From Dialogue to Peacebuilding?

Perspectives for the Engagement of Religious Actors by the EU and the European People's Party

Universite Catholique de Louvain

Centre interdisciplinaire d'etudes de l'islam dans le monde contemporain (CISMOC)

Friedrich Bokern, Sofia Lemmetyinen, Vincent Legrand, Brigitte Maréchal

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List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party (Turkish party of government)
AOES	Association Œcuménique pour Eglise et Société
APRODEV	Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe
BEPA	Bureau of European Policy Advisers
CCEE	Council of the Bishops' Conferences in Europe
CCME	Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union (German Christian Democrats)
CEC	Conference of European Churches
CIDSE	International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity
COMECE	Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community
CSU	Christlich Soziale Union (Bavarian Christian Democrats)
DC	Democrazia Cristiana (Italian Christian Democrats)
DG DEV	European Commission, Directorate General for Development
DG EAC	European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture
DG ELARG	European Commission, Directorate General for Enlargement
DG RELEX	European Commission, Directorate General for External Relations
EC	European Communities
ECRL	European Council of Religious Leaders
EECCS	European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process)
EMPA	Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EPP	European People's Party

EPP-ED	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats in the European Parliament
EU	European Union
EUCD	European Union of Christian Democrats
EYID	European Year of Intercultural Dialogue
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IMIC	International Multireligious and Intercultural Center (Sarajevo)
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Foundation
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MRI	Interreligious Institute in Sarajevo
MRP	Mouvement républicain populaire (French Christian Democrats)
MRV	Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEI	Nouvelles Equipes Internationales
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCIPE	Office catholique d'information sur les problèmes européens
OHR	Office of the High Representative (in Bosnia-Herzegovina)
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
SFOR	Stabilization Force (in Bosnia-Herzegovina)
SIPECA	European Catholic Pastoral Information Service
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRP	World Conference of Religions for Peace

Executive Summary

At the heart of this study is the nexus between intercultural dialogue and religious peacebuilding in the policy-making of the European Union (EU). The paper attempts to analyse the possible benefits for political agencies of the EU from extending their cooperation with religious actors to the prevention and reconciliation of violent conflicts. Not only since 9/11 has a new emphasis been placed upon the relation of religion to political extremism and/or sectarian strife; in the context of increasingly heterogeneous societies, these questions are relevant for both domestic and foreign affairs. Concepts of intercultural and/or interreligious dialogue have partly been promoted in reaction to these concerns, though hitherto too often in lack of consistency. Following some general considerations on the role of religious actors in the changing patterns of religion, ethics and politics, this study thus investigates the EU's commitment to the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. Special emphasis is placed on the role of the European People's Party in shaping the political agenda and on the proclamation of 2008 as European Year for Intercultural Dialogue. The concrete potential of interreligious dialogue for building peaceful societies is probed in the study of two post-conflict situations that include a dimension of religious identity. In the two cases of Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the EU has played a particular role in the peace and stabilisation process. However, the expertise and potential of religious actors have not fully been tapped. On the basis of observations made on the ground, the authors suggest to develop a "religious-sensitive approach" to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, particularly in situations of sectarian strife with a religious dimension.

Acknowledgements

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Preface

The question that lies at the heart of this study is the extent to which policy making institutions of the EU might draw on intercultural dialogue with religious actors for the sake of exploring ways of cooperation with them in EU peacebuilding policies (conflict prevention, conflict transformation, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction). The study makes an important contribution in raising awareness about the emerging field of (inter)religious peacebuilding in EU's immediate neighbourhood, as well as the dynamics and relationship of religious actors with EU policy making institutions.

A series of actors is at the heart of the research, both political agents operating at the EU level – such as the European Commission, the European People's Party (EPP) and the EPP-ED Group at the European Parliament – and religious agents, be they major religious organisations liaising with the EU (e.g. COMECE, CEC-KEK) or interreligious structures involved in peacebuilding. In this regard, the study is based on numerous original interviews. They were conducted by Friedrich Bokern, whose findings and writings were supervised by Sofia Lemmetyinen and Dr. Vincent Legrand, within the framework of CISMOC (Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes de l'Islam dans le Monde Contemporain). The study also benefited from the critical input of several other experts, such as Jan De Volder, Dr. Katrien Hertog, Dr. Bérengère Massignon and Dr. George Wilkes.

This report asks for a wider consideration towards religious actors as part of civil society. It is to be understood as a call for a more human- and citizen-centred Europe. At the same time, there should also be a call made for the establishment of a profound reflection on and promotion of European histories, identities and specificities. The global diversity and openness of Europe and its institutions towards as many (religious) actors as possible, should not let us forget that our fundamental values are to be promoted at all levels, from primary schools to universities. As an example,

when not explained or taught properly, democracy may be reduced to the rules of the majority, where rights and freedoms of minorities are not fully respected. Such a conception is not only false; it is also an obstacle for engendering true respect towards our European heritage and its core values.

An aspect of this study which should be further explored is the status of institutional religious representatives in the contemporary relationships between religion and politics. Among others, they are not questioned in their position as "vicarious leaders"[1], as it is tacitly understood that they are still able to continue playing important roles on behalf of both nominal and practicing believers, based on the assumption, for example, that Christians who are "nominal enough" are still attached, at least emotionally, to their churches. But research raises doubts about the long-term prospects for this form of vicarious religion (Beckford, 2003:54), especially when taking into account the major sociological shift from ascribed to achieved personal identities.

Implicitly, this study is more concerned with "modernity" and "modern societies". Another aspect of this study which should also be further explored in this regard is the progressive development of our societies as "post-modern" societies and its consequences for the contemporary relationships between religion and politics. Religious representatives are still, and even increasingly so, considered as valid political actors despite strong sociological contemporary tendencies insisting on paradox situations in a globalised world. On the one hand, religious beliefs are either progressively multiple and negotiated or isolated and fall back on fundamentals. On the other hand, there are some religious disaffiliations (although not noticed everywhere) and an important practical agnostic position although there are some religious institutional reaffirmations. For post-modern people, culture is first of all a way to express oneself, to express one's own identity. It is less a collective dimension or norm than a personal way of living in order to be openly recognised.

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[1]   A term that is derived from "vicarious religion" developed by Davie, 1999, 2001.

This report addresses the perspectives for the engagement of religious actors and raises the question of inclusiveness and legitimate representation in peacebuilding processes in terms of interlocutors and peacebuilding partners, and suggests that engagement of religious leaders in peacebuilding could be seen as one, yet not the only, approach to transform violent conflicts. This input is always to be questioned according to the situations, acknowledging that this reference is probably not the sole solution for all actual problems. Therefore, it should be emphasised that we can no longer think in terms only of relations between cultures or religions. As the sociologist Felice Dassetto (2004) rightly points out, civilisations – understood in a broad sense of the word, encompassing visions of the world, ways of thinking and shaping basic social acts – are nowadays to be returned to the foreground of our concerns and policies. Civilisations are interpenetrated by each other more and more, and it is important to invent new ways to build relationships between all citizens[2].

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[2] An example of such an attempt is to be found in De Changy, Dassetto, Maréchal, 2007: reflexive focus groups were created in Belgium in order to discuss the real stakes in living together as Muslims and non-Muslims, in European societies. One of the innovative approaches of the reflection groups was to invite extremists around the table, in order to rationally confront their positions. The findings revealed that even for people who are ready to be involved in intercultural dialogue, it is difficult to take into account others' perceptions, claims and feelings. There is a fear that the Other could be an obstacle to one's aspirations. There is also a fear of "the extremist" and "extremisation" on both sides (e.g. the Muslims vs far right parties, and the non-Muslims vs the Islamists). Good will is not enough – building trust is a long-term and challenging process – but urgently needed!

Introduction

When everybody is talking about dialogue and peace, something must be wrong. Why else would trivialities draw so much attention? A new spectre seems to be haunting Europe, the spectre of "clashing civilisations". Even though the late Samuel P. Huntington renounced his dictum in the later years of his life, after many scholars had endeavoured to denounce his essentialist approach, the "clash of civilisations" has developed its very own dynamic. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 contributed to anchor the spectre in the minds of a broad public. Religion is at the very heart of this conception, understood to represent the main distinction between civilisations and cultures. Essentialist ideas, especially about Islam and what it is supposed to imply in political terms, have ever since received a high level of consideration, especially within political elites; whereas official academic and political discourse has rather treated the "clash of civilizations" as refutable simplification or even as taboo. However, the awareness of religion as a possible factor of division and conflict has risen since the end of the Cold War's ideological confrontation and with different processes of globalisation, including wider and faster media coverage. Living together in cultural diversity is a challenge, at home and abroad.

Recent initiatives for promoting intercultural dialogue can partly be read against this background. Some of them, like the United Nation's "Alliance of Civilizations" pay quite explicit tribute to Huntington's terminology. These initiatives can be seen as attempts to preserve and restore peace in cultural heterogeneity. Religion plays a prominent role in this endeavour as one important source of ethical values and identities. It is typical in all major systems of religious belief that a specific ethical doctrine on the relationship with the other explicitly or implicitly evolves in relation to values like peace, justice, mercy and forgiveness. Particular religious leaders have launched permanent contacts and regular encounters with representatives of neighbouring communities, at times on their own initiative, at times with the support of political bodies. Interreligious

dialogue hence became, for certain actors, more than a mere tool of communication; it developed into a distinguished and distinguishing ethical norm in itself. Different religious actors – be they leaders or laymen – have established their own approach to the management of diversity, to building peace and to preventing conflict in heterogeneous societies.

In Europe, many religious organisations are involved in intercultural or interreligious dialogue with the purpose of defusing tensions, transforming conflicts and building peaceful societies. For instance, the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) has been successful in convening religious leaders in different conflict areas and has therefore played a complementary role to formal peace processes. At the political level, awareness of the contribution of religious actors to intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding has risen in recent years. The European People's Party (EPP) has been involved in intercultural dialogue with representatives for religious institutions or denominations since at least the 1990s, opening dialogue with Orthodox Churches in 1996 through the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and with "Islam" in 2001 through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and particular Muslim states.

The European Commission has also been committed to dialogue with religious actors from different religious communities since the 1990s; it has organised high-level meetings with religious leaders since 2005. Moreover, the Commission has funded several projects comprising religious content, which were addressed to religious audiences, or were implemented by religious organisations. The involvement of religious actors attracted particular attention with the EU's proclamation of 2008 as European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID), covering a wide range of activities and projects aiming at mainstreaming intercultural dialogue. Nevertheless, more structured and strategic cooperation between the EU and religious actors seems absent in day-to-day policies.

The nexus between intercultural dialogue and religious peacebuilding is at the very heart of this study. The question as to what extent the policy-making institutions of the EU might draw on

the intercultural dialogue with religious actors for the sake of peacebuilding and conflict prevention is open. In order to answer this question, two underlying problems must be taken into consideration: on one hand, the evolving relationship between political and religious institutions in the EU, on the other hand the relationship between religious communities and contemporary identity conflicts. Both problems have to be addressed in order to assess the feasibility and the possible impact that interreligious dialogue might have on peacebuilding. The first requires an analysis of relevant political agents in the EU and their interaction with religious constituencies, the second an investigation of the role of religious actors in the peacebuilding process of specific post-conflict situations with a religious dimension. The cases of Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina were chosen, since religious actors were involved in the peacebuilding process, but also on account of the countries' immediate geographical proximity to the EU.

The starting point of the study is some theoretical considerations regarding the political engagement of religious actors in the context of today's heterogeneous societies: first with regard to systemic relations between religion, ethics and politics, second with regard to the role of religious actors in contemporary identity conflicts. On the basis of these theoretical deliberations, the engagement of religious actors by the EPP and the EU will be examined in the second chapter. Special emphasis will be placed on the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, as compared with the past experience of the EPP and of other political actors in the EU. The critical evaluation of existing EU policies towards religious actors will furthermore be mirrored in the third chapter, where the role of interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding shall be assessed with regard to the peacebuilding process in specific post-conflict situations. The two cases mentioned above shall be explored with regard to the religious dimension of the previous conflict, the commitment of the EU and of religious actors to peace and reconciliation, and future prospects for the country and its broader environment.

This study is limited to EU policies since the end of the Cold War, except for the conflict background of the two case studies. Further

delimitations have been made regarding the selection of relevant actors. The terms intercultural dialogue, interfaith dialogue and interreligious dialogue are often employed synonymously. Since this study is putting its main focus on collective religious and political actors or representatives, the term interfaith shall be omitted – it is rather linked to individual convictions or beliefs. Intercultural dialogue designates the broader communications across cultural boundaries, whereas interreligious refers to different type of communication between formally organised religious communities. In this context, the thematic content of interreligious dialogue is understood in an inclusive way – i.e. it is not limited to mere theological debates about certain beliefs, rituals and ethics, but more broadly includes societal action and cooperation between religious communities.

With regard to peacebuilding, it is understood as a long-term, comprehensive process manifesting itself through different kind of means and activities, with the aim of preventing the outbreak of violent conflict or transforming armed conflict into sustainable, peaceful coexistence between conflicting parties. In general terms, religious peacebuilding can hence be understood as a process which comprises a religious dimension, e.g., where some of the actors involved are affiliated to a religious tradition or community. In order to make a distinction between different types of processes, the authors suggest religious peacebuilding as a process where religious leaders or official representatives of religious communities are stakeholders, whereas faith-based peacebuilding comprehends individuals and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that are driven by religious convictions, without any formal affiliation to religious authorities. This study will focus mainly on the former group, i.e. religious leaders and official representatives of religious communities active in peacebuilding, in the specific context of interreligious dialogue as a means of promoting peaceful coexistence. Therefore, the term interreligious peacebuilding shall occasionally be adopted. Further delimitations shall be introduced in the body of the text.

The endeavour of this study demands crossing many lines and boundaries: not only those between analytical and normative

considerations, but also between political, ethical, cultural and religious systems and finally between different policy areas. The actor-centric approach of this study will therefore be complemented by constructivist theories concerning the structural relationship between relevant social systems. Nevertheless, the choices of collective actors, i.e. official representatives for European policymaking institutions and religious communities, are the cornerstone of this analysis. Consultation of relevant text sources, published or unpublished, has therefore been complemented by qualitative, semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of political and religious agents. By asking for actions, motivations, opinions and expectations, counter-proofed by cross-questions and secondary sources, the interests and agendas of the stakeholders were discerned[3]. These findings are then placed in the context of institutional and systemic structures.

Taking into account the constraints of time and resources, as well as the limits of the research focus, this study can best be understood as an attempt to explore and to raise awareness about the emerging field of (inter)religious peacebuilding in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU. It is also an attempt to discuss how the EU relates to these processes and whether a move from mere dialogue with religious leaders to cooperation with them in peacebuilding policies may or may not be desirable.

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[3]   Cf. annex for a list of interviews and agents involved, including questions and structure of interviews.

1. The Place of Religion on the Political Stage

"We don't do God." Such was the famous reply by Tony Blair's spin doctor Alastair Campbell when journalists asked the then Prime Minister about his religious beliefs[4]. Indeed, religion and politics do not make for appropriate dinner conversation – and mixing them up would be worse still. At least in Western Europe, the divorce between religion and politics seems to be consummated, despite the formal persistence of different traditions in the relationship between church and state (Robbers 2005). Furthermore, the progressive secularisation of the West seems to be irreversible. Many classical authors of modernity considered religion as some avatar of primitive societies which it was believed would be overcome by Enlightenment, rational science and technological progress (Luckmann 2003)[5]; Max Weber coined the term of a "disenchanted world" (Weber 2006 [1930][6]; Gauchet 1985). An illustrative example of these developments is the fruitless attempts to make reference to the Jewish-Christian heritage in the preamble of the European Constitution, which later became the Treaty of Lisbon; it reflected the tension about the fact whether the EU should be associated with any religion or not (Foret, Schlesinger 2006).

But why does the question of religion and politics still provoke such passionate debates?[7] Certainly, the conviction that religion

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[4] Interestingly, Tony Blair revealed a different story once he had left office. He openly converted to Catholicism and confessed that religion had played a central role in his political life. Most recently, he held the keynote speech at the 'National Prayer Breakfast' of the US, in presence of President Obama, pleading for religion to play a central role in the public sphere of modern society (The Independent, 6 February 2009).

[5] Consider thinkers like Voltaire, Comte, Nietzsche, Freud and Marx, to cite only a few...

[6] A desacralised world, where metaphysical references are banned to the realm of irrationality.

[7] One might consider the cited debate about the European Constitution, but also the new definition of laïcité that President Sarkozy advocates or the ongoing institutionalisation of Islam in several EU Member States.

might eventually be overcome by modernity has lost ground, at least since the end of the Cold War. Several sociologists have revised the theories of secularisation over the last decades. According to them, religious beliefs do indeed transform in the course of modernity, but will not disappear (Hervieu-Léger 1993; Martin 2005). Compared with other parts of the world, Western Europe might not be the standard model for the evolution of religion and society, but "the exceptional case" (Davie 2002). Nevertheless, this hypothesis has not put a halt to the free fall of church attendance. Another reason for the new interest in religion and politics, perhaps more important, might be found in the new awareness of the religious dimension in violent conflict. The attempts to explain the patterns of the new international order after the end of the bi-polar world by recourse to the categories of religion and culture have partly tapped into this picture. Huntington's (1993) theory of clashing civilisations has attracted so much attention for it combined the fear of the traditional other, here: "the Muslim", with secular opposition to any religious belief. Al-Qaida and the attacks of 9/11 seemed to confirm his hypothesis all too readily.

The concept of intercultural dialogue has proven to be one of the most common political answers to these questions and one of the objects of this study. But to assess the political potentials of engaging religious actors for dialogue and peace, some theoretical clarifications must be made. The complex correlation of religion with civilisation, culture, identity, ethics, politics and conflict ought to be untangled. Starting with some general considerations on the evolution of modern society with regard to the secularisation of the public sphere, the second part of this chapter attempts to analyse the place of religious actors in the context of political responses of questions of war and peace. Does religion make a difference in political terms?

1.1 Religion in the European public sphere

The ambiguous relationship between religion and politics can be traced back to ancient history. Ever since the so-called "axial age" (Jaspers 1953 [1949]) between the years 800 and 200 BC, emerging institutions of religious and political authority were in permanent tension. The concept of empire entailed the exercise of power through culture, religion and politics at one and the same time[8]. Empire in the ancient sense was equivalent to civilisation. Its borders were supposed to be ever expanding and beyond them was nothing but terra incognita, barbarian wilderness. Political submission through the use of force was endorsed through the sanction of the imperial cult; the power of the sword found its equivalent in the power of belief and adoration. It is hence no coincidence that most ancient empires had recourse to the divinisation of the ruler. But the universal rule of empires also gave birth to a fundamental change in the relationship to transcendence. The emergence of philosophical thought and religious revelation advanced the abandonment of the former "tribal gods". Jaspers (1953 [1949]) identified the advent of "great religions" as a pivotal shift in the history of mankind. The religious idea of universality led to a new system of cultural reference that, ultimately, gained a certain degree of independence from the exercise of political power. "Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and unto God what belongs to God." (Mt 22, 21)

For sure, political and religious power remained closely associated for many centuries. However, in contrast to the early Neolithic age, the political power of existing or arising empires adopted a specific religion and did not any more try to establish it. Further evolution of religious doctrine was certainly influenced by ruling authorities, but its dogmatic core had gained autonomy.

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[8] Following Luhmann (1982), we understand culture, religion, ethics and politics in the modern sense of these terms as autonomous sub-systems of society; this understanding of functional differentiation has certainly not existed in pre-modern times. The term "culture" bears a particular ambiguity; we employ it in the understanding of American anthropology as an aggregation of symbolic codes (Geertz 1973; Clifford, Marcus 1986).

The establishment of a more or less independent clergy was most advanced in the hemisphere of Western Christianity, owing to historical circumstances but also to the doctrinal emphasis on certain ideas. Differentiation between spiritual and temporal power, rooted in several passages of the Christian Gospel, was further elaborated by thinkers like Augustine (1958 [5th century AD) or Gregory the Great. The distinction between the "City of God" and the "City of Men" eventually became cause for conflict. The Investiture Wars between Emperor and Pope in the late Middle Ages were one point on a timeline that led to ever greater differentiation. Ultimately, dialectics of modern times emerged, amongst others, through the affirmation of religious autonomy and the counter-affirmation of political sovereignty in the establishment of the state (Schulze 1998)[9].

Without pretending to explain complex developments by recourse to one single factor, this rough historical overview allows us to situate the relation between religion and politics in the context of what Jaspers and others called the "new axial period" (Lambert 1999): modernity[10]. The debate is still open concerning the extent to which the content of religious doctrine was relevant or contingent to this process: some argue that recourse to ancient philosophy was much more pertinent than Christian ideas[11]; others stress the point that different civilisations had developed similar degrees of knowledge and technology at a much earlier

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[9] The independence of the clergy went as so far as claiming total supremacy over any other form of power. The answer to this Caesaropapism, which resulted in constant power struggles and in the "Babylonian captivity" of the papacy in Avignon, was twofold: the affirmation of the ragione di stato as only instrument able to establish order and prosperity (Machiavelli 2005 [1532]) and the affirmation of the individual "Freedom of a Christian" (Luther 2007 [1520]).

[10] We are first and foremost talking about modern times in a larger sense: the time period that followed the Middle Ages and that subsists until today. We should further distinguish an early modern period from about 1500 to 1800, a classical modern period from about 1800 to 1960 and a late modern period thereafter.

[11] Notwithstanding the fact that Christian doctrine itself was heavily influenced by Greek, Roman and other philosophies: Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, Thomistic Aristotelianism... to cite only a few.

date[12]. However, Christianity has an important stake in the evolution of modernity as we know it today (Habermas 2002). Marcel Gauchet (1985) even talks about the "religion for departing from religion".

According to Luhmann (1982), functional differentiation and individualisation may be identified, amongst others, as two underlying principles for the evolution of modern societies. We might understand both terms as processes of emancipation, at collective and at a personal level, in the public and the private spheres. Emancipation from the religious sphere was a starting point for this endeavour: emancipation of the state from religious premises; emancipation of the individual from established religious institutions (Bokern 2004). In a short period of time, further differentiations followed: the scientific sphere, the economic sphere, the legal sphere and others gained autonomy from religion and from each other. The process of functional differentiation allowed each system of thought to follow and to develop its very own logic: power as paradigm of politics, reason as paradigm of science, profit as paradigm of economics, etc. In pre-modern times, religion had "meta-coded" these sub-systems of society (Luhmann 2002); now they are free to perfect their own functionality, following their inherent logic. But still, differentiation does certainly not imply that social systems could dwell in empty space. Structural linkages do exist.

The persistent bonds between religion and politics in modern times have been the topic of many reflections. The impetus of the ragione di stato, claiming sovereignty over all aspects of public and private life, was one of the dynamics that led to state totalitarianism. Carl Schmitt (1993 [1922]), a Catholic and leading

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[12] Islam, for instance, in its golden age between the 8th and 11th century, had developed considerable scientific progress by recourse to Greek, Persian and Indian philosophy, which only later were re-induced to Europe through contacts between both civilisations in Spain, Sicily and the Crusade dominions.

ideologist of the Nazi regime, affirmed in his Political Theology
that all doctrines of political ideology with regard to the state are
but secularised theological concepts. And indeed, many authors
have considered totalitarian ideologies to be a form of "political
religion", exercising not only sovereign rule over people, but
asking as well for "fanatical belief" in the higher cause.
The twentieth century was marked by the struggle to overcome
any of these forms of totalitarianism. Having ultimately become
the standard model in Europe, the liberal democratic state
is a moderated state which does not claim supremacy over every
aspect of human life; according to Böckenförde (1991 [1967]),
it relies on ethical premises that it cannot guarantee itself. Today,
the political elites of Western Europe seem to be very
sensible to the use of religion in political terms and to the
use of politics in religious terms. The affirmation of "civil religion",
as we know it from the US (Bellah 1967), is much less
vulgarised in the EU.

Nevertheless, structural linkages between religion and politics
might still be discerned. Though the direct employment has
become somewhat of a taboo, religious and political logics cross
through many other sub-systems of society, most prominently
the cultural and the ethical sphere. Religious beliefs create
cultural references and are hence one of the basic features
for understanding each other in a specific space and for creating
a certain group identity[13]. The second most prominent relay
between religion and politics that persists in Europe today
is the ethical sphere. A major stake in perhaps all world religions
is the translation of transcendental beliefs into immanent
premises of action. Ethical values and moral norms, at least
in abstract terms, are principally deduced from a specific view
of mankind and thus from specific philosophical convictions

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[13] Most cultural references in the course of history are arguably linked to the expression of
religious beliefs; and even today, in secularised European societies, "the cathedral" or other
religious symbols might be considered as lieux de mémoire ("remembered realms") in a cultural
sense (Nora 1986; Weiler 2004).

and/or religious beliefs[14]. It is no coincidence then that most reported interventions on the part of religious leaders in the public sphere are those on ethical issues; theological statements seldom make it to the front page. No coincidence either that the new "ethical councils" in many European states are prominently – though not exclusively – composed by religious actors. Church leaders might be contested regarding their ethical views, but they still occupy the first position for expressing them in public.

The institutional relationship between state and church in today's Europe is, according to Ferrari (Dassetto, Ferrari, Maréchal 2007), governed by three common principles. First, religious beliefs in general may not affect in a discriminatory manner individual political and civil rights. Equality of all individuals, regardless of their religious belonging, is guaranteed. Second, there is the principle of separation between state and church. On the one hand, this principle guarantees the autonomy of religious organisations and the non-intervention of the state in their doctrines and internal organisation. On the other hand, there is an independence of the state towards any form of religious legitimisation, because the state relies on the will of its citizens alone. Thirdly, there is cooperation between the state and church, which can take different forms, such as public financing of religious buildings, etc. Robbers (2005) distinguishes three basic models of how this cooperation might be organised: the radical secularism (laïcité) of France, the concordat model of Germany, Italy, Spain or Belgium, and the state-church model of the United Kingdom, Scandinavia or Greece.

But the understanding of religion in the modern public sphere cannot be restricted to its mere institutional aspects. Differentiation of society has not only led to systemic autonomy and the effective

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[14] The limits between philosophy and religion were never easy to trace; if metaphysical philosophical reasoning deals with what is beyond the boundary between immanence and transcendence, i.e. between what human beings can grasp and what they cannot, it certainly boasts a religious aspect. This is one of the main reasons why analytical and post-structuralist philosophies of the 20th century reject any form of metaphysical reasoning. Nevertheless, even these purely immanent approaches towards reason do rely on a priori premises they must believe in: moreover, conscious abstaining from something is a judgement.

separation between church and state; it came along with individualisation and hence that privatisation of beliefs (Luckmann 1967; 1990), which led ultimately to a religious pluralisation and a decline of church religiosity (Martin 1978; 2005). This process is commonly referred to as secularisation[15]. In contemporary Western European societies, we assist in the accelerated dissolution of collective groups that were hitherto "ascribed" by birth. After the revolutions of the 18th and 19th century, particularly in continental Europe, the pre-modern society that had meta-coded every aspect of public and private life had first been reproduced inside specific milieus[16]. In the Benelux countries, for instance, it was question of three pillars of the nation: a Catholic alongside a Socialist and Liberal "community". Each of these milieus was granted high autonomy in the organisation of social life. Schools, hospitals, trade unions and other associations were provided by them. Christian Democracy was the partisan expression of belonging to the Catholic pillar. But in the late period of modernity, as we experience it right now, differentiation and individualisation have led to an erosion of even these traditional milieus. Europe in the beginning of the 21st century has thus become a continent of increasingly individualised societies, even though new forms of collective belonging are emerging.

But individualisation is not the sole factor that leads to more heterogeneous societies in late modern times. In the course of globalisation, the arrival of new groups with other beliefs has

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[15] The term "secularisation" is disputed for its multiple uses in different disciplines. The original German understanding of Säkularisierung in historical terms refers to the end of the prince-bishoprics and other clerical dominions in the Reichsdeputationshauptschluss (German Mediatisation), which was imposed by Napoleon in 1803 and which put an end to the Holy Roman Empire. In sociological perspective, different theories have emerged since 1967 and aspire to explain the new "unbelief" in Western societies. Dobbelaere (1999) gives an overview and cites Berger (1969), Luckmann (1967) and Wilson (1982) as most prominent scholars.

[16] The events around the year 1968 might be seen as the differentiation of the last remaining bastion of ascribed belonging: the sphere of private families and their cultural, religious and political traditions. Some scholars suggest that these transformations, cumulating in radical individualism and cultural relativism, would herald a new period of history: post-modernity. Following the arguments of Giddens (1991), Habermas (2002) and others, we would rather talk about the "radicalised" and "universalised" consequences of modernity itself; we prefer hence Giddens' term of "late modern times" to designate today.

further contributed to the evolution of ever more religious diversity in the Western world. Especially the emergence of Islam in the public sphere has caused many discussions. In Western Europe, larger Muslim communities only appeared after the end of the Second World War (Nielsen 2004). The largely economically-induced immigration into former colonial powers or booming regions of the Wirtschaftswunder was at first not supposed to endure. Social institutions of these immigrant communities were still restricted to the private space, to family life or cultural clubs (Maréchal 2003). If any at all, religious facilities were most often provided by countries of origin as a form of "consular service". From 1975 on, it became more and more evident that larger Muslim populations would stay permanently in Western Europe and the needs for a more active approach towards socio-economic integration and the provision of proper religious facilities (mosques, religious education, etc.) amplified, parallel to a strong religious renewal throughout the Muslim world.

The question is open as to how all these elementary particles of the contemporary society will integrate into a common political space. In this regard, different concepts of multiculturalism, which were reduced to the simple promotion of diversity without taking into account the need for the construction of a common ground, are growingly considered to have failed. But what could be put at their place to organise the living together in a diversified society? How to create common cultural references and shared ethical values in a society with multiple traditions and individualised choices? These questions arise at all levels: local, national, regional and global. The EU, as a polity still under construction, has a particular interest in finding answers. Its motto "united in diversity" testifies about this endeavour. In the context of this interrogation, the notion of intercultural dialogue has gained prominence in recent years.

1.2 The role of religious actors in conflict and peacebuilding

If religion has attracted much attention in recent public debates, it might be in large part on account of the perception of new challenges and threats in late modern societies: managing cultural diversity is certainly one of them. Heterogeneity creates uncertainty; the dissolution of traditional structures of society due to individualisation and globalisation[17] has also provoked a sentiment of insecurity, not only in "soft" socio-economic terms but also in "hard" questions of war and peace. The ideological confrontation between the Western and the Eastern block had posed a perman   ent threat, amplified by huge nuclear arsenals, but at least it bore the "merits" of clarity. After the end of the Cold War and of the "Westphalian world" (Badie, Smouts 1999), many interrogations occurred about what might follow: the West had lost its enemy. Some scholars stressed the success of liberal democracy and market economy, going so far as to proclaim "the end of history" (Fukuyama 1992). Others feared the advent of new lines of conflict; amongst them, Samuel Huntington's (1993; 1996) concept of a "clash of civilisations" has gained most prominence. According to his theory, the Eurocentric confrontation of the Cold War would be superseded by violent conflicts along cultural fault lines, essentially defined in religious terms.

Huntington claimed ancient history and recent wars, like those in Bosnia or Chechnya, as evidence for his ideas. But the rise of what some called "Islamic fundamentalism" (Watt 1988; Riesebrodt 1993) or even "the revenge of God" (Kepel 1991) seemed to confirm his views even more

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[17]   According to Robertson (2000), globalisation "refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole." In other words, contemporary globalisation signifies a global process with increased complexity, intensity and density of world-wide exchanges.

drastically[18]. The appearance of al-Qaida only fostered a perception that has been latent ever since the assault of the US embassy in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The attacks of 9/11 looked like the ultimate fulfilment of Huntington's predictions. Not only since then have politicians from all over the world tapped into his vocabulary either to close ranks in the "global war on terror" or to prevent the presumed clash to happen[19]. Yet, Huntington's dictum had been contested by large parts of the academic world from the beginning on. Salvatore (1997) and Said (2001) were not the first to criticise his essentialist views of "Islam" or "the West" as monolithic blocks. And indeed, the very fact that the West did intervene on the sides of the Bosnian or Albanian Muslims dismisses one of the examples Huntington chose to make his point. Evidence suggests that entire religions or cultures do not affront each other. But still, it has to be explained why Huntington has reached so much prominence. One reason might be found in the new challenge to manage religious diversity within Western societies.

So how to understand what is perceived as "new wars of religion" that are threatening the secular peace of modernity, if not as a clash of civilisations? Huntington is right indeed when he points to culture and religion as possible source for violent conflict. Civilisations did confront each other in the past; and religion played a major role in the narrative of these conflicts: the battles of Poitiers, the Kosovo, Lepanto or Vienna are still part of the collective European memory – even though to a much lesser

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[18] The concept of fundamentalism originally applied to specific Protestant groups in Northern America that defended a literal interpretation of the Bible against any critical hermeneutics of liberal theology. The term was later adapted to describe any group that tries to defend religious orthodoxy against modernity, both in theological and political terms. The use of the term often lacks clarity and might be suspected (a) to compare apples with oranges and (b) to bear a general anti-religious connotation. It should hence be avoided.

[19] Sammak (2009) employed the term "Huntingtonism" for describing the fears of the white Anglo-Saxon and Protestant US elites towards the "other": be it the external Muslim enemy or the internal Hispanic foe.

degree than Verdun, Stalingrad or Auschwitz. But in the age of the Internet, the battles of the past do not comply any more with new social realities. Modernity is an unavoidable debate world-wide in its claim to represent a form of global civilisation. And if there is any global confrontation, then it is between groups cherishing traditional values against the levelling effects of modernity, which is often associated to its Western origins.[20] In this sense, based on the World Values Survey, Inglehart and Norris (2003) identified sexual liberalism as "the true clash of civilisations". Religious terrorist groups like al-Qaida might indeed be a form of armed resistance, amongst others, against what they perceive as the cultural imperialism of modern decadence.[21] Evidence suggests that the fault lines of these conflicts are not traced between "the West and the rest" but right through the heart of local communities. Extremist groups might indeed draw their belligerent agenda from religious beliefs and ethical convictions, but they are but marginal in their own home societies.

Yet, eschatological fanatism and moral zeal are not the only ways religion might foster violence. Perhaps most conflicts with religious overtones today are instead based on cultural belonging: the second structural link between religion and politics we branded before (cf. supra). We are talking about the violent affirmation of collective identity by specific groups that were or felt discriminated in specific states; these are the conflicts that Huntington put forward as evidence for his theory:

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[20] One of the puzzling facts of modernity is that it is universal in vocation and outreach, but particular in its origins and cultural references. Political and academic discourses in Europe might prefer referring to Enlightenment at the international stage for not offending any particular religious belief, but this Enlightenment was primarily even more restricted in its geographical dimensions than Christianity: it was a phenomenon that occurred in the West. The principles of the modern state were exported to the entire world first and foremost through imperialism and colonial rule.

[21] Interestingly, many radical religious groups like al-Qaida or diverse private sects might be seen themselves as products of modernity; they use not only modern technology at their ease but they originate in the very transition from ethnic communities to "virtual communities" of individual belief (Cesari 2004).

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, etc.[22] But contrary to what he affirmed, these wars were not fought between different civilisations, but within established states (Levy 2001; Brown 2001), or even within (religious) communities.[23] In this regard, the end of the ideological freeze of the Cold War has indeed unleashed old or new lines of conflict that do not comply with the principles of the Westphalian world (Münkler, 2004). Religion might be part of this contest of identities, alongside ethnicity, language or other marks of "distinction" (Castells 2004). But distinction should indeed be made between conflicts where the causes for violence are directly drawn from religious doctrines and conflicts between communities that "use" religion as distinctive group identity for claims of power or resources (Bitter 2003). Only the former could be called "wars of religion", whereas the common trait of the latter is rather situated within the mechanisms of what Maalouf (1998) called "murderous identities". These "wars of identity" might also be seen as a clash of modernity, insofar as specific groups, which were hitherto discriminated against, are longing for sovereignty, challenging the political entities to which they were formerly subordinated.

Religion might indeed be used as a powerful weapon for the affirmation of group identity against the "other", at home or abroad. We have seen that both the ethical and the cultural links of religion to the political sphere might serve as justification for the use of violence. But it would be presumptuous to reduce religion to its mere belligerent "pathologies" (Habermas, Ratzinger 2006) without taking account of the other side: the promotion of peace and

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[22] But also "older" internal conflicts, such as Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Cyprus or the Basque region. The final example suggests that religion is not always the distinctive mark of these "wars of identity".

[23] Since the end of the Cold War, most armed conflicts in the world have been intrastate conflicts between rivalling ethnic or religious groups (Erikson, Wallensteen 2004), leading occasionally to the new phenomenon of "failed states", which had not previously arisen (Rotberg 2002).

reconciliation.[24] The prospect of peace, "which every nature desires" (Augustine, 1958 [5th century]), is in arguably all world religions: not only in a promise for the afterlife but also as a moral premise for every believer. Certainly, the establishment of "perpetual peace" on earth (Kant 1948 [1795]) became a political project but with the Age of Enlightenment.[25] But if in the past, according to Clausewitz (1998 [1832]), war was "merely a continuation of politics by other means", then peace is perhaps nothing but a continuation of religion by political means. Also in modern times, religious doctrine continues to provide the cement for many actions of peaceful change: from the independence movement of Mahatma Gandhi to the overthrow of Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

The notion of "peacebuilding" became an issue of international politics towards the end of the Cold War, when an increasing amount of asymmetric wars could no longer be countered by the classical tools of international diplomacy (Diehl 2006). In the UN Agenda for Peace of 1992, the then Secretary-General Boutros Ghali recognised the role of peacebuilding in managing violent conflicts.[26] In difference to peacemaking or peacekeeping, the term peacebuilding applies

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[24]   In the discourse of modernity, religion had been blamed for many sins of the past; this attitude is partly due to the strong anti-religious or anti-clerical overtone of the French tradition of Enlightenment, which is often displayed as its most important branch (Cichocki 2007). Religion has been held responsible for the dark ages of ignorance, keeping mankind in its "self-inflicted immaturity" (Kant 1994 [1784] malgré lui…). The "wars of religion", which in many respects might rather be seen as wars over the homogenisation of the nation-state (Schulze 1998), are part of this narrative.

[25]   In particular, liberal contract theories placed peace as a central purpose of statecraft; Hobbes (1996 [1651]) stated in his first and fundamental law of nature: "That every man, ought to endeavor Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of Warre."; Kant (1948 [1795]) went one step further in affirming that "reason, from its throne of supreme legislating authority, absolutely condemns war as a legal recourse and makes a state of peace a direct duty, even though peace cannot be established or secured except by a compact among nations."

[26]   The UN Agenda defined peacebuilding as an "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse to conflict" (Lemmetyinen 2008); the entire document and further information are available at http://peacemaker.unlb.org/index.php (03/04/09).

mainly to post-conflict situations and is generally understood as structural reform process to prevent the return of violence (Appleby 2000). Mullenbach (2006) showed that third-party missions in all three fields might indeed have an impact on intrastate wars. In the same context, the concept of "multi-track diplomacy" has been further developed in the 1990s, advocating the employment of non-state parties for the resolution of violent conflicts, including as well a "religious track" (Diamond, McDonald 1996). Acknowledgment of the religious dimension in peacebuilding has been fostered in following years, mainly but not exclusively by US scholars.[27] Emphasis was put on the threefold impact religion might have as (a) normative system, (b) collective identity and (c) organisational structure (Berg Harpviken, Eggen Røislien 2005). Lederach (2006) stressed the four core values of Psalm 85 – peace and justice, mercy and truth – as the necessary elements that have to be matched in every reconciliation process. Religious peacebuilding might thus apply not only to conflicts with religious overtones.

Resuming our deliberations, we might assume that religion does indeed make a difference in questions of war and peace. Religion still plays a central, though not exclusive, role in the construction of collective identities and ethical convictions. If it is about questions of war and peace in a post-Westphalian world, where sovereign nation-states are no longer the sole actors on the international stage, the religious aspect seems worth to be taken into consideration. In most recent times, more voices can be heard pleading for a stronger sensitivity regarding religion in international relations (Johnston, Sampson 1994; Fox, Sandler 2004; Haynes 2007). Based on the innovative groundwork of interdependence theories (Nye, Keohane 1972; Rosenau 1990), many scholars have stressed the importance of non-state actors in today's world politics. Besides transnational NGOs and business corporations (Risse 2005), religious actors are counted as one of the most important players (Badie, Smouts 1999;

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[27]   Gopin (2000), Appleby (2001), Johnston (2005), Lederach (2005), Bouta et al. (2005), Sampson (2007), Smock (2007), etc… to cite only the most important.

Josselin, Wallace 2001). If we shift now the focus from systemic linkages between religion and politics to a more actor-centric approach, further specifications must be made.

Religious actors are myriad: not every community of belief disposes of an autonomous and elaborated hierarchy as the Roman Catholic Church. Arguably, the agency problem is even more pertinent than within official state actors. Who can speak in the name of a religious community? Who listens to the hierarchy if there is any? On the political stage, religious actors that preach hatred and sectarian violence are seldom the official heads of established faith. Political forces that seek violent conflict are often happy with any kind of endorsement, even if it should only be from minor or even self-appointed clerics. Following his general categorisation in the field of peacebuilding, Lederach (2006) distinguishes between top-level, middle-range and grassroots leadership of religious authority. All three levels ought to be engaged in a peacebuilding process, in different roles and at different moments of the conflict cycle: as advocates, conciliators, unifiers, mediators, observers, reconcilers, educators, etc. But religious authorities are not the sole actors present on the ground. Different NGOs of committed laypersons, who act out of religious conviction, have played an important role in different conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.[28]

Different academic institutions or scholars have also worked on the development and rapprochement of religious doctrines for the sake of peace and reconciliation (Wilkes 2008). And to complete this picture, the numerous interreligious and interfaith initiatives that try to mediate between conflicting religious communities must be mentioned.[29]

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[28] Sampson (2007) tells the stories of a great number of faith-based initiatives in the field of peacemaking or peacebuilding; the most prominent amongst them is perhaps the conclusion of the peace agreement at the see of the Catholic lay organisation Sant'Egidio, ending the civil war of Mozambique in 1990.

[29] Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005) provide a detailed analysis of 27 Christian, Muslim and multi-faith organisations in the field of peacebuilding, mainly based in Africa; their findings showed that multi-faith initiatives are not solely concerned by conflicting religious groups.

As we are chiefly dealing with the question of conviviality in heterogeneous societies, the main focus of this study is upon the latter aspect of conflict management. As suggested in the general introduction, we therefore distinguish interreligious from religious and faith-based peacebuilding.[30] Initiatives in the field of interreligious dialogue are older than the term "peacebuilding" itself. Universal world religions had to address issues like acculturation, cross-cultural competence and dialogue much earlier than state authorities. With the global spread of modern civilisation, the perception of different cultures as equal in rights required a new approach towards missionary activities. As early as 1961, religious leaders of different beliefs launched an initiative that ultimately led to the establishment of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) in 1970.[31] Other schemes followed like the interreligious prayer convened by Sant'Egidio to Assisi in 1986 and attended by Pope John Paul II and religious dignitaries from all over the world. A myriad of more or less institutionalised encounters exist today at very different levels. Scheffler (2002; 2003), for instance, gives an account of interreligious peacebuilding efforts in the Middle East.

Living together in diversity has become a major challenge in today's heterogeneous societies, particularly if we have to deal with (a) the clash of traditional cultures with secularised modernity and (b) the affirmation of collective identity of groups that were or

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[30] Faith-based peacebuilding applies to the case of the mentioned NGOs and private initiative that follow rather the general deontology of comparable secular NGOs; religious peacebuilding comprises religious leaders at different levels that refer explicitly to religious doctrine and religious authority; whereas interreligious peacebuilding means conflict management between religious communities.

[31] The WCRP was founded in 1970 from a personal initiative on the part of Unitarian, Buddhist and Hindu leaders from the US, Japan and India, as an ecumenical movement with the purpose of peace. Whereas in the first years, the main focus was put on nuclear disarmament, i.e. claims of peace towards political actors, the WCRP changed pretty quickly its approach in the aftermath of the Cold War and put main emphasis ever since then on peacebuilding and conflict resolution amongst religions actors in the context of new wars of identity. For further information on the WCRP's history, cf. http://www.wcrp.org/ (30/03/09).

felt discriminated against in the past. Political actors in the EU apparently had these issues in mind when they launched different initiatives in the field of intercultural dialogue with a certain emphasis on its religious dimension. To what extent might the engagement of religious actors for the cause of intercultural dialogue actually contribute to peacebuilding in specific post-conflict situations? Starting with the analysis of political actors' attitude towards religion within the EU, we will examine the potential of interreligious peacebuilding in two case studies that have experienced a violent clash of religious identities: Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Does the EU's approach match the realities on the ground?

2. The EU, the EPP and the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue

Building peace stood at the very beginning of what is today the EU; building peace through a new approach to the concert of nations. No longer was the dictate of the victorious the guiding principle, but the integration of the defeated; not the exertion of power, but the transfer of sovereignty to a European supranational body with respect for the principle of subsidiarity; not humiliating terms of peace, but "de facto solidarity"[32]. It would be difficult, or even presumptuous, to reduce this endeavour to a mere by-product of the Cold War, as some scholars suggest (Balibar 2002).

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[32] Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, cf. http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/9-may/decl_en.htm (12/03/09).

The "utopia" of peace is intimately linked to the "utopia" of European unity (Legrand 2007a) – the "counter-value" to war-mongering, and later combative nationalism. One of its first formulations emerged with the "Plan for perpetual peace in Europe" (1712-1713) by the Abbé de Saint Pierre, in relation to the conquests of Louis XIV. After the Napoleonic Wars, the idea of the political unification of Europe in order to assure peace was revived, in particular, by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Comte Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). The idea of European unity developed within different political and ideological milieus. First and foremost a concept of liberal and progressive forces, the European idea found later a strong reception in Christian circles. The third international congress of the peace movement, held in Paris in 1849 under the chairmanship of Victor Hugo, heavily contested by Pope Pius IX (Bokern 2004), called for the political unity of Europe. After the First World War, the attitude of the papacy had changed and committed Christians took a more active approach. In 1923, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi founded the Pan-European Movement, the first organised "counter-force" socialising the idea of European unity put forward by the utopian discourse of Pacifism under explicit Christian auspices. This "counter-force" scored its first point in 1930 with Aristide Briand's memorandum for the creation of a European federation: as Jean Barrea (1986) writes, this call for European unification by a leading political figure was undoubtedly the first sign of the emergence of a "new European culture", in the sense of the start of the adoption by the political class of a utopian "counter-programme". Winston Churchill's speech after the Second World War, in Zurich in 1946, calling for the creation of "a kind of United States of Europe" can be viewed in the same light even though it had another idea of Europe in mind from that which ultimately became the EU.[33]

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[33]   In distinction to the more internationalist approach of the Socialists and the more supranational approach of Political Catholicism, Churchill advocated an intergovernmental approach of a "Europe of Nations"; his initiative led to the creation in 1949 of the Council of Europe, which does not comprise supranational institutions.

The international committee of the movements for European unity gave rise to the European Movement, which held its inaugural conference in The Hague in 1948. As the result of direct pressure from these federalist "counter-forces", in 1949, governments agreed to the creation of the European Council – a compromise between the federalist concept of Europe put forward by the Franco-Belgian project and the intergovernmental concept of Europe advocated by Great Britain. However, the shortcomings of this compromise revived the federalist utopia, further to the declaration made on 9 May 1950 by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman, supporting the plan drawn up by Jean Monnet, the General Commissioner of the Plan. The Schuman declaration, which highlights the contribution that an organised Europe can bring to the maintenance of peaceful relations, is regarded as the "birth certificate of the European Union"[34] – and "Europe Day" has been celebrated on its anniversary every year since 1985.

Building peace is, then, indeed more than a question of political power; it is a question of ethics. The principles of reconciliation, renunciation of a part of national sovereignty and recognition of the other, which have guided the process of European integration (Guisan 2005), took inspiration from Christian teachings, notably embedded in the Catholic Social Teaching, principles such as service to one's neighbour and love for one's enemy. It might thus not be distorting to understand these ethical principles in the context of religious beliefs. And indeed, a closer look into the biographies of the EU's "founding fathers" suggests that at least some of them were committed Christians.[35] Christian Democracy as a political movement with an explicitly religious frame of reference

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[34] Cf. http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/9-may/decl_fr.htm (31/03/09).

[35] Robert Schuman from France, Konrad Adenauer from Germany and Alcide De Gasperi from Italy were practising Catholics. In their preparation of the European Defence Community, they went on a joint spiritual retreat in the Benedictine abbey of Maria Laach in Germany. Before signing the Treaties of Rome in 1957, the signing parties gathered for a solemn service at the tomb of De Gasperi at the basilica San Lorenzo fuori le Mura. The Catholic Church later started beatification processes for Schuman and De Gasperi which are still pending today.

has played a major role in shaping the EU; and the EPP, which is deeply rooted in this legacy, still constitutes the biggest part of the currently largest group in the European Parliament (EPP-ED).

But the cultural background, religious belief and ethical conviction of particular political actors are one thing, the institutional relationship between politics and religion another. As it has been shown before, the idea of separation between state and church.[36] has become a generally accepted principle in European politics. The European Communities and later the European Union were and are strongly anchored in this tradition; and what is more, they have never had any regulative competence with regard to the public status of religion. Nevertheless, religious communities have been present on the political scene of Strasbourg and Brussels for many years. Though their relationship with political decision-makers has first and foremost been built upon personal networks, some institutional links have been created. Starting with Christian churches, these exchanges have evolved since the 1990s to a more inclusive approach, also addressing other religious communities. A new political interest in intercultural dialogue has had an important impact on the EU's approach towards religious communities and has modified the institutional relationship.

This chapter traces the emergence of the intercultural approach in the relationship between political and religious actors in the EU. By doing so, we try to translate the considerations on the evolution of late modern societies on the systemic level to the concrete interaction of collective actors on the stage of EU politics. How has social change affected the institutional relationship between religion and politics in the EU? To analyse multiple actors in an ever-evolving multi-level polity like the EU creates very specific problems with regard to their agency and to the consistency of collective actor-identity. Especially in the case of religious communities, the question of who might represent a group of believers cannot be answered in

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[36]   Schwarz (1980; 1996) provides a valuable collection in German language of almost all official Catholic documents regarding European integration between 1945 and 1995: two impressive volumes.

general terms. The problem will reappear at several points, but for the sake of simplicity, this analysis confines itself to any agent that represents a formally constituted and collective actor in legal terms and that is related to the institutional relationship between religion and politics in the EU. The more interesting question is: what are the motivations of the different actors in political terms and how do they relate to the concept of intercultural, or more precisely: interreligious dialogue?

2.1 Religious actors on the stage of EU politics

European integration is work in progress. And before EU institutions could discuss the place of religion in its constitutional make-up, religious communities had already played a role in its very conception. Before dealing with the interests of religious and political actors in day-to-day EU policies, tribute should hence be paid to the religious interest in the edification of the EU polity itself. Considering the fact that this process is still under construction, polity interests and political interests are often intermingled. This ambiguity is also perceivable in the relation between religious and political actors: interests in specific policy areas are at times affected by broader interests in the overall development of European institutions.

Religious interests regarding the European polity

In the early stages of European integration, the commitment of collective religious actors to the new political order in the Old Continent was still pretty much restricted to Christian churches. Amongst them, the most prominent role was played by the Roman Catholic Church. Its presence was such that certain circles of the political left employed the term 'Vatican Europe' in the 1950s.[37] Pope Pius XII was particularly committed to the cause of European

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[37]   In the German debate, a similar slogan for disqualifying the new Communities read: "Begotten by the Vatican, suckled by Washington" ["Vom Vatikan gezeugt, von Washington gesäugt."] (Schneider 2003).

unity and put much emphasis on the supranational character of the new organisations. He went so far as commenting on the very details of their constitutional development. His first public demands for a community of European states existing "in solidarity and peace" were made in his radio messages on Christmas 1944 and 1945 (Chenaux 1990); in 1948 he asked explicitly for the foundation of a "European Union"[38]; in 1957 he deplored in a public statement the fact that the supranational Commission was granted less power in the new Rome Treaties than in the European Coal and Steel Community of 1951 (Schneider 2003). The supranational character of the European Communities (EC), the prominent role of Christian Democratic politicians in their establishment and the restriction of the founding member states to the mostly Catholic "Europe of Charlemagne" were indeed three good reasons for the papacy to prefer this entity to any other new organisation of post-War Western Europe.

The sovereign pontiffs have never again meddled so openly in the constitutional process.[39] of European integration. In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Catholic hierarchy adopted a less triumphalist attitude towards the political sphere, which was now seen as the autonomous domain of committed laypersons. The diplomacy of the Holy See rather focussed on matters of urgency in the United Nations and the Helsinki process. But the message was the same: Europe might overcome its spectres of war and decline only through conversion and spiritual renewal. The Ostpolitik of the Vatican gained further prominence with the election of John Paul II in 1978: the Pope from the East. The dramatic events of the 1980s, which finally led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, were also connected by many observers to this prominent figure. In the new constellation after the end of the Cold

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[38] Acta Apostolicae Sedis 40 (1948) 253, cited in Schwarz (1980).

[39] The Holy See chaired the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975 and was co-signatory of its Final Act (Stehle 1981).

War, John Paul II became one of the most fervent advocates for extending European integration to the East; Europe had to learn to breathe with "both lungs" again, in his words. The achievement of Eastern Enlargement in 2004 and 2007 was also partly the work of the late Pope.[40].

But the old Europe had passed. The different enlargement rounds since the 1970s have changed the religious and political landscape of the EC/EU considerably: the Catholic "Europe of Charlemagne" belongs to the past. The accession of predominantly Protestant and Orthodox countries and the social change in Western European societies, with a growing presence of Islam and some other denominations have led at once to a multiplication of confessions and also to a loss in the significance of religious belongings. Meanwhile, the old EC member states had consolidated their transition to an economic and political union, following the White Paper "Completing the Internal Market" of 1985[41] and the subsequent sequels of treaty reform, with an ever-growing number of common policies and supplementary competences. The last great "battle" of the papacy to inscribe the mark of Christianity to the polity of what was now the EU, ended in a flop (Foret, Schlesinger 2006): the reference to the "Jewish-Christian heritage" in the preamble of the proposed Constitution was perhaps also rejected because it did not reflect the new diversity in Europe. Coupled with growing secularisation and de-christianisation, the result is a Constitutional draft in which Christianity is not presented as a basis for European unity, but merely as one influence amongst others. Pope Benedict XVI strongly denounced this, going so far as to say at the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, in March 2007:

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[40] In his Polish home country, Pope John Paul II took quite an open political standpoint: in the overthrow of the Communist regime and also in the pushing for EU Eastern Enlargement (Byrnes, Katzenstein 2006). Many observers agree that his TV intervention on the very day of the Polish referendum on EU accession might have been decisive for its positive outcome.

[41] COM (1985) 310 final.

If, for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the Governments of the Union wish to "get nearer" to their citizens, how can they exclude an element essential to European identity such as Christianity, with which a vast majority of citizens continue to identify? Is it not surprising that today's Europe, while aspiring to be regarded as a community of values, seems ever more often to deny the very existence of universal and absolute values? Does not this unique form of "apostasy" from itself, even more than its apostasy from God, lead Europe to doubt its own identity?[42]

Religious interests regarding daily EU policies

Usually, popes no longer intervene in day-to-day politics; and popes are not the sole religious actors who are heard today. Before the official hierarchy of the Catholic Church made its first cautious steps towards a more inclusive approach to other denominations in the Second Vatican Council, Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox Churches had already established an ecumenical council for all Europe, East and West. The Conference of European Churches (CEC)[43] was founded in 1959 in Geneva in the spirit of the Ecumenical Movement and in the framework of the World Council of Churches (WCC)[44],, which had been established in the same city in 1948. The Roman Catholic Church is neither a member of the CEC nor of the WCC, but today maintains close ties to both. The Catholic episcopate only organised the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) in 1965, following Vatican II, its purpose mainly

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[42]   Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the congress "Values and Perspectives for Tomorrow's Europe", Vatican, 24 March 2007: www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/march/documents/ hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070324_comece_en.html (30/03/09).

[43]   At present, CEC defines itself as "fellowship of 126 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches along with 43 associated organisations from all countries on the European continent"; cf. http://www.cec-kek.org/content/history.shtml (20/03/09).

[44]   The WCC dates back to an initiative of religious leaders in 1937 to draw on the spirit of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910; the project could only be realised after the turmoil of the Second World War.

being of a pastoral nature. In a political perspective, both CEC and the CCEE were primarily concerned with the division between East and West. Owing to the thematic focus of the different international organisations in Europe, both bodies dealt only marginally with the EC; their privileged interlocutor was the Council of Europe.

But with the growing importance of the EC in regulation and legislation, the religious structures established at a European level have adapted as well. Since the first direct election of the European Parliament in 1979, the number of political and semi-political actors in Brussels has exploded (Greenwood 2007; Bouwen 2002); and so has the number of specialised religious agencies. What was once restricted to the diplomatic service of the Holy See, is today assumed by a large number of representative bodies, associations and informal lay groups: providing a relay between religious communities and official state authorities. Historically, the first of these specialised agencies was the Office catholique d'information sur les problèmes européens (OCIPE)[45], initially established in 1950, re-established in 1956 and attended since then by the Jesuit order. In 1980, the Catholic episcopate established a Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE). It had been preceded by the European Catholic Pastoral Information Service (SIPECA), from 1976 until 1980. Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and Old-Catholic Churches have had permanent offices in Brussels and Strasbourg within the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS) since 1984, which later merged with CEC.[46]

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[45] The OCIPE was re-baptised under the same abbreviation as Office catholique d'information et d'initiative pour l'Europe, or simply "Jesuit European Office" in English; today it runs offices in Brussels, Strasbourg, Budapest and Warsaw; cf. http://www.ocipe.info/ (12/03/09). Together with COMECE, OCIPE edits the monthly bulletin Europe Infos in English, French and German, an important information channel for large parts of the Catholic hierarchy all over Europe and beyond.

[46] The EECCS was established in 1973 on the basis of an older association of committed Christian officials of the European Communities, called Association Œcuménique pour Eglise et Société (AOES); cf. http://www.eurel.info/telechargement/EU_histoire.pdf (20/03/09). In 1999, the merger between CEC and the EECCS took effect and the representations of CEC in Brussels and Strasbourg have since then been labeled the CEC Church and Society Commission; cf. http://www.cec-kek.org/content/history.shtml (20/03/09).

Furthermore, particular churches have set up their own EU representations, for instance, the Quakers, the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Church of Greece or even the Russian Orthodox Church. These official church representations are complemented by numerous offices for particular church services in the field of social and development policy.[47]

This short overview illustrates the extent to which the religious landscape in connection to the EU has diversified and multiplied today. Specialisation, institutionalisation and pluralisation are three common traits that might characterise the evolution of the religious presence in Brussels (Massignon 2007a). More effectively than the religious leaders at the head of a community, these specialised agencies speak both languages, religious and political, in bridging the gap between faith, ethics and politics. We might helpfully distinguish between (a) official representations of churches and other religious communities, (b) specialised religious agencies in different policy areas and (c) spiritual circles and informal faith groups attached to European institutions. All three categories overlap; and some actors, such as the Dominicans, Jesuits or other orders of the Catholic Church, occupy a place somewhere in between the second and third sector.

Parallel to the consolidation of the EU in recent decades, the main interest of religious communities has shifted as well: from interests in the construction of the European polity as an end to interests in European policies as a means. Religious communities commonly define their political interests first and foremost in ethical terms. Thus, most interventions of church agencies are focussed on issues of charity, human development and the "common good." (Charentenay 2003), as emphasised by Pope

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[47] To give only a few examples of the wide range of organisations, we might cite the following: Caritas Europa, Eurodiaconia, Pax Christi, the Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe (APRODEV), the International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE), the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) or the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).

John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in Europa" (n°117) (Treanor 2007):

The presence of Christians, properly trained and competent, is needed in the various European agencies and institutions, in order to contribute – with respect for the correct dynamics of democracy and through an exchange of proposals – to the shaping of a European social order which is increasingly respectful of every man and woman, and thus in accordance with the common good.[48]

But it might also be – on a more occasional basis – a question of the Church's own material interests. The most massive intervention of "church lobbying" in recent decades was perhaps the case of the Directive 95/46/EC on data protection that threatened to jeopardise the German system of church tax collection through state authorities (Vachek 2000).

The EU's interest regarding religious actors

Identifying the place of the different religious agencies in the complex multi-level system (König 1996) of what is today the EU is a daunting task.[49] In legal terms, the EU affirms the freedom of religion in its Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000)[50]. Furthermore, the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of religion or belief was inserted in 2000 by the Treaty of Nice to Art. 13 of the Treaty establishing the European Community. But beyond these provisions, the EU has no competence for regulating the public status of religion or of religious communities. This ascertainment derives first and foremost from the principle of conferral, whereby the EU cannot legislate in any policy area without a specific transfer of competence.

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[48] www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/ hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa_en.html (30/03/09).

[49] For understanding the institutions and governing principles of the EU, cf. Jachtenfuchs, Kohler-Koch (2003).

[50] Cf. www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf (30/03/09).

In order to avoid any substantial modification of the different national traditions through regulation in other areas of EU competence[51], religious communities had advocated the insertion of a so-called negative clause to the EU's primary law. The Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997 was thus complemented by Declaration No. 11. The text of this declaration shall finally be incorporated into the EU's primary law through the pending Treaty of Lisbon, as Art. 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union[52]:

1. The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.

2. The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations.

3. Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.

Hence, with reference to Art. 17 §1, religion is – with few exceptions – not a matter of competence for the EU.[53] But this does not mean that there is no interface between religious actors, as well as philosophical and non-confessional actors, and the EU

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[51] The principle of conferral ("begrenzte Einzelermächtigung") has chiefly been elaborated by the constitutional jurisdiction of the Federal Republic of Germany. With the pending Treaty of Lisbon, it shall explicitly be anchored in the EU's primary law as the new Art. 5 of the Treaty on the European Union.

[52] COMECE and the "Church and Society" Commission of CEC presented in September 2002 a joint legislative proposal to the European Convention, which elaborated the European Constitution that ultimately became the Treaty of Lisbon; the purpose of this proposal was to include Declaration No. 11 into the main text of the treaty, stressing the importance of a structured dialogue (Treanor 2003).

[53] For a complete overview on religion-related norms in EU law, cf. the following document of the University of Trier: http://www.unitrier.de/fileadmin/fb5/inst/IEVR/Arbeitsmaterialien/ Staatskirchenrecht/Europa/EU-Bestimmungen/Englisch/EnglischTeil-I.pdf (20/03/09).

institutions. We should not forget the third paragraph of Art. 17, which provides for an open, transparent and regular dialogue between the EU and these actors. This dialogue has been institutionalised over the last decades.

Except for the accreditation of an Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities in 1970, the European institutions did not set up any official relations with religious authorities until 1992, when the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, invited religious leaders to his initiative "A Soul for Europe". Driven by the concern to bridge the gap between institutions and citizens, Delors intended to give "a spiritual and ethical dimension to the European Union"[54]. The dialogue was formalised in 1997 with Declaration No. 11 to the Treaty of Amsterdam and will also be incorporated into primary law through the pending Treaty of Lisbon – as mentioned above. Since 2005, the President of the European Commission, joined by the President of the European Parliament (since 2006) and the acting President of the Council of the EU (since 2007), meets once a year with leaders of the three monotheistic religions. The Commission speaks of a "structured dialogue", but which does not include any formal registration. A single official within the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA)[55], directly attached to the President of the Commission, is in charge of following this dossier.

The dialogue with religious communities has since then been pursued, deepened and extended to representatives of other religions and secular Humanism. President Jacques Santer started to hold bi-

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[54] Cf http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/archives/activities/ dialogue_religions_humanisms/sfe_en.htm (12/03/09). Despite original financial support from the EU budget, the association Une Âme pour l'Europe, created by religious authorities, remained rather passive in the following years. The name was eventually taken over in 2004 by another organisation with a more cultural orientation.

[55] BEPA is a special advisory group directly working to the President of the Commission. It succeeded the former Group of Policy Advisers (GOPA), which in turn had succeeded the former Forward Studies Unit (FSU), established by President Delors; cf. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/index_en.htm (12/03/09)

annual de-briefings with representatives of religious communities after European summits; and since the presidency of Romano Prodi, several meetings have been organised under the explicit auspices of interfaith and interreligious dialogue (Massignon 2007b). The interest of the Commission in these platforms of dialogue seem chiefly to be motivated by the concern to strengthen the social cohesion of the EU. Religious communities are seen as one important part of civil society that might contribute to the rapprochement between the European peoples and the EU institutions.

In this context it is worth highlighting that in relation to religious actors the Commission has not restricted its contacts to religious leaders or authorities alone. In the domestic domain, within the financial framework Culture 2007-13, Commission funding has been provided to civil society actors and NGOs promoting intercultural dialogue and peaceful relations between religions. Regarding external policies such as development cooperation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the Commission has actually developed a de facto cooperation with religious peacebuilding NGOs since at least the 1980s. In recent years, certain projects involving religious peacebuilding have also received Commission funding, e.g. in the framework of the EU partnership for Peace Programme (Israel-Palestine) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).[56] However, knowledge about this development has not been fully internalised and the level of cooperation varies across directorate-generals and even within certain directorate-generals, DG RELEX in particular[57] (Lemmetyinen 2008). An official of the

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[56] However, in terms of existing structures and entry points, DG RELEX has only one thematic desk that is indirectly related to religious peacebuilding, namely that of intercultural dialogue in DG RELEX's human rights unit.

[57] For instance, there are differences in how desk officers in Brussels and EC delegations on the ground cooperate with religious actors. The Commission's delegations in Tel Aviv and Damascus have recently funded projects undertaken by either religious actors or secular institutions addressing religious peacebuilding, while some other delegations in the Middle East have not. Cooperation is obviously not limited solely to funding, but illustrates nevertheless that the Commission has supported projects of religious peacebuilding.

Commission said that certain parts of the administration still had "Berührungsängste" with religious communities.[58]

2.2 The EPP's role in religious and intercultural dialogue

As was shown above, religion plays a major role in shaping the ethical conscience of individuals and hence as well the collective norms of any group or state. Though the Treaty of Lisbon and its predecessors did not sanction any particular religious heritage, it might be difficult to deny the important stake of Christianity as one of the cultural references that shaped Europe and ultimately the EU. In political terms, this part in the construction of collective identities and ethical convictions found its major expression in the movement of Christian Democracy, which formed the main political force of the centre-right in many states of post-war Europe. But does the term "Christian Democracy" still describe a political reality in an ever more diversified Europe? To what extent has the movement evolved in recent decades in order to cope with the social change on the Old Continent? And what is the part of this particular movement in furthering dialogue with religious actors beyond its traditional Christian roots?

From Christian Democracy to the EPP

Born out of Political Catholicism in the late 19th century, Christian Democracy had only gained a minority status in most European countries before the Second World War. It was the party of the Catholic milieu, always suspected of ultramontanism and other "sins" against the sovereign nation-state (Kaiser 2007). But Political Catholicism did not even exist in all states with larger Catholic population; it depended heavily upon the particular historical condition. In Italy for instance, the nation-state had been

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[58] Interview of 23 December 2008.

established against the will of the Church. Until the Lateran Pacts of 1929 under fascist rule, the Holy See did not recognise the Italian state and forbade believing Catholics to take part in its political life. In France, the papacy prohibited Catholics at several points under the Third Republic from forming their own political party, fearing that such a party might take a royalist position and ultimately split the Church.[59] The situation changed dramatically with the discrediting of Conservative parties on the Continent after the Second World War and the rise of Communist rule over Central and Eastern Europe. The Vatican now actively supported the emergence of Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, but also in the perspective of building peace through the search for unity in a divided continent (Chenaux 1990).

In the beginning of European integration, Christian Democracy did indeed play the most prominent role amongst all political forces of Western Europe in the establishment of the European Communities. The Nouvelles Equipes Internationales (NEI), founded 1947 following informal talks in Geneva and an initial congress in Lucerne, were a first attempt to unite the different national parties of Christian inspiration after the war. Frictions existed from the very beginning between more conservative parties from Germany, Switzerland and Austria on one hand and the deliberately centrist French Mouvement républicain populaire (MRP) that favoured a "third way" between capitalism and socialism and that wanted to avoid the formation of a "black international" (Kaiser 2004). After many years of debate and the decline of the French MRP in the Fifth Republic, the NEI eventually established the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD) in 1965. But in the meantime, the main line of division had shifted and was now to be found between parties from EC member states

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[59] Following the tradition of his successor Leo XIII, Pope Pius X rebuffed the claims of the Prince of Orléans's family to endorse his political cause (New York Times of 8 September 1912). In this tradition, Pope Pius XI prohibited Catholics from supporting the Action française of Charles Maurras in 1926 (Chenaux 2001).

and other European states. Austria and Switzerland found themselves increasingly marginalised. The year 1976 saw the establishment of the EPP as the first pan-European party. In 1983 the secretariats of the EUCD and the EPP were merged and in 1999 the EUCD was ultimately absorbed by the EPP.[60] Today the EPP counts 74 member parties from 38 European countries, inside and outside the EU.[61] The name "Christian Democracy" has progressively disappeared over the last decades; and this evolution is not only a question of wording. Already in the forefront of the EPP's foundation in the 1970s, major discussions were taking place about the attitude to Conservative parties outside the hemisphere of Political Catholicism and Christian Democracy. The successive accession of predominantly Protestant countries from 1973 on, starting with the United Kingdom and Denmark, fulfilled the prediction that Christian Democracy might not have a majority in a larger Europe. The German Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party Christlich Soziale Union (CSU) had strongly advocated the integration of Conservative parties into the political family of Christian Democracy; they were the driving force behind the creation of a third pan-European party in 1977, the European Democrat Union (EDU) which overlapped considerably with the EPP and EUCD, but which enclosed as well the British Conservative Party (Waschinski 2008). However, it was only the liquidation of the Italian Democrazia Cristiana (DC) in 1993 that paved the way to a rapprochement with Northern Conservative and French Gaullist parties. The alliance with both was concluded in 1999: the Gaullists became member of the EPP and the Tories were associated to its parliamentary group in the

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[60] For further details in the history of the EUCD and the EPP, cf. the chronological timeline at the website of the EPP-ED Group: http://www.epp-ed.eu/group/en/OurHistory.asp (20/03/09). For further information, see also academic works on the EPP history, such as De Brouwer (1991), Jansen (1998) or Fontaine (2003).

[61] Only parties from EU member states have the status of "full members"; parties from the European Economic Area or from EU candidate countries might become "associate members"; all others have the status of "observer members" without a vote in the EPP congress; cf. http://www.epp.eu/memberparties.php (20/03/09).

European Parliament, which has from then on been called "Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats" (EPP-ED). The EDU later ceased its activity as a party without any formal incorporation into the EPP structures. But thanks to the association of the ED in Parliament, the EPP has once again become the largest political group.[62] The price for this transition was the marginalisation of Christian Democracy. Today it survives only in the brackets of the group's designation; and merely 20 out of 74 EPP member parties still invoke the term "Christian" in their name.

New platforms for dialogue with religious actors

The EPP has certainly been the most religious of all political formations in EU politics. Though it followed the course of secularisation and the further dissolution of its Christian milieu, it has not ceased to keep its links with Christian churches. But the question is open as to whether and how new platforms of dialogue can be found to anchor the party in new social realities. Is there something like a new common ethos paralleling that of the old Christian Democracy? The response to these questions must be found as a function of new social realities. Yet, the secularisation of Western Europe's Christianity is not the only transformation under way. The fall of the Wall and the subsequent accession of ten Central and Eastern European countries to the EU as well as the emergence of Islam in the public sphere of the West are two other points of change that are at least of equal importance.

During the Cold War, the EPP had actively accompanied the quest for change in the East, mainly through the informal contact group *Amici Poloniae*, which was also attended by politicians of

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[62] The tension between the traditionally Europhile Christian Democrats and the traditionally Eurosceptic Conservatives persists though, and in March 2009 the divorce was announced for the forthcoming European elections. The new Tory leader David Cameron had announced his intention to quit the EPP-ED Group before and did implement his electoral promise against the wish of most Tory MEPs.

other affiliations.[63] This friendship group sought to establish contact with representatives of the Solidarność movement and the Catholic hierarchy. Even before the official accession talks with the first group of candidate states had started, the EPP launched a second move towards the integration of Central and Eastern European countries through the establishment of a permanent platform of dialogue with Orthodox Churches, which gathered firstly in 1996.[64] The annual meetings have taken place ever since in different countries of Orthodox tradition and have, since 2008, been complemented by regional dialogues addressing political issues in particular areas of concern like the Southern Caucasus or Ukraine. A permanent Working Group within the EPP-ED is accompanying this process and two group officials are providing a permanent administrative basis.[65] Many meetings were attended by heads of state or government and high dignitaries of different Orthodox Churches; they have to some extent contributed to the integration of Eastern European parties into the political family of the EPP, but also to regional stabilisation. The Eighth Dialogue of October 2004 in Thessalonica remains particularly memorable: the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Croatia, Vojslav Koštunica and Ivo Sanader, joined the Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis and dignitaries of different churches from all over Europe in a solemn ceremony

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[63] According to the former secretary general of the Amici Poloniae and collaborator of the EPP Group, Stephen Biller, the Communist MEP founder of the Federalist Movement, Altiero Spinelli, also became a member shortly before his death in 1986. The Amici Poloniae were ultimately incorporated into the Paneuropean Movement in 1996 (Interview with Stephen Biller of 05 December 2008).

[64] At the initiative of the Greek delegation of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, chaired by Panayotis Lambrias, the then Group Chairman Wilfried Martens accepted the invitation by Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople to establish high-level meetings on a regular basis. For further information, cf. http://www.epp-ed.eu/interculturaldialogue/default_en.asp (12/03/09).

[65] The Working Group is currently coordinated by one the Group's Vice Chairmen, Marian-Jean Marinescu; one of the administrative positions is that of a full-time assistant, the other that of a group advisor, who is currently also press officer for the Hungarian press and Deputy Secretary General of the EPP-ED's Robert Schuman Foundation in Luxembourg.

of reconciliation.[66] Besides peace and reconciliation, a wide range of other issues has been dealt with at the interface between religion, ethics and politics. Furthermore, the Orthodox Dialogue has increasingly embraced an interreligious dimension by including representatives of other Christian denominations and further as well of Judaism and Islam.

The current President of the EPP and former Chairman of the EPP Group, Wilfried Martens, has been a driving force behind the dialogue with religious actors.[67] Motivated by the conviction that religion was an important source of political action, he tried to extend the existing platforms of dialogue to other communities.[68]. He has, for instance, invested high personal efforts to reach out to Russian Orthodoxy and was present at the enthronement of the new Patriarch Cyril of Moscow and All Russia in February 2009.[69] The Orthodox dialogue also concerns another foreign dossier with religious connotation: the Turkish question. For the EPP, the main political issue in this regard is the membership of the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) of the current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Through its dialogue with the EPP, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has constantly repeated its request for putting an end to all forms of discrimination in Turkey, particularly concerning the restitution of its old Halki seminary on the Princes' Islands. The AKP's bid for membership in the EPP has thus caused headaches for many, bearing in mind that most

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[66] Cf. EPP-ED press release of 22 October 2004.

[67] Interviews with several EPP-ED officials, December 2008 to March 2009.

[68] Interview with EPP President Wilfried Martens of 5 March 2009. Unfortunately, the incumbent political coordinators of the EPP-ED Group for the two Working Groups on dialogue with religious communities, the Group's Vice Chairmen Marian-Jean Marinescu and Vito Bonsignore, were not available for any interview or statement, despite repeated requests

[69] The Russian Orthodox Church has participated in some of the dialogue meetings, but merely on its margins; it must be taken into consideration that the dialogue meetings have thus far been organised under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which is to a certain extent a competitor with the Patriarchate of Moscow for de facto (but not pro forma) leadership in the communion of Orthodox Churches.

EPP member parties anyhow oppose the Turkish EU accession.[70] In 2005 the AKP was finally accepted as an observer member; the decision on associate membership, which is usually granted to parties from official EU candidate states, is still pending.[71]

Notwithstanding the Turkish question, dialogue with Islam has become a second religious priority to the EPP over the last decade, paying attention to challenges of integration and challenges of internal and external security. It is no coincidence, then, that the first conference of the EPP on this issue took place in 2002 under the explicit auspices of Huntington's "clash of civilisations and the way to avoid it."[72] A second permanent Working Group was established within the EPP-ED Group that has met occasionally with diplomatic representatives of Muslim states.[73] Until now, the dialogue has mainly been restricted to the ambassadors of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the broadest organisation of majority Muslim states, and to meetings with particular member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Some conferences have been organised with academic experts, and a series of round-tables was launched in 2008 on the question of reciprocity between majority Muslim countries and EU member states in terms of religious freedom. However, until

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[70] Interestingly enough, two other Turkish parties had been member of the EUCD until its incorporation into the EPP in 1999; but the Motherland Party of the former Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz and the Democratic Party of the former Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, both working in a conservative Kemalist tradition, have been marginalised themselves after their electoral defeat (Interview with EPP President Martens of 5 March 2009).

[71] EPP President Martens stressed the fact that, in his official letter requesting admission to the EPP, the AKP President and Turkish Prime Minister Erdoǧan explicitly embraced the preamble text in the Statues of the EPP: "On the basis of the Christian view of mankind and the Christian Democratic concept of society…" (Interview with EPP President Martens of 5 March 2009).

[72] EPP-ED press release of 18 September 2002.

[73] The EPP-ED's Vice Chairman Vito Bonsignore is currently coordinating this Working Group, which is only meeting on an ad hoc basis. The administrative support is similar to the Working Group for the Orthodox Dialogue: one full-time assistant and one half-time advisor, who is also in charge of the Fisheries Committee.

today, encounters with religious Muslim authorities were merely coincidental. Several interlocutors have cited the agency problem as the main reason for this shortcoming: the EPP-ED feels somehow jammed between official but "irrelevant" religious authorities and those "relevant" but too "radical".[74] In addition to the official platform of (more or less) structured dialogue, some individual MEPs have started a certain number of unofficial initiatives for engaging dialogue with Islam.[75] The Working Group itself has elaborated a new strategy in this regard in May 2008, which aspires to address both domestic and foreign Muslim communities and which intends for the first time to include imams and other religious authorities.

Political interests in religious and intercultural dialogue

The EPP is perhaps the only political force on the stage of European politics that has a collective sensibility for the religious dimension of society and that has thus developed an official approach for engaging dialogue with religious actors. But what is the rationale behind the establishment of these interfaces? Even if politics is the quest of power, the ultimate political goal is connected with specific programmes, with economic, cultural, ethical and, also religious meanings that make sense for the individual and/or the group. In the case of Christian Democracy, the dominant programme for the constitution of group identity and ultimately hence for the successful exercise of democratic power, was in the past constituted by the Catholic and other Christian milieus. These times have gone in parts of Europe (chiefly the West), but they have returned in others (roughly the

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[74] Interviews with several EPP-ED officials between December 2008 and March 2009.

[75] The then Chairman of the EPP-ED Group, Hans-Gert Pöttering, has met with several representatives of the Arab League and of particular Muslim organisations; the Spanish Delegation to the EPP-ED is engaged in talks on reciprocity with respect to religious freedom; the British MEP Christopher Beazley is engaged in dialogue in his home constituency, to cite only a few… (Interview with several EPP-ED officials and with Christopher Beazley MEP of 11 February 2009).

East). How to deal with these new realities of diversity, between different regions of Europe but also within different regions? We have seen that the EPP has launched several projects to deal with the new religious realities. The intercultural and interreligious aspect of these new platforms for dialogue appears slowly but steadily as a common trait. So we might ask: where is the political interest in engaging religious actors in intercultural dialogue? Where is the possible benefit? Is there any?

Most interview partners, both politicians and advisors, concurred in stressing the possible electoral gains of religious and intercultural dialogue. Both established Working Groups within the EPP-ED Group were at least partly motivated by pure political considerations. "Engaging Orthodox Churches allowed us to integrate new member parties in the wake of Eastern Enlargement – that assure today our majority in Parliament."[76] Concerning dialogue with Islam, similar voices could be heard: "We have to be faster than the Socialists in reaching out to the electorate of Muslim communities."

But political reasoning is definitely not the sole argument for engaging dialogue. It has been shown before that ethical convictions do play a role, as a common code for specific groups of population, but also as personal basis for the political engagement of individual politicians. In this context, intercultural dialogue is not only seen as a mean to gain political power but also to achieve ethical ends. "Dialogue is a necessity!" affirms EPP President Martens. "Dialogue is the search for compromise (…), but it must always be directed towards the truth", states Vice President Mauro of the European Parliament.[77] Building a common ethical ground for living together in a increasingly diversified Europe: these might be identified as the objectives for

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[76] These and the following are anonymous statements drawn from interviews with EPP politicians and officials between December 2008 and March 2009.

[77] Interview with Vice President Mario Mauro MEP of 12 February 2009.

the political approach of other cultures and religions. Perhaps one of the first documents of the EPP Group dealing explicitly with the ethical challenges of living united in diversity was the "Declaration of Malta on Tolerance", which was adopted by the Group Bureau the 14 June 1996:

> *[…] Le PPE affirme sa responsabilité dans le combat que doivent mener les forces politiques démocratiques pour préserver une conception de l'Homme qui rend chaque personne à la fois unique et solidaire de l'Humanité toute entière. Nous devons assumer les tâches qui rendront non seulement vivable le siècle prochain, mais qui feront progresser l'harmonie entre les hommes et la paix entre les nations.*
>
> *A cette fin, le PPE considère que la tolérance, érigée comme une vertu, dont la pratique concerne chacun d'entre nous dans sa vie sociale, son éthique personnelle et son engagement politique, doit faire l'objet d'une pédagogie systématique à tous les stades du développement de l'être humain : au sein du milieu éducatif, dans le dialogue œcuménique entre les religions, à travers l'instruction civique et grâce aux potentialités des moyens de communication en constant développement. […]*

The transition of the EPP from an exclusively Catholic club to a pluralistic political movement has advanced in recent years. Based upon the conviction that religion is still "a major source of political action"[78], the EPP has played a major role in promoting the cause of religious and intercultural dialogue on the political stage. It was the first political force at EU level that explicitly embraced the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and its significance for building a common citizenship in a diversified Europe. At a moment when social groups with very different identities seek recognition and might thus provoke confrontation

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[78] Interview with EPP President Martens of 5 March 2009.

and violence, the EPP is betting on an inclusive approach that does not deny the role of religious beliefs for the constitution of communities, at local, national or European level.

2.3 Beyond the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)

The engagement of religious actors in European politics gained new prominence with the proclamation of 2008 as European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID). The recent developments in the relationship between religion and politics have converged towards a more and more intercultural approach. Neither EU institutions nor the EPP as a party in Christian Democratic tradition can afford to restrict its approach to religion to one single community, as they might have been able to in the past. Dialogue appears to be necessary cement for diversified societies. But the question is open to what extent religious actors ought to be included in this process. The approach of the EPP on many related developments has been anything but consensual, and the organisation of the EYID has revealed very different concepts of what culture and dialogue should comprise. Furthermore, another open question concerns the scope of these platforms for dialogue. Should they only concern the internal cohesion of European societies or might they be seen as a general approach in different policy areas, most notably in the field of external relations? To what extent does intercultural dialogue address questions of war and peace? To what extent might the EU draw on religious actors to foster peacebuilding in concrete conflict areas? These are questions to be addressed by both the EU and the EPP.

Intercultural dialogue as political objective

By comparison with other international organisations, the EU has not given broad public attention to intercultural dialogue than until recently, with the exception of Commission President Jacques Delors's initiative 'A Soul for Europe'in 1992. On the stage of

international politics, intercultural dialogue first made appearance in explicit reaction to Huntington's theory. It was the then President of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, who coined the term of "dialogue among civilisations" in a much noted speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in 1998.[79] Still at his initiative, the year 2001 was subsequently proclaimed the "United Nations' Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations"[80]. If it would not appear cynical, one might speak of bitter irony that this approach was ultimately overshadowed by the attacks of 9/11 in that very year 2001. Several years later, a new UN initiative was launched under the title "Alliance of Civilizations"[81]. In the meanwhile, the question has become a major focal point for the activities of UNESCO and other organisations. In 2005, the third summit of heads of state and government of the Council of Europe attached high political importance to intercultural dialogue. It was also the Council of Europe (2008) that put forward "the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue"; whereby religion is considered to constitute one possible difference in identity, alongside "ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds".[82] Even so, by this definition, intercultural dialogue is vaguely defined as an exchange of views between different individuals or groups at different levels: "within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world" (Council of Europe 2008).

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[79] In his address to the General Assembly, President Khatami stated: "Hence, it [the Islamic revolution of the Iranian people] calls for dialogue among civilizations and cultures instead of a clash between them. […] I would like to propose, in the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran, that the United Nations, as a first step, designate the year 2001 as the 'Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations', in the earnest hope that through such a dialogue the realization of universal justice and liberty may be initiated." (Official Records of the UN General Assembly, 53rd Session, 8th Plenary Meeting, 21 September 1998)

[80] Cf. http://www.un.org/Dialogue/ (20/03/09).

[81] On initiative of the Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in September 2004, later joined by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdo□an, Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched the "Alliance of Civilizations" in July 2005 under the auspices of the United Nations. The former Portugese President Jorge Sampaio was later appointed UN High Representative to the initiative. For further information, cf. http://www.unaoc.org/ (20/03/09).

[82] The Council's "Volga Forum Declaration" of 2006 called for an "open, transparent and regular dialogue with religious organisations, while recognising that this must be underpinned by universal values and principles" (Council of Europe 2008).

The EU has drawn on the experience of other international organisations when it agreed upon the declaration of the EYID in 2006. Nevertheless, following the grave concerns of the Commission about engaging religious actors (cf. *supra*), the main emphasis of the EU's approach to intercultural dialogue focused on questions of social cohesion and the emergence of a common identity inside the European polity. Unlike the approach of the UN, questions of violent conflict and possible clashes of collective identity did not figure at all in the Commission's proposal.[83] Its very first sentence states instead, in almost tautological manner, that "intercultural dialogue is intimately linked to the fundamental ambition underlying the construction of Europe, namely to bring together the peoples of Europe". In the further text, explicit reference is made to the Strategy of Lisbon, intending to make the EU the most competitive economic space in the world, but no mention is made at all of possible lines of conflict. This focus does not correspond to the original initiative for the EYID: as it was drawn from the Commission's first conference under the title "Peace, Security and Stability: Intercultural Dialogue" in March 2002, at the invitation of the then President Romano Prodi, interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding were a principal point of concern.

The concept of intercultural dialogue underlying the EYID is rather fuzzy. Officials from the Directorate-General Education and Culture (DG EAC)[84], which was in charge of its organisation, referred to a private consultancy that had drafted a preliminary study and whose definition is very vague.[85] The main focus of the

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[83] A quick search in the Commission's document reveals that the words "peace", "war" or "conflict" do not even appear (the last only once and carrying a different meaning); cf. COM (2005) 467.

[84] Interview with officials from DG EAC between December 2008 and March 2009.

[85] The European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts) that was charged with the report, delivers the following definition: "Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes." Cf. http://www.interculturaldialogue.eu/web/intercultural-dialogue.php (20/03/09).

agency's "best practice" report was upon education (arts and heritage), youth, culture and sports (ERICarts 2008): four of the six policy areas covered by DG EAC. Further emphasis was placed on building citizenship (the fifth area) as one major purpose of the EYID; religion was only mentioned at the sidelines. It is no coincidence, then, that the seven flagship projects of the EYID were mainly situated in the artistic sector, putting much emphasis on multilingualism, youth and urban culture.[86] Some of the subsidised groups were already beneficiaries of the previous "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All" in 2007. A comprehensive report of the Commission to Parliament is forthcoming in December 2009. But we might already conclude that the character of the EYID was very different from the understanding other international organisations or EU politicians have of intercultural dialogue.

The disputed place of religion in intercultural dialogue

A major point of discussion in the preparation of the EYID and its sequence was the place of religious actors. We have already noted before that DG EAC and its consultants neglected more or less explicitly this aspect of culture. But when the Commission's proposal reached the European Parliament in late 2005, some other voices were heard. A majority of parliamentarians voted in the first reading of the co-decision procedure in favour of the amendments tabled by the Parliaments rapporteur Erna Hennicot-Schoepges MEP, which intended to put the main emphasis of the EYID on interreligious dialogue. The Commission and the Council did not agree. In the Common Position of 14 November 2006, they deleted most of the proposed amendments. Parliament had no other choice but to accept this position in its second reading or to abandon the entire project. After concurring reports by some

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[86] Cf. the official website of the EYID: http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/339.0.html (20/03/09).

participants, some EU Member States, mainly France and Belgium, had threatened to veto any motion regarding religion.[87] As a compromise, at least one out of seven "Brussels Debates" of the EYID were organised on the topic "New horizons: active citizenship to bridge inter-religious divides"[88] and DG EAC stresses that at least some national actions were focussed on this aspect, particularly in Poland.[89]

But the discussion was not closed. The European Parliament chose another approach in its very own flagship projects. Already engaged in preparation of the EYID, its administration had commissioned a briefing paper on interreligious dialogue (Malik 2006). The President of Parliament and former EPP-ED Group Chairman, Hans-Gert Pöttering, may be cited as a driving force behind the efforts to focus on the religious dimension of culture, inviting representatives of all world religions to held keynote speeches in plenary session. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, an Indian Guru, the Dalai Lama and several others responded to his invitation.[90] The EPP-ED met most of them afterwards to an internal debate. The address of the Syrian Grand Mufti to the plenary, holding hands with the President of the Chaldean Catholic Bishops of Syria[91], was perhaps the only event of any EU institution involving religious

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[87] Interview with officials from DG EAC and with Erna Hennicot-Schoepges MEP of 14 November 2008.

[88] Cf. http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/408.0.html (20/03/09).

[89] Interview with officials from DG EAC between December 2008 and March 2009; asked about the reasons for this attitude towards religion, one official answered that after all, "atheists are quite in the majority in many EU Member States". He probably means, more generally, atheists, agnostics, or just people indifferent towards religion.

[90] For further information, cf. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/focus_page/037-20989-042-02-07-906-20080211FCS20948-11-02-2008-2008/default_en.htm (20/03/09). President Pöttering equally invited Pope Benedict XVI to close the EYID with a keynote address, but the Holy See dismissed the invitation, stressing the fact that the Pope was not only one religious leader amongst others but also a head of state (anonymous source).

[91] Cf. EP press release of 15 January 2008.

actors with an external dimension. But Parliament also held two thematic weeks (one African one Arab), several high level conferences and further events with other cultural activists, including a meeting among young Israelis, Palestinians and Europeans. Apparently Parliament had a concept of intercultural dialogue that was slightly different from the prevailing understanding in the Commission.

A myriad of national and international initiatives subscribed to the EYID. As a part of their contribution to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, COMECE, the "Church & Society" Commission (CSC) of the CEC and the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), organised in association with Muslim partners a series of seminars under the overall theme of "Islam, Christianity and Europe". The four seminars, which were hosted by the European Parliament, discussed the following themes: Intercultural dialogue, response to which problems? Christian and Muslim perspectives; Visibility of religion in the European public space, the question of worship places and religious symbols in clothing; 'Christian Europe' and Islam in Europe; and the external relations of the European Union with Muslim countries and international responsibility of religious communities.[92]

The internal and external dimensions of dialogue

The different understandings of intercultural dialogue held in Parliament (or rather by the EPP-ED majority) and within the Commission were not only discernable with respect to religious actors, but also with respect to its external dimension. Certainly, DG EAC stressed the fact that intercultural dialogue is transversal

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[92] Cf. the reports of the four seminars:
http://comece.eu/comece.taf?_function=church&_sub=_dialog&id=2&language=en (31/03/09).

[93] Supplementary to the seven flagship projects, twelve other projects were featured in cooperation between EU and third-country partners, eight of them with regard to Israel and Palestine; these projects received no funding through the EYID, but through other EU Programmes, including DG EAC's Lifelong Learning and Citizens for Europe, cf. http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/339.0.html (24/03/09).

and does also include an external dimension[93], but as we have shown, the focus was clearly upon internal cohesion and the integration of different parts of population. DG EAC hence abandoned any reference to violent conflict[94] and focussed rather on issues such as non-discrimination and common citizenship. After the preliminary report (ERICarts 2008), all activities somehow related to Huntington's theory should be avoided for it might be nothing else but a "self-fulfilling prophecy". The cooperation between the different services of the Commission mirrored this point of view. DG EAC established an Inter-Service Working Group on Culture with other directorate-generals and also with four national expert groups attached to the Culture and Education Council, but the single representative of DG RELEX in this body plays only a marginal role. The explicit goal of DG EAC to launch an Open Method of Coordination in the field of culture did not have an impact yet on the peacebuilding activities of DG RELEX.

However, points of contact would be there, especially in specific world regions. Culture is part of the third basket of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and has attracted more attention in recent years. The establishment in 2004 of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures in Alexandria was a major step in implementing the Euro-Med Partnership.[95] The idea for this Foundation dates back to the presidency of Romano Prodi, following the mentioned conferences he convoked on the issue of intercultural dialogue and peace. Interestingly enough, "Religion, Spirituality and Values" is one of its six main points of activity. The Foundation has funded several interreligious encounters and has dedicated its very first Euro-Med Award for Dialogue to the Italian Jesuit Paolo Dall'Oglio and his

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[94] An official of DG EAC affirmed that this question "was rather in the competence of DG RELEX"; interviews with officials from DG EAC between December 2008 and March 2009.

[95] The Foundation was established by the Sixth Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; cf.
http://www.euromedalex.org/sites/default/files/Statue_EN.pdf (24/03/09).

new monastic community of Deir Mar Musa in Syria which is dedicated to Christian-Muslim dialogue.[96] But these activities are not only restricted to the EMP. In December 2007, the Delegation of the Commission to Australia, together with the Australian Government, convened a first Regional Youth Interfaith Forum of South-East Asia in Perth. Young activists from all major religious communities of almost all South-East Asian countries met their Australian and European counterparts (Bokern 2008).

The European Parliament plays an important role in furthering the question of interreligious dialogue within the EMP. The first of two key topics on the agenda of the newly established Cultural Committee of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) was the issue of "inter-religious dialogue as a platform for mutual understanding in the Mediterranean"[97]. Interestingly, the terms "inter-religious dialogue" and "inter-cultural dialogue" are further employed as synonyms by the Committee. The EPP-ED aspires to unite the issue of religious and intercultural dialogue with the EMP and the broader European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) which also includes Eastern European neighbour states. Within the EPP-ED administration, the responsibility for both policy areas is placed under the same special department; its two permanent platform of dialogue, with Orthodox Churches and with Islam, correspond thus to the two dimensions of the ENP: Eastern and Southern.

Christian churches contributed actively to dialogue in the Mediterranean region. From the outset in the middle of the 1990s, COMECE has been working to raise awareness in the minds of those who had given impetus to the EMP of the importance of the

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[96] Cf. http://www.euromedalex.org/euromed-award/2006 (24/03/09); for more information on Deir Mar Musa, cf. http://www.deirmarmusa.org/ (24/03/09).

[97] Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Committee on the Promotion of the Quality of Life, Human Exchanges and Culture of 18 July 2008: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/200/200903/20090315Minutes_Cult_en.pdf (31/03/09).

cultural, religious, and civilisational dimension. When the idea of the EMP was beginning to take shape, COMECE suggested in this context to the Commission's Forward Studies Unit that this project should include some thinking about the role of the three monotheist religions for the peoples of the Mediterranean Basin. In cooperation with the Forward Studies Unit of the of the European Commission and the EECCS, COMECE helped with the organisation of a seminar at Toledo on 4-7 November 1995, on the basis of a desire for a dialogue between Catholics, Christians in general, and Muslims. The results of the Toledo Seminar led to the inclusion of an important paragraph in the declaration setting up the EMP, signed at Barcelona on 28 November 1995, on the promotion of dialogue and of respect between the cultures and religions and civilizations, intended to foster rapprochement, mutual tolerance and cooperation between the peoples on both shores of the Mediterranean (Legrand 2007b):

Greater understanding among the major religions present in the EuroMediterranean region will facilitate greater mutual tolerance and cooperation. Support will be given to periodic meetings of representatives of religions and religious institutions as well as theologians, academics and others concerned, with the aim of breaking down prejudice, ignorance and fanaticism and fostering cooperation at grassroots level. The conferences held in Stockholm (15/17.6.1995) and Toledo (4/7.11.1995) may serve as examples in this context.

The differences observed in understanding of intercultural dialogue and hence in setting the priorities of the EYID might reflect the general unease of making reference to Huntington's theory of clashing civilisations. Everything that might appear to accept this dictum has been omitted in the DG EAC's concept. Perhaps this shows a little too much good intention. The EYID has hence put forward a quite different narrative that neither matched the precedent experience of other international organisations nor the discourse of European politicians or even Commissioners. The former President Prodi, Commissioner Jan Figel´, Parliament President Pöttering and other representatives have pointed at

different moments to the peacebuilding role of intercultural dialogue. At least in the multiple annexed events of the EYID, this aspect did not disappear. Thanks to the myriad of activities in the European Parliament and in civil society that subscribed officially or unofficially to the EYID, this year has very much marked the debates in Brussels and beyond, perhaps more than other European Years…

Summary: From Christian Europe to Intercultural Dialogue?

The transition from the more or less homogenous societies of the six founding members of the European Communities to the diversity of what is today the EU has changed the relationship between religion and politics considerably over the last decades. Christian authorities called for the construction of a united and federal Europe after the Second World War; politicians, together with some religious actors, call today for the engagement of religious actors in the cause of dialogue. The example of the EPP exemplified this development: rooted in Political Catholicism and Christian Democracy, the party has today developed a very pluralistic appearance and actively seeks to embrace dialogue with other cultures and religions in adapting to new social realities.

The EYID might be seen as a breakthrough in the EU's engagement of religious actors on behalf of the cause of intercultural dialogue. Most official contacts between political and religious authorities have been more or less dedicated to this cause. But it must be stressed that at present this development is neither consensual nor coherent. The sole political actors maintaining regular administrative contacts with representatives of religious communities are the Presidency of the European Commission, notably through the BEPA, and the EPP-ED Group in Parliament. Some EU Member States in the Council, particularly France and Belgium, and some other political groups in Parliament, among others the All Party Working Group on Separation of Religion and Politics, fiercely oppose any attempt to give religious actors further space on the

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98   Cf. for instance the numerous manifestations

political stage.[98] The very vague definition of what the DG EAC understood by intercultural dialogue added to the general confusion. Religion played a much less prominent role in its concepts than in the equivalent of the Council of Europe or the UNESCO.[99] Too often, the dialogue at EU level seems to lack determination and purpose.

Building peace might be an underlying principle for the EU's dialogue with religious actors, but it has never been an explicit objective. The existing platforms of dialogue are governed by a variety of more or less overlapping political and ethical interests. The Commission grants priority to fostering of internal cohesion and to the emergence of a European public sphere through the engagement of all parts of civil society; the EPP tries to bridge the gap between traditional and potentially new electoral groups; religious representatives hope to influence EU decision-making in the sense of their ethical doctrine of the Common Good and, on a more occasional basis, for the benefit of their community; and above all, the individual religious and/or ethical commitment of particular actors should not be forgotten.[100] Civil peace might be one of these multiple interests, but it is not identified as a priority on the daily agenda. The existing platforms of dialogue are rather a concern of domestic policies, whereas peacebuilding is a matter of external relations. In this domain, no official contacts with religious actors have yet been established.

The same might be said for the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. For the Commission and other institutions, it was rather a question of non-discrimination to include different religious communities. Religious actors from conflict areas are only

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[99] Compare the outline of the EYID (*op. cit.* in Fn.14) with the approach of these organisations: UNESCO, *Dialogue among Civilizations: Regional Summit on Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue, Tirana 9-10 December 2004*, Paris 2006; Council of Europe, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: "Living Together As Equals in Dignity"*, Strasbourg 2008.

[100] These statements are drawn from several interviews with Commission officials, EPP politicians and representatives of religious communities between December 2008 and March 2009. of the Socialist MEP Véronique De Keyser for the promotion of strict laïcité in the French sense: http://www.vdekeyser.be (12/03/09)

timidly engaged. The EPP-ED has been more active in this regard: the interreligious encounters with Orthodox Churches and other communities in South-Eastern Europe showed a potential for peacebuilding, also as did its first steps towards dialogue with Islam and the Muslim World. It has to be shown to what extent all these starting points might be developed for the sake of peacebuilding in specific post-conflict situations. The question is open as to whether there might be any added value in political terms to promote the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.

3 Interreligious Peacebuilding in Specific Post-Conflict Situations

The lack of clarity in the concept of intercultural dialogue (Silvestri 2007) might be connected to the difficulty in locating new patterns of violent conflict after the end of the Cold War. As was shown before, the classical distinction between internal and external security has progressively been blurred in recent decades (Erikson, Wallensteen 2004). The vivid debate about Huntington's hypothesis has led to a very anxious attitude towards the nexus between religion, culture and conflict. Intercultural dialogue did appear as an issue of international politics in important parts as reaction to Huntington. It seems that other political actors, like the Commission's DG EAC, quite obstinately avoid for precisely this reason making any reference to religion or/and violent conflict in their understanding of intercultural dialogue. But one need not agree with the essentialist approach of Huntington to see that religion might indeed play a role in the affirmation of collective identities.

Even if the authors of this study do not assume that "Islam" and "the West", to take the two most current examples, would confront each other as homogenous blocks, they do acknowledge that specific groups use religion as distinctive criterion for affirming their collective identity and for furthering their political claims, sometimes recurring to violent means. Different understandings of modernity might play a role in this struggle for group sovereignty. In the context of global migration and ever shorter communication distances, living together in increasingly heterogonous societies might be challenge at home and abroad. The question is open as to how state authorities should react to this challenge. Most actors emphasise that recognition and empowerment of different communities cannot be built against but only on the basis of individual rights. One of the objectives of intercultural dialogue might be identified as to dyke potential conflicts through fostering understanding and mutual respect. But the concept goes beyond earlier attempts to build "multi-cultural" societies, only by recognising diversity without creating channels of communication and common ethical grounds. In this context, the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue might be of further relevance as it recurs as well to its role in the construction of collective identities as to its part in the definition of ethical norms and values.

Where, then, is the place of religious actors in addressing violent conflict and building peace? As defined in the introduction, this study distinguishes three categories: (a) faith-based peacebuilding; (b) religious peacebuilding; (c) interreligious peacebuilding, the latter being the focus of the study and referring to representatives or bodies of different religious communities engaged in overcoming sectarian strife in conflicts of collective identity with a religious dimension. All three categories might be useful in different types of conflict, including clashes of religious identity, and at different stages of the conflict cycle (Lederach 2006; Sampson 2007); the focus of this study is put on the third category.

Anyone who has experienced a violent community conflict with religious dimension might possibly join the Lebanese Minister for Public Reform, Ibrahim Shams al-Din, in his affirmation that

"obviously you cannot build peace without religious authorities!"[101] Until today, the EU has neglected this aspect in its peacebuilding policies, for a variety of reasons.[102] The time might have come to reconsider this position. The attempts of the EPP and the EPP-ED Group to address issues of war and peace in the framework of intercultural and religious dialogue might be seen as a first step in this direction. But the question remains as to whether, on one hand, political consensus might be found within the EU to foster the engagement of religious actors on the political stage, and on the other hand, whether religious dignitaries really are willing to embrace dialogue for the sake of reconciliation and peace. Furthermore, even if the principle of interreligious peacebuilding be accepted, the most difficult question remains whom to talk to. The analysis of two post-conflict situations with a religious dimension might help to clarify this question. In the cases both of Lebanon and of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the EU has a stake in peacebuilding, but at present it cannot yet achieve a sustainable reconciliation. Perhaps it is time to draw on other categories than the usual combination of peace keeping troops and technical assistance.

3.1 After the Lebanese Civil War

The Lebanese Civil War did somehow anticipate the new lines of conflict that dominate the international scene since end of the Cold War. In the course of the conflict, religion and family were the two most important criteria for marking the difference between rival sectarian groups. And there are many of them in Lebanon! Eighteen religious communities are officially recognised and enjoy legal status as for all matters of civil law. Lebanon has for many decades been the model *par excellence* of a

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[101]   Interview with Minister Ibrahim Shams al-Din of 21 February 2009.

[102]   Some interview partners amongst DG RELEX officials doubted the relevance of the religious factor in community conflicts; others feared that engaging religious representatives might be counterproductive for it might deepen the existing lines of confessional division.

heterogeneous society. At that time no community could count more than 35% of the population, and only five of them made up more than 5% each (Harris 1997). But the old golden age of cosmopolitism, conviviality and prosperity (Said 2000) seems to be gone since the fifteen years of bloodshed and sectarian strife. It has to be shown to what extent interreligious initiatives from the top and the bottom might contribute to overcoming the old lines of sectarian division.

The religious dimension of the Lebanese Civil War

Comparable to Northern Ireland or the Basque country, political ideologies were employed for the discourse of different parties to the conflict, but membership of these parties evolved to a greater extent along the lines of religious communities. For centuries, Lebanon had been at the crossroads of different cultures and civilisations. The retreat on the high plateaus of the Mount Lebanon had served different sects and communities as a safe place where they could develop semi-autonomy from the central authority of the Caliphate. This was namely the case of the 'Alawi in the Northern range of mountains and also of other communities of the Sevener and Twelver Shi'a, but first and foremost of the Maronite Catholics and the Druze on the heights of Mount Lebanon.[103] The eighteen communities that are today officially recognised represent almost the entire spectrum of traditional sects and denominations in the three monotheistic religions. The struggles that ultimately led to the Civil War arrived but with the introduction of Western modernity.

The Levantine coast has always been a contact point between Christianity and Islam, between Occident and Orient. In the context of the crusades, following the Great Schism between East and West in 1054, the Maronite Church was the first of all Oriental churches that was integrated as Uniate into Western

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[103] For a rough overview of all Lebanese sects and their distinctive beliefs, cf. Harris (1997).

Catholicism. The rather informal links of the first centuries were strengthened through the establishment of a Maronite College in Rome in 1584 and the emission of Jesuit and Franciscan brothers to Mount Lebanon by the papacy. But only with the establishment of the French Mandate of Syria in the aftermath of the First World War, could the Maronite community aspire to gain sovereignty over what later became the Greater Lebanon (stretching over the Bekaa Valley and the Southern coastlines). The French colonial authorities did indeed favour the Maronites to a disproportional degree, putting trust into their Western affiliation. At a very early moment, Maronites (and to a certain extent Muslims and other Christians) embraced Western values and a modern lifestyle.[104] The benefits of Western technology and medical science had for effect the strong growth of the Maronite and other Christian communities since the 19th century. At the end of the French protectorate in 1943, a majority of Lebanese was Christian.[105]

The Lebanese Constitution of 1926 and the informal National Pact of 1943 intended to balance the claims of the different communities and introduced a system what has become known as "confessionalism", distributing positions in parliament and in state administration after religious quotas (Abu Khalil 1998). The most prominent role in this constitutional arrangement was given to the Maronites, holding the presidency and the command of the armed forces. The claims of the underprivileged Muslim

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[104] At times, some Maronite intellectuals have even doubted their belonging to the Arab ethnicity. The old civilisation of Phoenicians was employed to mark an ethnic distinction between Maronites and other communities. But these constructions are less and less employed in the public discourse, though still quite often in private conversations. Lebanon was one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Arab League in 1945 and the Ta'if Agreement affirmed the fact that Lebanon had an Arab identity.

[105] These figures are based on the last census in Lebanon of 1932. Since then, the sensibility of the question has never allowed to conduct a new census, but estimations based on the birth and on the electoral register lead to the assumption, that Christians all together do not constitute more than 30 to 40% of the overall population. Especially the number of Shi'a has grown considerably, making up today between 40 and 50% of the country's population (Harris 1997; AbuKahlil 1998).

communities, especially the fast growing and economically disadvantaged Shi'a, were perhaps the most important underlying stake of the conflict. Different political ideologies, especially in relation to pan-Arabism, played also a determinant role, at least in the beginning of hostilities (Harris 1997; Hiro 1993). The influx of Palestinian refugees and the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon constituted a third major factor in the course of arms and provided ultimately the trigger for starting the civil war.[106] What followed was fifteen years of bloodshed, during which almost every party allied at least once with and against every other. Foreign powers intervened heavily, Israel and Syria at the forefront.[107] Though different periods of truce altered with periods of heavy battle, the Lebanese Civil War only ended with the signing of the National Reconciliation Accord on 22 October 1989. The Ta'if Agreement confirmed the National Pact of 1943 with a few modifications in favour of the Muslim communities. The seats in the enlarged Chamber of Deputies were now distributed equally between Muslims and Christians, but without taking full account of demography, especially with regard to the Shi'a community (Zahar 2008).

Having originated in a complex blend of sectarian belonging, socio-economic inequality and political ideology, the lines of conflict evolved in the course of the civil war ever more along religious divisions, mainly between the four communities of Christians (any confession), Sunni, Shi'a and Druze. Formerly mixed areas or neighbourhoods had become segregated and most people moved exclusively along their "community spots" on the Lebanese map. Even though religious doctrine was not the

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[106] In its armed struggle against Israel, the PLO had seized control over large parts of Lebanon, especially in Palestinian refugee camps and in the Southern border region. Some Maronite fractions opposed this development, fearing loss of their privileged position. According to the narrative of many scholars, the Lebanese Civil War "officially" started on 13 April 1975, when gunmen of the right-wing Phalange party ambushed a bus of Palestinian activists in 'Ain al-Rummanah and killed 27 persons, in revenge for the murder of four Maronites earlier that day at the same place. (Hiro 1993).

[107] For a detailed account of the course of war, cf. Hiro (1993).

cause for the conflict, religious belonging had become its most distinctive mark. The clergy of each sect played an ambiguous role in this situation. Depending on the structure of the respective denomination, religious leaders were more or less dependent on political chiefs and warlords. Very often, the heads of religious communities either remained silent or even endorsed the use of violence indirectly by stressing injustice and the suffering of the own community. As a prominent Sunni cleric put it:

Religion has been used for vengeance. We have to look who is profiting from it. Religious texts can always be read in two senses: they find very quickly the religious clients to say what they need.[108]

The Maronite case is of particular interest in this regard. Wedged between the nationalistic claims of large parts in the own clergy and the urge for peace and reconciliation from the Holy See in Rome, the two patriarchs of the civil war period, Cardinal Khoreish and Cardinal Sfeir, tried to held their church together and to promote peace and moderation on the same time. Both were sidelined in this endeavour by radical parts of the clergy, particularly among the monks of the Lebanese Maronite Orders, who rallied openly with the Phalange party. Only a strict disciplinary intervention of the Holy See in the 1980s with respect to all radical elements of the clergy ended this situation. The patriarch has appeared ever since then as one of the most independent moral authorities protecting the constitutional institutions, though he is certainly no longer listened to by all parts of his own community (Henley 2008).

But the most important shift in the Lebanese relationship between religion and politics has arguably been the emergence of an explicit religious party within the Duodeciman Shi'a community: Hizbullah, the "Party of God". Its origins lie in the

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[108]   Interview with Sheikh Muhammad Nokkari of 20 February 2009.

resistance against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and enmity to Israel is still one of the most important facets of its narrative. Founded in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent establishment of an Islamic Republic under clerical authority, Hizbullah raised to power in the last years of the civil war, originally in a bitter brother conflict with the elder Shi'a party Amal.[109] Myriads of books and articles have been written about Hizbullah, its "Leninist" structures and its complex relations to Iran (Alagha 2006; Hamzeh 2004; etc. etc.). In recent years, it has developed a specific Lebanese approach towards the principle of *Wilâyat al-Faqîh*, the "Rule of the Islamic Jurisconsult", though it has kept close links to some Iranian clerics.[110] Hizbullah is today perhaps the most powerful single Lebanese party, cornerstone of the political alliances in the aftermath of the Cedar Revolution that divide the country today in a pro-Syrian March 8 camp and an anti-Syrian March 14 camp.[111] Hizbullah runs today the only militia that has still not been disarmed and that continues the battle against Israel (International

[109] Amal is the Arabic word for "hope" but also the acronym for Afwjj al-Muqawmat al-Lubnaniyya, meaning "Lebanese Resistance Detachment", a Shi'a militia established by the prominent Imam Musa al-Sadr 1975 at the outbreak of the civil war, heir to his elder Movement of the Deprived, Harakat al-Mahrumeen.

[110] Under its late secretary general Abbas al-Musawi, Hizbullah participated since the early 1990s in political elections; his successor Hassan Nasrallah, the current secretary general, is quoted as having abandoned the concept of an Islamic Republic for the Lebanese case. But political opponents argue that the more radical standpointof the 1980s has still not been formally abolished.

[111] Following the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, Hizbullah and its political allies organised a large manifestation on Beirut's Martyrs' Square the 8 March 2005 to support the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon. On 14 March 2005, the then opposition rallied arguably more people on the same spot for a counter-demonstration against the Syrian presence. The latter succeeded, with considerable support from Saudi Arabia and the West and the last Syrian troops pulled out in the end of 2005 after almost 40 years of presence since 1976. It followed a period of turmoil and instability, marked by political assassinations and the blockade of state institutions (and the Beirut city centre) by the Hizbullah-led opposition. In May 2008, the tensions reached a peak with the occupation of large parts of Beirut through Shi'a militias (Hizbullah and Amal), which ended only in extremis by the Doha Agreement of 21 May 2008, which led to an interim government of national unity and paved the way for the overdue election of a new President of the Republic (International Crisis Group 2008a, 2008b).

Crisis Group 2008a; 2008b).[112] It is one of the most prominent Islamist movements in the Near East, inevitable in Lebanese politics as advocate of the underprivileged Shi'a community, but still listed as terrorist organisation by many Western states.[113]

The engagement of religious actors for the cause of peace and reconciliation

The internal structures of each of Lebanon's eighteen religious communities are variable and complex, hence quite difficult to grasp. Traditional leaders of the religious establishment and of mighty family clans have partially been supplanted by sectarian war lords. Some observers say that the old militia commanders will still dominate the political landscape for as long as no viable security guarantees can be made for safeguarding the vital interests of each community. Others say that sustainable peace will only be achieved through the reinforcement of central state authority and individual citizenship, overcoming the old system of community representation of the National Pact. The Ta'if Agreement of 1989 took both positions into account by proposing on one hand the abolishment of sectarian representation in the Chamber of Deputies and in public service, and on the other hand the establishment of a Senate as second chamber, where all "spiritual families" should be represented as such.[114] But the Agreement did not specify any specific date for these measures; as of today, they have still not been implemented.

Many other factors can be cited that prevent a lasting resolution of the permanent tensions between different sects and

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[112] The disputed territory of the Shebaa Farms, occupied by Israel in 1967 together with the Golan Heights, is today the main legitimisation for Hizbullah to keep its weapons and to continue the Muqawama al-Islamiyya, the "Islamic Resistance", against Israel. But of course, Israel's right of existence as such is also contested. The serious casualties Hizbullah has inflicted on Israel in the 2006 war gave further credits to the Shi'a organisation in the eyes of a broad Arab public.

[113] Contrary to the US and to some of EU member states (Netherlands and United Kingdom), the EU itself has not put Hizbullah on its list of terrorist organisations; the discussions are ongoing.

[114] Cf. the Taif Agreement of 22 October 1989, available at: (30/03/09).

denominations. For sure, for as long as different foreign powers do not cease to fight their proxy wars for regional hegemony in this small but so important country, any significant advance might be excluded.[115] Lebanese politicians have always known very well to take financial and political advantage from this situation. "In Lebanon, you can buy everything", stated one interview partner. This point exemplifies the moral dimension of peacebuilding. As long as political leaders are not hold accountable for their deeds in ethical terms but merely for their effectiveness in protecting the power share of their community, few advances seem possible. The role of spiritual leaders might be marginal in this constellation, but they do nevertheless exercise a certain influence on their community, reproducing cultural reference and setting ethical norms. Different interreligious initiatives have been established in most recent years to further the cause of reconciliation. We might distinguish between (a) official platforms of interreligious dialogue between spiritual leaders and their representatives, (b) interfaith and peacebuilding initiatives of committed believers and (c) other inter-communitarian initiatives of civil society.

Interreligious encounters are nothing new in Lebanon. Imam Musa al-Sadr, head of the Supreme Shi'a Council, pursued an interreligious approach for the sake of social progress in Lebanon before the outbreak of war.[116] But this kind of scheme was rather particular in its time. Only after the end of the Civil War, a common initiative of all religious leaders emerged in reaction to Israel's 1993 attack against Southern Lebanon. The Maronite Patriarch Sfeir organised a first "spiritual summit" at his see in

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[115] During the civil war, Syria and Israel were probably the most openly engaged countries. Today the line of division rather gears to the regional competition between Iran (and Syria) on one hand and Saudi Arabia (and the US) on the other. In difference to elder ideological competitions, for instance between the Ba'athist regimes of Syria and Iraq, this line of division corresponds to the sectarian divide between Sunnis and Shi'a.

[116] Originally, he established his Movement of the Deprived, *Harakat al-Mahrumeen*, together with the Greek Catholic Archbishop Grégoire Haddad. Only with outbreak of the civil war, this movement turned into the almost exclusive Shi'a militia of Amal, as described before (Alagha 2006).

Bkerké; the assembled spiritual leaders decided to establish a permanent Islamic-Christian National Dialogue Committee, comprising one representative of the seven most important religious communities.[117] The Committee has met ever since then on a regular basis, on average once a month, but it does not dispose of any administrative structures. Rather few common initiatives have been born out of this structure; it serves instead as an interface between the different religious authorities. Both secretary-generals, the Emir Hares Chehab (Maronite) and Dr. Muhammad al-Sammak (Sunni), maintain very close ties to the heads of their community, who gather in the framework of a "spiritual summit" only in specific circumstances. President Sleiman convoked such a summit to his palace in June 2008 for responding to the last sectarian confrontation of May and for gathering support of all communities for the Doha Accord.[118] The common appeal of the religious leaders to put a halt to all forms of violence and to adhere to the Doha Accord underpinned the new government of national unity that had emerged from the agreement.

The declarations of official authorities are one thing; the myriad of initiatives in civil society the other. Already during the civil war, different clerics and laymen started local projects for fostering peace and reconciliation among former enemies. Long before any official platforms of dialogue had been established, parts of the vibrant intellectual scene of Lebanon did try to reach out to other communities. In 1977, in the midst of civil war, the *Université Saint-Joseph* (USJ) of the Jesuits founded an Institute for Islamic-

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[117] Three representatives of the main Muslim communities (Sunni, Shi'a and Druze) are matched by four representatives of the main Christian confessions (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic and Armenian Orthodox). The Maronite representative is also in charge of liaison to the other eight Christian communities. The Committee has elected two secretary-generals, one Sunni and one Maronite, who convene the regular meetings of the committee in their private offices, in average once a month; interview with the Emir Hares Chehab of 18 February 2009; interview with Dr. Muhammad al-Sammak of 19 February 2009.

[118] Agence France-Presse of 24 June 2008.

Christian Studies, where all classes are composed half-half by Christian and Muslim students and lectures are always given together by one Christian and one Muslim professor. The Institute offers, amongst others, special training on interreligious dialogue for school teachers and since 2008 the degree of a Master in Islamic-Christian Relations.[119] Its web portal Hiwar.net is one of the main virtual platforms of interreligious dialogue world-wide.[120]

 In the environment of the USJ, other initiatives were born, like the foundation ADYAN (meaning "Religions")[121] that works on the common "clarification of major religious and theological concepts, especially in the framework of pluralistic societies where different religious communities face common social and political challenges." The ultimate goal of this endeavour is to build solidarity and peace beyond sectarian boundaries.

Many other initiatives at very different levels, public or private, local or national, have been established over the last decades to promote the issue of dialogue: SOS Dialogue, for instance, an association founded by the Director of the Dar al-Fatwa, Sheikh Muhammad Nokkari, that offers mediation in concrete interreligious quarrels. Another prominent example, which dates back to the end of the civil war, is the Centre for Dialogue and Development close to Sidon. Established in 1990 by Father Salim Ghazal, who was later ordained Greek Catholic bishop, in cooperation with the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, its focus is put on a combination of interreligious learning and practical work, first and foremost by offering vocational training for encouraging the return of ex-militiamen to civil life, but also by establishing different programmes for youth education and the allocation of micro-credits. Through its work, the peaceful return of thousands of displaced persons east of

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[119] Interview with Dr. Rita Ayoub of 18 February 2008; for further information, cf. (30/03/09).

[120] Cf. (30/03/09).

[121] The full title is: Lebanese Foundation for Interfaith Studies and Spiritual Solidarity; it was founded in 2007 at the initiative of Prof. Fadi Daou of USJ, a Maronite priest, together with a group of committed laypersons; for further information, cf. (30/03/09).

Sidon was facilitated. Father Ghazal had already collaborated with local Muslim authorities in Sidon in the 1960s, organising the exchange of religion teachers for fostering mutual understanding within the youth. His long-term commitment on a local ground had built so much confidence and mutual trust that he could remain present even in the darkest hours of sectarian strife. He became later one of the co-founders of the National Committee.

But the realities of Lebanon cannot be restricted only to the national or local levels. Several actors of interreligious dialogue are also committed to the broader picture of the Near East region. Facilitated by the Middle East Council of Churches, itself affiliated to the WCC in Geneva, the Arab Group for Muslim-Christian Dialogue[122] was established in 1995 in Beirut, including members from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. The Group has organised a number of conferences and high-level meetings over the last decade. Most recently, its members have agreed on a document of mutual respect among religions. Further topics on the Group's agenda are questions of citizenship, human rights, fundamentalism, the Abrahamic heritage and the status of Jerusalem.[123] No official contacts have been established yet with representatives of the Jewish community; the issue seems still to be too hot for representatives from certain countries that are openly hostile towards Israel. But representatives of the body have affirmed their wish to establish permanent relations with Israeli authorities, though not without stressing the Arab position in the Middle East Peace Process: no peace without justice!

These examples from the groundwork of interreligious dialogue must be put in the general perspective of the Lebanese civil society. Most of these projects are interconnected at personal level, though we might discern some differences between official

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[122] For further information, cf. (30/03/09).

[123] Interview with Judge Abbas al-Halabi of 21 February 2009; the judge al-Halabi is representative of the Sheikh al-Aql, leader of the Druze community, to the National Committee, the Arab [124] Interview with Dr. Mona Fayad of 19 February 2009.

bodies like the National Committee and private initiatives. Both have certain reserves towards each other, but themselves as complementary. Anyhow, the different bodies allow the spiritual leaders and the private initiatives to constitute an extended network and to establish trust and cooperation among each other. The picture would not be complete without mentioning the many social or secular initiatives to bridge the gap between the different sects. Believers and non-believers are also committed to a large variety of social causes. Associations like *Kafa* or *Bahithat* unite individuals from all communities to fight discrimination and violence against women. Interreligious peacebuilding is but a part of this broader picture.[124] And of course, dialogue between institutions is but one part of interaction among so many other places, private or public, for the encounter between individuals of different communities.

The merits and limits of interreligious dialogue in Lebanon

In recent years, interreligious dialogue seems to have become something like a Lebanese national sport. Today even the monks of Kaslik held round-tables on Christian-Muslim dialogue. Speaking to each other is indeed the first step, establishing channels of communication between religious leaders an important aspect, but several initiatives try to go beyond. For them, the lesson of the Lebanese Civil War was that the constitutional arrangement between different communities, merely living parallel to each other, might burst pretty easily at the slightest external shock. What followed was a decline in terms of reality (less intermingling) and in terms of ideology (the dominance of communitarian reasoning).[125] According to the estimations of Fadi Daou, a majority of Lebanese is today stuck in this logic, but certain groups try to go beyond, try to construct a new common ethos and thus give a renaissance to

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[124] Interview with Dr. Mona Fayad of 19 February 2009.

[125] Interview with Prof. Fadi Daou of 20 February 2009.

the former conviviality. These groups might today still be a minority, but in his opinion, their existence has a considerable impact for that civil war has not started again.

After the decline of Western political ideologies and the return of religion to the political sphere, the new conviviality can, according to political as well as to religious voices, only be constructed together with religious beliefs and not against them. Different initiatives have been launched to create new common spaces and new common symbols. The Director of the supreme Dar al-Fatwa, Sheikh Muhammad Nokkari, has called for the instauration of the Feast of the Annunciation as national holiday for all Lebanese, Christians and Muslims alike, in reference to their common reverence of the Virgin Mary. Interreligious dialogue is for him a theological challenge in ethical terms: "In religious teachings of Islam, religion of the other is to be respected, not only tolerated! Personally, I would go further: Islam also commands love of thy neighbour!"[126] A statement that sounds very Christian indeed. The pressing demands for finding a new common ground of conviviality are more and more stressed on the political stage. In his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2008, making reference to the late Pope John Paul II, the new President Michel Sleiman called upon Lebanon to become "an international centre for the management of dialogue of civilizations and cultures, hoping that the forces of good in the world will prevail."[127]

But peace and dialogue are sometimes more easy to proclaim than to enact. Three major difficulties can be identified today: (a) a problem of discourse, (b) a problem of agency, and (c) a problem of inclusion.

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[126] Interview with Sheikh Muhammad Nokkari of 20 February 2009.

[127] Official Records of the UN General Assembly, 63rd Session, 6th Plenary Meeting, 23 September 2008.

Peace and dialogue are great topics for sunny discourses on solemn occasions. The problem, as so often, is the concrete implementation. Almost everybody would agree that peace and justice are important values that must be furthered. But the difficulty starts when it comes to their concrete application for specific ethical dilemmas. What happens if the claim for justice of the one is hurting the longing for peace of the other? "No peace without justice!" was the outcry of the civil rights movement in the US. Most interreligious meetings of high dignitaries end with a solemn call for justice and peace, but in the most cases everybody can find its very own interpretation of what that means in political terms: fighting the perceived injustice of the other for obtaining a true and lasting peace? It seems indeed important to repeat abstract values over and over again, but it might be as important to discuss their concrete implementation in day-to-day conflicts. In order to achieve this goal, it would certainly be useful to create more permanent structures of interreligious dialogue that are not restricted to occasional meetings of the highest leaders. The institutionalisation of the National Committee is a step in this direction; but without permanent staff, it might lack the back-bone to develop its own collective identity.

This leads us to the second major problem: agency. In the encounter of Christianity and Islam, a particular difficulty is grounded in the different status of religious authorities. Whereas the Christian clergy is rather autonomous of political influences, the Muslim representatives depend heavily on the political leaders of their community: the Mufti of the Republic is more or less tributary to the Hariri clan, the Druze Sheikh al-Akl to the Jumblatt family and the head of the Supreme Islamic Shi'a Council to Hizbullah. These institutional links damage both the liberty of action of religious leaders and their credibility within their own community. Spiritual and ethical statements are hence often in function of political opportunity. The problem has been recognised by many actors, religious and politicians alike: "Religion has to find its own place"[128], states Judge al-Halabi –

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[128]   Interview with Judge Abbas al-Halabi of 21 February 2009.

"Any religious institution should be independent of politicians", pleads Minister Shams al-Din, and even further: "The government should act as if it were atheist, but leave room for other actors of society who do apply religious beliefs and who should do!"[129] But these might be the voices of an elite which do not yet match the realities on the ground. Until now, the lines of interreligious dialogue are too often equivalent to the lines of the current alliances.

This leads us to the third major problem: inclusion. Hizbullah, and hence large parts of the Shi'a community, is not part of any collective platform for interreligious dialogue. According to Emir Chehab[130], Bkerké had engaged such a dialogue in the 1990s, but it was abandoned in the context of the polarisation after the assassination of the former Prime Minister Hariri in 2005. "They do not want dialogue… They do not respect the other…" – these and similar voices could be heard in many conversations regarding the Party of God. And indeed, with its unique combination of being a religious institution and a political party at once, Hizbullah has further narrowed the space of the traditionally so independent Shi'a clergy. Its dismissal of the very active imam of Tyre in the course of the events in May 2008 was a strong indicator for this observation. At present, interreligious dialogue mainly happens between the different communities of the March 14 forces, which are indeed trying to establish a new common identity for all Lebanese. But for as long as large parts of the Shi'a community are excluded from this endeavour, sustainability might be questioned. The fact that Hizbullah is allied in its March 8 coalition with some parts of the Christian community, namely and mainly the Free Patriotic Movement of General Aoun, is perhaps the only impediment to the confrontation of all sects as homogenous blocks. The present political division of the

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[129] Interview with Minister Ibrahim Shams al-Din of 21 February 2009.

[130] Intrerview with Emir Hares Chehab of 18 February 2009.

Christians has often been deplored, but it assures a certain link between the Sunni and Shi'a community that are today the main opponents in political terms. The question is open as to whether religious authorities should not seek more actively dialogue with their counterparts on the other side of the political spectrum.

The EU, more than other international organisations, has so far avoided any official contact with religious authorities. According to officials from DG RELEX, its main point of concern is of technical assistance for the reconstruction of public infrastructure.[131] It is unclear if this abstention is mainly due to the fear of involvement in unclear lines of division, or if the role of religious actors as such is doubted. Findings suggest a mixture between both motives. But already for a couple of years, DG RELEX is preparing an internal paper for a new approach towards political Islam in the Arab world. This might be the opportunity to embrace not only a specific religious-political movement, but dialogue with all spiritual authorities all together. Official authorities and private initiatives urgently need support in financial and political terms: for the sake of their independence to build new bridges of reconciliation over old lines of sectarian division. Recognised and rewarded actors of civil society like Fadi Daou plead the EU to support their cause and to listen before applying any ready-made formula of Western "developmentism".[132]

3.2 After the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Beirut and Sarajevo: two cities in two different places, but yet so close to each other; two cities that were once symbols of cosmopolitism and the blending of cultures; two cities that were tormented then by sectarian hatred and destruction. We could

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[131]   Interview with officials from DG RELEX between December 2008 and March 2009.

[132]   Interview with Prof. Fadi Daou of 20 February 2009.

continue the analogies *ad infinitum*… and the two cases seem indeed being comparable in many terms.[133] Bosnia-Herzegovina brought the wars of "murderous identities" right in the backyard of the EU. What Europeans believed to be a question of far distant societies, often depicted as primitive or under-developed, came right to the heart of the European continent, to the coastal areas so popular for many ordinary tourists. For many observers, the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia stood as a beacon for what might the world look like after the end of the Cold War. The civil war of Bosnia-Herzegovina was one of the main hangers for Huntington's theory of clashing civilisations. And indeed, it seemed that old conflicts along the fault-lines of cultural and religious reference did resurge to the surface. It is our intention to examine the religious dimension of the Bosnian conflict and to learn more about the specific forms of interreligious peacebuilding that have been developed there. We are doing this in comparative perspectives with our observations in Lebanon, but also with other looming conflicts in the broader region of the Western Balkans.

The religious dimension of the Bosnian War

Similarly to Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina has been on the crossroads of different cultures and civilisations. Ivo Andriè (1994 [1945]) has described in his novels the early modern development of what once was the line of division between the Latin and Greek spaces of the Roman Empire, between its Western and Eastern parts, between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The roughly five centuries of Ottoman rule over what today is Bosnia-Herzegovina have added a further element of diversity: the imperial Muslim cult. For the very most years of its history, this part of Europe has always been governed by large multi-ethnic empires. From Roman to Byzantine to Ottoman to Austro-Hungarian times, only few decades of true independence had been granted to most of the

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[133] Some scholars have made the comparison between Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina before, for instance Zahar (2008).

Southern Slavic peoples. But nevertheless, in many cases these decades were most significant for the establishment of a collective identity, as in particular within the medieval Serbian Empire, which was amongst the longest-living of these dominions and which had already in 1219 gained autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Centuries of conflict between the expanding Ottoman Empire and the Christian dominions at its borders followed and led to an enormous patchwork of different populations with different beliefs.

When the political ideas and ideologies of the nineteenth century appeared on the Balkan Peninsula, different communities developed different ideological affinities. The Greek national awakening, a passionate topic for entire Europe, was followed and furthered by Russian pan-Slavism towards the Southern Slavic peoples. Religious and ethnic nationalism were deployed to build alliances and to delimitate the borders of the emerging states. Bosnia-Herzegovina with its strong Muslim population was one of the last parts of the Balkans that remained under Ottoman rule. Only in 1878, in the context of the Berlin Congress, was the Sublime Porte forced by the Great Powers to cede sovereignty to the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[134] What followed were the battlefields of the First World War and the establishment of a first common Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 under the former Serbian crown, which later was named Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Ethnic rivalries in the new pan-Slavic state continued over the following years and turned into major causes of bloodshed during the German occupation of the Second World War. The fascist Ustaše regime of Croatia fought a harsh war with the

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[134] The Austro-Hungarian administration intended to make out of this protectorate a "model colony", fostering economic development and the peaceful coexistence of different religious communities. But when in 1908, the Habsburg crown decided to formally annexe Bosnia-Herzegovina, nationalistic ideas had already largely penetrated the Croatian and Serbian parts of population from their respective "homelands" beyond the Bosnian borders. Only the Bosnian Muslims further supported the idea of a multi-ethnic entity – they had no other place to turn. For further information on the historical background cf. Bebler (2006).

Serbian etniks, the nationalist resistance. But ultimately, the Communist Yugoslav Partisans of Josip Broz Tito gained the upper hand and established the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1943/46.[135]

Nationalistic ideas and ethnic strife had been frozen by official Communist ideology, but to the detriment of personal freedom. Discrimination continued behind the scenes, especially in Kosovo, which was only an autonomous region within the Serbian Republic. With the death in 1980 of Tito, the war hero and main symbol of unity, the official doctrine eroded progressively and the ruling class turned to the old receipts of nationalist mobilisation. In particular the relationship between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo deteriorated considerably over the 1980s. The leadership of the Serbian branch of the Socialist Party under Miroslav Milošević made a considerable move and employed a more nationalistic speech for reaching out to a Serbian electorate in transition. Awakening of the nationalistic hope for sovereignty in all parts of the federation led ultimately to the declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia in early 1991, recognised in the end of that year by the EC and most parts of the Western world. It was only a question of time until Bosnia-Herzegovina followed this path, especially since the Federal Army under Serbian command used its military strength to push for ethnic Serbian policies in all regions with Serbian population. On 3 March 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina proclaimed independence, just at the moment when ethnic war in the Serbian areas of Croatia spilled over. What followed were three years of civil war and ethnic cleansing, sending shock waves across Europe and the world (Brajovic 2006; Bebler 2006).

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[135] At the beginning of the Cold War, Tito broke with Stalin very early on and left the Eastern bloc in 1948, becoming a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955. Yugoslavia later became something like a "third way" model, introducing certain degrees of market economy and the free movement of persons. Nevertheless, the Communist ideology of the ruling party remained the only reference of the state, discriminating against religions and any other free expression in the public sphere.

But how religious was the Bosnian War? Ethnic communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina define themselves, amongst other factors, along religious lines. Until the introduction of the specific term "Bosniak" in the 1980s, the Muslim parts of the Bosnian population were simply counted as "Muslims" (Goodwin 2007; Mojzes 1998).[136] This is different from the case in the Yugoslav part of Macedonia, where a Muslim minority of ethnic Slavs as well as Orthodox and Catholic minorities of ethnic Albanians can be found; ethnic communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina correspond almost entirely to religious affiliation. Linguistic differences have also been constructed since the outbreak of war, but with the exception of the alphabet (Serbs write Cyrillic whereas Bosniaks and Croats write in Latin script), these differences are rather artificial. The construction of group identity hence relied partly, if not primarily, on religious distinctions between Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Bosniaks. And, during the course of the war, these religious distinctions gained more prominence. In Bosnian society, which was once the most secularised among all Yugoslav republics and which counted a great number of mixed families (Mojzes 1998), religious symbols and beliefs were revitalised by all parties for strengthening the internal group cohesion. Destruction or erection of religious buildings marked the territory of the different communities (Johnston, Eastvold 2004).

Today, most interview partners from religious communities stress the opinion that religion was "abused" for the sake of politics and conflict. And indeed, most scholars agree that religion was not the cause for conflict; it merely served as one distinctive criterion for the affirmation of group identity (Mojzes 1998; Shenk 1998). The term "abuse" implies already a normative judgement that should be avoided in analytical terms. First and foremost, we have to talk about a "use" of religion, if that is "for

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[136] However, the Albanians, which are predominantly Muslim, were always counted as Albanians, since the distinctive criterion for their identity is the linguistic difference.

the good" or "for the bad" is a secondary question, though certainly no less important. Some scholars (Loo 2005) argue that the fact of using religion for the construction of group identities and ultimately for political conflict does not exempt religious communities from any responsibility. And indeed, local religious leaders often fostered sectarian violence by invoking a "tribal god" against the demonic other (Cohen 1998; Galijaš 2006; Wettach-Zeitz 2008). Calls for peace by religious leaders were often merely made under pressure from international politics and overarching religious authorities. On the ground, local clerics from all sides, most prominently from the Serbian Orthodox, but also from the Roman Catholic Church, favoured almost all forms of ethnic cleansing, such as those around Trebinje or even around the sanctuary of Medjugorje, known worldwide for the reports on the apparition of the Virgin Mary as the "Queen of Peace" (Sells 2002).

*The engagement of religious actors for the cause
of peace and reconciliation*

The Bosnian killings ended only with the intervention of the international community, leading to the Dayton Agreement of November 1995. Ever since then, Bosnia has been administered as a kind of international protectorate, under supervision of international troops[137] and with a High Representative (OHR) of the international community who has power to overrule any political decision made in the post-war state (Bebler 2006). The only bond between two entities of the current Bosnian state, the Serbian Republic, *Republika Srpska*, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Bosniaks and Croats, *Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine*, is for the moment the international community. Almost all interview partners agree that the central state would

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[137] In 2004, the EU took over the former NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) and deployed under its Common Foreign and Security Policy a new military mission named European Union Force Althea.

break up right away if the international community pulled out at once. Especially in the media, unilateral reports still contribute to stirring up ethnic hatred and the perception of each community as the eternal victim. Institutional progress has though been made; and the OHR is intervening much less today than still a few years ago. The institution and peace building process is supported by a myriad of national and international NGOs and private initiatives.

But not only the peace reinforcement came from abroad, so did many initiatives in the field of peace building. Perhaps more than Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina has been the target of numerous schemes in the field of religious peacebuilding. The most prominent among them are those sponsored, at least originally, by external actors. As we have shown before, the Bosnian War was an identity war with a strong religious connotation. Religious belonging has been one of the prominent marks of distinction between the different conflicting parties. We might consider that "interreligious peacebuilding" between divided sectarian communities is, also in this case, the main point of interest. The main emphasis shall therefore be put on the different initiatives in the field of interreligious dialogue. For the purpose of classifying the different platforms of dialogue, we should distinguish between (a) official representatives of religious communities and (b) private initiatives in civil society and (c) academic projects.[138]

Several private initiatives began during or immediately after the war. Sessions of reconciliation were organised by local communities and/or international peacebuilders. Michael Sells (2003) makes account of these experiences on the Bosnian ground. Already before the end of hostilities, the first institutional approach towards the religious dimension of peacebuilding was

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[138] Since the end of the war, many other scholars have analysed the role of religion in the peacebuilding process of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the broader Western Balkans: Powers (1996), Steele (1998), Dragicevic-Sesic (2004), Cerkez-Robinson (2005), Brajovic (2006), Tanaskovic (2007)… to cite only a few.

made by the WCRP. After a first fruitless attempt in 1993, which failed because of the refusal of the Bosnian religious leaders to agree a meeting without prior acknowledgement of sins committed by one community against the other, the two first journeys of WCRP delegations to the ground were able to establish contacts with all denominations in 1995 and 1996. The Secretary General of the WCRP, William F. Vendley, was the driving force behind the further efforts to establish an official body for interreligious dialogue in the war-stroke country. After several months of negotiations and an achievement of official endorsement through the higher authorities of both Christian churches abroad[139], the religious leaders of the Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish communities met first in Vienna and signed eventually the founding act of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRV) the 9 June 1997. The founding act was called "Statement of Shared Moral Commitment"; it had originally been proposed by the WCRP representatives and was further amended by the religious communities.

Owing to the active support of the WCRP, the MRV could develop quite quickly a certain degree of institutionalisation. The WCRP had established a permanent office in Sarajevo between 1997 and 2005, serving as a secretariat to the Council. Tania Wettach-Zeitz (2008) examined this process in her doctoral thesis until the end of the WCRP's permanent presence in 2005; she also tried to measure the impact of this endeavour within the local clergy of each community. Her evaluation had a rather critical overtone. And indeed, the survival of the MRV was several times at risk; and at the end of the observation period, Cardinal Pulji☐ had pulled out since his counterparts had not endorsed the conclusion of a concordat with the Holy See, and Metropolit

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[139] Secretary General Vendley, a Catholic, gained active support and the official endorsement of the Holy See through Cardinal Etchegaray and Cardinal Arinze, whereas the Orthodox President of the WCRP, Gabriel Habib, could convince Patriarch Pavle in the course of a meeting in Belgrade to agree with the proceedings and to nominate Metropolit Nikolaj Mr☐a of Sarajevo as delegate of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Wettach-Zeitz 2008).

Nikolaj had pulled out because his counterparts were not willing to condemn the injuring of a Pale parish priest when SFOR troops stormed his house on the search of the former leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadži´c. The MRV seemed to be stillborn. But Ms Wettach-Zeitz could not foresee its development subsequent to the departure of WCRP officials. Once the MRV stood all alone, both Christian leaders returned to their places; for now, as their representatives stressed, the very survival of the MRV was at stake since there was no international organisation assuring the continuity of its work even in the absence of any compliance.[140]

Today, the MRV has developed quite an important infrastructure, far more developed than its counterpart in Lebanon. The stakeholders of the Council are the heads of the four official religious communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina.[141] At present, they meet only two or three times (the minimum according to the statutes would be once) a year and on an *ad hoc* basis in the case of urgency. Under their supervision, four high clerical dignitaries of every community compose the Executive Board which meets at least once a month and decides on the current affairs of the MRV. They are in close contact with the next level on the organisational chart, the four permanent staff members who are nominated, once again, each by their community. Four permanent working groups complement the picture: one comprised of law experts, one on religious education, one for women, and one for the youth. Outreach with the internal structures of the four communities is also assured through the establishment of specialised bodies within some of them. The Islamic Community has established a Commission and the Catholic Bishops' Conference a

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[140] Interviews with all members of the MRV staff of 19 and 20 January 2009.

[141] Raisu-l-Ulama Mustafa Ceri□ for the Islamic Community, Metropolit Nikolaj for the Serbian Orthodox Church, Cardinal Pulji□ for the Roman Catholic Church and Jakob Finci for the Jewish Community.

permanent Office for Interreligious Dialogue. Coordination with the Serbian Orthodox Church is centralised within the office of its Holy Synod in Belgrade which meets once a week. The MRV has received funding from the Bosnian Ministry of Human Rights and from different private and governmental bodies, amongst others from the US Embassy and the Austrian Embassy.

Most recently, the MRV has started a very fruitful cooperation with the local KAS office in Sarajevo, which has sponsored several seminars with local clerics on the ground and with specific focus groups like theology students or high school teachers of religion (Zovkić 2006; Kovačević 2007). At the initiative of the former President of COMECE, Bishop Josef Homeyer, the MRV established an Interreligious Institute in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRI), which is located for now within its own premises but which is expected to gain operational independence soon. Whereas the MRV is increasingly absorbed by the daily interests of the religious communities, the MRI is supposed to provide a space for academic and other encounters at different levels, like those mentioned above. Its purpose is to reason together in order to develop a common ground regarding the spiritual, ethical and political challenges of today. The members of the staff stressed the fact that, contrary to the "official" MRV, the semi-official MRI is thought also to address extremists and radicals, to conduct them gradually towards dialogue. Up to now, it counts two permanent officials.[142]

The intention of this diversification in the institutional structures is to conduct an inclusive approach *vis-à-vis* different kinds of actors within the religious communities and within civil society. All

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[142] Most informations of this paragraph have been gathered through interviews with all members of the MRV and MRI staff, as with officials of the local KAS office, between the 19 and 22 January 2009.

stakeholders and staff members of the MRV and the MRI emphasised the importance to reach out to local communities and to grass-root organisations. The top-down approach of the WCRP has thus been furthered to a model that addresses different horizontal and vertical layers of society. And there is indeed a high variety of civil society initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In distinction to many other NGOs that are present on the ground, and also in distinction to the MRV, various private groups dedicated to interreligious dialogue have most been launched by local actors. The faculties of the Franciscan Order within the Catholic Church, for instance, have played a major role in furthering dialogue and reconciliation among the divided communities.[143] The person of Ivo Marković, a Franciscan brother and professor in Sarajevo, has often been cited in this regard. Marked by the killing of his father by Muslim forces in 1993, he decided to respond through faith and reconciliation. First in Zagreb during the war and then in Sarajevo immediately afterwards, he founded with this students the interfaith choir and orchestra Pontaninma, which stages spiritual concerts in mosques and churches and is run today by the interfaith initiative *Oci u Oci* ("face to face").[144]

But these cultural encounters are not the only private initiative. As early as 1991, the International Multireligious and Intercultural Center (IMIC) was founded as an independent NGO within the premises of

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[143] The Franciscans have played a major role within the Catholic Church in the whole Balkan region, especially with regard to Croatia. Owing to the fact that their structures, like those of most religious orders and congregations, constitute a form of parallel hierarchy within the Catholic Church, they are often in tension with local bishops regarding spiritual authority. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, this tension is most visible in the attitude towards the pilgrimage to Medjugorje, which is in the hands of the local Franciscans and which has fiercely been opposed by the local bishop of Mostar. Interestingly enough, the Franciscans are reported to have played an ambiguous role during the war; they have been blamed for being responsible for some nationalist speeches inciting ethnic hatred and cleansing (Sells 2002); but on the other hand, Franciscans were amongst the first to embrace diversity and dialogue in Sarajevo and beyond, as we show in this paragraph.

[144] Cf. http://msct.beyondintractability.org/reflections /peacebuilder_profiles/Ivo_Markovic.jsp (31/03/09).

the Jewish Community in Sarajevo; it counts more than 2000 members today and is managed through a Directorate composed of engaged clerics and laymen from all four communities.[145] Even during the war, IMIC had started to organise interfaith seminaries, common prayers and cultural encounters. It runs its own offices today and has established contact with different initiatives world-wide, religious or cultural alike, that are committed to the cause of reconciliation, democratisation and reintegration in divided societies. The main focus of IMIC is placed on cultural heritage and the nexus between particular and universal identities. Most recently, IMIC has launched a common project with partner organisations in Alexandria to foster cultural exchange between both shores of the Mediterranean. IMIC is founded upon the contributions of its members and upon international support, mainly through a number of embassies, amongst them those of the US and Iran side by side, and international organisations, private or public.[146] Several other initiatives may be cited that have emerged in post-war Bosnia, such as the Abraham Forum that is working in the spirit of Hans Küng's project World Ethos, but that has recently been brought to a halt from lack of funding.[147]

A third group of activists for the cause of interreligious peacebuilding is situated within academic institutions. By contrast with Lebanon, these initiatives are not a product of the local academic landscape or civil society, but have been initiated by the international community. In the year 2000, the OHR and the Council of Europe convened a Conference of the Ministers of Education of Bosnia-

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[145] These and the following information were gathered in the interviews with Ms Sabina Pstrocki and Mr. Nedim Muhedinovi□ of 21 January 2009.

[146] Amongst their supporters is the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the embassies of the US, Canada, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Norway, Greece, Egypt and Iran, as well as the Fondation Robert Schuman, the Soros Foundation or the Franciscan order… but not the EU!

[147] Interview with Mr. Alen Kristi□ of 21 January 2009; the Abraham Forum was founded after the war by a German Protestant pastor, Christoph Züm, and has organised a series of seminaries in rural areas, amongst others as well between religious actors and atheist persons.

Herzegovina, which launched the idea of a topic Culture of Religion in all Bosnian schools as supplement to the teaching of the students' own religion. The purpose of this endeavour was to give students the opportunity to learn about the beliefs of the others for eradicating stereotypes and prejudices. The OHR and the German Goethe Institute supported the development of a school curriculum first and the OSCE's Education Department in Bosnia-Herzegovina took over the baton later.[148] The most important problems were the establishment of a textbook and the training of teachers; the OSCE entrusted a group of local and international academic experts with this charge. But despite all efforts, the programme has as yet only partially been implemented. From its very beginnings, this programme was fiercely rejected by religious communities, especially the Catholic Church, and local authorities.[149] A more positive example in the context of this project is the establishment of a MA in Religious Studies by the University of Sarajevo in September 2007. Today, a first cohort of 20 students has enrolled.[150]

The merits and limits of interreligious dialogue in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina today is stable on a low level. Despite the impressive manpower and the billions of euros the international community has spent since the end of the civil war, a genuine Bosnian identity, a sense of common citizenship and a civic acceptance of the central state are far from being achieved. Bosnia-Herzegovina remains a protectorate of

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[148] Interviews with officials from the OHR and the OSCE, 20 January and 5 February 2009.

[149] The reasons put forward for this rejection were the reduction of religion to its mere cultural aspects, the promotion of religious relativism and, altogether, a "Marxist approach" towards religion (OSCE 2007). Today, only the Republika Srpska has introduced Culture of Religion as topic, but without accepting the proposed textbook, which was considered to be too much connected to Muslim authors.

[150] Interview with Dr. Dino Abazovi of 21 January 2009; the MA has been elaborated in cooperation with Arizona State University and the University of Oslo; religious authorities were involved in the original design.

the EU and NATO, hoping to join both of them one day. At least two of the three constituent peoples have not fully embraced the existence of the Bosnian state (International Crisis Group 2009). According to Mato Zovkić, the large majority of Serbs and Croatians still dream about joining their "home nation".[151] In such a political situation, the creation of a common identity seems to be the most urgent endeavour. The international community has the choice to foster an artificial identity that covers the differences, like the Communist regime has done for many decades, or to support attempts to embrace diversity and to build a common ground on the genuine beliefs and conviction of the population and the existing moral authorities in the country.

All local interview partners, religious and secular alike, stressed the fact that religious leaders are today among the most influential persons in the public sphere. Endorsement by religious authorities, local or national, enhances significantly the electoral perspectives of a political party. Dependence of certain religious actors on the goodwill of politicians, as we have observed in Lebanon, is hence not given in the Bosnian case. But this does not signify that the engagement of religious actors might be without any problem. Instead of depending on politicians, the religious leaders act themselves as community leaders; their role as political actors might thus obscure their role as spiritual authority. On the other hand, Bosnia-Herzegovina is still in transition from a former Communist regime to a liberal democracy. Religious communities have not profited from the material advantages of a confessional system like in Lebanon and thus share their common interests against the state, which creates a certain moment of unity. Bosnia-Herzegovina might not have the problem of a particular polarising fraction like the Lebanese Hizbullah, whose inclusion might be disputed, but it is indeed suffering from the disproportion of the committed atrocities during the civil war. Therefore, the question of

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[151] Interview with Mgr. Prof. Dr. Mato Zovkić of 19 January 2009.

recognising war crimes does not put the four communities on an equal basis and is hence a permanent source of tension.

To what extent might interreligious dialogue be useful in overcoming the deadlocks of post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina? To create a common cultural and ethical ground for living together is indeed a first priority, once the weapons have been silenced. The promotion of interreligious dialogue has provided a common platform between different community leaders. Establishing channels of communication is, here as well, the first step towards understanding the grievances of the other and accepting his or her very existence. Evidence from the ground suggests that the engagement of religious actors might indeed contribute to this endeavour by tapping into their spiritual and social resources. Their spiritual impact on the construction of ethical convictions and their considerable network capacities make religious actors a privileged partner for building the Bosnian commonwealth. But are they willing to embrace dialogue? The development of the MRV after the departure of WCRP officials is a sign of hope: religious leaders assumed their responsibility for the process once the international bodies had stopped their patronage. The engagement of the WCRP was fruitful in this regard; they knew when the right moment had come to pass over their project.

The MRV has deployed considerable resources today in terms of staff and network. But its main concern is increasingly related to the own interests of the religious communities. The common denominator is most often the common claim towards the state. A first success in this regard was the adoption of a law on the public status of religious communities that had mostly been elaborated by the MRV's legal committee and which passed parliament in 2007 with only minor amendments. Today, the main work of the permanent staff is concerned with pension plans for clergymen and with restitution claims for religious properties from pre-war (or

even pre-Communist) times: two rather technical and knotty dossiers. Religious leaders have discovered that if formulated together, their demands against the state have much more weight. But it would be presumptuous to conclude that the MRV only served the material interests of greedy church princes. The Jewish executive, Boris Kožemjakin, underlined the point that the leaders were well aware "what might happen if they pulled out".[152] We might rather talk, in the sense of Schuman's and Monnet's idea, of a "*de facto* solidarity". Political voices confirmed this point of view.[153] Nevertheless, it appears important to choose an inclusive approach towards interreligious dialogue and to assure its implementation on the ground. All interview partners agreed that intercultural, interreligious and interfaith peacebuilding must not be restricted to the environment of Sarajevo, where living together in diversity has a long tradition, but has to reach out to rural areas that were ethnically cleansed during the war and it has to reach out to different groups of society, such as women and the youth. The MRV has acknowledged this urge and has established structures that serve it: the MRI and the permanent committees are mainly committed to network and outreach activities.

We might conclude that the problem of agency does not exist to the same extent as in Lebanon. Religious leaders do not depend from politics, they stand in common against it. Nevertheless, we might identify another difficulty related to agency: the fact that both Christian churches have their religious and political points of reference "abroad". In the case of the Serbian Orthodox Church both coincide: Belgrade. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, it appears helpful that there is a difference between Rome and Zagreb. Also the existence of the

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[152] Interview with Mr Boris Kožemjakin of 20 January 2009.

[153] All interview partners from international organisations hailed the religious status law as a great success with regard to local ownership and balanced legislative work: an example still too rare in ordinary Bosnian politics, which rely too heavily on the patronage of the international community.

parallel hierarchy in the Franciscan, and other, order(s) serves the purpose of overcoming the old "tribal gods" and embracing multiple and universal identities, beliefs and values. The Islamic and Jewish communities, which are more independent and more committed to the common Bosnian state, have also undertaken steps to link with their companions abroad. Raisu-l-Ulama Ceriᴛ is founding member of the European Council on Fatwa and Research and one of the strongest advocates for the development of a unified "European Islam". He is one of the most prominent persons in European debates and his article in the EPP-affiliated journal European View (2007) has stirred up a passionate debate within German and European Christian Democracy.[154] The Jewish community in turn, has established strong links with Israel; regularly a Rabbi is sent from there to celebrate the main feasts with the small Bosnian community of some 1100 members. Interestingly enough, the Islamic and Jewish community feel very close in the Bosnian case and cooperate quite openly.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the main issue of discord between religious communities is still the content of dialogue. The question of war guilt regularly comes to the surface. Both Muslim and Jews stress much more the values of justice and truth as necessary object of dialogue, whereas both Christian churches stress more the issues of peace and mercy. That might be related to religious doctrine, but it is certainly also connected to the main responsibilities for the atrocities of the Bosnian War. It is quite telling that also the Jewish community, which was not "between

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[154]   In his article, Raisu-l-Ulama Ceriᴛ advocates the establishment of a single Muslim authority for all European Muslims and specifies the necessary governing rules of such an authority; amongst others, he mentions that this religious authority would have to follow, obviously, the religious law of Islam which is in the heart of the Muslim faith. But only the mentioning of the word *shari'ah* was too much for some European politicians, who associate the Islamist movement and archaic punishments like cutting hands or stoning women with this term. The debate especially arose in Germany. Several national and European parliamentarians expressed their concern and the European Parliament's President Pöttering distanced himself from the article.

the lines" but which was nevertheless not an active party of conflict, points mainly to the Serbian Orthodox Church if it is talking about the sins of the past. But as yet, Serbian spiritual leaders cannot bring themselves to recognise its part in what happened. Until now, a common visit of all religious leaders to Srebrenica, the place of the worst genocidal atrocity, is still an unfulfilled demand of the Muslim representatives. All religious leaders still hold more to the pastoral function of their office and stress almost exclusively the grievance of their own community. They hence foster the old Balkan syndrome of victimisation. But it is interesting to observe that the discourse changes the closer we come to the level of day-to-day cooperation. The staff members of the MRV, who share the same office space every day, were in fact the only interview partners that put forward the perception and grievance of anything other than their own community. A second observation in this regard is the report of several religious representatives that the discourse of their own clergy changed greatly depending whether they came from a region where they are in a majority or from one where they stand in a minority position. Incidentally, *intra*-religious dialogue appears to be as important as its *inter*-religious equivalent.

3.3 Summary: Common traits in interreligious peacebuilding

The Bosnian challenge is, to a certain extent, comparable to the Lebanese: to reconcile a war-torn and divided society, to bridge the gap between different communities of faith, to reconstruct a common citizenship and state. In both cases, religious beliefs and religious symbols were employed for marking the differences between the opposing parties; and in both cases interreligious dialogue appears to play an important role in post-conflict peacebuilding. If conflicts have a religious dimension, who else but persons with spiritual authority could try to neutralise them? In both cases, an inclusive approach to dialogue seems to be of the utmost importance in its vertical as well as its horizontal sense: inclusive with regard to different levels of hierarchy, comprising religious leaders and civil society initiatives on the

ground, but inclusive as well with regard to transversal issues like social services, female participation and outreach to the youth.

Whereas in Lebanon a vibrant civil society has existed for decades and takes a major part in local interfaith projects, most initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina appear to be induced from the outside. Yet, the official agencies of interreligious dialogue are much more established in the Bosnian case and have a much higher impact on the ground. The presence of permanent staff members makes a huge difference. Nevertheless, an agency problem persists in both cases: religious leaders seem sometimes to be torn between their priestly and prophetical functions, between the claims of their community and their longing for universal truth and mercy. As Lederach (2006) has stated in his "elicitive method" of religious peacebuilding, the balance between the four core values of Psalm 85 – justice and peace, truth and mercy – has to be found on a case-to-case basis; but all four elements have to be united to achieve structural transformation of war-rotten societies. This is a task indeed not restricted to peacekeeping troops, but comprising as well and foremost a spiritual dimension.

The problems of agency and discourse are in some cases complemented by the problem of inclusion. Shall radical parties, which have not renounced to violence yet, be included in the peacebuilding dialogue? Are there any prerequisites for dialogue? These questions seem to be among the most relevant for the Lebanese case of Hizbullah. Of course, dialogue cannot be imposed but must emerge from the readiness of each partner to embrace it. A dialogue of the deaf leads nowhere. But on the other side, no effort would be needed to establish dialogue if everybody agreed on everything in the first place. Dialogue is a dynamic and incremental process. Hence, a multi-level approach seems to be appropriate to address the tricky question of inclusion. Dialogue means recognition, and political actors like the EU might be obliged not to give recognition to armed movements that are disturbing peace and attacking allies. But in this context, interreligious dialogue might be a formidable tool of track-two-

diplomacy. Radical actors might first be invited to informal talks and seminaries before they are given a formal voice in representative bodies or even on political platforms funded from public resources. If, as in the case of Lebanon, local political alliances do not permit such a step, recognised mediators from outside might foster it. This was the lesson of Bosnia-Herzegovina where the external impulse of the WCRP has successfully united former enemies in common structures. It seems to be obvious that in a religious society, religious actors speaking the language of faith might have a much better access to the conflicting authorities.

To what extent has the EU tapped into these potentials? The answer is simple: almost not at all! Neither in the case of Lebanon nor in Bosnia-Herzegovina have EU representatives addressed religious actors in a structural approach. Civil society initiatives have been supported and subsidised by the EU in both cases, but not one project with a religious dimension. If we asked about the reasons for this negligence, some EU officials put forward the lack of relevance of religious actors; others feared counterproductive effects with regard to the reinforcement of sectarian divides.[155] At least the Directorate-General Enlargement (DG ELARG), which is in charge of the Western Balkans now, has created recently the position of a special advisor for intercultural dialogue; but his job specifications have yet to be elaborated – until now he is mainly in charge of cultural heritage. And indeed, the EU has collaborated with religious actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the reconstruction of destroyed places of worship in the context of the return of refugees. Particular embassies and other international organisations have also supported the process of interreligious peacebuilding in both cases, but the EU has yet not dared to address this issue.

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[155] Interviews with officials from DG RELEX, DG ELARG and other diplomatic actors between December 2008 and March 2009.

Perhaps it is time to extend the structured dialogue inside the EU to conflict areas abroad. The recent initiatives for the sake of intercultural dialogue, in the sense the EPP has fostered them, might be a first step into this direction. As the representative of the Islamic community in the MRV, Ifet Mustafi☐, has stated:

If Europe had a perspective for itself, it could give much more readily a perspective to Bosnia-Herzegovina and others.[156]

Policy Recommendations

To the European Union:

1. Promote intercultural dialogue in relevant policy areas, putting particular emphasis on the external relations in the context of peacebuilding (conflict prevention, conflict resolution/transformation, post-conflict reconstruction).

2. Take into consideration the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and foster the establishment of interreligious structures in the EU and abroad.

3. Raise awareness about the potential role of religious actors in conflicts and peacebuilding and develop in this regard a religious-sensitive approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, taking into account the religious dimensions of violent conflict, when appropriate.

4. Choose a careful approach towards religious actors resorting to violence, using means of Multi-Track and Track Two Diplomacy, based on an understanding of the root causes of violent behaviour, with the aim of promoting dialogue and non-violent methods of conflict settlement.

5. Promote and support inclusive peacebuilding policies, including women's, youth and civil society organisations, and other social and religious minority groups.

6. Take into account the possible impact of conflicts outside the EU on relations within and between religious communities in Europe and integrate this comprehensive approach into the EU's dialogues with religious actors.

7. Undertake and support innovative research, policy-making and practise in the emerging field of (inter)religious peacebuilding.

To the European Commission:

8. Identify best practices and develop guidelines for a religious sensitive approach to conflict, when appropriate.

9. Establish a transversal working group on dialogue with religious actors, including the services of different directorate-generals, and liaise with delegations of the European Commission, when appropriate.

10. Identify a coherent concept for intercultural dialogue and take into account its religious dimension as well as the dynamic process of cultural interpenetration.

To the European Parliament:

11. Institutionalise a permanent all party working group with religious actors, in charge of relations with religious communities in the EU and beyond.

12. Institutionalise regular encounters and talks with religious leaders, and enable dialogue with other religious actors, including women's, youth and civil society organisations, as well as other social and religious minority groups.

To the European People's Party:

13. Foster cooperation between party and parliamentary group with regard to religious dialogue and clarify the different roles of each body.

14. Promote and further institutionalise the interreligious character of its different platforms for dialogue with religious actors of different denominations.

15. Diversify its dialogue with all levels of religious actors, including youth and women, both at the leadership and the grassroots levels

16. Engage with representatives of diverse Muslim communities within and outside the EU and promote dialogue with them.

To representative bodies of religious communities:

17. Establish permanent structures for interreligious dialogue at different levels and in conflict areas and seek contact and dialogue with representatives of other religious communities than their own in such areas.

18. Identify ways to foster cooperation in peacebuilding processes with public authorities as well as with non-governmental actors of other convictions, such as secular humanists.

19. Institute mediation task forces aimed at reconciliation in identity conflicts with a religious dimension and promote non-violent methods of conflict settlement, within and beyond their religious communities.

Overall Conclusions

From dialogue to peacebuilding: this study suggests taking a step further in the engagement of religious actors by European politics. Starting with the analysis of the relationship between religion and politics in the course of modernity, this study has shown how religion is still used either for justifying violent conflicts or for building peace and reconciliation. Religion is indeed a fundamental cultural reference: it is a reference giving structure and meanings for confessing members of a religious community, but it can also provide with ethical landmarks those individuals who can be considered as disaffiliated from religious institutions. As such, religion contributes to the construction of collective identities and values, along with linguistic, ethnic, political or other marks of distinction. The end of the bipolar world order of the Cold War has unleashed old and new lines of conflict between rival groups of population, mainly within more or less established states. Religion might be one distinctive feature of group identity and can hence be employed as a powerful tool for closing the ranks and giving ideological determination to political, even armed, struggles.

In the case of heterogeneous societies, intercultural dialogue seems therefore to be a necessity and a means for living together in peace and justice. It appears obvious that religion must be part of this endeavour, as it can be considered a major point of cultural reference to large groups of the population on one hand, and an important source for ethical convictions and considerations on the other. Building peace is not only a matter of political power, but also a challenge in ethical terms. Peace does not fall from heaven; it is one value amongst others that has to be pursued in a daily effort of ethical discernment. In this perspective, the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue may be seen as an important contribution to the process of peacebuilding and conflict prevention: bridging the gap between communities with different

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[156] Interview with Effendi Ifet Mustafiċ of 20 January 2009

cultural and religious reference, and creating a place for finding and implementing a common ethos.

European integration has been a peacebuilding process, tributary to specific ethical values, which were mainly deduced from Christianity and the Enlightenment. Christian churches have played a major role at different moments of its development: in its very conception as supranational community of states and its outreach to the other side of Europe that has been oppressed in authoritarian regimes for half a century at least. But today, the religious landscape of Europe has evolved. Individualisation and globalisation have led Western Europe to develop more secularised and heterogeneous societies, whereas Eastern European countries have rediscovered the place of religion in the public sphere and are still experiencing deep transformations. Immigration has led to the emergence of new cultures and religions in the public sphere of Western Europe with the growing presence of Islam and other denominations.

The EPP has also experienced transition and change in its internal composition. Historically founded upon Political Catholicism and Christian Democracy, it has in recent decades evolved to include a broader basis for the centre and centre-right on the European landscape. However, in this development the EPP has not ceased to nurture its links with Christian denominations – quite the contrary. The study has shown how the party developed informal contacts in Eastern Europe through the initiative of *Amici Poloniae*, and how dialogue became more structured in the 1990s with the establishment of a Working Group in charge of relations with Orthodox Churches in 1996. Driven by both political and ethical convictions, the study has discussed how the EPP broadened its dialogue to include representatives of Muslim states in 2001, as well as recent attempts to reach out to Muslim communities in the EU and beyond. In this context, the findings show that political actors use intercultural dialogue with religious representatives both as a mean to gain political power and a way to promote their ideological agenda rooted on the vision of their proper ethical values.

Intercultural dialogue has indeed become a fashionable term in European politics, but different interpretations of the concept hinder the emergence of a coherent EU approach in this policy. Interestingly, DG EAC is mainly focussed on strengthening the internal cohesion in the EU and has not explicitly taken into account the potential external dimensions of intercultural dialogue, i.e. how it could serve the purpose of reconciliation in conflict situations in EU accession countries, its neighbourhood and beyond. In this regard, the concept of intercultural dialogue – as DG EAC advocated it – differed significantly from other regional and international initiatives, in which intercultural dialogue – with a more or less prominent religious dimension – was understood in implicit terms as a means of dealing with and transforming violent conflict and conflicts between collective identities. It also differed from the vision that the majority of the Members of the European Parliament had, when they voted for the inclusion of a religious dimension for the activities during the EYID.

The study also took a step further, in order to explore to what extent the assumptions made in the first chapters about the peacebuilding potential of the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue could be found in concrete post-conflict situations on the ground. For that purpose, two case studies of identity conflicts including a religious dimension were chosen: Lebanon and Bosnia Herzegovina. They turned out to be relevant case studies in this context, since both countries have experienced the breakdown of a heterogeneous society, since religious actors were involved in the peacebuilding process and since the EU had a stake in both post-conflict situations, being a neighbour to these countries. Both cases show that religious peacebuilding is evolving at different levels, amongst religious leaders (in which case the term interreligious peacebuilding applies) and through various civil society initiatives and platforms taking place at global, transnational, regional, national, and local levels. While religious belonging played a significant role in the construction of collective identities and thus added to the complexity of the conflict dynamics, religion also played an important role in the search for reconciliation between religious communities.

However, one could ask to what extent these peacebuilding initiatives were successful. As this study revealed, a number of initiatives faced some substantial difficulties:

First, the study discussed the problem of lack of consistency between the official discourse and the actual implementation of initiatives for the sake of addressing specific ethical dilemmas. Repeating common religious values regarding the importance of peace and justice in official discourses represented an initial step towards reconciliation. However, it can be questioned to what extent religious leaders succeeded in rationally spelling out how these values relate to each other, within their own religious doctrine, and in implementing them in practice. The main question here seemed to be how to recognise the other and his or her suffering, while remaining loyal to the own community at the same time? How to identify "new conviviality" and promote respect between people in fragmented societies? How to support the emergence of a common citizenship where citizens are conscious of both the diverse values they want to promote and equally the need for everyone to make choices between fundamentals and details of his own agenda, in order to consciously restrain himself and make social coexistence possible and profitable for everyone?

Second, the study addressed another major problem, namely that of agency. Who can speak in the name of a religious community and upon whom does he or she depend? Religious authorities may have different status, and therefore different levels of autonomy. For instance, in the Lebanese case, the Christian clergy seemed to be rather autonomous from political influences, while Muslim representatives depended heavily on the political leaders of their communities.

Third, the question of inclusion was raised. This is a crucial question not only with regard to religious actors resorting to violence and the question of how to approach and include them, but also in terms of recognising gender, age, and minority aspects in inclusive peacebuilding. It seems clear that peacebuilding processes can neither be holistic, nor sustainable,

if they are limited to mainstream majority religious groups or leaders alone, excluding the participation of women, youth, civil society organisations, and other social and religious minority groups.

Even though this study has not necessarily come up with waterproof answers, it has suggested that some of these problems could partly be addressed through a stronger engagement of the international community. While respecting the independence of the actors as well as their ownership of the peacebuilding process, the international community could nevertheless foster recognition of the interreligious approach and supporting it in political and financial terms.

The role of the EU has been somewhat non-existent in this respect. As the case studies show, the focus has been on technical assistance and peacekeeping operations, while interreligious initiatives for peacebuilding have largely been sidelined. Interestingly, though, certain other international and national stakeholders such as the US, particular EU member states, and international organisations seem to have gone much further in recognising these initiatives and their potential advantages or disadvantages.

While the EU has started to engage religious actors in intercultural dialogue for the sake of internal cohesion, it has not explored the peacebuilding potentials of interreligious dialogue in its external policies. The study suggests that the development of a religiously sensitive approach in EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding policies would not only be interesting, but also timely and necessary, in order to understand better the potential religious dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding in contemporary societies, among other dimensions (socio-economic, socio-political, etc.). In this respect, it seems that it will be inevitable to recognise the importance of the religious dimension in intercultural dialogue, and to adopt a holistic policy approach, including both the internal and the external aspects of EU engagement.

While this study has focussed on religious or interreligious peacebuilding, it does not suggest that this approach is necessarily convenient or relevant in all violent conflicts. However, depending on the context, (inter)religious peacebuilding may be seen as a parallel track to secular diplomacy as well as other peacebuilding efforts, and a complementary means of conflict transformation.

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Annex

Interviews

All interviews were conducted face-to-face, except for six interviews conducted by phone call. Some of the interviews were recorded, others not, depending on the approval or disapproval for recording by the informant. The recorded interviews have in principle not been transcribed, except for important quotes referred to in the text.

The survey was conducted through semi-structured qualitative interviews. The following questions were employed as a framework and structure to the interview; in most situations, they were followed by more detailed and context specific questions that rose spontaneously during the meeting.

Guiding questions

(a) Questions on facts and figures, e.g.: "What is your role in intercultural dialogue?"

(b) Questions on definitions and understandings, e.g.: "What do you understand under intercultural dialogue?"

(c) Questions on values and motivations, e.g.: "Why do you engage dialogue with religious actors and why is your party committed to this cause?"

(d) Questions on judgements and opinions, e.g.: "How honest is the commitment of religious leaders to the cause of dialogue and peacebuilding?"

(e) Questions on perspectives and expectations, e.g.: "What do you expect how the place of religious actors will evolve in EU politics?"

List of Informants

1. EPP and EPP-ED Group

The Hon. Wilfried Martens, President of the European People's Party, former Prime Minister of Belgium: Brussels, 5 March 09.

The Hon. Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, MEP, Committee on Education and Culture, rapporteur for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue: Brussels, 7 December 09.

The Hon. Christopher Beazley, MEP, Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament: Brussels, 11 February 09.

The Hon. Mario Mauro, MEP, Vice-President, former Chairman of the Working Group for Dialogue with Islam in the EPP-ED Group: Brussels, 12 February 09.

The Hon. Ingo Friedrich, MEP, Quaestor, Committee on Constitutional Affairs, Delegation for relations with Iran, Delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly: Brussels, 3 March 09.

Mr. Stephen Biller, advisor to the EPP-ED Group (retired), Brussels: 5 December 08.

Anonymous, official of the EPP-ED Group: Brussels: 10 December 08.

Anonymous, official of the EPP-ED Group: Brussels, 12 December 08 /12 Feb. 09.

Anonymous, official of the EPP-ED Group: Brussels, 12 December 08 / 19 March 09.

Anonymous, official of the EPP-ED Group: Brussels, 19 December 08.

Anonymous, official of the EPP-ED Group: Brussels, 6 March 09.

Anonymous, official of the EPP-ED Group: Brussels, 17 March 09.

2. EU institutions

Anonymous, advisor to the President of the European Parliament: Brussels, 4 Dec. 08.

Anonymous, official of the European Parliament: Brussels, 17 March 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, BEPA: Brussels, 23 December 08.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG EAC: Brussels, 26 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG EAC: Brussels, 26 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG RELEX: Brussels, 12 Feb. 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG RELEX: Brussels, 2 March 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG RELEX: Brussels, 4 March 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG RELEX: Brussels, 4 March 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG RELEX: Brussels, 10 Mar. 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG ELARG: Brussels, 27 Feb. 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG ELARG: Brussels, 4 March 09.

Anonymous, official of the European Commission, DG ELARG: Brussels, 11 Mar. 09.

3. Other governmental agencies or organisations

The Hon., Ibrahim Shams al-Din, Lebanese Minister for Public Reform: Beirut, 21 February 09.

The Hon. Aleksandar Spasenovski, MP, Assembly of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Skopje, 23 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the US Embassy to Bosnia-Herzegovina: phone interview, 29 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the US Embassy to Bosnia-Herzegovina: phone interview, 29 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the German Embassy in Skopje: phone interview, 3 February 09.

Anonymous, official of the German Embassy in Skopje: phone interview, 3 February 09.

Anonymous, official of the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sarajevo, 20 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina: phone interview, 4 February 09.

4. Religious organisations and representatives

Rev. Vebjørn L. Horsfjord, Secretary General of the European Council of Religious Leaders: phone interview, 9 December 09.

Mgr. Prof. Dr. Mato Zovkić, Executive of the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRV): Sarajevo, 19 January 09.

Effendi Ifet Mustafić, Executive of the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRV): Sarajevo, 20 January 09.

Mr. Boris Kožemjakin, Executive of the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRV): Sarajevo, 20 January 09.

Effendi Afrim Tairi, Secretary General of the Islamic Community in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Skopje, 23 January 09.

Fr. Prof. Dr. Gjoko Gjorgjevski, Professor at the Faculty of Theology "St. Clement of Ohrid", Orthodox Church of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Skopje, 24 January 09.

Emir Hares Chehab, Secretary General of the Islamic-Christian National Dialogue Committee of Lebanon, Beirut: 19 February 09.

Dr. Muhammad al-Sammak, Secretary General of the Islamic-Christian National Dialogue Committee of Lebanon, Beirut: 19 February 09.

Sheikh Muhammad Nokkari, Director of the Dar al-Fatwa: Beirut, 20 February 09.

Mgr. Salim Ghazal, President of the National Catholic Committee for Interreligious Dialogue in Lebanon and founding Director of the Centre for Dialogue and Development: Sidon, 20 February 09.

Mr. Emile N. Iskandar, Coordinator of the Centre for Dialogue and Development, Sidon: 20 February 09.

Judge Abbas al-Halabi, President of the Arab Working Group for Muslim-Christian Dialogue and Member of the Islamic-Christian National Dialogue Committee of Lebanon and different other groups: Raz al-Matn, 21 February 09.

Anonymous, official of the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRV), Sarajevo: 19 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRV), Sarajevo: 19 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRV), Sarajevo: 19 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Interreligious Institute in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRI), Sarajevo: 20 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Interreligious Institute in Bosnia-Herzegovina (MRI), Sarajevo: 20 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Jewish Community in Sarajevo: Sarajevo, 20 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Islamic Community in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje: 23 January 09.

5. Foundations, NGOs and other actors of civil society

Dr. Dino Abazović, University of Sarajevo, Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies: Sarajevo, 21 January 09.

Mr. Alen Kristić, President of the Abraham Forum: Sarajevo, 21 February 09.

Mr. Nedim Muhedinović, Assistant of the International Multireligious and Intercultural Centre (IMIC): Sarajevo, 21 January 09.

Ms Sabina Pstrocki, Head of Office of the International Multireligious and Intercultural Centre (IMIC): Sarajevo, 21 January 09.

Fr. Prof. Dr. Fadi Daou, President of the Lebanese Foundation for Interfaith Studies and Spiritual Solidarity (ADYAN), Université de Saint-Joseph: mail exchange in the beginning of February 09 and interview in Beirut, 20 February 09.

Dr. Rita Ayoub, Institute for Islamic-Christian Studies, Université Saint-Joseph: Beirut, 19 February 09.

Dr. Mona Fayad, Department of Psychology, Lebanese University: Beirut, 19 February 09.

Anonymous, official of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, European Office: Brussels, 7 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Bosnia Herzegovina Office: Sarajevo, 19 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Bosnia Herzegovina Office: Sarajevo, 19 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Bosnia Herzegovina Office: Sarajevo, 19 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Skopje Office: Skopje, 23 January 09.

Anonymous, official of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Skopje Office: Skopje, 23 January 09.

Friedrich J. Bokern

studied Political Science, International Relations and European Affairs in Berlin, Lyon and Paris, earning two Master degrees from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po) and the Freie Universität Berlin. Friedrich is lecturing at Sciences Po and preparing a PhD thesis on interreligious diplomacy in the Mediterranean region. Since the beginning of this CES research project in 2008, he is also serving as associate member to CISMOC at the Université catholique de Louvain. Friedrich has specialised in three research areas: a) European integration, particularly with regard to the EU's external relations; b) religion and politics in late modern societies, particularly with regard to Islam; c) peace and conflict studies, particularly with regard to the Western Balkans and the Near East, having spent several months in both regions for studies, field research and consultancy.

Sofia Lemmetyinen

holds an MA in comparative religion at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland and an MA in EU international relations from College of Europe in Bruges. Religious peacebuilding is a central theme in her both theses, in which she analysed the Catholic lay organisation Sant'Egidio as a transnational actor and the cooperation between the European Commission and religious peacebuilding NGOs. She has gained work experience in peacebuilding in Martti Ahtisaari's organisation Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and in the European umbrella organisation for peacebuilding NGOs, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). Currently, she works as EU Liaison Officer at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) – a human rights organisation specialising in freedom of religion or belief.

Vincent Legrand

holds a PhD in Political Science (International Relations, with a specialisation on the contemporary Arab world), also graduated in Arabic and Islamic Studies. He is a visiting professor at Université catholique de Louvain (UCL), associate member of CISMOC, and adviser in interreligious affairs (Christian - Muslim dialogue) at the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE).

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obtained her Ph.D. in Sociology in 2006 (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium). She was also graduated in Political Sciences, Islamology, and obtained a certificate from Institut Français d'Etudes Arabes de Damas (IFEAD-Syria, 1998-1999). She is the Director of CISMOC (Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes de l'Islam dans le Monde Contemporain) and has extensively published on European Islam. Among her publications: Nielsen J., S. Akgönül, A. Alibasic, B. Maréchal, Ch. Moe (eds), Yearbook of Muslims in Europe, Brill, Leiden, 2009, 562 p. ; Maréchal B., The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. Roots and Discourses, Brill, Leiden, 2008 ; Maréchal B., F. Dassetto (en collabo. avec) Ph. Muraille (eds), Adam et l'évolution – Islam et christianisme confrontés aux sciences, Louvain-la-Neuve, Academia-Bruylants, 2009, 287 p.; Maréchal B., « Courants fondamentalistes en Belgique » in MERIA (Middle East Review of International Affairs – French edition), volume 3, n°1, march 2008, 18 p. (available on Internet); De Changy J., F. Dassetto & B. Maréchal, Relations et co-inclusion – Islam en Belgique, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007; Maréchal B. & F. Dassetto (coord. by), Le suicide offensif en islam, Revue Maghreb-Machrek, n°186 (Winter 2005-2006), Paris, 2006, 122 p.; Maréchal B., S. Allievi, F. Dassetto & J. Nielsen, Muslims in the Enlarged Europe – Religion and Society, Brill, Leiden, 2003, 620 p.