**Pope's and Vatican's Position on Russia and Ukraine War**

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24th, 2022. According to president Vladimir Putin, the main reason for the invasion was to protect his country from a constant threat from Ukraine. He stated that western countries that Ukraine was supported and Russia was not feeling safe, developed and existent. President Vladimir Putin told Russians that he aimed to "demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine". He informed Russians that he aims to protect people who were subjected to bullying and genocide by Ukraine's government.

Nevertheless, Putin aimed to overrun Ukraine and depose its government ending its desire to join the western defensive alliance NATO. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has received mixed reactions from countries and world leaders, where some are in support of Russia while others are not. One leader who has raised his position on the Russia-Ukraine war is Pope Francis, but some critics hold that he has not done enough in condemning Russia.

**Pope's Position on Russia-Ukraine War**

There are allegations that Pope Francis has not come down hard enough on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Still, the Vatican has defended these allegations. It holds that Pope views the war as "senseless, repugnant and sacrilegious" (D'Emilio, 2022, para. 1). The Vatican's first statement on Russia's invasion of Ukraine determined the former as the aggressor and condemned the Moscow invasion. The Vatican stated that "as for the large-scale war in Ukraine, initiated by the Russian Federation, the interventions of the Holy Father Pope Francis are clear and unequivocal in condemning it as morally unjust, unacceptable, barbaric, senseless, repugnant and sacrilegious" (Povoledo, 2022, para. 2). The Vatican holds that Pope is with Ukraine and his support for Ukraine can be seen when he sent two cardinals to Ukraine as an expression of closeness with the people suffering from the violence of war (White, 2022). As per the words of Tornielli, who is from the Vatican editorial, "the successor of Peter does not have the problem of making known 'which side he is on,' because the Vicar of Christ, like his Lord, is always with the innocent who suffer as Jesus suffered on the cross" (White, 2022, para. 8). Tornielli's words are an indication that even if Pope does not directly condemn Russia for the invasion, he is in support of innocent Ukrainians who are suffering because of the war. In his conversation with Jesuits, Pope condemned the ferocity and brutality of the Russian troops for invading Ukraine and using mercenaries and called their actions "monstrous."

**Critique of the Vatican Position**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine started on February 24, 2022, yet the first time Pope Francis directly blamed the Russian president was in August. After the Russian invasion and before he blamed Putin, Pope Francis repeatedly talked about the suffering of Ukrainians, kissed the Ukrainian flag, and called the war "cruel and senseless", but he avoided blaming the real person behind the war who is Putin (Harlan & Pitrelli, 2022). Pope Francis's delay in criticizing Putin by name is a failure of his moral authority. As a world leader and a religious leader, Pope should have the moral authority to condemn what is morally wrong and promote what is morally right. Instead, the Vatican upheld its policy of not picking sides in a conflict to preserve the Catholic Church's chances of playing a constructive role in potential peace talks. Still, even if this is the case, the Vatican should have initiated peace talks before the war escalated or during the first month of the invasion.

Pope Francis has not only avoided criticizing and blaming Putin for Russia-Ukraine War but also placed the blame on western countries. In an interview published by an Italian newspaper, Pope criticized the western sanctions on Russia as one of the triggers of Putin's Wrath where he stated that they were "barking of NATO at Russia's door" (Matranga, 2022, para. 3). In March this year, Pope Francis said that wars are "always unjust" but in an interview with Corriere della Sera upon been asked if it is appropriate to send weapon to Ukraine he replied "I don't know" (Harlan & Pitrelli, 2022, para. 12). Nevertheless, as per the Catholic doctrine, countries have the right to defend themselves under some circumstances. Still, Pope's statements contradict his church doctrine and mean that Ukraine is not justified in defending itself.

**Conclusion**

Pope Francis has condemned the Russia-Ukraine war and viewed president Putin as an aggressor, but he has not done enough based on his influence. So far, the actions of the Pope on the Russia-Ukraine war are not enough, and his statements have compromised his views on maintaining morality in society. It seems that the Pope wants to maintain neutrality. Still, even if he is doing everything to maintain peace, he should exercise his moral authority to condemn the war in all manners possible while still advocating for Russia and Ukraine to have a peaceful talk. Every peace-loving leader needs to condemn and hold Russia accountable for the war, and Pope Francis is not an exception.

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