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Towards "Global Zero": The Role of the Holy See in the Campaign on Nuclear Disarmament

ABSTRACT

On 7 July 2017, at the UN headquarters in New York, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted, the first multilateral legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament negotiated in the last twenty years. The very signing of the Treaty must be seen as an extraordinary achievement because it represents a historic step in the seven-decades-long debate on nuclear weapons. One of the most significant achievements of the decade-long campaign is the engagement of civil society and non-state actors to such a degree that it was recognized through the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

The crucial supporter of the campaign and a powerful moral voice in the discussion has been that of Pope Francis and the Holy See's representatives. While the Holy See's engagement in the problem of disarmament has been an essential element of Catholic Social Teaching for many decades, never before has a pope condemned the possession of nuclear weapons so clearly and so firmly.

This article aims to present the teaching and involvement of the Holy See in the process of introducing and developing a concept of nuclear disarmament in which civil society and non-state opponents of nuclear weapons stand against the most powerful states of the contemporary world.

Key words: nuclear disarmament, Holy See, Catholic Social Teaching, civil society

INTRODUCTION

While the idea of nuclear disarmament may seem very unrealistic in a world burdened by the existence of about 15,000 nuclear weapons, it has been slowly drawing the attention of a widening body of engaged advocates. The problem of the

growing threat of such weapons is increasingly debated in the face of North Korea's growing nuclear strike capabilities, the threat of terrorist organizations aiming to get access to such weapons and, most recently, due to the United States considering a withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement. Many earlier opponents of nuclear weapons, including survivors of nuclear bombs, the *hibakusha*, raised the issue of the threat created by these weapons and the deadly consequences of their usage.

The problem of the existence of nuclear weapons and the limitations of their proliferation has been discussed since the Second World War, but the recent rise in the discussion on global nuclear disarmament has been only a decade long. On 4 January 2007, four American statesmen – George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn – published an article in "The Wall Street Journal" calling for "setting the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons" [Schulz et al. 2007]. Their statement was further developed on 15 January 2008, also in "The Wall Street Journal", and in following articles in 2010, 2011 and 2013 [*Wall Street Journal Opt-Eds* 2011].

The "global zero" project, though widely perceived as utopian [Perle 2011], quickly gained significant support from both governmental and non-governmental bodies. To further engage the worldwide attention garnered by the series, the four leaders created the Nuclear Security Project, aimed at global action to "reduce urgent nuclear dangers and build support for reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, ultimately ending them as a threat to the world" [Schulz et al. 2007]. The Nuclear Security Project has helped develop global networks of leaders to create a political space for dialogue, education and action on the vision and steps toward a world without nuclear weapons. As a result, more than 200 senior political, military, diplomatic and scientific leaders from across Europe, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the United States have joined the networks.[1]

In April 2007, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was formally launched in Austria. The campaign's founders were inspired by the success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which a decade earlier played an instrumental role in negotiating the anti-personnel mine ban convention known as the Ottawa Treaty. Their goal has been to build a "powerful global groundswell of public support for the abolition of nuclear weapons" [ICAN Campaign Overview 2017]. By engaging a diverse range of groups and working alongside the Red Cross and like-minded governments, they contribute to reshaping the debate on nuclear weapons and generate momentum towards their elimination.

A crucial moment in the further development of the idea of nuclear disarmament was the review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010 [2010 Review Conference] which revealed a renewed interest in the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons

[1] The Nuclear Security Project (NSP) has been coordinated by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, founded in 2001 by former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn and philanthropist Ted Turner. It serves as the coordinator of the NSP in conjunction with Stanford University's Hoover Institution. See: http://www.nti.org/about/ (access: 14.01.2018).

and, during which all the nations expressed their concern for the "catastrophic humanitarian consequences" of any use of nuclear weapons. This statement led later to the convening of three major conferences in 2013 and 2014, in Oslo, Nayarit (Mexico), and Vienna, focusing on the humanitarian impact of nuclear detonation. ICAN coordinated these meetings, which brought together most of the world's governments as well as international organizations and academic institutions [ICAN/ Religions for Peace 2017: 4–6].

The next step was establishing a special UN working group to examine the possibilities of advancing nuclear disarmament. In December 2016, based on the report of this working group [UN General Assembly 2016 A/71/371], the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations [UN General Assembly 2016 A/RES/71/258] which led to adopting the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017. On 10 December 2017, ICAN, consisting of 468 organizations from 101 countries, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

POPES AND "GLOBAL ZERO"

When analyzing the role of the Holy See in most important world issues, Mariano Barbato and Robert Joustra speak of a renaissance of the Holy See's role in diplomacy. In the last several years, intervening in Cuba, namely, mediating conversations between Barack Obama and Raul Castro, mediating in domestic tensions in Venezuela and finally, the role in the developments concerning the prohibition of nuclear weapons illustrate how "the Holy See has been at the forefront of a big push at the United Nations on a new global treaty banning nuclear weapons" [Barbato, Joustra 2017: 1].

The strong and influential voice of the Holy See on the issue of the threats caused by nuclear weapons has constituted an aspect of Catholic Social Teaching for over seven decades. Pope Pius XII referred to this problem already in 1943, two years before the first successful nuclear weapons test. He urged such weapons never be developed "because otherwise the consequences could be catastrophic not only in itself but for the whole planet". After the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the pope called the nuclear bomb "the most terrible weapon that the human mind has ever conceived" [Collins 2017].

Twenty years later, in 1963, in one of the most well-known and oft-quoted documents of Catholic Social Teaching, the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII declared that "the arms race should cease" and urged that "all come to an agreement on a fitting program of disarmament" [Jenkins 2014]. Pope John XXIII called for the realization of a true and lasting peace among nations and said that it "cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust" [*From Nuclear Deterrence to Disarmament*... 2015]. His call was not only the call

of a pope feeling responsible for the future of the human race but also of a witness to the direct nuclear threat. A few months earlier, his address had been essential for initiating dialogue between John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis.[2]

For Pope Paul VI the issue of disarmament was mainly connected with the problem of human development. He rejected the reliance on nuclear weapons and defined the peace created by nuclear deterrence as "a tragic illusion". In 1967, in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, he shaped the theme of development as a moral argument for the abolition of nuclear weapons, pointing out that the nuclear arms race retarded the development of people and contributed to the "crying disproportion between the resources in money and intelligence devoted to the service of death and the resources devoted to the service of life" [*From Nuclear Deterrence to Disarmament…* 2015].

In 1982, Pope John Paul II accepted the ethic of deterrence with the understanding that nations possessing nuclear weapons intended to move forward from deterrence to disarmament as outlined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty from 1968 [O'Connell 2017a]. However, already during his pontificate, the teaching of the Catholic Church shifted towards promoting a doctrine of nuclear disarmament instead of nuclear deterrence. In 1997, Archbishop Renato Martino, then representative of the Holy See to the UN, signaled this evolution in his speech at the UN: "Maintaining nuclear deterrence into the 21st century will not aid but impede peace. Nuclear deterrence prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. It maintains an unacceptable hegemony over non-nuclear development for the poorest half of the world's population" [Martino 1997].

Pope Benedict XVI spoke out against nuclear weapons several times, calling the argument that nuclear weapons are a basis for peace as "completely fallacious" and stressing that "peace requires that all strive for progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament" [*From Nuclear Deterrence to Disarmament…* 2015]. For Pope Benedict, an ethic of complacency and even a toleration of limited nuclear expansion had become intertwined with the ethic of deterrence. Observing that possession of nuclear weapons was increasingly becoming a sign of power, the pope saw them as a temptation for newly emerging powers to defend their interests and their people and a spur to modernization [McElroy 2017].

Pope Francis' condemnation of nuclear weapons represents a significant departure from the stance taken by his predecessors [O'Connell 2017a]. The issue of nuclear disarmament became one of Pope Francis' diplomatic priorities. In September 2013, in a speech delivered at the High-Level Meeting of the 68th Session of the General

[2] During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the appeal of the pope to "all governments" and the call for continuing discussions was broadcasted by the Vatican radio and published on the next day by all world newspapers including "Pravda", the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party. It gave Nikita Khrushchev an opportunity to present himself as a "man of peace" while answering to the pope's call and making the decision to withdraw missiles from Cuba. Secretly, it was agreed between the US and the USSR that American missiles would be withdrawn from Turkey [Gianelli, Tornielli 2006: 152–156; Rychlak 2011].

Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti presented the new, more rigorous stance of the Holy See on this issue, pointing to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as the main obstacle for heading towards a world free from nuclear weapons. According to him, "(…) The Holy See does not countenance the continuation of nuclear deterrence, since it is evident it is driving the development of ever newer nuclear arms, thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament" [Mamberti 2013]. He also called for countering "(…) the logic of fear with the ethic of responsibility fostering a climate of trust and sincere dialogue, capable of promoting a culture of peace, founded on the primacy of law and the common good, through a coherent and responsible co-operation between all members of the international community" [Mamberti 2013].

During the Vienna conference in December 2014, the Holy See released its major study paper "Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition". In a message to the conference, Pope Francis declared, "I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home" [Pope Francis 2014]. One year later, in September 2015, in his address to the General Assembly, Pope Francis stressed that "(…) an ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as »nations united by fear and distrust«" [Pope Francis 2015].

The United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards Their Total Elimination was opened in late March 2017[3] with a message from the pope and an address by the Secretary General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and it resumed on June 15 for three weeks of negotiation. The Holy See has been both one of most engaged advocates in the debate and also one of the first actors to sign the Treaty. With its first-ever vote at the United Nations, on 7 July 2017, the Holy See voted in favor of nuclear disarmament. Usually a permanent observer with standing to speak and to participate in negotiations, the Holy See, along with the State of Palestine, had been granted status as a full member state with voting rights in a procedural vote of the conference in late June 2017 [Christiansen 2017]. The Holy See exercised that right to join a 122-1-1 majority to adopt a draft treaty forbidding states to "develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices" [UN General Assembly 2017 A/CONF.229/2017/8]. The treaty also prohibits nations from transferring nuclear weapons and from allowing weapons to be stationed or deployed in their territory. The Netherlands, a stand-in for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, voted 'No' while Singapore abstained [July

[3] The conference was held from 27 to 31 March 2017 and from 15 June to 7 July 2017. A one-day organization session was held on 16 February 2017, https://www.un.org/disarmament/ptnw/background.html (access: 20.01.2018).

2017 Voting Results]. The United States and the world's eight other known nuclear powers did not participate in the conference or vote on the treaty. A few weeks later, on 20 September 2017, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Secretary for Relations with States, signed the Treaty on behalf of the Holy See and the Vatican City State.

THE HOLY SEE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The fact that the Holy See has been one of the first signatories of the Treaty was remarked upon and greatly appreciated by the most engaged proponents of nuclear disarmament namely, representatives of civil society. Beatrice Fihn, the executive director of ICAN, described this fact as "a strong signal to the world" [O'Connell 2017a]. In her speech presented at the international conference on nuclear disarmament organized in the Vatican in November 2017,[4] she noted the role of the pope as giving moral leadership on nuclear disarmament. Stressing that Pope Francis is the first pope who so firmly condemned nuclear weapons and a security based on fear, she also pointed out that the pope's stance on nuclear disarmament is not only normative in character but also is a call to action [Pope Francis 2017]. This call should not be treated as an idealistic vision as the majority of states is able to exist and function without nuclear weapons. As to the primary activities leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, Fihn emphasized the "global devaluation" and "stigmatization" of those weapons, while stressing that this crucial process is just starting [Fihn 2017]. Interestingly, while not a religious person herself, she asked the pope "to ask people to pray for the abolition of nuclear weapons on December 10, international Human Rights Day, when we (ICAN) receive the Noble Peace Prize".

The discussion on the renewed engagement of the Holy See regarding nuclear disarmament must be perceived in the broader context of the evolution of contemporary diplomacy and, more precisely, the increasing role of non-state actors committing themselves to the most challenging problems of the contemporary world. While governments are still the basic actors of international politics, non-state actors and engaged citizens have been moving closer to the center of the debate as both its subjects and objects. Their problems matter more and their participation in solving these problems also matters more. This ongoing evolution is marked by such developments as security being replaced with human security, power and interest being enriched with a more human-oriented, holistic approach to politics, with the notions of common good and commitment becoming more visible.

Both the top-down and bottom-up approach have continued to develop with regard to nuclear disarmament. As a result, a wide public conscience on the issue is being shaped. The Holy See, while recognized as the subject of international law

[4] The conference gathered 350 participants from all over the world, including 11 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates.

and possessing the attributes of a state, can and should also be recognized as a strong and influential player within the wide framework of civil society initiatives. Civil society, which is "lots of things, from the business sector to NGOs to coalitions and campaign", is also in many ways "an amplification of the moral compass, needed to guide decision making to put the collective good at the forefront" [Snyder 2017]. In this changed discourse on nuclear weapons, the result of the concentrated effort of civil society, international organizations and some governments, the voice of the pope, a widely recognized moral authority, furthers the development of the concept both in normative and practical ways. In many countries around the world, including those that possess nuclear weapons, a majority of citizens supports the goal of nuclear disarmament, though only a small minority actively engages in initiatives that contribute to that goal [Harrington et al. 2017: 255]. In this context, shaping the views of Catholics all around the world, including American Catholics, could significantly contribute to widening the discussion on "global zero". On the other hand, the Holy See is perceived as a moral authority also by non-Catholics, as is clearly visible in the campaign on "global zero". The line of reasoning used by civil society groups engaged in anti-nuclear activities clearly overlaps with the teachings of Pope Francis.

The arguments used by those involved in grassroots initiatives can be divided into two main groups. On the one hand, there are "fear-based" arguments, and on the other hand, there are "high-cost-oriented" arguments, which point out the environmental, human and financial costs of maintaining nuclear arsenals [Harrington et al. 2017: 255]. In the teachings of Pope Francis, the concepts of the "mentality of fear" and the "culture of waste" are discussed respectively [Pope Francis 2017]. The issue of the tremendous financial costs of nuclear weapons is an argument shared jointly by different actors and often presented from the moral perspective.[5] The continuation of a permanent nuclear deterrence policy, given the loss of human, financial and material resources in a time of scarcity of funds for health, education and social services, cannot be justified [Mamberti 2013]. For this reason, also nuclear weapons are perceived as immoral and illegitimate.

The doctrine of deterrence is another aspect of the discussion where the arguments of both players meet. While the starting point for the next phase of the "global zero" debate for civil society is mainly the humanitarian consequences of nuclear usage, the crucial point of argumentation for all actors in the anti-nuclear coalition is the concept of deterrence. When talking about the doctrine of deterrence, Pope Francis refers to a "false sense of security" [Pope Francis 2017], while the representatives of civil society point to the "false idols of deterrence and mutually assured destruction" [Snyder 2017]. Mohamed El Baradei, the Director General Emeritus

[5] Between 2010 and 2018, the US will have spent at least $179 billion on its nuclear arsenal. See: *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Budget: An Overview*, September 27, 2013, http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/us-nuclear-weoverview/apons-budget (access: 14.01.2018).

of the International Atomic Energy Agency,[6] describes the argument that nuclear weapons have kept the peace as "bogus". According to him a peace that hangs on a doctrine of mutually assured destruction is underpinned by human fallibility and is irrelevant to extremists. It is a peace that is unsustainable and highly perilous [El Baradei 2017]. Due to the growing number of states developing the capacity to possess nuclear weapons, the crucial question of the rationality of the actors involved must occur, whether they are states, such as North Korea, or non-state actors, especially terrorists groups. The argument of "terrorists not having a return address" [Harrington et al. 2017: 257] is one of the most important cited by opponents of nuclear weapons.

Critics of nuclear disarmament argue that the contention that nuclear weapons have kept the peace between the great powers since the Second World War is simplistic and impossible to prove as the absence of war is the result of many complex developments and is not determined by one factor. One of them is the increased potency of non-nuclear deterrence, resulting from advances in the lethality and precision of weapons' technology. Another argument, one not shared by the realist approach, is the growing level of interdependence between different countries [Cortright 2017]. Deterrence is usually understood in terms of the threat power, based on the philosophy: "do what I want or I will do what you do not want". The alternative to this way of thinking is the integrative power, based on building a community of interests: "together we can do something that is better for both of us" [Boulding 1989: 25].

BETWEEN REALISM AND IDEALISM

In a joint statement issued the day the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted, the delegations of the United States, the United Kingdom and France said they had not participated in the treaty negotiations and did not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it. They posited that this initiative clearly disregards the realities of the international security environment and that their accession to the Treaty is incompatible with the policy of nuclear deterrence which has been essential for keeping peace in Europe and North Asia for over 70 years [*Joint Press Statement*… 2017].

Commenting on the joint statement, the president of the conference that negotiated the treaty, Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica noted that when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was adopted it did not enjoy many accessions. Eventually, however, a total of 191 states joined the NPT, including five nuclear weapon ones, namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. While at first it was inconceivable that those states would become parties, they eventually did. She also pointed out that the *hibakusha*,

[6] Mohamed El Baradei was one of 11 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates who spoke during the conference on nuclear disarmament organized by the Holy See in November 2017.

survivors of nuclear bombing, were a driving force behind the new treaty, contributing to the negotiations with a "combination of reason and heart" [UN News Center 2017].

There is no doubt that the realization of the goal of a complete elimination of all nuclear weapons may seem utopian to its opponents. On the other hand, to its proponents it is both a possible and necessary goal to be achieved whether in the shorter or longer perspective. The discussion between both sides can be seen as an element of the never-ending discourse between two opposite perceptions of both contemporary global politics and human nature. While for realists focusing on national interest, especially for the states possessing nuclear weapons, nuclear deterrence may seem a good way to preserve their power status, for those adopting a more humanitarian perspective, nuclear disarmament is the only possible approach serving mankind. In the second approach, the hope for change is the significant determinant of their commitment, however, this active, not passive, hope also has a pragmatic dimension evident in the engagement of civil society. "Hope is fueled by the opportunity to take actions" with a final purpose of effecting change even if it appears unrealistic at the starting point. "A small success can build and grow and eventually become a world changing event" [Snyder 2017].

Though the engagement of civil society may seem naïve to a realist, it has already proved to be effective many times. The "philosophy of hope" supported by the "philosophy of patience" appears to be successful with reference to other kinds of weapons. As Fihn noted, "we banned biological weapons 45 years ago, we banned chemical weapons 25 years ago, and today we are banning nuclear weapons" [Sample 2017]. Therefore, it is evident that previous UN treaties have been effective even when key nations failed to sign them. While the United States did not sign the landmines treaty, it nonetheless completely aligned its landmines policy to comply. According to Fihn, these types of treaties have an impact that forces countries to change their behavior, not quickly, but effectively. "We have seen on all other weapons that prohibition comes first, and then elimination. This is taking the first step towards elimination" [Sample 2017].

By making ambitious objectives more conceivable, decision makers are more likely to pursue them [Lodgaard 2012: 1]. The change in the climate is visible and some new and historic opportunities for progress on nuclear abolition are emerging. High-level policymakers, including many who formerly supported nuclear deterrence, are signaling their support for a nuclear-weapon-free world [ICAN/Religions for Peace 2017: 1]. The fact that some well-known realists, like Henry Kissinger, have moved to the "camp" proposing the elimination of nuclear weapons may be perceived as a "sign of the times". Achieving the goal of "global zero" must be perceived and pursued as a universal common good and not in terms of unilateral advantage or national sacrifice [Lodgaard 2012: 18]. The Holy See, with its moral authority and "soft power" assets, may be a valuable contributor to the evolution of "hard power" policies in this regard. As Gerard Powers rightly remarks, "(…) the Catholic Church and other religious bodies help ensure that morality is not an uninvited guest at an exclusive party dominated by nuclear realists" [Powers 2017].

The perception of nuclear disarmament as well as the consequences of not making an effort to make this idea reality were well summarized by Sam Nunn, one of the four initiators of "global zero":

> (…) When I think about the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, to me it is like a very tall mountain. It is tempting and easy to say we can't get there from here. It is true that today our troubled world cannot even see the top of the mountain. But we can see that we are heading down, not up; we can see that we must turn around, that we must take paths leading to higher ground, and that we must get others to move with us. It is urgent for the survival of humanity that we stop our descent and find paths up the mountain toward a world free of nuclear weapons [Nunn 2009].

On 10 December 2017, International Human Rights Day, Pope Francis referred directly to Fihn's request and prayed for nuclear disarmament during the Angelus prayer [Reuters Staff 2017]. He pointed out that further development in the area of disarmament is entirely dependent on the decisions that people make themselves. "(…) We have the freedom, the intelligence and the capacity to guide technology, to limit our power, in the service of peace and true progress" [O'Connell 2017a]. On the same day in Oslo, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons officially received the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017. In a speech during the award ceremony, the Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, referred to the teaching of Pope Francis stressing that the "(…) weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity" [O'Connell 2017b]. She also noted that the Norwegian Nobel Committee shares this view.

CONCLUSIONS

The Holy See, characterized by a special "moral imagination", has repeatedly played the role of "prophet" and moral leader with regard to many international developments. Its soft power transforms into a considerable integrative and stabilization power in world politics [Troy 2013]. In areas regarding issues of the common, universal good, this power is "(…) enormous in the world that is so rapidly losing a moral vocabulary beyond profit/loss, power/order, and security/strength" [Barbato, Joustra 2017: 2].

The strong voice of the pope on the issue of nuclear disarmament is an integral element in the holistic, positive vision of peace that has been elaborated within the framework of Catholic Social Teaching alongside other problems that have increasingly come to the fore over the last few decades. In this vision, peace cannot "(…) be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies (…). Peace must be built on justice, socio-economic development, freedom, respect for

fundamental human rights, the participation of all in public affairs and the building of trust between peoples" [Pope Francis 2014]. The practical instruments for achieving such a state of affairs include, most notably, dialogue. Now, the call for dialogue has been extended to the issue of nuclear weapons. Pope Francis notes that this must be

> (…) sincere and open dialogue between parties internal to each nuclear state, between various nuclear states, and between nuclear states and non-nuclear states. This dialogue must be inclusive, involving international organizations, religious communities and civil society, and oriented towards the common good and not the protection of vested interests. (…) The future and the survival of the human family hinges on moving beyond this ideal and ensuring that it becomes a reality [Pope Francis 2014].

While, due to the Holy See's specific personality in the area of international relations, it should be undoubtedly perceived as the unique actor, at the same time, it may be perceived as "one of many", namely the representation of hundreds and thousands of very diversified religious voices that have increasingly contributed to the debate on the most controversial, most challenging issues of today. In this debate, after many decades and centuries of neglecting a religious factor in the socio-political realm, the religious and faith-based actors have been recently recognized as valuable, effective and offering more human-oriented approach in the crucial areas of contemporary world politics. Moreover, the dichotomous distinction between "the religious" and "the secular" has been questioned both at theoretical and empirical level [Schwarz, Lynch 2016: 1], leading many scholars to the assumption that bridging of both spheres is not only possible but often badly needed in the face of multi-faced problems and threats.

Thus, the contribution of the Holy See on the issue of nuclear disarmament should not be perceived through the limited lens of only the Catholic involvement. The nuclear disarmament campaign may in this regard become part of a wider project of rebuilding relations between people and a global transformation of ways of thinking so that the human being again becomes the main issue of concern. The creation of "shared belief" on nuclear disarmament may turn out to be part of extremely difficult but very much needed universal, never-ending project of building new trust and confidence at the national and international level.

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