain influential.

In recent years, there has been an increase in attention towards FBOs in the context of post-Cold War religious resurgence and post-secular international relations. FBOs are active in transnational civil society and at the UN, often forming alliances and specializing in specific issues to maximize their impact. This is especially true for Catholic FBOs, which benefit from the Holy See's established diplomatic relations with 183 countries via its papal nuncios. However, it remains unclear how the UN regards FBOs, despite a growing interest in working more closely with them. The UN recognizes the potential of religions to bring people together while also highlighting differences that need to be managed. The evolving dynamics of global governance necessitate that the UN takes religion into account in its system, particularly as it prepares for future summits and drafts new pacts.

The inclusion of FBOs at the UN signifies a complex but crucial relationship where religious organizations must continuously adapt to remain relevant. The Holy See, with its unique status and extensive network, exemplifies how religious entities can influence global governance. As the UN navigates the challenges of contemporary international relations, the role of FBOs, particularly Catholic ones, will remain a vast and evolving subject, highlighting the need for constant adaptation and engagement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Banchoff, Thomas (2008), *Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics*. Oxford University Press

Berger, P. L. (1999). *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Carrette, J., & Miall, H. (Eds.). (2015). *Religion, NGOs and the United Nations: visible and invisible actors in power*. Bloomsbury Academic

Durkheim, E. (1995). *The elementary form of religious life*. The Free Press.
https://monoskop.org/images/a/a2/Durkheim_Emile_The_Elementary_Forms_of_Religious_life_1995.pdf

Haynes, Jeff. (2014). *Faith-Based organizations at the United Nations*. Palgrave Macmillan; 2014th Edition.

Philpott, D. (2010). *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*. (Core Textbook ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/29920>

Ramanathan, C. S. (Ed.) & 13 more. (2016). *Spirituality, Culture, and Development: Implications for Social work*. Lexington Books.

Wagner, D. M. (2019). *The Church and the Modern Era (1846–2005): Pius IX, World Wars, and the Second Vatican Council*. Ave Maria Press.

Weigel, G. (2017). *The Irony of modern Catholic History: how the church rediscovered itself and challenged the modern world to reform*. Basic Books.

Wilson, P. H. (2009). *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy*. Belknap Press.

Articles

Boehle, J. (2010). The UN system and religious actors in the context of global change. *CrossCurrents*, 60(3), 383–401.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461578>

Chelini-Pont, B., Dubertrand, R. & Zuber, V. (2019). Représentations et mobilisations des acteurs institutionnels. Dans : , B. Chelini-Pont, R. Dubertrand & V. Zuber (Dir), *Géopolitique des religions: Un nouveau rôle du religieux dans les relations internationales ?* (pp. 13-31). Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu. <https://www-cairn-info.ezproxy.univ-catholille.fr/geopolitique-des-religions--9791031803708-page-13.htm>

De Senneville, L. B. (2014, February 7). La présence de l'Eglise dans les institutions internationales. *La Croix*. <https://www.la-croix.com>

Des organisations religieuses participent à la lutte contre la traite d'êtres humains. (2006, October 3). <https://www.iom.int/fr/news/des-organisations-religieuses-participent-la-lutte-contre-la-traite-detres-humains>

Diop, G. (2022). Religious Freedom: A Multifaceted Gift to Humanity. *Adventist Review*. <https://adventistreview.org/feature/religious-freedom-a-multifaceted-gift-to-humanity/#social-share>

Gross, L. (1948). The Peace of Westphalia, 1648-1948. *The American Journal of International Law*, 42(1), 20–41.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2193560>

Haynes, J. (2017). The United Nations Alliance of Civilisations and Global Justice. *Globalizations*, 14(7), 1125–1139.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2017.1308061>

Karam, A. (2010). Concluding thoughts on religion and the United Nations: Redesigning the Culture of Development. *CrossCurrents*, 60(3), 462–474. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461583>

Karam, A. (2010). The United Nations population fund's (UNFPA'S) Legacy of engaging Faith-based organizations as cultural agent of change. *CrossCurrents*, 60(3), 432–450. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461581>

Khafagy, R. A. (2020). Faith-based organizations: Humanitarian mission or religious missionary. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-020-00080-6>

Migration & Human Trafficking - Caritas. (2017, September 5). <https://www.caritas.org/whatwe-do/migration/>

Nouailhat, Y. (2006). Le Saint-Siège, l'ONU et la défense des droits de l'homme sous le pontificat de Jean-Paul II. *Relations internationales*, 127, 95-110. <https://doi.org/10.3917/ri.127.0095>

Pargament, K. I. (1999). The psychology of religion and spirituality? Yes and no. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 9(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr0901_2

Pedersen, K. P. (2010). Sri Chinmoy's work at the United nations: Spirituality and the Power of Silence. *CrossCurrents*, 60(3), 339–351. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461575>

Plaidoyer au Conseil de sécurité pour que les « valeurs de la fraternité humaine » soient mises au service de la promotion et de la pérennisation de la paix | Couverture des réunions & communiqués de presse. (n.d.). <https://press.un.org/fr/2023/cs15320.doc.htm>

Suter, K. (2019b, November 26). Four scenarios on the future of the United Nations. Retrieved from <https://www.democracywithoutborders.org/12164/four-scenarios-on-the-future-of-the-united-nations/>

Vatican News. (2024, April 5). 1,390 milliard de catholiques dans le monde en 2022: une hausse de 1%. Vatican News. <https://www.vaticannews.va>

Theses and dissertations

Marthoz, J.-P., Saunders, J., & Human Rights Watch. (n.d.). La religion et le mouvement des droits humains. Human Right Watch <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k5/religionFR/religionFR.pdf>

Treaties, Resolutions and Officials Declarations

Laudato si' (24 May 2015) | Francis. (2015, June 18). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

NATIONS UNIES. (2015). ACCORD DE PARIS. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/french_paris_agreement.pdf

Text of the Lateran Treaty of 1929. (n.d.). <https://www.uniset.ca/nold/latran.htm>

Sitography and webography

C-FAM. (2023). Mission and Issues. <https://c-fam.org/about/mission-and-issues/>

Catholic Relief Services. (2023). About Us. <https://www.crs.org/about-us>

Catholic Relief Services. (2022). Annual Report. <https://www.crs.org/annual-report>

Catholic Relief Services. (2021). Rwanda Project. <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/where-we-work/rwanda>

Milestones in the history of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian. (n.d.). <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/un>

The Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations. (n.d.). <https://holyseemission.org/> & <https://holyseemission.org/contents/statements/>

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

NGO Branch. (n.d.) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs | United Nations. <https://esango.un.org/civilsociety/displayConsultativeStatusSearch.do?method=search&sessionCheck=false>

UN General Assembly. (2014). Observer Status for Catholic Relief Services in the General Assembly. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>

United Nations. (n.d.). History of the United Nations | United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un>

United Nations. (n.d.). Les observateurs permanents | Nations Unies. <https://www.un.org/fr/about-us/about-permanent-observers>

Vatican. (n.d.). Le Saint-Siège. <https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/fr.html>

Filmography

Explore Media. (2024, June 20). L'influence secrète du Vatican | ATLAS [Video file]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d46UYT_QLRc

The Lateran Treaty of 1929: Understanding the relationship between Italy and the Holy See. (n.d.). <https://www.ewtnvatican.com/articles/lateran-treats-of-1929-understanding-the-relationship-between-italy-and-the-holy-see-538>