

**Faculty:** Scienze Politiche  
**Master:** International Relations  
**Major:** Security  
**Chair:** Chinese Studies

**Nihil Sine Episcopo: Political Tension and Future Diplomacy  
between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China**

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Dedicated to Cardinal Zen and the Catholics of China who despite their immense suffering have been an example of courage and faith.

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愈顯主榮

## Executive summary

When undertaking a project examining Catholicism in China it is important, first of all, to understand how the West has viewed (or rather constructed an image of) the East. Here, ‘view’ is a somewhat loaded term as it has a historical, cultural, political, sociological, and economic connotation. Though tangential to the main focus of this paper, it is important to develop this idea a bit in order to understand the historical differences and current situation of Catholicism in China. Edward Saïd, in his seminal work “Orientalism”, provides a valuable insight into how the West internalized and constructed a narrative of the East – a process he calls orientalism.

Saïd argued that the Orient is an “almost European invention” and as such it functions as “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European western experience...its cultural contestant.”<sup>1</sup> This is evident in the name given to the country of interest, China – a term completely foreign to the Chinese. Instead, the Chinese use (Zhong-guo 中國), or “Middle Kingdom.”<sup>2</sup> This term reinforces how the Chinese view themselves and how it competes with a (perceived) historically predominant Eurocentrism. China, then, becomes not only a competitor to the West, but its foil.

Though Saïd focused his work primarily on the colonial experience, it can also be used to understand the perspective of 15th and 16th century European powers in their pursuit of opening up relations with China – the precursor for Victorian colonialism. This relationship can be characterized, on the part of the West, as “dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>3</sup> The European powers gained their strength precisely because they were different from China and that factored deeply into their commercial calculus and in the construction of their own identity and perceived cultural dominance. In short, the historical relationship (and antagonism) between East and West can be defined by the latter’s cultural and commercial hegemony over the former.

It is against this backdrop that an analysis into the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and China can be examined. The Church<sup>4</sup>, despite interruptions due to persecution and political crisis, has been present in China for more than 500 years and what does it have to show for it? What makes the Church's mission in China so radically different from any other country or cultural context, whether it be in Latin America, Africa or even other Asian countries? One explanation is that China is both a geographic unit and a cultural concept. With a civilization dating back over four-thousand years, China’s culture and history is so complex that the Western mind struggles to fully understand it.

The Church had, no doubt, what Saïd would call an Orientalist mentality, or rather employed Orientalism in how it performs its mission actively. It is important to note that the Church was constrained, in some respects, by the political pressure of the Portuguese and

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1979) 1.

<sup>2</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming.* (Oscar storia, 2008) 18.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Saïd, *Orientalism*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Here, the Church refers to the Roman Catholic Church, which in international relations is represented by the Holy See (also referred to as the Roman See or Apostolic See).

French, which in turn prevented it from adhering to a purely spiritual and evangelical mission. Since the Church was instrumentalized to advance these state building (and colonial) projects. As long as there was a European network of missions (organized by and beholden to colonial agents) and a European ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Church in China could never fully mature. It can also be said that the Church existed and functioned like a microcosm, an isolated community, which ran parallel to and thus challenged the prevailing attitudes of the Chinese. Perhaps that is why the Church has also been looked at with such suspicion – it never fully integrated.

So, in deciding to do this study, it was important, as Saïd would agree, in “finding a point of departure” but also in designating “which texts, authors, and periods are the ones best suited for study.”<sup>5</sup> This paper is divided into four chapters. **Chapter One** looks at the introduction of Catholicism in China and the development of the early mission networks. It is important to understand the historical conflicts between the Catholic Church and China in order to frame the discussion of contemporary relations. The first chapter opens with the arrival of Matteo Ricci and the first group of Jesuit missionaries in China. This was a critical moment as it established not only a missionary network in China, – by virtue of Ricci’s evangelization efforts – but also laid the foundation for a primitive diplomatic relationship laid the foundation for a primitive diplomatic relationship.

Ricci’s efforts were later jeopardized by the arrival of other Catholic religious orders who condemned the Jesuits’ religious syncretism. This opened up the Chinese Rites Controversy, which was the ban on Chinese Catholics from celebrating traditional ancestral worship and from venerating Confucius. This multi-century debate exemplifies the primary conflict between the Church and Chinese authorities; that is to say they were both fighting for sovereignty, legitimacy. The Chinese thought that the Pope(s), by virtue of banning traditional ancestral worship, was interfering in the domestic affairs of China (a common refrain even today). The Pope, conversely, thought that the emperor(s) was undermining his spiritual authority.

Catholic mission networks were reliant on the patronage of, first, the Portuguese, and, later, the French. The perception of the Church as an instrument of the Western powers was, no doubt, due in great part to this. This runs hand-in-hand with the difficulties (and delays) in locating, or indigenizing, the Church in China. This paper has examined documents from Propaganda Fide (from the 17th and 18th centuries) and there was an effort (a desire) to initiate this process. However, the Church was unable to execute this due, again, to the mission networks being controlled by Portuguese/French. In the eyes of the Chinese the Church was inevitably bound to the Western colonialism.

In the early 20th century, there were signs that change was coming. The pontificates of Benedict XIV and Pius XI were pivotal for Sino-Vatican relations. Benedict XV’s *Maximum Illud* and Pius’s *Rerum Ecclesiae* helped change the Church’s missiology and, consequently, its relationship in China. They are, moreover, inherently political; they provided the Catholic missions with an updated roadmap on how to operate in different (i.e. non-Western) cultural contexts. This is coupled with the decline of the Western powers in Asia. The importance of Pius XI’s decision to send Archbishop, later Cardinal, Celso Costantini to China as a papal legate

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<sup>5</sup> Saïd 16

cannot be overstated. Costantini led the effort to localize the Church (which is seen in the convocation of the first synod of bishops in China in 1924 and in 1926 when he brought six Chinese priests to Rome to be consecrated as the first indigenous Chinese bishops. Finally, in 1938, Pius XII, after a series of instructions issued by the curial office of Propaganda Fide, closed the issue of the Chinese Rites Controversy. The Holy See's motivation was as much political and geopolitical as it reflected a changing ecclesiology. Nevertheless, the Church was still seen by many as a vehicle for Western powers, especially by the Communists.

At the turn of the 20th century China was still beset by colonial domination and the notion of national humiliation was a dominating force, which had grave implications on the national consciousness and on political stability. This was compounded further by internal fissures that ran on cultural, political, and economic lines. Following the abdication of the Qing Emperor in 1911, and the chaos of the Warlord era, China was unified under the banner of the Nationalist Government led by Chiang Kaishek. However, this unification was only nominal. The CCP, while pushed into the interior of the country, still had a significant presence and Japanese aggression threatened the country from the north. Finally, in 1931 the Japanese invaded Manchuria; by 1937 the Japanese controlled significant parts of the country. This complicated the nascent Republic's global position and legitimacy, and deepened the image of China as the 'sick man of Asia'.

**Chapter two** examines the fraught relationship between the Church and communism (as an ideology) and between the communist regimes of the 20th century. The Church unequivocally condemned the atheistic materialism of marxism and saw it as a threat to social stability. The Church did not just view marxism as a political ideology; instead, it was viewed as a new civic religion. The condemnation of marxism started with Pope Pius IX and it hardened in papal thought and rhetoric, reaching a climax under Pope Pius XII. The decision to recognize the Nationalist Government (after National Unification in 1928) was as much about insulating the Church from internal pressures (and persecution) as it was a tactic to counter the growing red tide in China. On a geopolitical level, the Church made sustained efforts to open up bilateral relations with the nationalist government. This would, on the one hand, show that the Church was ready to legitimize the Republic of China as an important global power (thereby giving it legitimacy on the world stage), as well gain legitimacy for itself. The newly created Vatican City State, created in 1929 via the Lateran Pacts, sought diplomatic recognition as a way to legitimize its diplomacy as well as protect its many assets across the world. Moreover, the Holy See stressed that the mission of the Church was inherently spiritual in order to quell anxiety (over fear that it was still a tool of the Western powers) and to show that it was non-inferential in Chinese domestic affairs. The Holy See's interest in legitimizing the nationalist government was also a way for it to repudiate the Chinese Communist Party.

The hardline approach of Pius XI and Pius XII changed with the election of Pope John XXIII in 1958 – the Church would go through an internal renewal that also affected how it related with the broader world and how it thought of its own foreign policy doctrine. This is seen in the process of *aggiornamento* (or modernization), which underscored the convocation of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. This process was continued by John's successor, Paul VI, in an even more vigorous way. Yet, despite this change on the part of the Vatican (including a softened stance on communism) the period following the Maoist revolution 1949 saw an

immense amount of suffering for Chinese Catholics. This is most evident during the Cultural Revolution; traditional religions were brutally suppressed and there was this campaign to build up a cult of Mao. Thus, running parallel to religious persecution was the creation of the Maosit myth. For Mao it represented a period of purification. Yet this wasn't shared by everyone in the governing apparatus of the party. Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, represented a break; ideological purity was abandoned for pragmatism. Instead of building up the cult of the leader there was a greater focus on economic development and opening up to the world. For Deng, the personality cult that developed around Mao had delayed economic development considerably and isolated China on the world stage. In the post-Cultural Revolution period there were minor improvements in Sino-Vatican relations, but the fundamental issue of selecting bishops still remained. This led to the reformation of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), which established a parallel hierarchy in China, further isolating Chinese Catholics from Rome. Consequently, divisions grew between Chinese Catholics who were loyal to Rome (and continued to practice their faith clandestinely in the underground Church) and those who associated with the official (also called the 'open' or 'patriotic') Church.

**Chapter three** is divided into two parts. The first looks specifically at the Holy See as an international actor (evaluating how its legal personality is constructed), looking at the structure of its diplomatic corps, and outlining the tools available to the pope in advancing his diplomatic agenda. The Holy See has a unique status in international relations; it is neither a conventional state, nor it is an international organization. Rather, its sovereignty stems from the figure of the pope as the universal head of the Catholic Church. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between the Holy See and the Vatican. Though colloquially they refer to the same thing, in international relations they are two separate entities.

The second part of chapter three looks at the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI, namely at his 2007 Letters addressed to the Catholics of China. This Letter was one of most important papal documents of the last fifty-years on the situation in China. It reinforced the pastoral nature of the Petrine Office, while also clearly articulating that the ordination of bishops was a much larger issue; it did not just concern China, it concerns the unity of the Catholic Church world over and is central to the Apostolic tradition of the Catholic Church that goes back 2,000 years. This Letter did not change the situation in China, in fact relations continued to deteriorate, hitting a new low-point in 2011 when several priests were consecrated without papal mandate. The Holy See responded by excommunicating the priests who were ordained as well as the other bishops who took part in their ordination.

**Chapter four** is also divided into several parts. The first looks at the process of sinicization, both before and after the arrival of Xi Jinping. Looking at legislative documents from the CCP gives an insight into the importance placed on this process of sinicization. It is inextricably tied to the process of modernization, national rejuvenation and further developing socialism with Chinese characteristics; these are not just rhetorical points, these are the aims of the CCP and the legislation coming out of China has given shape, and governmental backing, to these ideas.

Chapter four then goes on to look at and evaluate the 2018 Sino-Vatican Accord; the main point of discussion of this paper. While it may, at first, seem superfluous to have provided a

long historical overview of Catholicism in China, it becomes clear that the contemporary situation is a product of the past. The Accord signed between the Holy See and the PRC has not normalized diplomatic relations between the two; it only concerns the selection and nomination of bishops. If we are to judge the Accord by its proverbial fruits it is clear that there is an imbalance between the Holy See and the PRC.

Modern scholars and diplomats (both inside and outside of the Church) have suggested that this Accord reflects a shift back to the Holy See's Cold War *Ostpolitik*. Similar to the situation in China, the Catholic population of Eastern Europe was effectively cut off from Rome; religious celebration was effectively banned and bishops were harassed and prevented from exercising their ministry. The Holy See attempted to make deals with the communist regimes, namely in Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia; the logic went that an agreement that was less ideal was better than no agreement at all. The success of this strategy was limited; there were no major breakthroughs or diplomatic agreements that allowed for greater religious liberty and expression. Instead the results from the *Ostpolitik* amounted to small compromises that enabled the Church to operate – however limited – within the framework of a communist government. This reflects a pragmatism in the Holy See's foreign policy calculus, as well as an orientation towards the future. This strategy has been criticized, especially by members of the clergy; it no doubt is a difficult strategy to reconcile given that the Church maintained episcopal consecrations as the sole right of the Roman pontiff. In order to understand the motivations for the Holy See's strategy, we have to remember that the Holy See adheres to a different logic than most states. As seen in this chapter, via papal encyclicals and address, the Roman Pontiffs of the last century stressed that the Church was non-inferential in political affairs and was, then, focused on purely spiritual aims. In theory that works, but in practice that's hard to support. There are very real political implications when the pope speaks *ex cathedra*.

There are, no doubt, many similarities between those countries and China, namely the formation of patriotic associations to select bishops. For any communist regime, this was of fundamental importance as, if there are no bishops, then more priests cannot be ordained, and if there are no priests to administer the sacraments then the Church cannot operate. Dunn suggests, which this thesis supports, the “most important factor in determining *Ostpolitik*'s success is assessing the individual political conditions of a given country.”<sup>6</sup> For example, the Holy See had a greater degree of success in Poland than it did in Czechoslovakia; the reasons for this are a larger Catholic population and a more organized episcopal structure.

This brings us back to China. The Holy See has less leverage in China given that: the population is small (an estimated 13 million, or 1% of the total population) and this population is internally weak given that there are two Catholic communities in the country (the underground and the open Church). There are the historical factors to consider as well; from the time of Matteo Ricci in the late 16th century to the present there is this idea that the Catholic Church is foreign, that it is a vestige of an imperial past and as such is not Chinese. This last point provides a justification (going along with the logic of CCP) to sinicize religion, that is to make it more Chinese. This effort has intensified under Xi Jinping and has resulted in new regulations managing the daily activities of clergy.

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<sup>6</sup> Dennis J. Dunn, “The Vatican's *Ostpolitik*,” 308.

Since the deal was signed in 2018, renewed in 2018, and renewed for a second time in 2022. There has been a growing intentional criticism of the Holy See's approach. It is important to reiterate that the aims of the Holy See (as a political actor) are spiritual, not temporal – at least in practice). As such its motivations and logic are different from a conventional sovereign state. Nevertheless, from 2018 onward, persecution of underground Catholics has intensified, bishops have been subject to house arrest (some have disappeared), and only 6 bishops have been ordained in accordance with the terms of the agreement; many dioceses remain vacant. The central research question of this thesis was: does the ideological intransigence between the CCP and the Roman Catholic Church (Holy See) preclude it from engaging in and arriving at genuine dialogue?

The CCP maintains that the Holy See's diplomatic relations with Taiwan (the Republic of China) adversely affects this relationship. The Holy See, however, has repeatedly said that it would be willing to move its nunciature from Taipei to Beijing. Based on the research conducted in this period it is reasonable that this point is moot. It is clear that under the leadership of Xi Jinping the crackdown on religious expression (and the continued sinicization of religion) would continue unabated regardless if the Holy See moved its nunciature. This sinicization is now a central part of the CCP's building ideology. It is, then, reasonable to suggest that, notwithstanding the signing of the Sino-Vatican Accord, the two are at an impasse.



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## Introduction

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In the early 20th century, there were signs that change was coming. The pontificates of Benedict XIV and Pius XI were pivotal for Sino-Vatican relations. Benedict XV’s *Maximum Illud* and Pius’s *Rerum Ecclesiae* helped change the Church’s missiology and, consequently, its relationship in China. They are, moreover, inherently political; they provided the Catholic missions with an updated roadmap on how to operate in different (i.e. non-Western) cultural contexts. This is coupled with the decline of the Western powers in Asia. The importance of Pius XI’s decision to send Archbishop, later Cardinal, Celso Costantini to China as a papal legate cannot be overstated. Costantini led the effort to localize the Church (which is seen in the convocation of the first synod of bishops in China in 1924 and in 1926 when he brought six Chinese priests to Rome to be consecrated as the first indigenous Chinese bishops. Finally, in 1938, Pius XII, after a series of instructions issued by the curial office of Propaganda Fide, closed the issue of the Chinese Rites Controversy. The Holy See’s motivation was as much political and geopolitical as it reflected a changing ecclesiology. Nevertheless, the Church was still seen by many as a vehicle for Western powers, especially by the Communists.

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<sup>7</sup> Saïd 16

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The hardline approach of Pius XI and Pius XII changed with the election of Pope John XXIII in 1958 – the Church would go through an internal renewal that also affected how it related with the broader world and how it thought of its own foreign policy doctrine. This is seen in the process of *aggiornamento* (or modernization), which underscored the convocation of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. This process was continued by John's successor, Paul VI, in an even more vigorous way. Yet, despite this change on the part of the Vatican (including a softened stance on communism) the period following the Maoist revolution 1949 saw an immense amount of suffering for Chinese Catholics. This is most evident during the Cultural Revolution; traditional religions were brutally suppressed and there was this campaign to build up a cult of Mao. Yet this wasn't shared by everyone in the governing apparatus of the party. Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, represented a break; ideological purity was abandoned for pragmatism. Instead of building up the cult of the leader there was a greater focus on economic development and opening up to the world. In the post-Cultural Revolution period there were minor improvements in Sino-Vatican relations, but the fundamental issue of selecting bishops still remained. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) was reestablished, which established a parallel hierarchy in China, further isolating Chinese Catholics from Rome. Consequently, divisions grew between Chinese Catholics who were loyal to Rome (and continued to practice their faith clandestinely in the underground Church) and those who associated with the official (also called the 'open' or 'patriotic') Church.

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the CCP and the legislation coming out of China has given shape, and governmental backing, to these ideas.

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The paper has drawn from a large selection of primary documents, including: papal bulls, Apostolic constitutions, encyclicals, journals, instructions from the various offices of the Roman Curia spanning from the end of the 16th century to the present day. Similarity when researching the PRC/CCP, this paper has utilized regulations, speeches, constitutions, and various writings to gain a deeper insight into how the party thinks. This paper has also utilized numerous academic journals, books, and articles to support its research and argument.

# Chapter 1: A Historical Overview of Catholicism in China: From Matteo Ricci to Pius XI

## 1.1 Early Mission Activity in China: at the Nexus of State and Church

In 1515 Portuguese merchants entered into, for the first time, the seemingly impenetrable Chinese Empire, or as it is called the Middle Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> Their mission was predicated on building a vast trade network in the Far East, yet this was not fully realized (at least in China) until 1557 when they settled in Macau. Here, they established a formal community, albeit under a set of strict provisions and supervision of the Cantonese authorities.<sup>9</sup> Building the preeminent European commercial network necessitated exporting European culture to sustain it. The Ming Dynasty 大明, in the century preceding the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries, was characterized by economic isolationism. This was prompted by the threat posed by the Mongols to the north and the Japanese to the east. Though trading was not entirely forbidden, native merchants were not allowed to leave and foreigners were not allowed to enter; transactions between the two only occurred twice a year in the city of Guangzhou.<sup>10</sup> This trade and cultural exchange was critical in laying the foundation for a sustained European presence in China, had another important component: establishing missionary outposts. This was achieved by a system that developed first under the Portuguese and later under the French Protectorate. The Portuguese *Padroado* gained its authority by a temporal mandate from the pope. It was critical that the naval powers of Spain and Portugal attain a legal justification for their territorial expansion as, under Roman Law, there was no recognition of the right of discovery; the Church's Canon Law, however, did have a Doctrine of Discovery. By making recourse to Canon law as the legal justification for colonial expansion, and with the colonial powers being the de facto representative of missionary work in Asia, the image and role of Catholicism was inevitably tied with the colonial project.<sup>11</sup>

While this may have been advantageous for the Church in that it guaranteed the proliferation of the faith in the newly acquired Portuguese territories, it also meant that under the Portuguese *Padroado* system “no missionary could go there without the permissio of the King of Portugal...no Episcopal sees could be established save by royal consent and no bishop or archbishop could be nominated to any benefice except by the king's “presentation”.<sup>12</sup> The first episcopal see, in Asia, was established in Macau in 1576. Naturally, the Portuguese sought to

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<sup>8</sup> They were not, however, the first Europeans to make contact and evangelize in China. The Franciscan, Giovanni da Monte Corvino (1247-1328) reached Beijing in 1294, where he was appointed as the first bishop in 1307 by Pope Clement V. This mission was ultimately futile as, with the fall of the Yuan Dynasty and ascendancy of the Ming Dynasty in 1368, their mission failed and was suppressed. Pasquale M. d'Elia, *Catholic Native Episcopacy in China: Being an Outline of the Formation and Growth of the Chinese Catholic Clergy, 1300-1926* (Shanghai, 1926) 16.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East* (London: Faber And Faber, 2012) 37.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> H.M. Cole, “Origins of the French Protectorate over Catholic Missions in China,” *The American Journal of International Law*, no. 3 (1940): 474.

<sup>12</sup> H.M. Cole “Origins of the French Protectorate over Catholic Missions in China,” 474.

defend their monopoly on the missions as it went hand in hand with their domination in commerce. Any perceived change (or interference) by Rome was rebuked, "...when the holy father himself tried to establish other bishops in China at the end of the sixteenth century, his appointees were turned back because they lacked the exequatur or certification of the civil authorities at Lisbon."<sup>13</sup> While the Portuguese provided valuable infrastructure for Catholicism to take hold in Asia, this system represented a direct challenge to papal authority.

The first Catholic missionary to enter China, since the failed missions of the late 13th century, was one of the co-founders of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) Francis Xavier. The Jesuit order was founded on 15 August 1534 (though Pope Paul III gave his blessing for the founding of the Order in 1539), the feast day of the Assumption, by Ignatius of Loyola and six of his students (including Francis Xavier). Their new order was bound by three perpetual solemn vows: poverty, chastity, and obedience. In addition to this, they included a unique fourth vow: direct obedience to the pope. This fourth vow underscored their unique vocational mission, especially since in this period of the Counter Reformation (starting roughly with the opening of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which oversaw a massive reorganization of the Church, they were engaged in the fight against Protestantism. As defenders of Catholic orthodoxy and as the papal vanguard, it is logical that the Jesuits would focus on missionary work. In fact, the Jesuits's constitution called for members: "to travel through the world and live in any part of it whatsoever where there is hope of greater service to God and help of souls."<sup>14</sup> By not being bound by conventional monastic vows and having the unique privilege of direct obedience, the Jesuits were the ideal agents of the Church looking to expand its presence in the East.

The preeminent Jesuit missionary to China was the Italian, Matteo Ricci. It is impossible to overstate the importance of Ricci's work in China as he was the first to make diplomatic inroads with the *literati* 士大夫 (the learned Chinese elite), thereby ensuring that the Church could have a place, albeit limited, in China. This was a result not only of his personal zeal, adaptability, and penchant to dialogue, but also because he reformulated what it meant to be a missionary and thus how they operated in a culture as foreign as China's. The group of 14 Jesuits left Rome on 18 May 1577 with the blessing of Pope Gregory XIII.<sup>15</sup> They finally left Europe, by way of Portugal, on 24 March 1578 en route to Goa, India, which was the center of the Portuguese Empire in the East.<sup>16</sup> It wasn't until 10 December 1583 that they finally reached Zhaoqing 肇庆, a city on the River Xi 110 kilometers of Guangzhou.<sup>17</sup> Their arrival in Zhaoqing, facilitated by Wang Pan (Lingxi dao, superintendent of the provinces of Guangdong and Gunagxi), was important as their first expansion outside of the coastal enclave of Macau and into the interior.

Upon their arrival in Zhaoqing the Jesuits attracted the attention of the *literati*. Their logic followed that in order to make Catholicism acceptable to the Chinese, they would first need to make contact with, and ultimately convert, the social elite. This would lead to a diffusion of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming* (Oscar storia, 2008) 26.

<sup>16</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 34.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 62.

Catholicism and eventually be promoted on a state level.<sup>18</sup> In order to be accepted by the Chinese elite, Ricci needed to style himself – as much as possible – as one of them, not as a westerner. This was reflected in his decision (per the suggestion of Chen Rui, administrator of the Guangdong and Guangxi provinces) to wear buddhist robes.<sup>19</sup> He, along with Michele Ruggieri (a fellow Jesuit missionary) expressed this cultural assimilation by writing books in Chinese and in cartography. By positioning themselves in Chinese society with this dual capacity as scholar and priest Ricci caught the attention of the *litterati*. They meticulously researched the people, their customs, and motivations in order to better perform as missionaries.<sup>20</sup> Both Ricci and Ruggieri adopted Chinese names, Ricci becoming Li Madou 利瑪竇 and Ruggieri Luo Mingjian 羅明堅.<sup>21</sup> This cultural assimilation underscored the *modo soave*, the gentle method of conversion, in their dealings with non-believers.<sup>22</sup>

Studying Chinese cartography was a particularly instructive endeavor as it revealed to Ricci how exactly the Chinese viewed themselves and their place in the world. In these maps China was at the very center, which comes as no surprise given that the name Middle Kingdom reflects the centrality of this idea, and identity, in the Chinese national consciousness. In this sinocentric map China was bigger than adjacent territories and occupied most of the known land – this clashed with the Jesuits ‘mappamondo’, which represented the whole known world and was more a more realistic cartography than figurative perception.<sup>23</sup> There is, then, a significant difference in conception of self, place in the world and ultimately setting up two competing cultures and ideas.

The Jesuits understood that another significant challenge in introducing Catholicism in China rested in the fact that religion (Zongjiao) was conceptualized in a totally different manner. Confucianism isn’t a religion in the Western sense of the word, rather it functions as an official philosophy, a code of morality, a singular point of reference that shapes the Chinese consciousness. Confucian thought underscored all social relations and formed the basis of education for the elite. Ricci wrote, “the temple of the *letterati* is that of Confucius, which by law is established in every city, in the place we call the school.”<sup>24</sup> The *guan* 官, the imperial bureaucratic officials, were well educated in Chinese history and in Confucianism.<sup>25</sup> The strict patriarchal hierarchy (and emphasis on filial piety) starting with the emperor running through the

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<sup>18</sup> Laven notes that one of Ricci’s main hurdles was that the bulk of converts were women and children.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> “In questi principij, per non mettere qualche suspitione a questa gente con questa novità, non trattavano i Padri molto chiaramente di predicare la nostra santa legge, ma più tosto se impiegavano, nel tempo che di ricevere le visite, gli restava, in imparare bene la loro lingua, le loro lettere, e cortesie, e guadagnare gli animi de Cinesi” Matteo Ricci, *Storia Dell’Introduzione Del Cristianesimo in China Scritta Da Matteo Ricci S.I.: Parte I: Libri I-III Da Macao a Nanciam (1582-1597) NN. 1-500*, ed. Pasquale M. D’Elia S.J. (Roma: La Libreria Dello Stato, 1942), 192. Trans. Matthew Santucci

<sup>21</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 92.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 77.

<sup>24</sup> “Il proprio tempio de’ letterati è quello del Confuzo, che per legge se gli fa in ogni città, nel luogo che chiamiamo la scuola” Matteo Ricci, *Storia Dell’Introduzione Del Cristianesimo in China*, 118.

<sup>25</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 71.



guan and the state bureaucratic apparatus to the literati and eventually down to the people was Confucian in its thought, structure, and application.

Fr. Pasquale D'Elia S.J. noted "the idea of God has not remained an abstract idea: instead, in China as elsewhere, it has founded the morality of both the individual, the family and the nation."<sup>26</sup> This is seen also in how the emperor was viewed, as 'Son of Heaven', or (Tianzi 天子), who has a "mandate to govern his subjects, of which he feels invested, has been entrusted to him by Heaven (Tian 天), also called synonymically Supreme Emperor (Shangdi 上帝)."<sup>27</sup> The separation between spiritual power and temporal power is blurred, quasi nonexistent, in the imperial system. With Confucianism so deeply, inextricably, rooted in the Chinese mind it was incumbent upon Ricci to "convince the Chinese that Christianity was not only compatible with the doctrine of Confucius, but was the only religion that fully reflected the teachings of ancient Confucianism."<sup>28</sup> Yet Ricci was critical of what he saw in the Confucian system. In his *Storia Dell'Introduzione Del Cristianesimo in China* he wrote:

E perchè nella lingua dell Cina non vi è nessuno nome che risponda al nome di Dio, nè anco Dio si può bene pronunciare in essa per non avere questa lettere d, cominciorno a chiamare a Dio Tienciù, che vuol dire Signore del cielo, come sin hora si chaima per tutta la Cina, e nella Dottrina christiana et altri libri che si fecero. E cadde molto bene per il nostro proposito, perciochè adaorando i Cinesi per supremo nume il Cielo, che alcuni anco pensano esser questo cielo materiale, con l'istesso nome che habbiamo dato a Dio, manifestamente si dichiara quanto maggiore è il nostro Dio di quello che loro tengono per supremo nume, poichè Iddio è il Signore di quello."<sup>29</sup>

The fatherly virtue is seen in the idea of the Chinese state (guojia 国家), where the nation, state, country, were directly modeled on the family with a strict patriarchal hierarchy, flowing from the emperor to his people.<sup>30</sup> Not dissimilar, the Church has a strict hierarchical structure in which authority flows down from the Roman Pontiff to the magisterium and then down to the lay faithful. Perhaps the strict hierarchical structure of the Church and that of Chinese society inevitably put them at odds with one another. For a Chinese convert, which one

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<sup>26</sup> "L'idea di Dio non è restata un'idea astratta: essa invece, in Cina come altrove, ha fondato la morale tanto dell'individuo, quanto della famiglia e della nazione" (Matteo Ricci, *Storia Dell'Introduzione Del Cristianesimo in China*, XLVIII).

<sup>27</sup> "Gli è che il mandato di governare i suoi sudditi, di cui si sente investito, è stato a lui affidato dal Cielo o Tien 天, chiamato pure sinonimicamente Imperatore Supremo o Sciamti [Shangdi] 上帝" Matteo Ricci, *Storia Dell'Introduzione Del Cristianesimo in China*, XLI). Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>28</sup> "Convincere i cinesi che il cristianesimo non solo era compatibile con la dottrina di Confucio, ma era l'unica religione che rispecchiasse pienamente gli insegnamenti del confucianesimo antico." Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 300. Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>29</sup> Matteo Ricci, *Storia Dell'Introduzione Del Cristianesimo in China*, 193.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 182.

took precedence? Was one more Chinese or more Catholic? Embracing Confucian values was simultaneously an advantage to the Jesuits, but would also be to their detriment.<sup>31</sup>

Without the support of the Emperor, the Jesuits would never be able to build a sustainable mission in China. Ricci was a priest, missionary and scholar, but he had the additional function of diplomat and intelligence officer. His mission was just as much about evangelizing as it was gathering intelligence on the Chinese and expanding knowledge on their territories, customs, thoughts, and ideas. Though he would not have seen himself as such he was a diplomatic agent, expanding the corpus of information available on the Chinese and their territory. This information (his reconnaissance, if we are to think of it as such) was invaluable just as much for the Portuguese and European merchants as it was for the pope in Rome.

Despite the curiosity the Jesuits aroused in the *literati* they were viewed with a great deal of suspicion, which made their mission even more precarious. They, being ‘guests’ in Zhaoqing, were seen by some as foreign agents and representing imperial interests. In one instance locals in Zhaoqing wrote to the authorities in Canton, expressing that they thought the project “must therefore be part of a Portuguese conspiracy to incite rebellion among the people of China”.<sup>32</sup> No doubt working in this environment of distrust and suspicion was inauspicious to the Jesuit’s mission. Given the capriciousness of the local authorities, the permissibility of their mission could change from one official to the next; the Jesuits understood that it was critical to navigate around the regional bureaucracy and head north to gain imperial support for the long-term survivability of the Church.<sup>33</sup>

Following their expulsion from Zhaoqing in 1589 by hostile *literati*, the next five years were characterized by uncertainty and instability. 1592, after only a brief stint, the residents of Shaozhou launched a series of violent attacks and forced the Jesuits to leave; in 1595 they arrived in Nanjing and left the same year; in the summer of 1595 Ricci reached Nanchang (capital of Jiangxi province). It wasn’t until 24 January 1601 that the Jesuits were permitted to enter Beijing – under the close supervision of the eunuchs.<sup>34</sup> For Ricci it was of the utmost importance to remain in the Chinese capital; it was the only way to meet the emperor and gain his approval for the liberalization of Catholicism.<sup>35</sup> If Catholicism continued to be seen as suspicious, subversive, imperialistic and Western then the emperor would ban it in order to protect national unity. The Governor of Zhaoqing gave Ruggeri the option to go and arrange an embassy to Beijing. On this request Ruggeri went back to Rome to lobby the pope for the

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<sup>31</sup> There was a great deal of pushback against them from the *literati*. This is seen in the following excerpt from a Chinese author writing in the later years of the Ming dynasty: “By borrowing from Buddhism, adding to Confucianism, inventing on all sides and much manipulation, they created this vicious doctrine in order to use it to upset the world, deceive people and undermine the foundations of the empire.” *Ibid*, 151.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 59.

<sup>33</sup> “Ricci’s desire to get beyond Guangdong province was partly based on history. Canton and its hinterland had, since the beginning of the sixteenth century, been the stage on which often hostile relations between China and Europe were played out. Portuguese merchants, pursuing trade and wealth, were not always models of diplomacy.” *Ibid*, 64.

<sup>34</sup> Though it was on 7 September 1598 that they entered the city for the first time, but we force to leave after only two months. After their expulsion from Beijing, Ricci and his group of missionaries traveled to Linqing, which is on the border of Shandong and Hebei. Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 198, 246.

<sup>35</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 246.

creation of official diplomatic relations with the Chinese emperor (something that was not accomplished until 1705).<sup>36</sup>

While the Jesuits' theological syncretism and cultural assimilation made inroads with part of the local population, and even gained them the favor of the emperor, adopting their habits and even tailoring how they presented the faith to the Chinese ultimately led to their expulsion from China, scorn by other missionaries and religious order, and Rome's suppression of the order. It is against this backdrop that the period of the Chinese Rites Controversy and several centuries of heightened mistrust between China and the Church began.

## 1.2 The Chinese Rites Controversy, De Propaganda Fide, and the French Protectorate

The Chinese Rites encompassed the following: “(1) the periodic ceremonies held in honor of Confucius, generally but not exclusively by the scholar class in halls or temples dedicated to this great national philosophical mater; (2) the special ritual honors paid to one's ancestors, models of tributs and filial piety there were part of the very social fiber of China and still are today; finally (3) the semantic search for the most appropriate term(s) in Chinese to speak of and to the Christian God.”<sup>37</sup> Addressing the third point, Ricci gave permission to use the terms *tian* 天, or Heaven; *shangdi* 上帝, or supreme emperor; and *tianzhu* 天主, or Lord of Heaven as appropriate terms to refer to God. The debate over the proper term(s) for God, is not only a theological question, it also addresses questions of ecclesiology and missiology, and even forces a debate on the impact and role of culture and politics. There is also an additional competent: historical narrative. It is a controversy mired in the orientalist construction of China as what Giovannetti-Singh notes as “...an unwarranted focus on the theological aspects of the conflict. Which necessarily entailed the Eurocentric assumption that the outcome would be settled in the Vatican by a pope...”<sup>38</sup> It is missiological in that it highlights the differing methodologies between the different orders in their mission work; it is theological due to its focus on the nature of God and religious worship; it is ecclesiastical as it focus on the role of the church structure; finally it is sinological as it is a debate on the understanding of who the Chinese are, whether their own rites are civil or religious, and how to properly incorporate Catholicism in China. In any case the Chinese converts were stripped almost entirely of their agency.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “There was to be no papal embassy to China until the disastrous envoy of 1705 when the Pope's representative, Bishop Maillard de Tournon, fell into deep disagreement with the Kangxi Emperor over the matter of papal supremacy. Kangxi's response was to expel anybody who refused to sign a paper recognizing his authority in matters relating to religion and to imprison Maillard in Macau, where he died in 1707.” Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 102.

<sup>37</sup> 100 documents, Vii.

<sup>38</sup> Gianamar Giovannetti-Singh, “Rethinking the Rites Controversy: Killian Stumpf's Acta Pekinensia and the Historical Dimensions of a Religious Quarrel,” *Modern Intellectual History*, 19, no. 1 (2022): 3,4.

<sup>39</sup> The historical records of Kilian Stumpf (1655-1720), a Jesuit missionary and papal notary, provides an insight into the disagreements, the infighting of the different orders as well as how they viewed and orientalized China. The Acta Pekinensia “a detailed chronicle of the papal legate Charles-Thomas Maillard de Tournon's 1705-6 investigation into the controversy in Beijing” Ibid, 1. This book, a summary of the conflict submitted to Clement IX “captures the orientalist nature of the Vatican's approach, which attempted to remove – and arguably succeeded in doing so – Chinese agency from a controversy in which many Chinese actors and old Chinese books were active participants” Ibid, 5.

The absence of Chinese agency from the process of evangelizing underscored how the Church viewed its own agency in China. Is it fair to say that it viewed itself, its role, as being able to superimpose itself above Chinese culture (thereby adding to and even constructing its very own history) – so their mission was equal arts religious conversion as it was historical revision? It depends, of course, on if the Church saw the rites as either purely religious, as cultural, or a mix of the two. It is also difficult to evaluate what is purely religious and what belongs to the civil/cultural sphere as there often is a convergence between the two. Either way, the evangelizing mission of the Church did presuppose changing Chinese culture.<sup>40</sup> Whether the Church was acting in good faith or not is immaterial; what matters is the perception, and its very perception as being an agent forcing cultural change has created the lasting tension and mistrust on the part of many Chinese.<sup>41</sup>

The Jesuit's universalism and syncretism was necessary for building a diplomatic network with the *literati* and the Kangxi emperor; if it wasn't for this is it likely that Ricci's efforts and the early Jesuit mission would have failed. Yet this cultural exchange and liberal attitude between the Jesuit missionaries and the Kangxi court was short-lived. The period following the death of Ricci in Beijing on 11 May 1610, was marked by great turmoil for the Chinese missions. Similarly, relations with the emperor were unstable and capricious. In Nanjing in 1616 the vice minister of Rites, Shen Que, launched a series of accusations against the Jesuits, calling them "dangerous."<sup>42</sup> This culminated in a "lawsuit [that] was brought against the Christians of Nanjing...the priests were arrested and a proclamation was issued condemning Christian belief".<sup>43</sup> The Nanjing Incident of 1616 ended in 1632, but it significantly altered the nature of the Chinese mission and the goodwill between the emperor and the Church.

Pope Urban VIII (r: 1623-1644) issued the bull *Ex debito pastoralis officii* in 1633, which allowed for the mendicant orders (the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians) to come into China, which effectively ended the Jesuit's monopoly on mission work in China and further soured relations with the emperor.<sup>44</sup> The first Dominican missionary to arrive was Angelo Cocchi in 1633; he was followed, in 1633, by Juan Bautista de Morales. The Dominicans, who professed scholastic dogmatism, were opposed to the Jesuits' conciliatory nature and religious syncretism; they saw all of the traditional Chinese rites as superstitious. The Dominicans formally appealed to Rome and, in 1645, Pope Innocent X (r: 1644-1655) decreed that the practice of the Chinese Rites was incompatible with the Catholic faith. This banned and condemned the practice of Ricci and the Jesuits; however, it was later reversed in 1656 when the Jesuits appealed to Pope Alexander VII (r: 1655-1667), which was reversed yet again and

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<sup>40</sup> "...the concept of "religion" underwent profound changes between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries. Prior to the Vatican's anti-rites rulings of 1704, 1715, 1742, the broader category of "religion" included what we would now deem "culture," "customs," "polities," and "civilities," as well as the "superstition" that we still recognize as a constituent part of "religion" Ibid, 22.

<sup>41</sup> There is the view that since China is historically and culturally detached from Europe, there is a vast chasm between Chinese religious practices and European theological and philosophical thought. While this is true, other Western ideas, concepts have been able to penetrate into and have a large impact in Chinese culture.

<sup>42</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 368.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 224.

<sup>44</sup> Gianamar Giovannetti-Singh, "Rethinking the Rites Controversy," 7.

reinterpreted by Pope Clement IX (r: 1667-1669) in 1669, who decreed that it depended on the circumstances, the issues in question, and thus needed to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.<sup>45</sup>

The lack in consistency and coherence of papal thought, coupled with the mistrust and theological debates (and arguments on acceptable mission practice) between the Jesuits and the mendicants, led to the faith being spread in a sporadic and incoherent way. Papal interventionism with respect to these challenges was only so effective. After all, it was difficult for Rome (the center) to fully understand the nuances of China (the periphery). This was further complicated by the Portuguese *Padroado*, which effectively limited the Pope's authority. The solution for Rome was clear: to establish a central organ (a new curial office) capable of managing all of the Church's mission activity. This would limit the fighting between the orders and ensure that the work was evangelical and spiritual, not political and imperial (thus recentering and reinterpreting mission work as a strict competence of Rome).

The idea of a separate congregation in the Roman Curia for missionaries dates back to Francesco Borgia, one of the superior generals of the Jesuits. He proposed to Pope Pius V (r: 1566-1572) to erect a congregation that focuses on missionary affairs. However, it did not come to fruition as King Phillip II of Spain "did not tolerate the Cardinals 'meddling' in the missionary affairs of his empire."<sup>46</sup> It was finally Pope Gregory XV (r: 1621-1623) who in 1622 erected the Sacred Congregation Propaganda Fide in 1622, now known as the Dicastery for the Evangelization of People.<sup>47</sup>

Propaganda Fide had two main competencies: to (1) promote the evangelization of people throughout the world; and (2) to organize networks capable of performing pastoral ministry, thus conserving the faith.<sup>48</sup> This first part entails building and setting the foundation for the missionary Church; the second, after this foundation is laid, sought to make it self-sustainable. The first part of its mission also entails a top-down (Rome to periphery) centralized structure to mission work. In this way Propaganda Fide sought to extricate missionary work from the colonial project and to place it squarely into the ecclesiastical realm. With respect to the second competency there was also another crucial objective: the promotion and formation of local clergy and a local hierarchy.

This objective of forming indigenous Chinese clergy is seen in Propaganda Fide's Instruction of 1659. This document outlined the Church's updated missionary strategy, requiring that missionaries no longer persuade the Chinese (or other groups of people) to change their customs, their lifestyle, nor to impose the faith upon those who were unreceptive: "make no effort, and by no means persuade those peoples to change their rites, customs, and manners, so long as they are not openly contrary to religion and good manners."<sup>49</sup> It also forbade missionaries

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<sup>45</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 385.

<sup>46</sup> "...non tollerava che i Cardinali si "mischiassero" negli affari missionari del suo impero" Josef Metzler, "La Congregazione 'de Propaganda Fide' E Lo Sviluppo Delle Missioni Cattoliche (Ss. XVIII al XX)," *Anuario de Historia de La Iglesia*, 9 (2000): 146. Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 146.

<sup>48</sup> "(1) promuovere l'evangelizzazione dei popoli in tutto il mondo, cioè propagare la Fede", e (2) "organizzare il ministero pastorale tra i fedeli cattolici nella diaspora, cioè conservare la fede" *Ibid*, 146. Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>49</sup> "Nullum studium ponite, nullaque ratione suadete illis Populis ut ritus suos, consuetudines et mores mutant, modo ne sint apertissime religioni bonisque moribus contraria" (Instruction of 1659).

from engaging in political and commercial activity and called for the creation of a local, indigenous, ecclesiastical hierarchy. In 1665, twenty-three representatives of the Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans held 'The Canton Conferences', which sought to arrive at a uniform missionary method. The conference was completed on 26 January 1668 and the group presented the 42 articles. Article 41 reaffirmed the position taken by Pope Alexander VII in 1656 saying: "...we must not close the door to salvation to innumerable Chinese who would be prevented access to the Christian religion if they were prohibited from doing those things which licitly and with good faith may be done..."<sup>50</sup>

This period was marked by auspicious conditions for the Catholic missionaries. In 1667 the Emperor Kangxi 康熙大帝 assumed full control of the empire, and in March 1692 promulgated the Edict of Toleration 容教令, which allowed for the liberalization and spread of Christianity in Qing China. While this did not give Catholicism a privileged position, it allowed for its unimpeded spread and banded all attacks and persecutions on church property and on missionaries. The Kangxi Emperor, seeing Christianity as promoting rather than impeding social harmony, allowed for Catholicism to spread.<sup>51</sup> Yet this toleration would not last. In the 1680's Missionaries of the *Societe' des missions etrangeres de Paris* (Paris Foreign Mission Society, MEP) were working in China, and they too were critical of the Jesuit's acceptance of the traditional Chinese rites.<sup>52</sup> In 1693, the year following the Edict of Toleration, Bishop Charles Maigrot (MEP), forbade the practice of the traditional Chinese rites ceremonies. Five French bishops denounced the Jesuits in front of the faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne; the verdict, rendered in 1700, stated that the Jesuits were violating the teachings of the Church. The Jesuits asked the Kangxi Emperor for an intervention in which he confirmed that Confucius was "a sage and not a God and that the ceremonies in honor of ancestors only had a civil value."<sup>53</sup> Despite this intervention, Pope Clement XI in his decree *Cum Deus optimus* (1704) forbade the celebration of Chinese rites and prohibited the use of the names 'tian' and 'shangdi' for God; instead, the only acceptable term was 'Tianzhu'.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the Kangxi Emperor's willingness to permit the uninterrupted mission work of the Church, this mission was compromised by Rome's condemnation of the traditional ancestral veneration and the terms allowed for God; the goodwill and openness towards the Church ended. The disjointed approach to China was the result of different pontiffs having different priorities and views of mission work, a lack of cultural sensitivity required to understand China and that the periphery remained distant. Pope Clement XI chose Carlo Tommaso Maillard de Tournon as Ambassador plenipotentiary to the Indies and China, an appointment that further imperiled the state of the Church in China. In 1707, de Tournon's Edict of Nanjing condemned the Jesuit's syncretism and acceptance of the Chinese rites; this essentially nullified the Emperor's decree, from the year earlier, which permitted missionaries in China, only if they followed Ricci's example. In response the Kangxi Emperor ordered him to leave Beijing and into exile in Macau (where he was under house arrest until his death in 1710), banished other missionaries from

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<sup>50</sup> 100 documents, viii.

<sup>51</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 383.

<sup>52</sup> Giovannetti-Singh 9

<sup>53</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 386.

<sup>54</sup> Gianamar Giovannetti-Singh, "Rethinking the Rites Controversy," 10.

China, and in December 1706 decreed that all future missionaries could only operate in China with official imperial approval and the *piao* (*yin piao*, or residence permit).<sup>55</sup>

In response to what he viewed as imperial interference in a strictly religious affair, Pope Clement XI issued decrees in 1710 and 1711 reaffirming de Tournon's earlier decree that the pontiff alone could grant permission for missionary work in China. This was followed by the Apostolic Constitution *Ex illa die*, issued on 19 March 1715, which again limited the practice of the ancestral Rites.<sup>56</sup> The Pope's insistence that the Emperor was meddling in ecclesiastical affairs resulted in his decision to send his second Papal Legate to the Emperor, Bishop Carlo Ambrogio Mezzabarba. He asked the emperor to permit the christian faithful to practice the faith as prescribed by Rome and to recognize Rome as having authority over Chinese Catholics on the matter of all religious issues.<sup>57</sup> Pope Clement XI's successor, Pope Innocent XIII (r: 1721-1724) wrote to the Emperor of China (in a letter dated 2 October 1721) expressing his "...hope for continuing friendship and peace."<sup>58</sup>

This hope for improved relations had little bearing on the actual diplomatic reality between the Church and Qing China. The Kangxi Emperor died in 1722 and this marked another turning point in the relations between Rome and Qing China. Two years later, in January 1724 a Sacred Edict was announced, which listed Christianity among the 'perverse sects and sinister doctrines'.<sup>59</sup> The new Qing Emperor Yongzheng 雍正帝, ordered the confiscation of church property and exiled missionaries and priests; those who stayed and performed their ministry clandestinely were arrested and expelled.

In order to try to calm the situation and preserve the presence of the Church, the Bishop of Beijing, in 1733, issued a decree that Mezzabarba's 'Eight Permissions' must be adhered to. The 'Eight Permissions' was a document that curtailed some of the stricter provisions of the *Ex illa die*. This did not, however, affect in any meaningful way the trajectory of the Church in China. In response to what Rome saw as flagrant disobedience and the flippant application of the Church's ban on the traditional Chinese Rites, Pope Benedict XIV (r: 1740-1758) issued the bull *Ex Quo singulari* on 11 July 1742. This bull built upon the position established in *Ex Illa die*, and solidified Rome's control of the missions. It opened by quoting *Ex Illa die*: "in China there were great strides in the evangelization mission but 'it would have made far greater progress, had not disagreements among the workers sent there by the Holy See interpreted the drive... The disagreements were occasioned by certain ceremonies and rites which the Chinese were accustomed to use for honoring the philosopher, Confucius, and their ancestors...in 1645 this Congregation approved the answers and decisions of theologians who judged that those ceremonies and rites were indeed infected with superstition."<sup>60</sup> It continues: "the missionaries were split into parties. The result was a sharper division of minds and judgements. Preaching, discipline, and instruction became inconsistent and in turn this caused serious scandal and great

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>56</sup> 100 documents

<sup>57</sup> Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. Un Gesuita Alla Corte Dei Ming*, 387.

<sup>58</sup> 100 documents, Xi.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Laven, *Mission to China*, 239.

<sup>60</sup> 100 documents, 46.

loss of faith.”<sup>61</sup> There was deference to the “judgment of whoever is Commissioner and Visitor General Apostolic” and “also to the judgment of the bishops and vicars apostolic in that part of the world. In the meantime however they should take care, with all the zeal and diligence they can, to do away with these pagan rites entirely.”<sup>62</sup>

There was still the ongoing tension between the Church and the Portuguese and the desire of the Roman Pontiffs to recenter missionary work as a purely ecclesiastical function. No doubt the Church benefitted from the *Padroado*. The expansion of the faith came with the expansion of trade networks, that much is true, but as previously outlined the *Padroado* system introduced additional chaos to the Catholic mission network. Missionaries had a dual allegiance, one to the Church, the other to the State and this dual allegiance affected how they were viewed by the Chinese.

In 1658 Pope Alexander VII named two Frenchmen, François Pallu and Pierre de la Motte Lambert, as “apostolic bishops *in partibus infidelium*” and were given the explicit permission to choose a third bishop.<sup>63</sup> This can be viewed as a move by the pope to diminish the monopoly of the Portuguese and build an indigenous clergy (albeit a long-term strategy). In response the Portuguese imprisoned French clergy who couldn’t present proper documents from Lisbon. In 1673 Pope Clement X responded forcefully by ordering that the Archbishop of Goa limit his authority only to Portuguese territory.<sup>64</sup> H.M. Cole suggests that this amounted to a “four-cornered ‘dog-fight’ between the French, Portuguese, and Spanish missionaries plus representatives of the Vatican.”<sup>65</sup> *Ex Quo Singulari* attempted to end this feud between the Papacy and Portugal and between Portugal and the French, yet for the remainder of the 18th century the Portuguese dominated the missionary network in China.<sup>66</sup> It wasn’t until the reign of Louis XVIII (r: 1814-1815) that Portuguese influence waned and France ascended. As the “eldest daughter of the Church” France was the logical successor to Portugal whose claim over the mission network in China ended in 1846 with the investiture of Monsignor Mouly as “chief administrator of the missions.”<sup>67</sup> The ascendancy of the French Protectorate coincided with the period of Christian persecution in China and alongside the treaty period of what the Chinese would call ‘the Century of Humiliation’ 百年國恥.

The Chinese Rites Controversy stands, perhaps, as one of the biggest diplomatic blunders of the Catholic Church in China. The quagmire between Rome and the Portuguese, the Pope and the Emperor, the Chinese and the Portuguese, the religious orders and Chinese officials, Rome and the missionaries, and between the different religious orders themselves, highlights an environment that was highly dysfunctional and totally incapable of pursuing and building a

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<sup>61</sup> 100 documents, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Section 1 to 11 is quoting Given on March 19, 1715 Rome; Section 12-10 quotes September 26, 1735, 50.

<sup>63</sup> H.M. Cole “Origins of the French Protectorate over Catholic Missions in China,” 475.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 476.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 476.

<sup>66</sup> Cole notes that during this period the French influence was made up primarily of the French Jesuit mission in Beijing; however, the order was suppressed, first by the Portuguese, later by the French and then by Rome in 1773. H.M. Cole “Origins of the French Protectorate over Catholic Missions in China,” 477.

<sup>67</sup> “Portugal never officially recognized the French position until 1876, when the Bishop of Macao applied for a French passport for a Portuguese priest” *Ibid*, 478.



sustainable model for evangelization. It was precisely because of this political reality, that the pontiffs of the 17th and 18th century saw it necessary to centralize missionary work under the direct control of Rome, thus emphasizing its purely spiritual purpose. Reclaiming the Church's lost autonomy to the Portuguese under the *Padroado* was important, yet the Church made a serious miscalculation in condemning the traditional Chinese Rites. The Pope, the prelates of Propaganda Fide, and the bureaucratic apparatus of the Roman Curia lacked the cultural expertise and knowledge to understand the nuances of Chinese culture and the importance of ancestral veneration.

Rome's categorical condemnation of the traditional Chinese Rites paralyzed its mission and soured its already fraught relationship with the Chinese. It is not fair to say, however, that the relationship has always been antagonistic, or even incompatible. Clearly the Kangxi Emperor, in his Edict of Toleration, was open to Christianity. The problem is, if we understand correctly the Church's own missiology (which is one of its key diplomatic tools), that the Church was unable to properly establish itself in the Chinese cultural context. Should the Church have continued with the Ricci method then, it is reasonable to suggest, Catholicism would have been much more diffuse in China. The controversy was more about the Chinese (understanding China and the West's relation to it) than it was with the Chinese themselves. It is against this backdrop that one can contextualize the following Century of Humiliation and the ascendancy of the nationalist movement.

### **1.3 The Century of Humiliation and the Rise of Chinese Nationalism**

Beginning in 1839 and ending in 1949 with the triumph of the Maoist revolution, the Century of Humiliation marked a new low point between China and the West, where the former was politically and juridically impotent on its own soil. The first unequal treaty was the Treaty of Nanjing 南京條約, signed on 29 August 1842 after the Qing Dynasty's defeat to the British in the First Opium War 第一次鴉片戰爭 (1839-1842).<sup>68</sup> Before the Treaty of Nanjing the British had no legal status in China and their trade networks were just "tolerated".<sup>69</sup> After the treaty, however, the Chinese ceded Hong Kong and established trade tariffs thereby giving the British a foothold on the mainland – China's sovereignty was considerably restrained. This set the template by which other treaties were modeled and established the playbook for Western international relations with China. It, moreover, introduced two critical legal concepts: most-favored nation status and extraterritoriality.<sup>70</sup>

Attention should be directed to the concept of extraterritoriality as it required the Chinese government to cede "its legal authority over foreign nationals whose countries had treaties with China granting their nationals extraterritorial rights in China."<sup>71</sup> The French negotiated a series of their own unequal treaties, which not only boosted their economic interests in China, but

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<sup>68</sup> Toshio Ueda, "The Abolition Of The Unequal Treaties In China," *India Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1958): 364.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 365.

<sup>70</sup> Mitchell Chan, "Rule of Law and China's Unequal Treaties: Conceptions of the Rule of Law and Its Role in Chinese International Law and Diplomatic Relations in the Early Twentieth Century," *Penn History Review* 25, no. 2 (2009): 19.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

helped solidify their monopoly on mission work. These include the Treaty of Whampoa 黃埔條約 in 1844, the Treaty of Tientsin 天津條約 in 1858 and the Convention of Beijing 北京條約 in 1860. Article 22 of the Treaty of Whampoa, which outlined some of the key provisions relating to its mission work, allowed for the establishment of “churches, hospitals, schools, and cemeteries at the five treaty ports”, the rental of land, and also stipulated “if the Chinese violate or destroy the French churches or cemeteries the guilty ones shall be punished with all the rigor of the law of the land.”<sup>72</sup> This treaty allowed for the uninterrupted practice of Catholicism in China (in port cities under French control) and gave the French a clear extraterritorial status, and thus a definite legal instrument for its protection.

Two edicts were signed, one in December 1845 and the other in February 1846, between the French and the Chinese for the free practice of Christianity and the return of Church property that had been previously confiscated.<sup>73</sup> Cole notes, however, that “these two edicts remained a dead letter and were never enforced until they were inscribed in the treaty of 1860, or in other words, until the French had better legal grounds for demanding their enforcement.”<sup>74</sup> Yet in 1852 the Xianfeng Emperor 咸豐帝 secretly gave his consent for the old anti-Christian laws (which were thought to be abrogated by the treaties) to be retroactively applied.<sup>75</sup> However, a key moment that helped legitimize the French Protectorate and boost their legal status in China came in 1856 with the murder of French Priest Chapdelaine. Though he was proselytizing in the interior, outside of the protection of French port cities, his execution violated the terms of the treaty of Whampoa. This diplomatic fallout provided France with the opportunity to further expand its presence, and status, in China and this materialized in the Treaty of Tientsin (1858).

In the Treaty of Tientsin there were two main articles that concerned missionary work, 8 and 13. The French missionaries were no longer limited to the ports, they could go into the interior (legally) and preach in all of China. The treaty stated: “all which has been previously written, proclaimed or published in China by order of the Government against the Christian cult is completely abrogated and remains without force in all the provinces of the Empire.”<sup>76</sup> This liberalization of Christianity was not only for foreign nationals, but (perhaps of even greater significance) also for Chinese Christians. Moreover, it put all of Christians in China under the aegis of the French. The contractual rights given to the French through these treaties gave them a privileged position in China and gave the missions a distinct French character.<sup>77</sup> For the French to emphasize mission work in these treaties, it is clear that this was at the center of their foreign policy and that it functioned as a tool of expanding its foothold in the East. In this way, France was the preeminent Catholic power in China (and the de facto voice of the Church) and sought to build its own power and prestige through this diplomatic guardianship.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> H.M. Cole “Origins of the French Protectorate over Catholic Missions in China,” 479.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 480.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 480.

<sup>75</sup> Per the Treaty of Whampoa, French missionaries who were preaching outside of French port cities were supposed to be escorted back to said cities by imperial officials. Ibid, 484.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 486.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 482.

<sup>78</sup> This would last until 1907 when “France finally gave official notice that she would henceforth act only in the interests of French missionaries, and the protectorate ended” Ibid, 491.

On the other side of the Unequal treaties is China and central to understanding Chinese legal theory (and the response to these treaties) is Confucianism. The Europeans, who operated within a completely different legal framework, showed the Chinese that their traditional legal system, the underpinning of how it conceived and practiced international relations, was incompatible with the hegemonic West; it made China politically and diplomatically weak. This loss of national sovereignty shaped China's view of the West and of Christianity. Confucianism was predicated upon the idea of *li* 禮 or morality, which "linked government to ethics, ethics to education and to social control. In the Confucian model of government, rulers governed through *li* by educating individuals who deviate from socially accepted rules of behavior."<sup>79</sup> While there were legalistic elements in Chinese jurisprudence, it was predominantly Confucian in its outlook and application. This framework ran against the strict legalism of the Western powers that operated on the punitive idea of the rule of law. As Chan points out, the goal of Imperial Confucianism "was to promote a moral, harmonious society, not merely to punish people for misbehaving."<sup>80</sup>

The Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1911 and it was replaced by the Republic of China 中華民國. The new nationalist government understood the importance of modernizing China's legal, political, and diplomatic models in order to defend itself from the West, abrogate the unequal treaties and reclaim its lost sovereignty.<sup>81</sup> In this collective process of building a new and independent China came another wave of anti-Christian campaigns, which was as much a desire to quell internal divisions (drawn along ethnic and political lines) as it was a reaction to external political threats; it was imperative to arrive at a coherent national identity. Christianity, in many ways, not only hindered, but threatened this new 'Chineseness'. It wasn't just Christianity that the nationalists were opposed to, in fact as part of the New Culture Movement 新文化運動 nationalists had questioned the place and utility of all religions in a modern country. But this modern, anti-imperialist ethos saw Christianity specifically as "...a narrow and intolerant faith in the service of the expansionist West."<sup>82</sup> No doubt the association of the missionaries with the colonial model made it difficult to discern between authentic evangelization and politically motivated work. Missions, then, carried the historical baggage and the perception of being an instrument by which the Europeans humiliated the Chinese and stripped them of their own cultural identity. This contributed to the growth of myriad anti-Christian movements, one such example was Anti-Christian Student League 非基督教學生同盟 in Shanghai in 1922.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Mitchell Chan, "Rule of Law and China's Unequal Treaties," 13.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>81</sup> Mitchell Chan, "Rule of Law and China's Unequal Treaties," 32,34.

<sup>82</sup> Jessie G. Lutz, "Chinese Nationalism and the Anti-Christian Campaigns of the 1920s," *Modern Asian Studies* 10, no. 3 (1976): 397.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 399.

Chiang Kai Shek 蔣介石 was a pivotal figure in the nascent Republic serving as president from 1928 to 1975.<sup>84</sup> His youth and early political career was characterized by a passionate anti-imperialist (and anti-Christian) zeal. In 1926, he said that China's misfortunes were "due to the three evils of opium, Christianity, and foreigners."<sup>85</sup> In this transitional China, one that was still beset by the realities of colonialism, and by a growing communist movement, Chiang sought to construct a modern state that played a larger role in international politics. In order to achieve this vision it was necessary to abrogate the Unequal Treaties, which he considered to be the "very origin of all evil and disgrace for China."<sup>86</sup> Despite his earlier condemnations of Christianity, on 23 October 1930, two years after winning control of the country, Chiang was baptized as a Christian. His conversion made him the first Christian head of state of China and was a massive surprise to the country.<sup>87</sup> His decision was largely influenced by his wife, Mayling Soong 宋美齡, who was a devout Methodist and had studied in the United States. Ching, as a result of his conversion, saw no clash between Christianity and Chinese values; rather, he saw Christianity as being a tool to enable a regeneration of Chinese culture and in building a neo-Confucianism for the 20th century.<sup>88</sup>

Service to the nation, which entailed self-sacrifice, was at the center of Chiang's vision of a strong and independent China. Underpinning this effort of modernization were his plans for economic liberalization; however, the growing influence of communism threatened this. Chiang considered communism as the "greatest calamity the world has ever experienced" and that it was "not only fighting God but...also aspiring to play God."<sup>89</sup> This deep seated fear of communism, and the belief that its defeat was critical for the survival of the newly unified and modern China, made Chiang a natural ally of the Catholic Church. Despite Chiang's conversion, Christianity was still viewed by many as an instrument of the West that atrophied Chinese sovereignty and, consequently, prevented China from maturing into a modern country. The Catholic Church took steps to counteract this narrative, the most significant of which was Pope Benedict's apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* and the episcopal consecration of the first indigenous Chinese bishops in 1926.

#### **1.4 *Maximum Illud*, Celso Costantini and the Indigenization of the Chinese Episcopate**

Under the pontificate of Pope Benedict XV (r: 1914-1922) the Church's missiology was fundamentally transformed. This change represented the Church's long standing desire to reclaim missionary work as a strictly spiritual endeavor, which required a new organizational model of the missions. As a result of the unequal treaties, France was the *de jure* protector of Catholic missions in China and this did help the Church expand: "the number of baptized catholics...rose from 315,000 in 1848 to 2.4 million by 1926" and the number of priests grew

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<sup>84</sup> The government of the Republic of China moved to Taiwan in 1949 after the victory of the Maoist revolution, where it remains to this day. Currently, only 13 states recognize Taiwan as an independent country, one of which is the Holy See.

<sup>85</sup> Pichon P.Y Loh, "The Ideological Persuasion of Chiang Kai-Shek," *Modern Asian Studies* 4, no. 3 (1970): 232.

<sup>86</sup> Toshio Ueda, "The Abolition Of The Unequal Treaties In China," 366.

<sup>87</sup> Pichon P.Y Loh, "The Ideological Persuasion of Chiang Kai-Shek," 226.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 227.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 231.

from 135 to 1,217.”<sup>90</sup> Despite an expanding Catholic community, the Holy See did not have any direct diplomatic contact with China, any attempt to do so was thwarted by the French (which was the case as late as 1919).<sup>91</sup> Many missionaries moreover still felt an obligation to their country of origin, thus feeding into the idea that they were on a project of nation building rather than of evangelization. Benedict XV understood that in order to change the perception of the Church, mission work needed to be decoupled from the colonial project. He achieved this by reemphasizing the missionary’s role as strictly religious and in building an indigenous hierarchy in China.

Father Frédéric Vincent Lebbe, a French priest who arrived in China after the Boxer Rebellion 義和團運動 (1898-1900) was decisive in the effort to build an indigenous hierarchy. He advocated for this as early as 1908, which in turn earned him the scorn of the French and his later expulsion from China. This effort was shared by another priest, Father Anothony Cotta, a friend of Lebbe and a fellow Vincentian, who on 6 February 1917 sent a letter to Cardinal Domenico Serafini, the prefect of Propaganda Fide, titled “*Mémoire sur le Clergé Indigène* (Report on the Indigenous Clergy).”<sup>92</sup> This was followed by another letter Cotta forwarded to Rome, which was originally written by Lebbe to Paul-Marie Reynaud, Bishop of Ningbo (寧波). In this letter Lebbe admonished the missionaries for creating “spiritual colonies” instead of living Churches and for “the national [indigenous Chinese priests] priesthood, being always kept down to the assistant level, is as though foreign in its own county.”<sup>93</sup>

The first concrete step of Benedict XV’s pontificate in addressing the situation of the Church in China came in the *Motu Proprio Dei Providentis*, issued on 1 May 1917. This letter changed the jurisdictional control of the Church in China from Propaganda Fide to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches (now known as the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches). This congregation existed since 1862, as part of Propaganda Fide, but the decision to make it independent of Propaganda Fide emphasized the greater level of attention the Holy See wanted to give the Church in China (and to shed some of the baggage associated with the previous centuries mission work).<sup>94</sup>

The Holy See still had difficulties in making diplomatic inroads with the Chinese. The Chinese government’s wish for the Vatican to establish a nunciature in China was stymied by the French. In order to navigate around this hurdle, the Vatican in July 1919 appointed Bishop Jean-Baptiste-Marie Budes de Guébriant, M.E.P to assess the situation of the church in China by sending a questionnaire to the vicars apostolic and visiting all missionary sites.<sup>95</sup> Later that year, on 30 November, Benedict XV issued his seminal apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*. The letter opens by recalling both the zeal and the persecution of the early missions. It emphasizes the role of the missionaries in saying that “all the responsibility for the propagation of the faith rests

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<sup>90</sup> Paul P. Mariani, “The First Six Chinese Bishops of Modern Times: A Study in Church Indigenization,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (2014): 489.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 489.

<sup>92</sup> Paul P. Mariani, “The First Six Chinese Bishops of Modern Times,” 493.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 493.

<sup>94</sup> Josef Metzler, “La Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide,’” 153.

<sup>95</sup> Paul P. Mariani, “The First Six Chinese Bishops of Modern Times,” 496.

immediately upon them [missionaries], and it is to them especially that the church has entrusted her prospects of expansion.”<sup>96</sup> This expansion is not only the prerogative of the missionaries but the right of the Church as it is “not an intruder in any country; nor is she alien to any people.”<sup>97</sup> By stressing the universality of the Church, Benedict XV was legitimizing the Church’s mission work and entrance into non-Christian countries like China.

At the heart of *Maximum Illud* is the call for the training of local clergy, which is the “greatest hope of the new churches. For the local priest, one with his people by birth, by nature, by his sympathies and his aspirations is remarkably effective in appealing to their mentality and thus attracting them to the faith. Far better than anyone else, he knows the kind of argument they will listen to, and as a result he often has easy access to places where a foreign priest would not be tolerated.”<sup>98</sup> The ultimate objective was not just the training of more indigenous priests, but ensuring that, eventually, they would be able to assume leadership roles in this reconfigured ecclesial structure.<sup>99</sup> The Pope continued, in a more serious tone, warning the missionaries against working towards material ends and for their “terrestrial homeland.”<sup>100</sup> This would only induce a crisis of confidence among the local population and “...give rise to the conviction that the Christian religion is the national religion of some foreign people and that anyone converted to it is abandoning his loyalty to his own people and submitting to the pretensions and domination of a foreign power.”<sup>101</sup> Benedict XV is, on the one hand, saying that the updated metric by which the Church can be considered successful in a mission area is the development of the local clergy. On the other hand, he is signaling to the French that the Church alone controls the missions and expressing to the Chinese that the Church is not some vehicle for the political interests of the Western powers. This document creates more than just a new missiology, it ushers in a new diplomatic reality in China, one where the Church can start to represent itself independent of France (this was not fully realized in 1919, but the change was in motion).

The first step in putting *Maximum Illud* into action was the transfer of the seat of Propaganda Fide from France to Rome. There was considerable resistance to this move by the French as, by virtue of its new geographic location, it entailed centralized pontifical control over mission work and also greater diplomatic clout for the Holy See (which meant a diminished French influence in China). This transfer, which started in 1919, was finally completed, on 3 May 1922 with the motu proprio *Romanorum Pontificum*.<sup>102</sup> Propaganda Fide issued the instruction *De abiiciendis a Missionariis rerum saecularium curis*, on 6 January 1920, which further outlined some concrete ideas for the implementation of the *Maximum Illud*. The instruction was comprised of the following seven points: (1) the missionaries ought to learn the vernacular local of the country they are sent to, so not to be perceived as spreading the culture of their home country, and that this language ought to be used for prayers outside of the mass as

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<sup>96</sup> Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*. (1919), paragraph 8.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, paragraph 16.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, paragraph 14.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, paragraph 15.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, paragraph 19.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, paragraph 19.

<sup>102</sup> Carlo Pioppi, “I Concili Plenari E Provinciali Italiani Durante I Primi Anni Del Pontificato Di Pio XI (1922-1929),” *I Quaderni Della Brianza* 183 (2017): 311. Note: see Figure 3 in the appendix for an excerpt from the Motu Proprio.

well as in catechism; (2) they are prohibited from introducing laws and ecclesiastical customs from their home country, though they are to uphold the discipline of the Church; (3) they are strictly prohibited from engaging in political work, or promoting the politics of their home country; (4) they must fully obey the civil authorities and laws of the receiving country; (5) to abstain fully from engaging in commercial enterprises; (6) they were prohibited from publishing profane books; and (7) their sole aspiration was the glorification of God, not of their homeland.<sup>103</sup>

Pope Benedict XV died on 22 January 1922 and his successor, Pius XI (r: 1922-1939) was even more determined to reform missionary work and establish an indigenous hierarchy. One of his most consequential decisions for the Church in China was the appointment of Celso Benigno Costantini (known in China by the name Gang Hengyi 刚恒毅) as his personal apostolic delegate.<sup>104</sup> Before being sent to China, Pius XI elevated Costantini to archbishop, making him the highest ranking prelate in the country and thus his de facto personal representative. Costantini's main objective was to initiate the process for the selection of the first indigenous Chinese bishops, a decision that was ecclesiastically diplomatically significant.<sup>105</sup> He arrived in China during a period of social and political unrest with the two most significant events defining this period being the May 4th Movement of 1919 and the May 30<sup>th</sup> Movement of 1925.<sup>106</sup> In Costantini's memoir *Con I missionari in Cina (1922-1933)* it is evident that he viewed his mission as being purely religious, yet he was aware that this evangelical mission had political implications. The Church's logic in international diplomacy is entirely different than that of a regular sovereign state or international body as it is built upon the premise that evangelization is its sole temporal aim (a point Benedict XV underscored in *Maximum Illud*). This is seen clearly in Costantini's description of the Vatican's efforts as having a "simple religious, missionary character; it must, therefore, have no political aspect or constraints", that the "Holy See does not do politics...it has no imperialist aim in China", that "the politics of foreign powers is not its business" and that "the missions are at the service of the Church."<sup>107</sup> By emphasizing these points Costantini sought to reframe the popular perception of the Church and to introduce a new diplomatic paradigm in China by continually distancing the Church of the early 20th century from the colonial legacy of mission work – both of which were objectives expounded in *Maximum Illud*.

The Church with the Pope as its visible head formed "a perfect society", yet it did not "meddle in the internal affairs of nations. Where the Church establishes herself, each nation

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>104</sup> Pius XI did not make Costantini representative to China (the State) as the Vatican was, at this time, in discussions to normalize relations with the Third Republic and thus did not want to create a diplomatic crisis. Ibid, 310.

<sup>105</sup> Paul P. Mariani, "The First Six Chinese Bishops of Modern Times," 505.

<sup>106</sup> Jessie G. Lutz, "Chinese Nationalism and the Anti-Christian Campaigns of the 1920s," 396.

<sup>107</sup> "1) La missione del Delegato Apostolico ha un carattere semplicemente religioso, missionaria; non deve aver quindi nessun vincolo nessun aspetto politico. 3) La Santa Sede non fa politica, la politica entra talvolta nel dominio della religione, a allora per accidens, essa deve fare anche della politica. 4) La S. Sede non ha nessun mira imperialista in Cina. La politica delle potenze estere non è affare suo. Il Papa ama la Cina e desidera sinceramente il suo bene. La Cina ai cinesi; 5) Le missioni sono al servizio della Chiesa" (33 Costantini). Translation by the author

conserves its independence, as does the Church itself.”<sup>108</sup> Costantini, again, was articulating a view of the Church (spiritual in practice and independent in structure) that contrasted sharply with how it was perceived by the Chinese public. As an apolitical body it posed no challenge to the civil authority of the nascent nationalist government. However it must be noted that, despite this avowed apoliticism, the pope did have a political function: “...the action of the Pope between nations is that of a friend. Several times the divided nations elected him as arbiter; often he was able to reconcile peoples...this is why the nations of the world receive his representatives and send theirs to him.”<sup>109</sup> The very fact of presenting the figure of the Pope as global mediator and peacebuilder underscored the importance (and uniqueness) of the Holy See’s diplomatic mission, while also looking to ensure the survival and proliferation of the Church in non-Christian areas.

However, amid the climate of the anti-Christian sentiments of the 1920s, the future of the Church was uncertain. While there was a strong anti-religious ethos among the nationalists, the Holy See found common ground in their view of bolshevism as a grave danger.<sup>110</sup> On 12 January 1923 Costantini spoke to General Cao Kun 曹錕 and a group of nationalists at a reception in Baoding 保定.<sup>111</sup> This meeting with the future President of the Republic was a way for Costantini to assure the nationalists that they had a friend in Pius XI, that the Church was committed to a non-inferential role in domestic politics, and that the Vatican fully legitimized the new government. Costantini also shored up favor with the Nationalists by unequivocally condemning communism, which was even more important following the success of the Bolshevik revolution in 1923.<sup>112</sup> In his journal Costantini wrote: “The only way to prevent the

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<sup>108</sup> “La Chiesa, infatti, con il Papa a capo, forma una società perfetta, non vuole immischiarsi nel governo interno delle Nazioni. Là dove la Chiesa si stabilisce, ogni Nazione conserva la sua indipendenza, come la Chiesa la proprio...Il Papa vuole che i cattolici cinesi amino il loro paese e siano i migliori tra i cittadini” Celso Cardinal Costantini, *Con I Missionari in Cina (1922-1933) Memorie Di Fatti E Di Idee*. Vol. I. (Roma: Unione Missionaria Del Clero in Italia, 1946) 68). Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>109</sup> “Il Papa ama tutte le Nazioni, come io, di cui è il Rappresentante...L’azione del Papa fra le Nazioni, è quella di un amico. Più volte le Nazioni divise lo elessero arbitro; spesso egli potè riconciliare i popoli, e non c’è al mondo disgrazia a cui la sua conciliante bontà non cerchi di trovare rimedio. Ecco perché le Nazioni del mondo ricevono i suoi Rappresentanti e inviano i propri a lui” (Costantini 68). Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>110</sup> “I due governatori mi hanno risposto che apprezzano altamente il contributo che la religione offre al bene pubblico e hanno promesso di appoggiare le Missioni. Sono molto preoccupati per le idee bolsceviche, che vanno specialmente penetrando nell’animo dei giovani” Celso Cardinal Costantini, *Con I Missionari in Cina*, 33. Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>111</sup> Cao was President of the Republic from 1923 to 1924 thanks to what Costantini said was his ability in “manipolando accortamente le elezioni” Given in in Paotingfu. Celso Cardinal Costantini, *Con I Missionari in Cina*, 46.

<sup>112</sup> The growth of communism in China exacerbated an already precarious position for the Church amid the fervor of the May 4th Movement and in 1922 the protests of the Anti-Christian Student Federation. In 1922 “Shanghai students formed the Anti-Christian Student Federation, which organized anti-Christian protests in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Canton.” Amnita Arrington, “Recasting the Image: Celso Costantini and the Role of Sacred Art and Architecture in the Indigenization of the Chinese Catholic Church, 1922–1933” *Missiology* 41, no. 4 (September 10, 2013): 442.



nationalist-Bolshevik storm would be to extend a helping hand to China, help it get out of this chaos and then review with it the Treaties which are no longer viable.”<sup>113</sup>

The next step in making inroads with the nationalist government, and countering the narrative of the Church’s ‘foreignness’, was the process of creating an indigenous hierarchy in China. It is important to note that this process was not reactive to the political reality of the 1920s, as it had been desired for some time. In fact, calls for an indigenous clergy can be traced back to Francesco Ingoli, the first secretary of Propaganda Fide (1622-1649), and to Stefano Borgia, who was secretary from 1770-1789, who suggested that even the bishops ought to be native Chinese.<sup>114</sup> Costantini, in a correspondence to the French console Lecompte in 1923, said “the Church cannot remain forever foreign in China, that is with a foreign ecclesiastical hierarchy; it must, one way or another, become Chinese, according to the usage that is practiced all over the world.”<sup>115</sup> It is important to stress the fact that his desire for the inculturation and localization of the Church in China was not to make it independent of Rome (which has never been the objective), but to allow it to become more accessible – to make it, in other words, culturally relevant. A major development in this process came in the Spring of 1924 with the *Primum Concilium Sinense* (the first Plenary Council of China), or the Shanghai synod of bishops (天主教上海会议).

Pius XI in his apostolic letter *Quamquam* (20 January 1924) gave Costantini the authority to convoke and preside over the upcoming council. A few months later Costantini appointed Odorico Cheng Hede 成和德 as the head of the recently created Apostolic Prefecture of Puqi (Chibi) 赤壁市. This was a significant moment as it was the first time a Chinese cleric was put in charge of a missionary territory.<sup>116</sup> He elevated another Chinese priest, Melchior Sun Dezhen 孫德禎 to the Apostolic Prefecture of Lih sien. By preceding the Council with the elevation of two Chinese clerics to head ecclesiastical territories, Costantini was signaling that the time had come to start erecting a local hierarchy. The council was held in Shanghai from 15 May to 13 June 1924 and was comprised of 105 participants.<sup>117</sup> This was a massive shift for the Church in China; the Council produced a series of decrees that were subsequently sent to Rome and, after four years of deliberation, went into effect on 12 June 1929.<sup>118</sup> The Holy See accepted many of these recommendations, chief among which was the reorganization of ecclesiastical territories into 17 new units corresponding “with the administrative division of the Chinese state”<sup>119</sup>, a new

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<sup>113</sup> “L’unica via per impedire la bufera nazionalista-bolsvevica sarebbe quella di porgere una mano amica alla Cina, aiutarla ad uscire da questo caos e poi rivedere con essa i Trattati che non sono più vitali” Celso Cardinal Costantini, *Con I Missionari in Cina*, 210. 23 January 1925

<sup>114</sup> Josef Metzler, “La Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide,’” 151, 152.

<sup>115</sup> “...la Chiesa non può rimanere per sempre straniera in Cina, cioè con la Gerarchia ecclesiastica straniera; deve pure, un giorno o l’altro, diventare cinese, secondo l’uso che si pratica in tutto il mondo” Celso Cardinal Costantini, *Con I Missionari in Cina*, 79).

<sup>116</sup> Pioppi 311

<sup>117</sup> See Figure 1.5 in the appendix for Chapter 1 for a list of the participants.

<sup>118</sup> Pioppi 313

<sup>119</sup> “L’aggruppamento dei vicariati in 17 regioni ecclesiastiche, corrispondenti grosso modo con la divisione amministrativa dello stato cinese” (Pioppi 320).

translation of the Bible and prayers into Chinese, that parochial positions were open to Chinese clergy, and that foreign missionaries should avoid as much as possible any contact with foreign diplomats.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, the Council established (decree 23) that there mustn't be any parallels made between Chinese Civilization and the West and (decree 24) that these steps positively contributed to the view of the Church as universal. In the second book, the title (XXII): *De admittendo clero indigena ad omnia officia* the council explicitly states that "No office is barred to the native clergy, provided they are fit"<sup>121</sup> and that "the First Chinese Council has gladly embraced the teaching of Canon 305. It greatly desires that as soon as possible the day will see the light in which Chinese priests will also be elected as bishops."<sup>122</sup>

The Church looked different in 1926 than it did at the turn of the century. In 1900 there were 741,562 baptized Catholics and in 1926 2,394,962; in 1900 there were 470 Chinese priests and 1,219 in 1926; foreign priests still were more numerous, in 1900 there were 886 and 1,806 in 1926.<sup>123</sup> Despite the growth in the Catholic population, the Church was still a small sect in China and viewed unfavorably by many. That year Pius XI, fully aware of this reality, responded in two ways: first with the release of his encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* and in October with the ordination of the first six indigenous Chinese bishops. On 28 February 1926 Pius XI issued his encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*, which in many ways can be viewed as the second installment to *Maximum Illud*. It signaled to the world that Rome was serious about indigenizing the Church in mission territories.<sup>124</sup> This letter underscored the need of having a local clergy, which was paramount for a more complete and culturally appropriate evangelization. It also stressed that indigenization was important to protect the Church from political instability, to ensure that the Church remained active in China. There of course was a very real concern for this later point. Foreign missionaries in the past had been expelled before and, should that happen again, and no priests be available to minister the sacraments, the Church could not operate. This, again, speaks to the interplay between politics and ecclesiology; the later is, inevitably, shaped by and responds to the former. In *Rerum Ecclesiae* Pius XI wrote:

Before everything else, We call your attention to the importance of building up a native clergy. If you do not work with all your might to attain this purpose, We assert that not only will your apostolate be crippled, but it will become an obstacle and an impediment to the establishment and organization of the Church in those countries. We gladly recognize and acknowledge the fact that in some places steps have already been taken to provide for these needs by the erection of seminaries in which native youths of promise are well educated and prepared to receive the dignity of the priesthood, and are trained to instruct in the Christian Faith members of their own race. But in spite of all this work, we are still a great distance from the goal which we have set for ourselves.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Paul P. Mariani, "The First Six Chinese Bishops of Modern Times," 506.

<sup>121</sup> "Nullum officium clero indigenae, dummodo idoneo, praeccluditur" (Quoting Pioppi 319, quoting CSd 131, in ADV, p. 55).

<sup>122</sup> "Primum Concilium Sinense libenti animo quae canon 305 docet amplectitur. Imo maxime cupit ut quam citissime illa dies illucescat qua Sacerdotes sinenses etiam in episcopos eligantur" (Quoting Pioppi 319, quoting CSd 132, in ADV, p. 55).

<sup>123</sup> Pasquale M. d'Elia, *Catholic Native Episcopacy in China*, 4.

<sup>124</sup> Paul P. Mariani, "The First Six Chinese Bishops of Modern Times," 507.

<sup>125</sup> Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*. (1926), paragraph.19.

This point is expanded upon in section 25 of the letter where he discusses the importance of seminary formation: “...that you will not have turned out men who will not only attract the attention of the leading and learned men of their own country but also priests who will be destined one day to govern parishes and dioceses...”<sup>126</sup> as well as in section 26, “on the contrary, you should prefer the native priests to all others, for it is they who will one day govern the churches and Catholic communities founded by your sweat and labor.”<sup>127</sup> Pius XI was unambiguously signaling to the world that the time had come for local communities to take charge of the Church in their home countries; the period of Eurocentric mission work was slowly coming to an end.

One month later, on 30 March, Cardinal van Rossum, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, announced Pius XI’s decision to consecrate the first Chinese bishops.<sup>128</sup> The consecration was held in St. Peter’s Basilica on 28 October 1926. The bishops were: Philip Zhao Huaiyi 赵怀义, Vicariate Apostolic of Süanhwa 宣化区; Melchior Sun Dezhen 孫德禎, C.M., Prefecture Apostolic of Lih sien; Odoric Cheng Hede 成和德, O.F.M., Prefecture Apostolic of Puki (Chibi) 蒲圻; Aloysius Chen Guodi 陈国砥, O.F.M., Vicariate Apostolic of Fengyang 汾陽; Joseph Hu Roushan 胡若山, Vicariate Apostolic of Taizhou 台州市; and Simon Zhu Zaimin, S.J., Vicariate Apostolic of Haimen 海門.<sup>129</sup>



Msgr. Costantini (center) and the First Six Chinese Bishops before their departure for Rome (Source: *La Chine et la Saint Siège*. Copy made at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome).

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>128</sup> Paul P. Mariani, “The First Six Chinese Bishops of Modern Times,” 508.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 48.



The First Six Chinese Bishops before their episcopal consecration  
(Source: Pasquale M. d'Elia, *Catholic Native Episcopacy in China*. Scan made by M. Santucci at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome).



The First Six Chinese Bishops in Rome after their episcopal consecration  
(Source: Pasquale M. d'Elia, *Catholic Native Episcopacy in China*. Copy made at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome).

Nearly 400 years after Matteo Ricci's arrival in China, the Church had an updated face. This was a true turning point not only because the Church's local hierarchy was now, in part, Chinese, but also because it amounted to a clear departure from the outdated, and eurocentric, model of missionary work. The inertia of this consecration would promote further efforts for expanded localization. This is not to say the Church, neither in China nor in other mission territories, was independent of Rome. Rather, it meant that the Church sought to depoliticize the missions by putting it under its central governing authority, not under the competence of a foreign government. The political implications of this move were significant as it enabled the Holy See to dialogue directly with the Chinese government (thereby legitimizing the Nationalist Government) and, in turn, building its own credibility as a non-inferential player in Chinese society. Moreover, the shift away from a transitory network of missions to a more permanent and self-sustaining model was a way to guarantee the Church's survival in case of political upheaval.

### **1.5 The Legitimation of the Nationalist Government and the End of the Chinese Rites Controversy**

On 1 June 1929 the Nationalist government held a reinterment ceremony for the deceased former leader Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 from Beijing to the new seat of government in Nanjing, among those present was Archbishop Costantini.<sup>130</sup> This ceremony was significant as it was a way for the new government to build their credibility on the international stage. It was also an equally important moment for the Church. The Holy See, the international legal personality of the Church, should not be confused with Vatican City State, which was only created in 1929 with the signing of the Lateran Pacts between Pope Pius XI and Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy.<sup>131</sup> The creation of the State of Vatican City settled *la Questione Romana* (the Roman Question) and gave the Holy See a clearly defined legal territory in which it could operate. Just as the nascent Nationalist Government was looking for political legitimacy, so too was the Vatican. Here, there is an evident desire for reciprocal legitimation between the two states. Costantini's presence, then, at such an event signaled a massive improvement in Sino-Vatican relations. The two states, after years of being stymied by the French, were finally able to start engaging in a more meaningful diplomatic capacity, though it wouldn't be until 1942 that formal diplomatic relations were established.

In 1911 Sun was elected as the provisional president of the Republic of China, though this position was short-lived. In 1912 the abdication of the Qing emperor left a power vacuum in China between Sun, on one side, and Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 on the other.<sup>132</sup> Yuan's installment as president was followed by a period of political instability, which ultimately culminated in the Warlord Era 軍閥時代; the country was divided into spheres of control between the Beiyang Army 北洋軍 – which, with its capital in Beijing, was internationally recognized – and other factions. After being in exile in Japan, Sun returned to China in 1916 to work towards Chinese unification. On 10 October 1919 he resurrected the Kuomintang 中國國民黨 (KMT) and in 1923, under Sun's leadership, the KMT set up a rival government in Guangzhou.<sup>133</sup>

Sun's political philosophy was built upon his "Three principles of the People" 三民主義. These were: Mínzú 民族主義 or nationalism, Mínguán 民權主義 referring to the broad idea of democracy, and Míنشēng 民生主義 welfare.<sup>134</sup> This tripartite division can be understood as reflecting a new political reality and vision for China, one predicated upon self-determination, thus free from imperial rule, and underscored by a massive shift in Chinese relationship to the rest of the world – it sought to reconcile the Chinese spirit with changing political and economic forces. Chiang succeeded Sun as leader of the KMT after his death in 1925 and he continued to incorporate Sun's Three People's Principles into his own political philosophy. Chiang also

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<sup>130</sup> Albert Wu, "On Chinese Rites and Rights," Edited by Sarah Shortall and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins. *Human Rights in History*, (2020): 216.

<sup>131</sup> Luke Cahill, "The Realism of Holy See Foreign Policy," E-International Relations, February 27, 2017. <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/02/27/the-realism-of-holy-see-foreign-policy/>.

<sup>132</sup> Michael V. Metallo, "American Missionaries, Sun Yat-Sen, and the Chinese Revolution," *Pacific Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1978): 267.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 282.

<sup>134</sup> Sun Yatsen, *Fundamentals of National Reconstruction*. Taipei: China Cultura, 1953.

extended it to incorporate the ideas of “anti-imperialism, anti-warlordism, and anti-capitalism.”<sup>135</sup> In this way he clearly solidified his revolutionary vision as one that rebuked the ‘ills’ of modern China. The foreign influence of the past century had led to economic and political domination that was responsible for the internal political fragmentation. For Chiang it was important to mount a unified front against the Beiyang Army, which ultimately materialized into cooperation between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The Northern Expedition 國民革命軍北伐 was launched in 1926 against the Beiyang government in order to bring about Chinese unification. Prior to this, on 20 March 1926, in an incident known as the Zhongshan Incident, 中山艦事件 or the Canton Coup, Chiang purged the communists from the party.<sup>136</sup> The party, after a series of infighting between its left and right wing factions, split a year later. The purge of the communist presence from the party as well as the inter-party split reflects a shift in Chiang’s political calculus. It highlights his concern of the Soviet’s growing influence in Chinese affairs (and with that a growing threat to democracy and the market economy) as well as his concern with a unified party and ideology. This rift launched the Chinese Civil War 國共內戰 which ended in 1949 with the expulsion of the Nationalist government to Taiwan. Chinese reunification (nominally speaking) was in 1928 with the Northeast Flag Replacement 東北易幟. Pope Pius XI sent a letter to the government on 1 August 1928 “rejoicing” over the new found peace and reunification, thereby legitimizing the new government and simultaneously reaffirming the Church’s non-inferential in domestic affairs.<sup>137</sup> Chinese reunification under Chiang was an ideal moment for the Holy See to continue its efforts in building a more bilateral relationship. Moreover, it provided both the Holy See as well as the Republic of China an opportunity to further diminish the French influence and gain legitimacy on the world stage.

In light of the evolving political situation in China the time had come for the Church to formally address the outstanding issue of the Chinese Rites. In 1934 Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, wrote a letter to the Vicars Apostolics of Manciuco saying that the issue would be re-examined.<sup>138</sup> This was a priority in the continuation of the process of localization and in legitimizing the Chinese government. For Pius XI it was also a matter of closing a period of dark relations between the Church and the Chinese for, “the cursed issue of the Chinese Rites has setback the evangelization in China for two centuries.”<sup>139</sup> On 28 May 1935 Propaganda Fide issued its instruction *Normae statutae ab ordinariis in civitate sinking congregatis: I. Imago Confucii in scholis exposita, honores qui ei tribuuntur*<sup>140</sup> which permitted Catholics to partake in the Confucian rites as they had, as the letter stated, a purely civic

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<sup>135</sup> Pichon P.Y Loh, “The Ideological Persuasion of Chiang Kai-Shek,” 219.

<sup>136</sup> Albert Wu, “On Chinese Rites and Rights,” Edited by Sarah Shortall and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins. *Human Rights in History*, 2020: 585.

<sup>137</sup> Ernst P. Young, 'Chapter 11', *Ecclesiastical Colony: China's Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate* (New York, 2013) 234.

<sup>138</sup> Josef Metzler, “La Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide,” 150.

<sup>139</sup> “La maledetta questione dei riti cinese ha ritardato di due secoli l’evangelizzazione della Cina” Josef Metzler, “La Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide,” 148. Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>140</sup> See Figure 1.6 in the Appendix of Chapter 1.

significance; it also allowed for the hanging of images of Confucius in Catholic schools. This letter applied to the entirety of the Church in China.

Pope Pius XI died on 10 February 1939 and his successor was the seasoned diplomat and former Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli who chose the name Pius XII (r: 1939-1958). Against the backdrop of a world that was heading towards a global war, Pacelli was elected due to his diplomatic acumen; prior to serving as secretary of state he was Papal Nuncio in Munich from 1917 to 1925 and in Berlin from 1925 to 1929. He was also a staunch anti-Communist, a subject that preoccupied much of his pontificate. Just like for Pius XI, for Pacelli the question of ending the Chinese Rites Controversy was also fundamental to the Vatican's evolving geopolitical strategy.

The instruction *Plane compertum est* from Propaganda Fide was approved by Pius XII and 8 Dec 1939. The instruction opens by recalling that the ceremonies in question (from ancestral veneration to the honors paid to Confucius), which while “in earlier times...were tied in with pagan rites...[now] merely preserve civil expression.”<sup>141</sup> The instruction is divided into 4 short articles expressing the official end of the ban on the traditional rites. The first article, citing the new Chinese government's commitment towards religious freedom, states that since the rites are “not carried out with the intention of rendering religious worship...Catholics are allowed to be present at testimonials honoring Confucius.” The Second article states that it is no longer forbidden for images of Confucius to be displayed in schools, or “to honor it with a bow”. The third article says that Catholics who are ordered to attend public ceremonies can do so, as long as they remain “passive” and make signs that are “merely civil”. The fourth article allows for “bowing the head and other token of civil honor” for the deceased. The instruction closes by reiterating that the Chinese Rites Controversy “have been settled” and that missionaries and priests are no longer forced to take the oath of obedience as established in *Ex quo singulari*.<sup>142</sup> The letter was signed by Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, Prefect and Archbishop Costantini Secretary. The Church, after nearly three centuries, had finally closed the chapter on the Chinese Rites Controversy. It wasn't, however, until 1946 that a fully established indigenous hierarchy formed in China.<sup>143</sup>

The Church, however, still had much progress to make in China – one of the biggest concerns for the Vatican was the growing threat of Communism, a concern that Chiang shared; this made the two natural allies. As will be explored in the next chapter the Vatican's unequivocally condemnation of communism, while gaining the favor of the Nationalists, put it on a future collision course with the CCP.

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<sup>141</sup> 100 Documents 87

<sup>142</sup> 100 Documents 87

<sup>143</sup> Josef Metzler, “La Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide,’” 153.

## **Chapter 2: The Catholic Church and Communism: From Marx's Manifesto to the New Millennium**

### **2.1 Communism as the Root of All Evil: From Pius IX to Pius XIII**

The publication of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 brought about a paradigm shift in modern political thought. It established the framework for the modern communist movement and cemented the idea of class struggle as the defining theme in history. The subjugation of the proletariat was upheld, in no small way, by religion (which functioned to protect the class interests of the *bourgeoisie*), or what Marx called the "opium of the people".<sup>144</sup> Religion, for Marx, was palliative; it was a tool used to oppress the lower class (and prevented man from achieving self-realization) and, for that reason, it had to be abolished. Marxism's atheistic materialism made it a natural enemy of the Catholic Church. The first pope to condemn communist ideology was Pius XI (r: 1846-1878) in his encyclical *Qui pluribus*, issued on 9 November 1846 – two years before Marx's *Communist Manifesto* was published.<sup>145</sup> In this letter the Pope reinforced the Church's right to exist, its moral authority, and denounced what he saw as the threat of marxism (which ran contrary to man's reason). The Pope wrote:

The nefarious doctrine of Communism points to this, as they say, most adverse to natural law itself; once it is admitted, the rights of all, things, properties, indeed human society itself, would be turned upside down. The dark snares of those who, dressed as lambs but with the spirit of wolves, insinuate themselves with false appearances of the purest mercy and the most severe virtue

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<sup>144</sup> Brendan Daly, "The Situation of Communism in Canon Law," *The Canonist* 8, no. 2 (2017): 214.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 218.



and discipline aspire to this: they gently surprise, softly squeeze, secretly kill; they distract men from the observance of every religion, and make havoc of the Lord's flock.<sup>146</sup>

For Pius IX the diffusion of marxism presented an existential threat as it would lead to total social unrest and an undoing of the social order (which, as the Church taught, was contrary to man's nature as revealed by God). There is, then, in evaluating the Church as a political actor an impulse for self-preservation. Just as any state would act to protect its people or territorial boundaries, the Church – having a unique political structure and universal authority over Catholics world over – saw marxism as threatening its spiritual authority and thus its political legitimacy and interests.

Pius' successor, Leo XIII (r: 1878-1903) was equally forceful in his condemnation of communism. His second encyclical letter *Quod Apostolici Muneris (de erroribus modernis)*, issued on 28 December 1878 excoriated the “deadly plague” which was said ideology being pushed by “that sect of men who, under various and almost barbarous names, are called socialists, communists, or nihilists.”<sup>147</sup> Admonishing them for their rejection of God and reason, the Pope continued “[it] threatens civil society with destruction”.<sup>148</sup> As the Pope articulated in this letter maintaining the public order (and by extension upholding the idea that social inequality is inevitable and property “inviolable”) was an obligation the Church shouldered. Communism, since it was opposed to what the Church saw as the natural law (and the very foundation of society) was inherently opposed to the mission of the Church and as such must be strictly condemned.<sup>149</sup> Leo XIII did, despite his critiques of the modern world and marxian dialectical materialism, dedicate a great deal of writings during his pontificate on the need for expanded workers rights. Thus, by expanding Catholic social teaching to talk about the conditions of the working class, namely the importance of fair wages and trade unions, Leo offered an alternative to the nihilism and social instability he saw in marxist ideology and, in that way, hoped to dissuade disaffected Catholics from becoming marxists.

The Church's opposition was not just ideological, it was also reactive to what was happening in the Soviet Union in the early 1920's. The anti-clericalism of Lenin and the communists resulted in the suppression of the Russian Orthodox Church and its clergy.<sup>150</sup> In this period communism was growing beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. In 1928, at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, a programme was adopted which stated: “one of the most important tasks of the Cultural Revolution affecting the wide masses, is the task of systematically and unswervingly combating religion.”<sup>151</sup> The Church had a legitimate concern that if communism were to spread to historically Catholic countries, like Italy, and even to

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<sup>146</sup> “A questo punta la nefanda dottrina del *Comunismo*, come dicono, massimamente avversa allo stesso diritto naturale; una volta che essa sia ammessa, i diritti di tutti, le cose, le proprietà, anzi la stessa società umana si sconvolgerebbero dal fondo. A questo aspirano le tenebrose insidie di coloro che, in vesti di agnelli, ma con animo di lupi, s'insinuano con mentite apparenze di più pura pietà e di più severa virtù e disciplina: dolcemente sorprendono, mollemente stringono, occultamente uccidono; distolgono gli uomini dalla osservanza di ogni religione, e fanno scempio del gregge del Signore.” Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus*. (1846). Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>147</sup> Leo XIII, *Quod Apostolici Muneris: De Erroribus Modernis*. (1878), paragraph 1.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 2.

<sup>149</sup> Paul Higginson, “The Vatican and Communism from 'Divini Redemptoris' to Pope Paul VI,” 159.

<sup>150</sup> Brendan Daly, “The Situation of Communism in Canon Law,” 14.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 214.

foreign lands where it was present, like China, then it was only a matter of time before it too would be abolished.

Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (issued on 19 March 1937) was a response to the intensity of Stalin's Great Purge in the Soviet Union as well as the spread of communism in Catholic countries like Spain and Mexico. "This modern revolution", according to Pius, would lead the world to fall "back into a barbarism worse than that which oppressed the greater part of the world at the coming of the Redeemer".<sup>152</sup> The threat of "bolshevistic and atheistic Communism... aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization."<sup>153</sup> By referencing the encyclicals of Pius IX and Leo XIII, Pius XI was clearly demonstrating that the Church not only had not changed, but that it would assume an even harder line against communism. Moreover, the Church viewed marxism as not just a political ideology (which sought to supplant religion), but as a quasi-religious sect itself. Reducing the suffering of man to strictly material conditions elevated the state as the sole guarantor of salvation. In this salvific vision there is no room for God, and religion is viewed as an inherent obstacle to class consciousness and to the emancipation of the working man. With the Church as representing the "true civitas humana", Communism became its ultimate foil as a "satanic scourge".<sup>154</sup>

In order to respond to the real suffering of the working class (a main subject of concern for Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*), Pius took the opportunity to also inveigh against the abuses of economic liberalism, which was responsible for the abject conditions of the working class in Europe. Though, as Pius said, formulating a technical system of economics is not a competence of the Church, the Church, nonetheless, seeks to help the poor and uplift the working class. Improvements in the material conditions of the working class is part of the Church's mission in promoting the dignity of man. While affirming that the unfettered capitalism of the period resulted in inequality and disaffection, communism (by virtue of its dialectical materialism) estranged man from his true nature. This encyclical, moreover, was different from previous papal encyclicals in that it was not just responding to the spread of an ideology, but condemning the current regimes that had taken root following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Pius was careful to distinguish his criticism of the Soviet regime from his admiration and closeness to the Russian people, who were "deceived by fallacious hopes."<sup>155</sup>

Though not mentioned explicitly, the spread of communism in China was a top concern for the Pope; China would become a sort of proxy between Moscow and the Holy See. Moscow, since the 1920s, was already circulating propaganda in China, but this campaign intensified in the early part of the 1930s.<sup>156</sup> Clearly concerned about the diffusion of Moscow's propaganda in China and its financial support of the CCP, Archbishop Costantini (who was Apostolic Delegate to China until 1933) urged the Holy See to expedite the creation of an indigenous hierarchy in

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<sup>152</sup> Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, (1937), paragraph 2.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 3.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 7.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 24.

<sup>156</sup> Chiara D'Auria, "La Propaganda Comunista in Cina Nella Corrispondenza Di Mons. Celso Costantini," *Rivista Di Studi Politici Internazionali* 80, no. 4 (2013): 603.

the country.<sup>157</sup> On 14 April 1932, in a correspondence between then Secretary of State Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (future Pope Pius XII) and Costantini, the former expressed his grave concern over the spread of Communism in the country and what that meant for social order and for the Church.<sup>158</sup> As D’Auria notes, this correspondence was important as it highlights the anxiety the Church had for the future of China and also gives an insight into how the future Pius XII would approach the communist regimes. Both Moscow and the CCP viewed the Church as a key obstacle and nemesis – it had to be weakened and ultimately destroyed.<sup>159</sup>

In a letter responding to Cardinal Pacelli, Costantini noted that in China communist ideology was not being spread by the working class, but more so by intellectuals who were financed by the Soviets.<sup>160</sup> Costantini also highlighted to Pacelli that the legacy of the unequal treaties (and the sentiment of ‘national humiliation’) was still a relevant rallying call against the West. In fact, in 1923, following an accord reached between the USSR and Sun Yat-Sen, the Soviets supported efforts to unify the country, which in turn facilitated the short lived union between the CCP and the KMT.<sup>161</sup> The Soviets expressed their desire to treat China as an equal player on the international stage and took the position that the unequal treaties (words of the Russian ambassador Lev Karakan, quoted by Costantini) “...must be not only revisited but torn up and abolished because they are strangling China”.<sup>162</sup> The unambiguous condemnation of the unequal treaties by the Soviets was an attempt to build solidarity with the Chinese people and to utilize nationalist sentiment to foment an uprising against the remaining vestiges of western imperialism in China.

It is against this backdrop of the anti-religious propaganda in China that Costantini immediately set out to develop an ‘anti-propaganda’ campaign to retard the spread of the communist message, and to modify religious celebrations, as to not upset public opinion against the Church. Six years after the ordination of the first indigenous Chinese bishops, the process of localization and the creation of a truly indigenous hierarchy was far from complete. Costantini understood that this only played into the narrative that the Church remained a locus of foreign influence and was opposed to the Chinese national spirit and to the welfare of the Chinese people. The only countermeasure to this was the continued inculturation of the Church, but in many ways this process began too late and its rollout too slow; this would have serious ramifications in the following decades.

Pope Pius XII (r: 1939-1958) was elected on 2 March 1939 after the passing of Pius XI in February of that year. In many ways he was even more intense in his condemnation of communism than his predecessor and his pontificate can be seen as representing the apex of tensions between the Church and communist regimes. The ever expanding presence of communism, coupled with the relative instability of the nationalist government, underlined the urgency in opening up relations with China. Finally, in 1942, formal diplomatic relations were

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 603.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 604.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 605.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 607.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 608.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 608.

established between the Holy See and Republic of China.<sup>163</sup> The first representative from the Republic of China to the Holy See was Minister Xie Shoukang 謝壽康, who arrived in 1943.

Three years later, in 1946, he was succeeded by Minister Wu Jingxiong 吳經熊.<sup>164</sup>

Also that year, Pius' Apostolic Constitution, *Quotidie Nos*, officially established dioceses in China. There is a canonical significance, as well as a cultural/political, significance to this. Canonically, a diocese has a bishop as its head. Before 1946, the ecclesiastical administrative units were apostolic prefectures, which are administrative units in mission territories. In erecting dioceses, Pius was elevating the status of the Church in China, and signaling that China was an equal and that its status as a mission territory was a thing of the past. There are, of course, political implications to this as well.

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<sup>163</sup> Gerald Chan, "Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations: Problems and Prospects," *The China Quarterly* 120 (1989): 816.

<sup>164</sup> Wu's tenure, however, was short. He left for the United States in June 1949 given the political climate in China and the impending victory of the Communists. *Ibid*, 816.

# ACTA APOSTOLICAE SEDIS

COMMENTARIUM OFFICIALE

## ACTA Pii PP. .XII

CONSTITUTIO APOSTOLICA

SINARUM

HIERARCHIA EPISCOPALIS IN SINIS INSTITUITUR

PIUS EPISCOPUS

SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM

**Quotidie Nos, universo christiano orbi, licet immerito, praepositi, suprema ex hac Petri cathedra tamquam e specula dominicum agrum circumspicientes et in dissitas potissimum gentes evangelicae adhuc ignaras veritatis mentis Nostrae oculos concupiscenti animo convertentes, humillimas Patri Nostro, qui est in caelis, preces effundimus, ut Eius regnum toto terrarum orbe iuxta Christi praeceptum prolatetur stabilisque constituatur. Quas quidem humillimas preces Nostras misericors Deus numquam non exaudire dignatur; neminem profecto latet et maximum Nobis solatium affert in hac temporum acerbitate quod non paucae et amplissimae regiones *albae sunt iam ad messem* (Ioan. IV, 35), in Asia Orientali, praesertim frequentissima incolarum regio Sinesis, ubi impensae Evangelii praeconum operae, indefessum cleri, indigenae apostolicum studium, Deo auctore, largiter iam adimitur.**

**Primum quidem catholica fides sub fine saeculi decimi tertii per cl. mem. Ioannem de Montecorvino et B. Odoricum a Portunaone in Sinas invecta est, ac magnopere per totum saeculum decimum quartum per Franciscalis familiae sodales disseminata. Postea vero cum christiana res penitus intercidisset, iterum exeunte saeculo decimo sexto feliciter**

The Title Page Of *Quotidie Nos*, From *Acta Apostolicae Sedis Commentarium Officiale Annus XXXVII I - Series II - Vol. XII I*.

The new international order that developed immediately after the end of the Second World War can be characterized as being both bipolar and hegemonic. Bipolarity exists when

two actors exercise majority military might, as was the case of the early Cold War period with the United States on one side and the USSR on the other. Hegemony is evident in that the prevailing socio-cultural and economic models (in the West and non-Soviet aligned world) were fashioned after American trends.<sup>165</sup> In this model there is, moreover, a constant state of tension between the two poles – this was clearly the case of the Cold War. In this new bipolar political reality it was impossible for the Holy See to remain neutral. If communism spread outside of the Soviet sphere and into the West, then that would present an existential threat to the Church. Like his predecessors, Pius XII understood that as pontiff it was incumbent upon him “to warn and admonish the world, to expose error and point out sin.”<sup>166</sup> And Pius, who viewed communism as intrinsically evil, depraved and contrary to human nature, did just that.

1949 marked a turning point for the Holy See’s relationship with communist regimes for two main reasons. The first was the trial and conviction of Cardinal Mindszenty, the highest ranking cleric in Hungary. The second was the Maoist victory in China. Cardinal Józef Mindszenty was arrested on 26 December 1948 and was convicted of treason in a show trial on 3 February 1949. Pius XII, abhorred by the treatment of the Cardinal, excommunicated those involved in the trial nine days later. This was followed by the Holy Office’s Decree Against Communism (issued on 1 July 1949), which excommunicated Catholics who were members of the Communist Party and/or tenaciously believed in the tenets of communism. The letter was divided into four brief questions:

- 1) Whether it is lawful to enlist or show favor to the Communist party?
- 2) Whether it is lawful to publish, read, or disseminate books, newspapers, periodicals or leaflets in support of Communist doctrine and practice or write in them any articles?
- 3) Whether Catholics who knowingly and freely place actions as specified in Nos. 1 and 2 above may be admitted to the sacraments?
- 4) Whether Catholics, who profess and particularly those who defend and spread, the materialistic and anti-Christian doctrine of the Communists, ipso facto, as apostates from the Catholic faith, incur excommunication reserved especially by the Holy See?<sup>167</sup>

The letter responded in the negative to the first three questions and affirmative to the last. Pius was signaling to the world, in unambiguous terms, that not only being Catholic and a committed communist were incompatible, but also that the Vatican’s campaign was intensifying. The purported neutrality that characterized the Holy See’s diplomacy (and that was implored often by Pius during the course of the Second World War) was hereon suspended. This also points to a paradox in the Pope’s approach to world affairs. Pius XII, like his predecessors, “never saw communism as a political programme for economic and social reform but as a new religion.”<sup>168</sup> Thus, by framing communism in a quasi-religious lens (or better yet by showcasing how it

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<sup>165</sup> Thomas J. Volgy and Lawrence E. Imwalle, “Hegemonic and Bipolar Perspectives on the New World Order,” *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 4 (1995): 823.

<sup>166</sup> Paul Higginson, “The Vatican and Communism from ‘Divini Redemptoris’ to Pope Paul VI,” *New Blackfriars* 61, no. 719 (April 1980): 183.

<sup>167</sup> Holy Office’s Decree Against Communism (1949).

<sup>168</sup> Paul Higginson, “The Vatican and Communism from ‘Divini Redemptoris’ to Pope Paul VI,” 163.

sought to uproot and replace Catholicism) the roman pontiffs could then justify intervening in temporal affairs where communism was present and spreading.<sup>169</sup> Behind the Iron Curtain in the Soviet sphere, the persecution of religious groups intensified and this made any attempt at coexistence impossible for clergy; even if they wanted to seek some form of recognition by the state, this was strictly prohibited by the Vatican.<sup>170</sup> For Pius XII, opposition to the communist regimes, even up to the point of martyrdom, was heroic.

Pius XII, like his predecessors, was concerned more about the future than the present, yet with Pius there was a clear visceral reaction towards communism. Even though Pius XII was clearly thinking about a post-communist world, his actions also corresponded to the immediate reality of communism in a way that many of his immediate predecessors did not. There is a certain degree of realism in the Holy See's foreign policy making calculus: short term sacrifices are made if that entails the long-term survivability of the Church in a given area. Clearly, the Church could not remain neutral when it came to the issue of communism or to the events that soon unfolded in China. Higginson points out that Pius forwent neutrality as he "quietly supported the formation of NATO...an unholy alliance of the United States finance, the propertied sections of the European community, and the Vatican, combined to oppose Communism in any and every way possible".<sup>171</sup> The Vatican's anti-Communist position animated its not-so-subtle involvement in the 1948 Italian election, which, as many scholars suggest, prevented a communist victory in the country.

The second major event in 1949 came on 1 October when Mao Zedong 毛澤東 declared victory over the Nationalist government and inaugurated the birth of the People's Republic of China 中华人民共和国. Mao's victory can be attributed to a variety of factors, including poor leadership and betrayals in Chiang's army, tepid support from Washington D.C. for Chiang, and strong support of Mao from the Soviets. The Soviets, via occupied North Korea, were able to supply Mao with arms and undertook a massive campaign to help rebuild destroyed rail networks in Manchuria.<sup>172</sup> Mao's conception of power and statecraft was pure marxian. According to this theory, the class which controlled the means of production, controlled all political power. China was however still a largely agrarian country and the level of poverty was high. One of the first measures Mao introduced was his Land Reform Movement 土地改革运动, which fundamentally reordered the distribution (and ownership) of land in China.<sup>173</sup> Fundamental to Mao's success

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<sup>169</sup> Though, in Article 24 of the Lateran Treaty it states: "In regard to the sovereignty appertaining to it also in international matters, the Holy See declares that it desires to take, and shall take, no part in any temporal rivalries between other States, nor in any international congresses called to settle such matters, save and except in the event of such parties making a mutual appeal to the pacific mission of the Holy See, the latter reserving in any event the right of exercising its moral and spiritual power. The Vatican City shall, therefore, be invariably and in every event considered as neutral and inviolable territory." Lateran Pacts of 1929.

<sup>170</sup> Paul Higginson, "The Vatican and Communism from 'Divini Redemptoris' to Pope Paul VI," 162.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>172</sup> Chang 292

<sup>173</sup> Under Mao's Land Reform, there was a redistribution of land. In his treatise, *The Question of the Cadres*, Mao wrote, "In economically backward and semi-colonial China the landlord class and the comprador class are wholly appendages of the international bourgeoisie, depending upon imperialism for their survival and growth. (selected works of Mao Tse-Tung Volume 1 Foreign Language Press Peking 1965 subsection 'The Question of Cadres' pg.14).

was the Cadre System. The cadres 干部, were more than party members, they were committed full time to the running of the party and linking with the local population. According to Mao the cadres must be “versed in Marxism-Leninism, politically far-sighted, competent in work, full of the spirit of self-sacrifice, capable of tackling problems on their own, steadfast in the midst of difficulties and loyal and devoted in serving the nation, the class and the Party.”<sup>174</sup> In building up this cadre system, Mao was not only expanding the apparatus of the party, but was politicizing nearly all facets of life in China.

Relations between the Holy See and the People’s Republic of China took a turn for the worse. In September 1951 internuncio Antonio Riberi 黎培理 was expelled from Nanjing and, a year later, moved to Taipei 臺北市, where the Republic of China had moved its government.<sup>175</sup> After his expulsion, and the expulsion of almost all foreign clergy from the mainland, Pius responded in his Apostolic letter, *Cupimus Imprimis*. This letter can be viewed as the first installment in a series of three papal documents dealing specifically with China. Issued on 18 January 1952 Pius opened by expressing his admiration of the Chinese people and its civilization. The tone quickly changed and from there he remarked that the communists’ interference into the ministry of the Church, which was not only an obstacle to true freedom but also made them “an enemy of your people [the Chinese].”<sup>176</sup> He, moreover, recalled the steps the Church took in erecting a local hierarchy as a demonstrable effort in ecclesiastical localization. Most notably, in this letter, Pius said that the Church does not contradict any doctrine, public or private institution that is “true” and rooted in “justice, liberty, and charity.”<sup>177</sup> By making this distinction the Pope was effectively delegitimizing the Maoist regime. Any regime that did not correspond to what the Church saw as being ‘true’ could, following this logic, be condemned and thus the Holy See had a legitimate reason to interfere in worldly affairs.

The second installment in this series was the encyclical *Ad Sinarum Gentem* (To the Chinese People) issued on 7 October 1954. This letter opens by lamenting the fact that “the conditions of the Catholic Church in your midst have not improved in the least.”<sup>178</sup> This came after Riberi’s expulsion from China and rapidly deteriorating religious freedom. Even more forceful than *Cupimus Imprimis*, this letter not only condemned the Maoist regime, but also underscored that Catholics cannot be communists (a point already articulated in the 1949 Decree of the Holy Office). The central focus of *Ad Sinarum Gentem* was the diminished autonomy of the Church in China: “...the Catholic Church in your nation, as in all the others, will not be able to be ruled with “autonomy of government”<sup>179</sup> he continued “...it will be entirely necessary for your Christian community...to be subject to the Supreme Pontiff...and be strictly united with

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<sup>174</sup> Selected works of Mao Tse-Tung Volume 1 Foreign Language Press Peking 1965 subsection ‘The Question of Cadres). May 7, 1937, pg. 291

<sup>175</sup> Riberi remained in Taipei until 1959, when he was succeeded by Bishop Joseph Caprio. Chan notes, “in the same year the Republic of China raised its Vatican mission to ambassadorial status...the Holy See, in 1966, reciprocated “by raising its legation in Taipei to the status of embassy” (Chan 816,817).

<sup>176</sup> “Come nemica della vostra gente” Pius XII, *Cupimus Imprimis*. (1952). Trans. Matthew Santucci.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Pius XII, *Ad Sinarum Gentem*. (1954), paragraph 2.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, paragraph 10.



him.”<sup>180</sup> This put the Chinese faithful in a difficult position, for any resistance to the regime was severely punished, often by death. Yet, in Pius’s calculus, rebuking Mao and declaring the regime illegitimate was essential in reinforcing the role of the Pope as the sole spiritual authority in the life of Catholics. This runs against the marxist ethos that animated Mao and, no doubt, further inflamed relations between the Vatican and the PRC. This point is further evident by the Pope’s condemnation of the “Three Autonomies” which would, as Pius explained, led to the establishment of a “national” church, which “could no longer be Catholic because it would be the negation of that universality or rather ‘catholicity’ by which the society truly founded by Jesus Christ is above all nations and embraces them one and all.”<sup>181</sup>

Mao mistrusted the Church, and saw it as antithetical not only to the revolutionary zeal but to the very essence of ‘Chineseness’. Catholic loyalty to Rome became a defining feature of the tension between the CCP and the Holy See.<sup>182</sup> The CCP further attenuated Rome’s control of the local church with the creation of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, (zhongguo tianzhujiao aiguoahui 中國天主教愛國會) (CCPA). Established in 1957, it followed many of the same principles as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (self-government, self-support and self-propagation) in which churches would break ties with foreign missionary networks and become fully independent.<sup>183</sup> The CCPA was part of the broader network of the State Administration for Religious Affairs 国家宗教事务局, also known as the Religious Affairs Bureau of the CCP.<sup>184</sup> As seen in the Statue of the CCPA (see Figure 2 in the appendix of this chapter for the complete text) the association exists as a bridge between Church and state in order to foster “love for the country and the religion formed by priests and Chinese Catholic faithful” and to “unite the priests and the faithful of the entire country, under the direction of the of the Communist Party...to promote the patriotic spirit...and to participate actively in the construction of the socialist country.”<sup>185</sup>

Attempts at creating this parallel structure were evident as early as 1951. In March of that year Riberi penned a letter to the country’s priests and bishops telling them to not take part, in any capacity, in the three self movement.<sup>186</sup> The creation of the CCPA was a direct repudiation of Rome’s authority and traditional Catholic teaching, since it founded on the principles of “self-election” and “self-ordination” 自选自圣.<sup>187</sup> Bishops are selected by the Pope and while they do have the power to consecrate other Bishops, it requires the explicit approval of Rome. The CCPA undermined the Pope’s authority and influence over Chinese Catholics by making the

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid, paragraph 11.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, paragraph 22.

<sup>182</sup> Chang notes: “The tenacity and effectiveness of the Catholics perturbed the regime” the regime used this moment to “accelerate the takeover of Catholics institutions, including schools, hospitals, and orphanages” (Chang 321).

<sup>183</sup> Peter R. Moody, “The Catholic Church in China Today: The Limitations of Autonomy and Enculturation,” *Journal of Church and State* 55, no. 3 (2013): 408.

<sup>184</sup> Gerald Chan, “Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations: Problems and Prospects,” 820.

<sup>185</sup> Statuto dell’Associazione patriottica cattolica cinese (1962).

<sup>186</sup> Gerald Chan, “Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations: Problems and Prospects,” 816.

<sup>187</sup> Rachel Xiaohong Zhu, “The Division of the Roman Catholic Church in Mainland China: History and Challenges,” *Religions* 8, no. 3 (2017): 3.

local episcopal structure autonomous of the Church and, instead, putting it under party supervision. On 13 April 1958 three priests were illicitly consecrated bishops, who were members of the CCPA, and were swiftly excommunicated.<sup>188</sup> As Moody points out, “from Rome’s perspective, the Chinese ordinations were valid but illicit” and thus carried the penalty of automatic excommunication.”<sup>189</sup>

*Ad Apostolorum Principis*, issued on 29 June 1958, directly repudiated this parallel governmental structure. In a similar tone to *Ad Sinarum Gentem*, the Pope once more praised the greatness of Chinese civilization, while also saying that “the Church in your lands in recent years has been brought to still worse straits.”<sup>190</sup> Pius from there excoriates the creation of the CCPA saying, “an association has been created among you to which has been attached the title of “patriotic,” and Catholics are being forced by every means to take part in it.”<sup>191</sup> He continued, “...this association aims primarily at making Catholics gradually embrace the tenets of atheistic materialism.”<sup>192</sup> Pius XII is clearly rebuking the claim that the CCPA would advance social cohesion and love for the country – as always he viewed it as a way to subvert the hierarchy of the Church and Rome’s direct authority. Autonomy runs counter to what the Church teaches (by separating the Catholics from the Pope) and thus is impermissible.

The importance placed on a clearly defined hierarchical structure, sheds more light on just how important the ordination of the first six Chinese bishops was and why it was so crucial for the Church in legitimizing itself in China. Bishops, however, needed to be loyal to Rome, not subject to an organ of the CCP. What is perhaps even more insightful in this letter is the following: “the power of the Church is in no sense limited to so-called ‘strictly religious matters’, but the whole matter of the natural law, its institution, interpretation and application, in so far as the moral aspect is concerned, are within its power.”<sup>193</sup> This excerpt gives a valuable insight into the complicated framework of the Vatican’s foreign policy. As stated before, many of the previous pontiffs stressed that the Church has a strictly spiritual purpose, but as argued (and as explicitly stated here) this is never truly the case. The Holy See’s interest, as both a state and as the governing force of the global Catholic Church, is self-preservation and its influence and interests extend outside of the small confines of Vatican City State. Moreover, the Church viewing itself as the custodian of moral law gives it a mandate to not only preserve said law, but to intervene politically in order to defend it when it is being infringed upon. This becomes a key justification for the Church’s involvement in non-spiritual affairs. In fact, it can be argued that since natural law touches upon every aspect of life in the Church, it has, as a political actor, a clear justification in intervening. Pius XII fully embraced and utilized this justification, which resulted in his hardline approach and abandonment of the role of mediator.

In an analysis on the canonical status of Communism under Canon Law, the following was presented as the typical playbook for how Communist regimes attempt to undermine the Church:

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<sup>188</sup> Peter R. Moody, “The Catholic Church in China Today,” 408.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 409.

<sup>190</sup> Pius XII, *Ad Apostolorum Principis*. (1958), paragraph 8.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 10.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 11.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

- 1) Above all by breaking the unity with Rome, by preventing contact of the hierarchy and faithful with this center of the Catholic Church. At the same time by skillful propaganda must be undermined the respect and affection of the clergy and faithful toward the Holy Father,
- 2) By breaking up the unity of the bishops among themselves,
- 3) By breaking up the unity between bishops and priests,
- 4) By breaking up the unity among priests themselves,
- 5) By breaking up the unity of the clergy and the faithful.<sup>194</sup>

In this framework it is clear that the CCP (as other communist regimes had done in Eastern Europe) sought to splinter the Church – by severing the bishops from the Pope – and to ultimately suppress it. The creation of the CCPA satisfies the first point: contact with Rome was severed and the new bishops conference answered directly to the CCP. It also satisfies the second-fifth points. Not all bishops joined the CCPA, in fact many did not. The persecution of Catholics intensified and this caused the splintering of the Catholic community into an ‘official’ Church as supervised by the CCPA and the underground Church which remained loyal to Rome. Membership had nothing to do with being Catholic, instead it was a litmus test for loyalty to the regime.

When Pius XII died in 1958 the situation of the Church in China was grim. His pontificate was consequential, not because he was able to make progress in China, but for the exact opposite reason; his staunch anti-communism precluded nearly any form of dialogue. Did this exacerbate an already precarious situation for the Church? Many scholars would affirm, but it can also be argued that whether or not there was another pontiff – one more open to dialogue – the result would have been the same. This was not due to Pius XII’s retooling of papal diplomacy or personal crusade against communism, but instead due to the ‘baggage’ of the Church in China, the fact that it had only began the process of localization some three decades prior (due mainly to the obstacle presented by the French Protectorate), and – most importantly – due to the CCP’s intransigent anti-religious ideology. Whether Pacelli was pope or someone else would not have changed the situation. Mao was categorically opposed to religion and there would have been a persecution of the Church regardless. It is important to remember that the Catholic Church was not the only religion to face persecution in this period, even the traditional Chinese folk religions were severely suppressed. As will be seen in the next section, Pius XII’s successor was much more conciliatory towards communism, but this did not lead to any meaningful improvement in relations between the Holy See and the CCP. In fact, in the following decades religious persecution intensified.

## **2.2 *Aggiornamento*: the Pontificates of John XXIII, Paul VI and the Vatican’s New Approach to Global Diplomacy**

On the evening of 25 October 1958 after a four-day conclave the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, stepped out onto the loggia of St. Peter’s as Pope John XXIII (r: 1958-1963). Roncalli’s election represented a massive shift from the pontificate of Pius XII. Like Pacelli, Roncalli had a long diplomatic career, serving as a papal diplomat in Turkey,

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<sup>194</sup> Brendan Daly, “The Situation of Communism in Canon Law,” 215.

Bulgaria, and France. Yet John XXIII's approach to the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, and his understanding of the modern world, was markedly different from that of Pius XII.<sup>195</sup> This process of *aggiornamento*, opening up, is evident in several different ways. First we can see in the early development of *Ostpolitik*; the second, is in his monumental papal encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963); and the third was the convocation of the Second Vatican Council. What all of these underline is that John XXIII sought to create a new relationship between the Church and the world and to bring it more in line with the contemporary era by changing the prevailing attitudes of the Catholic hierarchy.

The first point to be addressed is *Ostpolitik*, or the eastern policy. Though it matured during Paul VI's pontificate, it no doubt has its foundation in John's. If Pius XII's relationship with communism was characterized by confrontation then *Ostpolitik* can be viewed as a direct reversal of that as it prioritized dialogue.<sup>196</sup> Vukicevic notes that in the early period of the Cold War there were three main factors in Vatican-Soviet relations. One was demographic, the second cultural and historic, and the third political.<sup>197</sup> Regarding the demography of countries in the Soviet sphere, there were many that had large Catholic populations, namely Croatia, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, which accounted for roughly 90 percent of Catholics in the region.<sup>198</sup> The cultural and historic element is closely connected to the first as many Catholics in these countries constructed their personal and national identity on their faith. The third point deals with the varying degrees of freedom afforded to religious and political pluralism in the Eastern European states.

Dunn writes, "what bothered the church the most was the fact that its hierarchy in Eastern Europe was decimated – the Communists were not allowing the Vatican to fill episcopal vacancies except in Poland and, to a degree, in East Germany. Since the Catholic Church is essentially dependent upon its bishops...the Communist policy was very disturbing."<sup>199</sup> As already mentioned, regarding the situation in China and the creation of the CCPA, without bishops the Church is unable to perform its pastoral duties and cannot properly function. Thus decimating the local episcopal hierarchy was a priority of the communists. The Holy See, recognizing that the Church faced extinction in the Soviet territories, sought to revamp its foreign policy doctrine by making it less idealistic, and more realistic, thereby allowing the possibility for compromise. Following the death of Joseph Stalin in 1955 there was a process of "decolonization" that happened in Eastern European countries.<sup>200</sup> One such example was in

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<sup>195</sup> Boris Vukicevic, "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe: Ostpolitik of the Holy See," *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 49 (2018): 120.

<sup>196</sup> Following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and after Stalin's Great Purge in the mid to late 1930's, the ecclesiastical structure of the Church in the Soviet Union was almost nonexistent. "By the end of the second five year plan, the hierarchical and clerical structure of the church was nonexistent; bishops and priests had virtually all disappeared. Without a clerical structure, it is difficult for the Catholic Church to function, and thus, the Communists shrewdly attacked the church where it was most vulnerable. Only a few priests were still active by 1939."

Dennis J. Dunn, "The Vatican's Ostpolitik: Past And Present," *Journal of International Affairs* 36, no. 2 (1982): 248.

<sup>197</sup> Boris Vukicevic, "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe," 121.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

<sup>199</sup> Dennis J. Dunn, "The Vatican's Ostpolitik," 249, 250.

<sup>200</sup> Boris Vukicevic, "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe," 121.

Yugoslavia, which did not want to join either of the two blocs, but instead launched the Non-Aligned movement.<sup>201</sup> Vukicevic notes that the Holy See, looking to distance itself from the United States, embraced this movement, which in turn would restore a sense of neutrality, thereby boosting the Holy See's image in communist countries and lend it credence as a mediator.

The second shift away from Pius XII's foreign policy, and a step towards dialogue, is evident in John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961), which even earned the praise of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.<sup>202</sup> In this encyclical the Pope, in a section titled *On Socialism*, reaffirmed Pius's main critiques of communism saying that since it "proposes a form of social organization which aims solely at production, it places too severe a restraint on human liberty, at the same time flouting the true notion of social authority."<sup>203</sup> However, a few lines below, he wrote "but in the twenty years which have elapsed since the changing economic climate noted at that time by Pius XII the economic scene has undergone a radical transformation, both in the internal structure of the various States and in their relations with one another."<sup>204</sup> Here, the Pope was referencing the economic transformation, and the rapid decolonization, happening in the global south. Economic development must, moreover, exist to promote "social progress and the well-being of all citizens."<sup>205</sup> Clearly, John was not rebuking his predecessors, as pontiffs such as Leo XIII and Pius XI spoke about the need for economic development that prioritized the poor and working class. However, it is bolder in that it more explicitly emphasized the collective good and condemned the inequality in the economically developed world. This shift also required a greater level of dialogue between the Church and the world. John wrote, "Differences of opinion in the application of principles can sometimes arise even among sincere Catholics. When this happens, they should be careful not to lose their respect and esteem for each other. Instead, they should strive to find points of agreement for effective and suitable action..."<sup>206</sup>

Concern for the collective welfare, which upheld the dignity of man, did require some degree of state intervention. This point was developed even further in his monumental encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (issued on 11 April 1963). More than commenting on economic relations, the Pope was making a reflection on the new international system, which was a product of different social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. It is important to spend time understanding this document as, it can be argued, it is one of the most important papal documents of the last century. In the main body of the text 'common good' appears 40 times, 'peace' 34 times, 'dignity' 31 times, and 'co-operation' 6 times. These are the central themes, or rather the aims of the encyclical. Peace is only achieved if there is a recognition of the common good both in microtransactions between individuals and microtransactions between states.

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<sup>201</sup> "Yugoslavia was the last socialist country in Europe to sever relations with the Holy See, in late 1952, and became the first (and, as time would tell, only) to reestablish these relations" Boris Vukicevic, "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe," 128.

<sup>202</sup> Boris Vukicevic, "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe," 125.

<sup>203</sup> John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*. (1961), paragraph 34.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 238.

*Pacem in Terris* opens with the Pope lamenting the “disunity among individuals and nations.”<sup>207</sup> This disunity, according to John, arose from the false equivalency of man's law and God's law, or rather the supremacy of the former over the latter. The abandonment of God's law inevitably resulted in a lack of peace in the world. A central tenet of God's law, and thus an imperative element for building peace, was the recognition that “each individual man is truly a person.”<sup>208</sup> This recognition of ‘personhood’ entails the right to worship, to be “accurately informed about public events”<sup>209</sup> as well as his right to economic equity, such as a fair wage and the private ownership of property.<sup>210</sup> This personhood, which carries a set of rights for man, is constructed upon the inherent dignity of all man, which is not specific to one culture or political framework, but to the “world-wide fellowship of man.”<sup>211</sup> Since the inherent dignity of man is seen as a universal axiom, it could never be “welded together by force.”<sup>212</sup> Thus the legitimacy of a state rests upon a recognition of these fundamental rights. John repeats this idea: “the attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities”<sup>213</sup> and that “authority...cannot be misdirected against the moral order.”<sup>214</sup> To repeat what the Pope said: state authority exists only for the protection and promotion of the common good. In this encyclical, John never criticized communism by name, which is unsurprising given his prioritization of dialogue over confrontation and his desire to seek out common interests. He did, however, inveigh against the arms race that was occurring between the U.S. and the USSR, which caused “people...[to live] in the grip of constant fear.”<sup>215</sup>

However, the Pope alluded to cooperation with the authoritarian regimes: “among the essential elements of the common good one must certainly include the various characteristics distinctive of each individual people.”<sup>216</sup> This points to a shift away from the one-size-fits-all political doctrine of Pius XII to one that recognized the realities, and complexities, of the new international order. As a way to navigate this political quagmire John XXIII praised the United Nations for its “farsightedness” in strengthening “peace between nations, and of encouraging and assisting friendly relations between them, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect, and extensive cooperation in every field of human endeavor.”<sup>217</sup> The UN surely embodied the spirit of co-operation that was necessary in the modern world, not only between Catholics and non-Christian Catholics, but between men of all faiths. *Pacem in Terris*, due to its boldness and seemingly abrupt break with past papal doctrine, is a foundational document for the Holy See's contemporary foreign policy. It clearly outlined the broad framework of *Ostpolitik* as well as gave shape to the Holy See's updated diplomatic *modus operandi* – one that is, arguably, still in force today. It, moreover, aided the Holy See in rebuilding its image of neutrality and the pope as mediator.

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<sup>207</sup> John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*. (1963), paragraph 4.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, paragraph 9.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, paragraph 12.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, paragraph 21.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, paragraph 25.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, paragraph 34.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, paragraph 54.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, paragraph 83.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, paragraph 111.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid, paragraph 55.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, paragraph 144.

Further evidence of John XXIII's role as mediator is seen in his efforts to intervene in the Cuban missile crisis; while unsuccessful, he earned him the praise of Khrushchev.<sup>218</sup> Here the Pope demonstrated his commitment both to the neutrality of the Holy See as well as the emphasis of dialogue as its chief diplomatic tool: "I cannot attribute ill-will to either side. If I do, there will be no dialogue and doors will be closed."<sup>219</sup> The improved relations with the Soviet premier laid the foundation for the Holy See to open up new diplomatic channels, as evidenced by Casaroli's visit to Prague and Budapest in May 1963, something that would have been inconceivable for Pius XII.<sup>220</sup> This shift undertaken by John, and entrusted to Casaroli, was a massive refashioning of the Church's foreign policy calculus. The Holy See understood that communism was not a transitory phenomenon and that the previous hardline approach of Pius XI and Pius XII only served to legitimize religious persecution in the eyes of communists, which, in turn, led to the local churches being strangled.<sup>221</sup> It was not sustainable for the Church to operate clandestinely via underground networks. "Aggressively confronting the Communist world and calling the faithful to martyrdom simply encouraged the Communist states to further persecution and slowly destroyed the local Churches."<sup>222</sup> There was another pragmatic reason for John's softening stance on communism: the Church was losing membership to worker's movements and left wing political parties. As long as the Church was viewed as being at the nexus of the capitalist class and western political ambitions, it could not exercise its neutrality and thus lost legitimacy. Even with respect to China, John attempted to dramatically change the relationship between the Holy See and the CCP. Chan notes that in 1962 "John XXIII promised to discontinue using the word 'schism,' which the Vatican had used since the late 1950s to describe the Church in China."<sup>223</sup>

The third and final factor of John's pontificate that showcases a change in the Church's relationship with the world was his convocation of the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 1962.<sup>224</sup> The Council was a way for the Church to reevaluate its relationship with the world, to make it more relevant to modern man. This process of *aggiornamento* did not just concern the Church's internal structures but also externally as an actor on the international stage. In his opening address to the Council John said:

"But for such a doctrine to reach the multiple structures of human activity, which concern individuals, families and social life, it is first of all necessary for the Church not to depart from the sacred patrimony of truth, received from parents; but, at the same time, it must look at the present, at the new conditions and forms of life introduced in today's world, which have opened new paths for the Catholic apostolate."<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Boris Vukicevic, "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe," 126.

<sup>219</sup> Paul Higginson, "The Vatican and Communism from 'Divini Redemptoris' to Pope Paul VI," 166.

<sup>220</sup> Boris Vukicevic, "Foreign Policy Doctrine of the Holy See in the Cold War Europe," 126.

<sup>221</sup> Paul Higginson, "The Vatican and Communism from 'Divini Redemptoris' to Pope Paul VI," 168.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>223</sup> Chan 819

<sup>224</sup> As early as 1959 John had intentions of calling an ecumenical council. Paul Higginson, "The Vatican and Communism from 'Divini Redemptoris' to Pope Paul VI," 165.

<sup>225</sup> Solemn Opening of The Second Vatican Council Address Of His Holiness John XXIII, Thursday, October 11, 1962

This excerpt from the Pope's opening address reinforces the idea that it was not about what the Church believed, but how the message was to be delivered. This change in relations with the world was a hallmark feature of John XXIII's pontificate and, no doubt, his enduring legacy.

On 3 June 1963, less than a year after convoking the council, John XXIII died and that cast into doubt the future of the reform. There were major divisions between the conservative and progressive factions of the Church cardinals, one of which was the softened approach towards communism. Individuals such as Cardinals Ottaviani and Siri saw John's approach as setting a dangerous precedent. Nevertheless, John XXIII's successor was the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, who chose the name Paul VI (r: 1963-1978). John's pontificate (a few months shy of 5 years) was transitional in the sense that it was shorter than both his predecessor Pius XII (19 years) and his successor Paul VI (15 years), yet, his impact on the Church was incalculable. The reforms started by John were enthusiastically continued by Paul VI in both his own writings and in the sessions of the Council.

Despite pushback from the conservative wing of the council fathers, communism was never mentioned explicitly in any documents produced during the sessions. The primary reason for this is that the Council wanted to maintain neutrality and retain the spiritual and pastoral nature of the Council. One of the main documents of the Council, the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope) was oriented towards those outside of the Church and sought to reconfigure the faith in the modern context. The first chapter of part 1, *The Dignity of the Human Person*, did, however, outline the problems atheism presented for modern man, which it classified as one of "the most serious problems of this age."<sup>226</sup> Attention should be placed on the following excerpt from the constitution to further understand how the Church approached the problem of atheism:

"Not to be overlooked among the forms of modern atheism is that which anticipates the liberation of man especially through his economic and social emancipation. This form argues that by its nature religion thwarts this liberation by arousing man's hope for a deceptive future life, thereby diverting him from the constructing of the earthly city. Consequently when the proponents of this doctrine gain governmental power they vigorously fight against religion, and promote atheism by using, especially in the education of youth, those means of pressure which public power has at its disposal."<sup>227</sup>

Here we can see that the council is referring to the atheistic materialism of the communist regimes.<sup>228</sup> The council was not suggesting that atheism means the absence of religion, rather it is showing (just like previous pontiffs had) that it seeks to liberate man in a purely material way and, therefore, assumes a quasi-religious character. Just as John XXIII wrote in *Pacem in Terris*, *Gaudium et Spes* reinforced the notion that these regimes limit the true freedom of man. By

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<sup>226</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, (19 chp 1 pt 1)

<sup>227</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, (20, chapter 1, part 1)

<sup>228</sup> Higginson notes, "in a footnote to the Constitution the commission explained that, despite the petitions to the contrary, it 'judged that its references to atheism satisfied the wishes of the Council as a 'whole', and there was therefore no need for an 'explicit condemnation of Marxist atheistic communism'" Paul Higginson, "The Vatican and Communism from 'Divini Redemptoris' to Paul VI: Part 2," *New Blackfriars* 61, no. 720 (1980): 235.



suggesting that materialistic atheism grew from a spiritual abeyance, the only antidote can be spiritual in nature. Dialogue, then, with atheistic regimes is not to be precluded, but encouraged, even if “some state authorities make between believers and unbelievers, with prejudice to the fundamental rights of the human person.”<sup>229</sup>

The process of inculturation (or localization), adopting the Church to local contexts and cultures “derives from a pastoral concern that the church be able to engage with secular modern culture.”<sup>230</sup> The themes of dialogue are continued in Paul VI’s first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964). In sections 101-103 under the heading of ‘On Communism’ Paul VI condemned the attempt of politicians who subscribed to these regimes in oppressing the Church and all people who recognize the role and importance of religion. “Instead of dialogue, therefore, there is silence, for example, the only voice that is heard is the voice of suffering. By its suffering it becomes the mouthpiece of an oppressed and degraded society, deprived by its rulers of every spiritual right.”<sup>231</sup> Despite this lack of dialogue on the part of communist regimes, Paul VI articulated that it was incumbent on the Church to present the faith in a more “profound” and “purer” way in order to even attempt opening up channels of communication.<sup>232</sup> Paul, just like his predecessor, was searching for peace (the Church’s mission), and the only way to achieve this in the modern political context was through dialogue. The changes brought about in the Church in this period reflect an inherent will to change just as much as a recognition of the necessity to change.

This call for dialogue characterized Paul VI’s approach to China, amid a rapidly deteriorating situation for the local Church. In June 1963 sent a message to the Chinese shortly after his election. He said: “To belong to the Church does not weaken the love of the Chinese Catholic for the country; on the contract, it reinforces it and makes the Catholics participate in the spirit of responsibility to the security, the peace and progress of the country. The Church does not want to dominate, but to serve.”<sup>233</sup> The Pope’s words reflect this new foreign policy framework of openness and dialogue, while also harkening back to the words of former pontiffs that there was no contradiction between being Chinese and being Catholic. This appeal is seen again in a telegram sent from Paul VI to Chairman Mao on 31 December 1965: “the prestige enjoyed by China today attracts the attention of the whole world. We beg you to welcome this appeal and these wishes which we formulate before God for the whole Chinese people at the beginning of the New Year.”<sup>234</sup> This is one of the clearest examples of Paul’s conciliatory attitude and desire for opening up dialogue with the CCP.

Paul VI’s commitment to dialogue and to the new international system is evidenced by his embracement of the United Nations.<sup>235</sup> In 1964, the Pope sent Alberto Giovannetti to serve as the first Observer to the United Nations. While, even to this day, the Holy See is not a member

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<sup>229</sup> Gaudium et Spes, (21, chapter 1, part 1)

<sup>230</sup> Peter R. Moody, “The Catholic Church in China Today,” 404.

<sup>231</sup> Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*. (1964), paragraph 103.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, paragraph 104.

<sup>233</sup> A Collection of Documents on the History of the 60 Years of Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations ‘To the Chinese Leaders After He Was Elected Pope’ pg. 29

<sup>234</sup> A Collection of Documents on the History of the 60 Years of Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations page 91

<sup>235</sup> Paul Higginson, “The Vatican and Communism from ‘Divini Redemptoris’ to Pope Paul VI,” 167.

state of the U.N., it does have permanent observer status. In October 1965 Paul was the first Pope to address the general assembly of the United Nations:

He is your brother, and even one of the least among you, representing as you do sovereign States, for he is vested-if it please you so to think of Us-with only a mute and quasi symbolic temporal sovereignty, only so much as is needed to leave him free to exercise his spiritual mission and to assure all those who treat with him that he is independent of every worldly sovereignty. He has no temporal power, no ambition to compete with you. In point of fact, We have nothing to ask for, no question to raise; at most a wish to express and a permission to request: to serve you, within Our competence, disinterestedly, humbly and in love...Whatever your opinion of the Roman Pontiff, you know Our mission: We are the bearer of a message for all mankind.<sup>236</sup>

Paul's address underscored the Church's mission as being purely spiritual, thus claiming no temporal power and to build up, in front of the General Assembly, the Church's image as mediator and peacebuilder. Can the Holy See only be interested in strictly spiritual matters? The answer to that question is no. The Church, given the universality of its mission and membership, has tangible interest around the globe. And even when it speaks on matters of faith there are very real political implications for that (this subject will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter). By speaking to the General Assembly of the Union Nations, the Church was relying upon very real political instruments to help adapt itself to a rapidly changing, multicultural, and soon to become multipolar world. For Paul, even if the resolutions of the United Nations are non-binding it was a forum for dialogue and that something he emphatically stressed as being part of authentic diplomacy.

There are two other documents from Paul VI that warrant discussion. The first was the *Motu Proprio Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum* (issued on 24 June 1969), which outlined the role of papal diplomats in their relationship with states and the local Church. They served at the behest of the pope, and their mission was predicated on "the exercise of this multiform mission of ours requires an intense exchange of relations between Us and Our Brothers in the Episcopate and the local Churches entrusted to them."<sup>237</sup> Papal diplomats relied upon the knowledge of the local bishops in order to make sound decisions. The letter goes on to note that while the "aims of the Church and the State are of a different order"<sup>238</sup> it is also true that "both one and the other work for the benefit of the common good"<sup>239</sup> Papal diplomats, then, act as an integral link between the local church and the Holy See to transmit information to the Holy See and to give the pope the opportunity to understand the situation in a given country better.

Then there is the 1971 Apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, in which the Pope had dispensed with the idea that there was a singular approach to teach Catholic social doctrine, especially in the context of countries under communist rule. The Pope wrote, " In the face of

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<sup>236</sup> Robert John Araujo, "The International Personality and Sovereignty of the Holy See," *Catholic University Law Review* 50, no. 2 (2001): 315.

<sup>237</sup> "L'esercizio di questa nostra multiforme missione impone un intenso scambio di relazioni tra Noi e i Nostri Fratelli nell'Episcopato e le Chiese locali loro affidate" Paul VI, *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*. (1969). Trans. Matthew Santucci

<sup>238</sup> "È ben vero che le finalità della Chiesa e dello Stato sono di ordine diverso" Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> "...ma è anche vero che l'una e l'altro agiscono a beneficio di un soggetto comune" Ibid.

such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country.”<sup>240</sup> Here, the Pope is acknowledging that the Church had to continue with the process of localization, for without it the Church would be unable to adapt itself within different local, regional, and national contexts.

Both in *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum* and in *Octogesima Adveniens*, Paul, while reaffirming the importance (and centrality) of the petrine office and ecclesial communion, broaden the scope of the Church’s localization efforts and, in countries where the situation for Catholics was particularly difficult, difference was given to the communities (bishops and lay faithful) in those states. This second point is clearly demonstrated by the importance given to nuncios to listen to local bishops and to the faithful on the ground. This is, undoubtedly, putting the spirit of the Second Vatican Council in practice and one of the most significant advancements for ecclesiastical localization. By giving the local episcopal conferences greater liberties, the Church could, ostensibly, have a more mature response to the complex regional problems. Despite Paul VI’s goodwill, his attempts at dialogue, and his softening stance on dialogue, his pontificate coincided with one of the darkest periods for the Church in China, the Cultural revolution.

### **2.3 From Mao’s Cultural Revolution to the Transformative Pontificate of John Paul II**

On 16 May 1966 a circular of the Central Committee of the CCP was published which effectively launched the Cultural Revolution.<sup>241</sup> The contents of this document give an insight into what the next ten years would look like in China: “Chairman Mao often says that there is no construction without destruction. Destruction means criticism and repudiation; it means revolution.”<sup>242</sup> The continued construction of the marxist state required nothing less than an intensification of ideological purity and the violent suppression of all religious activity in China.<sup>243</sup> While before, there were attempts to control religion and fundamentally alter its perception in the public consciousness, the Cultural Revolution sought to eliminate it altogether. This is also rooted in Mao’s strict Marxian understanding of power which “regarded non-communist authority as illegitimate power.”<sup>244</sup> Religion, because of the influence it had in shaping individuals personal habits, loyalties, and consciousness was particularly worrisome for Mao, and for the internal stability of the regime.

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<sup>240</sup> Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*. (1971), paragraph 4.

<sup>241</sup> This 16 May circular was a response to the ‘*Outline Report on the Current Academic Discussion made by the Group of Five in Charge of the Cultural Revolution*’, which the circular deemed to be antithetical to the revolutionary spirit and the teachings of Mao.

<sup>242</sup> The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, “Circular of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party,” in *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution 1966-1967*, n.d., 24.

<sup>243</sup> Peter R. Moody, “The Catholic Church in China Today,” 409.

<sup>244</sup> Ram Naresh Sharma, “Mao’s Concepts of Power, Authority and Legitimacy,” *China Report* 25, no. 2 (1989): 138.

The first step in attacking religious ideas and practices came with the elimination of the ‘Four Olds’ (old ideas, old values, old customs, and old traditions).<sup>245</sup> This applied both to the traditional religions, such as Confucianism<sup>246</sup>, Buddhism, and Taosim, as it did to the popular (local religions) that were prevalent in rural villages. The CCP’s persecution of Catholicism was particularly severe since it was still viewed as having an ‘imperialistic’ presence. The Church’s teaching *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside of the Church there is no salvation) cast it in diametric opposition to the CCP which taught that the atheistic materialism proposed by marxist doctrine was the only possible avenue for human ‘self-realization’.<sup>247</sup> Mao relied upon associations, such as The Red Guards 紅衛兵 to execute the program of the Cultural Revolution by “identifying all kinds of old and new ‘class enemies.’”<sup>248</sup> Catholic clergy and faithful fell into this category, many of whom were harassed, sent to labor camps, tortured, and even executed.<sup>249</sup> Not even the clergy who were members of the CCPA were immune from the terror. Church property was expropriated and books, vestments, statues (any visible expression of the faith) was destroyed.



Red Guard Attack against Beijing’s South Church, 1966. (Private Collection; Anthony E. Clark, Ph.d.)

<sup>245</sup> Jiping Zuo, “Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China,” *Sociological Analysis* 52, no. 1 (1991): 101.

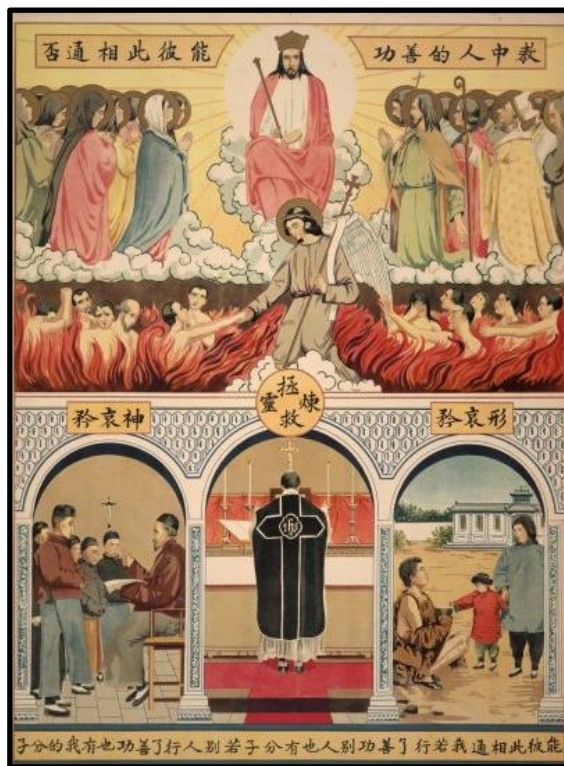
<sup>246</sup> As noted in the first chapter, Confucianism can be viewed more as a philosophy, a moral code governing behavior, than it was a religious creed with strict doctrines. However, it too was suppressed during the Cultural revolution given that, historically, it was utilized to maintain hierarchical relations in imperial China. To that end, it was considered anachronistic and contrary to the revolutionary spirit.

<sup>247</sup> Jiping Zuo, “Political Religion,” 100.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>249</sup> The persecution of Catholic clergy did not begin in 1966, immediately following the Revolution there were instances of harassment and mass arrests. This is seen clearly in the case of the former Archbishop of Shanghai, Cardinal Ignatius Kung 龔品梅. He, the first indigenous Chinese to hold that post, was consecrated as bishop a few days after Mao's declaration of victory in 1949. In 1955 Cardinal kung along with 200 priests from the Diocese of Shanghai were taken into custody. On Sept. 8, 1955, Bishop Kung and 200 priests from Shanghai were taken into custody. He was brought to trial in 1960 and sentenced to life in prison for ‘counter revolutionary’ activity. He was finally released in 1985 at the age of 84. (The Cardinal Kung Foundation, Biography).

Even though the regime was atheistic, it built a semi-religious cult around the personality of Mao, to the point where he was “seen as a god and widely worshiped by the people.”<sup>250</sup> As Zuo suggests, “the elimination of traditional religions did not lead China to atheism. On the contrary, a new religion was created.”<sup>251</sup> This deification of Mao built a cult-like devotion to the premier and imbued the marxist ideology with an even greater dogmatic character – this was critical for legitimizing the regime and building a sense of national unity. This is seen in what was known as the “Little Red Book” 毛主席語錄, a collection of sayings by Mao that citizens were expected to memorize.<sup>252</sup> Mao’s words and image were nearly ubiquitous, not only through the proliferation of the book, but also via the mandate that his image should be visible in every house. The propaganda released during the Cultural revolution reinforced this god-like quality of Mao and the emancipation provided for by the state. We can see the importance of this symbolism by juxtaposing the following two images, one a poster of Mao and the other a Catholic image from the same period.<sup>253</sup>



Title: Are Members of the Church in Communion? (教中人的善功能彼此相通否)<sup>254</sup>

<sup>250</sup> Jiping Zuo, “Political Religion,” 101.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>253</sup> The selection of the Catholic image was selected not to suggest that the propaganda apparatus of the regime was copying this specific image (or Catholic imagery in general), but rather to show how they co-opted religious themes to reinforce this messianic image of Mao.

<sup>254</sup> Yale Divinity Library, *Are Members of the Church in Communion?* (教中人的善功能彼此相通否), n.d., *Chinese Christian Posters*, n.d., <https://ccposters.com/poster/are-members-of-the-church-in-communion/>.



March to Victory with Chairman Mao's Line in Art and Literature (沿着毛主席的革命文艺路线胜利前进)<sup>255</sup>

By juxtaposing these two images one can see how the second co-opts traditional religious imagery to propagandize and present Mao in a messianic lens. The motif of Christ the redeemer, who is represented by the rising sun, is mimicked in the second with Mao. What is also striking is that in both the first and second images there's a horizontal element (in the first between the people and the priest and in the second between the worldwide community). Verticality is introduced in the first, by Christ's relationship to mankind and, subsequently, in the second image Mao's presence above the people.

Here we can see the development of what Zuo calls political religion.<sup>256</sup> As opposed to 'civil religion', political religion required the deification of Mao to render marxism and the regime as sacrosanct; it did not utilize (as was the case in examples of civic religion) existing religious structures for legitimacy.<sup>257</sup> With the party doctrine being infallible, the regime was legitimized, and this ordered devotion from the people. It, then, touched on nearly every facet of life whether it be cultural, economic, political, even down to how the family unit was structured and the behavior of individuals.<sup>258</sup> The Party became the new point of reference for daily life and the focus of devotion. In Mao's calculus this was fundamental in building up the legitimacy of the regime, which, as Sharma notes, is constituted of three main elements: "people's effective consent (the operative aspect of power), a spirit of general welfare...and ideological correctness."<sup>259</sup> Undoubtedly these are seen in the program of the cultural revolution, with the third point being the foundational component.

<sup>255</sup> Sylvia Schneider and Lincoln Cushing, *March to Victory with Chairman Mao's Line One Revolutionary Culture (Yanzhe Mao Zhuxi de Geming Wenyi Luxian Shengli Qianjin 沿着毛主席的革命文艺路线胜利前进)*, 1968, *A Continuous Revolution*, 1968, <https://projects.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/continuousrevolution/main.php?part=i&chapter=&img=9>.

<sup>256</sup> Jiping Zuo, "Political Religion," 103.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>259</sup> Ram Naresh Sharma, "Mao's Concepts of Power, Authority and Legitimacy," 141.

Chairman Mao died on 9 September 1976 and Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平, following a series of deft political maneuvers, became leader of the PRC in 1978. Deng was less ideological, and more pragmatic than Mao; he knew that religion could not be abolished and, to that end, decided to reverse many of the laws from the preceding decade. Article 36 of the 1982 PRC Constitution removed a clause from the 1975 Constitution giving freedom “to propagate atheism.”<sup>260</sup> Instead, in the 1982 constitution, Article 36 stated:

Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.<sup>261</sup>

This renewed openness to religion is also seen in the 1982 ‘Document No.19’, which acknowledged that religion was not going to disappear from the Chinese landscape: “because the people’s consciousness lags behind social realities, old thinking and habits cannot be thoroughly wiped out in a short period...the long-term influence of religion among a part of the people in a Socialist society cannot be avoided.”<sup>262</sup> This was, according to the document, due in no small part to the remaining economic inequalities that persisted.

Document No.19 also took note of the changed character of religion between the colonial period and in the present day. The party, following the revolution, dispensed with the “imperialist forces within the churches and prompted the correct policy of independent, self-governed, and autonomous churches.”<sup>263</sup> At the same time, it excoriated the ‘leftist errors’ that resulted in the mass persecutions of the cultural revolution, which “forbade normal religious activities by the masses.”<sup>264</sup> Thus the “third Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee” restored the “correct guiding principle and policy toward the religious question of Our Party.”<sup>265</sup> We cannot, however, qualify this document as being ‘benevolent’ towards religion. Deng, being the pragmatist that he was, abrogated the measures of the Cultural Revolution because it threatened national unity, and thus the power, of the PRC. It also was a massive obstacle to the modernization of China as it discouraged foreign investment and tainted its image on the international stage. Many of the countries Deng wanted to engage with diplomatically and economically had large Catholic populations, so the economic impulse is one of the driving factors for this shift. Despite the renewed ‘openness’ to religion, Document 19 insisted that “...Catholics...must strengthen their education in independence and the self-

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<sup>260</sup> Merle Goldman, “Religion in Post-Mao China,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 483 (January 1986): 150.

<sup>261</sup> “Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 1982” (1982), <https://china.usc.edu/constitution-peoples-republic-china-1982>.

<sup>262</sup> The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, “Document No. 19 The Basic Viewpoint On The Religious Question During Our Country’s Socialist Period” (1982), [https://www.globaleast.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Document\\_no.\\_19\\_1982.pdf](https://www.globaleast.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Document_no._19_1982.pdf).

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

government of their Churches.”<sup>266</sup> The CCPA was reestablished and it would, once again, serve as the link between the government and the people and orient the faithful towards becoming patriots, loyal to the regime, and inculcating a socialist consciousness.

While Deng was looking to expand China’s international relations, the document is explicit in saying, “but at the same time there are reactionary religious groups abroad, especially the imperialistic ones such as the Vatican...who strive to use all possible occasions to carry on their efforts at infiltration ‘to return to the China mainland.’ Our policy is to actively develop friendly international religious contacts, but also to firmly resist infiltration by hostile foreign religious forces.”<sup>267</sup> With respect to the persecution of Catholics, the party knew that despite all of the persecutions there was a tenacious underground resistance. The underground Church was fiercely loyal to Rome and this was a massive problem for the party. To that end, Document No.19 can also be read as the understanding that the best way to deal with the ‘religious question’, was not to destroy it (which was impossible), but to closely monitor and control it. Deng hoped that this would result in less faithful being compelled to celebrate the faith clandestinely, which, in turn allowed for the party (through the CCPA) to exert a greater influence.

In the same year Deng became ruler of the PRC, the Catholic Church was going through its own change in leadership. Pope Paul VI died on 6 August 1978. On 26 August Cardinal Albino Luciani was elected, choosing the name John Paul I. His reign was one of the shortest in papal history, lasting only 33 days. After his death another conclave began on 14 October and two days later, Karol Wojtyła was presented to the world as Pope John Paul II (r: 1978-2005). His election was consequential for several reasons. First, he was young (he was only 58 years old when elected) which meant that it would be a long pontificate. Second, not only was he the first non-Italian pope in 455 years, but he was the first ever Polish pontiff. This was significant given the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Having a Pope from behind the Iron Curtain was, no doubt, a positive sign for Catholics living under communist rule. Third, during the course of his pontificate, John Paul II made 104 apostolic trips, visiting 174 countries (some repeatedly). These visits, while pastoral in nature, served the dual purpose of expressing closeness with the faithful and softening relations with hostile civil authorities; these trips were an indispensable tool for building papal diplomacy and reinforcing the idea of the universal (united) Catholic Church. Lastly, during his pontificate, the Holy See had its most rapid expansion of formal diplomatic relations, from 86 countries in 1979 to 172 in 2000.<sup>268</sup>

On 20 October 1978, in his first speech to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, John Paul said the following:

“Diplomatic relations mean stable, reciprocal relations, under the sign of politeness, discretion and loyalty. Without confusing competences, they do not necessarily manifest, on my side, approval of such and such a regime – that is not my business. Obviously, neither do they manifest approval of all its acts in the conduct of public affairs. But they show an appreciation of positive temporal

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Robert John Araujo, “The International Personality and Sovereignty of the Holy See,” 319. As of the publication of this thesis (February 2023), the Holy See has official diplomatic relations with 177 states and the Order of Malta.



values; a desire for dialogue with those who are legitimately charged with the common good of society...”<sup>269</sup>

This reference to the ‘positive temporal values’ can be understood as pertaining to the idea of human dignity, which was absent in totalitarian systems. John Paul II chose to contrast the Church with the communist regimes (and even the forces of secularization in the West). This idea of contrast and of dialogue were central themes in the doctrine of *Ostpolitik*, which continued under his pontificate. The Pope elevated Casaroli (one of the chief architects of *Ostpolitik*) to the College of Cardinals and, later, selected him as his secretary of state.<sup>270</sup>

We can see another line of continuity between John Paul II and his predecessors in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* published on 4 March 1979. Here the Pope recalled the importance of dialogue in Paul VI’s pontificate and the Second Vatican Council as a way of expanding the “universal consciousness” of the Church and how this related to the “phenomenon of atheism” which was “organized and structured as a political system.”<sup>271</sup> For this dialogue to be dynamic and authentic “the Church must in no way be confused with the political community, nor bound to any political system.”<sup>272</sup> John Paul II put this idea into practice through the many apostolic trips he took during his pontificate. They allowed him to connect with Catholic faithful all over the globe, which in turn reinforced the idea of the Church as a unified body, despite its members living under different political and economic systems and coming from different ethnic backgrounds.

In 1983, the Church revised its Code of Canon Law (replacing the 1917 Code) and this can also be viewed as another sign of a softening of its canonical penalty on membership in communist organizations. Canon 1374 states: “a person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; however, a person who promotes or directs an association of this kind is to be punished with an interdict.”<sup>273</sup> In the 1917 Code of Canon Law there was automatic excommunication, which was reinforced in Pius XII’s 1949 Holy Office Decree.<sup>274</sup> Canon 287 states: “They are not to have an active part in political parties and in governing labor unions unless, in the judgment of competent ecclesiastical authority, the protection of the rights of the Church or the promotion of the common good requires it.”<sup>275</sup> Finally, Canon 1382 states: “A bishop who consecrates someone a bishop without a pontifical mandate and the person who receives the consecration from him incur a *latae sententiae*<sup>276</sup> excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See.”<sup>277</sup> Canon 1382 is of particular importance as this directly concerned the situation of the Church in China. While excommunication was no

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<sup>269</sup> Address Of His Holiness John Paul II to The Diplomatic Corps Accredited To The Holy See

<sup>270</sup> Dennis J. Dunn, “The Vatican’s *Ostpolitik*,” 254.

<sup>271</sup> *Redemptor Hominis*, section 11

<sup>272</sup> *Redemptor Hominis*, section 13

<sup>273</sup> 1983 Code of Canon Law, Can. 1374

<sup>274</sup> Canon 2335 of the 1917 Code stated: “Those giving their name to masonic sects or other associations of this sort that machinate against the Church or legitimate civil powers contract by that fact excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See” (Daly 219).

<sup>275</sup> 1983 Code of Canon Law, Can. 287

<sup>276</sup> Excommunication *latae sententiae* is incurred automatically by the individual, whether or not is known at the time of the offense to Church authorities.

<sup>277</sup> 1983 Code of Canon Law, Can. 1382

longer automatic for membership in the communist party, or affiliated organs, it remained in place for those who performed, and received, episcopal consecration without papal mandate. This underscores an unchanged attitude from Rome with respect to the importance placed on apostolic succession and its role in selecting bishops. Though, as will be discussed below, there is the letter of the law as well as the spirit of the law.

Against the backdrop of Document No.19 and the ostensible liberalization of religious practice in China, on the one hand, and greater diplomatic tact as represented in the figure of John Paul II, on the other, there was an upswing in communication between the PRC and the Holy See. This was preceded by a “downgrading of its diplomatic representation” in Taiwan, as evidenced by the Holy See’s decision, in October 1971, to recall its pronuncio to Taipei, Monsignor (later Cardinal) Francesco Colasuonno 高樂天.<sup>278</sup> From that point onward, it has been under a chargé d'affaires. This downgrading is also evident in that in 1980 the “Republic of China” was replaced by “Taiwan” in official Vatican correspondence.

The Chinese Government did not reciprocate this gesture. Infact, during this period the organization of the Church in China underwent a massive structural change. The CCPA was no longer the sole governing body of the Church; in 1980 the Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China (zhongguo tianzhujiao zhujiaotuan 中国天主教主教团) (BCCCC) and the National Administrative Commission of the Chinese Catholic Church (NACCCC) were created.<sup>279</sup> The latter is composed of both laymen and clergy and its main competence is organizing the internal affairs of the Church, such as the “internal pastoral affairs...the administering of the sacraments, the setting up of new seminaries, and the publishing of religious books and magazines.”<sup>280</sup> The aim of the former “is to study and to explain the Church’s doctrine and dogma of orthopraxis and orthodoxy, to promote evangelization, and to establish pastoral work at the local level.”<sup>281</sup> It also is charged with managing the external affairs of the Chinese Church.

The CCPA’s mission was refined so that it could focus on managing the relations between the Church and the government and in ensuring that the party directives were being effectively transmitted. Thus it operates as both a supervisory body as well as a liaison. All important decisions facing the official Church are made with the approval of both the CCPA and the BCCC. It should also be noted that in erecting additional administrative structures, the party was signaling that it was serious in making the Church even more autonomous from Rome. Now instead of one body, the organizational structure of the Church was complete with different offices, almost a remaking of the curial offices in Rome. The Official Church went ahead with consecrating bishops and “between 1979 and 1996, the church consecrated more than seventy-six bishops” without a papal mandate.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Chan 817

<sup>279</sup> Rachel Xiaohong Zhu, “The Division of the Roman Catholic Church in Mainland China,” 6.

<sup>280</sup> Chan 821

<sup>281</sup> Rachel Xiaohong Zhu, “The Division of the Roman Catholic Church in Mainland China,” 6.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, 6.

While the State sanctioned Church was undergoing a change in its administrative structures, there was a parallel efforts by bishops of the Underground Church, loyal to the Pope, to consecrate bishops. In 1981, Bishop Peter Joseph Fan Xueyan 范学淹, of the Baoding diocese, ordained a priest without a papal mandate. This was followed up with a subsequent consecration of three priests as bishops.<sup>283</sup> Zuo notes, “in the second case, Bishop Fan asked for an exemption from the Holy See. Pope John Paul II not only granted him the exemption but also gave Bishop Fan his blessing and the authority to make decisions on church affairs without first receiving the Vatican approval.”<sup>284</sup> In total Bishop Fan consecrated over 80 bishops, 63 of whom remained in the underground Church – the other 17 later joined the CCPA.<sup>285</sup> John Paul II was taking a pragmatic approach to China. By granting Bishop Fan the privilege of acting semi-autonomously from the Vatican, we can suggest that the Pope saw this as the only way to safeguard the faith in China.<sup>286</sup>

Sino-Vatican relations took another hit when Bishop Fan, after his incarceration, released his Thirteen-Points, which repudiated the CCPA and underscored the need of the Underground Church. Cardinal Jozef Tomko (then Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) responded in his own letter (See figure 3 in the appendix), titled “Guidelines on China from the Vatican” (also known as the Eight-Point Directive) in which he supported Fan’s original Thirteen Points and reiterated that the CCPA is a political body, not in communion with the Church and as such “Catholics cannot accept in conscience the principles of an Association which demands the rejection of a fundamental element of their faith, namely the indispensable communion with the Roman Pontiff, visible head of the Church and of the College of Catholic Bishops which cannot exist without him as head.”<sup>287</sup> In response to Cardinal Tomka’s letter, Wu Xueqian, Vice Premier of the PRC, said at a CCPA meeting that the “reminded the Vatican not to interfere in China’s internal affairs.”<sup>288</sup> In the opinion of the Chinese, the Pope further inflamed tensions in 1982 when he appointed Dominic Deng Yiming 鄧以明 as bishop Archbishop of Guangzhou,<sup>289</sup> which the government rejected immediately and again stated that this amounted to a “rude interference in the sovereign affairs of the Chinese Church.”<sup>290</sup>

Both the Chinese government and the Holy See remained entrenched in their respective positions, which was neither ideal for the Pope who sought unity, nor for the Chinese faithful

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>285</sup> Zhu also notes that Bishop Fan’s decision to act had serious consequences for the Church in China, as Hebei province has the largest concentration of Catholics in all of China.

<sup>286</sup> Thus we can see in the case of Bishop Fan, that Rome does grant exceptions (or did, anyways, in that period). Given the intransigence of the Chinese government, the Holy See had few other options if it wished to maintain the faith in China.

<sup>287</sup> Directives On Some Of The Problems Of The Church In Continental China

<sup>288</sup> UCANAAnalysis - Directives From The Vatican On Dealing With China, 27 December 1988

<sup>289</sup> Bishop Deng was appointed as apostolic administrator of Guangzhou on 1 October 1950 and, several months later, he was consecrated as the titular bishop of Elateia (on 13 February 1951). On 5 February 1958 he was arrested for his refusal to renounce the Pope and join the CCPA. According to his memoir, he was called “the most faithful running-dog of the reactionary Vatican”. He spent 22 years in prison and was finally released in 1980. (The Cardinal Kung Foundation Remembering Archbishop TANG Yee-Ming, SJ).

<sup>290</sup> Goldman 154

who were forced to choose between remaining faithful to Rome (and thus risking persecution by the state). This made for a very messy ecclesiastical landscape. By looking at some of John Paul II's addresses from this period we can see how papal rhetoric addressed this conundrum. In the "*Address of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the Ad Limina visit of the Bishops of Taiwan*", from 15 December 1990 the Pope took note of the "reopening of churches, seminaries and house of formation for young people wishing to follow a life of consecration, and of a flourishing of activities at the service of the entire community."<sup>291</sup> However, he lamented the fact that "at the same time there are reports that sadden my heart as Shepherd of the universal Church. The arrests of Bishops, priests and members of the laity, and various other difficulties, lead one to think that, in spite of some positive signs, there is a long way to go before the beloved Catholic community on the mainland can give full and open expressions to its faith and to its ecclesial communion with the Successor of Peter and the Catholic Church spread throughout the world."<sup>292</sup>

Five years later, in 1995, during his apostolic visit to the Philippines (which is considered one of the largest gatherings of Christians in history), the Pope spoke again about the situation in China, calling the suffering of Chinese Catholics as an inspiration for the whole Church. This address was also an opportunity to stress the importance of unity in the Church. The Pope said, "unity is not the result of human policies or hidden and mysterious intentions. Instead, unity springs from conversion of the heart, and from sincere acceptance of the unchanging principles laid down by Christ...particularly important among these principles is the...communion of all parts of the Church with her visible foundation: Peter the Rock, consequently. A Catholic who wishes to remain such and...recognized as such, cannot reject the principle of communion with the Successor of Peter"<sup>293</sup> By centering the notion of unity within the larger context of living an authentic faith, John Paul II was reminding Chinese Catholics that they called to unity, which is rooted in truth and ultimately in love. The Pope did not have to explicitly mention China to rebuke the government; instead, as noted before, he opted to present the Church as the alternative rather than to outright condemn the CCP.

Unity within the Church was at the core of two other addresses the Pope gave, one in 1996 and the other in 1999. On 3 December 1996, the Pope spoke to a group of Chinese bishops on an occasion marking the 50th anniversary of the creation of the local hierarchy on the mainland and the 70th anniversary of the consecration of the first Chinese bishops. He took this opportunity to address all clergy and faithful in China and to reaffirm the importance of papal supremacy, which was the visible and real center of communion between all of the world's Catholics. "I know that the Church, which is in the People's Republic of China, wishes to be truly Catholic. It must therefore remain united to Christ, to the Successor of Peter and to the whole universal Church also and especially through the ministry of the Bishops, in communion

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<sup>291</sup> Address of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the Ad Limina visit of the Bishops of Taiwan", 15 December 1990

<sup>292</sup> Address of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the Ad Limina visit of the Bishops of Taiwan", 15 December 1990

<sup>293</sup> On the occasion of the tenth world youth day in Manila, Philippines Pope John Paul II addressed the Chinese Catholics: 'Messaggio ai Cattolici in Cina' Pietro, La Rocca, E' il Fondamento Visibile Della Reale Comunione della Chiesa, Saturday, 14 January 1995 pg. 198

with the Apostolic See.”<sup>294</sup> In his message to the Catholic Church in China (delivered on 8 December 1999), the Pope expressed his goodwill to the people of China, while also addressing, once again, the universality of the Church and his desire for the whole of the Church to be united, especially to the Chinese Catholics living outside the mainland who “will foster union of spirit with all their brothers and sisters of the great Chinese family.”<sup>295</sup>

Despite the ongoing tensions, there were some marginal improvements in relations between the two states. There was the beginning of an “ex post facto system” in which “the Vatican evaluated bishops after their illicit ordination, and if they were deemed suitable, the Vatican would make them acceptable (legitimize them).”<sup>296</sup> However, this was upset in January 2000 with the consecration of five new bishops of the CCPA, without papal mandate. One of John Paul II’s successes was actually a detriment in China, given the role he played in ending communism in Europe, there was a fear that should he be given a platform in China he would cause a similar event. Despite John Paul II’s incredible legacy – both as pontiff and statesman – and his understanding that the true strength of the papacy, and thus the Holy See derives from its unparalleled soft power (which can mobilize millions and influence institutions) the progress made in China was painstakingly slow.

## **Chapter 3: Understanding the Holy See’s Legal Personality and Position in Modern IR**

### **3.1 Into the new millennium: Sino-Vatican Relations at the end of John Paul II’s Pontificate**

*Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam...* one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

On 6 January 2000, 12 Chinese bishops were ordained by the CCPA in Beijing on the same day Pope John Paul II ordained 12 bishops in Rome. While the CCP intended this event to showcase the solidarity of the Chinese Church, and to be a sharp rebuke of Rome, “only five showed up, while the other seven were nowhere to be seen.”<sup>297</sup> The tepid support for the ordinations in Beijing was a worrying sign after all the party’s effort to consolidate its control of

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<sup>294</sup> “Io so che la Chiesa, che è nella Repubblica Popolare Cinese, desidera essere veramente cattolica. Dovrà, pertanto, mantenersi unita a Cristo, al Successore di Pietro e a tutta la Chiesa universale anche e specialmente attraverso il ministero dei Vescovi, in comunione con La Sede Apostolica.” Translated by the author

<sup>295</sup> Message of the Holy Father John Paul II To the Catholic Church in China (8 December 1999)

<sup>296</sup> Alley 88

<sup>297</sup> Joseph Cardinal Zen, *For Love of My People I Will Not Remain Silent* (Ignatius Press, 2019) 20.

the Church in China.<sup>298</sup> Later that year, 1 October 2000 the Pope canonized 120 Chinese martyrs. October 1 in the Church's liturgical calendar is the feast day of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who is a patron of the missions; however, October 1 is also China's national day and the choice by the Holy See to canonize the Chinese Martyrs on that day was seen as a provocation by the CCP.<sup>299</sup> The canonization was denounced not only because it was perceived as antagonistic, but also because it directly threatened the legitimacy of the CPCA during a time when membership in the Underground Church was outpacing that of the Official Church.<sup>300</sup> In response, the Chinese bishops were called to Beijing and forced to sign a letter denouncing the canonization of the "imperialists".<sup>301</sup> By labeling the new Chinese saints as 'colonialists' and 'imperialists' the CCP was attempting to foment public opinion against the Vatican and to further isolate the underground Church.<sup>302</sup>

These two incidents highlight the crux of the problem between the Holy See and the PRC: sovereignty and legitimacy (both internal and external). Without sovereignty and the ability to make decisions for one's population, there is very little basis for legitimacy. Both the Holy See understood this, as well as the CCP. For the Holy See it is theological legitimacy, which forms the base of its internal governance and its legitimacy as an international actor. For the CCP it is ideological legitimacy, which underpins its internal stability and *raison d'être*. Chapter 4 will examine this notion of sovereignty from the Chinese perspective – looking at how it is used for internal regulation and for external relations – and culminate with an analysis of the 2018 Sino-Vatican Accord. This chapter, instead, will look at the sovereignty of the Holy See, how it is constructed and how that influences its own diplomatic efforts and its global mission. By looking at some of the prevailing theoretical theories of international relations, it will be

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<sup>298</sup> Madsen notes: "Usually, the consecration of new bishops would have been a joyous event, carried out in a packed church. This time, however, the Beijing Cathedral Of the Immaculate Conception (the "Nantang") was over half empty. The seminarians at the Beijing National Seminary refused to attend. (Because of this disobedience, they were later subjected to "political reeducation" and their rector was dismissed" Richard Madsen, "Saints And The State: Religious Evolution And Problems Of Governance In China," *Asian Perspective* 25, no. 4 (2001): 200.

<sup>299</sup> On 3 October the following was written in the *People's Daily* 人民日报 the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the CCP: "The People's Republic of China has ushered in its 51st birthday. The entire country rejoices with jubilation, and the people of all nationalities throughout the country are celebrating together the great day that symbolizes the day when the Chinese nation thoroughly overturned the three big mountains and truly stood up. However, at St. Peter's Square of the Vatican, a farce was staged, during which some foreign missionaries who had committed ugly and evil crimes in China and their followers were canonized as 'saints.' The Vatican disregarded strong opposition from the Chinese people including the vast numbers of Catholics, and insisted on engaging in the perverse act of 'canonization,' greatly hurting the feelings of the Chinese nation. It is a severe provocation to the 1.2 billion Chinese people" Qtd. in Richard Madsen, "Saints And The State," 188.

<sup>300</sup> It is important to remember that the canonization had: (1) been announced in March of that year; (2) all those canonized were beatified before 1946 (and many of those canonized were martyred during the Boxer Rebellion; and (3) the Vatican's choice to hold the canonization on 1 October was not intended to provoke the CCP, though in hindsight another day should have been selected. Ibid, 201.

<sup>301</sup> Joseph Cardinal Zen, *For Love of My People I Will Not Remain Silent*, 21.

<sup>302</sup> Another party reaction includes the following: "The majority of these people were executed for violation of Chinese laws during the invasion of China by imperialists and colonialists," and that "the sanctification of such people distorts truth and history, beautifies imperialism and slanders the peace loving Chinese people." (Zhang 28, quoting Richard McGregor, "Vatican-China Thaw Suffers a Setback," *Financial Times*, October 12, 2001).

easier to understand how the Holy See operates as an international actor, especially during the two modern pontificates of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.<sup>303</sup>

### **3.2 The structure and Legal Personality of the Holy See: Conceptualizing the Pope's Foreign Policy (framework) theoretical framework and in practice**

Though colloquially the Vatican and the Holy See are used interchangeably, they refer to two different entities under international law. The Holy See is the jurisdiction (the legal personality) of the pope as the Bishop of Rome, supreme pontiff, and absolute monarch.<sup>304</sup> 'The Vatican' refers to Vatican City State, the permanent and sovereign territory of the Holy See created in 1929 under the Lateran Pacts.<sup>305</sup> Article 2 of the Lateran Pacts states: "Italy recognizes the sovereignty of the Holy See in international matters as an inherent attribute in conformity with its traditions and the requirements of its mission to the world."<sup>306</sup> Article 3 reads: "Italy recognizes the full ownership, exclusive dominion, and sovereign authority and jurisdiction of the Holy See over the Vatican as at present constituted, together with all its appurtenances and endowments, thus creating the Vatican City, for the special purposes and under the conditions hereinafter referred to."<sup>307</sup> Here it is explicitly written that the Holy See, not the Vatican, is sovereign and thus, legal personality stems from the former, not the latter. Territory, while buttressing the sovereignty of the Holy See, is not the source; the Vatican is subordinated to the Holy See. The Vatican and the Holy See are linked via the "personal-union" of the Pope.<sup>308</sup> The legal personality of the Holy See goes back centuries, and its existence, as being independent from territoriality, is reinforced by the fact that following the loss of the Papal States in 1870, "the Holy See increased the number of states with which it exchanged legations."<sup>309</sup> This unique structure makes the Holy See a *sui generis* actor;<sup>310</sup> there is no other religion with legal personality, nor is there any other state or non-state actor where its very governmental sovereignty stems from the spiritual authority (or office) of an individual.

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<sup>303</sup> This is not to suggest there is a certain 'novelty' to Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis's diplomacy; rather this will be useful to typify the Holy See and to understand how its actorness is constructed.

<sup>304</sup> *Sancta sedes*, the Holy See, refers to the *sedes* (the Chair) of St. Peter. In the Gospel of Matthew 16:18, it is written, "you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Catholic tradition holds that St. Peter was the first Pope, by virtue of the command Jesus gave him. There is an unbroken line of succession from St. Peter to the present pontificate of Pope Francis.

<sup>305</sup> The creation of Vatican City was the response to the 'Roman Question', which persisted from the loss of the Papal States after Italian Unification was completed in 1870 until the signing of the Lateran Pacts in 1929.

<sup>306</sup> Lateran Pacts 1929.

<sup>307</sup> Lateran Pacts 1929. Ending the 'Roman Question' and giving the Church its own sovereign territory, not only buttressed the Holy See's judicial position, but also helped legitimize Mussolini's fascist government on the international stage. In 1984, under the Craxi Government, there was a revision of the Concordat between Italy and the Vatican in which the latter agreed to new provisions effectively downgrading its privileges in Italy. One of the most significant was that Roman Catholicism was no longer the state religion.

<sup>308</sup> Jodok Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched': Holy See Diplomacy as a Hybrid Mode of Diplomatic Agency," *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 20, no. 3 (2018): 526.

<sup>309</sup> Robert John Araujo, "The International Personality and Sovereignty of the Holy See," 302.

<sup>310</sup> Cedric Ryngaert, "The Legal Status of the Holy See," *Goettingen Journal of International Law* 3 (2011): 83. *Sui Generis* is a legal term, meaning of-its-own-kind, meaning here that the international legal personality of the Pope (the Holy See) is truly unique and without comparison.

Following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a new intentional system was created. The Westphalian model established the principle that sovereignty was predicated upon clear territorial boundaries. This new system, moreover, delineated between domestic and international affairs, where a sovereign state could not intervene in the relations of domestic affairs of another. Inter-state relations were conducted via formal diplomatic ties and the corpus of international law was made up of treaties.<sup>311</sup> Under the Westphalian system, especially in a modern context, there are also non-state international organizations that have legal personality. For an international organization to have a fixed legal status under international law, requires that the member states of that organization have conferred personality onto it.

The Holy See does not fall into this category (and for this reason it is clumsy that some scholars have equated the Holy See to a non-state sovereign actor). While the Holy See is not a conventional sovereign state, it is neither an international organization. The pope is the absolute ruler of the Church and his sovereignty under international law is derived from his spiritual mandate. According to the Montevideo Convention, the requirements for statehood are: (1) a permanent population; (2) a defined territory; (3) government; and (4) a capacity to enter into relations with other states.<sup>312</sup> While the Holy See satisfies the second and fourth requirements, difficulties arise with respect to the first and third. The population of the Vatican is transient; its residents are almost all clerics, coming from different countries from around the world, and it changes quite often (there is no native born Vatican population to speak of). As to the third requirement, the Holy See is the government of the Vatican state, but it has a distinct transnational character as the Pope is the spiritual head of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics. The transnational nature of the Petrine Office transcends the borders through his role as spiritual head of the Catholic Church. The influence of the Holy See is not constrained by geography, nor is it defined by a common culture. The Church is both universal and local; it is universal by virtue of its mission and the entire magisterium being united with the pope; it is local because the church has been able to insert itself into many if not most local contexts. This structure makes the Church an incredibly effective and resilient organization because it can transcend many of the issues and tensions that arise between intentional organization and member states, or between different regional bodies.

Looking at diverging international relations theories will help provide a better, albeit not complete, framework to understand how it operates. The two main theories that concern the Holy See are constructivism and realism. As Bartz states, realism "tends to see states and decision makers as egoistic and looking out for their own interests."<sup>313</sup> State power, wealth, and influence is gained via hard power, that is by economic might or military force. By prioritizing material objectives, realism is not equipped to deal "with the analysis of religious issues", which is the main focus of the Holy See.<sup>314</sup> Based upon this definition the Holy See is not a realistic actor, or at least is a weak actor. It has no hard power to speak of; there is no economy, nor military (notwithstanding the small standing army that is charged with the sole responsibility of protecting the pope). However, as Cahill argues, the Holy See can fit into a realistic construct by virtue of its willingness to evaluate states as "value neutral", which in turn permits it to establish

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<sup>311</sup> (The Source of International Legal Personality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, James E. Hickey, 1997) 3.

<sup>312</sup> "Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States" (1933).

<sup>313</sup> Bartz 2

<sup>314</sup> Mariano Barbato, "A State, a Diplomat, and a Transnational Church," 31.



“diplomatic relations with states whose actions and beliefs are fundamentally different to those espoused by the church.”<sup>315</sup> Again, since the sovereignty of the Holy See is not vested in territoriality (as is this is the case of conventional state actors) it is not constrained to act based on the impulse of survival, or self-preservation.

Constructivism, instead, concerns actors that can “continually shape – and sometimes reshape – the very nature of international relations through their actions and interactions” and “these changes, in turn, are based upon ideas, identities, and norms...constructed by the actors...[who] do not have to be just states, but can be individuals or institutions.”<sup>316</sup> In this framework social identity is a core component, which is constructed from the mutual interplay between agency and structure.<sup>317</sup> There is also a normative set of behavior, whereby an actor is expected to behave in accordance with their identity. According to the constructivist theory, the Holy See is an incredibly strong international actor. The reason for the Holy See’s continued involvement in diplomatic affairs is to achieve “the greatest hope of man, peace between nations, domestic tranquility, and the progress of each country.”<sup>318</sup> The Holy See is able to shape international dialogue and mediate (even sometimes successfully) in international affairs due to its moral norms and the unparalleled soft power that the pope wields. Soft power is best understood as the “the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals.”<sup>319</sup> The Holy See aims to fashion the world according to its global mission for peace, which is underpinned by its conception of natural law.

Having outlined the basic framework of constructivism, it is worthwhile to introduce another theory, faith-based diplomacy, or the two-track diplomacy. In the classic theories of international relations, religion was relegated to a secondary role, if not entirely disregarded. However, to preclude faith from the set of motivations for state and non-state actors denies a very real factor governing individual and state behavior. The two basic assumptions of this theory are “first, the proper orientation of politics to the transcendent, and second, the active role of the divine in human affairs.”<sup>320</sup> It is clear that the Holy See’s diplomacy is predicated upon and oriented towards Catholic social teaching. However, this theory focuses on the motivations of individuals and NGOs. The Holy See, again, does operate according to the logic of faith based, but it cannot just be confined to that. The Holy See’s actorness is an amalgam of realism, faith-based, and constructivism.

There are two main goals for a state actor: possession goals and milieu goals. The former “aim[s] at the enhancement or preservation of something the actor values”<sup>321</sup> while the latter focuses “on the ‘shape of the environment in which the nation operates’.”<sup>322</sup> The Holy See, by virtue of focusing mostly on long-term interests, is orientated towards milieu goals. The pope is

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<sup>315</sup> Luke Cahill, “The Realism of Holy See Foreign Policy.”

<sup>316</sup> Bartz 3

<sup>317</sup> Sarina Theys, “Introducing Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” E-International Relations, February 23, 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/23/introducing-constructivism-in-international-relations-theory/>.

<sup>318</sup> Paul VI, *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*. (1969).

<sup>319</sup> Bartz 5, quoting Nye, 2003

<sup>320</sup> Cox and Philpott, 31, 32

<sup>321</sup> Jodok Troy, “The Pope’s Own Hand Outstretched’: Holy See Diplomacy as a Hybrid Mode of Diplomatic Agency,” *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 20, no. 3 (2018): 528.

<sup>322</sup> Mariano Barbato, “A State, a Diplomat, and a Transnational Church,” 4.

able to achieve these goals primarily by his soft power. The pope's soft power is so extensive due to the larger number of Catholics around the globe, estimated anywhere from 1 to 1.3 billion.<sup>323</sup> When the pope speaks from the Vatican or goes abroad on an apostolic visit (a subject which will be addressed in greater detail in the following section), millions of people come to see him, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, and his words carry a certain authoritative weight. As Barbato notes, for the faithful to witness and see the pope "they experience a belonging beyond, sometimes in contrast to their nation and their secular or non-Catholic environment."<sup>324</sup> The construction of this dual-identity for Catholics, loyalty to both their native state as well as to the pope, gives the latter a great deal of influence with the Catholic population. This influence is not necessarily limited to theological issues. Often, when the pope comments on social issues, he has the ability, by virtue of this global audience, to shift the needle of public opinion and change the dialogue, which in turn can put pressure on states and institutions (especially in majority Catholic countries) to adopt a certain position.

Genovese notes that, generally speaking, religious leaders have a greater degree of freedom to speak up on political issues that secular leaders would avoid. "When formal political institutions are ambiguous about a political problem, morality may matter more for the public, so the church should respond to an increased demand for moral authority with a more political position."<sup>325</sup> The moral voice of the Church, and its ability to discuss and sometimes mediate on politically sensitive issues, underscores its credibility as an actor in international relations. However, just because the Church can offer its opinion on a politically sensitive issue that would benefit from its moral position, does not mean that it always does.<sup>326</sup> The Holy See's actions, while inherently religious, do carry political implications.

### 3.3 The Roman Curia: The Holy See's Bureaucracy

Before looking at the 'tools' of papal diplomacy, it is important to look at the administrative body that is responsible for the running of the Holy See and Vatican City, the Roman Curia. The *Fundamental law of the Vatican City State*, promulgated in the year 2000, is the constitution of Vatican City and establishes the framework for the government of the Holy See and the distribution of powers. Article 1.1 reads, "the Supreme Pontiff, Sovereign of the Vatican City State, has the fullness of legislative, executive, and judicial (powers/authority)."<sup>327</sup> All authority is vested in the pontiff, making him an absolute monarch. Article 2 reads: "The representation of the state with respect to other foreign states and with other subjects of international law, for diplomatic relations and for the (ratification of treaties), is reserved to the Supreme Pontiff, who (exercises it through the Secretary of State)."<sup>328</sup> Thus while the pope is the

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>324</sup> Mariano Barbato, "Geopolitics of Papal Traveling," 5.

<sup>325</sup> Federica Genovese, "Politics Ex Cathedra: Religious Authority and the Pope in Modern International Relations," *Research & Politics* 2, no. 4 (2015): 3.

<sup>326</sup> This point will be developed further in Chapter 4 when discussing the 2018 Sino-Vatican accord and how the Church has spoken (or rather its silence) about human rights abuses.

<sup>327</sup> 'Il Sommo Pontefice, Sovrano dello Stato della Città del Vaticano, ha la pienezza dei poteri legislativo, esecutivo e giudiziario.' (Original text, translation into English by the author).

<sup>328</sup> "La rappresentanza dello Stato nei rapporti con gli Stati esteri e con gli altri soggetti di diritto internazionale, per le relazioni diplomatiche e per la conclusione dei trattati, è riservata al Sommo Pontefice, che la esercita per mezzo della Segreteria di Stato." Trans. Matthew Santucci

head of state and sole authority of the different ‘branches’ of government, the delegation of powers to the Roman Curia enables the Holy See to run like any other state.<sup>329</sup>

The Roman Curia is the main support network for the pope; it is the collection of the dicasteries in the Church and thus oversees the running of the universal church.<sup>330</sup> In 2022 Pope Francis promulgated the apostolic constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, which abrogated *Pastor Bonus*. This document dramatically reshuffled the Curia, primarily by consolidating some dicasteries. The most notable example of this was merging the historically powerful Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) with the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization into the Dicastery for Evangelization. This constitution has also opened up leadership positions to “any member of the faithful...given their particular competence, power of governance and function.”<sup>331</sup>

Despite these reforms, and the increased bureaucratization of the Curia, its fundamental role remains unaltered. However, looking at Section I, point 8, of the Preamble reveals a new focus on the collegiality between the Pope and the bishops conferences:

The Roman Curia is at the service of the Pope, who, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the Bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. By virtue of this bond, the work of the Roman Curia is also organically related to the College of Bishops and individual Bishops, as well as to Episcopal Conferences and their regional and continental groupings, and the hierarchical structures of the Eastern Churches. All these are of great pastoral benefit as expressions of the affective and effective communion existing among the Bishops. The Roman Curia is not set between the Pope and the Bishops, but is at the service of both, according to the modalities proper to the nature of each.<sup>332</sup>

While the very centrality of the papacy and the clear hierarchical structure of the Church is emphasized, the Curia’s position as an intermediary body (between the pope and the universal Church) is deemphasized.

One of the most important offices of the Roman Curia is the Secretariat of State. “The Secretariat of State is presided over by a Cardinal who assumes the title of Secretary of State. As the Pope’s first collaborator in the governance of the universal Church, the Cardinal Secretary of State is the one primarily responsible for the diplomatic and political activity of the Holy See, in some circumstances representing the person of the Supreme Pontiff himself.”<sup>333</sup> Troy, quoting Resse, conceives the Secretariat of State “like a combination of the U.S. State Department and the White House staff.”<sup>334</sup> There have been two modern revisions to the structure Secretariat of

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<sup>329</sup> The Holy See has its own system of law (Canon Law), and judicial system (The Apostolic Penitentiary, the Roman Rota, and the Apostolic Signatura).

<sup>330</sup> “Art. 2 — § 1. By the word "dicasteries" are understood the Secretariat of State, Congregations, Tribunals, Councils and Offices, namely the Apostolic Camera, the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, and the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See.” John Paul II, “Apostolic Constitution: Pastor Bonus” (1988).

<sup>331</sup> *Praedicate Evangelium*, 5, II.

<sup>332</sup> Francis, *Praedicate Evangelium*, 8

<sup>333</sup> The Holy See Press Office, “Secretariat of State,” Vatican.va, n.d.,

<sup>334</sup> Jodok Troy, “The Pope’s Own Hand Outstretched,” 5 quoting Reese, 1998.

State. The first was manifested in Pope John Paul II's apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus* in 1988, which reorganized the Secretariat of State into two distinct sections. The First Section is charged with the daily operation of the Holy See, including inter-dicastery relations and external relations; it "takes care of matters concerning the presence and activity of the Holy See in international organizations."<sup>335</sup> It also is charged with the responsibility "to draw up and dispatch apostolic constitutions, decretal letters, apostolic letters, epistles, and other documents entrusted to it by the Supreme Pontiff."<sup>336</sup> The Second Section, previously known as The Council for Public Affairs of the Church, is essentially the Holy See's foreign office (or State Department in the U.S.). According to Art. 45, the Second Section's purpose is "to foster relations, especially those of a diplomatic nature, with States and other subjects of public international law, and to deal with matters of common interest, promoting the good of the Church and of civil society by means of concordats and other agreements of this kind, if the case arises, while respecting the considered opinions of the groupings of bishops that may be affected"<sup>337</sup> and "to represent the Holy See at international organizations and meetings concerning questions of a public nature."<sup>338</sup>

In 2017 Pope Francis modified the Secretariat of State by creating a third section, the Section for the Holy See diplomatic staff, which oversees the work of the nuncios.<sup>339</sup> Now we can understand the sections as follows: First Section (General Affairs); Second Section (Section for Relations with States and International organizations); and the Third section (Section for Diplomatic Personnel of the Holy See). As of the writing of this thesis, the Current profile of the Secretariat of State is as follows:

### **Secretary of State**

Cardinal Pietro Parolin

### **Section for General Affairs (First Section)**

- Msgr. Edgar Peña Parra, *Substitute*
- Msgr. Roberto Campisi, *Assessor*

### **Section for Relations with States and International Organizations (Second Section)**

- Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, *Secretary*
- Msgr. Mirosław Stanisław Wachowski, *Undersecretary*
- Msgr. Daniel Pachó, *Undersecretary for the multilateral sector*

### **Section for Diplomatic Personnel of the Holy See (Third Section)**

- Msgr. Luciano Russo, *Secretary*
- Msgr. Mauricio Rueda Beltz, *Undersecretary*<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> John Paul II, "Apostolic Constitution: Pastor Bonus," Art. 41 § 2.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid, Art. 42, 1.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid, Art. 46 1.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid, Art. 46 2.

<sup>339</sup> Jodok Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched," 526, 527.

<sup>340</sup> The Holy See Press Office, "Secretariat of State," Vatican.va, n.d., <https://www.vatican.va/content/romancuria/en/segreteria-di-stato/segreteria-di-stato/struttura.html>.

Looking at the pope's choice of who he staffs the curial offices allows us to make "a midrange evaluation of the Church's orientation in theological as well as political terms."<sup>341</sup> The current secretary of State, Cardinal Parolin, has been one of the most vocal supporters of Pope Francis' foreign policy agenda, which has created tension with some cardinals who have been critical of Francis's approach, especially with respect to China.

### 3.4 The structure of the Holy See's Diplomatic Corps and the tools of Papal Diplomacy

The Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with 183 states,<sup>342</sup> as well as with the European Union and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. The Holy See is also a permanent observer to the United Nations, as well as to other organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the African Union (AU), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Council of Europe.<sup>343</sup> The Holy See is also a member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).<sup>344</sup>

The pope sets the tone and direction of the Holy See's foreign policy, along with the close cooperation of the Secretariat of State. The third section concerns the operations of the papal diplomats, who Pope John XXIII once referred to as "the Pope's own hand outstretched."<sup>345</sup> Papal nuncios (also called Apostolic nuncios) are, under international law, the equivalent to an ambassador.<sup>346</sup> This is spelled out in Article 14 in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.<sup>347</sup> Article 16, 3 states: "this article is without prejudice to any practice accepted by the receiving State regarding the precedence of the representative of the Holy See."<sup>348</sup> Papal nuncios adhere to "a form of conduct created by a set of societal standards in which agents are guided by practices."<sup>349</sup> As summarized by current Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, the Holy See's diplomacy is "human diplomacy" because "real people must be at the center of all diplomatic action."<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Jodok Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched," 511. One example of this is the selection of bishops. The pope will often create bishops, per the recommendations handed to, who reflect his own pastoral and theological approach. This is evident in who he chooses to run the dicasteries. For example, Pope Benedict (who was himself the Prefect of the CDF for almost the entirety of Pope John Paul II's pontificate), chose Cardinal Gerhard Müller as the prefect of the CDF. In 2017 when Müller's five-year term ended, Pope Francis did not renew his term and instead selected fellow Jesuit, Luis Ferrer.

<sup>342</sup> The Holy See Press Office, "Informative Note on the Diplomatic Relations of the Holy See," Vatican.va, September 1, 2023, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2023/01/09/230109b.html>.

<sup>343</sup> Mariano Barbato, "A State, a Diplomat, and a Transnational Church," 41.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>345</sup> Jodok Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched," 521.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>347</sup> Article 14: Heads of mission are divided into three classes, namely: (a) That of ambassadors or nuncios accredited to Heads of State, and other heads of mission of equivalent rank." 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations

<sup>348</sup> United Nations, "Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961" (1961).

<sup>349</sup> Jodok Troy, "The Pope's Own Hand Outstretched," 524.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 529.

Papal nuncios are charged with the dual function of supervising the local church (i.e. collecting information on the status of the local church and relaying that back to Rome) as well as liaising between the Holy See and the host nation. This inherent hybrid nature of the nuncios (the convergence between a secular and religious function, as well as operating on a micro and macro level), makes them unique diplomatic actors. As opposed to a diplomat (from a secular sovereign state), the papal nuncios have a greater connection to their host country by virtue of the fact that they are: (1) are not native citizens of their sending nation (i.e. the Vatican); and (2) as opposed to regular diplomats who maintain a degree of separation from the host country, nuncios are able to integrate because of their role not as diplomat but as priest (thus forming greater bond with the national Catholic community).

When speaking about the tools available in papal diplomacy the first worth mentioning is the Holy See's ability to ratify and be party to bilateral agreements and international treaties.<sup>351</sup> A bilateral treaty, in the context of papal diplomacy, is typically referred to a concordat, which "is a specific bilateral treaty entered into between the Holy See and a State, which regulates the religious affairs and activities of the Catholic Church in that State."<sup>352</sup> As a binding legal agreement, recognized under international law is "concluded between equal parties."<sup>353</sup> These concordats do not enter the secular affairs of a state, instead they only focus on the legal status of the Church in a host state as well as the freedom for Catholics to worship. Currently, there are over 200 concordants in effect.<sup>354</sup>

But what about the pope? What tools are at his disposal in shaping his foreign policy? Just as papal nuncios are legally equivalent to ambassadors, the pope is the legal equivalent of a head of state. The tools that he utilizes in pursuit of his foreign policy goals reflect the unique soft power reach of the papacy. The first tool to mention is travel. Pope Paul VI became the first truly international pope by virtue of being the first pope to visit Asia, Oceania, Africa, the Holy land. While Paul VI was the first international pope, John Paul II perfected the art of travel as diplomacy. During his 28 year pontificate, John Paul II visited 129 countries during his 104 pastoral visits. Papal travel undisputedly helped accelerate the internationalization of the church. As Barbato says "traveling is so important for understanding papal geopolitics and their attempts to re-construct a Catholic landscape, because it is a key instrument for the popes to bring public and classical diplomacy together by mobilizing and addressing a specific audience, but effectively also a wider audience."<sup>355</sup> Barbato also notes that the other effect of travel is that it (religion) is as much a driver of globalization as "trade and finance."<sup>356</sup>

By comparing the apostolic journeys of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis we can see the geopolitical priorities of the popes. Pope Benedict in his eight-year Pontificate visited 24 countries:<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid, 529.

<sup>352</sup> Ryngaert 844

<sup>353</sup> Ryngaert 844.

<sup>354</sup> Joubert, VI

<sup>355</sup> Barbato 2

<sup>356</sup> Barbato 3

<sup>357</sup> In Italy Pope Benedict visited: Bari (2005); Manoppello and Verona (2006); Pavia, Assisi, Loreto, Velletri, and Naples (2007); Savona, Genoa, Santa Maria di Leuca, Brindisi, Sardinia, and Pompeii (2008); L'aquila, Casino and

- 2005: Germany
- 2006: Poland, Spain, Germany, Turkey
- 2007: Brazil and Austria
- 2008: The United States, Australia, France
- 2009: Cameron, Angola, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and the Czech Republic
- 2010: Malta, Portugal, Cyprus, the United Kingdom, and Spain
- 2011: Croatia, San Marino, Spain (3x), Germany (3x), Benin
- 2012: Mexico, Cuba, Lebanon
- 2013: No trips, resigned on 28 February 2013

Pope Francis, since his pontificate began in 2013, has visited 58 countries:<sup>358</sup>

- 2013: Brazil
- 2014: Israel, Jordan, Palestine, South Korea, Albania, France, Turkey
- 2015: Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Bosnia and Herzegovia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Cuba, the United States, Kenya, Uganda, the Central African Republic
- 2016: Cuba (2x), Mexico, Greece, Armenia, Poland, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Sweden
- 2017: Egypt, Portugal, Colombia, Myanmar, Bangladesh
- 2018: Chile, Peru, Switzerland, Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
- 2019: Panama, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Romania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Thailand, Japan
- 2020: No trips due to the Covid-19 Pandemic
- 2021: Iraq, Hungary, Slovakia, Greece (2x), Cyprus
- 2022: Malta, Canada, Kazakhstan, and Bahrain
- 2023: Congo, South Sudan, Portugal (scheduled for August 2023)

Figure 1: Apostolic Visits of Pope Benedict XVI <sup>359</sup>

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Montecassino, San Giovanni in Rotondo, Viterbo, Bagnoregio, Brescia, and Concesio (2009); Torino, Sulmona, Carpineto Romano, and Palermo (2010); Aquileia, Venice, Ancona, Lamezia Terme and Serra, and Assisi (2011); Arezzo, La Verna, Sansepolcro, and Loreto (2012).

<sup>358</sup> In Italy Pope Francis has visited: Lampedusa, Assisi, and Cagliari (2013); Cassano all'Jonio, Campobasso, Isernia, Caserta, Redipuglia War Memorial in Fogliano Redipuglia (2014); Pompeii, Naples, Turin, Prato, and Florence (2015); Assisi twice (2016); Milan, Carpi, Mirandola, Genoa, Bozzolo, Barbiana, Cesena, Bologna (2017); Pietrelcina, San Giovanni Rotondo, Alessano, Molfetta, Nomadelfia, Loppiano, Bari, Piazza Armerina and Palermo (2018); Loreto, Camerino, Naples, Albano Laziale, Greccio (2019); Bari (2020); L'Aquila (2022).

<sup>359</sup> Matthew Santucci, *Apostolic Visits of Pope Benedict XVI*, 2023.

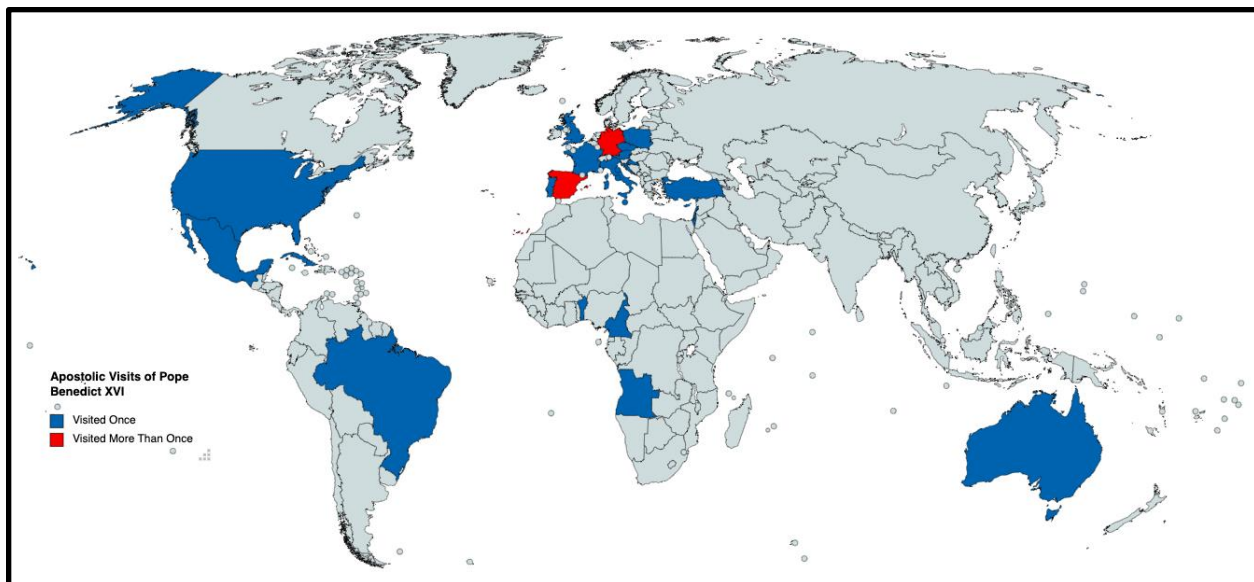
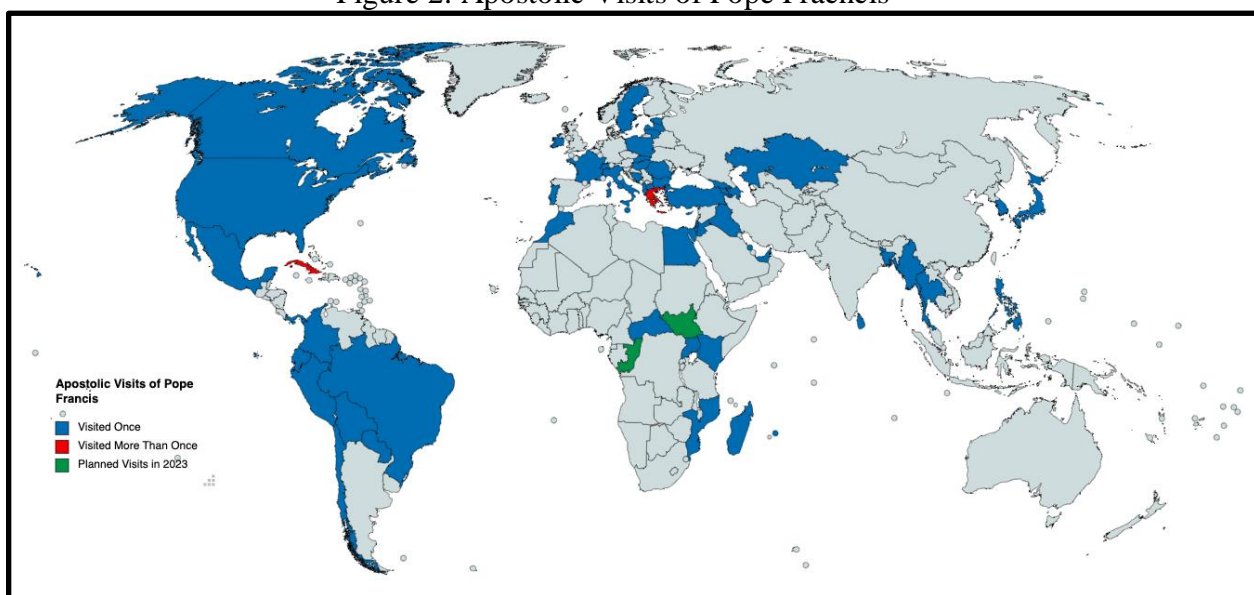


Figure 2: Apostolic Visits of Pope Francis<sup>360</sup>



Looking at the above maps we can see diverging geopolitical priorities between the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. Pope Benedict focused on the historical center of Catholicism, the European heartland; this is evident in his trip to Austria, his three trips to Spain, and the three trips to his native Germany. This falls in line with one of the central aims of his pontificate: the re-evangelizing Europe, which in the last sixty years has undergone a massive wave of secularization (and consequently there has been a massive drop in Church attendance). Pope Francis, during the course of his 10 year pontificate, has shifted the focus to South America, the Balkans, and Asia (which Benedict did not visit). The two countries that Benedict visited three times (Germany and Spain) Pope Francis, hasn't visited once. This pivot to the

<sup>360</sup> Matthew Santucci, *Apostolic Visits of Pope Francis*, 2023. As seen in the legend, countries shaded in blue were visited once, red, visited more than once, and countries shaded in green are the ones Pope Francis will visit in 2023.



global south highlights his desire to dialogue with countries where Catholicism is growing (especially in Africa) and areas that are (historically) economically underdeveloped and politically weak. His visits to Asia and to the Gulf countries can be constructed as an opening up to non-Christian countries. Moreover, his visits to Eastern Europe and the Balkans highlight the increased importance on ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Conspicuously absent for both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis is China. On 4 December 1970 Pope Paul VI, during his tour of Asia and Oceania, visited Hong Kong. Though this trip only lasted three hours, it was significant event for Catholics all across China. In 1999, Pope John Paul II, during his tour of Asia, was expected to visit Hong Kong<sup>361</sup> until the Chinese government forbade him visiting, citing the Holy See's diplomatic relations with Taiwan.<sup>362</sup> Pope John Paul II expressed his willingness to visit China in 1981<sup>363</sup>; Pope Benedict XVI in 2006<sup>364</sup>; and Pope Francis in 2015 and in 2022.<sup>365</sup>

Though there is very little chance of a papal visit to China in the near future, the rhetoric carries a significant weight; it shows that the Pope is willing to dialogue and does not preclude any opportunity to do so. This highlights another tool of papal diplomacy: written and verbal communication. Verbal communication includes the pope's public address, such the Angelus (held almost every Sunday), his general audience on Wednesdays, and the biannual *Urbi et Orbi* (to the City of Rome and to the World) address, held on Easter and Christmas day. These audiences allow the pope to communicate diplomatic objectives and "pay tribute to regions which are easier to talk about than to travel to."<sup>366</sup> They also give the pope the opportunity to weigh in on politically sensitive issues such as the perennial Israel-palestine conflict. Papal audiences and general addresses have a near universal reach, not only are faithful present from all corners of the globe, but there is always extensive press coverage, especially when the pope speaks on a pressing political matter. Pope Benedict alluded to the situation of China in his Christmas *Urbi et Orbi* address in 2005<sup>367</sup>, and explicitly in his Christmas Day *Urbi et Orbi*

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<sup>361</sup> Hong Kong was a British Colony until 1 July 1997, when it was handed over from the British to the Chinese Government.

<sup>362</sup> CONOR O'CLERY, "China Bans Pope's Visit to Hong Kong, Citing Vatican's Taiwan Links," *The Irish Times*, August 10, 1999, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/china-bans-pope-s-visit-to-hong-kong-citing-vatican-s-taiwan-links-1.215160>.

<sup>363</sup> United Press International, Pope John Paul II would like to visit China,...

<https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/03/03/Pope-John-Paul-II-would-like-to-visit-China/1812352443600/>

<sup>364</sup> Catholic News Agency, Pope says he wants to visit China

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/6358/pope-says-he-wants-to-visit-china>

<sup>365</sup> Catholic News Agency, Report: Pope Francis sought to meet with Xi Jinping, but China declined

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252311/report-pope-francis-sought-to-meet-with-xi-jinping-but-china-declined>

<sup>366</sup> Barbato 4

<sup>367</sup> Benedict Christmas 2005: "may he favour the process of dialogue on the Korean peninsula and elsewhere in the countries of Asia, so that, by the settlement of dangerous disputes, consistent and peaceful conclusions can be reached in a spirit of friendship, conclusions which their peoples expectantly await."

[https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20051225\\_urbi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20051225_urbi.html)

addresses in 2010<sup>368</sup> and in 2012.<sup>369</sup> In the Christmas day *Urbi et Orbi* in 2010 Pope Benedict said, “may the birth of the Saviour strengthen the spirit of faith, patience and courage of the faithful of the Church in mainland China, that they may not lose heart through the limitations imposed on their freedom of religion and conscience but, persevering in fidelity to Christ and his Church, may keep alive the flame of hope.”<sup>370</sup>

Besides address and audiences, the written works of the popes (both legislative and pastoral) are invaluable tools. There are several types of documents that the pope can promulgate, each carrying a different legislative weight and importance. The primary legal documents of the Pope are Apostolic Constitutions and *Motu Proprios*, which may or may not be delivered as a papal bull. Apostolic Constitutions are the most important and most solemn papal documents. They are usually issued on doctrinal issues, but can also concern judicial matters relating to the administration of the Holy See. Another legislative document is the *Motu Proprio* (meaning from the Pope’s own hand). These are issued to deal with a specific legislative, instructional, disciplinary, issue of the Church in a specific time. One of the main non-legal documents are encyclical letters. They are pastoral in nature and “offer counsel and shed light on existing doctrine as part of the Holy Father’s ordinary teaching authority.”<sup>371</sup> Other non-legislative documents include Apostolic Epistles, Apostolic Exhortations, and Decretal Letter, and Allocutiones/Addresses.

### **3.5 Pope Benedict XVI’s 2007 Letter to China a new low point in Sino-Vatican Relations**

On 2 April 2005, after 27 years in the Petrine Office, Pope John Paul II died in Rome. A few weeks later in the afternoon of 19 April 2005 the Bavarian Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected, choosing the name Benedict XVI (r: 2005-2013). He was the first German to be elected pope in almost 500 years. Cardinal Ratzinger was a well-known figure at the Vatican, having served as Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) from 1981 to 2005. In his role as Prefect of the CDF, he was the Church’s top theologian and doctrinal watchdog. He was noted for his orthodoxy and conservative theological, earning him the epithet of ‘God’s Rottweiler’ and the ‘Panzerkardinal’. He is also considered to be one of the most brilliant theologians of the last century, he wrote 67 books and three encyclicals during his long ecclesiastical career.

One of the main themes of his writings, both as a cardinal and as Pope, was his appraisal of the dangers present in, what he called, the ‘dictatorship of relativism’. This was rooted in what Pope Benedict saw as the rampant secularism and materialism of the modern West. This

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<sup>368</sup> Benedict Christmas 2010:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20101225\\_urbi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20101225_urbi.html)

<sup>369</sup> Benedict Christmas 2012: May peace spring up on the vast continent of Asia. May the Child Jesus look graciously on the many peoples who dwell in those lands and, in a special way, upon all those who believe in him. May the King of Peace turn his gaze to the new leaders of the People’s Republic of China for the high task which awaits them. I express my hope that, in fulfilling this task, they will esteem the contribution of the religions, in respect for each, in such a way that they can help to build a fraternal society for the benefit of that noble People and of the whole world.

[https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20121225\\_urbi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20121225_urbi.html)

<sup>370</sup> *Urbi et Orbi* 2010

<sup>371</sup> Saint Paul University, Canon Law, Papal Documents

rejection of secularism and materialism made him an opponent of liberalism as much as it did against marxism. This set the tone for his pontificate and was perhaps most clearly articulated in his controversial Regensburg Address from 2006. This carried over to how Benedict shaped his diplomacy, which (as seen in his apostolic visits) aimed to rebuild the Church in its traditional heartland (continental Europe).

Pope Benedict was familiar with the situation of the Church in China. In 1993, as a Cardinal, he visited Hong Kong where he met with some members of the Asian Bishops' Conference. Here he spoke about the need to introduce "interculturality", replacing the term 'inculturation' as it "presumes that a faith stripped of culture is transplanted into a religiously indifferent culture whereby two subjects, formally unknown to each other, meet and fuse."<sup>372</sup> According to Cardinal Zen, then Cardinal Ratzinger attended the 'secret' meetings held by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) which concerned the state of the Church in China.<sup>373</sup> Because of his role as Prefect of the CDF, he understood the theological and canonical implications of CCPA's selection and ordination of Bishops.

There were some signs of goodwill immediately after Benedict's election. The first came the day after his election when Qin Gang, 秦刚 said, "we express our warm greetings to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who was just elected to be the new pope."<sup>374</sup> In May 2005, then Chinese Ambassador to Italy, Dong Jinyi 董津义 said, "we appreciate the openings of the pope to China. It is necessary to dialogue and strengthen reciprocal trust if one wishes to arrive at the normalization of relations...we know that the desire of Benedict XVI to normalize relations between the Vatican and China is genuine. We hope that his words will be followed by concrete deeds."<sup>375</sup> However the condition remained that normalization would only happen if the Holy See broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan and did not interfere in the domestic affairs of China "not even in the name of religion."<sup>376</sup>

On 27 May 2007 Pope Benedict issued his Letter to the Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China, arguably one of, if not the most, important papal document on China of the last fifty years. Similar to other papal documents it opened by expressing the closeness of the Pope to the people in China, especially given the difficult circumstances they faced. He even recalled the importance of China for the Church, stressing that (quoting Pope John Paul II), "the church seeks no privilege

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<sup>372</sup> "Cardinal Ratzinger Urges Asian Bishops to Adopt Term Interculturality," Union of Catholic Asian News, March 8, 1993, [https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post\\_name=/1993/03/09/cardinal-ratzinger-urges-asian-bishops-to-adopt-term-interculturality&post\\_id=42924](https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/1993/03/09/cardinal-ratzinger-urges-asian-bishops-to-adopt-term-interculturality&post_id=42924).

<sup>373</sup> Joseph Cardinal Zen, *For Love of My People I Will Not Remain Silent*, 13.

<sup>374</sup> "Signals Point to Change in Relations between China and Holy Seeucan Column Vatican Vista by Gerard Oconnell," Union of Catholic Asian News, July 4, 2005, [https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post\\_name=/2005/07/05/signals-point-to-change-in-relations-between-china-and-holy-seeucan-column-vatican-vista-by-gerard-oconnell&post\\_id=15](https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/2005/07/05/signals-point-to-change-in-relations-between-china-and-holy-seeucan-column-vatican-vista-by-gerard-oconnell&post_id=15).

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

from China and its leaders but solely the resumption of dialogue in order to build a relationship based upon mutual respect and deeper understanding.”<sup>377</sup>

This letter repeatedly stressed that the Church was non-political and that it did not have any political ambitions, just spiritual (therefore it had no intention of meddling into the affairs of the government or changing the political regime). However, while the Church “cannot and must not replace the State” he also stressed that while the Church had an inherent obligation to work towards justice “a just society must be the achievement of politics, not the church.”<sup>378</sup> However, the letter turns its focus to the present situation in China (stating that there must be a reciprocal exchange) between the Church and civil authorities:

In light of these unreasonable principles, the solution to existing problems cannot be pursued via an ongoing conflict with the legitimate civil authorities; at the same time though compliance with those authorities is not acceptable when they interfere unduly in matters regarding the faith and discipline of the church...the civil authorities are well aware that the church in her teaching invites the faithful to be good citizens...but it is likewise clear that she asks the state to guarantee to those same catholic citizens the full exercise of their faith, with respect to authentic religious freedom.<sup>379</sup>

From there Benedict pivoted to the central focus of the Letter: the illicit episcopal ordinations of the CCPA. There are several reasons why these ordinations are dangerous to the structure of the Church. The first is that they sever the unity between the Pope and the local Church: “it is therefore indispensable for the unity of the church in individual nations that every Bishop should be in communion with the other bishops and that all should be in visible and concrete communion with the pope.”<sup>380</sup> The Church, by virtue of its apostolic nature,<sup>381</sup> and the mandate given to the pope as its supreme head, has the right to select and consecrate bishops. This is a non-negotiable ecclesiological matter. The selection of bishops by the CCPA presents an existential threat to the Church and delegitimizes the office of the Pope (from this angle can also be construed as an infringement of the Holy See’s sovereignty).

Pope Benedict repudiated the claims of the CCPA and the legitimacy of the BCCCC, saying that the “only a legitimate Episcopal Conference can formulate pastoral guidelines, valid for the entire catholic community of the country concerned.”<sup>382</sup> This point was followed by reiterating that the CCPA’s guiding principles of “independence and autonomy, self management and democratic administration of the church is incompatible with catholic doctrine.”<sup>383</sup> This point is mentioned several times throughout the letter: “...it is obvious that an Episcopal conference cannot be subjected to any civil authority in questions of faith and of living according to the faith.”<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Benedict XVI, “Letter Of The Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI To The Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons And Lay Faithful Of The Catholic Church In The People’s Republic Of China” (2007), section 4.

<sup>378</sup> Benedict XVI, “Letter Of The Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI To The Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons And Lay Faithful Of The Catholic Church In The People’s Republic Of China” section 5.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid, section 4,5.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid, section 5.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, section 7.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid, section 7.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, section 10.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid, section 8.

This authority, Benedict maintained, is of a strictly religious nature – the selection of bishops is not a political act (though, as always, there are political implications for a papal selection) and the interference of the state via the illegitimate organs of the CPCA and BCCC is tantamount to the state interfering in the Church’s affairs and undermines the sovereignty of the Holy See.<sup>385</sup> The Official Church as Benedict’s letter posits was the source of division and confusion for Chinese Catholics. He did, however, express his continued willingness to work with the government in arriving at some form of accord, “there would not be any particular difficulties with acceptance of the recognition granted by civil authorities on condition that this does not entail the denial of renounceable principles of faith and of ecclesiastical communion.”<sup>386</sup>

The CCPA also violated, according to Benedict, the individual conscience of priests and bishops who were in many cases coerced into joining the Official Church. Despite the unwavering position that Benedict outlined in this letter, it highlighted a very clear pragmatism. Given the overall circumstances and the neutered position of Rome, “...Holy See...leaves the decision to the individual Bishop who, having consulted his presbyterate, is better able to know the local situation...”<sup>387</sup> In the context of China, this relative autonomy offered to the bishops by the Holy See is imperative. Many bishops face great political pressure to act in accordance with the CCPA. Benedict’s willingness to dispense with this universal approach highlights the underlying pragmatism of this letter.

The letter ended with Benedict expressing his desire for dialogue and that this impasse ought to be overcome for the benefit of the church in China and for social cohesion.<sup>388</sup> Unsurprisingly, after its release Chinese Catholics were told to ignore the letter and shortly after its publication it was removed from the internet entirely.<sup>389</sup> While Cardinal Zen was largely supportive of the letter, he did note that there were some issues with the translation into Chinese, which compromised some core provisions/details.<sup>390</sup> According to Zen, it placed a great deal of pressure on the local bishops. This was a mistake, as the cardinal notes, because if the pressure to act doesn't come from the Pope, it will come from the government.<sup>391</sup> Zen also noted that the situation is not perfectly uniform, in some areas there is a coexistence between the two

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<sup>385</sup> “The Pope, when he issues the apostolic mandate for the ordination of a Bishop, exercises his supreme spiritual authority: this authority and this intervention remain within the strictly religious sphere. It is not, therefore, a question of a political authority, unduly asserting itself in the internal affairs of a State and offending against its sovereignty” Ibid, section 9.

<sup>386</sup> “Given this difficult situation, not a few members of the Catholic community are asking whether recognition from the civil authorities – necessary in order to function publicly – somehow compromise communion with the universal church.” Ibid, section 7.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid, section 7.

<sup>388</sup> “I renew my earnest wish that in the course of a respectful and open dialogue between the holy see and the chinese bishops on the one hand and the governmental authorities on the other, the difficulties mentioned may be overcome and thus a fruitful understanding may be reached that will prove beneficial to the catholic community and social cohesion” Ibid, 19,20.

<sup>389</sup> Some reflections on Benedict XVI’s letter to the Church in China – Savio Hon Tai-Fai, S.D.B. Cardinal Zen notes that one peculiarity was that the Chinese authorities did not denounce the letter publicly, but kept it more private.

<sup>390</sup> Joseph Cardinal Zen, *For Love of My People I Will Not Remain Silent*, 38.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid, 59.

communities, while in other areas it is much more conflictual. To that end, the Holy See ought to be more proactive in supporting the underground Church.

Here it is important to pivot to the illicit ordinations that occurred during Benedict's pontificate, both before and after the publication of the 2007 letter, as these events marked a major setback in Sino-Vatican relations. From 2000 (after the illicit ordinations in January) to April 2006 each bishop that was ordained in China had the approval of both the CCPA and the Holy See. That changed when on 30 April Joseph Ma Yinglin 馬英林 was ordained without papal mandate as Bishop of Kunming. This event was followed by the illicit ordination of Joseph Liu Xinhong 劉新紅 on 2 May as the Bishop of Anhui. The Holy See Press Office responded to these events stating, "The Holy Father learned of the ws with great sadness... We are faced with a great violation of religious freedom."<sup>392</sup> The statement went on to note, however, that priests and bishops operate under "strong pressures and threats"<sup>393</sup> in China. This can be read as the Vatican trying to take a more conciliatory approach, given that they did not issue any canonical sanctions on those bishops.

The goodwill of the Holy See seemed to have little effect. On 30 November 2006, John Wang Renlei 王仁雷 was illicitly ordained as coadjutor Bishop of Xuzhou. Following this the pope expressed "profound sorrow" and said that it was an "extremely grave"<sup>394</sup> act. There was, however, no formal pronouncement of excommunication.



A photo of the illicit ordination of John Wang Renlei circulated by SARA.<sup>395</sup>

There is also the case of Bishop Julius Jia Zhigu 賈治國, a prominent figure of the underground Church from the Diocese of Zhengding (in the Hebei province). He was clandestinely ordained bishop in December 1980 and spent nearly 20 years in prison; he was

<sup>392</sup> China's Naming of Bishops Angers Pope, *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2006.

<sup>393</sup> China's Naming of Bishops Angers Pope, *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2006.

<sup>394</sup> "Holy See: Ordination Caused Pope's Sorrow and Laceration of Ecclesial Community," PIME Asia News, December 2, 2006, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Holy-See:-Ordination-caused-pope%27s-sorrow-and-laceration-of-ecclesial-community-7910.html>.

<sup>395</sup> <https://www.xinde.org/show/5941>

later rearrested in 2009.<sup>396</sup> The Holy See Press office issued the following statement following his arrest: “situations of this kind create obstacles to that constructive dialogue with the competent authorities which, as is known, the Holy Father in his above-mentioned Letter expressed the hope might be pursued... This is not, unfortunately, an isolated case... other ecclesiastics are also deprived of their freedom and subject to undue pressures and limitations in their pastoral activities.”<sup>397</sup> Bishop Jia’s arrest is significant for a few reasons. One, he was an underground bishop and one of the fiercest critics of the Official church and Hebei has the largest Catholic population in China (with a large underground Catholic community).

After these incidents there was a resumption of ordinations having the approval of both the Holy See and the Chinese government. This lasted until 2010, when on 20 November Joseph Guo Jincai 郭金才 was consecrated as Bishop of Chengde.<sup>398</sup> He was the first bishop to be ordained without a papal mandate since Pope Benedict sent out his 2007 letter. The government had put an enormous amount of pressure on legitimate bishops to not only attend the ordination, but to also take part in the rite of consecration. This was a clear rebuke of the Vatican and a major setback in relations. The Holy See’s response to this particular ordination was notable as it mentioned Anthony Liu Bainian 刘柏年, the general secretary of the CCPA, by name: “the Holy See notes with regret that the Authorities allow the leadership of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, under the influence of Mr. Liu Bainian, to adopt attitudes that gravely damage the Catholic Church and hamper the aforesaid dialogue.”<sup>399</sup>

Sino-Vatican relations continued to deteriorate during Benedict's pontificate, reaching its nadir in 2011. On 29 June Lei Shiyin 雷世银 was ordained without papal mandate as Bishop of Leshan. The Holy See released a statement on 4 July 2011 formally excommunicating Lei:

Rev. Lei Shiyin, ordained without the Papal mandate and hence illegitimately, has no authority to govern the diocesan Catholic community, and the Holy See does not recognise him as the Bishop of the Diocese of Leshan. The effects of the sanction which he has incurred through violation of the norm of can. 1382 of the *Code of Canon Law* remain in place. The same Rev. Lei Shiyin had been informed, for some time, that he was unacceptable to the Holy See as an episcopal candidate for proven and very grave reasons.<sup>400</sup>

A little over two weeks later, on 14 July, Joseph Huang Bingzhang 黄炳章 was illicitly ordained bishop of Shantou. He too incurred excommunication by the Vatican in accordance

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<sup>396</sup> Asia News, Police arrest underground Zhengding bishop Jia Zhiguo  
<https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Police-arrest-underground-Zhengding-bishop-Jia-Zhiguo-14870.html>

<sup>397</sup> Catholic News Agency, Vatican says arrest of Chinese bishop creates obstacles to dialogue  
<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/15576/vatican-says-arrest-of-chinese-bishop-creates-obstacles-to-dialogue>

<sup>398</sup> People, Communities and the Catholic Church in CHina, Chapter 2: An Overview of the Catholic Church in Post-Mao China, pg. 15.

<sup>399</sup> Comunicato Della Sala Stampa Della Santa Sede In Merito All’ordinazione Episcopale A Chengde (Provincia Di Hebei, Cina Continentale), 24.11.2010

<sup>400</sup> Statement of The Holy See: Episcopal Ordination in the Diocese of Leshan (Province of Sichuan, Mainland China), 04.07.2011

with canon 1382. This dual incident was the first time since 1958 that excommunication was publicly incurred by a bishop in China.<sup>401</sup> While the Holy See had previously opted to be tactful and more reserved in its dealings with China, this was an inflection point. Pope Benedict issued a personal statement in which he lamented the fact that “the patient work of mending bonds between the underground and official Church” that Pope John Paul II and himself both attempted.”<sup>402</sup> Despite his patience and hope for dialogue, relations continued to deteriorate.

A year later, in 2012, there was another illicit ordination, this time in Harbin, in the Heilongjiang province. Prior to the ordination, Archbishop Savio Hon Taifai 韓大輝 – then secretary for the CPE – petitioned the authorities to not proceed with this ordination; the ordination happened anyways.<sup>403</sup> On 6 July 2012, Yue Fusheng 岳福生 was ordained without a pontifical mandate and was publicly excommunicated four days later.<sup>404</sup> The Vatican expressed that Yue’s ordination could not proceed as Harbin already had an apostolic administrator, Fr. Zhao Hongchun 赵宏春. Fr. Zhao – who was opposed to the ordination – was arrested on 4 July and was released two days later.<sup>405</sup> The Bishops present at the ordination – Fang Xinyao of Linyi, Pei Junmin of Liaoning, Meng Qinglu of Hothot in Inner Mongolia, Wang Renlei of Xuzhou and Yang Yongqiang of Zhoucun – were also excommunicated.<sup>406</sup>

One of the final dramas in China during Pope Benedict’s pontificate was the arrest of Thaddeus Ma Daqin 馬達欽 following his ordination on 7 July 2012. Ma was approved by both the Holy See and government; however, during his ordination he refused to let one of the illicit bishops place hands on him during the consecration. This act was followed by his announcement that he was renouncing his membership in the CCPA. This was, no doubt, a humiliating moment for the Chinese officials present and undermined the legitimacy of the CCPA in the eyes of those present. As a result, Ma was placed under house arrest where he remains until today.

The ordinations in 2011 and 2012 all have one important common feature. Even if the candidate was approved by both the Holy See and SARA (such as Ma) or unilaterally (such as Yue), the CCPA and BCCCC always ensured that the bishops present at the consecration were a mix of those with and without a papal mandate. On the one hand this was a power play by the CCPA; it was their message to the Vatican that even in the case of a valid ordination, bishops who were illicit would participate. This, while being an explicit political statement, is also a serious canonical issue as it then calls into question the legitimacy of even the bishops ordained *with* a papal mandate. Pope Benedict XVI, as had been the case before, said that these ordinations were illicit, but valid. All of this underscores the perennial issues between the Vatican and the PRC: legitimacy. Despite Pope Benedict’s lucid and erudite 2007 letter, his patience and goodwill, the situation of the Church in China deteriorated sharply. One reason for this could’ve been rooted in Pope Benedict’s decision to elevate Zen to the College of Cardinals

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<sup>401</sup> Criveller 16

<sup>402</sup> 208 Jean-Paul Weist, *Catholicism in China, 1900-Present: The Development of the Chinese Church*

<sup>403</sup> Popeless Bishops. *The Chinese Road to Schism*, Sandro Magister, July 9, 2012

<sup>404</sup> Crivellar, 16

<sup>405</sup> Popeless Bishops. *The Chinese Road to Schism*, Sandro Magister, July 9, 2012

<sup>406</sup> *The Situation of Communism in Canon Law*, pg. 216



in 2006. Another, which is more probable, was the internal changes happening in China, specifically the growing influence and ascent of Xi Jinping 习近平.

## Chapter 4: The 2018 Sino-Vatican Accord and the future of Sino-Vatican Relations

### 4.1 The genesis of the Administrative oversight in China Religion in China

In the late 1990s and early 2000s Jiang Zemin 江泽民 launched a campaign against the burgeoning Falun Gong movement 法輪功. Founded by Li Hongzhi 李洪志 in 1992, Falun Gong is a ‘new age’ spiritual movement that incorporates qigong exercises, Buddhist and Taoist spiritual exercises in order to bring people into harmony.<sup>407</sup> It was estimated that by 1999 between 70 and 100 million people were practicing.<sup>408</sup> The government abruptly abandoned its support of the movement and in 1999 launched a campaign to eradicate the movement, which it now considered to be an ‘evil cult’.<sup>409</sup> Jiang was no doubt worried that the rapid growth of the movement presented an ideological threat (whether the followers of Falun Gong saw it as such or not) to the party. At a conference, held in December 2001, Jiang announced that Falun Gong was being eradicated and that “the main item of the agenda was the adaptation of religion and socialism.”<sup>410</sup>

Before Jiang’s repression of Falun Gong, he had continued along his predecessor’s line to tolerate religion on the mainland. This is first evident with Document No. 6 in 1991, which supplemented Deng Xiaoping’s Document No. 19 (issued in 1982).<sup>411</sup> Document No. 6 recognized that there needed to be some degree (albeit limited) of religious toleration in China; however, religious activity needed to conform to the official directives of the party.<sup>412</sup> In 1997 the State Council released the Freedom of Religious Belief in China, or “White Paper”, profiled the different sects in the country, while reiterating the need for state control. In the first section of the document it is written: “now the Chinese people are building China into a modern socialist country with Chinese characteristics. The Chinese government advocates that religion should adapt to this reality.”<sup>413</sup> This is juxtaposed with the following section where it mentions that,

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<sup>407</sup> “Special Report: The Battle for China’s Spirit. Falun Gong,” *Freedom House* (Freedom House, 2017), [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH\\_2017\\_BattleForChinasSpirit\\_Falun\\_Gong\\_0.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_2017_BattleForChinasSpirit_Falun_Gong_0.pdf).

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Zhang Chunhua, “Chinese Christians Compelled to Honor Deceased CCP Leader Jiang Zemin,” *Bitter Winter*, December 16, 2022, <https://bitterwinter.org/chinese-christians-compelled-to-honor-deceased-ccp-leader-jiang-zemin/>.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Pitman B. Potter, “Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China,” *The China Quarterly* 174 (June 2003): 321.

<sup>413</sup> The State Council Of the People's Republic of China, “Freedom of Religious Belief in China (October 1997)” (1996), <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/Freedom/index.htm>.

prior to the 1949 revolution, Christianity in China was an instrument of western imperialism; it was only after the Maoist victory that Christianity became autonomous, that is to say 'Chinese'. The 1997 document specifically referenced Catholicism, saying that the diplomatic tensions between the Holy See and the PRC are drawn upon two points: the Holy See's diplomatic recognition of Taiwan (the ROC) and its continued interference in domestic affairs (i.e. the appointment of bishops). The document continued: "whether the relations between China and the Vatican change or not, the Chinese government will, as always, support Chinese Catholicism which holds aloft the banner of patriotism, sticks to the principle of independence and self-management, and stands for selection and ordination of bishops by itself."<sup>414</sup> Both the 1991 Document No.6 and the 1997 Freedom of Religious Belief in China reinforced Jiang's religious policy, which was predicated upon his "Three Sentences 三句话: enforce Party policies on religion, strengthen control of religion, and actively lead the adaptation of religion and socialism."<sup>415</sup>

Jiang's successor, Hu Jintao 胡锦涛, continued along the same line and in 2004 the Religious Affairs Regulations, also called the Regulations on Religious Affairs 宗教事务条例 of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (No. 426) were published, though they did not go into effect until 1 March 2005. Article 1 states that the new regulations serve to "...safeguard the religious freedom of citizens, uphold religious and social harmony, and standardize administration of religious affairs."<sup>416</sup> Article 4 is of particular interest, "all religions shall uphold the principle of independence and autonomy. Religious groups, places of religious activity, and religious affairs shall not be under control of a foreign power."<sup>417</sup> This document also increased the administrative oversight on religious activity, detailing specifically how religious learning centers, places of worship were to be registered. Article 23 outlines the provisions that religious activity must not "upset inter-ethnic harmony, or adversely affect social stability"<sup>418</sup> and Article 27 instead specifically outlines that "the selection of Catholic bishops shall be submitted by the national Catholic religious group for the files of the department of religious affairs of the state council."<sup>419</sup> Chapter 6, the final section of the document, outlines the legal liabilities should any individual or group break any of the rules outlined therein. In this document the word(s) harmony/harmonize/harmonious appears 6 times, social order 3 times, social welfare 4 times, and administration/administrative/administered 31 times.

This iteration of the Religious Affairs Regulations would stay in place until 2017 when an updated, and much longer, version was enacted. It is clear that the party made the realistic assessment that religion was not going to be eradicated any time soon. As a result, there needed

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid. As already mentioned, despite the attempts by the Holy See to make inroads with the PRC there was a sustained persecution of bishops and priests belonging to the underground Church. Former U.S. president George W. Bush, in 2002, asked Jiang to release the clergy of the underground Church who had been arrested and prevented from exercising their ministry. "List of 33 Bishops and Priests Arrested or Restricted in China," Den katolske kirke, February 21, 2002, <https://www.katolsk.no/nyheter/2002/02/22-0009>.

<sup>415</sup> Zhang Chunhua, "Chinese Christians Compelled to Honor Deceased CCP Leader Jiang Zemin."

<sup>416</sup> State Council of the People's Republic of China, "Religious Affairs Regulations (№ 426)" (2004), Article 1.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid, Article 4.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid, Article 23.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, Article 27.

to be more provisions in place to monitor religious activity, while at the same time a continued campaign to imbue religious practice with Chinese 'characteristics'. This ongoing sinicization of religion gained even greater momentum when Xi Jinping 习近平 came to power.

#### **4.2 Understanding Xi Jinping (Neo-Confucianism and Centralization) – the virtuous leader?**

The 2008 financial crisis that originated in the United States, had a massive spillover effect, soon thereafter affecting the global economy. Despite China's sustained economic growth, the country witnessed a sharp economic contraction in 2008. However, the Chinese government was able to insulate the country from the worst effects of the crisis by quickly implementing a massive stimulus package (12.5% of China 2008 GDP), which helped the country rebound.<sup>420</sup> In 2009 it surpassed Germany to become the largest exporting nation in the world and in 2010 it surpassed Japan to become the second largest economy in the world.<sup>421</sup> China was on a quick upward trajectory and while many "Chinese elites have a clear sense of general direction but an unclear sense of ultimate destination."<sup>422</sup> This not only concerned the economic future of the country, but also its internal policies and geopolitical ambitions. The country was shedding its low-profile image that had characterized it for the last 20 years and, instead, embraced a "striving for achievement strategy."<sup>423</sup> Since his ascent to the fulcrum of power in 2012, Xi Jinping has fundamentally altered the trajectory of China, bucking the trend set by his immediate predecessors and alarming the West.

In order to analyze Xi Jinping's rule of China, it is important to understand the ideological underpinnings; a central theme throughout Xi's rule has been the renewed interest and role of Confucianism. Neo-confucianism, as understood and employed by Xi, has underscored this notion of national rejuvenation and, as a consequence, has helped Xi cement his rule and legitimize the regime. Confucianism has been a central component of Chinese political thought up until the end of the Qing dynasty, which "provided the emperors with ruling legitimacy...while [also] regulating the behaviors of rulers towards their subjects."<sup>424</sup> This ruling legitimacy is predicated upon the notion of virtue of benevolence.<sup>425</sup> While benevolence is the main virtue that forms the legitimacy of a leader, other virtues that uphold the right of a leader are: "filial piety, fraternal duties, loyalty, kindness, righteousness, sincerity, trustworthiness, humility, diligence, gentleness, perseverance, respectfulness, deference."<sup>426</sup>

After the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, there was a shift away from Confucian ethics first under the Nationalist government and then following the Maoist revolution in 1949. In his

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<sup>420</sup> Christine Wong, "The Fiscal Stimulus Programme and Public Governance Issues in China," *OECD Journal on Budgeting* 11, no. 3 (2011): 2.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>422</sup> Xiaoyu Pu, "Controversial Identity of a Rising China," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 10, no. 2 (2017): 140.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

<sup>424</sup> Jiang Yi-huah, "Confucian Political Theory in Contemporary China," *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (May 2018): 156.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

youth, Mao exalted the teachings of Confucius, making reference to it more than even the classic Marxist writers, such as Marx and Lenin.<sup>427</sup> For Mao, Chinese socialism was always distinct from its European counterpart. Confucianism clearly helped differentiate, both ideologically and historically. Yet after the Revolution, Mao shifted away from confucian concepts to the point where it became strictly banned during the cultural revolution – confucian virtue was replaced by a strict adherence to marxist materialism.

Under Deng Xiaoping, in the context of the broader opening up of the 1980's, Confucianism made a comeback. It has been “presented to the outside world as a cultural symbol of China.”<sup>428</sup> This re-emergence of Confucianism has continued under Xi Jinping; however, it has served the primary purpose of legitimizing the power of the state and the consolidation of his own personal power. One of Xi's main objectives has been the continued process of localizing socialism, that is to make it distinctly Chinese. This idea is underscored by the importance given to ‘autonomy’ in official Chinese discourse. Lin argues that this is used to confront western liberalism. Confucianism, then, plays an integral part in differentiating China from the west as it is a key part of the country's “historical heritage.”<sup>429</sup> This idea of ‘historical heritage’ has been utilized by Xi to build China's national and political nationalism. Lin, quoting Guo Yingjie, states that “cultural nationalism is aimed at maintaining cultural autonomy, unity and identity by defending a distinctive and historically rooted way of life, political nationalism seeks to reconstruct political authority of the state by placing China's cultural heritage within a new culture that is congenial to state building.”<sup>430</sup> For Xi the legitimacy of the regime, its moral and governing authority, is supported by China's unique and storied cultural superiority – and at the very core of this is Confucianism.

On 24 September 2014, on the 2,565th anniversary of Confucius' birth, Xi delivered an address extolling the importance and virtue of Confucian in modern China.<sup>431</sup> In this speech Xi emphasized ‘peace’ and ‘development’ as the two main aims of the party, with the former being a confucian concept embodied in modern China: “The Chinese nation has always been a peace loving nation, and peace loving also has a deep origin in Confucianism.”<sup>432</sup> However, these goals have not been fully realized due to “war and poverty”.<sup>433</sup> Xi went on in this speech to note that the development of Confucianism has been a central part in the “struggle for homeland construction since ancient times”<sup>434</sup> Xi, however, stressed that Confucianism is not an ossified theory, but instead has changed and shifted “in response to the development of Chinese society and advancements of the times, so they have long-lasting vitality.”<sup>435</sup> Xi's addresses ended with

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<sup>427</sup> Delia Lin, “The CCP's Exploitation of Confucianism and Legalism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Communist Party*, ed. Willy Wo-Lap Lam (Routledge, 2017), 48.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>431</sup> Lin notes that “it marked the first time that a Chinese president formally attended celebrations marking the birth of Confucius.” Ibid, 50.

<sup>432</sup> Xi Jinping, “Speech at the Opening Meeting of the International Academic Symposium in Commemoration of the 2565th Anniversary of the Birth of Confucius and the Fifth General Assembly of the International Confucian Federation” (September 24, 2014).

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

highlighting some of the main challenges to modern China, namely: individualism, war, poverty, income inequality, materialism, and the decline of social integrity. Confucianism, then, given the central place of virtue, has become the rhetorical and practical basis upon which he has launched his reforms. This process of cultural purification has also affected the operation and organization of the CCP, and has become the launchpad for ‘exceptionalism’.

This notion of Chinese exceptionalism 中国特殊论 is essential for the continued legitimization of the regime and in differentiating it from, the international system. This campaign did not start under Xi Jinping; in fact, this idea of ‘rejuvenation’ goes back to the imperial period when China was under the yoke of the Western powers. The new slogan, ‘the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ (*zhonghua minzu de weida fuxing* 中华民族的伟大复兴) was endorsed by Jiang Zemin.<sup>436</sup> Rejuvenation in the Chinese context requires a complete rejection of western norms, ideas, and philosophies. This push for rejuvenation and exceptionalism, then, forms the basis of the CCP’s perennial antagonism with, and differentiation from, the West. That is not to say that western ideas cannot exist in China – they can; however, they must go through this process of sinicization in order to be made compatible with the overall direction and values of the party. In this way, China can both correct the mistakes of the past (which is a product of this idea of national humiliation that has already been presented) as well asserting itself as the new ethical force in the world. Rejuvenation and reform are not just responsive to external pressures and ideas, but also respond to internal shortcomings. This was seen during Deng’s mandate where the ‘openness’ of the 1980’s was a response to the excesses of Mao’s cultural revolution and more recently in Xi’s anti-corruption campaign. This process of Reform 改革 not only permits greater harmony (as the party would suggest), but it has made China incredibly resilient and adaptable.

By contrasting China with the international system, the Chinese government is repudiating the United States’ economic, political, and cultural hegemony.<sup>437</sup> With China presented as a foil to the West, Xi has been able to go forward with his reforms and this, in turn, has formed the ideological basis for Xi’s rule.<sup>438</sup> In September 2013 Xi Jinping “called upon China’s traditional cultures...to arrest the perceived decline in Chinese moral sensibilities.”<sup>439</sup> By projecting a moral dimension to China’s mission, it is easier to legitimize the government’s actions, even when they are in clear violation of international law.

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<sup>436</sup> Ho notes: Zemin used this phrase in place of the earlier phrase “Invigorating China” (*zhenxin zhonghua* 振兴中华) Benjamin Ho, “Understanding Chinese Exceptionalism: China’s Rise, Its Goodness, and Greatness,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 39, no. 3 (August 2014): 167.

<sup>437</sup> Chinese exceptionalism is premised on the “five principles of peaceful coexistence” as well as the “Deng Xiaping’s anti-hegemonist theories.” *Ibid*, 168.

<sup>438</sup> This neo-Confucian framework is only part of the picture, though. Another concept that is evident in China is legalism. As opposed to Confucianism, legalism posits that the uniformity of law (insert chinese character here), as opposed to social relationships governed by a moral code, to be the primary way to order society. Lin coined the term “governing the country according to law” as a way to understand and conceptualize Xi’s governance. Delia Lin, “The CCP’s Exploitation of Confucianism and Legalism,” 53, 54.

<sup>439</sup> Benjamin Ho, “Understanding Chinese Exceptionalism,” 169.

Out attention should now turn to to the 18th National Congress of the CPC 中国共产党第十八次全国代表大会, which ran from 8-15 November 2012, where Xi became General Secretary of the CCP. Analyzing the CCP congresses is important as they: (1) function as a retrospective reflection of the preceding five years; (2) allow the party to exalt the achievements the country has made; (3) give outsiders a critical insight in the priorities of the party; and (4) provide a broad (ideological and political) roadmap for the next five years, until the next congress. In the Work Report, delivered by Hu on 8 November, the overarching theme was the effective progress made in developing ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. This, according to the report, is a precondition for the “building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, accelerate socialist modernization, and achieve the great renewal of the Chinese nation.”<sup>440</sup>

It is worth taking a moment to detail the structure of the CCP in order to better understand how far-reaching and interconnected the administrative apparatus is. It’s important to remember that in China the party is the most important entity; it is more important than other political bodies and even the constitution, which serves to legitimize the party rule. Party congresses are held every five years and are the single most important event for the party. As mentioned, it is a moment of reflection for the party, and projects its vision for the next five year period. Moreover, at the congress, elections are held for key party positions.

The congress also revises the constitution and is able to change the party’s guiding ideology (which was the case in 2017).<sup>441</sup> (Note: this is not the same thing as the National People’s Congress, which is the national legislature).

At the apex of the CCP’s power structure is the Central Committee (officially called the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 中国共产党中央委员会) composed of the General Secretary and the elite Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) 中国共产党中央政治局常务委员会, which is composed of 7 members (including the General Secretary).<sup>442</sup> Underneath the PSC is the Politburo (25 members) from which members are selected for the PSC.<sup>443</sup> Then there is the Central Committee (380 members), which holds annual meetings, or plenums (also called plenary meetings or plenary sessions). The central committee is also responsible for selecting the members of the Politburo.<sup>444</sup> Then, there is the National Party Congress, which convenes every 5 years (it is both an event, as well as a body). Finally, at the bottom of the CCP hierarchy are the registered members (as of 2022 membership was an estimated 96.7 million

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<sup>440</sup> Hu Jintao, “Hu Jintao’s Report Delivered at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC)” (18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, November 8, 2012).

<sup>441</sup> Chatham House, Why does the CCP National Congress matter?  
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2022-08/guide-chinese-communist-partys-national-congress>

<sup>442</sup> As of the publication of this paper (February 2023) the PSC members are: Xi Jinping, Li Qiang 李强, Zhao Leji 赵乐际, Wang Huning 王沪宁, Cai Qi 蔡奇, Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥, and Li Xi 李希

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/23/xi-jinping-secures-historic-third-term-as-chinas-leader>

<sup>443</sup> <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46977>

<sup>444</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinese-communist-party>

people).<sup>445</sup> Xi, as the paramount leader 最高领导人 has a three-fold rule: he is the General Secretary of the CCP, the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and the President. As president he oversees the national government of the PRC, which while ostensibly parallel to the CCP, is entirely interlocked with the party structure. The national level institutions: the National People's Congress, the national legislature, the highest organ of the state. The Standing committee of the People's congress, instead, Thus, "the NPC elects a Standing Committee to act on its behalf when not in session."<sup>446</sup>

At the 19th National Congress of the CPC 中国共产党第十九次全国代表大会, held between 18-24 October in 2017, there were a couple events that all but solidified Xi's rule in China. The most obvious was the extension of his mandate; he was selected to serve another five year term as General Secretary of the CCP. Another key development highlighting Xi's consolidation of power, and undisputed role in guiding the party and the country, was the inclusion of 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' 习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想<sup>447</sup> in the constitution as one of its guiding principles. The above is also known simply as Xi Jinping Thought 习近平思想, which is based off of his Four Pronged Comprehensive Strategy 四个全面战略布局.<sup>448</sup> This strategy is: "The Four Comprehensives encompasses the interrelated narratives of 1. Building a moderately prosperous society, 2. Deepening reform, 3. Governing the nation according to law, and 4. Tightening party discipline."<sup>449</sup> It is not usually that a party leader's 'thought' is added to the constitution, had been the case when Deng's thought was added posthumously in the constitution in 1997. However, what is noteworthy is that Xi's 'thought' is given the same weight (as it is not called Xi Jinping Theory) as Mao's and included in the constitution while he is currently in charge. This is a clear marker of Xi's continued consolidation of power (both in practical terms and ideologically).

In this way the CCP is brought in as the reference point, everything is oriented around it and anchored to it. The constitution can only be revised, once every five years during the national congress<sup>450</sup>. In the Preamble of the Constitution it says: "The Communist Party of China uses Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of

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<sup>445</sup> <https://www.statista.com/topics/1247/chinese-communist-party/#topicOverview>

<sup>446</sup> [https://ash.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/the\\_national\\_peoples\\_congress.pdf](https://ash.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/the_national_peoples_congress.pdf)

<sup>447</sup> China Media Project Staff, "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," China Media Project, March 21, 2021, [https://chinamediaproject.org/the\\_ccp\\_dictionary/xi-jinping-thought-on-socialism-with-chinese-characteristics-for-a-new-era/](https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/xi-jinping-thought-on-socialism-with-chinese-characteristics-for-a-new-era/).

<sup>448</sup> John Garrick and Yan Chang Bennett, "'Xi Jinping Thought': Realisation of the Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation?," *China Perspectives* 1-2 (2018): 99.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>450</sup> Jarek Grzywacz, "How Xi Jinping Used the CCP Constitution to Cement His Power," *The Diplomat*, January 6, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/how-xi-jinping-used-the-ccp-constitution-to-cement-his-power/>.

Three Represents, the Scientific Outlook on Development, and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as its guides to action.”<sup>451 452</sup>

### **4.3 Sinicization of Religion Pre-2018 and The Structure and Change to the Religious Affairs Bureau**

The consolidation of the party’s power apparatus and the continually growing centralization is also evident in the sphere of religious matters. In 2013, the BCCCC introduced new regulations for the selection of bishops in China. Gerard O’Connell in an article published in *La Stampa*, noted, “The 1993 text had 6 regulations whereas the new one has 16. The revised text includes a demand that Catholic bishops must support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and its socialist system.”<sup>453</sup> Another significant change is that before the selection of bishops happened at the “provincial level”; however, in accordance with the updated regulations a “diocese has to seek agreement from the Beijing-based BCCCC and the Bureau for Religious Affairs.”<sup>454</sup>

This centralization of religious activity was deepened when, in 2015 at a conference of the United Front work Department, Xi stated:

To provide active guidance to religions [so they could] adapt to socialist society, [we] must insist on the direction of sinicization, must increase the level of rule of law in religious work, must dialectically consider the social function of religion, and must attach importance to and develop the impact of religious personages. [We shall] guide religion to strive for the promotion of economic development, societal harmony, cultural prosperity, ethnic unity, and unification of the fatherland.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, “Constitution Of The Communist Party Of China (2017)” (2017).

<sup>452</sup> “Since the Party’s 18th National Congress, Chinese Communists, with Comrade Xi Jinping as their chief representative, in response to contemporary developments and by integrating theory with practice, have systematically addressed the major question our times—what kind of socialism with Chinese characteristics the new era requires us to uphold and develop and how we should uphold and develop it, thus giving shape to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. The Thought Is Continuation and Development of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of Three Represents, and the Scientific Outlook on Development. It is the latest achievement in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context, a crystallization of the practical experience and collective wisdom of the Party and the people, an important component of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and a guide to action for the entire Party and all the Chinese people to strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and must be upheld long term and constantly developed. Under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the Communist Party of China has led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in a concerted effort to carry out a great struggle, develop a great project, advance a great cause, and realize a great dream, ushering in a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics” *Ibid*.

<sup>453</sup> Gerard O’Connell, “China Tightens Rules for Appointment of Bishops in Catholic Church,” *La Stampa*, May 23, 2013, <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2013/05/23/news/china-tightens-rules-for-appointment-of-bishops-in-catholic-church-1.36096942/>.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>455</sup> Chang, 41. Note: this translation was provided by Chang, quoting the official document “习近平：巩固发展最广泛的爱国统一战线” (Xi Jinping: Gonggu fazhan zui guangfan de aiguo tongyi zhanxian, Xi Jinping: Consolidate



In 2016 Xi attended the annual National Religious Work Conference (and was the first party secretary since 2001 to do so.)<sup>456</sup> This marked another step in the centralization of religious activity. At this conference, Xi said:

Providing active guidance to religions [so they could] adapt to socialist society is to guide the mass believers to love the fatherland, love the people, safeguard the unity of the fatherland, safeguard the great unity of the Chinese nation, observe and serve the best interests of the country and the interests of the Chinese nation as a whole; to uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, to support socialist institutions, to insist on the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics; to actively practice socialist core values, promote Chinese culture, make great efforts to integrate religious doctrines with Chinese culture; to obey state laws and regulations, to conscientiously accept state management by law; to engage in reform and opening and the construction of socialist modernisation and contribute to the Chinese Dream to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. [it is to] support each religion, while maintaining its fundamental beliefs, core doctrines, rituals and rites, in thoroughly uncovering their content in the teachings and canons that are beneficial to societal harmony, progress, and healthy civilisation; [support them] to interpret the teachings and canons in line with the developmental requirements of contemporary China as well as fine traditional Chinese culture.<sup>457</sup>

This further consolidation was the result of what Xi considered to be a lack of application and slow development of sinicization<sup>458</sup> of religion. Chang argues that the primary push for this sinicization of religion is a reaction to the increased growth of ‘foreign’ religious activity in China, namely the Catholic Church and of protestant house churches. This opinion was also shared by Dr. Chambon in an interview<sup>459</sup> with the author of this paper. Chang says, “underlying this school of thought is the idea that the Christian faith is harmful to Chinese cultural traditions... [if continued] this trend would not only pose a national security threat to the country via its foreign nature but would in addition bring about a further decline of Chinese civilization.”<sup>460</sup> Thus this sinicization is built upon two pillars: (1) curbing the foreign influence of religion by increased regulation and making it more ‘chinese’; and (2) reviving traditional Chinese cultural practices.

Sinicization not only seeks to orient religious thought and activity in line with the party, but there is also an external (visible) component, which has resulted in the destruction of Church property and the removal of public religious symbols. In fact, “between 2013 and the end of

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and develop the widest patriotic united front), Xinhuanet.com, 20 May 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-05/20/c\\_1115351358.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-05/20/c_1115351358.htm) (accessed on 16 May 2017).

<sup>456</sup> Chang 37

<sup>457</sup> Chang 41. Translation by Chang, quoting the official document “习近平：全面提高新形势下宗教工作水平” (Xi Jinping: quanmian tigao xinxingshi xia zongjiao gongzuo shuiping), op. cit.

<sup>458</sup> Sinicization (insert Chinese term here), Chang notes, was introduced “at the Central United Front Work Conference in 2015” and it “connotes a state initiative to press religions in China to incorporate Chinese characteristics into their beliefs and practices.” (Chang 37,38)

<sup>459</sup> See Appendix of Chapter 4 for the full transcript of the interview

<sup>460</sup> Chang 40

2015, more than 1700 crosses have been taken down from Catholic Church and Protestant buildings in Zhejiang Province.”<sup>461</sup>

Another change came in 2017 with the updated Regulations on Religious Affairs. This was the first time since 2005 that this has been modified. The 2017 Regulations are not only longer (77 articles compared to 2004’s 48 articles) but also increase the level of administrative oversight over religious activity. This document implemented new regulations for religious groups (thus increasing the oversight of the patriotic associations), inducing requirements for religious schools (articles 13-17); new guidelines for the establishment of religious sites (article 21): “religious groups are to submit applications to the religious affairs department of the county-level people’s governments for the area where the religious activity site will be”;<sup>462</sup> the publication of religious material online (article 47); and it prohibits the publication of religious material if it is seen as undermining the “principle of religions’ independence and self-governance.”<sup>463</sup>

Prior to 2018, the CCP relied on three different institutional bodies to manage religious affairs in the country: the UFWD, SARA, and the patriotic associations (i.e. CCPA for Catholics). The UFWD was initially in charge of performing research, to help the party develop its policy towards religious groups as well as liaising between the state and the religious associations.<sup>464</sup> SARA instead was in charge of the daily administration of religious activities and was in charge of implementing the policies. The patriotic associations were the “bridge” between the state and the religious communities. The party extended its control over religious groups in 2018 when the SARA was passed to the direct control of the party (previously it was under the Council of State). Now religious affairs are managed by the United Front Work Department (UFWD) “an organ of the Communist Party’s Central Committee.”<sup>465</sup> This decision is another example of centralization, strengthening of the party and ultimately of Xi himself.<sup>466</sup>

#### **4.4 Habemus Papam: the historic election of Pope Francis and The 2018 Sino-Vatican Accord**

Pope Benedict made history when on 11 February 2013 he announced his resignation from the Petrine Office (which went into effect on 28 February 2013). On 13 March the Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who chose the name Francis. Pope Francis represents a stark contrast from Pope Benedict in several ways. First, he is an outsider; not only did he never hold a curial position, he was also from Argentina, which made him the first pope ever from the ‘new world’. The decision to choose Bergoglio can be read as the cardinals looking to increase representation of the Church (towards the south) and representing a waning

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<sup>461</sup> Brendan Daly, “The Situation of Communism in Canon Law,” 217.

<sup>462</sup> State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “Religious Affairs Regulations 2017” (2017).

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Chang 38

<sup>465</sup> Wang Zhicheng, “Goodbye to the Religious Affairs Bureau: Religions Are Now under the Direct Control of the Party,” PIME Asia News, March 22, 2018, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Goodbye-to-the-Religious-Affairs-Bureau:-religions-are-now-under-the-direct-control-of-the-Party-43427.html>.

<sup>466</sup> Michael Sainsbury, “China Tightens Grip on Religion in Bureaucratic Overhaul,” Union of Catholic Asian News, March 23, 2018, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/china-tightens-grip-on-religion-in-bureaucratic-overhaul/81884>.

eurocentrism.<sup>467</sup> This is reflected, as already discussed, in Pope Francis' apostolic journeys, where he has paid more attention to the global south than the European heartland. This highlights a larger shift in Pope Francis' geopolitical priorities and his approach to totalitarian regimes like China.

While Benedict was a master theologian who commented extensively on culture and the importance of christianity for Europe, and dedicating two of his encyclicals to theological virtues, Pope Francis has focused on the social mission of the Church, especially on issues regarding economic development and poverty and climate change.<sup>468</sup> That is not to say that Benedict neglected the social mission of the church, on the contrary his third encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (published in 2009) was a response to the global financial crisis and the excesses of western capitalism. Francis, however, has put this at the center of his pontificate.

Pope Francis has also changed the orientation of the Holy See's diplomacy (a point already discussed in chapter 3); this includes the Vatican's China policy. The China commission, that was launched during Benedict's pontificate, was not reconvened after Pope Francis' election. Moreover, Cardinal Zen – who helped in the drafting of the 2007 Letter to Chinese Catholics – had been increasingly sidelined and ostracized at the Vatican. This is due in part to Pope Francis' emphasis on dialogue (over confrontation) as well as the personal feud between Cardinal Zen and the current Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin. Former Archbishop of Hong Kong – Cardinal Zen's immediate successor – Cardinal John Tong Hon 湯漢 released a pastoral letter on 8 August 2016 in which he spoke about the importance of communion, denounced the criticisms made against Pope Francis and said that the most important feature of any deal (and at the core of the Church itself) is unity. Like Pope Benedict in his 2007 letter and Pope Francis, Cardinal Hon reiterated that:

“The mission of the Catholic Church is not to change the institution or administrative agency of nations. It cannot and should not intervene in political struggles. Rather, it should realize the above targets through rational thought and the awakening of spiritual power. Without giving up its principles, it should resolve problems through communication with the legitimate political power and not through continuous confrontation.”<sup>469</sup>

He was justifying the ongoing negotiations between the PRC and the Holy See as an avenue of authentic dialogue and an imperative to in securing legal protections for the country's Catholics. In fact, Cardinal Hon talks specifically about the underground (or clandestine) Church suggesting, “To strive for and protect the legitimate authority of the bishops of the clandestine Churches in China, Rome should also conduct a dialogue in order that these bishops be recognised by the Chinese government as legitimate.”<sup>470</sup> The status of the underground Church has been one of the factors in play between the Holy See and Beijing. Naturally, any deal should seek to safeguard underground Catholics from further persecution.

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<sup>467</sup> Troy 11

<sup>468</sup> Rooney 3

<sup>469</sup> John Cardinal Tong, “The Communion of the Church in China with the Universal Church John Cardinal Tong, Bishop of Hong Kong,” Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, 2016.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

Leading up to 2018, there had already been talks (for some time) on the signing of an agreement between the Holy See and the PRC. Cardinal Zen noted that there was a broad deal in place during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Due to a confluence of factors, and the inconsistent Sino-Vatican relations, no deal was ever reached. But, in 2016 there were a series of meetings between a Holy See delegation and representatives of the CCPA and BCCCC in Beijing that signaled a thawing of relations.<sup>471</sup> The purpose was the status of episcopal ordinations. In February 2018, Cardinal Parolin, in an interview with Italian publication *La Stampa*, said, “The Holy See has always maintained a pastoral approach...in Pope Francis’ pontificate the ongoing negotiations move exactly along these lines: constructive openness to dialogue and fidelity to the genuine Tradition of the Church.” The purpose of this dialogue, he continued, is to safeguard “communion within the Church, in the wake of genuine Tradition and constant ecclesiastical discipline” and it aims to arrive at “realistic pastoral solutions.”<sup>472</sup>

This historic moment came on 22 September 2018 when it was announced that a provisional agreement had been signed between the Holy See and the Chinese government.<sup>473</sup> It is difficult to make a full analysis of the accord as it is a secret document. However, it has been revealed that the primary, and supposedly only, purpose of the accord is the question of episcopal ordinations. The Holy See has been given the ability to formally veto candidates; in turn, “the pope would recognise seven Chinese bishops who were appointed by Beijing without the Vatican’s approval, and were excommunicated as illegitimate.”<sup>474</sup> The seven bishops were: Joseph Guo Jincai, Joseph Huang Bingzhang, Paul Lei Shiyin, Joseph Liu Xinhong, Joseph Ma Yinglin, Joseph Yue Fusheng, Vincent Zhan Silu, and Anthony Tu Shihua (who died in 2017).<sup>475</sup> Another consequence of the signing of this accord was the creation of the Diocese of Chengde 承德教区,<sup>476</sup> located in the ecclesiastical province of Beijing.

Following the signing of the Accord, Pope Francis delivered a message to the Chinese Catholics on 26 September. In his address the Pope acknowledged that there were “sufferings”,

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<sup>471</sup> Monsignor Anthony Figueiredo Figueiredo, “2016 – a Year That Saw the Holy See and China Building Bridges,” *Catholic News Agency*, December 18, 2016, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/53668/2016-%E2%80%93-a-year-that-saw-the-holy-see-and-china-building-bridges>.

<sup>472</sup> Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Parolin, “Why we are in dialogue with China,” interview by Gianni Valente and La Stampa, February 1, 2018, <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2018/02/01/news/parolin-why-we-are-in-dialogue-with-china-1.33974144/>.

<sup>473</sup> The Holy See Press Office, “Provisional Agreement between Holy See and China,” Vatican News, September 22, 2018, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2018-09/china-holy-see-agreement-appointment-bishops.html>.

<sup>474</sup> Harriet Sherwood, “Vatican Signs Historic Deal with China – but Critics Denounce Sellout,” *The Guardian*, September 22, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/22/vatican-pope-francis-agreement-with-china-nominating-bishops>.

<sup>475</sup> The Holy See Press Office, “Nota Informativa Sulla Chiesa Cattolica in Cina, 22.09.2018,” Vatican.va, September 22, 2018, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2018/09/22/0676/01471.html#en>.

<sup>476</sup> The Holy See Press Office, “Erection of the Diocese of Chengde,” Vatican.va, September 22, 2018, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/09/22/180922h.html>.

“trials”, and “painful experiences”.<sup>477</sup> Yet, Pope Francis underscored that this accord was a marker of continued dialogue and it was important “for the sake of supporting and promoting the preaching of the Gospel in China and reestablishing full and visible unity in the Church, it was essential, before all else, to deal with the issue of the appointment of bishops. Regrettably, as we know, the recent history of the Catholic Church in China has been marked by deep and painful tensions, hurts and divisions, centered especially on the figure of the bishop as the guardian of the authenticity of the faith and as guarantor of ecclesial communion.”<sup>478</sup>

The Pope went on to stress that this agreement (given that it is provisional) is renewed every two years and as such can be tweaked to reflect changes in the situation. At the end of the address he reiterated that “On the civil and political level, Chinese Catholics must be good citizens, loving their homeland and serving their country with diligence and honesty, to the best of their ability. On the ethical level, they should be aware that many of their fellow citizens expect from them a greater commitment to the service of the common good and the harmonious growth of society as a whole.”<sup>479</sup> The overarching theme of Pope Francis’ message (and his pontificate in general) is unity and dialogue. We can see from the Pope’s words that dialogue is a continuous process that enables mutual understanding and unity is integral for faith. Clearly, even if the deal leaves out many questions, it is a step forward in building said unity between the Chinese Catholics and the Holy Father.

In a Statement immediately following the singing of the accord, Cardinal Parolin said:

The objective of the Holy See is a pastoral one: the Holy See intends just to create the condition, or help to create the condition, of a greater freedom, autonomy and organization, in order that the Catholic Church can dedicate itself to the mission of announcing the Gospel and also to contribute to the well-being and to the spiritual and material prosperity and harmony of the country, of every person and of the world as a whole. And today, for the first time all the Bishops in China are in communion with the Bishop of Rome, with the Successor of Peter... What is required now is unity, is trust and a new impetus; to have good Pastors, recognized by the Successor of Peter – by the Pope – and by the legitimate civil Authorities.”<sup>480</sup>

However, since its signing the Accord has been a source of great tension and controversy within the Church. Spearheading the criticisms against the accord has been Cardinal Zen, who said that the signing of the accord was akin to “giving the flock into the mouths of the wolves. It’s an incredible betrayal.”<sup>481</sup> Cardinal Zen went as far to criticize Cardinal Parolin, saying “my

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<sup>477</sup> Francis, “Pope Francis’ Message to the Chinese Church and to the Universal Church,” PIME Asia News, September 26, 2018, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope-Francis-message-to-the-Chinese-Church-and-to-the-universal-Church-45048.html>.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> “Statement by Card. Parolin on the Signing of the Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and the People’s Republic of China Concerning the Nomination of Bishops,” Vatican News, September 22, 2018, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2018-09/pope-commitment-reconciliation-chinese-catholics.html>.

<sup>481</sup> Anne Marie Roantree and James Pomfret, “Leading Asian Cardinal Calls for Vatican Foreign Minister to Resign over China Dealings,” *Reuters*, September 20, 2018, sec. Media and Telecoms, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-vatican-zen/leading-asian-cardinal-calls-for-vatican-foreign-minister-to-resign-over-china-dealings-idUSKCN1M025C>.

personal impression is that Parolin manipulates the Pope, at least in things regarding the Church in China...<sup>482</sup> A month after the signing of the deal, he authored an op-ed for the New York Times, “The Pope Doesn’t Understand China”, which was highly critical of Pope Francis and argued that he was ignorant of the situation of the Church and China. Cardinal Zen wrote: “Pope Francis, an Argentine, doesn’t seem to understand the Communists... Today, we have Pope Francis. Naturally optimistic about communism, he is being encouraged to be optimistic about the Communists in China by cynics around him who know better.”<sup>483</sup>

In February 2020, following Cardinal Zen’s public spat with Cardinal Parolin and his sustained criticism of the deal, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re (Dean of the College of Cardinals) released a letter saying that the Sino-Vatican Accord reflected a “a profound harmony of thought and action of the last three Pontiffs.”<sup>484</sup> The letter ended recalling the importance of unity within the Church and support for the Pope. In a blog post titled “To His Eminence Cardinal John Baptist Re”, Cardinal Zen responded to the points expressed in Re’s letter, namely refuting this idea of continuity of thought on China. Cardinal Zen, quoted an interview between Pope Benedict XVI and journalist Peter Seewald, where Benedict said, “we used to talk about that. It was clear to us that this strategy pursued by Casaroli with very good intentions was a failure.”<sup>485</sup> He reiterated his assertion that, “I have strong evidence to believe that Parolin is manipulating the Holy Father, who always shows so much affection to me when we meet, but never answers my questions.”<sup>486</sup> Cardinal Zen followed up with another post, titled Supplement to my answer to Cardinal G.B. Re (10 March 2020), where he again wrote against the agreement, calling it “immoral”, criticizing Cardinal Parolin, and refuted the notion that this deal represented the thought of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.<sup>487</sup> In October 2020, Cardinal Zen was in Rome and reportedly was denied a meeting with Pope Francis.<sup>488</sup> This is not totally surprising given the political sensitivity of the Accord and, as a consequence, the Holy See’s reticence to publicly weigh in on it. Cardinal Zen’s criticism of Cardinal Parolin (whether his points are valid or not is immaterial) is construed more broadly as a criticism of Pope Francis.

Between 2018 and 2020 the reception from the international community was varied. One the one side (sharing Cardinal Zen’s point of view) was the Trump administration. On 20 September 2020 (a few days before the first renewal of the Accord) then- Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted the following on twitter:

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<sup>482</sup> “Cardinal Zen: ‘Parolin Manipulates the Pope,’ and Vatican’s China Policy Is ‘Immoral,’” Catholic News Agency, March 20, 2020, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/43933/cardinal-zen-parolin-manipulates-the-pope-and-vaticans-china-policy-is-immoral>.

<sup>483</sup> Joseph Cardinal Zen, “The Pope Doesn’t Understand China,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/24/opinion/pope-china-vatican-church-catholics-bishops.html>.

<sup>484</sup> “Una profonda sintonia di pensiero e di azione degli ultimi tre Pontefici” translated by the author. The text of the letter is available in the appendix to chapter 4.

<sup>485</sup> Joseph Cardinal Zen, “To His Eminence Cardinal John Baptist Re,” March 1, 2020, <https://oldyosef.hkdavc.com/?p=1356>.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Joseph Cardinal Zen, “Supplement to My Answer to Cardinal G.B. Re (10 March 2020),” March 10, 2020, <https://oldyosef.hkdavc.com/?p=1394>.

<sup>488</sup> Rhoda Kwan, “Cardinal Zen Returns to Hong Kong after Failing to Meet the Pope,” Hong Kong Free Press, October 5, 2020, <https://hongkongfp.com/2020/10/05/cardinal-zen-returns-to-hong-kong-after-failing-to-meet-the-pope/>.



Tweet from former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's Official Twitter Account<sup>489</sup>

This response reflected the confrontational nature of Sino-American relations under the Trump administration which, it can be argued, has largely continued under the Biden Administration. As will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, it is important to note that despite the Trump Administration's position on China (and the U.S. government more broadly speaking), the Holy See has been careful to distance itself. The Trump administration's criticism of the Sino-Vatican Accord has to be read within the greater context of the larger historical, political, economic and ideological discord with the PRC (and its fear that China is becoming a superpower). That point is tangential to this paper; however, what can be said is that for the United States a deal between the Holy See and the PRC, amid ongoing human rights violations, further legitimizes the CCP on the international stage.

#### 4.5 Xi Jinping's accelerated sinicization: 2018 to the present

Despite the Holy See's hope that this accord would facilitate improved relations with the PRC, on the one hand, and between the underground and official communities on the other, there are signs that suggest better conditions for Chinese Catholics have not materialized. In fact, there has been an intensified process of sinicization following the 2018 accord. In December 2019 the 2019 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups was published, and went into effect on 1

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<sup>489</sup> Secretary Pompeo's Official Twitter, Twitter, September 19, 2020, <https://twitter.com/SecPompeo/status/1307366983890018311?s=20&t=btJgHAw2x7FoESE0Zj8v3A>.

February 2020.<sup>490</sup> This 41 article document enacted stricter provisions for religious expression by imposing new rules on the structure, function, and administrative oversight of religious groups.

Article 3 states, “Without the approval of the religious affairs department of the people’s government, or registration with the civil affairs department of the people’s government, no religious activities in the name of religious organizations are allowed.”<sup>491</sup> In the context of the Catholic situation, this reinforces the illegality of the underground Church. For an officially recognized religious organization, Article 5 states “ [they] must support the leadership of the Communist Party of China, abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations, rules and policies, adhere to the principles of self-support and self-governance, adhere to the direction of Sinicization of religions in China, embody the core values of socialism, and maintain national unity, ethnic unity, religious harmony and social stability.”<sup>492</sup>

Article 17 of the 2019 regulations is also important to mention, since it concerns the conduct and role of the clergy:

Religious organizations should publicize the guidelines and policies of the Communist Party of China, national laws, regulations, and rules to the clergy and religious citizens, in order to instruct and direct the clergy and religious citizens to support the rule of the Communist Party of China, support the socialist system, follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, abide by the laws, regulations, rules and policies, correctly treat the relationship between state laws and religious rules, and strengthen their national consciousness, consciousness of rule by law, and consciousness of one’s duty as a citizen.<sup>493</sup>

This point is extended in article 32, which specifies that not only the clergy, but staff (and anyone who receives religious instruction) should “learn about the major decisions of the Communist Party of China, national policies and regulations, the glorious traditional Chinese culture, and knowledge about religion.”<sup>494</sup> Whatever vestige or pretense of autonomy that existed before has clearly vanished with the 2019 regulations.

The instruction and administration of the clergy is of particular importance for the CCP. Clergy are respected in their communities and, for believers, their words carry a certain authoritative weight. Unsurprisingly, for the CCP it is imperative that their sermons, religious instruction is tightly monitored so as to not contradict the official line of the party. In 2021 yet another document was released further curtailing the freedom of religious groups: the Measures

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<sup>490</sup> Dominic J. Nardi, “The 2019 Regulation for Religious Groups in China” (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, February 2020), <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2020%20Factsheet%20-%20China.pdf>.

<sup>491</sup> “The 2019 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups” (2020), <https://bitterwinter.org/2019-administrative-measures-for-religious-groups/>.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.



on the management of Religious clergy 宗教教职人员管理办法.<sup>495</sup> This law implemented even stricter guidelines for the clergy and subjected them to greater penalties. Article 3 reiterates the need for clergy to be loyal and to promote “the Sinicization of religion in China.”<sup>496</sup> This is not remarkable in and of itself. However, the 2021 measures implemented an even greater degree of surveillance of clerical activity. For example, Article 8 states: “Religious clergy, when publishing religious information on the Internet, should comply with the relevant provisions of the national Internet information regulations.”<sup>497</sup>

Article 16 is of particular importance for this discussion as it concerns the appointment of Catholic bishops. It says:

Catholic bishops are approved and consecrated by the Chinese Catholic Bishops’ Conference. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops’ Conference shall, within twenty days after the consecration of the bishop, fill out a Catholic bishop reporting form and report it to the State Administration of Religious Affairs for the record, and submit the following materials.

- (a) A copy of the bishop’s household register and a copy of his resident identity card.
- (b) A statement issued by the Catholic community of the province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government on the democratic election of the bishop.
- (c) a letter of approval from the Chinese Catholic Bishops’ Conference.
- (d) the certificate of consecration of the bishop signed by the consecrating bishop.

The Catholic bishops registration form shall be the one supplied by the State Administration of Religious Affairs.<sup>498</sup>

Note, despite the signing of the 2018 Sino-Vatican accord, there is no reference anywhere that the Vatican/Holy See/Pope has the final say in the selection of bishops. Perhaps this would not be included as to undermine the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the Chinese people, but either way its omission is conscious. Perhaps one of the most pernicious features of the 2021 Measures is seen in Article 33, which states: “The State Administration of Religious Affairs shall establish a database of religious clergy, the local people’s government departments of religious affairs should provide and update the basic information of religious clergy, including awards and punishments, cancellation of records, and other information.”<sup>499</sup> Registration is compulsory, and should any clergy member be found guilty of breaking any of the rules their official membership can be canceled and their religious functions suspended. This creates an increasingly dangerous environment for clergy who object to joining the CCPA.

There were four events held between the end of 2021 and the end of 2022 that warrant a brief comment. The first was the CCP held the National Conference on Work Related to

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<sup>495</sup> State Administration of Religious Affairs, “The Measures on the Management of Religious Clergy 宗教教职人员管理办法” (2021), [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-02/09/content\\_5586371.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-02/09/content_5586371.htm).

<sup>496</sup> Massimo Introvigne, “Enter the ‘Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy’: Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid,” Bitter Winter, February 11, 2021, <https://bitterwinter.org/enter-the-administrative-measures-for-religious-clergy/>.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

Religious Affairs (or, National Religious Work Conference) 全国宗教工作会议, held on 3 and 4 December 2021.<sup>500</sup> At this conference Xi spoke at this conference and doubled down on the call for increased surveillance of religious activity on the internet (instructions already present in the 2017 Religious Affairs Regulations).



Xi addressing National Conference on Work Related to Religious Affairs in December 2021 (Video: CCTV)<sup>501</sup>

The second event was the 10th National Congress of Catholicism in China 中国天主教第十次全国代表会议 took place in Wuhan, concluding on 20 August 2022. This conference is held every five years and allows for the CCPA to elect new leaders and synthesize its mandate with that of the party. According to the Resolution posted on the official website of the CCPA, “345 representatives from all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government attended the meeting”<sup>502</sup> as well as Cui Maohu, deputy minister of the United Front Work Department. Unsurprisingly, the delegates accepted the motions for implementing activities to implement “Xi Jinping’s new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics...and unite and lead the majority of priests and churches across the country...insist on independent and self-run churches and democratically run churches...deeply carry out and continuously innovate the discussion and practice of the sinicization of church theology in China.”<sup>503</sup> At this conference, Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing was elected as the new chairman of the CCPA.

<sup>500</sup> This was the first such conference held since 2016, due to the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

<sup>501</sup> CCTV, “[视频]习近平在全国宗教工作会议上强调 坚持我国宗教中国化方向 积极引导宗教与社会主义社会相适应,” CCTV, December 4, 2021, <https://tv.cctv.com/2021/12/04/VIDE6GtJIKDI9YQ4PEI2wTSj211204.shtml?spm=C31267.PFsKSaKh6QQC.S71105.3>.

<sup>502</sup> CCPA, “Resolution of the Tenth National Conference of Catholics in China 中国天主教第十次全国代表会议决议,” Catholic Church in China, September 5, 2022, <https://www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22090178-1.htm>.

<sup>503</sup> “会议指出，中国天主教“一会一团”新一届领导集体要深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想，深入学习贯彻中央统战工作会议、全国宗教工作会议精神，团结带领全国广大神长教友拥护中国共产党领



Wang Yang Meets with the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association and the New Leadership Team of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference in August 2022 (Chinacatholic.cn).<sup>504</sup>

The third event was the 20th National Congress of the CCP 中国共产党第二十次全国代表大会, held between 16-22 October 2022. This Congress is of particular importance as Xi Jinping secured an unprecedented third term, all but solidifying his rule over the party and the country (perhaps even beyond another five-years). Moreover, the new members of the PSC are key allies of Xi, further solidifying Xi's rule and vision.<sup>505</sup> In the report delivered by Xi at the opening of the Congress, two of the main themes were 'national rejuvenation' (mentioned 23 separate times throughout the report) and 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' (mentioned 34 times). Xi said, "the leadership of the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the greatest strength of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics."<sup>506</sup> Xi also mentioned religious affairs: "We have made new accomplishments in promoting ethnic unity and progress, fully implemented the Party's basic

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导和社会主义制度, 全面贯彻党的宗教政策和各项决策部署, 遵守宪法、法律、法规, 弘扬社会主义核心价值观, 继续高举爱国爱教旗帜, 坚持独立自主自办教会和民主办教原则, 坚持我国天主教中国化方向, 加强教会的自我教育自我管理自我约束, 深入开展和不断创新我国教会神学思想中国化的探讨与实践, 拓宽人才培养渠道, 努力开展公益慈善, 积极服务社会, 进一步开拓对外友好交往途径, 不断推进牧灵福传事业, 开创中国天主教圣善事业新局面。” Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> CCPA, "Wang Yang Meets with the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association and the New Leadership Team of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference 汪洋会见中国天主教爱国会、中国天主教主教团新一届领导班子," Catholic Church in China, August 23, 2022, <https://www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22080447-1.htm>.

<sup>505</sup> "Decoding the 20th Party Congress," Asia Society Policy Institute, 2022, <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/decoding-chinas-20th-party-congress&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1676476552134090&usg=AOvVaw2NQzK8Lj0mErsswO6CRqT2>.

<sup>506</sup> Xi Jinping, "Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China" (20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 16, 2022), [http://my.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202210/t20221026\\_10792358.htm](http://my.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202210/t20221026_10792358.htm).

policy on religious affairs”; and “We will remain committed to the principle that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation and provide active guidance to religions so that they can adapt to socialist society.”<sup>507</sup>

The fourth event, held between 15-16 November 2022, was the conference “Second Mainland-Hong Kong Catholic Sinicized Theology Exchange” 第二届内地—香港天主教中国化神学分享交流会. The emphasis was on how to further implement sinicization in the Church in the specific context of Hong Kong. According to the summary of the event (provided on the CCPA’s official website), Bishop Shen Bin 沈斌, bishop of Haimen and vice-president of the CCPA emphasized that “this exchange meeting will be guided by the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress, comprehensively implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.”<sup>508</sup> It is clear that in 2022 whatever little autonomy existed of religious practice is even further curtailed by these provisions.

#### 4.6 Cardinal Zen’s Arrest, (dis)unity in the Catholic Church and the 2022 Renewal

On 30 June 2020 the NPC passed and implemented the controversial Hong Kong National Security Law 香港国家安全法.<sup>509</sup> The law criminalized any activity that is perceived as succession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with external forces.<sup>510</sup> Two years later, on 11 May 2022 Cardinal Zen, was arrested along with five others for improperly registering their now defunct “612 Humanitarian Relief Fund”, which helped provide legal aid and pay for medical bills for pro-democracy protesters.<sup>511</sup> The shockwaves of his arrest reverberated across the world, concerning many over China’s continued Sinicization and crackdowns of religion. The Cardinal’s trial started on 26 September and on Friday 25 November, he was convicted by the court. This comes roughly a month after the Sino-Vatican Accord was renewed for a second time on 22 October 2022.

All major international news outlets reported on Cardinal Zen’s arrest. Matteo Bruni, Director of The Holy See Press office, issued a statement saying, “The Holy See has learned with concern the news of Cardinal Zen’s arrest.”<sup>512</sup> Cardinal Pietro Parolin expressed his “closeness” to Cardinal Zen following his arrest, who “was freed and treated well.”<sup>513</sup> However, Cardinal Parolin said that the arrest should not be construed as “a disavowal” of the Sino-Vatican Accord.<sup>514</sup> Aside from Cardinal Parolin’s concern that Cardinal Zen’s arrest could imperil the

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> <https://www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22110425-1.htm>

<sup>509</sup> This law was responsive to the mass wave of protests that broke out in 2019 in response to the proposed Extradition Law Amendment Bill 反對修訂逃犯條例 (*faandeoï saudeng toufaan tiulai*).

<https://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/10476>

<sup>510</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838>

<sup>511</sup> The fund, founded in 2019, was disbanded in 2021.

<sup>512</sup> <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-05/cardinal-zen-arrested-in-hong-kong-holy-see-expresses-concern.html>

<sup>513</sup> <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-05/cardinal-parolin-expresses-closeness-to-cardinal-zen.html>

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

renewal of the Sino-Vatican Accord (which it did not), there was a conspicuous silence from Pope Francis. The only comment from the Pope was during his flight back from Kazakhstan: “qualifying China as undemocratic, I do not identify with that, because it's such a complex country” and “Cardinal Zen is going to trial these days...he says what he feels, and you can see that there are limitations there. More than qualifying, because it is difficult, and I do wish to qualify, they are impressions, and I try to support the path of dialogue.”<sup>515</sup>

One of the possible explanations as to why the pope did not want to comment on Cardinal Zen's arrest was that it no doubt would have complicated the renewal of the Accord and been construed by the government as an interference in domestic affairs. Nevertheless, the Pope's silence was increasingly conspicuous as in June calls grew for the Vatican to support Cardinal Zen. The European Parliament passed a resolution on 6 July 2022, which condemned the Cardinal's arrest, called for the charges to be dropped and called “on the Vatican to give full support to Cardinal Zen and other religious leaders who face persecution or the risk of detention under the national security regime in Hong Kong.”<sup>516</sup> There was also an evident divide in the response from Catholic leaders and media. There have been a handful of cardinals and bishops who have come to Zen's defense, most notably Cardinal Gerhard Müller and Cardinal Fernando Filoni. Cardinal Mueller, one of the leading voices of the conservative wing of the Church, has openly clashed with Pope Francis and was removed from his hugely influential position as Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) in 2017.<sup>517</sup> Other prelates that have spoken in support of Cardinal Zen are: Cardinal Charles Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar and President of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC); Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, Archbishop of San Francisco, CA; Bishop Thomas Tobin, Bishop of Providence, RI; Bishop Joseph Strickland, Bishop of Tyler, TX; and Bishop Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of Astana, Kazakhstan.<sup>518</sup> Notably, many of these clerics belong to the conservative wing of the Church and have been critical of Pope Francis on doctrinal, moral and liturgical issues.

On 24 November, the day before Cardinal Zen's conviction, news broke that Bishop Peng Weizhou 彭衛照 was appointed as Bishop of the Jiangxi Diocese. This diocese is not formally recognized by the Holy See, instead it is fabricated by the government as a collection of five different ecclesiastical territories belonging to the Diocese of Nanchang. Bishop Peng was secretly ordained with a Papal mandate on 10 April 2014 as the Bishop of Yujiang, in the Underground Church. He was subsequently imprisoned by Chinese authorities for six months. He came under pressure from Chinese authorities to accept “the government's plan to integrate all the dioceses into one, the Diocese of Jiangxi.”<sup>519</sup> An analysis from PIME AsiaNews suggested: “all this shows how Chinese authorities can pressure both official and underground bishops, and shape diocesan boundaries in accordance with their own political objectives, without too much concern for negotiations with the Vatican.”<sup>520</sup> Two days later, on 26 November

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<sup>515</sup> <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-09/pope-francis-kazakhstan-inflight-press-conference-ukraine-china.html>

<sup>516</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2022-0358\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2022-0358_EN.html)

<sup>517</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/01/world/europe/vatican-pope-doctrine-mueller.html>

<sup>518</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252396/a-handful-of-catholic-leaders-and-others-voice-support-for-cardinal-zen-as-his-trial-begins>

<sup>519</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Underground-Bishop-Peng-Weizhao-becomes-official-in-Jiangxi-57177.html>

<sup>520</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Underground-Bishop-Peng-Weizhao-becomes-official-in-Jiangxi-57177.html>

2022, the Vatican, in a highly unusual move, released a statement suggesting that the Chinese government had violated the terms of the provisional agreement.<sup>521</sup> The statement said:

The Holy See took note with surprise and regret of the news of the "installation ceremony", which took place on 24 c.m. in Nanchang, by H.E. Monsignor Giovanni Peng Weizhao, Bishop of Yujiang (Province of Jiangxi), as "Auxiliary Bishop of Jiangxi", a diocese not recognized by the Holy See. In fact, this event did not take place in accordance with the spirit of dialogue existing between the Vatican side and the Chinese side and with what was stipulated in the Provisional Agreement on the appointment of Bishops, dated 22 September 2018. Furthermore, the civil recognition of Mgr. Peng was preceded, according to the news received, by long and heavy pressure from the local authorities. The Holy See hopes that similar episodes will not be repeated, awaits appropriate communications on the matter from the Authorities and reaffirms its full availability to continue the respectful dialogue concerning all issues of common interest.<sup>522</sup>

This was significant given that it was the first time, since the deal was first signed in 2018, that the Vatican had publicly responded to and denounced China. Bishop David J. Malloy, chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on International Justice and Peace said it was "highly unusual" that the Holy See made a public statement and he shared the hope that "such actions will not be repeated."<sup>523</sup> What the Holy See's statement also suggests is that, despite the renewal in 2022, and the intensification of sinicization efforts (both legally and rhetorically), the Holy See is changing (albeit subtly) its approach to China.

Our attention should turn, for a moment, to the media response to Cardinal Zen's arrest. Analyzing the period from the cardinal's arrest in May 2022 until the conviction in November 2022 reveals an apparent left-right divide with more 'conservative' Catholic media outlets covering these topics more frequently than progressive Catholic outlets. Immediately following Cardinal Zen's arrest, the progressive *National Catholic Reporter* and the Jesuit publication *America Magazine*, did not publish any articles on cardinal Zen's arrest.<sup>524</sup> Whereas, conservative leaning publications, instead, have been more vocal. The National Catholic Register (owned by EWTN), published one editorial, "Vatican Takes 'Good Faith' Stance With China"

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<sup>521</sup> <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/11/26/0880/01842.html>

<sup>522</sup> "La Santa Sede ha preso atto con sorpresa e rammarico della notizia della "cerimonia di installazione", avvenuta il 24 c.m. a Nanchang, di S.E. Mons. Giovanni Peng Weizhao, Vescovo di Yujiang (Provincia di Jiangxi), come "Vescovo Ausiliare di Jiangxi", diocesi non riconosciuta dalla Santa Sede. Tale evento, infatti, non è avvenuto in conformità allo spirito di dialogo esistente tra la Parte Vaticana e la Parte Cinese e a quanto stipulato nell'Accordo Provvisorio sulla nomina dei Vescovi, il 22 settembre 2018. Per di più, il riconoscimento civile di Mons. Peng è stato preceduto, secondo le notizie giunte, da lunghe e pesanti pressioni delle Autorità locali. La Santa Sede auspica che non si ripetano simili episodi, resta in attesa di opportune comunicazioni in merito da parte delle Autorità e riafferma la sua piena disponibilità a continuare il dialogo rispettoso, concernente tutte le questioni di comune interesse." (Translation by the author)

<sup>523</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/news/2022/us-bishops-chairman-international-justice-and-peace-installation-chinese-bishop>

<sup>524</sup> The only article *America Magazine* published ( 19 July 2022) was an interview with Archbishop Paul Gallagher (the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States) which briefly discussed the upcoming renewal of the Accord. In this interview, Archbishop Gallagher said, the agreement functions as "a sort of confidence-building measure; if we can work successfully with the Chinese authorities on the appointment of bishops, then that obviously helps both parties to begin to examine other questions as well." <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2022/07/19/vatican-china-hong-kong-pope-francis-243379>

was highly critical of the deal: "...as Cardinal Parolin put it, it is hoped that this accommodation will be the seed for more tangible fruit down the road. Maybe someday it will. But given what has happened over the last four years, it's highly understandable that many informed Catholics continue to question whether there's any corresponding "good faith" on the Chinese side when it comes to its deal with the Vatican."<sup>525</sup> Another was, "China Analysts Say Vatican's Agreement With the Chinese Communist Party Ignores Negative Realities".<sup>526</sup> A slew of other conservative leaning news outlets have covered the Zen Affair with particular passion. Examples include: "Vatican silence on Cardinal Zen's trial is disconcerting" from Union of Asian Catholic News, "Pope Betrays Cardinal Zen"<sup>527</sup> from Catholic Culture, and from the Catholic World Report, "Cardinal Zen's arrest and the Vatican's muted, dangerous dance with China"<sup>528</sup> and "The Cardinal Zen situation puts spotlight on frayed Vatican-China relations".<sup>529</sup> Mainstream American media was quick to react to the Cardinal's arrest. The center-right *Wall Street Journal* published one particularly acerbic op-ed titled "The Pope Abandons Cardinal Zen"<sup>530</sup> on (DATE) and an editorial on 23 October 2022 "Of Catholics and Chinese Communists: The Vatican renews its bad deal with Beijing that ignores human-rights and religious abuses."<sup>531</sup>

The National Catholic Reporter published an op-ed (23 November 2022) titled, "US must hold China accountable for targeting Hong Kong Catholics"<sup>532</sup> and an article (30 November 2023) "Has the Vatican's dialogue with China reached its limits?"<sup>533</sup> This was the first time the NCR has been so direct and forthright in questioning the deal. Worth highlighting is that in the NCR's 30 November article, author Chris White quoted Hong Kong native and political science professor, Victoria Tinbor Hui, who was quoted as saying, "A lot of Hong Kongers feel like they have to go to the right in order to have help in Hong Kong's struggles to fight Beijing in general...I do hope liberal Catholics will say more."<sup>534</sup>

It is clear that the commentary on Cardinal Zen's arrest is both uneven and divided between the conservative and progressive wings of the Church. While progressive outlets have avoided criticizing the 2018 Sino-Vatican Accord and have been nearly silent on Cardinal Zen's arrest (up until his conviction and the Holy See's public statement on Bishop Peng), conservative leaning media has been vocal, in its defense of the Cardinal and its criticism of Rome, from the beginning. This may tell us that the trial of Cardinal Zen could be viewed as a litmus test not only for acceptance of the Sino-Vatican Accord, but of Pope Francis himself. Has the Vatican,

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<sup>525</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/commentaries/vatican-takes-good-faith-stance-with-china>

<sup>526</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/news/china-analysts-say-vatican-s-agreement-with-the-chinese-communist-party-ignores-negative-realities-j77u3n79>

<sup>527</sup> <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/popes-betrayal-cardinal-zen/>

<sup>528</sup> <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/05/12/cardinal-zens-arrest-and-the-vaticans-muted-and-dangerous-dance-with-china/>

<sup>529</sup> <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/05/14/the-cardinal-zen-situation-puts-spotlight-on-frayed-vatican-china-relations/>

<sup>530</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-pope-abandons-his-own-francis-cardinal-joseph-zen-hong-kong-trial-democracy-sino-vatican-accord-prison-11663616756>

<sup>531</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/of-catholics-and-communists-china-ccp-communism-hong-kong-pope-francis-cardinal-joseph-zen-appointments-vatican-11666540788>

<sup>532</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/us-must-hold-china-accountable-targeting-hong-kong-catholics>

<sup>533</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/has-vaticans-dialogue-china-reached-its-limits>

<sup>534</sup> NCR article

through its nexus of media platforms and close connection with myriad Catholic journals, tried to limit (or control) coverage of the Zen Affair? Perhaps. Of course this cannot be verified, but the Vatican journalist environment is small, tight knit, and should progressive Catholic media also start taking a more critical position on the Sino-Vatican accord, that would further delegitimize it (and harm the reputation of Pope Francis) in one of its core contingencies.

Michel Chambon, French theologian and coordinator of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics at the National University of Singapore, spoke to the author of this paper during a 45-minute long Zoom interview. He agreed with the assessment that coverage in some ways is reflective of support for Pope Francis, adding “that the Zen-trial and the Sino-Vatican agreement cannot be reduced to the same and immediately related thing. Of course, they speak to each other but the two things also have their own timeframe and socio-political framework.” He went on to say, “they overlap but they are not the same. I would also add that anti-Pope Francis people are more likely to use the negotiations with China as an additional reason to push back against Pope Francis' leadership. Finally, I am always a little cautious with broad terms like "conservative" and "progressive" - Pope Francis is conservative in multiple ways.”

Commenting on the Holy See's calculus and recent public statement Dr. Chambon said, “I would emphasize that the Holy See strategy has also evolved since May 2022 - especially when it comes to communication. While the Vatican has long played along the Chinese way of doing things (keeping full and absolute confidentiality about the negotiations), the situation has become so bad (no on-going negotiations for more than 2 years + HK situation) that after the arrest of Cardinal Zen, the Holy See (as a concerted strategy) decided to test and challenge Beijing by "going Public." By order of appearance and hierarchy, you saw the Pope, Parolin and Gallagher commenting more and more about the Sino-Vatican relation from June 2022 to now. This shift in the Holy See approach to China does also impact the way the broader Catholic media cover the topic...more progressive outlets talk about the negotiations, sometimes in a critical way, because even Pope Francis is doing so now.”

#### 4.7 The Current Ecclesiastical Landscape in China

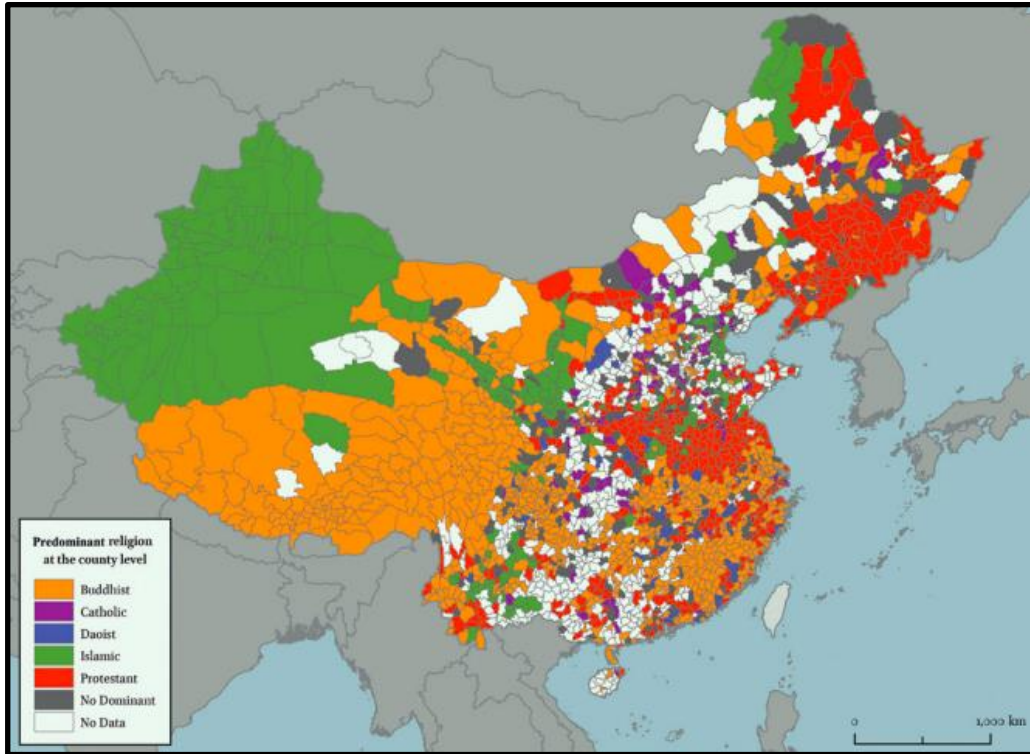
In 2004, according to SARA “there were about 4,000 Catholic churches throughout the country.”<sup>535</sup> Of course this figure reflects the number of official Catholic churches in China, not the unofficial churches. As seen in the following images, Catholicism is most diffuse in Hebei, Heilongjiang, Fujian, Shaanxi and in some areas near Shanghai.<sup>536</sup> From available data and information the underground Church has a significant presence in: (**Anhui**); Fuzhou, Xiapu (**Fujian**); Lanzhou, Tianshui (**Gansu**); Shantou (**Guangdong**); Nanning (**Guangxi**); Guiyang (**Guizhou**); Yixian [Baoding], Xuanhua, Yongnian (**Hebei**); Luoyang, Xinxiang (**Henan**); (**Huan**); **Nanchang (Jiangxi)**; Hanzhong (**Shaanxi**); and Wenzhou (**Zhejiang**).

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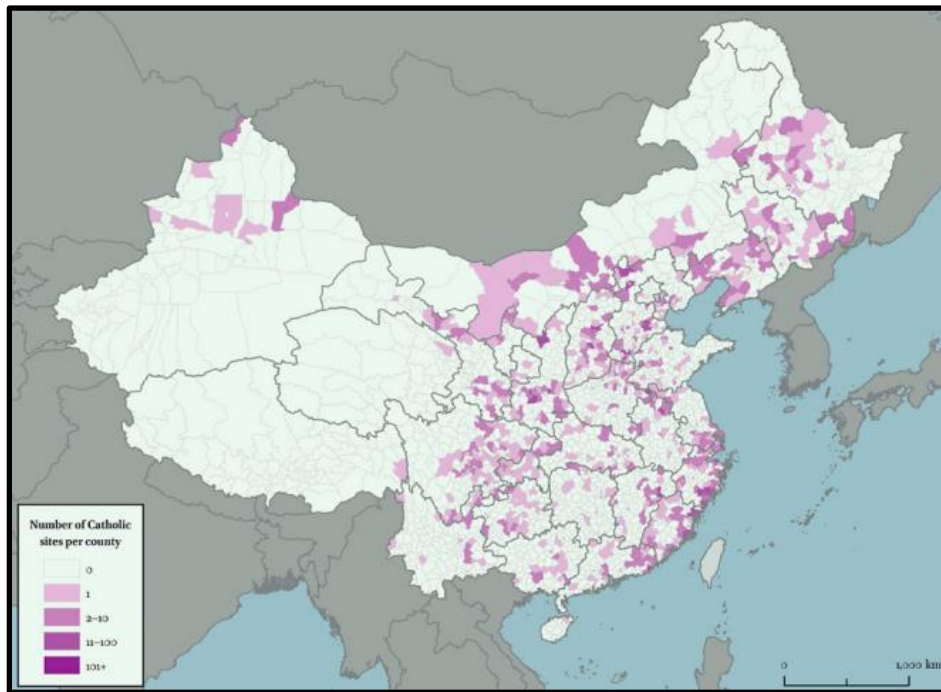
<sup>535</sup> Atlas of Religion pg. 40

<sup>536</sup> Fenggang Yang, *Atlas of Religion*, 40. Open source information.



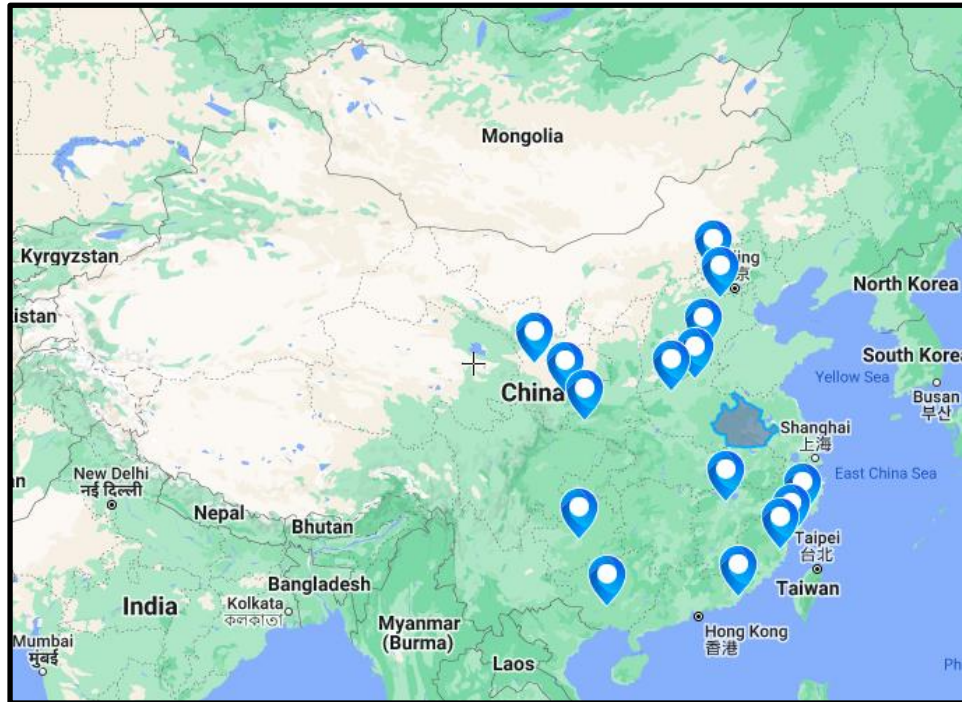


Predominant religion at the county level. *Atlas of Religion in China*, by Fenggang Yang.<sup>537</sup>



<sup>537</sup> Fenggang Yang, *Atlas of Religion*, 15. Open source information.

Number of Catholic Sites per County. *Atlas of Religion in China*, by Fenggang Yang.<sup>538</sup>



Activity of the Underground Church in China.<sup>539</sup>

According to the data of the Catholic Church in China, there are 147 ecclesiastical jurisdictions, that is 20 archdioceses, 96 dioceses (including Macao, Hong Kong, Baotou and Bameng), 29 apostolic prefectures and 2 ecclesiastical administrations (Harbin and Hulubei'er).<sup>540</sup> It is important to note the ecclesiastical provinces (and diocese) do not correspond to official Administrative provinces of the Chinese government. For the following breakdown, the dioceses are separated by administrative districts, not by the ecclesiastical provinces.<sup>541</sup>

Comparison of the Ecclesiastical and State Jurisdictions<sup>542</sup>

Ecclesiastical Province	Administrative Province (PRC)	Jurisdiction (Holy See)	Jurisdiction (PRC)
Anqing	Anhui	4	1
Beijing	Beijing, Hebei,	15,16	12

<sup>538</sup> *Atlas of Religion in China*, pg. 40 (open sources).

<sup>539</sup> Matthew Santucci, *Activity of the Underground Church in China.*, 2023, 2023.

<sup>540</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/-China-Vatican-agreement:-bishops-ordained-and-dioceses-left-vacant-56227.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20data%20of,Harbin%20and%20Hulubei'er>.

<sup>541</sup> Information has been collected from: (1) <http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/country/CN.htm> ;(2) <https://www.ucanews.com/directory/country/china/35> ; (3) <http://www.gcatholic.org/hierarchy/china/bishops.htm> ; and (4) <https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/cn.html>

<sup>542</sup> Map made by the author using the data from GCatholic and UCAnews (see preceding footnote)

	Tianjing		
Changa	Hunan	9	1
Chongqing	Chongqing, Sichuan, Tibet	8	8
Fuzhou	Fujian	6	4
Guangzhou	Guangdong, Hong Kong (Macau, Hainan)	8,9**	7,9
Guiyang	Guizhou	3	1
Hangzhou	Zhejiang	5	5
Hankou	Hubei	11	5
Jinan	Shandong	11	9
Kaifeng	Henan	9	9
Kunming	Yunnan	3	3
Lanzhou	Gansu (Qinghai, Xinjiang)*	5*	5
Nanchang	Jiangxi	5	1
Nanjing	Jiangsu, Shanghai	7	5
Nanning	Guangxi	3.4	1
Shenyang	Jilin, Liaoning ( Heilongjiang)	12,11*	3
Suiyuan	Inner Mongolia, Ningxia	4*	6
Taiyuan	Shanxi	8	10
Xi'an	Shaanxi	8	8
Total		147 (143)	106 (104)

**Anhui**

The state recognizes the Diocese of Anhui with the seat in Anqing, while the Holy See does not. According to UCAnews, “In 2001, due to an acute shortage of the clergy, the dioceses of Wuhu, Bengbu, Anqing and the Apostolic Vicariate of Tunxi were merged to form the Diocese of Anhui.”<sup>543</sup> The bishop is **Joseph Liu Xinhong** 劉新紅, who was ordained 3 May 2006 without a papal mandate and was excommunicated. His excommunication was lifted with the signing of the 2018 Accord. The underground Church is active in Anhui, especially in the “northern part of the province” where most catholics repudiate the official church.<sup>544</sup>

**Apostolic Prefecture of Tunxi (屯溪) – vacant**

**Archdiocese of Anqing 安慶 – Bishop Joseph Liu Xinhong (see above)**

The Holy See recognizes Bishop Liu as the archbishop of the diocese of Anqing, not as the bishop of Anhui.

**Diocese of Bengbu 蚌埠 – vacant (see above)**

**Diocese of Wuhu 蕪湖 – vacant (see above)**

## Beijing

**Archdiocese of Beijing 北京 – Bishop Joseph Li Shan 李山**

He was consecrated bishop in 2007. In August 2022, following the 10th National Assembly of Chinese Catholic Representatives, he was elected as the current President of the CCPA Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.<sup>545</sup> He has been one of the leading voices for Xi’s project of sinicization.<sup>546</sup> His predecessor, **Archbishop Michael Fu Tieshan** 傅鐵山, was ordained with no papal in 1979 and was bishop until 2007. He was a controversial figure given his repudiation of the Vatican and close ties to the CCP. He joined in Jiang Zemin’s campaign against the Falun Gong and condemned the Vatican for the canonization of the Chinese martyrs in 2000, among many other things.<sup>547</sup> At the same time, there was **Archbishop Matthias Pei Shangde (Xiangde)** 裴尚德, C.D.D who was consecrated by the Vatican clandestinely. He served as underground bishop until his death in 2001.

## Chongqing

**Archdiocese of Chongqing 重慶 – vacant**

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<sup>543</sup> <https://www.ucanews.com/directory/dioceses/china-anqing/186>

<sup>544</sup> [https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post\\_name=/2005/03/18/octogenarian-bishop-dies-in-eastern-china-leaves-province-vacant&post\\_id=25503](https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/2005/03/18/octogenarian-bishop-dies-in-eastern-china-leaves-province-vacant&post_id=25503)

<sup>545</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Beijing-Archbishop-Li-Shan-to-lead-the-Patriotic-Association-56494.html>

<sup>546</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Beijing-shows-off-the-%26lsquo%3Bsinicisation%26rsquo%3B-of-Catholicism-57519.html>

<sup>547</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Fu-Tieshan,-tragic-figure-of-the-Chinese-Patriotic-Church,-dies-9060.html>

Bishop Joseph Hou Guoyong was clandestinely ordained in 1989. He is recently deceased (sometime before 2022), however the exact date is unknown.

## **Diocese of Kangding 康定 - vacant**

### **Fujian**

## **Apostolic Prefecture of Jianou 建甌 – vacant**

## **Apostolic Prefecture of Shaowu 邵武 – vacant**

## **Archdiocese of Fuzhou – Archbishop Peter Lin Jiashan 林佳善**

Archbishop Lin was part of the unofficial Church and “in the 1980s he had also been sentenced to 10 years of forced labor.”<sup>548</sup> In 2001, was clandestinely ordained a bishop and refused to register with the CCPA.<sup>549</sup> He wasn’t recognized by the government until 2020, following the signing of the 2018 Sino-Vatican Accord. Asia News noted, “he had wanted to formalize his situation with the government, but was held back by the majority of his priests. The archdiocese, perhaps the richest and most numerous in China, has about 300 thousand faithful, 120 priests, over 500 nuns.”<sup>550</sup>

## **Diocese of Xiamen 廈門 – Bishop Joseph Cai Bingrui 蔡炳瑞**

Bishop Cai was ordained bishop in 2010 with approval of both the Holy See and the government.

## **Diocese of Xiapu 霞浦 / Funing 福寧 – Bishop Vincent Zhan Silu 詹思祿**

Bishop Zhan was one of the bishops whose excommunication was lifted following the signing of the 2018 accord.<sup>551</sup>

## **Auxiliary Bishop Bishop Vincent Guo Xijin 郭希錦**

Bishop Guo was clandestinely consecrated in 2008 in the underground Church. Before 2018 he was recognized by the Holy See as the bishop of the diocese; however, following the 2018 Accord he was demoted to auxiliary bishop. He resigned in 2020 following the first renewal of the agreement, citing “mixed messages” from Rome.<sup>552</sup> Asia News noted that in Xiapu/Mindong “there is a great imbalance: out of the more than 90 thousand members of the diocese, at least 80 thousand belong to the underground Church.”<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> [https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msgr.-Peter-Lin-Jiashan-is-the-\(official\)-archbishop-of-Fuzhou-50299.html](https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msgr.-Peter-Lin-Jiashan-is-the-(official)-archbishop-of-Fuzhou-50299.html)

<sup>549</sup> <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2020/06/chinese-bishop-83-becomes-third-installed-in-state-ceremony>

<sup>550</sup> [https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msgr.-Peter-Lin-Jiashan-is-the-\(official\)-archbishop-of-Fuzhou-50299.html](https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msgr.-Peter-Lin-Jiashan-is-the-(official)-archbishop-of-Fuzhou-50299.html)

<sup>551</sup> <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2018/09/22/0676/01471.html>

<sup>552</sup> <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-bishops-resignation-seen-as-result-of-sino-vatican-pact/89786>

<sup>553</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mindong:-Msgr.-Guo-Xijin,-underground-bishop,-gives-way-to-formerly-excommunicated-Msgr.-Zhan-Silu-45738.html>

## **Diocese of Changting 長汀 – vacant**

### **Gansu**

#### **Archdiocese of Lanzhou 蘭州 – Archbishop Joseph Han Zhihai 韓志海**

Archbishop Han was ordained in the underground Church and was only recognized by the government in 2017.<sup>554</sup> However, this caused a great deal of resentment in his diocese as many of the underground Catholics perceived that as a betrayal.<sup>555</sup> He succeeded Archbishop Philip Yang Libo 楊立柏, (ordained a bishop in the underground Church in 1987), and was a key figure of the underground episcopal conference established in 1989. He had been jailed for more than 30 years. The bishop was persistent in his refusal to join the CPA and was kept on a farm for "re-education through labor" by authorities.

#### **Diocese of Pingliang 平涼 – Bishop Nicholas Han Jide 韓紀德**

Note: the underground church is also active in the diocese of Pingliang.

#### **Coadjutor Bishop Anthony Li Hui 李輝**

Bishop Li formerly served in the secretariat office of the CCPA and later as secretary to the presidents of the BCCCC. Pope Francis formally made the nomination on 11 January 2021 and he was consecrated a bishop on 28 July 2021.

#### **Diocese of Tianshui 天水 / Qinzhou 秦州 – Bishop John Baptist Wang Ruowang 王若望**

Bishop Wang was clandestinely ordained in the underground Church in 2011. However, Bishop Wang along with his brother (the former bishop of Tianshui) were arrested.

**Augustine Zhao Jingnong 趙經農** was ordained without papal mandate in 1981 and served as bishop of the open church; he died in 2004.

### **Guangdong**

#### **Archdiocese of Guangzhou 廣州 – Archbishop Joseph Gan Junqiu 甘俊邱**

He was ordained with a papal mandate and the Chinese government's recognition, as the bishop of Guangzhou on 4 December 2007. In a 2012 state visit, the former German Chancellor met with Archbishop Gan and, reportedly, discussed the various issues facing the Church.<sup>556</sup>

#### **Diocese of Jiangmen 江門 – Bishop Paul Ling Jiansen 梁建森**

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<sup>554</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Former-underground-bishop-becomes-president-of-the-Patriotic-Association-for-an-independent-Church-45230.html>

<sup>555</sup> [https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Lanzhou,-official-bishop-commemorates-his-underground-predecessor.-With-some-difficulty-\(Video\)-43162.html](https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Lanzhou,-official-bishop-commemorates-his-underground-predecessor.-With-some-difficulty-(Video)-43162.html)

<sup>556</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Guangzhou:-Merkel%27s-visit-to-Msgr.-Gan,-a-way-to-support-the-living-Churches-23906.html>

**Diocese of Beihai 北海 – Bishop Paul Su Yongda 蘇永大**

He was ordained bishop with Papal Mandate on 9 November 2004.

**Diocese of Meixian 梅縣 / Jiaying 嘉應 – Bishop Joseph Liao Hongqing 廖宏清**

**Diocese of Shantou 汕頭 – Bishop Joseph Huang Bingzhang 黃炳章**

Bishop Huang was ordained as the Coadjutor Bishop of Shantou on 14 July 2011, without a Papal Mandate and was thereby excommunicated by the Holy See. His excommunication was lifted in 2018 with the signing of the Accord.

The (now deceased) underground bishop at the time, **Peter Zhuang Jianjian 莊建堅**, was asked by the Holy See to step aside for Bishop Bingzhang to take over; this happened before the signing of the accord. Msgr. Jianjian wrote a letter to Cardinal Zen, who in turn (unsuccessfully) petitioned Pope Francis.<sup>557</sup>

**Diocese of Shaoguan 韶關 – vacant**

**Guangxi**

The government does not recognize the Holy See's ecclesiastical structure; it has established only one diocese to correspond to the administrative territory.

**Archdiocese of Nanning 南寧 – Archbishop Joseph Tan Yanquan 譚燕全**

**Diocese of Wuzhou 梧州 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Guilin 桂林 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Haizhou 海州 – vacant**

**Guizhou**

The government does not recognize the Holy See's ecclesiastical structure; it has established only one diocese to correspond to the administrative territory.

**Archdiocese of Guiyang 貴陽 – Archbishop Paul Xiao Zejiang 蕭澤江**

Msgr. Xiao was ordained bishop of Guiyang, with the approval of Pope Benedict XVI, on 8 September 2007.

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<sup>557</sup> AsiaNews.it, “Shantou Bids Farewell to Msgr. Zhuang Jianjian, Who Does Not Participate in Mass,” PIME Asia News, January 23, 2019, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Shantou-bids-farewell-to-Msgr.-Zhuang-Jianjian>.

**Diocese of Anlong 安龍/Nanlong 南龍 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Shiqian 石阡 – vacant**

### Hainan

**Apostolic Prefecture of Hainan 海南 – vacant**

Note: the Holy See has designated Hainan as an apostolic prefecture, but the government has declared it a diocese.

### Hebei

**Apostolic Prefecture of Yixian 易縣 – Auxiliary Bishop John Chen Cangbao 陳蒼保**

Former **Bishop Cosmas Shi Enxiang** of the underground church, was clandestinely ordained bishop in 1982. Between 1957 and 1980, he was sentenced to various labor camps.<sup>558</sup> He was arrested in 2001 and disappeared. He was held in a secret location until his death in 2015.<sup>559</sup>

**Diocese of Xianxian 獻縣 – Bishop Joseph Liangui Li 李連貴**

Bishop Li, ordained a bishop in 2000, was approved by both the Holy See and the government as the Vatican-appointed and government-approved ordinary of the open Church in Cangzhou (Xianxian) Diocese. In 2011, he was briefly punished for his refusal to attend the National Congress of Catholic Representatives in Beijing.<sup>560</sup>

**Diocese of Daming (Handan) 大名 – vacant**

**Diocese of Yongnian 永年 – Bishop Joseph Sun Jigen 孫繼根**

He was ordained bishop with a papal mandate, on 21 June 2011.

**Diocese of Jingxian 景縣 – Bishop Peter Feng Xinmao 封新卯**

**Diocese of Yongping 永平 – Bishop Peter Fang Jianping 方建平**

Msgr. Gang was illicitly ordained in 2000 and recognized by the Holy See two years later.

**Diocese of Puqi 蒲圻 – vacant**

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<sup>558</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Beijing-hides-the-body-of-bishop-Cosma-Shi-Enxiang:-too-dangerous-33415.html>

<sup>559</sup> <https://www.catholicregister.org/home/international/item/19641-chinese-bishop-shi-held-in-secret-for-years-dies-at-94>

<sup>560</sup> <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1350177bdc4.html?eng=y>



## **Diocese of Xingtai 邢台 / Diocese of Shunde 順德 – vacant**

### **Diocese of Zhengding 正定 – Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo 賈治國**

Bishop Julius was clandestinely ordained bishop in 1981. Between 2004-2008 he was arrested 12 times.<sup>561</sup> He was arrested again on 30 March 2009, the day the Vatican's China Commission began its plenary meeting in Rome; he was released on 7 July 2010.<sup>562</sup> He was most recently arrested on 10 August 2020 for breaking the rules of assembly (in line with the Covid-19 regulations). He also refused to accept the terms of the Religious Affairs Regulations, which stated that people under the age of 18 are prohibited from religious worship.

### **Diocese of Anguo 安國 – vacant**

Note: The government does not recognize the Diocese of Anguo; it has consolidated it with the Diocese of Baoding.

### **Diocese of Baoding 保定 – Bishop Francis An Shuxin 安樹新**

He was arrested in 1996 and was released after spending 10 years in prison as a member of the underground Church.

The former bishop of the diocese, **Bishop James Su Zhimin 蘇哲民**, was a prominent figure in the underground Church. He was clandestinely ordained a priest in 1981 and later bishop in 1988. He was arrested in 1982 (following his priestly ordination and again in 1989 following his episcopal ordination). In 1995 he was officially recognized by the Holy See as bishop of Baoding and was arrested again. He was last seen in 2003 and there are no updates on his status.<sup>563</sup> According to an article published in *Bitter Winter*, his birthday has become a celebration in Baoding; in 2011 (before the celebration of his birthday) 10 priests of the underground church were arrested.<sup>564</sup>

### **Diocese of Chengde 承德 – Bishop Joseph Guo Jincan 郭金才**

The Diocese of Chengde was erected, by the Holy See, on 22 September 2018, following the signing of the Accord. Bishop Guo's excommunication was lifted as well.

### **Diocese of Xuanhua 宣化 – Bishop Thomas Zhao Kexun 趙克勳**

#### **Coadjutor Bishop Augustine Cui Tai 崔泰**

Msgr. Cui is another prominent figure in the underground Church. He has been arrested multiple times, most recently in 2022 for his refusal to join the CCPA. There have not been any updates on his status. According to a report by the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China,

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<sup>561</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20120220074510/http://www.speroforum.com/site/article.asp?id=15960>

<sup>562</sup> [https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post\\_name=/2009/03/31/underground-bishop-taken-away-as-vaticans-china-commission-meets&post\\_id=50150](https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/2009/03/31/underground-bishop-taken-away-as-vaticans-china-commission-meets&post_id=50150)

<sup>563</sup> <https://bitterwinter.org/james-su-zhimin-a-catholic-bishop-who-may-be-dead/>

<sup>564</sup> Ibid

“Police reportedly tortured Cui and other priests in order to obtain information about a bishop who died in 2018, Monsignor Zhao Kexun, including the location of his burial site.”<sup>565</sup>

## **Diocese of Zhaoxian 趙縣 – vacant**

### **Heilongjiang**

#### **Apostolic Administration of Harbin 哈爾濱 – Bishop Joseph Yue Fusheng 岳福生**

Note: the government does not recognize Harbin as an apostolic administration; it has designated a diocese, which covers the entire province of Heilongjiang. Bishop Yue was excommunicated following his ordination on 6 July 2012 without a Papal Mandate. However, he was one of the bishops whose excommunication was lighted by the signing of the Accord in 2018.

#### **Apostolic Prefecture of Jiamusi 佳木斯 – vacant**

#### **Apostolic Prefecture of Qiqihar 齊齊哈爾 – Bishop Joseph Wei Jingyi 魏景義**

In an interview with La Stampa in 2018, Bishop Wei (an underground bishop) expressed his hope that the Accord would unify the official and underground churches in china.<sup>566</sup>

### **Henan**

#### **Apostolic Prefecture of Xinxiang 新鄉 – Bishop Joseph Zhang Weizhu 張維柱 (Detained)**

Msgr. Zhang was clandestinely consecrated in 1990 and the Holy See appointed him as the ordinary of Xinxiang in 1998. The government does not recognize the jurisdiction of Xinxiang and, even after the signing of the 2018 Accord, the government did not recognize Bishop Zhang. He was arrested in May 2021 in accordance with new Regulations on Religious Affairs for operating a seminary for underground priests. Currently, he is still detained.<sup>567</sup>

#### **Metropolitan Archdiocese of Kaifeng 開封 – Archbishop Joseph Gao Hongxiao 高宏效**

#### **Diocese of Jixian 級縣 – Bishop Joseph Zhang Yinlin 張銀林**

#### **Diocese of Luoyang 洛陽 – Auxiliary Bishop Peter Mao Qingfu 毛慶福**

Former Bishop Placidus Pei Rongguì 裴榮貴 (of the underground church) was consecrated bishop of Luoyang in 2003 and was harassed and surveilled by the government for years (he was in prison from 1989 until 1993).<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>565</sup> <https://www.ppdcecc.gov/ppd?id=result&number=2020-00162>

<sup>566</sup> <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2018/09/25/news/the-underground-bishop-wei-with-the-china-vatican-agreement-we-overcome-the-divisions-between-catholics-1.34047794>

<sup>567</sup> <https://bitterwinter.org/bishop-joseph-zhang-weizhu-still-detained/>

<sup>568</sup> <https://bitterwinter.org/inside-the-persecuted-life-of-bishop-pei-ronggui/>

**Diocese of Nanyang 南陽 – Bishop Peter Jin Lugang 靳祿崗**

**Diocese of Shangqiu 商邱 – vacant**

**Diocese of Zhengzhou 鄭州 – vacant**

**Diocese of Zhumadian 駐馬店 – vacant**

According to an AsiaNews article, “The diocese of Zhumadian has been suppressed by the provincial authorities. It gathers over 60 thousand faithful and is currently without a bishop...The violence against Henan is explained by the fact that the province has a high percentage of Christians. Catholics and Protestants total an estimated 10-15% of the population, one of the highest in China, together with Zhejiang.”<sup>569</sup>

**Diocese of Xinyang 信陽 – vacant**

### Hong Kong

**Diocese of Hong Kong 香港 – Bishop Stephen Chow Sauyan SJ 周守仁<sup>570</sup>**

**Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chishing 夏志誠**

### Hubei

**Apostolic Prefecture of Suixian 隨縣 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Shashi 沙市 – vacant**

**Archdiocese of Hankow/Hankou (Wuhan) 漢口 – Archbishop Francis Cui Qingqi 崔慶琪, O.F.M.**

Msgr. Cui was ordained bishop in 2021 and was the sixth recognized ordination since the signing of the Accord.<sup>571</sup>

**Diocese of Laohekou 老河口 – vacant**

**Diocese of Yichang 宜昌 – vacant**

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<sup>569</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/More-than-before:-persecution-continues-in-Wenzhou,-Henan,-Hubei-after-the-China-Holy-See-agreement-45185.html>

<sup>570</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Fr-Stephen-Chow-Sau-yan-is-Hong-Kong%E2%80%99s-new-Bishop-53164.html>

<sup>571</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Fr-Cui-Qingqi-ordained-bishop-of-Wuhan-54013.html>

**Diocese of Enshi 恩施 / Shinan 施南 – vacant**

**Diocese of Hanyang 漢陽 – vacant**

**Diocese of Qizhou (Kichow/Qichun) 蕪春 – vacant**

**Diocese of Wuchang 武昌 – vacant**

**Diocese of Xiangyang 襄陽 – vacant**

### **Hunan**

In 1999 the government merged all of the ecclesiastical jurisdictions into one (the diocese of Hunan); the Holy See does not recognize this destination.

**Apostolic Prefecture of Baojing**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Lingling 零陵 / Yongzhou 永州 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Lixian 澧縣 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Xiangtan 湘潭 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Yueyang 岳陽 – vacant**

All of these are under the Archbishop of Changsha

**Archdiocese of Changsha 長沙 – Archbishop Methodius Qu Ailin 屈譚林**

Msgr. Qu was ordained in 2012 with approval from both the Holy See and the government.

**Diocese of Changde 常德 – vacant**

**Diocese of Hengyang 衡陽 / Hengzhou 衡州 – vacant**

**Yuanling 沅陵 – vacant**

### **Inner Mongolia**

**Archdiocese of Hohhot 呼和浩特 / Suiyuan 綏遠 – Archbishop Paul Meng Qinglu 孟青祿**

**Diocese of Jining 集寧 – Bishop Anthony Yao Shun 姚順**

Although he was the first bishop to be officially ordained after the signing of the Accord, Bishop Yao was secretly approved by the Vatican in 2010.

**Diocese of Chifeng 赤峰 – vacant**

**Xiwanzi 西灣子 / Chongli 崇禮 – vacant**

### Jiangsu

**Apostolic Prefecture of Yangzhou 揚州 – vacant**

**Archdiocese of Nanjing 南京 – Archbishop Francis Lu Xinping 陸新平**

**Diocese of Haimen 海門 – Bishop Joseph Shen Bin 沈斌**

**Diocese of Suzhou 蘇州 – Bishop Joseph Xu Honggen 徐宏根**

**Diocese of Xuzhou 徐州 – Bishop John Wang Renlei 王仁雷**

He was ordained bishop without papal mandate in 2011; he was later recognized by the Holy See in 2012.

### Jiangxi

The State reorganized the diocese in Jiangxi to conform to the administrative region; the Holy See does not recognize the Diocese of Jiangxi. In november 2022, a month after the Accord was renewed for a second time, **Bishop John Peng Weizhao 彭衛照** was made bishop of the diocese of Jiangxi.

**Archdiocese of Nanchang 南昌 – (Arch)bishop John Baptist Li Suguang 李蘇光**

**Diocese of Ganzhou 贛州 – vacant**

**Diocese of Jian 吉安 – vacant**

**Diocese of Nancheng 南城 – vacant**

**Diocese of Yujiang 餘江 – Peng was formerly bishop of Yujiang see above)**

### Jilin

**Diocese of Jilin 吉林 – vacant**

**Diocese of Siping 四平 – vacant**

**Diocese of Yanji 延吉 – vacant**

### Liaoning

**Archdiocese of Shenyang 瀋陽 – Archbishop Paul Pei Junmin 裴軍民**

He was ordained bishop in 2006, with the approval of the Holy See. His predecessor,

**Archbishop Pius Jin Peixian 金沛獻** (who retired in 2008) served 10 years in prison (1958-1968). Following his release from prison he was then sent to a work camp, where he remained until 1980.<sup>572</sup> Despite being a member of the official church, he reportedly kept in close contact with the Holy See.

**Diocese of Jinzhou 錦州 / Rehe 熱河 / Jehol – vacant**

This diocese lost much of its territory when Chengde was made a diocese in 2018.

**Diocese of Fushun 撫順 – vacant**

**Diocese of Yingkou 營口 – vacant**

### Macau<sup>573</sup>

**Macau 澳門 – Bishop Stephen Lee Bunsang 李斌生**

Msgr. Lee was appointed by Pope Francis as Bishop of Macau in 2017. Previously, he was auxiliary bishop of Hong Kong.

### Ningxia Hui

**Diocese of Yinchuan 銀川 / Ningxia 寧夏 – Bishop Joseph Li Jing 李晶**

He was approved by the Holy See, and recognized by the government. When he was ordained bishop in 2007, only bishops recognized by the Holy See took part in the ordination ceremony.<sup>574</sup>

### Qinghai

**Apostolic Prefecture of Xining 西寧 – Bishop Matthias Gu Zheng 顧征**

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<sup>572</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mgr-Jin-Peixian-of-Shenyang-dies-13665.html>

<sup>573</sup> Macua is a special administrative region.

<sup>574</sup> “New Bishop of Ningxia Only Ordained by Prelates Approved by the Pope,” PIME Asia News, December 21, 2007, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/New-bishop-of-Ningxia-only-ordained-by-prelates-approved-by-the-Pope-11097.html>.

## Shaanxi

**Apostolic Prefecture of Ankang 安康/Xing'anfu 興安府 – Bishop John Baptist Wang**

**Xiaoxun 王曉勳**

Msgr. Wang was ordained in 2016 with recognition by both the Holy See and the government.

**Tongzhou 同州 – Bishop Joseph Tong Changping 同長平**

**Lintong/Lindong 林東 – Bishop Matthias Du Jiang 杜江**

He was clandestinely ordained bishop in 2004; in 2010 the government approved.

**Archdiocese of Xian 西安 – Archbishop Anthony Dang Mingyan 黨明彥**

He was ordained as coadjutor bishop in 2005, with recognition by the pope, and became archbishop in 2006.

**Diocese of Fengxiang 鳳翔 – Bishop Peter Li Huiyuan 李會元**

Unofficial bishop since 2017 (but recognized by the Holy See since 2015) was finally recognized by the government in 2020.<sup>575</sup>

**Diocese of Hanzhong 漢中 – Bishop Stephen Xu Hongwei 胥紅偉**

Msgr. Xu was ordained bishop in 2019, considered the second ordination since the Accord was signed.

**Diocese of Sanyuan 三原 – Bishop Joseph Han Yingjin 韓英進**

**Diocese of Yanan 延安 – Bishop John Baptist Yang Xiaoting 楊曉亭**

He was ordained in 2010 with both papal mandate and approval from the government.

**Diocese of Zhouzhi 照壁 – Bishop Joseph Wu Qinjing 吳欽敬**

He was clandestinely ordained bishop in 2005. He was arrested in 2006 and his movement is still restricted. UCANews notes, “during this detention, Bishop Wu was forced to write a statement “admitting” that his episcopal status was illegal as he was ordained without an election, and that his management of the diocese and his presiding over Church activities as a bishop have violated the Chinese government’s religious affairs regulations.”<sup>576</sup>

## Shandong

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<sup>575</sup> “Fengxiang: Mgr Peter Li Huiyuan, Former Underground Bishop, Becomes Official Bishop,” PIME Asia News, June 22, 2020, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Fengxiang:-Mgr-Peter-Li-Huiyuan>.

<sup>576</sup> “Bishop of Zhouzhi Diocese Joseph Qinjing Wu,” Union of Catholic Asian news, 2023, <https://www.ucanews.com/directory/bishops/bishop-wu/331>.

**Apostolic Prefecture of Yiduxian 益都縣 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Linqing 臨清 – vacant**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Weihai 威海 – vacant**

**Archdiocese of Jinan 中文 – Archbishop Joseph Zhang Xianwang 張憲旺**

**Diocese of Yanggu 陽穀 – Bishop Joseph Zhao Fengchang 趙鳳昌**

**Diocese of Yantai 煙台 – vacant**

**Diocese of Yanzhou 兗州 – Bishop John Lu Peisen 呂培森**

Msgr. Lu was ordained in 2011 with papal approval.

**Diocese of Zhoucun 周村 – Bishop Joseph Yang Yongqiang 楊永強**

**Diocese of Linyi 臨沂 / Yizhou 沂州 – Bishop John Fang Xingyao 房興耀**

Msgr. Fang was elected as president of the CCPA in 2010 and re-elected for another term in 2016.

**Diocese of Qingdao 青島 – Bishop Thomas Chen Tianhao 陳天浩**

Msgr. Chen was ordained bishop on 23 November 2020. Since 2010 he has been a member of the standing committee of the National Patriotic Association.<sup>577</sup>

**Caozhou 曹州 / Heze 荷澤 – vacant**

## **Shanghai**

**Diocese of Shanghai 上海 – Functionally vacant**

**Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin 馬達欽**

Currently under house arrest.

**Bishop Joseph Xing Wenzhi 邢文之**

Ordained with papal approval and government's approval in 2005 as auxiliary bishop. However, he disappeared in 2011.

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<sup>577</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msgr-Thomas-Chen-Tianhao-is-the-new-bishop-of-Qingdao-51663.html>



## Shanxi

**Archdiocese of Taiyuan 太原 – Archbishop Paul Meng Ningyou 孟寧友**

**Diocese of Changzhi 長治 / Lu'an 潞安 – Bishop Peter Ding Lingbin 丁令斌**

Msgr. Ding was ordained in 2016, with approval from both the Holy See and the government. All of the bishops present at his ordination were in full communion with Rome.

**Diocese of Datong 大同 – vacant**

**Diocese of Fenyang 汾陽 – vacant**

The former bishop, **Bishop John Huo Cheng (霍成)**, died on 2 January 2023. From 1966-1980 he was detained at a labor camp. He was ordained with approval by the government and papal mandate in 1991.<sup>578</sup>

**Diocese of Yuci 榆次 – vacant**

**Shuoxian 朔縣 / Shouzhou 朔州 – Bishop Paul Ma Cunguo 馬存國**

Though ordained in 2004 (as part of the underground Church) it wasn't until 2020 that Bishop Ma was recognized by the government.

“The Agreement between China and the Vatican on new episcopal appointments has facilitated the transition. Other "underground" dioceses in Fujian, Zhejiang, Henan, Hebei, Guangdong, Heilongjiang, find it difficult to take this step, first of all because of the government authorities harshness towards the unofficial communities and also because the authorities have set membership and support for an "independent Church" and a ban on educating young people under the age of 18 to faith as a precondition for recognition.”<sup>579</sup>

**Hongdong (Hontong) 洪洞 – Bishop Peter Liu Genzhu 劉根柱**

## Sichuan

**Diocese of Wanxian 萬縣 – Bishop Paul He Zeqing 何澤清**

**Diocese of Chengdu 成都 – Bishop Joseph Tang Yuange 唐遠閣**

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<sup>578</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bishop-Huo-Cheng-of-Fenyang-dies-57434.html>

<sup>579</sup> Bernardo Cervellera, “Bishop Paolo Ma Cunguo of Shouzhou Now Recognized by Government,” PIME Asia News, July 18, 2020, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bishop-Paolo-Ma-Cunguo-of-Shouzhou-now-recognized-by-government-50607.html>.

**Diocese of Leshan 樂山 / Jiading 嘉定 – Bishop Paul Lei Shiyin 雷世銀**

Bishop Lei was ordained in 2011 without a papal mandate and was excommunicated. His excommunication was lifted in 2018 with the signing of the accord.<sup>580</sup>

**Diocese of Nanchong 南充 / Shunqing 順慶 – Bishop Joseph Chen Gongao 陳功鰲**

He was ordained with a papal mandate in 2012.

**Xichang 西昌 / Ningyuan 寧遠 – Bishop John Lei Jiapei 雷家培**

**Yibin 宜賓 / Suifu 敘府 – Bishop Peter Luo Xuegang 羅雪剛**

Ordained with the Pope's approval in 2011

**Tianjin**

**Diocese of Tianjin 天津 – functionally vacant**

**Bishop Melchior Shi Hongzhen 石鴻禎** was clandestinely ordained in 1982 and lived under house arrest (in 2019 he refused to join the CCPA).<sup>581</sup>

**Xinjiang Uyghur**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Xinjiang 新絳 – vacant**

The former bishop Bishop Peter Wu Junwei 武俊維 died on 10 May 2022.

**Xinjiang 新疆 / Urumqi 烏魯木齊 – vacant**

The former bishop, Bishop Paul Xie Tingzhe died in 2017; he was clandestinely ordained in 1991.

**Yunnan**

**Apostolic Prefecture of Zhaotong 昭通 – vacant**

**Archdiocese of Kunming 昆明 – Bishop Joseph Ma Yinglin 馬英林**

Bishop Ma, following his episcopal ordination without pontifical mandate in 2006, was excommunicated; his excommunication was lifted in 2018 following the signing of the Accord.

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<sup>580</sup> “Bishop Lei Celebrates the Birth of China’s Communist Party in Leshan Cathedral,” PIME Asia News, July 22, 2022, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bishop-Lei-celebrates-the-birth-of-China%E2%80%99s-Communist-Party-in-Leshan-cathedral-56172.html>.

<sup>581</sup> Giorgio Bernardelli, “Renewing the Sino-Vatican Agreement and the Case of Tianjin,” PIME Asia News, September 11, 2022, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Renewing-the-Sino-Vatican-Agreement-and-the-case-of-Tianjin-56630.html>.

## **Diocese of Dali 大理 – vacant**

### **Zhejiang**

## **Archdiocese of Hangzhou 杭州 – vacant**

The former archbishop Matthew Cao Xiangde 曹湘德 was illicitly ordained bishop in 2001, but he later asked forgiveness from the Holy See (which was granted in 2008, however he was not granted jurisdiction of the diocese).<sup>582</sup>

## **Diocese of Ningbo 寧波 – Bishop Francis Xavier Jin Yangke 金仰科**

## **Diocese of Linhai 臨海 – vacant**

## **Diocese of Yongjia 永嘉 / Wenzhou 溫州 – Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin 邵祝敏**

Bishop Shao was arrested on 25 October 2021. He is recognized by the Holy See, but not by the government. His predecessor, **Bishop James Lin Xili 林锡黎主教**, was ordained in 1992 (with the approval of Pope John Paul II); he was arrested in 1999 and kept there until his death in 2009.<sup>583</sup>

## **Diocese of Lishui 麗水 – vacant**

## **4.8 Analyzing the Effectiveness of the Sino-Vatican Accord and the Future of Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations**

Has the Sino-Vatican Accord been effective? Before making this analysis, it would be prudent to look at the main features of international agreements in general. Perhaps only then can we attempt to judge the accord. Typically, when two states sign an agreement it is the result of extended negotiations. The prevailing assumption in IR is that the agreement reflects a situation in which “no alternative agreement that could make both parties better off.”<sup>584</sup> If one state prioritizes an objective more than the other state – assuming that it is truly important – they will make concessions in other areas. While there is the expectation that by entering into a treaty a state is bound to conduct itself in a certain way, they are not ‘zero sum’ games. As Andrew Guzman notes, “states frequently do not make use of familiar and accessible mechanisms to increase the credibility of commitments.”<sup>585</sup> It should also be noted that “an agreement does not

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<sup>582</sup> “Mourning in the Episcopate: His Exc. Mgr. Matthew Cao Xiangde Dies - Agenzia Fides,” Agenzia Fides, August 9, 2021, [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70635-ASIA\\_CHINA\\_Mourning\\_in\\_the\\_Episcopate\\_His\\_Exc\\_Mgr\\_Matthew\\_Cao\\_Xiangde\\_dies](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70635-ASIA_CHINA_Mourning_in_the_Episcopate_His_Exc_Mgr_Matthew_Cao_Xiangde_dies).

<sup>583</sup> “Wenzhou Authorities Detain Bishop Shao Zhumin Again,” PIME Asia News, October 26, 2021, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Wenzhou-authorities-detain-Bishop-Shao-Zhumin-again-54365.html>.

<sup>584</sup> Guzman 586

<sup>585</sup> Guzman 587

only succeed or fail on its own terms but also according to how it affects the broader regime in which it is embedded.”<sup>586</sup>

It is then important to look at the conventional design elements of an agreement as they simultaneously boost an agreement's credibility and encourage parties to adhere to the terms of an agreement. We should first make a distinction between hard law and soft law. The former makes a treaty more enforceable because that inherently includes design elements that would penalize a state party should they violate a treaty. Soft law, instead, is “less binding...and, therefore, gives them [parties to an agreement] greater flexibility. This flexibility is said to be desirable for a variety of reasons, including to help states deal with an uncertain world, to reduce the costs of termination or abandonment, or to make renegotiation easier.”<sup>587</sup> Moreover, soft law agreements do not include “mandatory dispute resolution provisions”<sup>588</sup> which means “harmful behavior that cannot be deterred by any available sanction will be permitted.”<sup>589</sup> However, since they do not have mechanisms in place for dispute resolution and since they do not undergo a formal process of ratification, they can be implemented much quicker.<sup>590</sup>

It should also be noted that ratification is different from political support: “the ability of a binding multilateral agreement to have normative and regulatory impact requires the achievement of sufficient levels of ratification. Ratification (as well as its functional equivalents of accession and adherence) involves states taking steps pursuant to their national constitutions and laws to bind themselves to an international agreement.”<sup>591</sup> Ratification is juxtaposed with political support, which can be understood as “the motivations of state parties to support and further a treaty over its lifetime...it can be understood at a base level by distinguishing instances of strong political support from weak backing.”<sup>592</sup> With that being said, according to O’Brien and Gowan, in order for an agreement to be effective it must “win the support of key domestic constituencies”<sup>593</sup> as well as “drive normative change by solidifying consensus around new ideas and practices.”<sup>594</sup> What happens if a state violates the terms of an agreement or fails to shift the public perception on an issue? The most obvious consequence is bad publicity and reputational loss.

It must also be noted (as was already done in chapter 2) that the Sino-Vatican accord is not an aberration, in fact there is a historical precedent for the Holy See in enacting similar agreements with communist/hostile political regimes. Kramer notes:

In countries where the Catholic Church is internally strong and capable of vigorously articulating and defending its interests and/or where political elites need and seek the support of seizable Catholic populations...the authorities will probably be more receptive to the religious, and perhaps

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<sup>586</sup> O’Brien and Gowan 3

<sup>587</sup> Guzman 591

<sup>588</sup> Guzman 581

<sup>589</sup> Guzman 598

<sup>590</sup> Guzman 592

<sup>591</sup> McNerney 6,7

<sup>592</sup> McNerney 6

<sup>593</sup> O’Brien and Gowan 3

<sup>594</sup> O’Brien and Gowan 9

secular, demands of the Church. Yet in countries...where the Catholic Church is internally weak with an ecclesiastical hierarchy co-opted by the regime...the regime's political preeminence makes it less interested in eliciting support from the Catholic population, the impact...is likely to be far more limited."<sup>595</sup>

Our attention can now turn to an analysis of the accord, based on the aforementioned criteria: (1) no alternative agreement is possible; (2) the parties are not playing a zero sum game; (3) the agreement has had a demonstrable effect on the regime(s); there are has been some form of ratification or quantifiable political support; and (5) there is support for the agreement from key domestic constituencies. First, it must be noted that there are historical and contemporary examples for this deal. As already discussed in chapter 2, during the Cold War the Holy See's *Ostpolitik* allowed it to enact agreements with the communist governments in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. There was, however, a varying degree of success in these countries for this strategy for the reasons stated above in Kramer's excerpt. In Poland and Hungary there was a greater level of success, than in Czechoslovakia, given the larger Catholic population and a stronger episcopate. The Church's ability to survive in Poland was later buttressed by the Polish pope, John Paul II, who visited the country in 1979. To provide another historical example is the Cristero Rebellion in Mexico (1926-1929).<sup>596</sup> In June 1929, the moderate wing of the Mexican episcopate (with the support of the Holy See) reached an agreement with the government; priests were again allowed to practice in public if the Church no longer contested the 1917 Constitution. This truce divided both the episcopate and the faithful, many of whom felt that the government did not adhere to terms of the amnesty. Consequently, the unity of the Church in Mexico was compromised. Mexico, compared to China, is a historically Catholic country, where the Church for centuries (and even today) has been a powerful force in everyday life. However, the truce of 1929 does highlight that the Church, even if current conditions are inauspicious, displays a great deal of realpolitik in how it arrives at agreements. The question still remains, however, on how this affects the domestic unity of Catholics.

To draw upon a more contemporary example (and one that has greater temporal, cultural, and geographic relevance), in 2010 the Holy See signed an accord with the government of Vietnam, which (like the Sino-Vatican Accord) concerns the selection of bishops. However, one of the main differences between the Vietnam and China accords is that, in the case of Vietnam, the Holy See selects three names it sends to the government and, then, the government chooses from that list; this process is inverted in the Sino-Vatican Accord.<sup>597</sup> Another key difference between Vietnam and China is the demographic power of Catholics. According to the 2019 census, the total population in Vietnam was 92.6 million and the number of Catholics was approximately 7 million, or roughly 7% of the total population.<sup>598</sup> In China, the Catholic population is only 1% of the total population (estimated at around 12 million). Of course, the

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<sup>595</sup> John M. Kramer The Vatican's "Ostpolitik" 306,307

<sup>596</sup> In fact, the 1917 Mexican constitution forbade religious education and imposed a quota on the number of clergy that could practice in the different states; foreign clergy were prohibited from practicing (Wilkie 216). Following the outbreak of the rebellion, the Church was divided in two groups: those who supported the rebels and those who wanted peace (227). Finally, in 1929 a truce was reached between, though many cristeros were unhappy, stating that the government did not adhere to the terms of the amnesty. Peace may have been achieved, but Church unity was compromised (231).

<sup>597</sup> <https://bitterwinter.org/vietnamese-model-for-the-vatican-in-china/>

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exact number of Catholics is difficult to calculate given that many faithful still belong to the underground Church. Nevertheless, we can see how in Vietnam, by virtue of having a larger Catholic population, Catholicism has a greater cultural impact and, thus, the Holy See is able to exert a greater degree of influence and achieve a more auspicious agreement.

With this in mind, we can now evaluate the accord based on the aforementioned criteria. It is clear that the Holy See is not playing a zero-sum game. While Cardinal Zen has stated that no agreement is better than a bad agreement, Cardinal Parolin and Archbishop Gallagher are of the opposite opinion. What are the aims of the Accord? The Accord (given what we know) is specific: it only concerns the ordination of Bishops in China (it does not discuss any of the other diplomatic issues between the PRC and the Holy See. Secondary considerations (as a consequence of its official aim) include: greater unity with the pope, unity between the bishops, and unity between the underground and the official communities. Tertiary considerations include: support within the larger Church community, third party political support, and public support (media response). We should also note that the Holy See's understanding of 'domestic constituencies' is entirely different than that of a normal sovereign state.

An overview of the Holy See's status as it relates to the Sino-Vatican Accord.

*(1) Fragmentation and disunity.*

It is clear, as presented in the above sections, that there is a great deal of division within the Church. This is not surprising given that the Church is a universal body, with members of its senior magisterium, coming from all over the world. It is not a monolith, nor is it a homogeneous body. Moreover, there is a multifacetedness to this division; it runs between progressives (liberals) and conservatives (traditionalists), who maintain different theological opinions. The division also exists on cultural and national lines. Pope Francis has become a lightning rod for this infighting, whether it be on theological, liturgical, doctrinal, diplomatic issues. Despite his calls for unity within the Church, the divisions have grown. Due to this fragmentation, this could potentially inhibit the Holy See from accurately evaluating its "relative power position" and the effectiveness of the Accord.<sup>599</sup>

*(2) The Continued Efforts of Sinicization and the crackdown on Catholic Clergy*

As evidenced in Xi's various speeches following the signing of the Accord, in the revisions to the Religious Affairs Regulations, and in Cardinal Zen's arrest the situation for Catholics in China has worsened, not improved. Bishops are still harassed, the state nominated a bishop unilaterally in fall 2022 and created a new diocese. For the Holy See it can be said that the logic is: a treaty, even if it is a bad one, is better than no deal at all. Unity is important and having the pope closer to the official church is important.

*(3) The Underground and Official Communities (domestic constituencies)*

Catholics in China (even though the Chinese government would adamantly refute this) have a dual identity, as being Catholic and Chinese. The process of sinicization (supported and enforced by the CCPA) has attempted to eradicate this idea, however. To again quote Kramer: "the Vatican has compromised the primary objective of Ostpolitik by ignoring internal religious oppression in pursuit of cordial diplomatic relations with Communist governments. Not only has the Vatican extracted few concessions to religious

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<sup>599</sup> Xiaoyu Pu, "Controversial Identity of a Rising China," 135.

freedom in return for its diplomatic support...but Vatican policy also strengthens Communist regimes by enhancing both their internal and external legitimacy.”<sup>600</sup>

This is clearly the case here (a point that will be developed further below). They are the ones really hurt, some will leave the other church others will stay underground, growing resentment and distrust exists.

(4) *Arrests*

Since the deal went into effect, harassment and arrests of priests and bishops have continued. In 2021, Bishop Joseph Zhang Weizhu of Xinxiang (a diocese not recognized by the government) was arrested for allegedly violating the terms of the 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs (he had retrofitted an old factory as an underground seminary).<sup>601</sup> In 2022, Bishop Augustine Cui Tai (who had spent years under house arrest), was taken away by authorities (along with other priests in Hebei). This is not to mention the bishops who have disappeared and are missing, those who are barred from ministry (a complete list can be found in the previous section).

(5) *Episcopal vacancies*

As seen in the above section, despite the signing of the agreement there are still many dioceses that are vacant. In fact, as of 2023, only six bishops have been ordained in accordance with the terms of the Accord. One of the main aims of the agreement has been to unify not only the Chinese Catholics with the Pope, but also the two Catholic communities in China. Without a bishop, a diocese is isolated from the national and universal Church.

(6) *Media Reception and the response of senior prelates, a referendum on Pope Francis?*

As already demonstrated, Catholic media support is divided. The support from the media on the Accord has functioned as a sort of litmus test on the pope, it has become a wedge issue between conservatives and progressives (to adopt political categorizations). If more outlets, and prelates, were to speak out and criticize the China deal, defend Cardinal Zen and condemn the Chinese government's increasing hostility to the Church, that would be viewed unfavorably by the Vatican. They would see this as undermining the pope and potentially jeopardizing Sino-Vatican relations. It is reasonable to suggest that given that the only major clerics who have openly come to Cardinal Zen's defense are ones who have either criticized the deal in the past, and clashed with Pope Francis on myriad issues, the Holy See's China strategy has assumed an ideological and political dimension. This has, in turn, extended to Catholic Media, with conservative leaning publications covering the affair more frequently and strongly than progressive media. It is also worth noting that coverage and commentary from mainstream outlets (which has been largely critical).

(7) *Third Party Political Support*

During the Trump administration, relations between the United States and the Holy See were strained. The Trump administration took a hardline approach to China and this included criticizing the Sino-Vatican Accord. Relations have improved during the Biden administration, however, the U.S. government and the Holy See still have diverging views on China. A 2019 Congressional-Executive Report found that following the signing of the agreement conditions for Catholics in China have worsened. Following Cardinal Zen's arrest in 2022, the Parliament of the European Union passed a resolution calling on

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<sup>600</sup> Kramer 307

<sup>601</sup> <https://www.ucanews.com/news/china-arrests-vatican-approved-bishop-priests-seminarians/92587>

the PRC to release the cardinal and on the Holy See to publicly condemn the arrest (which did not happen).

(8) *Reputation damage to the Church and to Pope Francis*

Unequivocally the coverage of the trial highlights a fractured and polarized Church. Following Cardinal Zen's conviction Catholic and mainstream outlets have increased their criticism of the Vatican's approach to China, which in turn can be construed as a broader loss of its credibility on the international stage in terms of its seriousness in advancing human rights – and defending its own flock. That coupled with the Holy See's silence on the Cardinal throughout his trial and an increased persecution of underground Catholics, suggests that the Holy See does risk reputational damage as a global political actor.

It is now important to make the same considerations of the Sino-Vatican Accord from the perspective of the PRC. Xiaoyu notes that in Chinese IR there is a 'signaling model', which "refers to situations where Chinese scholars help the government to test social and international responses to new policy ideas or changes."<sup>602</sup> This self-referential response mechanism applies to both international audiences as well as to change ideas of relevant political actors. The CCP's main priorities (as outlined in Xi's report at the 20th National Congress in 2022) include continued economic growth and expanded security capabilities. These two points are buttressed by building up Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, national rejuvenation, and sinicizing religion.

What about religious freedom? Does its crackdown on religious freedom carry any regional or international backlash? We can say that given Xi's increasingly assertive diplomacy and domestic measures there is no doubt some fear in domestic Chinese circles of an international backlash. It is clear that the Sino-Vatican Accord has favored the Chinese government more than the Holy See. Xi and the party are not so concerned about reputational damage that comes with further crackdowns on religious activity. The underground Church is illegal and its persecution has a legal justification via the Religious Affairs Regulations and the party's official position of sinicization. Moreover, the Holy See (willingly or not) by virtue of reckoning the bishops of the CCPA has played a part in legitimizing this persecution. The purported goal was unity (which is important), but this unity comes at the expense of curtailed religious freedom, persecution, and risks making Chinese Catholics resentful of the Holy See.

Rhetorical Xi Jinping has made it clear that rejuvenation is fundamental for China (to wrong the past, to unshackle China from the West) etc. Moreover, he has made it clear that China is looking to chart a different course (present a different model) compared to the west.

In an interview with Dr. Chambon said the future of the church in China depends mostly on Xi Jinping; that is to say, will he still be there in five years? While it is true that the measures undertaken thus far during his mandate support a consolidation of power in practice and ideologically, could this lead to a de-stabilization of "elite politics" in China?<sup>603</sup> It is possible, but given the trajectory of the country under Xi (and the packing of the Politburo with loyalists) it can be argued that Xi's position is safe. The future of Catholics in China is less certain, if the

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<sup>602</sup> Xiaoyu Pu, "Controversial Identity of a Rising China," 142.

<sup>603</sup> Wang and Zeng 2



past few years are any indication (which is a safe bet), then persecutions will increase in correspondence to the government's increased sinicization efforts.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the broad historical context of Catholicism in China, from the successful introduction of the missionaries in the 16th century to the current day) in order to better understand the place of Catholicism in China, the reasons why it was viewed as foreign, and from there has arrived at an understanding of the contemporary context.

What does the future of Sino-Vatican relations look like? Clearly, since the signing (and subsequent renewal of the Sino-Vatican Accord) the situation has worsened. Despite the purported goal of attaining unity between the official and underground community (and for all Catholics in China to be in full communion with the Pope), this has not been the case. The history of Catholicism is complicated in China; it has gone through periods of acceptance and persecution, and periods of growth and decline. While there is a clear historical precedent for the Holy See to engage in realpolitik, its China strategy seems to be causing more division than unity. This division extends well beyond China; the Accord has become a sort of wedge issue in Church politics.

Will the Holy See continue along this trajectory? It depends on a few factors, namely on the leadership of the CCP/PRC (Xi Jinping) and at the Vatican (Pope Francis). When he dies (or retires) the upper management of the church will also change. Though there is a gradual rollover process (and any new pope still has to keep in people for the duration of their terms), the church could change its diplomatic direction and broader strategy (as has happened many times between one pope and another). The pope, compared to the past, is not constrained by temporal concerns;

his agency as a political actor is spiritual – he is the leader of the Catholic Church, the successor of St. Peter.

Does the Sino-Vatican Accord compromise its moral authority? What can be said is that while the Holy See did have to accept less-than-desirable agreements in many cases, it also gained greater legitimacy as a player on the global stage. Moreover, the Holy See is a sovereign entity and it shouldn't just be reduced to having a moral authority; it is a serious political player. No doubt the spirit of dialogue and cooperation, as opposed to confrontation, enabled the Church to make greater inroads, especially in non-Catholic majority countries. But in the case of China it doesn't seem to have made a demonstrable/quantifiable difference. One reason is that China has a small Catholic population (just one percent of the total population) and while the Catholic faithful in China are tenacious in preserving the faith (especially via the development of the Underground Church) the government didn't seek (or want) any form of legitimacy from the Church.

This paper has arrived at the conclusion that the current status of Sino-Vatican relations is tense, in part due to the historical connection between the church and colonialism, but more so due to the ideological headwinds of the CCP, especially since Xi Jinping has come to power. This is the main factor (more than any historical or other cultural factor) prohibiting relations between the PRC and the Holy See to mature. It hinges on the importance placed by both on the Chinese Church (i.e. autonomy versus communion with the universal body) and at the center of that the nomination of bishops. In line with the title of this paper: *Nihil sine episcopo*, nothing to be done without the bishop.

### **Appendix Chapter 1**

#### **Figure 1.1: Excerpts from the Constitution of Pope Benedict XIV, July 5, 1742**

“From the Church’s cradle days this Holy See has taken great pains to spread the light of Gospel truth everywhere, and to keep it free from every shadow of error” (46).

“In china there were great strides in the evangelization mission but “it would have made far greater progress, had not disagreements among the workers sent there by the Holy See interpreted the drive” (46)

“The disagreements were occasioned by certain ceremonies and rites which the CHinese were accustomed to use for honoring the philosopher, Confucius, and their ancestors...in 1645 this Congregation approved the answers and decisions of theologians who judged that those ceremonies and rites were indeed infected with superstition” (46)

“But behold, for a third time this same controversy was brought to the Holy See...The Chinese Rites Controversy did not end. Rather, it increased, grew in strength. The missionaries were split into parties. The result was a sharper division of minds and judgements. Preaching, discipline, and instruction became inconsistent. This caused serious scandal, great loss of faith” (47)

“Then, in 1704, Pope Clement XI confirmed [that]...the CHinese Rites, as being tainted with superstition, were forbidden” (47).

“But even a decree of this kind could subdue stubborn minds. So Pope Clement XI issued a Constitution in 1715” (49)

“Some missionaries disapprove of these as being superstitions. Others, however, saying that they are merely civil, permit them. We hope that Our judgment will bring a happy halt to these

disagreements. These disagreements are impeding the spread of the Christian religion and the Catholic faith” (49,50)

“These ceremonies are tainted with superstition” (50)

“Likewise, Christians should not be permitted to perform the ceremonies, rites, and oblations which take place in shrines of Confucius which are called by the Chinese name Miao” (50)

“Besides, Christians should not be permitted to offer the less solemn oblations to their ancestors in the temples and shrines dedicated to them” (50)

“...perform oblations, rites and ceremonies customarily enacted to honor ancestors before their tablets” (50).

There was deference to the “judgment of whoever is Commissioner and Visitor General Apostolic” to judge how to proceed. “Also to the judgment of the bishops and vicars apostolic in that part of the world. In the meantime however they should take care, with all the zeal and diligence they can, to do away with these pagan rites entirely” (50)

“As far as God lets Us, We want to provide peace for the faithful and salvation for souls...we command that each and every one of the previously spelled out responses and every thing contained in them be observed exactly, totally, absolutely, inviolably, and firmly” (52)

Formula for the oath on page 53.

Given on March 19, 1715 Rome

Pope Clement XI  
Pope Benedict XIV

### **Figure 1.2: 1692 March 22nd: Edict of Toleration (容教令)**

The Edict:

The Europeans, great admirer of religion, came here after traveling over ten thousand li (里) by sea. Now, they serve the government in the implementation of law, the effective use of military, manufacturing of artillery and canons; they even travel to the Russia Empire to help with diplomacy; they are loyal and they have achieved much. The Europeans who are living in each of our provinces, did not behave badly, did not disturb the people, or cause any abnormalities. The temples of the Lammas the monks allow people to go in, walk around and burn incense. The Europeans did not violate any law, yet we prohibit them, this sounds unreasonable. All the temples of the Lord of Heaven must be preserved in their original status, all the people who wish to go in to worship or burn incense, must be allowed and no prohibited. From the day of the Edict, all provinces and counties must obey.

The original Edict in Chinese:

查得西洋人，仰慕圣化，由万里航海而来。现今治理历法，用兵之际，力造军器、火炮，差往俄罗斯，诚心效力，克成其事，劳绩甚多。各省居住西洋人，并无为恶乱行之处，又

并非左道惑众，异端生事。喇嘛、僧等寺庙，尚容人烧香行走。西洋人并无违法之事，反行禁止，似属不宜。相应将各处天主堂俱照旧存留，凡进香供奉之人，仍许照常行走，不必禁止。俟命下之日，通行直隶各省可也。

### **Figure 1.3: Pius XI's Motu Proprio Romanorum Pontificum**

Excerpt:

Ob eam igitur, quam memoravimus, causam, potius quam aliquid novi inveniamus, faciendum videtur, ut ipsum Opus *Propagationis Fidei*, sede eius in hanc almam Urbem, totius Ecclesiae caput, translata, aptius a Nobis reddatur ad mutata tempora, Nostraque ornatum auctoritate, Pontificale fiat instrumentum stipibus fidelium ad usum Missionum universarum colligendis. Idque Nos effecturi sumus eo libentius quia qui tum Lugduni tum Lutetiae Parisiorum huic Operi praesunt, datis ad Nos pientissimjs litteris professi sunt se, ut filios Ecclesiae observantissimos, magna amplexuros voluntate, quidquid posthac de re sibi suisque civibus carissima haec Sedes Apostolica decreverit. In quo quidem lectissimo viri se et catholica professione et Gallico nomine dignos praebuerunt, cum aperte ostenderint tanti apud se esse dare operam regno Iesu Christi in terris amplificando, ut ceteras res, vel quas recte meritoque diligunt, posthabere non dubitent. Nos vero huiusmodi animi habitum eumque non modo eorum proprium sed comminmem catholicorum hominum ex Gallia, sic probamus ut *in faciem Ecclesiarum* vehementer commendemus.

### **Figure 1.4: INSTRUCTIO S. CONGREGATIONIS DE PROPAGANDA FIDE De abiiiciendis a Missionariis rerum saecularium curis**

Excerpts:

Haec itaque S. Congregatio Christiano Nomini Propagando, difficultatibus obvenire cupiens, quae ex inconsulto Missionariorum .erga terrestrem patriam studio oriri-facile possunt in discrimen evangelicae praedicationis, iis quae supra dicta sunt in memoriam revocatis, nonnulla practica monita opportunum censuit adiacere.

- (1) Vitent itaque Missionarii. patrii sermonis inter alienigenas propagandi studium; ne ita videantur nationis suae commodo atque utilitati magis quam animarum saluti prospicere. Curent potius populorum ad quos missi sunt linguae peculiare genus addiscere; eademque lingua vernacula sermones de rebus divinis, christianae doctrinae institutiones, publicae in scholis atque in aliis id generis coetibus sacrae allocutiones, semper fiant, ut omnibus prodesse et ab omnibus audiri atque intelligi possint. Pariter lingua vernacula preces, extra sacram liturgiam, recitentur, eodemque sermone popularia cantica hymnique canantur. Vetatur autem omnino Missionariis quominus alienigenas ad confessionem sacramentalem alia lingua quam eorundem christifidelium propria peragendam quomodolibet inducant.
- (2) Caveant insuper Missionarii ne peculiares patriae suae leges aut consuetudines, praecipue quod ad ieiunii et abstinentiae, nec non festorum de praecepto observantiam attinet, inter

populos quibus evangelium annunciant inducere conentur, quasi regulam de iisdern legibus particularibus et consuetudinibus effurmando; sed omnino curet ut ecclesiastica disciplina in omnibus prouti in universali Ecclesia viget ubique indicatur sancteque servetur.

- (3) Vitare pariter curent Missionarii quodlibet studium promovendi inter populos sibi concreditos suae nationis vel imperii aut reipublicae potestatis praeposteram pervasionem: ne videantur quae patriae suae terrestres sunt quaerere, non quae lesu Christi regnique coelestis. Politicarum itaque atque temporalium rerum cuiusvis generis curis in favorem nationis suae vel etiam alterius sese nunquam admisceant; sed hoc unum prae oculis iugiter habeant: beant supremum sanctumque negotium; animum nempe lucrum assequendum, Deique gloriam ubique totis viribus propagandam.
- (4) Quodcumque denique fuerit gubernii civilis regimen in regionibus, ad quas evangelici operarii mittentur, populos cohortari ne negligent, ut civilibus constitutis potestatibus fideliter pareant, eisque se subiiciant, uti Apostulus docet, non tamquam hominibus, sed tamquam Domino servientes; atque in hoc exemplo sint omnibus: debitum obsequium erga cuiusque loci civiles potestates ostendentes, earumque leges, dummodo honestas et Religioni non adversas, probe colentes. Circa vero populorum studia de una potius quam alia civilis regiminis ratione, aliaque huiusmodi de rebus mere politicis vota, Missionarii catholici curent omnino neutri parti se addicere; atque iis in adiunctis semper constanterque politicorum mutuum negotiis se extraneos servent; neque audeant de quaestionibus profanis, quae politicam redolent sive in ecclesia, cathedram christianam profanantes (can. 1347 Iur. Can.), sive extra ecclesiam, absque Ordinarii venia, publice concionari.
- (5) Abstineant omnino a promovendo adiuvandoque commercio sive cum patria propria sive cum aliis regionibus memores verbi Apostoli ad Timotheum: *Nemo militans Deo implicat se negotiis saecularibus*.
- (6) Studiose servent canonem Iur. Can. 1386 quo « vetantur clerici, sive saeculares sive religiosi, sine licentia Superiorum, libros de rebus profanis edere, et in diariis, foliis vel libellis periodicis scribere vel eadem moderari »; quae de rebus praesertim politicis diutius intelligantur.
- (7) In commentariis quae de rebus missionum vulgantur studium appareat Dei regnum tantum dilatandi, non autem propriae civitatis amplitudinem augendi, cum hoc quam maxime abalienet a religione sancta animos ethnicorum (Litt. Enc. « Maximum illud »).

...

Romae ex aedibus S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, die festo Epiphaniae, anno Domini 1920.

GUL. M. Card. VAN ROSSUM, Praefectus.

C. LAURENTI, Secretarius

### **Figure 1.5: List of Participants in the First Chinese Plenary Council**

List of those Present at the Council

Papal Legate

Msgr. Celso Costantini, Italian

Eveques vicaires apostoliques

Msgr Prosper Paris, S.J., French  
 Msgr. Paul-Marie Reynaud, C.M., French  
 Msgr. Conrad Abels, C.I.C.M., Belgian  
 Msgr. François Geurts, C.M., Dutch  
 Msgr. Odoric Timmer, O.F.M., Dutch  
 Msgr. Jean-Pellerin Mondini, O.F.M., Italian  
 Msgr. Agapit Fiorentini, O.F.M., Italian  
 Msgr. Augustin Henninghaus, S.V.D., German  
 Msgr. Adéodat-Marie Wittner, O.F.M., French  
 Msgr. Nicolas Ciceri, C.M., Italian  
 Msgr. Charles-Marie de Gorostarzu, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Eugène Massi, O.F.M., Italian  
 Msgr. Joseph Fabrègues, C.M., French  
 Msgr. Paul Favreau, C.M., French  
 Msgr. Maurice Duccœur, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Célestin Ibanez, O.F.M., Spanish  
 Msgr. Louis Fatiguet, C.M., French,  
 Msgr. Joseph Noe Tacconi, P.I.M.E., Italian  
 Msgr. François Auguirre, O.P., Spanish  
 Msgr. Aloysius Calza, S.X., Italian  
 Msgr. Paul Dumond, C.M., French  
 Msgr. Louis Clerc-Renaud, C.M., French  
 Msgr. Everard Ter Lask, C.I.C.M., Dutch  
 Msgr. Adolphe Rayssac, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Jean de Vienne, C.M., French  
 Msgr. Louis Van Dyck, C.I.C.M., Belgian  
 Msgr. Flaminius Belotti, P.I.M.E., Italian  
 Msgr. Emmanuel Prat, O.P., Spanish  
 Msgr. Jacques-Victor-Marie Rouchouse, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Ange-Diego Carbajal, O.E.S.A., Spanish  
 Mgr. Henri Lécroat, S.J., French  
 Msgr. Joseph Bourgain, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Aloysius Versiglia, S.S., Italian  
 Msgr. H. François Schraven, C.M., Dutch  
 Msgr. Auguste Gaspais, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Martin Chiolino, P.I.M.E., Italian  
 Msgr. Auguste Gauthier, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Jean-Marie Blois, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Vincent Huarte, S.J., Spanish  
 Msgr. Eménégilde Ricci, O.F.M., Italian  
 Msgr. Louis Janssens, C.I.C.M., Belgian  
 Msgr. Antoine Fourquet, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Alexandre Carlo, M.E.P., French  
 Msgr. Joseph Hoogers, C.I.C.M., Belgian  
 Msgr. Jacques Walsh, M.M., American  
 \*Msgr. Odoric Tcheng, O.F.M., Chinese

\*Msgr. Melchior Suen, C.M., Chinese  
Msgr. Théodore Buddenbrock, S.V.D., German  
Rev. Fr. Dom Luis Brun, French  
Msgr. Paul Montaigne, French  
Msgr. Samuel Somnavilla, O.F.M., Italian  
Msgr. Jean-Michel Spada, P.I.M.E., Italian

**Figure 6: Normae statutae ab ordinariis in civitate sinking congregatis: 1. Imago Confucii in scholis exposita**

A. Scholae Missionum.

1. Mandato ab Auctoritatibus legitimis regionis dato, potestne tolerari in scholis Missionum expositio imaginis Confucii?

R. Affirmative.

2. Licetne hanc imaginem collocare in quadam aedicula plus minusve ornata, quae eis similis est, in quibus pagani tabulas maiorum suorum honorant?

R. Tolerari potest, dato formali mandato, quod cludi non potest. In omni casu alumni clare certiores faciendi sunt, rem agi de cultu mere civili.

3. Licetne alumni permittere, si Auctoritas hoc imponit, ut inclinationem, plus minusve profundam, coram imagine Confucii, sic exposita faciant?

R. Tolerari potest.

4. Si cuidam scholae Christianae mandatum refertur, ut coram imagine Confucii quoddam altare cum candelis, incenso, aliisque rebus collocetur, liceretne hunc modum agendi tolerare?

R. Non, quia, quamvis a Dirigentibus responso dato de indole civili cultus Confucii tributi, haec tamen caeremonia nimiam similitudinem exhiberet cum ritis religiosis et superstitionis, atque etiam scandalum secum ferre posset

B. Scholae paganae.

1. Quomodo se gerere debent alumni christiani, qui scholam paganam frequentant et adiguntur, ut suas partes tribuant honoribus, quibus Confucius afficitur?

R. Suggestendum est eis private, ut assistentia passiva contenti sint, et toleranda inclinatio..., ut in casibus supra indicatis.

2. Si in vico pagano magister scholae, qui imaginem Confucii sibi providere non potest, nomen Confucii in quadam tabula scriberet, liceretne huic tabulae eosdem honores atque imagini Confucii tribuere?

R. Tolerari potest

**Appendix Chapter 2**

**Figure 1:  
Holy Office Decree Against Communism, 1949**

<https://www.nytimes.com/1949/07/14/archives/papal-decree-against-communism.html>

<https://www.ricognizioni.it/decretum-contra-communismum-decr-s-officii-171949-ds-3865/>

1 – Utrum licitum sit, partibus communistarum nomen dare vel eisdem favorem praestare.

R. Negative: Communismus enim est materialisticus et antichristianus; communistarum autem duces, etsi verbis quandoque profitentur se religionem non oppugnare, re tamen, sive doctrina sive actione, Deo veraeque religioni et Ecclesiae Christi sese infensos esse ostendunt.

2 – Utrum licitum sit edere, propagare vel legere libros, periodica, diaria vel folia, quae doctrine vel actioni communistarum patrocinantur, vel in eis scribere.

R. Negative: Prohibentur enim ipso iure.

3 – Utrum christifideles, qui actus, de quibus in n.1 et 2, scienter et libere posuerint, ad sacramenta admitti possint.

R. Negative, secundum ordinaria principia de sacramentis denegandis iis, Qui non sunt dispositi.

4 – Utrum christifideles, qui communistarum doctrinam materialisticam et antichristianam profitentur, et in primis, qui eam defendunt vel propagant, ipso facto, tamquam apostatae a fide catholica, incurrant in excommunicationem speciali modo Sedi Apostolicae reservatam.

R. Affirmative.

## **Figure 2:**

### **Statuto dell'Associazione patriottica cattolica cinese (1962)**

#### **(From A Collection of Documents on the History of the 60 Years of Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations)**

Art. 1 – Questa associazione assume il nome Associazione patriottica cattolica cinese

Art. 2 – Questa associazione è un'organizzazione di massa d'amore per la patria e per la religione formata da preti e fedeli cattolici cinesi. I suoi scopi sono: unire i preti e i fedeli di tutto il paese, sotto la guida del partito comunista cinese e del governo popolare; promuovere lo spirito patriottico; rispettare le politiche e le leggi nazionali; partecipare attivamente alla costruzione della patria socialista, ai movimenti anti-imperialisti e patriottici ed ai movimenti che difendono la pace mondiale; aiutare il governo ad applicare completamente la politica della libertà di credo religioso.

Art. 3 – L'organo supremo di questa associazione è la Conferenza dei delegati dell'associazione patriottica cattolica cinese, i cui compiti sono: stabilire e modificare lo statuto dell'associazione; ascoltare ed esaminare i rapporti sul lavoro del Comitato; eleggere i membri che formino il Comitato dell'associazione.

Art. 4 – Al di fuori delle sessioni della Conferenza dei delegati dell'Associazione patriottica cattolica cinese, il Comitato dell'associazione ha l'incarico di eseguire le decisioni della Conferenza dei delegati e di promuovere gli affari dell'associazione.

Art. 5 – Il Comitato dell'associazione elegge tra i suoi membri un certo numero di persone che formino il Comitato permanente, il quale, al di fuori delle sessioni del Comitato, è incaricato di eseguire le decisioni e di sbrigare gli affari dell'associazione.

Art. 6 – L'associazione ha un presidente e diversi vice-presidenti, eletti dal Comitato e incaricati di dirigere il lavoro. E' stato nominato un segretario generale e diversi sottosegretari che



assisteranno il presidente nella gestione degli affari ordinari. Il presidente, i vice-presidenti e i membri del Comitato restano in carica per tre anni e possono essere rieletti.

Art. 7 – Il Comitato dell'associazione, deve, in base alle necessità dei lavori, istituire diversi servizi.

Art. 8 – La Conferenza dei delegati cattolici cinesi si riunisce una volta ogni tre anni. Se è necessario, la convocazione della Conferenza può essere anticipata o ritardata.

Art. 9 – Il Comitato dell'associazione si riunisce una volta all'anno. Il Comitato permanente si riunisce una volta ogni sei mesi. Se è necessario le riunioni dei comitati possono essere anticipate o ritardate.

Art. 10 – Il Comitato permanente è incaricato di trovare i fondi necessari a coprire le spese dell'associazione.

Art. 11 – La sede sociale associazione è a Pechino.

Art. 12 – Lo statuto dell'associazione entra in vigore dopo l'approvazione da parte della Conferenza dei delegati dell'Associazione patriottica cattolica cinese. Testo emendato.

### **Figure 3:**

#### **Guidelines on China from the Vatican, Issued by Josef Cardinal Tomko 3 September 1988**

SACRA CONGREGATIO  
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE  
SEU DE PROPAGANDA FIDE

Prot. 3314/88

Rome, 3 September, 1988

[...]

As the contacts among members of the Episcopate, priests and faithful, with exponents of the Catholic Church in China are becoming ever more frequent, this Dicastery, in accord with the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church, considers it opportune to give the Episcopal Conferences the following indications:

1. The contacts in question could be a good occasion to reaffirm with clarity the Catholic Doctrine on the communion which must unite the Bishops with the Successor of Peter and, through him, among themselves (L. G. 14 & 18). In this regard, one could have recourse to the doctrinal principles of the Vatican Councils I and II.
2. In the light of the Vatican Council II one could also explain to them how the Church realizes in her own life self-government, self-propagation and self-financing: it is normal today that Bishops be chosen from among the local clergy; evangelization is, in the first place, to be realized by the local churches, even if in many cases the collaboration of the missionaries still remains necessary, but in a subordinate position; that it is evident that the Church be financially supported by the offerings of the faithful in the locality.
3. Mention could also be made to them of the various forms of collegiality which are being developed in the Church, particularly since Vatican Council II, both on the national and regional levels through the Episcopal Conferences, and on the universal level through the presence and collaboration of the Episcopates of the various countries in the central government of the Church, as, for example, their presence in the Roman Dicasteries, and their collaboration in the Synod of Bishops.

4. In the course of various encounters, care must be taken to avoid attitudes which could wound the sensibility of the 'silent' majority of those Catholics who have suffered and are suffering for their fidelity to the Holy Father.  
There is also need of avoiding that the visits in question do not become instrumental in obtaining recognition and the legitimization of a position which cannot in any way be acceptable either on the doctrinal level or disciplinary and canonical levels.
5. Another rather delicate point is the question of the liturgical celebrations. In fact all 'communicatio in sacris' is to be avoided. The 'patriotic' bishops and priests are not to be invited or even allowed to celebrate religious functions in public, either in the churches or in the oratories of the various religious institutes.
6. The necessary clarity regarding the ecclesial aspects of the visits and the attitude to be adopted, which must be respected by all, do not imply that there is to be a lack of fraternal charity, which should be expressed in the cordiality of the welcome given to the guests and in the manner in which they are treated.  
It is hoped that all this will assist them in understanding, in the light of the Spirit, the incoherence of their position and induce them to a change of attitude.
7. Care must also be taken that those who are responsible for the organization of the visits of the above-mentioned delegations be persons of sound doctrine, faithful to the Magisterium of the Church and capable of acting with great prudence.
8. It is to be foreseen that such events will not fail to arouse reactions in the local and international press. It will be necessary, therefore, to foresee how to assist the means of social communication, utilizing the orientations mentioned above, which clarify the position of the Church and may foster the comprehension of the diverse and complex problems closely connected with this position.

I am enclosing herewith the text of the directives on some of the problems of the Church in Continental China", prepared at the request of the Holy Father and approved by him. The document in question represents the reply to some requests which Chinese Bishops have repeatedly made to the Holy See.

[...]

In view of the great interest with which the Holy See follows the situation of the Church in China, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples would be pleased if, subsequently, your Episcopate could forward any possible useful information it might have in its regard.

With sentiments of personal esteem and every best wish, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Our Lord,

Josef Card. Tomko

Pref. (Signed)

### **Directives On Some Of The Problems Of The Church In Continental China by Josef Cardinal Tomko**

1. The Catholic Doctrine clearly affirms that only those are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who "accept her entire system and all means of salvation given to her, and through union with her visible structure are joined to Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops. This joining is effected by the bonds of professed faith, of the sacraments, of ecclesiastical government and of

communion". (L. G. n.14)

Since the Roman Pontiff in the Catholic Church is "a permanent and visible principle and foundation of unity of Faith and fellowship" (L. G. n.18) those who don't profess or don't preserve the communion with the Pope, cannot consider themselves to be Catholic. Communion with the Pope is not only a question of discipline but of Catholic faith.

For this reason, the Holy See keeps in deep esteem and admiration the Bishops, priests, religious and lay people who in the course of time and in all the regions of the world have always maintained the integrity of their Faith, including their fidelity to the Roman Pontiff. And it encourages them to continue and to grow in the same Faith.

2. In so far as China is concerned, history records in 1957 the constitution of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association whose expressed intent was to renounce to the fundamental bonds with the Roman Pontiff and the Holy See and to place the community of the Faithful under the direct control of the civic authority. Although more recently some of the representatives of the Patriotic Association have taken positions which seem to indicate a certain change of attitude and the tendency on the part of the same Association to assume a role that is more political than religious as a channel of communication between the Church and the Government, nonetheless the constitutive documents as well as the official declarations of the Representatives of the Association do confirm its initial intention.

Furthermore, it is a fact that the Patriotic Association tries to control until now the election and ordination of the Bishops in every diocese and the activities of the various diocesan communities.

In accordance with the doctrinal principles exposed above, the Catholics cannot accept in conscience the principles of an Association which demands the rejection of a fundamental element of their faith, namely the indispensable communion with the Roman Pontiff, visible head of the Church and of the College of Catholic Bishops which cannot exist without him as head.

3. Since 1958, by the initiative of the Patriotic Association, numerous Episcopal ordinations have taken place without the necessary consent of the Roman Pontiff (*mandato apostolico*).

In accordance with the Doctrine of the Church and the canonical discipline, such ordinations are to be considered graviously illicit; those who receive the ordination and those who confer it, incur in the excommunication "*latae sententiae*", reserved to the Holy See. (cfr. Decree of the Holy Office of April 9, 1951 and Canon 1382 in the codex of Canon Law)

Judging from the information at our disposal, it seems that in these ordinations no such elements are present as to make them *per se* invalid. Naturally in such situations no definitive judgment is possible until each case is carefully and duly examined under all aspects.

4. With regard to the sacraments administered by priests ordained by Bishops not recognized by the Roman Pontiff, the presumption is in favor of the validity of their ordination and therefore also of the sacraments they administer. With regard to the question whether or not is licit to assist at their Masses and

receive their sacraments, the Catholics must look for faithful priests, i.e. in communion with the Pope.

However, for the sake of their spiritual welfare, they may have recourse also to the other priest, provided that they avoid the occasion of scandal and the danger to thus jeopardize the exact notion of the Catholic faith, which, as has been already recalled, demands the full communion with the Roman Pontiff.

5. The Church has the right and the duty, even in China, of having her own seminary for the training of her clergy.

But, if this is forbidden and if it is not possible to give even privately an adequate formation to the candidates for the priesthood, then, these can be sent to the seminaries that are opened under the control of the Patriotic Association. But only under the condition that the general orientation and formation imparted there, follow the teaching and directives of the Church.

This possibility is to be evaluated according to the local circumstances and keeping in mind also the persons in charge of such formation centers.

6. The religious books, liturgical texts, catechisms and other religious materials (printed by the Patriotic Association) can be used only and to the extent that they faithfully convey the doctrine of the Church.
7. Subsidies must be directed towards initiatives which serve to the maintenance of the right doctrine and of the spirit of faith of the Catholic Church. For subsidies to persons or initiatives which do not offer such guarantees each individual case must be examined in the light of the moral principles about cooperation.

#### **APPENDIX CHAPTER 4:**

##### **Figure 4.1 Cardinal Re's Letter to Cardinal Zen**

Vaticano, 26 febbraio 2020  
Prot. N. 1/2020

Signor Cardinale,

Con riferimento ai vari interventi pubblici del Card. Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, S.D.B., e in particolare alla lettera del 27 settembre 2019, che il Vescovo emerito di Hong Kong ha inviato a noi membri del Collegio cardinalizio, sento il dovere di condividere alcune considerazioni e di offrire elementi che favoriscano una serena valutazione di questioni complesse riguardanti la Chiesa in Cina.

Desidero anzitutto far risaltare che, nell'approccio alla situazione della Chiesa cattolica in Cina, c'è una profonda sintonia di pensiero e di azione degli ultimi tre Pontefici, i quali - nel rispetto della verità - hanno favorito il dialogo tra le due Parti e non la contrapposizione. In particolare essi avevano in mente la delicata e importante questione della nomina dei Vescovi.

Così San Giovanni Paolo II, se da una parte favorì il ritorno alla piena comunione dei Vescovi consacrati illecitamente nel corso degli anni a partire dal 1958, e nel contempo fu suo desiderio sostenere la vita delle comunità "clandestine" che erano guidate da Vescovi e sacerdoti "non ufficiali", dall'altra promosse l'idea di pervenire a un Accordo formale con le Autorità governative sulla nomina dei Vescovi. Tale Accordo, la cui stesura ha preso molto tempo, più di un ventennio, è stato poi firmato a Pechino il 22 settembre 2018.

Il Card. Zen varie volte ha affermato che sarebbe stato meglio nessun Accordo piuttosto che un "brutto Accordo". I tre ultimi Pontefici non hanno condiviso tale posizione e hanno sostenuto e accompagnato la stesura dell'Accordo che, al momento attuale, è parso l'unico possibile.

In particolare, sorprende l'affermazione del Porporato che *«l'accordo firmato è lo stesso che Papa Benedetto aveva, a suo tempo, rifiutato di firmare»*. Tale asserzione non corrisponde a verità. Dopo aver preso conoscenza di persona dei documenti esistenti presso l'Archivio Corrente della Segreteria di Stato, sono in grado di assicurare a Vostra Eminenza che Papa Benedetto XVI aveva approvato il progetto di Accordo sulla nomina dei Vescovi in Cina, che soltanto nel 2018 è stato possibile firmare.

Agli Em.mi Signori Cardinali  
Loro Sedi

L'Accordo prevede l'intervento dell'autorità del Papa nel processo di nomina dei Vescovi in Cina. Anche a partire da questo dato certo, l'espressione "Chiesa indipendente" non può più essere interpretata in maniera assoluta, come "separazione" dal Papa, così come avveniva in passato.

Partroppo, c'è lentezza nel trarre *in loco* tutte le conseguenze che discendono da tale cambiamento epocale sia sul piano dottrinale che su quello pratico e permangono tensioni e situazioni dolorose. È impensabile, d'altra parte, che un Accordo parziale - l'Accordo tocca, infatti, solo il tema della nomina dei Vescovi - cambi le cose quasi in maniera automatica e immediata anche negli altri aspetti della vita della Chiesa.

Il Card. Zen, valutando gli "Orientamenti Pastoralisti della Santa Sede circa la registrazione civile del Clero in Cina", del 28 giugno 2019, scrive: *«Si firma un testo contro la fede e si dichiara che l'intenzione è di favorire il bene della comunità, un'evangelizzazione più adeguata, la gestione responsabile dei beni della Chiesa. Questa norma generale è ovviamente contro ogni principio di moralità. Se accettato, giustificerebbe l'apostasia (vedi "Dabria")*. Gli "Orientamenti Pastoralisti", al contrario, sono stati pensati proprio per salvaguardare la fede in situazioni talmente complicate e difficili da porre in crisi la coscienza personale.

Il Porporato, poi, nella sua lettera parla anche dell'«uccisione della Chiesa in Cina da parte di chi dovrebbe proteggerla e difenderla dai nemici» e, in particolare, in un'intervista, si rivolge ai cattolici con queste parole: *«attendete tempi migliori, tornate alle catacombe, il comunismo non è eterno»* ("New York Times", 24 ottobre 2018). Si tratta, purtroppo, di affermazioni molto pesanti che contestano la stessa guida pastorale del Santo Padre anche nei confronti dei cattolici "clandestini", nonostante che il Papa non abbia mancato di ascoltare ripetute volte l'Em.mo Cardinale e di leggere le sue numerose missive.

Caro confratello, questo sofferto intervento del Card. Zen ci aiuta a comprendere quanto sia ancora difficile il cammino della Chiesa in Cina e quanto complessa la missione dei Pastori e del Santo Padre! Siamo, pertanto, tutti chiamati a unirvi strettamente a Lui e a pregare intensamente affinché lo Spirito Santo lo sostenga e sostenga le comunità della Chiesa cattolica in Cina, che pur nella sofferenza da lungo tempo mostrano la loro fedeltà al Signore, nel cammino della riconciliazione, dell'unità e della missione a servizio del Vangelo.

Augurando ogni bene, cordialmente saluto

Aff.mo  
S. Card. Re

Figure 4.2

### Interview with Dr. Michel Chambon<sup>604</sup> With Matthew Santucci on 30 January 2023, 8.30 (CET)

This interview was conducted over Zoom; four questions were submitted prior to the meeting for Dr. Chambon's reference and set the overall framework of the conversation. The questions were:

- 1) Can you elaborate on the different socio-political frameworks pertaining to the Sino-Vatican Accord and the Cardinal Zen affair? How do they differ, where do they intersect, and what does that mean for the immediate and long term future of the Church in China?
- 2) Is there an intractable moral and ideological conflict between the PRC and the Vatican? By that I mean, does the ecclesiology of the Church (e.g. its teaching on the magisterial authority of the pope to select and ordain bishops) preclude it from fully recognizing the PRC?

<sup>604</sup> Dr. Michel Chambon is a French theologian, cultural anthropologist, professor at the National University of Singapore, and coordinator of the Initiative of the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC). He is a longtime contributor to UCAnews. His current research project examines the expansion of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta across the Asia Pacific region, as well as the materialization of Christianity within Chinese households

3) In line with question 2, will the PRC ever recognize the Church's ability to select bishops or will it maintain that it constitutes an interference in "internal affairs"?

4) How does the Church reconcile its universal moral authority with its silence (whether perceived or real) on human rights abuses in China?

5) Based on the premise that one of the goals of the Sino-Vatican Accord was to bring about unity between the Underground and Official Churches, what does this mean for the faithful in China? Have those faithful to Rome been adversely affected and has, in turn, led to a collapse of Catholic worship?

6) How does the Sino-Vatican Accord affect the long-term trajectory of the Holy See's diplomatic legitimacy with other states?

**Dr. Michel Chambon (MC):** So between China and Hong Kong, there are two different socio political dynamics, and they of course overlap and depend on each other and, of course Taiwan—so you have the three political, ecclesiastical, theological strengths of these Catholic networks; they're are very different from place to place. In Hong Kong, there were extremely strong and extremely social, not necessarily on the far left, but the Catholic Church was taking care of 40 percent of the students for primary education and so even though Catholics are less than 10 percent of the population, they take care of them. It was a heritage of the British colonial current. The Churches were providing a huge social service in terms of education, and the hospitals, medicine etc. That is still true, and so the footprint of the Catholic Church is really big, which is not the case in China. So, you have two different dynamics. And I think that is always important to consider and also you have Taiwan, which is another story.

So the Cardinal Zen affair, so my big thing is to say that there is not only one cardinal in Hong Kong. There are two, and the two of them have very different views on how we should deal with Beijing. So if we look for the Catholic position or the Hong Kong Catholic position on how to deal with Beijing, Cardinal Zen is only half of the picture. So, I do think it is useful, a big part of the picture – it's like parenting, you need the good cop and the bad cop, and so there's the two of them there. But you cannot just reduce the position of the Church to the "bad cop", one screaming and yelling. And yet, I am annoyed when the media reduces everything to what he says – that annoys me. I agree with him on many aspects, but I think it's detrimental to the Church, when we pretend that the Church is Cardinal Zen – it's really not the Catholic teaching and it's really not what is happening on the ground. It's way more complex.

**Matthew Santucci (MS):** Do you think that position is rooted in, what do you think his impetus is for that? Is it an ideological difference that he has with the CCP, or rooted in his own past, what he saw perhaps, this severe excess of the cultural revolution, which has shaped his view on how the Church, how the Holy Father and the Church ought to approach China – or is it something else?

**MC:** I don't think it's that. China is very pragmatic. I think he's been disappointed, like all of us, by all kinds of local decisions that are often supported by the center over the past 20 years. So it's

hard to trust and so his response is to say: we should be harsh! Sure and that makes sense. But, I don't think he was cautious in the beginning, I remember that. But he was not as radical 20 years ago. So he's not like, you know in the U.S. we have these 'ideological warriors'. Anything that sounds like communist is the devil. That's really not, you know, nobody can afford that in Hong Kong. Even 30 years ago, he used to go to China and everyone could tell in the [19]80s, the huge progress that the country was making, so Cardinal Zen is not just an ideologue. The problem is, yes, the party is not always reliable, and at the same time he knows, but he doesn't talk too much about that, it's not that simple to reduce the CCP to only one voice, one idea, one coherent ideology. That's not true. You have tensions, conflicts, fights and so half of the Church, anyone in the church, to grasp...China, because you have multiple...so that's why I would say in his defense.

**MS:** Thank you. And so the last part of that first question was, in your estimation, do you think that has long term implications for not only for the Sino Vatican accord, but for the Church in general, or you think that given his arrest...both Holy See and PRC...will there be his moment where, ok, this is related to the past and there's going to be a mutual understanding that, this doesn't affect the overall trajectory ?

**MC:** I personally think the trajectory will be way more impacted by what will happen to Xi Jinping in the coming years. Because.. we have no idea how things will turn, I try to keep an eye, but I don't know. I'm pretty sure he'll keep his position, but his legitimacy is less...it's at risk right now, after what happened in October [2022]. So the accident around Cardinal Zen is not that different from what happened to all kinds of bishops across China. In some sense Hong Kong is joining mainland China, and yet we are not in the situation where the church is totally controlled and silenced by the state, which they are, but the situation on the ground is different. But the drama around Cardinal Zen and compared to what we saw 10 years ago in Shanghai...it could easily be repaired or overcome if Beijing was determined to move forward, which we have no clue today, because clearly Xi Jinping was not in the last 10 years. He was determined to assert full control. And Pope Francis was determined to not just let it go without going for a fight. The Holy See has been able to manage some kind of dialogue, in a very adverse situation, and right now it will take awhile to refigure out the strengths and positions of Xi Jinping. We have a Catholic prime minister in Taiwan now, which is funny.

**MS:** In fact I wanted to ask, you, that wasn't one of the questions, but I guess, – do you believe that perhaps the 'Taiwan question', or the Holy See's diplomatic relations with Taiwan, should the accord go under new revisions, what that be something the Holy See consider doing, in breaking diplomatic relations with Taiwan?

**MC:** Based on what I read, I heard, the Holy See has always 'yes we are willing to'. Because by the way, the Holy See always said that their diplomats left Beijing, not by themselves, but they were forced by the CCP. So from Taiwan the Holy See was always expressing interest to maintain an ambassador in Beijing, which is nothing against Taiwan...

**MS:** So they recognize them more so due to the circumstances, rather than an actual 'want'...

**MC:** Yes! So to your second question; I don't think so. Look, the Vatican has been very pragmatic, in its capacity to work with communist regimes and so the Vatican is totally capable to collaborate and to work with communist regimes. On the Chinese side, officially, the agreement says the pope has the voice in the selection of bishops. Even on the Chinese side they're not that, yes they're communists, but there are ups and downs in this identification with this marxist legacy. I totally believe there's a way to recognize each other. Certainly not in the near future.

**MS:** There's that one facet of recognizing each other, given the Church's Ostpolitik in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, do you think that has, at least from the mid to long term perspective materialized into a beneficial situation of the Church? Or the phenomenon of what happened in the post-Soviet context, in eastern Europe is different than what could happen in a post-Xi Jinping China. One of my questions is did this translate to actual progress for the church in the long run?

**MC:** It really depends on what we call progress. If it's only about the number of Catholics, it's only one part of the question. It's not just about numbers, and when we talk about, we see this ideological evolution within the Catholic Church, where we care less about mission and more about evangelization; so how we build the kingdom and our relationship with environment (think of *Laudato Si*) so the mission of the church is not to make more christians who believe in Jesus etc. That is a very evangelical baptist statement, that's not a Catholic statement. The Catholic statement is really bigger and more inclusive. So the relationship between the material world... that's if we transform that we already ought to be in coming of the kingdom. If we convert this kind of relationship, between economic systems and the natural world, you see the relationship with the Holy See and China is not just about gaining more converts; it's also promoting a set of values and concerns that the Holy See perceives as relating to the gospel.

**MS:** Thank you!

**MC:** I think it's very important to look at the Catholic Church through its own logic, and not with the protestant or capitalist assumptions.

**MS:** Absolutely, because then we fundamentally misunderstand what the Church is, what its m.o., its goal is.

**MC:** Yes, and in any case when we're talking about the Church were talking about the Holy See, because you have Catholic groups, who are also part of the Church, who may have different agenda[s] and as a social scientist and my job is to hear them, not to unify everything to what Pope Francis says, or not to homogenize...it's not true, it's more complex. But, at least we should try to characterize the Catholic Church from the inside, from its variety of groups, lobbies etc. that you have inside the Catholic Church. The PRC already recognized the core ability to select bishops; it's already done. In some sense a huge victory for Pope Francis and the Vatican has been extremely discreet about that. They didn't show off as a way to respect the 'face' of Beijing, but that over the past four years didn't really pay back – it's really clear. At least and I hope to go to China soon. My personal statement, during the entire Xi Jinping era, things got very tight for religious groups for any kind of groups – banks...any kind of association has to be



monitored by the state, even if it's a gymnastic group; any kind of group is suspicious. My point is to evaluate what's going on for Catholics in China. You have to do it in context. I would say, indeed things worsened way faster for protestants than for Catholics over the past 10 years. And so the agreement worked in favor of the Catholics even so in general things are getting tight, they are not getting as tight as they be could be for other Christian groups. Who are really perceived as an agents of the U.S., which is not totally wrong

**MS:** You're talking about protestant missionaries?

**MC:** Yes, especially house churches. 10 years ago, 20 years ago the state was way more willing to turn a blind eye on those groups as long as they played the game of keeping it quiet and discreet. Now if the state continues to become totally paranoid, those groups will be targeted much faster. Catholics were perceived as the puppet of this crazy pope in Rome, but now I believe that even though Beijing is careful, they do think that they made some sort of deal, its manageable, Catholics are way more manageable than, easy to handle, than house church groups. Beijing knows, especially with Pope Francis, that Washington and Rome are two different things, they really don't have the same political agenda. So Catholics are not as easily associated with the U.S., unlike the protestants and the house churches.

**MS:** Do you think that when Benedict [XVI] was still pope there was a different sense of his priorities, one thing that comes to mind is the 2007 letter; it was beautiful, lucid, but perhaps given his more constative theology that was perceived as him being more closely aligned with the traditional western locus of power, more than Pope Francis is?

**MC:** I would say not because of Benedict, but that Benedict was more easily used by different American lobbies – conservative lobbies. Who were extremely vocal. Benedict was, I would say, as careful and cautious with the US, to make sure that the Church to make sure that the Church was not just used, but since, yes, he was more conservative, it was easier for American groups to use him as an excuse to legitimize their...to reinforce their anti-Chinese positions?

**MS:** To that end there was one other question, that I just thought of, if you don't mind, the construction of this dual identity. If you're a Chinese Catholic you have this sort of dual identity, one the one hand Chinese on the other than catholic. Going back even to the introduction of Catholicism in China, it's been difficult to navigate. Do you think it is still intact today, and does that explain why perhaps in the last 60 years, the Church has not has not grown as quickly as other Christian denominations?

**MC:** So I think the dual thing should be for all of us, it's not a Chinese exception. I wish Americans all of us French, it's the same distinction, we are part of this country, but not only. And so in my stance this is not necessarily a problem in China that there is this dual identity. I met very successful Chinese Catholics, in terms of business, life, professional career etc., they're very proud and they're extremely patriotic, proud of what the state has been able to manage. Proud of the success, the economic success of the country. And so it was interesting, their position was like...they're still hoping that the state recognizes the value of Catholics. Because this generation are in their 50s; they're successful entrepreneurs and they really participated and joined this transformation with China over the past 40 years and they'd like for

the state to appreciate how Catholicism has been a positive force. So, I think the dual thing is way less strong among Catholics, especially ‘official Catholics’, than underground house churches. Like some of them are in strong opposition to the state. Usually underground Catholics are more like not in strong opposition, but would like to be recognized in their capacity to manage their religious activities on their own. Which is a very Chinese tradition. If you go to temples, the state was not monitoring Taoist priests or Buddhist priests. It’s very Chinese that religion is another sector.

**MS:** The idea of autonomy...

**MC:** The autonomy of the religious sector, of course the state, the emperor was always beyond that, but was not the manager. Thinking about Western history, where it was the opposite, where the state would always monitor extremely closely religion. I think about the history of the Anglican church and the break with Rome, because the state, the king, thought he had a moral duty. In China, the state was monitoring religious groups, but always leaving them alone to debate theological affairs, etc., because the state, the emperor, was beyond that. In Europe we have a very strong identity where the king was, had to be, protestant or catholic, to be a moral figure, like perfectly aligned with the official teaching of the Church.

**MS:** In Europe, that is also constructed on the idea of the nation state, so there is this mutual reinforcement...

**MC:** That came later, but yes for sure! So when Catholics claim some kind of autonomy, it's not because they are Catholics, but because they are Chinese.

**MS:** How does that factor into the general logic, if you’re a member of the underground or official church, how do you reconcile this autonomy and also at the same time having a filial obedience to Rome?

**MC:** In the Catholic Church there is what we call subsidiary, the idea that Rome doesn’t have to manage every single question, you know, ‘who is in charge of cleaning my parish’ for example. Rome doesn’t manage everything. As the primary authority of the local church, he is the bishop of Rome and so, Rome will step in only in case of grave, serious issues, but Rome doesn’t manage every single detail. There is a very strong tradition of autonomy that some conservative voices would like to transform the Catholic Church into an army where everybody walks the same path in the same way, but that’s really not the tradition. Think about the capacity that the Catholic Church has to institutionalize different religious orders, with their different kinds of lifestyle, and they don’t get along. So, there is a long tradition of dealing with this diversity within the church, letting the different groups manage themselves. The more you tend to unify and homogenize the Church, the more troubles come with that. It's not a contradiction for Catholics...like, I’m French, we have a strong tradition in France ‘we’re not stupid, we don’t need orders from Rome’. In my diocese, we are always insisting that we were...after St. John the Evangelist. So St. John sent the first bishop of Lyon, and this bishop of Lyon sent the first bishop of my diocese, which is a polite way to say we’re also built upon an important friend of Jesus and so we don’t really have to obey St. Peter, we have our own tradition. So that was the first meaning of tradition – all across the Mediterranean to claim apostolic ancestry and tradition as a

way to tell the bishop of Rome, you're not just the big boss, there were 12 in the beginning and we also have our own connection and tradition to one of those 12.

**MS:** So do you think this 'hyper-papalism' was something that developed post [Council of] Trent?

**MC:** It was extremely strong in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a French thing, because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, France took over the Catholic Church, it's really clear, we even took the pope to Paris, at some point, and all kind of things, and the French model is hyper centralized. 1/10 of the population is in Paris, so compared to the American way, think about Washington and your big cities, economic centers and political power...there are multiple centers, and your economic power, New York, is not where the political power is – Washington. It's true on both the national and the state level – where capital and economic capital are different things. In France everything is in Paris, if you're a successful company your headquarters has to be in Paris. Look at the railroads between France, everything goes to Paris, and that's a 19<sup>th</sup> century construction. That was not the case before. Anyways, this hyper centralization was also promoted within the Catholic Church and so we have Vatican I – the pope at the universal level and the parish priest at the local level...as the universal one truth; one center. And Vatican II did everything they could against that, saying 'no no no, leadership of the Church is a college of bishops, it's a collective, it's not just one voice'. So, they brought back the college of bishops in a position to the almighty power of the pope, which is not healthy. It's clear it only is in some specific cases. And the figure of the parish priest that is not the ultimate authority of the Church on the local level.

**MS:** Because that's the most intimate link between the faithful and magisterium.

**MC:** So that's a 19<sup>th</sup> century conservative school of thought. But there are many other intimate ways to connect with the presence of God in your life. Like even in contemplating nature, so the problem is not to have this intimate relationship, the problem is to be sure that it's not some sort of dream or fake motions. We need multiple tools that the Church provides to ensure that we are really seeking God and not just doing some self...

**MS:** ...some sort of new age spirituality...

**MC:** Yes, exactly. But so you see, I would not describe the parish priest as the most intimate way to connect with God, no! Sometimes just contemplating your children is a way to contemplate the mystery of God and his presence with you.

**MS:** This is a totally different question, out of personal curiosity, do you think one of the problems with, I know in the U.S. they're trying to do some kind of Eucharistic revival, in terms of trying to get the faithful – to build their belief their faith in the real presence or, you now there are a lot of Catholics who don't accept the basic tenets of faith. Do you think the crisis is a result of this multipolar way to experience faith? What is the main reason why there has been a collapse in that belief?

**MC:** Why are they so obsessed with affirming the presence of Christ in the holy eucharist? Of course it is! But as it is two different ways, in each other, in the pool guy who is at the step of my

food, so I know it's different, but it's equally important that Christ is present within these different ways. Of course the eucharist is unique. But I like to say that – there's this talk about the mass as a summit. And I'm like 'fine', but have you done any kind of hiking? You don't walk all the way up to a high summit, without any kind of practice. So before getting on a high summit, you need some exercise, and lots of it. So, before forcing someone to go to the mass, we should leave them to practice the rosary, all different kinds of traditions that help appreciate the value of the summit. Because if you force someone to a summit without any kind of practice, they get there so exhausted that they can't breathe and they can't appreciate anything.\

**MS:** Right and that's the last time they ever go 'hiking' ever again.

**MC:** Probably they might die and never come back [joking]. Which may explain a lot why people don't go back to mass. It's nothing against the eucharist, like I'm like, 'do they really believe in the presence of Jesus' when they are so obsessed with forcing everyone to respect and..they're so focused on the eucharist only. They're the only warriors to protect that presence. And, I say, Jesus is present beyond all...it's a giant theological battle.

**MS:** It's not going to be resolved anytime soon.

**MC:** That's for sure, especially in an incredibly polarized environment like the U.S.

**MS:** That's one of the things I was talking about the other day, you know how with the traditionalist communities, and speaking especially to those who are devout to the Tridentine Mass, and one of my things is that one of the reasons why Pope Francis issued *Traditionis Custodes* was because in the U.S. there is the worrying trend where it wasn't about so much about going – and I go to the latin mass myself – but the problem was it became a proxy, it became politicized and was co opted by right wing groups in the U.S.

**MC:** And I must add not just in the U.S...

**MS:** Right, in France too there has been this trend...

**MC:** And even in parts of Asia, so I applied for a grant to study how catholics in Asia use the digital space to nourish and shape their catholic identity. But also behind that is to see also how they use this pace to lobby and to fight. We didn't get the grant; no one cares. But we made preliminary surveys and it's impressive how the digital space is used to silence any call from the pope on climate change, or on more respect for people with same sex attraction; like even on the death penalty in singapore. Trust me, nobody talks about it. And I wish we had more tools to analyze who is behind that and why they do that.

For instance the death penalty is not my cup of tea, but that's not the only thing and like I had a fight with one of these groups I'm studying on homosexuality, and they were talking about the four kinds of sins that call for vengeance. So sodomy is one of the four, so I'm like what about the three others, injustice, oppression of the foreigner, in Singapore, can we talk about that? Where we have one million slaves! No, it's all about sodomy and homosexuality. Are you grown up adults, do you know that normal couples and for centuries it was a way to secure

contraception? So, when we talk about sodomy it's not necessarily about homosexuality, it's only 10 percent of the picture.

**MS:** We can have that conversation another day. It's really interesting...

**MC:** Yeah, it's those conservative voices, you don't need to go to the U.S, I'm very surprised by the kind of conversation I witness here on the digital space in Singapore. I think it's the same thing in Hong Kong, but in Hong Kong it requires more effort...

So, the last question. So I do think it is positive, it shows how the Holy see is really resilient, committed for 10 years. Like, they are not giving up and so i do think that it is a positive image. Despite all of the critiques we hear about the Sino-Vatican Agreement.

**MS:** You think that it will have a positive effect in the long term?

**MC:** Yes, because at the end of the day, the Vatican got an agreement. It may be as ideal as we want, and so when I hear Americans criticizing the Vatican for dealing with, for talking with the 'devil', I'm always like 'who has an embassy in Beijing?', you can close it down if you're so good at giving lessons. Because the embassy of the Holy See is in Taipei, not in Beijing. And so anyways it's easy to instrumentalize the catholic church for american interests. I do think in the long term any kind of serious diplomatic actors do value and respect what the Vatican is trying to do in the region. And all of the states in the region, except North Korea and China, have diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

**MS:** Yes, which is impressive as it [the Holy See] has one of the largest diplomatic corps in the world. One of the others conversations is that well given the Holy See's diplomatic representation, and given that its diplomatic mission is premised on its moral authority and its ability to mediate in international affairs, is its perceived silence on things like the treatment of Uighurs or other human rights violations – does that delegitimize its diplomatic mission?

**MC:** I wrote an article on this argument of moral authority, that I'm critical against. It's kind of , I took my professor's voice. It's a long and technical article, but I tried to unfold this argument of the moral authority of the Vatican. My main point is that we can't reduce the Vatican to a moral authority. It's a sovereign state. So, it's more than that and so when we tend to frame the debate on morality, we've already attacking the Vatican, the Holy See.

**MS:** By suggesting that sovereignty is 'less' than other states?

**MC:** Yeah, to reducing everything to good and bad as if also good and bad is an objective universal norm. It's easy to debate, but it's more complex.

**MS:** So, in what framework would you put the Holy See in – would you say it's a realistic or a constructivist actor – what is the best framework to understand it?

**MC:** I really think it's realistic first. You know when I look at Singapore you have to go on the ground, because it's easy to dream and have misperceptions of Rome. But go check which kind

of premises...like I remember in Hong Kong the envoy of the Holy See in the late [19]90's and early 2000s had just an office and a bedroom in the house of the franciscans, that's it. But when he left, he had a plot of land, with two buildings on it, and a staff of five people. So everybody was talking about how things got bad, but on the ground slowly and, yes sure Beijing was monitoring it carefully, but it established a school and an almost 'real embassy'. You see what I mean? Where you come to Singapore the official embassy of the vatican is on the 7th floor of a tiny building, the catholic center, and nobody can explain to me why; it's not really...I'm totally sure there are many wealthy catholics who would beg to give property for the embassy, but no. And the poor ambassador is a very nice guy and he hates our bishop and he can't do much about our bishop of Singapore because he has to work in...and the heavy hand of the state in Singapore is extremely strong. So when you look at the embassy, there is something very weird. Why is the ambassador of the pope locked up on the 7th floor?

So, anyways, the Vatican has no army, catholics do not obey – we all know that – so the resources and tools that the Vatican has to engage in diplomatic dialogue with all kind of factors, while not always well intended or not always equipped to understand the Catholic Church, because sometimes it's not they have bad intention, it's just that it's...it's not always easy to engage in a constructive long term dialogue with all kind of factors, state administrations...that may not have consistency and long term diplomatic actions, like sometimes you have a gentle government and you get all the departments. All of the officials of the state and they have no training and they don't care. And you have to deal with those people in reality. So, the Holy See is dealing with different kinds of tools, to promote a set of issues, concerns. For instance it has pushed a lot on climate, which annoys a lot of conservative americans. But, yes, it's not just an obsession about conversion, that's very clear. It's obsessed with the common good for humankind.

**MS:** And, they look at states as 'value neutral', not making a judgment on whether or not the state is good or bad.

**MC:** Yeah and also states are not ultimate beings. States and their governments are in transition. State officials just play roles and at the end of the day were going to be gone at some point. The holy see is just trying to prompt some values and concerns to help the coming of the kingdom. And they have no army; they're not like Putin. I wish I could organize a more ethnographic study of the Vatican's diplomatic presence across Asia, because it's very interesting, and also which kind of people work there, which kind of people they employ because that gives us also...well, anyway, I was observing that in Bangkok. Which religious orders are more 'in' than others, what kind of presence, religious orders and nationalities. And not just of the official envoy of the pope, but also the staff of the embassy.

**MS:** Right, well historically speaking the majority of the priests who were at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy were mostly Italian, and then that has shifted a little. Obviously the church is becoming less eurocentric...

**MC:** That's not Europe, you're talking to a French guy here. That is not Europe. So the Vatican still has to cultivate a friendly relationship with Italy – it's vital for the independence, for the physical life of the Vatican. So you have this proportion of Italian cardinals, Italian diplomats

and so on. Not because Italians are better...again it's not Europe, it's Italy. Look at the number of cardinals today. Europeans are going down, not Italians though. It's only because the Vatican is stuck in this state. So the first number [of cardinals] is Italians and the second is what? So basically it's the big power of the time, always.

**MS:** The United States?

**MC:** Right. Years ago it was France and now it's the United States. Because the church needs to make sure it cultivates some channels of communication and mutual understanding with the power of the time. So, the first overrepresented nation among the college of cardinals is Italy and then the power of the time, today it's the U.S.

**MS:** And likely, one thing Pope Benedict tried to do with his travels, with his writings – thinking specifically about his Regensburg address – he was trying to reverse the secularization in Europe and prevent a post-Christian culture from taking root. So that shaped his vision of the Church. Whereas Pope Francis is much more about the ‘peripheries’ and developing the church where at least there is room for growth. But anyways, thank you again for your time and for flashing out of all these concepts.

**MC:** All the best in Rome and we stay in touch! Good bye.

**MS:** Absolutely, have a nice day – bye!

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