Pope Francis – The Diplomat of God

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Introduction: The papacy of Pope Francis has ended – a foreign policy reflection on the Diplomat of God. Whether admired or criticized, his impact on world politics was remarkable, even from a purely diplomatic, non-religious perspective. Few diplomats mastered the power of gestures and words as effectively as Francis. This made him one of the most influential moral voices in international politics—not merely by virtue of his office, but through personal authority and symbolic strength. When geopolitical fragmentation shattered a felt stability of geopolitics, Francis addressed this by giving unifying and raising the voice who are hit by the fragmentation

the most. He represented a peace-oriented ethical approach that merged theology with concrete foreign and security policy. His vision: peace not as a distant utopia, but as a political obligation. This ethical foundation gave the Vatican under his leadership a renewed geopolitical weight—one that transcended confessional boundaries.

Journeys of Peace as Geopolitical Signals Between 2013 and 2024, Pope Francis undertook 44 international apostolic journeys to 60 countries. He visited predominantly Muslim nations like Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Bangladesh, went to refugee camps on Lesbos, and spoke in symbolically charged cities such as Sarajevo, Jerusalem, and Hiroshima. These trips were never merely pastoral visits but political gestures. He used these gestures to foster the dialogue, reconciliation, and global justice.

Morality Instead of Power Politics From the beginning of his papacy, Francis used the moral authority of the Holy See to advocate for disarmament, multilateral dialogue, and social justice. He addressed the United Nations (2015), the U.S. Congress (2015), and the European Parliament (2014). He used these platforms for urging global leaders to solve international challenges not through national isolation but through shared responsibility. Central to his vision was a consistent focus on society's margins: the poor, the displaced, the excluded. Francis repeatedly reminded the world that in every geopolitical conflict, it is the weakest who suffer most—those with no voice and no protection. His foreign policy approach thus placed the peripheries at the center, making global justice inseparable from the dignity of the most vulnerable.

An Ethic of Nonviolence In his 2020 encyclical Fratelli tutti, Francis rejected the concept of a "just war" as outdated. He argued for a new international peace ethic, where nonviolence is seen not as weakness but as a form of political strength. Regarding the war in Ukraine, he initially avoided directly condemning Moscow. However, later he emphasized Ukraine's sovereignty and called for humanitarian corridors, prisoner exchanges, and the protection of civilians.

Diplomatic Interventions Behind the scenes, the Vatican often served as mediator—such as in 2014 during the historic rapprochement between the U.S. and Cuba, or in peace negotiations in Colombia. Francis understood early on that global security is more than a military balance. His concept of "integral security" combined economic justice, ecological responsibility, and social inclusion as the basis for lasting peace.

A Legacy for the Global Order Pope Francis remains—beyond his death—a distinctive yet impactful actor in international affairs. He did not represent a traditional nation-state, but rather a global Church with moral authority. In a world of growing uncertainty, he raised the uncomfortable question: What if peace does not emerge from deterrence, but from justice?

His papacy demonstrated that a spiritual leader—lacking military or economic power—can nonetheless be a relevant diplomatic force in global

politics. Through his ethical realism, Francis gave the international order a voice of conscience that should continue to be heard in the years to come.