# HUMAN FRATERNITY & INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP

## Interreligious Engagement in the Mediterranean

edited by **Fabio Petito**, **Fadi Daou**, and **Michael D. Driessen**
foreword by **Cardinal Miguel Ayuso**

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

Adyan is a Lebanese foundation for diversity, solidarity and human dignity. Through homegrown solutions in education, media, policymaking and intercultural and interreligious engagement, Adyan works locally, regionally and internationally to promote pluralism, inclusive citizenship, freedom of religion and belief, countering violent extremism and religious social responsibility. Adyan's policymaking department – The Rashad Center for Cultural Governance – provides evidence-based consultancies and engages in dialogue and advocacy with governments, private sector, civil society and non-state actors leading to good governance, peaceful coexistence and positive diversity management.

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# Foreword

*In the name of the Holy Father, Pope Francis,*
I write this short foreword and thank the Adyan Foundation for Diversity, Solidarity and Human Dignity (Lebanon) and the Institute for International Political Studies (Italy) for this policy report. With scholarly rigor, the report was able to translate the visions and intuitions of the *Human Fraternity f Document or World Peace and Living-Together*, the *Fratelli Tutti* Encyclical, and the recent Apostolic visit to Iraq into the language of diplomacy and the context of foreign policy.

The explicit objective of the report is to highlight the important contribution that diverse religious traditions, in collaboration with one another, can offer to the world of politics and international relations, deepening the reflection raised on the theme at the (2020) Rome-Med international conference organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and ISPI. This is precisely what Pope Francis underlines in the *Fratelli Tutti* Encyclical: "It is wrong when the only voices to be heard in public debate are those of the powerful and 'experts'. Room needs to be made for reflections born of religious traditions that are the repository of centuries of experience and wisdom" (Ft, 275).

As such, interreligious dialogue has an essential role to play in building a civil living-together, a society which includes and which is not built on a throwaway culture. This is a necessary condition for peace in the world. In a world that is dehumanized, in which a culture of indifference and greed characterizes the

relations between human beings, there is need for a new and universal solidarity and of a new dialogue to forge our future.

In recent years, the coasts of the Mediterranean have drifted apart as a result of the disparity in the living conditions of the populations which live on her shores, on account of clashes of ideology, and, sadly, on account of wars. As Pope Francis often says, the "*mare nostrum*" (our sea) has become a grave for many. But let us remember that the Mediterranean Sea is also a gateway which allows the three continents which border it (Africa, Asia and Europe) to encounter one another and that teaches us to recognize the "otherness" and to remember our common past.

In the Mediterranean context, therefore, it is necessary to recover consciousness of the fact that believers are citizens with full rights in the societies in which they live, which must be built by enriching them with the values of diverse religious traditions. We must therefore move beyond a respectful diversity to a human fraternity, from which we can recreate that *convivencia* which is not mere toleration but the capacity to live together even while different.

*H.Em. Card. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ*
*President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*

# Fraternity, Citizenship and Interreligious Engagement: Towards a Conceptual Framework

Fabio Petito, Fadi Daou, and Michael D. Driessen

In March 2021, Pope Francis made an historic visit to Iraq. The official Vatican slogan of the trip was "You are all brothers". Iraq has been an epicenter of geopolitical instability in the XXI century, and the Pope had it in mind when, in 2014, he warned that a third world war fought in "piecemeal" may have already begun.[1] In the span of a few days Francis hosted a large interfaith gathering of religious leaders in Ur, the birthplace of the patriarch Abraham, and then, in a visit marked by deep symbolism, he met with the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani in the holy city of Najaf, speaking with him about fraternity and citizenship and the future of religious diversity in the country.[2] The trip continued the journey Francis started with the *Human Fraternity Document*, co-signed in 2019 with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb. In the document, the two religious leaders sent a powerful message in favor of political inclusion and against the discrimination of minorities, especially in countries where Islam or Christianity represent the majority religion: if we are all brothers, then we all need recognition

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[1] See Pope Francis, "Celebration at the Military Memorial in Redipuglia (Italy) on the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Outbreak of the First World War", 13 September 2014.

[2] See M.A. Ayuso Guixot, "Tra Fratellanza e Dialogo" ("Between Fraternity and Dialogue"), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 11 March 2021.

and respect, including the right to participate in public life as citizens with full rights, freedoms and responsibilities.[3]

This report, which builds on the 2020 Rome-MED Dialogues on the same theme, presents interreligious engagement as a new policy framework that recognizes and amplifies these novel dynamics. The perspective of religious engagement points to ways in which governments and international organizations can better engage religious actors, including religious leaders, communities and a variety of religion-based organizations, to promote common global ambitions like sustainable development, human rights, and peace. By "interreligious engagement", we refer to the interreligious, policy-oriented interactions between states and international organizations on the one hand, and religious and interreligious actors, groups, coalitions, platforms and activities on the other . These interactions can include a wide range of interreligious activity, dialogue and collaboration initiated by multiple actors: from theological exchanges, to common everyday social action, to high-level meetings between official representatives, to more informal/grassroots initiatives.

In a specific way, the report illustrates the opportunities which human fraternity and inclusive citizenship offer for government-religious partnerships aimed at achieving more inclusive and peaceful societies on the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean. The inclusion of an innovative religious dimension to policy-making in the region represents an important breakthrough, especially as religious and interreligious actors are still rarely welcome at the leading global policy tables.[4] As Miguel Ángel Moratinos, the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, observes in his contribution to this report, at the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership just twenty-five years ago governments "did not really conceive

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[3] His Holiness Pope Francis and The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb, *A document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019.

[4] K. Marshall, *Interfaith Journeys: An Exploration of History, Ideas, and Future Directions*, The World Faiths Development Dialogue, 2017.

the religious dimension as something that ought to be a part of 'Mediterranean diplomacy'".

In this introduction, we offer a conceptual framework to understand the relationship between human fraternity, inclusive citizenship and interreligious engagement strategies, and we indicate how they respond to the challenges posed by new forms of religious polarization and conflict in the region. In doing so, the introduction echoes the religious leaders and practitioners in this report who highlight the policy potential of this framework. Thus, in his contribution, Mohamed Abdel-Salam, the Secretary General of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, characterizes the document signed by Al-Tayeb and Francis as an historic symbol capable of breaking walls, building rights and fostering cooperation between societies in the Mediterranean. André Azoulay, a longtime advocate for the Jewish Moroccan community, describes the impact of the formal recognition of the Jewish legacy within Moroccan identity, culture and history in the 2011 constitution, and the new interreligious cultural and educational collaboration on the Quran and the Torah that have been the fruit of this recognition. Mons. Jean-Marc Aveline, the Archbishop of Marseille, shares grassroots examples of Muslim-Christian fraternity and living-together and the concrete signs of hope they offer against polarization and discrimination in European societies. The discourses of human fraternity and inclusive citizenship are capturing these seeds of hope for unity and offer goals which the policy community can amplify through new strategies of interreligious engagement.

## The Challenges of Polarization and Discrimination: Is Religion Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?

Polarization and discrimination linked to religious identities have been increasing in many parts of the world, including

on the two shores of the Mediterranean. Recent reports have registered a rise in social hostility between communal groups throughout the world and the growing intersection of this crisis with the spread of new authoritarian politics, counter-terrorism practices and intra-state conflicts.[5] The current global health emergency would appear to have heightened these dynamics. In the words of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres (2020), the current Covid-19 pandemic "continues to unleash a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scare-mongering".[6] In this context, fundamental freedoms like the right to freedom of religion and belief and the freedom of expression have found themselves under assault from a diverse set of actors and ideologies, including from secular governments and religious movements.

This rise in ethnic, religious and sectarian discrimination is part of a larger social trend throughout the world, which seems to be fueled, in part, by processes of globalization and the breakdown of established collective identities. Different streams of populist politics have responded with a combination of religious nationalism and civilizational rhetoric which have strengthened processes of religious "othering" in various contexts. This can be observed in the rise of Islamophobia and Christian Nationalism in the West, anti-Islamic discrimination and Hindu Nationalism in India, anti-Islamic discrimination and Buddhist Nationalism in South-East Asia, anti-Semitism across Europe and the United States, and discrimination against Christians, Ezidis, Baha'i and other religious minorities in the Arab world. In a globalized international society, therefore, which appears to be fragmenting along lines of identity politics, civilizational and religious narratives have acquired

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[5] Pew Research Center, *Annual Report. Global Restrictions on Religions*, 2020; USCIRF, *Annual Report*, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; OSCE/ODIH, *Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security: Policy Guidance*, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Warsaw, 2019.

[6] A. Guterres, Speech given to launch the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, 8 May 2020.

a growing salience as sources of discrimination and conflict. [7] The question of religious pluralism, in other words, represents a central challenge for global politics today.

In this context, religion is often presented in the public discourse as part of the problem, even when its role is recognized as only one piece of a larger, complex geopolitical puzzle. Thus, religion is typically cast as either a perpetrator or victim of violence and human rights violations, and is seen as being at the heart of collective identity crises, concerns about social cohesion as well as scenarios of insecurity and discrimination.[8] This view, which sees the unexpected resurgence of religion primarily through the prism of a violence-prone form of politics, emerged as a predominant discourse in international affairs following the end of the Cold War. Others have challenged this view, and offered a more reflective discourse on international relations which has emphasized the political ambivalence of religion, namely that religious forces can promote political violence and conflict, but also peace-building, reconciliation and non-violent civic engagement.[9]  This more nuanced approach has opened the possibility in the global policy community to the idea that religion can be actually part of the solution, that is, a strategic resource for diplomacy, peace-building, the strengthening of human rights, and the advancement of citizenship and sustainable development. This new policy-oriented discussion, referred to in the global policy community as "religious engagement", is emerging as one of the most promising fields of strategic and creative thinking on which governments and

[7] G. Bettizza and F.Petito, "Why (clash of) civilizations discourses just won't go away? Understanding the civilizational politics of our times", in D. Orsi (Ed.), *The clash of civilizations. Twenty-five years on: A multidisciplinary appraisal,* Bristol: E-International Relations, 2018, pp. 37-51; D.N. DeHanas and M. Shterin, (Eds.), *Religion and the rise of populism*, London - New York, Routledge, 2019.

[8] F. Petito, "From Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Advocacy to Interreligious Engagement in Foreign Policy", *Global Affairs,* vol. 6, no. 3, 2020, pp. 269-286.

[9] R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation.* Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

international organizations are working collaboratively with religious organizations to achieve common goals.

## The New Policy Perspective of Religious Engagement in Global Affairs

In the European and North American context, in fact, Ministries of Foreign Affairs of countries such as France and the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy and Hungary have begun to strengthen their capacity to engage religion in order to "make better policy and to make a bigger difference", as the title of a conference sponsored by the UK Foreign Office suggests.[10] In 2015 the US State Department launched a new "US Strategy on Religious Leader and Faith Community Engagement", which paved the way for the creation of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs in 2015 within the US State Department, designed to advise the Secretary of State.[11] The aim of this strategy was to develop a more robust engagement with religious leaders and communities abroad – specifically to promote development and humanitarian assistance, advance human rights, including religious freedom, and prevent and resolve conflict.

The transition from an understanding of the political role of religion in global affairs as primarily that of a security problem, to an understanding of a more comprehensive engagement with religious communities on broader human development goals, is not easy. What is more, the very notion of religious engagement as a distinct strategy contains important ambiguities.[12] While

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[10] "Religion, foreign policy and development: making better policy to make a bigger difference", Wilton Park, 5-7 February 2014.

[11] See G. Bettiza, *Finding faith in foreign policy: Religion and American diplomacy in a postsecular world*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019.

[12] See, for example, P. Mandaville and S. Silvestri, "Integrating religious engagement and diplomacy: Challenges and opportunities", *Brooking Institute Issues in Governance Studies*, 67(1), 2015, pp. 1-13; F. Petito and S.M. Thomas, "Encounter, dialogue and knowledge: Italy as a special case of religious

seeking to move beyond a securitization approach to religion, for example, many, if not most, policymakers continue to adopt an instrumentalist approach to religious engagement which carries forward problems and risks, as R. Scott Appleby argues in this report. In a context where religion is recognized as representing a crucial dimension of the social fabrics of many societies of the world, religious engagement is still mostly conceived of as an addition to the toolkit of policy instruments which states use to achieve their aims. In other words, policy-makers in the West seem to primarily value religious engagement for its practical capacity to reach issues and communities where other forms of strategic engagement – for example with NGOs or the business sector alone – fail.

States have engaged in a parallel process of institutional innovation and support for new forms of religious engagement throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In a first phase, in the early 2000s, countries like Turkey, Iran and Jordan sponsored major dialogue initiatives, including the Dialogue among Civilizations and Alliance of Civilizations projects. Then, in a second phase, over the last decade, countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have invested in the creation of major, international, state-sponsored centers promoting dialogue and peace among religions.[13]

Like their Western counterparts, the establishment of these initiatives reflects a number of dynamics. On the one hand they represent explicit responses to international and domestic security concerns associated with religion. Through these initiatives, states like Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar

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engagement in foreign policy," *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2015, pp. 40-51.

[13] This includes the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) in Qatar (est. 2008), the King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in Vienna (est. 2012), and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies (est. 2014) and the Council of Muslim Elders (est. 2014) in the UAE. For a more detailed analysis of these institutions and the dynamics of this section see M. Driessen (forthcoming), *The Global Politics of Interreligious Dialogue: Religious Change, Citizenship and Solidarity in the Middle East.*

sought to counter the narrative of violence associated with Islam, reassure political and financial partners in the West in the process, and do so in a way that would not be perceived as adopting unpopular secularizing policies at home. The explicit or implicit ties of these centers to the Foreign Ministries of their states underscore the criticism that the nature of these initiatives mostly reflected top-down securitization and instrumentalist approaches to religion by these states.[14] In any case, an apologetic effort to detach Islam from accusations of association to extremism at the beginning of the XXI century was predominant.[15]

In the post-Arab Spring context, however, a paradigm shift has occurred, exemplified by the Al-Azhar declarations in 2012 on "Fundamental Freedoms" and in 2017 on "Freedom, Citizenship, Diversity, and Inclusion", in addition to the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration on "The Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities". These initiatives, as Nejia Al-Ourimi argues in her contribution to this report, represent a new narrative in the Islamic religious discourse by adopting and rooting in the Islamic tradition three key modern concepts: citizenship, pluralism and religious freedom, while re-envisioning the living-together in their own societies, and in relation with other citizens and religious communities.

At the same time, again, like their European counterparts, these initiatives also responded to the growing desire of states and international institutions to formalize better partnerships with religious communities at home and abroad in the service of mutually-shared humanitarian goals, whether it be environmental action, sustainable development, collaboration

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[14] J. Fahy and J. Haynes, "Interfaith on the World Stage", *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2018.

[15] F. Daou. 2015. "La crise du dialogue islamo-chrétien dans le contexte des bouleversements dans le monde arabe", *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 89-102 ; and F. Daou, "Les Eglises de l'Orient Arabe face à la globalisation du dialogue islamo-chrétien", *Théologiques, Montréal*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2011, pp. 89-99.

on Covid-19, or managing religiously-diverse societies better. As such, the institutionalization of interreligious initiatives in the Middle East has also mirrored the growth in importance of other international organizations, like Religions for Peace. These organizations have offered religious and interreligious leaders formal channels to work closely with international governmental organizations like the United Nations[16] and the European Union as well as participate in high-level, state-sponsored foreign policy initiatives like the US-sponsored Ministerials on Religious Freedom.

## The Potential of Interreligious Engagement: From the Vision of Human Fraternity to the Prospect of Inclusive Citizenship

This broad, loose coalition, therefore, has produced or contributed to a remarkable (if often unrecognized) level of religious-political dynamism and institutional innovation over the last ten years, particularly when compared to the traditional policy neglect of religion in global affairs. What is more, this growing realization of the political resources held by religious actors and communities, on both shores of the Mediterranean, has paved the way for the acquisition of a more religiously-aware mindset and new sets of skills for both governments and religious actors. These skills can serve as preconditions for building new capacity aimed at delivering innovative government-religious partnerships for the common good and to tackle global challenges.[17]

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[16] See, for example, the UN Rabat Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that could lead to Atrocity Crimes: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Plan_of_Action_Religious-rev5.pdf; and the "Faith for Rights" initiative by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Faith4Rights.pdf .

[17] J. Birdsall, J. Lindsay, and E. Tomalin (Eds), *Toward religion-attentive foreign policy: A report on an Anglo-American dialogue*, Policy Report, 2015.

Interreligious dialogue and collaboration as a sustained, global practice is a relatively new phenomenon and has significantly expanded over the last two decades. One of the more significant trends of this growth has been the steady development, both beyond and alongside theology, of practical, multi-religious collaboration with a focus on pressing social and political issues.[18] In this respect, the instrumentalist perspective of religious engagement has often neglected the substantive, pro-active and socially integrated dimensions embedded in this new post-secular era of interreligious dialogue and collaboration. Despite the political importance of state-based or state-sponsored dialogue initiatives, it is worth highlighting the growing social resonance of dialogue activity, much of which remains apolitical and outside the realm of the state. Most dialogue initiatives in the Middle East and North Africa, along with those in Europe, are rooted in civil society, local in scope and often religiously-inspired, and they draw on a broad repository of ideas, practices and resources in their efforts to build more inclusive societies.[19] These initiatives represent promising arenas for active citizen participation and empowerment, including among youth and women, as well as disaffected or sceptical religious populations against a contemporary background of democratic crisis marked by disengagement, and disenchantment. Through initiatives like these, religious non-state actors reach out to the poor, the marginalized, the ignored and the forgotten on the periphery of societies. In this sense, as Scott M. Thomas argues in this report, these actors and actions are *de facto* constructing a new, radical form of knowledge, from below, on how the

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[18] J. Fahy and J.-J. Bock, "Beyond dialogue? Interfaith engagement in Delhi, Doha and London", 2018, The Woolf Institute and Michael Driessen (forthcoming), *The Global Politics of Interreligious Dialogue.*

[19] See M. Driessen, A.M. Daou, D. Karadsheh, N. Omerovic, F.I. Keti, N. Tabbara, and A. Nagi, *Interreligious Mapping of the Middle East: Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq*, The Adyan Foundation, 2020; and M. Griera and A. K. Nagel, "Interreligious relations and governance of religion in Europe", *Social Compass*, 2018, pp. 1-11.

international system works.[20] Human fraternity and inclusive citizenship, as concepts and models, draw on this knowledge and re-imagine international politics as a result.

The growth of interreligious engagement, beyond creating new partnerships or responding to the security concerns of states, has also followed an internal logic of its own. As it has developed over time, it has increasingly shifted in discourse from offering a defense against religious violence, or protecting religious minorities, to formulating powerful proposals for political development which draw on the full civic and spiritual contribution of religious communities and actors, as Scott Appleby effectively argues in this report.[21] This development is captured by the concepts of human fraternity and inclusive citizenship. These proposals largely reverse the logic of securitization and the notion that "religion" primarily represents a problem that states are required to manage. Instead, they are contributing to a re-thinking of the role of religion and politics within a plural and multi-religious society (both nationally and globally) and producing substantive ideas about it.

## The Vision of Human Fraternity

The recent appeal to human fraternity – in the joint declaration by Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb and Pope Francis in 2019, Francis' subsequent encyclical in 2020, *Fratelli Tutti,* and his encounter with the Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani in 2021 – represents just

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[20] See also F. Petito and S.M. Thomas, "Encounter, dialogue and knowledge: Italy as a special case of religious engagement in foreign policy", *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2015, pp. 40-51.

[21] As he writes, this new paradigm, "requires moving away from a top-down, state-driven, state-controlled engagement strategy to a religiously pluralist, cross-cultural dialogue that addresses not merely the presenting symptoms – e.g., religiously inspired and inflected violence – but the underlying disease, namely, the failed instrumentalist approach to religious actors, which they perceive as robbing them of their God-given dignity. In the long run, the rewards of such a shift in approach will outweigh the costs".

such a political and spiritual development, one which is linked to interreligious dynamism.

In part, human fraternity can be understood as an innovative response to the political challenges of pluralism, which also re-claims or re-defines the public role of religion in politics and civil society. As Pasquale Ferrara explores in this volume, Al-Tayeb and Francis articulate human fraternity as the commitments – affective, civic and political – that individuals owe to others *qua* others within society; that is to say, not as co-religious others, but as fellow human beings. They pose these commitments as religious duties to the plural, common good and to each other.

In political terms, scholars have long held up fraternity as an essential yet neglected part of the trilogy of ideals underpinning liberal democracy, as in the French "liberty-equality-fraternity". Fraternity represents the solidarity, the social cohesion and the reality of a community, which political rights and civil liberties require to be effectively realized within a democratic society. As the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". In this sense, in their elevation of human fraternity, Pope Francis and Sheikh Al-Tayeb are also re-claiming a classic, public function of religion in society, namely, that of mobilizing social solidarity and action for the common good. In their formulation of human fraternity, Al-Tayeb and Francis confirm that religious engagement for the public good is essential to the identity and mission of religions, while simultaneously rejecting sectarian, exclusionary and even violent narratives and attitudes to which religious communities may fall prey, as Alberto Melloni reminds us in this report. In the "secular" West, various scholars have recognized the contributions that religious forces can offer to liberal societies marked by fragmentation and political isolation, which are linked to advanced forms of individualism that make collective action difficult in plural societies.

Indeed, Habermas' formulation of the "post-secular" which influenced the new attention to religion among European policy-makers, was in part an attempt to enlarge the public space for religious contributions to European politics and was driven by fears of a broad decline of communal, democratic commitments among European citizens.[22] In his famous 2009 dialogue with Habermas, Charles Taylor highlighted fraternity as one of the keys to rethinking the role of secularism in democracy, which he defined as "the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity".[23] Within the right settings, he argued, religious traditions, communities and insights are powerfully placed to help re-generate these affective, social and political commitments to one another; that is to say, to generate a fraternity capable of sustaining diversity.

This understanding of fraternity as the necessary flipside of diversity reflects a long-term transformation of global religious traditions' understanding of pluralism and the growing realization, in religious terms, that religious pluralism can be compatible with religious renewal and religious flourishing, rather than a threat to both. One of the striking features of the *Human Fraternity Document* and the *Fratelli Tutti* encyclical, in fact, is the way in which they embrace pluralism and diversity as religious goods. As the *Human Fraternity Document* states, "the pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings".

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis uses this embrace of pluralism to make a double critique of both a "closed" understanding of populism and nationalism, in which there is no space for diversity,[24] and an "individualistic liberal" approach to politics,

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[22] See J. Habermas, "An awareness of what is missing: Faith and reason in a post-secular age", Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010; and M. Driessen (Ed.), "Catholicism and European Politics", *Religions*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2021.

[23] C. Taylor, "Why we need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism," in E. Mendieta and J. Vanantwerpen (Eds.), *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 36.

[24] *Fratelli Tutti* (par. 160).

where there is no space for community.[25] Rather, Francis proposes human fraternity as a religiously-rooted, open understanding of community and diversity. In developing this approach, Pope Francis can be seen to directly rebuke the rising levels of Christian nationalism in Europe, which have reacted to immigration, social fragmentation and isolation with an appeal to a more exclusivist communitarian vision of European Christian nations. At the same time, he is directly critiquing forms of secularism and liberalism which ignore or marginalize religious contributions to social cohesion and the spiritual dimensions of community life. In the Muslim majority world, as Mohammed Hashas explores in this report, there are important links between this understanding of human fraternity and new approaches to pluralism by Islamic theologians, which likewise embrace religious diversity, and which propose public religious commitments as a source for living pluralism well.

Human fraternity, in this sense, represents a fecund political and religious development, which draws on a widening understanding of religious traditions' relationship to pluralism in modernity and invites religious actors to exercise their public, social responsibility in the co-construction of political life together with a plurality of other actors within civil society. As Scott Thomas argues in his contribution to this report, today human fraternity cannot be reduced to mere declaratory politics. It is a strategic vision of post-secular collaboration with multiple actors, both secular and religious, operating at multiple levels of analysis to meet immediate needs, to build institutions and transform communities.

## The Prospect of Inclusive Citizenship

Like human fraternity, the concept of inclusive citizenship also represents a substantive political and religious development linked to pluralism and the management of diversity in the

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[25] *Fratelli Tutti* (par. 105).

wider Mediterranean region. That development has been most evident across the Middle East and North Africa, but with important consequences for public religious engagement in Europe, especially as governments and societies across the West have re-assessed their approach to models of multiculturalism. The growth of inclusive citizenship as a model of political development supported by religious and interreligious actors throughout the region is the result of several intersecting dynamics, including the evolving response to violence against religious minorities in the region, the development of a new discourse on religious freedom and pluralism, and the political and social dynamics introduced by the Arab Spring and its aftermath.

Indeed, as violence against religious minorities throughout the Middle East increased in intensity and in public awareness, especially those committed by the brutality of the Islamic State in 2014-18, important religious authorities across the Muslim world forcefully spoke out in their defense. In order to do so, they emphasized the resources within Islam which protect religious diversity as well as the political rights of non-Muslims to publicly express their faith and worship without fear. In an important way, this was the conclusion of the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration, in which a broad coalition of Muslim religious leaders forcefully rejected discrimination against religious minorities in predominantly Muslim countries on the basis of a vision of political rights and religious responsibilities. In the Marrakesh Declaration, the roots of this vision are identified in the Constitution of Medina formulated by the Prophet Muhammed and long-recognized notions of human dignity as conferred by God to Adam and all of his diverse sons and daughters. Critically, the document names "citizenship which is inclusive of diverse groups" as the ideal legal and political form to protect, foster and advance that vision.

This increasing attention to political rights and participation, religious freedom and citizenship was also pushed forward by the events of the Arab Spring, as Georges Fahmi explores

in this report, and the demands made by broad, plural coalitions of citizens across North Africa and the Middle East for democratic reforms and enhanced political rights and freedoms. Particularly important in this regard were Al-Azhar's Document on the Future of Egypt in 2011 and its Declaration of Fundamental Freedoms in 2012, both of which affirmed Al-Azhar's commitment to building a national, democratic Egyptian state and the protection of the rights and freedoms of Egyptian citizens, including their freedom of expression and belief. Critically, it also declared these principles as rooted in the objectives of the Sharia (*maqasid al sharia*) as well as working towards them. Importantly, it also sought to formalize the autonomy of Al-Azhar from the state in doing so.

As religious sectarianism was on the rise in the Middle-East, and religiously-inspired political forces were gaining in political presence, intensive consultations were held with a wide range of religious, academic and political actors on the relationship between religion and democracy in the region. In this context, as Nayla Tabbara recounts in her contribution, the Adyan Foundation in Lebanon developed a series of materials on "inclusive citizenship" which emphasized the rights and freedoms of citizens, the social wealth of diversity, the importance of healthy national cohesion and the contribution and responsibility of religious forces to sustain all of these goods. The Foundation engaged with a number of other declaration processes and regional actors working on similar themes like the 2017 Al-Azhar Declaration on "Freedom, Citizenship, Diversity and Complementarity", the 2017 Vienna Declaration of KAICIID, as well as with the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, the Middle East Council of Churches and the Muslim World League. In their joint *Human Fraternity Document*, Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb adopt a similar approach to citizenship, writing that "it is crucial to establish in our societies the concept of *full citizenship* and reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority".

In important ways, the development of inclusive citizenship also reflects the reassessment of multiculturalism by governments and societies across Europe and North America.[26] Thus, in 2011 the former British Prime Minister David Cameron rejected the "doctrine of state multiculturalism," and called for "a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism".[27] While the multicultural paradigm has the merit of recognizing that the state cannot be culturally neutral, scholars also recognized the need to find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, being inclusive without being assimilationist.[28] Towards this end, in their report on "reasonable accommodation" in Quebec, Bouchard and Taylor advocated for a new policy of "interculturalism".[29] Some have argued that interculturalism represents an approach to citizenship that moves beyond equal opportunities and respect for existing cultural differences to the pluralist transformation of public space, institutions and civic culture. As Cantle writes, in this framework "dialogue becomes more than just a tool of communication; it is a process of mutual learning and joint growth".[30]

Rather than building unity through "muscular liberalism" as Cameron suggested, or through "liberal authoritarianism" as some Arab regimes adopted in reaction to the Arab Spring, inclusive citizenship could be understood to politically translate the intercultural approach. Thus, for example, the *National*

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[26] K. Malik, "The Failure of Multiculturalism: Community versus Society in Europe", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015; R. Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017.

[27] David Cameron, "Speech at Munich Security Conference", 5 February 2011.

[28] B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

[29] G. Bouchard and C. Taylor, *Building the Future: A time for Reconciliation. Report of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences*, Quebec, 2008.

[30] T. Cantle, *Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 152.

*Charter for education on Living-together in Lebanon*[31] has advocated for inclusive citizenship as a way to embrace and engage cultures and communities in a public space of creative interculturality. In a similar way, Marwan Muasher has endorsed inclusive citizenship as a post-Arab Spring paradigm, arguing that, "respect for diversity should be not only enshrined in Arab constitutions but codified in law and taught in educational institutions so that legal and cultural norms can harness the full potential of the different constituencies that form any Arab State".[32] As Mons. Paul Gallagher brings attention to in this report, the title of the 2019 UNDP Arab Human Development Report is "Leaving No One Behind: Towards Inclusive Citizenship in Arab Countries". The Report indicates the "transformative dynamics that could bring about a more inclusive definition of citizenship: the youth factor, political rights and participation, advancing women's rights, rethinking social policies, embracing sustainability, addressing violent extremism beyond security".[33]

Inclusive citizenship, in this perspective, reaffirms basic commitments to citizen rights and liberties and their equality under the rule of law, but it also includes a particular attention to cultural and religious diversity and seeks the more active inclusion of the various "others" in public life, whether those others represent socially marginalized or culturally different groups. In his contribution to his report, Silvio Ferrari similarly defines inclusive citizenship as a model of managing religious diversity. As a model, it is available equally to anyone who wishes to use it: rights are not granted to members of minorities but to all citizens, through a strategy of legal pluralism that regulates the same legal relationship in the way they consider most appropriate to their convictions.

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[31] Adyan Foundation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon.

[32] M. Muasher, *The Second Arab Awakening and the Battle for Pluralism*, Yale, Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 169-170.

[33] A. Abdellatif, P. Pagliani, and E. Hsu, *Leaving No One Behind: Towards Inclusive Citizenship in Arab Countries*, UNDP, New York, 2019, pp. 30-31.

The model of inclusive citizenship, therefore, is one of an integrated system of policies, legislations and behavior that embodies a comprehensive culture of participation. On the one hand, it aims to ensure the effective participation of citizens in public life, to guarantee that their voices are heard, and that their needs are met. On the other hand, it also seeks to integrate their cultural specificities into national life. In this perspective, it is possible to argue that inclusive citizenship is the political framework for human fraternity, since recognizing the "other" in their cultural and religious specificity and contributions is essential to building fraternal societies and active solidarities. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State of the Holy See, has likewise emphasized the centrality of fraternity and citizenship for the foundations of a common "Mediterranean vision," starting from their generative capacity to guide and valorize the political inclusion and integration of migrants from the MENA region across Europe, as Elie Al-Hindy also explores in this report. Thus, Parolin writes, "Citizenship, therefore, is the culmination of the *Human Fraternity Document*, but it is also a requirement that concerns the countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean".[34]

## Mitigating Risks, Maximizing Hope: Policy Implications

In a context where polarization and discrimination, also linked to religion, appear to be on the rise, the discourses of human fraternity and inclusive citizenship are seeds of hope scattered across the North and South of the Mediterranean. The policy community, we argue, can amplify and facilitate their growth by investing in the significant potential of new strategies of interreligious engagement. At the same time, for

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[34] Pietro Parolin, "Essere Mediterranei: Fratelli e Cittadini del 'Mare Nostro'" ("On Being Mediterranean: Brothers and Citizens of 'Mare Nostro'"), *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Quaderno 4072, 2020, pp. 368-380.

them to be successful the risks and limitations which come with these new forms of public religious engagement need to be recognized. Thus, Fahmi observes the distance between the official discourse in favor of citizenship by actors like Ahmed Al-Tayeb and the religious reality within many societies which is often less tolerant of religious difference and even aggressively hostile to religious pluralism. Parallel gaps might be observed between the inclusive vision of human fraternity of Pope Francis, which emphasizes the welcoming of all religious strangers, and the predominant attitudes of many Christian and Catholic-majority societies in contemporary Europe on issues of migration.[35] Likewise, Al-Ourimi questions whether a new, interreligiously-rooted discourse in favor of political rights and civil liberties can realistically flourish within the political-religious structure of a number of Muslim majority states, in which existing political inequalities can be directly or indirectly linked to the formal role of Islam within the state, including inheritance laws which discriminate against women or blasphemy laws which discriminate against non-Muslims. Finally, Azza Karam, who advocates for strengthening practices of multi-religious collaboration in this report, also denounces the danger, highlighted by the current pandemic, of religious traditions to withdraw to their respective co-religionist worlds in the name of "our brothers and sisters first".

In raising these criticisms, these contributions echo the continued fears of a number of scholars and policy-makers about the risks associated with adjusting the public or legal sphere towards greater accommodation of religious actors, voices and ideas. Hence scholars have worried that interreligious engagement opens the door for various forms of instrumentalization of religion and "religionization" of policy, on the part of both religious and political actors. State actors may use interreligious engagement in the

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[35] See "Being Christian in Western Europe", Washington, D.C., Pew Research Center, 2018.

service of authoritarian politics; religious communities may use interreligious engagement in the service of religious nationalism. Acknowledging these risks and limitations is critical if the new paradigm of interreligious engagement aspires to build inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies. In this sense, the contributions to this report offer guidance on how to mitigate some of these risks. By the same measure, they also serve as a clear markers which identify when those partnerships need recalibrating or when they risk slipping into patterns of exclusivist religious manipulation or authoritarian state domination.

This report, therefore, confirms the need for a new and reinvigorated approach to interreligious dialogue and collaboration, strategically facilitated and supported by carefully designed post-secular partnership with governments and international organizations. These interreligious engagement strategies, at multiple levels, can potentially be more impactful in building peaceful and inclusive societies than a policy of advocacy or secular developmental interventions.

The implications of this analysis for policy makers suggests the following recommendations. First, to establish funding streams in different government departments for the implementation of interreligious engagement strategies on the ground, linking also to other relevant policy agendas such as the SDGs. Second, to recognize that, if interreligious engagement is to be effective, high-level interreligious dialogues need to be strategically joined up to interreligious collaboration on the ground so as to achieve impactful implementation and influence the public opinion through, for example, educational and media programs as well as social action. Third, to recognize that states should facilitate and support interreligious initiatives, for examples through the provision of facilities and infrastructure, while remaining impartial and not seeking to influence religious doctrine or to further a different political agenda. Fourth, to recognize that states retain the responsibility to challenge the positions of public religious authorities under certain conditions, especially

when they are perceived to negatively impact the general welfare of society or in the context of broader multi-stakeholder forms of engagement for the common good. Fifth, to identify interreligious engagement as a priority of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and International Development' strategies to combat intolerance and promote inclusive societies. Finally, to ensure that stakeholder participation in interreligious engagement is context-specific, comprehensive and aimed at including actors beyond the usual suspects.

The vision of human fraternity and the prospect of inclusive citizenship, offspring of a new era of interreligious engagement, carries the promise, this report expects, of a new realistic politics of hope for the Mediterranean and beyond.

# PART I

# ENGAGING RELIGION IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS

# 1. A Mediterranean Conversation on Human Fraternity and Inclusive Citizenship

In November 2020, the Rome-MED conference[1] hosted a Religions Forum featuring a pair of back-to-back panels discussing new forms of interreligious engagement in the broader Euro-Mediterranean area. The panels included several high-level participants working at the intersection of religion and politics. As a theme, the participants explored the concepts of Human Fraternity and Inclusive Citizenship, two key ideas which have characterized recent interreligious engagement in the region. The text that follows is a revised and condensed transcript of the dialogues moderated by the editors of the report, Fabio Petito, Fadi Daou and Michael D. Driessen.

The first part of the conversation explored the idea of Human Fraternity as an important concept shaping new interreligious dialogue initiatives in the Mediterranean region. The discussion featured a number of participants from a range of religious backgrounds actively working on the topic in the field, including **Mohamed Abdel-Salam**, who is the Secretary General of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, a former advisor to the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar; **Jean-Marc Aveline**, who is the Catholic Archbishop of Marseille, and the President of

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[1] "Rome-MED Mediterranean Dialogues", realized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with ISPI, 25 November-4 December 2020.

the Council of Interreligious Relations and New Religious Movements for the French Catholic Church; **André Azoulay**, who is an Advisor to the King of Morocco, a longtime advocate for the Moroccan Jewish community and the former President of the Anna Lindh Foundation for intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean; and **Nayla Tabbara**, a Muslim theologian and current President and co-Founder of the Adyan Foundation in Lebanon, which has pioneered work in the MENA region on interreligious solidarity and inclusive citizenship.

The second part of the conversation shifted the focus of the discussion from "Human Fraternity" to "Inclusive Citizenship", as an important concept guiding the efforts of fostering coexistence and social cohesion in diverse societies and stimulating recent models of interreligious engagement. The second panel also featured a number of high-profile participants working on the theme in the field who were situated at the intersection of the religion-political nexus of the international policymaking. Thus, panel participants included **Paul Gallagher**, who is the English Catholic Archbishop heading the Holy See diplomatic service as the Secretary for Relations with States for the Secretariat of State of the Holy See and active in a number of diplomatic mediations for peace; **Miguel Ángel Moratinos**, former Foreign Minister of Spain, current UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, and closely involved in the construction of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogues known as the Barcelona Process; **Alberto Melloni**, who is the UNESCO Chair on Religious Pluralism and Peace, Founder of the European Academy of Religions and a Chief Scientific Advisor of the European Commission; and **Azza Karam**, Secretary General of Religions for Peace, Professor at the Free University in Amsterdam and a senior Policy Advisor to the United Nations on a range of religious initiatives.

# Human Fraternity and Interreligious Engagement

## New Developments in Interreligious Dialogue and Collaboration

**Moderators**: We would like to begin our conversation with a reflection on some of the recent developments in interreligious dialogue and collaboration in the region. Polarization and discrimination based on religion and belief have been increasing in many parts of the world, including on the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The current global health emergency has, unfortunately, amplified this crisis for, as the U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres has noted, the current Covid-19 pandemic keeps unleashing "a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scare-mongering".[2] We have seen a great deal of '*othering*' across the two shores of the Mediterranean world, as is evident in new forms of religious nationalism and populist politics, the 'Europe versus Islam' narrative of the civilizational clash and the 'Christian versus Islam' as well as the 'Sunni versus Shia' narratives of religious conflict. Against this gloomy background – where the North and South shores of the Mediterranean are facing similar challenges in different forms – religious leaders, like Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb with the *Human Fraternity Document*, have felt the responsibility, in the very name of the theologies and social ethics of their traditions, to call for a counter-narrative of Human Fraternity and for achieving inclusive and peaceful societies, respecting the cultural and religious diversity of humankind and building an integral vision of human development.

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[2] António Guterres, speech given to launch the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, "We must act now to strengthen the immunity of our societies against the virus of hate", United Nations, 8 May 2020.

*How do you read this development? Is the world on the cusp of a new era of interreligious dialogue and collaboration? Is there something innovative about this new type of interreligious engagement? In an ever more polarized world, can it help to concretely navigate our troubled political times to build peace and foster inclusive societies?*

**Nayla Tabbara**: Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb's encounter in Abu Dhabi which launched the *Human Fraternity Document* represented a symbolic moment for interreligious dialogue in the region. It is important to recognize, however, that behind that document were years of work done by both the Catholic Church and Al-Azhar to develop the concepts and ideas present in it. The development of Catholic social teaching, for example, on public life values, and the development of other church documents on interreligious dialogue, has been important in this respect, but so, too, has been the series of documents emanating from Al-Azhar since 2011, including its declarations on religious freedom, citizenship, equality, diversity, and inclusion.

The *Human Fraternity Document* brings these developments together and, in doing so, has emphasized social and political issues, along with interreligious ones. The Document talks about citizenship, about freedom of expression, of action, of belief, and of practice. It also talks about equality. It is, therefore, an inclusive document that doesn't only address Christians and Muslims, but also "all people of good will". It shows us that when we talk about these principles or when we act in favor of these principles, we can do so together regardless of our backgrounds, as long as we believe in those values. The document also speaks about some of the most pressing issues that we are facing today. For example, it reminds us that God doesn't need to be defended, but that the poorest and the most marginalized do. It, therefore, directs us towards defend their rights and their dignity.

So, after this very symbolic moment that comes as a culmination of a reflection already happening within both Christianity and Islam, what do we do now? How can we promote this on the ground and among grassroots movements? Many people do not know about these documents; others do not accept them or think that they do not relate to their lives. One of our challenges, therefore, is to get the message of the *Human Fraternity Document* to reach the grassroots level, so that believers and people of good will appropriate its values.

At the Adyan Foundation we have been working on religious education material to foster these values of public life, including through an online platform that we set up called *Taadudiya*, (which means pluralism in Arabic) and which reaches around twenty to thirty million people in the Arab world yearly. With educational programs, grassroots projects and media campaigns on pluralism, inclusive citizenship, and freedom of religion or belief, we are partnering with many stakeholders for the promotion of the message of the *Human Fraternity Document*, including the recently established Higher Committee of Human Fraternity. On a more policy-oriented level, we are also working on a faith-based Charter for Inclusive Citizenship in Arab countries. I think that it is imperative for us to reflect more together on how to promote this transformative model that inspires believers and persons of good will to work together for public life values and for the common good, and how get that to reach the grassroots level. This is what we call at Adyan "Religious social responsibility", that needs to be applied by religious decision and opinion makers as well as by regular believers.

**Mohamed Abdel-Salam**: We know that the *Human Fraternity Document*, co-signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb, is very important. It is the first time that something like this has happened in history. It is a symbol: one of most important religious leaders of Islam meets with one of the most important religious leaders in

Christianity, and together they agree on the same principles. I think that the 4th of February 2019 will be a date that we are going to remember in the future.

The Mediterranean region has always been a space of encounter between cultures and civilizations. Art, science and culture have constantly traveled from one shore to another, in both directions, as have people with their different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. And yet, this mixing of cultures, races and knowledge was not followed by mutual understanding at the same level. Thus, there are still a lot of barriers and stereotypes present about each other that make each party consider the other as a threat and an enemy who needs to be eliminated. The *Human Fraternity Document* seeks to break these walls and decrease the fears, doubts and concerns that each group has about the other.

The Document states that we are all brothers and sisters in humanity and equal citizens in our countries, emphasizing the fact that our differences in beliefs, languages, ethnicities, etc. should not divide us. Rather, we ought to live in our common world as if in one country, where we are all equal in rights and duties. At the same time, however, we must acknowledge that the challenges we have on this path are great: from defamation of religious symbols and beliefs; to hate speech and incitement against others; to terrorists who use religion to justify their violence. Therefore, in order to save humanity, I think we now must move from dialogue between religions to cooperation between religions.

As the Grand Imam and Pope made clear in the *Human Fraternity Document*, this call is addressed not only to Muslims and Christians, but to humanity as a whole, including to non-believers. Both leaders, in fact, asked all of us to work together, because we cannot build fraternity alone. Thus, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity strives to implement these principles, based on the values we share, through multiple practical initiatives, and I think this meeting is an important turning point in joining forces for the common good of

humanity. Together, we can build an international space for dialogue and coexistence in the Mediterranean region, one that is meaningful not only for its own population but for the whole world, by creating a stronger dynamic of exchange of thought, culture, and science between peoples.

**André Azoulay**: I will try to be as concrete as possible to tell you what it means to speak about religious and intercultural dialogue in our daily lives, especially in Islam and in the context of my country, Morocco, where diversity is key. Recently, I came back from my hometown of Essaouira-Mogador where I presided over a launching ceremony for a new school curriculum that was designed to teach my fellow Muslim compatriots the long and deep-rooted history of the Jewish heritage in Morocco. As a Moroccan Jew, I stand as a witness to close than three thousand years long history. Judaism arrived first in Morocco six centuries before Christ, which means thirteen centuries before Islam. Thus, Judaism in my country is not just a detail; it is part of our legacy. And yet, until now, there was no substantial program, no manuals, no books teaching the Moroccan people what Judaism represented in their own country. They did not know that their DNA was also nurtured by Judaism. But a few years ago, in July 2011, we voted our new Constitution by a very large majority, and in the forward to that Constitution it is mentioned that while Morocco today is a Muslim country, it was first nursed by the Amazigh-Berber civilization, and then by the Jewish civilization, and later on by the Arabo-Muslim Civilization. This was written in the Constitution. It was a major breakthrough which gives to us the legitimacy and the ability to try to leverage it in the daily life for the largest possible public, by starting projects in education which had not been possible in the past. It was a reality in history, and it was deeply rooted in the mindset of millions of Moroccans, but it was not in the educational system.

Fortunately now, thanks to the leadership of his Majesty the King Mohammed VI, schools and colleges in Morocco have

begun to work on this curriculum which teaches the Jewish part of the Moroccan identity, culture and history. And again, this has happened in a Muslim country. You cannot imagine the impact this has had in Moroccan civil society. This step has taught us what we can do in this very gloomy time not only because of Covid, but in a time where denial, clashes, frivolity are spoiling all of us. In this time of denial, we are sending this signal which is not simply from the top down, but also from the bottom up and open to all.

Let me just add that in 2020, on January 15, King Mohammed VI visited Essaouira to inaugurate a restored XVIII century historical building, one of the 40 synagogues which existed in Essaouira between 1819 and the early XX century. Essaouira is the only city I know in the world of Islam, from Morocco to Indonesia, where a Muslim population recognized that it once had a Jewish majority. One of the synagogues was restored and in the same building "Bayt Dakira" or "the Memory House" was created. Upstairs we also launched the first international study center to revisit the relations between Judaism and Islam. We want to revisit these relations by studying the two Holy Books, the Quran and the Torah, and look upon them with a different vision and goal. The two Holy Books, and all the Holy Books, were so badly instrumentalized and spoiled in their real meaning. Now we have again in Morocco a study center with academic and scientific partnerships all over the world from America to Europe and the Middle East, and we are working together to try to give the best possible chance for a global and inclusive education to succeed. Education is a keyword. It is through education that religious dialogue and religious legitimacy can help us to find a way out of this regressive and archaic situation that we are all confronted with today.

**Jean-Marc Aveline**: Throughout my ministry as a priest for almost thirty years and now as Archbishop of the city of Marseille in France, I have been working on inter-religious themes. This is because the city where I hold my office is a place

where believers and communities from different religions are many. Before responding to the questions posed here in a more systematic way, I would like to share with you some real-life examples that might be relevant for our discussion.

First, as you know, France has been mourning after the recent terror attacks in a school in Paris and in a church in Nice.[3] A few days after the attacks, I received a group of twenty-one imams at the Archbishopric who asked to see me to present their condolences. They offered me flowers, and it was a very strong moment. The second example, a few days later, a Muslim high school in Marseille took the initiative of organizing a minute of silence together with a Catholic high school facing it in the same street. It was very simple but for me very relevant. The last example is an annual meeting of Christian and Muslim families in Marseille, that has taken place for a number of years in a park with about 300 people present. Children play during the day, the adults prepare a meal, everybody enjoys their time together, and even pray together at the end of the day. For me, I enjoy being with them, and this last experience shows the relevance of meeting the other concretely in tangible moments of the ordinary life. These three examples show the importance of fraternity lived together; little things but very important because they are at the level of interpersonal relations. We need studies and forums like this, but we need above all, concrete relationships in ordinary life.

During the last thirty years I have observed three shifts in the focus of inter-religious dialogue. The first period roughly coincides with the pontificate of Saint John Paul II. At that time, the experience of meeting the other and the interrogations raised for the faith of each were important: this was the time of the great encounter in Assisi.[4] This theological moment was

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[3] The assassination of Samuel Paty took place in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine (France) on 16 October 2020 and the terror attack in Notre Dame in Nice (France) on 29 October 2020.

[4] Pope John Paul II organized the first World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, Italy, on 27 October 1986. Since then, the Community of Sant'Egidio promoted

important because it raised the question to the faith of each believer about the serious consideration of the existence of the other and his legitimacy to the pretention of truth.

The second period could coincide with the pontificate of Benedict XVI where the question of freedom was central: religious freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of worship. This other theological moment was important especially in the exchange of documents written after the Pontiff's address in Regensburg in 2006.[5]

The third period initiated with the pontificate of Francis and urges fraternity as a challenge against polarization and discrimination. So, first dialogue as a theological and spiritual issue; second dialogue as a diplomatic and international item about freedom, and third dialogue as an origin of concrete collaboration for human fraternity.

It seems to me that a new era of inter-religious dialogue can begin in this third period if and only if it does not forget the two preceding periods. It seems to me that these three moments are not chronological moments but logical moments which are at the heart of a new kind of inter-religious dialogue: faith, freedom, and fraternity together. Fraternity is foremost a remedy in these troubled times only if it has its origin in personal and spiritual conversion, and fraternity can only be lived if religious freedom is assured. All in all, in this polarized world, a new kind of inter-religious dialogue is possible if it is based on faith, freedom, and fraternity, and only with these conditions can it help build peace.

I want to close with something that the French Cardinal Tauran said a few years ago when he was president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. Namely, he said that religious pluralism can be considered as a mysterious purpose of God whose significance evades our intelligence.

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an yearly interreligious meeting of Peace in different cities of Europe and across the Mediterranean.

[5] The lecture sparked a controversy and negative international reactions, especially in the Muslim world, 12 September 2006, Regensburg (Germany).

## Human Fraternity and Religious Minorities

**Moderators**: We would like to steer our conversation now to a reflection on the theme of Human Fraternity, as expressed in the *Human Fraternity Document*. Other, recent, important, interreligious declarations in the region, including the Marrakesh Declaration and even the *A Common Word between Us and Them*, were clearly concerned with denouncing religiously-expressed violence; supporting the rights of religious minorities; or defending a basic necessity for interreligious collaboration. The *Human Fraternity Document*, instead, seems more directed at making the case for a shared vision of the common good and the responsibilities of religions to advocate for fundamental freedoms, like freedom of thought, conscience and religion within the framework of "inclusive" or "full" citizenship. We quote:

> It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies the concept of full citizenship and reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority … and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against.

The North and South shores of the Mediterranean seem, in this respect, to face similar challenges, though in different forms, and their respective models to manage religious pluralism – relative more emphasis on the universality of rights in the North and legal pluralism in the South – seem to be in crisis.

*Can the interreligious narrative of human fraternity help to create new inclusive forms of citizenship? What is the role of religious leaders and communities in this process? How do you understand this shift of emphasis from a minority/majority approach to inclusive citizenship? Are we sure minorities will be in a better position as a result of moving away from the normative framework of protection of religious minorities?*

**Nayla Tabbara**: I agree that we are seeing a shift today from talking about protecting minorities to protecting rights related to diversity, especially rights to Freedom of Religion or Belief and rights to cultural diversity. In this way we are seeking to protect rights of individuals and the rights of communities while also trying to avoid their "ghettoization". I think that our primary goal should be to protect social cohesion and, more broadly, to support diversity, human dignity, justice and the common good. My concern is that the minority framework can sometimes lead to a sort of ghettoization of religious communities and minorities, and may favor various forms of confessionalism and sectarianism. As we have seen in Lebanon, these closed systems can lead to clientelism and corruption. Focusing more on inclusive citizenship rights and freedoms, therefore, like Freedom of Religion or Belief, for instance, may be more conducive to promoting social cohesion.

At the same time, I also think that when we talk about rights, we don't talk enough about what inclusion really means. Inclusion requires a space where people from different backgrounds and beliefs can really communicate and dare to talk about the issues that they need to face in society, and not simply coexist and try to remain at the surface of issues. Inclusion is not to have a superficial umbrella where we say that "everything is fine" as long as individuals and groups have some recognized rights. No, inclusion is an umbrella under which we say let's see together where and why things are not fine, where are people being discriminated against, be they part of groups that are smaller, be they non-religious, be they part of religions that are non-recognized, or of majority religions, be they part of majority culture or minority cultures and ethnicities. This then leads us to examine what laws we have that do not support inclusive citizenship and what we can effectively do to promote it.

All of this requires serious efforts to integrate the different groups of society into the national culture. We cannot move directly to solidarity without getting people – "the other" – integrated in our public discourse, in our religious discourse,

in our education, in the holidays that we celebrate nationally, and in all of those cultural symbols around us. For me, these are all steps that must be taken together in parallel: on the one hand, we must work together for legal rights in order to end discrimination and to protect freedoms for everyone and the dignity of each and every individual in society. On the other hand, we need to work together for the social inclusion of all, for i.e. for a social cohesion built on recognition of each diverse group and on constant dynamic communication and discussion between all.

**Mohamed Abdel-Salam**: One thing I would like to stress is that when the Pope and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar talk about minorities, they teach us that we should not use this word to divide people. Using the word "minority" in a discriminatory way in the past has led even the youth in those societies to start speaking of themselves as these minorities. We should use this word very carefully because it can become dangerous since people may feel compelled to choose between feeling isolated or integrated in this society because of this focus on minorities. These people should aspire to have the same rights as the majority. The *Human Fraternity Document* reminds us that: "The concept of citizenship is based on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice". … and it is the "misuse [of the concept of minority which] paves the way for hostility and discord".

Therefore I believe that when we speak about inclusive citizenship, we are able to overcome the divisions of the minority/majority approach, and instead replace it by a common engagement between all citizens for further solidarity and mutual respect for human dignity. I will give three examples about how to implement these ideas. First, recently the Italian embassy in Egypt organized a conference entitled "From Freedom of Worship to Freedom of Religion or Belief".[6]

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[6] A. Benzo (Ed.), From Freedom of Worship to Freedom of Religion or Belief:

The aim of the conference was to explore the common vision within Christianity and Islam about the topic and the common engagement that they can have to advance this right on the legal level and in civil society.

The second example has to do with Covid-19. We are now living a crucial moment in our human history with the pandemic and its consequences. This presents us with a great test to live real human solidarity and to refuse all forms of discrimination either towards those who suffer from the virus or towards marginalized groups and populations, including refugees, whose sufferings were increased because of the pandemic. A fair distribution of the vaccines to all, including the poorest population is now a real challenge. I am glad to note and praise the humanistic decision that was taken by the G20 led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in November 2020, to purchase and distribute two billion of doses for vulnerable populations. Both the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Pope Francis are constantly reminding the world about this need for comprehensive solidarity to win the fight against the pandemic. It is our duty to work together for a post-Covid-19 world where human needs are put before economic interest and benefits, and to implement in a concrete and authentic way the *Human Fraternity Document*.

The third and final example has to do with education, which is extremely important in order to help transform mentalities and cultures. The *Human Fraternity Document* affirms,

> the need to revive this awareness in the hearts of new generations through sound education and an adherence to moral values and upright religious teachings. In this way we can confront tendencies that are individualistic, selfish, conflicting, and also address radicalism and blind extremism in all its forms and expressions.

Fostering the Partnership between State, the International Community and Religious Institutions, Proceedings of the conference at the Italian Cultural Institute in Cairo, 18 February 2020, published by the Italian Embassy in Cairo.

I am glad to tell you that more than two million people in Al-Azhar institutions are studying the *Human Fraternity Document* as part of their programs. This is a huge change, and one that is very meaningful for the future. Several governments have also begun to include the *Human Fraternity Document* within their school or university programs, as for example Liberia and the United Arab Emirates. I think that education is the main road and the healthy way to work for co-existence and fraternity.

**André Azoulay**: Allow me to respond with a different kind of answer. Dreaming of full citizenship in our time requires, unfortunately, that we first deal with the house which is already on fire. Today we are confronted with a situation where extremism, antisemitism and islamophobia are gaining ground everywhere. Christian minorities are under pressure in the Middle East and other places. So, I think we first have to try to build a counter dynamic that makes it possible to revive again the spirit of an earlier epoch where mutual respect and acceptance of diversity were the common rule in our daily life. Therefore, if we want to address the issue of full citizenship, we first have to repair what was broken and spoiled. We cannot avoid this reality, and I think that inclusive citizenship is something we have to keep in mind for a longer-term horizon. We first need to think about how we can coordinate better, how we can work together differently, how we can unite our voices, our tools, our policies, and our leadership to rebuild what was damaged, then we can give more possibility to what we are discussing today. I see this as a common commitment, as a promizing road map for the future.

**Jean-Marc Aveline**: The role of religious leaders is of the utmost importance here. But there is a great difficulty: who are the religious leaders? For example, in my country today, the government wants formal interlocutors in order to be in dialogue with its different religions. With respect to Islam, there was an attempt to create a national body of representation, but

that attempt shattered because too many people made claims to religious leadership. There is no homogeneity between the so-called leaders and the believers. In this sense, the rise of the Internet and social networks has also shifted the feeling of leadership of younger generations who seek the leaders they want. So, the real question becomes, how do we build religious leadership that can enhance the promotion of faith, freedom, and fraternity and create more inclusive societies?

Regarding the shift from the status of religious minority to a full citizenship, we can never be sure it will work out. There is some evidence that could suggest full citizenship might lead to the better protection of minorities or to a worse status that would lead minorities to flee their homes. Instead of saying if I am in favor of the model or not, I want to suggest which conditions would be necessary for inclusive citizenship to assure a better protection. It seems to me that these conditions are two: first, the goal of this shift must not be the survival of minorities but a common life together in mutual respect and concrete cooperation, where each minority thinks about the common good of the whole of society rather than their own proper survival.

The second condition is that this shift must not lead to a leveling that removes differences by refusing alterity. If inclusive means the contrary of exclusive, it will work. But if inclusive means erasing the differences, it will not work. The Jewish people can tell us and give us lessons about the importance of difference, so we have to keep being cautious. For example, in France, we have the experience of *Laicité*, which is positive to my eyes, but which can deviate into *Laicism* that excludes every religious dimension from the cultural sphere and public sphere and that is, for me, a point of concern. Inclusive citizenship is better than discrimination of minorities but if inclusive citizenship means the seclusion of the religious dimension just to the private sphere, then it is not a good thing.

## Inclusive Citizenship and Religious Social Responsibility

Inclusive Citizenship and
the Contemporary Crisis of Living Together

**Moderators**: As you know, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence are being increasingly challenged on both shores of the Mediterranean. During the last decade, the MENA region has experienced unprecedented protests expressing higher expectations for social justice, good governance and political participation. This, unfortunately, has occurred in parallel with a rise of sectarianism and extremism that have threatened the very existence of the diverse social fabrics of many countries of the region. More recently, the tragic terrorist attacks in Europe and the ensuing political discussions have foregrounded with new force the debate on the relationship between religion and radicalization. And it has done so at a precise moment in which the international community has started to recognize the positive impact of religion in fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. At the same time, religious leadership has appeared to move beyond simply raising a "prophetic voice" in the desert of politics, to mobilizing for a common interreligious engagement for a better and sustainable living together. Texts such as the *Human Fraternity Document* and Pope Francis' recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, seem to be promoting a strong new narrative about social, religious, and inter-religious friendship and engagement. So, we would like to start this discussion with two questions:

*Are we today at a crossroads where the political search for a new social contract meets with the interreligious engagement for a shared testimony for the common good? Is inclusive citizenship the name of this crossroads?*

**Paul Gallagher**: The voice of the Holy See seeks to make itself heard at multiple levels and on various occasions. It can be said that the diplomatic activity of the Vatican is not limited only to the diplomatic level, strictly speaking, but extends also to the inter-religious and humanitarian levels in accordance with its proper spiritual nature and mission. The concerns and priorities expressed in the above-mentioned documents continue to inspire and offer guidelines to the Holy See's action. As underlined by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State of the Holy See, during the press conference for the presentation of *Fratelli Tutti*:

> The encyclical not only considers fraternity as an instrument or an ideal, it outlines a culture of fraternity to be applied in international relations that can contribute to the renewal of principles guiding international life, inspire the guidelines necessary for facing new challenges, and lead the plurality of actors working at a global level to respond to the needs of human families.

And he continues:

> To the leaders of nations, to the diplomats, to those who work for peace and development, fraternity proposes the transformation of international life from merely living side by side, a coexistence which is almost necessary, to a dimension based on that common sense of humanity that already now inspires and supports so many international rules and structures, thus promoting effective coexistence.

It is exactly this social cohesion and peaceful coexistence that are being increasingly challenged on both shores of the Mediterranean. The Holy See is one among a number of actors seeking to address the causes of these current conflicts and working to promote a new narrative of fraternity. In the context of the region presently under discussion, these two concepts are given special relevance in the diplomatic activity of the Holy See. Intimately related to them is the fundamental question of equal citizenship among all members of society.

I now move on to this pressing question: in a recent research paper, "Leaving no one behind towards Inclusive Citizenship in Arab Countries", published by the *United Nations Development Programme* in 2019, it was underlined that,

> achieving the sustainable development goals in Arab countries requires addressing the most debilitating development problems related to citizenship in a region where the relations between the state and society remain deeply fraught and contested among political, social, and economic fragility.[7]

Promoting and defending equal citizenship, therefore, remains a crucial instrument for solving many of the problems that are plaguing the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean area. It is the firm conviction of the Holy See that strengthening and respecting the laws on equal citizenship in the various countries of the region regardless of ethnicity, race, religious affiliation, or nationality can ensure the basis on which to build peaceful coexistence between the various components of society. The law must equally and unequivocally guarantee every citizen's human rights among which is the right of freedom of religion and conscience, which involves the right to freely change one's religion without suffering discrimination, persecution, or being punished by death. A properly functioning state that works for the common good is also a pre-requisite for protecting religious minorities and ensuring their future. This theme was underscored in the *Human Fraternity Document* for world peace and common coexistence, signed on February 4, 2019 in Abu Dhabi by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, where it was reiterated that:

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[7] A. Abdellatif, P. Pagliani, and E. Hsu, *Leaving No One Behind: Towards Inclusive Citizenship in Arab Countries*, Arab Human Development Report Research Paper, 2, 2019.

> It is, therefore, crucial to establish in our societies the concept of full citizenship and to reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority. Its misuse paves the way for hostility and discord; it undoes any success and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against.

Pope Francis resumes and accentuates the same concept of full citizenship in chapter four of *Fratelli Tutti,* whose application paves the way for social cohesion and peaceful coexistence leaving no one behind.[8]

**Azza Karam**: In ways that are very pertinent to the notion of citizenship, the leadership we speak of in *Religions for Peace* is not a leadership only of titles within religious institutions or religious networks, but it is a leadership manifested through service to communities in very pragmatic and programmatic initiatives and actions. I would like to share a couple of very concrete things that *Religions for Peace* has learned from this particular legacy of working inter-religiously or multi-religiously over the last five decades in actual service to communities, what we refer to as Diapraxis.

The first of these, especially now that we have undergone almost a year of complexities arising from a global pandemic, is our understanding of "citizenship in action", which is exemplified by multi-religious advocacy and social engagement. Citizenship, in this sense, is created not just through the law by the state but through the actions of different citizens as they are instructed, engaged and facilitated by religious actors who are serving different members of a community. This includes all of the people who are there in the community, including migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people. By serving these various communities, we realize a form of citizenship that may not even correspond to existing legislation. Whereas existing laws may say that citizens are only those who bear citizenship

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[8] Francis Pope, *Fratelli Tutti*, Encyclical Letter, October 2020, pars. 128-131.

legally, who are born in this country, others, including migrants and refugees, may become *de facto* citizens of that territory through the work of religious organizations serving alongside them.

I think we need to be very conscious of the fact that when religious communities work together, they create a *status quo* that is much more inclusive than the laws and legislation of a particular nation-state, and this reality presents us with a very different understanding of what it is to realize citizenship in practice. This is extraordinarily critical at a time when we're talking about the largest numbers of refugees and internally displaced people ever in human history – as we've known it, that is, since we've started to track nation-states and the people moving in and people moving out of them. Given this particular reality, the contribution of multi-religious collaboration effectively exceeds the existing legislative capacities and challenges both the governmental and inter-governmental legislation, as we have it today. It does this through an act of multi-religious service and care extended to various communities in their particular national, regional, and global context. We are not often aware of this important dynamic of citizenship, as being enacted and made possible through the service of multi-religious actors coming together.

A second lesson has to do with Covid-19. Covid-19 is teaching us something that I would have hoped never to learn. Given the reality I have just described above, namely that religious actors can enable alternative forms of citizenship through their "welcoming of the stranger", one would assume that Covid-19 would have forced an acceleration of more collaboration between different religious communities and organizations, in order to absorb the huge need that Covid-19 has now imposed on all human beings: citizens, migrants, refugees, you name it. Interestingly however, while Covid-19 has magnified the fact that religious institutions and faith-based NGOs are indeed the "original" humanitarian and development actors, a great many of these organizations are serving others simply because their

governments are unable to fully serve the exponential growth of needs of their respective citizens. Religious actors, therefore, are at the forefront of the crisis and acting as first responders to it.

That said, are these religious institutions and faith-based NGOs working together in their response to Covid-19? I can tell you without a shadow of doubt: very, very rarely. These different institutions are each doing tremendous work and serving everyone, and they are not necessarily distinguishing between the different communities, including the different religious communities, whom they serve. But they are not deliberately working together. Catholics, Muslims (Shia, Sunni), Protestants, Buddhists and Hindus - they are not working together. They are each serving exponentially and amazingly, but they are not necessarily working together.

This is relevant because we have just said that if the religious contribution to citizenship is to expand its scope and to make citizenship more inclusive through its service, then what does it mean when different religious actors are working solely in siloed ways to serve communities? It means that we are looking at a much stronger religious presence in the public, social, economic, financial and political space, but we are not looking at a multi-religious collaborative existence that can truly build social cohesion. We are not looking at an inclusive, socially-cohesive reality. We are looking at a precipice. In fact, we are at the edge of a precipice in which we are looking at different forms of religions serving communities. I do not think that a necessarily very helpful space to be, and I am intentionally and deliberately provoking us to think about what that could imply. What will that mean for a citizenship – a citizenry – that sees different religious actors serving it in different ways but not working together as one?

**Alberto Melloni**: Being European means belonging to a union in which citizenship is not a gift but a right pertaining to the person as holder of a more profound status. I am happy to live in a country which has emancipated itself from its fascist

past by defining human rights as something that is beyond citizenship, as something that belongs to human person as such. I am very happy to live in a country which was inspired by French personalism to write in its constitution a helpful model of religious freedom that structures – does not define but "acknowledges" – the relationship between the religious experience and civil rights. This "non-model" continues to work even now, when the change in the religious landscape seems to urge us to find new solutions and – perhaps too quickly – to find a way out from the danger.

From this perspective, I want to look at the category of fraternity. For someone who reads the Bible, "fraternity" is a very delicate and fragile concept because brotherhood is the womb which gave birth to the first crime of history. We are *fratelli tutti* as Cain and Abel: therefore, *fratelli tutti* of Abel and *fratelli tutti* of Cain. So, both brotherhoods are important, and both must be delicately managed. I believe that the concept of inclusive citizenship is useful but that it has to be considered as a tool or an instrument among other instruments and not as a goal among other goals.

For this purpose, this year of 2021 offers several opportunities: with the G20 Interfaith Forum in Italy, and the Dubai Expo as well as other initiatives that have been taken by the different players in this field. They can continue an effort to re-consider inter-religious relations and their relevance in the broadest terms: as the cohabitation of different faiths, the cohabitation between people embracing a faith and the one rejecting a faith or moving from one faith to another.

Among the instruments for such a reflection, it is very important to consider the instrument of knowledge. I think that knowledge – as in acknowledgment, to be known – is the aspiration of both religious and non-religious communities. Knowledge of your neighbors, whoever you are whoever they are: neighbors sitting around the same public area. And this raises a question: if I can put it in very medieval and Italian terms, the question is: How large is the town square (which is the public space)?

There is a model that says that if you have a large and immense "*Place de la Laicité*" that allows people to be distant from each other, then this is the best solution, and that republican values make it possible to cross the "*Place de la Laicité*" from one corner to the other. Another model is represented by Bologna, where I speak from: in Bologna the people calls "*Piazza Grande*" a square which is actually a very small square; it contains the city's town hall, its Cathedral and its prison, all in the same space, and even in the papal time, before the Ghetto, it was very close to the old synagogue. This is a sort of urbanistic metaphor capable to depict a perspective that I think could be helpful in this field.

**Miguel Angel Moratinos**: Let me start by observing that this year marks the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration.[9] I was there, and 25 years ago we did not include the religious dimension in our policy work. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership had a three baskets structure – my friend André Azoulay who at that time led the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation would remember this well – one focused on the political/security dimension, a second on the economic/financial dimension, and the third on the cultural/social dimension. But at that time, we did not really conceive the religious dimension as something that ought to be a part of "Mediterranean diplomacy". Today, Italy has taken the lead, and I am very happy that we are including this issue in our Mediterranean dialogues today. It represents a novelty, I think, for a multilateral framework such as the RomeMED conference where difficult crises such as Syria and Libya are discussed at the highest level, and it is a great achievement to include how religion can contribute to peace and stability in the Mediterranean.

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[9] The 1995 Barcelona Declaration was the founding act of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, also known as the Barcelona process. In 2008 an international organization, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), was founded to strengthen the Euro-Med Partnership.

Secondly, the debate between politics and religion has been around throughout the entire history of mankind. There is a certain way in which we have all become secular in the Western World and in European democracies, at least since Nietzsche declared that "God is dead". For some time, it seemed that secularization had prevailed and that a certain *laicisism* as, for example, the division between state and religion in France embedded in the law of 1905 was undisputable.[10] I'm myself a Catholic, but I am also a secular man and respect all democracies. Yet, what we have been seeing in France has made the debate even more confusing. Let us be frank. Today, there is a tremendous confusing "amalgam": Where do we go with freedom of religion, freedom of speech, *laicism*, inclusive citizenship, the rights of religious minorities? Where are the guiding lines to really move ahead?

I am quite inspired by his Holiness Pope Francis, not only by the *Human Fraternity Document*, but also by the *Fratelli Tutti* encyclical. When Pope Francis published *Laudato Si'*, he made a tremendous impact, including in the media. And yet, with *Fratelli Tutti*, while we are discussing the encyclical here today, the media is not. And I think that Nayla Tabbara was right to say that there is a lack of debate, knowledge, and understanding of what *Fratelli Tutti* means. If you read *Fratelli Tutti* and you read other high-profile speeches in some European countries today, it represents a totally opposite approach. *Fratelli Tutti* is about being together, while others are looking for separatism, division, and exclusion. So, we really must recuperate these as guidelines. I recall Pope Francis' statement at the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the European Union and the Holy See in 2020, in which he said,

> I dream of a Europe marked by a healthy secularism, where God and Caesar remain distinct but not opposed ... The era

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[10] The *law* of *1905*, concerning the *separation* of the *churches* and the *state*, instituted and defined the French model of secularism, known as *Laïcité*.

of confessional conflicts is over, but so too – let us hope – is
the age of a certain laicism closed to others and especially to
God.[11]

I am, of course, in favor of *laïcité* but not a fundamentalist
understanding of *laicism*. We talk about fundamentalism
in religion, but sometimes we should also talk about
fundamentalism in secularism.

So, my friends, where are we now? We are in a world where
these two components of secularism and religious aspects are
in a relationship. I had the chance to be in Lindau last year,
invited by *Religions for Peace*, and I said that spirituality is back
in Europe. This doesn't mean that we should have theocratic
countries in Europe, but we must recognize that there is an
important place for spiritual sensitivity in our society. If the
decision-makers don't understand that, they won't be able to run
the country adequately. They need to understand that we live
in an era of deep religious pluralism, as the previously quoted
cardinal Touran understood it very well. Well, this pluralism of
religion is part of our societies today. How are we going to live
together?

Let me finish with one idea. We have been discussing the
concept of citizenship. I am absolutely in favor of that. I
think what has happened in France, for instance, was not a
contradiction between freedom of religion and freedom of
speech. Freedom of speech, of course, is mentioned in Article
19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but freedom
of religion and conscience are in Article 18. So, tell me what
is better, Article 18 or 19? Are we going to decide that article
19 prevails because it contains freedom of speech, and put

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[11] Letter of the Holy Father to the Secretary of State on the 40th anniversary
of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community
(COMECE), the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations
between the Holy See and the European Union, and the 50th anniversary of the
presence of the Holy See as Permanent Observer at the Council of Europe, 27
October 2020.

aside article 18? Or is there an indivisibility to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Why doesn't anyone talk about how these articles are interrelated? These articles work together and that means that we won't be able to have a real freedom of expression if we have the "freedom of hate". So, we have to work so that citizens have the right to both articles 18 and 19 in every country. For that we need citizenship – the individual rights of the citizens on an equal footing.

This is why the language of minority is not my cup of tea. I think that decision-makers, including academics and religious leaders, have to start to change not only our narrative, but our language as well – how we are expressing ourselves. I think that when we are working for fraternity, we must change from a negative concept to a positive one. Instead of minorities, defend citizenship; instead of coexistence, let's work for "living together". Instead of tolerance, which is a negative concept, let us work for mutual respect; instead of dialogue, let's move to alliance (as this is the logics of the UN Alliance of Civilizations I represent). Finally, instead of having security, let us have peace. Because without peace, we can never attain security. So, that is the responsibility we need to start working on.

## Religious Social Responsibility and New Secular-Religious Partnerships

**Moderators**: As we have been discussing, the emphasis on inclusive citizenship has also been closely tied to the development of a series of high-level interreligious dialogue initiatives across the Mediterranean space. One of the ongoing criticisms of these initiatives is that "they are for show only", are high on performance and low on content and action and, as such, risk being too easily instrumentalized by both states and religious leaders.

*What type of collaboration between religious and political leaders might mitigate these risks and contribute to more sustainable*

*and effective forms of secular-religious engagement to combat
intolerance and discrimination? What kind of responsibilities do
religious leaders have? How can governments and international
organizations best partner with religious leaders and communities
to concretely build inclusive societies in the Mediterranean region,
from the MENA region to Europe?*

**Miguel Angel Moratinos**: I was quite optimistic during the
last two years. When I was preparing the UN plan for safe-
guarding religious sites,[12] I traveled around the world, and I
met with many high-level religious personalities, and I found,
for the first time, the sense of working together. Before, there
were some isolated attempts, such as conferences which focused
on creating interchanges between religious leaders. But since
the *Human Fraternity Document* between Pope Francis and the
Grand Imam Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb, I think things have
changed. There is now a positive agenda which does not wait
for a terrorist attack to show solidarity and compassion with
the other.

The question is how can religious leaders begin to work
together to create a wider environment of mutual respect?
That's a methodology that I think the Pope and Sheikh Ahmed
Al-Tayeb and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations are
trying to develop. You can meet together as religious leaders,
but you also have to meet together with political personalities,
with civil society organizations, with the media, with the
private sector, so that everybody contributes and understands
what should be done. I think we have to go a step forward and
eliminate this sense of separatism. So, what I am pleading for
is to work together and to fight communitarianism. All of us
need to be engaged in order to fight extremism and violence.
We need a global and interactive dialogue with all stakeholders
to make this better.

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[12] United Nations Alliances of Civilizations (UNAOC), T*he United Nations Plan of
Action to Safeguard Religious Sites. In Unity and Solidarity for Safe and Peaceful Worship*,
"Ring of Peace", 2019.

**Alberto Melloni**: I think that the Italian presidency of the G20 will offer a good opportunity to introduce some particular Italian perspectives to the question of interreligious dialogue and interfaith encounters through the hosting of the G20 Interfaith Forum around the theme of a 'Time to Heal'. The G20 Interfaith Forum will include authorities and believers of the world-wide religious traditions and will want to represent the voice of the voiceless in front of the G20 and the powerful. It is a moment in which we hope to offer a possibility to represent the efforts that have been done in the past years regarding the issue of forgiveness and the consciousness of reconciliation inside each and every tradition, perhaps in the form of a small written document. I am especially thinking about the example of the year 2000, and the *Mea Culpa* of John Paul II in the jubilee year. The G20 Interfaith Forum in Italy is an opportunity to create a platform for offering a real commitment that could be promising for future generations.

**Azza Karam**: The Middle East has been one of those regions where even when things are not religious, they somehow get to be tainted with religion and the religious. Heaven knows we do a very good job anyway in the Middle East of making sure that religion is very much part of the equation, and even when there is a purely political resource issue, it somehow gets to become known as a religious issue. So, I think given that we have this particular characteristic in the region, that I am deeply proud to be part of, I think we have to acknowledge that multi-religious collaboration has to be the moral imperative in this space. Even if religious actors are the ones who seem to be the source of all troubles and all issues and all oppression and subordination and terrorism and violence and radicalization, precisely because this is a legacy, a heritage, and a stereotype, it behooves religious actors, not just religious institutions, but religious actors in their diversity, to collaborate towards a common set of purposes.

Again, Covid-19 has given us a blight – we already have serious water shortage in the region, and wars are ongoing in

the Middle East. If the political leaders do not appear to be able to overcome the multiple boundaries that we have, then it behooves the religious actors, institutions, leaders, and NGOs to present an alternative to the political space. This does not mean that religious leaders should become more political – because that is exactly the beginning of the end. Instead, religious leaders, and their institutions, and their NGOs and their communities, need to provide an alternative to what we are seeing as the wasteland of conflict – that is also the nurturing space for the world's largest monotheistic religions. I would call upon the religious leaders and their institutions in the region to model the prophetic alternative in praxis. Since they are already serving their communities in remarkable ways, can they model an alternative social coexistence?

Globally, however, it appears to me that the multi-religious imperative is a key to change. It's not just about religion being important – we've always known that religion is important – it is just that the Western European hemisphere is only now waking up to that fact. The truth here is that it is the multi-religious dimension that will make or break a pattern. We have to break the historical pattern where religious leaders and politicians have worked in tandem and have hurt, and done a great deal of harm, over the years. We must not repeat that pattern. We invite and insist on the multi-religious, so that no one religion has primacy and the "incredible knowledge of all things" and the "only link to the real true God'".

Instead, when we have a multi-religious collaborative platform, we understand, we appreciate, we genuinely see the divine in one another. Multi-religious has to be our modus operandi. It has to be what religious institutions do, no matter how powerful they are, and that is fundamentally the message of *Fratelli Tutti*. It is not saying we have to be better Catholics per se – it doesn't stop there – it says that we have to be brothers to one another across our differences and in spite of our differences. The multi-religious imperative is and has to be our way forward to model a social cohesion that strengthens our civil society infrastructure.

States and governments are facing their worst nightmare ever – institutionally, morally, and legally – so we cannot insist that states have to now behave better. What we can do is to provide a model for an alternative civic infrastructure. If the multi-religious can make a stronger civic space, then we will get through this entire drama, that we are only beginning to confront with Covid-19. And Covid-19 is but the beginning. There are many more humanitarian challenges that we can confront if the multi-religious, socially cohesive, civic engagement can provide all with an alternative modality of social cohesion. We will, God willing, Insha'Allah, "build back better", but if we fall into the political entrapment of looking at our distinctiveness and seeing who is more important and which organization is better than, we will get absolutely nowhere really fast.

**Paul Gallagher**: There is no doubt that there is a very strong connection between *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* in the way in which they both face up to a concrete problem and show that there is a need for a global response. *Fratelli Tutti* in some ways gives us the encouragement and some of the means to move forward. I am sure that the Pope is going to continue in this way.

I would like to second many of the things that Dr. Karam said in both a forceful way and a remarkable way. I think that an advantage of the Mediterranean region has been that religion has always been a significant part of the life of peoples, and this has not been the case in other parts of the world. In some areas where states are recognizing their own religious illiteracy, there are not even the linguistic tools to engage with people of faith around the world. I think we do have to get religious leaders and politicians working together, and not so much as possibly providing alternatives to existing policy, but rather to freshly look at the problems of the world.

And it is probably right to say that the pandemic is the tip of the iceberg for humanity in the coming decades. I think we need to get that cooperation going, and where there is a true recognition of the richness of the spiritual traditions and what

they can contribute to political discourse, religious leaders also have to realize that there is an enormous responsibility which comes with that as well. If you are committing yourself to this sort of engagement, then we have to try and also struggle with the negative stereotypes that have arisen in recent decades concerning almost everything religious and try to bring some freshness and a spirit that religion is part of the solution and not part of the problem.

I would like to recall a critical point that the Holy See has repeatedly made on various occasions, namely, that religious pluralism and diversity are not something to be imported into or imposed upon the Middle East from the outside. It is a reality that already has a millennial existence there and it is intrinsic to its identity. We must defeat the nefarious attempts to change the identity of the Middle East by eradicating religious pluralism and reinforce our efforts to establish a counter-narrative to the extremist ideology and to those actors who seek to reshape the region. The above-mentioned documents are evocative in this sense, but obviously time is needed so that they may inspire and open the way for a new culture at both the interreligious and political levels.

The paths towards inclusive citizenship in the countries of the Mediterranean area still need great work and commitment from both state and religious actors at various levels, reaffirming the importance of the application of this principle and freeing it from religious or political exploitation. The role that religious leaders can play is indispensable for combating the effects of "differentiated" citizenship at both vertically (state-citizen) and horizontally (citizen-citizen) relations.

The insistence of the Holy See on the principle of equal citizenship, for obvious reasons, must not be taken out of the context of the drama that the Christian communities in the Middle East, which constantly flee the region, continue to experience. However, asking that Christians be offered and guaranteed the status of full citizenship, be treated not as second-class citizens but with equal rights and duties, not only

aims to preserve the communities in their lands of origin, but it is also motivated by the conviction of the role that Christian communities can play in the formation of pluralistic societies and in containing fundamentalism.

The political leaders are charged with guaranteeing in the public forum the right to religious freedom, while acknowledging religion's positive and constructive contribution to the building of a civil society that sees no opposition between social belonging, sanctioned by the principle of citizenship, and the spiritual dimension of life, as Pope Francis reminded the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See on January 9, 2017.

Finally, I would like to conclude with the appeal of Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, which invites all of us to make a broad and persevering effort to understand one another and to strive for a new synthesis for the good of all (n. 226).

## Conclusion

**Moderators**: One of the things we keep from this conversation is that the word "boundaries" is crucial and, to the surprise of some of us, the sort of consensus was that we should not remove boundaries. Instead, we should keep boundaries to preserve diversity, and the difference between religion and politics or among different religions. However, rather than making these boundaries closed, the required efforts are to ensure that they are open boundaries. This results in a call on the one hand to recognize, acknowledge and respect the diversity and the distinction between religion and politics and among religious communities, and on the other hand to open those boundaries for common civic, political, religious and interreligious engagement and partnerships, as expression of our human fraternity and inclusive citizenship responsibility.

This raises the challenge for religions to move from identity-based action to value-based interreligious engagement. Done together, the service foster fraternity as "citizenship in action",

a truly inclusive citizenship. This interreligious engagement brings religious experiences, actions and actors to the public sphere – the "Piazza Grande" – and generate a wider framework for engagement, collaboration and partnership with all other civic and political actors for the common good of all, since the true dimension of the public sphere is measured by freedom and openness and readiness to collaborate.

This is not a conclusion, since the panelists left us with interesting and challenging new questions that require to keep this conversation open. Our hope is that we have opened some avenues for thinking more on how religious leaders and communities can be more actively involved in the public discussion on the current multiple crises in the North and South of the Mediterranean; and how they can help to stretch the political imagination of the possible strategies to build peacefull and inclusive societies in this region.

## 2. Comprehending Religion in Global Affairs: Toward a Post-Secular Paradigm of Religious Engagement to Advance Human Fraternity

R. Scott Appleby

In this chapter I explore the promise of new, more effective roles for religious and secular actors in the global conversation about building the foundations of just and inclusive societies. Specifically, I anticipate what it might mean to move beyond a narrowly instrumentalist view of religion to a fuller conception of religious agency in local, national and world affairs.

The *Human Fraternity Document* issued by Pope Francis and Sheik Al-Tayeb of Al-Azhar, Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, and the Marrakesh Declaration issued by more than 250 Muslim religious leaders, scholars and heads of state, are among the recent documents articulating the principles and goals of secular-religious as well as interreligious collaborations for human fraternity and inclusive citizenship in the modern world. Reflection on these statements and on the expert commentary available in the transcript of the 2020 RomeMED Religions Forum suggest that effective roles for religious actors in this effort must be grounded in "religion comprehended," that is, religion seen in its full scope and significance as an enduring and defining social reality that shapes political as well as cultural sensibilities, practices and policies in most nations of the modern world. Conveying this concept to an array of religious

and secular actors is the responsibility of scholars and educators possessing the gift of clear and accessible communication and the ability to collaborate skillfully with religious leaders as well as foreign ministers.

A great deal is packed into this opening statement. First, "a narrowly instrumentalist view" refers to the practice of recruiting religious actors to help advance foreign policy objectives – including anti-extremism, anti-terrorism, and Freedom of Religion and Belief [FoRB] advocacy – in a way that requires them to reduce their "worldviews"[1] to political ideologies, or to place them in the service of political ideologies. The instrumentalist approach assumes, incorrectly, that compartmentalization of the "less useful" aspects of a religious actor's *creencias* (deepest core beliefs) is both plausible and productive.[2]

Second, because religion continues to shape the sensibilities and attitudes of citizens as well as their national leaders, "religion comprehended" – religion engaged as a whole, encompassing its full range of relevance to everyday life – must be at the heart of any viable culturalist approach to foreign policy and to relations between nations and peoples. Comprehending religion entails, in turn, reckoning with religious conceptions of justice and human flourishing or "development", not least those conceptions at odds with a secular scientific worldview.

Third, with respect to "the modern world," we must take into account a worldwide skepticism regarding the secular-scientific worldview, owing to the failures of the Enlightenment promise of unimpeded moral and social progress under the sway of technoscientific reason. With the collapse of a modernist consensus, modes and models of secularism vary, with some scholars arguing that our current era is best described as *post-secular*. The term is contested but by no means dismissed or irrelevant to geopolitics. Some scholars who describe the world

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[1] See N. Smart, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs,* 3rd ed., New York, Charles Scribner,1999.

[2] J. Ortega y Gasset, *Ideas y creencias*, Alianza Editorial, pb edition, 1997.

today as post-secular argue that, contrary to the now-discarded "secularization thesis," the world is just as "fiercely religious" as ever, perhaps even more so. Others, examining data indicating trends away from affiliation with a religious institution (church, synagogue, mosque, temple, etc.) or para-church organization, contend, rather, that religion's persistent influence has not so much grown or diminished as taken new and often subtler expressions. Still others point to the mixture of religious and secular elements in everyday discourse and decision-making.[3]

## Imagining an Alternative to the Current Paradigm

Convincing possibly skeptical ambassadors, foreign ministers and other government officials and foreign policy experts that taking account of the ideational patterns of post-secularism is not merely an abstract academic exercise in religious studies but, rather, a potential corrective to the limited efficacy of previous compartmentalized and instrumentalist approaches, as well as a productive way forward in itself, is likely a daunting task. But selling a "religion comprehended" lens is made somewhat easier by the arguments advanced recently by colleagues working in the field of religion and international politics. In his article, "From Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) advocacy to interreligious engagement in foreign policy," for example, Fabio Petito proposes to place interreligious engagement at the center of efforts "to protect FoRB, combat intolerance and promote inclusive societies." In this usage, "interreligious engagement" does not refer to high-level theological or ecclesial

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[3] See, inter alia, C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2008; A. Abeysekara, *The Politics of Postsecular Religion: Mourning Secular Futures*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2008; M. Ratti, *The Postsecular Imagination: Postcolonialism, Religion, and Literature*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013; J. Habermas, «Secularism's Crisis of Faith: Notes on Post-Secular Society», *New Perspectives Quarterly*, vol. 25, 2008, p. 17-29; P. Berger (Ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Grand Rapids, MI, William B. Eerdmans, 1997.

dialogues and statements drawn up by experts and elites from competing denominations or factions within or across religious communities; the limited relevance and impact of such statements to lived religion is well known. Rather, the focus is on inter (and intra) religious dialogue and collaboration "from the ground up", that is, emerging from the grassroots level.

Addressing government departments that would implement "interreligious engagement strategies", Petito provides sound guidance within the existing paradigm for foreign policy, and takes a step in the right direction in terms of challenging certain aspects of the paradigm:

> There is also a degree of unavoidable ambiguity at present regarding the notion of religious engagement, which will hopefully be overcome as more conceptual work is done on the topic … I would argue, however, that the predominant understanding of this new policy strategy and practice – especially among policy-makers – has, unfortunately, been an instrumentalist one. In other words, religious engagement has mostly been conceived of as an addition to the toolkit of foreign policy instruments with which states can achieve their aims, in a context where religious actors have finally been recognized as representing a crucial dimension of the social fabrics of many societies of the world and as having a growing socio-political role and impact. This perspective fails to understand an important radical (or prophetic, in religious language) normative dimension embedded in this new post-secular development. In fact, I would contend that religious engagement in foreign policy not only has the practical capacity to deliver where other forms of strategic engagement – for example with civil society or business – fail but, more importantly, also has the potential to improve the knowledge base for foreign policy and, through new secular-religious partnerships, to stretch the political imagination and create new practical innovations with which to respond to global policy challenges.[4]

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[4] F. Petito, "From Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Advocacy to Interreligious Engagement in Foreign Policy", *Global Affairs, vol.* 6, no. 3, 2020, pp. 269-286.

The significance of this statement should not be underestimated. It contains the seeds of a sufficiently radical proposal, namely, that the "new secular-religious partnerships" must no longer take for granted the epistemological assumptions and operative frameworks that have governed secular foreign policy. One such assumption is that technoscientific rationality is manifestly superior to other ways of knowing the world and ordering political and economic affairs; another is that only a secular-scientific worldview can be trusted to advance productive, "progressive", peaceful relations among peoples and nations. (These assumptions do not always fare well in the face of the historical evidence and, as mentioned above, they are not always taken for granted by non-state actors, to put it mildly.) The operative framework based on such secularist foreign policy assumptions is that military and economic power authorizes the secular state, or the secular-oriented elites within a putatively religious or semi-theocratic state (e.g., Iran), to set the terms of engagement with religious communities, institutions and actors. This is a self-limiting framework; it fails to comprehend the range and potential of mutually productive alliances with religions.

In the absence of a process by which a more comprehensive conceptualization of religion might produce a more honest and effective approach to religious-secular, religious-state dialogues and collaboration, Petito and other would-be reformers are forced to resort to the familiar language of secular state sovereignty and autonomous agency. Thus, funding streams in different government departments should be established "for the implementation of interreligious engagement strategies on the ground, linking also to other relevant policy agendas such as the SDGs". High-level interreligious dialogues "need to be strategically joined up to interreligious collaboration on the ground if they are to achieve impactful implementation through, for example, educational programmes and social action". In such ambitious proposals the current paradigm nonetheless remains intact. But we are invited to imagine

how the educational programmes and social actions, and their "impactful implementation" would be enhanced by a closer partnership of equals that would include religious actors as well as the state and its natural allies in civil society.

Petito does caution states to limit their support of interreligious engagement to the provision of facilities and infrastructure, while remaining impartial in matters of FoRB, "not seeking to influence religious doctrine or to further a different political agenda." Wisely, he advises that stakeholder participation in interreligious engagement should be context-specific, comprehensive and aimed at including "actors beyond the usual suspects".[5] Notwithstanding these and other concessions to the (limited) autonomy of the religious actors under this arrangement, the latter are still, basically, surrogates of the state, recruited to advance its objectives (i.e., "at the end of the day, we call the shots and direct religious 'partners' to turn their practices to our ends").

This approach requires, however, that the state's potential partners are limited to those religious communities whose beliefs and behaviors are least scandalous to the secular mind, and to those religious actors at the grassroots level who are least resistant to compromising their singular religious worldview in order to collaborate with religious rivals or secular development agencies and imperatives. Unfortunately, however, it is not these compromising, accommodating religious actors who must be reached and engaged; they are not the troublemakers, as it were. Rather, the religiously inspired extremists and terrorists, the obstructionists set on undermining carefully negotiated agreements, settlements and treaties, by whatever means necessary, typically refuse to cross the epistemological line and cooperate with the "atheists" and their religiously lukewarm surrogates.

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[5] Ibid.

## Beyond Binaries

In community after community, the ordinary believer is often caught in the middle, stranded between the temperate, dialogic approach of "moderate" religious leaders, and the often outrageous but also compelling rhetoric of the obstructionists, who readily exploit the many instances of manipulation, cultural and economic imperialism, and "collateral damage" associated, in their telling, with the policies of secular states. Crucially, both sides make claim to be serving *justice*, with the obstructionists pointing to the failures and betrayals of the West, and the moderates seeing the glass as half full.[6]

Navigating this complex religious terrain is a delicate and difficult task. My experience co-chairing a task force sponsored by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, which presented its Report on "Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for U.S. Foreign Policy" in 2010, may be relevant here.[7] In determining which types of religious actors and communities to engage, the task force (composed of experts and senior leaders in government, diplomacy, security, law, religious freedom, higher education and civil society more broadly) worried a good deal about the perceived or actual proximity of "moderate" religious actors – our likeliest partners – to government officials and state-directed initiatives. Two considerations fueled our concern: first, the possibility that the very fact of participation in a state-affiliated initiative would discredit (and possibly endanger) our religious partners in the wider religious community; and, second, the fear that religious obstructionists and extremists would gain credence and a

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[6] See, for example, the "justice discourse" of Osama bin Laden: Translated text of bin Laden broadcast taken from the *New York Times,* 8 October 2001, p. B7.

[7] "Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for U.S. Foreign Policy", U.S. Department of State, Diplomacy in Action. Among the recommendations of the Report implemented by the Obama administration was the establishment of an Office on Religion and Global Affairs in the U.S. State Department.

stronger foothold within the wider religious society for being left out of the dialogues and collaboration, precisely because they vowed not to be treated as subordinates or used as "pawns" of the secular state. This exclusion, we anticipated, would only reinforce their narrative of being the "pure" core of the faith, the sacred remnant "untainted by the West".[8]

While I am not suggesting that irreconcilably violent extremists be incorporated into inter-religious or intra-religious initiatives, it is not fruitful to see the religious world primarily as binary, comprised of "bad" religious actors, on the one hand, and "good" religious actors, on the other. This approach overlooks the important layers and degrees of belonging to one or another camp. In addition, the binary "good *v*. bad" can obscure what is held in common across the spectrum of politically engaged religious actors. Indeed, millions of "post-secular" religious actors cannot be considered either sworn enemies of the secular state or state-accommodating religious elites. They are, rather, what Petito calls "actors beyond the usual suspects" i.e. those masses, and their local leaders, who are not caught up in cultural-religious wars, but who care deeply about questions of justice. To the extent that their concerns about justice – about fairness, equal treatment and, not least, respect for their dignity – are ignored, these grassroot actors may replicate the obstructionist suspicion of secular states and "neoliberal" governments and bureaucrats, as well as their wariness of "accommodating" or "compromising" religious "insiders."

If their community of believers is perceived to be taken for a cog in a FoRB wheel or a tool of bureaucrats, this majority of effectively neutral local actors become more likely to lend

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[8] "While debates inside religious communities have a bearing on the wider world, . . . outsiders often lack the standing to influence them… Frequently, the fissures within these religions are more important than the relationships between the religion's formal leadership and the United States", Ibid., p.66. (At the time of the Report, a burning question was how to engage factions within Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.)

credence to the religious extremists, not in their violent obstructionism, but in their rejection of any and all nonstate actors perceived to be too cozy with Western (read: neocolonial, paternalistic, exploitative) development agencies, security agencies and "peacebuilding" operations. The corollary to the feeling of being used or manipulated by powerful and wealthy governments is the equally alienating question of what our secular partners are doing to enhance our human security – a concept that goes beyond military or police protection from violence to include access to education, jobs, technology, medicine, and so on.

In short, the critique shared by "post-secular" individuals, groups and communities is what we might call "a justice critique". It includes specifically religious elements but goes far beyond them.

## Development and Peace with Dignity

"Dignity" is key to the justice critique. Honoring one's irreducible dignity as a child of God is more than respecting sacred spaces, rituals, customs and ethics, though this respect is essential. For the post-secular sensibility, a true partner, religious or secular, is one who also engages in listening, sharing and dialogue, not as a tool of official diplomacy in the first instance, but as a means of "encounter", of eliciting from the partner community cues (cultural tokens of value) to guide the co-creation of consistent and ongoing "programmes and social actions" designed to provide, over time, the material and economic as well as spiritual and cultural conditions commensurate with a people's dignity.

This is a tall order, of course, but the expectation of religious actors is not that the state becomes their welfare state; to the contrary, a relationship of dependence is precisely not what they seek. Rather, they seek to be included in the larger public deliberation about achieving the common good. And while this dialogue may well need to begin with intra-religious and

inter-religious engagement and collaboration, it cannot end there. Such inter-religious collaboration cannot be seen as a means of advancing the secular state's policies. It has its own integrity. In building an inter-religious partnership, however, it can become a step toward preparing the partner religious communities for the purpose of engaging the state in a dialogue about human security as well as narrowly conceived physical security. In this way, the religious-community-in-dialogue may evolve naturally into a reliable and longer-term partner of the government.

The fundamental idea of shifting the engagement away from an exclusive concentration on anti-terrorism or FoRB, to a broader, more holistic and inclusive process is not my own, of course. It is what many of the world's major religious leaders have been calling for, with a renewed energy and sense of common purpose since they were invited to participate in the dialogues which led to the drafting of the landmark social encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, which was issued by Pope Francis in 2015. Francis and his allies have set the fight against religious intolerance and violence in the context of a broader, comprehensive, religiously inflected and inspired agenda of constructive social change. The Pope has explicitly linked the concepts of *integral ecology* and *integral human development*, which are elaborated in *Laudato Si'* and in other papal documents (e.g., the text of his 2015 address to the United Nations in support of the Sustainable Development Goals), to his denunciations of religious violence and religious terrorism, presenting the former as the only plausible response to the latter.[9]

For the sake of illustration, let us take Integral Human Development (IHD), which is presented in Catholic social teaching as the state of society in which respect for the dignity of the human person, manifested by ongoing efforts to secure

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[9] Pope Francis, *Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations*, 25 September 2015.

the cultural and spiritual as well as economic and material requirements of human flourishing, is central to political and social life, upheld by the rule of law, and reflected in peaceful and just relations among nations, states and peoples. A new secular-religious partnership would be based on this kind of moral and political vision of a shared peace and prosperity. IHD also has the potential to authorize and shape a new kind of interreligious mode of religious-secular engagement, more robust and inclusive of all players, that could prove more effective and enduring than the current paradigm in fostering sustainable constructive change.

Finally, and not least, religion's comprehensive view of the human person's dignity as being grounded in a transcendent reality that cannot be granted by the state, or taken away by the state, is less susceptible to arbitrary manipulation by self-interested groups and individuals. Whether articulated through the concept of Integral Human Development, Islam's abiding notion of the absolute sovereignty of God over human affairs, or Judaism's affirmation of the covenant between God and humanity as the foundation of ethical reasoning, religion brings to the post-secular milieu an antidote to paralyzing solipsism and the shattering of moral consensus into 7 billion discrete, irreconcilable fragments.

## A Call for Religious Social Responsibility

Indeed, the past decade has witnessed the emergence of a new proposal for religious social responsibility: world religious leaders and communities have come together to articulate and assert moral and spiritual principles for religious engagement in interreligious and religious-secular dialogues and partnerships.

The landmark event in this development was the promulgation, in 2019, by Pope Francis and Sheikh Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, of The *Human Fraternity Document*. Addressed to "the leaders of the world as well as the architects of international policy and world economy", the statement

calls upon "intellectuals, philosophers, religious figures, artists, media professionals and men and women of culture in every part of the world, to rediscover the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity and coexistence" and "to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood and bring an end to wars, conflicts, environmental decay and the moral and cultural decline that the world is presently experiencing". To this end it urges "the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard".[10]

Notably, the Document features an unequivocal embrace of nonviolence alongside fervent condemnation of those who distort true religion to serve short-term territorial and material ends,[11] as well as an appreciation of the achievements of modern science, technology and medicine, "especially in developed countries." Yet it insists, repeatedly, that the exclusion of the established, multi-generational world religions from the meaningful deliberations and decisions of government and civil society has led to "a moral deterioration that influences international action and a weakening of spiritual values and responsibility". In the absence of the religions' proclamation of and witness to the requirements of a transcendent human dignity, there has arisen "a general feeling of frustration, isolation and desperation leading many to fall either into a

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[10] "Human Fraternity for world peace and living together: Full text", *Vatican News*, February 2019.

[11] Ibid. "Moreover, we resolutely declare that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women in order to make them act in a way that has nothing to do with the truth of religion. This is done for the purpose of achieving objectives that are political, economic, worldly and short-sighted."

vortex of atheistic, agnostic or religious extremism, or into blind and fanatic extremism, which ultimately encourage forms of dependency and individual or collective self-destruction". Only through sound education and an adherence to moral values and upright religious teachings, the Pope and Sheikh Al-Azhar proclaim, can societies "confront tendencies that are individualistic, selfish, conflicting, and also address radicalism and blind extremism in all its forms and expressions".[12]

Moving beyond the platitudes of previous international documents that invoke religion, the Document extols the cultivation of *human fraternity* as the indispensable requirement for world peace. This can be achieved, the document continues, through a dialogue of understanding and the accompanying promotion of a culture of tolerance and acceptance of others. Dialogue among believers means "coming together in the vast space of spiritual, human and shared social values and, from here, transmitting the highest moral virtues that religions aim for". In addition to providing moral instruction and guidance, the believers also contribute to the common good as citizens of the state and of the world.

The concept of citizenship must be based, however, "on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice. It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies the concept of *full citizenship* and reject the discriminatory use of the term *minorities* which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority". Far-reaching and challenging are the implications of this inclusive definition of citizenship for fruitful collaboration between religions and public officials, not least those entrusted with the responsibility of responding humanely to the flow of refugees across borders and relations between "sending" and "receiving" nations.

The theological, moral, spiritual and geopolitical implications of the *Human Fraternity Document* are elaborated by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*. There, for example, he sets

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[12] Ibid.

the discussion of human fraternity and inclusive citizenship within a broader critique of the inadequacy, in a globalized and interdependent world, of relying on states acting alone. Only a form of global governance, the Pope maintains, can responsibly attend to movements of migration and meet the need for "mid-term and long-term planning which is not limited to emergency responses. Such planning should include "effective assistance for integrating migrants in their receiving countries, while also promoting the development of their countries of origin through policies inspired by solidarity, yet not linking assistance to ideological strategies and practices alien or contrary to the cultures of the peoples being assisted".[13] Here, and in the Pope's call for reform of the United Nations system,[14] we find one of several echoes of the general proposal for invigorating religious-secular dialogues and collaboration with a more robust and "comprehensive" understanding and appreciation of religious agency.

An equally significant proposed expansion of the world's political governance comes in Francis's now-familiar call for an economic order "which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity". Ultimately, this will benefit the entire world, since

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[13] Francis Pope, *Fratelli Tutti*, Encyclical Letter, October 2020, par. 132. See also par. 138, on globalization.

[14] "... I would also note the need for a reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth. Needless to say, this calls for clear legal limits to avoid power being co-opted only by a few countries and to prevent cultural impositions or a restriction of the basic freedoms of weaker nations on the basis of ideological differences. For 'the international community is a juridical community founded on the sovereignty of each member state, without bonds of subordination that deny or limit its independence'. … There is a need to ensure the uncontested rule of law and tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration, as proposed by the Charter of the United Nations, which constitutes truly a fundamental juridical norm. There is a need to prevent this Organization from being delegitimized, since its problems and shortcomings are capable of being jointly addressed and resolved (Ibid. par. 173).

"development aid for poor countries" implies "creating wealth for all". From the standpoint of integral human development, this presupposes "giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making" and the capacity to "facilitate access to the international market on the part of countries suffering from poverty and underdevelopment" (FT 138). The implications of the Pope's moral vision for power sharing are radical, but he does not shy from delivering them bluntly: "The effective distribution of power (especially political, economic, defense-related and technological power) among a plurality of subjects, and the creation of a juridical system for regulating claims and interests, are one concrete way of limiting power" (FT 171).

Amplifying the Human Fraternity Declaration's assertion of the indispensable role of religion in effective and inclusive global governance, *Fratelli Tutti* derides the "many petty forms of politics focused on immediate interests" and contends that "true statecraft" occurs "when we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good". Secular political powers, focused as they are on their own nation-building projects, do not find it easy to assume this duty, or to forge "a common project for the human family, now and in the future". Global society, suffering from "grave structural deficiencies that cannot be resolved by piecemeal solutions or quick fixes" requires "fundamental reform and major renewal". This will happen, Francis argues, only by means of "a healthy politics, involving the most diverse sectors and skills, in service to an economy "that is an integral part of a political, social, cultural and popular programme directed to the common good …" (FT 178-179). To achieve this goal, political powers must "make sacrifices that foster encounter and seek convergence on at least some issues". The Pope acknowledges that this "lofty ambition" will seem "naïve and idealistic" to some – but it cannot be abandoned.

*Fratelli Tutti* devotes an entire chapter to the importance of "social dialogue for a new culture".[15] Social dialogue, Francis

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[15] Pope Francis's presentation of dialogue in this mode has nonetheless been

teaches, is not to be confused with "the feverish exchange of opinions on social networks, frequently based on media information that is not always reliable. These exchanges are merely parallel monologues" manipulated by powerful special interests, not only in governments, but also in economics, politics, communications, religion and in other spheres (FT 200-201).

Given religious and ethical pluralism, what would be the basis for forging consensus within such a wide-ranging and inclusive dialogue? Such dialogue, Francis observes, must be enriched and illumined by "clear thinking, rational arguments, a variety of perspectives and the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view". But it must also make space for the conviction that "it is possible to arrive at certain fundamental truths always to be upheld". "Acknowledging the existence of certain enduring values, however demanding it may be to discern them", he adds, "makes for a robust and solid social ethics" (FT 213).

## Conclusion: The Art of the Possible

Is the vision sketched above for a new interreligious and secular-religious dialogue and partnership achievable? Participants in the RomeMed Forum of 2020 considered the practical steps that now must be taken to advance "religious social responsibility and new secular-religious partnerships".

Three themes emerged, the first articulated by Miguel Angel Moratinos: the necessity of strengthening and respecting the laws on equal citizenship in the various countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region (and beyond). Sustained advocacy to

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criticized by some within the Catholic community, who feel it cannot overcome the structural marginalization of minorities, women and people on the margins of society. See, for example. N. de Anda, "Freedom and Equality Aren't Enough: A Symposium on *Fratelli tutti*", *Commonweal*, vol. 147, no. 11, December 2020, pp. 27-29.

ensure the legally authorized inclusion of all people, regardless of ethnicity, race, religious affiliation, or nationality among the ranks of citizens, is the strongest way to ensure the basis on which to build peaceful coexistence between the various components of society, he asserted. A properly functioning state that works for the common good is also a pre-requisite for protecting religious minorities and ensuring their future.

The state will always remain a major actor and principal interlocutor. Yet a truly inclusive religious-secular dialogue must move beyond the state to incorporate the actions of different citizens as they are instructed, engaged and facilitated by religious actors who are serving different members of a community. Taking up this second theme, Azza Karam described "citizenship in action" as exemplified by multi-religious advocacy and social engagement. Citizenship, in this sense, includes all the people who are members of the community by virtue of their very humanity, including migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people. "By serving these various communities, we realize a form of citizenship that may not even correspond to existing legislation", she commented. "Whereas existing laws may say that citizens are only those who bear citizenship legally, who are born in this country, others, including migrants and refugees, may become *de facto* citizens of that territory through the work of religious organizations serving alongside them".

Building on this point, Nayla Tabbara and Mohamed Abdel-Salam developed a third theme, namely, the necessity of creating innovative and scalable programs of education to foster human fraternity and inclusive citizenship. Tabbara encourages efforts to integrate the different groups of society into the national culture through participation in "public discourse, in our religious discourse, in our education, in the holidays that we celebrate nationally, and in all of those cultural symbols around us".

Abdel-Salam reported that more than two million people in Al-Azhar institutions are studying the *Human Fraternity Document* as part of their programs; several governments, such as those in Libya and the United Arab Emirates, have also begun

to include the *Human Fraternity Document* within their school or university programs. Tabbara noted that education is a long-term process; it has taken the religions years of work to prepare for the present moment; the development of Catholic social teaching on public life values, and Muslim-Christian progress on interreligious dialogue have been important in this respect. She asked, however: What do we do *now*? "How can we promote this on the ground and among grassroots movements?".

One of our challenges, she noted, is to reach the grassroots level, through educational programs, grassroots projects and media campaigns on pluralism, inclusive citizenship, and freedom of religion or belief. Partnering with many stakeholders will be crucial. She concluded:

> For me, these are all steps that must be taken together in parallel: on the one hand, we must work together for legal rights in order to end discrimination and to protect freedoms for everyone and the dignity of each and every individual in society. On the other hand, we need to work together for the social inclusion of all, i.e. for a social cohesion built on recognition of each diverse group and on constant dynamic communication and discussion between all.[16]

The work ahead includes the full elaboration of a concrete proposal, resonant with the post-secular era in which we live and with best practices in interreligious dialogue, to implement a new paradigm for religious-secular dialogue and partnership. Such a new paradigm must meet the practical challenges faced by our colleagues in foreign policy, diplomacy, security and statecraft, who will understandably ask: How can religion, thus "comprehended" in its totality and in its campaign for human dignity and inclusive justice, become an ally of the secular state? How can a prophetic concept like IHD or its equivalent become a basis for human fraternity within and across secular and religious communities?

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[16] See the Tabbara's intervention at pp. 44-45 in this volume.

Effective answers to these questions must begin with a sober-minded acknowledgment that conceptualizing and implementing such a paradigm requires moving away from a top-down, state-driven, state-controlled engagement strategy to a religiously pluralist, cross-cultural dialogue that addresses not merely the presenting symptoms, e.g., religiously inspired and inflected violence, but the underlying disease, namely, the failed instrumentalist approach to religious actors, which they perceive as robbing them of their God-given dignity. In the long run, the rewards of such a shift in approach will outweigh the costs. In the meantime, the building of "post-secular" partnerships will demand considerable ingenuity, patience and resourcefulness from all concerned parties.

# PART II

# THE VISION OF HUMAN FRATERNITY

# 3. Social Friendship and Universal Fraternity: Twin Moralities and the Crises of the Environment and Covid-19

Pasquale Ferrara

The idea of human fraternity in world religions has emerged in recent times as a new paradigm that seems more engaging than toleration and dialogue. However, this "fraternal" turn in pluralist theologies can at times lead to insufficiently conceptualizing the notion of fraternity beyond its original religious declination. Therefore, the *connotation* of the concept of fraternity, understood not simply as a qualitative relationship among individuals, needs to be clarified as a preliminary step for any hermeneutic exercise. In this regard, Pope Francis's recent Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*[1] provides seemingly useful intellectual and moral resources for political science and international relations. Fraternity is not, *per se*, a self-executing political principle, and needs to be translated into policy options, public policies, and institutional arrangements. In addition, on an interpersonal level, even when it is framed as a religious assumption, fraternity is rarely spontaneous, always requiring an explicit option, a deliberate choice. As McWilliams put it,

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[1] Cf. Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, Assisi, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, September 2020. Quotations from the Encyclical in this chapter are referred to with the title's acronym (FT) and the relevant paragraph number.

"becoming brothers … amounts rather to a revolution".[2]

The two pillars of my argument are based on the two slightly different ideas of *social friendship* (socialization of fraternity) and *universal fraternity* (universalization of fraternity). These two concepts are set out and used with similar but not identical meanings by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*. In an initial reading, social friendship seems to refer mainly to domestic policies and the collective efforts to eliminate inequalities through the special bonds that unite citizens in national institutions. In this meaning, social friendship is understood as a feature of specific and territorial polities. By contrast, universal fraternity implies a broader "embrace" beyond national community boundaries and, as such, seems to be a less compelling and operational principle for concrete policies.

This is not, however, what Pope Francis's idea of fraternity suggests. Fraternity is a social practice rather than an abstract metaphor. In particular, it would be wrong to assume that social friendship implies *operational* proximity, whereas universal fraternity necessarily takes the form of *elective* proximity. The interplay between the local and the universal is fundamental in order to grasp the potential political asymmetries between social friendship and universal fraternity. In Pope Francis's vision, love is what connects social friendship and universal fraternity: "A love capable of transcending borders is the basis of what in every city and country can be called 'social friendship'. Genuine social friendship within a society makes true universal openness possible". (FT 99) Universal fraternity and social friendship are closely associated. "Universal fraternity and social friendship are thus two inseparable and equally vital poles in every society. To separate them would be to disfigure each and to create a dangerous polarization". (FT 142) Moreover, "universal" does not refer solely to a spatial dimension, as is clearly demonstrated in Pope Francis's reading of the parable

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[2] W. Carey McWilliams, *The idea of fraternity in America*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1973, p. 23.

of the Good Samaritan, where he stresses the man's decision to *become* a neighbor not only to an absolute stranger, but also to a person belonging to a group considered impure, detestable and dangerous (FT 80, 81, and 82). In a way, fraternity is not only a religious assumption; regardless of the specific context, it always implies a choice.

I will try to elaborate on this distinction/connection between social friendship and universal fraternity in the light of some seminal contributions from contemporary political philosophy. A powerful connection exists between the two concepts, leading to the practice of inclusive citizenship (an idea that is broader than mere nationality). Finally, I will make the case for *thinking ecologically* in discussing the implications of fraternity for a truly *planetary* politics in the context of a global environmental crisis and the current pandemic, which have both shown the relevance of the new paradigm of fraternity and the need for a policy of interreligious engagement aimed at building new forms of inclusive citizenship.

## Social Friendship as a Paradigm Shift in the Politics of Solidarity (or of Social Justice)

For a long time, fraternity has been a neglected principle in social science. The reason for such academic and intellectual reticence lies mainly in the idea that fraternity, unlike liberty and equality, is related to the private and individual sphere of family ties and affections, making it difficult to articulate in terms of rights and institutional expectations. Critics have also stressed the "dark side" of fraternity by emphasizing the danger of an attitude of closure and exclusion, as well as stories of envy, conflict, hate and harsh competition between brothers. The tragic Biblical and Koranic story of Cain and Abel, beyond suggesting any homicide is ultimately a fratricide,[3]

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[3] Cf. D. Mazzù (Ed.), *Politiques de Cain*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 2004. See also L.A. Schökel*, Dov'è tuo fratello?*, Brescia, Paideia, 1987; and D. Assael, *La*

shows fraternity is not merely a natural bond, but requires responsibility and openness. Alternatively, Marx derided fraternity as sentimentalism, passivity and acquiescence towards the status quo, contrasting with the "strong", real brotherhood of proletarians in the class struggle. For Marx, if fraternity exists, it is that of the bourgeoisie against the proletarians.[4]

In recent decades, however, fraternity (with different interpretations) has caught the attention of political thinkers and scholars,[5] including Angel Puyol, who recently wrote a book on the concept of political fraternity. According to Puyol "fraternity becomes a political idea when the relational bond between equals who mutually help each other is introduced (or attempts are made to introduce it) into political institutions, laws and practices."[6] Fraternity, as a civic idea,[7] is then to be clearly distinguished from the more popular concept of solidarity for at least two reasons.

First, unlike fraternity, which aims at substantial equality (this is the basic meaning of being brothers), solidarity does not require removing the structural inequalities present in society. "Whereas fraternity demands that fraternal individuals treat each other as equals, just as ideally the sisters and brothers of a family are equals, solidarity does nothing to eliminate social and political relationships that are asymmetrical and subordinate".[8] In other words, fraternity, compared to solidarity, has an

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*fratellanza nella tradizione biblica. Giobbe e Esaù*, Verona, Fondazione Centro Studi Campostrini, 2014.

[4] Cf. F. Rigotti, *Il potere e le sue metafore*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1992, p. 105.

[5] See J. Attali, *Fraternités. Une nouvelle utopie*, Paris, Fayard, 1999; A.M. Baggio (Ed.), *Il principio dimenticato. La fraternità nella riflessione politologica contemporanea*, Roma, Città Nuova, 2007; A. Marzanati and A. Mattioni (Eds.), *La fraternità come principio del diritto pubblico*, Roma, Città Nuova, 2007; R. Debray, *Le moment fraternité*, Paris, Gallimard, 2009.

[6] À. Puyol, *Political Fraternity: Democracy beyond Freedom and Equality*, London, Routledge, 2020, p. 2.

[7] See M.R. Manieri, *Fraternità. Rilettura civile di un'idea che può cambiare il mondo*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2013.

[8] À.l Puyol (2020), p. 2.

*emancipatory* function. "The political idea of fraternity assumes, as one of its characteristic goals, emancipation from all forms of servile relations, tutelage or compassion between the members of the community, whereas solidarity does not necessarily include this emancipatory ideal".[9] The main goal of social friendship is to make possible an integral human development that goes beyond the idea of social policies being a policy *for* the poor, but never *with* the poor and never *of* the poor (FT 169). Adding to this idea of emancipation and accomplishment embodied in the concept of fraternity, Pope Francis articulates a further dimension, that is, the right (and capability) to differ: "while solidarity is the principle of social planning that allows the unequal to become equal; fraternity is what allows the equal to be different people. Fraternity allows people who are equal in their essence, dignity, freedom, and their fundamental rights to participate differently in the common good according to their abilities, their life plan, their vocation, their work, or their charism of service".[10] That is an important point, since the rejection of *differentiation in equality* is embedded in the archetypal stories of brothers and sibling rivalry.[11]

Second, fraternity is not only an ethical question, like solidarity: it is an image of *shared identity*. Political fraternity means no society is truly complete if some of its members remain on the sidelines. In other words, fraternity is semantically linked to the existence (or to the creation) of a community and to the concept of mutual care. Sometimes this political approach takes the form of policies pursuing the objective of "not leaving anybody behind". However, this goal, far from being a matter

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[9] Ibid., p. 3.

[10] *Message* of His Holiness Pope Francis to Prof. Margaret Archer, President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Vatican, 24 April 2017.

[11] Beyond Cain and Abel, Osiris and Seth in Egyptian mythology, Atreus and Thyestes in Greek mythology, Romulus and Remus in Roman mythology); moreover, we find it at the source of the mimetic desire in René Girard's scapegoat theory (Cf. R. Girard, *The Scapegoat*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

of compassion, is an act of justice and inclusion and it requires the restructuring of power relations at all levels.[12]

In this vein, a great contemporary philosopher, John Rawls, comes to the conclusion that for a society to be fair the principles of freedom and equality need to be balanced by a "difference principle". He argues that "social and economic inequalities should be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity." Rawls thinks this must be justified by the fact that "they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society".[13] Rawls believes the "difference principle" provides an interpretation of the principle of fraternity, insofar as it corresponds "to a natural meaning of fraternity: namely, the idea of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is for the benefits of others that are less well off".[14] By incorporating the "difference principle" into the notion of fraternity, the latter is "not an impracticable criterion".[15] This would lead, in Rawls' intention, to the operationalization of the concept of fraternity, although in Rawls' political-philosophical system the "difference principle" is not included into the "constitutional essentials" but it is rather part of the "institutions of distributive justice".[16]

In other words, social friendship and care for marginalized persons can be read as describing what Michael Walzer calls the "thick" morality of an individual society, implying some consensus on distributive justice and some degree of cultural self-identification because "moral terms have minimal and maximal meanings: we can standardly give thin and thick

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[12] See United Nations Committee for Development Policy, *Leaving no one behind -* Excerpt from Committee for Development Policy, Report on the twentieth, See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2018, Supplement no. 13 (E/2018/33).

[13] J. Rawls, *Justice as fairness. A restatement*, Cambridge MA and London UK, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 42-43.

[14] J. Rawls, *Collected papers*, Cambridge MA and London UK, Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 167.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., pp. 47-50.

accounts of them, and the two accounts are appropriate to different contexts, serve different purposes".[17] I will come back to this distinction in the next part of this chapter.

## Universal Fraternity for a Functional Universalism: The Environmental Crisis

To a certain extent, the idea of universal fraternity in Pope Francis's approach and in the interpretation of the main world religions represents the universalization of fraternity in a manner similar to the socialization of fraternity embodied in the notion of social friendship. One way of characterizing this process is that of referring to "fraternal interdependence", which implies "the choice of a respectful dialogue to that of hegemony, the way of mutual sharing to that of concentrating resources and expertise predominantly in certain parts of the world … fraternal interdependence is rightfully 'mutual dependence'".[18] Put in other terms, fraternity is seen as a continuum that starts from internal political life and embraces global policies with the same degree of moral thickness. Fraternity is always conceived in terms of *openness* ("fraternal openness" (FT 1); "universal openness" (FT 97)) and this is the key for seeing the expansive and inclusive nature of fraternity. As Charles Taylor notes, Pope Francis's philosophical anthropology "sees us as realizing more fully our humanity through contact and exchange with people and cultures beyond our original comfort zone".[19]

In the preamble to *Human fraternity for world peace and living together*,[20] Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar,

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[17] M. Walzer, *Thick and thin. Moral argument at home and abroad*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, p. 2.

[18] C. Lubich, "Interdependence vivified by fraternity, propelling force for positive processes", *Focolare movement*, 23 September 2004.

[19] C. Taylor, "Freedom and Equality Aren't Enough", *Commonweal*, 24 November 2020.

[20] Cf. His Holiness Pope Francis and The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb, *A document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu

Ahmed Al-Tayeb, list a series of initiatives of "caring" for others that have a clear transnational nature: "innocent human life that God has forbidden to kill"; "the poor, the destitute, the marginalized"; "orphans, widows, refugees and those exiled from their homes and their countries"; "all victims of wars, persecution and injustice"; "the weak, those who live in fear, prisoners of war and those tortured in any part of the world, without distinction"; and "peoples who have lost their security, peace, and the possibility of living together, becoming victims of destruction, calamity and war". Fraternity would imply, following the document's structure, not just manifestations of good will and religious and political leaders being predisposed to dialogue, but profound changes in domestic and international politics.

In the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* the ethical isomorphism between domestic politics and world politics is expressed explicitly: "No one, then, can remain excluded because of his or her place of birth, much less because of privileges enjoyed by others who were born in lands of greater opportunity. The limits and borders of individual states cannot stand in the way of this." (FT 121) This high moral standard constitutes *per se* a challenge not only to global governance but also to political theory and its underlying Westphalian assumptions.

As a case in point, one of the problems posed by the "difference principle" in John Rawls's theory is that it does not seem applicable on a universal scale, being limited to a (national) well-ordered society. In listing the principles of justice among free and democratic peoples, Rawls mentions the "duty to assist other people living under unfavorable conditions that prevent their having a just or decent political and social regime."[21] As Rawls clarifies in response to his critics, such as Charles Beitz,[22] the duty of assistance is to be understood as a

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Dhabi, 4 February 2019.

[21] J. Rawls*, The law of peoples*, Cambridge MA and London UK, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 37.

[22] Cf. C. Beitz*, Political Theory of International relations*, Princeton, Princeton

principle of *transition*, a limited and purposeful intervention intended to help societies to find their own way to become full members of the "Society of Peoples" (in liberal terms).[23]

In the same vein, Micheal Walzer's distinction between thick and thin morality might be at odds with universal fraternity. In Walzer's words, every human society is "universal because it is human, particular because it is a society".[24] He wants to describe two different but interrelated kinds of moral argument: "a way of talking among ourselves, here at home, about the thickness of our own history and culture … and a way of talking to people abroad, across different cultures, about the thinner life we have in common."[25] To be fair, Walzer stresses that minimalist morality should not be misunderstood as a morality that is "substantively minor or emotionally shallow".[26] Nonetheless, moral minimalism implies that although some core values are universal, in fact they become historically, geographically and politically *situated* and *implemented* in different ways and degrees. Let us elaborate more on this point. It seems to me that to better clarify the "maximalist-minimalist" dichotomous approaches to morality it is paramount to distinguish between *foundational universalism* (the cosmopolitan idea of the equality of all human beings) and *functional universalism* (the actual entitlement of all human beings to be treated as equal). Minimalist morality corresponds to foundational universalism, whereas functional universalism requires a stronger commitment based on maximalist morality (see Table 3.1).

University Press, 1979.

[23] Cf. J. Rawls (1999), p. 118.

[24] M. Walzer (1994), p. 8.

[25] Ibid., p. XI.

[26] Ibid., p. 6.

Tab 3.1 - Morality, universalism, fraternity

| Michael Walzer dichotomy | Type of universalism | Concepts of fraternity ("Fratelli tutti") |
|---|---|---|
| Maximalist (thick) morality | Functional universalism | Social friendship |
| Minimalist (thin) morality | Foundational universalism | Universal fraternity |

Whatever one may think of the solidity of this construction, there is one aspect of universality that would prove thin morality would not serve the cause of empirical universalism well – the environmental crisis. To start with, in recent religious reflections reference to fraternity is not limited to human beings. In 2000 Pope John Paul II talked about the opportunity "to rediscover kinship with the earth" adding that "if nature is not violated and degraded, it once again becomes man's sister" (it is worth noting the interesting concept of *sorority* here).[27] New eco-theologies have emerged in several religious traditions (Catholicism, Lutheranism, Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism), adding to the holistic view of nature already embedded in the oriental religious world (Buddhism, Hinduism). The idea of a new socio-natural complex in the debate on the global environment implies the need to extend fraternity to the relations between humankind and the earth, or rather between humanity and the planet. As Pope Francis clearly states in the extraordinary Encyclical *Laudato Si*[28] "we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*". (LS 49)

This *planetary* thinking increasingly generates cross-fertilization between apparently distant forms of knowledge,

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[27] John Paul II, *Address to General Audience*, Vatican City, 1 January 2000.

[28] Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home, Vatican City, 24 May 2015. Quotations from the Encyclical in this chapter are referred to with the title's acronym (LS) and the relevant paragraph number.

such as politics and theology, economics and religions. New brands of theological studies are flourishing, as in the case of eco-theology. The German evangelical theologian Jürgen Moltmann argues we need *invincible love for the Earth*[29] to counteract its destruction. The document-manifesto *The Earth Charter*, whose main inspiration is the eco-theologian and essayist Leonardo Boff, argues that "humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. … The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust".[30] In 1997, the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I defined any crime against the natural world as "sin".[31]

Interreligious dialogue on climate justice and sustainability has been underway for some time not only in ecumenical circles, but also between global religions, in particular Christianity and Islam. In Judaism, contemporary reflection on the environment is now consolidated and articulated, including using ancient biblical teachings, such as the obligation for man to cultivate (in Hebrew *abad*, work-serve) and to guard (*shamar*, which also has the meanings of preserving, watching over, observing) the garden of Eden.[32] For their part, Islamic environmentalists emphasize that what God has entrusted to humanity is not dominion over creation, but rather "management" (*khalifah*[33]); such a concept implies collective responsibility.

This brief excursus has shown the interrelation between humanity and the natural world is now also a central theme in theology and spirituality. Alongside the necessary and

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[29] Cf. J. Moltmann, "Il futuro ecologico della teologia moderna", *Il Regno Documenti*, vol. 57, no. 21, 2012, p. 697.

[30] *The Earth Charter*, 2001. The Earth Charter was created by the independent Earth Charter Commission, which was convened as a follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in order to produce a global consensus statement of values and principles for a sustainable future.

[31] Cf. Bartolomeo I, *Address at the Environmental Symposium*, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Santa Barbara, 8 November 1997.

[32] Cf. Gen 2:15.

[33] Cf. *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*, 18 August 2015.

indispensable dimension of universal fraternity (among all human beings), the idea of *creatural fraternity* takes shape, including the whole natural world. Moreover, in *Laudato Si'*[34] Pope Francis states that the "sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one" (LS 92). Humankind needs once again to "speak the language of fraternity" in its relationship with the world (LS 11). It is a truly comprehensive and holistic understanding of "universal fraternity" (LS 228).

## Fraternity, Interreligious Engagement and Inclusive Citizenship: Policy Implications for a Post-Pandemic World

The current global pandemic has clearly shown the importance of the new paradigm of fraternity. During this world health crisis we have witnessed the limit of a "thin morality" associated with foundational universalism. At first, but only for a short period, the impact of the pandemic created a sense of true belonging of all human beings to the universal human family. Subsequently, however, this shared feeling did not translate into a true social friendship at least in two defining moments of the global pandemic: the uneven distribution of protective masks in 2020 and "vaccine nationalism" in 2021. As the virus has spread with no regard for national boundaries, the pandemic clearly shows how social friendship and universal fraternity cannot be conceptualized independently of each other, especially when facing truly transnational phenomena, such as a global health crisis.

Religions have made an important contribution to understanding the multi-dimensional challenge of Covid-19. The Pontifical Academy of Science published a document on the pandemic and universal brotherhood, in the context of the "existential destabilization" caused by the virus, that found mankind unprepared to recognize human "physical, cultural

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[34] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'…*, cit.

and political vulnerability".[35] The correlation of all these elements creates a "socio-health-environmental crisis"[36] – as the Holy See Secretary for Relations with States, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, portraited it in an intervention on fraternity, integral ecology and Covid-19.

A group of prominent Muslim scholars and thinkers issued a Declaration of *Human Solidarity Initiative Against the Coronavirus Pandemic* which reads*:* "The here and now is a truly encouraging moment for the humanitarian side of religion to come to the fore and a moment conducive for the development of a civilizational discourse anchored in the shared values of humanity".[37] On the occasion of the most sacred day to Buddhists (Versak), the Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, stressed that Buddha's teachings "can help remind us all of the unity we need to meet the Covid-19 challenge" and then quotes a Buddhist sutra: "Because all living beings are subject to illness, I am ill, as well".[38]

Religions have created new initiatives to cope with social exclusion and the new poverty caused by the pandemic or related to it. It is worth mentioning here the *Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund in Response to Covid-19* launched by "Religions for Peace" (RfP) as an effort "to stimulate creative interventions that promote resilience within and among diverse

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[35] Pontifical Academy for Life, *Pandemic and universal brotherhood. Note on the Covid-19 emergency*, 30 March 2020.

[36] Cf. P.R. Gallagher, *Fraternity, integral ecology and Covid-19: The contribution of diplomacy and science*, Lectio Magistralis - Accademia dei Lincei, Rome, 23 November 2020.

[37] *The Declaration of the Human Solidarity Initiative Against the Coronavirus Pandemic*, Inter Press Service (IPS) New Agency, 10 April 2020.

[38] United Nations, *Buddha's Teachings Are Reminder That Tackling COVID-19 Challenge Requires Unity, Solidarity, Secretary-General Says in Remarks for International Vesak Day*, Press Release, Secretary General, Statements and Messages, 2 July 2020.

communities".[39] Similar initiatives[40] involve senior leaders from the world's religious and spiritual traditions – Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jain, Jewish, Sikh, Zoroastrian and Indigenous spirituality. Broadening the horizon of their action, RfP global religious leaders recently joined the WHO to promote vaccine equity as a policy imperative.[41]

Finally, religions are thinking about the post-pandemic world and how to practice forms of functional universalism. Even in the unlikely context of the World Economic Forum, religions are considered social vectors for understanding "civic and political life as an expression of love", interpreted as "a courageous acknowledgment of interdependence, even obligation, to one another as fellow human beings".[42] In November 2020, young economists, entrepreneurs and activists from all over the world took part in an online event entitled "The Economy of Francesco", requiring, among other things, that "new financial institutions be established and the existing ones (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund) be reformed in a democratic and inclusive sense to help the world recover from poverty and imbalances produced by the pandemic."[43]

The details provided above are just a few examples of how fraternity can be operationalized at local and global levels and how functional universalism can be translated into concrete policy options. New creative forms of interreligious engagement and partnership between governments, international organizations and religious actors inspired by the visions of universal fraternity

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[39] Cf. "Religions for Peace Launches the Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund in Response to COVID-19", *Religions for Peace*, 14 April 2020.

[40] UNICEF, Launch of Global Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action Covid-19 Initiative. Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities, 7 April 2020.

[41] "Global Religious Leaders and Director General of WHO Stress Urgency of Vaccine Equity", *Religions for Peace*, 19 March 2021.

[42] World Economic Forum, *COVID-19 shows the need for radical change. Here's how faith leaders can help rebuild a better post-pandemic world*, 15 May 2020.

[43] The Economy of Francesco Final Statement and Common Commitment, *The Economy of Francesco*, 21 November 2020.

and social friendship, I have argued, might have considerable policy implications (both domestically and internationally) and lead to new practices of inclusive citizenship, an idea broader than mere nationality and more fitting for the post-Westphalian world order to come.

# 4. Pope Francis' Strategic Vision of Human Fraternity: A Culture of Encounter at Multiple Levels from Argentina to Abu Dhabi and Iraq

Scott M. Thomas

There is a growing criticism and fatigue regarding "religious declarations", which strongly support religious engagement in international affairs but often remain at the level of ethical principles and declaratory politics and are ultimately ineffective on the ground. However, it would be a mistake to include in these criticisms Pope Francis' conceptualizations of human fraternity, citizenship, and social peace. These concepts are a key part of Francis' "culture of encounter", and perhaps the signature theme of his papacy. To better understand what can be accomplished in this regard, this chapter considers Jorge Mario Bergoglio's history of religious engagement in Argentina. Throughout his time in Argentina, Bergoglio developed a strategic vision of collaboration with multiple actors, both secular and religious, operating at multiple levels of analysis – individual, society, state, and international society. Religious declarations at the state level, through religious and interreligious engagement, accompanied specific actions at the grass-roots level to meet immediate needs, and to build institutions, as part of a long-term vision for an on-going local, social, economic, and *spiritual* impact to transform communities. Bergoglio did this as an active response to the consequences of deep suffering and violence during the repeated crises in Argentina, including

the military dictatorship, the Falklands defeat, democratic transition, hunger, unemployment, and economic collapse. Now, as Pope Francis, he is applying the key concepts of this culture of encounter to global issues in international relations. If Pope Francis is an idealist, then he is an idealist without illusions.

## Bergoglio's Vision on the Role of Religion in the Argentinian Crises: From Humanitarian to Institution-building

This section briefly provides the background to Bergoglio's key concepts, namely encounter, human fraternity, citizenship, and social peace, and why they can be described as action-oriented. Religious engagement and interreligious dialogue and collaboration, at multiple levels of analysis, became essential to religious leaders in Buenos Aires (increasingly a megacity), during Argentina's repeated crises. This was the only way to tackle specific issues, and develop projects or activities to meet immediate needs, and to even think about building institutions, as a long-term vision of social change to transform communities. Therefore, the section is also the background to what a strategy of religious engagement which uses these concepts might look like, as developed later in the chapter.

Argentina was a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century (this is why the Bergoglio family emigrated there from Italy).[1] The country is a case study in how things went wrong through domestic misfortunes, mismanagement, and the manner in which it was integrated into the global economy. It has had persistent social, political, and economic crises, instability, and violence. Bergoglio's key concepts emerge as part of

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[1] The main facts in the case studies are taken from Austin Ivereigh, but the interpretations are mainly my own. A. Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope*, Allen & Unwin, 2014, New Epilogue, 2015.

his understanding of *encounter*, which he frames in terms of fraternity and friendship. For Bergoglio, this *inevitably* means also encountering ordinary people, mostly those on the margins of society, and acknowledging, perhaps unexpectedly, the knowledge and religious resources they already possess. He learned this perspective in his grass-roots ministry, long before he became Pope Francis. In Argentina, Bergoglio demonstrated, through his partnerships with people from all religions and across society, that human agency encompasses how creativity can be mobilized as an active dimension of hope to help ordinary people, even amidst repeated political and economic crises (recall that hope is one of the theological virtues). However, it all begins with encounter.

Bergoglio, after his time as Jesuit Provincial of Argentina (1973-79), served as rector of the Jesuit seminary, Colegio Máximo, in San Miguel (1979-85), amid the working-class *barrios* outside Buenos Aires. It was a difficult time for the country, with the demands of democratic consolidation (after Raúl Alfonsín's victory in the 1983 presidential elections), and the need for justice and reconciliation (after the "Dirty War"). However, it was also a time of great economic hardship with the economic downturn, rising prices, and unemployment pushing thousands of families into destitution. Jesuit students sent out into the *barrios* around the seminary by Bergoglio reported back to him that many families barely ate one meal a day.

What did Bergoglio, the seminary rector do? He demonstrated by his actions that *creativity*, another key concept, is the active dimension of hope in difficult times.[2] On empty fertile acres around the college he created a farm to grow vegetables, and shelters for livestock. The farm helped provide for human as well as spiritual needs – not only for the workers and their families, but also for the Jesuit seminary students, most of whom were from middle class backgrounds. The seminarians were now

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[2] Jorge Mario Bergoglio/Pope Francis, *Education for Choosing Life: Proposals for Difficult Times*, Spanish, 2005; English, Ignatius Press, 2014.

thrust into the *barrios*, for encounter begins with learning to "go outside ourselves, beyond ourselves", and there the students discovered for themselves the *santo pueblo fiel de Dios*, God's holy faithful people. These ordinary "faithful people", many on the margins of society, expressed their religion in their everyday spiritualty and religious practices. This is why the culture of encounter is united to this other key concept of the Argentine theology of the people.[3] It is clear Pope Francis sees these concepts, including *santo pueblo fiel Dios*, as "transferable concepts", since this is how he referred to the Iraqi Church in his homily celebrating mass in Erbil at the conclusion of his apostolic journey to Iraq in March 2021.

Together with their farm labor, these encounters transformed the nature of the seminarian's Jesuit formation and spirituality (prayer, meditation, and contemplation), and helped them to "find God in all things", a key Jesuit expression. In pastoral theology classes Bergoglio asked them to meditate on their experiences in the *barrios*. He insisted that they were not going there to teach, but to be taught. Bergoglio had emphasized as Jesuit Provincial (1973-79) that elites of all kinds – religious, political, and academic – need to "[reject] the absurd idea of giving 'voice' to a people, as if they had none of their own. All peoples have a voice, even if it has been reduced by oppression to a whisper. We must sharpen our hearing and listen to that voice, and not speak in their place".[4] For Bergoglio, Christ spoke through the poor, and in meeting the needs of the poor the seminarians were learning that social action for justice was rooted in "the real", i.e. in the concrete demands, values, and culture of ordinary people, and in respecting the value of their cultural and spiritual authenticity.

Why are people on the margins of society so important? Certainly because of their inherent dignity (as created in the image of God), but it is also because hearing, and listening

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[3] D. Fares, SJ, *The Heart of Pope Francis: How a New Culture of Encounter is Changing the Church and the World*, Crossroads/Herder & Herder, 2015, p. 30.

[4] Ibid., p. 30.

to them, is a way of attaining new knowledge regarding their needs, and what is really going on at the local level ("truth is an encounter", *La verità è un incontro*, the homilies at Santa Marta). "For they have another way of looking at things; they see aspects of reality that are invisible to the centers of power where weighty decisions are made" (FT 215-217).[5] In other words, these basic concepts, or social practices, can help to sharpen our way of seeing or interpreting the world, since new knowledge comes through encounter, i.e. in a new, radical, social epistemology, or radical Franciscan epistemology, rather than a positivist epistemology. This new knowledge often leads to new, increasingly radical forms of human fraternity.

What Bergoglio did at San Miguel is a story of how to creatively meet immediate human needs and build institutions. His experience also shows how religious engagement, through secular and religious partnerships, can link the global level (i.e. the United Nations) and the local level in tangible ways for communities. When Bergoglio took over the church in San Miguel it was little more than a shed, but with help of students, young people, parishioners, and donors, in a few years it became a huge church with a children's crèche; a kitchen that fed 400 children a day (and another 400 in nearby San Alonso) during the economic crisis; a night school for adults who hadn't finished high school; a trade school; and place providing scholarships to enable young people to go to university. The students organized summer camps for kids who had never been to the seaside before. There were UN Day of the Child celebrations, bringing 3,000 children together, and giving them new toys (thanks to Bergoglio's contacts with toy manufacturers). This is an intriguing example of social networking linking the global and the local, and took *seriously*, in concrete ways, the activities of the United Nations, including the rights of the child, and in

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[5] Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, Assisi, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, September 2020. Quotations from the Encyclical in this chapter are referred to with the title's acronym (FT) and the relevant paragraph number.

ways that children could appreciate. This was part of Bergoglio's understanding, and that of his students, who demonstrated Catholic social teaching in practical ways, and Catholic support for the United Nations, international law, and international organizations.

Bergoglio became a cardinal (February 2001) as Argentina was sliding fast into a deep political and economic crisis by the end of the year. The "Argentinazo" or crisis of December 2001, was a period of rioting and violent civil unrest (especially on December 19-20, when the government declared a state of siege), and this was preceded by a popular revolt against the Argentine government which eventually caused the resignation of President Fernando de la Rúa, leading to a period of political instability. The economic collapse that followed was the biggest debt default in history, in which unemployment grew close to 50 per cent. With the devaluation of the peso, many working people lost a significant part of their savings, and the middle class faced increasing downward mobility in a country that once had the largest middle class in Latin America.

In early January 2002 Archbishop Karlic and Cardinal Bergoglio went to see the new President Eduardo Duhaldre, and they agreed to formalize the *Díalogo Argentino*, a seven-month process which engaged intensely with civil society organizations that helped keep society from total breakdown, and also created what potentially could become a new kind of politics. The *Díalogo* created the space for agency, shoring up civil society, and helping to expand the variety of civil society organizations involved in dialogue and conversation with the government (eventually involving 2,000 organizations). The Church was the main player, but amidst a variety of other players – who worked together to meet immediate needs, by providing transportation, food, child care, health care, and, given the collapse of savings, banks, and the financial system, setting up a mechanism for bartering the exchange between goods and services. Moreover, amidst a bankrupt state the social networks and neighborhood groups increasingly began

to unite. They demanded a voice – which was partly provided by the *Díalogo* - and to participate in what might be called developing a national strategy, i.e. organizing short, medium, and long-term initiatives, and developing ideas for long-term reforms to institutions.

However, Bergoglio insisted that it was Duhalde, as president, and not the Church, who convened and led the *Díalogo*. The Church – as an institution in Argentina, provided a space for dialogue but it was not a lobby, a party, an NGO, an interest group, a pressure group, or sector of civil society. The Church as an institution did not form a secular-religious partnership with the state (state-church separation), but Argentina did have a Catholic civic culture, and so the Church and the archbishop did have a role in social, religious, and political life. In this way the Church was not compromised, and the bishops' maintained their independence to criticize the government. It was at this local grass-roots level where secular-religious partnerships could flourish as part of a civil society that was increasingly active, and socially and politically engaged. In a document he shared with the president when he was archbishop, Bergoglio claimed that because of corruption only 40 per cent of state assistance reached those who needed it. He blamed both left-wing ideologues for the way they deified the state, and neoliberals for the way they left it out. His public sermon at the *Te Deum* Mass in the cathedral on Argentina's national day (May 25, 2002), with President Duhalde and the government in attendance, asserted declaratory politics and principles at the state level of analysis, but they were rooted in the *Díalogo Argentino* and in the grass-roots interreligious collaboration on projects and activities to help ordinary people. Bergoglio argued that the only way to rebuild society was from below, and no project based on great plans can be realized unless it is built and sustained from the ground up. The modern secular lexicon of development calls this the "ownership" of development projects, but this does not convey Bergoglio's understanding, which is rooted in the theology of the people. This meant for

Bergoglio an even stronger sense of agency, since for him this was an invitation to learn from the poor, the marginalized, and for ordinary citizens, to see themselves more fully as part of the *pueblo* - the people - and to serve them. Ultimately, when Néstor Kirchner and subsequently his wife Cristina Fernández came to power in 2003, they ignored the *Díalogo Argentino* and its policy recommendations, and the support it enjoyed among civil society organizations.

## Human Fraternity and Interreligious Engagement: A levels of analysis framework

The concepts that Pope Francis developed and utilized in his practical and policy-related religious engagement in Argentina, and the lessons he learned, steered him towards his diagnosis of the basic problem of international relations. In a globalizing world we are losing the bonds between people,[6] and this is happening at all levels of analysis – individual, society, state, and international society, a framework used by scholars of international relations. Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* articulates a similar type of levels of analysis framework, although its specific inclusion of the "family", and "peoples", rooted in Catholic social teaching, and the Argentine theology of the people is a notable expansion of its categories.

- **level of international society** – "Good politics will seek ways of building communities at *each* level of social life, in order to recalibrate and reorient globalization (FT 138, 142, 189, 259, 261, 280) and thus avoid disruptive effects (FT 182)". Globalization is a set of global processes – socially, politically, and economically constructed in one set of ways, and so they can be constructed in other ways that benefit ordinary people and

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[6] M. Borghesi, "A World Without Bonds: The Primacy of the Economy in the Era of Globalization", in *The Mind of Pope Francis Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey*, Liturgical Press, 2017, pars. 187-222.

the common good. *Fratelli Tutti* strongly supports the *strengthening* of the United Nations, international law, and regional integration (on slavery, trafficking, human rights, dispute settlement, etc.);

- **state, society, and community level** – "Each of us is fully a person when we are part of a people" (FT 182). FT argues genuine human fraternity respects "peoples", differences, rooted in their culture, and cultural authenticity, and yet is open to the gift of others, rather than subject to homogenizing forces of globalization (FT 95-100, ch. 5). These levels show why encounter and aspects of the theology of the people are transferable concepts, relevant at different levels of analysis, and through interreligious dialogue, can be applied to other societies, cultures, and religions;

- **individual** level – "at the same time, there are no peoples without respect for the individuality of each person. 'People' and 'person' are correlative terms. Nonetheless, there are attempts nowadays to reduce persons to isolated individuals easily manipulated by powers pursuing spurious interests" (FT 182).

The levels of analysis framework are helpful to indicate where religious engagement, as a specific type of foreign policy strategy, may help to facilitate the creation of human fraternity, inclusive citizenship, and social peace. One way to understand what this strategy might look like is to recognize that it uses secular-religious partnerships or collaboration that are at the intersection of both *secular* states and international organizations, and *religious* nonstate actors (religious leaders, communities, and various religious-based organizations).[7] These are also at the intersection of policy implementation that can bring together the *state level* and the *global level*, and, at the

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[7] F. Petito, S. Berry, and M. Mancinelli, *Interreligious Engagement Strategies: A Policy Tool to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief*, FoRB & Foreign Policy Initiative, University of Sussex, 2018, pp. 12-13.

*local level,* religious, nonstate actors engaged in interreligious dialogue and collaboration on specific projects to meet immediate needs. They can also work together to plan or to build new institutions as part of a long-term effort to transform communities.

How can secular-religious partnerships assist policy implementation in creative and constructive ways? Pope Francis' insights from Argentina offer one way of answering this question. They do so in a way that crucially explains how religious engagement and interreligious dialogue have the potential to help overcome the agency-structure problem in international relations (recall the fatigue, the weariness about ethical and religious declarations with which this paper began). How do we reconcile the fact that *human agency* is the only moving force behind events and social action in politics and international relations, with the fact that social action can only be realized in actual historical circumstances that *condition* the possibilities for social action and influence actual outcomes? What Bergoglio (joyfully and painfully) learned in Argentina – as an individual Catholic, as a priest, seminary rector, Jesuit provincial, archbishop and cardinal – is that any person can creatively become, or can learn to become, "strategic", i.e. become as a person with agency at each level of analysis (FT 165). In other words, what is "human agency" in Bergoglio's political anthropology? Agency is the way vision, creativity, and imagination by anyone (as an individual), or more often as part of a group, or as part of a "people" (FT 182), can mobilize, collaborate, as an active dimension of hope, at *each* level of analysis, on activities to meet immediate needs, develop specific projects, and even build new institutions over the long term.

*Fratelli Tutti* states that if people are in dialogue with those they encounter around them, then there is "the opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity", and in a variety of encounters we have "the *space* we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes" (FT 77). There is also the *space* to act boldly and creatively with

new ideas, and new projects to promote healing, reconciliation, and economic wellbeing (FT 225,  231). In other words, it is in *spaces* such as these that religious engagement and secular-religious partnerships can offer the funding, facilitation, and support the kind of human agency, vision, creativity, and imagination which emerge from new forms of encounter, and fraternity through interreligious dialogue and collaboration at each level of analysis,  especially  the grass-roots level. At the same time, as part of a radical social epistemology, religious actors – through religious engagement, interreligious dialogue, and collaboration – bring to governments new knowledge from the grass-roots level through secular-religious partnerships. They also extend the knowledge base for better, and more effective, foreign and development assistance, or post-conflict peacebuilding.[8]

## A Culture of Encounter and Inclusive Citizenship for a Globalizing World

Pope Francis' vision of human fraternity, citizenship and social peace is action-oriented from the outset, since it begins with encounter at the level of analysis of the individual. Each of us need to "go outside ourselves, beyond ourselves", and, for those who are Christians, they need to go out from the Church and into the world (this, of course, is also the message of *Gaudium et Spes* at the Second Vatican Council). Individuals can *learn* to do this, *not* by being taught by the state, but with the help of religious leaders, institutions, and their specific religious *tradition* of ethics, doctrine, and spirituality (at the state, society, and community levels of analysis). When individuals do this, who do they encounter? The poor, the marginalized, those who think differently, have different beliefs, and belong

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[8] F. Petito and S.M. Thomas, "Encounter, Dialogue and Knowledge: Italy as a Special Case of Religious Engagement in Foreign Policy", *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2015, pp. 40-51.

to different religions. It is then, through faith, dialogue, and diversity, at each level of analysis, that we can create a culture of encounter, a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, since what we all have in common that we are created in the image of God. This represents a new, radical form of social ontology, or a radical Franciscan social ontology as the counterpart to a new type of radical Franciscan social epistemology.[9] Moreover, Pope Francis argues that this can restore hope, and bring renewal (this is the role of creativity, and is why dreams are built together (FT 8)), leading to an increasingly wider set of concentric circles of encounter, and dialogue, and to increasingly *riskier* encounters. In fact, this follows the model of St. Francis, whose initial encounter was with a leper, continued with a set of *riskier* encounters, finally culminating in the *most risky* encounter of all (who with creativity and courage crossed the threshold of hope, and the levels of analysis): his meeting with al-Malik al-Kāmil, the Sultan of Egypt, as a Muslim, ostensibly the enemy of Christendom (FT 1-3).

This is why in a world without bonds, the purpose, or the dynamics of the culture of encounter, is more "a way of life", a way of living in the world (FT 216), than a program (a set of things to do). Yet this way of living, which is joyful (FT 218), and "passionate about meeting others" (FT 216), is, by definition, action-oriented and has quite practical applications. In the model of interreligious engagement already presented, it is possible to see in these projects and activities a description of interreligious dialogue and collaboration at the local level of analysis. This demonstrates what human fraternity and inclusive citizenship can look like, as this way of living is inevitably "seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone" (FT 1-3, and 216).

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[9] S.M. Thomas, "A Trajectory Towards the Periphery: Francis of Assisi, Louis Massignon, Pope Francis, and Muslim-Christian Relations", *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2018, pp. 16-36.

This vision of human fraternity, inclusive citizenship, and the culture of encounter is reflected in what is sometimes called the "Argentine model" of interreligious dialogue. In this model, the abstract level of interreligious dialogue and spirituality come to reflect what is already taking place in society. The origins of this model go back to the *Diálogo Argentino*, and the founding of the Argentine Institute for Interreligious Dialogue during the "Argentinazo", the popular revolt, state of siege, and economic collapse in 2001-02. The institute came into being as part of a joint religious response to Argentina's deepening political and economic crisis at a time when there was a lack of trust in politicians and state institutions. This led many people to look to their religious leaders, who rather than simply acting for their separate communities (religious engagement in separate silos), realized they needed to work together at this extremely difficult time to respond practically to the desperate needs of their religious communities.

It was set up by Bergoglio and other clerics, shortly after he became cardinal, and so in examining this model we must take into account Argentina's Catholic civic culture and tradition, and the role of the Catholic Church in civil society. The specific way in which the *Diálogo* was founded partly reflects Bergoglio's role in the Catholic Church, but also his organizational skills, and his understanding of what encounter means as a way of life – encountering others of different nationalities, colors/races, or religions as a part of everyday life. How Bergoglio and the other clerics acted shaped how the "Argentine model" of interreligious dialogue operates. For all of them, it was servant leadership, or religious leadership by example (which have become well-worn clichés), but they do not capture what took place. The key question for these religious leaders was, right now, what is practically needed at the grass-roots level? In other words, Bergoglio's key concept, *creativity*, and how creativity is the active dimension of hope, is demonstrated by the role of openness, and creativity in thinking about what immediately needs to be done, which may also include institution building.

The *Diálogo*, a new institution in civil society dedicated to interreligious dialogue, was something new – the result of vision, creativity and imagination to meet immediate needs, which now could help with future issues and problems.

However, in the Argentine model, it is possible to see how religious engagement, operating at multiple levels of analysis, can demonstrate what fraternity and inclusive citizenship looks like as a new way of envisioning Argentine society. Interreligious dialogue does not begin with theological debate or agreement, it begins with interreligious cooperation on meeting immediate social and economic needs. In this case, theological ethics on how they should respond to social issues brought participants in the dialogue together, and not debates over theology, as important as they can be. It also relies on personal friendships between religious leaders – modelling with them encounter as a style of life, so encounter becomes a culture, a way of living, and a living demonstration for others, in very difficult circumstances, of what a civic culture, dialogue, and friendship in society looks like (FT 163, 181, 264, 272, and 211). Also, dialogue takes place through these friendships rather than among institutions or religious representatives, and, crucially, they take on each other's concerns without losing their own identity.

Over the years, these friendships have helped develop common civic virtues to rehabilitate politics by working together – encounter as a way of living, in writing articles, book chapters, speeches, and public appearances, to both model publicly, and promote together common civic virtues to rehabilitate politics. The public profile varies for each of these activities, even if they are all important. However, Bergoglio, at the state and society levels of analysis, also made full use of the public square, the civic space, as cardinal in a Catholic country with a Catholic culture and tradition, to promote and demonstrate these values. In other words, as early as his time in the megacity of Buenos Aires (and Argentina), before he became pope, he was "performing

the gospel life" in a globalizing world.[10] He demonstrated what fraternity and inclusive citizenship look like by bringing religious minorities to the table to create an unprecedented civic space in Argentina for religious diversity. He gave other (i.e. non-Christian) religious leaders a *civic space*, and a place of honor at the annual *Te Deum* Mass on Argentina's national day (with the president and government in attendance), and arranged for common pledges and declarations on social issues facing the country to make sure there was a joint religious voice. Here, the ethical and political declarations were accompanied by public demonstrations of what they can look like in practice. In these ways Bergoglio demonstrated that Catholics, other Christians, Jews, and Muslims are also citizens – and could even be Argentine patriots, with a right to participate in determining the political direction of the country and to reap the fruits of the economy.

At the level of analysis of international society, Pope Francis's encounter with the Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb, one of the world's leading Sunni Muslim religious authorities, is another demonstration of what the key concepts of the culture of encounter can look life in a globalizing world. Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb, with the full public authority of their religious offices, at the global level of analysis, have already started to influence debate and discussion on minority rights and inclusive or "full" citizenship at the state and society levels of analysis. How has this been possible? People achieve things with words all the time in the social world of international relations. Words create and legitimate ideas, which in turn can lead to actions. They can do this negatively, by denigrating free and fair elections, inciting hatred of races, religions, or ethnic groups; or they can do this positively, as in the formulation of the concept of inclusive of "full citizenship", used by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb,

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[10] L.S. Cunningham, *Francis of Assisi: Performing the Gospel Life*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 2004.

with the full public authority of their religious offices on the global stage, at the levels of analysis of state and international society. This has already begun to challenge *concretely* existing paradigms – at the state and society levels of analysis, over minorities, migrants, and immigrants. It has also opened up, encouraged, and legitimated the social and political dynamics necessary for politicians, local religious leaders and their communities, and NGO activists, to mobilize the underlying social and political forces necessary to change laws, and simplify bureaucracies regarding visas and other legal documents, and provide humanitarian assistance in practical ways) (FT 130).

Moreover, the full extent to which Pope Francis is willing to take on even *riskier* encounters on the global stage, as part of *his* developing culture of encounter, even as pope, is important. Pope Francis' willingness to undertake his apostolic journey to Iraq is a good example of this, as was his willingness to go out, and beyond, the antagonism of Western policy and the Shia world to meet with Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani, one of the most deeply influential leaders in the global Shia Muslim community. Pope Francis is demonstrating on the world stage that the culture of encounter – creating encounter as a culture, is also the only way to transcend differences and divisions, and to assure genuine social peace rather than a peace that is fragile and superficial. It can contribute to integrating differences since *fraternity*, the growth of a culture of encounter – points towards the recognition that others, no matter how they have acted, "have something to offer which must not be overlooked" in building social peace or conflict resolution (FT 217).

## Conclusion

This chapter began with the fatigue, even weariness in certain circles regarding declaratory politics and ethical principles which ultimately do not have an impact at the local or grass-roots level. It has argued that it would be a mistake to include Pope Francis' key concept of the culture of encounter in this criticism. His

key concepts, or social practices, all emerged first in Argentina, and now as pope, he is applying them to other countries. They are underpinned by what is *real*, and what is real comes through *encounter*, and the *culture of encounter* – listening, learning the needs, the demands, the values, and culture of ordinary people (and not elites), many of whom are on the margins of society. This is why the culture of encounter and the theology of the people are inextricably related to each other and why they both reflect what might be called a radical Franciscan social ontology and social epistemology in international relations.

The chapter has briefly shown that the concepts of human fraternity, citizenship, and social peace are associated with Francis' vision of culture of encounter and "God's holy faithful people" embedded in his emphasis on hope, agency, and creativity. Therefore human fraternity and inclusive citizenship are action-oriented and transferable concepts, which can help deal with the global issues that confront all of us: they emerge from real social practice and help to identify, and even to create, the kind of social spaces where a variety of secular-religious partnerships, religious engagement, and interreligious dialogue and collaboration, at multiple levels of analysis, can help to meet immediate needs, develop new projects, and build new institutions to promote the global common good. Therefore, they cannot be reduced to mere declaratory politics, but instead represent the different components of a multi-layered, coherent and ambitious, strategic vision Francis has put forward to navigate the challenges and crises of our times.

## 5. Reclaiming Pluralism in Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Mediterranean Cosmopolitanism

Mohammed Hashas

> Today the cry for pluralism no longer has to hide behind metaphysical allegories. We can bring a new world into being through all the scientific advances that allow us to communicate, to engage in unlimited dialogue, to create that global mirror in which all cultures can shine in their uniqueness.
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> Fatema Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* [1992], 2002, 174

World religions and cultures are intrinsically plural; they could not have become global religions without this value. Even the cultures and religions that enjoy only limited influence in the world are minimally plural and open, otherwise they could not have resisted and existed to this day. However, history has its dynamics and cosmopolitan religions can face new challenges brought about by growing diversity. Secular-liberal modernity has put all traditions – religious, cultural and philosophical – to the test of change, and this includes modernity itself. This means that no tradition should throw stones at others; each has parts of its house made of glass. That is why profound pluralism and recognition of difference has to become part and parcel of daily intellectual exchanges, as well as interreligious initiatives. Human fraternity and inclusive citizenship are among the

most urgent values to imbue in our individual, communal, societal and global agendas. Interreligious dialogue is a form of recognizing global pluralism, despite each tradition's belief that its faith is the "best" or "superior" or "most true"; no faith would teach or preach that its beliefs are inferior or untrue, and the same applies to philosophical, political, and scientific tendencies. The challenge is to balance between what one claims as one's own and what one shares with the different other(s); the intertwining boundaries between them are wide and large. Contemporary Islamic thought is immersed in this modern – and historical – challenge of plural views of the cosmic world and its polities.

Pluralism is a lived reality in the Arab and vast worlds of Islam, despite the socio-political and economic challenges they may be experiencing, especially in recent times, characterized by socio-political wars of proxy since 2010-11. The fact that different ethnicities, races, languages, and religious traditions live in these historical parts of the world means that both in theory and in practice the tradition of pluralism is alive and is lived, however minimally in certain areas or in certain historically difficult moments. There is, however, a dire need for collective work to tackle the increasing challenges the Mediterranean region is facing on all fronts despite these shared stories of plural lives and co-existence. Islam has a major role to play in preventing, reducing, and overcoming these challenges. Contrary to the view that sees Islam as lacking theological and philosophical sources for pluralism, and thus lacking incentives for the democratic management of social and political diversity, a view often predominant among policy makers in the Euro-American context, this essay draws on classical and modern Islamic scholarship to demonstrate and to reclaim the centrality of pluralism in Islamic thinking. It also highlights the growing role of contemporary female Muslim theologians and feminist scholars to show how their defense of gender equality within their tradition is not separable from their defense of equality at large, both as an interreligious and intellectual dialogue among

varying faith traditions and philosophies and as a juridical right that has to find space in modern legal traditions. I put forward four recommendations at the intersection of religion and policy to foster what I refer to as institutional *pluralization* processes, to which stakeholders from all faiths and disciplines should contribute, with Islamic leaders and scholars in the lead. The essay concludes with the "Medizen" image of an open and aquatic Mediterranean identity as an ideal of pluralism in which Islamic scholarship as well as religious authorities – along with their counterparts in other traditions – have an important role to play.

## Classical Islamic Scholarship and the Recognition of Pluralism

Classical Islamic scholarship on other religions was the most advanced of its time for its capacity to study other faith traditions and to give them credit for what they were, theologically and juridically; often this was done with overtones of superiority and refutation, but still there were exceptional works that were as neutral as the works of anthropological methodology we know today. For example, the influential historian and exegete Ibn Jarir al-Ṭabari (838-923) refers to pre-Islamic prophets and religions in his *History of the Prophets and Kings,* known as *The Chronicles of al-Ṭabari,* and quotes Jesus in his voluminous exegesis of the Qur'an, the *al-Ṭabari Exegesis*. Ibn Ishaq al-Warraq al-Baghdadi, also known as Ibn al-Nadim (d. 998), compiled the original and encyclopaedic work *The Catalogue*, which contained a list of books, authors, geographies and sciences of all peoples that were available in Arabic at the time.

More interestingly, three exemplary works of comparative religion can be referred to. First, the polymath al-Biruni (973-1050) spent some 40 years in India, and examined Buddhism from the inside, as objectively as he could in *Verifying All That the Indians Recount, The Reasonable and the Unreasonable*. Al-Biruni believed that all major religions share the same values.

The contemporary anthropologist Akbar Ahmed says that al-Biruni can be considered the first true anthropologist. Second, the *Sects and Creeds* of Taj al-Din Muhammad al-Shahrastani (1086-1153) is another pioneering and exemplary text that is highly neutral for its time. The Australian scholar of religion Eric J. Sharpe says this about al-Shahrastani: "The honour of writing the first history of religion in world literature seems in fact to belong to the Muslim Shahrastani, whose *Religious Parties and Schools of Philosophy* [i.e. *Kitāb al-milal*] describes and systematises all the religions of the then known world, as far as the boundaries of China".[1] Third, *The Decisive Word on Sects, Heterodoxies, and Denominations* of the Andalusian Ibn Hazm (994-1064) discusses various world religions, with a focus on Christianity and Judaism; Ibn Hazm's comparison of religions aimed at refuting the theological foundations of the traditions he studied and was therefore less objective than the works of al-Biruni and al-Shahrastani. The well-known German-American scholar of Islam, Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003), says, "The comparative study of religion has been rightly acclaimed as one of the great contributions of Muslim civilization to mankind's intellectual progress".[2]

## The Revival of Theological Diversity in Contemporary Islamic Scholarship

The classical, encyclopaedic, intellectual Islamic tradition of engaging with other faith traditions as objectively as possible remains unchallenged by modern and contemporary Islamic scholarship. Many major Islamic seminaries and universities of traditional religious learning still depend on classical masterworks that are one thousand years old, because of the

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[1] E.J. Sharpe, *Caomparative Religion: A History*, 2d ed., LaSalle, IL, Open Court, 1991, p. 11.

[2] F. Rosenthal, "Preface", in B.B. Lawrence, *Shahrastani on the Indian Religions*, The Hague and Paris, De Gruyter Mouton, 1976, p. 2.

shortage of new intellectual productions of this type from an Islamic scholarly perspective. There are, of course, exceptions, like the work of the late Palestinian-American Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986), who wrote especially on the three Abrahamic religions and called for "meta-religion" through "critical world theology" to overcome religious polemics for genuine theological pluralism. A few more examples of pluralist philosophers and theologians of contemporary Islam are given below.

The Iranian philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933), based in the USA, had a theological-philosophical exchange with the English theologian John Hick (1922-2012) in the early 1990s, arranged by the young Turkish-Austrian scholar Ednan Aslan, currently professor at Vienna University. While both Hick and Nasr, as philosopher-theologians, defend the idea of pluralism and how all faith traditions try differently to answer the human search for the Real, the Ultimate Reality, Nasr sticks to the classical Islamic epistemological view of the world instead of endorsing the modern secular and purely rationalist view. Nasr's view reflects the role of traditional prophecy and profound human mystical experience in coming to terms with the world and the different other and does not see the pure rationalism of European modernity as a possible future salvation for humanity, or a way towards genuine human pluralism. For Nasr, unlike Hick, who shows more trust in purely human reason, mystical and prophetic experiences remain fundamental; they are the path towards teaching in-depth compassion towards the self, the other, and the world. In other words, Nasr believes that metaphysics still has a vital role to play in modern and future philosophy, for the sake of humanity. His theology and philosophy are influenced by towering classical figures like Ibn Sina (d. 1037), Suhrawardi (d. 1191), Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), and Mulla Sadra (d. 1640).

Nasr's compatriot, Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945), another major philosopher-theologian currently self-exiled in Canada, however, adopts a more "rationalist", i.e. neo-Mu'tazilite view

of the sacred text, though they both emphasize the value of human mystic experience for a more comprehensive view of the self, the other, and the world. Soroush contends that the world is (1) *a priori* pluralist, and terms such recognition "negative pluralism", and also that it is (2) pluralist *a posteriori*, and terms this recognition "positive pluralism", borrowing the terms "positive and negative" from the British philosopher Isaiah Berlin (d. 1997). Moreover, Soroush believes that human beings should not expect too much from religion, and terms this view "minimalist religiosity" because believers in history add "accidentals" to religion – additions and interpretations of the original faith that cover its "essentials," which only few believers reach through both reason and mystical experiences. To reach the "essentials" or the core of religion requires tracing the beginnings of a revelation and its later transformations in light of Prophetic experiences, historical constraints, and human interactions and relations. The history of a religion thus becomes knowledge about the religion and not the religion *per se*. Otherwise said, positive pluralism is the norm of the world, and is divinely willed. Different prophecies all preach a version of truth, from the same God. As to negative pluralism, it rests on something "lacking"; it is "pragmatic" and "instrumental"; it nurtures scepticism and lacks certitude or truth, because it is the result of rational theology, but it remains unavoidable and is likewise divinely willed. What matters in this view of pluralism is that there is not only one path towards truth but that there are multiple paths advocated differently by different faiths and traditions. Since God, the Guide, or *al-Hadi* in Arabic, is One, then He cannot exclude His own people and creation from His own mercy, compassion and the path towards Truth. Such a pluralist theology as advocated by Soroush requires "epistemological pluralism" and "rational modesty," as he argues. He says, "All truths reside under the same roof and are stars in the same constellation." He invokes his mystic master al-Rumi (d. 1272) and refers to the story of the elephant in the room to convey the idea of multiple versions of the same Truth.

The elephant story is originally Indian but is invoked in support of the concept of pluralism by contemporary theologians like John Thatamanil in his book *Circling the Elephant: Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity* (2020).

More critical of both conservative and liberal-secular intellectual tendencies in contemporary Islamic thought is the work of the Moroccan logician and moral philosopher Taha Abderrahmane (b. 1944). Like Nasr above, Abderrahmane's philosophy is more embedded in mystical experience, based on belief in revelation as the ultimate source for human ethical inspiration and guidance. He launches a staunch critique of "Western" modernity and its deformation of the human spirit and ethical worldview, which it replaces with the sovereignty of egoism and self-gratification. He equally critiques Islamic intellectual currents that seek an epistemological break with tradition and its source of "revelation" as the only form for socio-political and cultural change. Abderrahmane proposes what he calls "trusteeship philosophy" as a way to establish ethics rather than reason as the essence of humanity; reason is only a means and not an end in itself. Furthermore, Abderrahmane also makes internal and external dialogue, or "entangled dialogue" (*al-hiwariyya* in Arabic) the essence of human interaction for what he calls a future civilization of ethos. For him, there is no humanity without ethics, and no ethics without religion; religion and ethics are one; human creation is itself an act of mercy, and what it engenders are beings that have to bear this spirit through ethics in their thoughts and actions. Reason is a means to this realization. More interestingly, he makes such understanding and praxis an aesthetic: the more one does good to the other, the more one feels good towards the self; goodness is expansive. This philosophy is based on a Quranic covenant, expressed as "trust". In this light, life is a trust that human beings have to care for responsibly and ethically, hence the concept of "trusteeship" (*al-i'timaniyya* in Arabic).

While these prominent philosophical-theological voices convey that Islam recognises diversity and incites people

to recognise it, and to instil it into their hearts and acts, the Tanzanian-American theologian Abdulaziz Sachedina (b. 1942) confesses that it is not always easy to meet this ethical and pluralist challenge in the Islamic message. Muslims have not always lived up to this ideal, despite clear prescriptions of freedom of belief, and divinely willed human diversity. In *Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (2001), he says that politics impacts pluralistic teachings according to ideological needs; this became evident to him during the political turmoil in parts of the Middle East in the early 2000s when he participated in inter-and-intra-religious dialogue initiatives.

## Islamic Feminism and
## the Reclamation of Theological Pluralism

Women scholars of Islam do not hesitate to engage revelation and the sacred book in their struggles for improved gender equality rights, social justice, and interreligious dialogue. To take a few examples, Amina Wadud (b. 1952), who comes from a disadvantaged African American family background, has used the Quran in her defense of social justice and equality of all before the law in politics, and before God in piety. Feminist empowerment based on a re-appropriation of the sacred is intersectional, and there are direct and indirect learning processes among women of other faith traditions. Fraternity and equality start at home first before it extends to the neighbor and the different other, according to Mona Siddiqui (b. 1963) a British author of Pakistani origin and a public scholar of interreligious studies, in *Christians, Muslims and Jesus* (2013), and in *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name* (2015). This theme is even more evident in the contemporary Arab Levant, where Christians and Muslims have a centuries-long experience of co-existence, which scholarship and community leadership bring to the forefront especially in delicate socio-political moments like the present. The Lebanese Nayla Tabbara exemplifies this tendency in her most recent works, like *L'islam*

*pensé par une femme* (2018), which emphasises responsibility for invoking the common despite differences.

In dealing with theological and political issues regarding women, the Moroccan scholar and writer Fatema Mernissi (1940-2015), considered a pioneer of the later wave of Islamic feminism since the mid-1970s, ends one of her acclaimed works with an inspiring image that unites genders and peoples of all faiths beautifully. Mernissi gives the conclusion of her book *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (1992, 2002) the title *"The Simorgh Is Us!"* This an ideal title summarizes the sincere human quest for reciprocal respect, and genuine pluralism, or recognition of the world's *a priori* diversity. The poem-story of the Simorgh is originally written in more than four thousand lines by the Persian theologian and mystic poet Farid al-Din al-'Attar of Nishapur (1161-1221), and is known as *The Conference of Birds* (*Mantiq al-Tayr,* in Arabic). The portrayal of the Simorgh in Persian mythology is close to that of the Phoenix in Greek tradition, though their meanings differ. 'Attar's Simorgh is the great Being, the omnipresent Creator, the Ultimate Real and the Sovereign that thousands of birds have heard of and wish to travel to and appoint as their King. Since none of them can claim this sovereignty, they are all equal. This reflects human beings' link to and wish to be close to the Divine, as well as the wish to act for Him and speak on His behalf on Earth. 'Attar was inspired by the Quranic verse (27:16) where Solomon and David are said to have been taught the language of the birds (*mantiq al-tayr*). "Si morg" in Farsi language means "thirty birds," and refers to the number of birds that survive the long and arduous journey towards this "Simorgh"/the Real/the Sovereign that other birds fail to reach because of their inability to commit and to exert themselves to reach Him. When the persevering thirty birds finally reach the Simorgh, after having passed seven valleys of hardship and wisdom (*maqamat*), and ask where He is since they see just themselves, He replies, "I am a mirror set before your eyes … You find in Me the selves you were before." Otherwise said, God is what human beings make

of Him, and what they think of Him; if they travel arduously to reach Him, they find what they themselves do and think. This is what different religious traditions at the end think and do, too, when they speak differently of the same Divine and Transcendent.

This Sufi, mystic image of traveling refers to the different levels (*maqamat*) of the spiritual journey towards the sublime and the Real that human beings experience as seekers/pilgrims (*salikin*). Mernissi's borrowing of this Sufi image is not unique; in various other works she has borrowed the images of Sindbad and Shahrazad as iconic and mythological figures that can empower human beings, and women in particular, to overcome the challenges they face *inside* their own traditions and contexts and *outside* them, in relation to the external world and the other. These images of spiritual and literary figures in her overall work aim at empowering the weak, the disadvantaged and the misunderstood for the sake of a more harmonious and equal relationship with the powerful, the advantaged, and the holders of narrative; it is a form of giving space to the subaltern in order to achieve a genuine pluralism based on equality, and narration, i.e. dialogue. She says, beautifully, "Today the cry for pluralism no longer has to hide behind metaphysical allegories. We can bring a new world into being through all the scientific advances that allow us to communicate, to engage in unlimited dialogue, to create that global mirror in which all cultures can shine in their uniqueness".[3]

## The Way Ahead: Pluralization and Four Recommendations

It is narrated that al-ʿAttar who left us a genuine pluralist story was killed at the age of seventy when the Mongol army invaded Nishapur in 1221. Current wars and phobias in the world have

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[3] F. Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (first edition 1992), New York, Basic Books, 2002, p. 174.

certainly killed many erudite and humanist people like al-ʿAttar, despite advances in freedoms of different types, and laws against discrimination and inequality. As I argue elsewhere, *pluralism* is but an acknowledgement of a global fact, i.e. the world's a priori *plurality*, or diversity. For the protection of this natural diversity, there is a dire need for what I refer to as institutional *pluralization* processes, to which stakeholders from all faiths and disciplines should contribute, religious leaders and scholars in the lead.[4] Below I sketch out some of the mechanisms of pluralization that can be uses in our common human thinking, being and action.

First, because of the ongoing onslaughts on basic human rights and human dignity, even in the consolidated liberal democracies of Europe and America, the drafting, signing and ratifying of new charters to enforce human dignity, human fraternity, and reciprocal respect is required at the inter- and intra-faith levels of communities and traditions. The Amman Message of 2004, A Common Word between Us and You of 2007, the Marrakech Charter of 2016, the Abu Dhabi's A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together of 2019, and The Abu Dhabi Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue of 2019 are good examples for essential initiatives, initiated and led by religious leaders.

Second, faith leaders are not only faith/religious leaders; they are secular leaders as well; they preach on secular issues that touch the lives of human beings. As Mahatma Gandhi says in the closing paragraph of his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927), those who believe that religion can be imprisoned in the private sphere, in only the hearts of people, do not understand what religion is about. Religion, or faith in particular, is a reservoir of ethics that reflects a worldview, and worldviews impact all, or at least most, secular/this-worldly affairs; hence the intertwining of faith as a private matter and religion as a worldview that is present in this-worldly/secular

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[4] M. Hashas (Ed.), *Pluralism in Islamic Context*, Springer, 2021.

life. In other words, human practice is rooted in a particular worldview, and this is often a religious worldview. This requires us to know and understand the religious-ethical worldviews that we share with others. Otherwise, we shall not be able to understand others and the details that are important to them – details that are reflected in their practices. Respect must start with these small details, which reflect and preserve human dignity. Religion is not such an easy matter as the modern secular world believes, as the scholar of religions Karen Armstrong (b. 1944) points out. Religious leaders, however, cannot make it alone, often because while they have human and moral capital behind them, they lack institutional and juridical impact, which the modern nation states have assumed and monopolize.

Third, based on the above, religious leaders and scholars of religions have to be consulted and involved in policies regulating the teaching of ethics and the preparation of school textbooks, and in media coverage of particular faith traditions that may not be given enough space in public education and the media; they have to be listened to when they say that their minorities suffer and are targeted by the majority or another minority, before it is too late. Ignorance brings fear and hate, which, in difficult times, easily turns into violence. Prevention is vital here.

Fourth, critical scholarship has to remain alert, free and independent in order to direct rational and reasonable critique to whichever side causes human harm, be it the religious, the secular, the secular-religious, the atheist, or whatever worldview or ideology. Religious leadership is not only that which collaborates with the state or is under its surveillance; there are communities and influential religious voices outside the state's influence, and they must be involved and brought to the table of dialogue and fraternity, provided they do not incite hatred and violence. It is the role of independent scholarship to refer to whatever voices may be marginalized by state authoritarianism and ideological orientation. This happens in all societies and faith traditions, including consolidated liberal

democracies, and is not limited to non-democratic states; the current Islamophobia in the European-American context is an example.

## Conclusion: Towards a Medizen Identity

The Mediterranean in particular, because of its vicinity and vital importance to major world religions and civilizations [recall Fernand Braudel here], has to work harder to build the shared "aquatic identity" that the American critic Miriam Cooke (b. 1948) calls the "Medizen," i.e. a Mediterranean Citizen who is plural, open, and whose identity is rooted but also flexible, aquatic like the waters of the Mediterranean. Of course, being a Medizen is only one form of being cosmopolitan; being "Atlantizen" or "Oceanizen" or "Eurasian", etc., are other possible appellations we may think of, each based on the land and intellectual geographies one is close to. Being cosmopolitan starts somewhere, and each has the right to start from their own somewhere. The Scottish-French poet-philosopher Kenneth White (b. 1936) calls this open identity formation "geopoetics." Tareq Oubrou, a French-Moroccan imam and self-taught theologian, speaks of "geotheology." The Medizen has to be open to "geopoetics", free artistic and philosophical imagination, beyond borders, and to "geotheologies" rooted in land and space. Without this aptitude, the citizen can easily fall prey to populist and exclusivist narratives and ideologies, and there are already plenty of signs of this attitude in the rise of radically violent religious movements, right wing populism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and state violence against peaceful protests demanding basic civil and human rights. *Pluralization* is a long process of fertilization between poetics and theologies that are rooted in land but open to meeting the other half-way. It is the way ahead; it starts in thought but has to find space in real policies and politics.

# PART III

# THE PROSPECT OF INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP

# 6. Overcoming the "Same Rights for All Special Rights for Minorities" Dichotomy: Is Inclusive Citizenship the Right Answer?

Silvio Ferrari

On February 4, 2019, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, signed a document in Abu Dhabi entitled "Human Fraternity for world peace and living together". A passage from this document states: "The concept of citizenship is based on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice. It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies the concept of full citizenship and reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority. Its misuse paves the way for hostility and discord; it undoes any successes and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against"[1].

This statement can hardly be criticized: it is a fact that "the discriminatory use of the term minorities" can "engender feelings of isolation and inferiority" and that its "misuse" can "pave the way for hostility and discord". In some cases, however, it has been read as a call to drop the notion of minority rights and replace it with that of full citizenship.[2]

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[1] Apostolic journey of his Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates (3-5 February 2019), *A document on human fraternity for world peace and living together.*

[2] In some comments the sentence "reject the discriminatory use of the term

The proponents of this interpretation are convinced that the very use of the term minorities, and not just its misuse, is inadequate and potentially dangerous for addressing the issues posed by the presence in a country of individuals and groups who – because of their religion, language, ethnicity or national identity them – are particularly vulnerable. This change of strategy would profoundly change the approach to the question of minorities that has been followed, in different forms, since the end of the First World War. It therefore deserves to be carefully analyzed. The first part of this chapter will briefly outline the main criticisms leveled at the use of the category of religious minority rights. It is followed by some remarks on the notion of "full citizenship" and a short discussion of the need to address the issue of minority rights in the framework of the management of cultural and religious diversity. Finally, a few remarks are devoted to legal pluralism as a way of overcoming the dichotomy between special rights for minorities and same rights for all citizens. These remarks are based on the conviction that if we correctly combine full citizenship and legal pluralism, it becomes possible to achieve a model of "inclusive citizenship" that offers the best chances to regulate religious diversity.

## Minority Rights and Their Critics

The need for special rights for members of minorities is based on the conviction that minorities are vulnerable groups that require special protection.[3] Members of religious minorities

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minorities" has become "reject the discriminatory term minorities", with an obvious change of meaning: cfr. R.J. Joustra, "Only Francis could go to Arabia", *E-international relations*, 18 February 2019. See also, already before the document's publication, "Non esistono minoranze, soltanto cittadini", *Oasis*, 7 April 2017.

[3] See United Nations, General Assembly Distr.: General, A/HRC/22/51, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt", 24 December 2012, par. 33, p. 9: "the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities are not anti-universalistic privileges reserved to the members of certain predefined groups. Rather, all persons de facto living in the situation

enjoy the right to religious freedom and all other human rights that are accorded to every individual and group regardless of whether they belong to a majority or a minority.[4] However, they also enjoy specific rights (which are not granted to religious majorities) aimed at protecting them against discrimination, ensuring respect for their religious identity and promoting participation in the social, cultural and political life of the country where they live, including decision-making processes concerning issues of interest to them. Consequently, the State and public institutions must take *positive* actions to promote the identity and participation of religious minorities and to combat their discrimination. These actions "may include subsidies for schools and training institutions, the facilitation of community media, provisions for an appropriate legal status for religious minorities, accommodation of religious festivals and ceremonies, interreligious dialogue initiatives and awareness-raising programmes in the larger society".[5]

The principle of special rights reserved to members of minorities has always been controversial. With regard to religious minorities, it has been challenged from various points of view. Legal experts have argued that the establishment of special rights for religious minorities is not a good strategy to deal with their problems: they can be more effectively addressed through a comprehensive implementation of the right to religious freedom, ensuring its enjoyment on an equal footing for all individuals and groups.[6] From the world of political science, voices have been raised to denounce that granting special rights to religious minorities risks slowing down or

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of a religious or belief minority should be able to fully enjoy their human rights on the basis of non-discrimination and benefit from measures which they may need to develop their individual and communitarian identities".

[4] See ibid., par. 17, p. 5: "The rights of persons belonging to religious or belief minorities should be consistently understood from a human rights perspective, and must be protected in conjunction with all other human rights".

[5] Ibid., par. 25, p. 7.

[6] See L. Binderup, "Liberal Equality – from Minority Rights to the Limits of Tolerance", *Res Cogitans*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2007, pp. 95-109.

even preventing their integration into the society in which they live, encouraging the development of ghettos and separate societies.[7] Some sociologists advance even more radical doubts, asking whether it is time to "abandon the notion of religious minorities", which has become "a straitjacket that is tightened to societies with high socio-religious differentiation, internal to both the historical dominant religions, and to the new religious presences".[8] These doubts are echoed by the criticisms of a group of anthropologists. They underline that the concept of religious minorities, with the consequent attribution of special rights, is inextricably linked to that of a national and secular state, born in Europe and exported through colonial domination to other regions of the world without successfully resolving (indeed exacerbating) the problem of governing religious diversity.[9] Finally, religious studies scholars have noted that the expression 'religious minority' does not belong to the traditional language of Canon, Islamic and Jewish law. It is an expression that originated in the secular culture of the XIX and XX centuries and has no deep roots in the legal and theological tradition of the great religions of the Mediterranean.[10]

It is not possible here to examine these criticisms in more detail. They do, however, signal the existence of a number of unresolved issues surrounding the category of minority rights: the tension between equal rights for all and special rights for minorities, which in relation to religious minorities translates into the tension between a strategy based on the universal right

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[7] See J.L. Cohen, "The politics and risks of the new legal pluralism in the domain of intimacy", *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, vol. 10, 2012, pp. 380-97.

[8] V. Pace, "Religious Minorities in Europe: a Memory Mutates", in S. Ferrari, K. Wonisch, and R. Medda-Windischer (eds.), "Tying the knot: A holistic approach to the enhancement of religious minority rights and freedom of religion", special issue of *Religions* (forthcoming 2021).

[9] This is the central thesis of the book by S. Mahmood, *Religious difference in a secular age. A minority report*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015.

[10] See J. Tolan, "Introduction", in N. Berend, Y. Hameau-Masset, C. Nemo-Pekelman, and J. Tolan (Eds.), *Religious Minorities in Christian, Jewish and Muslim Law (5th-15th centuries)*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2017, p. 21.

of freedom of religion and another based on the particular rights of religious minorities; the tension between individual rights and group rights or the question whether rights should belong to individuals who are members of a minority or to the minority as a collective entity; the genetic link between the nation-state, the secular state and minority rights and the need to historicize and contextualize the notion of minority rights; the epistemological value of a notion, that of religious minority, which does not seem to be able to reflect the current process of religious fragmentation that affects all religious organizations, large and small, old and new. These tensions explain the question posed at the beginning of this paper: is it time to look for an alternative to models and strategies based on minority rights and to assess whether the notion of "full citizenship" provides more adequate perspectives for the governance of religious diversity and the construction of a society that is both inclusive and cohesive?

At the root of these tensions lies the unresolved question of the relevance that should be attached to religion in defining the citizens' civil and political rights. We all agree that "equal rights" does not necessarily mean "same rights". For centuries philosophers and jurists have explained that justice consists in giving each his own, not the same: "unicuique suum tribuere" is a dictum attributed to the Roman jurist Ulpianus and based on notions dating back to Plato and Aristotle. Therefore, the "equality of rights and duties" invoked in the document of the Pope and the Grand Imam does not require that each citizen be entitled to exactly the same rights and duties as all the others: it requires instead that citizens possess rights and duties which, taking into account the subjective and objective conditions in which they live, correspond to the rights and duties of other citizens living in different conditions. This is nothing revolutionary: this principle is already widely applied all over the world. The real question is another: does the religion professed by an individual constitute a condition that the lawgiver must take into account when defining the civil and political rights of citizens professing that religion?

European history, which has never forgotten the tragedy of the wars of religion, has led to answering this question in the negative and concluding that religious affiliation is irrelevant to the enjoyment of civil and political rights. In this field, a secular State cannot take religious differences into account, even if they concern a minority group in need of special protection. There are a few limited exceptions, but the danger of creating "religious ghettos", breaking social cohesion, weakening national identity and fueling religion-based conflicts has prompted the European States to regulate civil and political rights irrespective of their citizens religion. However, the increasing religious fragmentation of the European population has posed a new question: is it realistic to think that citizens practising minority religions can feel part of a common narrative and develop a sense of belonging, solidarity and commitment to a society and a State that ignores their religious beliefs and practices (and often privileges those of the adherents of the majority religion)?

The history of some Middle Eastern and North African countries, on the other hand, has followed a partially different path, in which religious differences have remained important in giving citizens different civil and political rights with regard to personal status, family law, inheritance and other legal areas. Sometimes these differences amount to discrimination against the members of minority religions: in some countries, for example, they lack the right to hold certain public offices. Here, too, a new question has arisen, prompted by the growing emphasis on human rights worldwide, including religious freedom and equal treatment: can citizens who follow minority religions feel part of a common narrative and develop a sense of belonging, solidarity and commitment to a society that does not grant them equal civil and political rights? On one side of the Mediterranean citizenship has been almost completely dissociated from religion; on the other religion continues to influence citizenship rights in some important areas of law.  Is it possible to find a point of convergence, that is a conception of citizenship which does not exclude religion without making it a divisive element?

## The Notion of "Full Citizenship"

To answer this question, clarifying the notion of "full citizenship", which is legally less precise than that of "minority rights", can be helpful. In the document of the Pope and the Grand Imam, "full citizenship" is connected to "equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice". In this perspective, full citizenship consists in the enjoyment of equal rights and duties: implicit in this thesis is the consequence that the problems of minorities can be adequately addressed and resolved by guaranteeing their members rights and duties equal to those enjoyed by citizens who make up the majority of a State.

This is not a new argument. I have already mentioned the line of thought that maintains the real problem of minorities is not the lack of special rules for them but the inadequate application of the general rules that guarantee the rights of all citizens. However, we know that it is not that simple. As is clear from the data published by the Pew Forum,[11] even in countries where there are no differences in rights based on religion, religious minorities continue to be discriminated against. This means that, even in a setting where there are no legal inequalities that put religious minorities at a disadvantage, the rules that apply to all citizens are not sufficient to prevent discrimination. Hence the conclusion that equality of rights and duties is not the end point but the starting point for addressing the issues posed by the existence of minority groups in our countries.

This is the correct interpretation of the passage in the document quoted at the beginning of this article. Equal rights and duties for all individuals and groups, regardless of their religion or whether they profess no religion at all, is the pre-condition for addressing the issue of minorities and their rights. But it is deceptive to think that it is the solution. If the "full

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[11] See Pew Research Center, *Religion & Public Life, Sidebar: Religious Hostilities and Religious Minorities in Europe*, 26 February 2015.

citizenship" invoked in the Abu Dhabi Declaration is reduced to a simple call for equality, it leads us into a blind alley, because equality of rights and duties cannot guarantee the rights of minorities (even if it remains the indispensable premise).

However, before discarding the notion of "full citizenship", it is worth reflecting further on its content. According to Christian Joppke, citizenship includes three dimensions: "citizenship as status, which denotes formal state membership and the rules of access to it; citizenship as rights, which is about the formal capacities and immunities connected with such a status; and, in addition, citizenship as identity, which refers to the behavioral aspects of individuals acting or conceiving themselves as members of a collectivity".[12] Implicit in these distinctions is the persuasion that the "full citizenship" of which the Abu Dhabi Declaration speaks is not only a matter of status and rights but also, and perhaps above all, of shared values. Being a good citizen does not (only) mean not committing crimes, but also implies feeling part of a common narrative, sharing its founding myths and developing a sense of belonging, solidarity, participation and commitment towards the society of which one is part. This goal is unattainable without a certain degree of acceptance of diversity: we have now learned (at great cost) that social cohesion is not achieved by requiring all citizens to believe and behave in the same way but by including as far as possible different beliefs and behaviors. This conclusion leads us to reflect on the last piece of the puzzle: how minority rights can foster the development of full citizenship.

## Legal Pluralism and Inclusive Citizenship

From what has been written so far it is clear that neither the strategy of "minority rights" nor that of "full citizenship",

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[12] "Transformation of Citizenship: Status, Rights, Identity", in E.F. Isin, P. Nyers, and B.S. Turner (Eds.), *Citizenship between Past and Future*, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 37.

taken alone, are successful. The former can lead to a feeling of inferiority and exclusion among the very minorities it aims to protect, while the latter overlooks the fact that equal rights are not enough to create a sense of belonging. It is necessary to broaden the perspective and include the issue of minorities and their rights in the broader horizon of the management of cultural and religious diversity. This is where legal pluralism can be a trump card.

The expression legal pluralism refers to the idea that in the same geographical space defined by the boundaries of a nation State, more than one legal system can exist.[13] The State offers the individuals who wish to make use of it a set of different options to regulate the same legal relationship. The person holding rights is the individual as such, not the individual as a member of a minority group. A Jew may, if he/she so wishes, celebrate a marriage according to Jewish law and this marriage, under certain conditions, will also have value for the State; but no one prevents the bridal couple, if they so wish, from celebrating a civil marriage. If a State decides to provide public school students with the option of choosing between different dietary regimes – kosher, halal, vegetarian, etc. – in school canteens, each student will be able to opt for the preferred regime. No one will demand that they show a certificate to prove their belonging to a religious group in order to gain access to specific foods.

The strategy of legal pluralism does not primarily aim to address the issue of minorities, but to manage cultural and legal diversity by allowing all citizens (and not only the members of a minority) to regulate the same legal relationship in the way they consider most appropriate to their convictions. There are many examples of legal pluralism, ranging from the simplest – the right of prisoners or soldiers to obtain food in accordance with their cultural and religious beliefs – to the most complex – the right to make use of forms of alternative dispute resolution

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[13] See M. Davies, "Legal Pluralism", in P. Cane and H.M. Kritzer (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Empirical Legal Research*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 805-27.

(ADR) – and including manifestations of legal pluralism that are recognized in some countries but not in others (the right to celebrate a religious marriage with civil effects; the right to refrain from work on the occasion of one's religious holidays; the right to wear the symbols of one's religion in public places). What is important is that these rights are not granted to members of minorities but to all citizens, and therefore do not constitute a system of minority rights but a model of management of religious diversity available equally to anyone who wants to use it. I would define this model as "inclusive citizenship". "Full citizenship", with its three dimensions mentioned by Joppke, is achieved through the inclusion of differences, not through their elimination or progressive marginalization.

In a context of "inclusive citizenship", the need for special rights for minorities is greatly reduced since many of the rights currently claimed by minority members become rights recognized and granted to all citizens. The political and legal relevance of the issue of minorities and their rights depends on the fact that many contemporary States are still inspired by a model of "legal uniformity". This is based on the conviction that national cohesion and consequently the strength of a State presupposes that all its citizens share the same values, beliefs and lifestyles. It is a conception that made possible the triumph of the nation States (and also the tragedy of the great clashes that set them against one another during the last two world wars), but it cannot long withstand the challenge of globalization and increasing migrations.

It would be naive to think that, once the model of "legal uniformity" has been replaced by that of "legal pluralism", the question of minorities will magically disappear. Within the same State, there will always be an unbalanced relationship of power between the largest and the smallest groups, between communities of people who stand for consolidated convictions and traditions and communities that strive to assert different principles, values and practices. There will always be new, marginalized, controversial social formations that will have

to fight for their rights. For these reasons, the recognition of minorities and their rights will continue to be an open issue. However, the model of legal pluralism can be particularly effective in relation to the State "duties of differential treatment to accommodate the separate identity of minorities and their ways of life".[14] Of course, such a model must be sustainable, and therefore it must include limits that prevent cultural and religious diversity from becoming a disruptive force. Elsewhere, I have discussed three conditions that make legal pluralism sustainable.[15] But the necessary attention that must be paid to the limits and conditions of legal pluralism must not distract us from the central question that I intended to address in this contribution: how to find the way to reconfigure the rights of minorities as rights of citizens and to put an end to the sterile opposition between minorities and the majority, special rights for the former and equal rights for all. A well balanced and sustainable system of legal pluralism is a step forwards to attain this goal.

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[14] K. Henrard, "The European Court of Human Rights, Ethnic and Religious Minorities and the Two Dimensions of the Right to Equal Treatment: Jurisprudence at Different Speeds?", *Nordic Journal of Human Rights,* vol. 34, 2016, pp. 157 and 158.

[15] See S. Ferrari, "Religious Minorities and Legal Pluralism in Europe", in K. von der Decken and A. Günzel (Eds.), *Staat - Religion - Recht: Festschrift für Gerhard Robbers zum 70. Geburtstag,* Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2020, pp. 353-68.

# 7. Pluralism and Diversity in the New Islamic Discourse: Opportunities and Challenges for Basic Freedoms and Citizenship

Nejia Al-Ourimi

Amidst the challenging situation in southern Mediterranean societies, a new Islamic discourse has emerged from enlightened religious leaders, popularizing the image of a moral (value-related) and spiritual Islam that represents one of the tributaries of "human fraternity" and a justification for "inclusive citizenship". This paper critically analyses the role and content of this new Islamic discourse in order to better understand the obstacles that hinder awareness of comprehensive citizenship in Arab societies that the discourse is working to overcome. In doing so, the paper raises the question of how this Islamic discourse can effectively preach citizenship-related values that belong to a post-secular and post-modern era without, however, fully going through the first stage of secularism and being aware of its gains and predicaments with respect to citizenship.

To achieve these goals, the chapter proceeds as follows. The first section examines the relationship between the religious and political dimensions in contemporary Arab society in order to shed light on the stumbling blocks in the modernization process that have reflected negatively on the maturation of the concept of citizenship in the region. The second section then examines how the new Islamic discourse has interacted with this reality through its repeated calls to consecrate the values of

citizenship and pluralism. The third section seeks to uncover a duplication in the new Islamic discourse. On the one hand, it is trying to engage in a postmodern era in which religion plays an ethical role in enshrining the values of coexistence and human wellbeing. On the other hand, it continues to cling to its traditional role aiming to "Islamize society and the state", undermining the very principle of equality between all citizens under a civil state.

## Religious and Political Dimensions in the Contemporary Arab State: The Faltering Path of Modernization

We can discern reasons for the faltering path of modernization in Arab states in three dimensions: 1) the insistence of Arab constitutions on Islam as the religion of the state; 2) the prevalence of traditional jurisprudence over social aspects, especially personal status; and 3) the hegemony of an intolerant religious culture, which provides fertile ground for the proliferation of extremist groups.

It is striking that most Arab constitutions stipulate that "Islam is the religion of the state".[1] For example, according to Article 2 of Egypt's Constitution: "Islam is the religion of the state. Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic jurisprudence (Sharia)". This designation of the state's religion continues to influence social reality in a way that serves the interests of those who belong to this

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[1] The constitutions of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco state that Islam is the official state religion. According to Article 2 of the Algerian Constitution and Chapter 3 of the Moroccan Constitution, "Islam is the religion of the state." According to Chapter 1 of the Tunisian Constitution, "Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign state. Its religion is Islam." The Tunisian President Kais Saied - an expert in constitutional law - criticized this chapter, saying that "the state has no religion because it is a legal entity." Watch his speech on the occasion of International Women's Day on August 13, 2020, on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sxwUbhSNqs

official religion. It is true that there are other articles in the constitution that stipulate "principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities among all citizens", "respect for human rights and freedoms", but they have only limited influence on a social reality in which citizenship is weak. This is clearly echoed in reports and press articles describing cases of injustice against non-Muslim Egyptian citizens because of their beliefs. An important example is that the Egyptian identity card does not recognise certain beliefs in accordance with the ancient Islamic concept of "People of the Book" and "Dhimmis", and thus only recognises Christianity and Judaism alongside Islam as official religions. In a Human Rights Watch report, Baha'i citizens stated that they were forced to declare their belonging to one of the officially recognized monotheistic religions in order to obtain their civil rights.[2] Moreover, Egyptian newspapers have reported the harshness of religious fundamentalists who hold administrative positions towards non-Muslim citizens,[3] in addition to many cases of apostasy against those who have abandoned Islam.[4] The political will in Egypt, as reflected in the spirit of the constitution and its provisions enshrining pluralism, cannot accept this injustice; but social practice, which remains uncontrolled, is still hostage to a traditional consciousness that has persisted in various forms.

The second dimension of the faltering path of modernization in Arab society is reflected through laws that are still subject to the domination of jurisprudence, especially in the area of personal status, which generally falls under the competence of religious and confessional law, despite some differences between Arab countries. This domination can only deepen the division of citizens into isolated groups in which the

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[2] Law No. 263/1960 of 19/7/1960 promulgated by Gamal Abdel Nasser, bans Baha'i activity. See: Law of 1960.

[3] A. Hafez, "The Religion Field in Egyptians' Identity Card, a Societal Ritual that Reflects Extremism", *Al-Arab newspaper*, 22 December 2018.

[4] See Special report on religious converts in Egypt, on *BBC*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbHDSFzFIbk

chances of social integration are weak. In Tunisia for example, despite the progress achieved in establishing the civil state and implementing civil personal status laws, some issues remain in contradiction with the principle of complete equality between citizens stipulated in the 2014 constitution. In particular, according to the inheritance law, a male is entitled to twice the share of inheritance of a female. This law is derived from rulings of patriarchal Islamic jurisprudence and has become part of the religious constant in Arab society, despite its contradiction of the principles of justice and equality. The call made by Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi, on the occasion of Women's Day on August 13, 2017, to recognize gender equality in inheritance, fell on deaf ears. The intervention of Al-Azhar in this issue contributed to the failure of this attempt.

The third dimension illustrating the limitations on modernization in the Arab context relates to prevailing religious culture. Sectarian and ideological awareness guides citizens' behavior and makes belonging to the "community" more important than belonging to "society". This consciousness is the result of religious education policies which, in most Arab countries, have not broken the chains of traditional conservative approaches that perpetuate an exclusionary consciousness of the different other.

## The New Islamic Discourse and the Call
## for a Citizenship Inclusive of Pluralism and Diversity

It is interesting to note that the statements and documents issued by prominent religious institutions in the decade following the Arab Spring stressed the various foundations of coexistence, including: the basic freedoms stipulated in the 2012 Al-Azhar Statement, the rights of minorities and all components of society to justice and equality confirmed by the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration, and citizenship-based coexistence between religions highlighted by the 2019 *Human Fraternity Document* issued by Al-Azhar and the Catholic Church.

The Al-Azhar Statement on Basic Freedoms

This statement was issued on January 8, 2012, at the height of the socio-political protest movement in Arab Mediterranean societies, which affected the entire Arab world to different degrees. What interests us in this movement is the new awareness that came with it; in fact, all the components that participated in the protest movement, secularists, liberals, Christians, Muslims and others, became aware of the fact that the bilateral polarization and exclusionary relations prevailing at that time were the main reason for the dispersion of forces capable of inducing positive change and extricating Arab society from its chronic crises. In this context, the statement published by Al-Azhar and Egyptian intellectuals about freedoms has a three-dimensional importance.

- The first dimension is related to the party that issued it: Al-Azhar and a group of secular intellectuals.[5] Al-Azhar chose to cooperate with intellectuals not belonging to the religious sphere. This represented a paradigm shift in the relationship between these two parties; it saw a transition from classic mutual exclusion to harmonization in order to find an optimal form of inclusive citizenship.

- The timing of its issuance was strategic. The statement was issued during the rise to power of parties inspired by political Islam, and the emergence of radical religious discourses that see in pluralism and diversity nothing but a problem that can only be solved by reviving Islamic differential standards. In this context – and in light of traditional religious culture – extremist religious discourse could only be faced by a rational religious discourse with moral authority over believers' consciences,

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[5] At the time, conservatives and political Islam movements accused the Sheikh of Al-Azhar of rapprochement with the secularists; See the article titled "Al-Azhar and the January 25 Revolution, a Documentational Observation and an Objective Overview", 2012 (in Arabic).

    as represented by the declaration of Al-Azhar.
- The statement's civil and pluralistic content creatively united religion and the values of inclusive citizenship.

The statement transforms the traditional dichotomy between the religious and modern civil spheres into cooperation and complementarity in order to reach unified goals that everyone agrees on. Religious "scholars of the nation" worked alongside "intellectual thinkers" and the document presents the "universal principles of Islamic law" as being in harmony with "the fundamental freedoms on which international covenants have unanimously agreed". The "Maqasid al-Sharia" (purposes of Sharia) are seen as supporting "the spirit of modern constitutional legislation"; "enlightened religious discourse" is aligned with "rational cultural discourse". The supreme goal of the document is to defend "basic freedoms, namely freedom of belief, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of scientific research, and freedom of literary and artistic production". Thanks to the terms "freedom", "harmony" and "everyone/all", Al-Azhar's discourse abandons the differential vertical conception of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims and adopts a broad horizontal conception of the participatory relationship between all citizens regardless of their different beliefs. This is underscored by the fact that the freedoms advocated by the statement constitute the basic condition for all citizens to enjoy their rights.

More importantly, the declaration is based on a double deductive plan: the religious argument supports the rational argument in order to convince the Muslim recipient that accepting the values of pluralism is a religious duty and an awareness of God's wisdom. The moral authority that Al-Azhar enjoys remains a fundamental factor in internalising these values in the consciences of Muslims, probably exceeding the effectiveness of injunctive laws that penalise breaches of respect for the other. The importance of this enlightened discourse lies in its ability to extract the act of exegesis (meaning the interpretation of the

Qur'an) from the hands of extremists, turning it into a process of giving religious roots to universal values.[6]

## The Marrakesh Declaration

This declaration, issued in 2016, has the advantage of being the subject of broad agreement among a large number of scholars, experts and politicians representing different countries, religions, sects and confessions throughout the Arab and Islamic world[7]. It confirms that coexistence in equality has become an object of universal consensus.

The Marrakesh Declaration considers that it is the duty of scholars to participate in enlightening the path for people "especially at this critical stage in the history of the Islamic nation". The goal of the declaration is two-fold; at the Arab level, the goal is "to develop a jurisprudence of the concept of 'citizenship' which is inclusive of diverse groups. Such jurisprudence shall be rooted in Islamic tradition and principles and mindful of global changes". At the global level, the goal is to contribute to "achieving peace between human beings". Today, this debate between the local and the universal is no longer a choice, but rather a reality imposed by the unity of human destiny.

The foreword to this declaration anchors universal values in Islamic authority, by highlighting verses that stress the value of human beings in Islam, freedom of belief, and the fact that pluralism of religions is divine willed, and that God created diverse human beings to know one another, and commanded that justice, charity, peace and mercy prevail among people. This is supported by the participatory civic behavior of the Prophet Muhammad when he immigrated to Medina, where

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[6] On the conflict between Al-Azhar and the Muslim Brotherhood see: R. Al-Sayed, *Al-Azhar ... the Present and Future challenges*, 2020 (in Arabic).

[7] The declaration was issued following an international conference held in Marrakesh from 25 to 27 January 2016, and organized by the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in Morocco, in partnership with the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies in the United Arab Emirates.

the Constitution of Medina, a treaty of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Jews, was drawn up. These Islamic arguments have a positive effect on the consciences of Muslims, transforming them into supporters of citizenship values on the one hand, and abolishing the use of "religion for the purpose of aggressing the rights of religious minorities in Islamic countries" on the other hand. This leads to the elevation of the principle of equality among citizens to "what is guaranteed and controlled by the law at the level of each country", in addition to convincing citizens of their duty "to adopt a civilized behaviour that eschews all forms of coercion, bias and arrogance".

The declaration is not content with merely advocating values of citizenship and relying on Islamic inferences, but criticises the causes that generate a culture of religious intolerance, represented by religious education systems that reproduce a religious awareness contrary to modern values. It issues a bold call "to conduct a courageous review of educational curricula that addresses honestly and effectively any material that instigates aggression and extremism, leads to war and chaos, and results in the destruction of our shared societies". Thanks to this audacity, it draws attention to the responsibility of prevailing religious culture for an important aspect of the current crisis.

## The Document on Human Fraternity

This document is a statement signed in 2019 by Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, to address the issue of human fraternity in its comprehensive sense in light of appropriate Muslim-Christian relations. The importance of this document arises from its success in crystallizing the religious and ontological basis for the concept of fraternity among human beings, especially through linking this concept to the context of recent local and global transformations that have proven that the religious dimension plays an indispensable role in resolving the current value crisis. According to the document, the imbalance between scientific and technological progress and value-related and spiritual human progress, in addition to the "absence of

the human conscience and religious ethics" from decision-making circles, have created the various negative phenomena characterizing people's reality today. Religious discourse at this level appears to cooperate with philosophical, artistic, media and other discourses for the sake of a higher goal to "rediscover the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity and coexistence".

The document calls for peace and freedom through belief, thought, expression, and practice, and for justice and dialogue as a way of communicating and solving problems and as the foundation of the societal model it promotes. It is rooted in the necessity to deepen faith and enlighten minds to accept that "the pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives".

The document focuses on highlighting the difference between religions in their benevolent and noble values and "the use of religions to incite hatred, violence, extremism and blind fanaticism". It hence points the finger at the problem, since religions have become, because of this use, part of the current crisis.

Thanks to the pluralistic values they herald, these three documents in the new Islamic discourse open up to a post-modernist dimension in which a new relationship is established between religion and society, and between faith and reason, after the rupture between them during the classical era of modernity.

## The New Islamic Discourse and Obstacles to Engaging in Post-Modernity: Difficulties and Conditions To Overcome Them

The issue in post-modernity is not the return of religions to the public sphere in terms of legislation and control over the organization of society according to their own legal systems.

Rather, it is in reinstating the ability of religion to spread a values-based discourse that places primary importance on human beings as such and protects people from the curse of scientific progress that has lost its moral compass. As Habermas writes, laws must be explained in a language that all citizens can understand.[8] Whereas the legal language of every religion can only be understood by its followers, the values that represent the common good can deliver the same message across the languages of religions, doctrines and philosophies.

In order for the new Islamic discourse not to remain restricted to the ceremonial roles of its leaders, and in order for it to creatively interact with the Arab revolutions' aspiration for a decent life from which no one is excluded, it is necessary to identify the shortcomings that limit its effectiveness in having a tangible impact, and above all the contradictory discourses of religious leaders that perhaps have greater influence over the majority of traditional Muslims. It is worth noting that these shortcomings are related to the pre-modern position of the Islamic religious establishment in the Arab world, which is especially reflected in its attachment to a traditional role that gives it a wider scope of authority compared to the modern role of religions in general. This scope is evident in legislation that is mostly derived from a jurisprudence of the past aimed at Islamising the state and society, with everything that this entails in terms of disregarding the principle of due equality among all citizens. Al-Azhar – the most prominent Islamic institution – is itself a clear example of these shortcomings, which we shall sum up in the following points, before identifying means of remediation and ways to overcome difficulties.

- Although this institution's declarations, including its new discourse, have discarded older terms that reject non-Muslims, such as "unorthodox", "those who wander astray" and "dhimmis", the connotations associated

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[8] J. Habermas, *Entre naturalisme et religion, Les défis de la démocratie*, Paris, Gallimard, 2008, p. 180.

with these terms still appear in some of its positions. Many examples can be identified, such as its position regarding Muslims who change their religion and who are still considered apostates, its rejection of Muslim women marrying non-Muslims[9], and its commitment to the "people of the Sunnah and the Jama'a"[10] curriculum while disregarding other Islamic curricula. Al-Azhar, which, according to the Egyptian constitution, is "the main reference in religious sciences and Islamic affairs" – a model of generalization and exhaustiveness – declares its commitment to the doctrine of the "people of the Sunnah and the Jama'a" and all this means in terms of wanting all Muslims to abide by this specific sectarian approach. On this basis, the traditional call for tolerance was considered a moral advantage characterizing Sunni Muslims who do others a favor by treating them well, rather than considering this behavior as a citizenship-related duty that imposes recognition and respect for all components, as well as coexistence in a context of complete equality of rights and duties.

- Al-Azhar was keen to convince Muslims of the validity of civil laws that regulate many aspects of society's life without deviating from the Islamic framework. This position, however, implies the absence of legitimacy for laws governing citizens but not inspired by Sharia law. The Mufti of the Republic reassured Muslim Egyptians that positive laws in Egypt are subject to the decisions of Islamic law, saying: "Rest assured... Islamic law is always present in Egypt, and all our positive laws are derived from the decisions of Islamic law and the

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[9] In this sense, the Tunisian legislation recently took another step in the path of enshrining civil legislation by allowing a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim. On September 14, 2017, it repealed a law banning Tunisian Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims.

[10] See: "Al-Azhar and the January 25 Revolution, a Documentational Observation and an Objective Overview…, cit.

Constitutional Court plays a monitoring role in this regard."[11] In addition, Al-Azhar promoted the comprehensiveness of religious legislation by expanding the scope of the fatwa and reviving old jurisprudential rulings. It extended fatwa methods to cover electronic in addition to traditional media. This jurisprudential control, covering almost every aspect of daily life, is likely to manage the minds, conscience and behavior of citizens, making them prisoners of their religious and sectarian affiliations and perpetuating the barriers between them and citizens of other religions or sects. The dangerous aspect of reviving such ancient jurisprudence is that it originally emerged in a historical context characterized by religious, sectarian and gender discrimination between subjects, and cannot be expected to support the values of just citizenship today. The 2012 Al-Azhar statement thus declares that "the concept of citizenship is based on equality in duties and rights under which everyone enjoys justice," and works on "consolidating the concept of full citizenship in our societies". Yet, at the same time, Al-Azhar refuses to recognize the rights of citizens who do not belong to the three monotheistic religions, and prohibits Muslims from establishing social relations with them[12].

• Religious education in Al-Azhar and in other educational institutions in the Arab world is dominated by a traditional conservative character and an absence of any critical review aimed at ridding the collective

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[11] A. Al-Beheiry, Grand Mufti of the Republic to Egyptians, "Rest assured... The Islamic law is present in Egypt", 2017 (in Arabic).

[12] The Sheikh of Al-Azhar answered a question about whether it is permissible for a Muslim to visit a Coptic Christian by saying that this is permissible, but only with the People of the Book. He cites a Hadith indicating that it is advisable to convince this Christian to "convert" to Islam. This is a type of citizenship that is conditioned by old jurisprudential concepts. See the fatwa on Egypt's Dar Al Ifta'a website (Al-Tayeb, 2003).

consciousness of attachment to a religious heritage that, in part, is no longer in line with this era's values. By seeking a new understanding of religion that supports universal values, the new Islamic discourse is leaving the old, inherited legacy unsettled, and alert to the dangers of clinging to it pathologically. This is the reason behind the emergence of religious extremists and fanatics who use violence as a way to eliminate those who, in their opinion, are preventing restoration of an imagined Salafi model. The new religious discourse is needed today to elevate prevailing religious culture from submission and subordination to responsible thinking and creative initiatives, through a critical approach that dismantles the foundations of intolerance and establishes a true understanding of religion based on faith in goodness and in humanity.

## Conclusion and Findings

This chapter is based on a belief in the effective role that the new Islamic discourse can play in encouraging contemporary Muslims' adherence to the values of human rights and pluralism, and in putting an end to the traditional Muslim attraction towards violence and hate speech propagated by Islamist extremists under the slogan of "promoting the word of Islam" and fighting the different other. The fallacies of these discourses can only be exposed, and their influence paralysed through an enlightened religious discourse that draws on the noble interpretational dimension of religion, and on the necessity of engaging with modern values. Taking into consideration the southern Mediterranean societies' failure in modernization, and their limited experiences of secularism, we observe that the appropriate strategy to help them overcome this historical blockage relies on involving enlightened religious leaders who, thanks to their moral authority, are able to rid believers of a heavy sectarian, religious and ethnic legacy and

convince them to embrace a universal system of values that has proved successful in ensuring the sustainable renaissance of other societies.

The re-emergence of religious dimensions does not involve the same experiences nor does it adopt the same mechanisms in all societies. In fact, its re-emergence in a society steeped in the values of modernity and secularism – such as the northern Mediterranean societies – represents progress and refrainment, in which religion plays roles that do not contradict the gains of pluralism within a state of citizenship. On the other hand, the return of a religious dimension in a society still subject to pre-modern thought – such as the southern Mediterranean societies – is likely to exacerbate their failure to manage pluralism and diversity, and to move them further away from the post-modernist horizons that hold out promise for a richer and a more balanced model of human civilization. Therefore, it is imperative for Muslim religious leaders to undertake serious critical reviews of their inherited doctrines, to "adopt a historical-hermeneutic approach to the teachings of the Qur'an"[13] in order to build on absolute value connotations and reconcile religious awareness with compliance with a democratic system, and to legitimize a higher unity among all citizens, whether believers or non-believers. In terms of awareness and mentality change, neither legal injunctions nor political instructions are capable of having the desired effect on the minds of believers. This is better entrusted to the new religious discourse and to religious systems which participate in the state-building process,[14] thanks to "their values and their cross-sectarian human activity".

Today, recognizing religious leaders as social actors no less important than other actors has become the basis for a quest for new socio-political equations that reject the exclusionary policies behind conflict between different components of society. It has

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[13] J. Habermas, "Qu'est – ce qu'une société 'post-séculière'?", *Le Débat*, Gallimard, 2008, vol. 5, no. 152, p. 12.

[14] F. Daou et al., *Religion and Democracy in Europe and the Arab World*, Institute of Citizenship and Diversity Management, Dar Al Farabi, 2017, p. 19 (in Arabic).

also become the basis for religious and philosophical equations capable of preventing the instrumental mind from breaking down and threatening the environment and society, and capable of saving people from tension and confusion through the hope, confidence and love for the other they inspire.

# 8. Al-Azhar and the Path Towards Inclusive Citizenship in Egypt

Georges Fahmi

In an era that witnessed unprecedented levels of violence and fear among Christian communities in the Middle East with the rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic caliphate and its atrocities committed against Christian communities in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Libya, the dialogue between Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb has sent a positive sign for peace and coexistence in the region. The success of this encounter begs new questions: how can the interreligious narrative of human fraternity help to create more inclusive forms of citizenship in the MENA region? What role could religious leaders play in this process? How can the dialogue from the religious leadership be disseminated to religious actors operating on the ground? And how can it be translated into political measures to end religious discrimination?

This article seeks to tackle these questions by focusing on the case of Egypt after 2011. Egypt has been struggling since 2011 to find a new framework that will ensure the rights of both its Muslim and Christian citizens. Al-Azhar was particularly active during the transitional period that followed the January 25, 2011 uprising in bringing different political voices together at Al-Azhar headquarters to debate this issue. These meetings resulted in several documents, including the Al-Azhar document on the future of Egypt in June 2011, and the basic freedoms document in January 2012.

Within this perspective, this article first assesses the approach of Ahmed Al-Tayeb, and Al-Azhar in general, towards the issue of citizenship and minority rights in Egypt. Secondly, the article looks at the challenges facing the implementation of Al-Azhar's approach to solving religious tensions in Egypt. Third, it offers some recommendations on how to deal with these challenges.

## Al-Azhar and Citizenship Challenges in Post-2011 Egypt

In post-2011 Egypt, Al-Azhar sought to play a reconciliatory role between the country's different political and religious groups. This strategy would allow Al-Azhar to avoid growing polarization among the different political groups during the transitional period, while consolidating at the same time its own position as a symbol of national unity. In Spring 2011, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb invited a group of Egyptian intellectuals from different political backgrounds to share their ideas about how the new Egyptian state post-2011 should look. The meeting also included a number of senior religious scholars from Al-Azhar. The result of this dialogue was a document entitled "The Al-Azhar Document on the Future of Egypt". Its first article states that "Al-Azhar supports establishing a modern and democratic state according to a constitution upon which Egyptians agreed on and which separates between the state actors and its governing legal institutions. Such a constitution should establish rules and guarantee the rights and the duties of all the citizens equally". The text also insisted on "the commitment to freedom of thought and opinions with a full respect of human, women's and children's rights, to multi-pluralism, full respect of divine religions and to consider citizenship as the basis of responsibility in society".[1]

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[1] Read the full document here: State Information Service. Your Gateway to Egypt, Al-Azhar Document, 19 May 2016.

As the influence of religious groups grew within society after the fall of Mubarak's regime, conservative religious voices tried to enforce religious rule within certain neighborhoods, following their own interpretation of the Islamic requirement "of commanding the right and forbidding the wrong." In a response to these violations of basic personal freedoms, Al-Azhar issued a document on basic freedoms in January 2012. The document stressed the importance of four main freedoms: freedom of belief, freedom of expression, freedom of scientific research, and freedom of literary and artistic creativity. According to this document, "All these freedoms should have their roots in serving the objectives of *Sharia* and grasping the spirit of modern constitutional legislation and the requirements of the advancement of human knowledge." The document represented a positive step towards reconciling *Sharia* law with international conventions on free expression.[2]

Al-Azhar's endeavor to ensure respect for cultural and religious diversity has also been an integral part of its interreligious activities, in which it has often insisted on the need to move away from a numerical approach to majorities and minorities and on the protection of religious minorities as the normative framework for inclusive and peaceful societies.

In 2017, Al-Azhar and the Muslim Council of Elders organized the meeting on "Freedom, Citizenship, Diversity, and Integration" which received more than 200 delegates, including politicians, academics, Christian and Muslim religious leaders from 60 countries. The participants in this meeting agreed on an Al-Azhar Declaration stating that citizenship is not just a desirable solution but also a necessary one. It recalled the first Islamic application of the fairest system of governance to the first Muslim community in the state of *Madinah*[3] and the subsequent covenants and treaties in which

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[2] Read the full document here: Free Speech Debate, "Al-Azhar's 'Bill of Rights'"

[3] The constitution of the Madinah has also been a central concept of the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities issued in January 2016 by hundreds of Muslim

the Prophet Muhammad defined the relationships between Muslim and non-Muslims. It also insisted that Al-Azhar, the Muslim Council of Elders, and the heads of leading Christian communities reaffirm the importance of equality between Muslims and Christians in terms of rights and responsibilities as defined by the state.[4]

Following several rounds of dialogue between Al-Azhar and the Vatican, Pope Francis and Ahmed Al-Tayeb signed a historic declaration of fraternity in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in February 2019, calling for peace between nations, religions and races. The document states "Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and the Muslims of the East and the West, together with the Catholic Church and the Catholics of the East and the West, declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as a path, of cooperation as a way, and of reciprocal understanding as a method and approach." The two religious leaders also insisted on their "firm conviction that the authentic teachings of religions bid us to cling to the values of peace, to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence, to entrench wisdom, justice and love, and to reawaken religious awareness among young people", and that "It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies the concept of full citizenship and reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority […] and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against".[5]

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scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with representatives of Islamic and international organizations, as well as leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities. The declaration insisted that the objectives of the Charter of Medina provide a suitable framework for national constitutions in countries with Muslim majorities and has called upon Muslim scholars and intellectuals around the world to develop a jurisprudence of the concept of "citizenship" which is inclusive of diverse groups.

[4] "There Are No Minorities, only Citizens", *OASIS*, 13 April 2017.

[5] Read the full document here: "Document on Human Fraternity for world peace and living together: Full text", *Vatican News*, February 2019

Through its national dialogue initiatives, as well as its interreligious activities, Al-Azhar has shown strong support for the concept of inclusive citizenship and has insisted on its compatibility with Islamic values and history, as the experience of the constitutional document of *Madinah* has shown.

## Obstacles Towards Implementing Al-Azhar's Vision in the Egyptian Context

Despite these positive steps taken by Al-Azhar and its Grand Imam over the past decade in supporting the discourse on inclusive citizenship, this path towards strengthening inclusive citizenship in Egypt faces two main challenges. First, this religious understanding of the concept of citizenship reflects the Grand Imam's own vision, but not necessarily the views of all the scholars within Al-Azhar, or those of other groups within the religious sphere in Egypt. Second, while this religious discourse affirming equality between Muslims and non-Muslims is a good step, it is not enough to end sectarian tensions in Egypt. Sectarianism is primarily a political problem, not a religious one.

Ahmed Al-Tayeb's initiatives over the last decade, either in his dialogues with Egyptian political forces, or in his interreligious initiatives with Christian religious leaders, have often been possible only due to the Grand Imam's own personal convictions, and those of the circle close to him, but these do not necessarily reflect the views of the religious institution, nor that of other groups within the Egyptian religious sphere. Unlike the case of the Vatican where Pope Francis can claim to represent all Catholics in the world, it is much more difficult for Ahmed Al-Tayeb to claim such authority over all Sunnis in Egypt, not to mention worldwide.

Al-Azhar is a broad institution with different religious tendencies from conservative to liberal. These different groups do not necessarily share the same position of their Grand Imam, nor his interpretation of the religious text. Moreover, Al-Azhar, as an institution, has neither control nor authority over the

religious sphere in Egypt, which includes different groups and ideas ranging from Sufis to Salafist-affiliated groups. Within this religious sphere, many conservative voices have expressed their reservations about the discourse on the common humanitarian side of all religions. Salafist preachers, for example, have warned against the danger of what some of them labeled the new humanitarian religion, which according to them constitutes a violation of the Islamic doctrine under the pretext of seeking common humanitarian values between Islam and Christianity. From its side too, Al-Azhar is careful not to seek to impose its vision on other religious trends within its own institution, or within the religious sphere at large. In recent years, Ahmed Al-Tayeb's priority has been to consolidate Al-Azhar's legitimacy within the religious sphere, in particular after Islamic groups accused him of being a mouthpiece of the new regime after the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013. His strategy to defend Al-Azhar's credibility rests on keeping Al-Azhar's ranks open to different religious voices, from conservatives to liberals. Al-Azhar's religious discourse on inclusive citizenship is therefore limited by a deeply divided and competitive religious sphere, in which Al-Azhar also needs to care about its own legitimacy.

The second challenge is that obstacles towards achieving inclusive citizenship in Egypt are mainly political, not religious. On the constitutional level, the Egyptian constitution states in its second article that Islam is the religion of the Egyptian state, and that the principles of Islamic Sharia are the principal source of legislation. And in article 64, it limits the freedom of practicing religious rituals and establishing places of worship only to the followers of the revealed (i.e., Abrahamic) religions, excluding therefore other religious communities such as Shia Muslims and Baha'is.

Even in the case of the Coptic minority, there are many limits on the practice of religious rituals and construction of worship places. Although state authorities adopted a new law on the construction of churches in 2016 to facilitate the administrative

procedures needed to build them, it was the first law to regulate such construction, which was previously governed by vague rules based on administrative decisions issued in the 1930s, and that placed many restrictions on church building. However, the law itself reproduced many of the old norms that had previously governed the construction of churches. While voices have called for a common law to govern the construction of places of worship for all religious communities, this particular law only targeted the question of churches. Moreover, those who drafted it insisted on using the term "religious sect" instead of "Egyptian Christian citizens" in their text, once again treating the Copts as part of a corporate entity.

Religious discourse by itself cannot solve citizenship challenges in Egypt if not coupled with concrete political measures, including constitutional and legal reforms. State institutions therefore have an essential role to play in any attempt to strengthen inclusive citizenship in Egypt.

The case of sectarian violence between Muslims and Copts only confirms this point. Religious tensions are not caused by religious ideas, even if religious discourse is used to mobilize support within each religious community in moments of crisis. Such tensions are caused by issues of rights and duties.

Looking at the different cases of sectarian tensions over the past five years for example, one realizes that most of them have been caused by two main issues: the right to freedom of worship, and laws governing interreligious marriage and conversion.

Attempts by Christians to build, expand, or renovate churches frequently lead to local opposition, which can turn violent. The local opposition is not due to the construction of the church itself, but to what is perceived as building without legal permission in order to impose a fact on the ground. Despite the 2016 law on the construction of churches, tensions have continued between Muslim and Christian communities over this issue, as officials have been slow to issue new permits and even to recognize already existing churches. Within this context, Christians often seek to pray in private houses, which

sometimes leads to tensions in their villages. Since the law's passage in 2016, and up until 2019, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights has documented 32 instances of sectarian violence associated with the practice of Christian religious rites. These incidents have occurred across nine governorates, concentrated in Minya, Beni Suef, and Sohag.[6] Although Ahmed Al-Tayeb has spoken on several occasions about protections in Islam for Christians to build places of worship, the problem lies within the administrative rules, not within the religious discourse.

Another source of religious tensions is due to interreligious marriages, particularly when it involves converting from Christianity to Islam. Islamic law takes supremacy over Christian law on personal status questions, so if a Muslim man and Christian woman wish to marry, the law will recognize them and their union, while the opposite is forbidden. This issue has been a source of many tensions in Upper Egypt as many families claim that their daughters have been kidnapped and did not leave their families of their own free will. While state authorities would previously allow a priest to talk to the person wishing to convert to make sure it was her free will, this practice has been suspended for more than a decade now.

These tensions are often met with the use of reconciliation councils and limited use of the courts, undercutting the legal rights of Egypt's Christian citizens.[7] The use of customary reconciliation sessions as a way of resolving sectarian attacks and conflicts often ends by favoring the stronger party at the expense of the weaker one, i.e., the Christian party in most instances.

Although, indeed, in moments of tension involving Muslims and Copts, some might use religious discourse to mobilize support from their own religious communities to take their side

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[6] I. Ibrahim, *The Reality of Church Construction in Egypt*, The Tharir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), 27 June 2019.

[7] T.E. Kaldas, *Bigger Than a Bomb: Structural Sectarianism in Egypt*, The Tharir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), 16 December 2016.

in the dispute, the role of religion is only secondary, and is not the root cause of the problem. Hence, the religious discourse of Al-Azhar is essential, but it is not sufficient. Al-Azhar itself has been investing in the initiative of *Bait al-'Aila* (the House of the Egyptian Family) to prevent religious tensions in Egypt. In 2010, Ahmed Al-Tayeb proposed the creation of a national independent body, to be named the House of the Egyptian Family, aimed at "preserving the national fabric of Egyptian society". In 2011, The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), then ruling the country after Mubarak stepped down, approved its creation under the leadership of both the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and the Coptic Orthodox Pope. The aims of the House of the Egyptian Family are to preserve Egyptian personality, restore important Muslim and Christian values, help in understanding differences, enhance citizenship, and strengthen Egypt's multiple cultures. However, this initiative has done little to address sectarian tensions. While one of its aims is to offer a comprehensive approach on how to deal with religious tensions, and to replace the informal reconciliation sessions by its own networks of religious and civil society actors, the House of the Egyptian Family has been unable to avoid becoming involved in day-to-day tensions. For example, it had to take part in informal reconciliation sessions to prevent further escalation of violence in certain cases, while at the same time it has no tool to address the root causes of these tensions.

## What Should Be Done To Address These Challenges?

Al-Azhar has been a supportive force for inclusive citizenship in Egypt through its discourse. The serious question is now: What next? How can this discourse translate into actions on the ground? To do so, there is a need to work on two levels: vertically, by disseminating Al-Azhar's discourse to religious civil society organizations, both Christian and Muslim, working on the ground with local populations; and, horizontally, by seeking

to establish a sustained platform that brings together religious and political leaders to discuss the legal and political measures needed to overcome the obstacles towards strengthening inclusive citizenship in Egypt.

## Moving to the local level

Al-Azhar needs to disseminate its ideas on inclusive citizenship from the central level of the Grand Imam and the circle close to him in Cairo to the local level in Egypt's different governorates, involving other religious groups. For this discourse on inclusive citizenship to have an impact on the ground, it should not stop at the level of Al-Azhar leadership, but should also reach religious civil society organizations, both Muslim and Christian, at the local level. These organizations have the advantage of being directly in touch with the people through their religious and welfare activities and are hence perceived as legitimate actors within their own religious communities. This legitimacy would give their religious discourse a wide acceptance within the communities they are serving.

However, in most cases, these organizations work separately in serving their respective religious communities without coordination among themselves. Christian and Muslim associations are the most active in offering services to Egyptians. However, these organizations, although performing the same type of activities and in some cases in the same areas, rarely, if ever, talk to each other. By establishing dialogue between Muslim and Christian organizations, the shared values of human rights, peace and coexistence will find their way to the larger Muslim and Christian audience, instead of only being shared among the religious elite. This is particularly important in countries experiencing religious sectarian tensions between Christians and Muslims, as is the case in Egypt.

The current Covid-19 pandemic is a challenge but could also offer an opportunity for both Christian and Muslim NGOs to rethink their approach of working separately to serve their own religious communities. This pandemic has shown that no one is safe until everyone is safe. To face this challenge, there is a need

for coordination among both Muslim and Christian actors to protect both communities.

## Lobbying for Political Change

So far, Al-Azhar's discourse on inclusive citizenship remains on the level of ideas with no direct political impact to change the reality on the ground. For these ideas to be translated into concrete political actions there is a need to create a permanent channel that brings together religious and political leaders as Al-Azhar did in the post-2011 period through the roundtables held in its headquarters after the 2011 uprising. These roundtables succeeded in bringing together politicians and intellectuals from different political backgrounds together with Al-Azhar scholars to debate the political future of post-2011 Egypt. This approach offers a positive experience of the need to maintain dialogue between religious and political figures. Al-Azhar should not limit its efforts solely to the religious level. The obstacles towards establishing a model of inclusive citizenship in Egypt are political, and they can only be addressed using political measures.

These roundtables should be able to suggest concrete measures that would turn into constitutional reforms, draft laws, and policies. Such political measures should work to solve the legal causes that lead to violence, including measures concerning the building of churches, as well as the rules governing interreligious marriages, and conversion from one religion to another. Within this framework, there is a need also to ensure the establishment of an equitable systems of justice that brings perpetrators of sectarian violence or promoters of hate speech to justice instead of turning to informal reconciliation sessions to deal with these problems. Other political measures should include the reform of the education system to remove any sectarian elements within it.[8]

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[8] TIMEP *Brief: Sectarian Violence*, The Tharir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), 21 November 2018.

## Conclusion

Al-Azhar has played an important role in preaching for inclusive citizenship in the Egyptian context, through its dialogue with Egyptian intellectuals and politicians in the post-2011 context, and through its interreligious initiatives involving leaders from other religious communities. While having a legitimate religious voice such as Al-Azhar defending the concept of citizenship in the Egyptian context strengthens these ideas and gives them a wider social acceptance, this approach faces two main challenges. Firstly, Al-Azhar's discourse alone is not sufficient to end sectarian tensions in Egypt. While religious ideas are often used to mobilize support among each religious community in moments of disputes, the root causes of these tensions are political, not religious. Secondly, this religious discourse supporting citizenship does not necessarily reflect the views of the different religious actors operating within the Egyptian religious sphere. Hence, for Al-Azhar's approach to have concrete results on the ground, it needs to reach horizontally to the political elite to address the political causes of sectarianism through concrete laws and policies, as well as vertically to other religious groups on the local level in order to disseminate its religious discourse defending the concept of citizenship on religious grounds.

# 9. Inclusive Citizenship and the Refugee Challenge: Different Yet the Same

Elie Al-Hindy

More than a decade ago, political turbulence in the Middle East created a series of antigovernment protests and armed rebellions best known as the Arab Spring. The latter triggered an unprecedented flow of refugees toward other Middle Eastern countries and Europe, seriously challenging borders and humanitarian policies. The Mediterranean basin offers a geographically strategic center line which permits ample movement between three continents. It is the greatest global hub for refugees and asylum seekers since World War II.[1]

Refugee flows in large numbers have presented a serious challenge to policymakers on both sides of the Mediterranean, and in spite of the significant differences between the two, the core problem is the same. The refugee crisis has not only been a tragic humanitarian crisis, but it has also polarized political discourses about collective identity and cohesion on both shores of the Mediterranean, with an increase in populist narratives about national and religious identities, specifically Islam and Christianity.

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[1] T.G. Hammond, "The Mediterranean Migration Crisis", *Foreign Policy*, 19 May 2015.

Against this background, the *Human Fraternity Document* came to highlight the need for all states to face the humanitarian challenge caused by the refugee crisis by, among other aspects, respecting religious diversity and cultural pluralism. Rather than alienating religious actors or denying their role in the public sphere, it favors engaging them and making them partners in building peaceful and inclusive societies around the world. The document can be understood as a call to reject the "dictatorship of secularism" and/or forced nationalistic identities. It invites instead to embrace the great heritage, traditions and values that religions can bring to the public sphere, which contribute, in a transformative dialog, to making everyone a better human being and a better citizen.

This was more than a technical challenge for both Europe and the Middle East. A lot of ink has been shed about the successes and failures of EU institutions to agree on a unified policy, to set the guidelines, to establish the implementation mechanisms and to evaluate the efficiency of such policy guidelines. Others have focused the debate on the ideological challenge that shakes the foundations of Europe and what the flow of refugees represents for the long-standing national identities of European states and for the collective European identity. On a different scale, similar technical and ideological debates have been increasing tensions in public opinion and relations with related international organizations, especially in Lebanon, which was overwhelmed by between 1 and 2 million Syrian refugees.

This paper will focus on models of national identity and citizenship, on both sides of the Mediterranean, and try to understand the dynamics that the flow of refugees created in this regard, while also acknowledging that the incoming refugees only made up 30% of new residents in Europe at the peak in 2016, and only 18% in 2019.[2] In the Middle East, and in the

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[2] Eurostat, Residence permits - statistics on first permits issued during the year, 2020.

absence of comparative data, one can assume that the refugees made up the largest part of new incomers for the same period. Two case studies will be used as part of the analysis in this paper, namely, Germany and Lebanon. The paper aims to answer how the different citizenship models which were adopted reflect on the policies toward refugees and, reciprocally, how the flow of refugees challenges these models of citizenship. Ultimately, the paper will argue that a new model of "inclusive citizenship" is the best approach in both contexts, and it will also present a practical translation of what this means in the local contexts of both countries.

## The European Dilemma

With the recent waves of refugees resulting from the instability on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, the challenge faced by European institutions lies both in the EU's policies and management of such unprecedented mass migration and the effect this mass migration has had on local demographics, social cohesion and politics. These challenges reflected not only on the ideological pillars of the European bloc as a whole, but also on the state-level response of frontline countries.[3] "United in diversity" was challenged like never before and the very inclusivity of this "diversity" was tested to its limits.

The most recent and heaviest irregular migration has included Syrians escaping civil war (39%); Afghans fleeing persecution from the Taliban war (11%); and Eritreans escaping harsh living conditions including forced labor (7%).[4] Refugees from these countries have been arriving regularly on the southern shores of Europe. New arrivals also reached the EU's eastern border, exposing Hungary as a hotspot for Syrians and Afghans journeying from Greece northwards to Macedonia and Serbia, all the way to Budapest.[5]

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[3] T.G. Hammond (2015).

[4] J. Park, *Europe's Migration Crisis*, Council on Foreign Relations, 2015.

[5] Ibid.

The Hungarian government responded to this influx of refugees with hostility. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has taken a strong, public stance against refugee assistance, suggesting the refugees pose a potential terrorist threat and are shaking the foundation of Western Civilization. Hungary challenged the European collective response mechanism and sought to overturn it by taking the matter to the EU Court of Justice.[6]

Poland has also been reprimanded by the EU for its lack of solidarity with other countries that accepted refugees. The government's response was that it does indeed welcome refugees as long as they are not Muslims, since letting Muslim refugees in would be a national and security challenge. Taking in such large numbers of refugees would "completely change our culture and radically lower the level of safety in our country," said Jarosław Kaczyński, the Polish right-wing party leader. In this sense, Poland can be seen to be drawing particular inspiration from the Eurosceptic politics of Orbán's Hungary, while also reflecting a broader European trend toward Islamophobia in countries such as France, Germany, Sweden and the UK.[7]

Such xenophobic calls resonated throughout Europe, and were further amplified by the deep economic recession and the political and social unease it generated across the continent. Right-wing parties, accordingly, gained increasing popularity by refusing the flow of refugees and seeing it as a major threat to their identity, values and social cohesion. From liberal Scandinavia to the southern reaches of Europe in Greece and Italy, far-right parties gained an increasing share of the vote in local elections. The results of such shifts in policy agendas focusing on anti-immigration, and explicitly or implicitly anti-Muslim courses of action, has formulated a stereotypic response of discrimination and intolerance which spread widely around the bloc.[8]

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[6] L. Gall, *Hungary's War on Refugees*, Human Riths Watch, 16 September 2016.

[7] K. Narkowicz, "'Refugees Not Welcome Here': State, Church and Civil Society Responses to the Refugee Crisis in Poland", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2018, pp. 357-73, cit. p. 357.

[8] *World Report 2019*, Human Rights Watch., 2019.

On the other hand, the UNHCR's definition of integration presents the process as being a multilayered "complex and gradual" process which requires mutual efforts from all parties who share the burden and responsibility to make it work. Integration is a multilayered process that includes legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions.[9] Although each host country, to some extent, reinvents its own history of nation building, the common concept of integration implies the selective extension to non-nationals of legal, social, cultural and political rights and opportunities that were once the exclusive entitlements of nationals.[10]

With that said, the struggle the European Union faces is embodied in various ethical dilemmas which make the procedure of handling the arrival of refugees difficult. It definitely challenges the entire EU project – "the creation of an integrated continent based on liberal values". Yet, well beyond that, this crisis puts European nations face to face with the universal dimension of the values and moral bases on which they have built their social contract, models of citizenship and national identity.

## The German Case

Like other European countries, Germany was faced with two choices: recognizing immigration as an imminent threat to the bloc's security, thus opting to close the borders, which automatically hinders other underlying pillars of freedom of movement as well as the basic European ideology of humanitarian assistance; or going forward with the option of opening the borders in what could be understood as a duty in a humanitarian crisis of this kind, but which would ultimately influence the country's internal solidity in terms of economic

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[9] *What is a refugee*, UNHCR, (n.d.); *Local Integration*, UNHCR (n.d.).
[10] K. Phalet and M. Swyngedouw, "Measuring immigrant integration: the case of Belgium", *Migration Studies*, vol. XL, no. 152, 2003, pp. 773-803.

and social inadequacies resulting from certain demographic changes.[11]

According to the German Federal Statistical Office, 1,865,000 migrants arrived in 2016.[12] Germany's foreign policy toward migrants has been characterized as an "open arms" approach. Chancellor Angela Merkel has made this very clear, calling on EU Member States to refrain from adopting an isolationist approach and instead focus on the collective efforts of the Union, in what she referred to as an opportunity-seeking issue rather than a legal and moral obligation perspective. Merkel has faced much criticism within her political party, knowing that an anti-immigration stance would have contradicted electoral promizes to their moderate Christian democratic constituency, going against their beliefs and values of human dignity and rights.[13]

The concern nowadays is that Germany may have "added hundreds of thousands of new dependents on the state, most with few job skills and no language preparation".[14] The *Alternativ für Deutschland* (AfD) party created in 2013 drew on this fear and in 2016 presented a far-right program under the slogan "Germany for Germans, foreigners out!". They argued for homogeneity as a utopia of the pure nation-state.[15] Instead of challenging such ideas, faced with the rapid rise of the AfD, German establishment politicians sought to regain popularity by embracing more rigid policy proposals that limited the freedoms of minority populations and limited newcomers, in ways similar to mainstream political leaders

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[11] T.G. Hammond (2015).

[12] S. Bundesamt, "Migration 2016: net immigration into Germany at 500,000", *Destatis*, 13 March 2018.

[13] C.B. Dan Hough, C. B. (2008). "Politicizing migration: opportunity or liability for the centre-right in Germany?", *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2008.

[14] M.B. Dougherty, "On Migration, Europe Is Admitting the Truth to Itself", *National Review*, 27 June 2017.

[15] C. Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge Universiti Press, 2009.

in France. Arguments in the political discourse that Muslims undermine German society, take advantage of the state's welfare policies and might eventually swamp the country and destroy the country's identity due to their higher birth rates have all gained popularity not only among right-wing supremacist but also among the supporters of mainstream parties.[16]

The definition of integration remains up for debate in Germany, while *Multikulti* or multiculturalism is much talked about and is also a focus of heated debates on the merits and dangers of integrating foreigners into German society. Introduced in the 1980s by Christian Democrat officials, the term was seized on by populist leaders not as an expression of tolerance, but as evidence of German resignation to the threat posed to their national identity by foreign immigration. Multiculturalism for them means the unwillingness of foreigners to integrate into German society and the failure of officials to devise and enforce stricter rules that would oblige them to integrate.

Issues like "the Christian identity of Germany", "social peace", "national and cultural unity of the state", "contradiction of Islamic practices with German laws", "limiting the construction of mosques and minarets" and "banning the full-face veil" were all the subject of heated debate. Co-opting policies became even more pronounced, as Germany launched a program that offered financial incentives for migrants to voluntarily return home and sought to speed up the deportation of failed asylum applications.[17] It remains to be seen what impact these political dynamics will have on Germany in the long-term.

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[16] D. Graham, "Newsmaker: Thilo Sarrazin, banker and pin-up of the right", *Reuters*, 10 September 2010.

[17] L. Dearden, Germany offers asylum seekers up to €1,200 each to voluntarily return to their home countries, *Independent*, 3 Febraury 2017.

## The Lebanese Case

Lebanon is the only MENA state that built its foundation on a pluralistic model of citizenship based not on one ethnic or religious national identity, but on a multicultural, multireligious one. Yet, avoiding an ethnic or a religious form of nationalism was not enough to develop a real national identity that adopts tolerance, openness and a welcoming attitude toward newcomers or refugees. On the contrary, Lebanese cultural/religious diversity was trapped in a delicate balance of power that forced the country into different kinds of problems and internal confrontations that arose every time a factor was perceived as a threat. The country has spent most of its 100 years of existence suffering from internal stability fueled by external threats. Today, Lebanon's multiculturalism is clearly perceived by many, both inside and outside the country, as a challenge rather than a blessing.

One of the recent threats was the inflow since 2012 of around two million Syrian refugees, giving Lebanon the highest ratio of citizens to refugees in recorded history.[18] Political divisions in Lebanon have been and continue to be a key factor in the failure of the Lebanese state to manage the Syrian refugee crisis systematically and effectively. The two dominant political discourses on the refugee crisis in Lebanon are rather extreme. One sees the refugee situation as a golden egg-laying goose and never speaks of return in the hope of receiving more financial support that could bolster Lebanon's economy. The other uses a trenchant and hostile approach that carries xenophobic undertones, blaming the Syrian refugees for deteriorating economic and security conditions. The goal is to remove refugees from the country by any means, even if this has a high political price or results in people being sent back to unsafe areas in which their lives are in real danger.[19]

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[18] "UNHCR Lebanon Factsheet - January 2019", *Relief Web*, 17 February 2019.

[19] E. Al-Hindy, C. Alalam, M. Succar, and L. El Chemaly, *The Syrian Refugees' Return to their Homeland: Approaches and Prospects*, Beirut, Konrad Adenaur Stiftung

Lebanese internal debate has echoed the legitimate fears of destabilization and insecurity that much of the general public believes were caused by refugees. In truth, it is ill-chosen policies that have fueled this feeling of insecurity, overstretched the capacity of state agencies, and thrown additional stumbling blocks in the way of refugees. This is particularly evident in the government's state of inertia or "burying of the head in the sand" in the face of the proliferation of informal refugee settlements across the country that has increased tensions with local populations as Lebanon's already struggling economy has worsened.[20]

For years, Lebanese political parties engaged in the contentious exercise of competing to propose the fastest and most efficient refugee return plan, each according to their political position on the Syrian conflict. The discussion, either intentionally or unintentionally, opened "a Pandora's box of issues that exposed coercive, restrictive, and racist attitudes in the country, including a tolerance for discriminatory municipal measures, physical violence and other practices which have only worsened the situation of refugees".[21]

The Lebanese government and almost all political parties have taken a clear stand about refusing to accept any long-term settlement or nationalization of refugees in Lebanon.[22] The main argument is that any large-scale nationalization would tip the very delicate sectarian balance of power in the country. Yet, the question is, if no long-term settlement is acceptable, then what will the status of these refugees be after years of displacement, and if no re-settlement happens? If assimilation

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& Middle East Institute for Reasearch and Strategic Studies, 2017.

[20] G. Ghali, *Addressing the legal and practical options for refugee protection in Lebanon*, Beirut, Konrad Adenauer Siftung & Middle East Institute for Research and Strategic Studies, 2017.

[21] Ibid., p. 6.

[22] Which is, anyway, stipulated in the constitution as a result of Lebanon's experience with Palestinian refugees who have remained in the country since 1948.

is not an option, can integration be considered? And finally, if none of the above is acceptable, how might social peace and minimum human standards be preserved, and what are the long-term consequences of this flow of refugees for the country and its national identity?

## Inclusive Citizenship as a Response to the Refugee Crisis

In this section the paper will explore the concept/model of "inclusive citizenship" and see whether it offers a viable approach to address the above challenges. It will also identify the challenges and limitations of such a concept. The Adyan Foundation's definition of inclusive citizenship will be used for the purpose of this exercise:

Inclusive citizenship is the political and social framework of citizens' recognition of cultural diversity in their society and for working together, through dialog and partnerships, for social cohesion and national unity through an inclusive and creative democratic path for individual and social development.[23]

Thus, inclusive citizenship challenges other forms of citizenships that are based on an ethnic, cultural or religious foundation, and claims to better address reality and human needs than global or multicultural citizenship. In itself, inclusive citizenship prevents insularity and the isolationism of cultural or religious groups through their integration in the public realm, which encourages interaction, complementarity and partnership among citizens, in order to achieve the common good, and sustainable and innovative development. Inclusive citizenship moves beyond identity-based citizenship to values-based citizenship with a set of values that are shared by all citizens and that should be reflected in the political system and in public rhetoric, public policies, the educational system, the work environment and daily interactions in the public

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[23] *Annual report 2017-2018*, Beirut, Adyan Foundation, 2018, p. 6.

sphere. Inclusive citizenship celebrates diversity and see it as a richness for every society and for every human being. Cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is welcomed and celebrated in the public space, a space that is considered the right place and framework for healthy interaction between individuals from diverse backgrounds, working for the benefit of all and each individual.

Unlike multicultural citizenship, which argues for separation and privileges for the different groups/components that make up the state, inclusive citizenship promotes the common living interaction among citizens, the dialog of life and reconciliation, as well as intercultural and interreligious engagement. This dynamic requires the recognition of cultural and religious communities and views them not principally in terms of their separate national identities, but in terms of their capacity to foster social cohesion and creative development within the country.

In European countries facing the challenge of accepting large numbers of refugees in a way that may jeopardize "national identity", it is important to note that the concept of national identity needs to be revisited, because it is impossible in the XXI century to speak about a specific set of criteria that are common to an entire population. All European peoples, and all peoples around the world in general, have become mixed beyond recognition. Today, it is almost impossible to hold any identity as fixed, unchangeable and pure.[24] Inclusive citizenship perceives the individual (every individual) as having a unique, complex identity and thus makes it practically impossible, let alone inacceptable, to classify people according to one specific characteristic that they may or may not have as a part of their general identity. It promotes "multilayered" religious/social identities and communities as opposed to "no" religious/social identities and communities or "pure" religious/social identities and communities. Accordingly, it calls on political systems

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[24] A. Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity*, New York, N.Y., Arcade Publishing, 1998.

to stop trying to force people into a specific identity or into classification boxes and rather to adopt a set of common values and a common vision that bring people together as members of a society no matter how different they are. It promotes a "more open national identity," as opposed to "no national identity" or an "exclusive national identity". Diversity thus ceases to be a threat and becomes a source of richness where every member offers his/her best for the common good, and in return receives respect and welcoming. A national identity would then be open and inclusive enough to receive and adopt newcomers, within the common values and vision set, and their participation and contribution will shape them and the national identity reciprocally.

As for Lebanon, inclusive citizenship has been the core around which the idea of Lebanon was developed. The founding fathers saw Lebanon as the refuge of any oppressed people in the region, and provided a space of freedom where every person can live and practice his/her faith, express opinions and live peacefully with others under the rule of law and the common vision for Lebanon. Unfortunately, the current constitution and current political practices are far from reflecting this. Nowadays, Lebanon tends to offer the image of the worst kind of multireligious system with sharp sectarianism and social cleavages that leave it on the brink of slipping into a civil war practically all the time.

Both Germany and Lebanon are facing a changing reality and witnessing a reactionary shift toward either a Christian national identity to face the perceived threat of the Muslim religious identity infiltrating society or a chauvinistic nationalism aggressive to any "other". In both contexts, inclusive citizenship offers a proactive model that builds citizenship and national identity on the unifying principles of human rights, cultural diversity, peace building, sustainable development, and the values of public life, and as the main tool to avoid the déjà-vu result of exclusion and oppression.

Yet, one of the key limitations of inclusive citizenship is the size, ratio and speed of accepting newcomers. It is a given that indigenous groups and existing diversity must be embraced, but when talking about newcomers it is legitimate for every state to decide on the conditions for their hospitality in a way that allows the proper management of their integration and the diversity they bring with them. As a possible solution to this challenge, countries may choose to adopt inclusive approaches and policies for all their permanent residents, while adopting in parallel more rigid and gradual nationalization laws to limit the influence of newcomers on the political decision-making of the country. This approach could preserve the advantages of inclusive citizenship without its "*supposed*" disadvantages. For Germany this may mean providing newcomers (including both migrant workers from Europe and the world, and refugees) with special residency status that allows them to be active members and full participants in an inclusive society.

Another important factor that inclusive citizenship offers for the integration of newcomers, is engaging religious actors in this process. As "Fratelli Tutti" highlights, the religious and social responsibility of every religious institution and/or believer is to care for the public good and for all human beings, especially the most vulnerable. Thus, it encourages every believer to help create a welcoming and safe environment for refugees, avoiding tension and potential clashes with host communities. In practice, religious institutions have been one of the first recourses for refugees away from their homelands.[25] Host states should work with religious institutions and partner with them to facilitate not only the humanitarian assistance/response but also – beyond that – the long-term accommodation and integration process. In turn, this will circumvent all kinds of abuse both ways (by the system and by the refugees). An

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[25] R. Chbib, *Muslim Perspectives on the Immigration and Integration Debate in Germany Today*, American Institute for Cotemporary German Studies, 27 April 2016; D. Estrin, "This Jewish family is hosting a Syrian Muslim refugee in their Berlin home", *The World*, 28 June 2016.

example of this is the role that was played by the Chaldean Catholic diocese in Lebanon and the role it played in hosting and fostering Iraqi refugees, whether Christian or Muslim.[26] Rayes argues that faith as a component of and contributor to mental health plays a "significant role in the social integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers".[27] According to Rayes, this is particularly the case for those who fled their countries due to political or religious persecution. Khallouck of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany also explains the important role played by Islamic citizens' initiatives in refugee integration.[28] Faith appears to have significant ties to mental health for refugees, yet it is often neglected in broader discussions of refugee integration. Experiences of Syrian refugees in Germany suggest these relationships should be considered more seriously and with greater sensitivity when developing integration programming and policies.[29]

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the *Human Fraternity Document* and the concept of inclusive citizenship provide today's world with a roadmap toward the most suitable way of managing diversity in pluralistic societies, especially while integrating vulnerable and foreign refugee groups. It is the most suitable way to foster healthy, peaceful and enriching interactions on a daily basis between the different members of any society, with a welcoming and mutually engaging space for the contribution of cultural and religious communities to this process. The limitations of inclusive citizenship can be addressed with suitable approaches

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[26] "Iraq's Chaldean refugees fleeing to Lebanon seek help from church", *Catholic Review*, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 19 January 2012.

[27] D. Rayes, "Faith and Mental Health Help Shape the Integration of Muslim Refugees in Germany", *Relief Web*, 7 January 2021.

[28] M. Khallouck, "How Islam Helps Refugees Integrate in Germany", *Refugees Deeply*, 11 April 2018.

[29] Rayes, D. (20201). D. Rayes (2021).

that are relevant and unique to every country, in a way that maximizes its benefits and minimizes its potential risks. Thus, all countries are invited to revisit their citizenship model and make it as inclusive as possible in order to reap the benefits of an open world and sustainable social cohesion built around the dignity and uniqueness of every human being.

# About the Authors

**Mohamed Abdel-Salam** is a judge and the Secretary General of the Higher Committee on Human Fraternity, Member of Al-Azhar Center for Interreligious Dialogue, Member of the Executive Office of the Muslim Council of Elders, and the former legislative and legal adviser to the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. Abdel-Salam is the first Arab Muslim to receive the medal of Commander with a Star from the Pope. This medal is among the highest honours awarded by the Vatican and came in recognition of his efforts to promote interreligious dialogue and tolerance.

**R. Scott Appleby** is a Professor of History and the Marilyn Keough Dean of the Keough School of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame. In his research studies he examines the ways religions and religiously inspired actors shape and are shaped by modern ideas, institutions, practices and conflicts. A Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, he is the author of several books, among others: *The Ambivalence of the Sacred. Religion Violence and Reconciliation* (1999); and *The Fundamentalism Project* (co-editor, with M.E. Marty, 2004) published in five volumes by the University of Chicago Press.

**Jean-Marc Aveline** was named Archbishop of Marseille in 2019 after serving as an auxiliary bishop there since 2013. He was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Marseille in 1984.

He taught theology and was Director of Studies at the Seminary in Marseille. In 2007 he was also named to a five-year term as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He led the Archdiocese's vocation service from 1991 to 1996. In 1992 he founded the Institut des sciences et de théologie des religions of Marseille (ISTR) and was its Director for the next ten years. He was Director from 1995 to 2013 of the Institut Saint-Jean, which in 1998 became the Catholic Institute of the Mediterranean and developed an association with the Faculty of Theology of Lyon.

**André Azoulay** is the Senior Adviser to King Mohammed VI of Morocco. He previously advised Mohammed's father, King Hassan II. He currently presides over the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures, based in Alexandria, Egypt. He is also President of the Executive Committee of the Foundation for the Three Cultures and the Three Religions, based in Seville, Spain, a founding member of the C-100 Davos Forum for the Dialogue of Civilizations and Religions, and was formerly Executive Vice-President of the BNP Paribas, Paris.

**Fadi Daou** is a laureate of the MIT Elevate Prize 2020 for Global change-makers. He is co-founder of Adyan Foundation, senior policy advisor and professor. He holds a PhD in theology and an MA in political philosophy, accompanied by an extensive research activity about pluralism, citizenship, and geopolitics of religions, published in French, Arabic, English and German. His academic work nourishes his entrepreneurial and policymaking engagement, leading policy dialogues and reforms in the MENA region and beyond. He is at the origin or part of many local and international initiatives and platforms fostering Peacebuilding, Intercultural and Interreligious engagement, Freedom of Religion and belief (FoRB) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE).

**Michael D. Driessen** is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Affairs at John Cabot University, Rome, where he also directs the University's Interfaith Initiative. He received his doctorate from the University of Notre Dame and was a Post-doctoral Fellow at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Doha, Qatar. He has published the book *Religion and Democratization* (2014), and his articles have appeared in *Comparative Politics*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Politics and Religion*, and *Democratization*. In 2019, he was a Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute in Fiesole, Italy, where he completed a manuscript entitled *The Global Politics of Interreligious Dialogue*. Prof. Driessen also serves as an advisor for the Adyan Foundation.

**Georges Fahmi** is a Research Fellow at the Middle East Directions Programme of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, at the European University Institute in Fiesole, Italy. Previously, he was a Non-resident Scholar at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, Lebanon. His research focuses on religious actors in democratic transition in the Middle East, the interplay between state and religion in Egypt and Tunisia, and religious minorities in Egypt and Syria.

**Pasquale Ferrara** has been appointed as Italy's Special Envoy for Libya in January 2021. Between October 2106 to November 2020, he served as Italian Ambassador in Algeria. Since 1984, he engaged in both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, having served in the US, Brussels (EU), Greece and Chile. He was also Secretary General of the European University Institute in Florence. As Director of the Policy Planning at the Italian MFA, he launched a new program on Religion and International Relations. His most recent books are *Global Religions and International Relations* and *Il mondo di Francesco* (Pope Francis' international profile). He teaches Diplomacy and Negotiation at LUISS University - Rome and Political integration at Sophia University Institute – Florence.

**Silvio Ferrari** is Emeritus Professor of Law and Religion at the University of Milan. His most recent publication is *Handbook of Freedom of Religion or Belief* (edited with R. Bottoni, M. Hill, and A. Jamal, 2020,). His main fields of interest are law and religion in Europe, comparative law of religions (particularly Jewish law, Canon law and Islamic law), religious minorities, the Vatican policy in the Middle East. Prof. Ferrari is Honorary President of ICLARS (International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies) and Vice-President of the European Academy of Religion.

**Paul Richard Gallagher** is an English Catholic bishop and the current Secretary for Relations with States within the Holy See's Secretariat of State, a position to which he was appointed in 2014. Prior to that he had been appointed Papal Nuncio to Australia since 2012. Throughout the years he has held posts in Tanzania, Uruguay, the Philippines, and the Vatican Secretariat of State. Ordained by Archbishop Derek Worlock in 1977 for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, he served in Fazakerley, before taking courses at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy. He later earned a doctorate in Canon law from the Pontifical Gregorian University, becoming a member of the Holy See's diplomatic service in 1984.

**Mohammed Hashas** is a Faculty Member at the Department of Political Science of Luiss University of Rome. His research areas are modern and contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, European Islamic thought, and contemporary Moroccan thought. He was Research Fellow at Babylon Center for the Study of the Multicultural Society in Tilburg, the Netherlands and the Center for European Islamic Thought at the University of Copenhagen. He has also been a Senior Research Fellow at Fscire-La Pira Library and Research Center on the History and Doctrines of Islam in Palermo (2019-21). Prof. Hashas has authored *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity* (2019) and *Pluralism in Islamic Contexts: Ethics, Politics and Modern Challenges* (2021).

**Elie Al-Hindy** is the Executive Director of Adyan Foundation. He is also an Associate Professor at Notre Dame University – Louaize, NDU Lebanon (since 2009). He earned his PhD (2009) in Government and International Relations from the University of Sydney – Australia; an MBA in International Affairs and Diplomacy and two bachelor degrees in Political and Administrative Sciences (2000) and in International Affairs and Diplomacy (1998). Dr. Al-Hindy is an active member, trainer and consultant in many national and international civil society organizations for more the past 20 years.

**Azza Karam** serves as the Secretary General of Religions for Peace. She also holds a professorship of Religion and Development at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, in The Netherlands – of which she is a citizen. She served as a Senior Advisor on Culture, at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and as Coordinator/Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development, where she coordinated engagement with members of a Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development with over 600 faith-based organizations from all regions of the world, representing all religions and interreligious affiliation. She is the Lead Facilitator for the United Nations' Strategic Learning Exchanges on Religion, Development and Diplomacy.

**Alberto Melloni** is a Professor of History of Christianity at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Director of the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies (Fscire) and Chair holder of the UNESCO Chair on Religious Pluralism and Peace at the University of Bologna. He spearheaded the establishment of the European Academy of Religion, a research platform which includes institutions, associations, academies, publishers, reviews concerned with the study of religion throughout Europe, the Mediterrean, Middle East, the Balkans, Caucasus and Russia. He is the Director of the COGD program and the History of Ecumenism. He has written more than 400

articles and several books on religious history. Among the last books he wrote or directed: *Il concilio e la grazia*, 2016; *Luther. A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)* (2017). He is columnist of *La Repubblica*, and RaiNews.

**Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé** was appointed High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations in 2019. He began his diplomatic career as the Head of the Coordination Section for Eastern Europe between 1977 and 1980. At the end of 1980, he was appointed to the Spanish Embassy in Yugoslavia and remained there until 1984. From Belgrade he went on to Rabat, this time as a political adviser, remaining there between 1984 and 1987. He was appointed General Deputy Director for Northern Africa (1987-91) and then Director of the Institute of Cooperation with the Arab World (1991-93). After his tenure at the Institute, he was appointed General Director of Foreign Policy for Africa and the Middle East, between 1993 and 1996, where he took part in the organization of the historic Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid in 1992. After being Spain's Ambassador in Israel from July to December 1996, he was appointed by the European Union as EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, a mission in which he worked from December 1996 to June 2003. In 2004, he was appointed as Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

**Nejia Al-Ourimi** is a Professor of Islamic Thought and Civilization at the High Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis, Tunis El Manar University; and a member of the Tunisian Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts; and a member of Religion for Peace (RFP), MENA Women of Faith; and a collaborator with Adyan Foundation. Her academic studies focus on some pressing issues of pluralism in the Arab society. Among her last publications: *Tolerance in Arabic Culture* (2018); *Women's Leadership in Early Islam* (2016). She has also translated *Melika Zeghal, The Guardians of Islam: Al-Azhar Ulema in Modern Egypt* (2015).

**Fabio Petito** is Head of the ISPI Programme on "Religions and International Relations" of ISPI supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He teaches International Relations at the University of Sussex where he leads the Freedom of Religion or Belief and Foreign Policy Initiative. He is also and member of the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief. His publications include *Religion in International Relations* (2003), *Civilizational Dialogue and World Order* (2009) and *Towards a Postsecular International Politics* (2014). Among his articles "An Italian foreign policy of religious engagement: challenges and prospects", in *The International Spectator* (with P. Ferrara, 2016).

**Nayla Tabbara** is President of Adyan, Foundation for Diversity, Solidarity and Human Dignity. She is also a Muslim woman theologian and a University Professor in religious and Islamic studies. She has published works in the fields of Islamic theology of other religions, education on interreligious and intercultural diversity, Qur'anic exegesis, and Sufism. She works on curricula development (formal and non-formal) for multifaith education and inclusive citizenship. She has received the Gold Medal of the French Renaissance Award and the Special Jury award of the Fr. Jacques Hamel Prize (2019) and the Ecritures et Spiritualités Award for her book *L'islam pensé par une femme*.

**Scott M. Thomas** is Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Bath, United Kingdom. He is the author of *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (2005), and many articles which use Alasdair MacIntyre's virtue-ethics and social theory, and René Girard's mimetic theory to take seriously culture, religion, theology, and spirituality in international relations. He is a senior academic advisor of the Religion and International Relations Section of the International Studies

Association, and a Contributing Editor of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*. He has been writing and speaking on *Franciscan* themes and international relations since 2008.