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*The Holy See and cold war Europe. The Holy See and Europe from the second world war to the end of the 20th century.*

**ABSTRACT:** The Cold War era represents one of the most complex periods in the history of international relations. In this context, the Holy See has played an important and delicate role from many points of view, having carried out a commitment in the humanitarian field of relief to Jews and political refugees, political, diplomatic. Particularly important was the European commitment of the Holy See, also in relation to the identification of the future structure (that is, following the end of the war) of Europe, in which the role of Christianity should have been important. The essay is a summary of the presentation of the volume which will be published shortly on the same topic.

**KEYWORDS:** Holy See, Europe, Cold War

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The Cold War era represents one of the most complex periods in history of international relations. Among many actors, the Holy See did not stand out, but it did play an important and delicate role, confirming that even in the times of *hard power* prestige, while nuclear weapons expansion and armed proxy conflicts spread all over the world, such an institution can not only manage to survive, but also to eventually solidify its position on the international scene.

Particularly important was the Holy See's European engagement, and this role was a topic of interests of my study which is expected to be published in Montenegro later this year.

First, it is important to understand the way the Holy See functions, and how its foreign policy mechanisms and its diplomatic apparatus are organized. Its peculiar organization, which makes the pope indisputably its top diplomat, while at the same time is organized in a way that it is spread around the world more than most of the other diplomacies, puts a major mark on its functioning.

In the first part, the *sui generis* status of the Holy See in international law and its relationship with the Vatican City State and the Roman Catholic Church are further analyzed, showing at the same time how precarious its status is, also sometimes disputed by its enemies, but at the same time functional and put in a such way that the Holy See is liberated from (at least direct) influences from other countries. Its history is also analyzed, as the Cold War era was just one of the more difficult periods of the Church's dealings in the international affairs. There were also many others, from the

conflict with the Emperor, Avignon (Babylonian) captivity, all the way to Napoleonic era and on toward the World Wars, when papacy was more or less under attack practically from all sides.

Then, we must in particular focus on the dynamics of breaking off of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and newly established *popular democracies*, when in turn, following their patrons in Moscow, all communist regimes in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe severed the relations with the Holy See. The Holy See suffered severe blows as some of historically very strong catholic countries, like Poland, Croatia or Lithuania, now fell under the atheists Marxist-Leninist regime. Even Yugoslavia, which had its famous split with Stalin in 1948 still severed relations with the Holy See, as it tried to maintain the balance between distancing from Moscow but at the same time preserving communist ideology – thus paradoxically, it aligned with the Eastern bloc in that sense, while at the same time it was making stronger ties with NATO, as its leader, Tito, was preparing to meet Churchill in London and Yugoslavia forged the Balkan Pact with NATO members Greece and Turkey.

International relations changed during the 1950s and passing of Pope Pius XII also opened the doors for the Catholic Church to move on toward more active and softer approach to international affairs.

The central part of my research is thus a period of the Holy See's so called *Ostpolitik* – the foreign policy doctrine which changed the approach of the Holy See toward the regimes in Eastern Europe (thus the name, which is

anachronistic, as it is a German word related to policies of Willy Brandt who would come to power *after* the Ostpolitik of the Holy See started). The focus is on the Eastern and Central European countries, but the role of major Western countries (both European and the United States, as their role in Europe during the Cold War is of great importance) is also analyzed.

The importance of persons who brought Ostpolitik to life, like the Council Popes and Agostino Casaroli, the major documents and doctrines, particularly derived from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is emphasized, as the way of functioning of the Holy See, presented before, makes personal aspects even more important than in parliamentary democracies. Angelo Roncalli, who was elected Pope John XXIII, convened the Second Vatican Council and traced the way for *aggiornamento* – adjournment of the Church, which included the dialogue with the communist regimes. He had exchanges of cordial messages with Soviet Premier Khrushchev and hosted his daughter and son in law in Vatican. He sent his trusted diplomat, Agostino Casaroli, to Budapest and Prague in 1963 to meet the officials of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, thus formally starting the dialogue. Although he died few months later, this policy was continued by his successor, Paul VI. It was during his pontificate that *détente* reached its pinnacle which coincided with the Church's dialogue. At the same time, at the height of process of decolonization, the Holy See was eager to be more present diplomatically in the Global South and to emphasize the distance from the colonial powers.

The biggest, or at least, the most visible, success of the Ostpolitik was the establishment of full diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia (in 1970). It was believed that event could be an example which may be used for other countries, but it turned up to be the exception, as Cold War Yugoslavia and its diplomatic relations were, in many ways, exception compared to the others. However, even more than incentive for the other socialist countries, Yugoslav case helped improvement of the image of the Holy See in the post-colonial world, as it made also a bridge between the Non-Alignment Movement, whose important leader Yugoslavia was, and the Holy See. Thus, the image of the Holy See, as more of neutral actor, than a staunch player in the Western camp, was built. Obviously, certain values cherished by the Western bloc (above all, freedom of religion) were still at heart of the Holy See's diplomacy, but it remained critical of many aspects of its policies and progressively turned more critical of the capitalist materialist way of life. The high point of the Ostpolitik and of the détente was the CSCE, where, in Helsinki, in 1975, the Holy See was accepted by both sides (as well as neutral and non-aligned countries) as an equal participant and partner. The Soviet Union and its satellites did not pose a question of the Holy See's status and did not reopen the dilemma regarding its position as a non-state entity, which was the sign of the times that made the Holy See a respectable partner, even if no formal diplomatic relations were established.

Since John Paul II became Pope, and as the atmosphere in international relations has changed, the Holy See has once again become much closer

to the Western powers, and thus, after more than eleven decades, renewed diplomatic relations with the USA. Also, diplomatic relations with Great Britain were re-established during the rule of Margaret Thatcher, and long-term and complex relations with France continued, which were significantly improved during the presidential mandate of Charles de Gaulle, i.e. the pontificate of the Council Popes.

The Holy See has helped democratic change in communist countries, but its role in the downfall of the communist system varies significantly from country to country. In Romania, Bulgaria, as well as most of the Soviet republics, the Church had a relatively small number of followers, and its influence on democratic changes was not significant. In East Germany it was also limited, and in Albania the Church did not officially exist after 1967. In Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, as well as the Soviet republics of Lithuania and Ukraine, there was a significantly larger number of Catholics, but its role was limited in scope, and it can be said that the greatest number of events was the expression of a number of other factors rather than the actions of the Roman Catholic Church itself. Finally, only in Poland did the Church have a real and deep influence, especially during the 1980s. The reason for this are the profound historical ties of the Polish nation and the understanding of the connection between its identity and the Catholic faith, which created a vision of Poland as a part of the *Antemurale Christianitatis*. The fact that in 1978, at the second conclave organized that year, a Pole, Archbishop of Krakow Karol Wojtyła, was

elected pope, enormously helped the role of the Church in Polish politics, and, in general, its work on dismantling the communist system.

As it was historically the case, the Holy See followed the changes in international relations, and positioned itself in accordance with them. It could not be said that the Church alone brought about dramatic changes in European history in the second half of the 20th century, but it did have an important place in the mosaic of relations in Cold War Europe. As Pope John Paul II modestly stated once, regarding his role in the fall of communism: *The tree was already rotten. I just gave it a good shake.*

After the end of Cold War new divisions between East and West, now not based on ideological differences, but on religious and civilization ones, came up. At the end of my work, I gave an insight into contemporary role of the Holy See in the inter-civilization dialogue, where the Holy See participates on different levels. The Holy See has again to deal with many issues both in the West, where it is a participant in internal dialogue, which secularization, materialistic capitalist culture and globalization impose, and in the East, where it takes part in important dialogues that include dialogues with Orthodox churches and countries, with Islam, and with the People's Republic of China, a rare state in contemporary international relations which still does not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See.