

The Use of Soft Power in the Diplomacy of the Holy See

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Abstract

The Holy See, the governing body of the Catholic Church, stands out in the international arena as a unique entity that combines a political structure with a religious institution. The Holy See currently maintains diplomatic relations with 183 countries and enjoys the status of a Permanent Observer at the United Nations Organisation. In addition to being an influential religious institution, the Holy See is also the oldest continuously operating international organisation in the world. The primary objectives of the Holy See are spiritual, moral and humanitarian in nature and it does not pursue military objectives and lacks the conventional tools of hard power that determine the prominence of a state on the international stage. Nevertheless, the Holy See distinguishes itself from other states through the use of Joseph Nye's concept of soft power in its diplomatic relations. The Holy See employs soft power through a network of churches, social and educational institutions spread across the globe. The Holy See is utilising soft power in a wide range of domains, including conflict resolution, climate change, inter-religious dialogue, nuclear disarmament and refugee crisis. The Pope exercises soft power through Papal visits and by shaping the opinions of 1.3 billion Catholics on contemporary issues. This research focuses on how the smallest state in the world has utilised soft power effectively to achieve its diplomatic goals. This research predominantly utilises the qualitative methodology and data is collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: *Diplomacy, Holy See, Soft Power*