Believe It or Not
The New Face of Religion in International Affairs

A case study of Sant'Egidio

Jenny Holmsen

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

Florence, 11 December 2018

European University Institute

Department of Political and Social Sciences

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIS	Armé Islamique du Salut
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
CICR	Center for International Conflict Resolution
CVE	Countering violent extremism
DS	Democrazia Solidale
EUI	European University Institute
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut
FRELIMO	Frente de Liberaçao de Moçambique
FFS	Front des Forces Socialistes
FLN	Front de la Liberation Nationale
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
GIA	Groupement Islamique Armé
HCS	High Council of State
ICD	Inter-Cultural Dialog
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMPP	International Meeting of the Prayer for Peace
IR	International Relations [the discipline]
IRCSL	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone
IRD	Inter-Religious Dialog
IRF	International Religious Freedom
ISPI	Italian Institute for International Political Studies
MDA	Mouvement Démocratique Algerien
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
NEM	New ecclesial movement
NSC	National Security Council (U.S.)
NTC	National Transitional Council

PT	Parti des Travailleurs
RCD	Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie
RENAMO	Resistencia Nacional de Moçambique
SIPA	School of International and Public Affairs
UNCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Abstract

In this dissertation I seek to contribute to our understanding of the recasting of religion in the global order. I approach this by conducting a case study of a prominent practitioner of religious diplomacy: the Italian Catholic Community of Sant'Egidio. I suggest that faith-based mediation is an important arena in which the meaning and role of religion in international politics and diplomacy is (re)negotiated, and seek to develop our understanding of two lacunae in the academic research on faith-based mediation: the operational dynamics of faith-based mediation and its links and contact points with international politics. With a view to developing a comprehensive and contextualized study of the Sant'Egidio community, I draw upon practice theory and mediation theory and propose a three-layered research design focusing on: the internal religious practices of the community; its conflict mediation practices; and, finally, its role and impact as a global entrepreneur of religion and politics. I show that faith-based mediation—when performed by a transnational, professionalized religious network such as Sant'Egidio—is likely to take on some distinctive characteristics that do not necessarily resonate with the findings established in the academic literature on faith-based mediation and religious peacemaking. I further argue that the Sant'Egidio community—through its status and role as a leading practitioner of religious diplomacy—is entrenched in a broader transformative process affecting both dominant ways of "thinking" religion in the current global order as well as traditional modes of conducting international diplomacy and politics.

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Introduction

Research interest and scope of the study

This PhD dissertation deals with the recasting of the religious in the global order. It seeks to understand emerging trends and dominant modes of “doing religion” in international politics through an in-depth study of one of the foremost religious practitioners of international diplomacy: the Italian Catholic Community of Sant’Egidio. The dissertation provides important insights into the micro-practices and operational dynamics of *faith-based mediation*, one of the most prestigious, yet less documented, branches of religious diplomacy. Beyond that, it explores the political impact and heel of faith-based mediation, conceptualized as an international practice with a performative effect on “world politics”. I show that Sant’Egidio, through its position as a leading epistemic community within the field of religion and politics, has played an instrumental role in redefining the meaning of and role of religion in international politics in the post-September 11 context. The community has played a central role in the articulation of *a new narrative* on religion and international politics; the establishment of *new tools and practices* of religious diplomacy; and the elaboration of *new policy frameworks* regulating the division of labor between secular and religious and state and non-state diplomatic actors. The community has also grown increasingly influential internally in the Holy See, having taken a leading role in the reconfiguration of Holy See diplomacy under Pope Francis. This has provided it with a central position in ongoing negotiations on the meaning and role of Catholicism in the modern world, currently taking place at the heart of the Holy See.

From faith-based mediation to a broader outlook on religion and IR

This dissertation initially took as its starting point a phenomenon that has been the subject of much academic and political interest since the last couple of decades: faith-based mediation and the potential of religion to create peace.

Parallel to recent global developments that has seen religious terrorism established as the dominant threat to international peace and security, believers and religious leaders over the globe have forcefully argued that if religion is part of the problem, it must also be part of the solution. Significant resources have been invested in researching the links between religion and peace-building and in the development of training programs designed to implement and apply the lessons learned therein.[1]

Faith-based mediation—conventionally defined as "third party intervention efforts where religious creed, objects (i.e., symbols, texts, images, principles, etc.) and institutions play an important role" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 183)—constitutes a particularly important and prestigious branch of the broader label of religious peace-building. This is a result of two factors: a broader trend toward mediation as the preferred method of intervention in international practices of conflict resolution and management, and an increasing number of peace processes in which religious leaders have played an important role as mediators. It is now increasingly acknowledged, also in traditionally "secularist" circles of international politics, that faith-based approaches may have added value in the field of international conflict mediation and that this is a field worth exploring (preferably as track-2, in combination with "conventional" approaches).

But what exactly *is* faith-based mediation? What constitutes the specific repertoire and tools of faith-based conflict mediation and how does this differ from "conventional" approaches? Interestingly, despite the large interest and investment in this field—by religious and secular actors alike—there appears to be little consensus on this issue. This is most likely linked to the inherently cross-disciplinary nature of faith-based mediation, which sits at the intersection

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[1] Some renowned U.S. institutions and initiatives include the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life; the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Religion and Politics Program), the Henry Luce Foundation's Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion in International Affairs; the United States Institute for Peace (program on Religion and Peacebuilding), the Notre Dame Kroc Institute for Peace Studies (the program on Religion, Conflict and Peace Building), Georgetown University's Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, to mention a few.

between at least three established fields of practice (and thus academic disciplines): religious politics, conflict resolution and international relations. As a consequence, the specialized literature on faith-based mediation is sparse, and interested audiences need to look into other complimentary and related literatures, most importantly the literature on religion and peace and the coverage of religion in international politics in International Relations (IR) theory.[2]

A review of the relevant literatures reveals a general feature: While scholars of religion and theologians, mediation scholars, and IR theorists have all made interesting contributions to the topic of faith-based mediation (and religious peacemaking more broadly), it is often difficult to link the different disciplinary debates. The different disciplines all come with their own set of ontologies, epistemologies, research agendas and methodologies and there appears to be a widespread disconnect between the parallel debates—although they all ultimately address the same topic. As a result, the study of faith-based mediation tends to fall between different chairs, effectively limiting the relevance and applicability of academic productions.

Whereas theologians and sociologist of religion have made interesting contributions concerning the potential and resources of religion to create peace, these groups of scholars rarely engage in more structural analysis of the political significance and implications of such activities. Moreover, the normative agenda that often motivate these studies also tend to weaken the academic contribution, as Brewer and colleagues (2011) have noted.[3] Mediation scholars have, on a general basis, shown little interest in faith-based approaches, and to the extent that faith-based mediation is included in analysis, the frameworks tend to be highly technical and outcome-oriented. Although this makes sense considering mediation studies' origins as an empirical, result-oriented field of study, the overarching focus on identifying the factors that are most prone to produce successful outcomes has proved to be unfertile in terms of producing a deeper

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[2] I use the term "International Relations (IR)" to refer to the field of inquiry, and 'international relations' to refer to a subject of interest for scholars in that field.

[3] According to Brewer, Higgins and Teeney (2011: 212), most of the literature on religious peacemaking is "hugely overoptimistic, very naïve, and idealistic".

understanding of what faith-based mediation is essentially about. As for relevant debates within the field of international politics and IR theory, the former resistance to engage with religion as a topic in its own right—resulting in religion being conflated with concepts such as "culture" or "identity"—has gradually been replaced with a keen interest in the topic, although at a quite different level of abstraction and theorization. Key concerns within IR theory on religion and international politics include whether we are now in a post-secular international system and how the "religious revival" will affect the nation-state system. We can also trace a much more inward-looking strand, focusing on how the comeback of religion challenges the traditional paradigms of IR theory.

This academic dispersion has effectively weakened the solidity and relevance of the theoretical production on faith-based mediation. Most importantly perhaps, it has resulted in a poor understanding of the micro-practices and operational dynamics of faith-based mediation conceptualized as a social and political performance. Johnstone and Svensson (2013: 577) write:

> The extent to which there is a particular approach—or a set of approaches—to faith-based mediation is something that is assumed, but not studied. If the faith-based mediators tap into spiritual resources; utilize religious symbols and language; approach the conflict resolution process from another perspective; and apply a long-term and holistic approach, then we could expect the faith-based mediation to be carried out in way that is markedly and consistently different to more secular peace initiatives. However, this remains unknown.

A second weakness is what appears to be a fundamental disconnect between research on faith-based mediation and the larger body of research on religion and international politics. In my view, this reflects a failure to recognize and conceptualize faith-based mediation as a key expression and arena for new international religious politics. Indeed, it is not only religious terrorist networks that change international relations; "benign" religious actors may change them ever more, albeit in less spectacular ways. The rise of religious actors as one of the most important categories of "new" unconventional diplomatic actors is not only changing the mode and practices of diplomacy, but of international relations altogether. But in what direction? I argue that faith-based mediation has much to

offer ongoing debates within religion and international politics and IR theory, even if this is not conventionally recognized in the literature.

In light of this discussion, the key task that this dissertation initially set out to produce was a study of faith-based mediation that: 1) produced detailed, empirical knowledge about the micro-practices of faith-based mediation; and 2) connected these findings with more abstract debates on the political impacts of faith-based mediation practices on international politics. The main research questions originally motivating the dissertation could thus be summarized as: What is faith-based mediation? And why does it matter?

Sant'Egidio as an ideal-type actor

My initial plan was to explore such questions through a case study of the Italian Catholic Community of Sant'Egidio, conceptualized as an ideal-type actor of faith-based mediation. The community is a leading actor within the field of international faith-based conflict mediation and has played a central role in the development of the practice. Since the early 1990s, the community has been engaged in over fifteen mediation initiatives across the world. It has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize on several occasions and is commonly referred to as the "UN of the Trastevere", after the Roman neighborhood where the community's headquarters are located.

I wanted to study the community's mediation efforts in Algeria in the mid-1990s, where it tried to mediate between the secularist Algerian regime and the Islamist party, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS). This specific initiative stood out as a particularly interesting case study for several reasons. Not only is it the most politically controversial initiative the community has engaged in,[4] it also included a broad range of actors with different religious and political preferences and traditions: a secularist regime, a political opposition dominated by radical

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[4] Indeed, the community's decision to get involved brought Sant'Egidio into straight-out conflict not only with the Algerian regime but also with important currents within the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Holy See and the Catholic Church in Algeria.

Islamists and an Italian Catholic community.[5] As such, I was hoping it would provide rich empirical material on the dynamics and logics of faith-based mediation in a complex religio–political landscape. It would also complement the existing literature on faith-based mediation with a seldom, and hopefully productive, study of a *failed* mediation initiative.

However, as I started out with the preliminary interviews, it soon became clear that some paradoxes were in play. While I was searching for the religious "core" of Sant'Egidio's faith-based mediation practices, my key informants—the putative faith-based mediators themselves—consistently downplayed the religious factor or even rejected the term of faith-based mediation altogether. During my first meeting with Mario Giro—the Sant'Egidio member responsible for the Algerian mediation efforts—he said: "There is no such thing as a methodology of faith-based mediation". He went on to elaborate:

> I know that there are studies on religious mediation, but we don't think like this. We think of ourselves as a Christian community—with what that may involve of moral considerations, if you will—that at a certain time, in the 1980s, decided to expand our range of activities into that of mediation.

In his initial response, Anwar Haddam, the chief negotiator representing the FIS, echoed Giro's reaction: "I never thought of it as an incidence of faith-based mediation. That's an interesting perspective".

These initial meetings in the field forced me to rethink some critical issues concerning the way we understand and approach faith-based mediation as an established international practice. How are we to interpret the resistance to the label of faith-based mediation by those who are, ostensibly, conducting it? And how does this gap between map and terrain effectively shape knowledge production on the topic? A considerable part of the research carried out for this dissertation has thus focused on identifying theoretical and conceptual problems and biases in the way faith-based mediation is conventionally addressed in the

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[5] The Catholic community in Algeria was specifically targeted during the civil conflict, with the murdering of the monks of Thibérine in 1997 representing the single most brutal incident. Who the killers of the monks were remains controversial.

literature, and to develop a new framework that allows me to move beyond these challenges. This has resulted in a revised and extended research design with some characteristic features.

A multi-level, practice-oriented approach to faith-based mediation

First, if faith-based mediation is a term that does not correspond to the actual experiences of the mediators, this merits attention. A natural first step would thus be to develop a more nuanced understanding of faith-based mediation and its different branches. I have tried to accommodate this by developing a typology of faith-based mediation that seeks to illustrate the possible variety in forms and set-ups that faith-based mediation initiatives may take on.

Second, if faith-based mediation is a contested and politicized term, this warrants some analytical focus on how the categories "religious" and "secular" are constructed and applied in the field of international conflict mediation. I have tried to accommodate this by developing a three-layer analytical framework, drawing upon mediation theory and practice theory. The framework starts with the notion of mediator identity and tries to extend our understanding of the meaning of this concept—in the context of faith-based mediation—by investigating it through the scope of practice theory.

The overarching analytical focus of the study is then on the construction, enactment and "application" of a specific faith-based mediator identity, as a key tool of mediation: I investigate this on three different levels or dimensions of practices: the internal religious practices of the community; the community's faith-based mediation practices; and finally, the community's international practices and interactions with religious and political authorities.

This framework has allowed me to combine different perspectives, methods and material in an innovative and interdisciplinary way that I believe has proved fertile in producing new knowledge both about the micro-practices of faith-based mediation and the ways such practices relate to systemic debates on the changing role of religion in international politics.

The dissertation research is based in a single case study. Whereas this has allowed for a deeper engagement with the specific case in question—the

Sant'Egidio community—it nevertheless warrants some reflections on whether Sant'Egidio represents an exceptional or arch-type actor, and the extent to which we can make meaningful generalization on the basis of this specific case study that are valid or relevant for the broader field of faith-based mediation. My take on this is that faith-based mediation—judging from the academic literature—is a broad field and a practice than can be undertaken by a range of different actors, in a number of distinct settings and in various ways (referring to the strategies and tools of the mediator). With a view to "organize" the field and clarify the specific contribution of this thesis within the broader field of faith-based mediation, I develop a typology (see Table 1 on page 44) that distinguishes between different "modes" of faith-based mediation. I argue that Sant'Egidio is highly representative of the specific type of faith-based mediation that this thesis addresses, which is transnational, cross-religious and political in scope.

Contributions

Religious identity as a tool of mediation

Through ethnographic studies of the community's religious practices and different cultures of reference, this dissertation contributes to a broader understanding of the religious mediator identity of Sant'Egidio, and how it is effectively "applied" in mediation practices. This involves a more thorough understanding of the "type" of religion (or Catholicism) the Sant'Egidio community represents and how this is coupled with politics. Below I elaborate on some of the salient dimensions of Sant'Egidio's mediator identity and how these translate into mediation practices.

Sant'Egidio as a new ecclesial movement

I argue that Sant'Egidio being a new ecclesial movement (NEM) is key to understanding its specific mediator identity. By closely examining the theological, sociological and political roots of the Sant'Egidio movement and its positions within the Catholic Church—drawing upon a wide range of available material,

including theological, historical and sociological sources, memoirs and autobiographies, etc.—this study brings scholarly work on Catholicism together with political science, IR theory and mediation theory. Beyond providing new empirical analysis of a topic that has as yet been little studied;[6] this approach has allowed me to develop a more nuanced understanding of the hybrid character of the Sant'Egidio community as both a religious and political actor, which is crucial to understanding the community's application of religion in mediation practices. The literature on NEMs is central in this regard, as it shows us how Sant'Egidio is in fact not—as it often presents itself to be—a unique phenomenon. Rather, it is an intrinsic part of a larger process of diversification—some say rupture, others specialization—within the Catholic Church. I show that the NEM framework is central to understand the community's distinct mission and position as a diplomatic actor, situated at the "frontline" between the Church and "the World". It is also key to understand the community's specific and ambivalent relations with both the Pope and the traditional Church hierarchy, and how that affects its mediator identity and diplomatic practices.

Rearticulating the religious: From theology and doctrine to "faith" and "spirituality"

Another central feature in the religious mediator identity of the Sant'Egidio community is its innovative and eclectic combination of the themes of the 1968 political climate and the Second Vatican Council, [7] in way that triggers

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[6] Despite the considerable academic (not to mention political) interest in Sant'Egidio during the last decades, I have not found a single study or article looking at its faith-based mediation practices that has engaged in any rigorous investigation of Sant'Egidio's position within the broader Catholic landscape, beyond presenting it as "a Roman Catholic lay community, founded in 1968, with strong ties to Vatican II". If we compare this field with studies of Islamism—which has also been a hot topic for some decades—the absence of "common knowledge" about the different currents within Catholicism and its religious and political implications, outside theological circles, appears rather striking.

[7] The Second Vatican Council (informally addressed as the Vatican II) is the most recent ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. The council took place over the course of three years (1962–1965) and addressed relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world. It is often described as the most important religious event of the twentieth century, and produced several important changes. Among the most significant ones are the new

considerable concern within more conservative Catholic circles. It is a religious identity modeled upon the vocabulary of religious pluralism and co-existence, and the implications of that in terms of toning down specific Catholic references and obligations. Indeed, the religious identity of Sant'Egidio as played out in scenes and arenas of international cooperation both inter-religious and religious–secular is quite religiously minimalist in the sense of evoking specific Catholic topics. And when Catholic concepts are raised, they are presented in Universalist terms and are meant to be accessible and relevant for all people "of good faith". This effectively brings non-believers also into a common framework of co-existence and cooperation. It is thus a form of Catholicism primarily concerned with the re-socialization and normalization of religion—both between the different faith systems, but also increasingly between religion and "culture".

Against this background, I argue that a central feature of Sant'Egidio's religious identity is its effort to re-articulate the religious as part of its strategy appeal to an increasingly pluralist audience. Key tools and strategies in this re-framing and innovation of religion and religious identity, in a globalized context, include: 1) attempts to break down the borders between different "regimes of truth" (religion and politics; knowledge and faith; intuition and science; emotions or feelings and truth); and 2) re-introduce religion through the scope of spirituality and faith, moving away from dogmas, doctrines and theology.

The operational dynamics of Sant'Egidio's style of faith-based mediation

Regarding concrete mediation practices, I show that the Sant'Egidio community's religious "baseline" identity translates into a quite specific type of faith-based mediation practice, with the following characteristic features.

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focus on ecumenism and inter-religious dialog, together with the universal call to holiness, effectively providing lay Catholics with a far more central role.

Faith-based meditation as a "crash course" in politics

Based on the study of Sant'Egidio's mediation efforts in Algeria, this dissertation questions dominant narratives that see faith-based mediation as primarily concerned with healing social relations, or that it even has much to do with religion at all. Rather, it suggests that the type of faith-based mediation activities the Sant'Egidio usually engages in—transnational, cross-religious, high-level political processes of conflict mediation, as exemplified by Sant'Egidio's mediation initiatives in Algeria—is qualitatively different from other forms of faith-based mediation. This forces us to rethink and re-conceptualize the application, role and function of religion in such initiatives.

Concerning specific features, I argue that Sant'Egidio's approach to faith-based mediation is highly political. The absence of religious references, practices, rituals or anecdotes is, in fact, rather striking. Religion, in the traditional sense of religious values, principles, rituals, etc., finds little, if any, purchase in this type of mediation process. Rather, the main "purpose" of this type of mediation practice appears to lie in: 1) in the *re-articulation of crises in political rather than religious terms* (origins, actors, trajectory, and possible solutions); and 2) the *creation and formation of political subjectivities*—that is, in teaching other religious actors to "think" and "speak politics".

Consequently, faith-based mediation "Sant'Egidio-style" is not only a political practice more than a religious one; it is also an inherently secularizing practice, in the sense that it can be best understood as a "crash course in politics" for religious actors. Judging from this case study, the main function of faith-based mediation is to train religious actors to operate and navigate within a political landscape, and to equip them with the language and tools they need to effectively canalize their agenda through politics instead of religion. The somewhat counterintuitive conclusion is therefore that the main strength of faith-based mediation is that it neutralizes religion, rather than strengthening it. Faith-based mediation serves to tame and shape religion, rather than to liberate it; in so doing, it "quarantines" religion from the negative associations with conflict and violence.

This finding has far-reaching implications for theoretical debates on faith-based mediation—and religious peacemaking more broadly—because it shows a

different causal relationship, or different application of religion, than conventionally portrayed in the literature. A common assumption is that religion is helpful in peace work because it represents some sort of a meta-narrative, a larger story, in which to inscribe and treat conflicts and differences.[8] The case study of Sant'Egidio in Algeria, however, presents quite a different picture, in which religion is applied or mobilized in an effort to remove religion from the meta-narrative and facilitate a *return to politics*.

Key strengths and capacities of faith-based mediators

If religion plays a more low-profile and less direct role in faith-based mediation processes than one might assume, it does not mean that it is irrelevant entirely. On the contrary, I argue that religion plays a crucial role in the faith-based mediation practices of Sant'Egidio, but on different levels and in other ways than we usually think.

Religion enters faith-based mediation primarily through the lens of identity; that is to say, in terms of who the mediator is and what she represents, rather than a distinct set of motivations, guiding principles, tools or strategies for action. In many segments of international diplomacy, the category of faith-based/religious—as opposed to secular—has important symbolic value. Belonging to the category of "religious folks" often allows faith-based mediators to leverage a set of capacities—whether assumed or real—concerning interpersonal skills and a deeper understanding of the human condition that make them a particularly good fit for the role of mediator.

I show that this faith-based identity is primarily practiced through a set of "insider capacities" that transcend specific religious traditions. *Analytical capacities* refer to the capacity of religious mediators to offer a fuller and more comprehensive analysis and understanding of the conflict and the parties to the conflict in question, which transcends the "narrow", materialistic analysis of

[8] Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 196) write that: "During a conflict, religious leaders can use religious tools and texts to construct a new story, a new narrative in which issues and differences are represented as meaningful parts of a divine project".

professional mediators. A basic component of this analytical capacity is a baseline "religious anthropology" of peace and conflict, in which the latter is conceptualized as something unnatural to mankind that needs to be learned (and unlearned). *Communicative capacities* refer to the ability of faith-based mediators to converse effectively with other faith-based actors and believers. Religion is cast as a "lost language" that most political actors have forgotten. From this perspective, faith-based actors like Sant'Egidio are uniquely positioned to access and communicate with a world "that is still hyper-religious"[9] and where political voices cannot reach.[10]

In terms of mediator performance, these capacities translate very productively in creating a space for political learning among religious actors. Effectively, the religious identity of the mediator provides him with unique leverage to negotiate religious issues—as well as the boundaries between religion and politics—with other religious actors. This is off-limits for secular mediators, as only religious actors have the authority to discuss what religion is and what it is not. The key strength of faith-based mediators thus lies in their capacity to negotiate and discipline religion from an *insider position*—this can happen both within and across faith traditions.

Faith-based mediation as a performative practice "in and on the World"

Finally, the dissertation develops the links between faith-based mediation and international politics. This is an important and timely contribution, considering that international faith-based conflict mediation is *de facto* international political practice. It is thus reasonable to assume that such practices (at least to some degree) are shaped by and shapes international political structures. But through what channels and in what direction?

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[9] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013.

[10] Interestingly, these communicative capacities go beyond the recurrent topic of *religious literacy*. It is as much about an implicit form of communication, a basic posture and attitude toward existence; namely, living in relation to something sacred.

Sant'Egidio as a powerful entrepreneur of religion and politics

Through an in-depth study of the community's relations with political and religious authorities, I show that Sant'Egidio's position as a leading practitioner of religious diplomacy has gradually translated into considerable influence and leverage on ongoing negotiations over the role and meaning of religion in international politics. I argue that the community has transitioned from a renowned "community of practice" to an important "epistemic community", whose narrative and understanding of religion and its appropriate role in international politics informs, in a highly effective way, global policy-making on the issue.

This shift in status can roughly be traced to circumstances in the United States in 2005–2006, when individuals in U.S. diplomatic and academic circles were working to develop a new framework for U.S. global policies in the aftermath of the failed "War on Terror" in Iraq and Afghanistan. The issue of religion would play a central role in the new framework, and Sant'Egidio was invited in by Catholic friends in the U.S. bureaucracy and leading academic circles, to provide input in terms of culture, professionalism and knowledge of the field. In the evangelical religious circles surrounding the Bush administration, the war in Iraq was seen as a struggle between Good and Evil—in this perspective, negotiations were not on the agenda. Sant'Egidio, in contrast, brought the more catholic view that no such dichotomy exists and that "the Other" is also a human being. The interest for Sant'Egidio in the United States might have been raised also by the need to negotiate while retaining a religious view of IR. As a result, Sant'Egidio's narrative on religion and politics penetrates the U.S. policy framework on "religious engagement". The community has subsequently played an important role in introducing the framework to the Italian context and in assisting the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to develop a specifically Italian model of religious engagement.

Against this background, I argue that the Sant'Egidio community's contribution to a new global narrative on religion and international politics can be quite accurately traced through the "religious engagement" policy framework. An interesting feature of that framework is that it is more than a narrative. It is an

inherently transforming/transcendental process that seeks to convert religion from a theoretical into a policy issue by implementing and integrating religion into actual practices of foreign policy and diplomacy. Another interesting feature in this policy process is the key role played by a small network of IR scholars working on religion and international politics. I show how the IR community—primarily in the United States but also in Europe—has played an instrumental role in the process of translating religion from theory to policy, in a way that really exposes the close interaction and at times blurry borders between academic knowledge production and policy-making. This finding triggers some timely questions regarding IR's status as an academic discipline and its performative and constructive dimensions.

The Sant'Egidio community's rise in political influence has coincided with a strengthened position also internally in the Catholic Church and vis-à-vis the Holy See. This must be seen in connection with the papacy of Francis, whose theological line of Catholicism—and proactive outlook on diplomacy and international politics—resonates well with that of Sant'Egidio. I show that Sant'Egidio has effectively played a key role in the reconfiguration of Holy See diplomacy under Pope Francis, most significantly by developing a diplomatic model of the "Encounter", which sharply contrasts the former Pope Benedict's diplomatic model of "Truth". The community's rise in influence internally in the Holy See has triggered, or revived, a deep divide within the Catholic Church concerning the appropriate role of the Catholic Church in international politics and diplomacy. This conflict is currently crystalizing in the ongoing confrontation between the advocates of a "Diplomacy of Truth" and those favoring a "Diplomacy of the Encounter".

I show that the current clash between competing visions of Holy See diplomacy is in fact rooted in deep theological questions and controversies concerning concept of Truth and the essence of Catholicism. This means that Sant'Egidio in the present exercises an important impact on internal negotiations on religion within the Catholic Church through its position as one of its leading diplomatic actors. The confrontation between "Truth" and "Encounter" thus

serves as an important arena to investigate Sant'Egidio's role in redefining the religious at the heart of the Holy See.

A new political narrative on religion: Religion as "knowledge"

As for the direction and "content" in Sant'Egidio's narrative on religion and international politics—effectively informing both U.S. and Italian policy-making—I show that it takes starting point in a "post-secular" understanding of global politics, in which religious actors are singled out as the most important drivers of international development. Religion is largely depicted in functionalistic rather than moral terms, as a new form of knowledge that can improve policy-making and possible also increase the legitimacy of traditional diplomacy. Indeed, the religious engagement narrative is largely framed within a larger narrative of a multidimensional crisis of diplomacy and secular politics altogether. Against this background, religion is pitched as a source of information and insight, which can help traditional (secular) diplomats navigate in a world that "they no longer understand". With sound foreign policies being the overarching goal, religion is suggested as something that can complement—not challenge—secular politics, by providing *vision* and *values*. It is a proposed as a mean to restore and rehabilitate "politics", which has gradually been emptied of meaning.

Changing religion "from within"

As for Sant'Egidio's role in negotiating religion internally in the Catholic Church, I show that diplomacy and theology are (perhaps somewhat surprisingly) deeply connected, and that the community's role and position as the diplomatic actor *par excellence* of the Holy See places it at the very center of ongoing, urgent controversies on the meaning and role of Catholicism in the (post)modern world. The very concept of "Encounter"—which entails not putting religion first—inevitably has a theological consequence: how to think about "Encounter" in a Church that does not negotiate on truth?

By consequence, the current confrontation between a "Diplomacy of Truth" and the "Diplomacy of the Encounter", masks a deeper confrontation between

different theologies, ultimately concerned with the nature and meaning of Truth in Catholicism. Sant'Egidio's position as a protagonist in the "Encounter" camp therefore offers a key to read Sant'Egidio's diplomatic activities in a way that distillates its religious foundation and components.

The concept of (an exclusive, Catholic) Truth[11] clearly poses a dilemma for diplomatic actors like Sant'Egidio, who essentially manage relations with "Others". If there is only one "Truth" and everyone else is "wrong", this makes diplomacy very hard if not impossible, and one would have to go back to proselytization and conversion. I show that Sant'Egidio's answer to this challenge is to renegotiate the concept of Truth and its role in Catholicism, which thus constitutes the "core" of the community's input in internal Catholic negotiations on religion. Sant'Egidio effectively opposes conservative, conceptions of Truth (often associated with former Pope Benedict XVI) by arguing that there is no fixed, exclusive, ultimate Truth that exists independently from the world. Rather, Truth can only be revealed through encounters with the Other(s). The community thus proposed an inclusive, non-confrontational, somewhat enigmatic conception of truth—which is perfectly compatible with diplomacy.

This flexible, yet theologically plausible/convincing conception of Truth constitutes the community's main strength in its practices of international diplomacy. However, it is also the community's main weakness vis-à-vis conservative criticism concerning its lack of "*la disciplina Cattolica",* and its destructive effect on Christian Unity, understood both as a theological principle and as the first and overarching principle of Holy See diplomacy.

Detailed outline of the chapters

In Chapter 1, **"Theoretical framework and methodology",** I review the academic literatures most relevant to the topic of faith-based mediation, within the fields of religion and peace, mediation studies, religion and IR theory. Having established the "state of the art", I propose a three-layer research model, that

[11] As in the notion that Jesus Christ is the one and only savior of mankind.

draws upon meditation theory and practice theory. I go on by discussing methods of data collection and analysis, and some methodological challenges that I have faced in the process.

In Chapter 2, **“Sant’Egidio, the actor in its environments”,** I set the stage for a nuanced ethnographic investigation of the community, by tracing its historical, sociological, theological and ecclesiastic roots and position. In this chapter, I draw upon the literature on NEMs (associated with the Bologna School), together with a broad selection of ethnographic material (interviews, biographies, analysis of the community’s own historiographies). I show how the community specific *mission and position* within the broader landscape of NEMs constitute it as a religio–political actor with a set of specific features and go on to investigate how this form the community’s relations and mode of interaction with central Catholic Church structures and Italian political authorities.

In Chapter 3, **“Anchoring practices: Becoming a mediator”**, I detail an ethnographic study of Sant’Egidio’s yearly meeting, the International Meeting of the Prayer for Peace (IMPP), drawing on my attendance at the 2015 meeting in Tirana, Albania and the 2016 meeting in Assisi, Italy. The analytical focus is on what sort of “baseline” (religious and political) identity, or platform of action, the community communicates and enacts through this annual event. In other words, its self-representation as an international subject, and the role of religion in this construction. I argue that some of the core mechanisms in play—effectively constituting some defining features of Sant’Egidio identity as religious and political actor—is an attempt to break down the borders between religion and politics and re-introduce religion through the scope of spirituality.

Chapter 4, **“Integrative practices: Performing mediation”**, presents my focused study of the micro-practices of faith-based mediation through a case study of Sant’Egidio’s mediation initiative in Algeria in 1994–1995. With a starting point in the concept of *mediator identity* and associated notions such as *motivation*, *strategies* and *resources*, I try to develop a better insight into the specific *modus operandi* and potential added value of faith-based mediation. I show that religion plays a far more low-profile role in this form of faith-based mediation practice and argue that faith-based mediation is first and foremost a political practice. The

religious component enters primarily through its symbolic value, through the identity of the mediator. As a religious actor he or she has a specific legitimacy to negotiate religion and its relations to politics, which secular actors lack. This legitimacy is used to evacuate religion from political conflicts. A key strength of faith-based mediation is therefore that it may be particularly successful in neutralizing the destructive force of religion.

In Chapter 5, **"International practices: Negotiating religion and politics in 'the World'",** I investigate the external dimension of Sant'Egidio's faith-based mediation practices, by studying the community's relations with political and religious authorities. As for the community's relations with political authorities, I take starting point in the "religious engagement" policy framework—which effectively seeks to formalize tighter cooperation with religious actors in the formation and practices of foreign policy and diplomacy—and trace the origins and trajectory of the framework from its U.S. origins to its Italian interpretation. As for the community's relations with the Holy See, I show Sant'Egidio's central role in the remaking of Holy See diplomacy through investigating the current confrontation between the adherents of a diplomacy of "Truth" and a diplomacy of the "Encounter".

In the **"Conclusion"**, I sum up the key findings and discuss what they add to the study of faith-based mediation and its links with international politics. I argue that a multi-level approach allows to observe some broader dynamics in play that impact on the way we conceptualize the relationship between faith-based mediation (as an established international practice) and larger transformations in the established boundaries between the religious and the secular (associated with the Westphalian model). I suggest that we are looking at two parallel and interconnected processes of religio–political innovation: a process of assimilation between what sociologists of religion call "lived" religion and "expert" religion (Shakman-Hurd 2015); and secondly, the development of a new vocabulary of international religious politics with a specific Catholic imprint. I conclude by discussing some inherent tensions and paradoxes in Sant'Egidio's construct of religious diplomacy and what it holds for Sant'Egidio's position as a leading entrepreneur of religion and politics in the future.

Chapter 1
Theoretical framework and methodology

The state of the art: Faith-based mediation in the academic literature

Religion and peace

The "return of religion" in international politics since the late 1960s[12] has led to a vivid debate within the social sciences about how religion should be understood, and how it relates to secularism and modernity. The debate has been most intense within the fields of sociology and political philosophy,[13] but is increasingly reflected across the entire disciplinary spectrum.

Not surprisingly perhaps, considering global political developments since the last decades, much focus has been given the topic of religious terrorism and violence.[14] However, parallel to studies of extremism and terrorism, there has also emerged a keen interest in the relationship between religion and peace, and the potential of religion to play a constructive role in conflict resolution and peace making. In an effort to correct the dominant focus on the well-established links between religion and conflict, an entire literature has emerged since the mid-1990s, which seek to document and communicate the "unique power" of religion as a source of peace.

[12] Perhaps we can speak of four waves of religious politics that form the foundation for the "return of religion" literature: the decolonization wars in the 1960–70s in which religion was often mobilized; the Iranian revolution of 1989; September 11; and, more recently, the emergence of "new-generation" Islamic terrorist networks like ISIS in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings and the political collapse of large parts of the MENA region.

[13] Key references work include: Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (2007), José Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994), and Talal Asad's *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003).

[14] See, for instance: Juergensmeyer (1993); Juergensmeyer (2001); Lawrence (1995); Norris & Inglehart (2004); Durward & Marsden (2009); Larsson (2004).

The literature on religion and peace takes its starting point in "the dual legacy of religion in human history" (Gopin 1997) or what Appleby (1999) refers to as the fundamental "ambivalence of the sacred"—that is, the capacity of religion to mobilize for peace and reconciliation, but also for conflict and violence. This literature essentially argues that if religious traditions and teaching can encourage violence and conflict, the same traditions are applicable in the resolution of conflict. This effectively provides religious leaders and faith-based actors with a special responsibility and potential.

Pioneer works within the "religion and peace" literature—which remain important references today as they were central in establishing religious diplomacy both as an academic and practical field of practice—include Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson's edited volume *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft (1995)*, Scott Appleby's *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (1999) and Marc Gopin's *Religion, Violence and Conflict Resolution* (1997). These works are important because they establish and elaborate an alternative view on conflict resolution in which religion is re-introduced as a positive element and as source of "untapped potential" in global practices of diplomacy and conflict resolution. The authors argue that rational actor paradigms and economic models of bargaining, which have dominated both Western theories and practices of conflict resolution, are unfit to deal with the type of new conflicts that have emerged after the end of the Cold War. These have been intra-state, rather than inter-state, conflicts and have centered on issues of identity, religion and ethnicity, rather than "traditional" conflict issues such as territorial borders and political ideologies. It is argued that the tools traditional diplomacy uses are unfit to manage identity-driven conflict because they fail to address the human and emotional dimensions of conflict (Johnston & Sampson 1994). In this view, conflict is understood as something more than the result of colliding "objective" interests; it also represents a crisis of human relations (ibid). As such, beyond a narrow focus on "fixing the problem", peacemakers also need to address the issue of societal healing and of restoring healthy relationships, if they are to be successful. Religion, it is argued, represents a unique spiritual resource for this type of process.

What, then, does the unique potential of religion to create peace actually consist of? Scott Appleby (1999; drawing upon Rudolph Otto 1957) suggests that the religious dynamic is powerful because it stems from the "encounter with the sacred," understood as a pre-moral source. As such, encountering the sacred may constitute a highly ambiguous ethical experience, potentially triggering widely different behaviors ranging from suicide and homicide to self-sacrifice and caring for the sick and vulnerable. The religious dynamic is powerful because it is, by definition, a "yearning for transcendence, a desire and search for meaning beyond the temporal and finite" (Appleby 1999). Due to these qualities, religion lends itself as a potent rationale for religious militants of all kinds. In terms of peacemaking, religious militants can be instrumental in creating a context where peace-building is possible, through practices espousing forgiveness, reconciliation, dialog, charity, hospitality to strangers, and restraint from judgment. They can help bring a culture of non-violence and reconciliation, thus beginning to make cultural sense of any kind of peace agreement or ceasefire. It can help to build down enemy images and inspire engagement with the Other, as well as forgiveness of perpetrators (ibid).

Johnston and Cox argue much along the same lines by agreeing that faith-based diplomacy is "more about reconciliation than it is of conflict resolution" (Johnston & Cox 2008: 15). They refer to four "foundational attributes" underlying religion's unique potential in peace and conflict resolution work. First, religion represents a stable and pervasive influence in local communities. Second, religion (according to the authors) is an apolitical force derived from a respected set of values; as such is acquitted from charges of seeking power and influence. Third, religion holds, for the authors, a unique leverage for reconciliation and the reconstruction of healthy relations through its tenets of love-of-neighbor and forgiveness. Finally, religious leaders often have a wide network of accompanying capability of mobilizing support for peace on all levels of society (ibid: 13–14).

Hurst (2015: 33) suggests that the literature on religion and peace identifies three ways in which religion can be applied as a strategy of conflict resolution. First, engaging in *religious and inter-faith dialog* can increase understanding and enhance sensitivity to other people. Reserved for situations in

which parties emerge from conflicting religious backgrounds, inter-faith dialog functions as a mechanism by which parties can enlighten other people to the beliefs, traditions and sacred values of their religion. The purpose is not to reach doctrinal agreement but to an increased understanding and sensitivity toward other's beliefs (Takim 2004, cited in Hurst 2015: 33). By consequence, inter-faith dialog generates relationships with the ability to produce beneficial, mutual understanding between parties of different religions (Gopin 2002, cited in Hurst 2015: 34).

Second, *religious values* can be introduced to help parties find unforeseen commonalities. Hurst holds that "research has documented various accounts where the re-framing of issues into religious contexts greatly amplifies resolution efforts" (Hurst 2015: 34). Religious values allow participants to re-frame disputes focusing on individual loss into teachings on compassion and forgiveness for other people (Matthews-Giba 1999, cited in Hurst 2015: 34). Re-framing disputes from religious contexts allows those who intervene unrestricted access and the ability to increase potential impact (Abu-Nimer 2001, cited in Hurst 2015: 34). Re-framing resolutions within a religious context dramatically increases the potential impact (that will be experiences by all parties) because "by identifying shared values, mediators construct a new narrative of the conflict in which disputes can be understood as meaningful parts of a divine project" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009, cited in Hurst 2015: 35).

Third, *religious texts* can be leveraged to explore shared values and traditions. According to Hurst:

> [S]uccessful mediators serve as "translators" capable of negotiating differences and similarities across religious borders through the use of religious narratives. As such, in-depth understanding and the ability to redefine religious texts rest at the core of conflict transformation (Mason 2011, cited in Hurst 2015: 35).

Hurst further argues that there are two primary ways of in which mediators can leverage this power. First, recognizing that religious parties use the text as moral anchor, mediators can enter into dialog that references main points shared by the

current conflict and the text.[15] Second, finding similarities between different religious texts "automatically create a sense of legitimacy for the other party's concerns" (Hurst 2001: 35).

Faith-based mediation

The specialized literature on faith-based mediation, as a specific approach to (religious) conflict resolution, remains limited in scope, as the issue is most often addressed within the larger body of literature on religion and peace. Yet there have been some attempts at systematic theory-building on faith-based mediation. In a 2009 article, renowned mediator–scholar Jacob Bercovitch and Ayşe Kadayifci-Orellana investigate faith-based mediation through the prism of mediation theory (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). This article remains a reference work in the field, as the first (and only) attempt at a systematic account of how faith-based mediation differs from regular (or secular) mediation, and under what conditions faith-based approaches have a comparative advantage to secular ones in enhancing effective mediation. As such, it is worth investigating this article a little more in detail. The article first establishes some central concepts from the mediation literature that can be used in the assessment of mediation and mediators, and then seeks to assess faith-based mediation and mediators within this framework. The analytical focus is on whether it makes sense to apply the same mediation concepts in the context of faith-based mediation, and what it tells us about the specific modus operandi and added value of faith-based approaches to conflict mediation.

Mediation and mediators

Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009) define mediation as "an approach to conflict management in which a third party, which is not a direct party to the dispute, help disputants through their negotiations and does so in a non-binding fashion" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 178, citing Bercovitch & Houston

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[15] As example, Hurst proposes using the Quran as a resource to help Muslim women become empowered.

1993: 298; Carnevale 1964: 42; Touval & Zartman 1989: 117; Wall & Lynn 1993). However, there appears to be no consensus on a single, satisfying definition of mediation. According to the authors this is because mediation and mediator roles have been understood differently by various scholars and have taken on different meanings in different religio-cultural contexts (Ibid: 178). Still, they argue that there are some main characteristics which are common to most mediation efforts. Some of these characteristics include mediation being: 1) a practice whereby third parties seek to bring about peaceful settlement to a conflict; 2) a non-coercive and ultimately non-binding practice; and 3) an extension of a larger process of conflict management and negotiations, in the sense that it cannot be viewed independently of power relations (Bercovitch, in Bercovitch, Kremenyuk & Zartman 2008).[16]

The (extreme) social complexity of mediation processes has complicated the task of theory-building within the academic literature. The inherently unique character of different conflicts and conflict dynamics, together with the high number of variables and unforeseen factors, have indeed made it difficult to produce generalizable theories. Evidently, the highly practical starting point for mediation studies as an academic discipline—that is, the need of practicing diplomats of tools and knowledge to move mediation processes forward—has steered the research agenda in a practical and results-oriented direction in which the overarching aim has been to identify the most important factors for successful mediation. Mediation scholars have tried to do this by applying an array of different approaches and methods, ranging from adapted versions of economic and game theory, to more interpretative approaches.[17]

As Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009) note, a closer reading of the mediation literature reveals that one issue appears to stand out as particularly

[16] In the 2009 article Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana point to seven characteristics; for reasons of simplicity I stick with the three characteristics set out by Bercovitch in 2008.

[17] Many scholars have attempted to examine the factors that may influence the effectiveness of mediation (Touval 1982; Bercovitch 1992; Bercovitch & Houston 1993; 1996; 2000; Bercovitch & Langley 2003; Kleiboer 1996; Elangovan 1995; Zartman 1995). Some suggestions include *key attributes* of the mediator (influence with the conflicting parties); *contextual features* (hurting stalemate, ripe moment, etc.); and *mediator roles and behaviors* (motivation, resources).

important, nearly regardless of the theoretical orientation of the work: the concept of *mediator identity*.[18] Despite other disagreements, there appears to be general consensus within the field that mediator identity is key to the effectiveness and success of any mediation effort.

Mediation processes, being social processes, make the mediator absolutely dependent upon the good will and genuine cooperation of the parties to the conflict, in order to do his job. Personal relations are at the center. If the mediator is not considered legitimate and credible, he or she will not be able to move the parties in any direction. This leads Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 180) to conclude that “what mediators do, can do, or are permitted to do in their effort to resolve a conflict may depend largely on who they are”. This means that the identity and characteristics of mediators are effectively “predictors of success” (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 180, citing Young 1986). According to the authors, mediator identity—and ultimately mediator legitimacy—is intrinsically linked to three critical factors: the *resources, motivations* and *strategies* of mediators (Ibid: 180).

Mediator resources

To exercise any degree of influence on a conflict, mediators need “leverage” or resources. Leverage entails the ability to become a relevant actor in conflict management by putting pressure on the parties or offering them inducements to accept a proposed settlement (Kleiboer 2002: 127, cited in Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 181). Leverage is traditionally derived from *tangible resources* such as economic incentives or military or political support (Slim 1992, cited in Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 181); however, less powerful mediators and non-state actors may also draw upon *intangible resources* such as credibility, legitimacy, trust, moral standing or their persuasive powers as a source of leverage.

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[18] The first attempt at a systematic analysis of this was Touval’s work from the early 1980s on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009).

Mediator motivation

Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009) argue that motivation "is critical as it determines whether or not a mediator will intervene and whether or not such mediation can contribute to building trust and credibility among the parties and the mediator" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 181). This is because successful mediation depends upon consent, high motivation, and active participation; if the parties believe that the mediator has a genuine interest in reducing violence and finding a peaceful solution to the conflict, they are more prone to trust the mediator (Ibid: 181).

Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana—together with a number of other mediation scholars—note that mediator motivation may spring from different sources: Whereas some mediators may be primarily motivated by "genuine" humanitarian interests, others may have more strategic interests when mediating (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). Usually it is a combination of the two. It is therefore important to consider mediation (at least that carried out by state actors) "as a part of foreign and domestic policy issues taking place 'within the context' of international politics" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 181, citing Touval 2003: 92). Common, though less altruistic mediator motivations include a desire to gain access to major political leaders and open channels of communication to a desire to spread one's own ideas and thus enhance personal statue and professional status (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 182). Bercovitch (2008) specifically underscores the importance of mediator motivations as key to develop a comprehensive understanding of mediator roles and practices and characterizes it as an "understudied" field.

Mediator strategies

Mediator behavior and performance—defined by Bercovitch as the "overall plan used by mediators to resolve and manage conflicts" (Bercovitch 1992; cited in Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 182)—is another factor which is crucial to effective mediation. The literature on mediation conventionally classifies mediator behavior into three different categories depending on how active the

mediator is (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 182, citing Bercovitch 1997; Kressel & Pruitt 1985; Kochan & Jick 1978; Bartos 1989). *Communication–facilitation strategies* refer to the most passive mediator strategies, where a mediator primarily seeks to pass messages and exchange unbiased information between the disputants (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). *Procedural strategies* refer to strategies that are slightly more ambitious and which actively seek to create favorable environments for disputants to meet in person and even negotiate. *Directive/manipulation strategies*, in contrast to the above "non-directive" strategies, are strategies that seek to "persuade disputants (with incentives and alternative outcomes) to agree upon the proposal suggested by the mediator with considerable authority" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 182).[19]

Factors in faith-based mediation

What then, about mediation undertaken by faith-based actors, or what is conventionally referred to as faith-based mediation? As we have seen Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 183) define faith-based mediation as: "third party intervention efforts where religious creeds, objects (i.e. symbols, texts, images, principles, etc.) and institutions play and important role". According to the article, several characteristics distinguish faith-based interventions form secular ones. These include: a) an explicit emphasis on spirituality and/or religious identity; b) use of religious texts; c) use of religious values and vocabulary; d) utilization of religious or spiritual rituals during the process and; e) involvement of faith-based actors as third parties (ibid: 185).

Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana argue that faith-based actors do in fact have a specific set of attributes, resources, motivations and strategies that sets them apart from secular mediators and provides them with a number of advantages in their effectiveness in responding to ethno-religious conflicts. The

[19] For a discussion on the pros and cons with "directive" versus "non-directive" mediator strategies, referring to the levels of pressure and power applied by the mediators, see: Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 182–183 or, alternatively, Lee 2004; Brian Muldoon 1996; Touval & Zartman 1985.

advantages of faith-based actors are closely linked to the particular form of legitimacy that they evoke as religious actors. According to Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana, faith-based mediators draw upon an essentially different form of legitimacy than secular actors. Whereas the legitimacy and credibility of conventional (secular) mediators is traditionally linked to ideas of impartiality and neutrality,[20] the legitimacy of faith-based mediators is based upon very different criteria. According to the article authors, faith-based mediators usually draw upon the legitimacy of a (cultural) "insider", that is, of a mediator with solid knowledge into the conflict and the parties and with a vested interest in the successful resolution of the conflict as the mediator will have to live with the consequences: "Religious leaders and faith-based actors are often like the insider mediators with the moral and spiritual legitimacy to influence the opinion of people. They are highly respected, and their opinions are generally held in high regard within their communities" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 187).

Faith-based resources

Faith-based mediators are also thought to have a different form of leverage in mediation, due in large part to their capacity to draw upon "intangible" resources. According to Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 187), "theirs (faith-based mediators) is a unique moral and spiritual leverage." This distinct influence is based upon "a reputation for change based on a respected set of values and a well-established influence in the community" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 187; citing Johnston & Cox 2003). The prominent status of religious leaders in their local communities is seen as providing them with a unique leverage to undertake social change and reconciliation:

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[20] Various mediation scholars have emphasized the impartiality and neutrality of the mediator as the distinguishing characteristic of the mediation process as well as the key to success. This ideal-type mediator—of a neutral "outsider" with no vested interest in the conflict—has increasingly been challenged in interdisciplinary discussions but remains a central reference. For a discussion on the advantages with a neutral outsider versus a "competent insider", see: Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 186–187).

> For example, in many conflict-ridden countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Israel/Palestine, Sierra Leone, and Iraq, religious leaders have a prominent role and are greatly respected in their societies. This status gives them a unique leverage to do something about a conflict and re-frame it in ways that are acceptable to their communities (ibid: 187).

Beyond this unique moral and spiritual leverage, faith-based mediators also have access to more "tangible" means. As Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana note: "Faith-based actors, such as Quakers, Sant'Egidio, Mennonites, Islamic Relief Services have well-established regional and global networks which they can draw upon for institutional, financial, and human resources" (ibid: 188). This means that they are often well-positioned to mobilize support both at the grassroots levels as well as the higher levels of leadership. Moreover, the religious groups usually have a much broader base than most international NGOs; this translates into a comparative advantage for faith-based actors as they have a much wider pool to draw upon (ibid: 188). This again allows faith-based mediators the luxury of *time and long-term engagement*, which is seen as one of the key weaknesses of "formal" mediation and conflict resolution.

Faith-based motivation

The specifically religious motivation is another crucial dimension in the legitimacy of faith-based mediators, according to the literature. Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 190) argue that: "One of the distinct characteristics of faith-based mediation is the spiritual and religious motivation behind it." In short, Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana argue that the pure and altruistic motivation of religious actors, and lack of a political agenda of their own, is key in constituting them as legitimate mediators: "The unique position as servants of a divine God who are inspired by their religious and spiritual traditions and are willing to take risks without any other interests or hidden agendas is key to understanding the legitimacy and possible sources of faith-based mediation" (ibid: 191).

Faith-based strategies

The literature holds that faith-based mediators deploy a different or additional set of strategies, contributing to the added value of such approaches. This include the use of use of religious and spiritual resources—such as prayer, meditation, religious ritual, vocabulary, values and myths—that complement and "deepen" traditional mediation strategies. As Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 191) note: "A distinctive element of faith-based mediation is framing intervention strategies within a religious context, while employing traditional strategies used by other mediators". Faith-based mediators may employ any of the three core mediation strategies identified in the literature—communication–facilitation strategies; procedural strategies and directive/manipulation strategies—but use them in a different context and endow them with a broader religious meaning (ibid).

Religion and International Relations theory

The broader topic of religion and peace—including that of faith-based mediation—is also addressed within the field of IR theory, albeit in a different framing. Here, the resurgent interest in religion is often part of a wider debate on post-secularism on whether we are now in an international political system that can be categorized as post-secular, and on how that would affect both empirical analysis and theories of international relations. The debates on post-secularism and religion within IR theory have produced both an inward-looking, theoretical strand of research—dedicated to the impact of the religious revival on central concepts and theorizing in IR itself—as well as more empirical strand focusing on the practical consequences of this religious revival on the current system(s) of international politics.

The theoretical strand: Toward a post-secular theory of International Relations?

The debate on religion and (post-)secularism within IR theory starts with an assumption that the secularization thesis—which has constituted the backbone of

Western theories of modernity and self-conceptions for decades—has failed.[21] It takes its cue from key works in the field of sociology and philosophy of religion and politics (by authors like Taylor, Assad, Berger and Habermas) and engages in a critical revision of the basic assumptions underlying IR theory as a secular academic discipline.

Secularization (or modernization) theory,[22] in short, assumes that secularism—broadly defined as the separation of religion and politics—is an indispensable condition for progress and democratization. The theory is firmly rooted in Enlightenment ideals and the Western canon of political thought originating from writers such as Kant, Hobbes, Locke, and continuing on to John Rawls and the early works of Habermas. It is also closely linked to a dominant historical narrative of the Westphalian Peace of 1648, understood to put an end to religion's destructive impact on politics, by introducing the modern sovereign state system in which religion was replaced with reason and rationalism, as organizing principal for social and political structures.

Secularization theory has taken different forms in different contexts—there is often a distinction made between laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism[23]—yet both build upon the idea that politics and religion belong to separate spheres that must be kept apart. The new division of labor—imposed by secularism—assigns religion to the private sphere and secularism to the public sphere. As such, secularism can also be understood as an effort to strain metaphysics and beliefs out of politics and create a new form of "pure politics"—which is value-neutral, objective and scientific (Shakman-Hurd 2004).

The impact of secularization theory on political and social structures in the West, and on the Western social sciences, can hardly be exaggerated. As the sociologist Casanova (1994: 17) states: "The theory of secularization may be the

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[21] For a useful overview of debates on post-secularism, see: Rosati and Stoeckl (2013).
[22] Perhaps most explicitly stated by the sociologist Peter Berger in an interview with the New York Times in 1968: "By the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture" (Peter Berger, quoted in the article 'A Bleak Outlook is Seen for Religion', *New York Times*, February 25, 1968: 3.
[23] For an in-depth discussion on the various forms and expressions of secularism, see: Shakman-Hurd (2004) or Connolly (1999).

only theory which was able to attain a truly paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences." Against this background, a number of IR theorists have argued, with increasing success, that IR's failure—or deliberate neglect—to adequately deal with religion is due to an inherent secularist bias within IR theory itself. As Philpott and Shah (2011: 24) comment:

> Religion has returned to global politics with ferocity and international relations theory has little to say about it. This is because the theory, like the phenomenon of international relations itself, has been secular from its very origins in the seventeenth century.

If IR theory is indeed a product of secularism, this poses a number of ethical and epistemological challenges. First, it calls for a critical evaluation of some basic inbuilt assumptions of IR theory, in particular its claims to neutrality toward values and morals, and its apolitical, scientific nature. Is secularism really a value-neutral, universally applicable concept, which will lead to progress, democracy and respect for human rights? Or is it merely another form of "disciplinary regime", comparable to religion? Second, if IR theory is inherently and irretrievably secular, to what extent is it fit to understand and analyze religion and its impact on international relations? Can the existing paradigms be adapted to include religion, or is there a need for a new paradigm altogether—a post-secular theory of IR?

IR theorists have suggested a number of different answers to these questions, according to their respective ontological and epistemological understandings or interpretations of religion and religious actors. At one end of the spectrum, a number of IR scholars argue that religious actors in international politics in fact represent a distinct category—a sui generis type, pursuing distinct political ends—which therefore requires new approaches and methodologies. Philpott and Shah, for instance, argue that to grasp the role and impact of religious actors in international politics, IR theorists must recognize the distinct political ends of religious actors and how those ends translate into politics (Philpott & Shah 2011). The authors contend that, unlike other political entities, religious communities are not rooted fundamentally in political ends, but rather in "beliefs and practices oriented around claims of the ultimate ground of existence" (ibid).

Other IR theorists take a more pragmatic approach, insisting on the flexibility of the existing paradigms to incorporate religion, and on the idea that religious actors too behave rationally (rational actors) within their own set of belief and preferences (Snyder & Nexon 2011).

As a reaction to these debates and to the new interest in religion among theorists and practitioners of IR, a number of IR scholars—mostly within the broader field of critical theory—criticize what they consider as a bloated focus on religion. In particular, they advise against the reification of religion as an independent category or variable in international relations,[24] effectively anchoring what Elisabeth Shakman Hurd refers to as the "new international politics of religion" (Shakman-Hurd 2015).

The empirical strand: Religion challenging the (secular) nation-state system?

As for the empirical strand of IR research on religion and international politics, the issue of religious peacemaking is most often approached as part of a wider debate on the emergence of religious transnational actors (RTAs)[25] as an increasingly powerful force in international relations. One of the main debates is whether there has been a qualitative shift in international relations, in the direction of a post-secular international system in which the hegemony of secular political thought is increasingly losing ground to religiously motivated actors.[26] IR scholars frequently observe that religious networks (such as the Roman Catholic Church, conservative American Protestants, Christian Evangelicals and Islamist jihadi entities such as al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba) are becoming increasingly internationally—and politically—oriented, mainly as a result of globalization

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[24] See the work of Elizabeth Shakman-Hurd, Helge Årsheim and Maria Birnbaum.

[25] The concept of religious transnational actor was coined by Haynes (2012).

[26] Shah and Philpott (2011: 50) write: "Overall, we are confident that a basic qualitative shift international politics has occurred: during most of the period between 1789 and 1967, political secularism put religious actors and ideologies on the defensive in much of the world; during most of the period between 1967 and the present, the situation has been reversed, with politically engaged religious actors of all kinds, in every part of the world, putting secular regimes and ideologies on the defensive, no doubt most spectacularly on September 11, 2001."

(Levitt 2004; Banchoff 2008; Rudolph & Piscatori 1997; Thomas 2005; Haynes 2012). Moreover, the communication revolution has made it possible for religious networks of various hues to gather forces and cooperate on specific policy issues, within and across faith traditions and geographical boundaries. Though such transnational religious networks and actors pursue a variety of different political ends—ranging from peace and development to undermining international order and security—and apply highly different methods to pursue such goals, they also have certain common features it is argued.

Haynes, for instance, argues that RTAs represent the emergence of "global religious identities", whereby people feel themselves part of religious transnational communities in new and important ways, leading to increased inter-religious cooperation and engagement around various issues, and that they use soft power to forward their interests and idea (Haynes 2012: 4). As such, the impact of the RTAs lies primarily in their capacity to influence international relations by their ability to disseminate ideas and values, and by molding and influencing international agendas and outcomes (James 2011; Snyder 2011).

A concern is whether the transnational orientation of such networks effectively challenges the centrality of the state, both as the main unit of analysis in IR and in the practices of international politics. According to Philpott and Shah (2011), not only do religious actors diverge from "regular" political actors through their distinct political ends, but also in that they "cannot be easily subsumed within the state." This is because the world's major religions are older and more broadly legitimate than modern states and because their populations and authority structures flow borders. According to Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, we are witnessing nothing less than "a *de facto* fading of the state which provides opportunity for spiritually and religiously informed transnational civil society to build a universal, poly-religious 'ecumene' to fill the burgeoning transnational space" (Rudolph 2005; cited in Haynes 2012: 31; see, also: Rudolph 1997).

Knowledge gaps and weaknesses in the literatures

This literature review testifies to the large and growing interest in religion and its political contact points across the disciplinary spectrum, including religion as a

strategy for peacemaking and mediation. The existing literature on faith-based mediation (and its complimentary literatures of religion and peace, and religion and IR) has taught us a lot about the complex relationship between religion and peace and how faith-based actors may have an important role to play in processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation. Yet, there are knowledge gaps and weaknesses.

Normative biases

The first limitation in the literature regards the normative foundation and "pro-religion" biases that underlie much of the research on faith-based mediation. In line with general trends within the larger body of literature on religion and peace, we see that the literature on faith-based mediation also continues to reflect strong normative assumptions and an idealistic agenda about the unique potential of religion to create peace. Such assumptions are typically formulated in sentences like: "Dedicated research must persist in order to awaken the dormant power of religion as a leading peace-building agent" (Hurst 2014: 37). The "transmission" of normative biases from the religion and peace literature to the faith-based mediation literature is likely the result of faith-based mediation studies, including that of Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009) exclusively draw upon secondary material—research findings and case studies from the religion and peace literature—rather than fresh case studies and first-hand material. There are thus good reasons to complement the existing body of research with fresh and updated case studies.

The normative biases of the religion and peace literature should not come as a surprise considering that religion, until relatively recently, remained a research area for those taking a special interest (that is, primarily practitioners or supporters of religious peace making) and that a main leitmotif within this literature has been to "rehabilitate" religion from its associations with conflict and violence. A normative position isn't necessarily a problem in itself, but when it affects the quality of analysis and knowledge production, it is. In my view, the baseline pro-religion attitude of the faith-based mediation literature is co-responsible for a number of weaknesses in the literature.

The first of these weaknesses is the poorly developed empirical documentation of the special attributes and resources of faith-based mediators, that is, of their "unique religious and spiritual leverage". Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana's 2009 article is useful because it suggests how classic mediator qualities like resources, motivations and strategies take on a different meaning in the context of faith-based mediation. Yet, a significant weakness, in my view, is that these added values of faith-based mediators (such as their "inherent moral legitimacy" and capacity to draw upon religious symbolism) are merely listed as attributes in an uncritical way, rather than profoundly documented and explained. It is one thing is to state that faith-based mediators have a different type of leverage or are able to draw upon "religious symbolism" in their work. But how, precisely, does this religious leverage materialize and manifest? And even if it is true that religious leaders may play an important role because they are recognized as legitimate moral and spiritual guides, there remains a number of important and unanswered questions concerning how exactly religious leaders succeed in positioning and inventing themselves as such, in specific contexts and under specific conditions. By merely duplicating the points and arguments made by scholars of religion and peace (based on "old" case studies) and organizing them within the framework of mediation theory, the biases and weaknesses from the religion and peace literature are effectively extended into the literature on faith-based mediation—contributing to create a unrealistic image of the realities of international faith-based mediation as an international political practice.

The second weakness regards the uncritical examination of mediator motivation in the context of faith-based mediation. Indeed, there is no attempt at a critical examination of mediator identity in the 2009 Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana article —even if Bercovitch, in his assessments of central concepts within mediation theory (Bercovich, Kremenyuk & Zartman 2008), insists on the importance of this understudied dimension in mediation studies and maintains that "this (purely humanitarian) interest (of mediators) usually intertwines with other, less altruistic interests" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 181).

Yet, the issue of faith-based mediator motivation is treated at a very superficial and uncritical level in the 2009 Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana

article: The religious motivation of mediators is taken entirely at face value, and seen as providing them with a unique leverage and thus a comparative advantage vis-à-vis secular actors:

> Their unique position as servants of a divine God who are inspired by their religious and spiritual traditions and are willing to take risks without any other interests or hidden agendas is key to understanding the legitimacy and possible sources of faith-based mediation (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 191).

Faith-based and religious mediators are in fact largely treated as the exception to the rule of mediators having "mixed" motives and motivation, of both "purely" humanitarian and strategic character.

Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana's failure to adequately deal with mediator motivation in the case of faith-based mediation may, however, not only be the result of normative biases in favor of religious actors. It may also be related to the fundamental methodological difficulties and challenges related with motivation as an object of study (in mediation studies as well as other fields). How do we assess someone's motivation in scientifically robust way? Obviously, we cannot enter someone else's head, and speculations about what other people might "really" think appears soon appear as a dead end. These difficulties lead Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana —and other mediation scholars—to confuse mediator motivation and *perceptions* of mediator motivations by speaking of both interchangeably without commenting on the difference between them.

On the one hand, the article speaks of motivation of faith-based actors as "essentially" being of a very particular type: "One of the distinct characteristics of faith-based mediation is the spiritual and religious motivation behind it" (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009: 190). Yet, on a much soberer note, the article also speaks about the *perceived* motivations of such actors: "As people of faith, religious leaders and faith-based actors are *more likely to be perceived* (my italicization) as evenhanded, trustworthy, and possessing a stronger moral and spiritual commitment than their secular counterparts" (ibid: 190). The article also opens up for the possibility that such perceptions about the mediator's motivation may play an instrumental role in mediation processes: "the religious motivation

(of the meditator, in this case the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, IRCSL) allowed them to be regarded as neutral mediators with no ulterior motivates but to do the work of God" (ibid: 190).

Detached from systemic debates on religion and international politics

A second important weakness is the complete detachment between the literature on faith-based mediation with broader systemic debates on religion and international politics. It is odd that the discussion on faith-based mediation—by definition a "transcending" practice—never touches the impact of such practices on traditional boundaries between the religious and the political. Certainly, IR debates on religion and international politics play out on a much more abstract and theoretical level than the rather technical and outcome-oriented perspective domination mediation studies. Yet, the IR literature surely provides interesting food for thought through its thesis and ideas of RTAs as undermining the current international secular political system in the direction of a poly-religious, globalized *ecumene* (in its most radical interpretations) and its discussions on whether religious actors can be assessed according to the same standards and analytical tools as "regular" political actors.

In my view, the fundamental detachment between the faith-based mediation and the IR literature is due to the failure—both among scholars of IR and (faith-based) mediation scholars—to conceptualize faith-based mediation as an important arena for RTAs and transnational religious politics; which means that studies of faith-based mediation largely remain "stuck" within the paradigm of traditional religious peacemaking by local religious leaders and normative debates on the merits and strengths of such approaches.

Conceptualizing faith-based mediators within the IR framework of RTAs may then open up many interesting research avenues from which both IR and faith-based mediation studies could benefit. Studies of faith-based mediation can potentially provide important and unique empirical input into several important, if largely theoretical, debates. These include the prospect of global religious identities challenging the hegemony of secularism and the nation-state, questions

of whether religious actors are inherently different from political actors or not and discussion on the changing boundaries between religion and secularism in international politics.

Research design: Religion as "practice"

A key ambition of this dissertation is to develop a research design that extends our understanding of what faith-based mediation is and can be and facilitates a dialog with relevant debates within other disciplines on the role of religion in international affairs. For this purpose, I first propose a typology of faith-based mediation, the purpose of the typology being to illustrate that faith-based mediation is a multifaceted practice that comes in many forms and shapes according to the contextual set-up and configuration of the specific mediation initiative. Second, I develop an analytical framework focusing on the processes through which religious mediator identities are constructed, enacted and applied. The framework begins with the central notion of mediator identity and seeks to extend our understanding of what this concept may contain—in the context of faith-based mediation—by investigating it through the scope of practice theory.

A typology of faith-based mediation

I argue that a first step in the study of faith-based mediation should be a careful consideration of the contextual set-up and configuration of the specific mediation initiative in question. Clearly, faith-based mediation is a multifaceted practice that can take many different forms and shapes according to who the faith-based mediator is, who he or she is mediating between and the context in which he or she happens to operate. Different contexts warrant different mediator behavior and performance; this means that research on faith-based mediation should be wary of the links between contextual set-up and the mediator performance.

This basic insight, however, is not reflected in the academic literature on faith-based mediation. As we have seen, the specialized literature is mostly comparative and seeks to identify general features and patterns in faith-based mediation practices and performances and explore its added value relative to

"conventional" mediation. However, when we look closer at the selection of cases that effectively form the foundation of these studies, we see that they are most often based upon a broad and seemingly eclectic collection of cases, ranging from the Pope's mediation in the mediation in the Beagle Channel conflict between Chile and Argentina in 1985 and local women groups in Bosnia addressing traumas of sexual violence to the role of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone in the country's civil war (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009; Johnstone & Svensson 2013). Indeed, except for the religious identity of the mediator, the cases are qualitatively different in nature and set-up, something which evidently complicates the task of meaningful comparison.

Most problematic, perhaps, is the persistent conflation of conflict mediation efforts carried out by local religious leaders, on the one hand, and transnational faith-based actors and networks, on the other. Despite the grand variation of cases and mediator actors, we see that the conclusions on the specific strengths and added value of faith-based mediation are consistently drawn upon the basis of one specific type of faith-based mediation: that of local religious leaders in local conflicts.[27] The failure to address the difference between local religious leaders and transnational religious networks and conflate all forms of (essentially) different faith-based mediation initiatives is problematic because it is bound to produce research results that do not correspond with the realities on the ground, and because it fails to capture the increasingly important phenomenon of the rise of professionalized, transnational religious actors and networks as new key figures within international diplomatic practices. There is therefore a clear need for a more nuanced approach to international faith-based

[27] Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 187) write that: "Religious leaders and faith-based actors are often like the insider mediators with the moral and spiritual legitimacy to influence the opinion of people. They are highly respected, and their opinions are generally held in high regard within their communities. Local imams, sheikhs, priests or rabbis know the history and the traditions of the parties, and they also know physical and emotional needs of their communities. Therefore, they are better equipped to reach out to the people, mobilize them, to re-humanize the 'enemy' by using religious values such as justice for all, forgiveness, harmony, human dignity, and ultimately to motivate them towards peace."

mediation that can recognize these important differences and be built on new first-hand material and case studies.

On this basis, I suggest a typology of faith-based mediation that identifies some critical contextual variables" in the set-up of faith-based mediation initiatives that in turn are likely to affect mediator performance and practices. The idea is that the typology can serve as a preliminary assessment tool, laying the foundation for more fine-grained analysis and relevant comparisons of faith-based mediation initiatives.

The typology is meant to complement other typologies of faith-based mediation and religious peacemaking, which tend to concentrate on the roles and modes that faith-based actors can take on in processes of conflict resolution and peacemaking. For instance, Cynthia Sampson (1997: 279–80) finds four predominant peace-building roles that she recommends faith-based actors adopt: observer, educator, advocate and intermediary. My point is that the situational set-up of the mediation initiative—i.e., the context—is likely to affect what type of role the religious mediator can assume—or aspire to. The main ambition with the typology is then to help us think more clearly and systematically about what type of context is likely to produce or trigger different kinds of faith-based mediator behavior and performance.

Thinking more systematically about contextual differences is key to be able to tune into the particularities of actors like Sant'Egidio, and ask: What are the specific practices, methodologies and added value of faith-based mediators in a transnational and cross-religious context? Do such mediators possess a specific "religious competence" that somehow transcends their specific faith tradition? If so, what are the main components of this "trans- or supra-religious" identity or competence?

With a view to facilitating a more nuanced outlook on the possible contexts and configurations of faith-based mediation initiatives—which are likely to impact on the meaning and role that religion effectively takes on in mediation

practices—the typology distinguishes between three different situational or contextual features: [28]

1. **Local or national versus transnational**: Is the mediator working in his/her home context or in a “foreign” context?
2. **Within or across faith traditions**: Does the mediator work in a context where his or her religious identity is shared, or does he or she work in cross-religious context? Note that this distinction point is not meant to say anything about whether (or the degree to which) the mediation initiative is of a religious character or not; it is purely meant to describe the religious context and religious “demography” of the initiative.
3. **Grassroots, community level or high-level political***:* Does the mediator engage in high-level political mediation efforts, or do the mediation efforts mainly address local communities? Do the mediation efforts target political leadership and representatives and aim for a formal political agreement to the conflict—or do they target affected individual and groups “on the ground” in an attempt to build down enemy images and negative stereotyping?[29]

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[28] The typology could of course be built out to include other important variables, such as whether there is a religious or ethnic dimension to the conflict in question, or the mediator’s institutional religious affiliations (whether he is a religious authority figure or rather an “autonomous”, “freelance” or “lay” actor.)

[29] This distinction is key to understanding the critical differences between otherwise resembling actors such as Sant’Egidio and Focolare, which have a history of engagement in the same conflicts (for instance in Algeria and Mindanao) but on different levels: Whereas Sant’Egidio (together with other likeminded religious actors, such as Al-Muhammadiyah, the world’s second largest Islamic organization based in Indonesia) has worked on a high-level political level with the Philippine Government and the leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to facilitate a political agreement, Focolare has primarily been active at the community level, organizing dialog initiatives and other activities seeking to build down negative stereotyping and prejudices and facilitate peaceful co-existence and interactions in daily life. (Source: Interview with a high-level Focolare member, Loppiano, June 2014).

Table 1. Typology of faith-based mediation

	Local/National		Transnational	
	Within faith tradition	**Across faith tradition**	**Within faith tradition**	**Across faith tradition**
Community Level	**Guatemala (1991—1993)** **Bishop Rodolfo Toruno during the civil war**	**Nigeria (1967—1970)** **Inter-faith Mediation Center during the civil war** **Sierra Leone (1991— present)** **The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL)**		**Algeria (1990s)** **Focolare** **Nigeria (1967—1970)** **The Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers) during the civil war**
Political Level	**Iraq (2004)** **Shi'ite religious authorities** **Mozambique (1990—1992)** **Archbishop of Beira, Jaime Gonçalves** **Myanmar (1994)** **Buddhist monk U Rewata Dhamma mediates Aung San Suu Kyi and the military regime**	**Israel–Palestine (2002)** **Catholic Bishop Michel Sabbah** **Uganda (2002—2003)** **Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative**	**Nicaragua (1996)** **Sant'Egidio** **DRC (Zaire) (1998)** **Pope John Paul II** **Uganda (2006—2007)** **Pax Christi International mediates government and the Lord's Resistance Army** **Afghanistan (1993)** **OIC mediates mujahedin leaders and the Afghan state**	**Algeria (1994—1995)** **Sant'Egidio mediates FIS and Algerian government** **Israel (2000—2001)** **OIC** **Iraq (2004)** **Pope John Paul II**

Source: Author's own elaboration

The typology is useful because it helps us identify some axes and dimensions that are important to establish before engaging either in a single case or comparative study of faith-based mediation. The horizontal axis—local versus transnational, and inter-faith versus intra-faith—is useful because it points to different insider–outsider dynamics (either in terms of geography or religion) and thus tells us something about the conditions of a common ground (whether in terms of geographical or religious space) the mediator has to work with or not. The vertical axis—community versus political level—is also important because it differentiates between two inherently different modes of mediation, with direct consequences for mediator expectations, strategies and overall style.

Mediator identities through the scope of practice theory

With a view to investigating the particular form of faith-based mediation associated with Sant'Egidio, this dissertation suggests an analytical framework that draws upon mediation theory and practice theory. The former is integrated through the notion of *mediator identity*, and the dissertation seeks to flesh out this concept by applying practice theory.

The notion of mediator identity appears as a natural starting point in a study of faith-based mediation, considering the strong emphasis on identity in most forms of faith-based and religious activism. Moreover, as this concept constitutes a central issue in ongoing debates on faith-based and "secular" mediation alike, it provides for a tight dialog with the larger body of mediation literature. The idea is therefore to expand our understanding of mediator identity—in the context of faith-based mediation—drawing upon different elements from practice theory.

Practice theory

Practice theory is not one single, coherent theory, but a number of theories building upon the same unit of analyses, which are, practices. Adler and Pouliot (2011: 6) define practices as "competent performances" and "socially meaningful patterns of action which, in being performed more or less competently,

simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world." Practice theory builds upon constructivist theories of culture and social facts, in that it understands meaning as something that emerges from intersubjective structures. Consequently, it considers agents and structures as mutually constitutive or, at least, mutually interdependent. But practice theory also tries to advance the starting premises of constructivism by trying to push the agenda in a more "empirical" direction, turning the analytical focus toward the practices of agents rather than the "traditional" constructivist categories such as ideas, norms, discourses, values and identities, etc. The ontological claim is that practices are what bring the material and the ideational dimensions of the world together (Adler & Pouliot 2011).

Variants of practice theory are being applied to a number of social and political phenomena for different purposes. Originating in philosophy and sociology, practice theory more definitely started to make its way into social and political sciences with the 2001 volume *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (co-edited by Schatzki, Cetina and Savigny) and into the study of international relations with Neumann's *Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy* (2002) and Adler and Pouliot's *International Practices* (2011). Within the study of international politics and relations, some of the most common exercises and applications are the investigation of: 1) how different international practices have emerged and become dominant; 2) how and why they have disappeared or been replaced by other practices; 3) how practices change over time; and 4) how power is exercised and diffused through practices.[30] There exists a fast-growing body of specialized practice theory and new analytical concepts to support it.

As an analytical concept, practices are distinct from other similar concepts—such as preferences, beliefs, discourses or institutions—primarily in that they are a performance. Practices refer to a form of action: as such, they express preferences and beliefs, and instantiate discourse and institutions, yet belong to a different category (Adler & Pouliot 2011). Moreover, as a form of

[30] See for instance Adler and Pouliot's (2011: 14) list of suggestions of how and why the term is relevant to the study of international relations.

action, practices differ from both behavior and action, in that they have more layers of meaning. Adler and Pouliot define practices as the upper category of three levels of actions—behavior, actions and practices. They use the example of running in the street to illustrate the differences: running around aimlessly is mere behavior, running after a thief is an action and police squads chasing down a criminal gang is a practice. Practices, consequently, refer to particular kinds of action, which are patterned and embedded in specific organized contexts (ibid). While action is specific and located in time, practices are general classes of action, socially structured and reiterated. Due to their status as forms of action, suspended between agents and structure, practices help us to appreciate the dynamic process of meaning production and avoid the reification that often comes along with attempts of reconstructing ideas, norms and discourses.

The added value of a practice-oriented approach to faith-based mediation

What, then, can practice theory add to our understanding of (faith-based) mediator identities? Applied in the study of religion and faith-based activism, practice theory has several advantages. First, by conceptualizing religion as something you do, rather than something you "adhere to", practice theory proposes a methodologically sound way to study religion, which departs from the essentialist conceptions of religion underlying much work on religion and politics, that consider religion as a more or less fixed corpus and seeks to investigate its "effects" on something else.[31] The innovation with studying religion through the scope of practice theory is that it takes the inverse approach. Instead of defining religion at the outset (and asking how it affects something else), a practice theory perspective on religion and politics makes us ask what the practices of faith-based actors can tell us about religion. This is an important methodological difference that I believe has great potential both in providing both fresh, empirical data on the issue of faith-based mediation and other (semi-)religious practices and in the aggregation of religion as an analytical category or object of study.

[31] As reflected in the typical way of posing research questions on religion and politics: "How does 'religion' affect political practices and behavior within a specific domain?"

Second, practice theory can help us in extending the analytical scope—and thus to generate more empirically observable variables—in research on mediator identities. As we have seen, mediator identity in the literature is conceived of quite narrowly and superficially. The claim is that faith-based mediators are in a particular position due to a specific set of capacities concerning their mediator identity, in terms of resources (an inherent and unique moral leverage); motivation (purely religious or spiritual, altruistic, apolitical or neutral) and strategies (i.e., employing religious symbolism or vocabulary). Empirically, however, these claims are not supported in a very robust manner. In this context, I suggest that practice theory can help us flesh out and enrichen our understanding of the notion of mediator identity, and its subcategories. By conceptualizing mediator identities as something constructed and enacted through practices, this framework offers a quite hands-on, tangible entry point to the study of mediator identities—as opposed to focusing on categories such as beliefs, values, norms, etc.

Operationalization: A multi-level approach to faith-based mediation

Practice theory also offers a way to study faith-based mediation in a multi-level perspective. By combining different elements from practice theory, we can study how international practices (like faith-based mediation) are shaped on different levels, as well as how different practices are interlinked.

With an empirical focus on the "micro-practices of world politics" as a common denominator, practice theory offers a flexible research agenda. Adler and Pouliot (2011: 18) suggests a "modular framework" that scholars from different traditions can access from their own particular ontological and epistemological perspectives. The authors suggest that practice theory can provide two general frameworks: *practice as explanans* (practices as a cause of transformation) and *practice as explanandum* (the evolution of a specific practice)—this is possible because "practices are both explanans and explanandum" (Adler & Pouliot 2011: 18). The frameworks are not mutually exclusive, however, and Adler and Pouliot recommend combining both as this makes it possible "to grasp the recursivity of practice in producing its own transformation" (ibid: 18). They further suggest

eight main contributions that a practice-oriented approach to IR could make: international practices and practitioners; anchoring practices; evolution of practices; background knowledge; communities of practice; power and practice; signaling; and balance of practices (Adler & Pouliot 2011: 23–25). They also welcome the combination of different perspectives. Practice theory as a general framework therefore remains flexible and researchers are encouraged to pick and choose and combine different elements and modules according to research interest.

For the purpose of this study, there are three related analytical concepts within the body of practice theory that stand out as particularly useful in analyzing different levels of practices and how they relate to each other. *Anchoring practices* refer to a set of "core" practices within a community which enacts the *"c*onstitutive rules" within a specific field or domain. Such anchoring practices "acquire their power to structure related discourses and patterns of activity because they implicitly define the basic entities or agents in the relative domain of social action" (Swidler 2001: 95; quoted by Sending & Neumann, cited in Adler & Pouliot 2011: 236–237). *Integrative practices* refer to specialized, often professionalized practices and serve to produce and reproduce social "glue" within specific communities of knowledge and further integrate the members of that community.[32] The concept of international practices, by contrast, refers to the external dimension of practices, and can be used to analyze how, for example, transnational communities of practice shape and affect international politics (Adler & Pouliot 2011: 24). The key question here is how practices develop, diffuse and become institutionalized in different communities of knowledge.

Anchoring practice: Becoming a mediator

Anchoring practices is a concept developed by Anne Swidler (2001) that refers to "basic practices" that structure other practices. In line with Swidler, Sending and

[32] Schatzki (1996). Its counterpart, dispersive practices, largely refers to tacit knowledge. Due to the relatively specialized character of both Sant'Egidio and mediators in general, I don't think this concept is very relevant to this study.

Neumann understand anchoring practices as “the manifestation of constitutive rules, which in turn define entities and so structures discourse” (Sending & Neumann, cited in Adler & Pouliot 2011: 237).

For the purposes of this study, I suggest that the concept of anchoring practices can be conceptualized as the core identity-building practices of the Sant’Egidio community, through which the community effectively becomes a mediator. As we have seen from the mediation literature, the issue of identity plays an instrumental role in conflict mediation, in force of being the single most important “tool” or asset of the mediator. If identity indeed is a key tool of mediation, such identities and the processes through which they come into being merit a more serious investigation than they are normally awarded in the faith-based mediation literature. This entails a broad understanding of mediator identity as an arena for the enactment of the constitutive rules or as an infrastructure that “renders some ‘strategies of actions’ available and closes off others” (ibid: 232).

An added value in applying an (anchoring) practice perspective on mediator identities is that it allows us to zoom in on issue which normally goes uncommented in mediation studies, that is, the fact that mediator identities do not emerge out of the blue or develop in an *ad hoc* fashion during actual mediation practices: They always have a history and a background and thus some basic structures. Anchoring practices, when conceptualized as becoming a mediator helps us to zoom in on the processes and practices through which a specific community or political entity—like Sant’Egidio—positions and establishes itself as a legitimate and credible subject of international relations.

Legitimacy and credibility is key for international mediators. The aim of this section is therefore to unpack what kind of legitimacy, competence and “mandate” Sant’Egidio (wants to) represent as a transnational religio–political actor[33]—and the role of religion in this nexus. In other words: If identity is a tool

[33] Some relevant questions would include: What type of reading of contemporary global politics and the “modern world” does Sant’Egidio offer? Who are the main protagonists of ‘world politics’ according to Sant’Egidio and what defines its relationship to these actors? How does Sant’Egidio conceptualize the differences between faith-based and “conventional’ conflict resolution and what type of role does it envision for religion in

for mediation, what type of identity, does Sant'Egidio propose—and what is the specific role and room for religion in this construction? I investigate such questions through an ethnographic study of the community's yearly flagship event—conceptualized as an archetype anchoring practice—the International Meeting of the Prayer for Peace, IMPP.

Integrative practice: Performing mediation

Whereas anchoring practices establish actor legitimacy and a social and political platform for action, they also have another functioning, namely that of anchoring other practices. *Integrative practices* refer to specialized practices—which are based or anchored in another set of core practices—defined by Schatzki (1996: 98) as "the more complex practices found in and constitutive of particular domains of social life", such as cooking, farming or business. International faith-based conflict mediation, as an established international practice, appears to fit this framework perfectly. The aim of this section is therefore to take a more focused perspective on Sant'Egidio actual practices as conflict mediators and assess their performance according to established concepts within the mediation literature such as mediator identity, mediator resources, mediator motivations and mediator strategies. By studying a key figure in the development of the field of faith-based conflict mediation, I try to generate a deeper understanding of the "rules of the game" of faith-based mediation and its specific features vis-à-vis secular approaches. Central questions include: To what extent do the religious components of Sant'Egidio's identity translate into the international conflict mediation practices of the community? If so, how exactly does this happen and how does it distinguish faith-based mediation practices from secular ones?

This part of the study is based in Sant'Egidio's mediation initiative in Algeria in 1994 and 1995, where the community tried to mediate between the Algerian regime and the Islamist party FIS.

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international (and domestic) politics? How does the community position itself vis-à-vis official (non-confessional) diplomatic actors, faith-based actors from other faith traditions, political and religious high-level representatives or grassroots activists?

International practice: Negotiating religion and politics in "the World"

In the last chapter, the overarching aim is to situate and assess Sant'Egidio's faith-based mediation practices "within a context of international politics", as recommended by Touval (2003) and Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009). If mediator identities are shaped through anchoring practices, they are also shaped according to structural and strategic considerations stemming from the mediator's role and position in international and domestic politics.[34] In contrast to the previous sections, then, the focus here is on the external dimension of practices; that is, on Sant'Egidio's position and international relations as an international religio–political subject, and how these structures shapes the community's mediator identity and practices.

As part of the constructivist tradition, practice theory is also interested in the performative effect of practices on "world politics". The concept of communities of practice and its interlinked concept of epistemic communities appear as useful entry points to study this dimension as they point to the how transnational communities of practitioners may influence and shape world politics and create social and political change. Whereas "communities of practice" refer to transnational communities of practitioners within a specific field—for instance diplomats—that share a professional culture, together with some values and interests that are intrinsic to their practice (Adler & Pouliot 2011), the term epistemic communities points[35] more directly to the role of such transnational networks in knowledge production and ultimately knowledge management and its "transition" into concrete policy outcomes. As such, these terms provide a framework that allows us to reflect on Sant'Egidio's role and impact as an increasingly influential entrepreneur of religion and diplomacy, both in its relations with religious authorities (e.g., the Holy See) and political authorities. How, then, does the Sant'Egidio community cultivate its role as epistemic

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[34] As such, the focus on the community's international relations is also an entry point to contribute to the understanding of mediator motivation which remains an understudied field in mediation studies, and perhaps particularly in the context of faith-based mediation.

[35] Largely associated with Peter M. Haas. See, for, instance his: "Introduction: Epistemic communities and global policy coordination" (Haas 1992).

community on religion and international politics? What sort of narratives and policy solutions does it effectively seek to negotiate?

Methods and material

The focus on practices has many implications for the empirical foundations of the present study. Most importantly, perhaps, it comes with the implication that we need to identify practices—what mediators actually do—rather than limit ourselves to an investigation of what they say (as we often do when we reconstruct ideas, norms, values, etc.) According to practice theory, discourse remains key, and should actually be considered as a practice. The boundaries between discourses and practices is often hard to pin down, as practices rely heavily on language; as Searle (1969; cited in Adler & Pouliot 2011: 14) notes: "Discursive practices, thus, are socially meaningful speech acts, according to which saying is doing". This leads Adler and Pouliot to conclude that "It is thus relevant to conceive of discourse as practice and to understand practice as discourse" (Ibid: 14).

Yet, discourse alone is not enough, and a practice-oriented empirical approach needs to draw upon richer empirical material and documentation of actions and behaviors. As for methods, this implies that a practice-oriented approach requires a broader set of ethnographic methods in the aim of identifying and analyzing the core practices of the issue or actors in question, and by consequence, a more diverse collection of material and sources than is conventionally to be found in political studies.

Ethnography and ethnographic methods

Ethnography comes forth as an evident choice of methodology in the study of faith-based mediation because of its rich reservoir of tools for the observation and analysis of religious practices and expressions together with their social and political contact points. Ethnography refers to a broad collection of different approaches to the study of meaning and culture, which are traditionally associated

with anthropology, but which are increasingly applied across the disciplinary spectrum and in particular in interdisciplinary research (Weeden 2010).

Interestingly, there is no clear consensus on the role of theory within ethnography or on whether ethnography per se comes with a set of epistemological and ontological assumptions. Those who apply it practice it very differently, ranging from traditional anthropological (interpretivist) approaches that seek to be as open-minded as possible[36] to researchers using ethnography as one of many tools in an extended research design, even within "positivist" frameworks (Della Porta & Keating 2012). Conventionally, however, ethnography is understood as closely linked with more interpretative research through its interest in typical "how" questions and its focus on understanding and explaining cultural phenomena of processes of meaning construction. This typically builds on Weberian and Geertzian concepts of culture, in which culture is understood as something socially constructed, as "the webs of meaning that man himself has spun" (Geertz 1973).

Against this background, the overarching aim of much ethnographic work is to decode (the often intricate and accidental) processes of meaning construction through which the outcome in question appears as natural and self-evident

> Doing ethnography is like trying to read—in the sense of "construct a reading of"—a manuscript—foreign faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior (Geertz 1973: 10).

Geertz defines ethnography as what social researchers actually "*do"* when they investigate cultural phenomena of various kinds; it thus refers to a specific *mode* of doing social research, more than a set of specific methods (ibid). Most often, this ethnographic research mode includes three activities: 1) some sort of immersion/interaction with the field (field work); 2) processes of interpretation seeking to understand underlying meaning(s); and 3) linking this meaning with

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[36] Often taking starting point in the "'child metaphor': the researcher as a child observing something for the first time, with a 'fresh' gaze".

existent concept and notions. Ethnography can thus be understood as the process of going back and forth between immersion/interaction and interpreting/writing; that is, going back and forth between lived reality and theoretical concepts. Writing thus occupies a central position in the approach, together with the notion of thick descriptions.

As for the concrete methods, most qualitative methods are in fact ethnographic, with fieldwork/participant observation and qualitative open-ended (semi-structured) interviews being among the most widely used ones. Other methods commonly applied in ethnographic work include ethnomethodology (Della Porta & Keating 2012) interpretive process tracing, and discourse analysis.

Ethnographic methods can be used to different degrees and on various levels, according to the purpose of the research. Whereas traditionally anthropologists would spend several years in local communities to observe a specific cultural phenomenon or group, a political scientist or interdisciplinary researchers typically engage in ethnographic inquiries on a much more limited basis.

Sources and material

For the purpose of this study, I have relied upon a broad spectrum of different ethnographic material and methods. The most important have been: 1) field work and participant observation; 2) qualitative analysis of primary and secondary material; 3) qualitative and open-ended interviews; 4) interpretative process tracing; and 5) discourse analysis. With a view to developing a broadest possible empirical foundation, I have applied a combination of different methods at all levels of analysis.

The study is anchored in a "baseline" ethnographic study that seeks to situate the community within its historical, sociological, political, theological and ecclesiastic context. This baseline study forms the core for the focused studies of the three key practices of the community that this dissertation is structured around: the IMPP, the community's mediation initiative in Algeria in 1994–95, and the community's relations with the Holy See and Italian political authorities.

For the baseline ethnographic study of the community I have drawn upon a broad collection of available secondary material, ranging from academic publications on the community (primarily within the fields of history, sociology and theology); memoirs and biographies of key community members; and the community's own historiographical production. In addition to qualitative analysis of secondary material, this section draws upon a broad selection of first-hand, original material generated through extensive field work. Since 2012, I have followed the community closely and attended a large number of community events, conferences and meetings in Italy and internationally. I have participated in the entire spectrum of community activities ranging from the purely religious ones (such as the community's daily evening prayers in Santa Maria di Trastevere in Rome and other "Sant'Egidio churches" across Italy) to more "academic" or "political" initiatives and interventions, including the community's recurrent conventions on inter-religious and inter-cultural dialog, such as the *Oriente e Occidente: Dialoghi di Civiltà* [East and West: Dialog of Civilizations].[37]

As part of the field work I conducted many formal and informal semi-structured interviews with Sant'Egidio members on all levels—from remote "friends" of the community to the core members comprising the community's leadership. I conducted in-depth interviews with most of the first-generation or founding members which constitute the "international office" of the Sant'Egidio community (Mario Giro, Marco Impagliazzo, Claudio Betty, Mauro Garofolo, Don Angelo Romano, etc.) but also with a number of less prominent members and friends. When possible, I recorded the interviews and transcribed them—this has allowed for a more systematic and thorough analysis of the informants' narratives and world views. With a view to diversifying my sources and developing a comprehensive understanding of the community I also interviewed a broad range of non-members: observers, analysts and critics.[38] Interviews with the "competitor" NEM of Focolare turned out to be very fruitful in this respect. This comprehensive approach has allowed me to triangulate and challenge the official

[37] This reference is a play on Huntington's well-known "clash of civilizations" thesis.
[38] These included Italian diplomats and bureaucrats, journalists, academics and faith-based actors belonging to other religious communities.

narrative of Sant'Egidio and to identity and go deeper into specific issues of interest.

As part of this baseline study I also interacted with the local Florentine community, by volunteering as teacher assistant in the community's Italian classes for newly arrived refugees and immigrants.[39] This was a useful experience that helped me to develop a better feel of community dynamics.

In Chapter 3 on the IMPP, I detail a mini-ethnography, based upon my attendance at Tirana meeting in 2015 (and "controlled for" by my attendance at the 2016 meeting in Assisi). This section arguably represents the "purest" ethnographic work of the study in the sense that it tries to describe, understand and interpret the overall meaning and function of the IMPP, conceptualized as an anchoring cultural and religious practice for the Sant'Egidio community.

The IMPP goes over several days and is a multifaceted event consisting of a set of qualitatively different organized activities: religious services and celebrations, panel discussion on a broad range of different political and religious topics and organized social activities. In addition, the meeting has an important non-formal component as a hub for meeting people and networking. This makes field work diverse and challenging. Beyond attending the fixed program, it is crucial to engage in more "immersive" practices and personal interactions—meals, formal and informal meetings, and discussions—with Sant'Egidio members and other participants and relevant audiences.

For my part, an important entry points to discuss Sant'Egidio and the IMPP from various angels was my encounter with a group of Italian journalists from the Italian state broadcaster, RAI, who were covering then Minister of Foreign Affairs Paulo Gentiloni's attendance at the IMPP meeting. I also learned a lot through my acquaintance with a Sant'Egidio member with a central position in the Genova community who worked in the community's communications department and who was responsible for the IMPPs social media campaign. I also spent much time in the hotel lobby of Hotel Tirana International, the main venue of the IMPP, where

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[39] I informed Sant'Egidio about my research in advance. The Florentine community needed permission from Rome before I could begin but once this was received they were very accommodating and friendly.

the most important guests would stay, which was the most important (publicly accessible) place for mingling and networking. In the lobby I would meet and talk to a broad spectrum of different people: religious actors of various kinds and affiliations; members of the local Albanian Sant'Egidio community; Sant'Egidio members and; politicians attending the event, etc.

During the field work I took extensive notes every day—descriptions, anecdotes, impressions—which eventually formed the basis of a more structured analysis that I wrote on my return to Italy.

The section on the Algerian mediation initiatives represented a particularly challenging part of the study in terms of research and documentation, due to the poor amount and status of accessible information.[40] Indeed, in great contrast to the community's other mediation initiatives, the Algerian mediation efforts are surprisingly poorly documented—something which is most likely related to the initiative being a failure politically. Twenty years later, the initiative continues to have a controversial legacy both in Algeria and Italy, which means that accessing information is difficult. Sant'Egidio has an archive but I was not allowed to access it. I arranged for a trip to Algiers to meet with an extended circle of people who had attended the talks, but I was not granted an entry visa from Algerian authorities.

Because of these challenges, the present section serves as an interesting example of how ethnographic methods can help us reconstruct past events and generate original first-hand material through the use of qualitative interviews, interpretative process tracing and field work. A key contribution of this dissertation is therefore that it offers original and new material on an important and under-researched event of faith-based mediation. Most importantly, it provides new insights into the dynamics of the mediation efforts through interviews with the responsible negotiator representing the FIS in the Rome talks,

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[40] Indeed, the only analysis of the mediation event was not produced by Sant'Egidio. It is a 2011 MA thesis by Nikolai Hegertun, entitled "Faith-based Mediation? Sant Egidio's peace efforts in Mozambique and Algeria". Among Sant'Egidio's own publications we have Mario Giro and Marco Impagliazzo's *Algeria in Ostaggio: Tra Esercito e Fondamentalismo, Storia di una Pace Difficile* (1997) and a small chapter in the book *Fare Pace: La Diplomazia di Sant'Egidio* (2010) written by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca.

Anwar Haddam. I met and interviewed Anwar Haddam in Washington in December 2013, where he has been living after being forced to flee Algeria in the early 1990s. Haddam is still politically active, although not under the FIS umbrella, and was very content to talk about the mediation initiative and the concept of faith-based mediation more generally.[41] Investigating the mediation efforts from both perspectives—from that of the mediator and that of the key participants—has facilitated a triangulation and critical reading of the Sant'Egidio's own production and narrative on this specific initiative—as well as on the broader concept of faith-based mediation—which I believe has been useful.

Through Anwar Haddam, I was also to access first-hand material from the Rome talks that have not been published before: The invitation letters forwarded by the community, the different political party's negotiations platforms, and different drafts of the Rome Platform. Most importantly, perhaps, this new material includes a draft of the FIS negotiation platform, with added comments from historical FIS leaders Madani and Belhadj, from their prison cells in Algiers. This clearly represent interesting historical material on many grounds.

Beyond qualitative interviews, which also have their limitations, I was able to engage Anwar Haddam and the responsible Sant'Egidio mediator, Mario Giro, in other ways that were useful in view of understanding as much as possible of the process that took place in 1994–1995. As co-organizer of a conference on "International Politics, Diplomacy and Religion" at the European University Institute (EUI) in June 2015,[42] I facilitated a "live" meeting between Anwar Haddam and Mario Giro, in a panel addressing the Algerian mediation efforts. This was the first time Giro and Haddam had met since the Rome talks,[43] and resulted in a very interesting discussion on their respective views and reflection on this particular experience, 20 years after. For this same conference, Haddam also wrote a conference paper—on the Algerian mediation efforts and religious

[41] Apparently, it was the first time Anwar had been contacted to talk about this specific experience.
[42] The conference program is attached in Appendix A.
[43] Haddam attended by Skype since he was still not able to travel to Europe.

diplomacy more generally—which constitutes an interesting piece of new first-hand material on the Algerian mediation efforts.

Also, the section on *Sant'Egidio's as global entrepreneur of religion and politics* builds upon a broad selection of material and extensive field work. As for the external dimension—referring to Sant'Egidio's interactions with political authorities—this section develops a genealogy of the "religious engagement" narrative, from its U.S. origins to its Italian trajectory. This was a demanding and time-consuming task and builds upon extensive literature reviews, mapping and qualitative analysis of first and secondary sources of various kinds, with a focus on academic production and policy material. As for the analysis of the religion's transition from theory to policy, I had to increasingly depend on field work. I have thus attended a large number of Italian and international conferences dedicated to the role of religion in international affairs, in which Sant'Egidio has been present. Main methods included participant observation, the writing of mini-ethnographies of the conferences, qualitative analysis of conference material and relevant policy material; formal and informal interviews with key stake holders (conference organizers, key participants, government actors, faith-based actors). Some of these conferences stand out as particularly important.

The series of meetings between the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Italian faith-based actors, coordinated by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) is particularly significant. In 2010 the policy planning unit in the MFA established a working group responsible for assessing the potential of increased cooperation with religious actors in Italian foreign policy. The working group has arranged a series of meetings between the MFA and key faith-based actors in Italy, together with diplomats (Italian and foreign diplomats based in Rome) and academics (mostly international, from the United States and European countries with a certain experience in this field).

In October 2014 I attended the meeting "Foreign Policy and Religious Engagement: the Special Case of Italy", which was organized at ISPI in Milan.[44] This meeting was an eye-opener for me, since I was not aware that a conversation

[44] The conference program is attached in Appendix B. The meetings were closed to the public, but I was allowed to participate as Professor Olivier Roy's assistant.

on a new partnership between the Italian MFA and religious actors in Italian foreign policies was taking place, much less that it would be so advanced. The meeting was also fascinating in that it allowed me to observe how the "negotiation process" between Italian religious actors and the MFA on the role of religion in Italian foreign policy actually played out.

Another meeting in the series organized by ISPI that stands out was the conference on "Making Democracy One's Own: Muslim, Catholic and Secular Perspectives in Dialog on Democracy, Development and Peace", which took place in Rome in July 2016. This meeting was co-organized with the John Cabot University in Rome and the Notre Dame University. It was key in that it really highlighted the links between the U.S "religious engagement" policy framework and Italian policy-making on the issue, and by consequence, the role of small epistemic communities in global policy-making processes. This meeting was also an important occasion to learn more about U.S. experiences with the religious engagement policy framework, and its implementation in the U.S. context, primarily with the formation of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs. Shaun Casey (who headed the Office in 2013–2016) and Scott Appleby (a prominent U.S. scholar of religion and politics) gave a speech to the Italian Senate in which they reviewed the Office's results and experiences during the first three years, and discussed on a quite specific basis how religion can be a useful tool or asset in foreign policy.[45] These talks lay the foundation for a detailed and practically oriented workshop on what an Italian model of religious engagement could look like, which forms important empirical input to my analysis on the recasting of the religious both within the framework of traditional state diplomacy and in the broader global order.

Other important venues of field work for this section include:

1. The UNFPA roundtable on "Religion and Development: Focusing on Governance, Peace and Security and Gender Equality in a Post-2015 Context" (New York, July 2015);[46]

[45] The conference program is attached in Appendix C.
[46] The conference program is attached in Appendix D.

2. The World Bank's Global Conference on Religion and Sustainable Development: Strengthening Partnerships to end Extreme Poverty (Washington, July 2015);[47]
3. The German Ministry of Development's conference on "Partners for Change: Religions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (Berlin, February 2016)[48] and;
4. The EUI conference on "International Politics, Diplomacy and Religion".[49]

As for the research on the internal dimension of Sant'Egidio's role as a global entrepreneur of religion and politics—referring to its relations with the Holy See—this was slightly more straight-forward. It was easier to carry out the research and the analysis because the material and number of sources are more limited in scope. The assessment drew on qualitative analysis of a range of relevant primary and secondary sources, including scholarly publications on Vatican diplomacy and foreign relations; newspaper articles and traditional media coverage;[50] blogs and social media;[51] and official Vatican foreign-policy papers.[52]

The analysis of existing material has been complemented with qualitative interviews with key *Vaticanisti*—journalists specializing in the internal and external politics of the Vatican[53]—Sant'Egidio members and members of the other NEMs, Vatican officials and other relevant observers.

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[47] The conference program and proceedings can be found at: https://jliflc.com/resources/religion-sustainable-development-building-partnerships-to-end-extreme-poverty-conference-program/; and https://jliflc.com/sessions/post-conference-resources/#33188

[48] The conference program and proceedings can be found at: http://www.partner-religion-development.org/fileadmin/Dateien/Resources/Knowledge_Center/Report_Partners_for_Change_en.pdf

[49] See Appendix A.

[50] Such as the Catholic newspapers *Chiesa*, *L'Esspresso*, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

[51] Key electronic sources include the blog *Monday Vatican* by Andrea Gagliarducci (http://www.mondayvatican.com/); the website of the National Catholic Register (http://www.ncregister.com/); the Italian Catholic website (http://www.korazym.org/); and the website of the Catholic News Agency (https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/about.php)

[52] The Vatican being a state actor, its policies are normally well documented and publically accessible at: vaticanstate.va.

[53] Roughly twelve *Vaticanisti* are considered to have access in the "inner circles". Some key figures include Sandro Magister, Andrea Gagliarducci and Marco Polito.

Methodological challenges

Throughout the research and writing of this dissertation I have faced numerous methodological challenges of various natures. In this section I focus on classical dilemmas concerning representativeness and subjectivity in ethnographic research—how they materialized during my work and how they shaped the final product.

Representativeness. A key challenge with ethnographic and interpretive work more broadly relates to the notorious issues of representativeness: Whose story is being told? Who tells it? And how "true" (i.e., representative) is it? Telling the "truth" about the Sant'Egidio community is a tall order, which no single study can ever hope to fully uncover. Truthfulness and transparency, however, should be within reach. This is important because ethnographic productions are not merely descriptive, "innocent" exercises: As other discourses they have a performative dimension in that they contribute to the shaping of dominant narratives and interpretation, and ultimately practices. With a view to maximizing representativeness and develop a balanced account/analysis of the Sant'Egidio community and its faith-based mediation practices, the triangulation of sources and data through the use of multiple methods and sources have constituted a key strategy, together with critical reflections on sources and material. During the research for this dissertation I have put much effort into talking to the largest possible number of people, in view of capturing different dimensions and perspectives. I have also insisted on observing the Sant'Egidio's community within a range of different contexts and environments.

Subjectivity. The issue of representativeness is intertwined with another thorny issue in ethnographic practices and knowledge production: the subjectivity and identity of the researcher. What is she or he effectively able to see? There are both internal and external dimensions to this problem. The notion of subjectivity refers to the internal challenges related with ethnographic knowledge production. Ethnography studies "things" through the study of people. As people—the researcher included—are by definition "soft", it is difficult to produce "hard", replicable, ethnographic knowledge. Knowledge being associative, it is necessarily generated through the filter of the researcher's own

dispositions and capacities, meaning that what we are able to see largely depends on who we are. How then, does this the affect the premises of ethnographic knowledge production on "the other"? How accurately can we synthesize, write and interpret the lives and meanings of other people? This is a fundamental challenge in ethnographic (and interpretive work) that continues to shape introspective disciplinary discussions.[54]

Challenges relating to one's own biases, blind spots and limitations as a researcher are perhaps particularly urgent and visible in ethnographic research on sensitive and identity-oriented issues such as religion.[55] Such challenges were definitely present in my own research for this study: To what extent can I—a Scandinavian (nominally Protestant but with no religious background) and with a substantially different cultural background—really understand the attraction, force and meaning of religion? And more specifically, the type of religion that Sant'Egidio is engaged with? I was not the only one worrying about this.

The subjectivity challenge is connected to the researcher's position as a relative "insider" or "outsider" to the cultural phenomena he or she is trying to study. A long debate and differing opinions on whether an insider or an outsider is best positioned and equipped for ethnographic studies, and the pros and cons with an "emic" versus an "etic" perspective.[56] For my part, there appeared to be both upsides and downsides concerning my position as a relative outsider to the Sant'Egidio community.[57] Whereas an Italian Catholic, or even a community member, would evidently have a much deeper and more intuitive understanding of the community, its religion and the various contexts, he or she may also have some deep-running biases and blind spots toward his or her local environment that could be difficult to identify and neutralize. As an outsider to the community, I am of course much more prone to misunderstandings and overseeing important data. On the positive side, however, I may also have an advantage in terms of a

[54] See, for instance: Kisfalvi (2006) or Hegelund (2005).
[55] See: Dunn (2017).
[56] See: Naaeke et al. (2010).
[57] Insider and outsider positions are relative terms that come in different degrees depending on the level of a common horizon of understanding between researcher and the object of study.

fresh gaze, and the novice's ability to question connections and dynamics that appear as self-evident to the insider. No definitive solution here except for critical self-reflection and awareness of one own position and biases.

Interestingly, the issue of subjectivity and identity also appears to have an external dimension, in terms of the type and quality of data and info the researcher will effectively be able to access. The (apparent) identity of the researcher is in fact often decisive both with regards to access to sources and key actors, and to how informants frame and presents themselves and their stories. People tend to adapt to what they believe the researcher would prefer, in terms of being portrayed in the most favorable way.

As for this study, my (external, visible) identity as a female Norwegian researcher undoubtedly laid some premises for the research results, perhaps first and foremost through its considerable contrast to my ideal-type informants: strongly religious Italian men in their 60s and 70s. Being perceived and occasionally referred to—half jokingly—as a "pagan Northern European", I think it is fair to suggest that I was often assumed to be somewhat critical or disinterested in religion—or perhaps just unable to fully understand. It is also probable that gender played into the dynamics, and that my key informants would assume that my status as a female Scandinavian researcher would make me in particular aware and critical toward gender discriminatory attitudes and practices—thus triggering a somewhat defensive and characteristically "progressive" discourse on such issues.

In sum, I think it is fair to assume that my specific identity profile had a substantial impact on interview dynamics and, consequently, the research findings. Most importantly perhaps, Sant'Egidio was resistant to talk about religion with me, and consistently strived to underscore the political, rational, moral and 'scientific' aspects of their activities. As a direct consequence of these methodological challenges, I decided to enlarge the scope of interactions with the community, away from one-to-one interview situations to studying the community's performance and behavior toward other audiences. These included internal community practices, and the community's mode of interaction with other faith-based actors, political authorities and the Holy See. The final result

therefore reflects a much more comprehensive study of both the movement and the environment in which it operates than initially previewed.

Chapter 2
Sant'Egidio: The actor in its environments

In this chapter I lay the foundation for a fine-grained analysis of the Sant'Egidio community's dual identity and role as a religious and a political international actor, by situating the movement within its historical context; namely, the rise of Catholic NEMs emerging in the twentieth century. I show that, while often presented as such, Sant'Egidio is not an entirely unique occurrence, but rather, part of a larger historical phenomenon that has played, and continues to play, a central role in the relationship between Catholicism and modernity in what scholars of Catholicism often refer to as the "post-Christian" age.

The literature on new ecclesial movements (NEMs) has largely been developed by sociologists, church historians and theologians associated with the "Bologna School" of Alberigo and Melloni. The School is a leading institute of religious (Catholic) sociology and Church history, specializing in Vatican II[58] and Massimo Faggioli is one of the foremost experts on NEMs.[59] Faggioli and colleagues claim that the NEMs are important because they are the most significant "drivers" of contemporary global Catholicism (Faggioli 2014: x, prologue). As such, they provide a critical entry point to understand the complex relationship between the Catholic Church, "the World" and modernity. This warrants in-depth inquiry into the specific organization and rationale of these "non-conventional", yet increasingly dominant, global Catholic actors and their political modus operandi.

Due to its embeddedness in religious studies, the NEM literature seldom crosses paths with political studies of Catholic actors.[60] This is unfortunate as it offers a number of useful analytical instruments and tools to situate and

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[58] http://www.fscire.it/index.php/en/.

[59] Key works include *Sorting out Catholicism* (2014) and *The Rising Laity* (2016).

[60] To my knowledge, there are no political studies or analysis of Sant'Egidio that take into consideration the fact that it is a new ecclesial movement.

understand these actors and their activities, from their own vantage point, and from the vantage point of the Church. As such, an important innovation in this study is bridging the NEM literature and political analysis, with a view to developing a contextualized and comprehensive understanding of these new ecclesial movements and their role and impact as global players.

I suggest that the NEM literature provides an excellent framework and a key to understanding Sant'Egidio's ambiguous role and relations both vis-à-vis the Catholic Church and political authorities. This is because it highlights the community's intermediate position and hybrid identity, as an inherently dual religio–political actor. The literature thus provides us with both important background information concerning the historical context under which these movements first appeared, and the functions they were originally designed to serve. This is key is key to understand their presence and activities also in the present. The literature is also useful in that it identifies the most important "variables" and structures shaping the character and modus operandi of the movements, which allows to compare similarities and differences.

In order to prepare the ground for a fine-grained analysis of the Sant'Egidio community's specific mission and position within the broader NEM category, I start out with a brief historical introduction of the community.

Sant'Egidio: A brief introduction

Sant'Egidio is an Italian lay Catholic community, founded in the early 1960s in Rome, by a young student of law and Church history at Roma III, Andrea Riccardi (who remains the leader of the community today). The Holy See officially recognized the community in 1968, within the legal framework of the new Pontifical Council on the Laity.

The community takes its inspiration from Saints Francis of Assisi and San Benedetto,[61] and its historical core activities include prayer, evangelization,

[61] The namesake of the community—Sant'Egidio—provides no theological inspiration whatsoever. The community took the name when they transferred to their present headquarters at Piazza Sant'Egidio in Rome in the mid-1960s.

solidarity with the poor, ecumenism and dialog. The community arranges daily evening prayers at 7.30 p.m. since 1968 in its "Mother Church" of Santa Maria de Trastevere in Rome. With the geographical expansion of the community, the prayers are now simultaneously translated into five languages[62] and streamed online so that the global audience can follow this central activity of the community in real-time and in local languages.[63] As for the community's efforts to communicate the gospel, this is an integrated part of their work with the poor (and increasingly other vulnerable groups in society, including the elderly, the sick and disabled, the young, refugees and immigrants, people in prison, etc.). The community runs a number of initiatives and centers designed to engage and attend to such vulnerable groups. Among the best known in Rome are a restaurant run by intellectually disabled youth at Piazza Sant'Egidio, a house for the terminally ill and various centers and initiatives that provide housing and food for people in need.[64] Ecumenism and dialog—as a way of peace and cooperation, put forth by Vatican II—have been key priorities for the community since its foundation.

In line with the increased international orientation of the community and the globalized character of the political challenges faced in Italy,[65] the Sant'Egidio community has gradually grown into taking on roles and responsibilities of a more structural and political character than conventionally associated with a religious community. The community organizes large programs on healthcare and education, many of them focusing on the African continent.[66] Refugee assistance constitutes a key priority, and in 2014 the community organized the first European "humanitarian corridor initiative", in cooperation with the Italian

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[62] Spanish, French, English, Portuguese and Arabic.

[63] Prayers and the Bible in streaming and podcast: http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/5581/langID/it/Preghiera-della-sera-con-Sant-Egidio--streaming-e-podcast.html.

[64] Further information on the community's work for these groups is provided at: http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/6/langID/en/FRIENDSHIP-WITH-THE-POOR.html

[65] As the refugee crisis triggered by political conflicts in North Africa, the broader African continent and the Middle East, which Italy has experienced very directly.

[66] See the DREAM program focusing on public health and the prevention and treatment of HIV or Scuola della Pace, the School of Peace, offering children and adolescents at risk support in both educational and social aspects.

Association of Evangelical Churches, the Waldesian Church and Italian political authorities. The humanitarian corridor project was designed to prevent the most vulnerable refugees with right to protection from taking the dangerous travel route to Europe by boats; instead they were flown in. The initiative has largely been received as a success and is currently assessed by a number of EU member states as a model to replicate.[67]

Notwithstanding the community's considerable efforts in these domains, it is its achievements and portfolio within the field of international conflict mediation and peacemaking that stands out as it most defining and celebrated feature. The community's mediation initiative in Mozambique in the early 1990s—in which it helped broker a peace agreement between the RENAMO (Resistencia Nacional de Moçambique) and the governing FRELIMO (Frente de Liberaçao de Moçambique) in collaboration with representatives of the Italian government—effectively led to its nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize and cemented its position as one of the more successful mediator communities at the international level. Since Mozambique, the community has been involved in over 25 mediation initiatives over the world, with varying levels of success.[68]

Through its experiences and achievements within the field of mediation, the Sant'Egidio community has successfully positioned itself as an important reference for both secular and religious non-state mediation practitioners. Through close cooperation with a "small and exclusive group" of other practitioners of international conflict mediation—among which are the Geneva-based Center for Humanitarian Dialog, Swiss Peace, the Carter Center and the Oslo Center constitute important partners—the community shares experiences and develops best practices with other likeminded actors.[69]

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[67] For more information, see: https://reliefweb.int/report/italy/humanitarian-corridors-vulnerable-refugees-italy-opening.

[68] Mozambique, the Central African Republic, Guatemala, Burundi, Albania, Kosovo, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Guinea Conakry, Niger, Colombia, Congo, Senegal, South Soudan, Soudan, Uganda, Mali, Libya, Cameroun, Chorea, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine (Source: https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30060/langID/it/FARE-PACE.html).

[69] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013.

The community also has an important academic "component": Many of its central members (including Andrea Riccardi, Mario Giro and Marco Impagliazzo) hold academic posts and have published extensively on religion and peace-building.[70] Andrea Bartoli plays a key role in this regard though his position as the head of the U.S. "branch" of the Sant'Egidio community, effectively bridging the Sant'Egidio community with central U.S. academic institutions and think tanks—as well as diplomatic circles—that work on religion and diplomacy. [71] Bartoli has served in key academic and diplomatic positions in the U.S. for more than two decades[72] and has been instrumental in establishing the "mètodo" of Sant'Egidio and faith-based mediation in the academic literature—and also in establishing the Sant'Egidio community as central contributor in U.S. academic and diplomatic work on religion and peace.

Beyond the religious and academic components, however, the community also has a far more political flair to it. It is evident that Sant'Egidio is growing into something quite different and more political in nature when we look at the community's "political transition" over the last decade—both in the Italy and in the United States. Not only have central community members been part of various Italian governments since 2011, when Andrea Riccardi accepted the first political appointment in the community's history, as a minister without portfolio in the Monti government, the community also plays an increasingly important role in international politics and diplomacy as a (semi-)autonomous international

[70] A few examples include: Riccardi (2005, 2007); Paglia (2011); Comunità di Sant'Egidio, (2017); Morozzo Della Rocca (2008, 2010, 2017); Giro (2018a, 2018b); Impagliazzo & Giro 1997); Bartoli (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2015); Bartoli & Sentongo (2012); Bartoli & Ogata 2012); Impagliazzo (2009a, 2009b, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a).

[71] Including the Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs; the George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution; University of Notre Dame (Kroc institute for international peace studies), United States Institute for Peace; Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

[72] Bartoli founded and directed the Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR) at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), where he remains a Senior Research Scholar at the Saltzman Institute on War and Peace Studies. He has served as of George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) and as chair of the Columbia University Seminar on Conflict Resolution. He currently serves as dean at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at the (Catholic) Seton Hall University.

political subject. With a legal status in international law as an "international institution"[73] the small community operates quite independently (from both Italy and the Holy See) and with much success in many sectors of international diplomacy. Since 2017, the community has formalized agreement with the UN through its own Permanent Representative of the Sant'Egidio Community to the UN, Department of Political Affairs. This is an unusual arrangement.[74] The community has also had permanent observer status at the International Organization for Migration since 2016 and formalized cooperation with the UNCHR (since 2016, largely the result of the Humanitarian Corridor initiative). Beyond formal agreements with large international organization the community also has individual framework agreements with over 20 countries.[75] This effectively means that the community enjoys significant flexibility and room to maneuver as it can operate through many different channels: As Italian state actors; as Holy See actors; and as community actors within an international institution. This very same feature complicates neat analysis of the community and its impact on social and political structures.

With a view to elaborating a better understanding of the dual character and identity of Sant'Egidio as both a religious community and political actor—and the type of relationship they cultivate with both religious and political authorities, at home and abroad—I suggest looking closer into two key issues. The first one is the specific background and trajectory of Sant'Egidio as part of the broader phenomenon of NEMs emerging in the twentieth century. The second is the specific organizational and operational set-up of the community, consisting of a tight-woven, small circle of core members (the "mother community"), supported by a broad circle of "friends".

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[73] Interview with Mauro Garofolo, 2018.

[74] "Working more officially with Sant'Egidio represents a rare step by the UN in forging partnerships with civil-society groups and regional organizations". See: (http://www.passblue.com/2017/06/09/the-un-formalizes-its-partnership-with-santegidio-the-rome-based-mediator/).

[75] As Mauro Garofolo explained (June 2018) this is 'work in progress': in 2014 they only had framework with twelve countries.

The new ecclesial movements: Less organization and more Holy Spirit

The NEMs, of which the Community of Sant'Egidio is but one, are "new-generation" Catholic lay communities, with a semi-independent status vis-à-vis the Catholic Church. They started to appear in the first half of the twentieth century. The term embraces a heterogeneous collection of movements, the most famous being the legendary Opus Dei. Other organizations under the NEM umbrella include Communione e Liberazione [Communion and Liberation], the Focolare movement (also known as Opera di Maria), the Neo-Catechumenal Way, the Cursillos de Cristianidad, the Regnum Christi movement and the Legionaries of Christ (Faggioli 2014). The phenomenon has received considerable attention by scholars of Church history and politics because it has become so politicized and contentious. Indeed, the phenomenon continues to trigger strong tensions between those who understand the NEMs primarily as a signal of rupture and internal division with the Catholic Church (thus threatening to undermine the unity of the Church from within), and those who consider them to be a kind of elite papal vanguard. This again largely explains the prevalence of either "apologetic" or 'diabolic' approaches toward the NEMs, according to Faggioli (2014).

Regardless of one's normative stance, it appears clear that the phenomenon has played a central role in the Church's transition to modernity. According to Faggioli, Catholicism is currently reaching a peak in global influence; an achievement which is mainly due to the role of the NEMs in spreading the new evangelization "launched by John Paul II, developed by Benedict XVI and reinvigorated by Pope Francis" (Faggioli 2014: x, prologue). Faggioli thus understands the NEMs as "one of the key experiences to understand the complexity of the relationship between Catholicism and the modern world in the twentieth century."

Charles Whitehead (2005) defines NEMs as:

> a group of Catholics who share the following characteristics: a charismatic founder, a particular charism, some form of ecclesial reality or expression, a predominantly lay membership, a radical commitment to the Gospel, a form of teaching or training closely linked to its charisma, a specific focus and a commitment to bringing its own emphasis or

> understanding into the life of the Church (cited in Hayes 2005: 18; quoted in Faggioli 2014: 3).

The movements vary greatly in terms of theological and political referential cultures, organizational set-up, links with the hierarchy within the Holy See and political authorities. Yet they are part of the same historical phenomenon and share some basic common features. Most importantly perhaps, as the term implies, is the insistence on the idea of Christianity as a movement (Faggioli 2014: 8). This idea, which emerged with ethnographic studies of early Christianity in the twentieth century, is key to understand the new dynamic of the NEMs. By recognizing the anti-institutional nature of the Jesus of Nazareth movement as the original and most authentic feature of Christianity the NEMs thus share some "deep" anti-establishment features that have complicated their relationship to traditional church authorities (ibid). The movements traditionally focus on autodidacticism and a direct relationship to God. They have also been instrumental in negotiating a more important role for lay people, as set forth in Vatican II teachings on the universal claim to holiness. If holiness is universally accessible, it is the responsibility of the laity—more than the episcopate,[76] the clergy and other "mid-level" religious leaders and authorities—to find new ways to live the Christian gospel[77] more directly. This attitude has, according to Faggioli and colleagues, contributed to the NEMs emerging as the most dynamic element within the contemporary Catholic Church. However, it also explains why the NEMs have a traditionally difficult or at least ambiguous relationship to traditional ecclesial authorities.

Commonalities: Historical background and "original mission"

The NEMs can be viewed as the continuation of the Italian Catholic Action (1920–1956), which was the first official lay mass movement of the Catholic Church

[76] The order or body of Bishops.

[77] The Christian gospel may refer to both what is understood to constitute the Christian message—expressed through the memories of the deeds and words of Jesus—and the books in which the message was set out—that is, the four gospels of the New Testament: Mathew, Mark, Luke and John.

(Faggioli 2014). Catholic Action is often referred to as "the biggest innovation in Catholicism since the monastery system" and its impact on religious practices and on the traditional Church hierarchy can hardly be exaggerated. By providing the laity with a specific mission—taking the "social path" in the Church's efforts to restore Christianity (*Societas Christiana)* on earth—Catholic Action effectively revolutionized the role, position and status of the laity vis-à-vis the ecclesiastic structures. This historical starting point and mission provide us with an important starting point to assess the role and impact of the increasingly salient NEMs—Sant'Egidio included—although the structural conditions under which Catholic Action was created have changed.

Catholic Action was created in the latter part of the nineteenth century, by the pontificate and the clergy. The ambition was to create a unit responsible to lead the Church's fight against secularism and liberalism, and ultimately in the restoration of Christianity in the public, social and political spaces—that is, in the societal spaces where the clergy, the episcopal authorities and the pontificate were not willing or able to access (Faggioli 2014: 36–37).[78] The frustrated laity presented itself as an obvious choice. At the time, a highly negative reading of modern times dominated among the ecclesial authorities and there was a widespread sentiment that the Church needed to mobilize and confront, rather than reconcile with, the modern world. The political context was one of conflict between the Catholic Church and the emergent nation-states in Europe. The Papal States had recently been conquered by the Italian nation-state and the Lateran treaties (1929) had not yet been formalized. The promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Italy and the introduction of laws concerning the Catholic Church and the religious orders had led Pope Pius IX (in 1874) to articulate the policy of *non expedit*—mandating abstention from Italian political elections and political life in general—for Italian Catholics (Faggioli 2014: 36).

[78] Faggioli (2011: 47) writes: "Catholic Action became an active part of the Church's plan, aiming at the restoration of the 'Kingdom of Christ' in a modern society viewed as corrupt and lacerated in the struggle between classes, between political parties and within families. The restoration of peace had to go through the re-establishment of the *Societas Christiana* under the guidance of the papal and episcopal ecclesiastical authorities."

The Catholic Church thus found itself in a state of multidimensional crisis. Internally, it suffered a crisis of authority within the clergy and the official structures; externally, it suffered a political crisis due to the Church's loss of the Papal States and its conflict with the emergent European nation-states. The political environment in Italy and abroad was dominated by totalitarian political ideologies and regimes, which the Church needed to conform with, or at the very least, regulate its relations with. Against this background, Catholic Action was initially formed as a mass movement "from above", designed to mobilize the laity in the struggle against secularism and liberalism (ibid). As such, Catholic Action had both modern and non-modern features. If it appeared as modern mass movement in terms of organizational set-up, it also displayed some characteristic noon-modern features as it was, most importantly, under the direct leadership and authority of the ecclesial structure. The aim of the organization was not to rethink or reflect upon the theological or political choices of the Church, but merely to fulfill the mission laid upon the laity "from above".

The emergence of the NEMs replacing Catholic Action as the overarching organization of the Catholic laity, on the other hand, came with a clear re-articulation of the mission of the laity (Faggioli 2014: 21). The new mission of the laity propagated by the NEMs was in line with the ecclesiological renewal that would shape Vatican II. As known, the role of the laity was a central element in Vatican II, expressed with the universal call to holiness in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity and the creation of the Pontifical Council of the Laity (in 1967).[79] The main innovation expressed with the NEMs was thus its view on the autonomous mission of the laity: that it should not only execute a strategy "from above", but take on a creative, independent, and ultimately responsible role, in the interpretation and communication of the Christian gospel and Christianity more broadly (ibid). The NEMs would do this by choosing and emphasizing different elements—specific charismas and spiritualties within the Catholic "repertoire"—and use it as an entry point to live (and spread) the gospel in a more intense and direct way that the traditional Church structures were able to provide. This

[79] In 2016 the functions of the Council were shifted to the new Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

specific starting point of the NEMs has contributed in giving the movements a shared set of distinct features and characteristics.

Specific position between the pontificate and "the World"

Faggioli explains that the NEMs can be interpreted as the diaspora of Catholic Action, splitting into a wide sector of different associations and communities with different impulses, ambitions and agendas (Faggioli 2014). The movements were first created as extra-legal entities, then gradually brought within the framework of the Catholic Church through official recognition in Canon Law, but on an *ad hoc* basis, in which the different movements and entities received different legal statuses.[80] The NEMs thus occupy a specific position as "semi-autonomous" bodies: they are (at least traditionally) under the direct control of the pontificate but largely avoiding the control of the episcopate.

This effectively means that the NEMs have substantially disturbed the traditional power balance in the Church hierarchy. Through their ultra-Papalist loyalties, the NEMs have massively expanded their reach and influence at the expense of the episcopate (Faggioli 2014). As a direct consequence, these new

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[80] Pope John Paul II—who some have labeled "the Pope of the movements"—first established a policy of recognition toward the new ecclesial movements. This line has been followed up by Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. This, even as Francis in fact—and in contrast to conventional assumptions—appears more concerned about the movements that his predecessor Benedict and has been more direct in his requests to the movements to show their willingness to unity and obedience to the episcopal authorities (Faggioli 2014). Because of the Holy See's ambiguous views on the NEMs, it has been slow in providing a coherent juridical framework to regulate the existence and affiliations of such movements vis-à-vis official Church structures. This means that most of the movements have been given different legal statuses, on an *ad hoc* basis. The Legionaries of Christ, for example, was granted status as Decretum Laudis in 1965 and Cursillos de Christianidad was approved by Paul VI in 1963. In 1965, Opera di Maria (Focolare)—which had been approved *ad experimentum* in 1962—was officially recognized in 1965 by Pope Paul VI. In 1968, Sant'Egidio was officially recognized as a lay association of pontifical right by John Paul VI. Two years later, Communione e Liberazione was given the same status. Opus Dei was eventually given the status of "personal prelature" (a unique legal status within the Catholic Church) in 1982.

movements, with a few exceptions, are traditionally not well regarded among the bishops, whose position has already been severely weakened by Vatican II. In addition, the clergy and local churches have traditionally regarded the NEMs with a certain skepticism because they represent competition, in terms of *religious authority, religious services, recruitment* and *influence*.

The NEMs effectively challenge the *religious authority and legitimacy* of the bishops, by refusing to subordinate to and respect their superior status. Traditionally, it is the ecclesial training of bishops that effectively sets them apart and above the laity and warrants their legitimacy as religious authorities. The NEMs, however, represent a disturbing element with their charismatic, predominantly lay leadership, which refuses to measure and categorize religious credibility according to such established institutional standards (Faggioli 2014). Indeed, the leaders of the NEMs are most often proud auto-didactics.

The NEMs also challenge traditional religious authorities through the establishment of private institutions and universities offering seminaries, theological studies and training for priests, which directly competes with the official universities of the Holy See. Opus Dei has its Pontificia Università della Santa Croce in Rome; Communion and Liberation has its fraternity for priests, Fraternità dei missionari di San Carlo; Focolare has its Istituto Universitario Sophia (in Loppiano, Tuscany) and will soon open another university in the Philippines. Furthermore, the Legionaries of Christ and its ecclesial movement Regnum Christi have the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum and the Neo-Cathecumenal Way has its "Redemptori's Mater Seminary". Sant'Egidio does not have a university of its own or a private training center, but many of the core members hold high-level academic posts in Italy and abroad.

The NEMs also represent competition in that they offer parallel and exclusive religious services, such as eucharistic celebrations,[81] sacraments, etc. These private services effectively compete with official ones in a "market" in which attendance at religious services is already low—which triggers dismay among the

[81] The celebration of Mass, the eucharistic liturgy and the process of transubstantiation through which the bread and wine used in the religious service, according to Catholic teachings, transform into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

clergy, local churches and the episcopate alike. There is also an element of controversy concerning the legality of these privately offered services. For instance, Sant'Egidio's practice of offering Sunday mass (in Santa Maria di Trastevere) was eventually prohibited in 1999 by the Holy See on the basis that it did not conform to official guidelines and requirements.[82]

The NEMs are also controversial due their *mode of recruitment.* They stand accused of recruiting from the parishes "prepared" by the local bishops and priests and thus directly threatening the daily bread of official Church officers (Faggioli 2014).

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the competition to the episcopate (in particular) represented by the NEMs[83] has resulted in the latter being rather negative toward the phenomenon. A key concern is the issue of the unity of the Church, and whether (or how) the NEMs can represent a dynamic enrichment of Catholicism, without undermining the unity of the Church. As *Vaticanista* Sandro Magister (1998) articulates it: "The fear is that Sant'Egidio becomes another church inside the Church" (my translation). The difficulties with obtaining a fine balance between the NEMs, the episcopate and the Pope are perfectly illustrated with the recent controversies with the Neo-Cathecumenal Way in Japan, whose seminary Redemptori's Mater Seminary was finally endorsed by Rome in 2010, after years of harsh contestation by Japanese Bishops.

According to Faggioli, the emergence NEMs have radically changed the structures of the Catholic Church. This is because the NEMs have largely replaced the episcopate as the legitimate "leaders" of the "Christian flock" (Faggioli 2014). From this perspective, the new structure of the Catholic Church is one in which there are two winners—the Pope and the movements—and two losers—the episcopate and the "lay laity"; that is, the non-organized laity (ibid). Although the Pope may worry about the unity of the Church, the new movements effectively provide him with an ultra-loyal, visible and revitalizing segment of support. The movements, in return, enjoy the support of a remote but "infallible" papacy and

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[82] For details, see: Magister (1998).
[83] This is crystalized by the fact that since the late 1990s Communione e Liberazione has been invited to the Synod of Bishops.

thus relative freedom from the episcopate. The episcopate, on the other hand, has found its influence effectively diminished to the benefit of the new ecclesial movements—which, moreover, have largely escaped the mandate and control of the episcopate thanks to papal goodwill. The "lay laity", that is, those who do not belong to a NEM or community, suffer from being "nobodies". They find themselves in the void between the "hot" sacraments of the movements versus the "cold" sacraments of the Church (ibid).

According to Faggioli, the current context is crucial both regarding the future of the NEMs and the direction of the Catholic Church as a whole. The increased internationalization of the NEMs, together with the weakening of the episcopate, whose traditional task was to supervise and control the movements, have led to a *de facto* unprecedented autonomization of the NEMs that coincide with their current peak in influence. Because the NEMs are not under a bishop control, they are "de-territorialized", which means they can act globally. Together with the sociological and political self-production of these movements, this has led to a new era in which the movements have definitely lost their links to the first phase of the new ecclesial movements (i.e., Catholic Action). This means that anyone who wants to understand the development of contemporary Catholicism and the Catholic Church should pay close attention to the NEMs, conceptualized as archetype actors of globalized, contemporary Catholicism (Faggioli 2014).

Differences

Although the NEMs share some basic features, they constitute a heterogeneous group, in terms of organizational set-up, socio-political agenda and partners. The most important axes of difference, according to Faggioli, ultimately lie in the community's reception of Vatican II, and more broadly in the strategies of the Catholic Church to reconcile or not with modernity, and if yes, on what terms. All of them are effectively the "children" of Vatican II, if nothing else, through their "birth certificate". Yet, they have very different ways in interpreting and applying the teachings of the Council. In fact, most of them are conservative, in the sense that insist on Catholic identity issues and reject liberal interpretations of the "spirit of Vatican II", together with its emphasis on ecumenism and inter-religious

dialog. Only Sant'Egidio and Focolare actively embrace Vatican II and consider themselves as the pioneers of the *issues ad extra* of it. These basic impulses of the various NEMs have much to do with the context and locus of their emergence. Faggioli divides them into three broad categories:

First-generation, Spanish-speaking movements

The first generation of NEMs emerged in the 1930s in Spain and Mexico. The most important are Opus Dei, Cursillos de Cristianidad, the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi. In particular, Spain in the 1930s—in the firm grip of Franco's "National Catholicism"—was an important cradle of first-generation NEMs. The leaders of Opus Dei and Cursillos de Cristianidad—which would become models for a trend of NEMs through the twentieth century—were strongly inspired by the literature of the crisis of civilization and the idea of a Catholic Reconquista against modern and liberal culture, "in the ideal footsteps of the Reconquista accomplished by Ferdinand and Isabella of Castilla in 1492 at the expense of Muslims and Jews" (Faggioli 2014: 53). The movements were characterized by a staunch opposition to any idea of internal reform of the Catholic Church and steadfast advocacy of integral Catholic identity.

Opus Dei was formed as community composed of both lay people and priests. Privacy and secrecy were characteristic features from the beginning. Additionally, the movement drew heavily on intellectuals in establishing its apostolate. The movement has been devoted to the training of university students and the country's elite (who were charged with having triggered the outbreak of the civil war). It is further characterized by "a reactionary attitude against the spirit of the time, and a clerical vision of the priests' role to exhort, inspire and direct the laity" (Faggioli 2014: 54).[84]

Cursillos de Cristianidad shared Opus Dei negative reading of the times, but whereas Opus Dei was mainly concerned with elites, Cursillos de Cristianidad took a "bottom-up" approach and pursued the role of a missionary proletariat. The

[84] For further readings on Opus Dei, see *The Way* written by the movement's founder, José Maria Escrivà de Balaguer.

name Cursillo refers to a short course to “grasp the fundamental truths of our holy Catholic religion” evangelization is therefore at the core of this movement. Cursillos originally emerged from the youth branch of Catholic Action among priests and laypeople of the Diocese of Mallorca.

Additionally, NEMs formed in Mexico in the 1940s as the nationalist–political culture and the Catholic design of social Reconquista became entwined. The Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi *both* applied a “top-down” approach to the re-catholicization of Mexico first through the formation of religious elites first and then of the laity. Similar to its Spanish counterparts, these movements also had mixed memberships, combining lay and clerical congregations and institutions (ibid).

First-generation Italian movements

The first-generation Italian movements—among which Focolare and Gioventù Studentesca[85] are the most important—emerged in a quite different context—an Italy in-between war and reconstruction. In Italy, the catastrophe of the Second World War and the compromise between the Church and the Fascist regime had resulted in tightened relations between the Holy See and the Church hierarchy. In this context, Opera di Maria (also known as Focolare) was founded in 1947 by Chiara Lubich, who had a background in Trent’s Catholic Action and the Franciscan third order.[86]

Whereas Focolare had only dealt with Catholic Action marginally, Gioventù Studentesca—founded by Luigi Giussani—saw itself as a direct continuation of the movement. This translated into a conservative focus on Catholic identity and domestic issues for Gioventù Studentesca, whereas Focolare from its inception was much concerned with ecumenism and dialog; the community likes to present

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[85] Gioventù Studentesca would become Communione e Liberazione in 1966.

[86] The third order (in Catholic religious orders) refer to an association of believers that seek to live accordingly to the ideals and spirit of Catholicism—in this case a Franciscan tradition, after Francis of Assisi—but who do not belong to either the first order (composed of monks) or second order (nuns). Commonly they are composed by lay people who have not taken religious vows.

itself as a frontrunner of the theological currents that would becoming dominant in the Second Vatican Council. As for the composition, both Italian movements were primarily composed of lay people, although some of the central lay personalities originating from these movements eventually made important theological contributions.

The second wave of new ecclesial movements

The second wave refers to Sant'Egidio and the charismatic movements originating in the 1960s in Spain and the United States such as the Neo-Catechumenal Way and the Renewal in the Spirit movement (Faggioli 2014: 75–76). Sant'Egidio was formed at the dawn of Vatican II, and in the emergent period of the 1968 movement, in a context characterized by the breakdown of authoritarian structures, both religious and political. Riccardi founded the movement upon his split with Gioventù Studentesca; similar to Focolare (a movement that played an important role in the community's creation) Sant'Egidio was also based in a pro-Vatican II tradition, situating itself in the center–left in terms of political orientation and preferences.

As for the charismatic NEMs, the Neo-Catechumenal Way was formed in Madrid in 1964, and the Renewal in the Spirit movement emerged in the United States in 1967. Both Sant'Egidio and the charismatic movements were primarily lay apostolates; and prayers constitute a central practice in both cases (although not to the same degree; Sant'Egidio has a far more political flair to it).

Sant'Egidio as a synthesis of the spirit of 1968 and Vatican II

The NEM literature is useful to analyze Sant'Egidio because it provides some key "variables" that aid comparative assessment of the ideological, political and theological orientations of the various NEMs. The historic assessment of the NEMs' ambiguous emergence and co-existence with official Church structures also allows for a more informed analysis of the movements' fluid relationship with both political and religious authorities in the present.

At first glance, Sant'Egidio stands out at as one "extreme" pole within the NEM framework, with Opus Dei at the other end of the spectrum. The movement is by far the most liberal, internationalist and Vatican II-friendly movement within the category. The question therefore arises: What type of theological, ideological and political ideas underpin the community, and how are the different dimensions linked and configured?

Religion as key to the revolution of mankind

Emerging in the early 1960s, in parallel to Vatican II, Sant'Egidio is the NEM with most direct links and the line of ecclesial and theological thinking that was expressed in the new council.[87] In the 1996 book *Sant'Egidio, Rome et le Monde* (based on interviews with Andrea Riccardi by Jean-Dominique Durand and Régis Ladous), Riccardi explains that Vatican II was an absolutely vital reform of the Catholic Church that proved instrumental to its very survival: "it [Vatican II] saved the Church from becoming an introverted, xenophobic institution' (Riccardi 1996: 8). Riccardi explains that the Church he knew in his youth "was remote and out of touch" (ibid: 8). As a young man, he was interested in religion but never considered to become a priest, because the priests had lost their positions and role and were in a position of crisis (Riccardi 1996).

Another central impulse in the creation of the community was the "spirit of 1968"—the generational clashes and an urgent feeling that "something was inevitably changing and that we had to participate in deciding the direction" (ibid). Sant'Egidio, from this perspective, can largely be seen as the outcome of a critical, anti-establishment attitude toward the institutions of the Church, set on using the teachings from Vatican II to reform and innovate the Church from within.

Sant'Egidio thus represents a "synthesis" of the religious and political crisis of the 1960s. It is based in an understanding of a multidimensional crisis of

[87] Note that the "meaning" of Vatican II is still internally contested by theologians. Some argue that it is fiercely liberal, a break with previous traditions. Others take a much more restrictive approach focusing on continuality rather than rupture. Interestingly, the concept of the "spirit of Vatican II" —as opposed to the letter—is itself a controversial term, evoked by liberal currents seeking to expand and celebrate its "revolutionary" potential, whereas conservative theologians reject the notion altogether.

authority, legitimacy, leadership and knowledge, lashing both the religious and political institutions of the time. A clear revolutionary dimension: but a *purely political* revolution is neither possible nor sufficient. Rather, Riccardi wants to revolutionize politics by revolutionizing humanity; and in order to revolutionize humanity, we need religion. The overall strategy is therefore to change society through changing humanity, with the Bible as the most effective tool of human transformation and growth. Riccardi writes: "I discussed with my friends: What does it mean to change society, if we don't change ourselves? […] I thought to myself: If we succeed to change man, then we can make a revolution; only new men can make a new world" (Riccardi 1996: 8, my translation).

On a personal level, Riccardi's solution is therefore to go back to the Scriptures, the Bible and the Christian gospel—rather than to the priests—and look for keys and answers to inform the urgent political challenges of the times. There is a clear emphasis on auto-didacticism, and a personal and intense relationship with the Bible that has clear evangelical impulses. The key theological inspiration that he encounters during this solitary research is Francis of Assisi and San Benedetto, which will come to play a highly influential role on the Sant'Egidio movement. Well-trained in Church history, Riccardi, finds himself fascinated by the revolutionary aspects of Francis of Assisi whom he had mostly been presented in rather soft and toothless fashion. Rather, he finds this figure "radically political", and an extraordinary source of inspiration in terms of applying the teachings of the gospel to address contemporary political challenges. Reflecting on the challenges of his own time, Riccardi explains that a main challenge was to think of a way to embark on a "true" revolution, which would go beyond superficial political structures.

From reading to living the Christian gospel

Riccardi's conviction is that the keys for self-transformation and revolution are to be found in the Christian gospel. But how to explore the topics of the Christian gospel in a *lived* fashion? This was not an easy task for Andrea Riccardi and the other founding members, who were raised and socialized in upper-middle-class intellectual milieus in Rome. They therefore elected to seek out the most deprived

communities in the Roman suburbs—struggling with poverty, crime, poor basic social services in terms of health and education—as a way live the Christian gospel in a more direct manner.[88] Its first office in the Roman suburbs opened in 1963, after which time Sant'Egidio has assisted the local community by giving classes, visiting elderly and sick people in their homes and accompanying people through difficult life situations. Beyond these "good deeds", such activity turned out to be a deeply rewarding and formative experience for the nascent community, according to Sant'Egidio. It has been through these meetings and emergent "friendships with the poor and powerless" that Sant'Egidio has developed its own particular identity. It is here—in the absence of the Italian state and Church authorities—that the community built its character, so to speak, before it regrouped and relocated to Rome in 1968. Riccardi (1996: 16; my translation) explains that:

> What are the places and the situations that can best reveal the evangelical healing that we find in the primitive Church, in the actions of the Apostles? […] The attention toward the inhabitants of the Roman suburbs explains the discovery of the themes, images and typical suffering of these realities: the cold winters against the humid houses, loneliness, diseases, the situation of women.

Judging from Riccardi's own account, the community's experiences in this precarious place—where "one cannot hide or pretend"—allowed for the exploration of true emotions, such as suffering, gratitude and the joy of sharing (ibid: 16).

Prayer as political act

It was in this context that Sant'Egidio developed its key tool of political innovation through religious practices; that is, the community's distinct *prayer practices*. Riccardi insists that prayer has been a central characteristic of the movement since the start, effectively constituting the "glue" of the community. Interestingly, prayer is conceptualized as something much more powerful than a standard

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[88] Arguably, this strategy can be understood as the religious analog to the phenomenon of "auto-proletarization" of the privileged political leaders of the 1968 riots.

religious practice or act of devotion. It is conceptualized, rather, as an act of political resistance and activism; as a physical, spiritual and ultimately *political exercise*. By applying a different way to pray—*public prayers*—it also represents an act of taking distance vis-à-vis the formal Church structures, thereby symbolizing the originality of the Sant'Egidio community.

Indeed, public prayers were quite controversial in the Italian Catholic context of the 1960s, as this was largely associated with evangelical Protestants. Riccardi was exposed to the practice in Paris during his studies. Upon his return to Italy he introduced the idea of public prayer to the community, which in fact stirred up a huge debate internally in the community on how to pray. Riccardi explains it thus:

> We were living a moment of profound internal debate: Can one pray in public? For us, praying, until 1974, was to meet in a room, open the Bible, read the prayers, always in a closed milieu. It was the model of the "Acts of the apostles": I speak with everyone, but if I invite my friends, I don't invite them to pray, but to speak or discuss (Riccardi 1996: 30).

In this context, the idea of public praying together, out loud, was quite radical—the community members were not even certain whether it was acceptable according to the Gospel of Mathew (ibid: 30).

Once institutionalized, the public prayers of Sant'Egidio turned out to be an effective tool of engaging with people: It represented a concrete and welcoming way of "creating and maintaining a conversation with the friends of the community" (ibid: 30). Riccardi also speaks of "living the experience of the Prayer" (ibid: 30) which appears to point to the non-literate aspects of faith thus also pointing to the charismatic and evangelical elements of the community's prayer practices. Since 1974, the community has arranged daily evening prayers, first in the chapel at the community's headquarters at Piazza Sant'Egidio in Trastevere, and later in the neighboring Church of Santa Maria di Trastevere, thanks to the community's friendship with the priest of Santa Maria di Trastevere, Vincenzo

Paglia. The public prayers are based on a fairly basic liturgy,[89] yet, a distinct feature is that it is done through *Lectio Divina*—a sort of spiritual practice, trying to reach God through praying the Bible, which is associated with Protestant evangelical and charismatic congregations. Riccardi acknowledges the charismatic features of Sant'Egidio in terms of prayer practices, yet insists on one key difference: namely, that Sant'Egidio is much more outward-looking than most charismatic movements. In contrast to charismatic currents, the Sant'Egidio community is rooted in the conviction that only engagement with the world can open up to God (ibid).

Relations with political and ecclesial authorities

In hindsight, it appears clear that Sant'Egidio made some fortuitous strategic choices in terms of religious and political partnerships, as well as theological orientation from the start. The community's decision to welcome cooperation with ecclesial authorities—most of all with the Pope(s) as the Bishop of Rome—turned out to be crucial, as was the community's inscription in a progressive current of Catholicism, embracing Vatican II teachings on ecumenism and dialog. Together with a number of fruitful relations and partnerships—*amicizie*, in Italian—with important ecclesial and political authorities, such choices facilitated for a swift and successful transition from the Roman suburbs to the central circles of Rome.

Papal relations from John Paul II to Francis

As we have seen, Sant'Egidio was recognized by John Paul II as a lay association of pontifical right in 1968, relatively shortly after its foundation. John Paull II—labeled, as mentioned, the "Pope of the movements"—is therefore a much-cherished figure within the Sant'Egidio community (only rivaled by Pope Francis)

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[89] See: *The Sant'Egidio Book of Prayer* or the community's website where they post the fixed program of the different prayers according to the days of the week.

due to his role in the community's transition from clandestine brotherhood into member of the central religious circles in Rome.[90]

From the perspective of the Sant'Egidio community, John Paul II personified a decisive and welcoming shift in the Catholic Church's development. Community members had not had any relations with the former popes, who were seen as remote and irrelevant.[91] Sant'Egidio thus took great efforts in starting off on a good foot with John Paul II when he assumed office in 1978. According to Sant'Egidio's own historiography, the community was first acquainted with John Paul II in 1978, during the Pope's visit to the Roman suburbs. This was the first time a Pope had visited the precarious districts of Rome; the community was impressed and managed to persuade the Pope to visit their offices to tell him about their activities in support of the local community (Riccardi 1996).

The community's second meeting with John Paul II took place during the Pope's visit to the Church of Santa Maria di Trastevere the same year. Sant'Egidio was notified and sent a message inviting him to visit the community headquarters during his visit to the neighborhood. Riccardi recalls that the Pope had been disappointed with his visit to Maria di Trastevere, because the Church was almost empty, with the exception of a few elderly people (ibid). The Pope then somewhat surprisingly decided to visit the Sant'Egidio headquarters. This represented a definitive breakthrough in Sant'Egidio's status in Rome. Riccardi explains that: "The people from the ecclesial milieus were scandalized and worried: because the Pope was entering the lion's den; and finally, if the Pope comes, you're famous; this was the Roman logic of those days" (Riccardi 2011: 55, my translation).

According to Riccardi, the Sant'Egidio headquarters—in contrast to Santa Maria di Trastevere—was packed with people. This impressed and animated the Pope to the extent that he decided to give a spontaneous speech during the prayer

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[90] Perhaps as a result, Andrea Riccardi has published extensively on Pope John Paul II.
[91] The community's first interaction with the Catholic Church was in 1964, when Cardinal Poletti, Vicar of the diocese of Rome, was preparing for a conference on the reception of Vatican II in Rome. Riccardi (1996) explains that the circumstances were tense, as Sant'Egidio was still a clandestine movement. It was at this congress, which was Sant'Egidio's introduction to the formal religious circles of Rome, that the community first took on the name Sant'Egidio, when they had to present themselves to the other NEMs and the ecclesial world. Up this point, they had referred to themselves as 'the community'.

in the Sant'Egidio chapel.[92] Just months later, the community was invited to visit the Pope at the Vatican to be formally recognized.

Another relationship that would turn out to be key for the emergent Sant'Egidio community was its friendship with the young worker–priest Vincenzo Paglia, whom they got to know in the Roman suburbs. Paglia would eventually become the priest of Santa Maria di Trastevere, and his cooperation would become essential to Sant'Egidio both in terms of establishing the community in the Trastevere neighborhood and for its future international orientation and expansion. Paglia opened up the Church of Santa Maria di Trastevere for the community as they grew bigger, and it is still here that Sant'Egidio organizes its daily evening prayer. It was also through Paglia's passionate international engagement and close contacts in Albania that Sant'Egidio undertook its very first international mission. After the death of Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha in 1985, his successors were working on a new constitution, building on democratic principles. Andrea Riccardi, through Vincenzo Paglia, was invited to advise on religious pluralism and co-existence.[93]

Monsignor Rossano, auxiliary bishop for culture in Rome and Rector of the Pontifical University (1982–1991), represent another important relationship to the nascent Sant'Egidio community. Monsignor Rossano, who had played an essential role in building the Holy See's portfolio on inter-religious dialog after Vatican II as one of the foremost experts of Nostra Aetate—would become instrumental in the Sant'Egidio community's education and efforts in inter-religious dialog. Rossano also constituted the community's initial point of contact with the world of Orthodox Christianity and introduced the community to a number of Orthodox religious leaders who would later become key partners to the Sant'Egidio community. The most important of these is arguably Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople.[94]

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[92] The speech, Riccardi (1996: 56) notes, "was not very good, but 'heartwarming', still".
[93] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013.
[94] Bartholomeos, a leading figure in inter-faith cooperation, is often referred to as the "Green Patriarch" due to his efforts to protect the environment. He is a "regular" at Sant'Egidio events, such as the IMPP.

Sant'Egidio's "real" breakthrough in terms of visibility and influence nevertheless appears to be linked with the election of Pope Francis in 2013. Indeed, the community's relations with the incumbent Pope—who shares many of the community's theological and political sympathies and orientations—appears to be much closer than those with John Paul II. This is evident from their interactions: in 2016 Pope Francis attended the IMPP in Assisi and even gave a speech during the final ceremony. Beyond that there has been a much tighter cooperation in diplomatic missions. Sant'Egidio has on several occasions assisted the Pope setting up his visit to conflict-ridden areas—such as the Central African Republic in 2016—and in setting up high-level meetings between the Pope and the Grand Imam of al-Azar, [95] Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb. [96] The increased cooperation has led central *Vaticanisti* to conclude that Sant'Egidio is becoming a central diplomatic player on the Pope's "chess board".[97]

Interestingly, the greater degree of cooperation between Pope Francis and Sant'Egidio also appears to have produced a distinct outcome: the inclusion of prominent Sant'Egidio members into the central ecclesial positions. As we have seen, Sant'Egidio has traditionally been a lay movement, and the few members who are in fact trained priests have intentionally avoided a career within the official Church structures.[98] Yet, in 2015 founding member Matteo Zuppi was appointed Archbishop of Bologna. Archbishops have a special position in the diplomatic body of the Holy See through the nuncial system, as the nuncios (ambassadors of the Holy See) are required to hold this rank. Is this an indicator of a broader process of integration, whereby Sant'Egidio is moving from an informal, if important, role in Holy See diplomacy to becoming a part of the formal structure itself?

Political relations

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[95] The al-Azar University is located in Cairo and is Egypt's oldest degree university. It is recognized as the most prestigious university of Islamic learning in the Sunni tradition.
[96] Interview with Mauro Garofolo, Rome, 2014.
[97] Sandro Magister, "Avec Bergoglio, c'est le triumph de l'esprit d'Assise", Chiesa, 18.9.16 (http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/135137575af.html?fr=y).
[98] Interview with Don Angelo Romano, Rome, 2015.

As for Sant'Egidio's relations with political actors and authorities, the community has traditionally identified with the center–left in terms of values but has chosen to take a non-partisan approach to Italian politics and to eschew direct participation. This distance vis-à-vis Italian party-politics has traditionally been viewed as an essential element to the community's claim to neutrality and independence in both international and domestic engagements. This line of policy was modified in 2011 when Andrea Riccardi entered the Monti government as Minister for International Cooperation without portfolio. The transition from religious brotherhood to government actor appears to represent a watershed or defining moment in the community's history and identity, and triggered a heated debate both within the community and among the general Italian public.[99] For some reason, however, this transition from non-state religious actor to state actor has largely escaped the interest of academic and scholars working on the Sant'Egidio community. To my knowledge there has to date been no work on the community analyzing this apparently significant rupture in the community's contemporary history and its impact on internal community dynamics. It is also interesting from a state–church perspective, given that the Sant'Egidio also forms part of the Vatican state. This effectively make it a state actor in a dual sense—since it represents both the Italian nation-state and the Vatican state—in addition to its religious community identity.

Riccardi's parliamentary career was closely linked to Monti and came to a temporary end with the general elections in 2013. Riccardi served as president of Monti's Civic Choice party in the run up to the 2013 election but stepped down with the formation of the Letta coalition government, though Civic Choice eventually formed part of the government together with Letta's center–left Democratic party and the center–right People of Freedom party. Riccardi's

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[99] Interview with Emmanuela del Ré, Rome, 2013. Interestingly, at the time of this interview, she was working as tenured researcher at the University of Unicusano in Rome, lecturing in 'Political Sociology' and the 'Sociology of Political Phenomena of the Middle East". However, since the formation of the Italian 'government of change" in June 2018—headed by the Five Star Movement and Lega Nord—Emmanuela del Ré effectively serves as Italy's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (representing the Five Star Movement), meaning that she has taken over Mario Giro's old position in the Italian MFA, also known as the Farnesina.

resignation, however, did not mean that Sant'Egidio gave up its new line of participation. In 2013 Mario Giro and Mario Marazziti (both high-level founding Sant'Egidio members) entered Italian formal politics as Vice-President of International Relations and Cooperation Foreign Affairs and President of the XII Social Affairs Commission of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, respectively. Giro's five-year mandate expired in May 2018, while at the time of writing (July 2018) Marazziti continues in office.

Whereas Riccardi's political affiliation was mostly connected to the personal figure of Monti, Giro and Marazziti represent the political party Democrazia Solidale (DS), which they effectively co-founded as a split from Monti and Riccardi's Civic Choice. DS considers itself as the continuation of the Christian Democratic party and the Italian Christian Left, and is currently headed by Lorenzo Dellai, a former president of the autonomous Italian province of Trentino.[100]

As government actors, Sant'Egidio has made its impact felt particularly within the MFA, with Giro serving as Deputy Minister. As such, we can trace an interesting development pattern since the 1990s, where the community has gone from being a source of nuisance for the Italian MFA (in particular after the Algerian mediation initiative[101]) to joining—and indeed, leading—it. And not only joining but transforming it: Through its insider–outsider role as religious community and dual state actor, Sant'Egidio appears to function as an important agent/driver for change of traditional Italian state diplomacy. This is expressed in the community's efforts to expand the consciousness and "humanity" of Italian state diplomacy, for instance through the community's push for better policies toward immigrants and refugees. The renowned Humanitarian Corridors project (effectively the fruit of the uncommon cooperation between the Italian government, Sant'Egidio, the

[100] DS maintains solid relations with the democratic Party and a number of minor parties and groups of the Christian Left, notably the Democratic Center (with which DS forms a joint parliamentary group in the Chamber of Deputies named "For Italy"), the Christian Popular Union (active mainly in Sardinia) and, in Trentino, the Union for Trentino.

[101] Interview (Rome, 2015) with a retired Italian diplomat who had been stationed in Algeria in the 1990s.

Waldesian Church and the Italian association of evangelical churches) stand out as a particularly successful initiative in this regard.

But the community is also taking initiative to start a broader debate of the role and meaning of traditional state diplomacy in the contemporary world, which is an interesting contribution coming from a state actor. In his article "Che diplomazia e quali diplomatici per un mondo liquido" ["What kind of diplomacy and what kind of diplomats for a fluid world," my translation],[102] Giro goes a long way to argue that Italian state diplomacy is not keeping up with global developments and that there is a need for substantially rethinking and reforming the Westphalian diplomatic model altogether.

Membership, expansion and modus operandi of the community

In order to understand Sant'Egidio as a political, religious and sociological phenomenon, it is important to consider the specific institutional and operational set-up of the organization—which is in fact highly centralized and Rome-oriented, somewhat contrasting the community's global outlook and membership base. In addition, the community's official number of 80,000 members globally masks some important dynamics of differentiation between the "friends" and "members" of the community. Although the community may well have some 80,000 "friends" globally, the "members" remain a small and exclusive group of Rome-based persons, most of them first-generation founding members. This is to say that Sant'Egidio should not be understood as a large, modern NGO, but rather as a small core community, albeit with a very large "support" apparatus and powerful international "friends".

As mentioned, the core consists of a small group of (mostly lay) people,[103] many holding academic or political posts, and a few clerics. It is this core group that form the "mother community"—*comunità madre*, in Italian. The family analog is quite precise, given that the mode of interaction internally in the community is more similar to that of a (traditional Italian) family than a professional

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[102] Giro (2014).
[103] I have not been able to find out how many.

organization. The hierarchical structure (and delegation of work and responsibilities) is neat and clear, and decision-making processes are mostly pursued in an organic, intuitive way—with what that may involve in terms of democratic deficits.

Every fourth year, an electoral assembly—composed of around 40 representatives, "the most esteemed persons of the Community" (Riccardi 1996: 40)—elects a Community Council, which in turn is responsible for electing a president. Marco Impagliazzo, who is also a founding member, currently serves as president. The Community Council is the responsible body of communication and information, both internal and external, and is presided by a general chaplain of the community, elected by the Pontifical Council of the Laity. The Pontifical Council is the way the Holy See supervises the NEMs. A key responsibility of the Community Council is to coordinate the specific sectors that compose the social services offered by the community. All the different services have a coordination unit, headed by a responsible leader. The section leaders are generally chosen by the coordination unit (though the president or the Community Council needs to agree) but in general, these election processes are more the result of an "osmosis' between the impulses from the grassroots and the coordination unit (ibid: 41). Community membership is handled in the same informal way: "Membership is the fruit of the encounter of two wills: you wish for it, and we wish for it" (ibid: 41). Those who are inclined to join simply approach the community, whereupon the community accepts or rejects the proposition.

The centrality of the *comunità madre* in Rome is also expressed in the community's "organic" mode of expansion. Reportedly, community expansion has traditionally taken place through some sort of pilgrimage to the Rome headquarters, which in turn has inspired local actors to set up their own "franchise" in their respective contexts. It is therefore not the "center" that sends out its ambassadors (or worse, missionaries), but rather the other way around: interested audiences come to Rome where they do an "internship". If this works out well, the "interns" may want to reproduce the activities in their home

contexts.[104] Once established, the community visits the new structures and either endorse them (which means they are taken under the Sant'Egidio "umbrella") or reject them.

Interestingly, the community supposedly never considered extending beyond Rome until the mid-'70s. Riccardi (1996: 43) explains that the community:

> had no interest in the classic system of setting up new communities; to send people all over, to become a large religious congregation. Moreover, it was impossible as the members are lay with their lives and jobs in Rome.

Rather, the community spread in an "organic" manner across Italy, Europe and then the globe through personal relations and friendships. The first non-Rome group emerged organically, in Naples in 1975, after the community's intervention to the 1975 cholera epidemic.[105] The first international community emerged in San Salvador in the early 1980s and was founded by an Italian priest who had worked as assistant for the late Archbishop of San Salvador Monsignor Romero, who was assassinated in 1980. Latin America would become a very important "terra" for the Sant'Egidio community, whose theological orientation corresponded well with the Latin American traditions of liberation theology. Sant'Egidio has served as mediator in several Latin American conflicts.[106]

Since the early 1990s and the successful Mozambique mediation efforts it appears that the African continent has gradually emerged as the main area of

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[104] Riccardi explains: "It's a bit like an attraction. You come to Rome, you participate in the prayers, you meet the community members. Some, especially if they are remaining for some time in Rome, for studies for example, receive the imprints of our spirituality. Some say that they want to start something similar, and we say: Ok, do what you can. Later, they will write us to tell that they've put together a group of five persons, working with handicapped children, etc. We send someone to see it and remain in contact. At a certain moment, the situation may be that the group is identified with Sant'Egidio; this scheme has reproduced itself various times" (Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2014).

[105] Other early Italian communities include Florence, Livorno, Genova, Torino, Milano, Parma, Trieste, Padua, Naples, Bari, and Catania. The earliest non-Italian communities include Anvers, Wurzburg, Monchengladbach, Barcelona, Madrid, Lisbon, Budapest, Prague, Kiev and Moscow.

[106] Important Latin American communities include those in San Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Bolivia, Cuba and Argentina.

investment for the Sant'Egidio community, something which is reflected in the scope of their Africa programs on topics concerning health, education and peace,[107] as well as in the agenda of the yearly Sant'Egidio convention of the IMPP. Africa is seen as the most challenging but also most potentially rewarding continent of the globe in terms of development; it is also fertile ground for religious or faith-based initiatives of various kinds through its large pool of faith-based Christian partners and interlocutors. In the case of Africa, interestingly, recruitment and community expansion has often happened through Algiers, a city which traditionally receives many students from Sub-Saharan Africa. From Algiers, many of these students depart to Rome on pilgrimage. Once in Rome, they would be acquainted with Sant'Egidio upon their visit to the Basilica of St. John Lateran—one of the seven pilgrim churches of the city—which is also a Sant'Egidio stronghold. According to Riccardi, relations would be nurtured between the community and sub-Saharan students, who would set up local communities upon their return to their respective home countries (Riccardi 1996).[108]

Sant'Egidio versus Focolare

Some distinct features that mark Sant'Egidio as a NEM are arguably thrown into sharp relief by a comparison with its most similar counterpart: Focolare. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, Focolare and Sant'Egidio share a number of features in the analytical scheme for the assessment of NEMs provided by Faggioli. Both are located on the center–left in terms of political orientation; both are among the most Vatican II-friendly movements in terms of openness to the world and toward theological and ecclesial renewal; and both have chosen ecumenism and inter-religious dialog as key areas of engagement. Among the most globalized diplomatic actors associated with the Holy See, Sant'Egidio and Focolare both claim to have large local communities around the globe: 80,000 and 120,000 members worldwide, respectively. Interestingly, Focolare and Sant'Egidio

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[107] e.g., DREAM and Scuola della Pace.
[108] Key communities are to be found in Cameroun, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Mozambique.

communities are often located in the same countries, which means that they on several occasions have been involved in mediation and peace-building processes in the same conflicts. The most prominent examples include Algeria in the 1990s, and the ongoing Mindanao conflict, in the Philippines.[109] How, then, do the two communities differ in terms of "identity", modus operandi, impact and status?

Same function, different styles? Sant'Egidio and Focolare as diplomatic actors of the Holy See

Sant'Egidio and Focolare traditionally occupy the same position and "function" within the larger body of (formal and informal) Holy See diplomacy.[110] The diplomatic structures of the Holy See are composed of a variety of specialized religious actors with different fields of expertise and "portfolios". In general terms, the structure can be understood as a three-level formation, composed of an *upper level* of formal Holy See diplomatic bureaucracy (i.e., the Section for the Relations with states, currently headed by Pietro Parolin); an *intermediate level* composed of specialized diplomatic actors, most often NEMs like Sant'Egidio and Focolare; and a *grassroots level* composed of missionary orders, congregations and Catholic social services. The impressive reach and scope of Holy See diplomacy is to a large extent the result of this structure and its highly effective internal division of labor.[111]

Within this framework, the key task of intermediate actors such as Focolare and Sant'Egidio is to "process" and "operationalize" the enormous amount of information and knowledge accumulated by grassroots players, and to develop analytical frameworks and policy inputs that can inform and benefit the policy-making of the formal center. As an example, whereas many grassroots

[109] This is a conflict between the MILF insurgency on Mindanao and the Philippine state.
[110] Interview with a high-level Focolare member, Loppiano, June 2014.
[111] The grassroots players have a dual role of policy implementation on behalf of the Church apparatus, but they also provide the formal center (the upper level) with unmatched local knowledge of different territories, populations, and key stakeholders. The *mid-level players* are non-state actors whose "niche" is to "process" and "operationalize" the enormous amount of information and knowledge accumulated by grassroots players. Finally, the *upper level* (the formal center) is responsible for the articulation and implementation of formal Holy See foreign policies and diplomatic missions.

players possess unmatched linguistic, social and political knowledge about different regions in Africa (for instance the Pères Blancs and the various Franciscan and Dominican orders), they may not possess the necessary analytical frameworks or tools to "apply" this knowledge or to successfully engage in international practices such as inter-religious dialog, mediation, etc. Against this background, the role of Focolare and Sant'Egidio is to fill this gap by building (practical and theoretical) expertise on specific diplomatic issues.[112]

Both Focolare and Sant'Egidio have chosen the diplomatic mission of inter-religious dialog and mediation initiatives; that is, the building of constructive relationships with the Catholic Church's various "Others". Yet, if their overall function is the same, Focolare and Sant'Egidio appear to have pursued this task in different ways. Key differences—according to Focolare—are to be found in the communities' chosen degree of *visibility* and preferred *level of engagement*. Focolare explains that, in terms of visibility, the Sant'Egidio community generally operates in a very open manner, whereas Focolare, presumably, tends to operate much more discretely. According to my interviewee, Focolare members seldom display publicly their affiliation to the movement: "Even if many high-level Italian politicians are Focolare, you wouldn't know because they don't flag it".[113] This "discreteness" of Focolare is in part the result of the community's focus on unity and its prudence vis-à-vis the risk of triggering (or displaying) internal divisions within the Church. But it is also the consequence of the community's strongly Maria-inspired approach to life and politics, in which modesty reportedly represents a key value.[114]

According to Focolare members, Focolare's virtues of modesty and discreteness most often translates at the level of visibility and engagement, into low-profile, diplomatic initiatives pursued individually and targeting the grassroots or community, rather than political, level. This apparently stands in contrast to the more opportunist, political strategies of Sant'Egidio to engage at

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[112] For a detailed analysis of how Holy See diplomacy is organized, see the policy paper by Salloum and Holmsen (2017).
[113] Interview with a high-level Focolare member, Loppiano, June 2014
[114] Indeed, the yearly "flagship" event of the Focolare community is called "Mariapolis" ["City of Maria"].

the highest level possible. This account of Sant'Egidio and Focolare's different modes of engagement appear to fit well with the two communities" respective mediation initiatives in Algeria in the 1990s, in which Sant'Egidio (as we will examine in more detail in Chapter 4) pursued high-level political negotiations, whereas Focolare pursued "under the radar" conflict mediation and local inter-religious dialog initiatives for a number of years.[115] Focolare maintains that these different "postures" toward conflict mediation and the nature of dialog has resulted in Focolare generally enjoying a better reputation among any local communities, because they tend to stay longer and be less concerned with political prestige than Sant'Egidio.

Summary

In this chapter I have conducted a "baseline" ethnographic analysis of Sant'Egidio, seeking to situate the community within its historical, sociological, political, theological and ecclesial environments. The chapter forms the foundation the more focused analysis of the community's anchoring, integrative and international practices coming up in the following chapters.

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[115] Focolare's experiences with mediation in Algeria are detailed in Cogghiaro Matilde's book *Nel deserto Fiorisce La Fraternità, Ulisse Caglioni fra i Musulman (Fraternity florishes in the desert: Ulisse Caglioni among the Muslims,* my translation*).*

Chapter 3
Anchoring practice: Becoming a mediator

In this chapter I detail an ethnographic study of the International Meeting of the Prayer for Peace (IMPP), based upon my attendance at the annual events in 2015 in Tirana, Albania and in 2016 in Assisi, Italy. I begin by outlining how the events unfolded, then move to discuss in more detail possible interpretations of the overall "meaning" of this annual meeting—conceptualized as an anchoring practice—and what it tells us about the "core identity" of Sant'Egidio as a Catholic community and international actor.

The International Meeting of the Prayer for Peace

Most of the new ecclesial movements (NEMs) have a yearly "flagship" event, in which members, friends and other interested audiences are brought together. Communion and Liberation has its "Meeting for Friendship Among People", Focolare its "Mariapolis" and Sant'Egidio its IMPP. These meetings serve important internal and external functions as they are designed both to mobilize and motivate the movement members and to serve as a public demonstration of the movements' reach, direction and influence.

The IMPP plays a central role in the Sant'Egidio community's auto-narrative and takes on an almost mythical dimension in the community's own historiographic production.[116] The meeting is described as a decisive experience and a "moment of truth", through which the community eventually succeeded in discovering its "true path". The IMPP is therefore cast as a "seed" that has eventually grown into a worldwide network of friends, a formative experience for

[116] See, for instance, the booklet on the "L'Esprit d'Assise" by the French historian and "friend" of the community, Jean-Dominique Durand.

the community in terms of encountering other people and learning the "art" of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialog (Durand 2008).

The meetings have been organized since 1987, as a direct continuation of John Paul II's meeting on inter-religious dialog in Assisi in 1986, which was transformative. The official line of the Sant'Egidio community is that John Paul II, during this meeting, specifically called upon the Sant'Egidio community to follow his call for increased Church engagement in the domain of inter-religious dialog. The community "accepted the invitation" and arranged the first yearly meeting of the IMPP in 1987 in Rome.[117]

The first meeting was arranged in Rome, but the IMPP rapidly became a highly international event in both scope and attendance. the 1989 meeting in Warsaw was the first organized outside Italy. Since then it has been hosted in cities across Italy, Europe, the United States and the Middle East, including Valetta, Brussels, Jerusalem, Bucharest, Tirana, Lisbon and Washington D.C., to mention just a few.[118]

The overall purpose of the meeting is to "spread the message of peace and living the Spirit of Assisi".[119] The meetings are conceptualized as a "pilgrimage of peace", assembling religious leaders and followers from different faiths, to meet and discuss religious, political and cultural issues. The meetings are typically organized around a specific topic related to the history of the host city. The 1989 meeting in Warsaw (on the 50th anniversary of the beginning of WWII) was

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[117] It should be noted that it remains somewhat controversial whether Sant'Egidio was really called upon directly by John Paul II, or whether this was somewhat "wishful thinking", whereby too much weight is placed on what may in fact have been a general appeal to all the religious actors present at the meeting. Indeed, the community's intervention and appropriation of this domain was certainly not unanimously embraced by the ecclesial structures, at least not in the early years. Few ecclesial authorities agreed to participate in the IMPP meetings, and John Paul II himself never attended. The first Pope who attended the IMPP was Benedict in 2005 (which was surprising considering that Benedict in general was seen as far more critical than John Paul II toward the new ecclesial movements). Pope Francis' attendance at the IMPP in Assisi 2016 nevertheless, appears to indicate a substantial change in status of the Sant'Egidio community, now increasingly recognized as the spearhead of Holy See efforts in inter-religious dialog and mediation.

[118] The full list of host cities historically is available at: santegidio.org.

[119] Interview with Marco Impagliazzo, Tirana, September 2015.

entitled “War: Never Again”; the 1991 meeting in Valetta, Malta was on “Immigration: Religions for a Sea of Peace”; the 1990 Bari meeting took the theme “From East to West: a Sea of Peace”; and the 1987 Rome meeting focused on “Prayer as a Source of Peace”.

The meeting titles and participant lists represent a useful way to trace the evolution of the scope and agenda of the meetings over the years and allows us to identify two key trends. First, the IMPP has gradually transitioned from being an intra-religious to an inter-religious dialog event. Secondly, it has moved from focusing on inter-religious dialog to a dialog between “cultures and religion”.

Indeed, throughout the 1980s only representatives of Christian churches attended the meeting. The 1990 Milan meeting—“Earth of People; Invocations of God”—was the first meeting attended by Muslim religious leaders, a trend that has continued and expanded.[120] In contemporary IMPP meetings, all of the large world faiths are represented.

We can also trace a change in the scope and direction of the IMPP (reflecting the broader Sant’Egidio global engagement) away from inter-religious dialog and religious topics toward one between *religion and culture.* Starting in 1997 with the Padova meeting—“Conflict or Encounter: Religions and Cultures at a Crossroad”—the topic of a dialog between religions and cultures has increasingly replaced the former focus on inter-religious relations, especially since the early 2000s. [121]

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[120] Key Muslim partners nowadays include Ahmad al-Tayyeb (Grand Imam of al-Azar) and Din Syamsuddin, President of the world’s second largest Muslim community, the Indonesian community Muhammadiyah.

[121] This is evident when we review some meeting titles: Conflict or Encounter: Religions and Cultures at a Crossroad (Padova 1997); Oceans of Peace: Religions and Cultures in Dialog (Lisbon 2000); On the Frontiers of Dialog: Religions and Civilizations in the New Century (Barcelona 2001); Faiths and Cultures: within Conflict and Dialog (Palermo 2002); War and Peace: Faiths and Cultures in Dialog (Aachen 2003); Religions and Cultures: the courage to forge a new spiritual humanism (Milan 2004); Religions and Cultures: the courage to forge a spiritual humanism of Peace (Lyon 2005); For a World of Peace: Religions and Cultures in Dialog (Assisi 2006); A World without Violence: Faiths and Cultures in Dialog (Naples 2007); The Civilization of Peace: Faiths and Cultures in Dialog (Cyprus 2008); 70 years after World War II Faiths and Cultures in Dialog (Krakow 2009); Bound to Live Together: Religions and Cultures in Dialog (Munich 2011); The

The IMPP has a fixed scenography which is repeated every year:

1. Eucharistic celebration
2. Welcome ceremony
3. Panels
4. Prayer for peace (among the specific faith communities)
5. Final ceremony (in which a signed Appeal for Peace is delivered to the younger generations)

Tirana 2015: La pace è sempre possibile[122], #peaceispossible

The 2015 IMPP was organized in Tirana, Albania, on September 5–8. Albania represents a location of great symbolic meaning for Sant'Egidio for several reasons. As we have seen, Albania was the first country in which Sant'Egidio became involved outside Italy, with Andrea Riccardi assisting in the authoring of the new constitution in the mid-'80s, advising specifically on religious pluralism and co-existence. The problems and challenges that the country was facing during these years, concerning religious repression, is an issue that remains very close to the heart of the community. The Albanian dictatorship under Enver Hoxha was characterized by a particular brutal form of religious repression: As the world's first explicitly "atheist state" (1966), religion and all forms of religious practices were effectively banned, and religious leaders were persecuted and, in many cases, assassinated.

Albania also has close links to Italy and the Sant'Egidio community in particular, as a result of the large immigration waves of the early 1990s, in which many young Albanians fled the country by boat. Most were heading toward Italy and entered through the Italian port city of Bari. The Sant'Egidio community in Bari played an important role in the accommodation of Albanian immigrants and in defending their case vis-à-vis the Italian authorities. This experience lay the foundation for strong links between Albania and the Sant'Egidio community: there

Courage to Hope: Religions and Cultures in Dialog (Rome 2013); Thirst for Peace: Religions and Cultures in Dialog (Assisi 2016).

[122] In English: "peace is always possible".

are many native Albanians volunteering in the Italian-based communities, and the Sant'Egidio community in Albania is one of the largest communities abroad. Together, these motives formed the backdrop of the 2015 meeting of the Prayer for Peace.

The 2015 meeting was co-hosted by the Albanian Orthodox Autocephalous and the Episcopal Conference Church of Albania. The full title of the meeting—"Peace is Always Possible: Religions and Cultures in Dialog"—communicates that the emphasis is on religion–culture relations (rather than inter-religious relations), in line with the trend over the last decade.[123]

The main conference venue was the Hotel International Tirana: this is where the most important guests stayed and where the closed dinners were arranged. The hotel lobby and the bar functioned as an important place for mingling and networking—activities that are at least equally important as the actual panels and other organized meetings featuring in the conference program.[124] Indeed, a key objective of the event is to convene the "human beings" behind the politics and encourage them to develop personal relations and understandings.[125] Such personalized relations are viewed as immensely important regardless of whether the actors are fighting the same cause and can benefit from forming cooperation (for instance in the formation of alliances between faith-based and political movements or leaders for a common cause—such as, for example, engagement in environmental issues) or whether such actors are finding themselves on the opposite sides in ongoing conflicts and the meeting merely served to "provide a human face to the enemy".[126] A key purpose of the meeting is therefore to facilitate for different types of cooperation and alliances (inter-religious or secular–religious) and allow for the meeting of personalities that do not normally have many opportunities to meet and discuss openly as a result of local conflict dynamics. This ambition is clearly illustrated in the

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[123] See conference material in Appendix E.
[124] For the full conference program and list of participants, see: https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30256/langID/en/itemID/604/Programme-Tirana-2015--Peace-is-always-possible-ENGLISH.html.
[125] Interview with Mauro Garofolo, Assisi, 2016.
[126] Ibid.

organization of the panels, in which lunch breaks would occasionally be scheduled for up to four hours. The long lunch recesses—together with the evening dinners—would be used for different forms of informal diplomatic activities ranging from social introductions to non-binding negotiations and mediation session. The meeting thus has a dual purpose and structure, consisting of both "open" (public) discussions and panels and "closed" (targeted) networking and diplomatic activities. Being aware of this dual purpose provides a framework to better understand the somewhat generic or seemingly "toothless" framing of the political and religious topics that would form the content of the conference (e.g., "Prayer as a source of peace in Iraq"). Effectively, many of the invited participants find themselves in delicate positions in their domestic context; they may not be allowed to travel in order to engage in political debates or dialog of any sort and could be easily accused of treason if they are perceived to be interacting with the "enemy".

The ambition to couple "religion" and "culture" (and "religion" and "politics") was also expressed in the selection of conference venues—which serves to illustrate the elaborated "event design" of the meeting. The panels were organized throughout the city of Tirana at important symbolic venues of *c*ulture and politics (such as the National History Museum, the National Gallery of Art, the Polytechnic University of Tirana, different libraries, and the People's Congress) and at important locations of religion—principally the new Orthodox Cathedral of Tirana. Yet, it appears that the criteria for representing religion were quite narrow, at least if we consider the meeting's set-up as a celebration of religious pluralism and co-existence in Albania. There was no Muslim co-host of the event and no use of Muslim places of worship (except for the separate prayers, where the members of each faith community gather by themselves). This is partly a question of logistics—there are currently three cathedrals but no central mosque in Tirana. However, this points directly to a sensitive point in Albania's situation, which was not explicitly commented on during the Tirana IMPP in 2015—namely, the grievances of the Muslim communities in Albania on the basis of religious discrimination and lack of religious facilities. Albanian Muslims make up around 60% of the population, yet they have very few places of worship. While Albania has 114 churches, there are only eight mosques throughout the entire country.

The Et'hem Bey Mosque in Tirana has a capacity of only 60 people, which means that Albanian Muslims must often pray on the street. In an effort to correct this, in 2010 Prime Minister Edi Rama announced the building of a new central mosque—the Great Mosque of Tirana, or the Namazgâh Mosque. The mosque is financed by the mostly state-run Turkish–Muslim organization, Diyanet, and the 2015 inauguration ceremony of the construction work was attended by Turkey's President Erdoğan.

The Sant'Egidio community's choice to avoid any discussion on Albanian Muslim communities in its celebration of the country as a success story in religious pluralism and inter-faith relations prompts some important questions. Does it mean that Sant'Egidio is merely behaving pragmatically, in the sense of operating within the available room and dominant norms in Albania (and notably, within its co-host, the Albanian Orthodox Church) on these matters? Or does it say something more profound about the community's endorsement of inter-faith interaction, but only as long as it is pursued on Christian premises and terrain (home turf)?

Program

The scenography of the 2015 meeting was in accordance with the fixed agenda of the IMPP. The meeting was inaugurated Sunday morning by a eucharistic celebration, followed up by an opening ceremony Sunday evening. Monday and Tuesday were filled up with panels and roundtable discussions. On Wednesday the meeting concluded with a "Prayer for Peace" and then a final ceremony. In 2015, the eucharistic celebration focused on orthodox liturgy and was conducted by Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana—who is, as such, also the primate and Head of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania—in the Orthodox Cathedral in Tirana (see Figure 1).

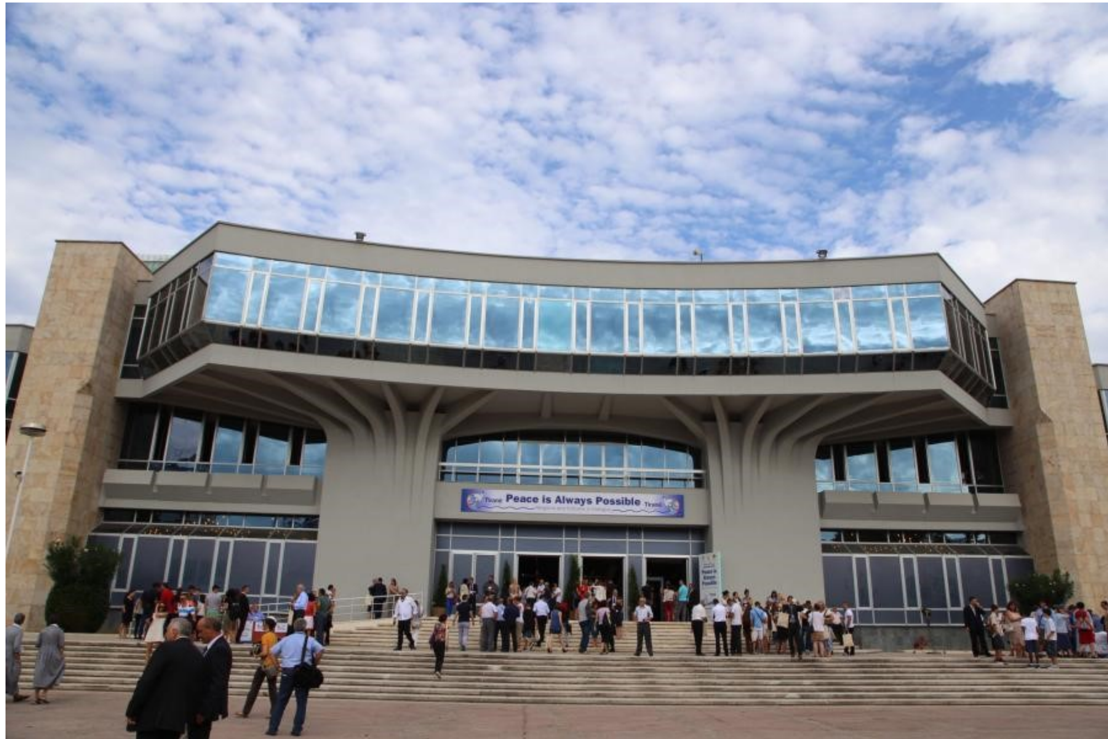
Figure 1. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, leading the eucharistic celebration in the Orthodox Cathedral of Tirana (2015)

Source: Image supplied by the Sant'Egidio community.

Anastasios is a close friend and ally of the Sant'Egidio community. Through his position as a key figure in the world of inter-faith relations and dialog, he has played a central role in Sant'Egidio's cooperation and relations with the Orthodox Churches. He currently serves as President of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and Honorary President of the World Conference of Religions for Peace.

The eucharistic celebration was followed by an opening ceremony, arranged in the People's Congress in Tirana. This venue is the historical headquarters of the atheist regime of Albania under Enver Hoxha. As such, it represents a highly symbolic venue for the inauguration of a meeting on inter-religious and secular–religious relations. The choice of location can be seen as an attempt to stage or imitate a take-over, or appropriation, of the central infrastructure of the atheist dictatorship, in an effort to rewrite or rehabilitate history.

Figure 2. The People’s Congress in Tirana—The historical headquarters of the Enver Hoxha regime



Source: Image supplied by the Sant’Egidio community

The opening ceremony was chaired by Hilde Kieboom, Vice-President of the Sant’Egidio community (see Figure 3). Kieboom represents a rare figure within the central circles of the Sant’Egidio community, both as a woman and as a non-Italian. She is the founder of the first non-Italian Sant’Egidio chapter, in Antwerp, in 1985, and currently serves as president of the Sant’Egidio communities in the Benelux countries. The welcome ceremony featured a long list of interventions and contributions by high-level religious and political leaders. Filip Vujanovic (President of the Republic of Montenegro) and Blendi Klosi (Minister of Welfare and Youth, Albania) gave the inaugural greetings, and Edi Rama (Prime Minister of Albania) and Andrea Riccardi (Sant’Egidio) the opening speeches. Andrea Orlando (Minister of Justice, Italy) and Louis Raphaël I Sako (Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Babylon, Iraq) followed up with speeches, before Anastasios (Archbishop of Tirana and Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania), David Rosen (Former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, American Jewish Committee, AJC, Israel), Muhy al-Din Afifi (Secretary-General of the Al-Azhar Al-

Sharif Islamic Research Academy), and Sudheendra Kulkarni (President of the Hindu Research Foundation of Mumbai, India) presented their contributions.[127] The opening ceremony also featured the reading of a personal message from Pope Francis (who would attend the 2016 meeting in Assisi). The welcome session set the background of the three topics that would dominate the 2016 meeting: terrorism and violence in the Middle East; the refugee crisis; and environmental issues.

Figure 3. The opening ceremony (Andrea Riccardi on the screen)

Source: Image supplied by the Sant'Egidio community.

As we can see from the above picture, the visual communication—the "aesthetics" of the meeting—is neat and professional, with the organizational set-up of high-level international political conferences. The meetings were arranged in large conference rooms which could accommodate several hundred people, with reserved seating for the most important audiences (cardinals, religious leaders,

[127] All the speeches given at the conference are transcribed and available online at santegidio.org. For the full text of the speeches from the opening ceremony see http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/7712/langID/en/event/512/Opening-Assembly.html.

politicians) in the front; it offered simultaneous translations services, large screens, and streaming services for those who were not able to enter and had to follow the session from the reception hall or from outside the building. The events were well-covered in social media (primarily on Facebook and Twitter) and the there was a large selection of conference "artifacts" available—pens, posters, pins, programs—featuring the logo of the conference (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Conference logo

Source: Image supplied by the Sant'Egidio community.

The conference logo depicts a dove, against this background of a globe in the colors of the rainbow, and the sea. The dove is a symbol of peace, and the rainbow—in addition to its obvious reference to the rainbow as symbols for the links between God and the descendants of Noah—symbolizes a "symphony of colors, experiences, voices, expressions, and religions: together but not mixed".[128] As such, the rainbow is meant to symbolize an ideal of inter-religious dialog and relations, on the basis of pluralism and peaceful co-existence, but not syncretism.

[128] Sant.egidio.org.

The sea—"a sea that divides and a sea that unites"—can also be seen as a symbol of religions and their uniting and alienating potential.

The panels and roundtable discussions started the morning after, with 27 panels being organized over the course of two days.[129] Four general topics dominated the public debates in 2015: religious repression and lack of religious freedom (symbolized by the history of Albania); religious radicalization and terrorism, with a focus on the Islamic State; the refugee crisis; and environmental issues.

The issue of religious freedom and religious repression was largely addressed within the larger topic of Christian persecution in the Middle East, under the umbrella of the label "Christian Unity"—which further served to underscore the specifically (predominantly) Christian orientation and outlook of the conference. The opening panel—which effectively set the tone—was entitled "The Role of Christian Unity in a Divided World" and took place in the Orthodox Cathedral. The panel was chaired by Norwegian Lutheran Bishop Ole Christian Kvarme[130]—and was composed of high-level Christian leaders, including Enthons (Archbishop, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church); Tamas Fabiny (Vice-President of the Lutheran World Federation); Ignatiy (Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop, Moscow Patriarchate); Seraphim Kykkotis (Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop, Patriarchate of Alexandria); Anders Wejryd (Co-President of the World Council of Churches); and Matteo Zuppi (Archbishop of Bologna and founding member of the Sant'Egidio community). The focus of this session was on Christian

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[129] The complete list of panels is as follows: Peace is Always Possible; Christians and Muslims and the Challenges of a Global World; Peace is Possible in Iraq; The Martyrs Show that Christianity is Changing; A New Alliance Between Humankind and the Environment; 70 Years since Hiroshima: The Past and the Future; Globalizing Human Solidarity; Envisioning Peace. Religion and Politics Discuss Their Role; The Spirit of Assisi from the Cold War to the Global World; Stories of the Mediterranean: A Sea that Both Divides and Unites; Gratuitousness and the Global Market; Religions and Violence; Prayer as a Source of Peace; Scenarios of War: Peace is Put to the Test; Albania, Land of Living Together; Europe at a Crossroads; Seyfo: A Forgotten Massacre; The Poor of Our Times and Religions; Migrants: A Global Challenge; Understanding the World Starting from the Peripheries; Is Dialog Still Necessary?; Is Living Together Possible Today?; Peace is Possible in Libya.

[130] The bishop is a controversial figure in Norway due to his conservative stance on gay rights.

martyrs and the condemnation of all extremism and violence in the name of religions.

On quite a different note, Panel 10—"Envisioning Peace: Religion and Politics Discuss Their Role"—tried to stage an open deliberation between "religion" and "politics", mediated by *Corriere della Sera* journalist Antonio Ferrari. "Politics" was represented by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paolo Gentiloni, and "religion" was represented Ignatius Aphrem II (Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East), John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan (Cardinal and Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria) and Abraham Skorka (Rector of the rabbinical seminary "Marshall T. Mayer" in Argentina).

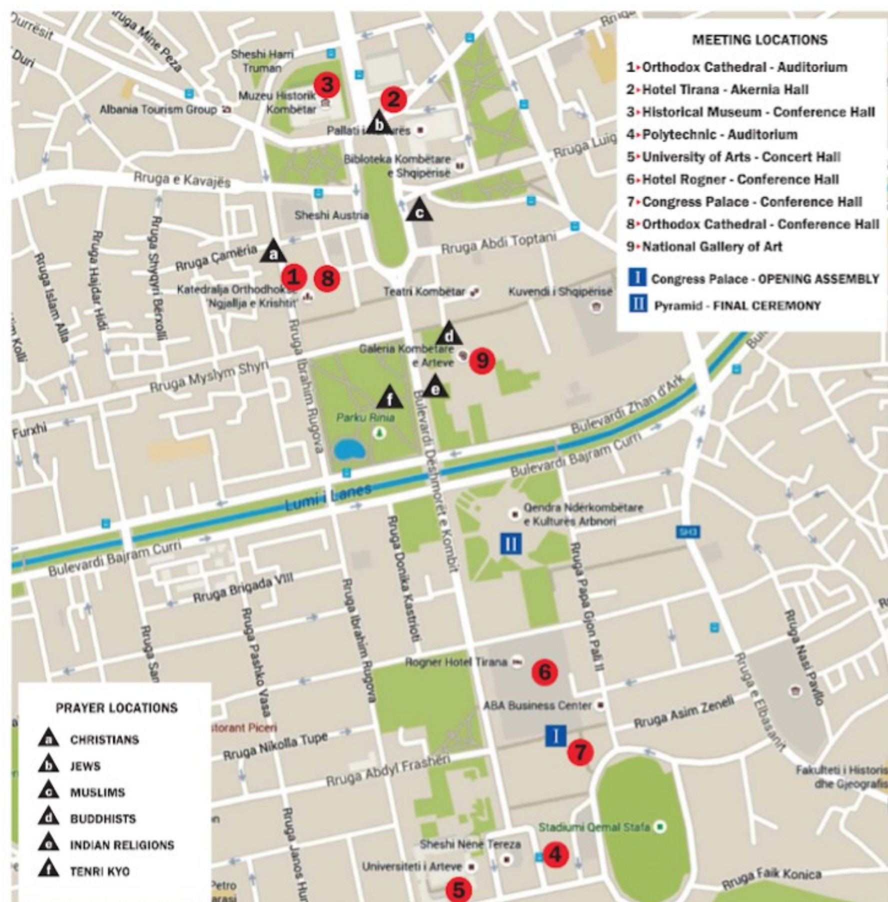
Figure 5. Panel 10: Envisioning Peace—Religion and Politics Discuss Their Role

Source: Image supplied by the Sant'Egidio community

In line with the overall emphasis on peace there were a number of panels discussing religion's contributions to peace, either in an abstract way—as in the panel on "Prayer as a Source of Peace"—or in a concrete way, looking at the specific achievements of religious actors (read Sant'Egidio) in international conflict resolution. The main "case study" or example of religious peacemaking at the 2015 meeting was the joint efforts of the Sant'Egidio community and the Muslim Indonesian community of Muhammadiyah to mediate in the conflict between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine government in the conflict on the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines. This mediation panel—entitled "Peace is Always Possible"—was chaired by Mario Giro (founding member of Sant'Egidio, and Vice-President of International Relations

and Cooperation of the Italian MFA, 2013–2018) and was composed of what seems to be the IMPP's honorary guest of the year, Miriam Coronel Ferrer, Chairperson of the Government of the Philippines Panel and the Peace Talks on Mindanao; [131] Mauro Garofolo (head of the international office, Sant'Egidio); Aboud Sayeed Lingga (Senior Member of the MILF) and Din Syamsuddin (Chairman of Muhammadiyah and the "Indonesian Ulema Council Center").

Figure 6. Map of prayer locations, Tirana 2015



Source: Map supplied by the Sant'Egidio community

After two full days of panel activities, the IMPP proceeded with the "Prayers for Peace", in which the different faith communities were invited to pray in their respective places of worship. As we can see from the map, the faith communities

[131] Coronel Ferrer also had a central role during the final ceremony, in which she read out the "Appeal for Peace".

provided for were Christians, Jews, Muslim, Buddhists, Indian religions and Tenri Kyo (a new Japanese religion). The Christians would pray in the Orthodox Cathedral, the Muslims in the Et'hem Bey Mosque, while the other faith communities would pray in "cultural" locations.

The ecumenical prayer at the Orthodox Cathedral was the main event, where all the Christian currents prayed together. The prayer was chaired by Anastasios, and featured a contribution from Bartolomeo I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople; Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church; Gerhard Ulrich, Lutheran Bishop and President of United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD); and John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, Cardinal, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria.[132]

Figure 7. The Christian ecumenical prayer of peace at the Orthodox Cathedral, Tirana, September 8, 2015.

Source: Image supplied by the Sant'Egidio community

The appeals and interventions by different Christian representatives were complimented by musical performances, including Gregorian and Byzantine chanting, together with the Sant'Egidio choir performing some of its standard repertoire from the daily evening prayers in the Santa Maria di Trastevere church. The session also included more spiritual and physical (charismatic) performances and appeals, most focusing on the theme of unity, which appeared to serve as the focal point of the ceremony. Here, the emphasis is on unity among people and unity between God and mankind, with a belief that we are all intrinsically bound

[132] A full transcription of the speeches can be found at: www.santegidio.org.

together through our human destiny and our relations to God. Hence, the pain of one person is the pain of the whole world. The participants—on and off stage—were encouraged to hold hands, pray together, embrace those nearby etc. There were also some attempts to "embody" the unity or oneness of mankind, for instance in the appeal of a young Syrian priest who repeated: "I am three-year old Aylan Kurid, washed ashore in Turkey".[133]

After the ecumenical service, the various faith traditions merged in a collective peace procession toward the final ceremony that took place in the city center. The religious leaders of the different traditions were walking first, making a chain by holding hands.

Figure 8. Peace procession, September 8, 2015

Source: Image supplied by the Sant'Egidio community

The final ceremony took place at the Pyramid Square in Tirana. It featured the same scenography and set-up as every year: a large scene in the colors of the rainbow, in which the most high-level attendees to the meeting were seated; final speeches by the hosts of the event (Andrea Riccardi and Anastasios together with Albania political leadership, represented by Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, and Erion Veliaj, Mayor of Tirana); the planting of an olive tree as a symbol of peace and victory; a minute of silence for the victim of wars, violence and terrorism; and finally the reading of the 2015 "Appeal for Peace", by

[133] This occurred just after the pictures of three-year old Aylan, who had drowned during an attempt to flee Syria for Europe, was picked up by a Turkish officer on a beach in Turkey.

Miriam Coronel Ferrer. The “Appeal for Peace”[134] marks the dramaturgical culmination of the IMPP. It is a document authored and signed by the globe’s “religious and political leadership” before it is delivered to the younger generation, represented by a small group of children all dressed in white. A candelabra is lit, and the audience members find their way out through a final exit procession, leading back to Hotel International Tirana for a final reception.

Figure 9. Final ceremony at the Pyramid Square in Tirana

Source: Image supplied by the Sant’Egidio community

Performing the message: A theater of (inter-religious) peace

The first impression is that the IMPP is nothing less than a mis-en-scène of the microcosmos of Sant’Egidio’s ideas. It is a representation and performance of the key ideas, protagonists and processes in the Sant’Egidio peace narrative. The fixed scenography depicts how a global leadership (composed of representatives of

[134] For the full text of the 2015 version see: http://archive.santegidio.org/pageID/7712/langID/zh/text/1672/APPEAL-FOR-PEACE-2015.html.

different world religions, political leaders and secular people of “good faith”, together with representatives of the grassroots) comes together for dialog and free liberation about urgent global social and political issues, before they unite in a joint commitment and appeal for peace. Everything is organized and mediated by the discrete Sant’Egidio community.

The impression one gets is that the main purpose of the IMPP is to dramatize—"show, don’t tell”—a story about global peace in which Sant’Egidio plays a crucial role as hub and mediator. The Catholic community provides a middle ground through its reach and influence with the religious world, the political world and the grassroots. The IMPP’s legitimacy is, as such, derived from many different sources due to the community’s engagement in different spheres: religious legitimacy and network; political know-how (both in a domestic and international context); and grassroots credibility. The IMPP is the locus and the main practice through which these different identities and “networks of friends” are united and interconnected, displayed for all to see. This makes the meeting a powerful and effective ceremony because it deepens and consolidates the community’s identity and prestige as natural mediators in all directions; the grassroots loyalty is encouraged by the community’s reach and impact in the political world (as are the religious representatives) and the political leaders are encouraged by seeing the community’s reach and prestige with religious leaders of all hues.

I suggest that the IMPP can be understood as an anchoring practice in the sense that it weaves together, and mutually strengthens, the different components and capacities of Sant’Egidio’s organizational identity, with an emphasis on the merging of their political and religious identities. This indeed stands out as the most particular organizational feature of Sant’Egidio; that they are equally “at home” in the political and the religious camps, and that they have succeeded in finding a way to be both religious and political simultaneously without losing credibility in either field. Sant’Egidio are religiously literate, they are politically literate and they can talk with credibility to the deprived and vulnerable. This “multilingualism” is a sought-after qualification and legitimizes their position as natural mediators. The IMPP is a practice through which Sant’Egidio facilitates

and teaches this multilingualism to other people. Or, rather, it demonstrates—and "invites" other people to be part of—this experience, consolidating its expertise and putting it out on the market.

In the following section, I will explore in more detail at what this microcosmos of Sant'Egidio looks like, and what kind of religious and political micro-practices that support it. How does Sant'Egidio understand and project the status of world politics and religion-society relations? Who are the main actors and drivers in global development and what is their potential? In what ways is religion invoked as a source for peace and how is it configured with political priorities and considerations?

The state of the world according to Sant'Egidio

As in any good drama, the Sant'Egidio community's reading of the global order carefully combines despair and optimism. According to the community, the world finds itself in the midst of a multidimensional crisis that affects all aspects of human existence. Yet the crisis also represents a window of opportunity for change, and in particular for religion and religious actors to actively partake in the "reconstruction" process. This world view supports the idea of a "Kairos moment"'[135] for religion in international politics—which constitutes the single most important leitmotif of the IMPP, the one that dominates.

The image sketched by Sant'Egidio of the current global order is a rather dark one. Dominating issues include: the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (and the spillover effects of these in terms of the refugee crises and Europe's problems mobilizing an adequate response); the great problems of poverty and social injustice across the planet; the interconnected problems of religious persecution and religious violence; and, finally, the "war" on Mother

[135] A "Kairos moment" is a window of opportunity—a limited period in time where one is able to achieve something normally without reach—but in a specifically Christian sense. It refers to "a way of perceiving time, as a series of important or significant events or moments". Some refer to it as "God's time" or "sacred time". A more elaborated definition can be found on the informative website with the catchy name "Dictionary of Christianese: The Casual Slang of the Christian Church… Authoritatively Defined". See: https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/.

Earth. In broad terms, the miserable state of affairs—a multidimensional religious, political and spiritual crisis—is linked to the prevalence of "predatory capitalism" responsible for the huge inequalities, a general apathy and resignation on part of political and religious leaders in front of these massive challenges and a widespread dominant spiritual and religious poverty.

The community's assessment engages in a strong criticism of what is seen as the neo-liberal global political and economic order, and as such, clearly positions the community among the more progressive currents within the Church, in line with Pope Francis.[136] Religious and political leaders in the West are accused of failing to see the consequences of their own global policies, fraught with double standards, especially toward the Muslim world. Religious and political leaders alike bear the responsibility of political opportunism and of (ab)using the "atomic energy of religion" in violent terrorism.

A key issue is the phenomenon of a *widespread spiritual and religious crisis* that has emerged as a result to hyper-secularization and religious repression. Religions have not been able to develop and exist as normal elements of society but have been pushed aside (i.e., estranged from the core of society) and discriminated against. This has resulted two very negative developments. On the one hand, it has led to the prevalence of "empty legalism" as a dominant principle of organization in many societies, which has no capacity to provide a normative and moral foundation for social order. Hyper-secularization and religious repression have also produced increased levels of religious radicalization and the abuse of religion as a powerful mobilizing tool. Together, these developments have translated into the "normalization of violence, enmity and conflict" and the resignation of the political leadership that characterizes contemporary politics. These weaknesses are illustrated primarily in the failure of the international community to put an end to the war in Syria and the larger MENA region; mobilize an adequate response to the refugee crisis; and initiate far-reaching reforms aiming for social, economic and political justice.

[136] See for instance Pope Francis' *The Joy of the Gospel* for a deep critique of modern capitalism or *Laudato Si* on environmental issues.

A "Kairos moment" for religion in international politics?

It is against this background that the Sant'Egidio community envisions a Kairos moment for religion in international politics. The meeting forcefully projects an idea of a decisive moment in history, in which the Catholic Church, finally, is more in tune with global politics and closer to the hearts of its global constituencies than it has been for a long time. As such it may function as a driver for change; not only for Catholics but for a broader pan-religious coalition of "forces for good". The community seems to suggest that the conditions for a "religious comeback" in politics are finally mature and that both state political leaderships and large international organizations (such as the UN and the World Bank[137]) welcome the increased participation of religion and religious leaders in global policy-making in what is seen as the "post-secular" present. They document the important role of religion in international politics by pointing to the role of religious actors in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (informally and formally, through the United Nations Development Program's "faith-based alliances" work); in the climate negotiations in Paris; and in the field of international conflict mediation and resolution (Colombia, Cuba–United States, Mexico, etc.) The idea is that these developments are but the careful signs of a new relationship between religion and politics; to the benefit of the common good for all mankind.

Against this established background of challenges and opportunities, I suggest that the most important "function" of the IMPP is the mis-en-scène of a new social reality. It appears an attempt to reconfigure and reconcile religious and political practices and establish new lines of alliances and loyalty in face of the perceived global challenges. A characteristic feature of this new social reality is the image of a happy and "mature" co-existence between religion and politics in a post-modern, post-secularist configuration. This is a co-existence in which the secularist paradigm has been abandoned and religious extremism has been tamed

[137] The organizations are often well represented at Sant'Egidio events, and were very much so in Tirana in 2015.

and neutralized through inclusion and normalization of religious actors and world views.

In my reading of it, Sant'Egidio—through the IMPP—applies two key strategies in the construction of this new social reality. First, the community seeks to break down the established borders between religion and politics. Second, it tries to re-introduce religion in a more pluralist, inclusive way, through the notion of "spirituality", as opposed to theology and doctrine.

Blurring the borders between religious and political practices

The IMPP can be interpreted as an attempt to challenge the dominant secularist paradigm in the practices of international politics and create a more plural and inclusive platform for political exchanges internationally. This motivation is largely built upon the perceived failure of secularist politics. The basic idea is that politics, in its most ardent, secularist version, has outplayed its role.

By repressing religion (together with other 'non-scientific' sources of meaning) as a valid voice and norm provider in the elaboration and practices of policies, secularism has had two very destructive results. First, it has failed to provide politics with a functioning and cohesive moral-ethical foundation. A politics "without visions" does not engage and has no credibility. It is against this background that we must interpret the rise of populism and political disintegration at a global level, or so the narrative goes.

Second, the secularization of politics is also to a large extent deemed responsible for the new global trends of religious radicalization. By suppressing religion, secularism in its most aggressive form has made religion corruptible to political opportunists seeking to use its mobilizing potential for political gain. According to Sant'Egidio, this would not be possible if religion was a more integrated part of the social and political fabric. As such, religious radicalization is seen as the result of a fundamental—but increasingly widespread—misconception about what religion truly is, caused by a lack of religious knowledge.

An underlying idea appears to be that secularism (and modernity in general) has introduced a set of separations and boundaries between different

"regimes of truth"—together with a hierarchical order regulating the areas in which these regimes are entitled to have an impact—that are lethal to a healthy and well-functioning society. The main purpose of this societal "fragmentation" is effectively to protect the hegemony of secularist thinking (associated with notions such as rationality, objectivity, value-neutrality, etc.) on political decision-making. Against this background, Sant'Egidio's contention is that secularism is also a value-based system—and, ultimately, a system of belief, rather than a neutral construction. By "reducing' politics to bureaucratic, self-referential processes, politics has become poorly equipped to understand— much less react to—global political challenges. One cannot understand the world solely through the lenses of secularism because secularism has some significant blindfolds not only concerning religion, but "the human condition" and "meaning" more generally.

From this perspective, the IMPP can be understood as a quite radical attempt to question and challenge the established borders between religion and politics, as they are normally practiced; namely, as an attempt to *rethink the space between religion and politics* and establish new contact points, without necessarily abandoning secularism. The community seems to do this by combining and mixing religious and political elements. Indeed, a characterizing feature of the IMPP is its "mixing of genres" and inherently hybrid character somewhere between religious celebration and political campaigning. As such, the IMPP challenges established dividing lines and the supposed dichotomy between the categories "religion" and "politics". Interestingly, it also goes beyond this, by challenging the separation and boundaries between different sources of knowledge in a broader sense; namely, between emotions and reason; truth and beauty; intuition and knowledge; and experience and science.

The IMPP can thus be seen as a contribution in a core philosophical interrogation—with potentially huge political ramifications—of what constitutes valid knowledge and legitimate human tools of perception. A key issue for Sant'Egidio together with the other religious actors is that truth cannot be grasped by rationality alone, because human beings are not rational creatures. This translates into a physical act of protest against dominating practices in global

decision-making processes modeled upon the monopoly of rationality of behalf of secularist politics.

Changing the cast, premises and "style" of global political practices

In practical terms, this "merging" of political and religious practices can be observed in three areas: 1) the IMPP's cast of interlocutors and participants; 2) the premises and framing of the debates; and 3) the aesthetics and style of the meeting.

As for the interlocutors, we see that *recasting and widening the circles of legitimate interlocutors* in global policy discussions is a clear priority in the IMPP. The emphasis is on inclusion and on the introduction of a new set of (traditionally marginalized) actors into the "hub" of global development policy debates: religious people, youth, activists, refugees, elderly, etc. The underlying logic is that global developments concern everyone, especially the more vulnerable groups who will be most affected by the outcomes. Consequently, global policy debates should not be a top-down process, confined to experts and politicians.

As for the *framing*, we can observe a re-articulation of the premises and stakes of the debates in a more human, personal, psychological direction, addressing question of morals, ethics and values. This shift is closely linked to the communication skills of the new participants to the discussions and to their (self-appointed) intermediaries—like Sant'Egidio—insisting on the argument that even though religious actors may not be "politically literate" (that is, able to present their contributions in the dominating "political" language) their input may still be valuable and important and that it is equally important that politicians become "religiously literate" as the other way around.

The IMPP thus appears as an attempt to engineer a shift away from expert, "elite opinionating" to "meaningful contributions" from and between non-conventional political actors, based upon different, non-scientific sources of insight and perception (emotions, intuition, experience, etc.). The meeting thus signals an increased appreciation and recognition of different types of human experiences as valid input in political debates.

It is within this framework, that the specific added value of religion is presented; namely, through its status as one of the most important sources of human insight. Religion is presented as something complementary to knowledge and pragmatism (understood as rationality), not as contradictory to it. In more specific terms, the key role of religion is closely linked to the issue of values and vision. In the current context in which "values have been definitely separated from politics", religion offers an important source of meaning that can help "restore" politics.

With regards to the *style and aesthetics* of the meeting, the IMPP proposes an enriched (and possibly even entertaining or more "fun") version of political practice, in which political debates and exchanges are embedded in religious, spiritual and emotional expressions, of visual, communicative and performative character (music, rituals, prayers, affectionate physical gestures, etc.) As such, the IMPP undoubtedly defies a prevailing norm in circles of secularist international politics of separating aesthetic, religious and political practices. Again, this serves to illustrate how Sant'Egidio challenges the boundaries and separation associated with modern societies between different fields of practice. The IMPP meeting is characterized by visual, musical and performative effects designed to "strengthen the message" and baseline narrative of the meeting—peace and happy co-existence between different religions and religions and culture. Suffice to say that this is an aesthetic take or strategy that would easily trigger suspicion as a form of emotional manipulation, seen from an ardent secularist perspective.

Re-introducing religion through the scope of spirituality

If the IMPP can be understood as a practice that essentially challenges established boundaries between religion and politics, and different forms of knowledge, the following questions arise: What room and role does it envision for religion? What type of religion, and what kind of co-existence with politics, does the meeting project?

In my reading of it, the IMPP, through its representations and enactment of religion, suggests a form of religion that has three characteristics: it is modest, rich and benevolent. It is a type of religion, which is modeled upon and for a multi-

religious, pluralist context. Key features here include a strong condemnation of all dogmatic, literalist, exclusivist readings or religions. From the IMPP's perspective, dogmatic interpretations of religion are seen as a misunderstanding, at best, or even abuse of religion, at worst. Rather, religion appears to be re-introduced through the scope of spirituality, cast as a cognitive tool of understanding "the Other" and "the Self". The key element of this narrative is that religion can teach us to view both ourselves and other people with a new glance, through facilitating a specific type of meeting—an "Encounter", *incontro* in Italian—in which we open ourselves to other people and the world in a genuine and authentic way.[138] Through confrontation and engagement with "the Other"—that is, by learning to speak his or her language and teaching him or her yours[139]—social relations are transformed and the seed of peace is cultivated. Proximity and familiarity with one another is crucial because it is our most effective shield against violence, which ultimately depends upon distance and ignorance. Religion is therefore cast as an important (yet not exclusive) source of motivation and attitude toward the other and one self; namely, as a willingness and capacity to start from scratch and view the other with a caring and tolerant glance. It is presented as a methodology to reset and reconfigure our capacities to see, speak and interact with others, as if we were doing it for the first time, with an open mind, like a child—indeed the child analogy is a recurrent topic.

As we can see, this line of logic clearly reflects Riccardi's thinking from the early days of the community—namely, reinventing the world through reinventing our human capacities and revolutionizing society through revolutionizing humanity. In the welcoming ceremony, Riccardi elaborates:

> The opposite of peace is not war, but self-centeredness—a form of violence in itself. Religions believe it is necessary to speak to the heart of people, to transform it from the inside, to liberate it from the domination of ego, from the worship of omnipotence or the prison of resignation.

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[138] As we will see in Chapter 5, the focus on the "Culture of the Encounter" is very much in line with the papacy of Francis.

[139] This appears to constitute the basic exercise of the IMPP—politicians are exposed and invited in to religious circles and languages, and vice versa.

> Change begins with oneself and no one can stop it. Religions remind us that unless we change our heart, it will not be possible to create a new world, or that new world will immediately turn into the worst world possible. Unless people convert their heart, and behavior, they will not respect creation (Andrea Riccardi, speaking in the final ceremony of the 2015 IMPP, my translation).

Religion is pitched as an entry point for a deeper understanding and deeper knowledge about others, the world and ourselves—primarily through its capacity to *expand our understanding* of central notions in human existence (such as peace, violence and knowledge). The interesting innovation here, is that the spiritual reservoir or methodology—of expanding of the mind—is not reserved for either Catholics or "religious folks" generally; quite the contrary, it is accessible to all people "of good faith". As such, Sant'Egidio effectively suggests a common ground that draws upon religious principles, but which is universal enough to accommodate both believers of all faiths together with non-believers (as long as they have "good faith"). By transforming religion from a question of *belief* to a question of *faith*, a common ground and a common platform is provided for coupling religion and secularism, and religion and culture. This includes a redefinition of alterity. There, the "other" is (essentially speaking) a believer as well, even if not a traditional sense.[140]

Expanding the categories of peace and violence

In a multi-religious context such as the IMPP—essentially showcasing the added value of religion to a political audience—one of the commonly agreed upon "strengths" of religion is to advance a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of peace and violence, in a way that defies the "narrow" and ultimately irresponsible interpretations of the concept that dominate among political leaderships.

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[140] Perhaps this can be understood as a religious psychology "in action" through which "the Other" is appropriated with some basic religious (Christian) features?

As for the concept of violence the IMPP seem to offer a quite radical extended reading of the notion—relative to how the term is conventionally used—designed to emphasize our common responsibility in an interconnected world. The IMPP suggests an understanding of violence as much more than military or physical violence: The unjust distribution of wealth and power in the world is a form of violence; poverty is an act of violence; inequality is violence. These states of being are caused by someone, and the pain is no lesser than the one caused by physical violence. [141] The added value of religion is therefore to see the interconnections between one person's wealth and another's misery, and to accept responsibility, whereas "professional politicians" tend to operate with clear limitations and restricted responsibilities (interpreted as a form of resignation or lack of vision by Sant'Egidio and the IMPP). This re-framing of violence is therefore also an attempt to insert an ethical principle or element as a starting point for political decision-making, which is our common responsibility to our various "Others". This responsibility arises from the spiritual (not necessarily religious) insight into the unity of mankind and the knowledge that what we do to other people, we ultimately do to ourselves (and to God, in its religious connotations). Acknowledging the responsibility is a condition, and necessary first step, to put in place a more just distribution—at the global as well as at the local level. We need to be willing to become "the Other" to create justice, which again is a condition for peace. This logic is articulated in both religious and spiritual or humanistic terms as a common denominator for peaceful co-existence.

The same methodology "of expansion" is applied on the concept of peace. If violence is more than the physical violence, this means that peace is more than the absence of violence: It is a spiritual, physical, political and emotional practice, which affects all levels of human existence, individually and collectively. We are all responsible for the violence, and we are all responsible for the peace. Again, the basic spiritual insight is the unity of mankind, and religion is cast a "connecting device" which forces a responsible recognition of the inevitable interconnection of everyone and everything: "There cannot be peace in the world without peace in

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[141] Sant'Egidio's conception of violence thus appears linked to Bourdieu's (1990) notion of symbolic violence.

Africa"; "one part of the world cannot live in peace if another part is bleeding". Against this background, the IMPP proposes and enacts different narratives of peace, designed to expand the scope and applicability of the category. Some of these include the narrative of peace as a vision; peace as a physical practice; peace as engagement with other people; peace as justice, peace as responsibility; and peace as transcendence and "oneness".

Religion as peace and the "special responsibility" of religious people

In this multi-religious context, religion is ultimately largely conflated with the notion of peace, conceptualized as the "ultimate purpose and will of religion". Indeed, a key issue is to "purify" religion form all contagious elements associated with conflict and violence—which is discredited as "false" or "unauthentic" religion—and arise in its place a tolerant and peaceful construct. This comes along with the idea that religious people have a special responsibility in today's global crises. The dual task of religious people is therefore to "take religion back" from the fundamentalists and mobilize the "true" potential of religion in the quest for a more just and peaceful world.

Religious leaders and followers should tap into the unique social and spiritual resources of religions and use this to snap out of the general state of apathy and resignation that characterizes current international politics and the political elites. This means that the mobilizing potential of religion does not lie in its specific theological content. Rather it is located in its transcending and liberating potential through its message of unconditioned solidarity. This potential is accessible not only for believers, but for all people of good faith and with basic spiritual faculties. Together these narrative elements produce a quite different story line on religion and its political cogency than we are usually presented with in the literature on religion and peace.

If religion is synonymous with peace, what remains of Catholicism?

As we can seem, the IMPP projects a very open and tolerant form of religion, in which the main focus is on religion as a form of spiritual exercise enabling us to open up to others. There is very little focus on theology or specific religious teachings, which perhaps makes sense in a multi-religious context such as the IMPP, convening both believers and non-believers. A specific feature with the IMPP form of religion is therefore its prudence with regards to *proselytization*. Sant'Egidio clearly has no wish to come across as missionaries, which would effectively undermine the community's hard-earned status as mediators and diplomats. This prudence translates into a very low-key Catholic or Christian discourse, in which only two specifically Catholic and Christian concepts come through: the "Spirit of Assisi" and "Christian Unity". Yet, the prevalence of precisely these two concepts—and their uneasy co-existence as the main Catholic identity markers of Sant'Egidio—tells us a lot about the deeper challenges of creating a communal/collective Catholic identity that serves the dual purpose of: 1) providing the community with an open and "light" religious identity that evokes legitimacy in the field of international diplomacy (which is per definition multi-religious and pluralist); and 2) robustly anchoring the community in the Catholic Church traditions in a way that also satisfies more conservative currents and constituencies.

The "Spirit of Assisi" versus "Christian Unity"

What then, do the two terms signify and what is the power balance between the two? The "Spirit of Assisi" refers to the tradition of Francis of Assisi as evoked during Pope John Paul II's 1986 meeting on inter-religious dialog. In the IMPP it is introduced as a concept with Catholic origins, but one that can form the foundation of inter-faith and religious–secular cooperation and existence. It is not easy to get a clear take on what exactly this term implies,[142] but it appears as the most tangible attempts to "operationalize" the open and tolerant versions of

[142] See the Vatican's explanation of the term on its webpage: http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_june-sept-1996_etchegaray-assisi_en.html

Catholicism associated with Vatican II teachings—or to what is often called the "Spirit of Vatican II". The emphasis on *spirit or spirituality* here—the "Spirit of Assisi", the "Spirit of Vatican II"—is interesting, as these terms are highly controversial within the Catholic Church. They are most contentious in theological debates between conservative and liberal theologians on the appropriate interpretation of the heritage of Vatican II—conservative theologians generally dislike the term "Spirit of Vatican II" because they think it gives a false impression of the level of "liberalism" introduced in the new teachings. In conservative Catholic circles, *spirit* and *spirituality* generally evoke suspicion as an expression of the "watering down" of religious principles or possible even syncretism.

In the Sant'Egidio terminology, the "Spirit of Assisi" appears as a way (i.e., a tool) of making dialog and engagement across and within different "faiths" possible, through focusing on "what unites", rather than on "what divides". Evidently, a basic challenge in inter-faith dialog and relations between monotheistic religions is the belief in the existence of one specific God, with a specific set of teachings. If one truly believes in the existence of only one God and the exclusive truth of his teachings—doesn't this imply that the rest must be wrong? How can this issue be solved philosophically and practically in external relations?

The "Spirit of Assisi" offers a way to go about these challenges of co-existence by translating belief into faith; and by casting faith as something that is commonly shared. As such, this term reflects a rather pragmatic approach to religion and belief, but which is still rich enough to provide the concerned actors with considerable latitude of interpretation. It is interesting, though, that the term nevertheless contains a *proselytizing element* by the simple and inevitable fact that a Catholic notion is proposed as conceptual foundation for successful inter-religious and secular–religious co-existence and communication. The "Spirit of Assisi", in this sense, is put forth as a universal value—as a method or principle of thinking and being in the world—that can guide all men and women of "good faith".

"Christian Unity": Is "blood thicker than water"?

The term "Christian Unity", on the other hand, communicates a quite different message. As explicitly expressed, this term is primarily concerned with the status of the in-group—the "Christian flock"—and its internal and external relations. A key issue of concern in the presence regards the persecution of Christian minorities in the contemporary Middle East. The topic of "Christian Unity" is unavoidable for any Catholic international diplomatic actor, as it is the first and leading principle of the global mission of the Holy See and thus of its diplomatic corpus, as stated in Canon Law.

From the perspective of a transnational diplomatic actor like Sant'Egidio, it appears that the meaning and centrality of the term—and its status as guiding principle of international activities—comes with some more and some less problematic sides to it. As a principal of internal relations within Christianity and its various churches, it is hardly problematic. The concept of *ecumenism* is well integrated in Catholic traditions and Sant'Egidio depends upon good relations with the international network of churches in order to do their job.

As a principle of *external relations* however, the term appears as much more problematic, especially as it is often evoked to address the specific responsibility of international Catholic actors, like Sant'Egidio, to address the persecution of Christian minorities worldwide. Sant'Egidio, clearly, condemns of all kinds religious persecution by principle. But, we might ask: Does the community effectively have a special responsibility toward its fellow Christians, as some currents claim? Or is it morally obliged to treat all religious communities at the same level? Is blood thicker than water? These questions—concerning the accommodation of the somewhat contradictory concepts of the "Spirit of Assisi" and "Christian Unity"—represent burning and partly unresolved issues at the heart of the communal identity of the Sant'Egidio community and its external relations.

The importance of this issue can hardly be exaggerated, as it represents an existential test to the conditions and limitations of Sant'Egidio's insistence on the equal worth of men, regardless of religious and confessional orientation, versus its loyalty to the Church. This is a dilemma of both ethical and highly practical

implications: If the community is perceived as disloyal and of failing to take responsibility for their co-believers in a period of crisis, this would potentially have heavy costs for their relations with the Christian world. On the other hand, overtly favoring Christian minorities to other religious minorities would clearly be harmful to the community's hard-earned status as a leading and legitimate actor of inter-religious dialog and relations. This means that the community has to step carefully.

Interestingly, this specific issue of Christian persecution—judging from anecdotal material from my field work—also seem to represent a point of tension between the relatively liberal and politically experienced *community leadership* and the more conservative *grassroots segments*. At the IMPP, the issue of Christian persecution appeared to be an important topic at the personal level for many of the grassroots activists, whereas at the level of the leadership, the issue would consequently be addressed rather hesitantly, always framed within the broader principle of condemnation of religious persecution altogether. In an effort to strike a compromise, the community leaders would state that Christians may currently be in need special protection but that this is not because they are Christian, but because they constitute the religious group most prone to religious persecution in the contemporary Middle East. If is correct that the community elites and the grassroots constituencies part ways on such issues, it is phenomenon that merits further academic attention.

"Religious, but not in the bad sense of the word"[143]

On the basis of this analysis of the IMPP, the question arises: What can we say about the "core" identity of Sant'Egidio and the role of religion in it? In general terms, it appears as if Sant'Egidio seeks to establish itself as a modest and discrete mediator between "religion" and "politics". Indeed, it is interesting to see how these two constructs are framed and modeled upon each other, often in very explicit terms. The main idea is that religion should be re-introduced as a

[143] A statement by Marco Impagliazzo, on the religious component of the Sant'Egidio community (Source: Interview, Rome, 2015).

complementary, enriching element to politics. The articulated intention is therefore not to dethrone politics (or secularism), but to enhance and enrich it through religion—primarily conceptualized as a source of insight and of solidarity. More specifically, we can observe an attempt to make religion "engageable"—to give religion a more coherent voice in view of increasing its impact in policy-making—through the establishment of a multi-religious consensus on some central benevolent "good" religious (Catholic) concepts, such as the "Spirit of Assisi".

As an (aspiring) central intermediary in this process, Sant'Egidio's most important resource lies in the community's hybrid character and solid anchoring in both the political and religious world. As such, we can perhaps conclude that the key assets in the conceptual toolbox of Sant'Egidio (providing it with its specific mediator identity) include its: 1) *bilingualism* (the fact that the community is both religiously and politically literate); 2) high-level *networks* in both religious and political circles; and 3) specific *expertise* in mediation and peacemaking.

The religious component of the community's core identity appears, at least at a first glance, as quite minimalist and pragmatic. It reflects a view on religion that seeks to take the best of religion and leave the worst behind: As Mario Giro articulates it, "only the best of faith can defeat the worst of religion".[144] It is also a religion customized for a pluralist and agnostic audience.

This modesty and discreteness—that one typically expects from a diplomat or a mediator—is also communicated aesthetically, for instance in the way the community leadership dress. The Sant'Egidio members always dress in neutral, dark blue or gray suits, with white shirts and a tie (the diplomat uniform)—they never wear religious symbols (except for the few priests who are part of the community) and don't attract attention. In a context of inter-faith cooperation—which most often features a large selection of seemingly eccentrically dressed religious leaders, at least from a Western secular view point—this means that Sant'Egidio also comes through visually as the natural intermediary between "religion" and "politics".

[144] Interview, Rome, 2013.

Figure 10. Sant'Egidio President Marco Impagliazzo together with Ignatius Aphrem II, Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

Source: Image supplied by the Sant'Egidio community

This visual dimension should not be underestimated. In a context in which many political leaders feel that they don't have the tools to understand or communicate with religious leaders, the bridge offered by Sant'Egidio represent a much appreciated entry point. The community succeeds because it has access to religious circles and leaders, at the same time as it is not "too" religious for the taste of its secular interlocutors. Religion or Catholicism is therefore presented as a repertoire, rather than a set of binding rules, on human existence and relations. As Marco Impagliazzo puts it: "We believe that Catholicism possesses a specific expertise on the human condition."[145]

[145] Interview, Rome, 2014.

Chapter 4
Integrative practice: Performing mediation

In this chapter, I detail an analysis of the micro-practices of faith-based mediation, through a case study of Sant'Egidio's mediation initiative in Algeria in the mid-1990s. Whereas the first chapter on "anchoring practices" dealt with the basic identity-building processes of Sant'Egidio through events such as the IMPP, this chapter takes a more focused look at the community's performances in the field of faith-based mediation, understood as an integrative, specialized practice. The overarching aim is to elaborate a deeper understanding of the specific modus operandi of faith-based mediation, and of the characteristics of faith-based mediator identities as a key tool of mediation. How does religion enter the mediation practices of Sant'Egidio? And what is the added value or main strength of religion in such efforts?

I start with a detailed description of the Algerian mediation process, before I go on to investigate more in detail the role of religion in this specific initiative.

Sant'Egidio in Algeria: A "failed success"?

In 1994–1995, the Italian Catholic community Sant'Egidio intervened in the escalating civil conflict in Algeria, in an attempt to mediate between the secularist Algerian regime and the Algerian opposition, in which the Islamist Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) party was the key protagonist. This specific initiative represents a crucial experience in the Sant'Egidio community's career as an international conflict mediator, for better or for worse. The dual heritage of this specific initiative is well reflected in the community's own assessment of the process, as a "failed success" [*un echec reussi*].[146] According to Mario Giro, the initiative was a failure in the obvious sense that it failed to put an end to the

[146] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2015.

Algerian civil conflict. Yet, it was not entire unsuccessful as it did manage to create an atmosphere of dialog and insert a seed of democratic culture in Algerian public space.

However, if we look beyond the actual outcomes of the initiative on the Algerian conflict, we see that the term "failed success" is also fitting to describe the heritage of the initiative "internally" in the community, as for what regards the status and position of Sant'Egidio as mediators. From this perspective, the Algerian mediation was a failure in the sense that it severely damaged the community's relations with Italian political authorities and central currents within the Holy See. Indeed, the community's decision to go against the advice of its closest partners and ultimately intervene unilaterally into the internal affairs of the sovereign state of Algeria was a highly controversial move. As it turned out, that initiative would fail politically to bring peace—indeed, it was followed by an intensification of the civil war—and the consequences on the Sant'Egidio community were considerable. Within a few years, the community went from "prince" to "pariah" in Italian political-religious circles, reaching an all-time low in 1998—coinciding with the community's 30th anniversary, which is therefore referred to as the *annus horribilus*. This was the year the community (and the Algerian initiative) was publicly "disowned" on behalf of the Italian MFA[147] *and* publicly reprimanded by the Holy See for a series of scandals concerning the internal regime of the community and its practices of the sacraments of the Eucharist, confessions and matrimony. It would take the community years to rehabilitate its status and position and re-enter the "good circles". Arguably, its complete political rehabilitation was confirmed with Andrea Riccardi entering the Italian government in 2011, and its religious rehabilitation with Pope Francis attending the IMPP in 2016.

Despite these obviously negative outcomes of the Algerian initiative, the community insists on the experience also being a success—primarily as an important *process of learning* for the community, but also in terms of *building*

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[147] The community received especially harsh treatment in the memoirs of Franco de Courten, Italian ambassador to Algeria (1996–1998) in his book *Diario di Algeria 1996–98*.

relations with the non-Western world. According to Giro, the Algerian experience was indispensable in terms of teaching the community to interact and communicate with Muslim actors: "We learned a lot from dialoguing with the Algerians. We learned to dialog with a world that is not our; the Muslim world."[148]

The Algerian initiative also played an instrumental role in establishing the small Catholic community as a legitimate actor in front of a global, Muslim audience. Indeed, the community's decision to intervene and defend the rights of an Islamist movement to have "a place at the table" during the peace negotiations effectively provided the community with a grassroots credibility among religious audiences worldwide (especially Muslim)—that has turned out to be crucial for Sant'Egidio's access to conflicts and stakeholders across the world. According to Mario Giro:

> The fact that we intervened in Algeria in 94/95, and what we did there, is the most important thing [and] it is what the whole Muslim world knows about us. Even in Indonesia! The news rapidly traveled to the entire Muslim world. For them too it was a shock that a Christian community would do this kind of mediation. It strengthened the credibility of Sant'Egidio in the Muslim world, also in radical milieus, in an extraordinary way [...]. So this has created very important connections. Even if you go to the Gulf countries, everyone knows us. Algeria is one of the main reasons that we are known in the Arab world.[149]

As one of the most challenging mediation initiatives that the community has engaged in, the Algerian mediation efforts represent a formative experience that has played a crucial role in the development of Sant'Egidio's specific mediator identity, profile and skillset. This means that the ways in which the Sant'Egidio mediators handled the various challenges that materialized during the Algerian mediation initiatives, and not least, the ways in which the community has cultivated this experience—effectively converting it form a "failure" into a success story—offers an important entry point to study the specific features of faith-based mediation in the style of Sant'Egidio.

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[148] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013.
[149] Ibid.

The Rome talks: Channels, actors, process, outcome

The Sant'Egidio community first started to consider the possibility of intervening in Algeria in 1993, after the assassination of a friend of the community in a Catholic library in the Kasbah of Algiers. At the time, Sant'Egidio had just landed its first successful mediation initiative in Mozambique and was enjoying a peak in international popularity and goodwill. The UN general secretary at the time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, had just recognized the community's important contributions in the domain of non-conventional peacemaking and praised the "Italian Formula" (referring to the combination of state and non-state efforts in international conflict mediation) that had produced the successful outcome in Mozambique.

It was clear from the very start, however, that the Algerian initiative would represent an entirely different set of challenges than Mozambique. This was primarily linked to the delicate (and interconnected) problematic of Islamic fundamentalism and the legacy of French colonialism in the country. Together, these features provided a very different starting point to that of Mozambique, regarding both the religious landscape and the type of resources that the community would be able to draw upon, and regarding the coordination with political authorities at home and abroad.

The Algerian civil war broke out in 1992, in the aftermath of a military coup d'état, which interrupted the first democratic election process in Algeria since liberation from France in 1962. The coup had effectively hindered FIS from coming to power through legal means. Under President Chadli Benjedid, in 1989 Algeria became the first Arab country to embark on what seemed to be a genuine attempt at democratization. After almost three decades of one-party rule (under the liberation party Front de Liberation National, FLN) President Benjedid opened the country—practically overnight[150]—to multi-party elections and presented a new constitution that (among other things) would abandon the socialist

[150] The transition occurred after an initial hard-handed crackdown on public demonstrations for democracy during the October 1988 riots—which the Algerian regime would later try to translate into Algeria's "Arab Spring". For further elaboration, see Holmsen (2015).

framework of the Algerian state, and guarantee Algerian citizens democracy and the protection of basic human rights. In the flurry of new parties emerging with the abolition of the one-party system, Islamist movements soon emerged as the most important contenders, and the FIS as the single Islamic organization that was able to gather the broadest collation of Islamist forces under one banner.[151] As the name indicates, the FIS was a typical "front"—as were most of the Algerian opposition parties—both in the sense that it traced its origins to the FLN and in the sense that it constituted a highly loose structure. Composed of a mix of populist, moderate and hardline Islamist currents, the political program of the FIS was at best underdeveloped, if existent at all.[152]

In the local elections in 1989, FIS unexpectedly won over 55% of the votes. In an effort to prevent the party from repeating the electoral success during the upcoming national elections, President Benjedid ordered a redrawing of the electoral maps, and the FIS leadership was imprisoned. Regardless, the party took over 48% of the popular vote in the first round of the parliamentary (effectively translating into 188 out of 231 seats in the parliament). The army saw the prospect of FIS rule in Algeria as unacceptable and on January 11, 1992, the second round of national elections were postponed indefinitely, until conditions were "ripe". President Benjedid was forces to resign and all executive powers transferred to a temporary High Council of State (HCS) led by the formerly exiled independence fighter Mohammed Boudiaf. The Algerian military and security services started a heavy-handed clampdown on Islamists and sympathizers, which resulted in a widespread fragmentation and radicalization of the Islamist camp. The result was a full-fledged civil war within short time between hardliner currents within the military and security services, pushing a non-dialogist, eradicating approach toward Islamists—known as the "eradicators"—and

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[151] Algerian Islamists—linking their existence to the Islamic renewal movement who played an integral part of the liberation struggle against the French—had long and proud traditions in Algeria. Islamic reformers constituted an integral part of the FLN until internal power battles tore the organization apart after liberation in 1962. For further elaboration on the history of Islamist movements in Algeria and their relationship to the political and military authorities, see: Holmsen (2010)

[152] This is indicated by the party's slogan before the 1991 elections, the rather anodyne "everything will be better".

radicalized Islamist guerilla movements. Civilians were caught in the middle of this particularly brutal and violent civil war, which would cost over 250,000 lives during the decade to come. In 1999, President Bouteflika's Law on Civil Concord (followed by the 2005 Charter on National Reconciliation) succeeded in substantially diminishing the violence. Yet, low-intensity fighting between regime and Islamist forces continues to this day.

Sant'Egidio's intervention occurred in Autumn 1994, just after Liamine Zeroual (head of the Algerian HCS) had announced the definitive breakdown of a national dialog attempt between the Algerian opposition parties, the FIS and the regime, led by the National Transitional Council (NTC). The situation was characterized by a political deadlock and a rising fragmentation of the Islamist camp: with the FIS leadership in jail and the party outlawed, many Islamist groups had given up the idea of any form of reconciliation with the regime and taken up arms. A flurry of armed Islamist branches had emerged, but while most of the early ones had remained, at least to a certain extent, under control by the Islamist political leadership, the creation of the Groupement Islamique Armé (GIA) in 1994 dramatically changed the landscape by expanding the scope of legitimate targets to everyone who did not actively join the armed battle: intellectuals, civilians, women, and "reconciliatory" Islamists. In an attempt to isolate and discredit the GIA, the FIS leadership had created its own armed wing (Armée Islamique du Salut, AIS), but the move had resulted in a straight-out war between the GIA, the AIS and the other "political" branches. The landscape was getting increasingly confused and incontrollable with the emergence of numerous detached jihadi cells that did not really take orders from anyone and whose links and organization overlapped with that of local clans and organization structures.

By the time of the dialog attempt of the NTC in summer 1994, the regime was still convinced—at least rhetorically—that FIS would have to be part of the dialog (this was viewed as crucial in view of reintegrating the Islamist electorate). The dialog apparently failed due to technicalities and stubbornness, or lack of trust: the regime had wanted an unconditional guarantee on behalf of FIS to renounce the use of violence and the respect of democratic principles; while the FIS had insisted on the liberation of its political leadership together with its legal

rehabilitation before any negotiations could start. Adding to the difficulties was the number of secularist hardliners (within the army and security forces, the opposition parties and civil society) who refused to participate in a dialog that included the FIS. In October 1995, Zeroual announced the definitive breakdown of the national dialog and suggested a new round of presidential elections instead. The move was followed by the replacement of many high-level officers by so-called "eradicators". This was the moment where Zeroual is perceived as having shifted from a "dialogist" to an "eradicator" stance. Madani (the imprisoned FIS leader) tried to evoke the initiative by giving concessions in Algerian press but was not heard. This is when Sant'Egidio stepped in.

Prelude

The possibility of an Algerian mediation initiative was first mentioned by Andrea Riccardi during the 1994 IMPP in Assisi. Riccardi explained that the community had been challenged by Muslim friends to show that the West supports democratic principles also in Muslim countries. Riccardi put together a working group,[153] tasked with evaluating the potential and implementation of a possible intervention.

The working group soon decided that an intervention was both possible and necessary: the community felt morally obliged to act against this background of the "apathy" of the international community toward the crisis in Algeria and to break the widespread (mis)conception in the West that the choice in the Arab world is between secularist autocracies or theocratic dictatorships. [154] The community also felt personally concerned by the conflict, due to its links to the country. Since 1984 Sant'Egidio has been involved in inter-religious dialog initiatives in Algeria and it had a special relationship to the Catholic Church in Algeria and especially to the Archbishop of Algiers, Léon Etienne Duval. [155]

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[153] Composed of founding members Matteo Zuppi, Marco Impagliazzo, Mario Marazziti and Mario Giro.

[154] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013.

[155] Duval had played a rather prominent role within the Catholic Church in the transition from colonial to independent Algeria. Duval never supported the idea of *l'Algérie française*

However, if Sant'Egidio had counted on the support of the Catholic Church in Algeria due to its relations with Duval, they were to be disappointed. While Duval himself seemed positive toward the initiative, his successor Henry Teissier and the Bishop of Oran, Pierre Claverie,[156] soon turned out to be vehemently against it. Teissier and Claverie feared it would render Christian minorities in Algeria—already in a delicate situation[157]—even more vulnerable to Islamist violence. The Algerian Catholic Church's absolute dismay was expressed in a public communiqué, issued on November 20, the same day that the Rome talks started, stating that "the Colloque does not in any way affect the authority of the Algerian Church" (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997: 71, my translation). The Holy See followed up with a public communication stating that "the initiative of Sant'Egidio is autonomous and not linked in any way to the Holy See; the Vatican has no role in the current conversations" (ibid: 70, my translation).

The Catholic Church in Algeria and the Holy See were not the only actors that were skeptical about the intervention. Indeed, the initiative was met with a wave of resistance, coming from many directions, from the start. The Algerian regime rejected the dialog initiative "in its generals and its details" from the outset and famously described the initiative as a "non-événement".[158] The regime tried to prevent and disrupt the initiative by putting diplomatic pressure on the Italian MFA and the Holy See and by launching a harsh media propaganda campaign seeking to discredit and ridicule the initiative and the Algerian participants.[159] The Algerian media coverage highlighted "foreign intervention" and the "treason" and

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and strongly condemned French use of torture against the FLN. As a pioneer of inter-religious dialog and cohabitation, he was given the somewhat polemical nickname "Mohammed", and in general had rather bad relations with the pied-noirs (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997: 65).

[156] He was assassinated by the GIA in 1996.

[157] Recent incidents had included the assassination of the Pères Trappistes in Thibérine, and two librarians in the Kasbah of Algiers.

[158] The statement is attributed to the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dembri.

[159] In Algiers, the Italian ambassador and the Apostolic nuncio were urgently called to the Algerian MFA on November 19 (the day before the talks started) and asked to explain the nature of the initiative, which the ministry considered to be supported by the Italian authorities and the Holy See. In Rome, the Algerian ambassador, Benali Banzagaghou, organized a press conference in which he accused Sant'Egidio of interfering and upsetting the ongoing national dialog process in Algeria (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997).

lack of patriotism of the participants. Interestingly, much of the coverage of the official paper of the regime—*El Moudjahid*—also focused extensively on the Catholic identity of Sant'Egidio and of the unacceptable intervention of a Catholic actor in the internal affairs of a Muslim country.[160] Indeed, the regime even petitioned an Imam within the regime-led Islamic Superior Council to issue a fatwa condemning the Rome talks. The fatwa was met with a counter-fatwa from FIS leader Belhadj, effectively endorsing the Rome talks.[161] As such, the religious dimension of the mediation initiative actually played a significant role in the regime's attempts to dismantle its impact.

As for Italian political authorities, the MFA was slightly more positive, although Sant'Egidio never managed to get the ministry fully on board. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Martino, stated the ministry's general support for the initiative on several occasions, and the ministry assisted technically. High-level MFA officers were also present during the first round of the talks and received the participants informally between the meeting sessions. Nevertheless, the Algerian dossier represented a far more sensitive and difficult issue to Italian political authorities than the Mozambique case.[162] Consequently, the MFA never participated in any formalized way, but "followed the initiative with interest".

Regardless of the position of the Algerian regime and its traditional partners—the Holy See, the local Church structures and the MFA—Sant'Egidio went ahead with the initiative. The first round of the Rome talks (Colloque sur l'Algérie) were held in Rome on November 21–22, 1994.

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[160] Some examples of indicative headlines include: "The new Messiah"; "Holy alliance"; "In the shadow of the Cross"; "Criminals, traitors and mercenaries, without masks"; and "Commedia all'Italiana".

[161] In the letter "Response to the Government's Messenger", Belhadj stated: "When the Prophet Mohammed saw the Quraysh tribe persecute and torture his companions, he told them to seek refuge in Abyssinia, saying: 'Their King, the disciple of Jesus, is a fair man who will not tolerate injustice'." On this basis, Belhadj concludes that "there is thus no doubt that when the representatives of a just cause are persecuted and tortured, they are in plain rights to leave their territory and take refuge in a foreign country and make their case known." (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997: 95, my translation).

[162] In addition to the issue of Europe's history of colonialism in Algeria and the unknown landscape of Islamic fundamentalism, was the issue of economy, as Algeria is an important economic partner for Italy, providing the country with one-third of its gas.

Round I of the Rome talks

For the first round of talks, Sant'Egidio managed to assemble representatives from the biggest political parties—FIS, the Front de la Libération Nationale (FLN), and the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS)—together with the leaders of the smaller opposition parties (including moderate Islamist parties). These were joined by important individuals with historical legitimacy (e.g., Ben Bella) and civil society actors. The full list of participants included: Abdelhami Mehri (FLN); Hocine Ait Ahmed (FFS); Anwar Haddam (FIS); Ben Bella (Mouvement Démocratique Algérien, MDA); Louisa Hanoune (Parti des Travailleurs, PT); Mahfoud Nahnah (Mouvement for the Society of Peace, HMS); Abdullah Jaballah (Ennahda); Noureddine Boukrouh (Party of Algerian Renewal) and; Ali Yahia (Algerian League of Human Rights).

The regime was invited through Minster of Foreign Affairs, Dembri, who never replied. In addition, the two ultra-secularist parties, sympathizing with the eradicator currents within the regime—the Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie, RCD, led by Said Sadi and the Ettahadi party—rejected the invitation, due to the presence of FIS.

Beyond the non-participation of the regime and the secular hardliners, the biggest challenge for Sant'Egidio was to find a representative negotiator on behalf of FIS. The leadership (Madani, Belhadj and Hachani) was in jail and the party outlawed; it only existed as an underground network in Algeria (led by Mohamed Said) and an international executive office (led by Rebah Kebir). The community first contacted Guemazzi (recently released FIS leader in Algeria, who was in close contact with Belhadj and Madani) and he obtained the endorsement of the imprisoned leadership. However, neither Guemazzi nor Kebir were able to lead the negotiations on behalf of the FIS (as Madani and Belhadj had requested).[163] The task eventually fell on Anwar Haddam—head of the parliamentary delegation, in exile in Washington—who was the only FIS leader who could move freely.[164]

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[163] Guemazzi did not have traveling documents and Kebir could not leave Germany as he was waiting for his asylum application to be processed.
[164] See the informal and formal invitations sent by Andrea Bartoli in Appendices F and G.

The first round of talks took place in Rome at the headquarters of Sant'Egidio. In addition to the participants, 250 external observers, mostly journalists, scholars and bureaucrats, attended the talks. The sessions were all public and framed as "open deliberation" to avoid upsetting the Algerian government. The key objective was to create a space for the Algerian political opposition to meet and discuss the situation, something that was not possible inside Algeria at the time due to the political climate. The participants presented their views on the Algerian crisis and possible ways of exiting it. The concrete outcome was the initiation of a dialog without going into the Algerian debate on the legitimacy of the interlocutors, together with a final declaration stating the parties intention to meet again and resume a real negotiation—only Nahnah and Bokrouh refused to sign, withdrawing from the process (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997: 77–83). As such, the first round of Rome talks represented the first step in the building of a political alliance between the FIS, FFS and FLN, and a common counter-narrative of the regime's framing of the Algerian conflict, in which the "terrorists" were a disconnected, evil element that needed to be eradicated. Rather, the new narrative of the political opposition told the story about the FLN's failure to deliver on the promises of the 1962 revolution and the regime's responsibility for the Algerian crisis as the result of the "tragic events" of 1991 (referring to the coup d'état).

This new emerging alliance (between FIS, FFS and FLN) met with a harsh reaction. The Algerian regime continued its campaign of defaming the participants of the talks and the Sant'Egidio community. But the Algerian regime was not the only actor unhappy with the Rome talks; the GIA—which opposed against all dialog initiatives between FIS and the regime—tried to spoil the process. On December 24, the group seized an Air France passenger plane at the airport of Algiers, taking 238 passengers hostage, while demanding the release of Madani, Belhad and Layada. Two days later, on December 26, four Pères Blancs were assassinated in Cabilia and the GIA claimed responsibility (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997: 99–100).

In this difficult political climate, with the political leadership of the FIS increasingly losing control over the Islamists, Sant'Egidio's efforts to bolster

political support became increasingly frustrated. France, muddling through a period of cohabitation between Mitterrand and Balladur, was not able to engage (even if the foreign minister, Alain Juppé, was favorable). Meanwhile, the Italian MFA opted for a wait and see posture, as going in alone seemed too risky and Madrid, for its part, was interested but did not commit. The U.S. Under-Secretary of State responsible for Middle East and North Africa, Robert Pelletrau, was sympathetic but could offer formal support. Despite the lack of support, Sant'Egidio went ahead with the preparations for the second round of mediation.

Round II of the Rome talks

The second Rome Platform had a quite different set-up than the first: the sessions were not public, the talks took place in a secret location in Rome (facilitated by the community); more time was given to participants (a full working week); the parties sent formal delegations[165] with prepared documents; and the sessions were held "between Algerians, behind closed doors". Thus, the second round offered a more ambitious and structured agenda for the negotiations, aiming for a common framework of peace, signed by the Algerian opposition and forwarded to the Algerian regime.

For the second round, Sant'Egidio had asked the participants (the FIS in particular) to prepare a political document meant to serve as a starting point for the negotiations. The FIS document prepared by Madani and Belhadj, who were then under house arrest, is in fact the first and only joint political document produced by the FIS leaders together, which says something about the political

[165] Interview with Anwar Haddam, Washington, February 2014, and with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013. Anwar Haddam still represented the FIS (as Guemazzi and Kebir could not travel), but this time he was joined by Abdelkrim Ould Adda, who was a representative of the FIS executive committee and had a Belgium passport. As for the representatives of the other political parties, Ait Ahmed was accompanied by National Secretary Ahmed Djeddai and Ben Bella by General Secretary Khaled Bensmain. There was only one new participant with the status of observer: the former Sheykh of Medea, Hocine Esslimani, who introduced the Sant'Egidio community to the FIS in the first place. Nahnah and Boukrouh, having abstained from signing the declaration after the first meeting, did not attend. Ali Yahia was the only non-political participant and was assigned the role of coordinator of the common sessions and group spokesperson. See: Giro & Impagliazzo (1997: 109).

inexperience and lack of political training of the FIS leadership.[166] The FLN and the FFS also prepared a set of documents (see Appendix J). The Rome Platform was therefore the result of the "raw materials" produced by these three parties—the three "Fronts", FFS, FLN and FIS—elaborated with the supervision and consultation of the smaller political parties and civil society actors.

The key ambition of the negotiations was to elaborate a credible political proposition, and thus convert the political opposition into a plausible interlocutor to the Algerian regime. The participants had to take a position on a number of critical issues: What type of final document or product should they aim for; posture and conditions vis-à-vis the regime; values and principles of the Algerian state; the role of Islam; the practicalities of the transition period.

After five days of negotiations; the "Platform for a Political and Peaceful Solution to the Algerian Crisis" (the Rome Platform) was signed by all of the participants.[167] Briefly, the document provides a historical reading of the Algerian conflict in which the 1991 coup was framed as the key reason for the current crisis and states the need to reopen the democratization process as the *sine qua non* for peace in Algeria. The document demanded a return to constitutional law, including a restoration of the 1989 constitution, and suggested the immediate organization of a national conference to establish a national transition council. The preliminary conditions for dialog included: 1) the immediate release of FIS leaders and all political detainees; 2) political and media arenas to be opened up; an end to the use of torture and extra-judicial executions; 3) full renunciation of the use of violence and; 4) an independent commission to investigate the crimes of the civil war. As for the contentious issue of Islam, the document avoids mentioning the political program of FIS altogether and simply reiterates Article 1 of the

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[166] For more detail, see Appendices H and I.

[167] For more detail, see Appendix L. The final agreement was signed by Abdennour Ali Yahyia; Abdelhamid Mehri (FLN); Hocine Ait Ahmed and Ahmed Djeddai (FFS); Anwar Haddam (FIS); Louisa Hanoune (PT); Ahmed Ben Bella and Khaled Bensmain (MDA); Abdallah Jaballah (Ennahda); and Ahmed Ben Mouhammed (JMC).

historical FLN proclamation of November 1, 1954: "The restoration of the sovereign democratic Algerian state governed by the principles of Islam."[168]

The Post-Rome developments

Although the Platform triggered some initial optimism in both Italy and Algeria, it soon became clear that it has it had failed politically. Zeroual and the Algerian authorities ignored the Platform altogether and went ahead with the announced presidential elections. Zeroual won those with 60 % of the vote. The participants from the Rome talks first abstained from formal politics, but eventually had to accept the *de facto* political developments in the country. With the exception of the FIS (which remained outlawed) the rest of the political opposition that attended the Rome talks later joined the formal political framework. As for Sant'Egidio, the community suffered political isolation from both the MFA and the Catholic Church structures, from which it had to work hard to recover. Until this very day, the legacy of the initiative remains highly contentious.

What is religious about faith-based mediation?

Ostensibly a case of faith-based mediation, the question emerges: What was the precise role of religion in Sant'Egidio's mediation initiative in Algeria? At first glance and judging from the reports of the protagonists of the talks—mediators and participants—religion played a very limited role, if at all. Quite to the contrary, based on what one would expect given the literature on faith-based mediation, the issue of religion was consistently downplayed or even explicitly challenged by both Sant'Egidio and the FIS. Both parties describe the mediation effort as a predominantly political process, answering to the political nature of the Algerian conflict.

[168] For the full text of the declaration, see: https://middleeast.library.cornell.edu/content/proclamation-algerian-national-liberation-front-fln-november-1-1954.

Sant'Egidio mediator Mario Giro explains that "in all conflicts there is a religious dimension, also in the Algerian conflict. But in reality, it is very political. Even if there are religious entities and subjects who are fighting."[169] Giro further challenges the presumed dichotomy between "religious" and "secular" and their usefulness as analytical categories to understand both specific conflicts, the parties to the conflict, and the role of the mediator; according to Giro, Sant'Egidio's performs mediation "regardless of how a conflict is perceived by the outside world and whether the parties to the conflict are religious or not."[170] Conflicts are essentially political, although they may be framed in religious terms; this means that mediation processes need to be political too. Hence, Giro states that "there is no methodology of faith-based mediation".[171] This is indeed a remarkable comment from a man that has devoted an entire career on a supposedly different approach to conflict mediation. He further contests what he sees the exotification of faith-based mediation as a separate branch of peacemaking:

> In the end it is quite banal: We are a small Catholic community that work with poverty and conflicts in Africa and across the world […]. Religion is merely one tool among many, and Sant'Egidio traces its primary identity and affiliation to the international community (of mediators) rather than to its status as religious congregation.[172]

The FIS negotiator, Anwar Haddam, also insists on the political character of the Algerian conflict and the mediation process. Haddam depicts a conflict that had its origins in the FLN's monopolization of power from the 1960s, and the FIS as a political movement that first and foremost was the result of political repression. To Haddam, the religious component of the Algerian conflict—if there is one—does not lie in the religious identity or program of the FIS, but rather in the way that the Algerian regime manipulated and abused the Islamic character of the FIS to discredit its (legitimate) political aspirations. According to Haddam, the Algerian regime's portrayal of the FIS as a religious fundamentalist movement

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[169] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome 2013.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

beyond the scope of dialog or negotiations was a conscious strategy to legitimize its eradication policies toward the Islamists. Against this background, the “genius” of Sant’Egidio—which Haddam says made the mediation effort possible —was the Catholic community’s ability to see through this manipulation and instrumentalization of religion on behalf of the regime, and insist on a political approach toward the conflict.[173]

This is as far as the protagonists of the mediation efforts are willing to go on the role of religion on an initial basis. As we can see, the issue of religion is generally toned down and not seen as influencing the mediation process in any significant way. The only ways in which religion actually enters the picture and does play a role (in the accounts of the Sant’Egidio and FIS), is in a “perverted” and instrumentalized form, either through the deliberate manipulations of religion by secular actors (as the Algerian regime) or through the misunderstanding of religion by fundamentalist elements within the FIS. As for the Sant’Egidio and the FIS, religion reportedly plays a much subtler role—something closely associated with the identity of the actors and which cannot easily be isolated and understood separately.

Sant’Egidio and FIS thus make a distinction between “bad” (manipulated, abused) religion and “good” (authentic, true) religion. Whereas it is easy to get a grip about what “bad” religion is and how it affects political processes, “good” religion—and its impact on specific political practices such as mediation—remains vaguer. There is an (understandable) resistance toward defining too neatly what the positive arsenal of religion represents in concrete terms.

In an effort to develop a more comprehensive understanding of what “good religion” is and what it may add to mediation processes like the Algerian one, I suggest a heuristic exercise, which asks: What is *political* about faith-based mediation? And what is *religious* about faith-based mediation? By triangulating the issue of religion, I seek to develop a nuanced understanding of the constructions and configuration of “the political” and “the religious” in the

[173] Interview with Anwar Haddam, Washington, 2014.

Algerian mediation efforts, and thus of some possible dynamics of faith-based mediation more generally.

Political aspects of the Algerian mediation

There is much evidence to support the participants' description of the Algerian mediation efforts as a predominantly political affair or practice. This goes for the framing of the motivation of the mediators to intervene; Sant'Egidio's conflict analysis and intervention design; and, finally, the content and outcome of the talks, concerning the Rome Platform as a political document and contract.

Motivation

Whereas the literature on faith-based mediation speaks of the "uniquely religious and spiritual motivation" of religious mediators, the Sant'Egidio mediators responsible for the Algerian mediation efforts speak of a much sober and political form of motivation. In their account, the decision to intervene in the Algerian conflict was first and foremost the result of political and strategic considerations.

First, the Algerian mediation was part of conscious and ambitious effort to expand the scope and the 'portfolio' of the community, both in terms of region, interlocutors of the type of conflict. It was the first time the Sant'Egidio community (or any other Western actor, for that matter) engaged with a radical Islamist movement—something that seems to have evoked a certain excitement among the community responsible, as an important challenge. Mario Giro explains that "at the time, no one had dared to think that it was possible to dialog with a radical Muslim movement".[174] The decision to intervene was thus at least partly a calculated risk, aiming to strengthen the community's new-won position and influence in the field of international conflict mediation. According to Sant'Egidio, FIS was still "recoverable" at this time (in 1994), and a political solution to the Algerian conflict was viewed as indispensable to regional security. Interestingly, this interpretation of the Algerian conflict—and its relations, both thematically

[174] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013.

and geographically, to the broader MENA region—has only strengthened with time, a key reason that the community considers the initiative as a "success" even if it "failed". Indeed, Giro views the Algerian conflict as a crucial test for democratic development in the MENA region and insists that if the outcome of the Algerian conflict had been different, it may have altered the entire subsequent history of Islamic radicalization and political conflict in North Africa and the Middle East:

> If we had been able, in the negotiations of 1995, to convert FIS into a normal political actor, within the framework of the negotiations with the other parties, that was the guarantee of the laicité of the state, we would no longer be at the same point that we are today in Tunisia and Egypt.[175]

In retrospect, the Algerian conflict and Sant'Egidio's meditation initiative are viewed as a litmus test for international society and "applied" secularism, which the international community failed by not supporting the Sant'Egidio community.

In addition to the overall political interpretation of the Algerian conflict and its importance, the decision to intervene was also motivated by a moral responsibility to "do something". Giro explains that "the Algerian war was becoming very precarious, but no one wanted to intervene."[176] Although both U.S. and European political leaders in the initial phase expressed concern about the Algerian coup d'état and the interruption of the elections, they hesitated to follow up. This resistance was partly due to Europe's colonial legacy in Algeria: the French leadership was concerned about evoking memories and bad blood concerning their difficult history in Algeria, and non-French European leaders resisted because they still (to a surprising extent) considered Algeria as "France's backyard" and thus a problem that France would have to take the lead on.[177] Besides, Islamism and religious fundamentalism in North Africa represented unknown territory for most Western audiences—which again made them easy targets for Algerian regime propaganda depicting the FIS as religious fundamentalists wanting to destroy democracy with democratic means. The careful sympathy that the FIS enjoyed in the initial phase would thus soon be

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[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

replaced by an implicit acceptation of the regime's use of force to crush the Islamist opposition.

Against this background, the Sant'Egidio community felt as one out of very few actors who would be able and willing to take the lead in a possible intervention. The community had solid connections to Algeria since decades through its efforts in inter-religious dialog and possessed a better-informed and more fine-tuned knowledge about Algerian politics and the status of democracy in Algeria under secularist FLN rule than most European leaders. This included a more nuanced understanding of both so-called secularist and religio–political actors in Algerian politics and of the relations between the two. As such, the community felt morally obliged to act.

The moral obligation felt by Sant'Egidio was strengthened with the accusation by Muslim actors around the world of the hypocrisy and double standards of Western power holders regarding democracy; namely, the view that the West would only contest the breach of democratic principles when there was a Christian community involved, and that this reflected deep-running assumptions in the West about Muslims not being worthy or "ready" for democracy. The community's decision to intervene was thus also a proactive, symbolic gesture designed to prove that Sant'Egidio did not share or accept the Eurocentric (and essentially pro-Christian) biases guiding the international policies of Western, secularist regimes. By intervening in Algeria and insisting on the right of an Islamist party—as any other political party with large public support—to partake in the official politics of the country, the Sant'Egidio community was hoping to communicate its policy of non-discrimination on religious grounds, regardless of the direction.[178]

Hence, we see that religion did in fact play a certain role in the community's motivation to intervene, but in an inversed sense (relative to what we learn from the faith-based mediation literature). The decision to intervene was not guided by religious inspiration in the sense that religion offered a "grand narrative" in which the Algerian conflict could be inscribed and provided with meaning –which would

[178] Interview with Marco Impagliazzo, Rome, 2014.

support the argument proposed by Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009: 196) that religious mediators "use religious tools and texts to construct a new story, a new narrative in which issues and differences are represented as meaningful parts of a divine project".[179] Quite to the contrary, a key motivating element for Sant'Egidio was to show that religion in fact was not as important as assumed (i.e., that religion was not responsible for the Algerian conflict, and that FIS represented a primarily politically motivated contestation of the Algerian regime, rather than a religiously motivated one). The aim was thus to convert a seemingly religious conflict into a political one, and thereby quarantine and protect religion (whether Islamic or Catholic) from political manipulation and misrepresentation. Mario Giro explains that this detangling religion from negative associations with conflict and violence is part of the community's basic impulse and modus operandi in international conflict mediation: "The religious aspect of crisis is important to us, also in order to keep it out of the conflict".[180]

Conflict analysis and intervention design

In addition, the conflict analysis and intervention design of the Algerian mediation efforts suggest a predominantly political approach and process. The first step for the Sant'Egidio working group—as for any mediator preparing for a possible intervention—was to elaborate a thorough understanding of the Algerian conflict and its parties: What was the Algerian conflict essentially about? And who were the key parties to the conflict?

Sant'Egidio's analysis, effectively informing the set-up of the initiative, tells the story of a conflict triggered and fueled by political repression, not religion. The Algerian conflict was seen as the result of political monopolization by FLN in its own interest for nearly half a decade, and the failure to acknowledge the plural and diverse character of Algerian society, in religious, ethnic and ideological terms.

[179] See page 11 and 23 for further discussions.
[180] Interview with Marco Giro, Rome, 2013.

Sant'Egidio's analysis also differed from mainstream interpretations regarding the key parties to the conflict. Whereas dominant interpretations emphasized a "historic" confrontation between a secularist regime and an Islamic contender (a narrative that was also pushed by pro-confrontation forces within the regime and the FIS), Sant'Egidio viewed the conflict as one between the Algerian regime, on the one hand, and the entire political opposition, on the other. The effectively meant that the FIS question (and the question of Islamic fundamentalism more generally) was treated within the larger frame of political opposition in Algeria, rather than as a unique religio–political phenomenon. From Sant'Egidio's perspective, the FIS was primarily as a populist movement, which used the language of Islam to frame its grievances. Sant'Egidio thus considered FIS to be the "unfortunate expression of a very real social and political malaise".[181] Yet, the community explicitly avoided labeling the FIS as a "fundamentalist actor with a coherent grand strategy of destroying the West and installing theocracy"[182] —a narrative pushed by so-called "eradicators" within the regime and security forces.

The mediation design reflected this baseline analysis both through its composition of participants and the content of the talks. In line with Sant'Egidio's analysis of the conflict as one affecting Algerian society at large, the participants had to reflect the entire political opposition, the Algerian regime and important civil society actors. Most importantly, it would have to include the political parties that had taken the largest number of votes in the elections: the FIS, the FLN and the FFS. Sant'Egidio explicitly rejected any idea of any exclusive negotiation between the regime and the FIS (which was suggested by both the regime and the FIS at different points) because it wanted to avoid a "horse trade" between the FIS and the regime, at the cost of the Algerian population.[183] As the regime refused to participate, the mediation efforts eventually took the form of alliance building within the political opposition with the FLN (Mehri), the FFS (Hocine Ait Ahmed)

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[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Interview with Marco Impagliazzo, Rome, 2014.

and FIS (Anwar Haddam)—together with Ben Bella, the first president of independent Algeria—as the key protagonists.

The collaboration of these different actors—many of them having played key roles in the liberation movement and Algerian politics, providing the mediation initiative with considerable popular and historical legitimacy[184]—served to tell a quite powerful counter-narrative to that of the regime. The regime tried to isolate the FIS as a clandestine, fundamentalist actor that hated democracy and had to be repressed with force. The mediation, in contrast, communicated something quite different: a united political opposition (in which FIS was an integrated part), which wanted to negotiate with the regime and start a new era of Algerian democratic politics.

As for the content of the mediation efforts, this had to be redefined when it became clear that the regime would not be part of the talks. With a key party absent, what could one possibly negotiate about? Sant'Egidio nevertheless decided to go on with the talks, still framed as an open deliberation. The main goal was now the creation of a common platform and a "politics of alliance" between the political opposition parties as a first step toward real negotiations with the regime.[185] The historic leader of the socialist party FFS, Hocine Ait Ahmed, spoke of the unity of the opposition and its ambition to launch a new era of Algerian politics in the opening session of first round of talks in Rome:

> The regime has done everything to split the opposition. They count on us not being able to understand each other or reach an agreement. But here we are, even agreeing on the fundamental principles that should be the basis of a negotiated solution. We have all affirmed the need to denounce the use of violence, end the horror, and respect human dignity. We are here to inaugurate a new politics. The only mode to exit the crisis is democracy.[186]

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[184] This was indeed a powerful symbol of reconciliation and unity among the Algerian political opposition, bearing in mind the historical enmity between Ben Bella and Hocine Ait Ahmed. Ben Bella had sentenced Ait Ahmed to death in the 1960s, after he had resigned his membership in the FLN and founded the FFS.

[185] Interview with Mario Giro in Rome, 2013.

[186] Hocine Ait Ahmed, at the opening the second session of the first day of the first round of talks in Rome (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997: 83, my translation).

The mediators viewed it as crucial to put an end to the zero-sum logic that had effectively characterized Algerian politics since independence. The ambitious aim of the mediation initiatives was thus to create the conditions of "a new type of politics" in Algeria—not primarily to negotiate the religio–political program of the FIS. [187] The mediation efforts were designed as "meta-political" mediation attempts to address the rules of the game of Algerian politics, which was considered as a necessary condition in order to the successful political re-integration of the FIS. The real issue was therefore to create a credible political proposition and convert the political opposition into a plausible interlocutor to the Algerian regime. For this to happen, the mediators wanted to "help the leaders of the FIS to promote a different type of politics" and, by consequence, reintegrate the movement into the fold of constructive political forces (Giro & Impagliazzo 1997: 83, my translation).

The Rome Platform as political document

Furthermore, the final output of the mediation initiatives—the Rome Platform, as a political document —suggests a highly political process. The proposed national contract is an entirely secular political structured around four issues. These were: 1) a historical reading of the Algerian conflict; 2) preliminary conditions for a dialog with the regime; 3) values and principles of Algerian politics and; 4) suggestion for how to organize the transition period.

According to Haddam, religion was in fact nearly absent in the mediation initatives. Jaballah (representing the Ennahda party) had initially insisted on including some references to Algeria being rebuilt as an Islamic state. However, as the secularist parties fiercely opposed this and Sant'Egidio advised against it, the FIS eventually decided that this issue did not have to be sorted out in the national contract, and that the overarching aim of the Platform should be to reach an agreement with the other political parties. Consequently, FIS did not support Ennahda's efforts to include directions on the religious character of the future Algerian state. Rather, FIS insisted that this would be a matter for internal FIS

[187] Interviews with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013, and Anwar Haddam, Washington, 2014.

processes once the political environment allowed for the party to pursue the mandate it had been given by the Algerian people.[188]

However, according to Haddam, the FIS was not ready to give up the issue of religion altogether, being an explicitly Islamist party aspiring to represent the Islamist vote. The compromise that was reached was hence to reiterate the first article of the historical 1954 FLN proclamation, stating "the restoration of the sovereign democratic Algerian state governed by the principles of Islam." As this proclamation represented the only political document in the history of independent Algeria that was unanimously recognized by the entire political opposition, it represented a "minimalist" solution to the Islam question, which all parties could agree upon.[189]

This article, however, according to Anwar Haddam, triggered a curious episode, which illustrates the extent to which Sant'Egidio tried to "evacuate" religion from the mediation process altogether. Haddam explains that during the writing of the Platform, one of the Sant'Egidio mediators, at one point, decided to erase the 1954 article referring to the Islamic foundation of the constitution, without consulting the participants.[190] When discovered, this was opposed by FIS together with most of the other parties. This was because the article was seen as largely non-controversial, as it simply repeated a general reference to Islam that had already been agreed upon in 1954. According to Anwar Haddam, then, the Sant'Egidio mediator thus apologized and the article was replaced in the text of the Platform.[191]

Anwar Haddam explains that the main achievement of the mediation effort was the "move from a debate on the legitimacy of the FIS as a political actor to a general discussion of the rules of democratic participation".[192] The debate reached its hardest round with the question of how to deal with FIS as a political movement. The outcome of this discussion marked a shift: Instead of negotiating the political program of the FIS or its legitimacy as a political actor, the mediation

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[188] Interview with Anwar Haddam, Washington, 2014.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.

initiatives moved toward a broader discussion of the rules and principles under which political parties, the FIS included, could pursue their agendas.

This re-framing of the mediation attempts effectively facilitated a considerable evolution and maturation on behalf of the FIS. A comparison of the political documents prepared for the second Rome meeting and the final text of the National Contract (i.e., the Rome Platform) allows us to trace a certain evolution in FIS's discourse and ambitions. Beyond recognizing democratic principles, like political pluralism and alternation of power, we see a shift in the language describing opponents, from an identity-based irreconcilable discourse on the Algerian regime as follows:

> The governments of the Islamic world have robbed public money to build grand palaces, they have used it in their personal business, for dresses for their girlfriends […]. [T]hey have suffocated peoples' spirit of initiative and their moral dignity. The Arab people, among the richest on earth, have become impoverished by their tyrants.[193]

The change was toward the rather sober discourse produced within the Rome Platform:

> More than 30 years after achieving independence at such a terrible price, many of the principles and objectives of November 1st, 1954 have foundered, and the peoples' hope and desires which flourished after October 1998 have been steadily eroded […]. Today the people of Algeria live in a climate of terror without equal, exacerbated by intolerable social and economic conditions. In this faceless war, kidnappings, disappearances, assassinations, systematic torture, mutilations and reprisals, are the daily fare of the men and women of Algeria.[194]

The religious aspects of the Algerian mediation efforts

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[193] From the FIS working document of the second Rome talks, as cited in Giro & Impagliazzo (1997: 115).

[194] The Rome Platform (1995). See: Appendix J.

Religion as identity

Whereas the literature on faith-based mediation presupposes that faith-based mediation constitutes a specific mode of conflict mediation that applies "religious myths, rituals, values or texts", religion appears to have taken a far more discrete role in the Algerian mediation efforts. There was no "overt" use of religious elements or practices, such as prayers or discussions on theology or religious values.[195]

Rather, according to the account of the protagonists, religion appears to have entered primarily through the identity of the mediator; effectively making religious identity a key tool of mediation. Giro says that "the fact of being a religious community, and not a professional office: this is a tool."[196] If religious identity is a tool, this means that in view of understanding the subtle role of religion in international conflict mediation, we need to look closer at the enactments and role of religious identities: On how such religious identities are practiced; the results they produce; their functional, operational and symbolic dimensions; their strategic and non-strategic components and elements.

The ambition here is clearly not to give an exhaustive account of Sant'Egidio's religious identity as mediators. Assuming that identities are fluid and essentially *relational*, the aim of this section is therefore to investigate what parts of its religious (mediator identity) reservoir was mobilized and "applied" during the Algerian mediation efforts, primarily in its interactions with the FIS. Religious mediator identities—as other identities—can be configured and mobilized in different ways depending on the context and the interlocutors; this means that the religious mediator identity of Sant'Egidio most likely will appears as quite different during mediation efforts in, for instance, Latin America, with a Catholic

[195] Anwar Haddam recalls that the only time where Sant'Egidio asked the participants to take part in an explicitly religious event was when they invited the group to attend the daily evening prayer in the Church of Santa Maria di Trastevere. However, in the end, only the FIS delegates accepted the invitation: According to Haddam, this was because the other participants did not think it was acceptable for a Muslim to enter a Christian church, something which Haddam found amusing, saying: "[This is said by] those who don't even believe!"

[196] Interview with Marco Giro, Rome, 2013

audience. The fascinating aspect of the Algerian mediation initiatives from this perspective is that it gives us an insight into a context where the specifically Catholic component (most probably) played a minimalist role in the religious identity of Sant'Egidio, and where the community had to develop and apply an *ad hoc*, inter-religious, inter-cultural, secular–religious skillset—which has since become the "signature" competence and field of expertise of the Sant'Egidio community.

As for the role of religious mediator identity in the Algerian mediation attempts, I will show how Sant'Egidio's religious identity was primarily practiced through a set of analytical and communicative skills. Together with the important symbolic force of "being religious", these capacities translated into a significant success in the mediation efforts—at least from a micro perspective (i.e., regarding the moderation of the FIS and the alliance building between the political opposition) but not in a comprehensive way regarding the political outcome of the Algerian conflict per se.

Analytical skills

A key component of the religious mediator identity practiced in the Algerian mediation can be summoned up as a specific way of looking at the world. Two features in this world view turned out as particularly important. The first is a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of religion (and its relation to both secularism and fundamentalism) than secular actors; and the second a particular religious anthropology of peace and conflict, emphasizing the human dimensions of conflict with mankind being seen as inherently good and conflicts as something contrary to our true nature.

A nuanced understanding of religion and secularism

A key factor of success in Sant'Egidio's interaction with FIS was clearly due to the latter's conception of Sant'Egidio having a more sophisticated understanding of religion and the Islamic character of the FIS than most other actors. As Haddam says, the international executive office of the FIS (headed by Haddam in

Washington after he fled in 1992) had been looking for some time for an appropriate mediator.[197] Haddam explains that the FIS had several meetings with an officer at the Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, but that finding a suitable mediator was a difficult task because "people in general were afraid of Islamists".[198] Haddam says "most people thought we were fundamentalists and that we wanted to install a theocracy like in Iran". [199] Sant'Egidio on the other hand, according to Haddam, had a much more realistic understanding of the religious character of the FIS and its relations to politics. Haddam attributes this understanding to the Sant'Egidio being religious actors themselves, somewhat like the FIS, stating:

> At the time, people had very little knowledge about the situation in Algeria and Islam. People were afraid of the FIS. So, the fact that they [Sant'Egidio] were not afraid of religion; that they understood that it is possible to be a political actor with a religious motivation—without being a fundamentalist or extremist—was important to us. They understood us, because they too are a little bit like that.[200]

A religious anthropology of peace and conflict

Another key element of the mediator identity of Sant'Egidio appears to be its specific anthropology of peace and conflict. This anthropology combines humanist, religious and political concepts in a way that effectively distinguishes it from professional diplomatic offices. According to Giro,[201] this specific "outlook" of Sant'Egidio stems from an "original intuition" together with practical experiences from the field of conflict mediation. It has two main components: an emphasis on the human side of conflicts and a conception of conflict as something unnatural to mankind.

Giro explains that although acknowledging the political and economic origins and aspects of conflicts, the Sant'Egidio approach contains a clear critique

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[197] Interview with Anwar Haddam, Washington, 2014.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Interview with Mario Giro in Rome, 2013.

of the over-simplistic, economic, "rational actor" understandings of conflict dominating, which in their opinion characterize the methods of "official diplomacy".[202] It also seeks to address and understand the human side of conflict:

> There might be, let's say, a conflict over oil, diamonds, etc. Resources are important, that's true. But what is more important are the men who create the conflict. You have to understand why that man is a military leader, why he has chosen to take up arms, etc. What does he want, imagine and think about his future for himself and his peers? It is not only about understanding the economic dimension, or political power relations; it is also about understanding the profound reasons that have lead these men toward a road that is not natural.[203]

Giro further explains that since conflicts are led by human beings, conflict resolution, in order to be successful, has no choice but to address the personal and psychological dimensions of the conflict in question. In fact, the psychology and personalities of the protagonists to the conflict represent an enormous reservoir for conflict mediation that is often left untapped by professional mediators. As Giro elaborates:

> It is an entire personal or humanistic aspect in this sense, which is important, and that official negotiation, at times, hold to be less important. You always have people that are hurt by the choices they have made, and every time these choices are revisited, my experience is that it is profoundly tormenting for the people in question—even if they believe they are right. You are dealing with people who are set on a road with no possibility of return. And you try to show them that there is a way back.[204]

The second distinct feature of Sant'Egidio's religious anthropology is a stern conviction of conflict as something unnatural and contrary to human nature. As Giro says: "Conflict is not natural. Conflicts exist, but they are not the natural way for human beings. We have the tendency to think that war is something natural, something inevitable, but this is not true."[205] Quite to the contrary, Sant'Egidio

[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

understands conflict and violence are something inherently abnormal to human beings; namely, as an artificial construction that has to be learned through long-term negative social processes. This means that conflicts are not the result of a spontaneous tendency in mankind, or that they emerge solely on the basis of structural factors (like different forms of injustice). Violent conflicts emerge only when the structures are present and when the social conditions allow for it. As Giro notes:

> There are those who say: "When there is too much religion, there is war"; "When there is too much money, there is war"; "When there too much ethnicity, there is often war". But there are very rich countries where there is never war, very religious countries that have never had war and there are countries with huge inequality that have never had war. It depends! It has to be constructed. And in the same way, one needs to construct peace.[206]

Sant'Egidio thus views both peace and conflicts as constructed sizes; as capacities or modes of human behavior that has to be cultivated:

> Killing is not easy. The moral "bad" needs to structure itself to work. It is not natural. It is not true that men are naturally bad, but if they make a huge effort, they can be good […]. In order to become a person that commit massacres you need to go the whole way down a ladder, of dehumanization.

What makes peacemaking possible, then, is the natural inclination of mankind toward peace, even among the worst of warlords. Speaking of the extremist elements within the Algerian Islamist camp, Giro says:

> I can tell you that even the hardest ones, the meanest ones, the most extremist, the craziest of war lords, are men. And in their ideas, war is nothing but a period in their life. Even the worst, they are not born to make war.[207]

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[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.

What is the role of religion in this nexus? There appears to be two sides to it. On the one hand, religion seems to be present as "a religious psychology in action", expressed in the idea that there is another person (a Christian?) behind the mediation efforts and the face of the perpetrator. As such, Sant'Egidio's faith-based mediation practices appears as the "operationalization" of Vatican II's replacement of *repentance* with *reconciliation* between the sinner and God. If you can make atonement with God, you can make it with people. There appears to be a specific catholic dimension here—an optimism regarding human nature which is definitely not Calvinist. It is one that differs from the religious anthropology of the evangelicals on central points. The aim is not to punish but to engage. This religious anthropology forms the baseline also for Sant'Egidio's contributions as a policy maker in the global policies of both states and the Holy See.

On the other hand, Sant'Egidio also appears to apply a quite traditional political science conception of religion as superstructure or identity. This is reflected in Giro's views on religion as something that can fuel and aggravate political conflicts, although it is not inherently responsible for it in the first place:

> It is important to keep religion out of conflict. Because religion, you know, is like an essence that you may throw on a fire and it becomes even worse—even if it is not the reason of the fire in the first place. Because it is part of the identity.[208]

Communicative skills

Religious literacy: Le FIS perdu.[209] The ability to communicate with other religious actors—being "religiously literate"—is cast as a key tool of Sant'Egidio's mediator identity. Sant'Egidio presents religion as a "lost language" in the hyper-secularized Western societies. By forgetting its religious origins and vocabulary, the West is now longer able to communicate with the rest of the world, which according to Giro, is still "hyper-religious".[210] Against this background,

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[208] Ibid.
[209] This expression plays on the French acronym of the FIS, pronounced the same way as *fils* [sons]—in this way, making a reference to the Biblical parable of the prodigal son.
[210] Interview with Mario Giro, Rome, 2013.

Sant'Egidio's religious literacy skills provides it with a unique access to the Muslim world—and the world at large—that secular diplomatic actors urgently lack. In the current state of world politics, characterized by a "crisis of communication between the West and the Muslim world", this represents a valuable resource:

> There is a problem of dialog between the West and the Muslim world, which is in a crisis since the arrival of Khomeini to power in Iran in the late '70s. This changed the face of the Muslim world and made religion something important again. And we, in the West, no longer have the tools to speak with this world, because we have become secularized. We have lost the language. We have lost all we need in order to communicate with a world that is hyper-religious. The Christian community may therefore be useful in this sense. It still has the tools to communicate with this world.[211]

Christian communities, such as Sant'Egidio, have a special access to different communities and actors worldwide through its religious literacy skills—something that clearly represent a significant advantage relative to conventional diplomats. There are, however, two features that stand out in Giro's account of religious literacy as a tool of mediation. First, there is the instrumentalist and strategic element: The idea that religious literacy is primarily a tool that Sant'Egidio applies as a door opener for communication with the Muslim world, not because it has an inherent value in itself. Giro emphasizes that Sant'Egidio's identity as Catholic community, and its ability to "speak religion", makes the community an appropriate interlocutor in the eyes of religious communities around the world—interestingly enough, almost regardless of faith tradition. The "pagan" Northern Europeans, on the other hand, are increasingly seen as someone that it is impossible to talk with: "According to the Muslims, Europe is without faith; it is not Christian. Northern Europe, in particular: you have become almost pagan."[212]

The other interconnected issue is that "religious literacy" as a skillset may actually be less directly linked to religion than one might think, at least to traditional conceptions of religion as something close to the theology and the

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[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid.

specific teachings of a given faith tradition. This, at least, seems to have been the case during the Algerian mediation attempts. In this initiative, it appears that the religious literacy of Sant'Egidio was not so much practiced through explicitly religious talk on Islam or Catholicism, but rather through a specific mode of speaking and addressing others, respectful of the shared feature of religious actors concerning the sacred (even if the explicit "content' of this sacred was left unspoken). As such, the religious literacy skills of Sant'Egidio appears to have materialized first and foremost as a mode of establishing relations associated with the notion of a "family" and a vocabulary building on associates concepts such as *belonging* and *inclusion*. Indeed, the family analogs were consistent through the Algerian mediation, where the opposition politicians were cast as "brothers and sisters", and the Islamist terrorists as *les fils perdus* ["lost sons"]. Throughout, Sant'Egidio promoted a conciliatory discourse on the terrorists as a homegrown product of Algerian society rather than as a strange element— 'bastard" sons. Within this logic, the solution proposed was to embrace and accommodate the lost children, rather to punish them. Needless to say, this reconciliatory discourse caused considerable consternation in many circles, especially as Islamist violence grew in scope and brutality. Sant'Egidio's religious literacy skills were thus primarily expressed through presenting the Algerian society as a family; namely, a social constellation where everyone depends on each other, and everyone is responsible—for better or worse—for the wellbeing of the flock. This "unity" perspective, it is worth noting, is the same as we traced in the IMPP meeting in the last chapter.

Religious contexts and infrastructure

Finally, the Algerian mediation efforts show that religious literacy can also be practiced through *physical places and contexts*. Sant'Egidio's rather spectacular venues and religious infrastructure surely added a dimension to the talks. The first round of talks were held in the Sant'Egidio headquarters (a convent from the fifteenth century), a place of great symbolic importance located in the heart of Rome. The city of Rome as a *backdrop*—the city of the Pope, the Caput Mundi of religion and politics, with its unique historical heritage and unmatched collection

of religious art—and the community's headquarters as *center stage*, with its own little Church, and an impressive religious library and archives, communicates, in my reading of it, a powerful message. For an actor like the FIS, it must be the visual representation of a success story of transition from a clandestine religious brotherhood (like the FIS) to a very favorable position, at the crossroads and very center of religious and political authorities, in a tolerant and benign political climate.

Humanistic resources

In addition to its religious literacy skills—understood in a broad sense—Sant'Egidio's specific communicative skills as a religious mediator were also practiced through more humanistic and psychological methods. According to Giro, Sant'Egidio mediators are more oriented toward the human and psychological dimensions of conflict and peace, than are "professional diplomats". This means that they give priority to a number of humanistic tools, including patience, the capacity to listen, the sense of belonging to a community and understanding the perspectives of the human beings involved in conflicts. As Giro contends:

> The method of Sant'Egidio differs in general terms from official negotiations. It is a method that insists much more on the human and personal aspects [...]. We create personal relations between the negotiators and participants. A number of human qualities—patience, dialog, listening—become political tools.[213]

Giro underscores that these methods are important because of their functional value, not because of their ethical or moral content. Nor are such methods unique for Catholic or religious approaches to peace mediation; everyone in the mediation business, including secular NGOs, use versions of the same tools.

[213] Interview with Mario Giro in Rome, 2013.

Religious identity as tool of mediation

What, then, is the added value of faith-based approaches to international conflict mediation? How does religion enter the picture? Based on this case study of Sant'Egidio's mediation initiative in Algeria, we see that religion enters primarily through the identity of the mediator, and what he or she represents (symbolically and "in reality") through being a religious actor. Giro says:

> In the end it is very political because you have to manage wealth sharing, power sharing, etc. But of course, the fact to be a religious community and not an office [...]; this is a tool, ok? This can help. When you are part of Sant'Egidio mediation, you are on the inside, you are part of a community, a family. All this are tools, instruments to work.[214]

Religious identities are thus a key tool of mediation and are at times used and applied quite *strategically* by the mediator. For instance, Giro explains that the religious identity of Sant'Egidio was probably decisive for FIS to accept them as partners:

> I believe that for them this was important. To see that we are a Christian community that prays every evening [...]. For the, let's say, the Muslim fundamentalist mentality, to see a Christian community a little bit according to their own mentality, is surely reassuring.[215]

In the Algerian case, the religious identity of Sant'Egidio was practiced through a set of analytical and communicative skills relating to a particularly religious anthropology of peace and conflict; a nuanced understanding of religion and secularism; religious literacy skills and humanistic resources (i.e., as a toolkit). Together, these skillsets produced some specific dynamics that constitute some of the added values or main strengths of faith-based mediation. A key component in this regard is the symbolic capital of religious identities and the capacities of such

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[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.

"imagined" commonalities in creating "insider relations" and as a consequence, latitude for negotiations.

In more concrete terms, I argue that the most important added value of faith-based approaches to mediation—judging from the Algerian case—lies in: 1) its capacity to neutralize the destructive impact of religion on conflicts; and 2) its potential to function as a space of political training for religious actors.

Religion neutralizes religion?

A main achievement of the religious identity of the mediator in the Algerian case—regardless of whether this identity was "real" or "projected"—was its capacity to neutralize the destructive impact of religion and re-articulate the conflict in political terms. The social mechanisms that made this possible were the religious identity of the mediator and its fine-tuned understanding of the religious character of the FIS—which effectively made it possible to go beyond discussions on the legitimacy of religion or the religious identity and program of the FIS, and rather focus on politics. Sant'Egidio's religious identity and its "sober" way of dealing with religion created a common sense of reference among the FIS representatives that was crucial to the progress of the mediation. Haddam explains that the FIS would probably have been too preoccupied defending its religious identity and program in the face of a secular actor, for whom religion *per se* would be defined as a problem, to even start talking about politics. Moreover, the religious identity of Sant'Egidio provided the community with a certain authority to negotiate the role of religion and its relations with politics that secular actors would not have. This authority made it possible for Sant'Egidio to push the idea that religion was not the problem, and help the FIS articulate its grievances in political rather than religious terms.

In this specific case, we thus see how the symbolic meaning of religion is used to convert religious conflicts into political ones, and thereby to remove religion from the picture. This shows a quite different application of religion than the one we learn about in the academic literature. Rather than using religion as a

meta-narrative to transform politics, there is conscious effort to remove religion (and its complicity) from the meta-narrative and return to "pure" politics.

Faith-based mediation as political training of religious actors

The second, interrelated, feature or added value of faith-based mediation that this study emphasizes is the political and even secularizing effect of faith-based mediation. Indeed, the Algerian mediation efforts can essentially be understood as a crash course in politics taught by one religious actor toward another.

As we have seen, at the time of the mediation intervention, the FIS were basically political rookies. Due to the difficult climate in Algeria, they had had few opportunities to organize and gain political experience. Moreover, the regime's heavy-handed crackdown of Islamists and sympathizers in the early years of the civil war had eradicated a whole generation of potential Islamist leaders. Haddam recalls: "[W]e had nothing to build on. All of our most promising potential leaders were either in prison or assassinated."[216]

Against this background, a major achievement of the Sant'Egidio mediation efforts appears to lie in its capacity to assist in the creation and formation of political subjectivities**;** that is, in teaching other religious actors to "think" and "speak politics". Faith-based mediation in the style of Sant'Egidio can therefore be conceptualized as a *secularizing* practice, in the sense that it promotes and trains religious actors to operate and navigate within a political landscape—it effectively seeks to equip faith-based actors with the language and tools necessary in view of canalizing their agenda through politics instead of religion. From this perspective, a main "function" of faith-based mediation is to tame and shape religion, rather than to liberate it. As a consequence, religion is "purified" of any connotations and associations with conflict and violence.

[216] Interview with Anwar Haddam, Washington, 2014.

Chapter 5
International practice: Negotiating religion and politics in “the World”

The objective of this final empirical chapter is to take an extended look at faith-based mediation and examine it as an international political practice. A basic premise of this study is that faith-based mediation practices do not take place in a vacuum—they are social and political practices that are motivated and shaped by the international political environment. This is the same point that Touval and Bercovitch (2003; 2008) make when they argue that faith-based mediation must be viewed within a context of international politics. Understanding and considering the contextual environment is therefore crucial in order to generate a comprehensive reading of faith-based mediation. The international context, however, is not simply useful as a way to understand mediator *motivation,* as Touval and Bercovitch seem to suggest. As I show in this chapter, it is also key to understanding the actual scope of opportunity and maneuver that actors have at their disposal, as well as their performative effect on world politics.

The aim of this chapter is therefore two-fold. On the one hand, it seeks to situate and assess Sant’Egidio’s position and role in international politics. On the other hand, it seeks to investigate the community’s performative effect on the structures and relations that comprise the international political context. Clearly, there are many possible entry points to studying Sant’Egidio within the context of international politics. In this study I focus on two key loci that are crucial in any assessment of Sant’Egidio’s role and function in international politics—namely, the community’s relations with political authorities (e.g. states) and those with religious authorities.

Having studied Sant’Egidio’s international engagements for some time, it has become clear to me that the community’s interactions with policymakers—both within the Holy See and within MFAs in Italy and abroad—on the meaning and role of religion in international politics are crucial. On this basis, I argue that

Sant'Egidio has emerged as a central entrepreneur of religion and politics, which is effectively changing religion from both the outside and the inside. I argue that the community's contribution in the articulation of a new political narrative on religion can be traced quite accurately through the "religious engagement policy framework" process, which will be the focus of the first part of this chapter. As for the community's input in theological and ecclesial debates on the appropriate role of Catholicism in contemporary world politics, I ground my discussion in the current confrontation between competing visions of diplomacy within the Holy See—namely, between what I conceptualize as a "Diplomacy of Truth" and a "Diplomacy of the Encounter".

Negotiating religion with political authorities

By studying the community's international relations and interaction with political authorities, I show that the Sant'Egidio community has experienced a substantial shift in status over the last decade, which has allowed it to emerge as one of the foremost authorities on "religion and politics" globally. As we will see in this chapter, the community has been a notable contributor to global policy-making as it pertains to religion and diplomacy in both the U.S. and Italy. It has played a key role in the elaboration of a new global narrative on religion and its role in politics, which has been instrumental in moving religion from a peripheral to central topic in global policy-making.

The community's recent rise in influence is the result of both push and pull factors. As for important pull factors, the community's change in status can be traced to a receptive U.S. context in the aftermath of the failed War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the need of American policymakers to develop a new model of U.S. religious diplomacy to restore Washington's international reputation and relations. By 2005/2006 it was increasingly acknowledged among U.S. diplomats and policy makers that Washington's policies in the Middle East had failed. The failure was largely interpreted as the result of the evangelical influence on U.S. policies under Bush. Against this background, central actors in the U.S. administration were looking to develop a more sophisticated and

reconciliatory model of Washington's religious diplomacy, in which religion could be engaged more "constructively" in the pursuit of U.S. interests. As I will show, this entailed an ambition to deploy "good" religion to fight "bad" religion, with terrorism as the utmost example of the latter. Sant'Egidio, in this context, represented a valuable resource and interlocutor for U.S. policy makers, through its status and position as a leading practitioner of religious diplomacy.

As for important push factors and Sant'Egidio's actual input to U.S. policy debates, I argue that the community played a central role in providing a new baseline narrative of the meaning and role of religion in international politics, which effectively informed U.S. policy-making, most explicitly through the elaboration of the "religious engagement policy framework." This framework was elaborated and implemented under President Obama, and in fact represents an important attempt to break with former dominant approaches to religion in U.S. global policies, that appears to have passed largely unnoticed in analysis of American foreign policy over the period. The main input of Sant'Egidio, I argue, has been to provide a new reading of international politics in which religion and religious actors are foregrounded. Religion has been presented as the "new normal"—indeed, it is secularism and secularists who represent the exception to the rule. Religion's role in diplomacy, then, should be holistic and implicit rather than direct and targeted (as evangelical policies centered on International Religious Freedom and Islamic terrorism had been).

Concerning the outcome of Sant'Egidio's input in U.S. policy-making around religion and foreign policy (and subsequently in Italian policy on the same), I argue that Sant'Egidio—alongside a set of likeminded Catholic actors in the United States and Italy—have been instrumental in providing a new and increasingly globalized discourse and understanding of the appropriate role of religion in international politics. This new narrative is currently feeding into global high-level policy processes—also beyond these two countries—as the religious engagement policy framework is currently being assessed and/or implemented within international institutions, in European countries and at the level of the European External Action Service, the EU's foreign-policy bureaucracy. Beyond a new narrative and change in discourse, I argue that the religious

engagement policy framework should also be understood as a transformative process of converting religion from a theoretical to a policy issue, with some expected and unexpected outcomes in the different settings. I show that Sant'Egidio's intellectual input has produced different results in the United States and Italy. In the United States, it has triggered a shift away from the evangelical emphasis on a confrontation between good and evil toward the inherently catholic notions of engagement and dialog. In Italy, in contrast, it has produced a more "pragmatic" renewed interest in religion in foreign policy, with religion being re-conceptualized as a main source of "new" knowledge and popular legitimacy.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to explain and describe the window of opportunity that opened for Sant'Egidio in 2005/2006, and the ways in which Sant'Egidio leveraged this opportunity in providing a range of inputs in U.S. and Italian policy-making on religion and foreign policy after this time. I conclude by discussing some (expected and unexpected) outcomes in terms of changing conceptions of religion in U.S. and Italian global policies, and on the community's role and status as an international political subject.

Sant'Egidio's rise as an internationally recognized political actor

The community's shift in status dates to the very receptive U.S. context in 2005–2006, when Sant'Egidio was drawn into U.S. policy debates on religion and foreign policy. By this time, the realization was dawning in U.S. diplomatic circles that the War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan had failed, triggering considerable soul searching among American diplomats and policymakers. There were widespread concerns about damaged relations with the Muslim world because of U.S. President Bush's policies and a growing consensus on the need for a new paradigm of religion to inform Washington's global policies.

Against this background, Sant'Egidio represented an obvious interlocutor for the U.S. diplomatic community. First, Italy's participation in the U.S.-led missions in the Middle East had laid the foundation for increased interaction and cooperation between the U.S. and Italian diplomatic circles, together with a shared understanding, at least to a certain degree, of how and why the policies failed. Also,

in Washington, policymakers wanted Sant'Egidio's religious expertise to help the United States "get religion right" in its foreign policies. The failure of U.S. policies was increasingly perceived as being linked to the issue of religion, and more specifically, the inability of the Bush administration to adequately understand religion and provide sound responses to challenges of religious extremism and terrorism. The evangelical impact on U.S. foreign policies under Bush was identified as the key problem, because of its confrontational and polarizing world view—namely, between the so-called "axis of evil" and the "forces of goodness and justice", which left little or no room for dialog or diplomacy. A particular concern was the issue of International Religious Freedom (IRF), which has been a traditional pillar of U.S. foreign policy, and its implementation under Bush. Critics argued it was being used as a politicized human rights tool by evangelists to interfere and pursue U.S. interests in the Middle East. Criticism was also leveled at the dominant trend of looking at religion primarily through the scope of terrorism (i.e., as a security issue).

In this new political climate, efforts were made to develop a new model of U.S. diplomacy that could engage constructively with religious actors around the world. American Catholic intellectuals rapidly took the lead in this discussion, and in the development of a new U.S. model of religion and diplomacy, which came to be known as the religious engagement policy framework. The prevalence of Catholic actors in the development of this new model of U.S. "religious diplomacy" is not surprising, given that the new policy framework was largely a reaction to Bush's evangelical foreign policies, in which there had been little room for conciliation and diplomacy. There was a general consensus on the need to build a more conciliatory and tolerant U.S. religious diplomacy informed by a more sophisticated outlook on religion. Catholic intellectuals were well-equipped in this regard, with their long tradition of engaging conciliation and diplomacy, and a rich intellectual heritage and capacity. Many of the leading U.S. universities are Catholic - —most notably, Georgetown University,[217] a Jesuit institution whose Walsh School of Foreign Service has a long tradition of training American

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[217] Which moreover has an impressive list of alumni, see https://sfs.georgetown.edu/alumni/prominent-alumni/

diplomats— and there is a rich tradition of Catholic intellectuals playing an important role in U.S. politics. In contrast, U.S. evangelicals have a limited tradition of intellectual engagement, due to the emphasis on charismatic features. There are few evangelical universities in the United States, with Liberty University (formerly part of the Baptist College Network) as a noteworthy exception.[218]

In this context, Sant'Egidio was invited in to U.S. policy discussions by Catholic friends (academics and policymakers) who would have central roles in the Obama Administration. Sant'Egidio was approached because it is the world's foremost practitioner of religious diplomacy and could provide culture, professionalism and knowledge of the field. Other assets were its proximity to Rome and Pope Francis. Sant'Egidio represented an obvious partner for the American government, having already become well-established in U.S. academic and diplomatic milieus, through its U.S. branch headed by Andrea Bartoli.

Sant'Egidio was both directly and indirectly involved in the development of the U.S. policy framework at this time. When Bartoli's became as member of the Department of State's Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group in 2012, the community took a formal role.[219] But it was also included on a more informal basis, through increased interaction and coordination between Sant'Egidio and the academic circles producing much of the foundation policy material for the religious engagement framework.[220]

The U.S. model of religious engagement

What, then, was Sant'Egidio input in U.S. policy-making on religion and foreign policy? Clearly it is methodologically difficult to assess the impact of Sant'Egidio relative to the other participants in the process, since we do not know how the policy processes unfolded in detail. I have tried to solve this by linking what we already know about Sant'Egidio's narratives and practices of religion (through the

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[218] The dominant trend of anti-intellectualism in American evangelical circles is well explored in Mark A. Noll's 2004 book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.

[219] Bartoli also participated in the U.S. State Department's testimony on religious persecution abroad before Congress.

[220] George Mason University and the University of Notre Dame in particular.

former chapters of the thesis) as a practitioner of international relations, and then discuss the extent to which the new policy framework can reasonably be linked to the religious expertise and input of Sant'Egidio. I start by explaining what religious engagement is and why it is relevant to the present study.

Religion from theory to policy: The "religious engagement policy framework"

The religious engagement policy framework is a policy framework for U.S: global polices that was developed and implemented under Obama, and which tried to break with the influence of evangelical traditions of U.S. foreign policies that had dominated under Bush (and also to a certain extent, Clinton). The framework is most explicitly laid out in the 2010 report *Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for U.S. Foreign Policy*, by Scott Appleby and Richard Cizik, two U.S.-based scholars of religion.[221]

The intention of the framework was to develop a new way of addressing and integrating religion in American foreign policy. The introductory sentence of the report states the authors' conviction that religion is the single most important challenge in contemporary global politics, and thus of the urgency in the task of "getting religion right" in U.S. foreign policies:

> There are times in foreign policy when the gap between what the United States can do and what it needs to do suddenly comes into focus. The advent of the nuclear age ushered in expertise on deterrence. The attacks of September 11 led to a more rigorous and systematic understanding of terrorist networks and how they operate. But there are also occasions where the capabilities gap is real, but lingers for some time, often at a great cost. The role of nationalism and decolonization was not widely understood in the United States until after the Vietnam War, despite considerable supporting evidence in the 1950s. Such is the case with religion today (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 1).

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[221] The report was sponsored by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and can be found online: https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/engaging-religious-communities-abroad-new-imperative-us-foreign-policy).

As for its ideological roots, the religious engagement policy framework can perhaps best be understood as the last "policy" expression of a longer, ideational/ideological trend aiming to "bring religion back" into U.S. global policies. Its origins are to be found in a particular interpretation of U.S. experiences in the 1990s and the early 2000s.[222] The religious engagement narrative conventionally places its origins with the *prise de conscience* of American diplomats in the 1990s over the failure to take religion into account in the elaboration of U.S. foreign policy. The religious engagement narrative, then, is inscribed in the same ideational or ideological tradition as the one motivating large parts of the religion and peace literature, in which the person of Douglas Johnston—the "Godfather of religious diplomacy"—and his perennial publications of the mid-1990s constitutes a key reference. A basic impulse of the current is therefore its position as a reaction to the secularist hegemony that has supposedly dominated international politics and diplomacy for decades (if not centuries, according to certain IR scholars). The secularist biases of U.S. foreign-policymakers and diplomats are seen as the single most important reason for the failure of U.S. global policies since the 1990s and its loss of global influence.

This line of thinking had some impact on political infrastructure and U.S. policies already in the late 1990s, with President Bill Clinton passing the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, establishing the U.S. Office of International Religious Freedom and an Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom. The IRF was rooted in the U.S. evangelical movement and has traditionally constituted the dominant paradigm for dealing with religion in U.S. foreign policies. However, as a result of the Office's politicized use of the doctrine and disproportionate focus on the protection of Christian minorities, IRF has become increasingly controversial and contested. The main critique is that it has

[222] Interestingly, also non-American (i.e., European) adaptations of the religious engagement policy framework take these American experiences (centered on September 11 and the War on Terror) as a starting point as well, underlining the specifically American roots of the policy framework.

not only failed its key ambition, mainly to protect religious minorities,[223] but has also severely weakened U.S. legitimacy and soft power at the global level.

By 2005–2006, it appeared that the U.S. context was ready to rethink the IRF doctrine and the role of religion in U.S. global policies altogether. The failure of the War on Terror was increasingly sinking in, and a number of key persons (holding central positions in the state administration or with good contacts) were pushing for an innovation of U.S. global policies on religion. Central figures such as Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State under President Clinton, and later John Kerry, Secretary of State under President Obama, explicitly articulated the need for developing a new approach to religion in U.S. foreign policy that approach religion in a comprehensive and systematic manner.[224] This current was strengthened with the election of Barack Obama, whose 2009 speech in Cairo addressing the Muslim world was largely interpreted as a "watershed moment" in U.S. approaches to religion (i.e., away from military and evangelical traditions toward respectful engagement with religious leaders).

Against this background, the Chicago Council of Global Affairs—arguably the most influential think tank in the U.S. working on global policies and civil society programs—decided that the time had come to re-evaluate U.S. policies on religion. In September 2008, it convened the first meeting of the Taskforce on Religion and the Making of U.S. Foreign Policy "to advance understanding of the role of religion in world affairs and to develop a framework to appropriately integrate religion into U.S. foreign policy" (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 1). The task

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[223] A number of studies have shown that the IRF has had a number of counterproductive results, and that external support (in particular from the United States) in many cases has rendered religious minorities even more vulnerable. Another concern is whether the overarching focus on religious identity motivates negative group thinking with religion as the most important identity marker. For studies on IRF and its links with foreign policy, see: Annichino (2013).

[224] Albright's 2006 statement remains a central reference to the religious engagement narrative: "When I was Secretary of State, I had an entire bureau of economic experts I could turn to, and a cadre of experts on nonproliferation and arms control […]. I did not have similar expertise available for integrating religious principles into our efforts at diplomacy. Given the nature of today's world, knowledge of this kind is essential." (Albright 2006: 75).

force[225] was led by two co-chairs—R. Scott Appleby, the John M. Regan Jr. Director of the Kroc Institute and professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, and Richard Cizik, President of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, Open Society Fellow and senior fellow at the United Nations Foundation. After five meetings—between policymakers, academics, constitutional lawyers, religious leaders and members of the media—the final report *Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for U.S. Foreign Policy* was published in 2010.

The framework had considerable impact and between 2010 and 2015, the main recommendations of the report were implemented. Chief among these was the creation of an Office of Religion and Global Affairs at the heart of the U.S. administration (i.e. within the National Security Council, which closely advises U.S. presidents on strategic and foreign-policy matters). The unit had over 30 full-time employees charged with the task of "mainstreaming the religious engagement policy across the sector of governmental departments." As of May 2016, the Office had a broad portfolio, working on issues and projects cutting across the full range of State Department polices, like global climate change, anti-corruption, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), anti-microbial resistance, countering ISIS; country specific work in places like Cuba, Cyprus, Ukraine, Israel and the occupied territories, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Burma.[226] A key issue of concern has been countering violent extremism (CVE).[227]

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[225] The full list of participants is as follows: Thomas F. Farr; Frederick Mark Gedicks, Kent Greeawalt, Ken Hackett, William Inboden, Martin Indyk, Douglas Johnston, Katherine Marshall, Radwan A. Masmoudi, Ruth Messinger, Abner J. Mikva, Dalia Mogahed, Emile Nakleh, David Neff, Eboo Patel, Edward Perkins, Gerard Powers, Asifa Quraishi, George Rupp, Rabbi David Saberstein, Father Donald Senior, Timothy Samuel Shah, Peter Steinfels; and Karin von Hippel. Source: Appleby & Cizek (2010).

[226] Source: Shaun Casey (responsible director of the Office at the time) speaking to the Italian Senate on June 2, 2016.

[227] Ibid.

Sant'Egidio's impact on the religious engagement policy framework

Clearly there is no one-to-one relationship between the religious engagement policy framework and Sant'Egidio. However, based on what we already know about Sant'Egidio's narratives and practices of religion, I think we can identify some issues where it is reasonable to presume there is a link. Most notably, I argue, this link can be seen in terms of a new conceptualization or understanding of religion in world politics (with some implicit but very real consequences for diplomatic practices), centered on some key observations: Religion represents the "new normal" in international politics (against the background of a general crisis of "traditional" diplomacy); This lays the ground for a new approach to religious diplomacy based in a "new attitude" toward religious actors on behalf of traditional diplomats; It also forges an expansion of the traditional role and repertoire of the diplomat in the post-Westphalian context. In the following I explore these contributions and their reception in the U.S. context more in detail.

A new conceptualization of religion: Religion as the "new normal"

The main innovation with the religious engagement policy framework, which I argue can be traced quite directly to Sant'Egidio, is its completely different approach to religion and religious actors in international politics. Whereas former U.S. approaches had focused on religion through specific channels and religious interests (with the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Islamic terrorism as the foremost examples) we see that the new framework takes a different approach in which religion and religious actors are placed at the very center, and understood as the main drivers of international developments. This appears to be very much in line with Sant'Egidio's insistence on the normalization and re-socialization of religion that we observed both in the community's anchoring practices through the yearly IMPP meeting but also through its integrative practices as conflict mediators as studied in the Algerian mediation efforts. One of the main inputs then is possibly the community's provision of a new reading of international politics in which religion is the rule, and secularism the exception. Religion is important simply because "most folks are religious". This

resonates well with Mario Giro's statements on the world being "hyper-religious" and the inability of secular Europeans to even communicate with the rest of the world, because they have not mastered the religious language (See: Chapter 3).

In the U.S. context, this insight is translated in the redefinition of religious actors as key, and indeed, inevitable partners for U.S. global policies. The introductory paragraph of the report establishes religion as a key factor of international politics—and thus confirms America's internalization of the "religious revival" narrative that has dominated large parts of academic and political debates over recent decades:

> Religion has been a major force in the daily lives of individuals and communities for millennia. Yet recent data show that the salience of religion is on the rise the world over. Once considered a "private" matter by Western policymakers, religion is now playing an increasingly influential role—both positive and negative—in the public sphere on many different levels (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 5).

If religion(s) and religious actors are the new protagonists of international politics and development, then global policies need to be elaborated with this in mind. Peter Mandaville, who has played a central role in the development and implementation of the religious engagement policy framework—both through is role as researcher with the George Mason University, and as policy advisor to the U.S. State Department—states that religious actors must be the focal point for U.S. global policies:

> Whether we are talking about stabilizing Afghanistan, bringing prosperity to Africa, or achieving democracy in the Arab world, a focus on religion and religious actors need to be front and center in our diplomacy and development work (Mandaville 2013).[228]

The success of U.S. global policies thus depends on the capacity to cooperate with religion and religious actors across the world, the report states:

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[228] Full text is available at: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/06/07/taking-religious-engagement-in-foreign-policy-seriously/.

> The success of American diplomacy in the next decade will not simply be measured by government-to-government contact, but also by its ability to connect with the hundreds of millions of people throughout the world whose identity is defined by religion today (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 1).

A Diplomacy in crisis

An interesting, interconnected argument regards Sant'Egidio's visions of diplomacy in a global context in which religion is the new normal. Additionally, we see here that Sant'Egidio's analysis of secular, elite politics as being in a state of crisis (as observed in the ethnographic study of the IMPP), penetrates the rationale for the religious engagement policy framework. Indeed traditional diplomacy, as encapsulated in the Westphalian model of diplomacy, is seen as the utmost example of a type of politics that has outplayed its role, and that needs to adapt to the new geopolitical context.

The U.S. policy framework specifically takes its cue from a rather pessimistic assessment of global politics and the role of U.S. in it: it is largely modeled upon the perceived failure of U.S. foreign policies in religious contexts such as the Middle East and the failure of the IRF paradigm as main frame of reference to deal with religion. These failures are inscribed in a broader background analysis, describing a rather sorry state of affairs for traditional diplomatic actors. The world is changing rapidly and traditional diplomatic actors—the United States in particular—fail to understand why and in which direction. Non-state actors, in contrast, are increasingly gaining positions and leverage due to the legitimacy deficits of traditional state-centered actors and politics. This calls for a redefinition of the role and "work description" of the diplomat.

The solution: constructive engagement with religious actors

Against this background, the solution proposed for U.S. diplomacy is to find a new way to engage constructively with religious actors. An interesting innovation with the new framework, that I argue can be traced quite directly to Sant'Egidio, is that

it calls for a change of diplomatic practice, rather than religious practices. Given that religion is the norm, and secular politics the exception, it is primarily the diplomats that need to change, more than the religious actors. This appears to be in line with Sant'Egidio's consistent eschewing of "exotifying" religion and religious actors—instead introducing it as "mainstream".

In practical terms, this means taking a holistic and indirect approach to religious engagement in foreign policies. Religious diplomacy cannot be about pursuing specific religious values or interests such as International Religious Freedom (IRF), fighting terrorism, or prohibiting abortion. In order to be serious, it needs to be integrated at a much deeper and holistic level, primarily as an *attitude toward the Other*. This also entails an emphasis on the positive potential of religious actors and religion both from an idealist and pragmatic point of view.

Against this background, the new U.S. policy framework proposed *engagement* as an appropriate mode of thinking and concerning religious actors. Engaging religious leaders and communities across the world is seen as an indispensable step in the management of vexing global problems. This means that religion must be viewed as a positive force, which can foster change and development. From this perspective, the main challenge is to capitalize upon the "good" sides of religion, while isolating the "bad" ones:

> What is needed is an "informed and coherent framework" that allows actors within and outside government to better understand and respond to religiously inspired actors and events in a way that supports those doing good, while isolating those who invoke the sacred to sow violence and confusion today (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 6).

Operationalization: Infrastructure, strategies, tools

In what ways has this new conceptualization of religion (that I argue is tightly associated with Sant'Egidio) impacted on the "operationalization" of religious engagement in U.S. diplomacy? Whereas the 2010 report provides a set of recommendations (on page 55), the meeting to evaluate U.S. experiences between U.S. and Italian policymakers at the Italian Senate in Rome on May 2, 2016 offers an interesting entry point to an updated assessment of the American model in

practice. The key U.S. representatives included Shaun Casey (responsible director of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs at the time) and Scott Appleby (the author of the 2010 report and advisor to Casey).[229] The meeting provided interesting insights into U.S. experiences with religious engagement between 2010 and 2017, both regarding the building of infrastructure and internal capacities; strategies; and concrete tools of religious engagement.[230]

The Office of Religion and Global Affairs. As we have seen, the main structure established to implement the religious engagement policy framework is the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives which was created in 2013. Despite a certain resistance, the Office was placed under the National Security Council, a strategy designed to maximize the impact and reach of the policy across the entire department. In 2015, the Office was renamed the Office of Religion and Global Affairs, in a move that seems to suggest an intention to upgrade its relevance and capacity.

As of June 2016, the Office had 30 full-time employees, whose key responsibilities included both the building of internal capacities for religious engagement within the state administration,[231] and the implementation of religious engagement policies in external relations. As of May 2016, the Office had a broad portfolio, working on issues and projects ranging from global climate change, anti-corruption, the SDGs, anti-microbial resistance, counter ISIS, and country specific programs. A key issue of concern has been to develop better models for Washington's CVE efforts. We have limited information about the

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[229] The meeting was organized within the framework of the conference "Making Democracy One's Own: Muslim, Catholic and Secular Perspectives in Dialog on Democracy, Development and Peace", organized by the Kroc Institute at Notre Dame University, the John Cabot University in Rome, and ISPI.

[230] Casey and Appleby's speeches to the Italian Senate on the U.S. religious engagement model can be found in full online: https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/contending-modernities/the-ongoing-mission-of-the-u-s-state-departments-office-of-religion-and-global-affairs/; and https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/theorizing-modernities/the-truth-is-an-encounter/.

[231] Here, the core tasks are: 1) the provision of mandatory training for government officials on the role of religion in world affairs; 2) integration and nurturing of the skills and expertise of military veterans and civilians from Iraq and Afghanistan; and 3) clarifying the applicability of the Establishment Clause.

details of this work; reportedly the Office's work differ from the earlier (read: President Bush's) approach to terrorism by proposing a more research-driven, contextualized analysis of the drivers of violent extremism and the ways in which extremists instrumentalize religion; it also seeks to design more "sophisticated" CVE activities, moving beyond the search for moderate voices to provide theological antidotes to extremism.

An indirect approach to religious engagement. In line with Sant'Egidio's resistance to operationalize religion on a narrow basis, we see that the main focus in the U.S. framework is not on specific religious topics or interests, but rather on successful communication and engagement with religious actors. This means that religion per se should not be addressed as a topic of negotiation, but that U.S. diplomats should take an "indirect" and holistic approach to the issue. This resonates well with the strategy we observed in Sant'Egidio's mediation efforts in Algeria, in which religion was not singled out or addressed as a relevant driver of conflict.

The indirect approach also builds upon a critique of U.S. and other Western attempts to manipulate and instrumentalize religious actors in the pursuit of foreign-policy interests—most importantly, perhaps, the (failed) strategies of identifying and supporting "good," "moderate" voices as a strategy to tackle radicalization from the inside. Indeed, this strategy has been much critiqued by Sant'Egidio and other likeminded actors, not only because it corrupts religious voices and their credibility in the domestic context, but because the strategy rests upon a deeply hostile interpretation of religion, if a "moderate" believer is the preferred kind. As religious–political entrepreneurs, Sant'Egidio wants powerful, visionary, even radical religion—as long as it is applied in a benign way. Being a "moderate" believer is not a compliment.

Against this ideational background, the U.S. report states that U.S. strategies of religious engagement need to be "broad and deep" (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 56). The new strategy explicitly seeks to steer away from previous attempts of overly "direct" religious engagement—that is, the manipulation and religious actors associated with the former state administrations; cooptation of religious leaders or sponsoring of specific theological interpretations that are perceived as

being in line with U.S. interests. The report states, thus: "The Task Force believes the United States should avoid trying to change religious societies through direct action or to promote an uncompromising secular alternative" (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 8). Although the overarching goal remains to pursue U.S. interests, the strategy needs to be more sophisticated and respect religious leaders' independence. Otherwise it is doomed to backfire.

The reports also suggest that the indirect approach needs to be structural in its implementation. Components of the new strategy include: 1) engaging on the societal level, not just the governmental or political level; 2)engaging religious parties even if they may oppose U.S. foreign policy; 3) reaffirming the U.S. commitment to religious freedom, while clarifying the meaning of the term;[232] 4) embracing a comprehensive approach to democracy promotion and human rights in order to accommodate the legitimate aspirations of religious communities, and finally; 5) working with multilateral organizations.

The strategy elaborated in the religious engagement framework is therefore indirect in a double sense of the word: It is indirect in the sense that it seeks to avoid addressing specific policy issues, but rather seeks structural change through deep engagement.[233] The religious engagement strategy is also indirect in the sense that it addresses the societal level more than the political one, and by the channels it applies to achieve this: The report explicitly calls for the need to

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[232] Most importantly, it seems, is to underscore that "Religious freedom does not only include the right of individuals and groups to be free of persecution, but also includes both minority and majority rights as well as the right of religious individuals and groups to advance their values publicly in civil society and political life" (Appleby & Cizek 2010: 72–73).

[233] The report states that the United States has a clear interest in the outcome of ongoing theological debates, and that it has to engage in such debates, while avoiding direct manipulation: "Religions are not monolithic, nor are the political movements they inspire […]. Some scholars have notices subtle or dramatic shifts towards orthodoxy within all of the world's major religions […]. The United States has a profound interest in the outcome of some of these debates […]. However, the United States often lacks the capacity to understand even the broad contours of such debates, much less the subtleties and nuances of religious history, theological argument and cultural context […]. Identities and groups identified as 'moderates' are the vulnerable to being regarded by their communities as lackeys of the United States […]. The key challenge for the US is to act in a way that is both decisive and prudent." (Appleby & Cizek 2010: 48–49).

engage religious leaders and communities with and through civil society actors and other non-traditional diplomatic actors: "Women's organizations, civil society associations, professional organizations, religious political parties, clerical centers, environmental groups, educational institutions, and grade school and high school teacher groups" (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 66) are to be engaged by "a wide range of U.S. governmental and non-governmental entities including academia, NGOs and the private sector" (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 68). This effectively implies a quite dramatic extension of the scope and nature of foreign policies in a traditional sense and triggers the questions of whether the religious engagement framework can be read as a state policy that is to be directed toward and carried out by non-state actors. And if so, what are the implications?

The report also calls for integrating the religious framework in large international organizations:

> The policy framework should also encompass international organizations. Thus, the United Nations, its major specialized agencies like UNICEF and UNESCO, the World Bank, and other would benefit from a better understanding of religious dynamics in the contemporary world as they carry out their specific missions. The United States plays significant leadership roles in these organizations, which from the most part, suffer from similar blinders where religion is concerned (Appleby & Cizik 2010: 77).

The interesting point here is therefore that the religious engagement framework transcends from being proposed as a framework of U.S. foreign policies to being proposed as "global outlook" on religion and international affairs that all Western (and secular) diplomatic actors, state or non-state, should ideally apply—with the United States taking a leading role in promoting and implementing the framework.[234]

Religious literacy and inter-religious dialog. At the level of policy tools and instruments, how can religious engagement be useful to U.S. global policies and

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[234] As we have seen, this appears to already be happening in the case of certain UN and World Bank agencies.

diplomatic interventions? In this part it is particularly important to divide between Sant'Egidio's intellectual input and its policy "expression" in U.S. policy-making. As we will see, the religious engagement policy framework produces quite different strategies and policy tools in the U.S. and Italian contexts, underscoring the importance of the national context and outlook in the operationalization of the framework. In the United States, it appears that Sant'Egidio's intellectual input is operationalized in a quite ambitious manner—clearly resonating with the deep-running religious culture in certain U.S diplomatic circles, in contrast to European ones—whereas the framework takes on a much more pragmatic and "minimalist" form in Italy.

Religious literacy. Not surprisingly, considering the focus on religious actors as the norm and the inability of traditional diplomats to understand and communicate with such actors, a key issue in the U.S. approach is religious literacy training among diplomats. Mandaville and Silvestri (2015: 7) identify religious (i)literacy as a key challenge in U.S. implementation of religious engagement policies and explain that: "The fact of the matter is that very few Foreign Service Officers and other diplomats possess either sufficient understanding of religion or the necessary skillset to effectively undertake religious engagement."[235] A key responsibility of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs, then, has been to provide mandatory and appropriate training of government officials in religious literacy and the role of religion in world affairs. On this issue, the Office has cooperated with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), which is responsible for the training of U.S. diplomats.

Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialog. Although religious literacy is important, it is first and foremost in the elaboration of inter-religious dialog and inter-cultural dialog (IRD and ICD) as tools of U.S. global policies that we see how

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[235] The issue of religious literacy—what it is and how to teach it—is an interesting and understudied issue that is likely to considerably influence diplomats' conceptualization of religion and its relations to politics in the future. The most concrete (and available) training that I have found is the Religious Literacy project at the Harvard Divinity Schools, which offers online courses, developed in cooperation with the Office of Religion and International Affairs. See: http://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/harvardx-course.

the religious engagement approach and the intellectual input of Sant'Egidio trigger an actual “religionization” of U.S. foreign policies. Indeed, U.S. conceptualizations of the role of IRD in religious engagement stand out as an ambitious attempt to theorize the strategic use of religious dialog within the framework of foreign policy, as a tool with both functionalist and moral components.

Upon closer scrutiny of the U.S. religious engagement policies, practices and intellectual underpinnings, it emerges that beyond the “functionalistic” value of IRD, as a tool of communication with religious people—understood as key drivers in international development—IRC also has a moral added value in that it helps religions to become more ”authentic” and more “true to themselves”. Interestingly, though, this moral aspect is also eventually framed as something that can be used strategically by U.S. diplomacy: if “authentic” religions are more peaceful (as the underlying assumption seems to hold) it is the interests of the United States to develop “healthy” and “democratic” ones. IRD is pitched as a crucial tool to do just this. This means that IRD and “structural” religious engagement can arguably be understood as quite ambitious efforts at religious engineering in the foreign-policy context.

In his speech to the Italian Senate—“‘The Truth is an Encounter’: Dialog as a Self-Critical, Self-Transformative Risk”—Scott Appleby elaborates on IRD and ICD. In particular, he proposes that:

> [T]he practice of inter-religious dialog [...] will carry us from our current situation of societal or “civilizational” tension and destructive conflict [...] to the far shore of a global reality in which ordinary cross-cultural and international interactions are characterized by a vibrant pluralism inclusive of religious as well as secular perspectives and commitment.[236]

With a view to understanding the notions of IRD and ICD and what they may represent as tools for U.S. foreign policy, it is useful to look in greater detail at the background and contextualization offered by Appleby.

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[236] Scott Appleby speaking to the Italian Senate on the U.S. model of religious engagement, on May 31, 2016. For the full text, see: https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/theorizing-modernities/the-truth-is-an-encounter/.

In general terms, Appleby suggests that the contemporary international political context is characterized by modern religions that find themselves in a state of crisis. Appleby explains that modern religions share three characteristic features—they are internally plural, contested and anxious.[237] In the current context, thus, modern religions have emerged as "self-aware actors within history", feeling increasingly vulnerable and even "exiled" from the world (Appleby 2016) This means that modern religions in fact have a limited range of option and strategies to survive in the contemporary world. Appleby sketches two main scenarios: They can attempt an "awkward mimesis of the regnant techno-scientific empiricism"; or they can try to "withdraw into the enclave, name the infidel and flee into isolation" (ibid). However, as isolation is not really a viable option in an "economically interdependent, socially interconnected cyber-space milieu", the withdrawal strategy easily becomes corruptible to violent interpretations. Appleby (ibid) then, understands religious radicalization and violent extremism as the result of the existential anxiety of modern religions:

> Among the things we think we know about modern religions is that the violent extremist movements that erupt within or around them are precisely the dysfunctional expression of this existential insecurity and anxiety I've sketched. These violent religious extremists are the ironic product of the very radical individualism, spiritual rootlessness, religious illiteracy, and selective, politicized self-appropriation and narrowing of the traditions, which the extremists rail against.

Against this background, Appleby (2016) proposes that modern religious actors are faced with two options. One is to give up, withdraw from the world, and take refuge in a "culture-ratifying, non-scandalous version of liberal Protestantism, Unitarianism, Reconstructionist Judaism or nominal Islam". The other option—

[237] "About modern religions operating under the conditions of modernity, 468 years after the Peace of Westphalia, we are fairly confident that we know that multigenerational transnational religions to be internally plural (ethnically, culturally, politically); internally contested, as one would expect from traditions that are inescapably interpretive (of sacred texts, exemplars, hallowed practices, etc.); and internally anxious. To one degree or another, about the turn that the world has taken" (Source: Appleby's speech to the Italian Senate on May 31, 2016).

recommended by Appleby as the only viable one, both for spiritual and physical survival—is to open up and engage with the world through dialog:

> Finally, there is another option. Rather than cling desperately and even hysterically to the "Tradition", forge it into a weapon, or reduce its mystery to a formula or blueprint or ideology, the religious can inhabit their traditions more freely, and free-ingly [*sic*], perhaps than ever before. In this sense, they can "go deeper" into their historic and still-sacred tradition and traditions, bend their surprisingly elastic boundaries, explore their unplumbed and ever-shifting depths, learn to live without closure and with ambiguity, and in this self-liberation from Tradition, paradoxically, deepen their own purchase on who they are and what they are called to be (Appleby 2016).

Engagement through dialog is therefore pitched as a worthwhile investment for religious actors and foreign-policy practitioners alike, because it allows religions to become truer to themselves:

> An answer to the "why bother" question may be that IRD, surprisingly, is the primary means by which religions can become more traditionally religious, more themselves, as it were. [Because] only in the risky (but ultimately rewarding) meeting with the Other can religions reveal to themselves, and take fuller purchase of, the human and yet still-sacred depths of meaning and wisdom they embody. [238]

This is interesting language in a policy context.

Inter-religious dialog is therefore proposed as a methodology for bridging policy debates and religious reflections and knowledge production. But what type of dialog? The problem with applying dialogical methods in a policy perspective is of course that dialog and policy-making represent, by definition, two radically different forms of practices. Whereas "genuine" dialog (in particular on sensitive topics such as religion and identity) needs to be non-instrumental,[239] policy-making is, and has to be, instrumental in nature. What then does this imply for the

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[238] Appleby (2016). Then again, we could of course ask why it would be a U.S. foreign-policy goal to make religions more truly religious.

[239] See Gadamer (1982) or Volf (2012).

dialogists representing U.S. foreign-policy interests in terms of techniques, tools and realistic achievements?

Judging from Appleby's speech, it seems that such dialog requires a quite dramatic extension of the traditional repertoire among participating U.S. diplomats, as well as of their religious interlocutors. The baseline agreement conditioning such dialogs seems to imply a new vision of "the Other", "the Self" and the nature of dialog—which moreover seems to build on a set of specifically religious, Catholic underpinnings. The participants must accept the process as a "risk-laden, potentially self-transformative, sustained encounter with the Other":

> The partner in any dialog across seemingly vast gulfs of understanding and appreciation takes the risk of hospitality—the risk of welcoming the Other into her home, as it were, into a place of solemnity and joy and even confusion or turmoil, where a glimpse of the heart and soul is possible. This is a precious space and it takes courage to invite anyone there. The host offers nothing less, then, than an encounter with the Other, who after all may one day become a friend and worthy confident, but begins most likely as a stranger, perhaps in some way an intruder, or even an enemy. An encounter, moreover, implies some level of mutuality. I am open to Thee. Not only do I seek understanding, I offer it. (Appleby 2016)

In terms of realistic outcomes, then, policymakers and religious actors alike must accept the premise that understanding—more than agreement—is the overall goal. Yet, as far as dialog is also proposed as a mean of change and impact (due to its strategic embeddedness in the overarching pursuit of U.S. foreign-policy interests) it is also assumed to have a certain transformative power; first and foremost perhaps in the creation and consolidation of more self-critical and self-reflective religions—that is to say, "authentic" religions. As such, the strategy may be interpreted as an attempt to transform society through transforming, or civilizing, religion; an endeavor anchored in the basic premise that religion and religious actors constitute the core of the societal fabric around the world. This effectively constitutes a quite ambitious agenda of social and religious entrepreneurship.

The "everyday religious citizen". As for the concrete link between genuine dialog as a self-purifying encounter with "the Other", on the one hand, and foreign

policy and national self-interest, on the other, Appleby (2016) seeks to link policy-making and religious dialog through the notion of a new ideal-type citizen: the "everyday religious citizen". Policymakers should take an interest in religious dialog because of the important role played by "the rise of the everyday religious citizen, (including) the new interactions created between religious individuals who have been empowered by democracy" (ibid). There is therefore a need for "a new language to understand these new interactions and to advance them" (ibid). Appleby (2016) states that we need to "learn more about this new everyday religious citizen and her potentially transformative role in disrupting the gross imbalance of power and voice that has plagued, and continues to plague, democracies and religions alike."

IRD, then appears primarily as a tool to create and engage normalized and re-socialized religious actors. The new everyday religious citizen is not only compatible with democracy—he or she effectively enhances democracy. The criteria for these new religious everyday citizens, to be empowered, is that they conform to a liberal and interpretive religious tradition. This can be Catholic or not, as long as it is line with Pope Francis' form of religiosity: "For it is a rare and courageous voice that holds power and still will proclaim: The Truth is in an Encounter!" (Appleby 2016, quoting Pope Francis).

The Italian model of religious engagement

European MFAs have also been increasingly concerned with the rise of religion in international affairs over the last decade and have tried to assess different opportunities to "deal" with this issue through the creation of competence, infrastructure and mechanisms. As we will see, most of these efforts are being carried out in cooperation with U.S. policymakers, diplomats and scholars of religion and IR that have been central in elaborating the U.S. approach. This, once again, serves to illustrate the key role of small, person-oriented, transnational epistemic communities in global policy developments, such as the religious engagement policy framework.

In the Italian case—which moreover stands out as a particular interesting and ambitious effort to develop a proper Italian model of religious engagement,

profiting from the country's distinct historical and geographical relationship with the Holy See—the Italian MFA's assessment of the religious engagement framework has been scientifically organized by the American IR scholar Scott Thomas, together with Italian IR scholar Fabio Petito. This is the same Scott Thomas that is associated with the reinterpretation of the Westphalian myth, discussed earlier in this chapter. Also, the authors of the U.S. policy framework and their scholarly networks—together with the diplomats and policymakers responsible for establishing the U.S. Office of Religion and Global Affairs—have been included throughout the process in Italy.

Starting in 2009, the Italian MFA has sponsored a working group and a series of meetings on religion and international affairs. After five years of conceptual work "to raise the awareness of the growing relevance of religion in international affairs by exploring a number of critical issues related to this agenda (from Global Governance to the Arab revolutions and Freedom of Religion and Belief)", (Petito & Scott 2014: 2), the working group decided in 2014 that the time had come for more concrete assessment of what an Italian model of religious engagement should look like. As was noted:

> It is time to move to a more practical and policy-oriented aim and ask how Italian foreign policy should more systematically engage religious actors and integrate religious knowledge to enhance its foreign policy-making process and produce better policy (Petito & Scott 2014: 2).

The most concrete answers and attempts to describe this Italian model can be traced through the different concept papers published by ISPI, some of which are accessible online. Two key pieces are "Foreign Policy and Religious Engagement: The Special Case of Italy" (Petito & Thomas 2015) and "An Italian Foreign Policy of Religious Engagement: Challenges and Prospects" (Ferrara & Petito 2016).

Although clearly inspired by the U.S. approach, the Italian model has distinctive features, concerning both framing and concrete tools and measures. The Italian process also showed some very specific Italian features in terms of the organizational set-up of the talks arranged by the working group, which really serves to illustrate the deep-running connections between religious and political life in Italy, and Rome in particular. As an example, at the ISPI talks in Milan 2014

(See: Appendix B), the talks were organized as a discussion on both the promise and limitations of religious engagement in Italian foreign policy, between key stake holders and experts. The four categories of participants were diplomats, policymakers, academics and faith-based actors.[240]

However, as a result of the specific configuration of religious and political life in Italy, several of the key actors in fact belonged to various categories, through their dual position and role as *both* diplomats within the Italian MFA and members of the faith-based movements that had been invited to participate.[241] The leader of the Italian MFA's policy planning unit, responsible for the assessment of the religious engagement approach in the first place, is also a prominent member of Focolare, an Italian NEM. At the 2014 Milan meeting, Focolare was represented by the community's president, Roberto Catalano. Sant'Egidio was also represented on both sides of the table. Founding member Mario Giro is Vice-President of International Relations and Cooperation in the Italian MFA and Claudio Betty (secretary to the community president) represents the Sant'Egidio community as a key faith-based partner of the government.

Conceptualization: Continuations and ruptures with the U.S. model

In terms of framing and historical contextualization, the Italian model of religious engagement differs most significantly from the U.S. "mother" framework in terms of its particular starting point and potential stemming from its special relationship with the Holy See, and of Rome's specific status as the religio–political *Caput Mundi*. Petito & Thomas (2015: 41) argue that:

> Italy could represent a special case of religious engagement in foreign policy because of its unique geo-religious position: in the context of the current epoch-making changes in international society, there is a sense in which Rome has become again, religiously speaking, caput mundi—

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[240] As for the faith-based actors, there were predominantly Catholic actors, representing the Holy See, the NEMs (Sant'Egidio and Focolare) and a selection of missionary orders, in addition to a representative for the Islamic council of Italy and a Rabbi.

[241] Perhaps this is not a specifically Italian feature after all. In the United States, many policymakers and advisors also have a background as scholar–practitioners and diplomats often have religious affiliations.

> the center of the world—as a unique hub of transnational network of religious connections. Retrieving some episodes of its older and its more recent complex history of ante-litteram religious engagement in foreign policy, we suggest that Italy could develop a model of religious engagement in foreign policy mediated by its "special" relationship with the Catholic Church and with the world.

In terms of historical contextualization and embedding, the Italian model also differs significantly from the U.S. one. Whereas the U.S. approach builds upon recent lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan, Italy in contrast—in a typical "old world", continental style—takes a far longer historical perspective, and examines how religion has traditionally been accommodated in the four key eras of Italian foreign policy: the liberal period, the fascist era, the First Republic and the Second Republic. The premise is that religious engagement has been an integral feature of Italian domestic *and* foreign policy since the unification of Italy in the mid-nineteenth century. Religious accommodation was inevitable with the presence of the Holy See at the heart of the Italian capital and with the contestation over the Papal States. Italy, as such, possesses a unique historical experience in the field of religious engagement, which needs to be revised and drawn upon.[242]

In very broad strokes, the historical narrative drawn up speaks of a difficult starting point between the Italian nation-state and Holy See. The promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Italy (1861) and, in particular, the laws regulating the Catholic Church and the religious orders was answered by the Catholic Church with a policy of *non expedit*—whereby Italian Catholics were enjoined to abstain from the polls in parliamentary elections. In 1870, Italy's capture of Rome from Pope Pius XI—marking the definitive end of the Papal States and leaving the Pope without any physical territory—plunged the Holy See and the Italian nation-state into an even more conflictual relationship. This rather hostile relationship would not be normalized for 60 years, until Benito Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty (1929), granting sovereignty to the Vatican state.

[242] For a detailed and interesting analysis of religious accommodation in Italian foreign policies, according to the eras set out above, see: Ferrara & Petito (2016).

The confrontation between the Italian state and the Holy See had a distinct impact in terms of the transnational orientation of the Catholic Church, which again would influence the coordination of Italian and Catholic "foreign policies" (Petito & Scott 2016). As the Catholic Church found it increasingly difficult to realize its mission—the creation of a *Societas Christiana*—within the liberal nation-state of Italy, it started to direct its focus and efforts toward the international level. This meant beefing up its transnational presence and networks and stepping up its missionary activities. From the perspective of Italian foreign policies, the international network and influence of the Catholic Church was viewed as a very useful asset—which the state actively tried to benefit from, by offering increased religious autonomy (within Italy) in return (ibid.).

The mutual interests of the Church and the young Italian nation-state thus lay the foundation for increased coordination in foreign policies and international engagements already from the late nineteenth century. A typical example of religious accommodation—or religious engagement, if you will—from this early period was the arrangement between Franciscan orders and the Italian state in Ethiopia, according to which the Franciscan orders (which at the time were outlawed in Italy) assisted in the implementation of the colonial policies of the Italian regime—whose baseline ideological narrative about a *misison civilicatrice* they shared. In return, they were allowed to practice freely in Italy and even open up their own university in Rome (ibid: 33).

The mode of cooperation between the Holy See and Italian political authorities has varied during the different eras of Italian foreign policy. Petito and Ferrara (2016) argue that the religious engagement pursued in the first two—i.e., the liberal and the fascist eras—can be roughly summoned up as one of "instrumentalist accommodation". During the First Republic (under the Christian Democrats) an "embedded approach" to religion and foreign policy was pursued, whereas in the Second Republic (under Berlusconi) a "militant approach" focusing on IRF was taken.

As for present practices of Italian religious engagement by political authorities, the authors seem to argue that the "embedded approach" associated with the First Republic of the Christian Democrats represents the most promising

part of the of Italian heritage. The report authors lament how this model did not survive the collapse of the Christian Democratic party. It is nevertheless interesting to consider the extent to which the tit-for-tat cooperation dynamics associated with the instrumentalist accommodation mode of the liberal and fascist eras—illustrated by the example of the Franciscan orders—continues to characterize religious–secular cooperation in Italian foreign policies, perhaps especially in its informal expressions. For instance, to what extent does it make sense to view the role of the NEMs, such as Focolare and Sant'Egidio, within this tit-for-tat, instrumentalist framework?

As for the narrative on the present context of international politics, and the type of challenges it represents, the Italian story line bears many resemblances to the American one. The world is undergoing rapid and epoch-changing processes, on many levels, which are likely to alter the global order as we have come to know it. Also, the Italian reports considers that religion, in any case, will be a key characteristic of the new order:

> In other words, we need to come to terms with the fact that today the international society is experiencing an epoch-making process of transformation: the economic shift toward the East, the emerging great powers embedded mainly in non-Western cultures, religions and civilizations (BRICs); global urbanization, with the world now more urban than rural […] and the rise of the global middle class, in which the world for the first time in history will move from being mostly poor to mostly middle class. Our contention is that the global resurgence of religion is actually significantly related to these structural societal changes (Petito & Thomas 2014: 43)

Against this background of transformative change, the key challenge for traditional diplomatic actors—Italy included—is the deficit of knowledge among political elites. That is, the failure of secularist actors to understand why the world is changing and in what direction. The link between global developments and religious engagement as a policy choice is therefore primarily centered on the conceptualization of religion as a locus of knowledge production. A knowledge of and from "the peripheries"—that will soon constitute the center of global politics and attention.

This narrative has both a pragmatic and ethical component. One the one hand, it is an attempt to link religion with power and politics: If religion is acknowledged as a structural or structuring principle of international politics—more than just a moral one—this would largely justify why foreign ministries should take it seriously (ibid.). On this note, Petito & Thomas argue that religion is first and foremost about power (to define the truth, and the world) and that religious engagement should be about integrating the truth and knowledge produced by religions into the practices of foreign policies:

> Therefore, from this perspective, "religious engagement" becomes a crucial way of improving the knowledge base for foreign policy in an increasingly culturally pluralistic and politically fragmented global international society. Integrating religion is about tackling the deficit of knowledge that now often seems to contribute wo what has been called "the world adrift" (Crocker et al. 2015), the growing disintegration of international society in terms of its political-cultural arrangements and world views along a number of dividing lines such as the West–Non-West and the Global North–Global South (Petito & Thomas 2014: 43).

But religion is also about *legitimacy* in the Italian accounts. This includes an ethical argument about the knowledge of religious actors—largely conflated with "bottom players" and the peripheries—constitutes a particularly important, true, and "ethical" type of knowledge that should inform high-level policy-making. As such, religious knowledge and religious engagement is pitched as a sort of bottom-up approach to foreign policy making, which will also help foreign-policy makers improve their legitimacy—through engagement with the (religious) grassroots. Religious engagement is presented as a strategy to anchor political will in "the people" or the "demos"—which is assumed to religious at large. Petito and Thomas (2015: 44) argue that:

> More than ever in our contemporary world the "bottom" and not the "top" of society is (or at least should be) an important location to construct knowledge about the international relations—to understand the functioning of social, political, and economic systems, and for knowledge about the consequences of choices in foreign policy. The idea that the bottom of society, that is, the poor, the marginalized, is the preferential place for ethics is not new: it can be found in the Catholic

> tradition in the notion of the "the preferential option for the poor". What we argue however, is that the bottom and not the top of society can also be the preferential place for epistemology, for discovering what knowledge is, how it is constructed, and in whose interests it is constructed in international relations. If this is the case, then religious non-state actors can be an important resource for generating or constructing new knowledge in international relations, knowledge relevant to foreign-policy makers. It is knowledge coming from what Pope Francis has called "the periphery"; a metaphor he uses to describe social marginality, as part of a religious criticism of liberal conceptions to globalizations.

What, then, is this new knowledge produced by religious actors and what purposes can it serve? Petito and Scott (2015:44) note that it is not primarily about religious knowledge and truths, as in religious leaders' discussion of ideas and doctrines. Rather, it is about the common knowledge generated in "ordinary, day-to-day interactions and friendships" before it emerges in "the social, political or economic problems of everyday living". The underlying idea thus seems to be that religious actors are central contributors to the creation of relevant contextual knowledge (on a range of topics and geographical regions), and that paying closer attention and absorbing this knowledge may help policy makers to detect issues and problems that may eventually trigger social unrest and eruptions if not addressed. As an example, Petito and Thomas use the story of Mohamed Bouazizi, the street vendor whose self-immolation sparked the Tunisian Revolution and the broader Arab Spring. Against this background, religious engagement is presented as a way to acquire knowledge from religious actors about "what is really going on" and about veiled violence and other suppressive societal and political mechanisms, so that such issues can be defused before they explode. It is not necessarily knowledge about religion, but knowledge about society and politics produced and communicated through religious actors.

Transforming religion or transforming diplomacy? A particularity with the Italian model of religious engagement relative to the U.S. one is the insistence on the need to transform diplomacy itself—namely, to "extend" and re-invent the traditional diplomatic customs and practices associated with the Westphalian model of international diplomacy. Simply acquiring basic religious literacy skills

or “reaching out” to cultivate good relations with religious actors is far from sufficient. The authors of the Italian reports clearly states that religious literacy among diplomats is a lesser problem in Italy than in the United States. Moreover, “reaching out” to religious actors is a deeply embedded practice in Italian diplomatic procedures, due to its particular historical and geographical relations to the Holy See (Ferrara & Petito 2016: 30). Rather, religious engagement in the Italian context is supposed to invoke a broader transformation and adaptation of diplomatic practices in the fullest sense, starting with how diplomats view themselves, others and the nature and purpose of social relations. As Ferrara and Petito (2015: 30–31) note:

> [R]eligious engagement implies entering into a profound conversation, in which listening is the most relevant part […]. In the process of religious engagement, diplomats should genuinely engage themselves, meaning that that they cannot adopt a by-stander attitude, remaining outside the social construction of the dialog itself […]. Diplomats are thus expected to become “cultural insiders” instead of outside, neutral, observers. From this perspective, then, religious engagement does not mean just taking religion seriously; it is also “about the readiness to enrich, expand and transform the Westphalian diplomatic categories” (Ferrara & Petito 2015: 31).

One of the major consequences of this process of enriching, expanding and ultimately transforming the Westphalian diplomatic categories is “rebalancing the diplomatic focus from an inter-state paradigm to a transnational vantage point” (ibid: 31). With a view to regaining popular legitimacy and trust, diplomats are not only expected to display a broader set of humanistic capacities and apply a language able to address the “big questions,” but also to reflect a transnational, altruistic vantage point rather than narrow national perspectives and interests. At the same time, however, they are required to respect the traditional priorities and responsibilities that comes with their status of state diplomats, ultimately serving the interests of the Italian state. Ferrara and Petito (2016: 31) explain that “this enrichment of the Westphalian outlook must be managed skillfully in order to avoid any possible backlash in terms of violation of the domestic political domain by diplomatic actors.”

The interesting issue, then, is that the ongoing debates on religious engagement—beyond showing how dominant narratives on religion and international politics are changing—also serve to illustrate the extent to which traditional diplomacies are perceived to be in a state of crises; of no longer understanding the world and what is "really" going on. Against this background, the religious engagement policy process can also be read as one strategy, among many, to provide "traditional" diplomacy with a much-needed update and get it back on "the right side of history". Perhaps, then, is the religious engagement framework less about transforming religion than about transforming diplomacy?

Operationalization

Infrastructure and mechanisms. As we have seen, the major asset and comparative advantage of Italy, relative to other countries, in developing an effective model of religious engagement, is its closeness and historical relations with the Holy See, the central government of the Catholic Church. The Holy See not only links Italy (and the Italian MFA) to the global network of the Catholic Church—which is unique among the great worldwide religious organizations for its universal vertical structure—but also to

> other religious traditions, communities and organizations through the mediation of the Catholic world—that is, via the links that the Holy See, local and national churches, and the many Catholic organizations or non-state actors headquartered in Rome have worldwide with religious communities and leaders abroad (Petito & Thomas 2014: 47)

Such actors and communities possess important knowledge that the Italian MFA would benefit from in their foreign policy-making. As a consequence, the main challenge to the Italian MFA is to cooperate and engage with the Holy See and selected faith-based partners on a much more serious and committed level, in view of tapping into and operationalizing the valuable knowledge that such actors possess.

But on what grounds should such partnerships be pursued? Why would faith-based actors share their information and knowledge with the Italian MFA

and what would they get in return? An interesting feature with the Italian model is that is more explicit than the U.S. version in formulating the premises of the agreement or framework of cooperation between secular and religious actors that such constitute the foundation for Italian practices of religious engagement. The Italian policy papers propose a set of condition and criteria for religious engagement, together with some concessions from the MFA. As for the conditions, the report clearly states that the religious engagement framework is only open to the type of religion and religious actors that conform to the liberal tradition associated with Pope Francis. All forms of the "nostalgic, dangerous, Catholic Power Italy" model, strictly supporting Catholic interests and values, are harshly rejected (Petito & Thomas 2015: 48). The religious "input" needs to be non-confessional, yet inter-religious, inter-cultural and tolerant in scope.

In return for the contribution of religious actors, the Italian MFA offers that Italian foreign policies be elaborated based on religious principles (though in a broad sense), that is, based on Catholic social teachings on the common good (Petito & Thomas 2015; Ferrara & Petito 2016).[243] Petito and Thomas (2015: 48) suggest that:

> The "common good"—as a general principle articulated by the Catholic social doctrine and operationalized by expert's contextual judgement (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004, para 165)—should be the political-religious frame of reference for a meaningful and successful Italian model of religious engagement in foreign policy, mediated by its special relationship with the Catholic world.

Second, in view of avoiding instrumentalizing religious actors, the Italian MFA should engage religion and religious leaders also in what is called the "ascending phase" of world politics (Ferrara & Petito 2016: 40). The idea here is that there is a tendency within the international community—Italy included—to view the role of religion in the descending phase of world politics, that is, "when decisions have already been taken and challenges need to be addressed in an urgent manner"

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[243] For some reason it seems that the religious engagement narrative has not triggered the same debate as in the United States on whether it is compatible with the secular framework of the state, and thus on the legality of the approach.

(ibid: 40). However, Ferrara and Petito argue that if religious engagement is to be taken seriously, it is necessary to involve religious groups and actors also in the "ascending phase" of foreign policy, referring to "the very process of foreign policy formation" (ibid: 40).

The overall "contract" is therefore one in which the Italian MFA commits to not interpret religious engagement instrumentally, only as a form of intelligence gathering. At the same time, the religious non-state actors—primarily the Catholic organizations—do not interpret religious engagement as lobbying activity vis-à-vis Italian foreign policy.

Strategies, tools and mechanisms. The main challenge of the Italian MFA is therefore to tap into the knowledge of religious actors and then apply such knowledge in the elaboration of foreign policies. In general terms, Ferrara and Petito (2016) suggest that Italy develop a special model of religious engagement by: 1) strengthening the central structures involved in religious matters and foreign policy and; 2) using the vast network of Rome-based, religious, non-state actors as a forum of consultants and policy advice. But the Italian reports also suggest more concrete tools and mechanisms in the set-up of the Italian model in which religious orders and the NEMs, in particular, appears to play a key role. This is most clearly illustrated with the concept of "reverse mission" proposed in Ferrara and Petito 2016.

"Reverse mission". In short, reverse mission refers to a strategy through which the Italian MFA may "use the network of the Holy See to its advantage" (Ferrara & Petito 2016: 38). The basic idea contrasts "mission" in its traditional sense—speaking of the Catholic Church—which would refer to a flow of (religious) knowledge going from the center to the peripheries. Instead, "reverse mission" refers to the processes through which knowledge and information travel from the peripheries to the center through the same global infrastructure of the Holy See, largely composed of religious orders and communities. Reverse mission is therefore proposed as a strategy through which the Italian MFA may tap into the wealth of under-utilized, religiously-based societal information and knowledge and use it for its own advantage. Beyond producing better-informed (and

hopefully more benign) foreign policies, reverse mission is, interestingly, also a strategy in which the NEMs play a key role by effectively "bridging" the Italian MFA with the global Catholic networks of the Holy See. Here we see that the NEM's (in particular Sant'Egidio and Focolare) mid-level position within the diplomatic structures of the Holy See—that is, their position as middlemen and mediators between the religious orders on the ground and the centralized, policy-making, Church structures—is used to negotiate an important role for the NEMs *also within the Italian MFA*.

Transnational religious orders and communities—such as Focolare and Sant'Egidio—are thus presented as particularly valuable resources for Italian foreign policy making, through a set of added values and advantages. First, the dual identity of such actors, combining a transnational religious identity with a national identity and affiliation, may help the Italian MFA to develop a transnational vantage point, without undermining loyalty to the Italian nation-state, it is argued. Drawing upon Timothy Byrnes (2011: 13), Petito and Ferrara (2016: 38) suggest that such transnational religious communities can represent foreign communities in national policy-making processes, a sort of "domestic representation of foreign communities." The NEMs' dual identity is therefore framed as an advantage rather than as a drawback. Rather than triggering questions on the ultimate loyalty of such actors (of whether it would be to the religious or the national community) the authors seem to argue that the dual identity of such actors make them twice as loyal and twice as "fit" for diplomatic policy-making and missions:

> It is a 'simple but powerful fact that the religious identity shared by members of these communities straddles—and sometimes obliterate—international borders. This is not to suggest that the members of these orders stop being American or Italian or French. Rather, it is precisely because members of those orders are both citizens of their own countries and part of transnational religious communities that they can bring their communities' interests to the policy processes with strong legitimacy. In a sense they are insiders in both realms; this special status "provides them with both: a) the motivation to care deeply about national foreign policy;

and: b) the opportunity to try to influence its direction. (Ferrara & Petito 2016: 22)

Ferrara and Petito (2016) further argue that religious transnational orders and communities may be more effective diplomats because they "create synergies between transnational and national policy-making processes" (ibid: 16).[244] Moreover, the vast international network of such actors—often superior to that of official diplomatic ones—provides them with the added value of being able to operate in "remote areas, in critical social and political contexts, and within local communities" (ibid: 16).

Religion as a tool of foreign policy in a "post-secular" world

In this section, I have analyzed the religious engagement policy framework in its U.S. and Italian context, in view of understanding how the Sant'Egidio community has contributed to the recasting of religion in the global order. Clearly, the religious engagement framework is not the direct product or output of Sant'Egidio. Yet, I argue that the framework can be understood as a joint endeavor to operationalize and politically formalize the type of religion—liberal, tolerant Catholicism—of which Sant'Egidio is one of the foremost practitioners. This is obvious when we look at the content of the religious engagement policy framework, since its inception in the U.S. context to its Italian trajectory. The framework explicitly presupposes a set of distinctive features—openness to the world, dialogic religion, anti-dogmatism—typically associated with the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis, and Sant'Egidio.

More specifically, I argue that we can trace Sant'Egidio's influence on the U.S. framework through the case studies used in the central policy texts laying out the policy framework. For instance, Appleby and Cizik (2010) go a long way in

[244] Indeed, the religious engagement policy framework policy process itself stands out as a prominent example.

endorsing Sant'Egidio's narrative on the Algerian political conflict (and by consequence, the prospects for its resolution) by claiming that:

> The emergence and maturation of democratic Islamic politics, for example, has been retarded in some nations—such as Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan—by the exclusion of some religiously informed arguments, religious actors, and viable parties from the public sphere (Appleby & Cizek 2010: 41).

Against this background, the report states that U.S. policies toward Algeria were wrong in supporting the Algerian military's decision to quash the election, thereby failing to stand up for the rights of Islamic partiers to stand in elections (ibid: 44). This U.S. policy of supporting autocratic allies, at the cost of democracy, has dramatically failed, it is argued. The Algerian case is therefore also used to introduce the "moderation thesis"—the idea that the inclusion of radical parties into formal politics leads to moderation—as dominant conceptual frame to understand radical Islamism in U.S. policies. This indeed marks a significant shift from previous approaches. Appleby and Cizik (2010: 70) write that:

> [E]vidence from the past indicates that elected, religiously affiliated parties tend to place pragmatism and problem solving over ideology. In a comparable case of "moderation via participation," no Islamist party popularly elected to national parliament has sought to put greater emphasis on Sharia laws as the source of legislation, despite pre-election rhetoric to the contrary. Instead they often become focused on the day-to-day necessities of ruling.

Input versus impact

In terms of input, I argue that Sant'Egidio has contributed significantly to the development of a post-September 11 model of religion in the United States. This has been pursued by replacing the evangelist accent on confrontation (truth) with the deeply catholic notion of engagement (diplomacy). It has also triggered a shift away from the formerly dominating frames to deal with religion in U.S. policies—securitization/terrorism and IRF—toward the idea of partnership and engagement. The religious engagement policy framework is still work in progress, and experiences are limited, yet this new approach builds upon a different view

altogether on the nature of religion and the potential for co-existence, which bears some characteristic features.

The common starting point of the religious engagement framework is a self-proclaimed post-secularist understanding of global politics, in which religious actors are singled out as the key drivers of international developments. Against this background, it is argued that the integration of religious principles will result in a richer and better-informed foreign-policy making and practices. The religious engagement approach can therefore essentially be understood as an attempt to approach religion in a more positive and constructive manner.

The respective reception and trajectory of the religious engagement policy assessment in the U.S. and Italy have led to some distinctive characteristics. In the United States, the policy framework and its implementation are framed in an inherently religious (moral, ethical) language—religious engagement is justified as the policy version of the "Theology of the Encounter" line of Catholicism associated with Pope Francis, and as the only way in which religions in the modern world can become "truly authentic". In line with this logic, the key tools of religious engagement developed in the U.S model includes inter-religious and inter-cultural dialog—which are framed in a rather spiritual (or at the very least, spiritually sensitive) language as existential, possibly self-transformative, processes.

In Italy, on the other hand, we see a much more sober and pragmatic framing of religion and its potential as a tool of foreign policy. The Italian model introduces religion first and foremost as a new form of knowledge—maybe even intelligence—that can inform and enhance foreign-policy making, primarily through elaborating a better understanding of the status quo of global politics. Religion is being pitched as important not because it is morally or ethically superior, but rather because of its vital function as a tool of foreign policy in a "post-secular" world. A specific tool developed in the Italian model of religious engagement is the idea of reverse missioning, discussed above, which perfectly embodies the pragmatic or even cynical approach of the Italians on this issue. In return for their services, so to speak, the faith-based partners to the Italian MFA are promised a certain influence on policy-making, although in vague terms.

Italian foreign-policymaking would have to be centered on the notion of the "common good" as taught in Catholic social teachings.

As for the Italian context, it is easier to trace the finger print of the Sant'Egidio community on the religious engagement policy framework, both through their participation as state actors within the Italian MFA and as faith-based partners to the MFA. Indeed, the Italian model appears custom-made for the type of religious actors that Sant'Egidio (together with Focolare) are. The framework explicitly encourages the active collaboration of NEMs—with Focolare and Sant'Egidio being explicitly mentioned—as critical tools for the Italian MFA to renew its ("outdated") diplomacy to answer to the global challenges of the present. The Italian framework thus suggests a new role for the NEMs as entrepreneurs and innovators of traditional Italian state diplomacy.

Impact. If Sant'Egidio has provided important input into emergent global policy-making on religion in international politics and diplomacy, what about its impact? To what extent can the community's rise in both U.S. and Italian political circles be read as the result of community's increase in actual power and influence? And to what extent has it altered power relations and dynamic in Sant'Egidio's relations with Italian political authorities and the Holy See? In other words: has Sant'Egidio imposed the narrative on its partners or did the partners "use" Sant'Egidio's narrative and moral standing for its own purposes, as a way to rehabilitate diplomacy?

This appears to go both ways. If Sant'Egidio is currently experiencing a peak in international influence, there are also some clear limitations to this influence that need to be addressed. First, to what extent will the religious engagement policy framework actually be applied and have an impact? Clearly, having a new policy on something does not necessarily mean that anything will actually change or that new practices will replace old ones. Surely, there are many signs that the new foreign policy of constructive engagement with religious actors will have limited impact. What is the future for "state" religious diplomacy as a form of "religious engagement"?

First, the context under which the framework was initially conceived is rapidly changing. This is especially the case in the United States with the election of Donald Trump, whose character and style of leadership does not necessarily resonate with the notion of respectful and constructive engagement with the Other, or even the notion of diplomacy altogether. Trump might be far more prone to "aggressive" IRF and a more confrontational approach than Bush, although he does not have an evangelist background. And, indeed, the Office of Religion and International Affairs has been severely downscaled since Trump took office, and its future remains uncertain in the present.[245]

Also in Italy the framework faces much resistance due to lack of political will, lack of resources, and more recently the prolonged political crisis that culminated in the appointment of a populist government—the "government of change"—headed by the Five Star Movement and Lega Nord in June 2018. It is difficult to imagine that Matteo Salvini (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior), Luigi di Maio (Deputy Prime Minister) or even Giuseppe Conte (serving Prime Minister) would see it useful to develop the notions of inter-faith and inter-cultural dialog as the main tools of a post-secular Italian foreign policy.

Beyond external factors there are also some clear internal tensions in play that may complicate the future of the religious engagement policy framework or even the very idea of a state religious diplomacy altogether. These include:

- The ultimately unresolved issue of the division of labor and responsibility (in the last resort) between religious and state actors set forth in the framework. It is not evident that there is a solution both actors can live with.
- The impossibility of overcoming the "good religion" versus "bad religion" schism that also characterized former U.S. approaches. The religious engagement framework does apply a more diplomatic language and speaks of the "constructive" religious actors with "legitimate claims" versus the "illegitimate" ones. But illegitimate or constructive according to what?

[245] Casey's essay, "How the State Department has sidelined religion's role in diplomacy", is available at: https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/how-the-state-department-has-sidelined-religion-s-role-in-diplomacy.

Apparently, it is the perspective and interests of the state that forms the baseline standard. Successful collaboration therefore depends on a conflation between religious and state interests, which is not evident.

- Finally, there is the difficult issue of singling out religious identity as a central identity marker. Although framed positively rather than negatively, the strong emphasis on religion as a key driver in international politics is not uncontroversial and may have counterproductive effects.

Sant'Egidio as maverick or mediator?

This brings us back to the question of power balance and how strong Sant'Egidio "really" is. Is the rise of the religious engagement policy framework (and the Diplomacy of the Encounter) a direct result of the increased leverage and influence of the community over the last decade? And how closely is Sant'Egidio's future linked to the future of religious diplomacy?

Interestingly, the relative success or failure of the religious engagement policy framework does not appears to be so important to Sant'Egidio (as, for instance, it is to the IR community and within some policy-making circles). This is because Sant'Egidio is the "real thing", whereas the others are theorists. Sant'Egidio is first and foremost a practitioner of religious diplomacy, not policy-making. The community's does not lie in a specific policy framework; but in their concrete results and achievements as international diplomats. From this perspective, the religious engagement framework is only one formalized political channel among many. As we have seen, Sant'Egidio can already work through the Italian state; through the Holy See; and through the community in its capacities as religious network and international institution. In fact, Sant'Egidio may well consider itself to be better off without too tight formal coordination with political authorities based on its religious identity.

Considering the community's history of shifting relation with both Italian political and religious authorities, the community's current peak in influence seems more the result of a coalition of interests than a structural change in power relations. After the War on Terror there was a need for a new narrative and paradigm of religion in the global order. Sant'Egidio—through its position as the

most experienced, well-connected and "successful" practitioner of religious diplomacy—was best qualified to offer this. This has increased Sant'Egidio's status and leverage as a key advisor and authority on religion and politics, but nevertheless leaves the community with a limited impact on actual political practices and structural relations. An in-depth study of the religious engagement policy framework thus allows us to observe the synergy, but also the autonomy, of all three actors: Sant'Egidio, the Italian MFA and the Holy See.

Negotiating religion with religious authorities

The second arena constituting a key element of the international context in which Sant'Egidio operates is the Holy See, the central government of the Catholic Church. If Sant'Egidio is affected by formal structures of international politics and diplomacy—most directly by the ongoing policy debates on the religious engagement policy framework, as this dissertation argues—it is also under the influence of the formal and informal structures of the Holy See and the Catholic Church.

I understand the Sant'Egidio community's relations with the Holy See as a two-way relationship. While the Holy See clearly provides some basic structures of opportunity and constraint for Sant'Egidio's international practices and overall "identity" as global diplomatic actor, the latter in turn actively partakes in the shaping of these very structures, through its international practices. The analytical focus of this section of the chapter is thus on: 1) mapping and understanding the "traditions" in which Sant'Egidio works as a semi-independent, Catholic diplomatic actor and; 2) investigating the ways in which the community possibly challenges or redefines these traditions. In other words: What sort of narrative on religion and international politics does Sant'Egidio negotiate internally in the Catholic Church? And how does this narrative stand in relation to the narrative developed in the community's negotiations with political authorities, most explicitly articulated through the religious engagement policy framework?

I show that Sant'Egidio in its relations with religious authorities (as with political authorities) has also emerged as a sort of epistemic community, whose

(at least partly) recognized expertise and experiences in the field of international politics and diplomacy has gradually translated into considerable leverage on ongoing negotiations within the Holy See concerning its global policies and diplomatic strategies. Especially following the election of Pope Francis—who represents a line of Catholicism that very much accords with that of the Sant'Egidio—the community is increasingly playing a central role in the reconfiguration of traditional Holy See diplomacy and its global policies. Transforming and innovating Holy See diplomacy evidently entails (indeed depends upon) a quite comprehensive negotiation process on dominant interpretations of the overall "meaning" and role of the Catholic Church and Catholicism in the contemporary world.

In this section, then, I map and analyze key debates on diplomacy within the Holy See—and their theological and political implications—and try to situate Sant'Egidio's position within this nexus. I show that there is an ongoing confrontation between two currents holding radically different views on (the appropriate) role of the Catholic Church in international diplomacy and politics and try to sketch up the key characteristics and stakes in the clash between the currents favoring a "Diplomacy of the Encounter", and those favoring a "Diplomacy of Truth". Against this background, I discuss the Sant'Egidio community's responses to the core issues and questions raised in this broader confrontation between "Truth" and "Encounter", and how these responses can improve our understanding of the Sant'Egidio community as a Catholic global diplomatic actor.

Diplomacy as a key issue in the battle for the soul of the Catholic Church

Faggioli's hypothesis of the NEMs position at the forefront of a larger confrontation between modernity and Catholicism provides us with a useful starting point to explore the Sant'Egidio community's role and strategies as a global Catholic actor. As we have seen, Faggioli argues that a basic tension within the Catholic Church—reproduced within the NEMs—is the issue of Vatican II and its respective reception/rejection. The NEM's relationship to Vatican II—and, in particular, its teachings on "openness" to the world—structure both the socio-

political orientation of the increasingly globalized new ecclesial movements as well as their relationship to the centralized hierarchical structure. This effectively makes Vatican II the single most important "variable" to understand and analyze what type of social and political force the various NEMs effectively represent, and how they are likely to impact on global contemporary Catholicism.

However, closer scrutiny of internal debates within the Holy See and broader Catholic constituencies about Sant'Egidio, make it clear that the issue of diplomacy and international engagement represents a key arena for the confrontation between competing views on the heritage of Vatican II and how this heritage should be managed in practical terms. This means that current polemics on diplomacy within the Holy See and the Catholic Church in fact reflect a deeper debate and tension at the heart of the Church on existential questions concerning the role that the Church should take vis-à-vis "the world" and "modernity". This questions whether the Church should "engage" and risk getting its hands dirty, or "stay truthful" and "abandon the fickleness of diplomacy" altogether (Gagliarducci 2012).

Diplomacy's position as a key issue, at the heart of a confrontation between "progressive" and "conservative" currents within the Catholic Church is not a new phenomenon. Its centrality can be explained by the history and identity of the Catholic Church as a transnational "movement" with both territorial and non-territorial experiences and ambitions.[246] Indeed, international relations and diplomatic practices have constituted characteristic features of the Catholic Church's organizational set-up and occupation since its very inception, first through its activities of *missioning* and *proselytizing,* and later through the *diplomatic activities* of the sovereign entity of the Holy See.

The diplomatic program of the Holy See builds upon the mission of the Church as stated in Canon Law; it is therefore a diplomatic profile which builds upon the central notions of evangelization, "Christian Unity" and Catholic social teachings. However, as missioning and proselytization have become increasingly

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[246] By this, I mean the expansion and decline of the Pope's empire, the confrontation with the new nation-states concerning the last Papal States, and its arrangement with Italian authorities (and international law) of the status and position of the Vatican state.

controversial and questioned as an ethical practice in a pluralist world,[247] Holy See diplomacy has gradually moved toward "applied" Catholicism on an ever-increasing range of domains. As a result, the diplomatic program of the Holy See increasingly reflects that of any other diplomatic state actor—it now has a broad diplomatic portfolio, ranging from economic and social inequality, conflict resolution and peacemaking, humanitarian assistance, education, health, development, etc. Pope Francis in particular has played a central in the expansion of the traditional scope of Holy See diplomacy.

This, however, means that from a conservative perspective, diplomacy *per se* as an institutionalized practice breaks with the former predominance of the issue of evangelization and the establishment of a transnational *Societas Christiana,* to the benefit of more pragmatic and political considerations, reflecting the priorities of the Holy See as a state actor (more than its "domestic" responsibilities as the central government of the Catholic Church.) As the single most secular, worthily and praxis-oriented activity of the Catholic Church, diplomacy is by its very nature fiercely criticized by conservative Catholic currents.[248] The Sant'Egidio community's position as a key diplomatic player of the Holy See (and surely the most ambitious one)—effectively representing the "frontline" of the Church toward "the world"—thus situates the community in a central, but also vulnerable position, exposed to harsh winds from different directions. This very particular structural context should be considered in the assessment of Sant'Egidio's identity and role as a key Catholic entrepreneur of religion and international affairs.

Interestingly, there may also exist more structural and physical reasons for the current polemics on Holy See diplomacy in the present: As Gagliarducci (2016b) notes, Emeritus Pope Benedict still exercises influence on Holy See diplomacy through the simple fact that he continues to live and work in the

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[247] Much due to the role of missionaries in the colonial projects.

[248] These conservative Catholics currents do in deed seem to share a number of features (and basic concerns) with their *salafi* peers, most importantly in terms of their apolitical features and position of withdrawal, resignation, non-participation. This schism between participation and resignation from "the World" appears to be a pattern replicated in many religious traditions.

Vatican premises, as the only Pope who has abdicated since Gregory XII in 1415. This means that there exists a personalized "living" opposition and alternative to the diplomatic model of Francis. According to Gagliarducci, then, we now effectively have parallel lines of Holy See diplomacy that are being pursued through different channels and through different Pontifical Councils (ibid).

The conservative camp: A "Diplomacy of Truth"

The blog *Monday Vatican*—authored by Andrea Gagliarducci, a prominent 'Vaticanista' (i.e., journalist specializing in Vatican issues) [249] —provides an interesting peek into conservative thinking on Vatican foreign policies and the appropriate relationship between religion and diplomacy. The conservative story line, sketched in the writings of Gagliarducci, is that Pope Francis' papacy embodies some of the fundamental dilemmas of today's Church, which can ultimately be boiled down to the question of the Truth—with a capital "T"—and its role in Christianity. Gagliarducci recognizes the same fundamental dilemmas and tensions internally in the Church and in its external relations with the world—most concretely practiced through its diplomatic activities (Gagliarducci 2016b).

From a conservative perspective, the Catholic Church finds itself is a challenging position in the contemporary world. This is primarily because of the "hyper-secularization" of Western societies (increasingly spreading to other parts of the world). Indeed, the hyper-secularization of Western societies is largely deemed responsible for the difficult position for the Catholic Church at "home" and "abroad". Not only has it resulted in attacks on religious freedoms *within* Western societies, it has also been instrumental in the rise of religious fundamentalism and persecution of Christians *outside* the West. However, beyond this established analysis of the destructive effects of secularization, Gagliarducci elaborates on some additional elements that increasingly appear to become part of mainstream conservative Catholic discourses. First, he posits idea that the secularization of European societies is no longer the only, or even the single most important

[249] Gagliarducci, a Vatican analyst at the Catholic News Agency, writes for the *National Catholic Register*, *La Sicilia* and *Il Tempo*.

challenge to the Catholic Church. Rather, Gagliarducci (2016b) identities another trend, which he calls the "Protestantization of Catholicism":

> Protestant thought, proclaimed by Luther, whose notion of the free examination of conscience penetrated the Freemasons, has subsequently touched the world elites. That Protestant thought is nowadays the Church's real enemy.

Gagliarducci's point is that Catholicism is currently suffering a process of "internalized" secularization, through the spread of a pragmatic, casuistry form of Catholicism, in which concepts such as doubt and critical reasoning—normally associated with Protestantism—is given increased latitude (Gagliarducci 2016b). This "infiltration of the Arian doubt" into the heart of the Catholic Church "of whether Christ is God or not, and whether the sacraments are what the Church's faith proclaims, or whether they are no more than empty signs" is perceived to effectively undermine the very raison d'être and core of Catholicism (Gagliarducci 2016b).

The second issue that Gagliarducci establishes in his analysis of the state of the Church in contemporary world regards the concept of the *peripheries.* As we have seen, this concept constitutes a much-favored topic of Pope Francis. Conventionally—and in the idiom of Popo Francis—the peripheries would refer to the economically, socially and politically marginalized areas of the Global South, which find themselves far away from the economic and political centers of the West.[250] During Pope Francis' papacy, the peripheries have been given much attention. Indeed, a key ambition of his diplomatic agenda has been to make "the peripheries the center"; that is, to advocate a new global order which reconfigures the balance of power between the marginalized peripheries and the traditional Western power centers. This diplomatic ambition has been pursued for instance through the Pope's attempts to reorganize the Holy See structures and administration in a way that reflects the increasingly global face of the Catholic Church, through the de-Italianization of the Curia. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this

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[250] As we have seen in the section on religious engagement, the peripheries are understood as the most important places to create "a new form of knowledge"—rooted in peoples' daily realities—to better inform foreign policies.

has not been well received among many traditionally oriented Catholic constituencies pertaining to the traditional "center".

Gagliarducci (2016c) argues that this tendency has gone too far; in fact, he claims that the peripheries of the Catholic Church no longer are the Global South—in these areas, Catholicism is "alive and well". Quite to the contrary, Gagliarducci argues that the new peripheries of Catholicism are to be found in the heart of its traditional center, that is, in European societies and Italy in particular. The Italian "Mother Church" is urgently ill—it is therefore here the Pope should focus his attention.

"Moses versus Christ" and "Sociology versus Religion"? Conservative readings of opposing traditions within the Church seem to claim that the current crisis in the European domain results from its failure to be loyal to Truth. As a result, it has partly lost its identity. The Church is seen as trapped in an existential squeeze between "the spirit of the world" and the "reasonable truth of faith" (Gagliarducci 2016b) in which the spirit of the world has had the upper hand for some time. Pope Francis constitutes the utmost symbol of the "spirit of the world", through slogans such as "reality is greater than ideas". In this conservative story line, the Church's major sin is that it has become relativist about Truth; which is an attitude "mortal to faith", in the famous words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who remains the major figure in the conservative camp.

Conservative voices claim that although this basic dilemma was also present with the former popes, the urgency of the impasse has culminated in the papacy of Francis, who has taken a clear and "radical" position on this question. A key reference that elaborates this critique of Pope Frances is a 2016 newspaper article—"Il drama di Papa Francesco" ["The drama of Pope Francis", my translation]—by Stanislaw Grygiel, published in the Italian newspaper *Il Foglio* (Grygiel 2016). Grygiel is a Polish philosopher, friend of John Paul II, and lectures at the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for Studies on Family and Marriage in Rome. As much of the conservative critique against Pope Francis, the article takes its cue from the Apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. In the article, Grygiel provides a rather broad-stroke historical analysis of opposing traditions within the Church. He depicts two different and opposed traditions of thought—or rather, between

faith and doubt—that can roughly be traced through Moses, sociology (i.e. Marx) and Pope Francis, on the one hand, and Christ, religion and Pope Benedict on the other.

The article links the "common erroneous thinking" of Moses—referring to his decision to break the table of the Ten Commandments—to Karl Marx's conception of a "critical mass" and the development of sociology as a modern academic discipline and, finally, Pope Francis' tendency to privilege praxis over principle. Grygiel's accusation against Pope Francis is therefore that he is much too pragmatic and worldly oriented, in a way that threatens to undermine the very essence of Catholic faith. Grygiel attributes the Pope's pragmatic attitude to his education "according to the Ignatian principle of the 'discernment of the spirit in the concrete situation'" (Grygiel 2016).

The opposed tradition—of Christ, as a contrast to Moses—is linked to a notion of absolute Truth and devotion, and an idea of "speaking the Truth regardless of the consequences". Grygiel (2016) thus sets up a dichotomy between the non-pragmatic and truthful, who remain loyal to the eternal truth of the gospel rather than to the shifting spirits of the world,[251] and those "hard of heart", who always adapt and take a relativist stance. Against this background, he concludes that the "fundamental" dilemma of Pope Francis is to "choose between Christ and Moses. That is, choosing between the merciful truth and the casuistry for the hard of heart. That is, choosing between religion and sociology. In the end, Moses' mistake is also Karl Marx's mistake" (Grygiel 2016, cited in Gagliarducci 2016b).

A diplomatic model built on "Truth". What sort of diplomatic model can be built on (Catholic) Truth as guiding principle? In general terms, conservative analysis of Holy See diplomacy sketch up two different models and traditions of Vatican diplomacy, in the continuation of the tensions between principles versus praxis: One with starting point in Pope Benedict XVI and the conception of a diplomacy of "Truth" (Gagliarducci 2012; 2014) and one starting with Pope Francis's notion of

[251] And not least, to the shifting sociology and anthropology of the world, with what that involves in terms of changing perceptions of and physical constitution of (the increasingly various) genders, family configurations and roles.

a diplomacy of the "Encounter" (Gagliarducci 2016a; 2017). John Paul II is presented as a first-generation "hybrid"; in fact, Benedict XVI's diplomatic agenda of "Truth" can in fact to a considerable extent be read as a reaction to the "openings" to the world created by Pope John Paul II, most specifically through the notions of inter-religious dialog and ecumenism as key priorities of global Holy See engagement (2016a).[252]

Benedict openly disagreed with John Paul II on this issue and elaborated his critique in the controversial document—with the telling title *Dominum Jesus*—published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. In this document, Benedict opposes the perceived relativism underlying the Church's engagement in inter-religious and ecumenical work, and effectively seeks to reestablish the Catholic Church as the sole true Church of Christ, and Jesus as the sole path to salvation. Benedict explains that not all religions are equal or of equal worth; nor are we all the children are God. [253] Rather, there is only one way to salvation for all of humanity and that is Jesus; this means that the "renunciation of Truth"—or its "modification" through practices or inter-religious equality—"is mortal to faith" (Ratzinger 2000).[254]

The diplomacy of "Truth", favored by conservative currents, is therefore very much linked to the papacy of Benedict XIV, and his focus on the exclusiveness of Catholic Truth, including the limitations this notion represents for relations with other people. Most accurately, perhaps, the "manifest" underlying this diplomatic agenda model can be traced in Benedict's first message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace (2006) entitled "In Truth, Peace".[255] This document is important because it sets out the main framework of Holy See diplomacy under Benedict—the text is still traditionally handed out to governments and diplomatic representation to the Holy See.

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[252] An agenda launched with the 1986 meeting in Assisi.
[253] Benedict's observation is that we are not all the children of God; we are all the creations of God, but only those who follow Jesus will become his children.
[254] The entire text can be found at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.
[255] The entire text can be found at: https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20051213_xxxix-world-day-peace.html.

In short, the text establishes Truth as the exclusive condition for peace: "In truth, peace expresses the conviction that wherever and whenever men and women are enlightened by the splendour of truth, they naturally set out on the path of peace" (Ratzinger 2006). This means that when human beings understand and accept Truth—in its fullest sense—peace will automatically follow, because it is the "fruit of an order which has been planted in human society by its divine Founder". The main obstacle to peace is therefore lying and falsehood; quoting from final chapter in the last book of the Bible, Benedict states that "outside are [...] all who love falsehood" (ibid.). All actions that—willingly or unwillingly—partake in the obfuscation of Truth, are thus the key reason for conflict, whether in the hearts of human beings or at the state level. This means that "aberrant ideological and political systems" bear a key responsibility because they "willfully twist the truth" (ibid).

What is Truth, in its fullest sense, then? In the conservative tradition associated with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, this is largely synonymous with the person of Jesus. Benedict (Ratzinger 2006) states that:

> Jesus defined himself as the Truth in person […]. He has disclosed the full truth about humanity and about human history. The power of his grace makes it possible to live ''in'' and ''by'' truth, since he alone is completely true and faithful. Jesus is the truth which gives us peace.

Against this background, the duty of Catholics in every part of the world is to "proclaim and embody ever more fully the 'Gospel of Peace', and to show that acknowledgment of the full truth of God is the first, indispensable condition for consolidating the truth of peace" (Ratzinger 2006).

Outcome of diplomatic practices: International law and evangelization

Even if framed in a religious, theological language, these texts—when "decoded"—have quite significant implications for diplomatic practices. Together, they form the outline of a diplomacy based on the (sole) Truth of the Catholic faith, in which absolute Truth, in the Benedictian sense, constitutes a premise for peace: Peace can only be achieved by living in and through Catholicism. But how does this

attitude affect relations with non-Catholic "Others"? In diplomatic practices it has materialized as a resistance to engage in the "fickleness of diplomacy" and a preference toward "speaking the Truth"—primarily by denouncing terrorism and, in particular, Christian persecution around the world (Gagliarducci 2012). In terms of diplomatic strategies and practices, the focus on Truth thus appears to translate into a line of confrontation, or alternatively resignation—anything but compromise and negotiations that is seen as the first steps of a path that will eventually lead to the corruption and loss of identity of Catholicism.[256] The focus on an exclusive Catholic Truth thus largely finds its expression in the focus on international law—as arguably the "purest" domain of international relations and politics (ibid.)—and in linking international law with Christian theology. According to Gagliarducci, the key achievements of Benedict have in fact been to create awareness of the Christian underpinnings of international law. Not surprisingly, perhaps, International Religious Freedom (IRF) have been at the center of such endeavors.

Another key issue within the framework of the "Diplomacy of Truth" is the issue of evangelization and proselytizing. If the core of Catholicism is its absolute Truth, *evangelization* needs to be a central feature of Catholic diplomacy and international relations—even if it does not fit well with the contemporary "spirit of the world". Indeed, evangelization was an issue Benedict keenly returned to, and that he advanced for instance through the creation of a Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the Promotion of the New Evangelization (in 2010). But how does the renewed focus on evangelization stand in relation to the teachings of Vatican II on ecumenism and inter-religious dialog? One would think that an agenda of inter-religious dialog (in which respecting the faith traditions of others is key) and an agenda of evangelization (in which spreading the sole Truth constitutes the overarching mission) would be a difficult combination. Benedict tried to solve this by primarily focusing on already nominally Catholic

[256] Benedict's focus on the non-negotiable elements of Catholicism in external relations were clearly expressed for instance his 2006 speech in Regentzburg which according to Sant'Egidio represented an all-time low in the Church's relations with the Muslim world. See: https://www.ncronline.org/news/911-marked-crucial-turn-vatican-muslim-relations.

constituencies; namely, those already identifying as Catholics but who have lost their connection to religion in an increasingly secular society. These "New Pagans", in the terminology of Benedict,[257] would constitute a particular priority in Benedict's papacy, in his view representing perhaps the most critical challenge to contemporary Catholicism.

The liberal camp: A "Diplomacy of the Encounter"

At the other end of the spectrum is the concept of a diplomacy of the "Encounter", which is largely associated with the "new" Holy See diplomatic model of Pope Francis, and with the Sant'Egidio community, as the incumbent Pope's key diplomatic players (Gagliarducci 2016a; 2017). The term is "work in progress" and Pope Francis often speaks of a "Culture of the Encounter" and has on several occasions stated that there is a need to write a proper "Theology of the Encounter", but a theological text is still to be written. Yet, the term and the "Encounter" framework constitutes a useful key to read the diplomatic engagement of the Pope and actors such as Sant'Egidio as an important act of rebellion and contestation against conservative and strict interpretations of Catholicism and its external relations. The encounter approach as diplomatic model is embedded in deep ontological questions concerning truth and identity.

The battle of "the Truth". The notion of "the Truth"—and its different conceptions—remains the key bone of contention underlying internal Catholic debates on diplomacy. This is perfectly illustrated in the response of the "Diplomacy of the Encounter" line to conservative critiques regarding its (presumably flawed) relationship to Truth: "The Truth is in the Encounter". This statement, originally formulated by Pope Francis, was reiterated by Sant'Egidio and is currently providing the slogan for both the U.S. and Italian religious engagement policy frameworks; which shows how ideas travel (also across religious–secular boundaries) in the relatively limited circle of stakeholders and key actors in global policy-making processes on religion and international politics.

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[257] This was first developed in his 1958 lecture on the "New Pagans and the Church".

The key idea of the encounter-oriented approach pioneered by the Pope and Sant'Egidio is that the dichotomy between principle and praxis, truth and relativism, religion and sociology identified by the advocates of a "Diplomacy of Truth" is false. There is no one single, absolute Truth existing in a separate theoretical sphere. Quite to the contrary, truth—in its fullest sense—can only be discovered in the meeting with others, in action and engagement with the world. Hence, one does not have to choose between religion and sociology; or Moses and Christ—it is precisely this type of confrontational outlook which creates conflict in the first place.

Pope Francis' (and Sant'Egidio's) suggestion then, seems to be to replace Truth with Encounter, in an attempt to create a more inclusive conception of Truth. An understanding of Truth that is compatible with the external engagement of the various Others of the Catholic Church (through inter-religious dialog and ecumenism, conflict mediation and other diplomatic practices), but which is also compatible with, and reflects, the internal pluralism of the Catholic Church, as increasingly a Church of the Global South. Beyond the issue of inclusiveness, the encounter-oriented approach also focuses on Truth as something that is created in the meeting; it cannot be transmitted in in a top-down manner, and it has to be revealed through actions and practices rather than proselytizing: "Actions speak louder than words".

Some of the key issues in the—still not written—Theology of the Encounter has been elaborated in the Pope's speeches, perhaps most concretely in his morning homily in the Domus Sanctae Maertha on September 13, 2016.[258] Also in the Theology of the Encounter, the figure of Jesus is essential, yet, Pope Francis interpretation and framing of this major figure is quite different to that of Benedict. Rather than pitching Jesus as "Truth in person", Pope Francis speaks of the Truth in the actions of Jesus. In Pope Francis reading, Jesus' most "radical" teaching or contribution was first and foremost his ability of engagement and compassion with others—his ability to deeply engage with other people, taking on their concerns and worries as if they were his own.

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[258] This is available at: https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20160913_for-a-culture-of-encounter.html.

A second key feature with the "Jesus tradition", according to Pope Francis—which should constitute the core of the theology, and the diplomacy, of the Encounter—is his special care for the marginalized, the poor, the sick and the weak. In this perspective, the most vulnerable and marginalized are the ones closest to God; this means that engagement with the poor or those most in need effectively represent the most concrete way of interacting with the divine. According to Pope Francis, then, a Theology of the Encounter must build upon the actions of Jesus —more than outdated principles and dogma—in order to remain truthful to Christianity. He hence speaks of a tradition centered on Jesus' ability to encounter and engage with others, in the sense of being truly open and receptive to the world. In this account, encounters are presented as a physical and mental exercise with some mystical features regarding the inherent unity but also separation between "the Self" and "Others".

If a "Theology of Encounter" is about being truly open to others, a "Culture of the Encounter", in practical terms, means facilitating these forms of human relations and interactions. As such, the term in fact has very political connotations, and effectively constitutes the baseline of Pope Francis and liberal Catholic currents (such as Sant'Egidio's) harsh criticism of the current global order. Pope Francis is typically arguing that the neo-liberal, capitalist global economic system—the "globalization of inequalities and indifference" and the "idolatry of money"—is dangerous precisely because it makes true encounters almost impossible. In a system in which everyone views each other primarily as means toward an end, and which rewards the exploitation of others, true friendship is rare, the Pope argues.

Outcome on diplomatic practices: A proactive, "political", Holy See diplomacy

How then does these "Theology of the Encounter" components rub off on diplomatic models and practices? At first glance, the "Diplomacy of the Encounter" associated with Pope Francis and Sant'Egidio is a diplomacy of actions and gestures, more than a diplomacy of words. It is less interested in principles and dogma (both theological and worldly in the form of international law) that in the

realities on the ground; and insists on the necessity to get engaged and involved in the world. Resignation and indifference is seen as the worst possible option.

A key feature with Holy See diplomacy under Pope Francis is the strong emphasis on inter-religious dialog and relations (especially with the Islamic world).[259] This marks an explicit shift from Benedict's "Diplomacy of Truth", centered on evangelization and confrontation (as in the 2006 Regensburg lecture). Another explicit shift is Pope Francis' relative disinterest in international law —at least in the sense of linking Catholic theology and social teachings with international law—and rather prioritizing an active and dispersed case-by-case global diplomacy. Indeed, the Pope has pursued a broad set of diplomatic missions since 2013, many of them quite outside the traditional comfort zone of Holy See diplomacy. The Pope has actively participated in ongoing debates on the global economy, which would have been unthinkable with any of the former popes.[260] In an equally proactive fashion, the Pope has engaged in heated discussions on the global environmental challenges and the UN's sustainable development agenda 2015–2030; indeed, the Pope's mobilization on such issues in 2014–2015 is widely seen as indispensable to the reaching of an agreement during the Paris negotiations on climate change in 2015. In sum, the Pope—through his insistence on encounters and engagement—has significantly expanded the traditional scope of action of Holy See diplomacy. This has not passed unnoticed with the secular audience, resulting in the Pope's nomination of "person of the year" by *The Times* already in 2013, during the first year of his pontificate.

But the diplomatic agenda of Pope Francis also reflects more traditional Franciscan topics such as a focus on the poor, the marginalized, and the

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[259] Some examples include Pope Francis' meetings with the grand Imam of the Al-Azar University, Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, in both Egypt and Italy (apparently, the Sant'Egidio community should have played a central role in organizing the meetings); the Pope's visit to a mosque during his trip to the war-torn Central African Republic in 2015 (this travel was also apparently organized by the Sant'Egidio community); and his visit to the Wailing Wall with Rabbi Abraham Scorsa and Muslim leader Omar Abboud in 2015. Other indicators of the Pope's emphasis on inter-faith dialog is his support of the Obama administration's Iran policies, and active encouragement of the inter-religious dialog activities of Sant'Egidio and likeminded movements.

[260] See, for instance, the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si*, which the leading economist Jeffrey Sachs assisted in writing.

peripheries. This has been particularly evident in the Pope's approach toward the European refuge crisis that emerged in the aftermath of the political collapse in large parts of the MENA region; a crisis which Italy, for obvious reasons, has experienced very directly. The Pope has continuously insisted on treating refugees with humanity and dignity, and spoken out against the rise of xenophobic, anti-immigrant currents in Italian and European politics. The Pope also used his first trip outside Rome to visit the Italian island of Lampedusa to express solidarity with the migrants.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, one issue has a special priority in Francis' "Diplomacy of the Encounter" (in addition to his focus in inter-religious relations): peace and reconciliation. With Pope Francis, there are some indications of Holy See diplomacy moving from a rather careful stance toward international mediation engagements, in the direction of a more proactive approach seeking to include formal mediation efforts as part of the Holy See diplomatic toolkit. Pope Francis has since his election been involved in a series of mediation initiatives, in particular in the Latin American continent, and in 2016, Secretary of State Pietro Parolin suggested to establish an office for pontifical mediation within the Secretariat. The suggestion was not voted, but Parolin seems to be pursuing the agenda.

As for the *mode* of Francis' diplomacy, commentators often point to his particular style, which is seemingly more independent and disconnected from the formal diplomatic structures of the Holy See than usual—often to the dismay of the official diplomatic institutions in Rome.[261] On several occasions, the Pope, should have personally initiated diplomatic initiatives, only involving a small circle of partners. An example includes the Pope's intervention in the United States–Cuba talks in 2014, in the aftermath of the stalemate of the Canadian-led negotiations. Reportedly, the Holy See diplomatic institutions in Rome had not been informed about the Pope's participation, meaning that they first learned about the initiative with the official declaration of the reaching of an agreement.[262]

[261] Source: interview with a Rome-based, Italian diplomat, Rome, 2015.
[262] Ibid.

This direct, person-oriented style of diplomacy has triggered some negative responses, not only in conservative circles.

As for infrastructure and concrete policy tools, Pope Francis has taken several steps to reconfigure the traditional set up of Holy See diplomacy. Most importantly, he has created an advisory council composed of twelve cardinals largely originating from the "peripheries" to advise him in global policy-making processes.[263] In addition he has strengthened the Nazareth Institute, which currently represents "a bastion of pro-Frances diplomatic thinking and the central institution in charge of elaborating the diplomatic line and model of the sitting Pope" according to Gagliarducci (2016a). Pope Francis appointed Pietro Parolin as the institute's first Director in Chief, a position he left only when he was later appointed as Pope Francis' Secretary of State (the equivalent to the foreign minister of the Holy See).

The Pope is also actively developing and applying a number of policy tools to be used in diplomatic negotiations, reflecting a more "head-on" approach to global diplomatic practices. For the most part, these are adaptations of secular policy concepts in a religiously framed language, designed to facilitate negotiations and engagement with secular, political actors. Traditionally—and also with Pope Francis—the Holy See uses a different language that secular state actors to frame and pursue its policy agenda. Its foreign-policy interests are generally framed within an ethical and moral agenda and aim to address and represent a global conscience—with the Pope acts as a moral spokesman. With Pope Francis however, we see a rapprochement to the secular audience also linguistically. This happens through the formulation of new Holy See policy goals, which "play" upon their secular counterparts (while seeking to enrich and anchor these policy aims morally and ethically). Some examples of such innovations that the Pope frequently uses are the concepts of Integral Human Development—as opposed to the established category of human development or even development at large—and the notion of the *duty to protect* as opposed to the *responsibility to protect* (R2P) (Holmsen & Salloum 2017).

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[263] This triggered additional hostilities among parts of the Curia who already feel demoted under Pope Francis.

Conclusion

The dissertation has sought to contribute to our understanding of two lacunae in academic research on faith-based conflict meditation: 1) the operational dynamics of faith-based mediation and; 2) its links and contact points with international politics. By conducting a practice-oriented, multi-level investigation of a prominent actor of faith-based mediation—the Italian Catholic Sant'Egidio community—the dissertation provides important insight into both the micro-practices of faith-based mediation and larger questions concerning the recasting of the religious in the global order.

Contributions to the study of faith-based mediation

As for the operational dynamics of faith-based mediation, the dissertation has contributed conceptually and theoretically by developing a typology of faith-based mediation together with a multi-level analytical framework drawing upon mediation and practice theory. These tools have allowed for a focused analysis of Sant'Egidio's faith-based mediator identity and practices emphasizing its distinctive features as a professionalized, transnational religious mediator community. The findings both challenge dominant narratives on faith-based mediation as portrayed in the academic literature and extends our understanding of established concepts and dynamics.

Most importantly, perhaps, it shows that faith-based mediation "Sant'Egidio-style" is much more political than one would assume. It is not only a predominately secular practice, but also an inherently secularizing practice in that its main purpose is to teach other religious actors to think and speak "politics". The purpose is not to introduce a religious meta-narrative on the conflict, as the literature on faith-based mediation seems to suggest, but rather to the contrary, to *remove* religion from the narrative, and thereby purifying it. In the context of transnational, cross-religious faith-based mediation, the main strength of faith-

based mediators lies primarily in the symbolic value of their identity as religious actors more than in their theological competence and other explicitly religious tools. By belonging to the category of "religious actor", faith-based mediators are considered as qualified to discuss religion with other religious actors. Interestingly, this religious "quality" often transcends faith traditions in an apparently seamless manner.

The political heel of faith-based mediation and religious diplomacy

As for the links between faith-based conflict mediation and international politics, this dissertation contests dominant understandings of religious diplomacy as an apolitical "detached" practice, uniquely guided by the religious values of the mediators. This is an important and timely contribution. I show how the Sant'Egidio community's position as a leading expert in the field of religious diplomacy, in combination with a series of historical coincidences, eventually led to the community's transition from troublemaker to recognized actor, with significant impact on post-Westphalian redefinitions on religion and politics after September 11. The Sant'Egidio community has been central in the development of a new narrative on religion and politics which started to penetrate U.S. policy-making processes on religion and diplomacy in 2005–2006 and subsequently in Italian policy-making processes on the same topic since roughly 2010.

The community's rise in influence in political circles has coincided with its increased impact and influence also in religious circles, most explicitly in internal negotiations on religion and its role in international politics and diplomacy within the Holy See. By consequence, the community has played a key role in redefining the role and meaning of Catholicism in the contemporary world and in the reconfiguration of Holy See international relations.

In sum, then, I argue that Sant'Egidio has exercised a significant impact on world politics, through its position and role as an important agent of change situated within a larger process of transformation of both religion and diplomacy.

Transforming religion

This study has allowed us to observe the community's role in changing religion from within, on different levels. By investigating the community's internal religious practices at the IMPP as well as its relations with the Holy See, we see that the community has played a central role in redefining the religious both at the level of religious micro-practices and at the level of Holy See foreign-policy practices.

At the level of *religious practices,* the community has contributed to recasting religion in terms such as *spirituality* and *faith,* signaling a break with more traditional conceptions of religion focusing on the "content" of religious belief, in terms of theology or religious ideas, values and principles. The community also appears to apply religion as creative tool or device, which can help us to expand our understanding of categories such as violence and peace. This is key to the idea of revealing the inherent unity of everyone, and thus the special and shared responsibility of religious people. We also see that that religion is used as a tool to break down the borders between different regimes and truth, and to re-introduce other forms of knowledge—emotional, religious, ethical and spiritual—as valid contributions in public and political debates.

At the level of religious diplomacy and Holy See foreign policies, the community's redefinition of religion has translated into a very proactive and pragmatic posture. Indeed, the Sant'Egidio community has radically extended and re-invented the traditional role and scope for religious actors in international politics and diplomacy, effectively triggering some deep-running conflicts with more conservative currents within the Holy See. This is because diplomacy is, in essence, a deeply theological issue, rooted in the notion of Truth in Catholicism, and the role of pragmatism and relativism in religion.

This means that Sant'Egidio is also effectively active in redefining religion at the heart of the Holy See, through its status and practices as its foremost diplomatic actor. Most importantly, the community is seeking to redefine the very notion of Truth in a more open and flexible conception, which is possible to accommodate with diplomacy. The Sant'Egidio community has tried to so by advocating that "Truth is in the Encounter".

Interestingly, then, it is the relation to Truth that forms the religious, perhaps even theological "core" of Sant'Egidio's faith-based mediation practices: The idea of living in relation to something sacred, something true. Truth is therefore the indispensable, non-negotiable element, but it remains open to interpretation. The issue of Truth is also at the center of the internal tensions that we have observed on the different levels, although expressed differently: At the level of religious practices there is a tension between "Christian Unity" and the "Spirit of Assisi"; at the level of Holy See foreign policies it is between a "Diplomacy of the Encounter" and a "Diplomacy of Truth". This reinforces the impression of a deep-running existential tension or even schism, in which the notion of Truth constitutes the central focal point.

Transforming diplomacy

The study has also analyzed how Sant'Egidio, through is dual identity and position as both religious and political actor, has contributed in transforming diplomacy—or at least, dominant thinking on diplomacy—through the scope of religion. By negotiating a new role for religion in traditional state diplomacy the community has contributed to re-invent diplomacy in a post-Westphalian, post-secularist diplomacy. Some key tools in this transformative process include a new political narrative on religion and global affairs, and a new policy framework and policy tools designed to regulate a new form of partnership between religious and political actors.

A new political narrative on religion

As we have seen, the new political narrative of religion seeks to (re)introduce religion in foreign policies first and foremost as a source of legitimacy and grassroots credibility, designed to rehabilitate an "outdated" and "discredited" state diplomacy. Religion is therefore recast in terms such as *knowledge* and *legitimacy*. Religion is important in foreign policies not because it is "good" or morally superior, but because "most people are religious". The religious engagement narrative is therefore based in an interpretation—which appear to

be growing in diplomatic circles—of the world as "hyper-religious", and of the Western experience with secularism as an aberration to the norm, a parenthesis in history.

In this account, religious communities and networks constitute the protagonist and key drivers in international developments. Religious knowledge is by consequence key to understand what is "really" going on, on the ground. The narrative also has a populist element, in the form of an inbuilt criticism toward "elite" politicians and diplomats (Western, secular, Eurocentric) who "no longer understand the world". This is because they lack adequate analytical frameworks, and most importantly, have no understanding of religion. The claim is therefore that traditional, Westphalian diplomacy has failed to renew itself. Against this background, religion is proposed as a forgotten resource that can "boost" traditional diplomacy. There is also an important link to legitimacy: If most people are religious—in contrast to diplomats—state diplomacy will gain legitimacy through closer partnerships with religion and religious actors.

New policy frameworks and tools

This new narrative has translated into a set of specific new foreign-policy strategies and tools, with distinct U.S. and Italian features: In the U.S. context, it has triggered a shift away from IRF and a "securitization" approach to religion, toward the deeply catholic notion of engagement with religious actors, conceptualized as key partners in U.S. global policies. This Catholic definition of the other as interlocutor and partner marks a significant shift from U.S. evangelical approaches defining "the Other" as evil. In terms of specific tools, IRD and ICD are proposed as the as key instruments for a post-secular U.S. foreign policy. Interestingly, we see that the main purpose of IRD and ICD is articulated in an inherently religious language, as means to help religions to become more authentic and "true to themselves"—and by consequence (hopefully) more compatible with liberal, democratic values.

In the Italian context, we observe a more "timid" and pragmatic approach emphasizing that closer cooperation with religious actors is likely to produce

better knowledge and information, which in turn can inform foreign-policymaking. This focus is reflected in the Italian policy concept of *reverse mission,* as a means for the Italian MFA to tap into the vast network of the Holy See and the Catholic Church. In return, though, Italian foreign policies should be based in the Catholic notion of the "common good" and religious actors should be included also in the "ascending" phase of world politics.

Added contributions to the study of religion and international politics

A multi-level, practice-oriented approach to Sant'Egidio's faith-based mediation practices thus exposes an interesting pattern of similarities between the "religious engagement policy framework" that the community has negotiated with political authorities and the "Theology of the Encounter" line of Catholicism that it has negotiated with religious authorities. Indeed, these are different sides of the same coin: The religious engagement policy framework welcomes precisely the type of religiosity put forth in the Theology of the Encounter. This effectively makes the Sant'Egidio community one of the most ambitious and successful global entrepreneurs of religion and diplomacy in the present.

Moreover, by studying these processes together we can also point to some other dynamics as for what regards international faith-based mediation and its performative effect on world politics. Among the more significant ones, I argue, is the process of assimilation between what sociologists of religion call "lived" and "expert" religion (Hurd 2015) and the development of a new vocabulary of international religious politics with specifically Catholic imprints.

A process of assimilation between "lived" and "expert" religion

This study of Sant'Egidio suggests that we are witnessing a broad transformation of religion at all levels. At the level of *religious practices* among transnational religious networks (studied through Sant'Egidio's yearly IMPP gatherings), we see a new form of "globalized" religious practices, which are tailored to serve a multi-religious (and secular) audience. Religious practices are pluralist and inclusive, oddly "non-confessional", and insist on faith and spirituality, rather than tradition-

specific theological content and teachings. Perhaps we can even speak of a form of religious practices emerging from a "religionicization of politics" rather than a politicization of religion? The point here is to underscore what appears as the predominance of political and pragmatic principles in such religious services, more than unquestionable and non-negotiable religious beliefs. Indeed, religion appears to be modeled upon political priorities—peace and development, security, de-radicalization—rather than the other way around.

Looking closer at the micro-practices of faith-based mediation, this impression of a new form of globalized, "non-confessional religion" is reinforced. The active blurring of borders between the religious and the political—expressed for instance with the resistance of faith-based mediators to identify with the "religious" label—also points in this direction. Indeed, Sant'Egidio's form of religiosity appears as customized for international political practices such as conflict mediation, as it is inclusive and non-dogmatic, set on benefiting from the "good things" with religion, while avoiding the "bad" ones.

At the international level, Sant'Egidio's specific "take" on religion is key to its relative success in negotiating both the integration of religion into state policies, and a new diplomatic model of the Holy See.

A multi-level approach, then, is useful because it allows us to identify a broader process of religious transformation, in the direction of a process of assimilation between "lived" religion and "expert" religion; that is, between the religious practices of transnational religious actors and communities and the ways in which religion is being re-introduced to politics by the "experts" (as exemplified in the religious engagement policy framework). Indeed, the religious engagement policy framework appears as explicitly shaped upon the same "template" of religion that seems to become dominant in religious practices at the community level. An added value of a multi-level perspective is therefore that it allows us to see faith-based mediation as an international practice situated within this broader context of assimilation and religious engineering—that is, as one of the key arenas where the innovation of religion and innovation of politics finds place.

The Catholic imprints on the new vocabulary of international religious politics

The study has also allowed us to see how the prominent role of Catholic actors in contemporary politics have resulted in the emergence of a new vocabulary of international religious politics with specifically Catholic ideational underpinnings, informing both policy frameworks and dominant practices of inter-religious and religious–secular relations and dialog. The parallel rise of the Theology of the Encounter line of Catholicism and the religious engagement policy framework—modeled upon the same "form" of Catholicism, associated with Pope Francis and Sant'Egidio—effectively illustrates the extent to which liberal Catholic actors enjoy an unprecedented level of influence in the present context. This means that the liberal, interpretative line of Catholicism associated with such actors is currently used to provide the blueprint for how to engage religions in the practices of foreign policy and diplomacy—also for non-Catholic religions. This has resulted in a specifically Catholic imprint on the new international vocabulary on religion and politics; although intending to be Universalist.

As we have seen, a key feature with this new vocabulary of religion, meant to constitute a common platform for religions and their engagement, are the notion of *spirituality and faith*. These notions are introduced either directly (through the concept of the Spirit of Assisi or even just Catholic spirituality) or indirectly through notions such as Encounter. Interestingly, these notions appear to primarily refer to a *mode or methodology of being religious*, rather than what to believe in. The common factor is the reference to a new form of religiosity—applicable across faith traditions—which is compatible with the modern pluralist world and democratic principles.

The focus on spirituality and its application in the practices of inter-faith cooperation trigger many interesting questions about the dynamics of contemporary religious politics. Surely, there are some paradoxes in play here. First, can a Catholic concept function as a Universalist terms, effectively providing a common ground and overarching principle for multi-religious relations and co-existence? How robust is the legitimacy of such a concept in an increasingly pluralist international context? A provocative yet pertinent question is whether the focus on a shared (Catholic) spirituality can be read as a covert or more

discrete form of proselytizing, or even missioning? Or perhaps, if conversions are superfluous in a spiritually shared world?[264]

Indeed, there are some indicators supporting such an interpretation. The NEMs in particular have played a key role in the invention of shared spiritualties as a tool of ecumenism and inter-religious relations. Both Sant'Egidio and Focolare speak about Catholic spirituality as something that can be transmitted to other faith traditions—all while respecting the faith tradition of the person in questions—producing, for instance the remarkable outcome of "Muslims with a Catholic spirituality".[265] And indeed, many of the members of the NEMs are not Catholics, but robustly placed within other faith tradition, claiming to share spiritualties but not religious beliefs in a literal sense. This is a phenomenon that merits further scholarly attention.

Looking ahead

In this study I have shown that the Italian Community of Sant'Egidio is currently experiencing a "golden period" in terms of religious and political influence, as a prominent post-Westphalian diplomatic actor with considerable leverage in the renegotiation of religious–secular boundaries, in Italy and the global level.

However, the study also points to the paradoxes and tensions in play that are likely to affect the extent to which the community will be able to continue to use the momentum. Some of the more critical ones, and which should thus be watched in the future, include the contradiction between Truth and Encounter, and the "Spirit of Assisi" and "Christian Unity". Is this sustainable? Until the present, the Sant'Egidio community has been able to draw upon a favorable environment and, especially, the support of Pope Francis. But Francis is also facing considerable resistance from conservative Catholic currents. As of now, it looks as if the community's destiny is tightly linked to that of the Pope. A shift in the power

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[264] The continued prevalence of Catholic intellectual production—*Nostra Aeate* being the single most important work—as foundation and key reference in inter-faith cooperation of all kinds and across faith traditions supports this observation. Source: Interview with a representative of the Turkish Gülen movement, Rome, 2014.

[265] Source: Interview with high-level Focolare member, Loppiano, 2015.

balance internally in the Church would clearly affect the community's standing and influence, and it remains to see how well it would adapt to a more conservative climate. Additionally, internal community dynamics suggest this tension already poses a number of challenges, resulting in the community having to strike a fine balance on specifically sensitive topics concerning Catholic identity and "Christian Unity", as on the issue of religious persecutions of Christians.

Another critical issue for the future of religious diplomacy, Sant'Egidio-style, is the sustainability of this "Catholic" model of inter-faith cooperation and co-existence. Does it represent an acceptable platform also for other faith traditions in the long run, or will it be increasingly challenged?

Adding to these challenges is the generational dimension and the community's ability to renew itself. Although a great innovator in many respects, the Sant'Egidio community does not seem to have a very pioneering and progressive set-up in terms of organizational structure and recruitment. And this is perhaps not an ambition either. Fifty years after its foundation, the community remains remarkably similar, with most of the founding members still occupying key positions. There are indeed few women, few non-Roman members and few young people who have entered the inner circles of the community. The community is still very much person-oriented and based in a set of historical experiences that do not necessarily resonate so much with younger generations. This appears to make it vulnerable in view of a necessarily forthcoming generational shift.

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APPENDIX A

International Politics, Diplomacy and Religion

Scientific Coordinators: **Olivier Roy** | RSCAS/EUI
Cynthia Salloum | EHESS/EUI
Jenny Holmsen | SPS/EUI
Maria Birnbaum | RSCAS/EUI

Villa La Fonte – Via delle Fontanelle, 18
San Domenico di Fiesole

4 - 5 May 2015

Context

Raymond Aron famously argued that international relations are lived and symbolized by the contrasting figures of the diplomat and the soldier. Nowhere is this dual character of international relations more visible than in the field of international politics of religion: Religious actors have proven to serve as much as sword-weilding instigators as peacekeeping mediators; up until today religion is the cause of conflicts and a way to mediate peace.

The religious factor as a trigger and instrument of mobilization in international politics is raising considerable challenges for diplomats, policy makers and religious actors alike. States and diplomacies are facing the need to build competencies for diplomats working in the field; religious actors find themselves in the vest of a diplomat.

This conference aims to clarify the role of the religious factor in international politics both from the perspective of professional diplomacy as well as from the perspective of religious and secular practicionners of international relations. It asks why is religion relevant to the conduct of Foreign Policy? How do diplomats and other international actors address religion in carrying out policies; how do religious actors position themselves as professionals of international relations?

The specific take on the subject in this conference is motivated by the observation that, for the most part, it has been non-conventional diplomacy initiatives that have developed specific religious approaches in foreign policy-making. Practitionners of Faith-based diplomacy —on national, EU, or NGO levels—, paved the way for analysis through bringing empirical evidence from specific case studies, experiments and practice. Conventional diplomacy, on the other hand, has been much slower in taking religion into account as a factor of foreign policy. One aim of this conference is to bring actors of conventional and non-conventional diplomacy together in order to compare their approaches and assessment of the religious factor in foreign policy conduct.

We invite presentations that mirror the understanding practitionners have of the nature, role and impact of religion in international politics and show the effect of religious engagement in foreign affairs making. The architecture of the conference will facilitate the debate among state and non-state, religious and non-religious actors and it will allow the confrontation between general theoretical accounts and applied theory. Written papers will be requested for the publishing a guide book for national and EU diplomats.

Funded by European Research Council
7th Framework Programme

Programme

Monday 4 May

09.30 - 09.45 WELCOME COFFEE

09.45 -10.00 Welcome and introduction to the conference by the Secretary General of the EUI Pasquale Ferrara and Professor Olivier Roy

10.00 -12.30 **Panel 1 – *"Speaking Religion": Increasing Religious Literacy in National Foreign Policy***

Chair: **Pasquale Ferrara** | EUI
Discussant: **Fabio Petito** | University of Sussex

Participants: **Carlos Martins Ceglia** | Ambassador, Director of the Middle East Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil
Jean-Nicolas Bitter | Senior Adviser on Religion, Politics and Conflict, Switzerland Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Merete Bilde | Policy Advisor at the European External Action Service (EEAS) of the European Union
Peter Mandaville | Senior Advisor to the Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Christian Heldt | Minister, Deputy Head of Mission, German Embassy to the Holy See

12.30-14.00 LUNCH

14.00-16.30 **Panel 2 – *"Acting Religion": Accommodating Religious Interests in International Politics***

Chair: **Marc Gopin** | Georges Mason University and Brookings

Discussant: **Erin Wilson** | University of Groningen

Participants: **Joseph Maïla** | Former director "Pôle Religion" and Policy planning Directory, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Professor of International Relations | ESSEC
Jorge Alvarez Fuentes | Mexican Ambassador in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan
Pierre Morel | Former Ambassador, Head of the Observatoire Pharos
Victoria Alvarado | Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy to Holy See

16.30-16.45 COFFEE BREAK

16.45-19.00 **Panel 3 – *The Limits and Challenges of Secularism: Special Role of Faith-based Mediation?***

Chair: **Scott Appleby** | Notre Dame University

Case study 1: Sant'Egidio and the Algerian civil conflict

Discussant 1: **Xabier Itzçaina** | Sciences Po Bordeaux, CNRS

Participants: **Anwar Haddam** | Former leader of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), co-founder of the Movement for Liberty and Social Justice (MLSJ)
Antonio Armellini, Former Italian Ambassador in Algeria
Mario Giro, deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Renzi Government, Former Director for International Relations, Sant[1]Egidio Community

Case study 2: Al Muhammadiya and the Mindanao Conflict (Philippines)

Discussant 2: **Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman** | Malaysia Program IDSS, RSIS

Participants: **Din Syamsuddin** | Professor of Islamic Political Thought, State Islamic University, President of of Muhammadiyah
Ali Saleem | Senior Programme Manager, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue
Michael Mastura | Former member of the Philippines Congress, Senior member of the peace negociation panel for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

20.30 DINNER

Tuesday 5 May

09.00 - 09.20 **Morning coffee**

09.20-12.30 **Panel 4 – *The Limits and Challenges of Secularism: Multi-level Cooperation in Faith-based Diplomacy?***

Chair: **Olivier Roy** | EUI
Discussant: **Michael Driessen** | John Cabot University

Participants: **Ingrid Vik** | Scanteam, former advisor at the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights
Jean Arnold de Clermont | Pastor of Clermont, Observatoire Pharos
Bernhard Callebaut | Dr., Associate professor, University Institute Sophia, program director 'Religions in a global world' and member of Focolare Movement
Mario Marazziti | Peacebroker, Sant'Egidio Community Spokesman

12.30-14.00 **Lunch**

14.00-16.00 **Panel 5 – *Faith-based Mediation in Intractable Conflicts***

Chair: **Nida Alahmad** | EUI

Discussant: **Judd Birdsall** | Cambridge University

Participants: **Raymond J. Helmick** | Reverend, Instructor in Conflict Resolution, Boston College
Sharon Rosen | Co-director of the Jerusalem office, Search for Common Ground (SFCG)

Trond Bakkevig | Rev. Canon Dr., Rural archdeacon of the Church of Norway, Convenor of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, Moderator of the board of the Norwegian Resource Centre for Peacebuilding (NOREF)

16.00-16.30 **Coffee break**

16.30-18.30 **Panel 6 – Theoretical Concluding Debate**

Chair: **Maria Birnbaum**

Participants: **Olivier Roy** | European University Institute

Scott Appleby | Notre Dame University

Marc Gopin | George Mason University

Peter Mandaville | George Mason University

Michael Driessen | John Cabot University

Xabier Itzçaina | Sciences Po Bordeaux, CNRS

Fabio Petito | University of Sussex

Judd Birdsall | Cambridge University

Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman | S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Iza Hussin | Cambridge University

Erin Wilson | University of Groningen

20.00 **Dinner**

APPENDIX B

ISPI 80 1934 - 2014

Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale

Foreign Policy and Religious Engagement: The special case of Italy

Milan, October 30-31, 2014

30th October

3.00-3.15 p.m.

Welcome addresses

Franco BRUNI, Vice President, ISPI

Massimo CARNELOS, Counsellor, Policy planning and historical diplomatic Documentation Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

3.15-3.30 p.m.

Introductory remarks

Fabio PETITO, University of Sussex & Scientific Coordinator of ISPI-MAE seminar on 'Religions and International Relations'

Scott THOMAS, University of Bath & Scientific Co-coordinator of this year seminar

3.30-6.00 p.m.

Panel 1: Discussing the Contemporary Experiences of Religious Engagement in Foreign Policy

Chair: **Fabio PETITO**, University of Sussex & Scientific Coordinator of ISPI-MAE seminar on 'Religions and International Relations'

Kick off remarks:

Orianne AYMARD, Religions and Political Affairs Officer, Centre for Analysis, Planning and Strategy, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – France

Nigel BAKER, British Ambassador to the Holy See – Vatican City State

Merete BILDE, Senior Policy Adviser, European External Action Service – Belgium

Jean Nicolas BITTER, Senior Adviser, Religion, Politics and Conflict, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs – Switzerland

Liora DANAN, Policy Advisor of the U.S. Secretary of State for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives – USA

Peter MANDAVILLE, Professor of International Affairs, George Mason University – USA

7.30 p.m.

Cocktail

a

31 October

9.00-10.45 a.m.

Panel 2: An Overview of the Religion and Foreign Policy Relationship in Italy: Retrieving and reconsidering the historical memory for building the future

Chair: **Alfonso ALFONSI**, President Aldo Moro Academy of Historical Studies – Italy

Kick off remarks:

Father Giuseppe BUFFON, Professor of Church History, Antonianum University – Italy

Alfredo CANAVERO, Director, Center for Study of Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, University of Milan – Italy

Pierre DE CHARENTENAY, SJ, member of the Board of the writers of "The Catholic ivilization" – Vatican City State

/ichael DRIESSEN, Professor of International Affairs and Political Science, John Cabot Jniversity – Italy

11.15 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

Panel 3: Looking ahead: how to implement creatively religious engagement in Italian foreign policy? The case of the protection of human rights

Chair: **Roberto CATALANO**, Director, Interreligious Dialogue Center, Focolare Movement – Italy

Kick off remarks:

Pasquale ANNICCHINO, Research Fellow, European University Institute – Italy

Khalid CHAOUKI, Member, Italian Parliament – Italy

Father Giacomo COSTA, Director, Aggiornamenti Sociali – Italy

3.00-4.30 p.m.

Panel 4: Looking ahead: how to implement creatively religious engagement in Italian foreign policy? The case of crisis management and peace building

Chair: **Scott THOMAS**, Senior Lecturer in International Relations and the Politics of Developing Countries, University of Bath; Research Fellow in the Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue, Heythop College, University of London – UK

Kick off remarks:

Claudio BETTI, Community of Sant' Egidio – Italy

Pasquale FERRARA, Secretary General, European University Institute – Italy

Yahya Sergio Yahe PALLAVICINI, Chairman, ISESCO Council for Muslims in non Islamic countries; Vice President, CO.RE.IS. (Italian Islamic Religious Community) – Italy

Olivier ROY, Professor of Social and Political Theory, European University Institute – Italy

4.30-5.00pm

Concluding Session: How to move forward and final document discussion

Chair: **Fabio PETITO**, University of Sussex & Scientific Coordinator of ISPI-MAE seminar on 'Religions and International Relations'

Changing the Conversation about Religion

APPENDIX C

Making Democracy One's Own

Muslim, Catholic and Secular Perspectives in Dialogue on Democracy, Development, and Peace

May 30 – June 1, 2016
Rome, Italy

This conference seeks to theorize recent developments in Catholic, Muslim and secular projects centered on democratic modernity in the Mediterranean region and beyond. It explores the possibilities of structured dialogue and collaboration within and across religious traditions, with an emphasis on Catholicism and Islam, and between religious and secular actors and institutions.

Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale

U.S. Embassy to the Holy See

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Rome Global Gateway

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Keough School of Global Affairs

Monday, May 30, 2016

Notre Dame Global Gateway, Rome

9:15 a.m. **Welcome and Introduction**
Scott Appleby, *University of Notre Dame*
Fabio Petito, *University of Sussex*

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Framing the Inquiry: What Is "Modern" about Catholic, Muslim and Secular Forms of Democracy?

9:30 a.m. CHAIR: **Ebrahim Moosa**, *University of Notre Dame*

KEYNOTE ADDRESS**: Jan-Werner Müller**, *Princeton University*

RESPONDENTS: **Michael Driessen,** *John Cabot University*
Atalia Omer, *University of Notre Dame*

11:00 a.m. Break

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

How Far Interreligious Dialogue?

11:30 a.m. CHAIR: **Rita Moussalem,** *Center for Interreligious Dialogue, Focolare Movement*

KEYNOTE ADDRESS**: R. Scott Appleby**, *University of Notre Dame*

RESPONDENTS: **Rashied Omar,** *University of Notre Dame*
Fabio Petito, *University of Sussex*

1:00 p.m. Lunch

2:00 p.m. **Session 1: Democracy in an Age of Religious Pluralism and Violent Extremism**

CHAIR: **Giancarlo Bosetti,** *Reset DoC*
Asef Bayat, *University of Illinois*
Mona Siddiqui, *University of Edinburgh*

3:30 p.m. Break

4:00 p.m.	**Session 2: Democracy and Interreligious Cooperation: European Challenges**
	CHAIR**: Bernhard Callebaut,** *Sophia University Institute* **Silvio Ferrari,** *Milan University* **Slavica Jakelić,** *Valparaiso University* **Adnane Mokrani,** *Pontifical Institute for the Study of Arabic and Islam*
5:30 p.m.	Break
6:00 p.m.	**Walking group leaves for John Cabot University**
6:15 p.m.	**Shuttle leaves for John Cabot University**

PUBLIC SESSION

Perspectives from Practitioners of Interreligious Dialogue and Collaboration

John Cabot University, Rome

7:00 p.m.	WELCOME NOTE**: Franco Pavoncello**, *President, John Cabot University*
	CHAIR: **Michael Driessen**, *John Cabot University* **Roberto Catalano,** *Sophia University Institute* **Fadi Daou**, *Adyan Foundation* **Lailatul Fitriyah**, *Gregorian Pontifical University* **Rashied Omar,** *University of Notre Dame* **Najeeba Sayeed,** *Claremont School of Theology*
8:30 p.m.	**Reception** *Please join us for a reception on the Secchia Terrace*

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

Notre Dame Global Gateway, Rome

9:00 a.m.	**Session 4: Foundations for Democracy in Catholic and Islamic Traditions** CHAIR: **Scott Appleby,** *University of Notre Dame* **Agostino Giovagnoli,** *Catholic University Milan* **Armina Omerika,** *Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main* **Armando Salvatore,** *McGill University*
10:30 a.m.	Break
11:00 a.m.	**Session 5: Human Development and Interreligious Engagement** CHAIR: **Atalia Omer,** *University of Notre Dame* **Katherine Marshall,** *Georgetown University* **Wolfgang Palaver,** *Innsbruck University* **Emma Tomalin,** *University of Leeds*
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	**Sessions in Collaboration with the Policy Planning Unit of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** INTRODUCTION: **Fabio Petito,** *University of Sussex* **Armando Barucco,** *Italian MFA*
1:45 p.m.	**Session 6: The Peacebuilding Potential of Catholic-Muslim Dialogue** CHAIR: **Nigel Baker,** *UK Ambassador the Holy See* **Patrice Brodeur,** *KAICIID* **Amer al Hafi,** *Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, Jordan* **Zilka Spahic-Šiljak,** *University of Sarajevo/Stanford University*
3:00 p.m.	**Session 7: The Refugee Crisis in the Middle East: Embedding Interreligious Collaboration in Foreign Policy** **Chair: Kenneth F. Hackett,** *US Ambassador to the Holy See* **Pasquale Ferrara,** *Sophia University Institute & Italian MFA* **Mauro Garofalo,** *Community of Sant'Egidio* **Scott Thomas,** *Bath University*
4:15 p.m.	Break
4:30 p.m.	**Shuttle leaves to the Italian Senate**

SESSION AT THE ITALIAN SENATE

Religion and Global Affairs: Countering Violent Religious Extremism

Sala degli Atti Parlamentari, Senate of the Republic: By Invitation Only

5:00 p.m. CHAIR: **Pasquale Ferrara**, *Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
Scott Appleby, *University of Notre Dame*

INSTITUTIONAL ADDRESS: **Pier Ferdinando Casini,** *President of the Italian Senate Foreign Affairs Committee*

5:30 p.m. **Looking Ahead: The Ongoing Mission of the US State Department's Office of Religion and Global Affairs**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: **Shaun Casey,** *US Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs, US State Department*

6:15 p.m. **Roundtable: Countering Violent Religious Extremism**

CHAIR: **Nabila Ramdani,** *freelance journalist France/Algeria*
Said Ferjani, *Ennahda*
Khalid Chaouki, *Deputy, Italian Parliament*
Peter Mandaville, *US State Department*
Katherine Marshall, *Georgetown University*
Fabio Petito, *University of Sussex*
Graeme Wood, *The Atlantic*

7:45 p.m. **Reception**
Please join us at the Grand Hotel de la Minerve

Wednesday 1 June

Notre Dame Global Gateway, Rome

Testing the Concept: Formulating a New Research Project

These sessions are designed to engage in a collective critical reflection on the lessons learned throughout the conference in order to name those themes that emerged as most in need of scholarly advancement and to identify collaborative research opportunities for doing so.

9:00 a.m. **Session 1: Lessons Learned – What Have We Heard?**
CHAIR: **Michael Driessen,** *John Cabot University*

10:30 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. **Session 2: The Next Step – Formulating a Research Program**
CHAIR: **Atalia Omer,** *University of Notre Dame*

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APPENDIX D

Agenda

Key questions to be addressed throughout the Consultation:

1. *What are the key challenges facing your organization as regards the nexus between religion and {governance, peace and security, gender equality & women's empowerment}? These can be attitudes, laws, policies, organizational culture ...*
2. *How are these challenges being coped with – what tools/ means do you have at your disposal already and what is your assessment of the use of these?*
3. *What do you need from the respective partners around this table to facilitate, inform, enable your response(s) to some of these challenges?*
4. *What should we be conscious of avoiding/mitigating against as we manage these multiple nexus areas, **within our respective organizations, and together**?*
5. *Way ahead, what should be next – e.g. as DUF-III? expectations and structure of networking/ multi donor approaches?*

Day 1 (Friday, July 10th)

(UNFPA - 605 Third Avenue, 5th floor Conf. Room)

09:30 – 09:35 -- Welcome & Logistics/Expectations - Day Chair, Azza Karam/UNFPA

09:35 – 09:45 -- *Official Welcome from hosts*
- UNFPA
- DIGNI, Norway

09:45 – 10:05 -- *Keynotes*
- UN office (*International Perspective*)
- AU (*Regional Perspective*) - tbc
- US State Department (*host country/national perspective*)

10:05 – 10:35 – Participant Round of Introductions

10:35 – 11:35 – Opening Remarks: Setting the Frame of the Discussion around the question: ***The Sustainable Development Goals – Does Religion Matter?***

Donor Lenses:
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Germany
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland
- NORAD

Multilateral Lenses:
- UNDP
- OECD
- EU

FBO Lenses:
- Islamic Relief
- Jewish Theological Seminary
- World Council of Churches

11:35 – 11:50 COFFEE/TEA BREAK

11:50 – 17:00 **THEMATIC ROUNDTABLES**

!NB: EVERYONE EXPECTED TO CONTRIBUTE.
NAMES LISTED HERE ONLY TO CONSTRUCTIVELY PROMOTE/PROVOKE THE DISCUSSION!

I - Religion and Governance -- Moderator: Dr. Peter Mandaville, *US State Department*

'Discussion Provocateurs' to include…

- USAID
- UNDP
- Wilton Park
- GIZ
- WACC Global
- Triad
- Global Ethics
- UNICEF

DISCUSSION

13:00 – 14:00 --- LUNCH – [Courtesy of UNFPA]

14:00 – 15:00 **II – (a) Religion, Conflict, Peace and Security – Moderator, Dr. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *KAICIID***

'Discussion Provocateurs' to include…

- The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace Africa
- Lutheran World Federation
- UNFPA, Kenya
- World Council of Churches
- ICCO Cooperation, Netherlands
- Tannenbaum Foundation
- World Vision International
- The Salvation Army
- UNAIDS

DISCUSSION

15:00 – 15:15 – COFFEE/TEA BREAK

15:15 – 17:00 **II – (b) Religion, Conflict, Peace and Security – Moderator, Katherine Marshall, Georgetown**

'Discussion Provocateurs' to include…

- Danish Mission Council
- Digni
- Islamic Relief
- Interfaith Center of New York
- World Bank
- GIZ
- World Vision International
- UNODC
- UNWOMEN

DISCUSSION

19:30 – GROUP DINNER [Courtesy of Digni]

Donor-UN-FBO Consultation

Day 2 - Saturday July 11

(Church Center for the United Nations, 777 UN Plaza, 2nd Floor)

10:00 -- RECAP

10:10 – 11:10

III - Religion, gender equality and women's empowerment – Moderators DIGNI/UNAIDS

'Discussion Provocateurs' to include…

- UNAIDS
- Georgetown University
- Joint Learning Initiative
- Digni
- World Council of Churches
- UNICEF
- UNFPA
- UNDP

11:10 – 12:30

IV - OPEN PLENARY (i) How can we avoid what we must avoid? Creative Visions and Strategies to Deal with Pitfalls and Concerns – Moderator: Rev. Dr. Martin Junge/LWF

12:30 – 13:30: LUNCH [courtesy of World Council of Churches]

13:30 – 15:00

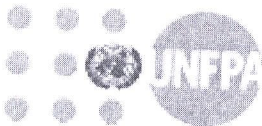
IV – OPEN PLENARY (ii) Going Forward & Wrap Up – Moderator: Rudelmar Bueno de Faria/WCC

- DIGNI
- BMZ
- UNFPA

RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT POST-2015

REPORT OF A CONSULTATION AMONG DONOR ORGANIZATIONS, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

NEW YORK
12-13 MAY 2014



APPENDIX E

Chiesa Ortodossa Autocelafa di Albania

Comunità di Sant'Egidio

Conferenza Episcopale di Albania

Incontro Internazionale

La pace è sempre possibile

religioni e culture in dialogo

PROGRAMMA

MAIN HALL

Community of Sant'Egidio
Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania
Episcopal Conference of Albania

On the occasion of the International Meeting

Peace is Always Possible

Religions and Cultures in Dialogue

we have the honor to invite you
to take part in the Opening Assembly of the event
Congress Palace
Dëshmorët e Kombit Boulevard
Sunday, September 6th, 2015
5:00 p.m.

This entrance card is personal and valid for one place in the Hall indicated.
It must be shown to the security control at the gate.
Entrance will be allowed since **4:00 p.m.** and, for security reasons, it won't be permitted after **4:45 p.m.**

Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania Community of Sant'Egidio
Episcopal Conference of Albania

PEACE IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE

Religions and Cultures in Dialogue

ECUMENICAL PRAYER

Tirana, September 8, 2015

Comunità di S. Egidio

APPENDIX F

Son Excellence
M. Anwar Haddam
Président de la Délégation
Parlementaire du F.I.S.

U.S.A.

Rome, le 3 novembre 1994

Excellence,

la Communauté de Sant Egidio est une Association Internationale fondée à Rome en 1968 et qui oeuvre dans les domaines de l'aide aux pauvres, de la coopération, du dialogue inter-religieux et de la recherche de la paix. La Communauté est à l'origine des Rencontres Internationales de Prière pour la Paix qui se déroulent chaque année depuis 1986 avec une toujours plus forte participation de leaders des grandes religions mondiales mais aussi de personnalités politiques majeures, parmi lesquelles on peut nommer M.Gorbaciev et les Présidents Mugabe du Zimbabwe, Chissano du Mozambique et Soares du Portugal.

Sensible depuis longtemps aux problèmes d'Afrique, la Communauté réalise des actions de paix dans ce continent delaissé. En particulier ceci nous a amené à nous occuper de près de la situation au Mozambique, pays blessé par 17 ans de guerre civile. Convaincus comme nous le sommes que sans la paix rien n'est possible, nous avons pris l'initiative de contacts à fin de réaliser les conditions pour un dialogue entre les parties en lutte. Ce travail s'est définitivement concrétisé par des négociations de paix qui ont démarré en juin 1990 à notre siège de Rome et se sont déroulées chez nous pendant plus de deux ans, jusqu'à la signature de l'Accord de paix, événement qui s'est produit à Sant Egidio le 4 octobre 1992. Tout le long du processus de paix j'ai personellement conduit le groupe de médiateurs. C'est justement en ces jours-ci que s'accomplit le dernier acte de l'Accord par les premières élections libres du pays auxquelles ont participé toute les parties jadis en guerre.

Piazza S. Egidio 3/a - 00153 Roma - 06/585661 - Telex COMSEC I 625845 - Fax 06/5800197

Sur ce même terrain de dialogue et de recherche de la paix, notre Communauté a pris d'autres initiatives par des colloques et des réunions, axés en majeure partie sur la rencontre islamo-chrétienne et elle a aussi organisé des importantes visites en Italie et au Vatican de hautes personnalités en provenance du Maghreb, du Moyen Orient et d'Afrique.

Notre souci pour la paix ne peut donc ne pas être sollicité vivement par la situation difficile que vit l'Algérie aujourd'hui, d'autant plus que notre travail nous a souvent amenés à visiter ce pays, si important dans le cadre de la Méditerranée et du Monde arabe. Moi-même j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer des responsables politiques, religieux et intellectuels soit en Algérie soit lors des visites à Rome et en Italie que nous avons eu soin d'organiser à plusieures reprises.

C'est pourquoi nous avons décidé d'organiser un Colloque sur l'Algérie qui se tiendra à Rome les 21 et 22 novembre prochain et auquel j'ai le plaisir de Vous inviter. En ce colloque des responsables algériens de différentes sensibilités et des majeurs partis politiques présenteront leur idées sur l'évolution du Pays en essayant d'apporter une contribution sur les issues possibles. Il ne s'agira donc pas d'un dialogue, qui d'ailleurs devra se tenir entre algériens en Algérie, mais d'un débat libre et authentique basée sur l'exposition des points de vue politiques de chaque participant. Au colloque sera invitée la presse italienne et internationale ainsi que les représentants du monde politique et économique italien.

Je Vous serais donc reconnaissant si Vous voudrez bien accepter notre invitation pour donner Votre apport à la discussion, apport que je considère essential dans le cadre de la crise algérienne. Il reste entendu que Vous serez notre hôte.

Certain que Vous serez sensible à cet événement et présent à Rome lors de son déroulement, je Vous prie d'accepter, Excellence, l'expression de ma plus haute estime.

Andrea Riccardi

(prof. Andrea Riccardi)

APPENDIX G

COMMUNITY OF ST. EGIDIO USA, INC.
P. O. BOX 260 299
NEW YORK, NY 10025-1534
TEL (212) 663-1483 FAX (212) 663-4178

Mr. Anwar Haddam
President
F.I.S. Parliamentary Delegation
c/o American Muslim Council
1212 New York Avenue, N.W. Suite 400
Washington DC 20005

November 6, 1994

Dear Mr. Haddam:

I am very pleased to send you the official invitation for our conference on Algeria that will take place in Rome, Monday November 21 and Tuesday November 22, 1994. We are also organizing meetings with representatives of the Italian Parliament, officials and opinion makers.

We would be glad to welcome you and the members of your delegation as our guests. I would appreciate to receive a confirmation of your participation.

I will be in contact with your office to arrange all the details (names of the delegation members; visa; date and place of departures; accommodations...).

If you have any question please do not hesitate to contact me at my office (telephone (212) 854.4449; fax 854.6171) or at home (212) 663.4178.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely Yours,

Andrea Bartoli

Dr. Andrea Bartoli
Vice President

APPENDIX H

مشروع البعثة البرلمانية للمفاوضات حول ملف الأزمة في الجزائر*

قال الله تعالى: " و ان جنحوا للسلم فاجنح لها و توكل على الله"

الفهرس

تمهيد: ثورة أول نوفمبر 1954 الجهادية...ص 2

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الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ و مواجهتها السلمية لوحشية المؤسسة العسكرية............ص 3

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* أعد المشروع بواشنطن في يناير ١٩٩٤ للمكتب التنفيذي الوطني المؤقت (و قد صادق عليه في فبراير ٩٤). تمت مراجعته يوم ٩٤/٩/٢٩ ثم يوم ٩٥/١/٣ بناء على المستجد ات.

مشروع البعثة البرلمانية للمفاوضات حول ملف الأزمة في الجزائر

تمهيد:

ثورة أول نوفمبر1954 الجهادية:

ان ثورة أول نوفمبر 1954 في الجزائر التي فجرها فتية آمنوا بربهم استلهموا ضمير الشعب و عقيدته و واقعه فأدركوا بعين الفطرة أن ساعة الخلاص قد أزفت و أن نهاية الطغيان قدحانت ليتكفل الشعب تكفل الراشدين بتقرير مصيره و اصلاح حاضره و صياغة معالم مستقبله .

فكان بيان أول نوفمبر، الذي استمد مضمونه من التاريخ المجيد و الواقع المؤلم والمستقبل المنشود المأمول كان نداء لجهاد رددت أصداءه أرجاء الجزائر المسلمة: لأنه خاطب الشعب بلغة العقيدة و الآلم و العدل والمستقبل و التاريخ، انه النداء "المشروع" الذي أزال الابهام وحل الاشكال، حدد الغاية و بين الاهداف و رصد الوسائل و ضبط المصطلحات و رسم سهم الاتجاه و أشار بأصابيع الاتهام الى العدو المعوق عن السير: فالعدو هو الاستدمار الفرنسي و من ينحاز الى صفه تقوية له. و الهدف هو تحطيم النظام الاستدماري في الجزائر بكل الوسائل المشروعة من الكلمة المجاهدة الى الجهاد المسلح الذي يستهدف كل مرتكزات الوجود الاستدماري العسكري و العمراني و الاقتصادي و الاستيطاني حتى يدرك المستدمر أن أيام"الهناء" للمستدمرين قد انتهت! و الغاية هي بناء الدولة الجزائرية : جمهورية قائمة على المبادئ الاسلامية.

ان موقف الشعب الجزائري قد كان يبدو سلبيا لبعض المفتوتين بالاستدمار و قوته، لكن الشعب أدرك بفطرته الاسلامية، أن الاحتفاظ بالهوية و الفطرة السليمة مع البؤس خير من الانغماس في الثقافة الاستدمارية التي ما تمكنت من بلد الا أفقدته خصائصه الذاتية .

فترة ما بعد الاستقلال الى أحداث أكتوبر 1988 :

و جاء الاستقلال لتبدء المبارة العنيفة في السباق على السلطة! و ثمة خط الانحراف عن المثل التي ضحى من أجلها الشهداء الأبرار عليهم سحائب الرحمة من الله. لقد تحول مشروع بناء دولة في اطار المبادئ الاسلامية الى بناء دولة تستمد نمودجها من اروبا الشرقية فاجتمع على الجزائر المجاهدة الاستبداد السياسي و التغريب في الثقافة و الضجيج في سياسات التنمية الاقتصادية.

ان الشعب الذي اتخذته الثورة حكما و كان عليه العبء الأكبر في التضحيات قد همشه الاستقلال بدعوى عدم نضجه لممارسة السلطة و بناء المؤسسات الشرعية دون وصاية!

ان امكانات الاقلاع الحضاري كانت متوفرة غداة الاستقلال فهناك روح جهادية متسمة بالزهد و التقشف، تذكيها روح"الواجب أكثر من الحقوق"! و هناك عقيدة جامعة توحد مسيرة الشعب نحو الازدهار! و هناك الثروات الطبيعية التي حبا الله بها هذا الوطن لو سخرت في تشغيل الشعب لا في شراء سكوته على المتسلطين و هناك اكتفاء ذاتي من الناحية الغذائية! و هناك روح الانضباط والعفة و حب الوطن الموروثة عن الثورة و الجهاد!

غير أن الشعب لما رأى سهام اتجاه السلطة تسير نحو الهاوية أعلن في قرارة نفسه القطيعة و سحب منهم الثقة دون الاعلان نظرا لعنف قوة البطش التي لا تطاق فسارت السلطة في اتجاه و سار الشعب في اتجاه آخر فكان ضياع ثلاثين عاما من مسيرة شعب و حياته.

و من حسن حظ الجزائر أن الله قيض للجزائر- في زمن الاستدمار- الى جانب من تفرغ للمسعى السياسي من انتدب لمشروع تعليمي تربوي تثقيفي اصلاحي ضمن خطة مدروسة وكان هذا متكاملا مع العمل السياسي. و بعد الاستقلال واصل ثلة من العلماء العمل من أجل تحقيق أهداف النهضة الحضارية في الجزائر فالتقى بهم الشباب الرسالي على موعد لتوصيل الحاضر بالماضي و الجمع بين أصالة الشيوخ و فعالية الشباب فكان من بركات التواصل بين الجيلين هذه الصحوة المباركة التي تقف أمام الطغمة العسكرية العميلة لفرنسا .

ان الدعوة الاسلامية عملت بهدوء و سارت بخطا ثابتة في رعاية من الله و توجيه من العلماء .

و وصل النظام الى الطريق المسدود بعدما استنفد كل وسائل التضليل و "الارجاء" للتغيير فكانت بداية القمع الهستيري في الثمانينات حيث جمع في السجون كل الاتجاهات من اليمين الى اليسار مرورا بالوسطية الاسلامية و انتهت الازمة الى انتفاضة أكتوبر1988 التي عبر فيها الشباب عن الأزمة الخطيرة التي تعيشها البلاد حيث ان النظام جمع في يده بين الافلاس في المشروع و التمتع بقوة البطش التي يسخر لها مؤسسات الدولة التي كان من المفروض ألا ترتبط بالنظام.

ان أحداث أكتوبر خيلت للنظام أنه وجد الحل في اطلاق حرية الكلام، و السماح بتعددية شكلية و انتخابات تعددية محسوبة النتائج مسبقا!

الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ و مواجهتها السلمية لوحشية المؤسسة العسكرية:

و جاءت الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ الحزب الذي غير كل حسابات النظام، لقد انبثق مشروعه من عمق الشعب الجزائري و رحم المعانات و أتون الالم و أفق الامل . فجددت الجبهة الاسلامية الامل في نفوس المخلصين، من أبناء الوطن، ببلورة رؤية أصيلة و مقاربة أمينة موضوعية لأبعاد الأزمة، و طرح الحل الشامل مع ضرورة المرحلية و التدرج في الاجراء و التغيير.

ان الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ قد ثمنت كل رصيد الشعب الجزائري التاريخي و الجهادي، مع اعادة الوحدة لجبهته الواسعة في الدفاع عن وجوده، و تحقيق وثبة حضارية للقضاء على أسباب الضعف، و دواعي أطماع الأعداء، و بذلك قضت على ذلك التنافي المفتعل بين الوطنية وعاء، و بين الاسلام مضمونا.

حققت الجبهة الاسلامية تعبئة شعبية عامة لا نظير لها منذ الاستقلال و كان يمكن أن تحول الجزائر الى ورشة عملاقة لصنع الحضارة و التاريخ ! لولا "الشبكات النائمة" التابعة للاستدمار الفرنسي التي تحركت في الوقت المحدد لاجهاض نهضة الشعب. غير ان الشعب أراد الحياة فاستجاب لنداء الحياة و لا يمكن لأية قوة أن توقف مسيرته.

ان الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ قد نفذت الى عمق روح الاسلام لتستلهم المسعى النبوي في بناء الدولة الاسلامية، المسعى القائم على الدعوة و السلم و الثقة في قدرة الانسان على تجاوز العوائق المختلفة التي تقف في طريق المسيرة الى الغد الأفضل!

ان الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ حاولت جادة أن تتجاوز حتمية الجهاد المسلح في تحقيق مشروعها الاسلامي طالما أن فرص الجهاد الأفضل متاحة. و هو جهاد الاقناع بالكلمة العلمية الصادقة الأمينة الشجاعة:

1 -لقد احتجت على مشروع القوانين الانتخابية الأول في جوان 1991 بالوسائل السلمية عساها توقظ بقايا مكامن ايثار مصلحة الوطن في نفوس الحكام. ان الجبهة الاسلامية أصرت على اقامة الحجة السلمية على النظام، و أشهدت الشعب و العالم على جور النظام و على التزامها بالشرعية و خطها السلمي على الرغم من حجم الاستفزازات و ضغط القاعدة الشعبية.

2 -ان النظام بدل الاستماع الى صوت العقل و المصلحة العليا للبلاد عمد الى القمع الوحشي في جوان 1991: في نفس الوقت الذي كان فيه قادة يفاوضون، كانت قوات التدخل العنيف تطلق نيران الرشاشات بالذخيرة الحية على المعتصمين العزل !

3 -أعتقل الآلآف من المناضلين و الاطارات! و أعتقلت القيادة قصد استدراج الجبهة الى المواجهة! لكنها صبرت و احتسبت لا جبنا و خوفا، و لكن ادراكا للخطورة المحدقة بالبلاد و لأهداف المعادين للجزائر و شعبها و تاريخها و ثورتها من داخل النظام و حاشيته من الاتجاه الذي استوصاه الاستدمار الفرنسي على مشروعه و على تدمير الجزائر من الداخل.

4 -ضمدت الجبهة الاسلامية جراحها و تحملت آلآمها و عزمت على فتح صفحة جديدة و طي صفحة القمع، بشرط أن لا ينصب أحد نفسه وصيا على الشعب، و هذا على الرغم من اصرار النظام على استبقاء الشيوخ القادة الأصليين رهائن في السجن .

و هذا كله يؤكد اصرار الجبهة الاسلامية على السلم و اصرار النظام على العنف و المواجهة المسلحة!

الجهاد القائم ولده ارهاب المؤسسة العسكرية:

ان الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ كانت بالفعل غير مسلحة: لأنها التزمت بالميثاق الذي يربطها بالممارسة السياسية الشريفة!

ان الجبهة الاسلامية اختارت طريق السلم في الممارسة السياسية و لكن لا أحد ينكر على الشعب الدفاع عن حقوقه المغتصبة بالجهاد المسلح عندما وقفت القوة الغاشمة في وجه الجهاد الأفضل ، الجهاد السياسي:

-لقد سجل التاريخ نداء العقل و الشرع في مسجد السنة بالجزائر العاصمة و خلال الندوة الصحافية بقاعة بلدية القبة بالعاصمة أيضا و ذلك في بداية شهر جويليا ١٩٩١:

" يا قوم توبوا الى رشدكم فان البديل عن الجبهة الاسلامية هو أن تجدوا أنفسكم وجها لوجه مع الشعب بكل فئاته ..."

و هل وجد النداء الصادق آذان الراشد السياسي الذي يتصف به رجال الدولة الكبار الذين يصلون الى الحكم بعد عشرات التمحيصات الشعبية الدقيقة لا الذين تقذف بهم الدبابات الى سدة الحكم !

دخلت الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ انتخابات ديسمبر ١٩٩١ بكل شجاعة و بكل ثقة مع القبول بالحكم الذي سيصدره الشعب عن طريق صناديق الاقتراع ما دام الشعب هو صاحب المصلحة العليا في ما سيختاره و يتحمل مسؤولية اختياره بشرط أن تكون العملية الانتخابية " حرة و نظيفة " على الرغم من تحفظات مشروعة حول مصداقية انتخابات تنظمها جهة لا تقيم كبير اعتبار للأخلاق السياسية.

أسفرت الانتخابات عن فوز الجبهة الاسلامية رجالا و مشروعا فوزا ساحقا في الدور الأول و فوز مماثل في الدور الثاني ، حرك النظام أزلامه المبثوثة في جسم الشعب كالسرطان ينادون بالويل و استصراخ المؤسسة العسكرية لتتحرك في الميدان لمصادرة اختيار الشعب اذ حكموا عليه بالقصور!

وقع الانقلاب المشؤوم استجابة لشهوة السلطة مبررة بضجيج أعداء الجزائر في الداخل و الخارج الذين تحركوا في كل الاتجاهات و دقوا طبول الحرب الأهلية و الانفصال و تفكيك الجيش ان وصلت الجبهة الاسلامية الى الحكم و نسوا و تصاموا عن الطبول التي يدقها الشعب و ممثلوه ان هم صادروا اختياره و وقفوا في وجه التغيير الذي يريده الشعب! : لأن من اكتسب حقا مشروعا بطريقة سلمية شرعية لا يعني أنه مستعد لقبول الأمر الواقع الذي أراد الغاصبون الانقلابيون فرضه.

لقد مدت الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ يد الحوار بين الدورين و بعد الانقلاب قصد تطويق الأزمة و تفادي كل تصعيد من شأنه أن يحطم الجسور الهشة بين النظام القائم و الشعب و يصعب بعد ذلك مدها. لقد قبلت بالوساطة لكن رد المؤسسة العسكرية كان واضحا و هدفها واضحا و وسائلها كانت واضحة.

و فهمت الجبهة الاسلامية المؤسسة العسكرية و فهمها مناضلوها و فهمتها قيادتها : اعتقلت قيادة الجبهة الاسلامية و حوصرت المساجد و بدأت المحاكم الردعية و قمعت الاحتجاجات في حمامات من الدم و حلت الجبهة الاسلامية و أعلنت حالة الطوارئ وفتحت المحتشدات العسكرية ...!!!

ان اصرار الطغمة العسكرية على استخدام العنف و الارهاب و التعذيب للبقاء في الحكم هو الذي كان من وراء الجو السائد في البلاد : جو ثورة جهادية عارمة تشمل كل أرجاء البلاد! لأن العمل السياسي أوصلته المؤسسة العسكرية الى الطريق المسدود برفض نتائج انتخابات 26ديسمبر1991 و بالتالي رفض مبدء الانتخابات و مبدء خضوع المؤسسة العسكرية للسلطة السياسية المنتخبة!

ان الوضع يزداد يوما بعد يوم خطورة بما شهدته الساحة من تطورات في أساليب القمع البوليسي و القضائي و الأمني حيث عرفت البلاد حالة الطوارئ و حظر التجول و المحتشدات و الاعتقالات العشوية و الاعدامات و التقتيل الجماعي و هدم البيوت و المحاكمات السياسية و صدور "قانون الارهاب" الذي داس كل القوانين و انشاء المحاكم الخاصة التي هي امتداد لمراكز البوليس التي يتم فيها التعذيب بصفة منتظمة دون حسيب ولا رقيب و يؤدي غالب الأحيان الى الوفاة على طاولة عمليات التعذيب!

أكثر من30000 اعتقالات في الأيام الثلاثة الأولى بعد الانقلاب !

أكثر من 40000 قتيل ضحية الانقلاب !

ان كل هذا الوضع قد بلور منطق ثورة تعتمد كل الأساليب المشروعة المجدية، ما دام "ميثاق السلام" الذي ساد الى غاية 1992/01/11 قد نقضته المؤسسة العسكرية.

الجهاد وسيلة و ليس غاية:

رغم مواصلة "القواة الخاصة" الدنيئة المجرمة التابعة للمؤسسة العسكرية، ممارستها أبشع أساليب الارهاب و التعذيب ضد أبناء شعبنا العزل ، فاننا، و حرصا على مصالح البلاد والعباد، لن نصد الباب في وجه مفاوضات جادة: **فالمجاهد الذي لا يخاف الموت في سبيل الحق، لا يخاف الجلوس الى طاولة المفاوضات للجدال بالحق من أجل اعلاء الحق و رده الى أهله!**

الجهاد وسيلة وليس غاية. فاذا توفرت الدلائل على النوايا الصادقة و توفرت الأسباب والشروط الملائمة لحل سلمي يعيد للشعب كرامته و سلطته على دولته، و لا يساوم في اسلاميته، فذلك هو المراد وعلى الله التكلان.

أسباب الأزمة:

ان للأزمة أسباب و ان الجهاد المسلح كان بديلا اضطراريا و سيزول عندما تزول أسبابه و تتحقق أهدافه المتمثلة في حق الشعب في اختيار ممثليه الشرعيين و مشروعه المجتمعي.

ان تصعيد حملة الاستئصال الخبيثة بالقتل و التعذيب المؤطر و اعتمادا على من ورائهم من جهات سرية خارجية و داخلية تعمل داخل الجزائر، يزيد يوما بعد يوم الأزمة خطورة و يأكد أن صياغة الحل السلمي لمستقبل الجزائر الحرة لن يتم الا بابعاد " حزب فرنسا" من داخل الجيش و من خاره ، أي أصحاب انقلاب ١١ جانفي ١٩٩٢، الذين كان من وراء الأزمة معرح:

-كانت للدولة مفهوم مبهم في أذهانهم حيث لم يفرقوا بين الدولة والنظام الحاكم : فمن يعارض الحكام يتهمه القانون بالمس بأمن الدولة و يعاقبه من أجل ذلك !

- أصبحت المؤسسة العسكرية معزولة عن الشعب و آدات لقهره.

- عملوا على تهميش مؤسسات المجتمع المدني: كالعائلة و المدرسة و المسجد و الاعلام و الجمعيات.

- و أخيرا بعد أحداث أكتوبر 1988 أرادوا احتواء المسار الدمقراطي مع الجفاض على مؤسساتهم و رجالهم!

تلكم هي بعض اسباب الأزمة التي تتخبط فيها الجزائر اليوم .

المفاوضات:

ان مشروع النظام للحوار مرفوض لأنه لم يتطرق للمحاور الأساسية و يشير الى وجود "سلطة" خارج المؤسسات الدستورية و أنها ستبقى عالة على الهيئات الانتقالية مع غموض في هوية مراكز القرار. و الطعن من هذا الاقتراح هو (*)

بناء على ذلك نقترح هذا المشروع من أجل مفاوضات جادة حول ملف الأزمة مؤكدين على النقاط التالية:

<u>أولا:</u> لا سلطة للجيش الا التي خولها له الشعب لحماية حدود وطنه و وحدته.

<u>ثانيا:</u> لا شرعية لأي نظام و لا حق له في الوجود بدون رضا شعبه و بدون اختياره. فلا شرعية لانتخابات في غياب تعددية سياسية حقيقية و حرة، اذ لا شرعية لمغتصب.

<u>ثالثا:</u> في المجتمع الاسلامي حق الحكم للأكثرية ثابتة و حق الأقلية أن تعارض في ايطار القانون ثابة، و حق التداول على السلطة ثابتة أيضا.

<u>رابعا:</u> من اعتدى على هذه الأسس و لا يعترف بالمعالم المطروحة أسفله- أمثال أصحاب انقلاب ١١ جانفي ١٩٩٢ - لا يمكن التفاوض معه. و بالتالي ينبغي على من تحملوا مسؤولية النظام ، ان كانوا جادين في دعوتهم للحوار، أن يتخلصوا من الذين دبروا الانقلاب على الشرعية الدستورية و على الشعب و أدخلوا البلاد في برك الدماءوالدموع!

خامسا (**)

1) معالم لمفاوضات جادة:

ا. الاختيار الشعبي الحر هو أساس أي سلطة سياسية:

ينبغي الالتزام بالمبدء الانتخابي و بالتعددية الحزبية و بالتداول على السلطة

ب. الاستقلالية ما بين السلطات التشريعية و التنفيذية و القضائية.

ج. المحافظة على المؤسسات الدستورية بما فيها: - مؤسسة الجمهورية و مؤسسة الجيش. (*3)

د. المحافظة على سيادة ووحدة البلاد و أمنها الداخلي.

هـ. (*4)

و. (*5)

ز. (*6)

2) تهيئة المناخ للمفاوضات:

ا. توفير الضمانات اللازمة لقادة الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ و لقادة المجاهدين من حقوق الحرية و الحماية و الأمان، مع الوسائل الضرورية للالتقاء فيما بينهم لكي يتيسرالاجماع على صيغة عرض يهدف الى حل عادل ودائم. كما طالب به الشيوخ في رسالة 6 سبتمبر 1994

ب. الغاء جميع القرارات و الاجراءات التي تلت الانقلاب العسكري بما فيها:

(ا) الأحكام القضائية، (ب) أحكام الطوارئ، (ج) المحاكم الاستثنائية، (د) حضر التجول، (هـ) الحد من حرية الصحافة والتعبير في شتى المنابر، (و) قرار حل الجبهة الاسلامية للانقاذ، (ز) قرار حل المجالس المنتخبة للبلديات و الولايات.

ج. اطلاق سراح جميع المعتقلين السياسيين من مدنيين و عسكريين مهما كان التكييف القنوني لقضاياهم.

د. ايقاف عمليات القوات الخاصة التابعة للنظام بجميع تشكيلاتها.

هـ. (*7)

3) الاجراءات التأهيلية للمفاوضات:

ا.عزل و ابعاد الذين تورطوا في الانقلاب أو كانوا من ورائه.

ب. ايقاف العمليات الجهادية ضد النظام قبيل الشروع في المفاوضات الرسمية.

ج. ضمان حق استعمال وسائل الاعلام الوطني بكل أنواعه.

يحبذ التنسيق مع القوى السياسية الأخرى- المنتخبة او التي لم تلطخ مصداقيتها بالتعامل مع الانقلابيين - لتهيئة المناخ و الاجراءات التأهيلية للمفاوضات و للقيام بحملة دولية ضد التدخل الفرنسي في المنطقة بمختلف أشكاله: -التحريش الاعلامي ، - قضية القبائل، - التدخل العسكري.

د. *8

إضافات

*1. التوصل إلى نقاط مشتركة يصلح أن تكون منطلقًا حقيقيا لإيجاد حلول حقيقية وواقعية للمعضلة السياسية التي تعاني منها البلاد والتي تماطل النظام المغتصب للسلطة في إيجاد صيغ سياسية، اللهم إلا ما ارتضاه من حلول أجمعت الطبقة السياسية الجادة على أنها لا تحل الأزمة وإنما تزيدها تعقيدًا واستفحالا.

*2. نهيب بالغرب أن يتحرى من الحقائق التي تأتيه عن طريق السلطة غير الشرعية وأن يسمع للطرف الثاني ومن أجل هذا نعقد لقاءات في الخارج لا بهدف التدخل في القضايا الداخلية وإنما بهدف التعريف بالقضية الجزائرية ووجهات نظر المعارضة الشرعية التي عتمت عليها السلطة داخليا

*3. أي عدم تدخل الجيش في الحياة السياسية وهذا لضمان وحدته وانسجامه وفعاليته ليكون قادرًا على حماية الوطن.

*4. حق الشعب في النصح والتقويم والعزل إذا انحرف الحاكم عن الطريق السوي، ومس بمقومات الأمة، وحق الشعب في الثورة ومجاهدة من يغتصب السلطة بقوة الحديد والنار.

*5. كفالة الحريات الفردية والجماعية وخاصة السياسية في إطار مبادئ الإسلام وقيم الأمة الثابتة

*6. عدم الإعتراف بأي عقود أو معاهدات تعقد بعيدًا عن اختيار الشعب ولأنها باطلة شرعًا وقانونًا، لأنها عقدت مع سلطة فاقدة للشرعية.

*7. فيما يخص السياسة الخارجية: رفض التدخل في الشؤون الداخلية رفضًا باتًا، وعدم دعم النظام الفاقد للشرعية بطرق سرية وتحت غطاء الدبلماسية: ذلك أن دعم النظام الفاقد للشرعية خروج عن مبدأ الحياد، فيصبح ذلك الدعم الظاهري أو الباطني عبارة عن تحول تلك الدولة الداعمة طرفًا في النزاع وهذا يعرض مصالحها للخطر.

*8. تكوين لجنة وطنية صادقة ومنصفة ومن سائر الشخصيات السياسية والوطنية والدينية ومن رجال القانون وحقوق الإنسان والإعلام النزيه، للتحقيق في شأن المظالم التي وقعت على الشعب.

APPENDIX I

FFS

- *Projet* -

- Les Algériennes et les Algériens vivent un **climat de terreur** sans précédent. La violence a atteint un seuil intolérable.
3 ans après l'arrêt du processus électoral, **la logique d'affrontement** a, de toute évidence, mené le pays à l'impasse.
Les **risques de guerre civile** sont réels.

- Seule une **solution politique** à la crise peut ouvrir des perspectives et redonner l'espoir à une population exsangue.
Un véritable dialogue reste l'unique alternative pour une issue pacifique et démocratique.

- L'amorce du dialogue nécessite **l'engagement ferme** des deux protagonistes pour faire cesser la violence. Une dynamique nouvelle pour la paix nécessite **simultanément de la part des 2 protagonistes de la violence** un climat de détente par la libération des détenus politiques et la mise en place d'un processus de mesures concrètes et urgentes pour la réduction de la violence et le retour à la Paix Civile.
Cette dynamique exige **l'implication active et permanente des forces politiques et pacifiques** comme garantie de succès et d'adhésion de la population.

- Les partenaires au dialogue s'engagent sur la base d'un contrat national contre **la violence et pour la démocratie** qui repose sur les principes suivants :

- Le rejet de la violence et la promotion du dialogue comme mode d'action et de règlement politique.
- Le respect des droits de la personne humaine tels qu'ils sont énoncés par la déclaration universelle et les pactes internationaux.
- L'acceptation et le respect de l'alternance politique.
- La garantie des libertés fondamentales.
- La garantie du pluralisme politique, culturel et linguistique.
- La non instrumentalisation de l'islam et des mosquées à des fins politiques.

- Les parties prenantes au dialogue doivent définir une **nouvelle légalité** fondée notamment sur une **gestion pluraliste**. Elle doit mettre en place une **Conférence Nationale dotée de pouvoirs souverains**, représentative du pouvoir réel et des forces réelles de la société politique et civile.

Cette Conférence Nationale définira :

- La représentation nationale provisoire
- Les modalités
- et la durée.

d'une période de transition devant aboutir à des **élections libres et pluralistes.**

La liberté de l'information, le libre accès aux médias et les conditions du **libre choix** des Algériennes et des Algériens doivent être assurés.
Le respect des résultats de ce choix doit être garanti.

- Le retour à la légitimité démocratique et l'instauration d'un état de droit imposent la **limitation et la séparation des pouvoirs** législatif, exécutif et judiciaire.
Ces principes doivent faire l'objet d'une **consécration fondamentale** qu'aucune autorité ou assemblée ne pourra remettre en cause.

- Le Président de l'Etat, Ministre de la Défense Nationale, **garantit l'accord** réalisé entre toutes les parties au dialogue.

- **Des garanties internationales** viendront compléter et renforcer les garanties nationales dans le respect de la souveraineté.

APPENDIX J

PLATEFORME
pour une
SOLUTION POLITIQUE et PACIFIQUE
de la CRISE ALGERIENNE

Les partis de l'opposition algérienne, réunis à Rome auprès de la Communauté de S.Egidio, déclarent en ce 13 janvier 1995:

L'Algérie traverse aujourd'hui une épreuve tragique sans précédent.

Plus de trente ans après avoir chèrement payé son indépendance, le peuple n'a pas pu voir se réaliser les principes et tous les objectifs du 1er novembre 1954 et a vu s'éloigner progressivement tous les espoirs nés après octobre 1988.

Aujourd'hui, le peuple algérien vit un climat de terreur jamais égalé, aggravé par des conditions sociales et économiques intolérables. Dans cette guerre sans images: sequestrations, disparitions, assassinats, torture systématisée, mutilations et représailles sont devenus le lot quotidien des algériennes et des algériens.

Les conséquences des événements de juin 91 et du coup d'Etat du 11 janvier 1992, l'interruption du processus électoral, la fermeture du champ politique, la dissolution du FIS, l'instauration de l'état d'urgence et les mésures repressives et les réactions qu'elles ont suscitées, ont engendré une logique d'affrontement.

Depuis, la violence n'a cessé de s'amplifier et de s'étendre. Les tentatives du pouvoir de créer des milices au sein de la population marquent une nouvelle étape dans la politique du pire. Les risques de guerre civile sont réels, menaçant l'intégrité physique du peuple, l'unité du pays et la souveraineté nationale.

L'urgence d'une solution globale, politique et équitable s'impose afin d'ouvrir d'autres perspectives à une population qui aspire à la paix, la stabilité et à la légitimité populaire.

Le pouvoir n'a initié que de faux dialogues qui ont servi de paravents à des décisions unilatérales et à la politique du fait accompli.

Une véritable négociation reste l'unique moyen pour parvenir à une issue pacifique et démocratique.

A. Cadre: valeurs et principes

Les participants s'engagent sur la base d'un contrat national dont les principes sont les suivants et sans l'acceptation desquelles aucune négociation ne serait viable:

- La déclaration du 1er novembre 1954: "la restauration de l'Etat algérien souverain démocratique et social dans le cadre des principes de l'Islam" (art 1)
- le rejet de la violence pour accéder ou se maintenir au pouvoir.
- le rejet de toute dictature quelle que soit sa nature ou sa forme et le droit du peuple à défendre ses institutions élues.
- le respect et la promotion des droits de la personne humaine tels qu'énoncés par la Déclaration Universelle, les pactes internationaux sur les droits de l'homme, la convention internationale contre la torture et consacré par textes légaux.
- le respect de l'alternance politique à travers le suffrage universel.
- le respect de la légitimité populaire. Les institutions librement élues ne peuvent etre remises en cause que par la volonté populaire.
- la primauté de la loi légitime
- la garantie des libértés fondamentales, individuelles et collectives quelle que soit la race, le sexe, la confession et la langue.
- la consécration du multipartisme.

- la non implication de l'Armée dans les affaires politiques. Le retour à ses attributions constitutionnelles de sauvegarde de l'unité et de l'indivisibilité du territoire national.

- les éléments constitutifs de la personnalité algérienne sont l'Islam, l'arabité et l'amazighité; la culture et les deux langues concourant au developpement de cette personnalité doivent trouver dans ce cadre unificateur leur place et leur promotion institutionnelle, sans exclusion ni marginalisation.

- la séparation des pouvoirs législatif, exécutif et judiciaire.

B. MESURES DEVANT PRECEDER LES NEGOCIATIONS

1. La libération efféctive des responsables du FIS et de tous les detenus politiques. Assurer aux dirigeants du FIS tous les moyens et garanties nécessaires leur permettant de se réunir librement entre eux et avec tous ceux dont ils jugent la participation nécessaire à la prise de décisions.

2. L'ouverture du champ politique et médiatique. L'annulation de la décision de dissolution du FIS. Le plein rétablissement des activités de tous les partis.

3. Levée des mesures d'interdiction et de suspension des journaux des écrits et des livres, prise en application du dispositif d'exception.

4. La cessation immédiate, effective et vérifiable de la pratique de la torture.

5. L'arret ds exécution des peines capitales, des exécutions extra-judiciaires et des représailles contre la population civile.

6. La condamnation et l'appel à la cessation des exactions et des attentats contre les civils, les étrangers et de la destruction des biens publics.

7. La constitution d'une commission indépendante pour enqueter sur ces actes de violence et les graves violations des droits de l'Homme.

C. RETABLISSEMENT DE LA PAIX

Une dynamique nouvelle pour la paix implique un processus graduel, simultané et négocié comprenant:

- d'une part des mésures de détente réelles: fermeture des camps de sureté, levée de l'état d'urgence et abrogation du dispositif d'excéption.

- et d'autre part un appel urgent et sans ambiguité pour l'arret des affrontements. Les Algériennes et les Algériens aspirent au retour rapide de la paix civile. Les modalités d'application de cet engagement seront détérminées par les deux parties en conflit avec la participation active des autres partis représentatifs.

Cette dynamique exige la participation pleine et entière des forces politiques représentatives et pacifiques. Celles-ci sont en mesure de contribuer au succès du processus en cours et assurer l'adhésion de la population.

D. LE RETOUR A LA LEGALITE CONSTITUTIONNELLE

- les partis s'engagent à respecter la Constitution du 23 février 1989. Son amendement ne peut se faire que par les voies constitutionnelles.

E. LE RETOUR A LA SOUVERAINETE POPULAIRE

Les parties prenantes aux négociations doivent définir une légalité transitoire pour la mise en oeuvre et la surveillance des accords. Pour cela elles doivent mettre en place une Conférence nationale dotée de compétences réelles, composée du pouvoir effectif et des forces politiques représentatives.

Cette Conférence définira:

les structures transitoires, les modalités et la durée d'une période de transition, la plus courte possible, devant aboutir à des élections libres et pluralistes qui permettent au peuple le plein exercice de sa souveraineté.

La liberté de l'information, le libre accès aux médias et les conditions du libre choix du peuple doivent être assurés.

Le respect des résultats de ce choix doit être garanti.

F. GARANTIES

Toutes les parties prenantes à la négociation sont en droit d'obtenir des garanties mutuelles.

Les partis, tout en gardant leur autonomie de décision:

s'opposent à toute ingérence dans les affaires internes de l'Algérie.

dénoncent l'internationalisation de fait qui est le résultat de la politique d'affrontement menée par le pouvoir.

ils demeurent convaincus que la solution de la crise ne peut etre que l'oeuvre exclusive des algériens et doit se concrétiser en Algérie.

ils s'engagent à mener une campagne d'information auprès de la communauté internationale pour faire connaitre l'initiative de cette plateforme et lui assurer un soutien.

décident de lancer une pétition internationale pour appuier l'exigence d'une solution politique et pacifique en Algérie.

ils appelent la communauté internationale à une solidarité agissante avec le peuple algérien.

décident de maintenir les contacts entre eux en vue d'une consultation et d'une concertation permanentes.

pour la LADDH — Abdennour ALI YAHIA

Pour l'FLN — Abdelhamid MEHRI

pour l'FFS — Hocine AIT AHMED

Ahmed DJEDDAI

pour le FIS — Rabah KEBIR

Anwar HADDAM

pour l'MDA — Ahmed BEN BELLA

Khaled BENSMAIN

pour le PT — Louisa HANOUNE

pour Ennahada — Abdallah JABALLAH

pour JMC — Ahmed BEN MOHAMMED