



**MALMÖ UNIVERSITY**  
FACULTY OF CULTURE  
AND SOCIETY

# Role of Religion on Climate Change Governance

The influence of RNGO in COP 21

Christina Ajayi

International Relations  
Dept. of Global Political Studies Bachelor programme – IR103L  
15 credits thesis  
[Spring 2019]  
Examiner: Fredrik Lindström

## **SUMMARY**

In June 2015, the Vatican released *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis encyclical focused on environmental issues. Pope Francis acted as an advocate for a binding agreement on climate change at the United Nation (UN) Convention conferences of the parties 2015 (COP21) citing the scientific consensus on the existence and human causes of climate change. This call for action by the Pope raised the question on the role of religion in the political sphere considering whether a religious authority could influence political matters. By building on the analytical framework drawn from the work of Corell and Betsill (2008), on assessing the influence of NGO in international environmental negotiations, this thesis developed an analytical framework for accessing the influence of Religious non-governmental organizations (RNGO) to examine the influence of RNGO on COP21. The findings also shed light on the secularization debate in International Relations.

**Keywords;** Climate change, NGO influence, Pope Francis, COP21, RNGO, NGO, Paris agreement, Secularization, United States, Religion, International Relations.

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## **Acronyms**

EU	European Union
FBO	Faith Based Organization
COP21	The Convention Conferences of The Parties 2015/Paris Agreement
IR	International Relations
IO	International Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
RNGO	Religious Nongovernmental Organization
US	United States of America
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNSG	United Nation Secretary General
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

# 1 Introduction

*“Political leaders must understand that the public expects action, action now. Faith communities can help communicate this message... You can inspire, you can provoke, you can challenge your political leaders, through your wisdom, through your power, through your followers. Together let us walk toward a more sustainable path, one that respects our planet, and provides a safer, healthier, more equitable future for all of us.”*

- Ban Ki Moon

Environmental policy making has changed dramatically over the last three decades, at latest since the 1980s global threats of climate change put pressure on national sovereignty. A critical reflection on the above statement by the former United Nation Secretary General (UNSG) Ban Ki Moon stating that, the public expects actions from the state actors, while emphasizing that faith communities can challenge the state actors through their powers and followers in solving a major global problem such as the climate change raises a major question of what is the role of ‘faith’ or ‘religion’ in politics? One may then wonder what the relationship between these two variables are (i.e. religion and politics). The statement made by Ban Ki Moon also raises more questions like what power does faith leaders have in political matters? Do faith leaders influence the behaviour of the public and state actors? Can faith leaders influence the decisions of state actors on environmental issues?

Studies of religion and climate change has grown to become an academic field that engages in dialogue with other disciplines (e.g., science, economics, education, public policy) in seeking comprehensive solutions to both global and local environmental problems (Ronans, 2017:1). This present study holds that a research on the role of religion on environmental issues can sheds more light on the influence of the so-called faith communities in other words, religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs) such as Pope Francis and Faith based organizations (FBOs) in climate change governance.

Interestingly, Bernd Nilles (2016) wrote in his article in Christianity today that Pope Francis acted as an advocate for a binding agreement on climate change at the United Nation (UN) Convention conferences of the parties 2015 (COP21). Pointing out that Francis’s 2015 Laudato si encyclical brought together civil society and social movement clamouring for action on climate issue, he also claimed that the encyclical helped united FBOs worldwide to adopt a general

statement and to put pressure on policy makers to raise awareness and take responsibility towards COP21.

The religion – climate change governance presents a puzzle because a research towards determining the influence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in International environmental negotiations is arguably interesting since treaty making is the responsibility of states. As members of UN, only states have formal decision-making power during international negotiations. This is done through the establishment of rules for which actors may participate and the nature of their participation (e.g. through formal interventions or by directly engaging in floor debate) (Betsill and Corell, 2001:68). Hence it remains the ultimate duty of states to vote on whether to adopt a text or to reject it. In contrast, NGOs participation is based on the role of observers and they have no formal voting authority. One can then argue that the position of NGOs as observers should make it difficult for them to influence the negotiating process. But empirically, evidences of influence will imply that NGOs might be playing a role beyond mere observation role at these negotiations.

It is important to note that within the discipline of international relations (IR), discussion on how religions may affect international relations has been abysmal at least up to early twentieth century (Fox, 2001; Petitio and Hatzopoulos, 2003). Some scholars reject, or even dismiss, the concept of religion altogether (Abdullah, 1996). Some have concluded that as a discipline IR is indeed, secularized (Philpott, 2002). Some scholars claimed that the body of scholarship about religion and international relations remains marginal in the political science subfield of IR (Desch, 2013; Wald and Wilcox 2006). They argued that Behind this marginalization is the persistent power of the secularization thesis (Bramadat and Biles, 2005; Philpott, 2009; Sandal and James 2010; Shah, 2013:98). The secularization thesis holds that religion is irrational, inherently violent, and doomed for extinction while stressing that this idea has dominated not only IR research but also the western academy until recently.

On the other hand, some scholars neither reject nor accept the secularization idea (Fox, 2018; Schwatz and Lynch, 2001). They claimed that, the study of religion and international relations is problematic because it is characterized by two opposing perspectives; (1) the assumptions that link the religious with barbaric actions leading to specific assumptions that religious ideologies do contribute to conflict. Such assumptions view religion as anachronistic and antimodern at best, and dangerous at worst. (2) This second perspective lays emphasis on the

religious leaders, projects, and principles of peace that are significant components of many religious traditions, and they focus on the instrumental “goods” that emanate from specific religious attitudes and convictions (Schwarz and Lynch, 2016:18). These two perspectives complicate one another. Also, some scholars argued that religion’s contribution to international relations is ethical and not political (Desch, 2013:18-19; Shah and Philpott, 2011). Hence, they claimed that religion do not play a role in politics.

By building on the body of works on the second perspective that argued that religion can contribute to peace processes and broader projects of good in the world and the argument made by Fox that religion influences international politics in many ways based on his claims that religion is linked with nationalism, totalitarianism, political regimes, political opinions and attitudes, ethnicity, issues of identity, the process of globalization, terrorism, political culture, attitude towards war and peace, and the politics of specific states (Fox, 2001:72). Therefore, this research holds that, the role of religion in international politics can also be brought to light by examining the influence that religious actors might have on the decision-making process concerning climate change. To achieve this purpose, I explore how religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs) is shifting the debate on climate change in terms of what influence they are having.

## 1.1 Research Aim and arguments

The aim of this research is to add to the body of work that challenges the secularization debate and to contribute to the recent waves of scholars who argued that religion can contribute to peace processes and broader projects of good in the world. However, religion itself is a very broad topic operating at multiple scales: individual and collective; local, regional, and transnational (Veldman et al, 2014) and all these dimensions contributes to how religions interact with climate change. Therefore, an examination of all the religion is not realistic for this research. My focus will be on the Christian religion since my argument will be centred on Pope Francis as a major global actor coupled with his religious authority advantage of sitting atop a hierarchy with which 1.3 billion people are affiliated. Though an organized institution, but more like a multinational corporation than a nation-state, the Catholic Church and its members are spread across all the countries of the world (Jamieson, 2015:19; Hrynkow, 2017:381). As mentioned earlier, Based on the argument made by some scholars that, the inclusion or contribution of religion to international relations is merely ethical and not political hence it does not play a great role, versus the arguments that religion and religious actors remains relevant, I thereby, propose to argue that religion and



politics are mutually exclusive if, RNGOs can influence the behaviour and worldviews of state actors concerning the negotiations of COP21.

## 1.2 Research question

This question this thesis address is

*Did Pope Francis/RNGOs influence the outcome of COP21?*

Since the effects of climate change are transboundary, its management is out of the reach of any national government's control. Evidently, action against global warming and efforts to tackle the greatest problem mankind has ever faced can be observed across multiple levels and involves a huge diversity of actors such as; international organizations, transnational companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities and consumers (Spring, 2016; Sosa-Nunez and Atkins, 2016). In accordance to Betsill and Correll's work on the assessment of the influence of NGO diplomats, to consider whether NGOs matter in global environmental politics, researchers, seek answers to numerous questions such as; Do NGOs place issues on the international political agenda? Do they shape the outcome of international environmental negotiations? In each case, the objective is to determine whether NGOs influence global environmental politics (Betsill and Corell 2007:20). With this guide, my objective is to determine if the role of FBOs and Pope Francis involvement with UN on climate change matters has been a source of influence on the state actors in signing the Paris agreement in 2015?

## 1.3 Relevance to IR

This topic is relevant to the field of IR and of great importance to international politics because firstly, it contributes knowledge to the neglect of religion in IR discipline on one hand and its re-emergence on the other hand. The surge of transnational studies in IR has allowed soft politics issues to emerge as a topic in IR field. One issue that has been put in the spotlight is religion, especially in the post-9/11 world. It has been argued that there is a re-emergence of religion in IR (Bramadat and Biles, 2005; Thomas, 2000; Desch, 2013), highlighting how religion has become a significant issue that may affect the making of policies. Timothy Shah (2013) noted this striking puzzle that religion has become one of the most influential factors in world politics in recent time but remains one of the least examined factors in the professional study and practice. Likewise, May et al, argued, that non-state political actors and institutions including religious actors are unsurprisingly becoming more important and that they are having a powerful impact on

the structures and practices of politics and society (2014:343). Nevertheless, despite increasing amount of interest pertaining to religion in IR, discussion on religious actors remains inadequate (Kristiono, 2017:17). This implies that religion's relationship with these new political entities has not been adequately addressed in dominant IR literatures.

Moreover, environmental discussions in traditional core themes of International Relations have been concerned with war, peace and security (Dalby, 2016:42). Most of the available literature on religion and climate change is theological and prescriptive. Such writing is dominated by a specific religious worldview. Comparatively little of the existing literature on the subject can be characterized as empirical or social scientific and consequently, there are many significant gaps in the existing literature (Haluza-DeLay et al, 2014:9). Although writings on religion and climate is growing among theologians, it deserves more attention within the IR discipline to fill the gaps in existing literatures, since religion and climate change are transboundary issues. By examining the influence of Religious NGOs in COP21, this thesis will be able to contribute to environmental scholarship in contemporary international politics by bringing in the dimension of religion on climate change governance and how it can be articulated in IR. Particularly, the puzzle about the possibility of NGOs influencing the negotiating process in spite of their presumed position as observers in International environmental negotiations since only states have formal decision-making power during international negotiations (Betsill and Corell, 2001:68). While NGOs participation is based on the role of observers without a formal voting authority.

#### 1.4 Thesis outline

This rest of the thesis is structured as follows. In chapter 2, the theoretical discussions are divided into four sections; Section 2.1 contains the secularization theory, section 2.2 is divided into smaller parts to describe the religious-secular link, in section 2.3, the conceptualization of RNGO as NGO is presented and section 2.4 contains the discussion on the analytical framework guiding this thesis and how it can help to answer the research questions. In chapter 3 the methodological approach explains the analytical tools and how the data was collected. The analysis is presented in chapters 4 and 5 by addressing the research question with the analysis of the data on RNGOs influence on COP21 and Chapter 6 summarizes the main findings and gives suggestions for further research. Finally, the list of references is presented in chapter 7.

## 2 Theoretical discussion

The research question posed by this thesis involves two complex subjects in IR. On one hand is the debate on the role of religion in IR, which is characterized by the secularization debate and on the other hand is the climate change challenge. This chapter aims to justify how the theoretical concepts guiding this study fits with the research question at the centre of the study. It is divided into four sections. Section 2.1 opened with the secularization theory and the debate surrounding it, while mentioning major critiques and shortcomings of the theory. In section 2.2, -2.2.3, I discussed the religious-secular link by focusing on theoretical conceptualization of religion in relation to the definition problem in IR studies, the conceptualization of Pope Francis as a global actor in IR and the conceptualization of RNGOs/FBOs as NGOs. Sections 2.3 and 2.4 presents Elisabeth Corell, and Michele Betsill work on *The Influence of Nongovernmental Organizations* as the analytical framework guiding this thesis and the definition of influence in international negotiation as used in this study.

### 2.1 The Secularisation Theory

This theory is synonymous with social thinkers such as Marx, Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Cortes, and Weber who believed that religion would gradually fade in importance and cease to be Significant due to modernity (Fox, 2001; Hurd, 2011; Norris and Inglehart, 2011:3; Herrington and McKay, 2015:3). According to Stephen Dawson (2015) secularization describes three interrelated social processes: first, differentiation of secular institutions (i.e. the state and the free market, religious and secular realm) from religious institutions (such as the church); second, the decline of religious beliefs; and third, the privatization of religious belief and practices is essential for liberal democracy. This thesis is a corollary of modernization theory with suggestion that social modernization marginalizes religion because of the shifting sources of legitimacy that is invoked by modern nation-state about the proper relationship between religion and politics. Secularization does not just describe a historical process; it is also a normative claim about the proper relationship between religion and politics (Dawson, 2015:23-24).

However, the secularization theory as the overarching framework for treating the relationship between religion and politics has come under increasing scrutiny in recent IR scholarship (May et al, 2014). Berger, an advocate of secularization during the 1960s, recanted his earlier claims: *“The world today, with some exceptions . . . is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians*

*and social scientists loosely labelled 'secularization theory' is essentially mistaken."* (1999:2). Stark and Finke suggested it is time to bury the secularization thesis: *"After nearly three centuries of utterly failed prophecies and misrepresentations of both present and past, it seems time to carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories, and there to whisper, 'Requiescat in pace'"* (2000:79). Norris and Inglehart argued that these secularizations should not be dismissed completely because the critiques were based on selected anomalies and focuses more on the United States rather than comparing systematic evidence across a broad range of rich and poor societies. While Norris and Inglehart argued that literature from the last decade has generated a vigorous debate about the contemporary vitality of religious life, despite post- Enlightenment efforts to excise religion from public life and government (Berger, 2003).

Recent debates on terrorism and environment provides numerous examples of religiously inspired political and public action and among these is the subject of at the centre of this present study. Therefore, raising important questions about the links that were assumed to connect the process of modernization with secularization, Fox argued that modernization has led to a resurgence of religion. He posited that religious actors remain active and important in global politics. (2001:56). In another study, Hadden (1987) argued that secularization is not happening as predicted, that those who claimed that secularization has occurred have exaggerated and romanticized the depth of religious practices in the European past and simultaneously underestimated the power and popularity of religious movements in present times. In sum, Secularization and modernization theorists assume the nation-state no longer derives its legitimacy solely or primarily from the gods, God, or any other supernatural force because of this process.

## 2.2 The religious-secular link

This section discusses the religious versus the secular debate in IR starting with the concept of religion, followed by the conceptualization of Pope Francis as a global actor in IR and lastly, how Religious NGO is theorized in this study.

### 2.2.1 Conceptualizing religion

Religion in IR is debatable. Basically, 'religion' as a word, seems relatively straightforward because it is used by most people in everyday speech. However, when we try to define religion, problem arises. Stephen Dawson argued that "It's not that 'religion' is indefinable; rather, 'religion' suffers from a sort of definitional satyriasis: no matter how many suitors there are, 'religion' is ready to accept another" (Dawson, 2015:26). He posited that beneath the sheer variety

of competing definitions, two fundamental characteristics of the specifically modern category of religion can be observed. First, religion is ontologically unique (i.e. religion is a trans- historical, trans-cultural object). While it takes empirical form in a different way, its essence can be concisely expressed in different systems of propositions and beliefs about reality. Secondly, religion and the secular together form a binary opposition, simply because religion requires the epistemological contrast of ‘not-religion’, or ‘the secular’ to be known. Therefore, religion and secular are a pair of related concepts that are mutually exclusive in meaning. A typical example would be the binary opposition ‘up’ and ‘down’. Secular and religion are likewise connected.

The definition problem with the concept of religion masks a significant diversity in the way that scholars address religion in international relations literature. There are two major factions of these definitions in IR; firstly, religion as *sui generis*, in this type of approach, religion is regarded as a *sui generis* impulse in human cultures that is distinct from other secular types of human endeavour such as politics, economy, art, etc. Although this approach has two variations, it also assumes that religion is a trans-historical and trans-cultural phenomenon that can be found in all times and places (Cavanaugh, 2013:56-58). This line of argument is also found to agree with Dawson’s argument on religion. Secondly, religion as not *sui generis* are those scholars that do not believe that religion is a *sui generis* aspect of human life.

Ironically, there is a divide among scholars who believe that religion is *sui generis*; some think that IR should avoid religion because IR is essentially a secular social science. These scholars see the development of the discipline of IR as a response to the side-lining of religion in the development of the modern nation-state. International relations as such were born with the breakup of Christian religion into sovereign states, and eventually nation-states, each with their own interests based on essentially secular pursuits such as security, land, access to natural resources, etc. Realist scholars’ views nationalism as a secularizing process. This view holds that IR is the study of nation-states in pursuit of secular interests, and religion can only become a matter of study when it intersects with the interest of the state (Cavanaugh, 2013:58-59).

As mentioned earlier, this view of secularization thesis equates modernity with secularity and therefore expects that religion will become more marginal to public life over time. On the contrary, the second group of scholars who also believe that religion is *sui generis* argued that religion is an important field of study for IR scholars. They assume that religion is essentially distinct from secular pursuits like politics hence, religion has a profound effect on global politics

(Wilson, 2014; Cavanaugh, 2013; Desch, 2013; Fox 2001). For the present study, I will lean towards the first approach that regards religion as *sui generis* because it brings to light the possible connection between religion and climate change in the sense that both are trans historical, trans-cultural and trans-boundary issues. In other words, religion and climate change cuts across cultures and countries and they are both complex phenomena.

### 2.2.2 Conceptualizing Pope Francis as global actor in IR

To justify why I want to investigate the ongoing debate on Pope Francis rhetoric on climate change issues, I will refer to Klotz and Lynch constructivist assumption of agency, that human beings, have purposes and or intentions and act on behalf of themselves as individuals and as members of groups. By arguing and demanding, they advance their views of the world. According to this view, Non-state actors include NGOs, networks, social movements, epistemic communities' moral entrepreneurs and civil society. Moral entrepreneurs range from charismatic individuals to social movements to innovative corporations (2007:46-47). Clearly, one can then argue that pope Francis fits into these categories. To buttress this point, Lyon et al. (2018) in a detailed work on pope Francis as a global actor reported that Pope Francis is the most widely recognized religious leader in the world and based on the catechism of the catholic church, the pope possesses complete and universal power over the roman catholic church of over 1.2 billion people.

In addition to this, Jodok Troy (2016) established in his study on the Catholic church and international relations that the Catholic church is a multifaceted and transnational political actor by way of its agency and structure. "The Church" is often touted as a powerful non-state actor representing Catholicism (Holy See Press Office, 2016). It's influences in global discourses spreads through many channels such as churches and initiatives of various Catholic NGOs, and individual activities of the Pope as the head of the Church. Moreover, it remains to be the only religious faction represented in the UN through accreditation of the Holy See to UN bodies (see Abdullah, 1996). These authors claimed that the office of the pope holds the potential of a global leader through his moral teachings and concern.

In a study by Michael Kristiono (2017), on the Roman catholic church and international relations to determine the assumptions made about the relationship of actors within the entire Catholic religious system, current literature was classified into three broad categories; The first category contains the ones that understand Catholicism actorness as mainly manifested through the Vatican, that is, the actorness of the Holy See. The second category contains articles which

contend the spread of Catholicism influence through its worldwide grassroots network of churches and faith-based organizations and thirdly, the category that focused on the Pope as an influential world leader capable of influencing discourse, not unlike the Secretary General of the UN. In other words, contemporary IR literature perceives the Church as at least three separate bodies, each acting and exercising their powers liberally, one body being dominant over the others (2017:21). This third group of literature emphasized the Pope as an influential individual actor. Acting as the head of the Church, the Pope is seen as the supreme authority within the Catholic World. This implies that the Pope's statesmanship represents the ultimate point of view of the Church.

### 2.2.3 Conceptualisation of RNGOs/FBOs as NGOs in climate change

By drawing reviews from the legal and academic literature on NGOs, Betsill and Corell identified three minimum criteria that are used in the accreditation process to determine who may participate in international policy making processes and thus, to define an NGO. According to their study, an NGO is an organization that (1) is not formed by intergovernmental agreement, (2) has expertise or interests relevant to the international institution, and (3) expresses views that are independent of any national government (Betsill and Corell, 2008:4; Bestill, 2015:252). These scholars defined NGO as a broad spectrum of actors from advocacy groups rooted in civil society to privately held multinational corporations and trade associations to research-oriented bodies that participate in international environmental negotiation processes using the tools of diplomacy. This definition is consistent with the usage of the term in the UN, which also excludes organizations that advocate violence, and those belonging to political parties that do not support UN objectives (Oberthur et al. 2002).

To put religious non-governmental organizations in the context of this research, I will draw from work of Julia Berger on her analysis of religious nongovernmental organization in which "RNGOs" was defined as a "formal organizations whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operates on a non-profit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level" (Berger, 2003). Nathan Grills, defined faith-based organizations "FBOs" as an institution, association, or group formed by members of a religious affiliation or mission. This definition incorporates a variety of congregational groups, parachurch and civil society bodies, and national religious representative

groups. (2009:506). Additionally, Gemmil and Bamidele-Izu claimed that the membership of civil society is quite diverse, and it ranges from individuals to religious and academic institutions to issue-focused groups such as not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations (2002:3). Grill expressed that FBOs is the religious acronym that the UN is most likely to engage with in terms of global governance. Therefore, for the purposes of the present study, I will be using the terms “FBOs” and “RNGO” interchangeably as the two definitions by Grills and Berger and the contribution from Gemmil and Bamidele-Izu are consistent with the broad definition described by Betsill and Corell (2015) above. In this sense, RNGOs fulfils the three minimum criteria of an NGO proposed by Betsill and Corell cited above and those of the UN. Therefore, this study defines RNGOs/FBOs as a formal non-profit organization formed by religious groups whose mission are derived from teachings of one or more religious traditions, which operates independently, voluntarily to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level.

In a study on NGOs and climate governance by Michelle Betsill (2015), it was pointed out that NGOs are actively involved at the UN on climate change matters. She stresses that The Copenhagen convention reflected three different but overlapping roles played by NGOs in global climate governance: as activists raising awareness and calling for action; as diplomats working with governments to craft climate policies; and as governors developing new mechanisms for steering society towards a low-carbon (2015:251). It is also interesting to note that a strong argument was put forward by Jeffrey Haynes in his work on what the FBOs seek at the UN. While admitting that the UN accepts the contributions and cooperation of FBOs on various issues affecting the globe, including climate change. He contested this cooperation on the basis that the UN is a secular organization with consolidated policy-making structures and processes embedded on its long-term and institutional secular preferences which traditionally exclude religious concerns or at best regard religion as marginal to the organizations policies (2015:186-188). This line of arguments reflects the religious versus the secular debate in IR.

Interestingly, the UN is dominated by numerous numbers of registered NGOs and RNGOs/FBOs (see Betsill, 2015:251; Haynes, 2015:190). Haynes work revealed that a recent survey identifies fully three-quarters of UN RNGOs/FBOs as Christian and this implies that the Christian body is over represented at the UN considering that Christians constitute about one third of the world population. One important fact to note is that there exists conservative and liberal



tension among these RNGOs (see Haynes, 2015:189-190). Since the scope of this thesis cannot cover all the activities of these several RNGOs/FBOs, I will limit this research to investigating Pope Francis as a global actor since his rhetoric on climate change and his interesting ambiguous status as a secular and religious leader puts him at the centre of this research.

### 2.3 Analytical framework for accessing NGOs influence in climate change

The analytical framework for this research is drawn from the work of Corell and Betsill on assessing the influence of NGO in international environmental negotiations. Primarily, NGOs influence has two dimensions; participation in international negotiations and the subsequent effects on the behaviour of other actors including state actors (2008;19). This framework begins with a guidance for gathering and analysing data related to NGO influence followed by a set of qualitative indicators used to differentiate between three levels of NGO influence. To consider whether NGOs matter in global environmental politics, researchers, seek answers to questions such as; Do NGOs place issues on the international political agenda? Do they facilitate the evolution of a global civil society concerned with protecting the environment? Do they shape the outcome of international environmental negotiations? In each case the objective is to determine whether NGOs influence global environmental politics (Bestill and Corell 2008:20).

However, according to their work, the failure to define what is meant by influence; could lead to three problems; (1) analysts will have little guidance as to what types of evidence should be collected. They often appear to be presenting evidence on an ad hoc basis and to have a bias toward evidence suggesting NGO diplomats made a difference in a given political process while evidence is ignored to the contrary. (2) The validity claims of NGO influence can be challenged because of lack of basis for assessing whether the evidence measures influence. (3) it will be difficult to compare NGO influence across cases because analysts rely on different types of evidence that may measure different aspects of influence. Most importantly, researchers must consider the conditioning factors that enable or constrain NGO diplomats and help explain variation in NGO influence, and must be clear about the distinctions between power and influence, which necessitates that we define influence as it is used in this present study. Therefore, by building on the work of Betsill and Corell (2008), on assessing the influence of NGO in international environmental negotiations, I developed a framework for understanding the influence of religious NGOs in the Paris agreement negotiation by adapting Religious NGO as NGO in the analytical framework described above. This is shown in table 1 below.

**Table 1**

Indicators of RNGO influence on COP21

	Influence indicator	Evidence	Evidence	RNGO Influence? (yes/no)
		Behaviour of other actors	...as caused by RNGO communication	
Influence on negotiating process	Issue framing	How was the issue understood prior to the start of the negotiations?  Was there a shift in how the issue was understood once the negotiations were underway?	What did RNGOs do to bring about this understanding?	
	Agenda setting	How did the issue first come to the attention of the international community?  What specific items were placed on or taken off the negotiating agenda?  What were the terms of debate for specific agenda items?	What did RNGOs do to shape the agenda?	
	Position of key actors	What was the initial position of key actors?  Did key actors change their position during the negotiations?	What did RNGOs do to shape the position of key actors?	
Influence on negotiating outcome	Final agreement/ procedural issues	Does the agreement create new institutions to facilitate RNGO participation in future decision-making processes?  Does the agreement acknowledge the role of RNGOs in implementation?	What did RNGOs do to promote these procedural changes?	
	Final agreement/ substantive issues	Does the agreement reflect the RNGO position about what should be done on the issue?	What did RNGOs do to promote these substantive issues?	

Adapted from: Betsill, M.M. and Corell, E. (2008) 'Analytical Framework: Assessing the Influence of NGO' p.34-35.

Table 1 presents the outline of the five indicators; issue framing, agenda setting, positions of key states, procedural and substantive elements of the final text. The first three indicators examine the effects of NGOs on negotiating process while the last two focuses on the effects of NGOs on the negotiating outcome in relation to the final agreement.

Firstly, *Issue framing* is the way the environmental issue was conceptualized before and during negotiation. According to the work of Betsill and Corell Frame is “an interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one’s present or past environment” (2008:33). Through framing and re-framing, religious NGO can highlight who has the responsibility to act. If RNGO influence framing, it should be expected to see similarities in frames adopted by RNGO and other actors in their statements or in the final agreement.

Secondly, *Agenda setting* refers to policy process prior to negotiation as well as an ongoing process during negotiations. The factor to consider here is whether there is a link between RNGO activities and how climate change was understood prior COP21. Moreover, negotiation usually starts with a framework of negotiation to address specific issues, in this case, I would consider whether RNGO succeeded in placing or keeping issues on the negotiating agenda. Thirdly, since only states have formal decision-making power during international negotiations, the *positions of key states*, must be observed to determine if their positions have been shaped because of RNGO activities (Betsill and Corell 2008:36).

Lastly, the last two indicators on negotiating outcome examine the effects of RNGO on the final agreement by addressing procedural and substantive issues. NGO can shape *Procedural issues* by making moves to enhance future decisions through creating new institutions or by securing a role towards implementation. They can also shape substantive issues by make specific demands on member states (Betsill and Corell 2008:36-37). Usually, NGOs do have strong positions on how to address environmental problems, these positions can sometimes reflect in the final agreement. What this means is that we may find evidence that specific texts or ideas of RNGO will reflect in the agreement. The operationalisation of the analytical framework will be explained further in chapter 4 and a detailed visualisation of how these set of indicators have been employed to determine the level of RNGO influence in COP21 will be shown in table 4.

## 2.4 NGO Influence in international environmental negotiation

In international relations, States are regarded to possess military, economic, and political resources (power) that they use to exert influence. Discussions of power and influence have focused on states. In accordance to the work of Betsill and Corell (2008), discussions of influence vary depending on the way influence is perceived to relate to power and the context in which the influence is exercised. Power is mostly discussed in terms of state power i.e. a state has power if it can make another state to do what it would not normally do. However, there is growing awareness that non-state actors also possess capabilities that can be used to shape international outcomes. Although NGOs rarely possess military capabilities, but like states, they have access to several resources that give them power in multilateral negotiations. As knowledge and information are sources of power for NGOs on the political stage, they often use their specialized knowledge in the hope of modifying the actions of state decision-makers or to alter how they define their interests in international environmental negotiations NGOs. Such knowledge is a particularly valuable resource as international environmental issues are highly complex, and decisionmakers often turn to NGOs for help to understand the nature of the problems and the implications of various policy alternatives under consideration (Betsill and Corell, 2008:23). This line of thinking can be argued to explain why the former UNSG was said to be seeking for help from Pope Francis on climate change issues prior to the signing of the Paris agreement in December 2015 according to UNFCCC report. This will be discussed further in the analysis chapter as it is part of the main analysis. One can then argue that knowledge and information may contribute to NGOs' perceived legitimacy in negotiations and may open avenues and opportunities for influence.

The relationship between power (capabilities) and influence is not direct for states actors and non-state actors alike, the question then remains how capabilities are translated into influence? To answer this question, Holsti (1988) identified six forms that states can use to exercise influence; persuasion, offer of rewards, granting of rewards, threat of punishment, the infliction of nonviolent punishment, and the use of force. Betsill and Corell argued that many of these tactics are also used by NGOs to exert influence in international environmental negotiations (2008: 23-24). Persuasion is the most commonly used as NGOs try to influence talks by persuading government representatives, who have the formal power to make the decisions, to accept the non-state actors' perspective. In the case of COP21, my interest will be centred on investigating attempts of persuasions by RINGOs. Though NGOs may also use coercive measures; such as threats or

infliction of nonviolent punishment against states that are uncooperative. For example, many NGOs use a strategy of “blaming and shaming” to get support for their positions by publicizing actions that interfere with the negotiations and or noncompliance with previous commitments. In accordance to Betsill and Corell, the use of force is generally not a viable option for states or non-state actors during international environmental negotiations (2008:24). It is certain that RINGO will not use coercive force on climate change issues but blaming and shaming is an aspect I will like to investigate, to find out if there were instances that RINGOs blamed or shamed state actors to get supports for their positions towards the achieving their goals on the negotiation.

Defining influence is particularly challenging since some scholars claim that influence is a form of power but different from control, coercion, force, and interference (Holsti, 1988; Scruton, 1996:252). To this effect Betsill and Corell argued that “influence occurs when an actor intentionally communicates to another to alter the latter’s behaviour from what would have they would have done otherwise” (2008:24). This definition of influence serves as the basis for the analytical frame work at the core of this thesis. However, it is important to note that that the definition of influence should be separate from the tools (power) used to achieve that influence. In their project, Betsill and Corell, sought to analyse the observable effects of NGO participation in international environmental negotiations, regardless of the resources used by the NGO to realize those effects in other words, determining the relevant resources is the focal point of the research using the framework.

The main resource used by NGO to influence international negotiations is communication. Therefore, the form in which the communication occurs at the international or domestic level is up for investigation in this research. However, this definition of influence is limited because it is linked to the political arena of international environmental negotiations therefore, it should not be read as a definitive statement of NGO influence in all areas of political activity. Since my research is situated within international environmental negotiation, precisely, the investigation of the influence of RINGO in COP21, this definition fits into this thesis. Therefore, this thesis posits that influence occurs when RINGO is found to intentionally communicate to other actors to alter their behaviour from what they would have done otherwise.

### 3 Methodological approach

In this chapter I will discuss the research strategy and methodologies used for data collection and analysis. Since the aim of this thesis is to investigate the influences RNGO in climate change governance, this thesis focuses specifically on the influence of Pope Francis in COP21 as RNGO. To cover this subject, the research question is aimed at testing the analytical framework for assessing the influence of RNGO on international environmental negotiation of climate change to argue for the vitality of religion in the political arena.

#### 3.1 Case selection

The reason for choosing the specific case of investigating Pope Francis and his rhetoric on COP21 is due to three major reasons; firstly, it opens avenue to think about the role of religion and religious leader on political issues. Thereby, problematizing the secularization theory as discussed earlier in the theoretical chapter. Secondly, the cooperation of the UN and Pope Francis on climate change issues is contestable because Francis is a religious figure and the UN is a secular organization with consolidated policy-making structures and processes embedded on its long-term and institutional secular preferences which traditionally exclude religious concerns or at best regard religion as marginal to the organizations policies (Haynes, 2015:186-188). Thirdly, according to the work of Betsill and Corell, International negotiations are a particularly interesting arena for the consideration of NGO influence since they are largely the domain of states. Apparently only states possess formal decision-making power during international negotiations as UN members. They establish rules for who may participate and the nature of that participation. Whereas, NGOs often participate in these processes as observers and have no formal voting authority, which in turn makes it difficult for NGOs to influence the negotiating process (Betsill and Corell, 2008:6). Thus, having conceptualized Pope Francis as a non-conventional NGO, findings of RNGO influence COP21 present an interesting empirical puzzle.

#### 3.2 Analytical framework

As mentioned earlier, the analytical framework for this research is drawn from the work of Corell and Betsill on assessing the influence of NGO in international environmental negotiations. The definition of influence is a deterministic factor in this framework and according to Betsill and Corell “influence occurs when one actor intentionally communicates to another so as to alter the latter’s behaviour from what would have occurred otherwise” (2008:24). Although one may argue

that finding evidence about the role of NGOs in international governance does not necessarily mean that influence has occurred. Therefore, a more rigid research strategy is needed for the determination of more reliable and precise influences. The approach presented here indicates such a research strategy. This framework begins with a guidance for gathering and analysing data that are related to RINGO influence in a systemic way. Since this framework identifies two dimensions to NGO influence; participation in international negotiations and the subsequent effects on the behaviour of other state actors. This means that data must be gathered on these two dimensions from a variety of sources. This is followed by a set of indicators used to differentiate between three levels of RINGO influence which are analysed qualitatively.

### 3.2.1 Advantages and disadvantages of the analytical framework

A major challenge to this approach is that it can explain an individual case, but it cannot be used to make general deductions on other cases. This implies that this approach only fits this case of the influence of RINGO on COP 21 and cannot help to draw lessons on RINGOs influence across cases. Mitchell (2002: 59) argued that a carefully designed case study often generates convincing findings that fit the case studied quite well but usually do so by forgoing the ability to map those findings credibly to many, if any. In comparison to quantitative approaches, the reverse is the case as they identify findings that hold relatively well across cases but do not explain any single case absolutely.

That been said, the advantage of this approach over others is that it provides the opportunity to highlight the unique aspects of a case. This framework involves asking questions both about what RINGOs did in a given negotiating context as well as the observed effects focusing on issue framing, agenda-setting, the positions of key states, procedural and substantive outcomes. More specifically, this framework gives insight into elements of both structure and agency in their explanations of NGO influence, as the distinction between agent based and structural conditioning factors should not be overstated since they are interconnected oftentimes.

My justification for choosing this framework of analysis is because it is rooted in triangulation. *Triangulation* will allow the use of multiple data types, sources and methodologies to analyse RINGO influence in COP21 negotiations and it can also help to reduce researcher's bias in the development of indicators for assessing RINGO influence (Betsill and Corell, 2008:24-26). Furthermore, to examine how RINGO diplomats shape the negotiation process and the outcome in environmental negotiations, this framework suggests the use of process tracing and counterfactual

analysis to analyse data. *Process tracing* means the assessment of causality by recording elements of the causal chain (Betsill and Corell, 2008:30-31). In the specific case of RNGOs in COP 21 negotiations, process tracing requires building a logical chain of evidence linking communications from RNGO with other actors, their response or nonresponse, and the effects or no effects of those communications. Process tracing is helpful in making causal inferences in single case studies and strengthens claims of NGO influence in any given negotiating context.

Moreover, by specifying the causal links between RNGO and observed effects, process tracing can help to uncover the conditions under which RNGOs exert influence. *Counterfactual analysis* is an “imaginative construct” to consider what might have happened if one variable were removed from the chain of events (Betsill and Corell, 2008:30-31). In this case, I will consider whether the process and outcome of COP21 negotiations would have been different in the absence of RNGO. If the outcome of the negotiations would have been the same regardless of the activities of RNGOs, then it is more likely that they had little or no influence. If the negotiations of COP21 would have been different had RNGO not been involved, then the claim that they were responsible for an observed effect would be strengthened. In other words, the claims of RNGO influence can be strengthened using process tracing and counterfactual analysis to help rule out alternative explanations and strengthen claims of RNGO influence.

### 3.2.2 Data gathering

As mentioned above, the claims of NGO influence in international environmental negotiation can be strengthened by using a systematic way of collecting and analysing data (Betsill and Corell, 2008:26) While reviewing literature on NGO influence, it was found that much of the evidence were focused on indirect measurement of influence, leading to validity issues. Most scholars relied on evidence on NGO activities (e.g., lobbying, information or drafts decisions to negotiators on a position, their access to negotiations, the rules of participation, and NGO resources. Collectively, this provides evidence about how NGOs participate in international environmental negotiations. However, it is important to consider that participation does not automatically translate into influence; thus, exaggerating data on just the activities of RNGOs will tend to provide an incomplete picture. To get a more accurate measure of RNGO influence, I will consider whether their efforts to shape COP21 negotiations are successful if RNGO involvement results in influence in the negotiations, then it should be possible to observe the effects of RNGO activities independent of those activities (King et al, 1994).



**Table 2**

A strategy for gathering and analysing data on RNGO influence on COP21

Triangulation by	Intentional communication by RNGOs/RNGOs participation	Behaviour of other actors/goal Attainment
<i>Research task: Gather evidence of RNGO influence along two dimensions</i>		
Data type	<p><i>Activities:</i> How did RNGOs communicate with other actors?</p> <p><i>Access:</i> What opportunities did RNGOs have to communicate with other actors?</p> <p><i>Resources:</i> What sources of leverage did RNGOs use in communicating with other actors?</p>	<p><i>Outcome:</i> Does the final agreement contain text drafted by RNGOs? Does the final agreement reflect RNGO goals and principles?</p> <p><i>Process:</i> Did negotiators discuss issues proposed by RNGOs (or cease to discuss issues opposed by RNGOs)? Did RNGOs coin terms that became part of the negotiating jargon? Did RNGOs shape the positions of key states?</p>
Data source	<p><i>Primary texts</i> (e.g., draft decisions, country position statements of final agreement, RNGO lobbying materials)</p> <p><i>Secondary texts</i> (Negotiations Bulletin, media reports, press releases)</p> <p><i>Interviews</i> (government delegates, observers, RNGOs)</p> <p><i>Researcher observations</i> during the negotiations</p>	
<i>Research task: Analyse evidence of RNGO influence</i>		
Methodology	<p><i>Process tracing:</i> What were the causal mechanisms linking RNGO participation in international environmental negotiations with their influence?</p>	<p><i>Counterfactual analysis:</i> What would have happened if RNGOs had not participated in the negotiations?</p>

Source: Betsill, M.M. and Corell, E. (2008) 'Analytical Framework: Assessing the Influence of NGO' p.28

Table 2 gives a visual representation of the strategies used for gathering and analysing data on NGO influence. The cells contain set of questions that were reflected on during the analysis. Data addressing the first dimension has to do with how RNGOs communicated with other actors and participation; activities, resources and access to negotiation. To address the second dimension, the evaluation of RNGOs' goal attainment will be most useful as the comparison of goals with the observed outcome can explain the intentions of RNGOs when they communicated with other key actors and whether those key actors' behaviour was altered in response to the communication of RNGO. Due to the complexity of this approach, the combination of evidence on RNGO participation and evidence on goal attainment is expected to provide a richer picture of RNGO influence in COP21 as a complimentary approach.

Since the definition of influence for this study highlighted two dimensions to RNGO influence; (1) how RNGO communicate with other actors prior and during negotiations participation in international negotiations, and (2) alteration effects on the behaviour of other actors in response to RNGOs communication. Considering this definition of influence, I will be collecting evidence relating to how RNGO participated in COP21 and evidence relating to the behaviour of other actors during the negotiations of COP21 to access if influence has occurred. This means that data must be gathered on these two dimensions from a variety of sources.

This research included two main steps. Firstly, the gathering of literature to understand the role of religion and climate change in IR scholarship and the gathering of contributing factors for accessing NGO influence to create the 'Framework for Analysing RNGO influence in COP21. For the initial literature survey two search engines were used: Libsearch and Google Scholar. Both recent and more dated literature was considered based on the following key words: 'climate change and religion,' 'role of religion in climate change', 'religion in international relations', 'religion and Paris agreement', 'environmental governance', 'NGO influence', 'RNGO and Paris agreement', 'FBOs and climate change', 'COP21', 'NGOs in environmental governance'. Twenty-two academic articles were chosen from year 2000 to 2017 based on relevance and year of publication. Since my interest was on information on religion, climate change and international relations, the articles were grouped into these three categories and each article was reviewed by searching for specific information based on these categories. By marking definitions of concepts, contributing factors to the concepts, and biases within the texts or between the different articles, the results of the survey were brought together and discussed in the chapter on theoretical discussion.

The second main step was to operationalize the analytical framework by means of a single case into which factors of the analytical framework contributed to the influence of Pope Francis on COP21. As the framework required, multiple methods were applied to collect data for the conceptualization of the framework and the case at hand. To increase the validity of the research, which is largely qualitative, I will be making use of primary texts, secondary texts and a recorded interview. *Primary source documents* are the original documents that are authored by individuals who had direct access to the information being described, or directly experienced a specific event. *Secondary source documents* are documents, which refer to, and analyse, primary source documents (Lamont, 2015:80).

The primary documents used were sourced from events prior and during the negotiation. Materials are gathered from April 2015 to December 2015, this timeline covers four major activities of RNGO prior the negotiation; (1) the workshop on Protect the Earth, Dignify Humanity: The Moral Dimensions of Climate Change and Sustainable Humanity organized by the Vatican in April 2015, (2) Official visit of the Pope Francis to the United State of America (USA) in September 2015 at the white house, (3) Pope at the joint meeting of the USA congress in September 2015, (4) Pope at the UN headquarters general assembly in September 2015. Materials retrieved are; statements by UNSG Moon and Cardinal Turkson (president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, an adviser to the Pope in the preparation of the encyclical) (Kirchgaessner, 2015; Mooney,2015), and the Declaration of Religious Leaders, Political Leaders, Business Leaders, Scientists and Development Practitioners at the workshop in 28 April 2015, official statements by Pope Francis and Obama at the white house, Francis address to the USA congress and at the UN general assembly and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) released at the UN general assembly meeting. Other primary materials collected during negotiation are; final statement of the Paris agreement, Statement of Faith and Spiritual leaders at COP21, Statements by President Obama on the Paris Climate Agreement, the addresses of Cardinal Turkson (the representative of Pope Francis at COP21) and Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Vatican secretary of state) and more importantly, Pope Francis encyclical on the environment - Laudato Si, These primary documents were collected directly from these authors archives and official websites.

The secondary documents used include press releases from the UN news room, relevant media reports sourced from three major international newspapers; The New York Times, The

Washington Post and The Guardian. A total of nine newspaper articles were chosen. However, since I was not present at the meeting, there was no possibility of collecting interview from representatives and observers. Therefore, in place of interview, I will rely on the television interview anchored by the Christiane Amanpour who is a popular CNN presenter. In the interview, she spoke with two representatives of the Holy See during the Paris Convention in 2015. The evidence gathered will be presented in the analysis chapter.

### 3.3 Accessing RNGO influence

The influence of NGOs is mostly evident in the connection between the text of the final agreement and NGO goals. If NGO diplomats influenced the negotiations, it is logical to expect similarities in ideas communicated by NGOs during the negotiations and the ideas imbedded in the text of an agreement. An agreement may contain specific text drafted by NGO diplomats or reflect a general principle or idea introduced by NGOs during the negotiations. Betsill and Corell (2008) further argued that researchers should not rely only on evidence focused on the outcome of international environmental negotiations to identify NGO influence because most time, there is a gap between what NGO diplomats publicly demand and what they privately hope to achieve. For example, environmental NGOs often promote extreme positions as a strategy for pushing state decision-makers

A crucial point is that goals of NGOs can be on both the outcome (text of the agreement) of the negotiation and the process of the negotiation (agenda) (see Betsill 2000). In this present study, the effects of RNGO may also be observed on the negotiating process. For example, ideas communicated by RNGO may reflect in individual country statements, whose issues may or may not be on the agenda, in the terminology used to discuss the issues during negotiation or in the general way climate change problem is framed. Failure to examine the effects of RNGO on the negotiating process can simplify or overlook instances of RNGO influence.

The framework of analysis used in this study provides a rich systematic way of collecting and analysing data on NGO influence that will guide in the assessment of RNGO influence in COP21. It is believed that the analytical techniques imbedded in this approach will produce more robust and reliable claims of influence. This approach favours qualitative analysis over other studies that have laid emphasis on quantitative measurement of NGO influence. Betsill and Corell argued in their work that precise quantifications are pointless and would only create false impressions of measurability for a phenomenon that is highly complex and intangible (2008:32).

They proposed that instead of “measuring” influence, a better result can be obtained by combining different types of evidence of NGO influence to assess the influence of RNGOs qualitatively in terms of high, moderate, or low levels of influence as illustrated in table 3.

**Table 3.**

Determining levels of RNGOs influence

	low	Moderate	High
Description	RNGOs participate in the negotiations but without effect on either process or outcome.	RNGOs participate and have some success in shaping the negotiating process but not the outcome.	RNGOs participate in the negotiations and have some success in shaping the negotiating process.  RNGOs effects of participation can be linked to outcome.
Evidence	RNGOs engage in activities aimed at influencing the negotiations.  RNGOs do not score a yes on any of the influence indicators.	RNGOs engage in activities aimed at influencing the negotiations.  RNGOs score a yes on some or all the process indicators.  RNGOs score a no on all the outcome indicators.	RNGOs engage in activities aimed at influencing the negotiations.  RNGOs score a yes on some or all the process indicators.  RNGOs score a yes on one or both outcome indicators.

Source: Betsill, M.M. and Corell, E. (2008) ‘Analytical Framework: Assessing the Influence of NGO’ p.38

For better understanding of table 3, when accessing levels of RNGO influence, low influence indicates that RNGO diplomats participate in negotiations but without effect. In other words, there were no evidence of RNGO influence on any of the five indicators. A moderate influence would occur when RNGOs participate and have some success in shaping the negotiating process of COP21. In this case we record observations of RNGO influence on issue framing,

agenda-setting or the positions of key actors (RNGO does not have to influence each element of the process). The significant distinction between moderate and high levels of RNGO influence relates to effects on the outcome of the negotiations. When RNGO ideas can be linked to specific effects on the Paris agreement text, RNGOs can be said to have exerted a high level of influence in COP21

### 3.4 Qualitative Approach

The analytical approach for this framework of analysis is largely qualitative because this approach does not lay emphasis on quantitative measurement of NGO influence like in other studies as this may create false impressions of measurability for a phenomenon that is highly complex and intangible (Betsill and Corell, 2008:32). Instead of measuring influence, the sets of indicators are processed qualitatively to differentiate between three levels of RNGO influence. Therefore, qualitative method is considered most appropriate for this research as it allows for the examination of contextual rich data on any topic because it involves a wide range of methods and techniques, such as process tracing which is used to show how variables interact with each other (Lamont, 2015:135).

According to Christopher Lamont, qualitative methods are used to better understand how we make sense of the world around us. The data collection and analysis strategy of this method is based on the collection and analysis of non-numeric data. Qualitative method thus requires that researchers focus on meanings and processes that make up international politics (Lamont, 2015:78). Qualitative method is carried out through in-depth studies of events, phenomena, regions, countries, organizations, or individuals. The in-depth analysis of the case of influence of RNGO or Pope Francis on climate change fits into these categories when we consider the event of COP21, the phenomenon of climate change, RNGOs, The UN and ratifying states. This method has been used by scholars from a wide range of research traditions (Lamont, 2015:79). One of such is the analytical framework employed in this research which requires that, collected data should be triangulated and analysed qualitatively. The visualization of the Strategies for gathering and analysing data on RNGO influence on COP21 in table 2 is in accordance with the above description of qualitative methods.

While qualitative methods in International Relations is sometimes conflated with case study research design, qualitative methods here describe the different set of tools and resources that can be used to gather and analyse data that comes in the form of the spoken or written language

(Lamont, 2015:97). This contrasts with quantitative methods which depend on statistical tests and mathematical modelling (Lamont, 2015:89), it is more concerned with the easily observable content but, the meaning of texts, or variables of interest may not reside on the surface of the content but ‘between the lines’, therefore, qualitative content analysis is preferable in this research because it deals with latent content. “Qualitative content analysis assumes that it is possible to expose the meanings, motives, and purposes embedded within the text, and to infer valid hidden or underlying meanings of interest to the researcher. It is generally more sensitive to the context in which texts are produced, and better able to tell us about meanings, norms, values, motives, and purposes” (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 319).

Qualitative research designs have at times been critiqued for being too vague and not clear enough about how the researcher came to certain findings. To avoid such critique, qualitative research “must be conducted in a systematic manner”, meaning the research should be clear, plausible and coherent, but also credible and fruitful” (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 317). Thus, a textual analysis such as this requires a thorough guide on what the researcher is looking for in the texts, how the texts are being examined, and how to show the presence of certain findings (Halperin and Heath, 2012). The next section provides such a guide by taking the reader through the coding process of the selected materials.

### 3.4.1 Coding

The population of used texts for this study have been presented in the previous section and this section will present an overview of how these texts are coded. In this research “open coding” was employed which thus, relies on grounded codes. Grounded codes, in contrast to priori codes, “emerged from the data as the researcher reads it” and the focus is on finding themes in the texts (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 323). In open coding broad themes are noted, and documents are scanned while keeping these themes in mind. Furthermore, patterns are labelled, and passages are tagged and categorized (Halperin and Heath, 2012: 323). Then, different passages of text with similar codes can be matched together or contrasted, and the emerging data can then be analysed. The categories or topics of interest that I am looking for are generally about climate change, COP21, Paris agreement, religion and Pope Francis. Since the assessment of RNGO influence for this study requires that evidence should be gathered along two dimensions; (1) how RNGO communicate with other actors prior and during negotiations and (2) alteration effects on the behaviour of other actors in response to RNGOs communication, I ensured that data was collected

along these two premises from a variety of sources.

To address the first dimension, the first step will be to demonstrate that RNGOs did engage in intentional communication with other key actors. This will be done by processing the collected data, precisely speeches made by RNGO officials at the events mentioned earlier. My interest in these texts is to look for how RNGO is presenting issues of climate to other actors. To address the second dimension, the evaluation of RNGOs' goal attainment will be most useful as the comparison of goals with the observed outcome can explain the intentions of RNGOs when they communicated with other key actors and whether those key actors' behaviour was altered in response to the communication of RNGO. Lastly, to have a wider picture of how the influence of RNGO in COP21 can be better understood, the media articles will be analysed to understand what the media is saying about Pope Francis influence on the outcome of COP21.

### 3.5 Delimitation

It is important to note that the definition of influence presented in this thesis is linked to the political arena of international environmental negotiations. Therefore, we cannot use this definition as a generalization of religious NGO influence in all areas of political activities. As mentioned earlier, this research is interested in how religious non-governmental organizations influence climate change and the position of religion in international relations.

Therefore, this thesis does not attempt to solve why climate change is produced as a religious issue, apart from raising awareness. Neither does this thesis answer why the efforts of religious NGO or Pope Francis on climate change has not led to any permanent measures yet despite the popular moral framing rhetoric of Pope Francis and his cooperation with the UN. I believe that to answer these questions, among other things, a deeper engagement of how religion can be integrated into IR theory is needed. Lastly because the coding process of this research was singlehandedly done by me manually using different themes of single word, and a few sentences, the use of computer coding could increase the reliability and reproducibility of the conclusions.



## 4 Analysis of findings on RNGO Influence

Research question: *Did Pope Francis/RNGOs influence the outcome of COP21?*

The chapter shows how the analytical framework described in chapter 2 and chapter 3 is employed to access the influence of Pope Francis/RNGO in COP21. This framework begins with gathering and analysing data relating to RNGO influence gathered along two dimensions; (1) how RNGO communicate with other actors prior and during negotiations and (2) alteration effects on the behaviour of other actors in response to RNGOs communication. This is followed by a set of indicators used to differentiate between three levels of RNGO influence which are analysed qualitatively. Detailed explanation on these indicators have been provided in chapter 2. The visualisation of the result will be presented in table 4.

### 4.1 Operationalization of analytical framework

To address the first dimension, the framework requires that we expose the motives, and purposes embedded in RNGO communication, the first step was to examine how RNGOs engaged in intentional communication with other key actors. I carried out qualitative content analysis by processing speeches made by RNGO officials at the events mentioned earlier in chapter 3. The selected texts were manually coded by scanning for the keyword 'climate change' Even though this is not a quantitative content analysis, key terms can still be indicators for a specific discourse or rhetoric. However, since the analysis relies on an open coding approach, further key terms did appear throughout the research process they include; 'global warming' 'environment', 'common home' 'moral', 'ethics', 'planet earth', 'security', 'poor', 'justice', 'common good', 'vulnerable', 'protect', 'mitigation', 'adaptation'. These themes emerged as the text were being read. The finding of themes within these texts mainly focuses on the way Pope Francis rhetoric is produced and presented. However, reliance on evidences drawn from RNGO activities, resources and access to negotiation only shows how RNGO participated in COP21. One could then argue that participation does not automatically indicate that influence has occurred thus, evidences on just the activities of RNGO provide an incomplete picture. Therefore, to get a clearer picture, there is need to examine the altering effect of RNGO communication on other key actors.

To address the second dimension involves looking for evidences pertaining to alteration effects on the behaviour of other actors in response to RNGOs communication. The most effective way is to evaluate the goal attainments of RNGO and other actors because the influence of NGOs is mostly evident in the connection between the text of the final agreement and NGO goals.

Comparison of these goals with the observed outcome can explain the intentions of RNGOs when they communicated with other key actors and whether those key actors' behaviour was altered in response to the communication of RNGO. The evaluation was done by comparing the collected data on the goals of the various key actors.

The selected texts are; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG), final statement of the Paris agreement, Statement of Faith and Spiritual leaders at COP21, Statements by President Obama on the Paris Climate Agreement, the addresses of Cardinal Turkson (the representative of Pope Francis at COP21) and Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Vatican secretary of state) at COP21 and more importantly, Pope Francis encyclical on the environment -Laudato Si. Furthermore, to have a wider picture of how the influence of RNGO in COP21 can be better understood, the media articles were scanned using key terms; climate change, COP21, Paris agreement, moral, Pope Francis, Laudato Si. My interest here is to understand what the media is saying about Pope Francis influence on the outcome of COP21. The most relevant RNGO document to this thesis is Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*'. In this document, Pope Francis made a call to everybody to enter dialogue to help the society understand the destruction that human has been doing to the environment and others (Francis, 2015a:12). Over the course of six chapters, Pope Francis discussed the 'rupture' between the environment humanity as well as prospects for healing this relationship. Though Pope Francis recognized a "growing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet" (Francis, 2015a:16). Taking responsibility, Francis argued, had to be done through an integral ecology, which respects its human and social dimensions (Francis, 2015a:103).

Lastly, the methodological approach involved process tracing demonstrated by building on chain of evidence of RNGO intentionally communication with other key actors. These evidences are drawn from the chain of events of Pope Francis when he visited the United states in September 2015 prior COP21 as discussed earlier in chapter 3. The next step was to process the findings which was done by focusing on the activities of RNGO prior and during COP21 in terms of their communication with other actors. The outcomes are drawn from emerging official documents from those events. The visualization of the findings is shown in table 4 below and more explanations on my deductions from the table is presented in sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3. and 4.1.4.

**Table 4**

Evidence and Operationalization of analytical framework

	Influence indicator	Evidence	Evidence	RNGO influence? (YES/NO)
		Behaviour of other actors	...as caused by RNGO communication	
Influence on negotiating process	Issue framing	<p>Prior COP21, Climate change has been viewed as technological, scientific and economic problems.</p> <p>During negotiation, delegates leaned towards moral issue.</p>	Pope Francis expands the nature of climate change discourse from a focus on scientific and economic issues into public, moral, and political conversation	YES
	Agenda setting	<p>Consensus on adaptation and mitigation of below 2C degree goal.</p> <p>Delegates adopted the language of our common home and States were willing to sign the agreement.</p>	Pope Francis rhetoric that the earth is our common home and the need for all people on the planet to take ethical responsibilities to protect the earth.	YES
	Position of key actors	<p>Prior COP21, The USA pulled out of Kyoto Protocol, Reluctance to adopt provisions while during COP21, The USA agreed to sign the Paris agreement.</p> <p>The EU Original position remains in favour of finding solutions to climate change.</p>	No strong evidence of RNGO influence as the Obama administration is pro climate change	NO
Influence on negotiating outcome	Final agreement procedural issues	<p>Non-binding commitments, Lack of enforcement mechanisms.</p> <p>RNGO role is not acknowledged</p>	No evidence	NO
	Final agreement/substantive issues	<p>Similarities in major themes of Laudato Si, UNSDG released prior COP21 and articles 2,4,7,9 of the Paris agreement.</p> <p>Obama’s speeches reflected similar ideas as Laudato Si.</p>	Laudato Si addresses mains problems of climate change and calls for action	YES  YES
Level of influence				HIGH

The table consist of three columns of indicators; influence on negotiating process, influence on negotiating outcome and level of influence. Each column is treated and explained individually. Consequently, the determination of the level of influence is dependent on evidence that emerges from RNGO participation in negotiation and the evidences from negotiating process and negotiating outcome. The combination of evidence on RNGO participation and evidence on goal attainment is expected to provide a richer picture of RNGO influence which can then be used to determine the level of influence of RNGO in COP21 given that it could be low level of influence or medium level of influence or high level of influence as discussed in chapter 3.

#### 4.1.1 RNGO Influence on Negotiating Process

The first three indicators examine the effects of NGOs on negotiating process. The First aspect concerns *Issue framing, Agenda setting and Position of key actors*. The findings revealed that prior COP21, climate change was not seen as imminent threat by all the states and this is found to be partly due to concerns about who should be responsible for the economical burdens but during the negotiation, the delegates were quick to adopt the moral frame produced by Francis through his encyclical released prior COP21. One could then argue that this shift is linked to activities of RNGO aimed at influencing the negotiation. This evidence is revealed in the media analysis report because much attention was placed on Francis's rhetoric on moral framing of climate change and his activities were reported to be directed towards the upcoming COP21.

However, there was a shift in the position of the USA, while the position of the EU remains in favour of climate actions. However, the shift in the position of USA cannot be directly attributed to RNGO because despite that the position of the USA on climate change policy has not been stable over the years, the Obama administration supports climate change actions. Climate change policy in the USA remains a problematic one largely due to divided political ideologies in the country. For example, the USA helped in bringing the Kyoto protocol to a successful conclusion only to pull out subsequently (Bang and Schreurs, 2017). So, on negotiating process, RNGO scored a NO on the position of key actor indicator and scored a yes on issue framing and agenda setting. What this means is that RNGO influence is observed on the negotiating process.

#### 4.1.2 RNGO Influence on Negotiation Outcome

The next two indicators examine the effects RNGO on the negotiating outcome in relation to the final agreement by addressing procedural and substantive issues. There was no evidence of RNGO on *Procedural issues* as the Holy see still maintains its role as a non-signatory party in the

absence of new institutional role towards implementation of future agreement. The evidence did show some possible influence of RNGO on *substantive issues*. Usually, NGOs do have strong positions on how to address environmental problems, these positions can sometimes reflect in the final agreement. What this means is that evidence on specific texts or ideas of RNGO will reflect in the agreement.

The evidence revealed that there are considerable similarities in the ideas of Laudato Si and the preamble to the Paris Agreement with references to care for the environment, poverty, developing countries and common concern for humankind. Additionally, there are similarities in the statements of faith and spiritual leaders released ahead of COP21 and specific articles of the Paris Agreement, particularly art.2, art.4, art.7 and art.9 in the way that they address issues of global goal adaptation, sustainable development, engagement with various actors on solving climate change problems. Summarily, the observation of a yes on the indicator of substantive issues signifies that RNGO had some influence on the negotiating outcome.

#### 4.1.3 Accessing the level of RNGO influence in COP21

Lastly, the level of RNGO influence is determined by reflecting on the negotiating process and the negotiating outcome. The details of this has been provided in chapter 3. In the determination of levels of RNGO influence, low influence indicates that, there were no evidence of RNGO influence on any of the five indicators. A moderate influence would occur when RNGOs participate and have some success in shaping the negotiating process of COP21. This is when there are evidences of RNGO influence on issue framing, agenda-setting or the positions of key actors (RNGO does not have to influence each element of the process). Finally, when RNGO can be linked to specific effects on the Paris agreement text, RNGOs can be said to have exerted a high level of influence in COP21.

Primarily, the deduction that RNGO scored a high level of influence on COP21 was drawn from the combination of the evidences from RNGO influence on negotiation process and negotiating outcome. Even though evidences were not present across all the set of indicators, one can still argue that the observation of a YES on some of the process indicators will imply that RNGO exerted some influence because, when we consider that the analytical framework for this study stipulated that RNGO does not necessarily have to influence all the elements of the process to score a high influence as the determinant factor for this is evidence on specific texts or ideas of RNGO reflected in the final agreement.

#### 4.1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, we can argue that RINGO/Francis had a high level of influence in COP21 because evidences showed RINGO/Francis engagement in activities aimed at influencing COP21. To buttress this point, it was found that Francis encyclical got considerable media coverage in the United States before and after its June 2015 release. In September 2015, Pope Francis visited the United States and gave three major speeches that addressed climate change; at the White House, at a joint session of Congress, and at the United Nations. Although, climate was not the only issue covered in the media with respect to the Pope's visit, but the climate messages received significant media attention. Moreover, FBO participated in the negotiation as observers and the Holy See was actively represented at COP21 by Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Vatican secretary of state) while Cardinal Peter Turkson and Professor Hans Schellnhuber acted as representative of Pope Francis at COP21. Despite their status as observers, they remained active participants in the negotiations and we observed some success in shaping some of the indicators of both the negotiating process and outcome.

The result showed evidences of RINGO participation and evidences on similarities in the ideas and text of RINGO and the final agreement as mentioned in section 4.1.2. The combination of evidence gathered from both the negotiating process and negotiation outcome is an indication of a high level of influence. Although influence can be said to have occurred when RINGO acted or communicated in a way to change the positions of other actors, but when we consider the position of key actors such as; United States of America and the European Union as shown in this study, it is unclear if their positions have been altered by the activities and communication of pope Francis. The evidence revealed that there was no strong evidence of RINGO influence on the change in the position of USA as the Obama administration is pro climate change. While the position of the EU was not altered as it remained in favour of finding solutions to climate change prior and during COP21.

## 5 Analysis for influence of Pope Francis in IR

This chapter is a follow up on the result of ‘high level of influence’ deduced from the analytical framework as shown in the previous chapter. The aim is to further our understanding on how the hybrid position of Pope Francis in IR can explain his role in the outcome of COP21. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of COP21 followed by the exploration of the position of The Holy See in the UN, then, the religious secular explanation to further establish the vitality of religion in International Relations and finally a summary of the discussion of the influence of Pope Francis in COP21.

### 5.1 UNFCCC Paris 2015 (COP21)

COP21 stands for ‘Conference of the Parties’ an annual conference of the UNFCCC. The meeting which took place at Paris in November 2015 was the 21st meeting, hence the name COP21. The COP21 stood in a line of other conferences about climate. The first convention as an international political response to climate change started in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, at the Rio Earth Summit. The Summit involved the adoption of the UNFCCC and a framework for action towards stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) (Climate Action, 2015). The major objective of the annual Conference of the Parties was to review the process of the parties’ implementation. Other significant COPs included COP3 in Kyoto (1997), which was the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol where the parties agreed to the broad outlines of emissions targets to cope with the effects of climate change, COP11 in Montreal (2005) producing the Montreal Action Plan and COP15 in Copenhagen (2009) which failed to produce an agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol. COP21, was the first time since the Rio Earth Summit that the COP aimed to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2C degrees (Climate Action, 2015). This aim was achieved, resulting in the adaptation of the first international climate agreement, the Paris Agreement, applicable to all 195 countries that concluded to it.

The Paris Agreement consists of a twelve-page text: a preamble and 29 articles. It aims to limit the global temperature rise to below 2C degrees, even tending towards 1.5C degrees. The agreement has been formulated in such a way that it is flexible, considering the needs and capacities of each country. (COP21, 2015). Before and during the conference in Paris, countries submitted extensive national climate action plans (INDCs) which aided in getting individual country to achieve the worldwide goals agreed on. Apart from government and state actors

participating in COP21, several NGOs participated in the debates in some form prior and during the conference. Clear examples of their participation are position papers, by which NGOs stated their view on the status-quo of a subject and how to move forward. Or, in case of COP21, what their opinion was on what the outcome of the conference should be and what all participating actors in the international environmental governance arena could or should do regarding climate change, before as well as during the conference, but especially after the conference in Paris. Several of these NGOs also addressed the parties during the event, including the Secretary of the Holy See (UNFCCC, 2015).

## 5.2 An Understanding of the position of the Holy See in COP21

In the world of international relations, it is the Holy See that represents the Vatican City State, of which the Pope is the head of state and government. However, the Vatican City State does not act on the political stage. The Holy See has been the universal government of the Catholic Church, with close to 1.2 billion members. A special mention for the pope's role in foreign policy is crucial, as he is fulfilling a hybrid role in several organizational, diplomatic, and religious functions. First, the pope is the head of state of Vatican City, secondly the head of government and the administration, thirdly he remains a sovereign subject of international law as the embodiment of the Holy See and lastly, as the Papal Supremacy as Bishop of Rome, he is the head of the Catholic Church (Rleck and Niebuhr, 2015:40-42). These different roles tend to interfere with each other and are not always clearly distinguishable. When one considers the emphasis of the Holy See in IR in relation to their non-governmental status, instead of its geopolitical or economic position, and its large number of members, the Holy See can then be described as a large, internationally involved, non-governmental organization.

Therefore, the Pope's 'diplomatic service' is a unique and ambiguous status as both a religious and secular leader. The close intertwining with the territorial state of Vatican City and the spiritual leadership of the Catholic Church make the Holy See a peculiar unconventional NGO. However, to view the Catholic church as just a political actor is not that easy. Not only has the catholic church been an immense civil society actor, but it has also been subject of international law with full diplomatic recognition by 188 states around the world and as a result of this, it maintains one of the most close-knit networks regarding foreign representations in the world, with further diplomatic relations as a "non-governmental sovereign power" on multilateral level with the European Union (EU). The Vatican or more properly, the Holy See is a Permanent Observer



to the United Nations and has observer status under the UNFCCC.

A critical reflection on the supposed position of observer raises question on the claims of Bernd Nilles (2016) that Pope Francis was instrumental to the signing of the Paris agreement. This claim can only be supported if there are evidences that Francis acted or communicated in a way to alter the behaviour of other key actors. This is because according to the definition of influence, influence can be said to have occurred when the key actors have shifted their positions on an issue. Although Jodok Troy (2016) and Michael Kristiono (2017) argued that The Holy See is a powerful non-state actor capable of influencing political discourse by way of its agency and structure. But according to Betsill and Corell, (2008:21), this argument of power does not necessarily follow the definition of power in international relations where power is discussed in terms of one state power over another and this typically involve military capability

Though the Vatican City is recognized by the UN as a state, it lacks military capability therefore, one can argue that the Holy See does not possess power over other states on the other hand, Betsill and Corell (2008) also argued that non-state actors also possess capabilities that can be used to shape international outcomes since they have access to several resources that give them power in multilateral negotiations such as knowledge and information which can be used to modify the actions of state decision-makers or to alter how they define their interests in international environmental negotiations. Moreover, the work of Betsill and Corell (2008) maintained that influence derives from relationship between actors, therefore, power may or may not be regarded as influence in political processes as power is not a guarantee that an actor will exert influence on another.

### 5.3 The Religious versus Secular: Francis COP21 Nexus

The debate on Pope Francis rhetoric on climate change issues shifts focus to the relevance of religion in politics and IR. In response the lack of substantial solutions to the climate change problem, a growing number of scholars across many fields has suggested that the world's religions may, individually and collectively, become critical actors as the climate crisis unfolds (Genovese, 2015:1; Haluza-DeLay et al. 2014:3; Auer, 2000:155; Posas, 2007). Furthermore, Ban Ki Moon reiterated that the involvement of FBOs and the pope's moral guidance is essential to finding solution to the climate change crisis (UN News, 2015; Rolloson, 2010; United Nations, 2009). The official publication of *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis in June 2015 was a remarkable decision, assumed to be targeted towards influencing the Paris agreement accord as the COP21 was set for

November that year. Unsurprisingly, the text of *Laudato Si'* presents a strong call for world leaders to establish “enforceable international agreements (...), since local authorities are not always capable of effective intervention” (Francis, 2015:127). Proceeding the publication of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis spoke about his encyclical and his views when he addressed the members of the General Assembly of the UN and members of the United States Congress in September 2015 during his visit to the USA. Referring to *Laudato Si'*, he stated that “solemn commitments are not enough, although they are certainly a necessary step towards solutions” (Francis, 2015b). Pope Francis also proposed global regulatory norms as part of the solution, to “impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions” (Francis, 2015a:127-128)

Prior to the official publication of *Laudato Si'* the encyclical got a lot of media attention. The primary concentration of the media attention was on aspects tied to environmental policies that were being discussed at that point in time on the global agenda, such as climate change and pollution. After the publication, media worldwide gave attention to the encyclical. Ranging from responses of bishops, to regular news agencies, to world leaders and sparked the interest of scientists, politicians, and communities around the world. In strong terms he reframed the discussion about global warming from the scientific problems to a broad question of ethics (Winfield et al. 2015; Heald, 2016). He declared the moral dimension of climate change.

The former UNSG Ban Ki Moon welcomed the encyclical and praised the moral guidance contributions of Pope Francis and all religious leaders and people of influence in responding to the climate challenge and in strengthening sustainable development (Newman et al, 2016). While the message of the encyclical and its messenger was appraised by Ban Ki- Moon and other major world leaders, for its moral imperative (UN News, 2015; Stinson, 2015; Turker, 2015; Jamieson, 2016; Heald, 2016:4-5; Mcleord and Palmer, 2015; Hrynkow, 2017). On the contrary, it was rejected by conservative thinktank and politicians in the USA who claimed that climate change is a political issue and not a moral issue (Hulme, 2015; Heald 2016:5-6; Hrynkow, 2017:380). The debates the encyclical has generated before its formal release in 2015 up until COP21 and beyond, raise important questions about the role of RNGO in global politics and international relations in general.

One of these is the problem of the secularization theory as discussed in chapter 2. According to this theory, religion would gradually fade in importance and cease to be Significant due to modernity (Fox, 2001; Norris and Inglehart, 2011:3; Herrington and McKay, 2015:3).

Despite that secularization and modernization theorists assume the nation-state no longer derives its legitimacy solely or primarily from the gods, or any other supernatural force because of this process (Hadden, 1987). Contrary arguments by Fox (2001) suggested that modernization has not led to the death of religion but instead it has led to a resurgence of religion. He posited that religious actors remain active and important in global politics and a deeper reflection on these arguments gives insight into elements of both structure and agency as this study shows that the Catholic church is a multifaceted and transnational political actor by way of its agency and structure. This shows that the distinction between agent based and structural conditioning factors should not be overstated because they are interconnected oftentimes.

#### 5.4 Discussion on the influence of Pope Francis in COP21.

Going by our definition of influence from the work by Bestill and Corell that “influence occurs when an actor intentionally communicates to another to alter the latter’s behaviour from what would have they would have done otherwise” (2008:24). One can then argue that Pope Francis intention for the release of his encyclical prior to COP21 was targeted to use it as a means of communication to alter the behaviour of other actors. This can be explained by the fact that since the Holy See occupy the status of an observer and therefore is not expected to have a voting authority, the most effective way to alter the behaviour of other actor will be through communication. In relation to the puzzle at the centre of this study, finding influence of NGOs in international environmental negotiations implies that communication is a powerful tool that NGOs can use to alter the behaviour of other actors during the negotiating process. One can then argue that the role played by the Holy See in COP21 was beyond observer roles.

Furthermore, we see linkages of the religious versus the secular in the ways that the UN being a secular organization accepts the contributions and cooperation of the Pope on climate change issues. This is reflected in the statement of Key official of the UN. For example, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres said: “Pope Francis’ encyclical underscores the moral imperative for urgent action on climate change to lift the planet’s most vulnerable populations, protect development, and spur responsible growth. This clarion call should guide the world towards a strong and durable universal climate agreement in Paris at the end of this year. Coupled with the economic imperative, the moral imperative leaves no doubt that we must act on climate change now” (UNFCCC, 2015). According to a UN news report “The Secretary-General reaffirms that humanity has a significant obligation to care for and protect our common home, the planet

Earth(...), “to show solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable members of society who are suffering most from climate impacts,” (...) governments to place the global common good above national interests and to adopt an ambitious, universal climate agreement in Paris this year” (UN NEWS, 2015).

These statements coupled with the findings of high level of influence of the Pope in COP21, reveal the interplay of two institutions with different structural factors coming together through their agencies to work on a global issue such as climate change. In other words, a critical reflection on the connectedness of structure and agency of the UN coupled with that of Pope Francis shows how religion can influence political matters. It is important to note that structural factor that is more cultural than institutional factors relates to the way issues under negotiation are framed. Frames can enable or restrain NGO diplomats by creating a demand for specific information, thereby privileging some actors and limiting which proposals delegates consider as vital (Betsill and Corell, 2008:41). In this situation it can be argued that the structural factor of the Holy See contributed to the way that the UN and delegates accepted the Pope’s framing of climate change as moral imperative.

In conclusion, my proposed arguments that religion and politics are mutually exclusive if, RNGOs can influence the behaviour and worldviews of state actors concerning the negotiations of COP21 is inconclusive because there was no concrete evidence that the positions and behaviour of key actors such as the EU and the USA was influenced by RNGO during COP21 despite that the analytical framework used in this study produced the results of ‘high RNGO influence’ in COP21. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that the UN may have taken advantage of the Pope’s leadership authority in the political arena to propagate their agenda of presenting climate change issue as a ‘moral issue’. Nevertheless, my deduction from these findings is in support of the claims of the second wave of scholars that argued that religion can contribute to peace processes and broader projects of good in the world (Schwarz and Lynch, 2016:18). Likewise, the findings also corroborate the arguments of Fox (2001) and May et al, (2004) that non-state political actors and institutions including religious actors remain active and relevant as they are having a powerful impact on the structures and practices of politics and society.

## 6 Conclusion

To answer the research question: *Did Pope Francis/RNGOs influence the outcome of COP21?* this thesis began with the quest for finding the influence of religious nongovernmental organization in climate change and by considering if a religious authority could influence political matters, it was found that Pope Francis as a religious authority and global actor, expanded the nature of climate change discourse from a focus on scientific and economic issues into public, moral, and political conversation in the negotiation of COP21. The findings did show that RNGO had a high level of influence in COP21 because RNGO ideas can be linked to specific effects on the final text of the Paris agreement. In other words, the findings of the thesis corroborate the argument made by Fox (2001) on the secularization thesis in IR scholarship where he argued for the relevance of religion in IR with claims that there is resurgence of religion in the field of IR. This finding also highlights the puzzle of the role of NGOs in environmental negotiations and raises questions on whether NGOs plays a role beyond the role of observers.

Although one could argue that Pope Francis as an NGO might have used his position as a highly respected religious authority and the message of his encyclical to target the outcome of COP21. It may also appear that the UN has taken advantage of the Pope's leadership authority in global politics to propagate their agenda of presenting climate change issue as a 'moral imperative'. The secular versus religious debate has been a major problem in both the political and academic worlds. This is due to the secularization theory that tries to separate the religious from the secular world, but interestingly, as it has been shown in this thesis, religion and secular do interfere with each other in the political arena. For instance, the UN is not a religious institution, but it is involved in cooperation on developmental projects with the catholic church. The role played by the Pope in the historic COP21 is a typical example of his interesting ambiguous status as a secular and religious leader.

But when one considers counterfactual reasoning of what could have happened if Pope Francis did not communicate to influence other actors on climate change issues, we may ask questions such as; what would have been the position of the USA on COP21? Would the framing of moral imperative by the UN yield a positive result? Would the delegate be focused on the general economic and scientific frames? Would most of the parties ratify the Paris agreement? These are all important questions that could help to explore the problem from other perspectives. However, it cannot be claimed that the USA ratification of the Paris agreement in 2015 was a

factor of Pope Francis influence because the Obama administration is in favour of climate change actions. Moreover, because of divided political ideologies in the country, whether the administration will commit to an agreement depend on its domestic policies on climate change. It is also important to note that the position of the USA on COP21 has changed since the Trump's administration, but this aspect is not covered in this thesis because it is outside the scope of this research. I will suggest that the USA climate change debate can be a case for further studies due to its religious roots. Apparently, this can help to understand the connection between modernization and secularization.

On another note, the religion approach to climate change is problematic. In the context of this thesis, the problem can be attributed to three factors; (1) the problem with the Christian tradition approach to climate change. (2) the secular versus religious debate, (3) The problem associated with moral framing. Speaking of the problem with the Christian religion approach to climate change, Smith & Leiserowitz, (2013), argued that there are a few distinctly different Christian perceptions and attitudes on aspects surrounding climate change. Among Christians, there are two major school of thoughts; 'stewardship of nature' and 'anthropomorphic dominance'. The debate over environmentalism as framed by Pope Francis rhetoric is seen to traditionally be centred on attempting to try and successfully reconcile the twin concepts of stewardship and dominion.

Another barrier connected to the problem is the argument on morality. Even though the Pope made his mark in COP21 by framing climate change as amoral issue. Interestingly morality itself is a complicated phenomenon (Rachels, 2003). The definition of what constitute moral, who is a moral agent, who dictates what is moral, cultural relativism of moral and the big question of whether moral should depend on religion are all factors that contribute to the way that the critics of Pope Francis are reasoning. I strongly believe that an in-depth study on moral ethics of climate change in relation to religion will benefit our understanding of Christian approach to climate change. However, this thesis does not claim that RINGO influence can be observed across all areas of political activities as the framework used here only applies to international environmental negotiations, more precisely, the influence of RINGO on COP21.

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