

74/2023

02/11/2023

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Vatican Geopolitics on Climate Change[Visit the WEBSITE](#)[Receive the E-NEWSLETTER](#)

Vatican Geopolitics on Climate Change

Abstract:

Climate change has gone from being a risk multiplier to being a threat to global security in itself. Most countries and the main international organizations have adopted this interpretation. According to the annual World Meteorological Organization's state of the global climate reports, climate change is advancing every year. Despite this, it continues to be the subject of debate between denialists and those who use it for ideological purposes.

In a disordered social and geopolitical context, the Vatican has its own view on the issue. Its evangelical and apostolic mission does not prevent it from condemning the global environmental degradation caused by humanity's unashamed consumerist mentality. It could be said that in international relations the Vatican deploys a geopolitical approach with tenets very close to those of liberal institutionalism.

Keywords:

Vatican, The Holy See, John Paul II, Benedict XIV, Francis, encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, *Laudato si'*, *Laudate deum*, *Fratelli tutti*, geopolitics, climate change.

***NOTE:** The ideas contained in the **Analysis Papers** are the responsibility of their authors. They do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the IEEE or the Ministry of Defence.

Geopolítica vaticana del cambio climático

Resumen:

El cambio climático ha pasado de ser un factor potenciador de riesgos a la seguridad global a una amenaza en sí misma. La mayoría de los países y las principales organizaciones internacionales así lo entienden. Los sucesivos informes sobre el estado del clima de la Organización Meteorológica Mundial atestiguan su avance año tras año. Pese a ello, el cambio climático continúa siendo objeto de debate entre los que niegan su existencia y los que lo utilizan con fines ideológicos.

En un entorno geopolítico y social cargado de confusión, el Vaticano tiene algo que decir. Su misión evangélica y apostólica no le impide denunciar el deterioro ambiental global ocasionado por una actitud consumista desaforada de la humanidad. Se podría decir que, en el ámbito de las relaciones internacionales, el Vaticano practica una geopolítica cuyos elementos esenciales los encontramos en el institucionalismo liberal.

Palabras clave:

Vaticano, Santa Sede, Juan Pablo II, Benedicto XIV, Francisco, cartas encíclicas, exhortaciones apostólicas, *Laudato si'*, *Laudate deum*, *Fratelli tutti*, geopolítica, cambio climático.

How to cite this document:

GUTIÉRREZ DEL CASTILLO, Evaristo J. *Vatican Geopolitics on Climate Change*. IEEE Analysis Paper 74/2023.
https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2023/DIEEEA74_2023_EVARGUT_Vaticano_ENG.pdf and/or [bie³ link](#) (accessed on day/month/year)

Introduction

Climate change is of concern to most countries and international organizations. In contemporary Spanish strategic thinking, it was initially considered a risk or a threat factor¹, then a² National Security challenge, and now a threat in itself to global security³: "a direct existential threat through its social, economic and geopolitical impacts"⁴. This approach informs the National Defence Directives⁵ and Defence Policy 2020⁶, and the conceptual military-strategic development of CEFAS-21⁷.

Climate change is also on NATO's agendas⁸ and in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy⁹. Both organizations see it as a threat in itself, and a risk multiplier with a security impact. They also commit to combating its effects, NATO "[...] by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency [...] without compromising military effectiveness and a credible deterrence and defence posture"; and the EU "[by] improving energy efficiency and resource efficiency, in particular the environmental footprint of our CSDP missions and operations, in line with the EU's objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 [...] without reducing operational effectiveness".

According to the World Meteorological Organization's latest State of the Climate report¹⁰, climate change continued its advance in 2022: "Droughts, floods and heat waves affected

¹ Government of Spain. "2013 National Security Strategy". 31 May 2013. Available at: https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/documents/seguridad_1406connavegacionfinalaccesiblepdf.pdf [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

² Government of Spain. "2017 National Security Strategy". 1 December 2017. Available at: https://www.dsn.gob.es/sites/dsn/files/Estrategia_de_Seguridad_Nacional_ESN%20Final.pdf [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

³ Government of Spain. "2021 National Security Strategy". 28 December 2021. Available at: <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/documento/estrategia-Seguridad-nacional-2021> [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

⁴ Ministry of Defence. "Overview of geopolitical trends. Horizon 2040. Second edition". 24 November 2021. Defence Publications. Available at: file:///C:/Users/egutcas/Downloads/panorama_de_tendencias_geopoliticas_horizon_2040_2_edici_n_1.pdf [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

⁵ Government of Spain. "National Defence Directive (2020)". 11 June 2020. Available at: <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/Documents/2020/110620-DirectivaDefensaNacional2020.pdf> [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

⁶ Ministry of Defence. "Defence Policy Directive 2020". 4 August 2020. Available at: <https://www.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/defensadocs/directiva-politica-Defensa-2020.pdf> [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

⁷ Defence staff. "FAS Employment Concept (CEFAS-21)". 14 October 2021. Available at: https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/emad/files/CEFAS_2021.pdf [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

⁸ NATO. NATO's Strategic Concept 2022 29 June 2022. Available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf [Consultation: 19/10/2023].

⁹ UE. Strategic Compass 21 March 2022. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf [Consultation: 19/10/2023].

¹⁰ World Meteorological Organization. "State of the Energy Union 2022". 21 April 2023. Available at: https://library.wmo.int/viewer/66214/download?file=Statement_2022.pdf&type=pdf&navigator=1 [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

communities on every continent and caused losses of many billions of dollars. The extent of the retreat of Antarctic sea ice reached historic lows and the melting of some European glaciers reached unprecedented levels".

The report reflects the changes in land, seas and atmosphere caused by record high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, which are responsible for heat retention. The period from 2015 to 2022 was found to be the warmest on record and climate change - manifested in "dangerous weather and climate events" - is directly affecting the livelihoods of millions of people, ecosystems and the environment itself.

On the occasion of Earth Day 2023, the UN Secretary-General endorsed the findings of the report and sent the following message: "We have the necessary tools, knowledge and solutions. But we must act with greater urgency. We need to accelerate climate action with stronger and faster emission reductions to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C. We must also radically increase investments in adaptation and resilience, particularly for the most vulnerable countries and communities, who have contributed the least to the crisis".

Despite the fact that the data seem to be irrefutable, climate change is subjected to an important ideological use ranging from "anti-system" positions with fear and despair as banners because of its apocalyptic consequences, to the purest denialism inspired by conspiracy theories that cast doubt on its very existence. In this ideological struggle, we find some balance in the Vatican's approach, which is humanistic but deeply geopolitical.

To begin with, one might ask whether there really is such a thing as Vatican geopolitics. In this regard, we refer to the geopolitics of the Vatican as a state (the Holy See) with the Pope at its head, and not to the Catholic Church as a religious entity. This distinction is important as the interests of the Vatican and the Catholic Church are not always necessarily aligned¹¹.

By its very nature, the Vatican is called upon to exercise a kind of soft power, as defined by Joseph Nye¹² (a combination of attraction and persuasion), but with the addition of a deep spiritual charge and with the human being taking centre stage. Taken to the field of International Relations Theory, it could be said that in both its positive conception of

¹¹ SOMIEDO GARCÍA, Juan Pablo. "Vatican geopolitics: from John Paul II to Benedict XVI". IEEE Opinion Paper 16/2013. Available at: https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2013/DIEEEO16-2013_Geopolitica_Vaticano_JPSomiedo.pdf [Consultation: 17/10/2023].

¹² Nye J. (2005). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Public Affairs.

human nature and in its commitment to the regulatory role of supranational organizations in global affairs, the Vatican approach has many points in common with the neoliberal institutionalism of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye.

But the Vatican's geopolitical relevance is relatively recent. Since the Peace of Westphalia, the Vatican's neutrality in many of the conflicts has led to its virtual isolation in the field of international relations¹³, despite being the first state to have a school for diplomats (Academy of Ecclesiastical Nobles, created in 1701 by Pope Clement XI)¹⁴.

Everything changed with the arrival in the Vatican of Pope John Paul II in 1978. His famous "do not be afraid" marks the beginning of a papacy that would place him at the centre of the world stage. The Vatican's fight against communism was followed by positions ranging from support for humanitarian military interventions (East Timor, Haiti, the Great Lakes), through opposition to the 1990 invasion of Iraq, to support for operations in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks¹⁵.

The Pope of "dazzling intuitions" was replaced by the Pope of "methodical reasoning and action". In fact, in 2005, with Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican, a "crusade" against moral relativism and for the reconciliation of faith and reason began, with a moral campaign launched against neoliberal capitalism and in defence of the environment, and the denouncing of the effects of climate change¹⁶.

In March 2013, a new Vatican phase began in which "action" seemed to eclipse "methodical reasoning".

During the ten years of Pope Francis' pontificate, Vatican geopolitics could be defined as that of a 'renewed *Ostpolitik*'. This rapprochement has been translated into a series of concrete actions, including the establishment of agreements with China, the maintenance of bridges with Russia (despite the invasion of Ukraine), mediation between the Cuban regime and the US administration, support for the process of national reconciliation in Venezuela, the maintenance of the (difficult) dialogue with Nicaragua, and

¹³ SOMIEDO GARCÍA, Juan Pablo. (2013). *Op. cit.*

¹⁴ SOMIEDO GARCÍA, Juan Pablo. "Vatican diplomacy and its influence as a major player in today's international relations". IEEE Opinion Paper 117/2016. Available at: https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2016/DIEFEO117-2016_DiplomaciaVaticana_JuanPabloSomiedo.pdf [Consultation: 17/10/2023].

¹⁵ SOMIEDO GARCÍA, Juan Pablo. (2013). *Op. cit.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

rapprochement with Islam. The Vatican is also being very active in its (critical) dialogue with the 2030 Agenda and in the fight against climate change¹⁷.

Climate change from the Vatican's perspective

In his encyclical *Laudato si'*¹⁸ (Praise be to you) - on the care for our common home - Pope Francis recalls that global environmental degradation is a concern of the Vatican, and is shared by the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb.

As early as the 1970s, Pope Paul VI called for a "radical change in the behaviour of mankind [because if] the most extraordinary scientific progress, the most astonishing technical prowess, the most prodigious economic growth are not accompanied by genuine social and moral progress, they are ultimately turned against man"¹⁹. Montini warned of the danger to nature posed by the uncontrolled activity of mankind²⁰.

John Paul II also expressed his concern about human beings' consumerist attitude towards nature²¹, while appealing to the moral dimension of human development with maximum respect for nature²². He also called for an "ecological conversion" of humanity²³ and warned about the consequences of excessive consumerism and the need "to safeguard the moral conditions of an authentic "human ecology"²⁴.

¹⁷ GARRIDO GUIJARRO, Óscar. "Taking stock of a decade of Francisco 'geopolitics'". IEEE Analysis Paper 16/2023. Available at: https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2023/DIEEEA16_2023_OSCGAR_Francisco.pdf [Consultation: 17/10/2023].

¹⁸ The Holy See. "*Laudato si'*". Encyclical Letter Pope Francis. 24 May 2015. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_sp.pdf [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

¹⁹ The Holy See. Speech of His Holiness Paul VI on the 25th anniversary of FAO. 16 November 1970. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/es/speeches/1970/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19701116_xxv-istituzione-fao.html [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

²⁰ The Holy See. "*Octogesima adveniens*". Apostolic Letter Pope Paul VI. 14 May 1971. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/es/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

²¹ The Holy See. "*Redemptor hominis*". Encyclical Letter Pope John Paul II. 4 March 1979. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

²² The Holy See. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. Encyclical Letter Pope John Paul II. 30 December 1987. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html [Consultation: 12/10/2023].

²³ The Holy See. General Audience Pope John Paul II. 17 January 2001. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/audiences/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20010117.html [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

²⁴ The Holy See. "*Centesimus annus*". Encyclical Letter Pope John Paul II. 1 May 1991. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

Pope Benedict XVI, for his part, advocated for a "[...] modification of growth models that seem incapable of guaranteeing respect for the environment and integral human development for today and above all for the future"²⁵, denouncing the negative sense of ownership that humanity was adopting over nature²⁶. Likewise, he talked of the link there must be between the way people treat nature and the way they treat themselves, and the need to protect Man from his own destruction by appealing to a "human ecology" wherein "[...] healthy social coexistence and a good relationship with nature coexist"²⁷. He recognised the importance of ecology and the need to use what nature gives fairly²⁸.

Against this background, and with his encyclical *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis "[...] recognises the greatness, urgency and beauty of the challenge before us". Bergoglio reviews the elements that define the current ecological crisis and what the scientific community has to say about it. Placing the human being at the centre of the equation, the Pope advocates an ecology that is the fruit of a profound analysis of the causes of the current situation of environmental deterioration and not just of the symptoms and the effects that are already being suffered.

Francis sets out a series of lines of action to achieve a greater commitment from individuals and institutions to protect the environment, identifying climate change as one of the greatest threats that must be tackled without delay, and calling for an "ecological conversion" in which authentic values prevail over the consumerism to which today's society falls victim.

Eight years after the publication of *Laudato si'*, in the recent apostolic exhortation *Laudate deum*²⁹, Pope Francis again expresses his grave concern about the rapid deterioration of nature - our common home - due to climate change, the harmful effects of which are felt

²⁵ The Holy See. Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Diplomatic Corps to the Holy See. 8 January 2007. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/es/speeches/2007/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070108_diplomatic-corps.html [Consultation: 12/10/2023].

²⁶ The Holy See. Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone. 6 August 2008. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/es/speeches/2008/august/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080806_clero-bressanone.html [Consultation: 12/10/2023].

²⁷ The Holy See. "*Caritas in veritate*". Encyclical Letter Pope Benedict XVI. 29 June 2009. Accessed at: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html [Consultation: 12/10/2023].

²⁸ The Holy See. Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the German Bundestag. 22 September 2011. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/es/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_reichstag-berlin.html [Consultation: 12/10/2023].

²⁹ The Holy See. "*Laudate deum*". Apostolic Exhortation Pope Francis. 4 October 2023. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.pdf [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

most by the most vulnerable people. Bergoglio addresses sceptics and denialists by pointing out an irrefutable fact: global warming is occurring at a high rate and cannot be considered as one of the warming periods of the warming-cooling cycle to which the planet is subjected.

Accepting the direct influence of the use of fossil fuels on climate change, a transition to the use of renewable energy sources is advocated wherein the challenges (possible reduction of jobs) are transformed into opportunities (creation of new jobs), so that the most disadvantaged people are not the victims of a process that is otherwise irreversible.

The "anthropogenic" nature of climate change is clearly recognised, and concrete data is provided in relation to the exponential increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere since the industrial development of the mid-19th century, which has led to an increase in global temperature that is gradually approaching the well-stated limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Pope Francis expresses his concern about the consequences of the "unbridled human intervention on nature in recent centuries" and denounces the lack of interest of the "great economic powers" in the climate crisis, as they are more concerned about the short-term economic benefits of their activities.

In an almost apocalyptic tone, irreparable damage to nature is already taken for granted, such that the only thing left for humanity to do is to prevent further damage. According to this reasoning, unless drastic measures are taken at global level, we are getting ever closer to a climate tipping point, a process of environmental deterioration that no one will be able to stop.

Laudate deum highlights what it calls the "technocratic paradigm", or the chimera of infinite growth provided by technological and economic power, which has been reinforced by developments in artificial intelligence and certain disruptive technologies. This approach seeks to project human power beyond what is ethically acceptable, even at the cost of unprecedented environmental degradation, which is a demonstration of human selfishness and idolatry at the service of the few.

As in any apostolic exhortation - "addressed to all people of good will" - moral questions are raised that are most often addressed with a blank stare. It is said that humanity appears to live in a mirage caused by an unlimited conception of its power, which has

allowed it to achieve great progress, but which can also lead it to the abyss, to self-destruction. In this process of unbridled human ambition, nature takes the role of the scapegoat. Pope Francis uses the occasion to call for a socially sensitive "meritocracy" wherein personal development is based on equal opportunities, and where the ambition of the most powerful does not put "our common home" at risk.

Failure of multilateralism

A section of *Laudate deum* is devoted to the "weakness of international politics", whose source of inspiration can be found in the encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*³⁰, in which Pope Francis' frustration with the direction humanity has taken is palpable: "For decades it seemed that the world had learned from so many wars and failures and was slowly moving towards various forms of integration. [...] But history is showing signs of turning back. Anachronistic conflicts that were considered to have been overcome are being ignited, and closed, exasperated, resentful and aggressive nationalisms are resurfacing".

Josep Piqué interpreted this "turning back" as a process of transition between a global order and a new one dominated by volatility and uncertainty, and not necessarily accompanied by conflict. This against a background of clear decadence of Western ethnocentrism, a post-Western synthesis, in the form of a cross-cutting compromise between illiberal, statist rupture and liberal internationalism³¹.

In a complementary approach to the previous one, Fukuyama renounces the predictions of the "End of History", envisaging an international society in constant change, at once globalised and regionalised, with a boom in identity politics promoted by certain political currents and ceasing to appeal to a great supranational identity³².

One could even go a step further in this reasoning, because until that fateful 24 February 2022, it seemed that the possibility of a conventional war between states, let alone a nuclear escalation, had been practically ruled out. Submerged in the dictates of hybrid threats and in the fog of the blurred grey zone of conflict, our idealised world seemed to

³⁰ The Holy See. "Fratelli tutti". Encyclical Letter Pope Francis. 3 October 2020. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.pdf [Consultation: 10/10/2023].

³¹ Piqué, J. (2018). *The world to come. Challenges and hopes of the 21st century: A post-western world with western values?* Barcelona: Deusto.

³² Fukuyama, F. (2019). *Identity. The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment.* Barcelona: Deusto.

be anaesthetised to a reality it did not want to see - or only out of the corner of its eye - which the enemies of "universal brotherhood" are taking great advantage of. This synthetic reasoning can be extrapolated to what is happening with climate change.

In *Laudate deum*, Pope Francis highlights the value of multilateral agreements between states as a necessary instrument for progress on a global environmental policy that contributes to reducing the effects of climate change. It advocates an effective multilateralism based on the continuity of agreements reached that goes beyond individuals, current political circumstances and lobbying interests.

According to this approach, multilateralism should take the form of "[...] more effective global organizations, endowed with the authority to ensure the global common good, the eradication of hunger and misery, and the certain defence of basic human rights"³³.

Along these lines, *Laudate deum* argues the need for a reconfiguration of multilateralism that is developed "from below and not simply decided by the power elites"³⁴. It is undoubtedly an unambiguous critique of the current international system in place since the end of the Second World War³⁵.

The League of Nations - the forerunner of the UN - was created in 1919 as a reaction to the horrors of the First World War (1914-1918). Under the parameters of political idealism, and as an alternative to the balance of power, the aim was to limit the anarchy of the international system through the establishment of a supranational organization that would be protected by the international legal order and with a collective security mechanism.

However, we know that the attempt was unsuccessful: nations went into the Great War because they had different conceptions of freedom, dignity and culture, and they would go to the Second World War (1939-1945) because they had exclusionary and totalitarian worldviews³⁶.

The result was a new world order based on the three well-known basic pillars: the economic order established at Bretton Woods (1944), the political order founded in the United Nations Charter (1945) and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

³³ *Fratelli tutti. Op. cit.*

³⁴ *Laudate deum. Op. cit.*

³⁵ The beginnings of multilateralism can be found in the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the Congress of Vienna (1815) and the 14 points of President Wilson's address to Congress (1918).

³⁶ Aznar F. (2011). *The War Equation*. Essay. Editorial Montesinos.

It is the world order of the victors (the Rules-Based International Order) that is now beginning to be questioned by the revisionist powers (BRICS plus).

Against this background, the Vatican is fully aware of the need to adapt the "old multilateralism" to the new global geopolitical scenario, a multifaceted one if ever there was one, and which perhaps requires a less maximalist approach, as Dacoba points out, citing Richard Haass: "[...] it is more useful to prioritise a minimally consensual international order (based on respect for the integrity of states and collaboration vis-à-vis global challenges) over insistence on demanding democracy at all costs [...]"³⁷.

But Pope Francis goes further. To address global challenges - including climate change - he believes it is essential to give primacy to the individual, to their dignity, over what he calls "local or circumstantial expediciencies"³⁸. It is the application of the Catholic Church's own universal vision to politics: "the culture of dialogue as a path; common collaboration as a behaviour; reciprocal knowledge as a method and criterion"³⁹.

With an express recognition of the validity of classical diplomacy ("old diplomacy"), Pope Francis expresses the need for a renewed multilateral diplomacy and more efficient mechanisms of international cooperation to face global challenges. This leads him to propose the need to establish "a new procedure for taking decisions and legitimising those decisions"⁴⁰. This is undoubtedly a "revisionist" conception of multilateralism that seeks to overcome the limitations of its hegemonic, normative and defensive modalities⁴¹.

Last, it is worth noting that *Laudate deum* devotes four pages to the climate conferences - the so-called COPs (Conferences of the Parties) - with a bittersweet assessment of the results achieved so far. The good intentions of the 190 participating countries are tempered by the prevalence "[...] of national interests over the global common good", something that should not surprise us.

³⁷ DACOBA CERVIÑO, Francisco José. "In a multipolar world, it is not the strongest that will survive but the most adaptable". IEEE Analysis Paper 84/2022. Available at: https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2022/DIEEEA84_2022_FRADAC_Multipolar.pdf [Consultation: 17/10/2023].

³⁸ *Fratelli tutti*. *Op. cit.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Laudate deum*. *Op. cit.*

⁴¹ CAAMAÑO ARAMBURU, Luis. "The Effectiveness of Multilateralism in International Relations". IEEE Opinion Paper 87/2014. Available at: file:///C:/Users/egutcas/Documents/01%20Evaristo/Vatican/DIEEE087-2014_EffectivenessMultilateralism_LuisCaamano.pdf [Consultation: 17/10/2023].

Bergoglio moves in the moral terrain - that of ethical principles and faith - which usually has trouble fitting into the praxis of states. The Vatican hopes that a commitment to an efficient, mandatory and controllable energy transition will be made at COP28 in Dubai.

The final sentence of Pope Francis invites a profound reflection that is also geopolitical: all hope will be useless if "human beings [continue to] pretend to take the place of God [by] becoming the worst danger to themselves"⁴².

Conclusions

Most countries and major international organizations consider climate change to be a global threat facing humanity. This is the case in Spain, in NATO and in the EU. Successive reports on the state of the climate by the World Meteorological Organization leave no room to doubt this.

In a geopolitical and social environment fraught with turmoil, the Vatican has its own view. Its very active involvement in international political affairs started in the pontificate of John Paul II, in the "do not be afraid" era. However, concern for environmental degradation began with Pope Paul VI, was continued by John Paul II, and found its greatest champion in Benedict XVI (the "green" Pope). For his part, Pope Francis endorses the concerns of his predecessors and in his encyclical letter *Laudato si'* calls for an "ecological conversion" of humanity to address the effects of climate change without delay.

In his recent apostolic exhortation *Laudate deum*, Pope Francis reiterates his deep concern about the speed at which climate change is occurring, outlining the elements that characterise this global climate crisis, including denialism and misinterpretation, the need for an orderly ecological transition, the anthropogenic origin of climate change and the irreversibility of the damage already caused to nature.

In *Laudate deum* Francis denounces the ineffectiveness of current multilateralism in the implementation of a global environmental policy, and expresses the need for a renewed multilateral diplomacy and more efficient mechanisms of international cooperation.

⁴² *Laudate deum. Op. cit.*

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