

Constructing Peace in a Multipolar World: Finland's UN Speech and Integral Human Development

Brian Bantugan and Paolo Domingo

St. Paul University Manila

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.909000660>

Received: 12 October 2025; Accepted: 18 October 2025; Published: 25 October 2025

ABSTRACT

On September 24, 2025, President Alexander Stubb of Finland addressed the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, articulating a vision of peace in a rapidly shifting multipolar world. Stubb situated Finland's foreign policy within the framework of **values, interests, and power**, underscoring that while large states rely on hard power, smaller nations must exercise agency through diplomacy, dialogue, and coalition-building. His proposals emphasized safeguarding sovereignty, reforming the UN Security Council to reflect contemporary realities, and strengthening multilateral institutions as mechanisms for inclusive global governance. Stubb also highlighted ongoing crises—such as Russia's aggression in Ukraine, violations of international law in Palestine, and humanitarian emergencies in Africa and Asia—as evidence of the urgent need to uphold human dignity and international law. Importantly, he warned against transactional diplomacy and the risks of a purely multipolar order, calling instead for cooperation grounded in shared values and sustainable development. This article analyzed Stubb's speech through the lens of the Catholic doctrine of **Integral Human Development (IHD)**, which frames peace as inseparable from justice, solidarity, dialogue, and the common good. By thematically coding Stubb's references to sovereignty, institutional reform, and global cooperation against IHD principles, the study evaluated the extent to which his construct of peace aligns with ethical, holistic approaches to international relations. Findings suggest that while Stubb's discourse substantially supports IHD's vision in areas of global cooperation and justice, it reflects partial alignment in sovereignty and institutional reform, offering critical insights into the role of non-aligned states in peace communication.

Keywords: Alexander Stubb, Multipolar World Order, Peace Communication, Integral Human Development, United Nations Reform

INTRODUCTION

On September 24, 2025, Finnish President Alexander Stubb addressed the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly at a moment of rising geopolitical turbulence marked by multiple armed conflicts, challenges to multilateral institutions, and a contest over the rules-based international order. As the leader of a smaller state, Stubb framed Finland's foreign policy in terms of a balance between values, interests, and power, emphasizing that while large powers may lean on coercion, smaller nations must rely on diplomacy, alliances, and shared norms. Central to his speech was the call for reform of global governance, particularly the United Nations Security Council, which he argued should be expanded to include additional representation from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, with the veto power eliminated and suspended for members that violate the UN Charter. Stubb situated the war in Ukraine as a test case for the defense of sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights, and the prohibition of force, while also pointing to other crises, such as violations in Palestine and the destabilizing role of proxy wars in weaker states, as evidence that institutions must be strengthened to respond effectively.

At the same time, Stubb acknowledged that global power is shifting toward the Global South, Asia, and Africa, stressing that their voices must be more fully integrated into shaping the new world order. His message was not only directed at major powers but also at smaller and medium-sized states, reminding them that they retain agency in building this emerging system. He cautioned against a drift toward purely transactional diplomacy, warning that when interests are pursued without grounding in values, the result is systemic breakdown and

institutional paralysis. For Finland, the path forward lies in renewing trust in multilateralism, adapting institutions to reflect contemporary realities, and reaffirming the foundational principles of the UN.

Communication plays a vital role in realizing this multipolar vision. In a world where diverse states with different histories, cultures, and priorities must share responsibility, the ability to communicate values, negotiate interests, and build trust becomes the cornerstone of global cooperation. Effective dialogue ensures that smaller states are not silenced, that the perspectives of the Global South are integrated into decision-making, and that reforms such as those Stubb proposed gain legitimacy through shared understanding. Without communication—transparent, inclusive, and grounded in mutual respect—the multipolar order risks devolving into fragmented blocs and competing interests. With it, however, there is the possibility of constructing a genuinely representative international system where values and interests coexist, and power is exercised collectively rather than imposed unilaterally.

Finland's non-alignment enhances Stubb's construct of peace by positioning the country as a **neutral and principled actor** capable of advocating multilateralism, dialogue, and ethical diplomacy. Freed from the obligations of military alliances or bloc politics, Stubb frames peace around **shared values, collective interests, and respect for international law**, emphasizing human dignity and sovereignty. This impartial stance strengthens his credibility when calling for **inclusive decision-making, institutional reform, and global cooperation**, signaling that his proposals prioritize principles over strategic self-interest. Non-alignment also allows Finland to serve as a **mediator and bridge** between conflicting parties, promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperative solutions to global challenges. In this way, Finland's non-aligned status underpins Stubb's vision of peace as a **collective, inclusive, and ethically grounded endeavor**, where smaller states exercise agency and contribute meaningfully to global stability.

The speech of Stubb is highly relevant to the ongoing conflict in the West Philippine Sea, where tensions between China and Southeast Asian nations, particularly the Philippines, continue to escalate. In his speech, Stubb highlighted the importance of safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, and adherence to international law—principles that lie at the heart of disputes in the West Philippine Sea. Much like Ukraine's struggle against Russian aggression, the conflict in the West Philippine Sea demonstrates how violations of international norms threaten smaller states and undermine global stability (Stubb, 2025). By calling for UN reform, including greater representation for Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and by reaffirming the centrality of values in foreign policy, Stubb implicitly underscores the need to amplify the voices of countries like the Philippines that are directly affected by China's expansive maritime claims.

Communication, as Stubb suggested indirectly, is central to this process. Transparent dialogue between states, strengthened multilateral diplomacy, and adherence to established frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are critical for preventing escalation in the West Philippine Sea. Stubb's warning against transactional diplomacy resonates strongly in this context: if powerful states pursue unilateral interests without regard for shared values, smaller states risk marginalization (Stubb, 2025; Baviera, 2020). By framing international relations as a balance of values, interests, and power, his remarks highlight the necessity of sustained communication to ensure that disputes are resolved through law and negotiation rather than coercion. Thus, the principles articulated in Stubb's UN speech directly support the call for a rules-based order in the South China Sea and strengthen the Philippines' position in advocating for peaceful resolution and respect for international law.

Analyzing Stubb's 2025 UN speech through the lens of the **Catholic doctrine of Integral Human Development (IHD)** makes a significant contribution to **peace communication** in several ways.

First, it **demonstrates the ethical grounding of international discourse**. By mapping Stubb's references to values, interests, power, and multipolarity onto IHD themes—dignity, solidarity, justice, dialogue, and sustainability—analysts can show how language at the highest levels of diplomacy can reinforce norms that promote human flourishing. For instance, Stubb's insistence that “war is always a failure of humanity” or that “each and every member state of the UN has agency” translates abstract policy rhetoric into communicable principles that emphasize respect for life, inclusivity, and shared responsibility. This illustrates how political

speech can function as a medium for **normative peace messaging**, shaping perceptions and expectations of ethical conduct in international relations.

Second, the analysis provides a **framework for translating complex geopolitical concepts into actionable dialogue**. Multipolarity, sovereignty, and institutional reform are often treated as technical or strategic matters. Using IHD as an analytical lens allows peace communicators to **decode these concepts into human-centered narratives**, highlighting the moral imperatives behind policy choices. This makes it easier to educate, advocate, and mediate in global, regional, and local contexts by showing the ethical stakes embedded in political decisions.

Third, it advances **strategic communication for peacebuilding** by identifying how leaders can model integrative approaches. Stubb combines realism about power with ethical appeals to shared values—demonstrating that effective communication is not only about persuasion but about fostering **mutual understanding, empathy, and cooperation**. Analyzing such speeches equips scholars and practitioners with examples of rhetoric that aligns moral principles with practical diplomacy, offering templates for both public diplomacy and civil society engagement.

Finally, the analysis contributes to **scholarly and pedagogical knowledge in peace communication**, bridging theory and practice. It highlights how IHD principles can be operationalized in real-world international speech, enriching curricula on peace studies, conflict resolution, and international relations, and providing a replicable methodology for evaluating other diplomatic texts.

Multipolar World Order

A multipolar world order is an international system where power is distributed among multiple states or centers of influence, rather than concentrated in one (unipolarity) or two (bipolarity). Historically, multipolarity characterized 19th-century Europe after the Congress of Vienna, where major powers maintained a delicate balance until World War I (Kissinger, 1994). The Cold War introduced bipolarity between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, followed by a unipolar era dominated by the United States after 1991 (Krauthammer, 1990; Waltz, 1979).

In the 21st century, however, the rise of China, the resurgence of Russia, and the growing influence of the European Union, India, and Global South actors suggest a return to multipolarity—one increasingly framed as a more inclusive alternative to hegemonic dominance (Acharya, 2014; Ikenberry, 2011). Recent scholarship in international communication further emphasizes that a multipolar world is also a discursive space, where peace narratives, legitimacy claims, and global cooperation are negotiated through communication and media (Hellmüller, 2022; Auwal, 2022; Simo et al., 2025).

Hellmüller (2022) demonstrates that mediation practices within the United Nations increasingly reflect the structural complexities of multipolarity, where diverse actors co-construct meanings of peace and justice. Similarly, Auwal (2022) and Chilwa (2024) show how peace-oriented communication and discourse shape public understanding of conflict, cooperation, and moral responsibility across digital and geopolitical spaces. These findings affirm that multipolarity is not merely a configuration of power but also a communicative order, where the language of diplomacy, peace journalism, and global ethics mediates competing worldviews.

Within this context, peace communication studies have expanded to analyze how dialogue, empathy, and participatory media foster understanding in politically fragmented settings (Chilwa, 2024; [Anonymous], 2024). Gu's (2023) positive discourse analysis of Chinese engagement rhetoric highlights how nations use inclusive narratives to project cooperation in a complex world system, echoing calls for “strategic empathy” and relational diplomacy. Meanwhile, Simo, Mustafa, and Mousa (2025) use structural equation modeling to show how media framing and big-data narratives influence conflict escalation in multipolar environments—demonstrating that peace and conflict today are as much communicative as they are political phenomena.

Integral Human Development (IHD)

The Catholic doctrine of Integral Human Development (IHD), first articulated by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* (1967), defines authentic development as the holistic flourishing of every person—spiritually, socially, economically, and politically—and identifies it as “the new name for peace.” Successive papal encyclicals expanded this teaching to address decolonization, globalization, ecological crisis, and growing inequality, consistently stressing solidarity, justice, and the common good (John Paul II, 1987; Benedict XVI, 2009; Francis, 2015, 2020).

In a multipolar world where influence is dispersed among several centers of power, IHD underscores that peace cannot rest on dominance or transactional diplomacy. Instead, it must be grounded in inclusive cooperation that promotes human dignity, dialogue, and shared responsibility for sustainable development. Here, the insights of peace communication research enrich IHD’s theological perspective: both emphasize dialogue, empathy, and participation as foundations for global solidarity (Auwal, 2022; [Anonymous], 2024).

Integrating these perspectives suggests that communicative processes—how states, leaders, and publics articulate and interpret peace—are essential to realizing IHD’s call for “development of the whole person and of all peoples.” As Chilwa (2024) argues, peace language is not neutral but performative: it constructs the moral order within which justice and cooperation are imagined. Thus, in the context of IHD, peace communication becomes not only instrumental but formative—it helps cultivate the ethical culture that sustains solidarity in a pluralistic global order.

Study Framework

The Catholic doctrine of **Integral Human Development (IHD)** understands development as the holistic advancement of the human person—socially, economically, politically, spiritually, and ecologically—while affirming that peace is “the new name for development” (Paul VI, 1967). Building on this foundation, later encyclicals by John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis stressed solidarity, justice, dialogue, human dignity, and care for creation as essential elements of genuine progress (John Paul II, 1987; Benedict XVI, 2009; Francis, 2015, 2020). In this view, peace in the global order must be rooted not in domination or narrow interests, but in cooperation and structures that advance the common good.

Anchored on the Catholic doctrine of IHD, the conceptual framework of this study examines **values, interests, and power** within the context of a **multipolar world order**. Values—such as human dignity, solidarity, and justice—function as normative principles that orient global cooperation. Interests become legitimate only when balanced by the common good, while power is ethically acceptable when exercised as service rather than domination (Paul VI, 1967; Francis, 2020).

Drawing from peace communication and discourse analysis literature, this framework also recognizes that these categories are not only moral but **discursive**. The way leaders frame values, interests, and power in their speeches signals underlying worldviews about peace and cooperation (Chilwa, 2024; Gu, 2023). Thus, a multipolar world offers both opportunity and risk: it can enable inclusivity and shared responsibility when guided by dialogue and fraternity, or it can degenerate into fragmentation when dominated by competitive rhetoric.

The operational framework applies this lens in three stages:

1. **Textual identification** of references to values, interests, power, and multipolarity in Stubb’s UN speech;
2. **Thematic coding** according to IHD themes such as dignity, solidarity, justice, dialogue, and sustainability; and
3. **Alignment analysis**, assessing whether the discourse reflects IHD’s vision of peace through justice and inclusivity or reproduces power-based hierarchies.

This process aligns with recent discourse-analytic approaches in peace communication that emphasize context, framing, and intertextuality (Hellmüller, 2022; Simo et al., 2025). By integrating IHD’s moral theology with

communicative analysis, the framework bridges normative ethics and empirical discourse, offering a holistic view of how peace can be articulated and enacted within a multipolar world order.

Statement of the Problem

While President Alexander Stubb's 2025 UN General Assembly speech emphasizes values, interests, power, and the emerging multipolar world order, it remains unclear to what extent his discourse aligns with the Catholic doctrine of Integral Human Development (IHD), which frames peace as inseparable from justice, solidarity, inclusivity, and the common good. Without such an evaluative lens, the analysis risks overlooking whether political rhetoric supports holistic and sustainable peace or reinforces transactional and exclusionary practices.

Specific Research Questions

1. How does President Stubb's speech articulate **values, interests, and power** in his UN speech?
2. In what ways does President Stubb's speech on the **multipolar world order** coincide with IHD's inclusivity, solidarity, and dialogue as foundations of peace?
3. In what ways do Stubb's proposals for **institutional reforms and global cooperation** correspond with IHD's call for structures that safeguard human dignity and advance the common good?

As an interpretive paper, the study does not require empirical triangulation to support or validate the data beyond the intended framework for interpretation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design using **document analysis** as the primary method of inquiry. Document analysis enables the systematic evaluation of texts to uncover meanings, patterns, and conceptual alignments with established frameworks (Bowen, 2009). Two central documents are examined: (1) President Alexander Stubb's 2025 UN General Assembly speech and (2) the Catholic doctrine of Integral Human Development (IHD), as articulated in key magisterial texts such as *Populorum Progressio* (Paul VI, 1967), *Caritas in Veritate* (Benedict XVI, 2009), and related Catholic Social Teaching documents.

The study applies a **thematic analysis** approach to identify, organize, and interpret themes within and across the documents. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), provides a flexible yet rigorous method for generating codes and categories from textual data. First, the documents undergo **open coding**, identifying meaningful textual units related to peace, justice, solidarity, dialogue, sustainability, and global cooperation (Saldaña, 2021). Second, **axial coding** clusters codes into broader categories corresponding to the study's conceptual anchors: values, interests, power, and peace within a multipolar world order (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Third, **selective coding** synthesizes these categories to reveal areas of alignment or divergence between Stubb's discourse and IHD principles.

To systematically assess alignment, the study integrates a **rubric-based evaluation**. The rubric evaluates three dimensions—**sovereignty, institutional reform, and global cooperation**—against IHD principles such as dignity, solidarity, justice, dialogue, and sustainability. Each dimension is scored according to the extent to which Stubb's proposals reflect ethical, human-centered, and relational considerations central to IHD. For example, sovereignty is assessed not only as legal-political protection but also in terms of responsibilities to vulnerable populations and the common good. Institutional reform is evaluated for inclusivity, participatory mechanisms, and ethical renewal, while global cooperation is assessed for solidarity, sustainability, and moral responsibility. The rubric provides a structured, transparent, and replicable mechanism for comparing the political discourse of a contemporary leader with normative doctrinal principles.

Table 1 Assessment Rubric: Alignment of Stubb's Speech with IHD Principles

Dimension	Criteria	Strong` (4 pts)	Moderate (3 pts)	Partial (2 pts)	Limited (1 pt)
Sovereignty	Extent to which the speech frames sovereignty as protecting human dignity and serving the common good	Clearly frames sovereignty as relational, ethical, and protective of all human dignity and rights	Frames sovereignty as protective of human dignity and rights, with partial attention to relational responsibilities	Focuses mainly on legal-political aspects of sovereignty, limited reference to human dignity	Sovereignty framed purely as state-centric or legal, with little attention to human dignity or the common good
Institutional Reform	Degree to which proposed reforms align with IHD principles of dialogue, participation, justice, and ethical governance	Reform proposals emphasize inclusivity, dialogue, justice, and ethical renewal of institutions	Reform proposals emphasize inclusivity and dialogue, with partial attention to ethical principles	Reform proposals are mainly procedural or technical, with minimal connection to IHD ethical principles	Reform proposals lack focus on inclusivity, dialogue, or ethical governance
Global Cooperation	Extent to which cooperation is framed in terms of solidarity, sustainability, and shared responsibility	Cooperation framed explicitly around solidarity, sustainability, justice, and moral obligation	Cooperation emphasizes shared responsibility and sustainability, with partial ethical framing	Cooperation framed pragmatically, with minimal ethical or solidarity focus	Cooperation framed only in terms of national or strategic interests, no alignment with IHD
Overall Alignment	General correspondence with IHD principles across all dimensions	Speech fully embodies IHD principles across sovereignty, reform, and cooperation	Speech substantially aligns with IHD, with minor gaps	Speech shows partial alignment, significant gaps in ethical framing	Speech shows minimal alignment with IHD principles

Scoring Notes:

- **16–13 points:** Strong alignment with IHD principles; suitable as a model for ethical peacebuilding communication.
- **12–9 points:** Moderate alignment; aligns with some principles but needs ethical or relational strengthening.
- **8–5 points:** Partial alignment; primarily structural or pragmatic, weak on moral/ethical grounding.
- **4–1 points:** Limited alignment; minimal consideration of human dignity, solidarity, justice, or sustainability.

Data synthesis emphasizes the comparative dimension of the analysis, situating Stubb's speech both on its own terms and relative to IHD's holistic vision of human development and peace (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). This process directly addresses the study's research questions by **mapping political discourse to**

doctrinal principles and quantifying degrees of alignment using rubric scores. Rigor is maintained through iterative readings, reflexive note-taking, and refinement of coding categories to reduce bias and enhance trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017).

In summary, the integration of document analysis, thematic coding, and the rubric-based evaluation provides a **robust framework** for assessing the extent to which Stubb's articulation of peace in a multipolar world corresponds with the Catholic doctrine of Integral Human Development, offering both qualitative and systematic insights into ethical, values-driven diplomacy.

RESULTS

How does President Stubb's speech articulate values, interests, and power in his UN speech?

Values. Stubb consistently frames values as the normative foundation of foreign policy, even while acknowledging the divergent contexts of member states. He states that "fundamental values are something we should all share. We have commonly defined some of the most essential of them in the UN Charter." Here, values are not abstract ideals but institutionalized norms embedded in international law. He identifies sovereignty, territorial integrity, prohibition of the use of force, and respect for human rights as the "building blocks of who we are and what we stand for as United Nations." At the same time, Stubb warns that neglecting values in favor of interests or power will create cyclical problems: "If you set aside values for unhindered pursuit of power and interests, you will eventually find before you the very same problems you wanted to overlook." This suggests that for Stubb, values serve both a moral and pragmatic purpose: they sustain legitimacy and prevent destructive opportunism.

Interests. Interests, for Stubb, are framed as both legitimate and inevitable drivers of state behavior. He concedes that "our interests differ – depending on our geographical location, history, state of development or culture," underlining their contextual and plural nature. Yet he avoids demonizing interests, instead recognizing them as "entirely legitimate" determinants of foreign policy choices. Stubb emphasizes that even when transactional or multivectoral approaches dominate, "the broad international community has, overwhelmingly, an interest in upholding [fundamental values]." This demonstrates his belief in a convergence between self-interest and collective responsibility, particularly in opposition to wars of conquest. Stubb thus situates interests within a spectrum: from self-preservation and opportunism on one end to alignment with shared values on the other.

Power. Stubb draws a distinction between the power of larger and smaller states, acknowledging asymmetries while asserting agency for smaller players. He observes, "Power – hard and soft – is a luxury of bigger players. The power of a smaller country arises from its capacity to cooperate with others." In this view, diplomacy and coalition-building become alternative forms of power for weaker states. He also underscores the shifting distribution of power globally, noting demographic, economic, and cultural shifts toward the Global South and East: "This will also turn them into a political and cultural force. It will yield them both hard power and soft power." Importantly, Stubb stresses that "power will constantly seek a new balance" and cautions against being blinded by hard power, asserting that "the power of legitimacy, integrity and rules will remain strong." His framing suggests a multi-layered understanding of power: coercive force, soft influence, and normative legitimacy.

Multipolarity. Multipolarity is treated ambivalently in Stubb's speech. He recognizes its growing prominence, stating: "there is a growing tension between those who promote multilateralism – an order based on the rule of law – and those that speak the language of multipolarity or transactionalism." While acknowledging the "temptation and rationale" of multipolarity, he questions whether it can address collective challenges like climate change and sustainable development. For Stubb, multipolarity risks fragmenting global governance into transactional relationships rather than sustaining rule-based cooperation. He concedes, however, that multipolarity reflects real-world shifts: "the balance of power in the new world order is shifting towards South and East." Thus, while multipolarity signals inclusivity of new power centers, Stubb remains cautious about its implications for stability, preferring multilateralism grounded in shared values and international law.

In what ways does President Stubb's speech on the multipolar world order coincide with IHD's dignity, solidarity, justice, dialogue, and sustainability as foundations of peace?

Dignity. The Catholic doctrine of IHD underscores human dignity as the foundation of peace, recognizing each person's inherent worth as created in the image of God (Paul VI, 1967). Stubb echoes this principle when he asserts that "war is always a failure of humanity. It is a collective failure of our fundamental values." This framing situates dignity as both a moral and political imperative, violated by conflict and safeguarded by respect for human rights. His emphasis that "media freedom is the basis for democracy. It is a prerequisite for an open society" likewise reinforces human dignity, as freedom of expression allows individuals to participate in truth-seeking and self-determination.

Solidarity. IHD stresses solidarity as the moral commitment to the common good, requiring nations and peoples to cooperate across divides (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). Stubb captures this spirit when he notes that "the power of a smaller country arises from its capacity to cooperate with others," highlighting that even limited actors can exercise influence through collective action. He also appeals to solidarity in affirming that "the broad international community has, overwhelmingly, an interest in upholding [fundamental values]," suggesting that global peace depends on shared responsibility. His recognition of "all those who, in good faith, continue to work for peace" further demonstrates the value of collective perseverance toward the common good.

Justice. Justice in IHD is rooted in truth, law, and fairness, ensuring that peace is not transactional but anchored in rights and accountability (Benedict XVI, 2009). Stubb aligns closely with this when declaring, "Russia has no right to continue its aggression against Ukraine. Israel has no right to violate international law in Palestine." By situating accountability within international law, he reinforces the IHD position that peace requires both justice and the rejection of impunity. His further insistence that "aggression must not be rewarded. Accountability for the most serious international crimes must be pursued" articulates a legal and moral principle of justice that transcends geopolitics.

Dialogue. Dialogue is a central mechanism in IHD for fostering reconciliation, building trust, and creating participatory peace (Francis, 2020). Stubb foregrounds this when he asserts that "smart diplomacy is what gives a smaller player at least relative influence," indicating that structured communication and negotiation provide states with agency in a multipolar system. He deepens this idea with the inclusive statement that "each and every member state of the UN has agency – a say in how the new world order will look like." Perhaps most powerfully, he recalls Nelson Mandela's model of reconciliation: "truth and reconciliation [are] the only hope for nations that are bitterly divided. The same applies to relations between states." This reflects the IHD understanding that dialogue is not mere negotiation but a path to truth and healing.

Sustainability. Finally, IHD emphasizes sustainability, not only in ecological terms but as the interdependence of peace, development, and justice across generations (Paul VI, 1967; Francis, 2015). Stubb directly acknowledges this concern when questioning whether multipolarity can "solve the world's biggest challenges, such as climate change or sustainable development." He warns that while "never before in history has humankind had such means and innovations at its disposal," the "current direction is wrong in many ways." His call that the UN should focus on "ending and preventing wars, protecting human rights, and acting as a catalyst for sustainable development" resonates deeply with IHD's integrative vision of peace as inseparable from development and ecological responsibility.

In what ways do Stubb's proposals for sovereignty, institutional reforms, and global cooperation correspond with IHD's call for structures that safeguard human dignity and advance the common good?

Sovereignty. Stubb stresses that "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, the prohibition of the use of force, and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" must remain non-negotiable. This stance aligns with IHD, which upholds the dignity of peoples and their right to self-determination (Paul VI, 1967). By equating sovereignty with dignity and protection of human rights, Stubb reinforces IHD's principle that political autonomy must serve human flourishing. However, IHD frames sovereignty as relational rather than absolute, oriented toward the common good. Stubb's emphasis tends to prioritize sovereignty as a legal-political shield,

leaving less room for its relational dimension — such as responsibilities to migrants, minorities, or ecological interdependence.

Assessment: *Partial alignment.* Strong on sovereignty as protection of dignity, weaker on sovereignty as shared responsibility.

Institutional Reform. Stubb calls for UN reform, highlighting that “each and every member state of the UN has agency – a say in how the new world order will look like.” His insistence on inclusivity resonates with IHD’s commitment to participation, subsidiarity, and dialogue (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). Furthermore, his endorsement of Mandela’s model of “truth and reconciliation” as the path for divided nations reflects IHD’s emphasis on institutions that enable dialogue, justice, and healing. Still, Stubb’s reform discourse is framed largely in procedural terms (expanding participation, smart diplomacy), whereas IHD would emphasize the *ethical* renewal of institutions, rooting reform in a moral vision of solidarity and integral development.

Assessment: *Moderate alignment.* Strong on inclusion and dialogue, weaker on embedding reform within a moral framework of the common good.

Global Cooperation. Stubb highlights that global challenges like “climate change or sustainable development” cannot be solved by multipolar competition alone, calling instead for shared responsibility and UN-led action. This is highly consistent with IHD, which stresses solidarity across nations and generations, integrating peace, ecology, and justice into a holistic vision (Francis, 2015). His recognition that “never before in history has humankind had such means and innovations at its disposal” but is moving “in the wrong direction” echoes IHD’s critique of technocratic development divorced from ethics. Where divergence may emerge is in Stubb’s framing of cooperation primarily through pragmatic interests and smart diplomacy, while IHD grounds cooperation in transcendent human dignity and the moral duty of solidarity.

Assessment: *Strong alignment.* Both IHD and Stubb emphasize cooperation for sustainability, though Stubb leans pragmatic while IHD emphasizes moral obligation.

Overall Alignment

Stubb’s speech shows **substantial alignment with IHD principles**, especially in areas of **global cooperation** and **justice**, where he calls for accountability, sustainable development, and inclusive multilateralism. His treatment of **sovereignty** and **institutional reform**, while consistent with IHD at a structural level, tends to stress legal and procedural concerns more than the **ethical and moral grounding** central to Catholic social teaching.

DISCUSSION

Alexander Stubb’s Communicating ‘Peace’

In his 2025 UN speech, Alexander Stubb, as a non-aligned state leader, constructs the ideal of peace as ethical, inclusive, and cooperative, grounded in the interplay of values, interests, and power. He emphasizes that smaller states can exercise agency through smart diplomacy, multilateral engagement, and principled action, reinforcing the protection of human dignity, sovereignty, and fundamental rights. Peace is framed not merely as the absence of conflict but as a collective endeavor supported by just institutions, adherence to international law, and shared responsibility for global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development. While acknowledging the realities of a multipolar world, Stubb insists that values—solidarity, justice, and accountability—must guide policy, demonstrating that the ideal of peace is both pragmatic and ethically anchored. In this way, he presents peace as a holistic, participatory, and morally grounded project, aligning smaller-state agency with the broader goal of human flourishing.

Stubb’s Construct of Peace and Values of Non-aligned States

Stubb’s construct of peace reflects the core values of non-aligned states by emphasizing **neutrality, multilateral cooperation, ethical responsibility, and inclusivity**. He highlights that smaller states can exercise meaningful

agency through **diplomacy, dialogue, and principled action** rather than reliance on military power or alliances, aligning with the non-aligned emphasis on mediation and ethical engagement. His advocacy for **inclusive UN reforms, cooperative solutions to global challenges, and accountability for violations of international law** demonstrates a commitment to **solidarity, justice, and human dignity**. By promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and shared responsibility, Stubb frames peace as a **collective, participatory, and morally grounded endeavor**, exemplifying how the values of non-aligned states can guide principled global action.

Peace Constructs: Aligns vs. Non-Aligned States

Stubb's construct of peace, grounded in the values of **non-alignment**, emphasizes **dialogue, multilateralism, solidarity, and the ethical responsibility of states**. He frames peace as a product of **inclusive global governance, respect for international law, and shared responsibility for sustainability and justice**, underscoring the role of small states in advancing diplomacy and reconciliation. This reflects the traditional non-aligned stance that peace must be **value-driven and participatory**, rather than dictated by power blocs (Acharya, 2017; Prashad, 2007).

In contrast, the Global North's aligned construct of peace often rests on a **liberal internationalist paradigm**, where peace is associated with **institutionalized security alliances, liberal democratic norms, and market-based integration** (Ikenberry, 2011; Paris, 2010). Peace, in this view, tends to be maintained through **strategic deterrence, economic conditionality, and rule-setting led by powerful states or coalitions**, such as NATO or the European Union (Kupchan, 2020). While this model has ensured stability within the North Atlantic system, critics argue it privileges **hegemonic power and interest-based order** over broader concerns of global justice and equality (Richmond, 2014).

Comparatively, Stubb's vision seeks to bridge divides by advocating for **UN-centered multilateral reforms, sustainable development, and global solidarity**, resonating with Integral Human Development (IHD) principles of **dignity, justice, and dialogue** (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). His construct contrasts with the Global North's reliance on aligned security frameworks by **centering small-state agency, neutrality, and moral legitimacy** as pillars of global peacebuilding. Thus, whereas the Global North prioritizes **strategic stability and institutional liberal order**, Stubb promotes a **value-oriented, inclusive, and non-aligned model of peace**.

Alignment with IHD and Consensus Building on Stubb's Peace Construct

Alignment with the **IHD** framework increases the likelihood of building consensus around Stubb's construct of peace by providing a **shared ethical foundation** that transcends individual national interests. By emphasizing **human dignity, solidarity, justice, dialogue, and sustainability**, IHD offers universally recognized principles that make peace a morally compelling and inclusive goal (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). Framing sovereignty, institutional reform, and global cooperation in terms of human flourishing and the common good allows states with diverse priorities to negotiate from a standpoint that balances interests with ethical responsibility. This multidimensional approach positions peace not merely as the absence of conflict but as the **promotion of equitable structures and collective well-being**, making Stubb's vision of peace more relatable, persuasive, and conducive to multilateral consensus.

Contributions to Peace Communication

The paper contributes to peace-building through communication research by offering a **rich primary text** that demonstrates how political discourse frames peace in an era of shifting global power dynamics.

First, it highlights the role of **rhetoric and narrative in peace communication**. By structuring his address around **values, interests, and power**, Stubb communicates that peace is not only a strategic outcome but also a moral and cooperative process. This framing provides communication researchers with a case study of how language can construct shared meanings of sovereignty, cooperation, and justice to influence both domestic and international audiences.

Second, the speech emphasizes **dialogue, inclusivity, and reform**, aligning with communication theories that stress participation, reciprocity, and representation as foundations of conflict resolution and consensus-building (Habermas, 1996; Galtung, 2000). His references to reconciliation, truth, and accountability illustrate how **discursive practices**—storytelling, appeals to shared values, and naming injustices—function as communicative tools for peace-building.

Third, when analyzed vis-à-vis the **Catholic doctrine of Integral Human Development (IHD)**, the speech provides communication scholars with a framework for evaluating the **ethical and normative dimensions of political messaging**. The comparison allows researchers to examine whether political discourse aligns with universal principles of human dignity, solidarity, justice, and sustainability, showing how moral language shapes peace narratives.

Thus, the article contributes to peace-building through communication research by demonstrating that **political speeches are not neutral exchanges**, but sites where leaders negotiate meanings, mobilize values, and attempt to build consensus around the global ideal of peace.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study highlight that ethical frameworks such as IHD can effectively inform peace communication and diplomatic discourse in a multipolar world. Practically, these insights offer several applications for policymakers, educators, and peace communication practitioners:

Policy and Diplomacy. Stubb's integration of values, interests, and power demonstrates how small and medium-sized states can exercise moral leadership through diplomacy. Embedding IHD principles—dignity, solidarity, justice, dialogue, and sustainability—into foreign policy training programs can help diplomats frame policies that balance strategic interests with ethical responsibility. Institutions such as the United Nations, ASEAN, and the European Union could adopt similar frameworks to evaluate policy coherence with peace and justice principles.

Peace Communication and Media Practice. The study underscores the power of language in constructing peace narratives. Peace communication training programs and media literacy curricula could integrate discourse-analytic tools derived from this research to help journalists and communicators recognize how framing, metaphor, and rhetoric either reinforce or challenge hegemonic power structures. This contributes to more ethical reporting and constructive dialogue in conflict-sensitive contexts.

Education and Leadership Formation. In Catholic and other values-based educational institutions, the IHD framework can serve as a pedagogical model for teaching global citizenship, ethics, and leadership. Incorporating Stubb's case into peace studies and international relations curricula would help students understand how moral discourse can coexist with *realpolitik*, offering models of ethical statecraft for emerging leaders.

Faith-Based and Civil Society Peacebuilding. Religious and civil society organizations can draw on IHD's emphasis on holistic human development to bridge divides between faith traditions and secular diplomacy. This integration supports local peacebuilding, especially in multicultural or post-conflict societies, by fostering dialogue that combines spiritual and practical dimensions of peace.

Proposed Follow-Up Research

A recommended follow-up study should empirically investigate how communicative framing influences perceptions of ethical peacebuilding in a multipolar world. Focusing on political discourse such as Stubb's 2025 UN speech, the study would examine how diplomats, journalists, and students interpret messages grounded in Integral Human Development (IHD) principles. Using a sequential mixed-methods approach, it would first gather qualitative insights from experts in peace communication and theology to identify key linguistic and moral themes, then quantitatively assess how broader audiences perceive ethical coherence, emotional resonance, and trust in such discourses. By integrating findings from both phases, the study could develop a model linking

language, moral reasoning, and communicative trust. The results would offer empirical evidence for strengthening peace communication theory, provide analytical tools for evaluating political rhetoric, and inform ethical communication training for diplomats and media practitioners.

CONCLUSION

By analyzing President Stubb's 2025 UN speech through the lens of Integral Human Development, this study bridges moral theology, peace communication, and discourse analysis in understanding how ethical frameworks shape diplomatic rhetoric. The findings reaffirm that peace in a multipolar world must be communicatively constructed—rooted in justice, solidarity, and dialogue. The proposed pilot mixed-methods study extends this inquiry empirically, exploring how audiences interpret and internalize such ethical discourses, thereby advancing both the theory and practice of peace communication in a globalized era.

REFERENCES

1. Auwal, A. M. (2022). Peace journalism strategy for covering online political discourses in a multipolar society and the new public sphere. *Journal of Communication & Media Studies*, 12(2), 45–62.
2. Chilwa, I. (2024). Investigating the language of conflict and peace in critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 23(1), 56–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2024.2331160>
3. Gu, C. (2023). A corpus-based positive discourse analysis of Beijing's interpreters' international engagement discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 34(4), 501–523. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265231180179>
4. Hellmüller, S. (2022). Peacemaking in a shifting world order: A macro-level analysis of UN mediation in Syria. *Review of International Studies*, 48(3), 543–559. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021052200016X>
5. Simo, A., Mustafa, S., & Mousa, K. M. (2025). Exploring conflict escalation: Power imbalance, alliances, diplomacy, media, and big data in a multipolar world. *Journalism and Media*, 6(1), 43. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia6010043>
6. [Anonymous]. (2024). Peace communication: A transdisciplinary perspective for peacebuilding. *Journal of Peace & Communication Studies*, 17(1), 8–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2024.2437315>
7. Acharya, A. (2017). *The end of American world order* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
8. Baviera, A. S. P. (2020). The South China Sea disputes: Strategic issues and regional stability. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 12(3), 321–339. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12558>
9. Benedict XVI. (2009). *Caritas in veritate* [Encyclical letter]. Vatican Publishing House.
10. Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
11. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
12. Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.
13. Francis. (2015). *Laudato si'* [Encyclical letter]. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
14. Francis. (2020). *Fratelli tutti* [Encyclical letter]. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
15. Ikenberry, G. J. (2011). *Liberal Leviathan: The origins, crisis, and transformation of the American world order*. Princeton University Press.
16. John Paul II. (1987). *Sollicitudo rei socialis* [Encyclical letter]. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
17. Kupchan, C. (2020). *Isolationism: A history of America's efforts to shield itself from the world*. Oxford University Press.
18. Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
19. Paris, R. (2010). Saving liberal peacebuilding. *Review of International Studies*, 36(2), 337–365. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000057>
20. Paul VI. (1967). *Populorum progressio* [Encyclical letter]. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
21. Paul VI. (1967). *Populorum progressio* [Encyclical letter]. Vatican Publishing House.

-
22. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (2004). *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*. Vatican Publishing House.
 23. Prashad, V. (2007). *The darker nations: A people's history of the Third World*. The New Press.
 24. Richmond, O. P. (2014). Peace formation and local infrastructures for peace. *Peacebuilding*, 2(3), 183–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2014.910383>
 25. Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Sage.
 26. Stubb, A. (2025, September 24). Statement by President of the Republic of Finland Alexander Stubb at the General Debate of the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York. Office of the President of the Republic of Finland. <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/statement-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-alexander-stubb-at-the-general-debate-of-the-80th-session-of-the-un-general-assembly-in-new-york-on-24-september-2025/>