

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Overview

The Catholic Church, primarily through the Holy See, has long been recognised as a unique and influential actor in the sphere of international relations, particularly regarding conflict mediation, reconciliation, and peace-building efforts (Gaetan, 2021; Rivera, 2015). This could be seen by the Church intervention and call for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 by Pope John XXIII, and also by Pope John Paul II opposition and unyielding call for ceasefire during the Gulf War from 1991-2003 (Troy, 2009). Distinct from secular diplomatic bodies, the Holy See exercises its international engagement through a well-established diplomatic network that spans embassies (*nunciatures*) in over 180 countries. It strategically leverages soft power, moral persuasion, and religious legitimacy as key instruments in its foreign policy and peace-making toolkit (Korniawan, 2024; Salum, 2023). The Church's diplomatic interventions are further underpinned by its principle of permanent neutrality, a legal and theological position that was formally codified in the Lateran Treaty of 1929. This framework allows the Vatican to act as a relatively impartial mediator in international and intra-state conflicts (Breger & Reginbogin, 2022; Cahill, 2017). Since the reforms and theological shifts introduced by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), there has been a notable reorientation of the Church's global mission toward promoting human dignity, social justice, and peace. This has catalysed more proactive

and visible engagement by the Holy See in global humanitarian and peace-oriented interventions (Rivera, 2015; Troy, 2008).

Although the role of the Holy See as a high-level diplomatic mediator in cases such as international conflicts has been widely examined in scholarly and policy-oriented literature such as by the works of Breger & Reginbogin, 2022; Gaetan, 2021; Rivera, 2015; Salum, 2023. A significantly less explored but equally important dimension lies in the contributions of local Catholic actors to the Vatican's peace diplomacy. These local actors, including national bishops' conferences, diocesan structures, religious congregations, lay ecclesial movements, and faith-based service organisations such as Caritas at both national and grassroots levels play a vital, though often underappreciated, role in shaping the Church's peace-building posture on the ground. Their influence is not merely operational but can extend into the conceptual and strategic frameworks adopted by the Vatican. They often serve as the initial responders to conflict, providing the Holy See with firsthand information, local credibility, and community-rooted approaches that inform subsequent diplomatic strategies.

Randriamanantena (2020) underscored the “decisive role of the local church” in enabling Vatican mediation efforts, emphasising that these local entities frequently act as the Church's eyes, ears, and hands in complex political and cultural environments. This bottom-up dynamic is frequently overlooked in mainstream analyses of Vatican foreign policy. Notably, case studies such as the Colombian peace process reveal that grassroots church-led

peace initiatives often precede, inspire, or significantly shape the Vatican's formal involvement (Gaetan, 2021). The Beagle Channel dispute case which was resolved by the intervention of the local Catholic Diocese as the middleman and mediator for the conflicting parties (Mirow, 2004). And lastly and more familiarly is the East Timor Independence from Indonesia in 1999-2002, where the Local Catholic Actor such as Bishop Carlos Belo of Dili wrote a passionate letter of appeal to the UN Secretary-General in 1989 calling for a referendum of Self-determination and the local parishes sheltered Timorese demonstrators and activist from Indonesian Military (Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo, 2015; Kohen, 2000). These local Catholic actors employ a diverse array of peace-building methods, ranging from public advocacy and informal shuttle diplomacy to trauma healing, civic education, and interfaith dialogue, tailored to the unique socio-political realities of their respective contexts (Driessen, 2025).

The Catholic Church functions as a coherent and whole organisation that works on plenty of social and human rights issues. This is evident and could be seen through the many Pastoral Letters and Papal Encyclicals written by popes throughout the ages. Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* which was released in 1891 set the fundamentals and a start for the modern Catholic Church advocacy and social teachings, it laid out the groundworks regarding the working conditions and appeal for social improvements for labour workers at the time. Complementing it, in 1963 Pope John XXIII wrote *Pacem in Terris* which highlighted all people to build a peaceful world order based on

human rights and dignity. It specifically points out that world peace cannot be achieved through a balance of military power, but must be founded on principles of truth, justice, charity, and liberty. The encyclical was written within the context of the Cold War in hand, and plenty of human rights atrocities happening around the world. Lastly was Pope Francis encyclical written in 2020 titled, *Fratelli tutti* that calls for a compassionate and inclusive post-pandemic world based on universal human fraternity and social friendship. It urges people to reject division, embrace dialogue and encounter one another, and prioritize human dignity and solidarity over individualism and market-driven interests. Citing the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the encyclical asks people to act as neighbours to those in need and advocates for a new kind of politics and global cooperation to address problems that affect everyone.

The church, through many eras and social injustices, has always been out loud and outspoken in defence of the repressed this can be seen especially during the democratization era of the Cold War where often Catholic Church became the beacon of hope and voice for the voiceless across Latin America and Africa (Troy, 2009). In Brazil for example, despite a brutal military regime during 1964-1985, the Catholic Church in Brazil refused to backdown giving voice for the people (Serbin, 1999). Even in the face of persecution and intimidation from the government, the Catholic Church of Brazil stayed and fought back, voicing the brutality of the government to the International Community, and providing sanctuary and public space for opinion against the government censorship (French, 2007). The Church has always braved enough

despite the circumstances to balance the social justice scale and give voice to the voiceless, yet this is not necessarily the straightforward case when we're talking about human rights issues in Papua where the church presence has always been a pivotal player on the island since 1894 through its missionary mission. The catholic population in the Papua island now accounts for 13.3% of the population or estimated around 765.000-800.000 people (Disdukcapil, 2024). With such many followers we'd expect the church to once more take a solid stance.

The human rights situation in the region, encompassing the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua, is not one of sporadic violence but a systemic, decades-long conflict as mentioned in Anderson (2015) works, within he mentioned that the violence endured by the Papuans aren't only in the usual form of physical repression but also from a service negligence by the state towards the people. Tebay (2009) also noted that amongst the Papuan natives, a consensus has been made that violence acts of repression done by the military has much more instigated conflict rather than suppressing it. He'd also argued that the lack of implementation of various services by the Government ever since the PEPERA in 1969 has been sign of neglect for the Papuans rights as citizens of Indonesia. Human rights issues in Papua are deeply rooted in its controversial integration into Indonesia following the 1969 "Act of Free Choice," which many Papuans view as fraudulent and coercive (Anderson, 2015; Hedman, 2007). This contested legitimacy fuelled a pro-independence insurgency, prompting heavy-handed responses from Indonesian

security forces that have included brutal "sweeping" operations, torture, and extrajudicial killings (Hedman, 2007). These military actions have led to significant displacement, forcing thousands of villagers to flee as refugees into Papua New Guinea or to become internally displaced in forests where they face starvation and lack of medical care. Beyond direct state violence, significant human insecurity stems from structural neglect and the effective absence of state welfare services in many indigenous areas (Anderson, 2015). Indigenous Papuans face widespread dispossession due to massive migration from other parts of Indonesia, leaving them as marginalized minorities in many urban centres. Alongside that, recent analyses indicate that "horizontal" violence, such as inter-clan conflict and epidemic levels of domestic violence, often claim more lives than the political conflict with the state (Anderson, 2015). This complex topography of insecurity is compounded by aggressive resource extraction industries that employ the Indonesian military for security, intertwining corporate interests with local human rights abuses (Anderson, 2015; Hedman, 2007).

The Indonesian government has year on year affirmed its stance that the Papuan issue is a domestic issue that has been exaggerated by various international actors (Firmansyah, 2023). The presence of Otsus (*Otoritas Khusus*)/Special Autonomy that now has become a central policy in the Government initiative for the development of Papua. The Special Autonomy for Papua was extended through Law No. 2 of 2021, which amended the original Special Autonomy Law (Law No. 21/2001). This amendment not only

prolonged the period for Otsus funding but also revised structural and administrative aspects of governance in Papua (Amirullah, 2025). The government highlights Otsus as a program with two main pillars: development and reconciliation. Provincial leaders (e.g., in South Papua) explicitly frame Otsus as intended to boost infrastructure, human resource development, and peacebuilding across the region (Rahayu, 2026).

Major international bodies have repeatedly documented the severity of the crisis. United Nations human rights experts have expressed "serious concerns" over "shocking abuses" against indigenous Papuans, citing extrajudicial killings, child killings, enforced disappearances, and torture (United Nations OHCHR, 2022). The 2024 report from the United States Department of State corroborates this, noting that the Indonesian government "did not systematically take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses" (United States Department of State, 2024). The ongoing violence between government forces and separatist groups has precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis. UN experts estimate that between 60,000 and 100,000 people have been internally displaced since the conflict's escalation in 2018. These internally displaced persons (IDPs) are often left without aid, leading to reports of severe malnutrition (United Nations OHCHR, 2022). Crucially, this lack of access is not an accident but a strategy of state control. UN experts stated they were "particularly disturbed by reports that humanitarian aid to displaced Papuans is being obstructed by the authorities" (United Nations OHCHR, 2022). This obstruction specifically

targets religious organisations. In several incidents, "church workers have been prevented by security forces from visiting villages where IDPs are seeking shelter" (United Nations OHCHR, 2022). This action reveals that Indonesian security forces (*TNI/Polri*) do not view local church workers as neutral humanitarian actors, but as potential adversaries and, most importantly, as credible witnesses to be blinded. This directly confirms the high-stakes, frontline role the local Church is forced to play. The physical conflict is sustained by a state-led information war designed to control the narrative. The Indonesian government has "severely restricted" access for foreign journalists, independent researchers, and international human rights monitors since the 1960s (Harsono, 2024). This policy of restriction has been highly successful; a search for "West Papua" in Indonesia's National Library, for example, yields a "thin collection" of just 1,192 titles, reflecting a deliberate effort to stifle independent analysis (Harsono, 2024). Human rights defenders who do manage to operate within Papua are left "vulnerable to threats and intimidation," and "very few of those responsible for the attacks were brought to justice" (United States Department of State, 2024).

This successful restriction on academic and journalistic access has a profound, unintended consequence: it dramatically increases the importance of the Church. According to Nahria et al. (2025), the government which often through security forces and restrictive policies usually hinders journalism in Papua by limiting access to information, intimidating journalists, and failing to provide firm legal protection for press freedom in conflict areas, despite

guarantees under Press Law No. 40/1999. As a result, journalists practice self-censorship by avoiding sensitive issues (such as independence narratives), softening language, or delaying reports, which leads to fragmented, cautious, and incomplete media coverage of Papua's conflict realities. This environment ultimately weakens the media's watchdog role and prevents the public from both nationally and internationally, from gaining a comprehensive understanding of the structural violence and human rights issues occurring in Papua. Campbell (2016) mentioned, in the remote highland villages where monitors cannot go, the local parish priest, the catechist, and the diocesan Justice and Peace worker remain. The Church's pre-existing, island-wide infrastructure, which penetrates every part of Papuan society, becomes the *de facto*, and often the *only*, credible monitoring network on the ground. This elevates the Church's human right's "role" from a simple moral choice to an existential necessity for documenting the suffering of the Papuan people. With the difficult circumstances faced by native Papuans, especially regarding the systemic repression felt throughout the island by the government.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

The Church, being an experienced international actor which has on countless occasions become a voice for the oppressed, possessing a unique persona and influence within the international community. Yet when we're talking about Human rights issues in Papua, we couldn't fully get the Catholic Church stance. Thus, it raises the following questions:

1. Is the Catholic Church divided on its stance in Human Rights issues in Papua?
2. What influences the Catholic Church response towards the Human Rights issues in Papua?

### **1.3. Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to provide a comprehensive analysis on the Catholic Church's complex and seemingly contradictory stance on the human rights crisis in Papua. The research aimed to move beyond a simple description and demonstrate that the Church is not a single entity in this matter and explore the tension between the actors within the church proper. This research, therefore, sought to explain this internal conflict by examining the actions of local dioceses, the critiques from priests and laity, key academic analyses, and the Vatican's strategic response.

### **1.4. Research Benefit**

This research is done with the hope of meeting a practical benefit and an academic benefit, which is:

#### **1.4.1. Academic Benefit**

This research contributes to academic understanding by addressing a notable gap in the study of Catholic peacebuilding. It highlights the often-overlooked role of local Catholic actors in shaping Vatican diplomacy and shows how local-global Church interactions influence peace processes. The study will enrich international relations theory, particularly constructivism and the English School, by offering insights into how religious actors shape norms

and identities across different levels. It also adds depth to peace and conflict studies by demonstrating how local agency and internal Church dynamics affect international mediation. Furthermore, it contributes to the sociology of religion by showing how a global institution like the Catholic Church manages diversity and influence in complex social and political environments.

#### **1.4.2. Practical Benefit**

On a practical level, the research may help improve how the Holy See works with local Catholic actors in conflict settings. It can strengthen Vatican peace efforts by identifying ways to better coordinate with grassroots initiatives, while also empowering local Church leaders by recognising their role and offering strategies to increase their influence. For governments, international organisations, and NGOs, the study provides a clearer picture of how to engage with the Catholic Church as a multi-level peace-building actor. It may also guide the selection of reliable Church partners in regions where the Church holds a strong moral and social standing. Finally, by exploring the Church's internal dynamics, the research offers useful insights for interfaith and secular organisations aiming to build more effective partnerships in the pursuit of peace and justice.

### **1.5. Theoretical Thinking Framework**

#### **1.5.1. Literature Review**

The Catholic Church, through the Holy See, plays a unique and influential role in global peacebuilding. Its international legal personality, distinct from the territorial Vatican City State, enables it to engage in

diplomatic activities akin to those of sovereign states, including sending and receiving ambassadors (*apostolic nuncios*) and entering treaties or concordats (Cahill, 2017; Joubert, 2017). The Holy See's diplomatic engagements are largely non-coercive, grounded in soft power, moral authority, and its vast transnational network, rather than material or military force (Gaetan, 2021; Salum, 2023). Central to its foreign policy are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), including human dignity, the common good, and solidarity. These values shape the Vatican's approach to global affairs and present its diplomatic efforts as a moral commitment to humanity (Rivera, 2015). Under Pope Francis, this ethical framework has further evolved into a "Doctrine of Mercy," guiding Vatican responses to a range of global challenges, such as armed conflict and climate change (Korniawan, 2024).

A foundational element of Vatican diplomacy is its policy of permanent neutrality, which was formally codified in the Lateran Treaty of 1929. This legal commitment mandates the Holy See's abstention from political or military alignments unless expressly called upon by conflicting parties (Breger & Reginbogin, 2022; Gaetan, 2021; Joubert, 2017). However, neutrality has not been without controversy. Critics argue that the Vatican maintains neutrality by treating states as value-neutral in its international dealings, distinguishing between theological views on sin and pragmatic diplomatic relations with and civil society through specialised, values-based (Cahill, 2017). This approach has provoked criticism, especially in morally charged conflicts such as the war in Ukraine, where the Vatican's stance has at

times been interpreted as a moral compromise (Krijger, 2025; Robert Lansing Institute, 2025). While Vatican diplomacy has proven effective in cases such as the Beagle Channel dispute between Argentina and Chile, where papal mediation was pivotal (Mirow, 2004), its moral suasion may have limited impact in contexts where religious appeals carry less influence or where hard power dominates (Korniawan, 2024). Analytical frameworks like constructivism, which emphasise the influence of norms, values, and identity, are commonly employed to interpret the Holy See's diplomatic strategies (Korniawan, 2024). The English School of International Relations also provides valuable insights into the Holy See's position within international society and its normative engagements (Devlen et al., 2005; Rozario, 2024)

In parallel, a growing body of scholarship underscores the significant contributions of local Catholic actors to peacebuilding efforts. These actors, which include national bishops' conferences, diocesan institutions, religious orders, and lay organisations such as Caritas, operate across a spectrum of interventions, including mediation, advocacy, trauma healing, peace education, and interreligious dialogue (Driessen, 2025). As Appleby's concept of the ambivalence of the sacred suggests, religion has the potential to fuel both conflict and peace, making the role of Catholic actors particularly complex yet vital. Prominent Catholic organisations like Caritas Internationalis and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) embed peacebuilding within broader humanitarian programmes. For example, CRS's "3Bs" strategy, binding, bonding, and bridging, is a CST-based framework for interfaith

reconciliation (Evans, 2024). The Community of Sant'Egidio, a lay Catholic association, has earned recognition for its Track 1.5 mediation work in Mozambique and South Sudan, blending informal religious diplomacy with official peace negotiations (Gaetan, 2021; Giro, 1998)

Regional case studies demonstrate how local Catholic efforts often lay the groundwork for, or complement, Vatican initiatives. In Colombia, for instance, the Church's "Pastoral Social" projects facilitated local dialogue with armed actors and provided protective presence long before Vatican involvement. These actions ultimately enhanced the Church's legitimacy in formal negotiations (Gaetan, 2021; Guerra, 2023). Similarly, during El Salvador's civil war, Catholic clergy and organisations like Tutela Legal played crucial roles in non-violent resistance, human rights advocacy, and post-conflict reconciliation through the Commission for Peace (COPAZ) (Sandin et al., 2020; Stein, 1992). The Catholic Church also acted as a mediator during national reconciliation consultations in Guatemala. Yet, internal Church divisions can sometimes hinder peacebuilding effectiveness. In Cameroon, divergent views between Anglophone and Francophone bishops have undermined the Church's credibility as a unified peace actor in the Anglophone crisis (Crisis Group, 2018). Moreover, interreligious dialogue, while widely practised, continues to face persistent criticisms regarding its limited impact in highly politicised conflict zones (Driessen, 2025).

Despite the increasing attention to both Vatican diplomacy and local Catholic peacebuilding efforts, a major gap remains in the literature. There is a

lack of systematic analysis on how local Catholic actors influence the Holy See's diplomatic strategies and peace initiatives along with how the Catholic Church acts and stance regarding the Human Rights issues in Papua. Randriamanantena (2020) offers a rare exception by arguing for the decisive role of the local church and the significance of Catholic identity in shaping mediation. However, even this work acknowledges that the foreign policy dimension of Vatican diplomacy has been largely overlooked. Similarly, Driessen (2025) observes that while studies on Church involvement in Colombia's peace process have expanded, few have examined how local initiatives influence conflict dynamics, and even fewer explore the Vatican's strategic response. Most existing research focuses on the actions of either the Holy See or local Church institutions independently, without adequately exploring the mechanisms through which local voices, networks, and legitimacy feed into formal Vatican diplomacy. Furthermore, there is a paucity of comparative research assessing how this interplay operates across different conflicts or contexts, and how it affects the outcomes of peace processes.

Along with that, there's significant literature gap concerning the theological motivations of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI). While its "deafening silence" is widely documented as a source of internal conflict, there is a lack of analysis exploring whether this is merely institutional caution or a distinct theological position. Research is needed to investigate the KWI's embrace of Indonesian nationalism and the state ideology of Pancasila as a competing *pro ecclesia et patria* ("for church and country") theology that

fundamentally conflicts with the Papuan Church's liberation-focused ministry. This gap extends to a lack of comparative studies examining whether the KWI's stance on Papua is a replication of its institutional passivity during the Timor-Leste occupation.

Another gap exists in understanding the mechanics and effectiveness of the Church's multi-level advocacy. While internal protests like the 2020 "Moral Call" by Papuan priests are known, no study explicitly analyses these actions as a deliberate internal advocacy strategy like a "boomerang effect" targeting the Vatican (the "Principal") to correct the non-responsive KWI (the "Agent"). Furthermore, while the participation of diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions (SKPs) in Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) is established, particularly through submissions to the UN, there is a significant lack of empirical research assessing the actual impact of this faith-based advocacy on Indonesian state policy, especially in the face of Indonesia's "diplomacy of denial".

Finally, a major ethnographic gap exists in the study of indigenous Papuan Catholicism itself. Scholars have examined how Christianity has been "adopted, adapted, and transformed" by Papuans for political self-determination, but this work has largely focused on Protestant groups like the Kingmi Church. There is a distinct lack of research on how indigenous Catholic communities syncretise their traditional beliefs (regarding land, ancestors, and community) with Catholic theology to forge a unique liberation

framework. Understanding this specific "indigenous theology of resistance" is critical to fully grasping the motivations of the local, activist Church.

This research seeks to address that lacuna by exploring the mutual influence and dynamic relationship between local Catholic actors and the Catholic Church dynamics and stance regarding human rights issues in Papua.

### **1.5.2. The English School**

The English School (ES) of international relations (IR) theory provides a uniquely suitable paradigm for this analysis. Unlike realism, which would reduce the Church's actions to a quest for power, or liberalism, which would focus narrowly on its role as an NGO, the ES posits that international politics is shaped not just by material capabilities but by ideas, norms, and shared institutions (Bull, 1977; Neumann, 2001). It is a constructivist and historical approach that examines the "society of states" and the normative structures that bind it. The ES is fundamentally concerned with the tension between state sovereignty (a "realist" assumption) and the existence of a common normative framework, making it ideal for analysing an actor like the Catholic Church, which is itself a primary global norm-setter.

The ES framework posits a "three-tiered" conception of global order. The first tier is the international system, which forms from the mere interaction of states and is driven by power politics, or *Machtpolitik* (Bull, 1977). The second, more developed tier is the international society, which emerges when these states become "conscious of certain common interests and common values" and agree to be bound by shared rules and institutions (like

international law, diplomacy, and the norm of sovereignty) (Bull, 1977). The Catholic Church, through the Holy See, participates in this society as a state-like actor. The third, and for this analysis most critical, tier is world society. This "Cinderella concept" (Buzan, 2004) transcends the state system entirely, focusing instead on the global population, individuals, and non-state actors as the primary focus of global identity and arrangements. The Church as a global community of believers is a quintessential institution of this "world society."

At the heart of the English School is a central normative debate between "pluralism" and "solidarism," which serves as the "best-known tension within English School theory" (Bellamy, 2003). This debate concerns the nature and depth of the shared norms within the "international society" (Bellamy, 2003; Stivachtis & McKeil, 2018). A pluralist conception of international society is minimalist; it emphasizes the diversity of states and cultures and argues that the only norms that can be universally agreed upon are procedural ones that maintain order, chiefly state sovereignty and non-intervention (Bellamy, 2003). A solidarist conception, by contrast, argues for a more integrated global community, or "world society," bound by a "high degree of shared norms", including the universal validity of human rights. Solidarism, therefore, legitimises humanitarian intervention and holds states accountable for violating these universal values, prioritizing global justice over state-based order (Bellamy, 2003; Neumann, 2001)

This theoretical debate provides a powerful lens through which to understand the internal division within the Indonesian Catholic Church. The

national-level Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) embodies the pluralist position. Its behaviour is not defined by apathy but by a calculated institutional choice to prioritize order and respect state sovereignty. The KWI's legal and political identity is inextricably linked to the Indonesian state. Its very name and structure were shaped by the New Order regime's 1985 Law on Social Organizations, which mandated that all organizations, including the Church, adopt the state ideology of Pancasila as their "sole ideology". This history created a powerful institutional incentive for the KWI to see itself as "part of Indonesian society" first and foremost. Consequently, its interventions are classic pluralist actions: they avoid direct confrontation, respect Indonesian sovereignty, and frame their concerns in the "safe" institutional language of promoting "dialogue" (KWI, 2011) or convening "indicative" studies on IDPs (ACAPS, 2024). This is an "order-keeping" approach, designed to maintain its legal standing and not violate the cardinal rule of non-interference.

In direct contrast, the local Papuan dioceses, priests, and laity function as solidarist actors. Operating from the "world society" perspective, their primary referent is not the state but the individual human being and universal dignity. They are not constrained by the same national-level diplomatic considerations as the KWI. Their appeals are grounded explicitly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a moral framework that sees the state not as a partner in order, but as the "perpetrator" of injustice. Their demands for external, "third-party" mediated dialogue (Human Rights

Monitor, 2023), their direct submission of grievance reports to the United Nations, and their explicit calls for UN intervention interventions.

(Human Rights Monitor, 2023) are quintessentially solidarist acts. They reject the primacy of Indonesian sovereignty in the face of what they see as a violation of universal human rights. The internal division within the Catholic Church, therefore, is not a simple disagreement; it is a perfect microcosm of the English School's central and unresolved debate between pluralism and solidarism, order and justice (Bellamy, 2003).

### **1.5.3. Transnational Advocacy Network**

The solidarist actions of the Papuan Church are not random; they follow a clear strategic logic explained by Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) theory. TANs are defined by scholars Keck & Sikkink (1998) as networks of activists operating across national borders, "bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information" (p. 2). These networks are motivated by "principled ideas or values" and aim to promote causes and policy changes on a global scale. The theory explicitly identifies "churches" as primary actors within these networks (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The assemblage of Papuan Church actors, including the JPIC commissions of the Dioceses of Agats, Timika, and Sorong, alongside religious orders like the Franciscans (SKPKC Fransiskan Papua) and Augustinians is an absolute example of TAN.

The core mechanism of TANs is the "boomerang pattern". Keck & Sikkink explained this pattern emerges when domestic groups, blocked in their

attempts to effect change by their own government, seek international allies. These allies, which can include international NGOs, foundations, media, or parts of other governments, then use their access to "pressure" blocking state from the outside. This strategy is most common in human rights campaigns (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) where a state like Indonesia, which restricts access for independent human rights observers and media understood primarily as the Vatican's capacity to exert leverage over parties i(ACAPS, 2024), effectively severs the domestic channels for redress. The Papuan Church's activism demonstrates a sophisticated, nested boomerang strategy. It is "nested" because the local actors are blocked twice: first by the Indonesian state, and second, by their own national Church leadership (the KWI). In response, they have launched two distinct boomerangs. The first is a classic TAN manoeuvre: the Papuan Church's JPIC commissions, blocked by the Indonesian government, partner with their international counterparts (*e.g., Franciscans International, TAPOL, Asia Justice and Rights*) (HRWG, 2022). This transnational coalition then bypasses the Indonesian state and targets an intergovernmental organization (IGO) directly which in this case, by submitting a joint report to the UN Human Rights Committee (ICCPR) to pressure Indonesia on its treaty obligations (UN General Assembly, 2022). The second boomerang is internal to the Church. The local priests and laity, feeling their calls for justice are ignored by the "silent" KWI (Human Rights Monitor, 2023), "boomerang" their appeal over the KWI's head to other powerful actors within the global Church. This includes direct appeals to

neighboring bishops' conferences (*like those of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands*) (Catholic Papuan Women, 2016) and, ultimately, to the Pope and the wider global community via the UN (Human Rights Monitor, 2023).

This TAN employs the full spectrum of tactics identified by Keck & Sikkink (1998). Information politics, the "ability to move politically usable information quickly and credibly" (p. 19), is their primary weapon. The 1995 Munninghoff report, the 2009 dialogue proposal by Father Neles Tebay (*published by the Jayapura Diocese*) (Tebay, 2009), and the recent IDP reports (ACAPS, 2024) are all expert examples of creating and disseminating credible, data-driven "information politics" to frame the narrative. Symbolic politics, the "ability to call upon symbols...or stories" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 20), is evident in the 147 priests' 2020 statement. They leverage their unique moral authority as "servants of God" to "voice the cries of the consciousness" of the people, symbolically reframing a political conflict as a profound moral and spiritual emergency. Leverage politics, calling on powerful actors, is seen in their direct appeal for UN intervention (Catholic priests call for UN intervention, 2021). Finally, and most astutely, they employ accountability politics: the "effort to oblige more powerful actors to act on...principles they formally endorsed" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 20). The 2020 priests' statement perfectly executes this by publicly shaming the KWI, contrasting its "profound sorrow" and swift condemnation of violence against Protestants in Sigi, Central Sulawesi, with its "silent" response to the killings in Papua. This was a

direct, public, internal accountability manoeuvre, obliging the KWI to live up to its own professed Catholic principles.

#### **1.5.4. Principal-Agent Theory**

The internal divisions and strategic actions exposed by the ES and TAN frameworks are rooted in the formal organizational structure of the Catholic Church. This structure, and the conflicts it produces, can be modelled using Principal-Agent (PA) theory. In political science and economics, PA theory analyses the challenges of delegation (Bernhold & Wiesweg, 2021). A "principal" (*e.g., a citizen, a boss*) delegates authority to an "agent" (*e.g., a politician, an employee*) to act on their behalf. This relationship is inherently problematic and defined by two core issues: asymmetric information (*the agent, who is "on the ground," possesses more or better information than the principal*) and preference divergence (*the principal and the agent may have different goals or incentives*) (Genovese, 2015). These problems can lead to "agency slack," where the agent's behaviour deviates from the principal's wishes (Hawkins et al., 2006). This framework is an established method for analysing the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, where the Vatican/Pope is the principal and clerics are the agents.

The crisis in Papua reveals that the Church is not a simple, single PA relationship but a complex chain with competing principals. A local Papuan priest or diocesan bishop (*like the Bishop of Jayapura*) is an agent trapped in a web of conflicting loyalties, serving multiple principals simultaneously, each with divergent preferences. 'Principal 1' is the Papuan laity. 'Principal 2' is the

national conference (the KWI), which, as established, has a strong preference for institutional survival and maintaining a "pluralist" compact with the Indonesian state. 'Principal 3' is the Holy See (*the Vatican and the Pope*), the ultimate principal, whose preferences are global, balancing pastoral concerns with diplomatic relations with all states (Affatato, 2025). The "division" within the Church is the direct, observable result of this conflict. The "agency slack" of the local priests, their open defiance of the KWI's "silent" preference, is a rational choice to prioritize the preferences of Principal 1 (*their local flock*) over Principal 2 (*the national conference*).

This PA framework also provides the precise mechanism for understanding the connection between the local Church and the Vatican, a key query of this analysis. This connection is best understood as the principal's (*Vatican's*) effort to solve the PA problem, specifically by creating monitoring mechanisms to overcome information asymmetry and manage agency slack. The Vatican does not rely solely on the KWI for information; it has two crucial, direct channels to the local dioceses. The first mechanism is the Apostolic Nuncio. The Nuncio is the Vatican's ambassador, and he serves a critical dual role: a diplomatic role to the host state (*Indonesia*) and an ecclesiastical role as the Pope's direct representative to the local Church (Affatato, 2025). The Nuncio is the Vatican's on-the-ground monitor, responsible for "observing the political, social, and religious climates" and "making critical reports back to the Vatican". He is also directly involved in "advising the Pope on the selection of bishops". This structure allows the

Vatican to bypass the KWI's information filter. When the Nuncio, Mgr. Piero Pioppo, arranged for Pope Francis to meet with refugees and marginalized groups upon his arrival in Jakarta, he was engaging in a form of direct monitoring, gathering unfiltered, on-the-ground data for the principal. The second mechanism is the *Visita ad Limina Apostolorum*. This is the formal, canonical requirement for every diocesan bishop in the world to travel to Rome (*traditionally every five years*) to report in person to the Pope and the various Vatican dicasteries (Sayer & Gracias, 2022). This *visita* is the direct, institutional line of communication the user's query sought. It is a monitoring tool that allows the Bishop of Jayapura or Timika (*the agent*) to bypass his national principal (*the KWI*) and report directly to the ultimate principal (*the Pope*). Recent Vatican reforms to this process explicitly aim to solve the PA problem, replacing a spirit of "distrust" with one of "cooperation" and requiring bishops to provide their own "subjective assessments" rather than filtered reports (Sayer & Gracias, 2022). This ensures the Vatican receives the unfiltered, solidarist, on-the-ground reality from its Papuan agents to counterbalance the pluralist, diplomatic information coming from the KWI.

## **1.6. Operationalisation of the Concept**

### **1.6.1. Influence**

According to the foundational work of political scientist Robert Dahl, influence is defined as a specific relational dynamic where one actor (the influencer) succeeds in getting another actor to do something they would not have otherwise done. In this framework, the factors that trigger a political act

are rooted in the influencer's "power base", the specific resources they command, such as wealth, social status, or specialized information, and the "means" by which those resources are deployed, whether through persuasion, inducement, or coercion. For Dahl, influencing a political actor is essentially a process of altering their decision-making calculus; the actor performs the act because the influencer has effectively changed the environment or the incentives surrounding that choice, making the desired action the most rational or necessary path forward for the subject.

Regarding this term, influence will be used to refer to the various factors might that be internal or external that pressure or affects the judgement of the actors discussed within this research. We will primarily focuses regarding the contextual situation placed for each of the actor and also their standing and overall sphere of influence regarding the issue at hand.

### **1.6.2. Conflict**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, conflict is fundamentally defined as a serious disagreement or a state of "incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests." When applied to a political context where actors are aligned on a goal, this definition characterises conflict as a structural tension arising from competing perceptions of the necessary path forward. It represents a situation where, despite a shared objective, the "incompatibility" lies in the tactical methods or principles used to address a specific issue. In this sense, conflict acts as a rigorous vetting process for divergent strategies; it highlights where logic or priorities differ on the "how"

rather than the "what," framing the dispute not as a breakdown of cooperation, but as a necessary disagreement aimed at optimising the outcome through the resolution of procedural differences.

Lewis Coser (1957) concept of "Realistic Conflict" serves as the primary theoretical frame for understanding these disagreements as productive rather than destructive. Coser argues that when actors are unified by a common goal but divided by their approaches, the resulting conflict performs a vital social function by clarifying operational boundaries and strengthening the group's internal resilience. Because the struggle is directed toward achieving a concrete result, it forces a high-level evaluation of tactics and resources, ensuring that the chosen path is the most effective. Thus, for Coser, this form of conflict is an essential mechanism for institutional adjustment, preventing stagnation and ensuring that the shared objective is reached through the most durable means possible.

The term conflict will be used within this research to refer to the discourse and varying stances between the actor within this research. The word "conflict" would be used frequently to refer either towards the relationship between the actors, or the differencing stance used by the actors.

### **1.6.3. Human Rights Issues**

Under the framework of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), human rights are defined as inalienable entitlements that derive solely from the inherent dignity of the human person. Both treaties assert in their identical preambles that these rights are not

privileges bestowed by a state, but are the fundamental "foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world." By grounding rights in universal dignity rather than national legislation, the Covenants establish that every individual possesses a baseline of protection which ranges from physical integrity to freedom of conscience, that exists independently of their citizenship, status, or the whims of a government.

Furthermore, these Covenants define human rights as an indivisible and interdependent system where civil liberties and socio-economic well-being are mutually reinforcing. While the ICCPR focuses on "negative rights" (protection from state interference, such as freedom from torture) and the ICESCR focuses on "positive rights" (state-supported entitlements, such as the right to education and health), the treaties argue that one cannot be fully realised without the other. This comprehensive definition posits that a person cannot truly enjoy political freedom if they lack the necessities for survival, nor can they enjoy economic security without the legal safeguards to protect their voice. Thus, human rights are defined as the total environment encompassing legal, social, and economic, required for a "free human being" to flourish.

A definition of human rights remains incomplete without an understanding of what constitutes their breach. Within the legal architecture of the Covenants, a violation occurs when a State Party fails to meet its tripartite obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of individuals within its jurisdiction. These breaches can manifest as acts of commission, such as state-

sanctioned torture or the suppression of peaceful assembly (ICCPR), or acts of omission, such as a government's failure to take "deliberate, concrete, and targeted" steps toward providing basic healthcare or education (ICESCR).

Because these treaties are legally binding, a violation represents more than a moral failing; it is a breach of international law that triggers a duty of accountability and remediation. Whether through the active denial of due process or the systemic neglect of a population's standard of living, a violation is defined as any state action or inaction that undermines the inherent dignity that these Covenants were designed to safeguard.

The term human rights issues will be used within this research to refer to the context of human rights violations experienced by native Papuans. This term will be used frequently whenever we're referring to the overall human rights situation and discourse regarding Papua.

#### **1.6.4. Local Church**

Within the framework of this research, the "Local Church" or interchangeably referred also as "Local Vatican" is conceptualised as a specific constellation of local Catholic actors delineated by four functionally interconnected domains: diplomacy, governance, evangelization, and pastoral care (Vallier, 1971). This "Local Vatican" serves as the institutional interface between the Holy See and individual nation-states, facilitating a complex relational system where global mandates are adapted to national contexts (Randriamanantena, 2020). Central to this structure is the Apostolic Nuncio, whose "double status" as both a diplomatic envoy to sovereign governments

and a pastoral liaison to the domestic clergy enables a bidirectional flow of influence. By acting as a critical conduit, the Nuncio translates Roman policy into local realities while simultaneously channelling grassroots socio-political nuances back to the central administration in Rome.

Complementing this diplomatic apparatus, Bishops' Conferences represent the highest authority at the local level, having acquired significant autonomy and moral legitimacy following the Second Vatican Council (Randriamanantena, 2020). This decentralization allowed national hierarchies to move beyond administrative roles, becoming influential actors capable of mediating civil conflicts and shaping national discourse independent of direct Roman oversight. Furthermore, the Local Church encompasses diverse religious congregations and lay organisations, such as the Jesuits or Caritas, which function as "niche" diplomatic actors. These "structures of grace" leverage specialized expertise in social research and humanitarian aid to address systemic injustices, thereby extending the Vatican's reach into the spheres of global justice (United States Department of State, 2024).

This successful restriction on academic and journalistic access has a profound, unintended consequence: it dramatically increases the importance of the Church. This leverage isn't typically derived from material power (like military or economic strength) but from a combination of moral authority, spiritual standing, institutional reach, and the ability to shape perceptions and actions (Guerra, 2023).

This term will be used to refer to the influence the Catholic Church and the Holy See has over regional conflict, and to refer to the influence the local churches have over the Holy See perceptions and approach towards a regional conflict.

#### **1.6.5. Peace-making**

This research uses the term "peace-making" largely interchangeably with "conflict resolution" and "mediation" as based on Randriamanantena dissertation. It refers to the broad range of activities and strategies employed by the Vatican (at both global and local levels) to prevent, manage, or resolve conflicts and to foster conditions for lasting peace. The ultimate goal of these efforts is the establishment of peace between nations, rooted in the Vatican's ecclesial mission (Driessen, 2025; Guerra, 2023; Rivera, 2015).

This term will be used to refer to the Catholic Church initiative and actions worldwide which main goals are to pursue peace among nations as stated in *Pacem in terris* by Pope John XXIII (1963). This term will also be used to describe the overall process taken by the Church to mediate a conflict in a regional context.

#### **1.6.6. Pluralist**

The English School approach is characterised by its unique position at the heart of the debate between realism and idealism. Broadly speaking, this school of thought suggests that the world is neither as inherently conflictual as realism maintains, nor as consistently peaceful as idealism envisions. In its application, the English School employs three primary levels of analysis: the

international system (or states-system), international society, and world society (Devlen et al., 2005).

A key scholar who underscores the pluralist approach within this paradigm is Robert H. Jackson. In his work, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States*, Jackson explains that every state possesses its own sovereignty, which other nations are duty-bound to respect. Pluralism in this context focuses on honouring the diverse values, cultures, and internal systems that each country maintains. Its fundamental objective is to preserve international order rather than to enforce a set of universal moral values, recognising that every state is defined by its own distinct characteristics.

Within this research, the term pluralist will be used to describe an actor which leans more on their respect of a state sovereignty and try to refrain from interfering with the issue in a direct way. A pluralist actor would be described as an actor that takes a rather neutral and limited approach towards a problem, who tread carefully in order to not antagonise and respect the international order.

#### **1.6.7. Solidarist**

Within the English School framework, solidarism is understood as a normative orientation that elevates justice and the protection of human rights to the status of collective goals for the international society. This perspective suggests that the absolute nature of state sovereignty may be limited if grave humanitarian violations occur (Bull, 1977). Unlike more restrictive views, solidarist posits that states are not merely holders of sovereignty but are also

members of an international society with a moral duty to protect individuals beyond their own borders when necessary.

Consequently, solidarist places a greater emphasis on transnational norms and collective obligations rooted in shared humanity. It argues that the moral bond between individuals can, at times, override the legal boundaries of the state, particularly when the basic rights of persons are at stake. This creates a framework where the international community shares a responsibility to uphold human dignity across the globe.

Within this research, the term solidarist would be used to describe and refer to an actor that actions lean more towards protecting others' rights beyond their own jurisdiction. Whose acts focuses more on the welfare and advocacy of the marginalised group of individuals.

### **1.7. Research Argument**

The central argument of this research is situated within the English School's debate between pluralist and solidarist perspectives regarding the Catholic Church's stance on human rights. This study contends that the Church's seemingly contradictory positions do not represent institutional fracture, but rather a calculated strategy to navigate this complex issue. To substantiate this, the English School serves as the primary theoretical framework, supplemented by an analysis of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TAN) and Principal-Agent Theory.

## **1.8. Research Method**

### **1.8.1. Research Type**

This research employs a qualitative and descriptive approach. This method was chosen due to its suitability in addressing the research questions posed in the study. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher can gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being examined. Qualitative research methodology is grounded in a philosophical perspective, whereby the researcher serves as the principal instrument in data collection and analysis. The techniques applied prioritise qualitative aspects, with a particular emphasis on the interpretation of meaning (Sugiyono, 2013). The primary aim of qualitative research is to comprehend the experiences encountered by the research subjects, particularly in relation to their behaviours, attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and actions. In other words, this approach cannot be substituted by a quantitative one (Moleong, 2007).

This research will also focus on trying to explain the relationship between the Local Church, and we will try to formalise the stance of The Catholic Church of Indonesia regarding the Human Rights issues in Papua. We will try to address the “why”, “how”, and “what” questions posed in the research questions of this paper through a descriptive method to maximise the readers understanding.

### **1.8.2. Research Sites**

The main sites of this research will be in Indonesia, especially the Apostolic Nuncio for Indonesia and various archbishop and bishops in

Indonesia and Papua. This research will not be field research, thus doesn't necessarily need direct observation. Most of the data for this research will be gathered through various literature studies and possible interviews with people who've understanding on the role of the Catholic Church on Papua.

### **1.8.3. Research Object**

The object of this research is the Local Church in Indonesia, and their stance of Papua. Our key object of this research is to identify how the Catholic Church views the Human rights issues in Papua and why they act the way they acted.

### **1.8.4. Type of Data**

The data that will be used and analysed are primary and secondary data which will be gathered from various sources. Primary data will mainly consist of reports and accounts gathered from various Church Officials. Secondary data will consist of research done by various authors regarding this topic.

### **1.8.5. Data Source**

Data gathered for this research will mainly be sourced from credible and valid sources. Primary data used within this research will be sourced from various Church reports and accounts from Church officials. Secondary data used within this research will be sourced from various academic institutions and authors that have explored this topic before this research, and possibility through the accounts of people who have experiences and understanding on the roles of the Catholic Church on Human Rights issues in Papua.

### **1.8.6. Data Collection Technique**

Data Collection technique that will be used for this research is mainly through literature reviews from various available resources from online databases. Along with that inquiry regarding the systematic of Local Church communication to the Holy See could be made through various Archbishops Seats and the Apostolic Nuncio in Indonesia. This doesn't necessarily rule out the possibility of interview with various sources that may give insight into the roles of the Catholic Church on Human Rights issues in Papua.

### **1.8.7. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Qualitative data analysis is a dynamic and cyclical process of finding meaning in non-numerical information like interview transcripts or field notes, where data collection and analysis happen concurrently (Atkinson, 2017). The process begins with systematically managing the data through activities like transcription, writing summaries, and making initial notes. The core of the analysis involves "coding," where you label segments of data to capture what they are about (Ratcliff, 2008). These codes are then grouped into broader, more defined categories, which are continuously refined by comparing new data against them in an iterative loop (Atkinson, 2017; Ratcliff, 2008). This foundational work transforms raw data into an organized structure ready for deeper interpretation (Ratcliff, 2008).

Once categories are established, the analysis moves toward identifying overarching themes, patterns, and relationships across the dataset. This might involve forming and rigorously testing hypotheses against the data or using

formal methods like content analysis, rhetorical criticism, or creating typologies to build a coherent argument (Atkinson, 2017). Central to this entire endeavour is the role of creative insight, described as a "transforming moment," where the researcher wrestles with a puzzle in the data until a breakthrough in understanding is achieved. This new insight is then verified against the data and with participants, driving the analysis from simple description to a rich, nuanced interpretation (Atkinson, 2017; Ratcliff, 2008).

The data gathered regarding the Local Church involvement in regional conflicts, or their stances and interest shall first be categorised into various urgency and means. Then we shall formulate and hypothesise how these data represent the Local Church and their absolute stance on the Human Rights issues in Papua. Along with the gathered data, we will try to form a consensus and analysis on what is the Church overall response towards the issue.

#### **1.8.8. Data Quality (*goodness criteria*)**

To ensure the quality of data gathered for this research, we will be very selective with the sources we gather from. We will focus exclusively on primary data gathered from the Catholic Church officials, such as their reports or their memos. Other than that, we will ensure that the secondary data we use for this research comes from a reliable institution or author, as to make sure the quality of research being referenced are done by experts on this field.