

**The Popes and Revolution: Understanding the Role of Moral
Leaders in Promoting Political Change**

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In 1989 revolution swept across Eastern Europe. After decades under oppressive communist rule, popular movements tumbled entrenched governments. The success of the revolution in Poland in was quickly followed by the collapse of regimes throughout the region. The people of Eastern Europe rose up, and the communist governments and their Soviet protector chose not to put them down violently as they had done many times before. The fall of communism in Eastern Europe had enormous implications for world politics, as virtually overnight the division of Europe and the ideological competition that made stability on the continent fragile disappeared. Thinking about these revolutions raises the question, why did they happen when they did? What made 1989 different from the other years when Eastern Europe was under communist rule?

Scholars advance four schools of thought to explain the emergence and timing of the 1989 revolutions. The first approach credits poorly performing communist economies and declining socioeconomic conditions with driving Eastern Europe to rebellion. A second school examines the contagious nature of revolution, claiming that each successful overthrowing of a communist regime inspired those that followed. A third view thinks Gorbachev should be considered responsible for the fall, since the Soviet leader allowed those living under communist rule in Europe and the USSR to begin questioning social and political conditions and the General Secretary ultimately did not order the tanks to roll in 1989. Finally the fourth school credits the activism of Pope John Paul II with inspiring the revolutionaries, especially those in his homeland, Poland. The final school gives a compelling explanation for why communism fell in Eastern Europe in 1989 that is worthy of further study. The activism of the Pope somehow weakened the authoritarian, communist regime and led to its downfall.

This paper argues that the more the Pope stands up against communist oppression, the

more that repressive system will be weakened. To explore this hypothesis, this paper performs comparative case studies of ten critical years in the tenure of two Popes: Pope Pius XII (1948-1958) who led the Church during years of rebellion in Poland, East Germany, and Hungary, and Pope John Paul II (1979-1989) who was the Pontiff when communist opposition to change seemed to harden (early 1980s) as well as when the whole system surprisingly crumbled quickly. Using discourse analysis of the Popes' languages in official documents and speeches as well as an assessment of their actions, I show that Pius XII's accommodation of contemporary political realities is correlated with communist stability, while John Paul II's categorical rejection of the precepts of communism as inimical to the Catholic faith and his support of Polish nationalism helped to undermine communist authority. Of course, other factors – such as the ruthlessness of Communist leaderships in the earlier period could be important, but this paper reveals that John Paul II's behavior certainly emboldened citizens to stand for basic human rights and dignity against the regime. This finding suggests that leaders, even symbolic ones, can have an important impact on their population over the long term by remaining true to fundamental human values, even in the face of oppression. Given that authoritarianism and brutality have not disappeared in the world, realizing the power of rhetoric and encouraging it as a means for undermining repressive rule, is an important findings for promoting positive political change in world affairs.

Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe: Four Explanations

Scholars provide several theories to account for communism's collapse in Eastern Europe in 1989, with approaches focusing on economic performance, ideological contagion, Gorbachev's role, and papal activism among the most important of these explanations.¹ The

¹ For a first look at these explanations, see Timothy Garton Ash, "1989!" *New York Review of Books*. (November 5, 1989). <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/nov/05/1989/>.

economic performance school looks at how the slowdown of communist economies led to the collapse of regimes in Eastern Europe,² while the contagion approach focuses on the fact that the collapse of communism in one place (Poland) led to revolutions throughout the region.³ The Gorbachev view credits the Soviet leader in bringing an end of communism in Eastern Europe.⁴ Finally the Papal activism perspective examines how the Polish Pope John Paul II inspired resistance in his homeland and the rest of Eastern Europe. This final school gives the best explanation for communism's fall. The problems in the communist states of Eastern Europe were not new in the 1980s, and this school demonstrates that there was something significantly different about the 1980s Papal activism.⁵

First, the economic performance school assumes that communist regimes get their legitimacy from good economic performance and the benefits that the government is able to give to its citizens. By the 1980s, communist economies were no longer expanding; meaning states had a hard time giving the expected benefits to citizens, and tougher economic times led citizens to question the legitimacy of the governments. As Stephen White explains, economic performance allows communist regimes to keep citizen support and avoid highly coercive measures. In exchange for giving up civil liberties, citizens of a communist state will enjoy things like health care, education, employment, stable prices, a rising standard of living, and career mobility. Declining economic success, however, makes it difficult for communist regimes

² Stephen White, "Economic Performance and Communist Legitimacy," *World Politics*, 38, No. 3 (1986): 462-82. Accessed September 17, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010202>.

³ David Motadel, "Waves of Revolution," *History Today*, 61, No. 4 (2011): 3-4. Accessed October, 7, 2013. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=6e3aef44-3449-48be-92d6-0a1a3d9370d9%40sessionmgr13&vid=1&hid=20&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWVhc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=60082524>.

⁴ Ivan Varga, "Opaque Glasnost? Eastern Europe and Gorbachev's Reforms," *International Journal*, 43, No. 1 (1987-88): 18-34. Accessed November 12, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/40202507.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

⁵ Gracjan Kraszewski, "Catalyst for Revolution Pope John Paul II's 1979 Pilgrimage to Poland and Its Effects on Solidarity and the Fall of Communism," *The Polish Review*, 57, No. 4 (2012): 29. Accessed September 23, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/polishreview.57.4.002>.

to provide these things to their citizens and maintain their end of the bargain.⁶ Following this logic, Charles Maier believes that economic failure gives a new power and urgency to political resistance.⁷ How can people have faith in a system that is failing to live up to its promises of offering a better quality of life? They therefore become emboldened to think about different possible futures and all the freedoms they are being denied.

Malgorzata Mazurek and Matthew Hilton take an approach similar to White's, although they look at the importance of economic performance in a slightly different way. According to these authors, as people living in communist countries notice the decline in their living standards despite governmental promises, the state's failure to deliver calls its legitimacy into question.⁸ The fact that these regimes claimed they would deliver a higher quality of life than capitalism was also untrue. The contrast between East and West Germany starkly highlighted the falsehood.⁹ Mazurek and Hilton claim that relative economic deprivation motivated East Germans in the 1980s, as most citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) were seeking a higher standard of living more than political freedom.

Instead of focusing on economic conditions, the second school credits the contagious nature of revolution, which can also be referred to as the "domino" or the "bandwagon effect" for bringing about the upheavals in 1989. This argument claims that once communism fell in Poland, political change quickly spread to the other countries of Eastern Europe because they were following the example Poland set. This school is logically similar to the Cold War America fear that whole continents would fall to communism as revolutions occurred in Africa, Latin

⁶ White, "Economic Performance," 462-4.

⁷ Charles S. Maier, "The Collapse of Communism: Approaches for a Future History" *History Workshop*, No. 31, (1991): 51. Accessed September 24, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289050>.

⁸ Malgorzata Mazurek and Matthew Hilton, "Consumerism, Solidarity and Communism: Consumer Protection and the Consumer Movement in Poland," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42, No. 2. (2007): 316. Accessed September 23, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036446>.

⁹ Mazurek and Hilton, "Consumerism, Solidarity, and Communism," 320.

America, the Middle East, and South East Asia.¹⁰ The contagion school says that a major change occurring in one country will infect its neighbors too. According to this line of thinking, anti-communism spread like wildfire across Eastern and Central Europe as citizens sought to jump on the wagon of liberalism, without necessarily knowing or supporting this political program. Thus, demands for change and the corresponding collapse of the regime in Poland created similar outbursts among citizens and weakened political elites. Thus, communism fell in rapid succession in Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania in the second half of 1989.¹¹

O'Loughlin and Ward write that certain characteristics make states more susceptible to the "contagious infection" of political upheaval. Countries in the same region tend to have similar internal conditions that make both the complaints heard across borders resonate and pressure elites in similar fashion.¹² In the case of Eastern Europe these countries "shared the same version of a totalitarian political system"¹³ and had "the same political and economic structure, the same power mechanisms, and the same claims to legitimacy as an expression of a popular will and international solidarity."¹⁴ With all of these similarities, if one country in a region experiences a revolution and then moves towards democracy, neighboring states will likely follow.

¹⁰ David Motadel, "Waves of Revolution," *History Today*, 61, No. 4 (2011): 4. Accessed October, 7, 2013. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=6e3aef44-3449-48be-92d6-0a1a3d9370d9%40sessionmgr13&vid=1&hid=20&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=60082524>.

¹¹ Motadel, "Waves of Revolution," 4.

¹² John O'Loughlin and Michael D. Ward, "The Diffusion of Democracy, 1946-1994," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, No. 4 (1998): 549. Accessed October 16, 2013. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=4d4f53d9-e204-41c9-aa36-29472d9fa368%40sessionmgr12&vid=6&hid=20>.

¹³ Michael Zantovsky, "1989 and 2011 Compare and Contrast," *World Affairs* 174, No. 2 (2011): 15. Accessed November 14, 2013.

<https://ezproxy.sju.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=77673885&site=ehost-live>

¹⁴ Zantovsky, "1989 and 2011," 15.

Another interesting analysis of the “bandwagon effect” of dissent in Eastern Europe comes from Timur Kuran, who noticed that over time, opposition movements became bolder, and governments became less likely to respond with violence.¹⁵ Kuran and others also note the increasingly rapid timeframe in which the movements for political change succeeded. After communism fell in Czechoslovakia, a banner in Prague read, “Poland – 10 years, Hungary – 10 months, East Germany – 10 weeks, Czechoslovakia – 10 days.”¹⁶ Success in one country accelerated change in the countries that followed, as the fall of communism in Poland led to revolution in Hungary, and their successes provoked protests in East Germany and beyond.

The third school focuses on the importance of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s decision to allow communism to collapse in the satellite states. Any time before, the Soviet leader used force to destroy any opposition, and since 1968, the Brezhnev doctrine articulated that state’s policy, “the gains of socialism will not be reversed.” Gorbachev’s leadership, over time, made the former Soviet formula for ruling Eastern Europe nonsensical, as he began arguing for a “common European Home” and even espousing values that were more comfortable in the West than among his party colleagues in the East like the importance of openness and some forms of political (and even economic) competition.¹⁷ By the 1980s the Soviet Union was allowing Eastern European states to handle their own political and economic affairs so long as they did not interfere with Soviet interests.¹⁸ This new freedom allowed East European leaderships to respond uniquely to their own problems, which made some, like Hungary, take the radical step of opening its border with Austria. Others, like East Germany and Czechoslovakia

¹⁵ Timur Kuran, “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* 44, No. 1(1991): 36, 38. Accessed September 24, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010422>.

¹⁶ Kuran, “Now Out of Never,” 42.

¹⁷ Zantovsky, “1989 and 2011,” 19.

¹⁸ Ivan Varga, “Opaque Glasnost? Eastern Europe and Gorbachev’s Reforms,” *International Journal*, 43, No. 1 (1987-88): 19. Accessed November 12, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/40202507.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

might have hoped for stronger Soviet support in response to challengers, but when Gorbachev replaced the Brezhnev with the “Sinatra Doctrine,” allowing East Europeans to “do it their way,” then populations felt emboldened and regimes were unsure of their responses to protestors.¹⁹

“Gorbachev’s rhetoric is less ominous and his readiness to use force against perceived threats to allied socialist regimes is less apparent,”²⁰ said expert Charles Gati back in 1987. In the past (1953, 56, 68, 81) Soviet intervention or the mere threat of it had been enough to put an end to uprisings. In 1989 popular protests across Eastern Europe were an obvious threat to the “allied socialist regimes.” Protestors would be more likely to come out in this time, because they did not fear Soviet power in addition to their own states. A Soviet leader not ready to defend the communist regimes of Eastern Europe was definitely not helpful in trying to ensure the continued cooperation of the people. Timothy Garton Ash sees that Gorbachev’s “crucial contribution was to accept changes happening at the periphery of the Soviet Union’s outer empire, rather than attempting to slow down or reverse them.”²¹ By not acting in defense of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, Gorbachev allowed them to fall.

Finally, the Papal Activism school assumes that Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was central to the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe, and these efforts began in his homeland and then spread. Many scholars look at the effect his election had on uniting the Polish people, and how this surprising choice (a *Polish Pope*) made the church relevant again not only to Poland, but also the rest of Eastern Europe. Scholars also tend to focus specifically on the impact of John Paul II’s 1979 trip to Poland as a major turning point.

The significance of a a Polish Pope, according to Walter Sawatsky, was a huge *national*

¹⁹ Garton Ash, “1989.”

²⁰ Charles Gati, “Gorbachev and Eastern Europe” *Foreign Affairs*, 65, No. 5 (1987): 970. Accessed November 13, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20043196>.

²¹ Timothy Garton Ash, “1989!” *The New York Review of Books*, 56, No. 17 (2009). Accessed November 11, 2013. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/nov/05/1989/?pagination=false>

victory that united the Polish people. Choosing Wojtyła energized the people of Poland, at a time of increasing economic bleakness and social malaise.²² Moreover, his selection ended the long time Italian domination of the Church and his position as the head of the Church gave John Paul II a platform for reaching hundreds of millions of people beyond Poland. By preaching against oppression and the right of all to be treated with dignity, the Pontiff inspired people around the world to seek freedom.²³

Gracjan Kraszewski writes, “When the Pope came [to Poland in 1979], people lost their fear and the façade of the communist establishment was exposed.”²⁴ According to Kraszewski, John Paul II’s message in 1979 addressed the sensitive issues of nationalism, work, and faith, and his words had a lasting impact. The Pope’s visit awakened Polish pride which was not previously encouraged, but which communism (despite its efforts) had never destroyed. His message offered a view of work as something more than a means of material gain, which was a contrary view in the Soviet bloc. Most importantly the visit of John Paul II reestablished the importance of Catholicism to the Polish people and their shared faith became a key piece of their national resistance movement.²⁵ Solidarity, the independent workers’ union central to the end of communism, emerged the following year. Sawatsky also points out that some of the impact of the visit must have been noticeable right away. While the Pope was in his homeland, the

²² Walter Sawatsky, “Truth Telling in Eastern Europe: The Liberation and the Burden,” *Journal of Church & State*, 33, No. 4 (1991): 701. Accessed September 24, 2013. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=c9de66f2-b1f1-4ad0-895f-b3a9baab576e%40sessionmgr15&vid=1&hid=10&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=9604260399>.

²³ M. Spalding and A. Beichman, “The Cold War’s Magnificent Seven,” *Policy Review*, No. 59 (1992): 44. Accessed September 24, 2013. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=cd558979-da74-468f-a682-adc81552dcb4%40sessionmgr12&vid=2&hid=10&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=9203093859&anchor=AN9203093859-21>. In addition, the Pope’s words and deeds, along with those of Cardinal Jaime Sin’s of the Philippines were extremely important in provoking that people power revolt, too.

²⁴ Gracjan Kraszewski, “Catalyst for Revolution Pope John Paul II’s 1979 Pilgrimage to Poland and Its Effects on Solidarity and the Fall of Communism,” *The Polish Review*, 57, No. 4 (2012): 29. Accessed September 23, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/polishreview.57.4.0027>.

²⁵ Kraszewski, “Catalyst for Revolution,” 30-37.

government actually cut back on television coverage as the visit continued.²⁶

In “The Power of the Powerless,” Václav Havel looks at the implications that the actions of one brave person can have. In his example, a greengrocer stops displaying regime propaganda in his store and begins to voice his alternative views at political meetings. He is upsetting the “panorama” of acquiescence that the regime requires. By acting in ways that show that some people actually do not agree with the regime, he undermines the existing system. By living in truth, the greengrocer reveals the lies of the regime for everyone to see.²⁷ Even though the regime will try to keep the greengrocer from speaking out anymore the impact of the greengrocer’s actions can be irreversible if a critical mass of others live in truth, too. This man has shown others who are unhappy with the regime that they are no alone in their dissatisfaction. As Kuran explains, “pluralistic ignorance,” which had convinced individuals that they were alone and the only ones who felt dissatisfied, had been broken.²⁸ The greengrocer’s refusal to live within the lie makes clear that “the ideology had become an empty shell, paid lip service by all and believed by none.”²⁹ Pope John Paul II can be likened to Havel’s greengrocer. He returns to Poland after his election to the papacy and speaks the truth. In doing this he inspires the Polish people and motivates them to live in truth. Within ten years of his visit, Poland had overthrown communism.

The fourth school is the most compelling, as it provides an interesting account of how both extraordinary and regular people brought about change in Eastern Europe. Cardinal Wojtyła was chosen to lead the faithful and he was a man for whom living in a manner consistent with human dignity was essential. His words and actions then inspired others, through their truth,

²⁶ Sawatsky, “Truth Telling,” 701.

²⁷ Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” *International Journal of Politics*, 15, No. 3/4, (1985-86): 39-40. Accessed September 23, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41103710>.

²⁸ Kuran, “Now Out of Never,” 30.

²⁹ Zantovsky, “1989 and 2011,” 16.

power and consistency, to seek change even when they faced harsh punishments. And ultimately, when regime pressure lessened, people were motivated to return to John Paul II's calls and assert the right to live in truth.

Accepting the Papal Activism school does not mean thinking that economic performance, contagion, and Gorbachev were not important. Economic performance was one reason people were unhappy with communist regimes, so when the Pope began speaking out against communism it was one of the reasons they were willing to rise up. Contagion can also explain why all of Eastern Europe overthrew communism, even countries where the Catholic Church was less present. Contagion would explain why the Pope's visits to Poland and undermining communist ideology there would have an impact on political movements in other countries in the region. One could not completely discuss the fall of communism in Eastern Europe without at least mentioning the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. He certainly played a significant role in the region during this time, but he is not the most important cause of this collapse of so many communist regimes. His big contribution is not doing anything to end the revolutions of 1989 before they were successful in toppling communist regimes. His role would seem more important if communism had fallen first in the USSR. Still, this focus on the Pope shows what one individual can do to inspire others to bring about the fall of what might seem an indestructible edifice.

The Effects of Papal Activism on the Stability of Communist Regimes

The stability of communist regimes depends on a belief in the regime's ideology. As long as it seems that everyone accepts the regime's ideology the government will continue to be stable. Propaganda was important in states with communist regimes, because it encouraged belief

in communism's ideals. One person could undermine this if he had a large, attentive audience and a message teaching something other than communist ideals. This is why Pope John Paul II was so dangerous to communism in Eastern Europe. A pictorial representation of this argument is:

Quality of Papal Activism → Stability of the Communist Government

As the model shows, the quality of papal activism affects the stability of the government. *If the Pope is aggressive in his condemnation of the communist system, then the communist system will be shaken; if his opposition is less systemic or widespread, then the system will maintain its legitimacy and be able to survive.* The more that Pope John Paul II taught Christianity as an alternative worldview, the less people were satisfied with the explanations communism offered. These ideas made the government more vulnerable to uprisings. Therefore, papal activism was essential for bringing down communism.

Evaluating the Impact of Papal Activism on the Stability of Communist Regimes

Choosing Cases for Analysis

Central to the argument of the Papal Activism school is the claim that a Pope can inspire individuals and undermine the logic of repression that then leads to opposition and regime collapse. To investigate this claim, this paper compares the behavior of two Popes serving at critical times in the East European history, Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) and Pope John Paul II (1979-2005). Each leader had different approaches to communism, and their activism had varied results. Because of the unequal lengths of their papacies, taking a ten year period from the reign of each will be the best way to examine their effects. For Pius XII this period will be from 1948-1958, and for John Paul II the period will be 1979-1989. Both of these Popes were very active

opponents of communism; however it was the activism of Pope John Paul II, not Pius XII, which led to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. This pairing of cases gives periods of political foment, the second one decidedly more active, and in the later one, the outcome is the fall of the communist regime, while by the time Pius dies in 1958, Eastern Europe had settled down in the aftermath of the 1956 Hungarian revolution.

These comparisons will prove interesting to study (opposition to the stealing of elections in 1948, uprisings in 1953, and the crushing on the Hungarian revolution in 1956 for the first one, and the rise and repressing of Solidarity in the early 1980s, followed by its stunning electoral victory in June 1989 and the fall of communism in Europe at the end of the year in the second case), but admittedly there are some problems with control. In the early days of communism, this system provided economic improvement for most citizens and a respite from the deprivation of the war years. By the 1970s, Poland was experiencing significant economic problems. In addition, the world context in which these two cases occurred was very different. At the start of the Pius XII case, Stalin had made clear that he would tolerate no political diversity in the Soviet European sphere. In the John Paul II case, Gorbachev's predecessors were similarly unwilling to allow experimentation, but by 1986, the Soviet leader was encouraging openness and democracy (not meaning liberal democracy, but still, he was talking about given ordinary people more say in their workplaces and within party politics). Thus, while the Gorbachev factor makes a difference later on in the case, the last Soviet leader can't account for the changes in Poland that were brewing in the late 1970s when John Paul II emerged. In proceeding with this analysis, understanding that economics and the Soviet factor vary along with the Pope's discourse will be important.

Operationalizing the Quality of Papal Activism: Using Discourse Analysis to Evaluate

Language and Actions

To determine the quality of the activism, the Pope's language (in both official pronouncements and Vatican statements) and his actions matter. The Pope's consistent language and themes in writings and speeches are the message the Vatican is trying to get to the world. As authors like Roxanne Lynn Doty explain, how elites and others talk about the world create a reality that structures what is possible. In other words, the language a Pope uses has consequences for his own action and those of others. If he casts a system, such as communism, as evil, in his own mind and actions and those of his followers that regime becomes evil and then any kind of compromise with it becomes impossible.³⁰ Thus the language used is very important, as it has effects on the speaker and others.

Unfortunately writings and speeches of the two Popes are not equally translated in English. For Pius XII the only pieces consistently available to an English speaker are his encyclicals, but many more speeches, letters, and encyclicals of John Paul II's are accessible. Encyclicals are good works to examine, because they are translated into many more languages than speeches or other letters, and they are sent to leaders of the Church all over the world. This meant that they probably reach a wider audience than any other written work would. Looking at several encyclicals by the same man tends to reveal issues that are important to that particular Pope.

Speeches also give a clear picture about how a person feels, for example John Paul II's speeches on his 1979 apostolic visit to Poland are quite insightful. Plus, this visit, unparalleled in Pius' reign has been called a key turning point. Staying close to the text will ensure that the interpretation is one that anyone could agree with. Another issue to examine is the actions of the

³⁰ Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines" *International Studies Quarterly* 37, No. 3. (Sep. 1993): 316-317.

Pope. Papal visits and other actions can also show the Pope's message in the same way that written documents can. Thus, I will perform a discourse analysis of the Pope's writings and major speeches, as well as examine what he has done to be able to characterize the quality of his activism. Such a strategy provides both a valid and reliable understanding of the concept. It is valid because the Pope's words (spoken and written) are how he seeks to influence the faithful (and others). These are his messages, and much of what the Pope engages in is a type of symbolic politics of influence. His actions, when consistent with his words, demonstrate that his words reflect sincere policy preferences and attempts to influence, not simply a public relations strategy. Staying close to the text and linking words with action helps to combat any problem with reliability. Any observer will find the same repeated themes in the text and will be able to see whether those words correspond to actions. Thus, the discourse and action analysis combined provide a good way of capturing the Pope's activism.

Operationalizing Regime Stability

To assess the stability of the regime, I will look at the extent and nature of the challenges to it. Are there protests? How big and geographically dispersed are they and who is involved? What happens when those in the opposition are met with violence? Do others shrink away and go back to normal life? Looking at the types and size of the challenges to the regime provides a measure whether its staying power is ephemeral. These factors also give a valid account of the regime's stability. In communist or other repressive countries knowing how much support is difficult since people are forced (literally) to show their faith. Given the costs of misbehavior, then, dissident and protest activity are very strong signs of opposition and, ultimately, weakness in the regime. Keeping track of protest events and the activities of opponents also is reliable (or if anything, undercounts the opposition, given the regime's brutality). These events and actions

are reported in newspapers and in secondary accounts of the time and can be assessed through careful research.

Ultimately, the goal is to see whether across these cases, a difference in papal activism leads to varied outcomes in regimes stability. My expectation is higher levels of activism under John Paul II – with his words and deeds inspiring popular anti-communist movements – as compared with the more staid language and behavior of Pius – encouraged others to challenge the regimes and ultimately led to communism’s crumbling.

Stability of Communist Governments: Impact of Popes Pius XII and John Paul II

Both Pius XII and John Paul II were opposed to communism, and they made their opposition known to the world through their encyclicals, speeches and actions had an impact on the rest of the world. A difference in tone, however, marks the language and behavior of both Pontiffs, with Pius XII, in essence, acquiescing to political realities but John Paul II, even in the early days when communism seemed extremely robust and committed to its vision, aggressively countering Marxist-Leninist ideology. The difference in their activism helps account for the varied effects on world politics that the two men had, with John Paul II presiding over the Church when communism fell.

Pius: A Principled Realist Who Avoids the Direct Challenge, Thereby Promoting Stability

Finding the value of the independent variable: examining language and actions. Pius XII most clearly addresses communism in a series of encyclicals written between 1948 and 1958, *Anni Sacri* (1950), *Mirabile Illud* (1950), *Summi Maeroris* (1950), *Evangeliis Praecones* (1951), *Luctuosissimi Eventus* (1956), *Meminisse Iuvat* (1958), and *Ad Apostolorum Principis* (1958). In *Evangeliis Praecones*, he warns “it is imperative to keep all nations from those [i.e. Marxism-

Leninism's] pernicious errors.”³¹ There is much language that concerns the rights and well-being of people,³² including freedom to practice religion, and Pius worries that communists will “jeopardize their eternal salvation”³³ because they are atheists and they are engaging in behavior that is contrary to God’s teachings. In fact, Pius XII writes that “those in the other camp strive to destroy the very basis of Catholic religion and Christian worship”³⁴ as communists, for the most part, enforce and propagandize atheism over the territories they control.

Not simply bothered by the rejection of religion, Pius XII also points to the perverse approach and results of communism. Rejecting the use of violence to help improve conditions of workers and the poor,³⁵ Pius XII speaks negatively of revolutions “which prepare for the ruin of the economy and cause irreparable harm to the common good.”³⁶ In fact, when he looks at what communism has wrought for the ordinary people in these dominated regimes, Pius XII asks all Christians to “join in prayer with these, their brothers, who are oppressed by so many calamities and so many wrongs,”³⁷ and hopes for freedom “through the powerful intervention of Mary.”³⁸ This language is pointing out problems within communism, but Pius is not calling for action, simply sympathizing to those oppressed and hoping for intervention.

³¹ Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, Encyclical letter on promotion of Catholic missions, Vatican Web site, November 13, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_pxii_enc_02061951_evangelii-praecones_en.html.

³² Pius XII, *Luctuosissimi Eventus*, Encyclical letter urging public prayers for peace and freedom for the people of Hungary, Vatican Web site, November 13, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_28101956_luctuosissimi-eventus_en.html.

³³ Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*.

³⁴ Pius XII, *Anni Sacri*, Encyclical letter on a Program for Combatting Atheistic Propaganda throughout the World, Vatican Web Site, November 25, 2013. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12031950_anni-sacri_en.html.

³⁵ Pius XII, *Meminisse Iuvat*, Encyclical letter on prayers for the persecuted Church, Vatican Web site, November, 13, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_14071958_meminisse-iuvat_en.html.

³⁶ Pius XII, *Anni Sacri*.

³⁷ Pius XII, *Luctuosissimi Eventus*.

³⁸ Pius XII, *Ad Apostolorum Principis*, Encyclical letter on communism and the Church in China, Vatican Web site, November 13, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061958_ad-apostolorum-principis_en.html.

Given that Pius XII is leading the Church in a period just after the horrors of World War II, with the Holocaust and the horrible violence of invasion, occupation, and liberation and when tensions are again rising, but this time between the Soviets and the West, the theme of world peace is also pervasive in Pius', work as he prays for a better and more happy era for all."³⁹ "We... return to exhorting earnestly all citizens and their governments to a true concord and peace."⁴⁰ This type of language reveals that Pius XII well understands the danger of his era, and he does not seek provocations in such a dangerous time. Still, this more passive approach to call for prayer and peace does not provide hope for any near-term change in conditions in Eastern Europe.

With respect to actions, Pius XII excommunicated communists and others during his reign, even for actions as seemingly harmless as reading works supporting communist doctrine.⁴¹ While these expulsions could not necessarily be enforced, Pius XII's action left no doubt about his and the Church's position on the morality of communism, as he defined anyone who "defended and spread the materialistic and antichristian doctrine...apostates."⁴² This behavior was, of course, directed not simply at Eastern Europe but other parts of the world, including the Pontiff's on native Italy where Western European communists were seeking to win power through electoral contests. France also had a strong communist party, and in many in the West feared a communist victory. His act, of course, directly affected citizens of communist countries who had to decide whether to risk eternal exclusion for worldly success (not in a Faustian sense,

³⁹ Pius XII, *Mirabile Illud*, Encyclical letter on the Crusade of Prayer for Peace, Vatican Web site, November 26, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_06121950_mirabile-illud_en.html.

⁴⁰ Pius XII, *Summi Maeroris*, Encyclical letter on Public Prayers for Peace, Vatican Web site, November 25, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_19071950_summi-maeroris_en.html.

⁴¹ Elisa A. Carrillo, "The Italian Catholic Church and Communism, 1943-1963," *The Catholic Historical Review* 77, No. 4 (1991): 650. Available November 13, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25023639>.

⁴² Carrillo, "The Italian Catholic Church and Communism," 650.

but to have an easier and more comfortable life as a communist). In addition, during this ten year period, Pius XII never visited any communist countries, though my evidence does not indicate whether his choices or international political realities prevented him. Likely, in the early days of the Cold War such a visit would be impossible from both perspectives, out of the realm of the Pope's imagination⁴³ and rejected by Communist leaders, as the Chinese exclude the Dalai Lama today.

In sum, Pius' language and deeds accept the political realities: the Soviets control much of Eastern Europe and short of war there is no changing that domination. Thus, he is not calling for liberation of those lands, although the Pontiff calls for prayer for the oppressed. Instead, his words and deeds are more directed on achieving what is possible, preventing communism from gaining ground in new countries, and, through excommunication, deterring people from flirting or espousing communist ideals. The Pope's relative silence on the violence in Poland and especially Hungary in 1956, also reflects this realism.

Assessing the dependent variable in the Pius XII case: protests and regime response. As a result of political openness in the USSR in 1956⁴⁴ as well as mounting economic problems internally, there were widespread protests in Poland and Hungary. In Poland intelligentsia and students supported social protests and "new forums for critical debate."⁴⁵ In October, a workers' revolt began in Poznan. Around the same time protests also began in Hungary. Responses to these two uprisings were different. Poland brutally suppressed the Poznan revolt itself, and

⁴³ Doty, "Foreign Policy," 305-310.

⁴⁴ In his "Secret Speech," to the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev revealed Stalin's crimes against Party members and detailed the dangers of the "Cult of Personality." Khrushchev's questioning of the previous rule led many, especially those abroad, to doubt the wisdom of both communist and Soviet domination. Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics, 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 62-74.

⁴⁵ Terry Cox, "1956: Discoveries, Legacies and Memory," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, No. 8 (2006): vi. Accessed November 26, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451312>.

Khrushchev did not need to follow through on his threat of Soviet intervention.⁴⁶ In Hungary, however, the very leadership itself was calling for reform and for leaving the Warsaw Pact, revealing the internal lack of appeal of communism. In fact, support was widespread both geographically and ideologically. Thus, the Soviets authorized a bloody intervention to suppress an anti-communist revolution.⁴⁷

These uprisings were important internally generated uprisings, but the Pope's words and deeds seemed to have little to do with them. He was not calling for the overthrow of the system, although people did try to bring revolution or at least reform about, and in Hungary, if not for Soviet tanks, political change would likely have been extensive because of the broad based opposition to communism there. But political change was not to be in 1956, despite the best efforts of citizens and some elites. We can't know whether the Pope's blessings (words and deeds) might have both further inspired citizens and deterred their opponents. Given the nature of global politics at the time as well as the deafness with which the communists in the USSR listened to moral leaders like the Pope back then, even if Pius had been an outspoken advocate for liberation in Eastern Europe it's doubtful that he would have succeeded in any way other than encouraging more people to go into the streets and be slaughtered by communist forces. Thus, in the first case, we see a Pope who acquiesced to Soviet rule in Eastern Europe, and even though some citizens challenged communist power, they were ultimately crushed by the force of the Warsaw Pact.

John Paul II: Encouragement of Anti-Communism and Polish Nationalism Carries the Day

John Paul II took the helm of the Church at, in some ways, a comparable time in world history. While perhaps hard to believe now, in the late 1970s, the West seemed to be in decline

⁴⁶ Cox, "1956," vi.

⁴⁷ Cox, "1956," vi.

and communism was, in not economically, then in terms of foreign policy and power on the rise. The USSR had intervened in Afghanistan (a move that would ultimately prove fatal), had been expanding in Africa and promoting Marxism-Leninism in Latin America, and seemed to be building more and more powerful nuclear forces. Although the leadership was aging, it remained intransigent and committed to tightly holding onto territory and power.⁴⁸ Soviet victories, however, seemed irrelevant to the Polish Pontiff, who from the outset of his reign served as a moral foil against the teachings of communism and who helped re-inspire the Polish people and others to challenge the force that dominated them. His words and deeds are part of the set of forces that unleashed protest and ultimately destroyed communism in Eastern Europe in 1989.

Finding the value of the independent variable: examining language and actions. Much of John Paul II's language offered alternatives to communism unlike Pius XII's which mostly focused on communism's evils. In one encyclical, Pope John Paul II focused on the importance of development and condemned both communist *and* capitalist states alike for putting undeveloped states in the middle of their ideological conflict.⁴⁹ This is a principled man who is not interested in worldly ideologies but being true to God's word and promoting human dignity. To make the world a better place for all people, John Paul II calls on both systems to change their ways. His language and approach are quite different from Pius XII who did not seem to be so openly critical of capitalism, as he reigned in a time when capitalism, in a sense, ensured that Catholicism could still function in Western Europe. Taking the helm of the Church when the Cold War was about thirty years old, John Paul II pushes the Church's social, political, and economic doctrine, showing the weaknesses of ideologies from both the East and West to

⁴⁸ McCauley, *Soviet Politics*, 80-85.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Encyclical letter for the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, Vatican Web site, December 7, 2013.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html.

achieve “real” good for God’s children.⁵⁰

John Paul II explains his alternative to economic ideology on his trip to Poland in 1979. In opposition to Marxists, the Pope rejects Marxist materialism, as well as capitalism. To him, work does not simply contribute to the state or state power (communist) or a person’s wealth or well-being (communist). Instead, he asserts that work is “ethical” and “spiritual”⁵¹ and that meaning in life comes from Christ and knowing the Son of God.⁵² In calling for faith in God and thinking about the hereafter, the Pope is challenging the communist focus on serving the state and living for today.⁵³

In fact, the Pope goes on to explain, man cannot be fully understood without Christ. Or rather, man is incapable of understanding himself fully without Christ. He cannot understand who he is, nor what his true dignity is, nor what his vocation is, nor what his final end is. He cannot understand any of this without Christ,.... [and t]herefore Christ cannot be kept out of the history of man in any part of the globe, at any longitude or latitude of geography. The exclusion of Christ from the history of man is an act against man.⁵⁴

Here again, we see the Pontiff rejecting communist understandings of human nature and history, and asking Poles to revert back to what they know is true in their hearts, because they are

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Encyclical letter for the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, Vatican Web site, December 7, 2013. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html.

⁵¹ John Paul II, “Holy Mass for the Workers from Upper Silesia and Zaglebie, Homily of His Holiness John Paul II,” Częstochowa, June 6, 1979, Accessed December 5, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790606_polonia-jasna-gora-operai_en.html.

⁵² Pope John Paul II, “Holy Mass Homily,” Victory Square, Warsaw, June 2, 1979. Available December 5, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790602_polonia-varsavia_en.html

⁵³ Pope John Paul II, “Holy Mass Homily.”

⁵⁴ Pope John Paul II, “Holy Mass Homily.”

children of God. And he calls for Poles to see “Christ ... [as] an open book of life for the future, *for our Polish future*” [emphasis in original]. Again, this is a rejection of communist spiritual values as well as of communist internationalism, as the Pope is asserting the rightness of Polish nationalism.⁵⁵

During that visit, the Pope lays out a clear challenge to the people of Poland, to rise to the occasion in today’s world. He asks Poles to consider why, at this time in history, does the Church have a Polish Pope and suggests that the faithful may rightly interpret “that *Poland has become nowadays the land of a particularly responsible witness?*” [emphasis in original]. Here the Pope is encouraging Poles to see themselves as particularly special and chosen to do great things, standing up for what is right and just, even in the face of terrible evil.⁵⁶

In terms of actions, John Paul was able to do more. He traveled the world, even to Eastern Europe and to his native Poland. Changes in transportation, as well as a kind of normalization in the Cold War helped bring about those trips, but the Pope himself was an important actor here. He sought to be among his flock, even when they were oppressed, and most observers believe that John Paul II’s trips to his homeland were his most significant action in terms of contributing to the fall of communism. His first visit was in June 1979 not too long after he had been elected, and the second came a few years later in 1983. Of the first visit Gracjan Kraszewski writes, “The Pope’s 1979 pilgrimage proved more powerful than any nuclear weapons, politics, or economic restructuring package could ever be.”⁵⁷ His language in his speeches during this trip, offered an alternative to what the government taught. John Paul II visited Poland once again in 1983. A month after this visit martial law in Poland was over.

⁵⁵ Pope John Paul II, “Holy Mass Homily.”

⁵⁶ Pope John Paul II, “Holy Mass Homily.”

⁵⁷ Kraszewski, “Catalyst for Revolution,” 29.

Kraszewski cites an article in which it is said that, “The Pope may have lit a time bomb.”⁵⁸ This visit once again linked the Pope to the opposition movement in his homeland. The first of these visits can be credited with inspiring the Solidarity movement, and the second can be credited with making it stronger.

Scholars contend that the Pope’s visit had important effects on people’s lives, causing them to put their faith into action. Perhaps nothing better reflects “faith in action” for political purposes than the independent trade union, Solidarity. Under communism, trade unions were part of the larger socio-political structure that ensured that workers were obedient to state needs and would work effectively in state-run enterprises. Given that communist countries were “workers’ states,” Marxist-Leninist ideology rejected the idea that workers could be exploited by management, since there were no independent owners of the means of production, in Marxist parlance. Solidarity, however, recognized the oppression and domination that workers faced, and it made its arguments and demands in a particularly Catholic “accent.” As Kraszewski explains, “Solidarity was a distinctly Catholic organization, the Pope’s words seasoning the resolve of its members during the darkest days of martial law and imprisonment.”⁵⁹ The Catholic faith became a big part of what connected the Polish people to each other and their resistance movement. John Paul II helped build bridges among Catholics and to some extent other Christians of Eastern Europe who were wronged and offended by atheistic communism, making them feel a non-communist yet supranational bond.⁶⁰ For many years the people of Eastern Europe had been isolated, and now they finally felt connected to each other, to a spiritual force, and to what might be called Western values.

Assessing the dependent variable in the John Paul case: protests and regime response.

⁵⁸ Kraszewski, “Catalyst for Revolution,” 43.

⁵⁹ Kraszewski, “Catalyst for Revolution,” 29.

⁶⁰ Kraszewski, “Catalyst for Revolution,” 38.

The revolutionary movements of the 1980s were very different from earlier ones. The Solidarity movement in Poland began in 1980 with workers' protests. In 1981 martial rule was imposed on Poland. After martial law was lifted in 1983 the regime was more willing to negotiate with the Solidarity movement instead of reverting to more brutal suppression. By 1988 the economy was failing and the government was ready to enter serious talks with the opposition. In June 1989 democratic elections were held in Poland with Solidarity winning a convincing victory.⁶¹ In less than a decade, the seemingly iron grip that the communists had power in that region had melted away.

In the 1980s, the early regime responses seem similar to the response in 1956. What is different, however, is the reception of citizens specifically to the Pope's words. His language calls them to action, to see their connection to God and each other, to fulfill their promise, and to live as God ordained. Catholicism (and nationalism) inspires Solidarity. In the 1950s, anti-communism and oppression, fueled by the revelations of the Secret Speech, seem most important to the opposition. Despite attempts by the party-state to crush opponents (and martial law was brutal), Solidarity and other activists remained committed, even though they were jailed. Thus, when the political winds from Moscow started to change and called for more openness and dialog, activists in Poland were ready, as was the Pope, to encourage them to petition for nothing less than their freedom and dignity.

Thus, what the second case shows is that the Pope was an inspiration, and his language and deeds were soaring. People responded, although many also retired when the going got tough. Still, they were motivated and ready when the possibility to challenge communism arose, and the Pope's words and deeds certainly helped motivate individuals and their movement.

⁶¹ Kraszewski, "Catalyst for Revolution," 43-44.

Inspiration and Activism: The Role of Popes in Promoting Stability or Revolution

An examination of the role of Pius XII and John Paul II in promoting political change in Eastern Europe is instructive, and also a bit humbling. First, clearly Pius' words were less focused on bringing about major political change in Eastern Europe. Instead, he seemed more focused on stopping the spread of communism to the West and accepting the political realities of the early post-Cold War period. John Paul II on the other hand rejected the realities of his period – when a new deep freeze in the Cold War was emerging – as wrong and asked Poles to capture their birthright as well as asked other Catholics and Christians to stand for what God deemed was right and true. The case analysis shows that corresponding with (if not clearly following from) these Pope's words and deeds were shattered hopes for political change in the 1950s and realized dreams in the 1980s.

But are the Pope's responsible for what was not or was achieved? Sustaining that causal claim is very difficult, as many factors were in play during those eras. In both cases, economic times were bad, so claiming that economic actors were more significant in the 1980s versus the 1950s is very difficult. Similarly, anti-communist political upheaval was strong in the region in the mid-late 1950s, as well as in the 1980s. But the role of leadership in the USSR is very important, as is the leadership within the "captive" regimes themselves. From 1956 until the issuing of the Sinatra Doctrine, no one was sure what the Soviet leadership would do, and in fact, history seemed to suggest that the tanks would always roll. Moreover, that John Paul was Polish was probably just as important as his principled and combative style in helping to promote change in 1989. And, we should not forget that no one (except perhaps John Paul because of his faith in God) was certain that Soviets wouldn't crush change. Even Solidarity itself doubted its ability to take power, as the June 1989 elections witnessed, when their members feared that their total victory might not be recognized and power would be stolen from them. But in the end,

Gorbachev agreed to behave in a “civilized” manner and respect human dignity, despite the calls of some of his colleagues both in the USSR and in the satellite states.

Still, the Polish Pope’s inspiration to his people and others is remarkable, and in many ways, undeniable. He motivated people to act and stand up against their oppression. That they succeeded is excellent, but the mere fact that he convinced them to do this against enormous odds is also significant. In essence, this research suggests that symbolic actions in support of the oppressed are not “wasted” or “fruitless” because they inspire and help others to hold on. Oppressed citizens might not win immediately, but the justness of their cause will ultimately prevail. And when outsiders, like the Pope – although these could be other world leaders, activists, political organizations, or even citizen-based social media campaigns – support them and their cause, they help to push activists forward even through the darkest times.

Today the world again is in a dark place, as authoritarianism appears on the rise. With the coup in Egypt, the horrific violence in Syria, and chaos in Libya, the promise of the “Arab Spring” appears dead. What this research suggests is the way forward in these regimes is not closed, but rather temporarily blocked. And it is up to leaders and citizens to help support those who stand up for human dignity in the face of oppression and evil. While the Pope might not be the most influential in the part of the world that is currently afflicted (the Middle East and North Africa), still his stance for justice can be important in inspiring others. And that inspiration is fundamental for promoting positive change that the Pope and others who stand for human dignity hope to accomplish.

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