

# Pope Francis' influence and public opinion in the EU in the context of national resilience

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## ABSTRACT

Studying Pope Francis' influence on public opinion in European Union countries in the context of national resilience is a pressing research question. Although the Pope enjoys high moral authority among Europeans, a comprehensive analysis of his role in shaping societal positions, particularly on security and defense issues, is lacking. Investigating this problem enables a deeper understanding of the religious factor's role in strengthening European unity, countering destructive influences. The research materials include Pope Francis' public speeches and statements, primarily those circulated through mass media and social networks, as well as sociological survey results on the EU public's perception of the pontiff's position on crucial socio-political issues. Content analysis methods are used to examine the content and tone of the Pope's messages, while comparative analysis of sociological research data identifies correlations between the Pope's rhetoric and shifts in public sentiment regarding national resilience. The results show that despite Pope Francis' high popularity in EU countries, where the vast majority of the population approves of the pontiff, his public statements have a limited and short-lived impact on public opinion. Empirical evidence indicates that most Europeans do not consider the Pope a decisive factor in shaping their views on various socio-political problems, such as nuclear disarmament, migration, pandemics, or basic income. The Pope's pacifist stance on war, a topic of discussion in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, is not a determining factor that risks critically undermining the personnel and motivation of EU countries' armed forces. The population's willingness to defend their homeland militarily varies significantly among EU states and is influenced by a complex interplay of historical, geopolitical, and socio-cultural factors that outweigh the pontiff's religious rhetoric. In conclusion, while papal pacifism somewhat resonates with the anti-war sentiments of some Europeans, it does not pose major challenges to ensuring the defense capabilities and resilience of EU countries. Pope Francis' high moral authority does not automatically translate into a dominant influence on public opinion and societal attitudes regarding national security in European Union member states.

## KEYWORDS

*Catholicism,  
national resilience,  
religion,  
EU,  
public opinion,  
Pope Francis.*

## Introduction

Pope Francis, as the head of the Catholic Church and an influential moral authority, potentially plays a significant role in shaping public opinion in European Union countries, where the majority of the population practices Christianity. His public speeches and statements appear to have a powerful impact on societal attitudes and political processes in Europe. In this context, examining the relationship between Pope Francis's rhetoric and the dynamics of public opinion in the EU becomes particularly relevant amidst contemporary challenges, especially in the framework of national resilience.

Catholicism, as one of the world's largest religions, has a long history of influencing the socio-political life of European countries. The Pope, as the spiritual leader of Catholics, traditionally acts as a moral compass and the voice of conscience on issues of peace, justice, and solidarity. In

the face of global challenges and crises, the Pope's role as a peacemaker and defender of universal values gains particular significance.

A prominent example of such a challenge is the war between Russia and Ukraine, which has been ongoing since 2014 and escalated dramatically with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. This war has posed a severe test not only for Ukraine but also for all of Europe, as it threatens the fundamental principles of international law and security on the continent.

Studying the interrelationship between Pope Francis's rhetoric and the dynamics of public sentiments in Europe in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war is a crucial scholarly task. It allows for a deeper understanding of the religious factor's role in shaping national resilience and consolidating the European community in the face of external

threats. Analyzing this issue can provide valuable recommendations for developing effective public diplomacy and strategic communication strategies for Ukraine in the European direction. Thorough research on this topic will contribute to a better understanding of socio-political processes in Europe and the development of effective strategies to strengthen Ukraine's national resilience amid Russian aggression.

The issue of ensuring national resilience has attracted the attention of many researchers in Ukraine in recent times. The National Institute for Strategic Studies has made significant contributions to this topic, with notable work by O. Reznikova. In her comprehensive study, she thoroughly analyzed the issue of national resilience from the perspective of effective governance and proposed several practical recommendations for authorities on implementing the relevant system in Ukraine (Reznikova, 2022). Significant contributions to the study of the transformation of the Catholic Church's social doctrine have been made by P. Yarotskyi (2001). The problem of understanding human nature in contemporary Catholic theology through the lens of the scientific and technological challenges of our time has been addressed in the works of Ivan Ostashchuk (2008).

The activities of the current Pope in the context of interaction with the EU in moral, political, and socio-economic aspects have been explored in the works of Eva Kozerska (2022), Patrick Daly (2017), and Paolo Peverini (2021).

However, the topic of Pope Francis's influence on public opinion in European Union countries remains insufficiently studied and requires more thorough investigation. While there are individual scholarly explorations regarding the Pontiff's impact on public opinion in specific areas, a comprehensive analysis of his role in shaping public stance across the EU, particularly in the context of strengthening national resilience, is lacking.

The Pope's moral authority is high among broad segments of Europeans, so his actions can play a significant role in uniting society around shared values. Since the EU is a key partner for Ukraine, ensuring the national resilience of its member states directly affects the security situation in our country. Thus, this research has both theoretical and practical significance and requires further development.

The novelty of this work lies in the fact that we do not aim to prove a thesis about the significant influence of the Pope or the absence of such influence. Instead, based on sociological studies, we seek to find correlations between changes in public opinion in EU countries and the position of Pope Francis. Specifically, we will investigate, using sociological survey data, the degree of influence the Pope has on public opinion, if such influence exists.

The purpose of this article is to study the influence of Pope Francis, as the head of the Catholic Church, on the process of forming public opinion in European Union countries and to determine the potential role of this influence in the context of ensuring the national resilience of EU member states. To achieve this purpose, the following tasks need to be accomplished: First, we will analyze sociological surveys regarding public perception of Pope Francis's stance on urgent social, political, and economic issues. Second, with data on the level of the Pope's influence on public opinion, we will extrapolate these findings to the issue of ensuring the national resilience of EU member states.

## Research methods

This study will primarily examine Pope Francis's public speeches and statements disseminated through mass media. Although the current Pontiff has a significant body of work in the form of encyclicals that thoroughly express his ideological positions, it is his public speeches and social media posts that predominantly influence the broader audience.

Given that the aim of this research is to ascertain public opinion regarding the leader of contemporary Catholicism in European Union countries, the tools and empirical basis will consist of sociological surveys on the general perception of Pope Francis by the public, his stances on important socio-political issues, and the level of public support for these positions. Additionally, the level of religiosity in the studied regions will be considered. To correlate these data with national resilience, we will focus on a specific aspect important for the functioning and sustainability of the state and simultaneously linked to the narratives propagated by Pope Francis. A key component of national resilience in this context is the citizens' readiness to mobilize into the armed forces in the event of aggression against their homeland, juxtaposed with the Pope's position on this issue – pacifism, which condemns and recognizes war as an evil in all its forms.

In the context of EU countries, where Catholicism potentially has a significant influence on society, Pope Francis's stance on absolute pacifism may have ambiguous consequences for national resilience. On the one hand, calls for peace and the cessation of hostilities may contribute to the de-escalation of tensions and the pursuit of diplomatic solutions to conflicts. On the other hand, in the face of a real threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of EU member states, absolute pacifism might weaken citizens' readiness to defend their country and reduce the level of national resilience. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how public opinion in EU countries perceives Pope Francis's stance on war and peace and how this perception might impact these states' ability to withstand external threats.

## Results and Discussion

According to the results of a sociological survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014, the image of Pope Francis is extraordinarily positive in European Union countries. The vast majority of the population in Poland (92%), Italy (91%), France (88%), Spain (84%), and Germany (82%) express a favorable attitude towards the Pontiff. In the United Kingdom, which is a former member of the EU, this figure is somewhat lower but still stands at 65%, while in Greece it is 49%, which is significant given the predominantly Orthodox population of the country (*Pope Francis' Image...*, 2014).

The high approval ratings of Pope Francis in EU countries can be attributed to several factors. According to survey data, there is a correlation between the proportion of the Catholic population and the level of support for the Pontiff in the mentioned countries. Specifically, the highest approval ratings for the Pope are recorded in Poland and Italy, where Catholics constitute an absolute majority. Besides religious affiliation, Pope Francis's public stance on current social issues also influences his positive perception. The Pontiff pays significant attention to issues of social justice, the protection of vulnerable groups, and environmental challenges, which resonates with various segments of the European public.

It is worth noting that Pope Francis is respected even among the non-Christian population of Europe. The research shows that in the United Kingdom and France, where there are significant Muslim communities, the difference in attitudes towards the Pontiff between Catholics and non-Catholics is relatively small – 12-19 percentage points.

According to the results of another survey conducted by Gallup International in 2015, Pope Francis continues to maintain a high trust rating among the population of EU member states. Overall, 62% of EU residents expressed a positive opinion about the Pontiff, while only 14% viewed him negatively (*Gallup International Association, 2015*).

The research revealed significant differences in attitudes toward Pope Francis among EU countries. The highest approval rating is observed in Portugal, where 94% of the population views Pope Francis positively. High levels of support for the Pontiff are also recorded in Italy (86%), Spain (80%), Poland (78%), Austria (75%), and Slovenia (73%).

In other EU countries, the level of support for the Pope is somewhat lower, but still exceeds 50%. Specifically, 67% of the population in the Czech Republic, 66% in Belgium, 65% in Romania, 62% in France, 61% in Finland, 57% in Germany, 56% in Iceland, and 51% in both Bulgaria and the Netherlands have a positive attitude towards the Pontiff.

The lowest approval ratings for Pope Francis in the EU are recorded in the United Kingdom (37%), Greece (36%), and Sweden (37%). However, even in these countries, the negative attitude towards the Pontiff was expressed by only 17%, 23%, and 14% respectively. A significant portion of the population in the United Kingdom (46%), Greece (41%), and Sweden (50%) could not assess the Pope's activities.

The study also allows for a comparison of Pope Francis's level of support with the popularity of world political leaders: the Pope surpasses all politicians in EU countries. His rating significantly exceeds those of Barack Obama, Angela Merkel, David Cameron, and François Hollande.

Thus, despite minor differences in figures, both sociological studies (from 2014-2015) demonstrate a consistently high level of popularity and authority of Pope Francis among the population of European Union countries. The Pontiff receives the most support in states with predominant Catholic populations, yet even in more secularized countries of Western Europe, he is generally viewed positively. Compared to other world leaders, Pope Francis stands as a greater moral authority for the EU population.

However, questions remain open: does the Pope's authority influence the views and beliefs of Europeans, and does this loyalty persist among Europeans in 2024? To explore this, we will analyze sociological surveys on specific positions of Pope Francis and the public's reaction to them regarding nuclear weapons, refugee issues, economic matters, and the COVID-19 situation – issues that have gained prominence during the current Pontificate.

In this context, a study conducted in 2018 within the VULPAN project of the Nuclear Knowledge program (supported by the French National Research Agency) is relevant. The study aimed to determine the level of knowledge and attitudes of the European public towards nuclear weapons and the impact of Pope Francis's stance on public opinion on this issue (*Fabricio et al., 2019*).

Respondents from European countries (France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden) were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with Pope Francis's position on nuclear weapons and to assess his role regarding "nuclear policy." Specifically, survey participants were asked

whether they agree with the Pope's position, which strongly condemns the very existence of nuclear weapons, whether they believe the Pontiff's opinion influenced their views, and whether they approve of his involvement in political debates surrounding nuclear disarmament.

The results of the study showed that the majority of respondents (75% and more) in all countries support Pope Francis's anti-nuclear stance. At the same time, only a small portion of those surveyed (up to 25%, except for Poland – 42%) acknowledged that the Pope's opinion changed their attitude towards the issue. Three out of four respondents stated that their opinion on nuclear weapons does not depend on the Pontiff's statements. Regarding the Pope's involvement in political debates, the majority of respondents (55-60%) believe that, as a religious leader, he should not interfere in politics. Exceptions are Germany and Italy, where over 50% supported Pope Francis's political activity.

Thus, the study demonstrated that despite the widespread support for Pope Francis's anti-nuclear stance, the European public generally does not recognize his decisive influence on shaping their views on this issue. Most Europeans also do not approve of the Pontiff's excessive involvement in the political sphere despite Pope Francis's high moral authority.

Another significant issue in the EU that Pope Francis has addressed publicly is the refugee crisis. A study conducted by a group of European researchers in 2016 during the migration crisis aimed to ascertain the impact of Pope Francis's position on public opinion in European Union countries regarding the refugee issue (*Claudio et al., 2023*). During his visit to the Greek island of Lesbos on April 16, 2016, the pontiff delivered a speech calling on European leaders to show humanity and solidarity in addressing the migration crisis by providing asylum and dignified living conditions for those fleeing war and violence.

The researchers took advantage of the timing coincidence between the Pope's speech and the Eurobarometer survey (a series of public opinion surveys conducted by the EU within its institutions) held from April 9-19, 2016. This allowed for a comparison of respondents' answers before and after the pontiff's address. The primary focus was on the question of whether citizens considered the EU's actions on migration insufficient.

The results indicated that after Pope Francis's speech, respondents from predominantly Catholic countries were 2.7 percentage points more likely to declare the EU's efforts in addressing the migration issue as insufficient compared to respondents from non-Catholic countries. This effect was short-lived (lasting only 2 days) and was more pronounced among married individuals with a medium level of education, the unemployed, and homemakers.

Simultaneously, the overall impact of the Pope's message on public opinion was quite limited and transient. Specifically, there were no observed shifts in attitudes towards other aspects of the EU's activities, apart from migration policy. This indicates that Catholics responded specifically to the content of the Pope's speech, rather than merely to the fact that it was delivered.

Thus, the formal status of the speaker (the authority of the Pope) played a less crucial role than the content of his words and the values he conveyed. This conclusion is important as it indicates that in the modern world, the influence of religious leaders on believers is not automatic but depends on the relevance and persuasiveness of their messages. The mere fact of the Pope's public appearance

is insufficient to sway Catholics in his favor. The Pontiff must appeal to real issues and human values for his message to resonate in the hearts of believers and prompt them to reconsider their own positions.

Therefore, the study showed that Pope Francis's position had a short-term impact on the perception of migration policy in the EU among Catholics. However, this effect proved to be relatively weak and did not lead to significant shifts in public opinion.

The topic of vaccination during the 2020-2021 pandemic period was also socially significant. A study conducted by a group of researchers from Poland aimed to determine whether the Pope's statements influenced public opinion on vaccination. Researchers analyzed 1803 tweets posted on Twitter from January 6 to February 21, 2021, after Pope Francis expressed support for vaccination (Gawel *et al.*, 2021).

The analysis of sentiments revealed that negative emotions in tweets outweighed the positive ones overall. Specifically, 61% of the words used had a negative connotation, while 39% were positive. Neutral tweets accounted for 43%, with 33% containing predominantly negative words and 24% containing positive ones.

Contrary to expectations that the authority of the Pope would contribute to a positive perception of vaccination, the statistics indicate the opposite. Researcher's attribute this to the phenomenon of post-truth, where objective facts are less important in shaping public opinion than emotions and personal convictions. In the era of post-truth, people often convince themselves of the "truth" of their beliefs regardless of their correspondence to reality.

Thus, despite Pope Francis's unequivocal support for vaccination, his statements did not have a decisive impact on the opinions of Twitter users. Negative sentiments and skepticism regarding vaccines continued to dominate the discourse on social media.

In this context, research on the influence of Pope Francis on Europeans' opinions regarding the universal basic income (UBI) is symptomatic. The study, conducted as part of the ResPOnSE COVID-19 project by the Swg S.P.A. research institute in 2020, aimed to ascertain whether Pope Francis's support for the idea of a guaranteed basic income affected public opinion in Italy (Pope Francis' effect..., 2023).

The results indicated the presence of a certain "Pope Francis effect" concerning public opinion. In the experimental group, 26% fully agreed with the idea of UBI compared to 20.9% in the control group. The proportion of those who completely disagreed was the same (4.4%). The positive effect of referring to Pope Francis was only evident among participants with a high level of trust in him.

The study demonstrated that appealing to the authority of Pope Francis could somewhat strengthen public support for the idea of UBI. However, this effect is limited to the circle of the Pontiff's supporters and does not extend to his critics.

Thus, in a series of sociological studies conducted between 2014 and 2021, the influence of Pope Francis's position and authority on public opinion in EU countries regarding various topical issues – nuclear disarmament, the migration crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the idea of basic income – was examined. The results showed that despite the Pope's high popularity and moral authority among Europeans, his public statements had only a limited and short-term impact on societal attitudes. Specifically, most respondents did not recognize the decisive

role of the Pontiff in shaping their views and did not approve of excessive Papal intervention in the political sphere. Moreover, the positive effect of Pope Francis's statements was mainly observed among his supporters and hardly extended to his critics.

Now, let's analyze how the Vatican's position and the Catholic Church's public statements through the Pope's speeches may influence certain components of the national resilience of EU member states. Recall that national resilience is understood as "the ability of a state and society to effectively counter threats, adapt to changes in the security environment, maintain stable functioning, and quickly recover after crises" (Reznikova, 2022: 35). Civil society institutions play a crucial role in this concept.

As noted, Pope Francis's approach to the issue of war can be characterized as radical pacifism. This stance was vividly demonstrated in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, when the Pontiff urged Ukraine to "have the courage to raise the white flag" (Politico, 2024). Overall, Francis condemns the very fact of war, not its causes, considering the cessation of hostilities and, accordingly, their destructive consequences as the highest moral good. The question of who the aggressor is and who is the victim fades into the background and belongs to the realm of politics. Essentially, from this perspective, both sides of the conflict bear responsibility for waging war, which is interpreted as an absolute moral evil. The aggressor is to blame for initiating hostilities, while the victim is at fault for engaging in armed resistance. However, it is not advisable to clearly label the parties as aggressor or victim in order not to hinder peaceful dialogue aimed at ending the war.

Within the European Union, there are many countries whose populations predominantly adhere to Catholicism and hold a positive view of the Pope. These include Poland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Austria, France, and others. In the context of the concept of national resilience, the question logically arises: can the pacifist position of the Pope influence the readiness and ability of Europeans to defend their countries in the event of war? In other words, does the Papal pacifism pose the risk that the armed forces of EU countries will lack sufficient personnel and motivation to counter aggression?

Regarding the readiness of Europeans to defend their countries by force, several sociological surveys exist. Let's examine them. On the one hand, one can trace the dependence of survey results on the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022. On the other hand, the results and readiness of citizens to defend their countries by force are quite troubling. However, it should be noted that there are exceptions, and events from 2022 to 2024 also contributed to the readiness of the populations of certain countries for armed resistance to aggression.

A Gallup International study conducted in 2014 showed that the willingness to fight for one's country in European Union countries is relatively low (Gallup International Association, 2014). Specifically, in Western Europe, only 25% of respondents expressed such readiness, while in the Middle East and North Africa region, this figure reached 83%. Among individual EU countries, the lowest willingness to defend their state was demonstrated by the Netherlands (15%), Germany (18%), Belgium (19%), Italy (20%), Spain (21%), and Austria (21%). Slightly higher, but still not very high, were the indicators for France (29%) and the United Kingdom (27%). The highest indicator was in Finland, where 74% of respondents expressed readiness.

Another study was conducted by the Forsa Institute for Market and Social Research on behalf of the Stern magazine in late 2023 in Germany (*Stern*, 2023). According to the results, only 17% of Germans are unequivocally prepared to defend their country with arms in hand in the event of a military attack. Another 19% expressed a probable readiness to do so. Instead, the vast majority (61%) would most likely or definitely not defend Germany with weapons. The proportion of those completely rejecting such a possibility stands at 40%, nearly twice as much as during a similar survey in May 2022.

Several sociological surveys conducted in various European countries in 2023 show heterogeneous readiness of the population to defend their homeland with arms in hand in the event of war.

In Poland, according to data from the IBRiS company, only 16% of citizens would volunteer for the army in the event of a Russian armed attack. Instead, 37.4% would leave the country with their families, and 25.5% would evacuate to a safe place within the country (*Kozubal*, 2024).

In Estonia, according to a survey by the Ministry of Defense and OÜ Eesti Uuringukeskus, two-thirds of the population (64%) are willing to participate in defending the country in the event of foreign aggression. Overall, 83% of Estonians believe that the country should offer armed resistance in the event of an attack (*Slovo i dilo*, 2024).

In Lithuania, according to Vilnius University data, approximately 30% of citizens are personally willing to defend the country with arms, while another 59% are willing to contribute to defense in other ways (*Slovo i dilo*, 2024).

A YouGov survey in January 2024 showed that 38% of Britons under 40 would refuse conscription during a world war, and 30% would do so even in the face of an inevitable invasion of the country. Only 7% would voluntarily join the army during a world war, and 11% if there were a direct threat to Britain (*Smith*, 2024).

The situation in France is interesting, where attitudes have clearly changed compared to the 2014 survey. According to the results of a sociological study conducted in 2023 at the behest of the French Ministry of Defense, there is an increase in patriotic sentiments and readiness to defend the country among French youth. Specifically, 51% of respondents aged 18-25 expressed readiness to participate in a war in Ukraine if France's interests required it, and 57% expressed readiness to join the army in the event of war. Additionally, 31% of young French people supported the idea of deploying French troops in Ukraine, and 62% were in favor of reinstating compulsory military service (*20 Minutes*, 2024).

An analysis of the results of sociological studies indicates significant differences in Europeans' readiness for armed defense of their countries. The highest level of readiness is demonstrated by citizens of Estonia and Lithuania, while in Poland, Germany, and Britain, the majority of the population is not inclined to personally participate in military actions. Surveys in recent years indicate a strengthening of pacifist sentiments in a number of European states, particularly in Germany and Britain. Such trends may limit political opportunities for increasing military capabilities and undermine national resilience in the face of growing external threats. The presence of a significant number of pacifist-minded citizens in most EU countries poses certain challenges for ensuring their defense readiness and resilience in the face of potential aggression. However, some studies from 2023-2024 indicate certain shifts in societal

attitudes. In particular, there is an increase in patriotic sentiments among young people in France. It is worth noting that the willingness of the population to defend their country with arms in hand depends on a complex set of factors and may evolve over time under the influence of socio-political circumstances.

Pope Francis's pacifist position is unlikely to significantly affect Europeans' readiness and ability to defend their countries in the event of war. Although the Pope enjoys high moral authority among Europe's Catholics, his public statements, as shown by sociological research, have only limited and short-term impact on public opinion. Positive effects of Pope Francis's appeals are mainly evident among his supporters and hardly extend to critics. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Pope's pacifist rhetoric will fundamentally change Europeans' attitudes toward defending their countries.

Moreover, even those who view Pope Francis favorably do not necessarily share his views. In this context, polling on Polish attitudes toward the Pope's words about the "bravery of the white flag for Ukraine" is indicative, as Poland is a predominantly Catholic country where the Pope's rating exceeds 90%. Almost half (49.7%) of Poles negatively evaluate Pope Francis's statements about the "white flag" in the context of the war in Ukraine, while only 17.7% expressed a positive opinion (*Rzeczpospolita*, 2024). Critical attitudes toward the Pope's words increase in parallel with the age, education, and income of respondents. The majority of Polish society does not share the Pope's view on the necessity for Ukraine to negotiate with Russia, which may be related to Poland's historical experience and geopolitical sensitivity.

At the same time, the readiness of the population to engage in armed defense of the homeland, as shown by research, varies significantly among EU countries. While in Estonia and Lithuania, most citizens are willing to resist the aggressor with arms, in Poland, Germany, and Britain, pacifist sentiments prevail. However, these differences are influenced by a complex set of historical, geopolitical, and socio-cultural factors and are unlikely to be directly related to Pope Francis's position. Moreover, some surveys from 2023-2024 record shifts towards greater patriotism and readiness to defend the country, especially among French youth. This indicates that societal attitudes can change in response to current security challenges, regardless of the pontiff's pacifist calls.

Therefore, while papal pacifism resonates to some extent with the anti-war sentiments of some Europeans, it is unlikely to be the determining factor posing a risk of critical personnel and motivation deficits in the armed forces of EU countries.

## Conclusion

Despite the high authority and popularity of Pope Francis among citizens of European Union countries, his public statements have limited influence on shaping public opinion. Most Europeans do not recognize the pontiff's decisive role in determining their own positions on various issues, and the positive effect of his appeals is mainly observed among his supporters.

Regarding the issue of national resilience and readiness to defend their countries by armed means, Pope Francis's pacifist position is not a direct factor influencing societal attitudes. Sociological data indicate significant differences among EU countries on this issue, driven by a complex set of historical, geopolitical, and socio-cultural

factors that outweigh religious views and the pontiff's speeches.

At the same time, the results of recent years demonstrate some cases of increasing patriotic sentiments and motivation for armed defense of the state, which may be associated with heightened security challenges and are not directly dependent on the pontiff's pacifist rhetoric. Overall, relying on empirical data, it is difficult to argue for the existence of a critical risk of personnel deficits and low motivation in the armed forces of EU countries due to the pontiff's appeals for peace at any cost.

Thus, despite his high moral authority, Pope Francis is not a leading influence on public opinion and societal attitudes regarding national security in EU member states. His calls for pacifism have limited impact and do not create significant problems for ensuring the defense capability and resilience of European countries.

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## Вплив Папи Франциска на громадську думку в ЄС у контексті національної стійкості

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Дослідження впливу Папи Франциска на громадську думку в країнах Європейського Союзу в контексті забезпечення національної стійкості є актуальним науковим завданням. Попри високий моральний авторитет Папи серед європейців, його роль у формуванні глобальної суспільної позиції комплексно не досліджена, особливо щодо питань безпеки та обороноздатності держав. Вивчення цієї проблематики дозволяє глибше зрозуміти роль релігійного фактора в зміцненні європейської єдності та протидії деструктивним впливам. Матеріалом дослідження є публічні виступи та заяви Папи Франциска, насамперед ті, що поширюються через засоби масової інформації та соціальні мережі, а також результати соціологічних опитувань щодо сприйняття позиції понтифіка громадськістю ЄС з актуальних соціально-політичних питань. Застосовано методи контент-аналізу для вивчення змісту та тональності повідомлень Папи, а також компаративний аналіз даних соціологічних досліджень для виявлення кореляцій між риторикою Папи та динамікою суспільних настроїв у контексті національної стійкості. Результати дослідження засвідчують, що попри широку популярність Папи Франциска, його публічні заяви мають обмежений і короткочасний вплив на громадську думку в країнах ЄС. Емпіричні дані показують, що більшість європейців не визнає вирішальної ролі Папи у формуванні їхніх поглядів щодо різноманітних соціально-політичних проблем, таких як ядерне роззброєння, міграція, пандемія чи ідея базового доходу. Більшість європейців не визнає вирішальної ролі понтифіка у формуванні їхніх поглядів, а позитивний ефект його звернень проявляється переважно серед кола його прихильників. Пацифістська позиція Папи щодо війни, яка є предметом дискусій у контексті російсько-української війни, не є визначальним фактором, який несе ризик дефіциту особового складу та мотивації збройних сил країн ЄС. Готовність населення до збройного захисту батьківщини суттєво відмінна між державами Євросоюзу і зумовлена комплексом історичних, геополітичних та соціокультурних чинників. Отже, хоча папський пацифізм певною мірою резонує з антивоєнними настроями частини європейців, він не створює значних викликів для забезпечення обороноздатності й стійкості країн ЄС. Високий моральний авторитет Папи Франциска не трансформується автоматично у домінуючий вплив на громадську думку і суспільні настрої щодо національної безпеки в державах-членах Європейського Союзу.

**Ключові слова:** католицизм, національна стійкість, релігія, ЄС, громадська думка, Папа Франциск.

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