A Clash of Civilisations or a Dialogue of Faiths?

La Civiltà Cattolica and Catholic Responses to Islamic Terrorism

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Abstract

This thesis examines the discourse of the Jesuit journal La Civiltà Cattolica and its implications for the broader debate on transnational Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first century. Given the large body of post-9/11 secular political literature on this modern phenomenon, the response of Catholic intellectuals has not received the critical analysis it merits. The examination makes an original contribution to scholarship on religion and violence by framing the Jesuits’ propositions as an alternative “soft-counterterrorist” approach based on interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Jesuit scholarship has been a traditionally potent manifestation of the Catholic viewpoint on global affairs. The Jesuits’ most significant journal, La Civiltà Cattolica, has regularly contributed to the international discussion on the nature of Islamic terrorist violence. The journal’s “semi-official” status allows it to transcend boundaries imposed on official organs of Catholic information and still reflect the views of the highest Vatican authorities. This study analyses La Civiltà Cattolica’s discussion of the relationship between Islam and violence over the past thirteen years and attributes the journal’s adoption of a less critical, more pro-dialogue, approach to the controversy surrounding Pope Benedict XVI’s 2006 Regensburg lecture. The study also frames the Pope’s lecture as a watershed moment that simultaneously rocked Christian-Muslim relations and set in motion numerous interfaith initiatives. The views of the journal have challenged established political and academic understandings that see a direct link between Islam and violence, instead considering Islam as a religion of peace that has been manipulated by extremists.

The thesis provides two chapters of contextual information and three of discourse analysis. The contextual chapters interpret the change in the Catholic response to the Islamic religion in general and to the phenomenon of political violence in particular. In the analytical chapters, emphasis is laid on the non-violent measures favoured by the Jesuits, including collaborations between peace-seeking Christians and Muslims aimed at countering both hard counterterrorism strategies and the propaganda of violent extremists.
Declaration

The thesis is my own composition, all sources have been acknowledged and my contribution is clearly identified in the thesis. This thesis contains only sole-authored work, some of which has been published under sole authorship.

Parts of Chapter 5 have been published in *The Journal of Religion and Violence*:


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Marco Ceccarelli
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Introduction

Since the Islamic terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Western media has frequently referred to American theorist Samuel P. Huntington’s “Clash of Civilisations” theory in public debate.¹ Huntington’s idea that post-Cold war conflict would be dominated not by ideological but by cultural and religious contention seemed, to many, the best way of making sense of an event that would in the following years be repeated in other Western countries. Despite criticism by numerous scholars that Huntington had misinterpreted the history of civilisations,² his prediction of the kind of intercultural and interreligious clash that would affect the twenty-first century makes his theory a suitable starting point for this thesis.

Huntington’s theory continued to make headlines throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century and was especially used in the month of September, 2006, in reference to Islamic protests against the then leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI.³ Once again, it was employed both to portray an instance of Islam

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coming into conflict with the West over cultural and religious matters and to
exemplify what is often referred to as the incompatibility between two different
worlds.\footnote{In the context of increasing African, Asian and Middle-Eastern migration to Europe, the late
twenty and early twenty-first centuries have seen contentious debates regarding Western practices
conflicting with Islamic customs. The Salman Rushdie Affair, the French headscarf issue, the murder
of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, the right wing politics of Geert Wilders, the issue of religious
signs in Italian classrooms, the Danish cartoon controversy and the anti-Islamic YouTube clip are
some of the affairs that have seen Western liberal ideology collide with Islamic sensitivities.}
The demonstrations were sparked by a number of quotations used by
Benedict in a lecture entitled \textit{Faith, Reason and The University: Memories and
Reflections},\footnote{Pope Benedict XVI, \textit{Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections}, Apostolic Journey
of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to München, Altötting, and Regensburg (September 9-14, 2006),
2006/semester/documents/hf_benxvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html.} which he delivered at the University of Regensburg on 12 September
2006, the day following the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Placing his discussion in the context of the Hellenistic tradition’s encounter
with the Christian faith, the Pope argued that religion is capable of adapting to a
changing society through the successful, albeit contested, union of faith and reason
in the religious experience. “Biblical faith, in the Hellenistic period,” the Pope stated,
“encountered the best of Greek thought at a deep level, resulting in a mutual
enrichment evident especially in the later wisdom literature.”\footnote{Benedict XVI, \textit{Faith, Reason and the University}.} Within this context,
the Pope argued, religion and rationality grew together in a relationship that saw a
favouring of the best elements the two could offer. On the basis of this “Eastern”
encounter, the roots of Western civilisation began to grow and to branch out into the
European context, later adopted into the Roman heritage. Pope Benedict’s lecture
went on to discuss the damage he believed this particular unity of faith and reason
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has suffered in the modern age, and focused on its repercussions on intercultural and interreligious coexistence.

However, while his focus was a critique of Western civilisation, in the opening section of his address Pope Benedict quoted from a recorded dialogue between the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos and a Persian intellectual that allegedly took place in the final decade of the fourteenth century. The quoted dialogue concerned the structures of faith contained in the Bible and in the Qur’an, the image of God and of man, the theme of Holy War and the relationship between faith and reason. One part of Benedict’s lecture in particular caused Islamic anger:

In the seventh conversation (διάλεξις - controversy) edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. The emperor must have known that surah 2, 256 reads: ‘There is no compulsion in religion.’ According to some of the experts, this is probably one of the suras of the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat. But naturally the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur’an, concerning holy war. Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the ‘Book’ and the ‘infidels,’ he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable, on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: ‘Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.’ The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. ‘God,’ he says, ‘is not pleased by blood - and not acting reasonably (σῶν λόγω) is contrary to God's nature.’

A combination of media hype and what was probably a poor choice of quotation by the Pope unleashed days of violent protests throughout the Islamic world during which various Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches were vandalised; death threats to the Pope were also made. The Pope was accused of defaming and

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7 Benedict XVI, *Faith, Reason and the University*. 
misinterpreting Islam and asked by various Islamic religious leaders and politicians to apologise for his comments. Yet a number of religious and secular scholars argued the Pope’s lecture had been “misunderstood,” and that it was not in fact an attack on the Islamic religion. Paradoxically, the years following the controversy saw a dramatic rise in interfaith initiatives between Christians and Muslims and in open discussions of issues such as the relationship between religion and violence, religious pluralism and religious freedom in the world.

While this thesis does not support Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilisations theory, it identifies the controversy surrounding Pope Benedict XVI’s Regensburg address as symptomatic of an ongoing intercultural and interreligious malaise between the Christian West and Islam. The demonstrations against the Pope were not simply linked to his quotation of the remarks of a Byzantine Emperor; they reflect a history of strained relations between Christianity and Islam that dates back to Islam’s Age of Expansion and counts among its most contentious periods the Crusades and the age of European Imperialism. Despite the significant steps made in terms of reconciliation and rapprochement since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), many of which will be documented in the course of this thesis, the road towards

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10 Hereafter, the term “Vatican II” will also be used to refer to the Second Vatican Council.
peaceful and respectful coexistence is as long as it is tortuous and there is still a long way to go. Furthermore, the events surrounding the Regensburg lecture shed light on the caution the Catholic Church must display when discussing connections between Islam and violence. Misunderstood as it may have been, the Regensburg lecture was another warning regarding the Islamic community’s sensitivity to references associating its founder with irrationality, particularly from the leader of another religion.

The fourteen centuries of interaction between Christianity and Islam have seen the two religions live, as Bernard Lewis states, “always as neighbours, often as rivals, sometimes as enemies.”¹¹ Most of the scholarship on the history of their relations inevitably dedicates a significant amount of attention to rivalry, both ideological and theological (writings and books) and physical (overt violence).¹² Yet despite their differences, Christianity and Islam share common ground. Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, traces its faith to the patriarch Abraham and therefore belongs to the group of “Abrahamic religions”: all three are monotheistic; all refer in some way to the prophets of Israel; all have a long history of interaction with each other. Through the Second Vatican Council the Church attempted to build on what common ground existed between Christianity and Islam and to intensify relations. The Church officially recognised Islam as a worthy partner through the publication

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of two breakthrough decrees, *Lumen Gentium* (1964) and *Nostra Aetate* (1965), and established institutions, such as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), specifically aimed at increasing interreligious dialogue. This led to the establishment of recurring dialogical encounters with Islam on issues such as religious freedom, human rights, the rights of religious minorities and conflict resolution through religious exchange.

The Catholic Church’s long history of interaction with Islam, along with its religious, cultural and scholarly interest in Islamic civilisation, make its response to the contemporary phenomenon of Islamic terrorism worthy of consideration. In the context of a growing body of scholarship surrounding this pressing issue of our modern age, the views of Catholic scholars have not been studied sufficiently. Many of the detailed studies on Islamic terrorism since 9/11 fail to assess whether the Catholic intellectual tradition has anything to contribute to the debate on extremist violence that claims to be based on religious tenets. This thesis aims to redress this failure by framing the response of Catholic scholarship to Islamic terrorism as a

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14 The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, or PCID, was originally established by Pope Paul VI, on 19 May 1964, as The Secretariat for non-Christians - it was later renamed by Pope John Paul II. The Pontifical Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, or PISAI, was originally set up in Tunis by the White Fathers in 1926 and was moved to Rome in 1964. The Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies was established in Amman, Jordan, in 1994 by Prince Hassan, for the study of religious issues in the Arab and Islamic worlds, with particular reference to Christianity in the Arab world. See Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, 184 – 186.

pertinent soft-counterterrorist narrative based on interreligious dialogue and cooperation. As one of the most impressive intellectual manifestations of Catholicism, the Jesuit order\textsuperscript{16} is the focus of this study. Since the founding of their order in 1540, the Jesuits have had regular contact with the Islamic world both through missionary efforts and through a scholarly tradition that has often critiqued Islamic cultural, social and political developments.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, as an intellectual order that regularly comments on interreligious relations, the Jesuits emerge as a particularly important manifestation of the Catholic Church’s new insights on Islam in the twenty-first century and therefore of the Church’s response to the challenge of Islamic terrorism.

One of the scholarly instruments used by the Jesuits to communicate their ideas is the journal \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica}. Since its establishment by Jesuits in 1850, this Italian-language journal has dealt with a wide variety of topics, from history and politics to economics and international relations.\textsuperscript{18} This thesis illuminates Jesuit scholarly discourse on the issue of twenty-first century Islamic terrorism in \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica}. The journal has extensively covered the development of Islamic violent extremism since 9/11, and continues to do so through a number of well-researched

\textsuperscript{16} The original name of the order as introduced by its founder, Ignatius of Loyola, was “The Company of Jesus.” It was later changed to “The Society of Jesus.” The names of Jesuit authors are often followed by either S.I. or S.J. The former is a reference to the Latin version of the name, “Societas Jesu,” the latter refers to the English “Society of Jesus.” Since the Jesuits of \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} sign their name using the Latin version, S.I. will be used throughout this thesis.

\textsuperscript{17} See, for instance, the work of Giovanni Fausti S.I. (1899-1946), contributor to the \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} journal and missionary in Albania. Fausti has been described as a precursor to Christian-Muslim interreligious dialogue particularly since his efforts foreshadowed the new position of openness towards Islam that the Catholic Church took at the Second Vatican Council. For more information see Armando Guidetti, \textit{Padre Fausti S.I., Martire in Albania: Un Precursore Del Dialogo Islamico-Cristiano} (Roma: Edizioni La Civiltà Cattolica, 1974).

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} is the longest running of all Italian journals still being published.
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articles that analyse the impact of Islamic terrorism in the West and in Islamic
countries, the US-led War on Terror and War in Iraq, the ideological roots of Islamic
terrorist violence, and new methods of fighting political violence. This scholarship,
rich in historical content and critical analysis, has not yet received the critical
attention that it merits. Aside from the articles of L’Espresso journalist Sandro
Magister and a brief and at times misleading critique by the Israeli scholar Sergio
Itzhak Minerbi, La Civiltà Cattolica’s discussion of Islamic terrorism has not been
critically apprehended.19

The analysis of over fifty post-9/11 articles published by La Civiltà Cattolica
on the relationship between religion and violence in the twenty first century reveals
a complex and interesting pattern of engagement with Islamic terrorism in the
journal. The purpose of this thesis is to illuminate this discourse and highlight the
various positions taken by the Jesuits on this pressing issue. The thesis will not,
however, study the origination of contributions to this discourse, whether in the
institutional politics of the journal or in the predilections of individual authors. It
confines itself to the history of ideas.

For it to contribute to the current political and academic discourse, the
analysis of La Civiltà Cattolica must be contextualised in literature on Islamic
terrorism and in those seminal works that give the term “Islamic terrorism” the
political charge it has today. This contextualisation requires a brief review of works
by leading scholars in the field including Bernard Lewis, John L. Esposito, Gilles
Kepel, Bassam Tibi, Walter Laqueur, Olivier Roy, Mark Juergensmeyer and Mark

19 These works are addressed in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.
Introduction

Sageman.20 The major works of these authors, and the critique which surrounds them, must be illuminated in order to highlight the main points of discussion raised in regards to Islamic terrorism and its impact on both Western and Islamic societies. This discussion will introduce the different motives and ideologies that drive Islamic terrorist violence and various scholars’ suggestions for resolving this issue as a context for presenting La Civiltà Cattolica’s interpretations.

Political and Academic Discourse on Islamic Terrorism since 9/11

The 9/11 terrorist attacks rapidly transformed the security requirements of many Western states and international organisations. In the years following the attacks, and particularly after subsequent terrorist attacks including those in Bali (October 2002 and October 2005), Madrid (March 2004), London (July 2005), and Mumbai (July 2006), terrorism became the number one security issue for the West, leading to an array of new local and international anti-terrorism laws, security measures and programmes. As Islamic militants claimed responsibility for the attacks, the mainstream media gradually became more hostile to Islam in general, linking it with

violence. During this time the use of the term “Islamic terrorism” proliferated and led to the intensification of Western stereotypes about the Islamic world as backward and barbaric. \(^{21}\) Simultaneously, the academic world devoted unparalleled attention to the phenomenon of terrorism. Soon, the new terrorism discourse – an effort by scholars from a range of disciplines to unpack the terms, assumptions, categories, labels, and narratives used to explain terrorism – was at the forefront of academic debate.

While 9/11 brought Islamic terrorism to global attention, the consideration of this issue is by no means a twenty-first century phenomenon. The debate on Islamic terrorism is based on the assumptions, theories and understanding of what before 9/11 was the relatively small field of terrorism studies. In the past fourteen years, this field has been transformed into one of the fastest expanding areas of study of the twenty-first century. The notion of “Islamic terrorism” emerged from studies on “religious terrorism,” an area of research that can be traced back to the work of political scientist David Rapoport and his much cited 1984 article “Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions.”\(^{22}\) Following Rapoport’s article, a number of works emerged on Islamic terrorism that laid the foundations for twenty-first century scholarship. These include Bruce Hoffman’s *Inside Terrorism* (1998), pioneer of studies on terrorism Walter Laqueur’s *The New Terrorism*:  

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Richard Jackson asserts that there is another scholarly tradition from which the current discourse of Islamic terrorism draws much of its terminology and many of its assumptions. He labels this the “orientalist scholarship on the Middle East and Arab culture and religion.” The two scholars often associated with this kind of literature are the aforementioned Samuel Huntington and the Islamic studies expert Bernard Lewis. Both have become well known figures for their extensive and insightful coverage of breakthrough events in the Middle East, such as the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Rushdie affair and the terrorist hijackings of the 1980s, and for their hostile representations of Islamic extremists as violent and irrational. Huntington’s assertion that “Islam has bloody borders” was fundamental in establishing an assumption that has led to a central question in public and academic debate: is Islam inherently violent? Scholars such as Barak Mendelsohn and Walter

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25 Richard Jackson, “Constructing Enemies: ‘Islamic Terrorism’ in Political and Academic Discourse,” *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 399. Orientalism is a framework of knowledge based upon a distinction between the orient and the occident in which the orient is seen as a negative inversion of Western culture. It includes a number of subtle cultural generalisations and racial and religious prejudices that portray Arab cultures as backward, violent and irrational. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003). This work was originally published in 1978.
27 Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?,” 35.
Laqueur argue that Islam does not distinguish between religion and state and has not officially rejected the notion of religious war. They often use this premise to conclude that while religious extremism exists in all religions, it seems to loom larger in Muslim societies.  

By championing interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation against violent extremism, *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discussion of Islamic terrorism challenges Huntington’s controversial theory in new ways. This thesis asks what the Jesuits have to offer that secular scholarship may perhaps have overlooked in the relationship between Islam and violence. Christianity’s own engagement with religious violence is firmly embedded in its history, as is its eventual rejection of the concept of Holy War; could the Jesuits’ evaluation of the current stigma surrounding Islam point to new avenues of discussion and consideration that have so far been overlooked? First and foremost, the issue of Islamic fundamentalism must be closely examined since it often surfaces in Western academic discourse as the ideological root from which Islamic terrorists draw inspiration. Scholars tend to divide the Islamic world into fundamentalists and moderates, with the moderate Muslims often categorised as those leaders who will guide a war against the extremists who have “hijacked” their religion. Zeyno Baran, for instance, suggests finding new ways of helping moderate Muslims to win the theological and ideological war that is occurring in the Islamic world. However, tracing a clear line that divides moderates from fundamentalists may not be the wisest approach in dealing with the issue since

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29 Zeyno Baran, "Fighting the War of Ideas," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (2005): 74.
any individual with deeply held religious convictions could be classified as fundamentalist or extremist. The Jesuits’ contribution to the understanding of this issue is considered in the third chapter of this thesis in the context of *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discussion of Islamic fundamentalism.

The scholars who have so far been mentioned have deployed a number of labels and terms that have become part of the basic terminology used to define Islamic terrorism. These include terms such as “Islamism,” “violent extremism,” “Jihadism,” “Wahhabism,” “Salafism,” and “fundamentalism.” These terms are generally used in reference to Islamic terrorism’s ideological roots and, in particular, to the nineteenth and twentieth century radical scholars who developed aggressive, anti-Western, interpretations of Islamic texts. However, Western academics often use much of this language interchangeably and fail to employ the caution that should be used with the terminology of a diverse and dynamic tradition. For example, the term “Islamism,” meaning “political Islam,” has been overused to describe Al-Qaeda style terrorist attacks. While it is undeniable that a number of Islamist organisations have terrorist branches, groups like Hamas, Hezbollah and The Muslim Brotherhood have also participated in national elections and have at least attempted to establish democratic credentials. Hamas, for example, is viewed by *La Civiltà Cattolica* as fundamental to the search for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite the organisation’s failure to renounce violence and ability to use democracy to its benefit without moderating its political aims, the Jesuits believe that it should not be excluded from the negotiating table.\(^{30}\)

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The concept of Jihad also seems to be automatically associated with terrorism without much care being taken in regards to its proper meaning. Authors such as Mark Sageman and Reuven Paz fall prey to this misconception and imply a direct link between Islamic fundamentalism and violence. This assumption is supported and often exaggerated by Robert Spencer and Bruce Bawer, two authors who are renowned for their staunch criticism of Islam and for their apocalyptic warnings regarding Islam’s eventual rule of the world. Spencer’s popular blog, “Jihad Watch,” exemplifies the use of the term Jihad to sow fear among Western readers. Yet Jihad in Islam is defined both as an internal spiritual struggle to become a better Muslim (Greater Jihad) and as an effort to spread Islam in the world and defend it from enemies (Lesser Jihad). Lesser Jihad concerns self-defence and self-preservation and can be associated with the more widespread use of the slogan “Holy War” that has become popular, in a modern context, since the Afghan war of the 1980s.

The scholar Mahmood Mamdani emphasises that before the Afghan War, the terms “Holy War” or “just struggle” as the mobilising slogan and banner of militant

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33 See Robert Spencer, Jihad Watch (blog), http://www.jihadwatch.org/. The website is frequently updated with warnings regarding the destructive plots of “Jihadi terrorists.”
35 Here I am referring to the Soviet war in Afghanistan. The Mujahedeen (strugglers) resistance against the Soviets lasted nine years and was backed by numerous sources including the United States, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Egypt and China. Christopher J. van der Krogt, “Jihad without Apologetics,” Islam & Christian Muslim Relations 21, no. 2 (2010): 128.
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Islam were seldom used by Islamic militants. In this respect, works such as Ahmad Moussalli’s article "Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who Is the Enemy?" present a balanced rendition of the subtle differences between terms that often overlap in significance but should not be used interchangeably. Moreover, in contradiction to most academic texts on Islamic terrorism, there is a body of literature confirming that Islamic doctrine and practice, including varieties of Islamic fundamentalism, are not inherently violent. In fact, the political scientist Joseph Schwarz states that the “Islamic fundamentalist emphasis on personal purity often takes an individual rather than a collective and political expression.” Thus strong religious devotion can lead to political withdrawal rather than to militancy. The inconsistencies that surround the terms “Islamic fundamentalism” and “Jihad” are addressed throughout the thesis in the context of La Civiltà Cattolica’s discussion of twentieth century Islamic radicalism.

Another core narrative present in Western academic discourse on Islamic terrorism describes the violence of Islamic terrorists as anti-modern, anti-secular and anti-democratic. Once again, a strong assumption that Islam itself endorses all of these characteristics runs through much of the literature on this topic and contributes to the idea that Islam is responsible for the deeds of violent extremists. An example of this, published by Ayla Schbely in a prominent terrorism journal, states that: “the Islamic world’s rejection of democracy and modernity as well as their ongoing

36 Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 51.
Islamic resurgence and propensity to violence” is due to the fact that “the concept of nation-state and democracy is, to most contemporary Muslim nations, as alien to them as pork rinds.”39 This strongly worded statement demonstrates the ease with which Islam’s rejection of some forms of Western-style democracy is hastily associated with what some critics view as its embrace of violence against the West. Here, the author fails to take into consideration Islamic countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Malaysia and Indonesia, where the practice of Islamic Sharia law is not strictly enforced and where democracy has had some success in establishing popular elections, a multiplicity of political parties and even a popularly elected parliament.40

The issue of compatibility between Islam and democracy is discussed in numerous La Civiltà Cattolica articles and is linked to the journal’s hopes and fears regarding the protection of Christian minorities in the Islamic world. La Civiltà Cattolica views the triumph of democratic principles in Islamic countries as a guarantee of increased security for persecuted Christian minorities. A recent study estimated that more than a hundred million Christians were persecuted in the world in 2013, with Islamic countries taking nine of the top ten spots on the list of “difficult countries” for Christians to live in.41 However, unlike conservative authors such as

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Daniel Pipes and Bernard Lewis, *La Civiltà Cattolica* does not believe that Muslims should simply accept and adapt to a Western-style democracy, instead, they argue that the Islamic community should have more power and jurisdiction in forging its own paths to democracy. According to their views, the imposition of the Western template simply does not work. While the Jesuits’ views differ greatly from Schbely’s, their overall perspective on the compatibility of Islam and democracy, particularly since the ousting of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, is rather pessimistic. The third and fourth chapters of this thesis offer an in-depth analysis of the Jesuits’ views on this issue.

One of the dominant narratives on Islamic terrorist violence that also sees Jesuits disagree with neo-conservative scholars concerns the major security threat that terrorism poses to the West and the means used to counter it. Mark Sageman, for instance, classifies Islamic terrorism as a significant threat to the Western world and as a destabilising force that threatens Western democracy. Influential authors such as Daniel Pipes have expressed concern about both Islamic terrorists and the silent majority of Muslims that fails to condemn Islamic terrorism. In 2002, Pipes stated that although “reliable statistics on opinion in the Muslim world do not exist, my sense is that one half of the world’s Muslims – or 500 million persons – sympathise more with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban than with the United States.”

Observations such as these seem to validate Samuel Huntington’s Clash of

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Civilisations theory and give credibility to the notion that the West and the Islamic world are on a collision course. Walter Laqueur’s studies on the “new terrorism” add a catastrophic dimension by considering the possibility of terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. At this point, a question arises: how can Islamic terrorism be fought? Given the failure of the “War on Terror” and the War in Iraq to successfully stamp out terrorism, are there alternative suggestions that have not been considered?

The narratives that have so far been observed suggest there is no possibility of negotiating with dangerous and irrational Islamic terrorists. Despite the failure of hard counterterrorism to stop terrorism, scholars often validate it as a reasonable response to a challenging problem. One such validation emerges in Charles K. Rowley’s article “Terrorist Attacks on Western Civilisations.” Rowley suggests that in order to minimise the risk of further terrorist attacks, the United States should ignore politically correct objections to torture as a means of extracting information and of deterring would-be terrorists. Rowley goes on to state that “[t]errorists, it should be remembered, are not only sub-human, but sub-animal…in dealing with a sub-human, sub-animal species, normal rules of combat simply do not apply.”

Benjamin Barber adopts a similar line of reasoning when he argues that the purposes of Al-Qaeda can be “neither rationalised nor negotiated” and that “the terrorists offer

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46 The term “War on Terror” was used during the Bush administration but has been changed by the Obama administration to “Overseas Contingency Operation,” probably due to the terminology issues that have been discussed throughout this review.
no terms and can be given none in exchange.\footnote{49} Barber also emphasises the difficulty of monitoring decentralised and flexible network structures that do not follow the traditional hierarchical structure of terrorist groups.\footnote{50} His comment points to yet another narrative on contemporary Islamic terrorism that identifies the Internet as a facilitator of communication between a loosely connected web of terrorist organisations. The irony of this kind of “cyber-terrorism,” which depends on satellite communications, email and the Internet, is that it is used by individuals who wish to return to the classical tradition of Islam. Here, Olivier Roy’s discussion of Islamic terrorism’s reliance on the use of modern technology and global financial systems is highly insightful.\footnote{51}

The purpose of the “hard counterterrorist” and “cyber-terrorism” narratives is to highlight the strength and elusiveness of Islamic terrorist groups and to argue that strong measures are needed if terrorism is to be defeated. Barber and Rowley tend to justify their punitive measures by demonising Islamic terrorists as irrational, barbaric and fanatical individuals.\footnote{52} In their views, non-violent alternatives would be ineffective and futile since violent terrorists only respond to violence. Yet works such as Christopher Boucek’s study of non-violent approaches in Saudi Arabia have proven that soft-counterterrorist methods are effective in both preventing attacks and rehabilitating imprisoned terrorists.\footnote{53} In addition, Nigeria’s recent decision to

\footnote{50} Barber, “Democracy and Terror,” 249.
\footnote{52} Barber, "Democracy and Terror," 246; Rowley, "Terrorist Attacks," 4-6.
Introduce soft-counterterrorist methods to deal with the violence of terrorist group Boko Haram can also be interpreted as a gradual shift within governments from hard to soft anti-terror measures. Here, La Civiltà Cattolica’s range of non-violent solutions to terrorism – interreligious and intercultural dialogue first and foremost among them – can be seen to contribute to the current literature on this unconventional and under-explored method of countering terrorism. Could the persistence of local and international Islamic terrorism be linked to self-defeating hard-counterterrorism policies? The failure of thirteen years of War on Terror to successfully stamp out Islamic terrorist violence suggests that violent extremism cannot be achieved through hard security measures alone.

La Civiltà Cattolica addresses the failure of hard power to end terrorism by advocating an alternative “soft-counterterrorist” approach based on interreligious and intercultural dialogue. In their arguments against the use of “hard power,” such as that seen in the military and police interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the thesis argues that the Jesuits champion the use of “soft power,” a concept developed by the Joseph Nye to describe the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce as a means of persuasion. La Civiltà Cattolica views the collaborative efforts of peace-seeking Christians and Muslims in the Western and Islamic world as a powerful weapon against the challenge of violent extremism. It considers the improvement of

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Christian-Muslim relations as vital to the defeat of the kind of extremist propaganda that calls for a twenty-first century “religious war.”

*La Civiltà Cattolica* is a bi-weekly journal that was inaugurated by Pope Pius IX in Naples on 6 April 1850 with the dual purpose of offering a Catholic alternative to the liberal press and of defending “Catholic civilisation” from the political ideas of the Italian Risorgimento. After the publication of its first issue, the college of writers working for the journal moved to Rome due to oppressive censorship from the Bourbons. The journal was an immediate success and gradually became an organ of information for conservative Catholicism. It came to reflect and defend, in the words of its founder Carlo Maria Curci, “Catholic cultural identity” at a time when Catholicism had begun to lose power and influence in Europe and the rest of the world. Anti-Semitism characterised the journal from the mid-1880s through to the 1960s, as the Jesuits used the journal to defend Catholicism’s religious and political importance. The publication of anti-Semitic articles became significantly less frequent in the years leading up to the Second World War until the new pro dialogue

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approach of Vatican II sought to officially eradicate anti-Semitism in Vatican-backed Catholic publications.\textsuperscript{59}

While the anti-Semitic past of the journal does not play a central role in this thesis, a brief analysis of this contentions chapter of the journal’s history is important to the understanding of contemporary Jesuit analysis of Catholicism and Islamic terrorism. \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica’s} own acknowledgment of wrongdoing in regards to the Jewish people and religion\textsuperscript{60} may have played a significant role in its friendlier post-conciliar approach to Islam. It may also have led the Jesuits to tread carefully in their discussion of a contentious topic such as Islamic terrorism so as not to offend an already stigmatised Islamic community. Overall, the tone of the journal has undergone a significant change from its former polemical character; according to an open declaration on its website it no longer strives to be critical of other cultures and religions but searches for ways in which to enter into dialogue with them.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} is written by Jesuits only and all of its articles, even those with by-lines, are explicitly deemed the responsibility of the “College of Authors” who live a common life in the Villa Malta in the centre of Rome. The editor-in-chief


\textsuperscript{60}For De Rosa’s apology see De Rosa, \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica}, 90-95.

\textsuperscript{61}Further information can be found on the “Our History” section of \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica’s} website: http://www.laciviltacattolica.it/it/storia/storia/lo-stile-attuale.
Introduction

of the journal, currently Antonio Spadaro S.I., works in liaison with the Vatican authorities and ensures that drafts of all articles are sent to the Holy See’s Secretariat of State for examination before they are published. The Vatican may suggest revisions to the articles or even veto the publication of a particular text.\textsuperscript{62} Thus, while \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} is not constrained by the strict limitations imposed on official organs of information such as \textit{L’Osservatore Romano}, it is also not an unofficial publication; it can be categorised as a semi-official\textsuperscript{63} journal that reflects the views of both the Jesuits who write for it and the highest Vatican authorities.\textsuperscript{64}

\textbf{Chapter Outline}

The thesis is divided into five chapters, the first two of which provide the contextual background for the analysis of \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} undertaken in the other three. The latter, analytical chapters of the thesis focus on five methods of countering Islamic terrorism discussed in \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica}: the creation of new bridges of friendship and collaboration between Christians and Muslims both in Islamic countries and in the West; the rejection of a direct link between Islamic fundamentalism and violence and the discussion of Jihad as a peaceful Islamic concept; the cessation of unnecessary actions that provoke and humiliate Muslims; the abandonment of the idea of forcing Muslims to accept Western-style democracy; and a fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Jesuits also discuss the favouring of intelligence

\textsuperscript{62} For more information, see the section of the \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} website entitled “Our Relationship with the Holy See,” http://www.laciviltacattolica.it/it/storia/storia/il-rapporto-con-la-santa-sede.

\textsuperscript{63} In the Italian language, the journal is referred to by the Jesuits as “ufficioso.”

\textsuperscript{64} The journal also welcomes contributions from Jesuit scholars who may not be members of the College. The scholar Christian Troll S.I., for example, has often written articles for \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} yet has never been a permanent member of the College.
measures over military action and the deprivation of financing from major Islamic banks that Islamic terrorism utilises – actions aimed at “drying the waters in which terrorism navigates.”

Chapter One documents the European Catholic Church’s attempts to understand and define the phenomenon of modern political violence. It begins with a consideration of Christian just war theory as presented in the works of Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine, using the discussion of the right to armed warfare as a lens through which to analyse contemporary terrorist violence. This examination foregrounds the analysis of two case studies, namely the conflict in Northern Ireland during The Troubles and the Italian Red Brigade terrorism of the ‘70s and ‘80s; in the former case, members of the clergy played the controversial role of both condemning and supporting armed rebellion, while in the latter they became involved as mediators between the state and the terrorists, often directly negotiating with each party and struggling to appease the demands of both. In order to establish whether the Church has learned any lessons from its past, the chapter also draws comparisons between the way the Church dealt with national and political terrorist violence in the twentieth century and the way it approaches religious violent extremism today. Overall, the Church is here pictured as balancing on an unsteady tightrope, pulled on either side by statesmen and terrorists while struggling to retain a firm hold over the decisions of its clergy. Its tumbles to either side of the rope are documented in a chapter that assesses the Church’s struggles to manage its involvement in situations of political unrest.

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Introduction

The aim of Chapter Two is to contextualise the current Catholic Jesuit discourse on Islam and Islamic terrorism in the history of strained Christian-Muslim relations. The chapter begins with a brief analysis of these relations from the birth of the Islamic religion in the seventh century to the watershed Second Vatican Council decrees of *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium*. It initially focuses on the darker ages of Christian-Muslim relations by documenting the Christian defamation of Islam, the developing friction between two great religions each claiming to be the final revelation of God to humanity, and the explosion of armed conflict and violence during the Crusades. However, the chapter also considers pivotal Christian figures, such as Francis of Assisi and Louis Massignon, whose efforts to better understand Islam and create bonds of friendship with Muslims laid the foundations for the significant steps towards rapprochement taken by the Church in the latter part of the twentieth century. The analysis follows the expansionist ebbs and flows of two religions claiming world dominance and documents the eventual fall of the Ottoman Empire and the age of European imperialism. It concludes by outlining the efforts of the Catholic Church to build new intercultural and interreligious bridges with its “Muslim brothers” whom it came to see, in the Second Vatican Council, as included in God’s plan of salvation. The endeavours of Jesuit missionaries and of modern Jesuit scholars who have come into contact with Islamic civilisations also features in this scene setting analysis. This both introduces the reader to the particularity of Jesuit-Muslim relations and provides context for the analysis of *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discussion of Islamic terrorism that takes place in subsequent chapters.

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Introduction

Chapter Three, the first analytical chapter, explores *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s understanding of Islamic fundamentalism as the ideological root from which violent extremists claim to draw inspiration and which they use to justify their acts of terrorism. A shift in the journal’s attitude is identified in the middle of the first decade of this century as Giuseppe De Rosa S.I.’s critical and pessimistic views are replaced with Giovanni Sale S.I.’s optimism and pro-dialogue approach. This significant shift in tone and position is viewed as symptomatic of the new measures taken by the journal, particularly after Pope Benedict’s Regensburg lecture, in regards to its discussion of links between Islam and violence. The analysis also considers Giovanni Sale’s insights into the compatibility of Islam and democracy and his emphasis on allowing Muslims to pave their own road towards more democratic socio-political environments.

Chapter Four focuses on *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discussion of Christians living in Islamic countries and probes the contentious issues of reciprocity, religious pluralism and religious freedom in the Islamic world. The argument presented by the Jesuits - that without religious freedom there can be no sound interreligious and intercultural dialogue - is closely examined in a chapter that considers *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s views on the experience of Christians living in major Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, as well as other parts Africa. An analysis of the evident and pressing issue of the persecution of Christian minorities plays a significant role as the chapter considers Jesuit rhetoric on how to balance the safety and freedom of Christians living in the Islamic world with the respect that is owed to Islamic culture and law. Particular attention is devoted to the Jesuits’ vision of an interreligious
encounter and therefore of respectful interreligious dialogue that does not come at the expense of a Christian’s nor a Muslim’s own beliefs but seeks common ground on which to confront the issue of terrorist violence.

In the fifth and final chapter of the thesis the journal’s practical soft-counterterrorist solutions are examined in the context of its position against the use of military and police force as a way of dealing with terrorism and extremist propaganda. Among La Civiltà Cattolica’s suggestions are the preparation of “cultural mediators” who may aid the integration of a new generation of European Muslims as well as the condemnation of defamations of the Islamic religion and of the Prophet Muhammad. The journal’s discussion of soft power is examined in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the Jesuits view the inclusion of organisations such as Hamas at the negotiating table as a fundamental key to conflict resolution. With the exception of this discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the chapter deals less with the journal’s discourse on the Islamic world and more with its assessment of the Western world’s response to Islamic terrorism. For this reason, it returns to Europe and to the central point of Pope Benedict XVI’s call in the Regensburg lecture for Westerners to rediscover the roots of their own Christian identity before suggesting changes to Islam. On this point, the journal’s critique of what it sees as rampant relativism in the West is closely examined. The Jesuits see relativism as one of the causes that inhibits Westerners’ acquisition of knowledge of Islamic culture and respectful intercultural and interfaith dialogue – both crucial elements at the centre of La Civiltà Cattolica’s soft-counterterrorist efforts. A general lack of interest in self-criticism and self-understanding, the journal argues, may be at
the heart of the West’s failures to improve relations with Muslim people and of collaborative efforts to end violent extremism.

The thesis concludes by identifying *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discourse on Islamic terrorist violence as a potentially powerful element in the global struggle against a pernicious phenomenon. It draws the major points raised throughout the analysis into a concluding chapter that recapitulates how *La Civiltà Cattolica* has advanced alternative theories on Islamic terrorism, and points to those areas that need to be addressed by future scholarship. It also makes a final assessment of the Regensburg lecture’s impact on Christian-Muslim relations in order to ascertain whether it damaged or improved decades of interreligious rapprochement. As the body of literature on Islamic terrorism continues to grow, this thesis makes a contribution to the identification and explanation of the motives of Islamic terrorists and the discovery of effective and ethical methods with which to fight this modern phenomenon.
Chapter 1

Walking an Unsteady Tightrope

Tracing the Response of the Catholic Church to Political Violence in a Modern European Historical Context

In order to gain a sense of the history which contextualises the contemporary Catholic discourse on the issue of political violence, it is necessary to review the Catholic Church’s response to terrorism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a global religion interested and often involved in the socio-political developments of the country it exists in, Catholicism has often confronted systematic terrorist violence throughout the modern era. Particularly after the secular French revolutionary regime and the fall of the Papal States threatened its hegemony, the Catholic Church has generally condemned violent insurrection, rebellion, rioting, anarchy, terrorism and physical conflicts by non-state actors. However, its position on political violence has been constantly evolving and has also depended on whether a particular ruling power was prepared to defend the Church’s rights and interests. This chapter analyses the response of the Catholic Church to different scenarios of European political violence conflict, ranging from late nineteenth century anarchism to Irish Fenianism and IRA violence, and from the Spanish Civil War to Italian Red Brigade terror. This is done in the context of the continuous evolution of the Church’s stance on just war theory and social teaching regarding terrorism and political violence – changes that were symptomatic of its struggle to define and speak out against terrorism, to condemn atheist regimes and to simultaneously remain socially influential. The chapter also investigates whether the Church has learned any lessons from its past experiences in
dealing with political violence that have laid the foundations for its approach to Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first century.

**Just War Theory and Legitimate Violence**

One of the most important doctrines developed by the Catholic Church on the issue of armed conflict has been that of just war theory (*jus ad bellum*). While it is conventionally classified as a teaching of the Church, just war theory has also enjoyed acceptance in the secular world and is still used by governments, militaries and institutions, such as the UN, advancing international law on the question of war.¹ Its origins are found in the thought of Augustine of Hippo (354-430, commonly referred to as Saint Augustine) and the doctrine was further developed by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Augustine proposed the idea of just war as punitive action aimed at punishing the love of violence, cruelty and the lust for power that arose out of human selfishness. He added that wars should be the result of necessity and not choice and proposed the following guidelines to the legitimate taking up of arms: just cause, right intention and legitimate authority. Augustine also established the notion that innocent third parties were to be protected in times of conflict and that the ultimate aim of war was to secure a just peace.²

It was Thomas Aquinas, however, who developed a more explicit understanding of what constitutes a just war and laid the foundations of just war

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theory as we know it today. Following the logic of Augustine, Aquinas rejected the presuppositions of an absolute Christian pacifism and expanded on the justification for war. The following statement, found in the section entitled “On War” of his *Summa Theologica*, spells out his philosophy:

In order for a war to be just, three things are necessary. First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged. For it is not the business of a private individual to declare war, because he can seek for redress of his rights from the tribunal of his superior. Moreover it is not the business of a private individual to summon together the people, which has to be done in wartime. Secondly, a just cause is required, namely, that those who are attacked should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault. [Quoting Augustine] ‘A just war is wont to be described as one that avenge wrongs, when a nation or state is to be punished, or to restore what it has seized unjustly.’ Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents have a rightful intention.3

In order to prevent his message from being trivialised and possibly misused, Aquinas emphasised that the resistance against attacks must be proportional to the end of restoring peace and that self-defence perpetrated with the intention of killing another human being was not a legitimate aspect of just war but an unlawful act.4 The *Summa Theologica* was the first real attempt to establish the parameters of just war theory and introduce a set of instructions to those who sought the Church’s authority for armed conflict.

The idea of just war continued to evolve after Aquinas’ death. It was developed by scholars such as the Spaniards Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez and internationalised by the Protestant Dutch theologian Hugo Grotius. In the first half of the seventeenth century, Grotius broadened the idea of just war beyond the confines of religion and sought to universalise a theory that, in Europe at least,

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4 Steffen, "Religion and Violence," 110.
had come to be associated solely with Church thinking. He claimed that all men, religious or not, have a right of resistance against injury and that this right could not be changed, not even by God.\(^5\) The general scope of just war theory, both on a religious and a secular level, was first to establish that war should be avoided, and second, that if war was unavoidable, then the use of force should be restrained.

Despite the above-mentioned theorists’ efforts to establish its parameters, just war theory remains a set of broad, non-specific guidelines that is often subject to criticism. As Steffen notes in a recent study on religion and violence, a common criticism of just war thinking concerns the ease with which it can be manipulated and used “self-serve\(\text{ingly},\) even cynically, to ‘rationalize violence’ and to justify political and military incursions that require the patina of moral justification to garner public support.”\(^6\) The Catholic Church has often experienced the repercussions of a loosely defined theory and has struggled with its application in scenarios of political conflict; just war theory does, after all, go against the commandment “thou shalt not kill.” In order to trace the Church’s relationship with this theory in a modern context, one needs to look to the tradition of Catholic social teaching and identify those areas where the Church was faced with inevitable violence. Particularly in the periods following the American and French Revolutions, the magisterium of the Church elaborated what came to be known as Catholic Social Doctrine. This is not to say, of course, that the Church did not have a social doctrine prior to the revolutionary


\(^6\) Steffen, "Religion and Violence," 111.
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period, yet through Pope Leo XIII Catholic social doctrine became formalised, systematic and complete. Here, various themes that help us understand how the Church came to view and respond to political violence are identifiable.

**Catholic Social Doctrine on Political Violence: A Shifting Pattern**

While scholars generally recognise the official origins of Catholic social doctrine in Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* – a document that rejected socialism but supported those workers exploited by unrestricted capitalism – the Church’s first reference to modern terrorism was made ten years prior in Pope Leo’s encyclical *Diuturnum* (1881). While this document is largely based on the Pope’s preference for patriarchal monarchy over popular sovereignty, his fears regarding the assassination of the Russian Tsar Alexander II, murdered in St. Petersburg on March 13, 1881 by a group of nihilists, are clearly visible in the opening paragraphs of the document. In reference to this event, Leo claimed that “the whole of Europe was

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10 The group responsible for the death of the Tsar was known as *Narodnaya Volya* [The People’s Will]. This small organization had carried out seven attempts on the life of Tsar Alexander II and eventually succeeded in their mission by ambushing the Tsar’s carriage and hurling home made bombs at his convoy. Walter Laqueur and Charles Townshend identify The People’s Will as the first, systematically organized, terrorist organization of modern history. See Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 34; Charles Townshend, *Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-20.
lately filled with horror at the horrible murder of a most powerful Emperor” and that “these perils to commonwealth...fill us with grave anxiety, when the security of rulers and the tranquillity of empires, together with the safety of nations, [are] put in peril almost from hour to hour.” 11 With these words, Pope Leo initiated what became a growing Catholic interest in understanding terrorist violence in modern Europe. His anxieties were destined to grow with the onset of anarchist violence in the early 1890s.

The Church felt threatened by anarchist violence – labelled both as “anarchism” and “terrorism” around the turn of the twentieth century12 – not only because of its potential for physical destruction, but due to the strong ideological influence it exerted over the population. Anarchists fought for the eradication of evil from the world and against human exploitation; many of them did this, however, by championing a “propaganda by the deed” approach that validated the use of violence. According to Joseph Dowling, Pope Leo feared the “emotional appeal” of anarchism, which could create a competing philosophy of life to religion.13 It is therefore no surprise that the Pope was considerably shaken by the news of a thwarted attempt in 1893 to blow up the headquarters of the Vatican Noble Guard, which provided a bodyguard service for the Pope during processions, and an anarchist plot against the Vatican in the aftermath of the bombings of the Italian Chamber of Deputies a year...

11 Pope Leo XIII, Diuturnum, sec. 3.
later. Despite his hesitancy to overtly condemn anarchism, Leo encouraged local Bishops who had been confronted with this kind of violence, particularly those who experienced the anarchist bombing campaign on Sicily in 1894, to dissuade Catholics from anarchist means and discourage anyone already using them.

In order to further understand the true cause of Pope Leo’s fears concerning late nineteenth century political violence, we must turn to certain developments in Catholic social teaching in accordance with the aforementioned scholarship of Thomas Aquinas. For Aquinas, all legitimate authority derived from the sovereign head of state and any group that was not affiliated with the state, or did not have the state’s approval, could be deemed illegitimate. In particular, a private individual could not wage armed warfare without being part of an armed body guided by a sovereign state. Since both anarchists and groups such as those who murdered the Tsar were neither given state authority, nor were part of state sanctioned military order, they were identified by the Church as threats to the civil order. In light of the political theology of the time, civic order was a reflection of divine order, peace, and the authority of God over all humanity; in this respect, Diuturnum was one of many steps taken by the Church to establish the duty and rights of Catholics in relation to the state. According to Pope Leo, since the state was guided by divine law and thus reflected its rules and principles, obedience to sovereign power was a Christian duty.

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Thus despite its involvement in the sixteenth-century wars of religion and its support for various rebellions against the anti-Christian French revolutionary regime after 1789, the late nineteenth century Church of Pope Leo XIII became a strong supporter of sovereign power. This support, however, was largely based on a sovereign government’s ability to protect the Church’s interests. As the following case studies demonstrate, the Church’s efforts to maintain civic peace and encourage its faithful to sovereign obedience were linked to its interest in remaining influential and relevant within society. The great obstacle, however, was that not all Catholics agreed with its political theology in regards to the legitimacy of the state. Because of this, the Church risked losing the trust of its faithful in exchange for friendly relations with sovereign powers. Here, Oliver Rafferty’s study of late-nineteenth century Irish political violence offers an insight into the Church’s struggle to balance the demands of its followers with those of the British state.

Throughout the 1840s, the revolutionary fervour stirred by leaders and members of the revolutionary group Young Ireland had been closely monitored by both the Vatican and the Irish clergy. The creation of the Fenian movement in 1858 only heightened this sense of awareness. As well as calling for independence from Great Britain, such revolutionaries questioned Catholic social doctrine and criticised the Church for defending the interests of Britain on Irish territory. In response to the agitation caused by the Fenians, Pope Pius IX issued a condemnation “by name” of Fenianism in January 1870 and warned the Irish clergy to not support the revolutionary aims of such individuals.\footnote{Oliver P. Rafferty, Catholicism in Ulster, 1603-1983: An Interpretative History (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 162.} This fuelled the already anti-clerical politics
of the movement, which portrayed the Church as an ally of the British government and an enemy of the Irish people. This accusation evoked a strong response from a prominent leader of the Irish Church, Cardinal Paul Cullen, who responded by stating that he did not see “any harm in supporting the government; that if opposing the government was a virtue, one ought in Italy to cooperate with Mazzini.” Cullen believed that it was “the first duty of every Catholic to support the government unless it attacked the Church.”¹⁸ The Church’s prioritisation of obedience to governing authorities was beginning to be set in stone.

Another insight into why the Church was so determined to maintain social order is given by Tom Inglis’ study on the Catholic Church and Ribbonism.¹⁹ Inglis states that in the nineteenth century “the struggle between the Church and the Ribbonmen…was one of obtaining control of the form and content of political activity.”²⁰ This observation discloses the importance of the role of social control in the Church’s response to political violence throughout this time. Catholics who labelled the Church a defender of British interests criticised the Church’s interest in discouraging violent rebellion. Consequently, the appeals of the Church in regards to political instability in Ireland became less relevant. As Rafferty notes, by the end of

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¹⁸ Cardinal Paul Cullen, as cited in Oliver P. Rafferty, The Church, the State and the Fenian Threat, 1861-75 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 5.
¹⁹ Ribbonmen were members of a Catholic secret society founded in Ireland in 1808 in opposition to the landlord class. They protested, usually by means of violence and intimidation, the exploitation of tenant farmers and were violently opposed to the Protestant Orange Order. Ribbonism ceased to be active by 1840, the energies of its members being taken up by O’Connellism and Young Ireland. For more information see Brewer’s Dictionary of Irish Phrase and Fable, s.v. “Ribbonmen,” accessed 3 November 2013, http://www.credoreference.com.ezproxy.library.uwa.edu.au/entry/orionirishpf/ribbonmen.
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the nineteenth century the Irish people were so embittered by what they saw as the Vatican’s support for British rule that Pope Leo XIII’s condemnation of boycotting in his 1888 encyclical *Saepe Nos* was largely ignored. In this particular case, the Church’s support for sovereign power seemed to backfire: what was to be gained from good relations with the state if Catholics stopped heeding the advice of their religious leaders?

Re-evaluating Just War Theory: The Catholic Church and Political Violence in the Twentieth Century

The Church’s attitude to political violence in the twentieth century changed considerably as the emergence of anti-clerical regimes threatened its autonomy and survival. For instance, when faced with the persecutions of the Spanish Republic in 1936, Pope Pius XI permitted Cardinal Isidro Gomá to support general Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War and argued that Franco’s “civic-military” movement held some form of legitimacy. His successor, Pope Pius XII, was no less

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22 Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, from the Great War to the War on Terror* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 137-138; José M. Sánchez, "The Second Spanish Republic and the Holy See: 1931-1936" *The Catholic Historical Review* 49, no. 1 (1963): 67. In July 1936 the Bishop of Salamanca, Dr Enrique Plá Y Daniel, issued a lengthy pastoral letter titled "The Two Cities," in which he drew explicitly on a Papal blessing which Pius XI had given exiled Spaniards in Rome, distinguishing between the Christian heroism of the Nationalists and the barbarism of the Republic. Using Augustine’s notion of the worldly and the heavenly city, the Bishop of Salamanca identified the former with Republican-held territory in Spain and the latter with the Nationalist zone. The text of this pastoral letter, in which, apparently for the first time, the term “cruzada” (crusade) was used to describe the Nationalist cause, was submitted to Franco for his approval before it was published. For more information see Frederick Hale, "Fighting over the Fight in Spain: The Pro-Franco Campaign of Bishop Peter Amigo of Southwark," *The Catholic Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (2005): 464.
in favour of armed resistance against what he saw as ungodly despotism. After having identified communism as the new great threat to Catholicism in Europe, Pius XII looked with sympathy on the 1956 Hungarian attempted revolution against Stalinism. On this specific occasion, a repressed Catholic Church took advantage of its short-lived freedom and was vocal about its support for the nationalist forces and its aspirations to reclaim significant relevance in society.\(^{23}\) In both these instances, the Church re-evaluated its position on just war theory and modified its social teaching in order to sympathise with armed rebellion against anti-clerical governments. It therefore came to consider its commitment to a sovereign power that defended its rights and interests and allowed it to fulfil its mission as a priority.

The Church’s support of armed resistance in Hungary reflected a strong anti-Soviet sentiment that began with Pius XI. Due to Pius XI’s condemnation of Soviet power, the Vatican’s use of the term “terrorism” was no longer limited to clandestine illegitimate groups, but was associated with atheistic communism. Since the very start of his papacy, the Pope was well aware of the ill treatment of priests in Soviet Russia, yet it was not until his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, published in 1937, that he officially used the term “terrorism” in reference to the Soviet regime.\(^{24}\) In this document, Pius XI declared that while communism promised to ensure

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\(^{23}\) The leader of the Catholic Church in Hungary at the time, Cardinal József Mindszenty, was freed from house arrest in the wake of the revolution and taken to Budapest to announce the return of the former social order. When Soviet troops reclaimed Hungary, the Cardinal sought refuge in the Hungarian US embassy, where he remained for the following fifteen years. See Paul Froese, "Hungary for Religion: A Supply-Side Interpretation of the Hungarian Religious Revival," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001): 254-56.

\(^{24}\) Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, Encyclical on Atheistic Communism, Vatican website, 19 March 1937, Sec. 15 and 23, as cited in Gallagher, "The Roman Catholic Church and Modern Terrorism," 52.
economic prosperity and the enforcement of morality, all that it delivered was terrorism:

…it is terrorism that reigns today in Russia, where former comrades in revolution are exterminating each other. Terrorism, having failed despite all to stem the tide of moral corruption, cannot even prevent the dissolution of society itself.\(^{25}\)

The Pope seemed to have understood that the threat posed by this kind of “state terrorism”\(^{26}\) far outweighed the political violence of small, illegitimate terrorist cells. Due to his fears regarding the security of the Church in areas controlled by Soviets, the terms communism and terrorism among Catholic leadership became temporarily interchangeable. This new Catholic teaching on terrorism set a precedent for the Church’s anti-communist sentiment and its support for violence against Soviet power.

The period during which the Church seemingly favoured armed revolt against anti-Christian regimes was short-lived, and after the death of Pius XII, in 1958, the Holy See’s social teaching shifted once again. Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, published on 11 April 1963, marked the Catholic Church’s return to a position of non-violence and denunciation of armed insurrection. Together with the Second Vatican Council, this communication did not abolish the principle of just war, yet seemed to limit its range. In the context of possible nuclear war, it focused on the urgent need for disarmament. An excerpt from the encyclical captures Pope John XXIII’s intentions:


\[^{26}\] Pius XI is here referring to what is today termed “state terrorism” or “state terror” – a label that reflects the first use of the term “terrorism” during the French Revolution’s Reign of Terror (1789-1799). The contemporary use of “terrorism” is generally used to describe clandestine, non-state groups. For more information on the contemporary use of the term see Townshend, *Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction*, 1-20.
Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from men's minds. But this requires that the fundamental principles upon which peace is based in today's world be replaced by an altogether different one, namely, the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust. And we are confident that this can be achieved, for it is a thing which not only is dictated by common sense, but is in itself most desirable and most fruitful of good.27

As Lan T. Chu attests in a recent study on the Catholic Church and just war, throughout the Second Vatican Council the Church seemed to focus more on the general avoidance of war than on a theoretical analysis of whether it is legitimate to enter into armed conflict.28 It nourished this new point of view with further exhortations such as the 1965 Pastoral Constitution to the Modern World entitled Gaudium et Spes. The document dedicated an entire section to “The Avoidance of War” and referred specifically to weapons of mass destruction and their incompatibility with legitimate warfare. In relation to this, John XXIII’s successor, Pope Paul VI, made the following statement: “The horror and perversity of war is immensely magnified by the addition of scientific weapons. For acts of war involving these weapons can inflict massive and indiscriminate destruction, thus going far beyond the bounds of legitimate defence.” The use of violence as legitimate self-defence was, however, mentioned by the Pope as permissible “once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted.”29 This was also a time in which the Church

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29 Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican Website, 7 December 1965, as cited in Lan T. Chu, "God Is Not Dead or Violent,” 425. For the full pastoral constitution see Flannery, 988. Sec 79.
had created a bond with the UN and had begun making its policies more compatible with Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\footnote{Gallagher, "The Roman Catholic Church and Modern Terrorism," 61.}

With the succession of Paul VI to the papacy in 1963, we enter into what may be termed the post-	extit{Pacem in Terris} phase: a period in which the global threat of nuclear war slowly faded and the practice of clandestine terrorist violence resurfaced. As the ensuing analysis shows, at times the Church became a direct target of terrorist activity and was held accountable for its involvement in and influence on Ireland and Italy. While the Church remained critical of terrorism, a number of clergy also fell into the temptation of supporting armed resistance and used their influence over the faithful to encourage armed resistance. For the Church, the phenomenon of terrorism came as a direct challenge to the perhaps overly optimistic principles of \textit{Pacem in Terris}. The urban guerrilla violence that erupted in Europe throughout the latter half of the twentieth century reminded the Church that war was still very much a part of the human condition and that “peace on earth” would not be established until oppression and corruption were stamped out.

\textbf{The Catholic Church and IRA Terrorist Violence}

In the particular scenario of the Provisional IRA violence of the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s, the Church’s existence was not directly threatened as it had been in the Second Spanish Republic, nor was it confronted with a population living under tyrannical rule as in 1950s Hungary; instead, it was faced with small, aggressive, terrorist groups, many of which were comprised of Catholics. While its position as a staunch
critic of terrorism remained intransigent, the Church is here best understood as being pulled from the two sides of a tightrope. One side was composed of statesmen who required its contribution to maintain social order, the other of terrorists who demanded its loyalty to the cause of Irish freedom.

The origins of the Irish Church’s tendency to condemn the new trend of modern political violence is particularly evident in a number of comments made by Irish Bishops in January 1956:

No private citizen or group or organisation of citizens has the right to bear arms or to use them against another state, its soldiers or citizens….Sacred scripture gives the right to bear the sword and to use it against evil doers to the supreme authority (of the State) and to it alone.\textsuperscript{31}

The signatories to this document also claimed that “no private individual has the authority to judge of these issues, or to involve those from whom he has received no mandate.”\textsuperscript{32} Although “individual” or “non-state” violence in Northern Ireland had at this stage not yet reached its post-1969 intensity, here we see Bishops condemning the origins of what would later lead to terrorist violence in Ireland: paramilitary organisations. With the creation of the Irish Republican Army as an alternative paramilitary organisation, numerous Catholic Irish nationalists took a step further towards the systematic use of violence that would later become the trademark of the Provisional IRA. The warnings issued by the Bishops endeavoured to draw attention to the heightened level of danger and pain (physical and psychological) that engagement in paramilitary violence could cause. Firm in its attempt to dissuade nationalists from pursuing the desire to take matters into their own hands, the Church

\textsuperscript{31} Relevant sections of the Bishops’ statements can be found in John Henry Whyte, \textit{Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1979} (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1980) 320-321.

\textsuperscript{32} John Henry Whyte, \textit{Church and State in Modern Ireland}, 320-321.
advised its followers to leave the bearing of arms to the supreme authorities. This encouragement would intensify throughout the Church’s post-Vatican II era.

The effects of John XXIII’s 1963 *Pacem in Terris* were particularly visible throughout Pope John Paul II’s pontificate. With John Paul, the Church hardened its policy on armed rebellion and became a supporter of diplomatic solutions and non-violent negotiations. In his 1979 encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul spoke of terrorism as a violation of human rights, thereby setting a precedent for the Church’s future discussion of terrorist violence. The Holy See’s position on political violence began to harden as the concessions of the past remained a distant memory. As Rafferty notes, “bishops in the North of Ireland not only resolutely condemn the violence of the IRA, but they are at pains to point out that there is a great difference between the present IRA and the ‘old IRA.’” He supports his argument with the comments of Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh Cahal Daly, who once claimed that while Ireland’s fight for freedom had in the past been acceptable, Provisional IRA violence was incompatible with the Christian conscience and needed to be condemned. The past reference is to the Easter uprising of 1916 and the subsequent Irish war of independence that resulted in the Irish Free State.

Cardinal Daly’s observation proves that before *Pacem in Terris* the Church was more willing to support armed rebellions that ensured its survival and ability to remain influential in society. In the post-Vatican II era, however, political violence,

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especially the kind of non-state political violence so condemned by Aquinas, became unacceptable to the Church. In addition, one must note that throughout the 1970s Britain financially sustained the Irish Church in Northern Ireland both in the sector of education and in clerically organised job creation schemes. This aided the Church in appearing relevant in the context of social deprivation and declining levels of religious practice.\textsuperscript{36} The financial support must also have contributed to the Church’s condemnation of IRA violence in this moment of political and social instability.

The ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland of the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s, often referred to as “The Troubles,” can be categorised as one of the Catholic Church’s most trying times regarding its confrontation with political violence. With the split of the Provisional IRA from the Official IRA, terrorism became the order of the day for numerous Catholics seeking justice as self-appointed freedom fighters. Provisional IRA terrorists mixed nationalistic fervour with a heightened sense of religious belonging and attacked the Catholic Church for being disloyal to the Irish people. This resulted in a battle over the leadership of the Catholic community between the Church and nationalist terrorists.

The Provisionals were quick to condemn what they believed was the pro-British position of the clergy. Whenever an ecclesial statement affecting the IRA was made, terrorists would compare it to British abuse of power and violence, particularly the killing of Catholics, committed against young protesters in different parts of Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{37} In turn, priests, bishops and archbishops criticised each other over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence, causing embarrassment to their superiors

\textsuperscript{36} Rafferty, "The Catholic Bishops," 39.
\textsuperscript{37} Rafferty, Catholicism in Ulster, 1603-1983: An Interpretative History, 263.
and to the Vatican. For instance, in 1969 a priest named Father Denis Faul was publically criticised by Cardinal Conway for a series of attacks on the judiciary. In January 1972, a group of sixty priests published a statement that undermined all that the Catholic hierarchy had worked for since the beginning of The Troubles in Ireland. Part of the controversial statement is reported by Joseph McVeigh:

> It is not true that armed resistance to aggression can never be justified; it is not true to say that only bishops and priests can decide when armed resistance has become lawful; it is not true to say that only the “elected” can decide when to resist aggression and brutality with force.\(^{38}\)

The ebbs and flows of a battle that seemed to be as fierce within the Catholic Church as it was against violent Catholic republicans continued throughout The Troubles. Yet the representative authorities of the Church remained unambiguously opposed to IRA violence not only because it was immoral but because, as Cardinal Daly stated, it was “undemocratic.”\(^{39}\) Pope John Paul II’s visit to the town of Drogheda in Ireland in 1979 consolidated the non-violent approach that the Church would be taking to this conflict.

In the midst of a deteriorating situation that saw nationalists and loyalists engage in violent clashes on a daily basis, Pope John Paul II was invited to officially visit and speak to the people of Ireland. After a number of changes to his itinerary caused by further clashes, the Pope eventually stopped in the town of Drogheda, north of Dublin, where he celebrated mass and gave a homily. In an attempt to win the favour of his listeners and appeal to what he regarded as a rational and attentive community, the Pope passionately encouraged Irish Catholics to renounce violence


in favour of more peaceful solutions. He emphasised, however, that this did not mean
ignoring the problem at hand:

*Christianity does not command us to close our eyes to difficult human problems.* It does not permit us to neglect and refuse to see unjust social or
international situations. What Christianity does forbid is to seek solutions to
these situations by the ways of hatred, by the murdering of defenceless people,
by the methods of terrorism…I pray with you that the moral sense and Christian
conviction of Irish men and women may never become obscured and blunted by
the lie of violence, that nobody may ever call murder by any other name than
murder, that the spiral of violence may never be given the distinction of
unavoidable logic or necessary retaliation. Let us remember that the word
remains forever: ‘All who take the sword will perish by the sword.’

After having specifically denounced the practice of terrorism and reminded his
listeners of the true and essential purpose of Christianity, the Pope made a direct and
emotional appeal to those very fighters caught in violent action:

I appeal to you, in language of passionate pleading. On my knees I beg you to
turn away from the paths of violence and to return to the ways of peace. You
may claim to seek justice. I too believe in justice and seek justice. But violence
only delays the day of justice. Violence destroys the work of justice. Further
violence in Ireland will only drag down to ruin the land you claim to love and
the values you claim to cherish.

The final appeal was made to the politicians and people in positions of political
power:

Never think you are betraying your own community by seeking to understand
and respect and accept those of a different tradition. You will serve your own
tradition best by working for reconciliation with the others…Let no one
concerned with Ireland have any illusions about the nature and the menace of
political violence. The ideology and the methods of violence have become an
international problem of the utmost gravity. The longer the violence continues
in Ireland, the more the danger will grow that this beloved land could become
yet another theatre for international terrorism.

The Pope’s words reflected a modern Catholic Church that preferred to directly
confront its followers rather than publish encyclicals and theological documents on

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40 Pope John Paul II, “Homily,” Apostolic Journey to Ireland: Holy Mass in Drogheda, Vatican
documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790929_irlanda-dublino-drogheda_en.html. Sec. 5, 10, 13. Italics in
original.
armed rebellion. John Paul’s emotional plea discarded the formality of Catholic social doctrine and spoke directly to the terrorists of his time. His prescription for avoiding terrorist violence was a rational invitation to see that the spiral of violence would consume, not liberate, the much loved country for which the Irish terrorist was fighting.

**The Catholic Church as *Defensor Italiæ*: Italian Red Brigade Terror**

As the Vatican looked to the IRA bombings and shootings with concern and apprehension, it realised that political violence of a radical left-wing kind, had begun to take root much closer to home. An extremist left-wing organisation named The Red Brigades led this violent movement. Urged by a sense of utter dissatisfaction with what they saw as a corrupt and unjust government led by the Christian Democratic Party, a number of young Italian men and women had taken their belief in popular radical ideologies a step further and opted for armed struggle against the state. In a similar – although less pronounced – way to the situation in Ireland, many of the individuals who eventually took up arms had come from a Catholic upbringing.\(^{41}\) For those who turned their back on the teachings of the Church, it had become a matter of rejecting a set of “out-dated principles” that they felt had become irrelevant in a world filled with malice and injustice. For others, it had simply been a matter of “transition” from the parish to the violent revolutionary organization; the sense of justice was still there, but the means by which to achieve it, for many, had

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changed. It is thus that a brief analysis of the Church’s response to extremist left-wing and right-wing acts of political violence in the so-called Italian “Years of Lead”\textsuperscript{42} becomes relevant for this study.

Pope John Paul II was not the only Pontiff of the post-war period to have begged terrorists to lay down their weapons. The message sent by Paul VI to the Red Brigades requesting kidnapped President of the Christian Democrat Party Aldo Moro’s life be spared is perhaps the most discussed incident in the Catholic Church’s intervention in Red Brigade terror. In a letter to the terrorist organisation, published on 22 April, 1978, Paul VI wrote: “I am writing to you, men of the Red Brigades...you, unknown and implacable adversaries of this deserving and innocent man, I pray to you on my knees, liberate Aldo Moro simply and without any conditions.”\textsuperscript{43} A year before the Drogheda speech, the Church had thus already begged terrorists to stop their violent actions. At the core of its prescription for an end to the violence was a simple act of charity, asked of “men,” not terrorists, who had committed a serious injustice. Unsurprisingly, the Pope’s appeal fell on deaf ears and Moro was killed on 9 May 1978.

The Church’s request that Moro be released “without condition” raised a polemical debate in Italy about whether the Pope had in fact compromised any remaining attempts at negotiating with the terrorists.\textsuperscript{44} What many in Italy saw as a feeble humanitarian appeal was said to have tempered with the prisoner exchange program that the government had considered but seemed more and more unwilling to

\textsuperscript{42} A reference to the bullets used throughout this period of urban guerrilla warfare in Italy.
\textsuperscript{43} The entire letter can be found in Pasquale Macchi, \textit{Paolo VI e La Tragedia Di Moro: 55 Giorni di Ansie, Tentativi, Speranze e Assurda Crudeltà} (Milano: Rusconi, 1998), 26.
\textsuperscript{44} Agostino Giovagnoli, \textit{Il Caso Moro} (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), 199.
pursue. Agostino Giovagnoli also points out that the Pope’s message was seen by many as an act of surrender in front of an enemy trying to bring governing authorities to their knees.\footnote{Giovagnoli, Il Caso Moro, 199.} Moro himself seemed dissatisfied with the Pope’s intervention, as stated in a note discovered by police that read “the Pope has done very little.”\footnote{Aldo Moro, as cited in Giovagnoli, Il Caso Moro, 200.} Could an alliance between state and Church authorities have done more? Other attempts of the Church at gaining Moro’s freedom are discussed in works of Giovagnoli and Jean-Dominique Durand.

In an act reminiscent of Pope Paul VI’s 1977 attempt to offer himself to the hijackers of a West German airliner in exchange for the eighty-six hostages on board,\footnote{“Pope Restates Hostage Offer,” New York Times, 20 October 1977, 12.} three Bishops had offered themselves as prisoners in exchange for Aldo Moro. These were Monsignor Luigi Bettazzi, Bishop of Ivrea and director of Pax Christi; Monsignor Alberto Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno; and Monsignor Clemente Riva, Auxiliary Bishop of Rome.\footnote{Jean-Dominique Durand, "I Cattolici di Fronte alla Violenza Terroristica Durante gli Anni di Piombo," in Il Libro degli Anni Di Piombo: Storia e Memoria Del Terrorismo Italiano, edited by Marc Lazar and Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci (Milano: Rizzoli, 2010), 99.} The suggested request had the potential to be one of the Church’s greatest acts of charity towards an Italian politician during the years of Italian left-wing terrorism. The Vatican eventually vetoed the risky exchange. The suggested exchange of Moro for three Italian Bishops reveals how closely involved the Church was with the state in this moment of crisis. The Church was once again balancing on a tightrope as it attempted to tame national conflict by taking on the role of mediator between terrorists and statesmen. Part of this dedication to a peaceful resolution was linked to the sense of trust it had gained from both politicians and
young activists. The Italian Church was caught between a state unable to deal with
the powerful political upheaval of student movements and an exasperated student
body fixed in its distrust and scepticism of a corrupt government. As Durand
observes, the Church became a self-appointed “Defensor Italiae” as it was so
involved in Italy’s political affairs.49

The Church was successful in its efforts to mediate between the terrorists and
the Italian state, as an interview with one of the founders of the Red Brigades, Alberto
Franceschini, attests. Franceschini indicated that the Church’s human rights
campaign during the hunger strikes of prisoners was an important factor in his
decision to eventually dissociate from the armed struggle:

Perhaps we would have died, or they would have force fed us, I don’t know. What
I do know is that our change of perspective regarding the armed struggle and the
ensuing decision to dissociate ourselves was strongly linked to that episode and
to the Church’s efforts to lay emphasis on human rights. In that condition we
became aware of a non-violent path to the affirmation of our rights. We were able
to walk that path thanks to people such as don Salvatore [the prison chaplain]. I
am certain that terrorism’s history would have been different if in Badu’ and
Carros, and in many other Italian prisons, there would not have been someone
capable of welcoming our cry and transforming it into something positive.50

Franceschini’s testimony suggests the Catholic Church was successful in its
mediation efforts during the years of Italian left-wing terrorism. He later claims to
have found in the Church an interlocutor with whom his requests for a dignified
treatment of imprisoned terrorists could be heard.51 Much like the situation in
twentieth-century terrorist violence in Ireland, the Church was seen as a powerful
institution that terrorists turned to in the face of an immovable government.

49 Durand, “I Cattolici di Fronte alla Violenza Terroristica,” 98. See also Giovagnoli, Il Caso Moro, 55.
50 Alberto Franceschini, as cited in Valle, Parole, Opere e Omissioni, 209. Translated by Marco
Ceccarelli. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
Furthermore, Franceschini’s reaction demonstrates that the Church’s approach to combating terrorism, based on dialogue and the respect of the human person, could in fact produce positive results.

Franceschini’s declaration can be grouped with practical acts of dissociation from other Italian terrorists. In June 1984, a young man handed three bags full of weapons to the secretary of the Archbishop of Milan Carlo Maria Martini. When questioned about the rationale behind this specific act, a member of the terrorist organisation responsible for the handover of the weapons, Sergio Segio, responded by defining the move as “a handover in the hands of the Milanese Church, and its Archdiocese, for the work of a human and social, rather than political, reconciliation done with all of us.” Segio criticised the government’s attempts to distort the deed and acknowledged the success of the Church’s humanitarian efforts during this time:

They [the Italian state] also interfered on the handover of weapons. They said that this was yet another demonstration of our rejection of the state. Ours was interpreted as yet another subversive gesture. On the contrary, we recognised the Church as having a fundamental role of understanding and availability in our regards….there was a possibility of dialogue without immediate judgment and condemnation. With other forces of society, those of a left-wing nature included, condemnation always came before dialogue. Instead, with certain members who represented the Church, there was a reversed approach.

The handing over of weapons, along with this testimony, confirms that the Italian Church was one of the means through which terrorists dissociated themselves from urban guerrilla warfare. This is further evidence that the Church’s soft approach to terrorism could be effective.

Towards the end of the 1970s, and particularly after the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro, there was a significant drop in terrorist attacks in Italy. The Church,

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52 Valle, Parole, Opere e Omissioni, 219.
53 Valle, Parole, Opere e Omissioni, 222.
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however, experienced political violence first hand when there was an attempt on John Paul II’s life, on the evening of 13 May 1981, by Mahmet Ali Acğa. This event led the Church to work on its own official condemnation of terrorism that emerged in the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1993: “Terrorism threatens wounds, and kills indiscriminately; it is gravely against justice and charity.”54 In the new millennium, the events of 9/11 brought the Church to an even more categorical judgment. In his World Peace Day address on 1 January 2002, Pope John Paul II stated that terrorism is “itself a true crime against humanity.”55 With this declaration, the Pope returned to his first official reference to terrorism, in Redemptor Hominis, as a violation of human rights.

The Church and Terrorism Yesterday and Today: Lessons from the Past

This analysis of the Catholic Church’s response to political violence has so far shed light on the changing pattern of Catholic social doctrine based on the Church’s interest in both fulfilling its mission and remaining influential throughout Europe and the rest of the world. It is thus fitting to ask how the Church’s experience of nationalist and radical left-wing political violence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries impacts on its understanding of and response to Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first. What methods is the Church today using to combat religiously motivated political violence? Have any lessons been learnt from its past endeavours? Considering that

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Christians today have become one of the primary targets of Al-Qaeda terrorism, has the Church’s policy regarding an end to violence changed? A general overview of the current situation will prepare a basis for the interpretative analysis of Jesuit scholarship on Islamic terrorism in the final three chapters of this thesis.

Maintaining good relations with the religion of Islam and with Islamic governments has been one of the priorities of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. The two decrees on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions published at the Council, Nostra Aetate and Lumen Gentium, focused on the need for improved Christian-Muslim relations and renewed interreligious dialogue in the modern age. Ironically, the period during which Vatican II was held (1962-1965) coincided with the birth of a form of modern radical Islam that targeted the Christian West and its imperialist forces. This aggressive ideology stemmed from the works of the Egyptian ideologue Sayyid Qutb – an influential Islamist who called for a global Jihad as an Islamic world revolution for the introduction of a new world order.\(^{56}\) The practice of *al-jihad al-asghar* – Lesser Jihad, or Holy War – was at the centre of Qutb’s teaching and became the guiding principle for a new generation of Islamic terrorists whose representative would eventually become Osama bin Laden.\(^{57}\) The attacks of 9/11 can be seen as the culmination of a violent ideology that had redefined the concept of Jihad as a global attack on the United States and its allies.

Numerous parallels can be drawn between the nineteenth and twentieth-century Catholic Church confronting Fenian, IRA and Red Brigade violence and the Church dealing with Islamic terrorism today. The most important of these is linked

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\(^{56}\) Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe*, 5-6.

\(^{57}\) Esposito, *Unholy War*, 59-60.
to the influence the Church seeks to maintain on an international scale in order to fulfil its mission of bringing the Christian gospel to all peoples. Just as nationalist and ideological terrorism undermined the order of the Irish and Italian state, today religiously motivated terrorism against the West seeks to destabilise the countries that it targets by creating within them an environment of constant fear and panic. Islamic terrorism also specifically targets civilians in order to coerce the enemy government into making political concessions.\(^5^8\) This is an attack on the concept of democracy and on people’s freedom. Here, Cardinal Cahal Daly’s statement that twentieth-century Irish Bishops were unambiguously opposed to any manifestation of violence not only because it was “immoral” but because it is “undemocratic”\(^5^9\) echoes within the challenge faced by the Church in the twenty-first century. The Church is today very critical of Islamic terrorism, both because of its immorality and because of its threat to social order and democratic values.

The Church’s approach to dealing with political violence has undergone some noteworthy changes. In the present conflict, its prescriptions for ending terrorism emerge through invitations to intercultural and interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims rather than through formal Papal encyclicals and emotional exhortations. In other words, the Church seems focused on a “bottom up” approach to ending or least minimising political violence. Both Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have been particularly focused on creating new bonds of friendship between Christians and Muslims and continuing the practice of interreligious dialogue.

\(^{59}\) Daly, *Peace the Work of Justice*, 136.
established by John Paul II. As he announced in one of the first public speeches he gave as newly elected Pope, Francis’ hope for members of the two religions in the twenty-first century is that they come to “know each other.” This promotion of mutual knowledge can be understood as an alternative “soft-counterterrorist” approach based on the respect for the sanctity of one’s traditional and religious background. In an age of increasing migration of Muslims to Europe and other parts of the Western world, and persecution of Christians in some Islamic countries, the Church attempts to offer an alternative to hard counterterrorist policy by seeking to collaborate with those who wish to counter the propaganda of violent extremists. Francis’ comment evokes the words of John Paul II in Drogheda: “Never think you are betraying your own community by seeking to understand and respect and accept those of a different tradition.” In an attempt to break with its past as a staunch critic of Islam and other religions, the Church today encourages its faithful to go beyond their comfort zones in order to discover the richness of other religions and cultures.

In scenarios reminiscent of Unionist politicians who claimed that the Church was too soft on the IRA and that it should have done more to dissuade Catholics from engaging in political violence, the Church today can be seen balancing on a similar

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tightrope that it walked in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Church’s ongoing criticism of the War on Terror and of the United States led invasion of Iraq, for instance, has been condemned by some scholars as pro-Islamic. Its efforts to build bonds of friendship with Muslims and to engage in respectful interreligious dialogue with them have been criticised as acts of surrender in front of the advancement Islamic civilisation throughout the Western world.63 These accusations put the Church in an uncomfortable position as it strives to be critical of Islamic terrorist violence on one hand, and maintain good relations with those Islamic governments responsible for the protection of Christians living in the Islamic world on the other. As the controversy surrounding Pope Benedict XVI’s 2006 Regensburg lecture demonstrated, often all it takes is one badly worded remark to endanger thousands of Christians lives.64 The Church today is required to be cautious when approaching the issue of terrorism, particularly when the terrorists involved claim they are fighting a Holy War against Christians. The repercussions on its followers could be disastrous.

The history of the Catholic Church’s response to political violence is still in the making. The image of a religious institution balancing on a tightrope is still relevant for our times as it continues to adequately represent the struggle the Church faces in giving meaningful advice to those who wish to hear its response to terrorism. Given that today the Church considers itself a contributor to the discussion of the global fight against terrorism, it has a significant history of reactions to political

63 See Sergio Itzhak Minerbi, "Benedict XVI and Islam," Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs 6, no. 2 (2012): 63-73. This article and the Catholic Church’s supposed “pro-Islamic” stance will be discussed at length in the fifth chapter of this thesis.  
64 For a recent detailed study on global restrictions on religion see “Arab Spring Adds to Global Restrictions on Religion,” Pew Research Centre, 20 June 2013 http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/20/arab-spring-restrictions-on-religion-findings/#relharass.
violence to learn from if it wishes to avoid losing its footing. As in the past, this balancing act perhaps inevitably results in the Church’s disappointment of those who attempt to coerce it to espouse their viewpoints and in its renewed pursuit of ways to better deal with the threat of terrorism. Only then may the Church succeed in advancing those assessments that are so unique to its tradition of political theology.
Chapter 2
Between Confrontation and Dialogue
A Historical Overview of Christianity’s Relations with Islam

Along with the consideration of the Catholic Church’s general response to modern terrorism, an effective analysis of the Jesuit response to contemporary Islamic terrorism calls for a review of the history of relations between Christianity and Islam. As with a number of Catholic periodicals monitored by the Vatican, La Civiltà Cattolica’s opinions on Islam have been shaped by the interreligious reforms introduced by the Second Vatican Council. One of the concerns of the Council was to address the history of strained Christian-Muslim relations spanning almost fourteen hundred years. This chapter’s overview of Christianity’s relationship with Islam from medieval times to the present investigates the advances and setbacks in an ambiguous struggle for tolerance and respect between two of the world’s great monotheistic religions. The analysis pivots on the documentation of two seemingly contradictory and often overlapping traditions: one of conflict and discord and the other of latent fellowship and dialogue. The former considers the competition for cultural, theological, political and global hegemony that also led to armed conflict, while the latter takes into account the peaceful cultural exchange that culminated in the post-Conciliar interreligious and intercultural dialogue initiatives. While contention and hostility continue to characterise much of contemporary Christian-Muslim interaction, the Catholic Church has been at pains to stem the Christian tradition of fault-finding and prejudice aimed at the Muslim people.
Early Christian Responses to Islam: Two Conflicting Traditions

When Islam first appeared and expanded outside of Arabia, the Christians who encountered it sought to understand its arrival in terms of a religious tradition that they had been familiar with. Islam was thus initially interpreted as being a fulfilment of God’s promise in the book of Genesis to Abraham’s rejected eldest son Ishmael, born of Abraham’s slave girl, Hagar:

God said to him [Abraham]: ‘Do not distress yourself on account of the boy and your slave-girl. Do whatever Sarah says, for Isaac is the one through whom your name will be carried on. But the slave-girl’s son I shall also make into a great nation.’ (Gen 21: 12-13)

Historically, the Christian tradition that portrayed the religion of Islam as “of God” is traced back to the Armenian bishop Sebeos, a religious figure who, in his *History of Heraclius*, completed in 661, portrayed the Ishmaelites as descendants of Abraham and thus the heirs of a divine promise. According to a study by John Moorhead, later positive evaluations of Islam that validated Islam’s theological authenticity can be found in the work of early Christian historians and authors such as pseudo-Dionysius of Tell-Mahre, a Monophysite author writing in about 775, and the tenth century Arab Christian writer Severus Ibn al-Muqaffa’. Both Severus and pseudo-Dionysius looked favourably on the unification of Arabs under the belief in “One God” and in Muhammad’s ability to lead them away from the adoration of idols.¹ Along with other Eastern writers such as Michael the Syrian, a twelfth-century Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Severus and pseudo-Dionysius can be categorised as early Christians who looked favourably on the teachings of Muhammad. While they may have rejected Muhammad’s status as prophet, they

nonetheless validated Islam’s monotheism and acknowledged that Christianity and Islam shared some common ground.

Realistically, however, the majority of early Christian theologians looked upon the birth and expansion of the Islamic religion and civilisation with suspicion. Their fears stemmed from the belief that this new religion had come to change the Christian faith. According to early Muslims, Christians were honoured along with Jewish people as “People of the Book,” (Qur’an 3:110) that is, people of the Jewish or Christian Bible, and they were seen as striving to worship the one God. However, their submission to God was done in error, as Christ was considered by Muslims to be only a just man and a prophet like any other, not the son of God and certainly not God Himself. In other words, Christians began to understand that their privileged position as the sole guardians of God’s final revelation, manifested in the sending of his son Jesus Christ, was something that Islam wanted to change or correct. These initial feelings of discomfort and suspicion toward the advent of Islam were to set the tone for a long-lasting antagonism between the two religions. In the first centuries after its birth, Islam was often perceived as a threat and was very seldom seen as a potential friend.

It was not until the Islamic Empire expanded into the Mediterranean, conquering Egypt from 639-645, the rest of Northern Africa by 709 and most of Spain by 750, that Christians began to express stronger criticisms of Islam. A figure often considered by scholars to represent early Christian critiques of Islam was the eighth century Syrian monk and theologian John of Damascus. On the basis of his

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experience communicating with members of the Islamic community, and his study of Qur’anic teaching, John concluded that Islam was a Christian heresy.\(^3\) One of his manuscripts, *On Heresies* (written in 742/43), reports that Islam was not the independent religion it claimed to be, that its leader was not a prophet and that his revelation was a fictitious creation of his imagination. Furthermore, John portrayed Muhammad both as the forerunner of the Antichrist spoken of in the book of Revelation as well as a “false prophet” who came across the Old and New Testaments and thus formed, or as John suspected, forged, a heresy of his own.\(^4\)

Throughout the eighth century AD, Christian interpretations of Islam followed the polemical tradition initiated by John of Damascus: Islam was a heresy at best and a demonic religion at worst.\(^5\) This belief is reflected in the work of a scholar named Nicetas of Byzantium, who also refuted the Qur’an and the teachings of the Islamic religion in general. Nicetas’ *Anatrope* concludes that Muhammad is really a devil for he admits certain elements of Holy Scripture and thus implies its acceptance. It also asserts that Muhammad’s God cannot be a true God since He does not accept Christian Law.\(^6\) Observations such as these were frequent among Eastern Christians and were responsible for casting a dark shadow over the emerging Islamic religion and Muslim community as a whole. This, in turn, prepared the stage for the

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\(^3\) Armour, *Islam, Christianity and the West*, 41.


\(^6\) Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1960), 5. The Byzantine historian Theophanes, known as Theophanes the Confessor, also treated the coming of Islam as a heresy, yet added new elements to the anti-Islamic polemic not seen in John of Damascus or Nicetas of Byzantium. According to Theophanes, Muhammad had epilepsy and due to this illness had problems with his wife Khadija. Epilepsy was probably used by early Christians to dismiss Muhammad’s so called “moments of trance” in which he claimed to have received the Qur’an. See Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, 56-57.
antagonistic and violent encounter between Christianity and Islam that would develop in the early centuries of the second millennium.

Following Nicetas’ and John of Damascus’ interpretations of Islam from the perspective of the Eastern half of the Roman Empire, the Christian anti-Muslim polemic was taken up in the West throughout the eighth and ninth centuries by figures such as the Anglo-Saxon monk known as “the Venerable Bede” and a number of Spanish Christians, including the martyred bishop of Toledo, St Eulogious. Bede - one of the first significant Western writers to report on Islam - labelled Muslims “enemies of the Church” and “hateful to God.”

In a similar fashion to his Eastern contemporaries, he focused on a number of verses from Genesis that categorized Ishmael as a “wild ass of a man” whose hand was to be “against every man and every man’s hand against him” (Genesis 16:12). In Muslim-ruled ninth-century Spain, Christians struggled with the presence of the Islamic regime and its enforced restrictions. Non-Muslims were forced to pay poll taxes, could not publicly display their faith and risked severe punishment, event death, if they blasphemed the Prophet Muhammad.

Within this context works such as Cordoban priest Eulogious’ Liber Apologeticus Martyrum emerged; this text has been described by Norman Daniel as a largely inaccurate Christian anti-Islamic polemic verging on absurdity. Eulogious, together with a layman named Paul Alvarus, reinforced the idea of Islam as the

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In the midst of this developing culture of Christian anti-Islamic critiques, the turn of the century brought at least one official and often-cited positive interpretation of Islam. A letter written by Pope Gregory VII (Papacy 1073 - 1085) to Anazir, King of Mauretania, stands out among the wave of negative criticisms. In it, Gregory thanks Anazir for having set some of his prisoners free and states:

\begin{quote}
This affection we and you owe to each other in a more peculiar way than to people of other races because we worship and confess the same God though in diverse forms and daily praise and adore him as the creator and ruler of this world. For, in the words of the Apostle, ‘He is our peace who hath made both one.’
\end{quote}

Another section of the letter speaks with striking warmth and cordiality:

\begin{quote}
For God knows…how earnestly we pray both with our lips and with our heart that God himself, after the long journey of this life, may lead you into the bosom of the most holy patriarch Abraham.\footnote{Ephraim Emerton, \textit{The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 95.}
\end{quote}

Abraham’s bosom, also known as the place where souls of the faithful find repose, is here conceived as an idealised place longed for by both Christians and Muslims. In pointing out such commonalities between the two religions, Pope Gregory thus perceives Muslims not as heretics but as fellow believers striving to fulfil the will of God and reach the final resting place where their spiritual self may be at peace. Nonetheless, Gregory’s views stood as solitary flames within a cold environment of...
growing interreligious hostility. The religiously motivated violence that erupted in the late decades of the eleventh century signalled the predominance of aversion over a weak tradition within Christianity of seeing Islam as “of God.”

Patterns of Ambiguity: Armed Conflict and Cultural Interaction

While the term “Holy War” is associated in contemporary academic and political discourse with Islam, both Christianity and Islam throughout the Crusades\(^1^1\) practiced violence in the name of God during the Crusades. Islam’s golden age of expansion took place throughout the ninth and tenth centuries with two main administrative centres of Muslim power in Baghdad, run by the Abbasid Caliphate, and Cordoba, ruled by the Umayyad dynasty. The primary aim of Islamic warriors was twofold: geographical expansion and the establishment of the \textit{dar al-Islam} (realm of Islam).\(^1^2\) The Arab occupation of Palestine, and therefore of numerous Christian holy sites, led Pope Urban II to call for the first Crusade in 1095. The preparation of militant Christian fighters destined for Jerusalem was as spiritual as it was physical – the idea of Holy War lay at the centre of the spiritual awareness of

\(^1^1\) The term ‘Crusade’ is based on the Latin \textit{crux, cruc-} ‘cross'; the state of being marked with the cross. Crusaders were distinguished by large crosses imprinted on to their clothing.

\(^1^2\) The \textit{dar ar-Islam}, which can be translated as either ‘realm’, ‘abode,’ or ‘land’ of Islam, is the whole territory in which the law of Islam prevails. These areas can also include non-Muslims as part of the polity as long as they fall into the “dhimmi” (non-Muslim free communities living under Islamic law who enjoy legal status and are subject to some restrictions and taxes) classification. According to classical doctrine, everything outside of \textit{dar al-Islam} is considered to be \textit{dar-al Harb} – Realm of War. Most Islamic theorists conclude that it is not always necessary to declare open warfare upon this part of the world. Rather, preaching and conversion is encouraged as well as truces with sovereigns of territories with which Islam may be in conflict. These may preserve their internal autonomy in exchange for an external and formal recognition of the Muslim sovereign’s authority. For further details see: Gordon D. Newby, \textit{A Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam} (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 51; Francesco Gabrieli, \textit{Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam} (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), 189-208.
each fighter. Pope Urban added a further element to the crusaders’ task: religious and spiritual compensation. As the historian Riley-Smith elucidates, freeing Jerusalem entailed a heavenly reward: “to crusade meant to engage in a war that was both holy, because it was believed to be waged on God’s behalf, and penitential, because those taking part considered themselves to be performing an act of penance.” In addition, Norman Daniel points to further justification of crusading efforts by drawing attention to the then popular idea that these were, after all, “lost provinces belonging by right to the Latin Church.” Thus, reinforced by a combination of justifications and divine promises, the first crusaders, roughly sixty thousand men, set out from different parts of Western Europe with the Eastern city of Jerusalem as the intended final destination. Salvation, in this context, was to be won through the slaughter of both opponents and countless innocent victims. Eight major Crusades took place within the first two hundred years of the new millennium.

Armour asserts that the Crusades were the Western response to the Islamic “Lesser Jihad” of the seventh century and became something of a mirror image of the Jihad as well. Indeed, both sides attempted to gain possession of land through warfare and believed in a heavenly reward or direct entry into paradise should they kill or be killed. Yet as it emerged from this period of violent clashes, Christianity had the grim task of addressing the bloodshed it had caused in the pursuit of political and religious hegemony. From this point onward, as Christianity moved into the later

16 Armour, *Islam, Christianity and the West*, 79.
Chapter 2

Middle Ages, a change within its views on Islam occurred. The failure of the Crusades and the growth of the Islamic Empire, particularly under the Ottoman Turks, forced Christian rulers to accept the presence of this new religion and civilisation. While respectful relations were still a long way off, the first visible signs of cultural interest in the Mediterranean emerged amidst a time of shifting power balances.

The ambiguous and often contradictory nature of Christian-Muslim relations seems to be particularly evident in the first centuries of the new millennium when the two religions would often be found clashing in one particular scenario while simultaneously cooperating and coexisting in another. Cultural exchange had already been taking place since the early eighth century, when the Iberian Peninsula had been invaded by Muslims and interaction between the two religions had become part of the status quo. The “People of the Book” were given the opportunity by the new Muslim overlords to surrender their arms and continue their own religious practices. It is within this context of submission and foreign rule that the first cultural exchanges were made. In particular, cities within the southern Spanish region of Andalusia such as Toledo and Cordoba became renowned centres of mutual understanding where the initial bridges of literary exchange between Christianity and Islam were built.17

The development of a climate of trust between Christianity and Islam took place during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and was felt in regions of cultural flourishing such as Spain and Sicily. Standing at the forefront of the movement for the translation of Arabic texts into Latin was the noted Maurice de Montboissier,

17 Armour, Islam, Christianity and the West, 81-82.
better known as Peter the Venerable. In the mid-twelfth century, Peter had set out to translate Islamic texts into Latin and significantly contributed to Western Christendom’s cultural encounter with Islam. The cities of Toledo and Cordoba, along with numerous Sicilian towns, featured as important centres for the translation of texts from Arabic to Latin and became symbols of Christian-Muslim cooperation on artistic, architectural, scientific and literary work.\(^{18}\) Thus, for all the violence and antagonism between the Christian West and Islamic world in the Middle Ages in certain regions, in other parts there was a more positive and beneficial interaction. This peculiar inconsistency of fear and rapprochement continued to characterise Christianity’s relationship with Islam well into the modern age, and remained so with the growth of European imperialism from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.

**Changing Balances of Power, Missionaries and Imperialists**

The fifteenth century represented a crucial shift in the balance of power between the Christian and Muslim worlds. The fall of the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, to Turkish armies led by Sultan Mahmed II in 1453 symbolised both the strength of Ottoman power and the crisis in Eastern Christianity. Islamic Ottoman expansion continued throughout south-Eastern Europe, with attempts to take Vienna in 1529 and in 1683 and Hungary coming under Ottoman control during the 1540s. The second siege of Vienna, however, was followed by an Ottoman retreat. It signalled both the highpoint of Ottoman dominance as well as the beginning of its decline; over the next two centuries the Ottoman Empire would be driven back until

its collapse at the end of the First World War and the establishment of a secular
democratic Turkish state modelled on Western (French) republicanism in its stead.

The balance of power also shifted at sea, as symbolised by the Battle of
Lepanto fought in the gulf of Corinth in 1571, where an alliance of Spain, Venice
and Genoa defeated an entire Ottoman fleet. Furthermore, a direct link between
Europe and Asia was made when Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good
Hope and into the Indian Ocean in the name of the Portuguese in 1497.\textsuperscript{19} Voyages
such as these opened up different routes for European explorers to discover lands
without passing through the Muslim world. Instead, Islamic lands were surrounded
and a form of role reversal took place whereby the menacing threat was now, or
rather once again, played by the Christian West. Towards the end of the fifteenth
century, as the two religions expanded in opposite directions, the Christian-Muslim
encounter moved beyond the Mediterranean and became global. Gradually, the
previously victorious Ottoman armies were decimated by enemy Christian forces that
conquered and reconquered land. As its empires grew and organized orders formed,
Christianity set out to fulfil one of the direct teachings left by Jesus Christ in the
gospels: missionary work.\textsuperscript{20}

While the survival of both Christian and Islamic empires was often in the
precarious position we have just been observing, ambitious Christian missionaries
sought to take their now refined knowledge of Islam a step further and attempted to

\textsuperscript{19} Goddard, \textit{A History of Christian-Muslim Relations}, 112.
\textsuperscript{20} For the purpose of this thesis attention will be devoted to Roman Catholic missionary endeavours.
Protestant missions, Anglican and Reformed, were also successful in bringing the Christian message
to the heart of Islam and converting Muslims and were led by two noteworthy figures who worked in
the latter part of the nineteenth century: Temple Gairner, an Englishman who worked in Egypt, and
Samuel Zwemer who from America founded the Arabian Mission.
Chapter 2

convert Muslims. The first attempts made by Christians to convert Muslims have been traced back to the Franciscans and Dominicans, both mendicant (“begging”) orders which, since their foundation in the early thirteenth century, had led the conversion of Muslims and Jews in Spain and North Africa.\(^{21}\) The central figure in early Christian missionary work is the monk responsible for establishing the Franciscan order in 1209, Francis of Assisi. Through his dialogue focused approach aimed at promoting the knowledge of Christ to Muslims, Francis stood in stark contrast to the crusading fighter of his times who was intent on defeating the infidel enemy through armed warfare. While Francis’ efforts to reach Muslim lands in Africa in 1212 and 1214 failed, his third trip to Egypt in 1219 succeeded and became the best known of his missionary efforts. Accompanied by twelve companions, Francis first sailed to Acre and on to Damietta in Egypt, a region at the time occupied by the army of the fifth Crusade. In what has become a widely studied encounter, Francis failed to gain the trust of Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil and was therefore denied official permission to practise his missionary work. He did so, nonetheless, with the help of both his companions and the disenchanted Crusaders he found upon his arrival.\(^{22}\)

Francis became renowned for his humanistic approach and enlightening dialogues – abilities that earned him the respect of Muslim religious leaders and a private meeting with the Sultan. Due to his popularity he was attributed the title of “apostle of love;”\(^{23}\) for this reason also, Francis’ hometown of Assisi was chosen by

\(^{21}\) Armour, *Islam, Christianity and the West*, 88.

\(^{22}\) The fifth Crusade was taking place when Francis of Assisi visited Egypt. For more information See John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan: The Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

the late Pope John Paul II as the location for interreligious dialogue and Day of Prayer for Peace which, established in 1982, takes place annually to this day. Francis’ vision was taken up by the theologian and mystic Raymond Lull, who directed it in a slightly different and noteworthy fashion. Lull dedicated his life to writing books explaining the Christian faith and training Christian missionaries to reach Muslims. He eventually became a third order member of the Franciscans in 1295. Lull thought he had found the key to converting Muslims to Christianity with a peaceful approach, which like the approaches of many before him, gradually became more forceful and polemical. He combined two Christian elements that he thought indispensable for the establishment of a successful mission to Muslims: missionary fervour and intense study. With this mentality he trained Christian missionaries to be masters of a sound knowledge of Christianity and sturdy arguments for conversion. Lull continued the work begun by Peter the Venerable and the Franciscans, establishing a training college in 1276 at Miramar in Majorca to teach thirteen friars. However, by the end of his life he had become embittered and used terms such as “infidels” to define those who resisted preaching and had refuted his intellect, earning him the name of “fool of love” for his forceful arguments against Islam and its influences, particularly Averroism, in Paris in 1297.

The missionary vision of Francis of Assisi and Raymond Lull was revived and implemented in the sixteenth century by the Society of Jesus. This Roman Catholic order, founded by Ignatius of Loyola and recognised by Pope Paul III in

26 The school of philosophy initiated by the Muslim scholar Averroes.
Chapter 2

1540, was one of the most effective in its missionary efforts in early modern times. The Jesuits, as they were called, managed to successfully combine the two elements of intellectual preparation and tolerant Christian preaching which Lull and Francis had championed but ultimately failed to achieve. As Stephan Neill points out, Jesuit Christian missionaries adopted a sensitive approach to the cultural and religious traditions of the people with whom they came into contact. This became official when they were instructed by Pope Gregory XV’s Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to avoid pressuring peoples into changing their manners, customs and uses and instead to introduce “the faith, which does not despise or destroy the manners and customs of any people, always supposing that they are not evil, but rather wishes to see them preserved unharmed.” The Jesuits’ ability to communicate with people of different religions and transmit knowledge of Christianity acquired a certain popularity and prompted the sixteenth-century Moghul Emperor Akbar to seek their council in his own matters, particularly those regarding the education of his son.

In 1579, Akbar sent a message to the Portuguese centre of Goa asking for a group of Jesuits to be sent to his court. Three Jesuits were sent who engaged in

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27 Some of the more renowned Jesuit missionaries were Francis Xavier, one of the most famous of Catholic Missionaries and Ignatius’ first and closest companion. Xavier travelled and worked in southwest India from 1542 and later moved to Indonesia and Japan. Another missionary noteworthy for his work in Asia was Matteo Ricci, founder of the Jesuit China Mission and missionary to China from his arrival in 1582. Finally, and with greater relevance to this study, was Jerome Xavier, a missionary renowned for his work between 1595 and 1614 at the court of the Islamic Moghul emperors Akbar and Jahangir, See Michael Foss, The Founding of the Jesuits (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969), 191-193.


29 In order to bring all the missions under the guidance and direction of one central authority, Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1622.

30 Instructions of the Propaganda of the Faith sent out in 1659 to its vicars apostolic. As cited in Neill, A History of Christian Missions, 179.
debates with Muslim scholars as well as with the emperor himself. Furthermore, the Jesuits, who were renowned for being masterful teachers as well as good scholars, were given charge of the education of the emperor’s second son, Murad. While further missions were sent in response to Akbar’s requests, the legacy of the Jesuits did not last long as conflicting religious beliefs eventually became too big an obstacle for both the emperor and his Islamic scholars. An example of this discrepancy was the rejection by the emperor of the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ and the fundamental belief in the unity of the Trinity. Despite his reported dislike of Islam, Akbar was not prepared to accept these Christian convictions. When he eventually died, his successor Jhangir ordered his sons to be baptised and to be raised according to Christian precepts in 1610. This raised great hopes among the Jesuits who, initially convinced that Jhangir would convert along with his children, were disappointed when these eventually returned their crucifixes to their religious and educational teachers. The Jesuits finally understood that Christianity would not be adopted by the empire.31 Nonetheless, the missions did leave some kind of lasting legacy as Jerome Xavier succeeded in producing and distributing Christian literature in Persian.

During what is often referred to by modern Western historians as “the long nineteenth century,” that is, the period between the French Revolution and the outbreak of World War One, Christian missions enjoyed spectacular growth as the balance of power shifted further in favour of European imperialism. The staggering growth of the Christian West, not only militarily but also in the fields of literature,

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science, commerce, technology and industry, unsurprisingly threw the Islamic world into an unprecedented state of alarm, preoccupation and spiritual questioning. The development of Christian missions, continued by Jesuit missionaries and reinvigorated by the new ventures of the White Fathers in Africa,\(^{32}\) raised fears of mass conversions throughout Muslim lands. Christian missionaries refined their methods, concentrating more on finding and building peaceful common ground of understanding with Muslims rather than correcting supposedly erroneous ways of living one’s faith.

Scholars delineate two responses from the Islamic community to the global growth of European influence in the nineteenth century: one of assimilation and emulation, the other of rejection. Certain parts of the Islamic world imitated European models particularly in terms of government, state and economy. This took place most clearly in the Ottoman Empire, where a number of sultans reacted to the sudden crisis experienced by Islam with a strong push for modernisation, or Tanzīmāt (reorganisation), which began in 1839 and ended with the First Constitutional Era in 1876.\(^{33}\) Reforms to the Turkish constitution were also implemented along with changes to laws regarding religious freedom.\(^{34}\) On the other hand, a strong rejection of Europe in favour of Islamic tradition and freedom took place throughout the nineteenth century, with a specific reaction against and resistance to the work of Christian missionaries.\(^{35}\) This emerged in the form of what Western authors defined

\(^{32}\) A Catholic order and missionary society founded in 1868 by Cardinal Charles Lavigerie.

\(^{33}\) Donald Quataret, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 66.

\(^{34}\) Authorities were more lenient with Muslims wanting to convert to Christianity.

\(^{35}\) Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 48-49.
as “radical Islam” – a form of Islamism, or political Islam, that sought to defend Islam from the power and secular culture of modern Western states. This movement would be institutionalised with the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928.

One of the methods of resistance used by radical extremists was aggressive Jihad, or military struggle, which called on the global Islamic community to fight against the expansion of Western forces into Muslim lands and retain Islamic culture wherever Islam had been installed.\(^\text{36}\) Thus, throughout the late nineteenth century, a number of Muslim resistance leaders advocated war to fight the advancing British, French, Russian and Dutch expeditions. The more notorious of these were the Sanusi Sufi order, which resisted French and Italian expansion in West and Central Africa and Libya respectively in the early decades of the twentieth century; Colonel Ahmad Urabi’s struggles against the French and British in Egypt in 1881-1882; the Tobacco Protest of 1891 in Iran, which culminated in the Shah’s assassination; and the resistance against Russian expansion in the Caucasus organised by the Naqshbandi Imam Shamil until his defeat in 1859.\(^\text{37}\) In these and other examples, Muslim military leaders fought for the sympathy of Muslim rulers to resist European influence in the Muslim world.

The growth of Western Empires also led to the deepening of the study of Islam as well as of the Arabic language. The first Chair of Arabic was established at the Collège de France in 1539 and at the University of Leiden in 1613. The Vatican published an Arabic Bible in 1583 and established a college for the education of Maronite clergy in Rome the following year. English language versions of the Qur’an

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\(^{36}\) Calvert, *Islamism*, 5.

appeared, the first by Alexander Ross in 1649, though the more accurate translation by George Sale, in 1734, quickly became the more renowned and reliable lens through which English speakers could access the Islamic holy text.\(^{38}\) It was through this continuing interest in the dynamics of Islamic civilisation that a diplomatic rapprochement between Islam and Christianity eventually took place in the course of the twentieth century. The establishment of further schools of Arabic language, religion and culture alongside the work of central academic figures such as Louis Massignon eventually laid the foundations for the revolutionary declarations made at the Second Vatican Council.

**Steps towards Rapprochement: The Catholic Church and Islam in the Twentieth Century**

The phrase “The Church regards the Muslims with esteem” arguably represents the most significant and momentous breakthrough in the history of Christian-Muslim relations. By opening the third article of the decree *Nostra Aetate* (1965) with these words, the Catholic Church formalised its decision to take a different position in regards to Islam. As this chapter has thus far demonstrated, the history between these two great monotheistic religions has been plagued by unfriendly rivalry and, at times, violent conflict. In this context of strained relations, however, a number of Christian scholars began to take advantage of longstanding cultural and religious exchange to formulate new theories regarding the improvement of Christian-Muslim relations. The French theologian Louis Massignon, an expert in Islamic studies and a pioneer

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\(^{38}\) Armour, *Islam, Christianity and the West*, 134.
of spiritual rapprochement between Christians and Muslims worldwide, sought to overturn a tradition of negative Catholic perceptions of Islam. His new ideas breathed life into a stagnant Christian-Muslim relationship and initiated a movement for the establishment of institutions for interreligious dialogue. However, changing almost fourteen hundred years of preconceived ideas was not an easy task.

While the latter half of the twentieth century can be seen as a time of change for Roman Catholicism’s perception of Islam, the road to *Nostra Aetate* was littered with obstacles and destabilizing forces from within. As Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical letter, *Immortale Dei* (1885), demonstrated, a haughty approach to the Islamic civilisation continued in the late nineteenth-century. According to Leo, the Christian West had

> [v]ictoriously rolled back the tide of Mohammedan conquest; retained the headship of civilisation; stood forth in the front rank as the leader and teacher of all…and most wisely founded very numerous institutions for the solace of human suffering…in large measure, through religion, under whose auspices so many great undertakings were set on foot, through whose aid they were brought to completion.\(^{39}\)

Given Christian Europe’s post-Ottoman consolidation of power, it may be said that this pronouncement does not stand in stark contrast to the numerous other proclamations made by Western political and military leaders of the time. It does, however, reflect the condescending tone towards Muslims that persisted throughout the twentieth century and continued to re-emphasise Christianity’s hegemony in the context of Europe’s successes. Much like a victorious leader of Europe’s final

Crusade, Pope Leo emerged from this period of European hegemony claiming Christianity’s victory over the infidel, finally defeated or “rolled back.”

The negative ideas about Islam among Christian scholars were echoed in the twentieth century by Fr. Henri Lammens S.I., a Belgian Jesuit who devoted much of his life to the study of Islam and who influenced many Christian writers and thinkers of his time. While he was knowledgeable in his work on Muslim theology, Lammens demonstrated a significant degree of hostility towards Islam, its doctrines, and the Prophet Muhammad in particular. In his more renowned works such as *Islam: Beliefs and Institutions*, and in French journals *Études* (1910-1923) and *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* (1910 onwards), Lammens’ condescending contempt for the origins of Islamic Holy Scripture can be detected. His judgments were in keeping with the tradition of scornful analyses of Islam, the dismissal of the holy Qur’an as a plagiarised Old Testament and the demonization of the Prophet Muhammad. Lammens was not alone in perpetuating negative Christian interpretations of Islam. Examples can be found in Fr. D’Alès’ *Dictionnaire d’Apologistique*, a collection of works by Christian scholars (some of whom belonged to school of Fr. Lammens) who often equated Islam with other sects and who repeatedly raised Christianity’s status above Islam’s.  

Scholars point to Lammens’ work as one manifestation of a dying legacy of critiques of Islam. The establishment of numerous institutions for the study of Arabic

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and Islam, the translation of Muslim texts into Latin and the improved understanding of the Eastern religion had contributed to a phasing out of orientalist interpretations of the Mohammedan religion. Although not as visible, other more positive currents of thought were active in the early decades of the twentieth century. Fr Miguel Asin Palacios, for instance, did not spare the Islamic religion from very Christianised perspectives yet had come to the appreciation of its dogmas and values through the study of mystical theology, spirituality and eschatological poetry. His discoveries and positive conclusions regarding Islam are owed to great thinkers who preceded him such as Thomas Aquinas and Averroes, Pascal and Dante Alighieri. This approach is reminiscent of Francis of Assisi and Raymond Lull as it endeavoured to combine profound study and knowledge of Islam with preaching and missionary work. It is this kind of more balanced work which prepared the way for a revolutionary thinker who emerged from France, Louis Massignon.

Massignon helped engineer new perspectives on Christian-Muslim relations and is said to have initiated a revolutionary way of thinking about Islam. Scholars such as O'Mahony, Küng and Unsworth often attribute the groundwork of the breakthrough pronouncements and documents that emerged from the Second Vatican Council to his pioneering work on interreligious dialogue and respect. Massignon’s theories regarding Islam acted as a force that brought about changes at the top of the Catholic hierarchy as he befriended and influenced a young Giovanni Montini, the

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42 Anthony O'Mahony, "The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon on the Catholic Church's Relations with Islam," The Downside Review 126 (2008), 172. 
43 O'Mahony, "The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon," 172.
future Pope Paul VI. For this, Massignon’s work is known to have paved the way for various instances of formal rapprochement between the two religions.\textsuperscript{44}

Andrew Unsworth’s study on the Magisterium of the Catholic Church on Islam reveals Massignon’s audacity in opposing the mainstream Catholic negative opinion of Muslims.\textsuperscript{45} Massignon’s opinions were considered subversive and unorthodox. Nonetheless, his work resonated with scholars in his field to the extent that his views became the consensus perspective that was later adopted by Vatican II.\textsuperscript{46} It was through the close observation of the two concepts of love towards one’s enemy and martyrdom that Massignon came to realise that the Catholic view of Muslims was in need of drastic reform. He was heavily influenced by the mystic Mensur al-Hallāj, a Persian reactionary writer and great figure in the history of the Islamic religion who was tortured and crucified in 922 AD in Baghdad on accusations of heresy. Al-Hallāj, according to Massignon, was a figure who defied greater authorities through meekness, suffering and compassion. To the French Catholic scholar, he represented the Islamic counterpart to Jesus Christ. What resonated strongly with Massignon was the mystery of “good in suffering” he could see fulfilled in al-Hallāj, a mystical sanctity founded on the Qur’anic Jesus which revealed a commitment to the other that went beyond one’s self-interest.\textsuperscript{47} This religious experience seemed to constitute Massignon’s entire philosophy of life. He

\textsuperscript{45} O’Mahony, “The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon,” 299-316.
\textsuperscript{46} Unsworth, “Louis Massignon, the Holy See,” 303.
\textsuperscript{47} O’Mahony, “The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon,” 173.
would channel this notion towards the improvement of Christian-Muslim relations and to the central idea of discovering Jesus Christ within oneself, before preaching to individuals of different faiths.\footnote{See Küng, \textit{Islam: Past, Present & Future}, 332-334.}

For much of the latter part of his life, Massignon’s commitment was completely directed towards the Islamic people. His “mystical Catholicism,” as O’Mahony defines it, was a key with which he attempted to unlock numerous issues that had plagued Christian-Muslim relations over the centuries. One such issue centred upon the figure of Abraham, a central and pivotal individual in Islam, Christianity and Judaism. With the publication of one of his most important works, “The Three Prayers of Abraham, Father of all Believers,”\footnote{Pim Valkenberg, \textit{On the Way to God: Muslim-Christian Dialogue and Theology in the Context of Abrahamic Partnership} (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 67-70.} Massignon identified two unifying elements that would bring these three religions together and emphasise the ancestral roots which tied all three in an unbreakable traditional bond: Abraham and the worship of the same God. Massignon’s views are summarised in a statement made in September 1953: “the one who believes in the original equality of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) knows that they each refer to the same God of Truth.”\footnote{Louis Massignon, “Islam and the Testimony of the Faithful,” as cited in Unsworth, “Louis Massignon, the Holy See,” 304.} Abraham, according to Massignon, was the father and symbol for the commonalities of all three religions. Christianity, Islam and Judaism, therefore, shared not only Abrahamic faith, that is, the belief in the one God, but
Abrahamic ancestry also, a claim which with through traditional preconceptions and created room for introducing doctrinal changes.  

Massignon believed that Muslims were included in God’s plan of salvation and that, together with Christians and Jews, they believed in the God of Abraham. Therefore, it also followed that Muslims shared in the same Holy Spirit sent by God, a Spirit that was as alive in Islamic people as in Christians and Jews. Massignon’s inclusive approach focused less on differences between Christians and Muslims and more on similarities. For this reason, he is viewed by scholars of modern Christian-Muslim relations such as Goddard, Troll, Unsworth and O’Mahony as one of the major architects of new Christian thinking about Islam in the twentieth century.

**The Second Vatican Council: A Turning Point**

Pope Paul VI’s past connection with and interest in the Massignon’s work shed some light on the reasons behind his decision to formulate the change in the Catholic Church’s perspective on Muslims. In his younger years, Montini had looked favourably upon Massignon’s work and was particularly interested in his writings on al-Hâllaj. Since as early as the 1930s, the two would often meet when Massignon was in Rome to discuss each other’s discoveries in academic work. A friendship of

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51 Unsworth, "Louis Massignon, the Holy See," 313.
mutual interest and respect ensued, one that Massignon also fostered with Popes Ratti (Pius XI), Pacelli (Pius XII) and Roncalli (John XXIII). As subsequent events would reveal, Massignon’s contact with the engineers of Vatican II played was influential in the creation of more “pro-interfaith dialogue” conciliar decrees.\(^54\)

Of the numerous statements about Islam made at and after Vatican II there are two that can be regarded as being highly significant to the Church’s reformed view on non-Christian religions. The first statement is found in *Lumen Gentium* – Light of the Nations. After having acknowledged the Jewish people as those to whom the initial testament and promises were made, the document reads:

> But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Mohammedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind.\(^55\)

This official Roman Catholic recognition of Islam as a religion stemming from the same God worshipped by Christians and Jews and, more importantly, its inclusion in the history and plan of salvation, marks a turning point in Christian-Muslim relations. Massignon’s vision of a doctrine that united the three Abrahamic religions in terms of both faith and ancestry seemed to have materialised. The claim was in fact so great that some theologians of spirituality questioned whether the recognition of Islam within God’s plan of salvation should have been implemented. On this matter, O’Mahony raises an important question:

> [D]id all of this not question doctrines as well-established, even defined, regarding salvation, as the Christian notion of time, the closing of the constitutive prophecy which was revealed at the death of the last apostle, the

\(^{54}\) Anthony O’Mahony, ”'Our Common Fidelity to Abraham is what Divides’: Christianity and Islam in the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon,” in *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Anthony O’Mahony and Peter Bower (Gloucester: Action Publishing, 2006), 163.

uniqueness of the path of salvation (if not of salvation itself) according to the path traced out by the Bible and by Christ?  

Numerous debates within Christian theology emerged following the release of *Lumen Gentium*. Scholars had identified this claim as a threat to what the Church Fathers called the “*novitas christiana,*” an exclusive Christian pathway to salvation. Nonetheless, the idea that Vatican II could undermine essential Christian claims of revelation demonstrates the audacity of Pope Paul VI in breaking a number of taboos regarding other religions, and the Islamic faith in particular. *Lumen Gentium* opened a new window of opportunity within the realm of Christian-Muslim relations.

*Nostra Aetate* created the space within which numerous interreligious and intercultural endeavours are still very active. Scholars often identify the third article of *Nostra Aetate* as pivotal in the Catholic Church’s opening of discourse and dialogue with Islam. The section reads:

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

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56 O’Mahony, “The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon,” 182.  
57 Armour, *Islam, Christianity and the West*, 142.  
58 *Nostra Aetate*, Sec 3. See Flannery, 739-740.
The acknowledgement of Muslims as “esteemed individuals” sealed the Church’s reform on matters regarding Islam and officially opened a period of dialogue and perhaps better understanding of non-Christian religions in general. This phrase became the iconic symbol of still imperfect yet significantly improved relations between Christianity and Islam and stands as a reminder to both Christians and Muslims of the official stance of the Church in regards to Islamic people. However, one must question why Nostra Aetate was so significant in urging at least the Catholic, if not the whole Christian, community to change its previous preconceptions about Islam. After all, Christian scholars and theologians had made previous attempts to improve relations, yet criticism and conflict still persisted. Could this be attributable solely to the institutional and official origin of the statement, namely the Vatican? A closer look at the content of the document may shed further light on this question.

Although Nostra Aetate and Lumen Gentium were criticised by some Catholic scholars as restrictive and ambiguous⁵⁹ these two decrees seemed to have struck a theological balance which appealed to many Muslims and Christians. The references to Mary, Jesus and Abraham evoke a sense of continuity in terms of shared tradition and similar ancestral roots between the two religions. At the same time, however, discrepancies such as Islam’s lack of acknowledgement of the Trinity and Christianity’s fundamental claim that Jesus is the Son of God, as well as the hostility

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over past centuries, are emphasised and weaved into the encyclical. A reference to these differences is found in the latter part of the article which encourages both religions to put their past behind them and strive towards that to which both are essentially called: morality, peace and freedom. It is this section of the article which, according to O’Mahony, was for the first time in history not drowned out by criticism nor was it dismissed as mere lofty talk.60 Certainly, the declaration was made by a great religious institution with centuries of credible and reputable scholarship, yet it was through the careful establishment and recognition of similar religious practices, similar ancestry and, finally, belief in the one and same God, that *Nostra Aetate* left a significant mark in the history of Christian-Muslim relations. *Nostra Aetate* was an attempt to clarify a number of points that had caused quarrels and disagreement in past centuries. More emphatically, it was an acknowledgment that Christians and Muslims not only revered “one God,” but “the same God.” This revolutionary official acknowledgment, the document attested, should aid the creation of stronger and more peaceful ties.

While *Nostra Aetate* struck a positive note in Christian-Muslim relations, there are some noteworthy silences within the text that have called it into question. Two central elements dear to the Islamic community were left out, most likely with deliberate intention: the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad. According to Unsworth, the group responsible for the reworking of *Nostra Aetate* had in fact considered these two elements and the third factor of pilgrimage, or “Hajj,” but had

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60 O’Mahony, “The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon,” 180.
omitted them from the final document for serious prudential reasons.\textsuperscript{61} This indicated that Catholic Church had come a long a way from the view of its medieval forebears, yet some issues were still too sensitive to be directly approached. Would a formal statement on the Prophet and the Qur’an depicting the Church’s opinion have overshadowed \textit{Nostra Aetate’s} positive statements? Or would it have been premature touch on such contentious issues? These questions continue to echo in the realms of theological and public interreligious dialogue.

\textbf{Interreligious Dialogue}

The first significant post-conciliar change regarding Islam within the Catholic Church came with Pope Paul VI’s creation of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians in 1964, later renamed Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID).\textsuperscript{62} Roughly six years after its creation, the PCID began producing the


\textsuperscript{62} For the reader unfamiliar with Ecclesiastical terminology, a brief description of the Catholic Magisterium structure will aid the understanding of the post-conciliar documents released by the Vatican from 1965 onwards. Within the Church there are four major types of teaching documents: documents of large Ecumenical Councils, Solemn Papal teachings, Ordinary Papal teachings and documents of the Roman Dicasteries. Works that emerge from Ecumenical Councils, such as \textit{Nostra Aetate}, stem from the highest level of the Church hierarchy and often reflect the teachings of Bishops of the Church loyal to the Pope. Solemn Papal teaching documents emerge in the form of Apostolic constitutions, Apostolic Exhortations, Apostolic Letters and, perhaps most commonly known, Encyclicals. These are originally written in Latin and, although not restricted to them, they often reflect the opinions of the highest religious figures of the Church. It is through Solemn Papal teachings that the Church often makes specific and official references to Muslims and Islam. Ordinary Papal teachings can appear in the form of simple homilies, addresses and letters. Finally, the Roman Dicasteries, or departments of the Roman Curia, are composed of Congregations, Tribunals and Pontifical Councils. These function as channels through which the Pope can direct the teachings of the Church on a universal scale. See Thomas J. Reese, \textit{Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church} (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996). Further explanation is given by Unsworth, “John Paul II, Islam and the Christian-Muslim Encounter,” 254-256.
Chapter 2

*Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians.*63 These were not official teachings as such, yet endeavoured to offer clarifications on statements made by the Magisterium on matters regarding dialogue and communication between Christians and Muslims. The PCID is to this day one of the leading sponsors of dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the world. It hosts, organises and directs numerous meetings on a regional, national and international level. As Troll elucidates, it ensures that a continuous flow of statements of the Magisterium of the Church is directed at interreligious dialogue in general and Christian-Muslim relations in particular.64 Furthermore, the PCID offers a Catholic vision of Islam that goes beyond, and at times clarifies, the Conciliar statements, ensuring that a continuously evolving perception of Islam and Muslims is present among the Catholic and Islamic communities.65

Troll further notes that most post-conciliar texts of the Magisterium endeavour to underline what is common among Christians and Muslims without omitting those specific differences that render each religion unique. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II led this new approach by including the newly installed decrees of the Church on Islam in their written and spoken correspondence with both Christians and Muslims. During a visit in 1969 to the Ugandan capital of Kampala, Paul VI compared “confessors of the Muslim faith” with Catholic and Protestant martyrs. He

65 For more information, visit the page dedicated to the PCID on the Vatican Website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_pro_20051996_en.html
emphasised the fraternity and proximity between Christians and Muslims not only as believers in the one and same God, but also as martyrs and self-sacrificial individuals. He went on to bestow God’s blessing on the Muslims present and begged for peace to be installed in Africa. In the 1980s and 1990s, John Paul II urged Catholics to approach Muslims not merely to speak but to listen, conscious of the fact that they can be enriched by them. He became the Pontiff who arguably did more for Christian-Muslim relations than any of his predecessors.

One of John Paul II’s greatest abilities was to communicate, in a charismatic way, his messages to a live audience. In a speech delivered in Ankara, on 3 December 1979, the Pope instructed Catholics to draw on the similarities between Christians and Muslims:

[Consider every day the deep roots of faith in God in whom also your Muslim fellow citizens believe, in order to draw from this the principle of a collaboration with a view to the progress of man, emulation in good, to the extension of peace and brotherhood in the profession of the faith peculiar to each one.]

In a similar vein, speaking to eighty thousand young Moroccan Muslims at Casablanca on 19 August 1985, he stated: “for us, Abraham is a very model of faith in God, of submission to his will and of confidence in his goodness.” He also added “We believe in the same God, the one God, the living God, the God who creates the worlds and brings the worlds to their perfection.” These two speeches are typical of John Paul II’s numerous addresses to Christians and Muslims, which emphasised

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the fraternal links between the two religions, the need for mutual respect, and close
observation and even emulation of the other’s religious devotion.

The approach John Paul championed for Christians seemed to go beyond the
simple exchange of ideas and demonstration of the goodness of the Christian model.
It urged Christians to consider how one can be challenged and benefit from an
encounter with Islam. One of his first addresses to the Secretariat for Non-Christians,
which echoed the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), stressed this very point. In
it John Paul encouraged Christians to observe genuinely religious non-Christians in
order to “read and listen to the testimonies of their wisdom and thus to have direct
proof of their faith…Respect and esteem for the other, and what he has in the depths
of his heart, is essential to dialogue.”\(^70\) Pope John Paul encouraged Christians to
redefine the concept of dialogue with Islam as not only an analysis of how and why
Muslims believe and do what their religion commands. His idea of dialogue also
urged Christians to “see themselves” in their approach to Muslim people. As Troll
explains, the Pope desired a Christian “change of heart,”\(^71\) that is, a genuine love for
the Muslims, before any form of dialogue is undertaken. Simultaneously, from the
Casablanca speech onwards (Gulf 1989, Tanzania 1990), his encouragement to
Muslims was also focused on a self-reflexive approach. Muslims were urged to
recognise the shared oneness of God with Christians and thus enhance their respect
for Christians living in Muslim countries, for religious freedom and, more
importantly, reciprocity in all domains.\(^72\)

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\(^{72}\) Troll, "Catholic Teachings on Interreligious Dialogue,” 242.
On this last point of reciprocity, Cardinal Arinze, head of the PCID from 1984 to 2002, offered a brief yet detailed explanation of what interreligious dialogue should entail:

[Interreligious dialogue] is a meeting of different religions in an atmosphere of freedom and openness in order to listen to one another, to try to understand that person’s religion and hopefully to seek opportunities of collaboration. It is hoped that the other partner will reciprocate, because dialogue should be marked by a two-way and not a one-way movement. Reciprocity is in the nature of dialogue. There is give and take. Dialogue implies both receptivity and active conversation.\textsuperscript{73}

The concept of reciprocity, as the Cardinal emphasised, is in the nature of the dialogue and a fundamental element for the successful continuation of interreligious dialogue. The Catholic Church today attempts to pursue a dialogue with and critique of Islam based on these post-conciliar guidelines. Countering the propaganda of violent extremists who encourage Muslims to engage in a religious war against Christians is one of the great challenges over which the Church searches for those collaborative efforts mentioned by the Cardinal.

If, as historian Jonathan Riley-Smith argues, Christians historically saw themselves as divinely appointed to fight against the Islamic enemy, then the contemporary Church has clearly changed its perspective. This chapter has traced the long and arduous road taken by the Church to arrive at a more tolerant view of Islam that seeks a collaborative effort in the joint fight against modern day Islamic terrorism. This violence is deeply embedded in a new kind of radical Islamist ideology that, in its most extreme versions, points to those darker periods of Christian-Muslim relations as unresolved conflicts that justify renewed religious

\textsuperscript{73} Francis Arinze, \textit{Meeting Other Believers} (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1997), 5. For further analysis see Pauline Rae, "Christian-Muslim Relations," \textit{Australian Catholic Record} 80, no. 4 (2003): 403-16.
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wars. While it may be naïve to think that contemporary interfaith and intercultural
dialogue and critique may in some way restrain Islamic terrorism, this is an area of
anti-terrorist initiative that has thus far been largely unexplored. The analysis of how
one of the Church’s organs of information is searching for ways to deescalate
interfaith and intercultural tension is the focus of the remaining chapters of this thesis.
Chapter 3

Analysing the Ideological Roots of Islamic Terrorism

*La Civiltà Cattolica* on Islamic Fundamentalism and Radicalism in the Twenty-first Century

If it is to be won, *the fight against terrorism cannot be limited solely to repressive and punitive operations*. It is essential that the use of force, even when necessary, be accompanied by a courageous and lucid analysis of the *reasons behind terrorist attacks*.

Pope John Paul II

Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace

1 January 2004

The above statement, pronounced by Pope John Paul II almost a year after the US-led invasion of Iraq, indicates the Catholic Church’s commitment to the search for alternative methods of dealing with Islamic terrorism to the use of hard-counterterrorist measures. It also reveals a profound interest in understanding the ideological motives that propel terrorists into committing acts of violence.¹ In the context of existing core narratives, present both in the mainstream media and in political and academic discourse, that tend to focus on what they claim is a direct link between fundamentalist forms of Islam and terrorist violence, *La Civiltà Cattolica* has dedicated a significant amount of attention to understanding the history and development of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By the time the Pope made the above statement, the journal had already

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begun suggesting new interpretations of Islamic fundamentalism as an ideology that may not be as aggressive as neo-conservative authors have suggested. This unusual approach is linked to a change in the journal’s discourse on Islamic terrorism that saw the former expert in Islamic Studies Giuseppe De Rosa’s more critical views of Islam replaced with Giovanni Sale’s pro-dialogue approach. This chapter considers La Civiltà Cattolica’s highlighting of the more peaceful aspects of Islamic fundamentalist ideology as it attempts to resist scholarly assumptions that label Islamist groups as exclusively terroristic and anti-democratic.

Fundamentalism: Meaning and Origins

According to Professor Luciano Pellicani, fundamentalism is born as a reaction against a situation “when space devoted to the sacred is diminished and replaced with space given to the profane.”2 The profane, in this case, must not be equated to secularism. As this chapter demonstrates, fundamentalist movements are just as hostile to other religions, and to less dogmatic variants of their own religion, which they also categorise as profane, as they are to secular ideologies. Fundamentalism as a political term originated in the 1920s among conservative Protestant evangelical circles in America and is the militant statement of the infallibility of scripture and of ethical absolutism.3 The roots of the first fundamentalist movement have been traced back to the American Presbyterian General Assembly of 1910, which subsequently drew up a list of five defining qualities of true believers in a series of pamphlets

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3 The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology, s.v. "Fundamentalism."
called *The Fundamentals*.\(^4\) Christian fundamentalists believe that there is no other hope for attaining salvation or for avoiding hell than the acceptance of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was sent by his Father to die on the cross for all sinners. The authority of the message is Holy Scripture, whose inerrancy should be at the very centre of an individual’s life and be accompanied by actions that reflect its teachings. In the West, the term fundamentalism began to be applied to other religions, especially Islam, during the 1950s. Modern definitions of fundamentalism often refer to hard-line religious individuals who justify their political agendas by referring to their respective religious traditions.\(^5\)

In the first volume of *Fundamentalisms Observed*, John O. Voll defines Islamic fundamentalism as “a distinctive mode of response to major social and cultural change introduced either by exogenous or indigenous forces and perceived as threatening to dilute or dissolve the clear lines of Islamic identity.”\(^6\) Voll is aware that the very nature of the Islamic faith demands further explanations of the meaning of Islamic fundamentalism, as any Muslim with deeply held convictions could be classified as a fundamentalist: to be a practicing Muslim means to have an obligation to implement the fundamentals of the truth of the revelation in the Qur’an in one’s life. Voll attempts to clarify this point by stating that those who we today refer to as

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“Islamic fundamentalists” tend to set themselves apart by fulfilling this obligation through an “exclusivist and literalist interpretation of the fundamentals of Islam and by a rigorist pursuit of sociomoral reconstruction.”\(^7\) In other words, while the line that distinguishes Muslims with deeply held convictions from fundamentalists may be blurred, there is nonetheless a division between the two that should be acknowledged.

The modern understanding of Islamic fundamentalism by Western scholars was significantly developed in the twentieth century. Only in the late 1970s did Islamic fundamentalism become a generally recognised movement, not even receiving a mention in William Polk’s 1965 *The United States and the Arab World*, an influential introduction to the Middle-East at the time.\(^8\) Yet to properly understand Islamic fundamentalist theory’s rapid growth in popularity over this time, one must turn to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the Islamic Caliphate in 1924. This event is of great significance for Muslims as it marks a point in the history of their religion when a symbol of Islamic unity and identity was destroyed and replaced with the domination of Western civilisation. As the theologian Küng observes, the traditional understanding of Muslims was that through the Qur’an, revealed by God to the Prophet Mohammad, Islam had been promised victory and supremacy throughout the world.\(^9\) Allah would therefore not have permitted “the best community raised for mankind” (Qur’an 3:110) to be defeated by the unbelieving

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7 Voll, "Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World," 347.
European nations who did not practice “the only and truthful religion in the eyes of God.” (Qur’an 3:19) The reality faced by the Muslim world following the abolition of the Caliphate prepared the way for the development of modern fundamentalist doctrines.

Under Kemal Atatürk’s leadership, the new Turkish republic carried out an extensive and comprehensive programme of modernisation and secularisation. As the entire Anatolian region was reorganised according to the European republican system, a different kind of movement began taking root in the Arabic-speaking provinces of the former empire. Unsurprisingly, the Western way of life was rejected by numerous Muslims still faithful to the message of the Qur’an, the Dawah (call) and the inseparability of religion and state. Was this not a classic instance of sacred space being replaced by the profanity of Atatürk’s secularism? The backlash against a combination of modernity and secular society gave increased momentum to the fundamentalist ideological movement driven by ideas which Giuseppe De Rosa believes had already been “fermenting” in the Islamic world since well before the dawn of the new century.  

From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, restoration movements in Egypt and Saudi Arabia had called for all Muslims to return to the essence of Islam, to the inseparability of God and Muslims and to the strict unity of politics and religion. These modern revivalists drew inspiration from the pre-modern forerunners of religious reform movements in Egypt and Arabia, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855) and Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), and were popularly

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11 Küng, Islam, 438; Bernard Lewis, The Crisis of Islam, xvi.
Chapter 3

represented by the fundamentalist scholar and founder of the Wahhabi movement Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792).\textsuperscript{12}

Al-Wahhab’s claim that Islamism was the only way to counter the Western modernization of Islamic territories eventually became popular within the most important Islamist organisation in modern history: Hassan al-Banna’s Muslim Brotherhood (founded in 1928). From this movement of revivalists sprang an offshoot of violent radicals who believed that Islam could only be defended through the use of force. These extremists were inspired by the ideas of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who took numerous verses from the Qur’an that encourage Muslims to a “Jihad fi sabil Allah”\textsuperscript{13} (struggle in the way of God) and downplayed understandings of Jihad that limited it to an internal spiritual struggle. They emphasised the medieval juridical discourse on Jihad that called for Islam’s worldly domination of unbelievers.\textsuperscript{14} Terrorist attacks undertaken by Al-Qaeda in the past thirty years are a contemporary example of this new kind of violent Jihadism which continues to threaten both the West and, particularly since the 1990s, those Islamic countries affiliated with it.

\textit{La Civiltà Cattolica’s Giuseppe De Rosa on Islamic Fundamentalism, Radicalism and Terrorism}

As the Jesuit of \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} in charge of dealing with Islamic matters in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Giuseppe De Rosa’s works offer numerous insights

\textsuperscript{12} See Voll, "Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World," 347-349.

\textsuperscript{13} This expression appears forty one times in the Qur’an. See Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopaedia, s.v. Jihad.

\textsuperscript{14} Calvert, Islamism: A Documentary and Reference Guide, 3.
into the response of the Catholic Church to the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the twenty-first century. More than any other member of *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s college of writers working on this topic at that time, De Rosa gives detailed information on Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism and the challenges that such movements pose to contemporary Christian-Muslim relations. Of the five articles that dealt specifically with the theme of Islamic terrorism published in the six months after 9/11, only one editorial, entitled “Ripresa del Terrorismo Islamico” [Recovery of Islamic Terrorism, 2003], briefly discussed the ideological roots Islamic terrorism uses to justify its actions. Most articles were limited to recounting the facts of what happened on the day of the attacks as well as details regarding the aims of Islamic terrorists in the twenty-first century. De Rosa’s “L’Islam in Fermento tra Fondamentalismo e Radicalismo” [Islam Fermenting between Fundamentalism and Radicalism, 2002], however, analysed the attacks of 9/11 in the context of a changing and “radicalising” fundamentalist rhetoric. Aside from the critiques of Italian newspaper *L’Espresso* journalist Sandro Magister, De Rosa’s articles have not received any critical attention in the academic world.

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17 Sandro Magister is an Italian journalist who works for *L’Espresso* newspaper. He specializes in religious news, particularly those concerning the Catholic Church and the Vatican, and has set up the
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If, as scholars Sergio Minerbi and Renzo Guolo suggest, there is a division within the Catholic clergy between those in favour of interfaith dialogue with Islam and those against it, De Rosa tends towards the latter category. His works are in line with those of author Samir Khalil Samir S.I., an Egyptian Jesuit who often denounces radical Islam and who gives credibility to scholarship that seeks to establish a direct link between Islam and violence. In an extensive interview published in 2008, Samir declared that Islam’s “current state of malaise results from the very sources of the Muslim faith: the Qur’an, the Sunnah (Islamic traditions connected to Muhammad), and tradition.” Samir’s ongoing contact with the Middle-Eastern world has led him to publish numerous articles on Islam and modernity. In most cases, he is sceptical of the Catholic Church’s post-Vatican II efforts to establish friendly relations with Islam and points to what he sees as the general incompatibility of the two religions. His recent publication on Pope Francis’ 2013 Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, for example, criticizes the Pope’s belief that "true Islam and the proper interpretation of the Koran oppose all violence." According to Samir, these words express wishful thinking rather than a reality. He believes that the majority of Muslims may well be opposed to violence,

website chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it. Numerous comments on Catholic affairs and on the articles of La Civiltà Cattolica can be found on the website.
20 Most of Samir’s articles appear on the website www.asianews.it.
yet “to say that ‘the true Islam is against any violence,’ does not seem true: there is violence in the Koran. To say then that ‘for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence’ needs a lot of explaining.”

While Samir’s views support the dominant narrative that violence and, by implication, terrorism is inherent to Islam, the new Pope Francis’ statements concerning the Qur’an take an opposing view. Francis seems to ally himself with those Islamic scholars, such as Bassam Tibi, Khaled Abou El Fadl and Mahmoud Hamdi Zakzouk, who argue that the Qur’an forbids the use of violence for means other than self-defence and that a proper reading of it should lead one to a peaceful vision of life. There is plenty of evidence in the Qur’an to suggest that their views are credible: Sura 5: 32 of the Qur’an states that “whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it as though he kept alive all men.” In fact, the contextualising first part of Francis’ comment in Evangelii Gaudium omitted by Samir reads as follows: “Faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalisations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence.” Whether one believes Samir is dismissive of Islam’s potential as a

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22 Samir, “Pope Francis.” Emphasis added by Samir.
peaceful religion, or that Francis may be taking a naïve approach to the current issues surrounding Islamic terrorism, what is certain is that current instructions coming from the highest ranks of the Catholic Church view Islam and its core teachings as peaceful. Francis’ statement is clearly a nod to those Islamic scholars who argue that Islamic civilization has the potential to peacefully coexist with the West and the rest of the world.

While Giuseppe De Rosa is not as pessimistic as Samir, he nonetheless makes similar points. His aforementioned article, “L’Islam in Fermento,” paints a broad-stroke picture of the birth of Islamic fundamentalism, its gradual evolution into Islamic radicalism and into its most violent ramification: Islamic terrorism. De Rosa briefly focuses on the three pillars that sustain Islam: the Qur’an (the holy book), the Sharia (the Islamic law) and the Dawah (the ‘call’ for all humanity to convert to Islam and for those who were born Muslim to be better Muslims) and describes each as conflicting with values that are fundamental to the Western world. Pointing to Islam’s notion of the inseparability of religion and state and its reservations regarding the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, De Rosa argues that the Islamic and Western civilisations cannot peacefully coexist.25 Furthermore, he highlights the problems of reciprocity that arise out of such strict laws and laments the prohibition of the construction of Christian Churches in holy Islamic territories (such as Saudi Arabia).26

The most critical section of De Rosa’s article is his discussion of Islamic Jihad. While the concept of Jihad in Islam is generally defined as both an internal spiritual struggle to be a better Muslim and as an effort to spread Islam in the world and defend it from enemies, De Rosa solely focuses on the latter understanding in his article. According to De Rosa the third pillar on which Islam rests, the Dawah, is not a simple aspiration but a compelling, constricting and highly persuasive proclamation of Allah’s will. In order for it to be fulfilled, all men and women must submit to Allah, something that De Rosa believes Islam has done through its expansionist phase and in accordance with the much quoted ninth Sura of the Qur’an that dictates:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection. (Qur’an 9: 29.)

While there are credible elements in De Rosa’s discussion of the expansionist efforts of Islamic Holy War, he fails to acknowledge some fundamental historical facts. In the ninth century, the “People of the Book” were given the status of dhimmis (protected minorities) and enjoyed greater religious freedom than “heretics” ever did under imperial Christianity. As Goddard and Armour argue, once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, non-Christians faced worse disadvantages than those endured by Christians under Islamic rule. Conversions compelled by Charlemagne, medieval laws ordering capital punishment for heretics

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27 See Barak Mendelsohn, "Sovereignty under Attack: The International Society Meets the Al Qaeda Network,” 55.
29 Goddard, A History of Christian-Muslim Relations, 67; Armour, Islam, Christianity and the West, 32.
and the work of Christian missionaries in the wake of Western military campaigns\textsuperscript{30} are examples of patterns of religious coercion by Christians that do not appear in De Rosa’s article and would have lent it greater balance.

De Rosa views the increase of Islamic terrorist attacks in the twenty-first century as strictly tied to the growth of Islamic radicalism in the twentieth. He argues that radicalism both gives Muslims unrealistic hopes of revenge against the West and sparks racist sentiment against Islamic immigrants in European countries.\textsuperscript{31} To counter this double-edged sword, he points to moderate Islamic intellectuals and foregrounds the formulations of political scientist Zeyno Baran, who argues that a central task of contemporary counterterrorist efforts should be “to find ways of helping moderates win the theological and ideological war currently taking place within the Muslim world.”\textsuperscript{32} Such moderate Muslims, De Rosa suggests, should show the Islamic community that

\begin{quote}
Islam has nothing to lose, in a religious and moral sense, by opening itself up to both the critical method of Qur’anic interpretation and, with a non-fundamentalist vision of the Sharia in the political and social spheres, to Western modernity that is not all ‘corrupt,’ ‘unbelieving’ and ‘satanic’ as radical Islamists would want them to believe.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

However, while it may be true that moderate Muslims can dispell the anti-Western sentiment used by violent extremists to foster hatred of the West among Muslims, De Rosa’s belief that Islam will lose nothing in opening itself up to Western methods of critique and modernity is questionable. Would Muslims not have to renounce all the pillars on which De Rosa believes the Islamic religion rests (the Qur’an, the

\textsuperscript{30} Armour, \textit{Islam, Christianity and the West}, 93.
\textsuperscript{31} De Rosa, “L’Islam in Fermento,” 137.
\textsuperscript{32} Zeyno Baran, “Fighting the War of Ideas,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 84, no. 6 (2005): 84.
\textsuperscript{33} De Rosa, “L’Islam in Fermento,” 137.
Sharia and the Dawah) in order to heed this advice? First, Muslims believe the Qur’an is the exact and unadulterated word of God that cannot be subject to critical interpretation. Second, together with the Hadith (the eye witness reports of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), the Qur’an forms the basis of Sharia law – thus to demand that this law not be seen in a “fundamental” way is not possible. Furthermore, there are numerous reasons – the wounds inflicted by the European colonialist expansion first and foremost among them – why the Islamic community is not ready to embrace Western modernity and democracy as De Rosa would like it to. For these reasons, De Rosa’s approach may need to be rethought and reformulated if the respectful and balanced dialogue called for by Vatican II is to take place between Christians and Muslims in the twenty-first century.

De Rosa’s distinction between extremist and moderate Muslims reflects another core narrative within the study of Islamic terrorism that has often gone unchallenged. His views suggest that there is a clear dividing line between violent, fundamentalist, uncivilised, backward and terroristic Muslims and moderate, democratic, secular, civil and modern Muslims. This may lead to the conviction that only the latter category should be invited to dialogue and negotiation regarding ways of countering Islamic terrorist violence. Such distinctions, however, tend to diminish the value of scholarly debate around Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. Numerous Muslims who have deeply held religious convictions may not fit the oversimplified category of violent terrorist and may in fact be open to the search for ways of ridding Islam of violent extremism. Furthermore, research confirms that some varieties of Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism are not typically violent,
anti-democratic or incompatible with modernity. As Mumtaz Ahmad has noted, “the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Turkish, Malaysian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan Islamists have already accepted the Islamic legitimacy of popular elections, the electoral process, the multiplicity of political parties and even the authority of the popularly elected parliament.” There are also examples of moderate Muslim intellectuals such as Bassam Tibi, as well as Khaled Abou El-Fadl, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, and influential yet controversial Islamic clerics such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi who suggest ways of countering the spread of radicalism both within the West and in the Islamic world. Recent changes in the collective writing on Islam within La Civiltà Cattolica have seen this more optimistic and tolerant view that does not separate fundamentalists from moderates take centre stage.

A Shift in La Civiltà Cattolica’s View of Islamic Fundamentalism: Giovanni Sale on Jihad in Islamic Thought

As La Civiltà Cattolica’s discourse on the issue of Islamic terrorism significantly increased after 9/11 – on average, seven articles were published on the topic each year – Giovanni Sale’s articles gradually replaced De Rosa’s contributions. The change occurred in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s and can be attributed

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35 Ahmad, “Islam and Democracy.”
both to De Rosa’s deteriorating health and to the repercussions of Pope Benedict XVI’s 2006 Regensburg address on the Catholic world. The Islamic world’s reactions to the Pope’s quotation of Byzantine Emperor Manuel II’s unfavourable remarks about the Prophet Muhammad significantly damaged Christian-Muslim relations, yet were also a catalyst for intensified Christian-Muslim dialogue that will be explored in the fifth chapter of this thesis. In this period Giovanni Sale took over as the primary expert in the Islamic studies section of the journal. Through Sale’s influence, the work of frequent La Civiltà Cattolica contributors including Angelo Macchi S.I., Victor Assouad S.I., Antoine Audo S.I., Edmond Farahian S.I., Christian Mellon S.I., Giandomenico Mucci S.I., Luciano Larivera S.I. and Enrico Cattaneo S.I., the tone of the journal in regards to the issue of Islam and political violence softened.

Both political discourse on Islamic terrorism and mainstream media frequently assume that terrorism is linked to, or emerges from, Wahhabi and Salafi ideologies. Experts in studies on political violence such as Ranstorp and Paz, for example, imply that violence is culturally embedded within Islamism and closely connected to the notion of Jihad. Giovanni Sale presents a contemporary analysis of Jihad that is in contrast to such texts and uses a number of the more modern radical theorists to make his claim. He selects the influential Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab

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37 One month after the Regensburg lecture, 38 Islamic scholars, representing all branches of Islam, replied to Pope Benedict in "An Open Letter to the Pope," dated 13 October 2006. One year later, 138 Islamic personalities co-signed an open letter entitled "A Common Word between Us and You." The letter aimed to promote interfaith dialogue. The recently updated “5 year anniversary” website www.acommonword.com offers details on both the letter and the numerous reflections it has evoked from both Christian and Muslim intellectuals.

(founder of Wahhabism) as well as Rashid Rida, Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb and focuses less on their view of Jihad as a physical struggle of combat in defence of Islam and more on their understanding of Jihad as a believer’s internal struggle to live the Muslim faith as well as possible. Through his analysis of these theorists, Sale discusses Jihad as not typically or necessarily violent and as not incompatible with modernity. His work on this politically loaded term marks a shift in La Civiltà Cattolica’s discussion of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. It also reflects of a more cautious Vatican instructing the Jesuit College of Writers to tone down their articles on Islam in the post-Regensburg environment.  

Sale’s “Il Jihad nel Pensiero Islamico Contemporaneo” [Jihad in Contemporary Islamic Thought], published in June 2008, is largely based on twentieth century Islamic and Western scholarship on Jihad. He begins his examination with Rashid Rida (1865-1935), student of the reformist Islamic theologian Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), and analyses these two theorists’ portrayal of armed struggle as a defensive practice that should be implemented only

\[39\] According to the personal testimony of Giovanni Sale, given to the author on 18 November 2013, in the latter half of the first decade of the 2000s the Holy See and the Vatican reviewers of La Civiltà Cattolica began advising the writers of the Jesuit journal to be cautious when dealing with matters concerning the Arab world lest the relations between the Holy See and certain Islamic countries be damaged. Authorisation to cite this comment was formally given by Giovanni Sale on 10 February 2014.


when true Islamic believers are attacked by infidels. Sale points out what he calls the apologist element present in the Jihadi views of such Islamic reformers and states that “to define Jihad in a spiritual-defensive sense was a way of responding to Christian missionaries who accused Islam of being a ‘religion of the sword.’” He emphasises that according to these ideologues Islam was by no means a religion of the sword but was instead a peaceful religion which valued working with other cultures and peoples of different beliefs. Rida’s application of the label “defensive war” during Islam’s expansionist phase attests to this: war was waged in order to defend the truth of Islam from non-Muslims. Sale quotes from Rida’s work to exemplify the defensive and apologist approach of this particular reformer:

Muslims used force only when they found themselves in difficult situations or when it was absolutely necessary. They did this in order to offer Islam to different peoples; if these accepted they were assimilated, if they refused they would be forced to pay a small jizya tax…and they would be allowed to retain their personal liberty, their properties and their religion.

Sale’s examination sheds light on an explanation of militant Jihad that is at odds with both De Rosa’s perception of Islamic expansionism and with the inflammatory scholarship of neo-conservative authors such as Bruce Bawer, Robert Spencer and the less polemical yet highly critical Daniel Pipes. In Sale’s article, the reader is presented with the words of one of the founders of Islamic Salafist ideology, Rashid

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42 Sale, "Il 'Jihad' nel Pensiero Islamico Contemporaneo," 421.  
43 Sale, "Il 'Jihad' nel Pensiero Islamico Contemporaneo," 421.  
44 Rashid Rida, as cited in Sale, "Il 'Jihad' nel Pensiero Islamico Contemporaneo," 422.  
46 “Salafis,” those who follow the Salaf (a predecessor or forefather), claim that they are following the true Islam and are therefore grounded in Islamic authenticity. The founders of Salafism maintained that Muslims should return to the original textual sources of the Qur’an and the Sunnah (exemplary behaviour of the Prophet Muhammad). The Salafist movement is rooted in belief in the reproducibility of the Golden Age of Islam under the Prophet. Salafists envision a utopian return to a time in which
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Rida, that limit violence to a defensive act. This demonstrates a strong incentive within *La Civiltà Cattolica* to promote the more peaceful side of Islamic fundamentalism. Nonetheless, Rida’s explanation must be questioned. One must consider the possibility that Rida is an apologist and is attempting to justify aggressive warfare by labelling it as self-defence. Sale himself is aware of this possibility and makes frequent reference to a “manipulation of truth” by Rida that paints Muhammad’s and subsequent Islamic Empires’ conquests as more benign than they actually were.\(^\text{47}\) For this reason, he states that Rida’s doctrine must not be confused with the notion of “Greater Jihad,” which is limited to an inner struggle for true submission to the will of God.\(^\text{48}\)

It is difficult to find Western scholarship on Islamic terrorism that does not link terrorist violence to modern day revivalists such as the Egyptian Hassan al-Banna and the Pakistani Abul A’la Maududi. While it is undeniable that both theorists shared an anti-imperialist view of the West and were critical of the Westernisation of the Muslim way of life, the scholarship of John L. Esposito suggests that they were not in favour of aggressive Jihad.\(^\text{49}\) Sale supports Esposito’s view while acknowledging that the work of the Muslim Brotherhood significantly contributed to the flourishing of radical Islam in the 1960s and 1970s. According to

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\(^\text{49}\) Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 122.
Sale’s analysis, al-Banna’s notion of Jihad had a strictly defensive connotation. Sale demonstrates how al-Banna supported his claims with verses from the Qur’an and traditional Hadith\(^ {50}\) and how he insisted that the kind of Jihad understood in terms of religious war must be waged for a just and beneficial cause. A section of al-Banna’s propaganda book, entitled *Maj’muat Rasil*, reads:

> War for purposes other than these humane and beneficial ones is not permissible. This is absolutely clear because Islam follows the word fighting with the phrase ‘In the cause of Allah.’ One will not find in any Islamic text the word fighting or Jihad (struggle) not accompanied by the phrase ‘in the cause of Allah.’\(^ {51}\)

Sale’s apparent intention to bring to light the peaceful interpretation of Jihad by the man often seen as the initiator of contemporary Islamist internationalism against the West\(^ {52}\) marks another significant shift in *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discussion of Islamic radicalism. The decision to quote directly from Hassan al-Banna’s propaganda book sets up a strong case for the condemnation of aggressive violence in the name of the Islamic religion – an element rarely found in De Rosa’s works. Once again, however, one must keep in mind that war is often labelled as defensive by perpetrators who would reluctantly refer to their actions as aggressive.

Sale’s scholarship on Islam can be understood as a refutation of Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilisations” and is in line with the work of Syrian political scientist Bassam Tibi, who also rejects Huntington’s thesis. Tibi believes that the contemporary debate on how “Islam is challenging the West” is burdened by Huntington’s belief that Christian and Islamic civilisations are on a collision course.

\(^{50}\) The Hadith are a collection of traditions containing sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad. In Islam, they are considered a tool with which to understand the Qur’an.


\(^{52}\) Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe*, 110.
He also asserts that more scholarship should be emerging which searches for ways in which both civilisations may “adapt” to each other’s traditions. It seems that the new La Civiltà Cattolica approach, championed by Sale, is intent on dispelling stereotypical depictions of Islam as a violent religion and searching for a softer rhetoric on links between Islam and armed force.

Sale’s examination of the peaceful elements of Jihad as proclaimed by the Islamic revivalists of the mid-twentieth century does not stop at Hassan al-Banna. He briefly touches on A’la Abul Maududi’s position on violence as stated in an address delivered by the Islamic scholar on 13 April 1939:

>We are pacifist preachers like the mendicants and religious divines. To refute certain religious beliefs and convert the people to some other faith instead, that is the be-all and end-all of our enthusiasm. What concern have we with sabres! Yes, indeed, we plead guilty to one crime, though, that whenever someone else attacked us, we attacked him in self-defence.

Sale interprets Maududi’s perspective as being opposed to tyranny, intent on freeing people from injustice and returning them to the place they were assigned through creation. In this view, Sale argues, Jihad can be a struggle for freedom, for justice and for universal peace. On the implementation of this notion, Sale is in agreement with Pope Francis as he believes that true Qur’anic law, created for the protection, well-being and goodness of all men and women, must be established within the Islamic community. According to Sale, this understanding of Jihad, which departs from the traditional doctrine of combat, war and religious militancy, could therefore replace what is taught in Qur’anic schools. Sale is clearly attempting to create the

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53 Tibi, Political Islam, World Politics and Europe, 3-5.
55 Sale, "Il 'Jihad' nel Pensiero Islamicco Contemporaneo," 424.
space in which peaceful theories of Jihad can emerge and be debated against the violent and exclusively aggressive notions popularised by extremists. His argument challenges De Rosa’s stance as he uses the works of leading Islamic revivalists, often categorised by Western scholarship as founders of the fundamental tenets of radical Islam, to shed light on the potentiality within Islam to be what it was originally intended to be: a religion of peace and freedom. This is a far cry from De Rosa’s suggestion that moderate Muslims should instruct the Islamic community on how to better relate with the West.

**Belligerent Jihad**

In the same way that he discusses those twentieth century Islamic understandings of Jihad that tend to promote peace, Sale also dedicates a large proportion of his analysis to the intellectuals whose theories have promoted an aggressive and equally influential interpretation of this concept. Sayyid Qutb, identified by Sale as the true founder of modern radical Islam, is the leader and main promoter of a belligerent understanding of Jihad. Qutb’s beliefs were rooted in the idea that twentieth century left and right wing ideologies had failed and that Islam remained the only true path for a world deceived by the United States and its Western allies. True Islam was within each Muslim individual and needed to be rediscovered through a revival in line with the wars fought by the Prophet Muhammad during the seventh century. Qutb’s puritanical views aimed at encouraging all Muslims to return to the Islam of the origins in order to cleanse the religion of modern contaminations. However, unlike preceding puritans, his doctrine of Jihad was founded on the belligerent verses of the Qur’an and on the violent historical origins of the Islamic faith. While he did
have an understanding of the separation between defensive and aggressive Jihad, Qutb attempted to convince his followers that the use of force, whether of an expansionist or defensive nature, was a means justified by the end: bringing the truth of Islam to the world.\textsuperscript{56} To exemplify this, Sale points to the fourth chapter of Qutb’s most important work, \textit{Milestones}, which merits quotation:

Since the objective of the message of Islam is a decisive declaration of man’s freedom, not merely on the philosophical plane but also in the actual conditions of life, it must employ Jihad. It is immaterial whether the homeland of Islam – in the true Islamic sense, \textit{Dar ul-Islam} – is in a condition of peace or whether it is threatened by its neighbours. When Islam strives for peace, its objective is not that superficial peace which requires that only that part of the earth where the followers of Islam are residing, remains secure. The peace which Islam desires is that the religion (i.e. the law of the society) be purified for God, that the obedience of all people be for God alone, and that some people should not be lords over others.\textsuperscript{57}

These statements reveal the extent to which Qutb redefined the understanding of Jihad in the 1960s not only as defensive war that protected Islamic territory, but also as a project of expansion which both exported and purified the religion throughout the world. As noted in much scholarship surrounding Islamic radical intellectuals of the 1960s, Qutb believed that Islam needed to be defended from those Muslims who had distorted its true role in the world and had contaminated it with Western ideology.\textsuperscript{58} This is also the reason, Sale adds, why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not become a prominent issue for radical Islamists until the decades following the 1960s.

\textsuperscript{56} Calvert, \textit{Islamism}, 6-9.
\textsuperscript{57} Sayyid Qutb, as cited in Sale, “Il ’Jihad’ nel Pensiero Islamico Contemporaneo,” 426. Interjection and italics in original. For original work see Sayyid Qutb, \textit{Milestones} (Beirut: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1978), 113-114. This work was originally published in 1964.
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Sale traces the development of violent Jihad in the 1980s and 1990s in relation to the growth and flourishing of a transnational radical Islamism not limited to single intellectuals but capable of mobilising the Arab masses. His observations revolve around two crucial events: the Six Day War, lost by the Arab States to Israel and a sign that the “political modernisation” of Islamic countries had failed; and the Iranian revolution, an event which proved that a political Islamic state could be established through revolution. Sale’s analysis of the development of belligerent Jihad in the ‘80s and ‘90s brings him to the radical theorist and coordinator of the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and leader of the Islamist group Al-Jihad: Muhammad abd-al-Salam Faraj. Sale notes that Faraj saw Islam as the instrument that would allow future Muslims to re-establish the international Caliphate and eventually dominate the world. Faraj’s notion of Jihad, reflected in the title of his most popular pamphlet, The Neglected Duty, envisioned the conversion of the whole world to Qur’anic teaching. Yet Faraj is at odds with Qutb and other radical Islamists since he does not factor free will into his equation. There is no choice between Islam and unbelief; all peoples must be subjected to Islam if it is to be made into a global religion. As Cook also observes, Faraj takes complete possession of the traditional belligerent aspect of Islamic history, making it the most

important notion in Islam and positioning the idea of obligatory aggressive Jihad on a global scale while ignoring the other tradition of the spiritual “Greater Jihad.”

Sale does not shy away from voicing his thoughts on the legacy of individuals such as Faraj on the Islamic world. He categorises Faraj as the most dangerous radical theorist of contemporary Jihad and argues that his views significantly elevated the role of aggressive Jihad in radical Islam. The repercussions of this new understanding of the political-religious function of a contemporary Holy War were visible in the events of 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks on Western targets such as the March 2004 Madrid bombings and the London attack in July 2005. The academic world and the press often responded to such attacks by portraying Islam and its fundamentalist ideology as anti-modern, anti-secular and, above all, anti-democratic. In this view, Benjamin Berber, for example, argued that “these Jihadic warriors detest modernity – the secular, scientific, rational and commercial civilisation created by the Enlightenment as it is defined…in its virtues (freedom, democracy, tolerance and diversity).” As this discursive formulation gained popularity it led to the more widespread categorisation of the Islamic world as anti-modern and anti-democratic. In response, *La Civiltà Cattolica* has offered its own rendition on the compatibility of Islam and democracy in the twenty-first century. In the wake of the recent uprisings of the Arab Spring, Giovanni Sale’s considerations have become even more worthy of investigation.

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64 See Ayla Schbely, "Religious Terrorism, the Media, and International Islamization Terrorism," 208.
Political Islam and Democracy: Destined to Incompatibility?

The close association of the terms Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism within Western scholarship has given credibility to the idea that political Islam and democracy are essentially incompatible. Since Sale took over De Rosa as the primary writer in charge of Islamic affairs, *La Civiltà Cattolica* has tended to counter this core narrative of Islamic terrorism studies by exploring the recent attempts within a number of Islamic countries at carving new roads towards democracy. In particular, the Jesuit journal has highlighted the recent efforts of a new generation of Muslims rallying against repressive regimes in order to generate equality and a more democratic Islamic world. A question which loomed during this time was: do the revolts of the Arab Spring reveal the possibility of compatibility between Islam and democracy or are true Islamic principles being cast aside in favour of a new, egalitarian and popular Arab world?

Sale’s quotation, in his article “Islam e Democrazia,” *Islam and Democracy*, 2011 of a spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood who stated “We are moving away from a bad autocratic and dictatorial system toward a democratic system” was heavily criticised in 2012 by the scholar in Jewish studies and political scientist Sergio Itzhak Minerbi, who asked: “can we really define the Muslim Brothers as democratic?.” This question points us towards an understanding of new suggestions and critiques made in the more recent publications of *La Civiltà Cattolica* regarding the opening of new political avenues in the Arab world. In the context of Minerbi’s

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scepticism about the Muslim Brotherhood’s democratic intentions, Giovanni Sale’s
two articles on Islam and democracy, the first published in 2009 and the second in
2011, offer an insightful observation on the chances for democracy’s development in
a pre- and post-Arab Spring context. Despite Minerbi’s recurring accusations of
naivety, Sale’s more optimistic approach points to true democratic options arising
for the Islamic world in what often appears to be a call for the introduction of more
democratic values from frustrated Arab masses.

In his 2009 article, Sale divides the major Western critics who deal with the
issue of Islam and democracy into four categories: optimists, a category subdivided
into “gradualists” such as Bernard Lewis and “realists” such as the American neo-
conservatives; sceptics; pessimists; and those Sale defines as “scettico-possibilisti”
– which literally translates as sceptico-possibilists.67 Through his article, Sale tends
to place himself in this last category. Sale believes that democracy in the Islamic
world has the potential to grow and significantly affect the unstable and often corrupt
socio-political situations of many countries. To support his argument, he highlights
those Islamic countries in which, according to him, a democracy shaped on the
Western republican system has greatly benefited the political environment. He points
to Turkey and Lebanon, countries marred by sectarian violence and civil conflict yet
guided by a modern constitution which continues to regulate coexistence among
people of different races and religions. However, he also considers those Islamic
countries in which democracy seems to have taken on a more symbolic nature. Iran,
for example, figures as a country that claims to represent the perfect Islamic political

system yet, after allowing its people to vote, seems to rapidly default to authoritarianism due to the lack of fundamental elements needed for true democracy to be sustained. Thus, Sale concludes, it is not sufficient for an Islamic country to adopt a constitution and the activation of “more or less” free electoral procedures for it to reflect authentic democracy. One of the key questions at the heart of this study thus becomes more salient: how does Sale envision democracy emerging in the Islamic world? More importantly, could democracy in the Islamic world be used in the fight against Islamic terrorist violence?

Sale devotes much of his article to the categorisation of “optimists,” such as the renowned Islamic studies expert Bernard Lewis, who believes that Western-style democracy should be gradually implemented in the Islamic world. Sale contends that for Lewis the question is not whether democracy will work, but what kind of democracy should be introduced in countries that are only familiar with autocratic forms of government. Sale’s discussion of a second group, which he labels “optimist-realists,” maintains that such individuals are supporters of a “realpolitik” strategy of implanting (or exporting) the Western democratic model to Islamic countries in order to avoid a “clash of civilisations” and weakened Islamist organisations. Those who take this position, Sale contends, are interested in the result rather than the means through which their goals are reached.

Finally, Sale delineates the “pessimists” using a label he claims to have coined, the “sceptico-possibilists,” the latter being the group he seems to identify

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with. The intellectual who best represents the category of the pessimists, according to Sale, is Samuel Huntington. Sale refers to Huntington’s Clash of Civilisations article as one among many pessimistic studies that have concluded that Islamism is not a deviation from Islamic orthodoxy but the very substance of its cultural and religious tradition.\(^\text{70}\) It should also be noted that Sale refers to another political commentator whose views on foreign policy seem to be in line with Huntington’s, Daniel Pipes. Yet Sale’s focus is not on the aspects of Pipes’ views which accord with Huntington, but on those that deviate from the “Clash of Civilisations” theory. Here, Sale opens a space within which to situate his own theory. He draws on out Pipes’ claim that terrorism can be defeated not by a military effort but through a cultural and civil struggle which encourages moderate Muslims to “reshape Islamic society through their own version of democracy.”\(^\text{71}\) This view is more in line with the research of scholars Esposito, Shahid and Norris who suggest that not only are Islamic values compatible with democracy, but, as opinion polls have shown over many years, the great majority of individuals in Muslim countries prefer democracy over any other kind of political system.\(^\text{72}\) In other words, the problem seems to be not that Islam is opposed to democracy but that repressive Islamist regimes have suppressed democratic movements and have justified violent and coercive state power. Sale champions this view yet lays a great deal of emphasis on the notion that


the West must not impose its style of democracy in the Islamic world but that Muslims need to develop “their own” version of democracy.\textsuperscript{73}

The final category discussed by Sale, the sceptico-possibilists, clearly reflects some of his own hopes and fears and is the one in which he signposts his position on the viability of democracy in the Islamic world. His views stand alongside those of Esposito and Shahid who believe that this issue needs to be confronted not on the basis of political or ideological evaluations, but on the simple judgement of whether Islamic countries possess a culture that can sustain democracy.\textsuperscript{74} This position, Sale continues, is taken by those who fear the aforementioned “symbolic democracy” taking place instead of real democratic restructuring. Here, the question of whether the cultural climate within Islamic countries can effectively recognise specific rights granted to people and organisations arises. What Sale is essentially driving at with his introduction of this final category is made clear when he states that “sustainable democracy, therefore, cannot be introduced, as the neo-conservatives suggest, from the outside; in order for it to function realistically, it has to be chosen by the states which adopt it.”\textsuperscript{75} Sale’s own position on the matter is evident, making this final category the arena in which his own views are contrasted with those of the intellectuals he has been discussing.

Sale’s evaluation of Islam’s compatibility with democracy can be summarised in the following quotation taken from his 2009 article:

according to us, one of the causes which obstructs this route [to democracy] from the ideological-cultural perspective is the religious factor. Islam and democracy can be compatible on the condition that the religious element, with all of its richness, be used simply as a point of ethical and moral reference to the interpreter of social science, without pretending to dictate the norms of the State and of politics.\(^\text{76}\)

Ironically, a religious figure, speaking for a religious journal, suggests that it is precisely the religious element that impedes the development of democracy within the Islamic world. Sale’s view can be linked to one of the characteristics of the Christian tradition that debates the separation of religion and politics and finds its origins in Jesus Christ’s call to “render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21). The Islamic world, however, has had a very different experience and has often seen religion and political affairs as inextricably linked. While Sale’s comment reveals his preference for the division of the two realms, he argues against the coercion of Islamic peoples into the adoption of Western-style democracy: “Westerners can help the growth and enculturation of Islamic democracy in a globalised world; but it is not up to them to find a solution to the problem. Every culture has its own road towards democracy.”\(^\text{77}\) The ongoing revolutions throughout the Arab world suggest to some scholars that a large proportion of Muslims are forging their own paths away from autocracy and towards more democratic living conditions. The 2013 ousting of Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, the ongoing civil war in Syria and sectarian violence in Iraq, however, give credibility to those scholars who believe that these revolutions are simply a plot for radical Islamists to take over the Middle-East.


Chapter 3

The Western media has often reported that the recent revolutions within the Arab world have been led by what has been labelled a “generation in ferment.” The widely used term, “Arab Spring” has at times been replaced with “Arab Awakening” or “Arab Uprising,” yet in his 2011 article “Islam e Democrazia,” Giovanni Sale speaks of the Arab Spring as part of the recent history of re-Islamisation within the Arab world. He states that the political unrest is essentially a battle between those institutional movements that wish to re-Islamise the Arab world along softer Islamic lines, but still with Sharia law as the inspirational source of legislation, and those, such as the street protestors, who wish to overturn and replace the constitution in its entirety. Sale’s personal stance is not clearly stated in the article, yet despite Minerbi’s accusation of favouritism towards the Muslim Brotherhood, Sale does criticise what he calls the Brotherhood’s oscillation between an effort to adapt to Egypt’s political environment and its belated support of the protest movements in Tahrir square. If we briefly return to Minerbi’s criticism of Sale’s quotation of the Muslim Brotherhood spokesman, we notice that the quote was in fact followed by Sale’s expression of concern that “the attitude of the Brotherhood to the Egyptian events of Tahrir square emerges as contradictory.” Sale’s suspicion stems from his questioning of how the Muslim Brotherhood could lay claim to a new tendency towards laicism, democracy and the respect of human rights without going against

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the very Islamist principles on which it was founded. For this reason, and given the Muslim Brotherhood’s presence in different Arabic countries, what worries Sale is that the movement may be still intent on the re-Islamisation of the Arab world, something which was made impossible by leaders such as Sadat and Mubarak. Therefore, while he sees in the events of the Arab Spring a renewed sense of hope for the Islamic world, Sale is still apprehensive about the promises of new leadership movements.

Finally, while Sale’s articles on the Arab Spring express scepticism towards the possible rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood, *La Civiltà Cattolica* contributor Victor Assouad’s February 2012 article is much more alarmist, and given the current situation in countries such Syria, arguably prophetic. According to Assouad “the lack of a democratic tradition within these countries and the influence of the organised fundamentalist parties make one fear the worst.” Although Assouad’s fear of Islamism permeates the article, his primary suggestion is that Christians should seek to befriend moderate Muslims, the unorganised yet numerous majority within the Islamic community. He offers a noteworthy example of how such relations can be cultivated not only on a personal but on a political level also: “We have a significant example in Egypt, where a Copt businessman (Naguib Sawiris) in May of 2011 founded a political party which is open to the organisation of civil society, asking every Christian who would like to enter into the party to bring with

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them at least two Muslims, to ensure a true pluralism.” While this appears to be only a small step towards the creation of a functioning multicultural and multi-religious society, Assouad signals that it is a crucial act aimed at defeating the ghettoization of Christians in Islamic countries. He also emphasises the need for Christians living in Islamic countries to follow in Sawiris’ footsteps and become intermediaries, or “bridges” between the different components of society as well as between Islam and the West. This, however, is the focus of the next chapter of this thesis.

This initial analysis of La Civiltà Cattolica’s scholarship has focused on the change within the journal’s discussion of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism in the decade following the 9/11 attacks. The journal’s transition from De Rosa’s pessimistic and sometimes patronising tone to Giovanni Sale’s softer and more inclusive examinations points to two changes which have occurred within the Catholic Church as a whole. The first is the Church’s desire to improve its relations with Islam and create those bonds of friendship called for by Pope John Paul II, while the second can be linked to its fear of sparking protests such as those witnessed in the aftermath of Benedict XVI’s Regensburg address. In both cases, the change in rhetoric within La Civiltà Cattolica seems more in tune with current Pope Francis’ belief that Islam is not a violent religion and that the followers of the true, authentic Islam should be respected. As this research has shown, however, the line that divides violent fundamentalists from moderates is not easily identifiable, making the task of reaching moderate Muslims very difficult. Nonetheless, through La Civiltà Cattolica,

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85 Assouad, "Cristiani di Oriente," 375.
the Church has initiated a more optimistic search for that manifestation of Islam with which it can fight against violent extremism.
Chapter 4

A Challenge for the Twenty-first Century

La Civiltà Cattolica on Christian Minorities in Islamic Countries

Along with the interest in understanding and analysing the link between fundamentalism and terrorism, one of the primary motivations for La Civiltà Cattolica’s discussion of Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first century is its concern for the Christian minorities living in Islamic countries. In conformity with what has been the Vatican’s growing fear for the safety of Christians living in the Islamic world, La Civiltà Cattolica has focused on Muslim-Christian relations in major Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as other African regions. Analysis of these articles reveals the journal’s attempt to shed light on what it considers to be the pressing issue of religious freedom as well as its interest in the search for possible Islamic interlocutors with whom Christians might cooperate in countering violent extremism. Without an easing of interreligious tension in the Islamic world, the journal maintains, interfaith dialogue and cooperative efforts to defeat terrorism risk becoming ineffective. However, centuries of political conflict between Islam and the West, recently reflected in the War in Iraq, have led modern Islamist governing authorities to restrict Christian culture in the Islamic world. One of the greatest challenges for the journal is therefore to identify ways of guaranteeing the welfare of Christian minorities in Islamic countries while respecting the rich and long-standing religious and cultural principles of the Islamic tradition.
Christian-Muslim Relations in the Islamic World: Isolation or Interaction?

As the second chapter of this thesis illustrated, Christian-Muslim relations have historically been characterised by political and theological conflict that has often revolved around strenuous religious critique on both sides. The resentment carried by the Islamic world towards the West into the twenty-first century plays a significant role in the way Christians are treated throughout the Islamic world. An examination of Catholic thought on contemporary Christian-Muslim relations must take into account the history of Islamic revivalism sparked by Hassan al-Banna’s Muslim Brotherhood and its impact in shaping the current Islamic socio-political scenario. This, in turn, means focusing on the history of modern political Islam. As a scholar in comparative religion Antonie Wessels claims, the resurgent political Islam of the twentieth century has tended to categorise socio-political conflicts as religious or Holy Wars. In fact, while the causes of confrontations between East and West during the colonial era were primarily social, territorial, economic and political in nature, Islamists ensured that they took on a religious connotation. This, according to Wessels, led to a polarization of relations between local Christians – including Maronites, Armenians, Copts and Greek Orthodox – and Muslims, resulting in the persecution and eventual emigration of Arab Christians from Islamic countries that continues to this day.¹

In order to analyse La Civiltà Cattolica’s post-9/11 discussion of Christians in the Islamic world, the scholarship of Bassam Tibi and Olivier Roy offers vital scene-setting information regarding modern Islamism’s impact on Christian-Muslim

¹ Antonie Wessels, Arab and Christian? (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 189.
relations. While this thesis has thus far challenged the narrative that directly links modern Islamism to terrorism, certain embodiments of modern Islamism have been known to use violence and terrorism against their enemies. These have also classified political conflict as closely linked to a “religious war” between Christianity and Islam. As Tibi argues, Islamists maintain that there is no distinction between Islam and Islamism, but only one essential Islam. Those who agree are considered to be true believers; those who do not are accused of heresy. The stigmatisation of those who do not espouse their ideas, Tibi suggests, is part of the “war of ideas” waged by modern Islamists. Both Roy and Tibi argue that Islamism is not Islam but a political ideology and system born out of the Muslim Brotherhood’s desire to compete with the major ideologies of the twentieth century.

Tibi goes a step further in his portrayal of modern Islamism and draws a distinction between “institutional” and “Jihadist” Islamists. The former participate in politics within institutions and disavow violence (although he concedes they have been known to use violence), the latter use terrorism redefined as “legitimate Islamic Jihad” to pursue their attacks on unbelievers. Tibi’s vision is in line the categorisations of expert in Islamic studies Ahmad Achtar who not only divides modern Islamism into Political Islamism and Armed Islamism, but lists three sub-

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2 Wessels, Arab and Christian?, 222.
3 Tibi, Islam and Islamism, 8-9.
4 Roy, The Failure of Political Islam, vii; Tibi, Islam and Islamism, 9. While Roy and Tibi agree on the definition of Islamism, they disagree on its impact in the Islamic world. Roy argues that Islamism has failed to alter the political landscape of the Middle East whereas Tibi takes the opposite stance and claims that Islamism, in the form of a Sunni internationalism movement of non-state actors, is a resilient driving force on global networking. See also Tibi, Political Islam, World Politics and Europe, 133.
5 Tibi, Islam and Islamism, 10.
categories of Armed Islamism: activities against occupying powers, activities against nominal Muslim regimes, also known as “the nearer enemy,” and the Al-Qaeda category that sees a shifting in direction of militant activities from the nearer to the further enemy, the US and its allies in particular. According to Wessels, both forms of Islamism show significant intolerance towards Christian minorities who eventually live as second-class citizens or convert to Islam in order to avoid persecution and have better employment opportunities. Here, the view of the aforementioned violent extremist Muhammad abd-al-Salam Faraj is echoed. Faraj included “native regimes” that had supposedly betrayed the Islamic cause in his aggressive vision of violent Jihad. Wessels claims that in this view “local Christians were accused of being part of a worldwide Crusade against Islam and held accountable for economic exploitation, social diseases and moral decay.”

Furthermore, Osama bin Laden’s 23 February 1998 invitation to all Jihadist organisations to create a “global Islamic front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders,” which eventually became Al-Qaeda, is a clear example of the use of Islamist rhetoric to transform a political conflict into a religious war. Bin Laden was capitalising on the Islamist idea that armed conflict against the West is as political as it is religious when he declared that “since God laid down the Arab peninsula, created its desert, and surrounded it with its seas, no calamity has ever befallen it like the Crusader hosts that have spread in it like locusts.” One must nonetheless keep in mind that

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7 Wessels, Arab and Christian?, 220.
8 Wessels, Arab and Christian?, 220.
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religion and politics are often inextricably linked in Islam, a principle taken into consideration by *La Civiltà Cattolica* in its search for possibilities of easing intercultural and interreligious tension in the Islamic world.

A discussion of twenty-first century Islamism, both in its institutional and its violent Jihadi forms, has increasingly featured in the articles of *La Civiltà Cattolica* since 9/11. Beyond De Rosa and Sale’s differing points of view on political Islam’s compatibility with democratic values lies a discussion regarding Islamism’s concern, or lack thereof, for Christian minorities living in Islamic countries. This discussion is often linked to the concepts of religious freedom and human rights in territories considered by Christians as their homeland; such groups, like the Egyptian Copts, are natives of their lands and lived in them before Islam’s birth.\(^{10}\) Both academic studies and the Western press report that due to the lack of religious freedom and to the punishments that accompany the breaking of certain rules on conversion, Church building and public manifestations of faith, thousands of Christians flee Islamic countries each year.\(^{11}\) According to the Western mainstream media, the increase in violent attacks on Christians has resulted in the shrinking of the Christian population in the Middle East over the past two decades at a faster rate than ever before.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{12}\) Roland Flamini, “Forced Exodus: Christians in the Middle East,” *World Affairs*, November/December 2013. Among the more recent acts of violence against Christians in Islamic
Civiltà Cattolica’s opinion, the latest intervention of US-led forces in Islamic territory (Iraq and Afghanistan) has gravely endangered Christian minorities, giving violent extremists more reasons to classify the armed intervention as a religious war. The Jesuit journal reflects the Catholic Church’s fears for those Christians who are on the receiving end of the Holy War waged by armed Islamists. For this reason, its stanch opposition to the War in Iraq and to the further use of hard-counterterrorist methods against Islamic states characterises a number of its articles.  

The Catholic Church’s attempts to counter the efforts of Islamists to give political conflicts a religious connotation goes back to the early 1990s – a time when armed Islamism targeted not only occupying powers but also Islamic regimes that did not endorse a strict practice of Sharia law. Regarding the developments of the Gulf War, the Archbishop of Algeria, Henri Teissier, stated in 1991 that “certain Islamic circles in the Maghreb had attempted to give a confessional slant to the [Gulf] countries are the attacks on a Syriac Catholic Cathedral of Baghdad on 31 October 2010 which left 58 dead and 78 injured. Also, in the bombing of a Coptic Orthodox Church in Alexandria on 1 January 2011, 27 people were killed and at least 79 were injured, see “Al Qaeda attack on Baghdad Church ends in Massacre,” Asianews.it, 1 November 2010, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Al-Qaeda-attack-on-Baghdad-church-ends-in-massacre-19871.html; Michael Slackman, “Egypt Links Palestinians to Attack at Church,” New York Times, 23 January 2011. In the wake of former military commander Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s 2013 coup that toppled Mohamed Morsi’s government, Christians bore some of the brunt of Islamists’ anger over the coup. Islamist mobs attacked sixty three churches and ransacked Christian orphanages and businesses, see, Aryn Baker, “Unholy Choices,” Time, 21 April 2014.


14 Wessels, Arab and Christian?, 224.
conflict by depicting it as some sort of Jewish-Christian Crusade against the Muslims…Fortunately, the intervention of the Holy See has called for a halt to this manipulation of history.”\textsuperscript{15} Conscious of the repercussions it could have had on Christians in the Middle East, Pope John Paul II had spoken out against the war and referred to it as “an adventure from which there is no return.”\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, on 21 June 1995, John Paul took advantage of the opening of the great mosque in Rome to counter the polarisation of Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and to address the issues of religious freedom and church building:

A grand mosque is being inaugurated today. This event is an eloquent sign of the religious freedom recognized here for every believer. And it is significant that in Rome, the centre of Christianity and the See of Peter’s Successor, Muslims should have their own place to worship with full respect for their freedom of conscience. On a significant occasion like this, it is unfortunately necessary to point out that in some Islamic countries similar signs of the recognition of religious freedom are lacking. And yet the world, on the threshold of the third millennium, is waiting for these signs! Religious freedom has now become part of many international documents and is one of the pillars of contemporary society. While I am pleased that Muslims can gather in prayer in the new Roman mosque, I earnestly hope that the rights of Christians and of all believers to freely express their own faith will be recognised in every corner of the earth.\textsuperscript{17}

While the address does not mention any state in particular, one can deduce that it was aimed at Saudi Arabia, a country in which building Churches is forbidden and where religious freedom is severely limited. The Pope’s words emanate an urgency regarding the need for reciprocity in spite of the political and cultural turmoil that has for centuries characterised the relations between Islamic and Western cultures.

Yet as \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} often notes, the plight of Muslim populations must also

\textsuperscript{15} Henri Teissier, \textit{Le Monde}, 7 March 1991, as cited in Wessels, \textit{Arab and Christian}?, 224.
\textsuperscript{17} “Inauguration of Grand Mosque in Rome,” \textit{L’Osservatore Romano}, eng. ed, 28 June 1995, p11.
be taken into consideration. On numerous occasions the religious rights of Muslims have been ignored, particularly in the last two centuries, when Western powers have invaded Muslim countries and displayed a lack of respect for religious sacredness and practice. In this respect, the journal suggests ways of balancing its acknowledgment of the humiliation of Muslims at the hands of Western powers with its interest in defending persecuted Christian minorities.

Since the beginning of the War on Terror and War in Iraq, La Civiltà Cattolica has often reminded its readers that the current presence of Western troops in Islamic countries is seen by Muslims as a new form of “American and European imperialism that dominates politically and exploits economically.” Armed Islamists draw on this feeling of resentment to wage the aforementioned “war of ideas,” that is, the West is attacking the religion of Islam: those who agree are true believers while those who oppose are the enemies of Islam. In other words, the Jesuits believe that hard-counterterrorist measures in the Islamic world risk giving violent extremists more ammunition and better reasons to spread anti-Western and anti-Christian propaganda. Over time, the Vatican has been conscious of this and has intervened, usually at sessions of the UN, to defend the human and religious rights of Muslims. Some notable examples are Pope John Paul II’s high profile opposition to the Gulf and more recent Iraq Wars and the Church’s defence of the rights of Palestinian

18 Editoriale, "Una Nuova Forma di Terrorismo?," 434.
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Given the ongoing persecution experienced by Christian minorities, the Church is in search of new ways of de-escalating interreligious tension that can result in violent incidents fostered by armed Islamists.

The different styles of Giuseppe De Rosa and Giovanni Sale in regards to the discussion of contemporary Islamism also shine through in *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s articles on Christians in Islamic countries. In his October 2003 piece entitled “I Cristiani nei Paesi Musulmani” [Christians in Islamic Countries], De Rosa states that “in all its history, Islam has shown a warlike face and a conquering spirit for the glory of Allah” and that the consequence of dhimmi status imposed on Christians caused “the ‘erosion’ of the Christian communities and the conversion of many Christians to Islam for economic, social, and political motives: to find a better job, enjoy a better social status, participate in administrative, political and military life and in order to not live in a condition of perpetual discrimination.”21 In reference to contemporary society, De Rosa concludes that while the dhimmi system has undergone modifications due to ideas of equality and citizenship taking a foothold in a numerous Islamic countries, “the Christian is brought back to the status of dhimmi, even if the term no longer appears in the present-day laws of a good number of Muslim countries.”22 He attributes the continuation of what he sees as a “backward” approach to the advent of modern day Islamism that prescribes the introduction of Sharia law

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in every Islamic country: “It is evident that the institution of Sharia law would render the lives of Christians rather difficult, and their very existence would be in danger. This is the cause of the mass migration of Christians from Islamic to Western countries.”

While De Rosa’s statements can come across as blunt – numerous scholars would argue against a representation of Islam as showing a warlike face throughout its entire history – he nonetheless highlights the complexity of the situation faced by a significant proportion of Christians living in the Islamic world. His vision raises the question of why Christians are still persecuted in some Islamic countries and why their freedom to fully express their belief in Christianity can be limited, particularly when Western Muslims seem to enjoy religious freedom in the West. The problem with De Rosa’s line of thought is that it tends to nullify possibilities of rapprochement and negotiation between Christians and Muslims. From his outlook there can be no kind of negotiation with a supposedly “violent religion” and Christians are destined to live as second-class citizens in perpetual fear of violent attacks. However, other members of La Civiltà Cattolica’s College of Writers such as Sale, Antoine Audo and Michele Simone do not espouse De Rosa’s views and take a more balanced approach to this issue by identifying areas in which Christians and Muslims can come together against violent extremism.

While La Civiltà Cattolica, particularly since Sale’s articles on Islam became more frequent, has demonstrated a commitment to improving Christian-Muslim relations, it must be noted the majority of the articles written by these Jesuits on the

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situation of Christians in the Islamic world are rather pessimistic. Aside from the realisation that the situation does not seem to be improving, the Jesuits tend to rely on the theoretical suggestions of more progressive, Western-educated, Islamic intellectuals whose methods of interpreting Islam are rejected by most Islamists. This makes the journal’s desire to see the implementation of a tolerant view of non-Islamic religions in the Islamic world quite difficult to realise, as the very task of finding interlocutors, particularly with a religion that lacks a central authority, is itself a challenging task. Despite this, the journal offers a range of thought-provoking opinions on this issue that have not received any attention in the academic world. Beyond L’Espresso journalist Sandro Magister’s interest in the more polemical assertions of La Civiltà Cattolica, such as Giuseppe De Rosa’s general criticism of Islam, the numerous opinions emerging from La Civiltà Cattolica have not been subjected to scholarly analysis. For instance, many Jesuits believe that true and authentic Islam is opposed to any form of violence and that finding a solution to violence against Christians does not simply mean that the Islamic world needs to change. On the contrary, a number of articles refer to the need for Christians living in Islamic countries to acquire knowledge of Islam and of Islamic civilisation and to find ways of living their faith while respecting the religious practices and customs of the country they inhabit. In certain hostile environments this may also mean, as

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24 The kidnapping of more than two hundred Nigerian schoolgirls, most of which were Christian, by the terrorist group Boko Haram on April 2014 has been just one of the more documented incidents of Islamic violent extremist attacks on Christians in a multireligious country.


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Giovanni Sale states in a March 2007 article on Sudan, “intelligently using those spaces that ruling governments offer the Catholic Church.” Here Sale seems to be implying that, in particular scenarios, it may be better for the Church to take advantage of what it has and avoid activities, such as proselytism, which may provoke the violence of armed Islamists and become life-threatening practices. Despite this being a violation of the fundamental Christian goal of spreading the gospel, *La Civiltà Cattolica* advises a cautious and “intelligent” approach to those Christians living in areas of ongoing political unrest.

The analysis which follows focuses specifically on *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discussion of Christian minorities in Middle Eastern and African Islamic countries that have had a significant and consistent Christian presence. While in the latter half of this chapter there will be a chance to study the journal’s thematic understanding of religious pluralism and human rights in the Islamic world, the current focus is purposely aimed at analysing the presentation of the political and religious experience of the selected countries and how it has affected Christian minorities. The aim is to take a step back from what is a general reference to the “Islamic world” and consider *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s views on how certain countries’ modern socio-political and religious frameworks affect those Christians who call an Islamic state “home.” Given the nature of this thesis and its focus on Islamic terrorism, the situations of “crisis” in which Christians are targeted by violent extremists remains the focus of analysis.


La Civiltà Cattolica on Christians in Saudi Arabia and Egypt

In a pre-9/11 contribution made to the November 1998 issue of La Civiltà Cattolica, “Missione e Dialogo: L’Incontro tra Cristiani e Musulmani” [Mission and Dialogue: the Christian and Muslim Encounter], the Jesuit and Islamic studies expert Christian W. Troll attempted to explain the reasons why Muslims find it difficult to permit religious and ideological freedom in the Islamic world. Troll explains that Muslims see such principles as originating in the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – a document which emerged in political environments dominated by Christianity and is therefore incompatible with the “Islam revealed by God.”

He further notes that Muslims see in the Christian Churches’ efforts to obtain full religious freedom an attempt to undermine the unity and religious cohesion of Islam. Furthermore, the apparent decadence and moral weakness of Christianity in pluralist and secularised societies, Troll maintains, arouses a sense of insecurity in Muslims who believe that favouring a pluralism of faiths and opinions in the same way that Christian Churches do may eventually lead to secularism. Finally, Troll states that the services offered by Christians in the fields of education, medicine and professional consultancy throughout Islamic countries are viewed by some Muslims as subtle attempts to convert people to Christianity.

In what he calls a situation of “misunderstandings, fear and mistrust,” Troll prescribes a set of recommendations that have less to do with Muslims changing their

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29 Troll, "Missione e Dialogo,” 400.
30 Troll, "Missione e Dialogo,” 401.
views and more with Christians gaining a better understanding of the people in whose
country they live. This approach stands in contrast to a number of La Civiltà
Cattolica articles written in the new millennium where the emphasis is often on the
need for Islamic states to meet the requests of Christian minorities and offer them the
rights they should be entitled to. For instance, an article written by Michele Simone
in November 2001 entitled “L’Islam e i Diritti Umani” [Islam and Human Rights]
urges Muslims to “come out of their schemes” and gain a better understanding of
human rights in order to ease the social pressures on Christian minorities in the
Middle East. 31 In contrast, Troll advises Christians on what an “authentic Christian
presence” among Muslims entails and centres his argument on the need for Christians
to know their fellow citizens, establish honest and respectful relations with them,
search for the common ground shared by both religions, and, finally, develop
patience in bearing those cultural differences that are often the cause of disputes. He
subsequently states that “there is a need [for Christians] to understand Muslims not
only as they are, but also as they would like to be seen.” 32 Here, Troll echoes the
opinion of Antonie Wessels who views the increasing isolation, or “closing of ranks”
among Christians in Islamic countries as the root cause of interreligious problems.
Wessels argues that Christians can fall into a process of “ghettoization” or adopt an
open Christianity which acknowledges the legitimacy of the Islamic revival. 33 Both
scholars feel that better integration of Christians and Muslims could eventually lead
to more concessions granted to Christians in the field of religious freedom. The issue

31 Michele Simone S.I., "L’Islam e i Diritti Umani," [Islam and Human Rights] La Civiltà Cattolica
32 Troll, "Missione e Dialogo," 403.
33 Wessels, Arab and Christian?, 226.
of Islamist governing authorities who impose Islamic Sharia law in both the public and private sectors of society, however, remains a significant obstacle. Illuminating this is a core concern of Giovanni Sale.

In no country is the link between politics and religion stronger than in Saudi Arabia, the place where the Prophet Muhammad was born and which contains Islam’s two holiest cities: Mecca and Medina. In “L’Arabia Saudita fra Tradizionalismo Wahhabita e Modernizzazione,” [Saudi Arabia between Wahhabi Traditionalism and Modernisation], published in February 2007, Sale notes that while the current Saudi regime has made significant efforts to stamp out Islamic terrorism, religious intolerance, directed towards both Christians and the Shiite Islamic minority, remains a major problem. While he wishes for the development of a culture of tolerance towards non-Muslim minorities, Sale seems to struggle to offer plausible solutions that might counter the pressure which Islamist puritans exert on the governing authorities in regards to this issue. He does, however, make a noteworthy comment on the search for a “true” Islam that prefigures the comments made by Pope Francis in his latest encyclical Evangeli Gaudium. According to Sale, the development of a culture of tolerance would function as a powerful antidote against all forms of religious fundamentalism and discrimination. We are convinced that Islam, if understood along its genuine tradition – which is certainly not that of fundamentalist Jihad – may offer precious resources for the construction, with other religions, of a global culture of peace and fraternity.

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35 Sale, "L'Arabia Saudita," 337. The author’s use of “we” points to the collectivist approach Sale takes in what can be seen as La Civiltà Cattolica’s invitation to collaborate with Muslims in the fight against incendiary fundamentalist rhetoric.
Sale’s mention of Islam’s “genuine tradition” reveals an element of hope present among those contemporary Catholic intellectuals, such as Christian Troll and indeed Pope Francis himself, who believe that the solution to improved relations between Christians and Muslims in the Islamic world lies in more, not less, religious and cultural interaction. In other words, and in stark contrast to the theories of secular intellectuals such as the late Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, La Civiltà Cattolica’s answer to violent extremism does not see the marginalisation of Islam from the debate about terrorism as a viable solution. On the contrary, it sees Islam as fundamental to the search for non-violent solutions to a problem that is of concern to both the Christian and Islamic religions. As the second chapter of this thesis demonstrated, there exists a history of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims that was not tainted by the anti-Christian propaganda of violent extremists that arose in the post-World War One period. Scholars such as Sale, while generally sceptical of improved conditions for Christians in countries with strong political-religious ties such as Saudi Arabia, nonetheless show signs of optimism regarding the possible culture of peace and tolerance that the “genuine tradition” of Islam can offer.

Another leading Islamic country that is often discussed in La Civiltà Cattolica due its significant Christian population is Egypt. In “L'Egitto tra Islamismo di Stato e Fondamentalismo” [Egypt Between State Islamism and Fundamentalism, 2008], Sale notes that the Egyptian governing framework (which has been in crisis since 2011) represents those political, social and religious tendencies that have characterised a number of Arabic countries since their independence: an experience

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of liberalism shaped around the Western European model, an experience of nationalism built with elements derived from socialist ideology, and the presence of Islam in both its moderate and radical versions. Yet throughout the twentieth century, despite decades of moderate Islamic leadership by presidents such as Nasser and Sadat, Islamist groups inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood became a serious threat to both the government and religious minorities. The cause of this, according to Sale, has not been Islam but the politicization of religion by Islamists interested in creating an Islamic state in which all must abide by Sharia law. Sale’s concern is not so much with the creation of the Muslim Brotherhood but with the way in which the organisation’s theories, language and ethos gradually closed off possibilities for intercultural exchange between Christians and Muslims in post-World War One Egypt. The value of his analysis emerges in his comments regarding the movement’s radical phase — a time in which the theories of Sayyid Qutb were adopted and a staunch criticism of the West was intensified:

The Brotherhood, under the influence of its major ideologue, Sayyid Qutb, elaborated a new theory of the Islamic state, espousing radical ideals: the new objective consisted in the establishment of the fundamentalist Islamic state, self-sufficient and not democratic, and in the reinstitution of the Caliphate.

While there was no denying that Islam was the state religion and played a significant role in the socio-political development of Egypt, the Brotherhood condemned Egyptian leaders for having failed to ensure Islam’s prominence in state affairs. Sale also reminds his readers that president Nasser was by no means anti-Islamic; in fact Islam was included as one of the pillars on which the new republic was to be created.

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He was, however, opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood and to the ideology of extremists. His idea was therefore not to eradicate Islam, but to nationalise it in an attempt to monitor its movements and prevent extremists from gaining too much power. This gave rise to what Baldinetti calls “Islamism of the state,” also known as a regulated presence of religion in political affairs. It is clear that Nasser attempted to separate state from religious affairs, or limit the role that the Ulema (Muslim legal scholars) could play in politics. Here Sale discusses some of the origins of an obstacle which today obstructs the development of dialogue between Christianity and Islam. While Nasser’s state control of religion was often seen by radical Islamists as an attack on the freedom of the Islamic religion, it ensured that a version of radical Islam did not infiltrate mosques, schools and institutions where religion played a fundamental role in the formation of new generations. For this reason Sale also devotes attention to the murder of Nasser’s successor, president Sadat, a firm believer in Nasserian religious politics and pioneer of the division between politics and religion for the future of Egypt.

Sale’s observations on Islamism in its post-Qutbian phase allow us to see how effective Islamism was in changing the political development of Egypt and marginalising existing cultures. The Brotherhood’s early 1970s leadership rejected Qutbian theory and condemned revolutionary activism along with armed struggle and violence. This led to an easing of tension between the Brotherhood and president Sadat; the president’s aim was to use this new alliance to consolidate a relationship

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with non-radical Islamists. However, Sale also points to the rise of new fundamentalist organisations which arose in the 1970s and which were no longer dependent on the Brotherhood. In 1973, a movement of student groups named Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya established itself within the major Egyptian universities, creating ideological currents aimed at achieving the total adoption of Islam and the eradication of everything of which that religion did not approve.\textsuperscript{41} The importance of this movement lies in its representation of new form of radicalism, one which denounced the “state run” Muslim Brotherhood with its state Ulema and strived for a return to supposedly authentic Islam.

It was not long before new forms of radicalism in Egypt identified the ills of Islamic society not only in what were seen by radicals as corrupt governing authorities but in the presence of Christian communities residing on Islamic territory. The new movement clashed with old members of the Brotherhood with tensions reaching a climax in 1975-76, when Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel. Within this tense atmosphere of political and religious agitation, radical groups arose including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (originally referred to as al-Jihad) which espoused Qutb’s Jihadist rhetoric.\textsuperscript{42} While Islamic Jihad was essentially fragmented with different ideological currents working within its core, Sale’s interest is directed towards those who sought to defend the Islamic faith against the “followers of Christ” - the Egyptian Coptic community. Here Sale’s attempt to reveal another layer of the complexity of dialogue with Islam in the twenty-first century is particularly evident. He notes that according to these radical Islamists, Egyptian Copts should have

\textsuperscript{41} Sale, "L'Egitto tra Islamismo," 117.
\textsuperscript{42} Sale, "L'Egitto tra Islamismo," 119.
accepted the statute of dhimmi, which guarantees minorities some form of protection yet obliges them not to proselytise and perform public tasks: “The movement’s strategy of action consisted in the achievement of two simultaneous goals: armed struggle against Christian communities, both indigenous and missionary, particularly those made up of foreigners, and armed struggle against the impious Government.”

While strategies to accomplish the former objective were still in the making, the latter was executed on 6 October 1981 when Islamic Jihad assassinated President Sadat. What concerns Sale, however, is that this killing was done in the name of a new version of radical Islam, the “first regicide of contemporary Jihad.” The significance of the event lies in the way it combined political motives and religious ideology: Sadat’s assassin, Khalid Islambouli, had obtained a “Fatwa” from Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman before the attack.

Sale explores the difficulties faced by Christian minorities in Egypt by surveying the country’s record of human rights and religious freedom in the last twenty years. He emphasises that Egypt ensures freedom of religion, as stated in the 46th article of its constitution, and is therefore considered one of the Islamic countries which guarantees safety to Christian and non-Muslim communities. However, Christians still face challenges regarding access to civil, administrative and political positions, since they are classified as second-class citizens, a situation which creates the danger of Islamic prejudice towards those of differing religious beliefs.

Although Sale notes that Egypt has made considerable advances over the past twenty

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43 Sale, "L'Egitto tra Islamismo," 120.
44 Sale, "L'Egitto tra Islamismo," 120.
years, such as its ratification of the principle of the International Convention on Human Rights and the creation of the National Council for Human Rights, discrimination still persists. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is legal in Egypt, yet the problem of people converting to Islam for employment and financial security has gradually become a point of concern as it reflects a situation of selectivity based on faith, not merit. Finally, another great fear, this time presented by Victor Assouad in his article “Cristiani di Oriente nella Primavera Araba” [Eastern Christians in the Arab Spring, 2012], is that the toppling of dictatorial regimes could open the way for the ascension of Islamist groups rather than more democratic systems.46

Islam in Africa

In line with its study of other Islamic countries, La Civiltà Cattolica’s examination of the Islamisation of the Maghreb considers a number of advances and setbacks in the promotion of human rights and respect for religious freedom in the last fifty years. In this context, Sale’s discussion begins with a focus on Algeria and the birth of the “Front Islamique du Salut” (FIS), an Islamist party founded in 1989 whose political project was to replace the secular republic with an Islamic one. Following the political vacuum left by the Algerian Civil War (1991 - 2002) the Jihadist faction of the FIS went into clandestinity and eventually split into small groups intent on conducting an armed struggle against Algerian ruling elites and Westerners. Christians experienced the repercussions of this political instability on numerous occasions: the kidnapping and murder of seven Roman Catholic Trappist Monks and

the bombing of Bishop Clavière’s vehicle in 1996 are some examples of the violent consequences faced by Christians at the hands of Islamists. Despite the efforts of President Bouteflika, elected in 1999 and again in 2004, to reintroduce a more democratic and less autocratic government, the activities of violent extremists continue to pose a threat to Christian minorities.\footnote{Giovanni Sale S.I., "Il Maghreb Tra Islamismo Jihadista E Islâm Tradizionale," [The Maghreb between Jihadi Islamism and Traditional Islam] La Civiltà Cattolica III, no. 3769 (2007): 19; Editoriale, "Una Nuova Forma Di Terrorismo?," 431.} The historical turn of events as depicted by Sale explains why Christians in a country such as Algeria face more persecution and discrimination than in other Maghrebin countries, namely Tunisia and Morocco, where the presence of radical Islam has not been as predominant.

In his examination of Tunisia and Morocco, Sale focuses on the reduced influence of radical Islam over political affairs in the period following both countries’ independence. He notes that as early as August 1956 the Tunisian government introduced a “personal statute” which radically reformed Islamic law in regards to family rights, guaranteeing equality between men and women, abolishing polygamy and the ability for a husband to reject his wife, and introducing a minimum age of consent for marriage.\footnote{Sale, "Il Maghreb tra Islamismo," 20.} Improvements, according to Sale, have also been visible in Morocco where the Moroccan monarchy has gained considerable trust and respect from the Islamic population and has simultaneously not given way to Islamic fundamentalism. More importantly, however, while the Moroccan monarchy respects and upholds the religion of Islam (the monarchs retain titles such as “princes of the faithful” and “defenders of the faith”), encouraging the population to follow
suit, it has also prevented extremism from gaining popularity. An example of its firm rejection of terrorism was seen in its strong condemnation of the 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca that claimed the lives of 41 people.\(^49\) These initiatives have translated into an increased sense of freedom for non-Muslim religious minorities and are framed by *La Civiltà Cattolica* as areas in which the pursuit of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is possible.

*La Civiltà Cattolica*’s identification of moderate Islam’s accomplishments in former European colonies such as Tunisia and Morocco opens space for the creation of what Sale calls “a bulwark against Islamic extremism.”\(^50\) Compared to most Islamic countries not only in the Middle East but in Asia as well, Sale believes that Christians living in the Maghreb find better conditions given that their freedom of religion is respected, or at least protected, by the ruling elite. This has improved relations between the Catholic Church and the Magrebin countries, Morocco in particular, and has led to events of profound interreligious and intercultural significance such as Pope John Paul II’s address to young Muslims in Casablanca on 19 August 1985. A quote from his speech reflects the possibility of improving conditions for both Christians and Muslims in all Islamic countries:

> I believe that we, Christians and Muslims, must recognize with joy the religious values that we have in common, and give thanks to God for them. Both of us believe in one God the only God, who is all Justice and all Mercy; we believe in the importance of prayer, of fasting, of almsgiving, of repentance and of pardon; we believe that God will be a merciful judge to us at the end of time.\(^51\)

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\(^{49}\) Sale, "Il Maghreb tra Islamismo," 23.

\(^{50}\) Sale, "Il Maghreb tra Islamismo," 24.

The Pope’s words also come with a sense of realism as they acknowledge the difficult history Christianity and Islam carry into a period of renewed friendship. Nonetheless, they outline a non-violent solution which the Pope endeavours to communicate to the entire Muslim world:

Christians and Muslims, in general we have badly understood each other, and sometimes, in the past, we have opposed and even exhausted each other in polemics and in wars. I believe that, today, God invites us to change our old practices. We must respect each other, and also we must stimulate each other in good works on the path of God.52

Such instances of religious tolerance point to a fertile area of intercultural and interreligious exchange which may be used to counter the strict limitations on Christians imposed by Islamist governments. The promotion of dialogue in these Islamic countries may be the only way to cultivate a culture of tolerance and coexistence that strengthens Christians’ and Muslims’ shared sense of ethics and spiritual morality.

Religious Pluralism in the Islamic World: A Possibility?

In six of its post-9/11 articles on interreligious dialogue, La Civiltà Cattolica argues for the establishment of respectful religious pluralism in the Islamic world as a way of preventing further interreligious and intercultural conflict.53 Their argument, in turn, is linked to the hope for a better implementation of human rights in areas where

52 John Paul II, “Address of His Holiness John Paul II to Young Muslims,” Sec 10. Italics in original.
Islamist governments fail to ensure the safety of non-Muslim religious minorities. According to the analysis thus far, the Jesuits have identified in areas managed by religiously intolerant Islamist governments a fertile ground for the creation of armed Jihadi Islamists. This, they claim, has had severe repercussions on Christians and often caused a breakdown in Christian-Muslim relations. The use of coercive behaviour automatically extinguishes hopes of peaceful coexistence. However, the Jesuits identify another threat to their hopes of seeing religious pluralism established both in the Islamic and the Western world: syncretism, understood in this context as the attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite religious practices. They fear that efforts to create interfaith dialogue and collaboration between Christians and Muslims may be stunted by a simplistic vision that focuses on the “sameness” of all religions in order to facilitate interfaith dialogue. While La Civiltà Cattolica champions the search for common ground with Muslims, particularly against the menace of violent extremism that often targets members of both religions, it warns against a “uniform” presentation of all religions as being the same.

According to the scholarship of theologian Lenn Goodman, modern religious pluralism is a perspective “that sees room for more than one good way of life for an individual or a society and acknowledges diverse perspectives on the truth.” Goodman reflects the views of the Jesuits when he states that “pluralism does not

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54 In “I Diritti dell’Uomo nell’Islam,” Sale acknowledges the “great juridical and cultural gap” that lies between the UN declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights (CDHR), particularly in regards to the CDHR’s articles on the rights of non-Muslims, the right to religious freedom and freedom of marriage. See Sale, "I Diritti dell’Uomo nell'Islam," 382.


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proclaim multiple truths and deny that one reality stands behind them all. That view, as I see it, is not pluralism but relativism.” He goes on to affirm that “the faith of pluralism is that values can be reconciled and that diverse perspectives do not reflect an underlying incoherence in reality.”

In both their 17 July 2004 and 6 May 2006 editorials, the Jesuits warn against a particular understanding of religious pluralism, framed by Goodman as “religious relativism” and by the Jesuits as “syncretism,” within interreligious dialogue. They begin their argument in the more incisive May 2006 editorial by attributing two meanings to this concept. The first points to coexistence. The editorial generally argues that, while in the past religions enjoyed their own territory and were not in close proximity to each other, today, particularly since the establishment of nation states, individuals of multiple religions share confined geographical spaces. For the Jesuits, this historical change sheds light on the second meaning of religious pluralism, framed as a “right:” the right of every religion to be considered on equal footing with others and to benefit from the same privileges. This latter understanding, considered by the Jesuits as the most commonly used when speaking of religious pluralism, entails that all religions are equally accepted by the laws of the state. In this sense, the Jesuits state that all religions have the right to make their own propaganda and practice their own rites, in conformity with the laws that regulate the public order of the state.

The Jesuits are not opposed to religions enjoying equal rights and being treated on an equal footing with other religions. What they fear, however, is the

simplistic philosophical-theological meaning which, they believe, can stem from this legal perspective on religious pluralism. For example, they argue against some of the modern claims made by Christian theologians such as Paul F. Knitter who sees “Jesus as not the only saviour, but a saviour among others,” arguing that there is “not only one way to salvation, but many ways, all of equal value.” According to Knitter, there is no such thing as an “absolute truth” but “many equally valid truths.” In this view, the Jesuits argue, Christianity’s claim to be the one and true religion, given its portrayal as nothing more than a religion like any other, would be false. Therefore, a Christian seeking dialogue with a Muslim may risk deceiving his or her interlocutor into a watered-down understanding of Christianity and of the fundamental Christian dogmas of the Trinity of God and uniqueness of Jesus Christ. In a similar way, the Jesuits affirm that members of other religions must enter into dialogue with a genuine and truthful understanding of their religion. As stated in their July 2004 editorial, “interreligious dialogue is authentic only if those who engage in it present their own religious creed in its authenticity and integrity.” They go on to affirm that “If, then, interreligious dialogue brings religions to a better understanding of each other and to an exchange of gifts and values, it will not be ineffective. Believers of different religions could reflect on these values in a transformed environment no longer conditioned by ignorance and prejudice, but constantly fuelled by mutual comprehension and friendship.”

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61 Editoriale, "Il Dialogo Interreligioso," 114.
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The Jesuits are aware that, as Troll has argued, their call for respectful interreligious dialogue and cooperation could be understood by members of other religions as a subtle way of seeking to convert individuals to the Christian faith. In fact, those belonging to a religion, such as Islam, that has historically been in conflict with Christianity may be justified in their suspicion. The first chapter of this thesis has demonstrated how the belief in Christianity as “the one and true religion” was used to sustain an anti-Islamic polemic, fuelled by European Christianity’s territorial struggles with Islam, that cast a shadow over the Islamic religion by portraying it as a heresy. For this reason, La Civiltà Cattolica’s May 2006 editorial clarifies that the ultimate goal of interreligious dialogue is

not to propose a conversion to Jesus and adhesion to the Church, but to create mutual knowledge and appreciation, and – where possible – mutual collaboration for civil, cultural and social progress. Above all, interreligious dialogue should create a climate of peace among people who, despite their belonging to a different religion, should find reasons to remain united and not divided. 63

This statement is indicative of La Civiltà Cattolica’s search for an in-between point where members of different religious backgrounds can meet without on the one hand feeling coerced into wholeheartedly accepting another’s religious beliefs and, on the other, adopting the superficial view that everyone possesses the truth. The statement also prefigures the words of Pope Francis on 22 March 2013 who, after calling for greater dialogue between Christianity and Islam, stated: “It is not possible to build bridges between people while forgetting God. But the converse is also true: it is not possible to establish true links with God while ignoring other people.” 64 If new

bridges are to be built with Islam, particularly at a time when violent Islamic extremism threatens both Christians and moderate Muslims, the ultimate goal of interreligious dialogue is neither to convert the other to one’s own religion, nor is it to give way to syncretism, but, as Troll mentioned in his 1998 article and Michel Fédou reaffirmed in 2010, to know, to listen and above all to collaborate with the other with the aim of bringing about peaceful coexistence.65 In this way La Civiltà Cattolica’s basic suggestions as to how interreligious dialogue should take place open new possibilities for both Christians and Muslims to remain faithful to their religious traditions while engaging with members of another religion toward the greater good.

Given that La Civiltà Cattolica is a Catholic journal, it directs the greater proportion of its messages to those Christians who wish to engage in interreligious dialogue but are afraid of either being rejected by religious individuals with a different creed or, as we have discussed, compromising the essence of their faith in an effort to facilitate dialogue. On this point, the Jesuits encourage Christians to return to the essence of their religion and recognise that they have been, and still are, unfaithful to Christianity, and that they are unable to live it truthfully and in full. Therefore, they stress that the true purpose of the Christian individual is found in the continuous conversion to God, repeatedly passing from deceit to truthfulness, from egoism to charity, which is the very soul of Christianity.66 Here, the former Apostolic Nuncio in Egypt Michael L. Fitzgerald’s citation of a document published by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1991, entitled, Dialogue and Proclamation, can aid our understanding of how the Jesuits believe interfaith dialogue can function.

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65 Troll, "Missione e Dialogo," 400; Fédou, "I Cristiani in Dialogo con le Altre Religioni," 143.
to both foster mutual knowledge and become a way of deepening one’s own spiritual experience. According to the document, dialogue has a deeper purpose than that of exploring other religious convictions:

Interreligious dialogue does not merely aim at mutual understanding and friendly relations. It reaches a much a deeper level, that of the spirit, where exchange and sharing consist in a mutual witness to one’s beliefs and a common exploration of one’s respective religious convictions. In dialogue, Christians and others are invited to deepen their religious commitment, to respond with increasing sincerity to God’s personal call and gracious gift.\(^67\)

The key to this statement emerges in its categorisation of “mutual witness” as a central element of interreligious dialogue. As Michael Fitzgerald argues, this allows one’s partner in dialogue to speak of their religion according to their own understanding of it since “they should be allowed to define themselves in light of their own religious experience.”\(^68\) On these terms, the possibility of interfaith dialogue and cooperation seems plausible. For this study, however, the question remains whether dialogue has been practically useful in countering the deeds and propaganda of those extremists who claim that Christianity and Islam are engaged in a religious war. The Jesuits’ analysis of some recent official Catholic-Muslim interchanges, particularly in regards to religious freedom, can help us better understand the direction that new interfaith initiatives are taking.

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\(^68\) Fitzgerald, "*Nostra Aetate*, a Key to Interreligious Dialogue," 710.
Interfaith Initiatives: Breakthroughs and Obstacles

When faced with the task of engaging in a concrete analysis of how fruitful interfaith dialogue between Christianity and Islam has been in recent years, the Jesuits of *La Civiltà Cattolica* generally praise the efforts of Islamic clerics to meet with members of the PCID and see the 2006 Regensburg lecture as a catalyst to intensified dialogue. The enthusiasm the Jesuits showed when suggesting new ways of engaging in dialogue and collaboration, however, seems also to be overshadowed by their acknowledgment of significant obstacles in interfaith initiatives – the lack of consensus on the right to religious freedom in the Islamic world first and foremost among them. Without this fundamental right, which is offered to Muslims living in the Western world but not to all Christians living in the Islamic world, the Jesuits do not see a growth in collaborative efforts to counter Islamic extremism. Nonetheless, the number of interreligious meetings, lectures, symposia, conferences, seminars and workshops significantly increased in the period following the Regensburg lecture, giving both Christian and Islamic religious leaders a chance to discuss those challenges faced by both faiths in the new millennium. At the centre of intensified interreligious dialogue was an open letter addressed to Pope Benedict XVI signed by 138 Islamic intellectuals.

In an article published on 1 December 2007, Christian Troll describes the open letter to the Pope, the Patriarchs of the Orthodox Churches, the leaders of the larger Christian denominations, and to leaders of Christians everywhere as an
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“unprecedented event in the history of Christian-Muslim relations.”

The letter, entitled *A Common Word Between Us and You*, is a follow up to a shorter letter, sent in 2006, in response to Pope Benedict’s Regensburg address. It uses extensive quotes from the Qur’an, the Hadith, and the Bible to reinforce the notion that Islam and Christianity share the twin commandment to love God and love one’s neighbour and that this common ground can be the starting point for further dialogue to promote understanding and world peace. While many Christian leaders have responded to *A Common Word*, notable scholars such as John L. Esposito and Karen Armstrong also contributed to the ongoing exchange of views. In addition, the letter sparked a series of global interreligious initiatives that addressed, among numerous other topics, current issues such as violent extremism, human rights, religious freedom and equality.

In their analysis of both *A Common Word* and some official interreligious meetings held in the period following its publication, *La Civiltà Cattolica* authors

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71 These included the lectures and workshops in Cambridge University in February 2009; in Oman in March 2009; and in the Philippines; Richmond, Virginia; Egypt and Sudan over the course of 2009. Larger symposiums were held at the Mediterranean Dialogue of Cultures in November 2008; at the Brookings Institute in Qatar in January 2009; at Fuller Theological Seminary in May 2009; at ISNA in July 2009; and at Yale University again in September 2009. Full-blown conferences were held on *A Common Word* in Portland, Oregon in March 2009; in the United Arab Emirates and South Carolina simultaneously in March 2009; in Pakistan in April 2009, and in Australia in May 2009. The original letter is available at http://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/. The responses, including the ones mentioned here, are available at http://www.acommonword.com/category/site/christian-responses/.
Troll and De Rosa acknowledge these events as breakthroughs in contemporary Christian-Muslim relations. Troll, for instance, praises *A Common Word*’s citation of passages from the Christian and Hebrew Bible and interprets this as a possible break from more classical Islamic doctrines that portray the scriptures of Christians and Hebrews as corrupt testimonies that should not be trusted by Muslims, let alone used as the basis for dialogue with Christians.\(^2\) Giuseppe De Rosa, on the other hand, selects an interreligious event that brought the issue of Islamic terrorist violence into the limelight but was largely overlooked by the Western media: the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue, held in Mecca 4-6 June 2008.\(^3\) Organised by the King of Saudi Arabia Abdullah bin Abdulaziz with the intention of encouraging the Islamic Ulema to dialogue with Christian and Jewish religious leaders, the conference framed interreligious dialogue as the key to extinguishing religious violence and terrorism. De Rosa captured the two following sections of the King’s speech at the conference:

> You are gathered here to say to the world that we are the voice of justice and of moral human values, that we are the voice of coexistence and of dialogue. Yet how difficult are the challenges that the Islamic nation encounters in this moment in which a number of enemies, among which are its extremist sons, have united with evident animosity to wound Islam in its equity and its new objectives…Dialogue is destined to oppose those challenges brought about by closed mindedness and by ignorance so that the world may understand the precepts of Islam without malice or resentment.\(^4\)

\(^2\) Troll, "Verso una Convergenza di Fondo," 439.
\(^3\) Among the most important interreligious meetings held throughout this period were: June 2008: Interreligious meeting in Mecca, in which the King of Saudi Arabia encouraged Muslim elites to engage in interreligious dialogue; July 2008: Interfaith Congress in Madrid; October 2007: Cambridge meeting between Christians and Muslims; October 2008: Symposium on interfaith dialogue held in Brussels; 6th international Christian-Islamic Conference held by the Focolari Catholic movement; November 2008: Catholic-Muslim Forum held at the Gregorian University of Rome.
In his article De Rosa argues that the intentions of the King were to seek the help of the Saudi Arabian government in order to instruct 40,000 Saudi and foreign Imam in a more moderate version of Islam which would condemn extremism. Furthermore, King Abdullah’s vision of the three great monotheistic religions speaking as one voice in condemnation of terrorism supports La Civiltà Cattolica’s proposition of new, non-violent, religious collaborative efforts to counter violent extremism. A question often raised at interreligious meetings, however, reveals some of the complications involved: how can relations between Christians and Muslims be facilitated so that counterterrorist collaboration may be implemented?

The two Jesuit authors dedicate a significant amount of attention to what they believe are some of the shortcomings of these interreligious encounters. In a more in-depth article published on 1 November 2008 entitled “La Dichiarazione di Madrid. Un Passo Avanti nel Dialogo Interreligioso,” [The Madrid Declaration. A Step Forward in Interreligious Dialogue] De Rosa examines an event closely linked to the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue: The World Conference on Dialogue organized by the Muslim World League in Madrid, 16-18 July 2008. While De Rosa views the resulting “Declaration of Madrid” document and its clear denunciation of terrorism as a significant step forward in the battle against violent extremism, he voices concern about the lack of reference to religious freedom. He utilises the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran’s comments to unveil what he believes were the less successful aspects of the

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75 De Rosa, “I Problemi Del Dialogo Interreligioso,” 67-68.
76 The declaration can be viewed on the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC website. See http://www.saudiembassy.net/announcement/announcement07180801.aspx
conference. When asked by *L’Osservatore Romano* to comment on the outcomes of the conference, Tauran replied:

Something worth noticing is that in the final communiqué there is not one allusion to freedom of religion. In my intervention, nevertheless, I mentioned it. This means there are still difficulties in understanding the difference between the freedom of worship and freedom of religion.

Tauran sees true religious freedom in the Islamic world – framed by Luciano Larivera as the ability to publicly manifest one’s faith, the possibility of inviting others to join one’s religion and the right to change religion – as often overshadowed by a freedom of worship which limits the believer to private ritual and prayer. The breaking of certain rules can often be met with serious punishment, even death. The sense of fear and insecurity that this generates, in turn, is one of the elements that impedes the process of collaboration against violent extremism spoken of by the Jesuits of *La Civiltà Cattolica* and reinforced by the comments of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. Giovanni Sale elaborates on this point by emphasising that Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, have often appealed to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to defend the rights of migrant Muslims living in Western countries, “rights which they do not seem willing to accept in their own countries, and, above all, in the interests of residing minorities. This ambiguous behaviour has often been noted by Western scholars.”

On this complicated issue Christian Troll returns to the text of *A Common Word* and expresses his desire to see Christian-Muslim interaction go beyond the mere quotation of religious passages and towards the fulfilment of what Tauran calls

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77 Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, as cited in De Rosa, "La Dichiarazione di Madrid," 285.
79 Sale, "I Diritti dell'Uomo nell'Islam," 382.
the “plan of the Creator” – that same Creator to whom both Christians and Muslims turn. Troll argues that this plan should guide all believers to “greater interreligious solidarity and fraternity… and to the fundamental task of finding in one’s religious experience a contribution to the formation and reinforcement of the ‘common good’ in a pluralist society.”80 While A Common Word has proved to be a suitable starting point from which some of the more pressing issues of our age can be debated, the need for the creation of more safe environments in which Christians and Muslims can efficiently cooperate remains one of the greater challenges for the Jesuits of La Civiltà Cattolica.

Islamic countries are not the only places where La Civiltà Cattolica sees divisive and alienating forces at work. In fact, many of the journal’s messages are directed at the West’s often unsavoury portrayal of Islam and the damaging impact of secular post-modern society on a number of Islamic customs. As the following chapter on La Civiltà Cattolica’s soft-counterterrorist solutions demonstrates, the Jesuits see this as symptomatic of the West’s ignorance of both Islamic civilisation and its own religious Christian roots. In light of La Civiltà Cattolica’s acknowledgment of the difficulty in seeing religious pluralism and religious freedom implemented in certain parts of the Islamic world, the hope to which the journal clings is that both Christians and Muslims develop a relationship based on those basic ethical and moral principles that run through both religions. At a time when Islam seems to be coming into increasing conflict with a secularised West, this may be the moment for Christians and Muslims to take advantage of their shared sense of spiritual

80 Troll, “Verso una Convergenza di Fondo,” 441.
morality and fight for the noble ideals of religious equality, freedom of religion, interreligious dialogue and a unified struggle for peace. While acts of violence continue to generate fear and a climate of terror in the Islamic world, a number of changes are proving that those who wish to live their faith truthfully and authentically can counter the ideas of violent extremists. This, however, can only be done according to the laws of a God who is both “love” (1 Jn 4:8) and “the most gracious and the most merciful.” (Qur’an 1:1)
Chapter 5

Catholic Thought as Soft-Counterterrorism

_La Civiltà Cattolica_ on non-Violent Solutions to Islamic Terrorism

Given the material, social and cultural destruction caused by the contemporary war on terrorism, the necessity of articulating non-violent responses to the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism has become a pressing issue for our times. This thesis has thus far analysed _La Civiltà Cattolica_’s challenge to scholarship on Islamic terrorism that portrays Islam as a violent religion incompatible with both democracy and modernity. Yet there is another paradigm of scholarship on Islamic terrorism that functions to legitimise hard counterterrorism measures as the only means through which Islamic terrorism can be fought. This narrative tends to portray Islamic terrorists as alienated, weak-minded and irrational social outcasts with whom there can be no form of compromise. Islamic communities living in Western countries are often similarly indicted and find themselves on the receiving end of anti-Islamic sentiment. _La Civiltà Cattolica_ challenges this narrative by suggesting Islamic terrorist violence can be addressed with soft counterterrorist measures based on dialogue, mediation and self-criticism. While critics label the Jesuits’ efforts as “acts of surrender” to the religious war waged by violent extremists, this chapter frames the Jesuit journal’s call for greater collaboration between the general Christian and Muslim population as a powerful weapon in the fight against Islamic terrorism.
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Using Soft Power to Counter Islamic Terrorism in Europe

The term “soft power” – coined by in 1990 by the political scientist Joseph Nye – is defined by Nye as the ability to influence others using intangible sources, such as cultural exchange, the use of principles and of values and diplomacy, rather than tangible means such as coercion (threat and force).¹ The concept has featured in scholarship on the US-led War on Terror and War in Iraq and has sparked a debate about the need for more soft power in light of the United States’ failure to counter ideological support for terrorism among Muslims.² While Nye devoted much of his work to explaining what soft power is, scholars have lamented the lack of explanation in his book of how soft power can be used, in a practical sense, to prevent further Islamic terrorist attacks in the twenty-first century.³ The discussion of the more direct, enemy-centric counterterrorist approach consisting mainly of offensive, hard power tactics such as drone strikes, special forces operations and policing has dominated scholarship on Islamic terrorism, yet what Jason Rineheart labels the “indirect soft power approach, based on population-centric methods focused on analysing the underlying causes that drive terrorism,”⁴ has not received sufficient scholarly attention. Here, La Civiltà Cattolica’s focus on intercultural and interfaith

dialogue as a counterterrorist strategy aimed at “drying the waters in which terrorism navigates” belongs in in this gradually expanding field of scholarship.

One of the conclusions drawn by experts of international relations and security Matthew Kroenig, Melissa McAdam and Steven Weber on the use of soft counterterrorism is that soft power campaigns are successful when intermediaries who are trusted by the target audience are called into action. In reference to this point, and in the context of developing friction between Westerners and Muslims in Europe and the Western world, La Civiltà Cattolica writer Edmond Farahian S.I. suggests two points of discussion: preparing the territory for improved Christian-Muslim relations and promoting the positive aspects of what both religions have in common. The first point focuses on challenging Westerners’ preconceived ideas about Muslims and avoiding superficial assumptions that foster hatred and resentment. The categorisation of Muslims as an alienated community unable to adapt to a democratic environment and unwilling to respect liberty of conscience is, according to Farahian, a major obstacle to cooperative efforts to defeat violent extremism.

Negative representations of Muslims can be found in current narratives on Islamic terrorism that link “home-grown” terrorist violence to the alienation, lack of integration and unemployment of Muslims as well as to the general failure of multiculturalism in Europe. For instance, political scientists Javier Jordan and Luisa

5 Editoriale, "'Un Giorno Buio nella Storia dell'Umanità,'" 9.
Box argue that “by working among ordinary European and North American Muslims, Al-Qaeda has gained strategic depth at the very heart of Western Communities.”8 In other words, Western Muslims are a potential “enemy within”9 who can be indoctrinated, or radicalised, into terrorism often through extremist madrasas, mosques or the internet.10 This representation of Muslims reinforces the belief that punitive hard counterterrorism strategies are justifiable and that the only way to defeat violent extremism is to use force. In this view, non-violent alternatives such as dialogue and compromise appear counterproductive.11 Farahian’s work, in conformity with the new pro-dialogue approach of La Civiltà Cattolica, not only denounces forceful punitive strategies as ineffective but sees Western Muslims as the key to defeating violent extremism and to establishing peaceful coexistence.

Farahian discusses how Muslims living in Europe can be better integrated into a Western system that allows for religious freedom yet may not permit certain traditional customs that are at odds with European laws. First, he raises some related contentious issues at the heart of contemporary cultural and political debates in Europe. While the practice, claimed only by a small minority, of violent extremism is one of the greater causes of friction between Westerners and Muslims in Europe, Farahian touches on other local issues of contention such as full-face coverings, the right of women to divorce, and the creation of religious schools unrecognised by the state. On this last matter, he clarifies that Muslims should be entitled to their own

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9 Jordan and Box, "Al-Qaeda and Western Islam," 4
11 Jackson, “Constructing Enemies,” 421.
private schools, yet these should follow a curriculum that is related to the guidelines of national education. For instance, he discusses the intention to create an Islamic school in Milan which endorsed a curriculum completely unrelated to the Italian school system. This, Farahian believes, can lead to a further “ghettoization” of new generations of Muslims rather than to integration.\footnote{Farahian, "Il Dialogo," 571-73.} If what Farahian labels a “new climate” among Muslims and Westerners is to be created in Europe, the European school environment should serve as an example of a formative locus in which young Muslims can learn about European culture and way of life while retaining their own customs and beliefs. For this reason, he believes it is critical that the school not become a place of isolation for students belonging to Islamic cultures. The school, he argues, should teach students to live together within a modern society where the inhabitants of a shared space have the same rights and duties. This would be a first step in the creation of a bridge over the abyss that often lies between what is lived at home and what is lived at school.\footnote{Farahian, "Il Dialogo," 573.}

Within this discussion of how the education system can be better suited to promote intercultural understanding, Farahian calls the aforementioned “intermediaries” into action. He emphasises the need to prepare “cultural mediators” to facilitate better relations between Westerners and Muslims. These will not only facilitate the formative experiences of young people in schools but may be used in the context of the wider European community according to the numbers of Muslims residing in specific areas. Farahian believes these cultural mediators would expose Europeans to difficulties faced by Muslims as well as encourage Islamic migrants to
know what is expected of them in order to avoid needless conflict. His ultimate goal is to promote an enriched, preventative and not repressive European multicultural culture that focuses on respect for liberty of conscience, respect for the dignity of the human person and, above all, reciprocity.\textsuperscript{14}

On a religious level, Farahian believes that the training of Islamic religious leaders is paramount to the future of Western Muslims. He argues that Imam and Ulema preaching in European mosques should be bilingual and should actively help their followers to coexist within the West; for him this is a prerequisite for the creation of better relations between Christians and Muslims in the West. In addition, Farahian suggests the foundation of a confederation of all the great European mosques that could be used as a means of a more centralised form of communication with other religions.\textsuperscript{15} Here, \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica}’s search for Islamic interlocutors is clearly identifiable. In the context of what is often seen as a lack of central authority in Islam, Farahian’s suggestion to establish a confederation of mosques that, he hopes, will make clearer distinctions between violent and non-violent interpretations of Islam, emerges as a method of countering the propaganda of Islamic terrorists. However, the potential Islamic fear that this may in fact be a way for the West to better control Islam, or worse, to create a “diluted” Islam that is in line with Western models is considered by Farahian. He therefore emphasises that the aim of this initiative is to allow Islam to be freely practiced according to its true principles, without interference from those who seek to manipulate the religion for violent ends. Farahian’s fears that his initiatives may be seen by Muslims as new Western efforts

\textsuperscript{14} Farahian, "Il Dialogo,” 577.

\textsuperscript{15} Farahian, "Il Dialogo,” 576.
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of colonising the East is an evident reminder that soft power comes with limitations. Muslims must find these ideas appealing and non-invasive before their implementation is championed.

As Philip Lewis states in a recent article on Christians and Muslims in Western Europe, “the greatest challenge facing Christians and Muslims is to learn to share the public and civic space and to seek together to shape it for the common good.” While the bombs that ripped through the London public transport system barely three weeks after Farahian’s publication demonstrated that violent extremists were still at large, the launch of a national Christian-Muslim Forum (CMF) at Lambeth Palace in January 2006 proved that his vision could be implemented. The forum gathers the views of local Muslims, Christians and policy-makers in order to develop strong and committed relationships between members of both faiths. It organises teams of specialists to resource working parties concerned with community and public affairs, education, youth, international relations, media and family. There is still much to be done in order to strengthen interfaith relations on a practical level and create the kind of cooperation envisaged by Farahian, but initiatives such as the CMF are a viable starting point.

While La Civiltà Cattolica has primarily focused its analysis of non-violent solutions to Islamic terrorism on the Islamic world and the West, its contributions to another environment of heightened Islamic terrorist activity, namely Israel, also

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17 A detailed explanation of the initiatives launched by the Catholic-Muslim Forum can be viewed at http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/.
merits discussion. The journal’s extensive research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict again reflects the diverging opinions and approaches of Giovanni Sale and Giuseppe De Rosa and provides new alternatives on how soft power can be used to counter violent extremists. As the ensuing analysis demonstrates, *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s critics label its new, less constrictive and more pro-dialogue, approach to terrorists and terrorist organisations in Palestine as an act of surrender. Here too, the efficacy of soft power in dealing with terrorism resurfaces as a complex issue that needs further exploration.

**The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Finding a fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a recurring point of discussion in *La Civiltà Cattolica*. The Jesuits’ analysis of the conflict aims both to find a solution to the ongoing political tension in the region and to remove another element that fuels international Islamic terrorist violence. In an October 2006 article entitled “Quale Lotta al Terrorismo? Cinque Anni Dopo L’11 Settembre 2001,” [What Struggle Against Terrorism? Five Years After 11 September 2001] the Jesuits deem military activity and the imposition of Western-style democracy in the Islamic world as ineffective counterterrorism measures that may in fact promote more terrorism and argue that without a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Islamic terrorism will not be able be stamped out.¹⁸

As the *Civiltà Cattolica* author who opened the journal’s examination of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the twenty-first century, Giuseppe De Rosa’s account

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¹⁸ Editoriale, "Quale Lotta al Terrorismo?,” 112.
of Palestinian terrorism once again represents a critical approach towards violent struggles in the name of Islam that has been superseded since the middle of the first decade of the 2000s.\textsuperscript{19} While other \textit{La Civilità Cattolica} contributors, such as Angelo Macchi and Giovanni Sale, offer a more balanced approach that considers Palestinian terrorism in light of ongoing Jewish expansion and land settlements, De Rosa’s 2003 article “Il Terrorismo Suicida nella Palestina di Oggi” [Suicide Terrorism in Today’s Palestine] solely focuses on Palestinian attacks on Israelis. Furthermore, he particularly criticises the Palestinian justification of violence by reference to God, not taking into consideration that the Jewish appropriation of territory is also routinely justified as the will of God for his chosen people.\textsuperscript{20} Hamas is portrayed by De Rosa as a stumbling block to what he believes is the only remedy to the conflict: a two-state solution. However, De Rosa’s article omits the vital historical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, opting instead for a detailed argument of how Hamas terrorist recruitments betray the true meaning of the Islamic religion. Such considerations tend to manifest \textit{La Civilità Cattolica}’s older, more critical renditions of Islamic terrorism that focus on demonising the perpetrators of violent attacks.

Giovanni Sale’s more recent (2009 and 2011) deliberations on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict offer a different portrayal of the ongoing warfare alongside insight into ways of challenging Palestinian Islamic terrorism. In an article entitled “Hamas e la Questione Palestinese” [Hamas and the Palestinian Question, 2009] Sale

\textsuperscript{19} While I acknowledge that Palestinian terrorism is not only an Islamic struggle but also a political one perpetrated by atheists or members of other religions, in this section my focus is on De Rosa’s stigmatising analysis of Palestinian terrorists compared with Giovanni Sale’s more balanced approach.

recounts the history of Hamas from its foundation in 1987 to its victory in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections. First, he makes a clear and well-framed distinction between Hamas and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). He states that in contrast to the PLO’s secularist perspective, founded on the emulation of Western socialist and communist parties, Hamas’ current intention is to establish a Palestinian Islamic state founded on Sharia law. For the PLO, Sale recounts, the Palestinian cause is of a political and national nature; for Hamas, it is religious and non-negotiable. Continuing De Rosa’s custom of examining the relatively new phenomenon of Islamic suicide bombings, Sale takes a more cautious approach to the topic and focuses on the socio-historical climate within which this practice came to be used by violent extremists.

Sale places a great deal of emphasis on the origins of the practice of suicide terrorism by Sunni extremists. He does this by singling out a specific moment in the mid-nineties that saw Shiite tactics of political violence being adopted by Sunni extremists. He touches on the first Oslo peace process of September 1993 which called for Palestinian interim self-government and the withdrawal of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. While this accord was officially signed in Washington D.C. in the presence of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and U.S. President Bill Clinton, Sale recounts the opposition with which the religious right in Israel and Hamas in Palestine greeted the Oslo accord. In an effort to maintain progress towards a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Prime Minister Rabin clamped down on the

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21 Sale, "Hamas e la Questione Palestinese," 35.
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Islamists with an iron fist. Approximately 1600 Hamas militants along with 450 Palestinian managerial staff were arrested in December 1992 and deported to Lebanon. Sale writes of the “boomerang” effect this hard-line approach produced. The deportation of such a large numbers of Sunni Islamists to the partly Shiite country of Lebanon created new possibilities for Hamas and Lebanese Hezbollah militants to liaise. More importantly, however, the new strategy of suicide bombing, used by Hezbollah during the 1980s, was emulated by Hamas militants who incorporated the infamous practice into their religious struggle against Israel. Given Sunni Islam’s predominant status in the Muslim world, Sale lays emphasis on how this transmission of suicide terrorism from the Shiite to the Sunni led to the internationalisation of suicide terrorism. According to Sale, what was intended as a strategic move by Prime Minister Rabin to rid Israel and Palestine of terrorism resulted in Sunni extremists’ introduction to a weapon they would come to frequently use not only against Israel, but also against countries in the West. Sale discusses the emotion and symbolism which began to surround the image of the suicide bomber in Palestine in the late nineties, especially among Hamas militants. Sale argues that, for a significant proportion of the resentful population, such individuals were hailed as shahid, “suicide martyrs,” and became both freedom fighters and martyrs for Palestine. He paraphrases the sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar: “never had the political and religious elements so complemented and enhanced each other as in this

22 Sale, "Hamas e la Questione Palestinese," 38
23 Sale, "Hamas e la Questione Palestinese," 39. See also Massimo Introvigne, Hamas, Fondamentalismo Islamico E Terrorismo Suicida in Palestina. (Torino: Elledici, 2003), 50; Renzo Guolo, Il Fondamentalismo Islamico, 166.
moment.”

Suicide bombings characterised the Islamic struggle against Israel well into the new millennium and continue to play a part, although diminished, in the conflict today.

At this point the question arises: does La Civiltà Cattolica see a solution to the conflict in Palestine? Sale, Macchi and De Rosa are all pessimistic on this issue. However, Sale often seems be the more resourceful of the Civiltà Cattolica writers suggesting new strategies and providing in-depth analyses which point to the political failures of certain leaders on both sides. In the 2009 article on Hamas, he closes his analysis by boldly stating that Hamas cannot be excluded from efforts to find a possible solution to the conflict. In a statement which again reflects the intensification of La Civiltà Cattolica’s pro-dialogue approach over the past decade, Sale concludes that while Hamas has been labelled a terrorist organisation by the United States, it was elected by the Palestinian people in January 2006 and gained 60% of seats in what he calls the “mini parliament.” He adds:

it must be underscored that not all who voted for Hamas belonged to the organisation: half of the supporters voted for the Islamist party because they shared its political programme and its objectives, while the other half simply wanted to express a ‘vote of protest’ towards the governing party [the PLO], both for its corruption and for its failure to properly deal with the peace process and the intensity of Israeli occupation.

Sale concludes that if peace talks are to be renewed, Hamas, and all it represents, cannot be excluded from the negotiating table. He acknowledges the organisation’s categorisation as a terrorist group, yet states that the blacklist on which Hamas finds

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itself could be modified. While he does not explicitly say so, he is clearly hinting at discussions regarding Hamas’ possible removal from the list and inclusion in possible future peace talks.

In 2010, Sale published another article that discussed the ways in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could have been resolved had certain political leaders made wiser decisions. While his approach in this article is often speculative and retrospective, it nonetheless offers new insights into the dynamics of the much debated two-state solution. Sale draws the United Nations partition plan for Palestine into the debate – a plan designed in 1947 and intended to be effective after the termination of the British mandate in 1948. While the Jewish Agency, along with thirty-three UN countries (72% of the vote) were in favour of the plan, Arab governments and the Arab community rejected it. According to Sale, the refutation was based on “religious and ideological motives.” Here Sale’s speculation begins and a forceful tone pervades the rest of the article. Sale states that if on the evening of 14 May 1948, immediately after the declaration of independence by Ben-Gurion in the Tel-Aviv museum, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Muhammad Amin al-Husseini had launched a similar declaration and proclaimed the independence of the Palestinian state, fifty years of Middle-Eastern history would have been quite different. Thus, as his first major statement on the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Sale argues that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem should have taken advantage of a moment in which an internationally backed and recognised resolution was

26 Sale, "Hamas e la Questione Palestinese," 42.
28 Sale, "La Questione Israeliano-Palestinese," 549.
proposed to declare a Palestinian state. Reluctant as he may have been to accept such an agreement due to the intense criticism he would have been subjected to, Sale believes the Grand Mufti could have avoided an ongoing war which to this day continues claim civilian lives. Sale underscores that the Grand Mufti allowed internal feuds among Palestinian families and the political games of neighbouring Arab countries to take priority over a strategic decision which would have granted Palestine its own state.29

Yet there is also the consideration of Israel’s failure to avoid conflict in Sale’s work. Again, he singles out another event and speculates on what could have been done to ease the tensions and bring the UN resolution to fruition. Drawing on the work of the historian Sergio Della Pergola, Sale states that if on the evening of 11 July 1967, following the six day war between Israel and the UAR (Egypt), Jordan and Syria, the Israeli governing authorities had not pronounced the phrase “we await a phone call from King Hussain,” implying a political recognition of Israel’s victory by the Arab armies, further conflict could have been avoided. Sale believes that the Israelis should have been more pro-active in this instance and made the call themselves. Perhaps, in Della Pergola’s words, “the subsequent 40 years of Israeli-Palestinian relations would have been less marked by bloody events.”30 The essence of Sale’s speculations emerges in the concluding comments of his article: “It is true that history is not made with ‘ifs.’” Sale claims, “yet the events of the past, including

29 Sale, "La Questione Israeliano-Palestinese," 549.
missed opportunities, are needed to better understand the present and, above all, to not repeat the same errors.”

As he goes on to consider the pros and cons of a two-state solution, Sale dedicates more of his work to what he identifies as a “two-nations/one state” remedy due to the Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories. Drawing on the work of an expert in ethnic and racial conflict Virginia Tilley, Sale points to the impracticability of a two-state solution in the twenty-first century due to Israeli expansion, an observation which explains his ongoing “ifs” in the first part of the article. Thus his conclusions are quite pessimistic. He sceptically reconsiders the theories of contemporary scholars on the two-state solution and proposes his own remedy by suggesting the creation of a “confederation of Middle-Eastern states,” including Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza strip and Jordan that could gain the support of Arabs interested in finding a solution to the conflict. Sale goes on to state that such a solution would lead to closer ties between Palestinians and Jordanians which could in turn lead to a redefinition of areas in dispute. While a project of this kind is by no means a novelty, Sale reminds his readers that it has been looked upon with favour by both Palestinian and Zionist leaders. The main obstacle to this proposition, and here Sale’s pessimism resurfaces as he seems to contradict his earlier statements, would be the Islamists, that is, Hamas, an organisation which is not willing to share any territory with Israel. The only hope of finding a solution, according to Sale,

33 Sale, "La Questione Israeliano-Palestinese," 557.
34 Sale, "La Questione Israeliano-Palestinese," 557.
remains in the hands of those Palestinian and Israeli leaders who, regardless of the treacherous road, continue to search for a solution to what has become an extremely complicated problem.

The speculative element of Sale’s views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict tend to make his suggestions on a possible solution to the conflict ineffective. For instance, it would have been interesting to have Sale focus less on the “missed opportunities” among Israeli and Palestinian political and religious leaders and more on how his envisioned “confederation of Middle-Eastern states” could have been implemented and under what auspices. Much like Farahian’s suggestion of a confederation of all the great European mosques, Sale’s is an attempt to create a locus of dialogue, exchange and collaboration in function of conflict resolution. In this respect, his suggestion to remove Hamas from the US-compiled blacklist of terrorist organisation and consider inviting its representatives to possible future peace talks emerges as his most daring yet perhaps plausible assertion. The situation of growing political and religious unrest in Israel and Palestinian territories suggests that this is an opportune moment to consider new avenues of diplomatic, soft-counterterrorist methods that may counter state sanctioned violence and violent extremism in these regions.

Criticism of La Civiltà Cattolica’s Pro-Discourse Position Towards Islam

La Civiltà Cattolica’s pro-dialogue approach to Islam in the twenty-first century has attracted a considerable amount of criticism from scholars and journalists who see the journal’s change of position as reflecting the Church’s weakness in confronting violent extremism. On 25 March 2013, Magdi Allam, a controversial Egyptian-born
Italian journalist who converted from Islam to Christianity in 2008, publically announced his abandonment of the Catholic Church to protest against its “soft stance against Islam.” Allam’s decision came days after the newly elected Pope Francis announced that he wished to make the intensification of dialogue with Muslims one of the priorities of his pontificate. According to Allam, instead of seeking dialogue and bonds of friendship, the Church should denounce Islam as incompatible with Western civilisation and fundamental human rights. He also stated that not doing so would pave the way for Europe’s eventual subjugation to Islam. While the full story behind Allam’s departure from a second religion remains unclear, his categorisation of the Church’s pro-dialogue approach towards Islam as an act of weakness is shared by other scholars.

La Civiltà Cattolica’s position towards Islamic terrorist violence in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be summarised in a few comments made by Angelo Macchi S.I. in an article published during the second and more aggressive Intifada in July 2002: “There is a morality of ends, but also of means. A good end (the creation of a Palestinian state) cannot justify an immoral means (the massacre of civilians).” While this statement demonstrates the historical change


37 Allam, “Perché me ne vado da questa Chiesa debole con l'Islam.”

which took place over a millennium in the Church’s mentality towards violence and aggression, it did not convince expert in Jewish studies Sergio Itzhak Minerbi. In an article published in the *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* in 2012, Minerbi criticised *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s approach towards the conflict in Palestine and the Catholic Church’s current position with regards to Islam in general. Minerbi holds the Catholic Church accountable for failing to adequately condemn Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first century and shapes his criticism around three main arguments: that the Church does not have a firm hold on its curia; that there are different and at times conflicting trends within the Church in regards to Islam and fundamentalism in particular; and that the Church has not yet defined a clear policy towards Islam. For Minerbi, the official representatives of the Catholic Church and the Jesuits, particularly those working for *La Civiltà Cattolica*, are rewarding Islamic extremists and terrorists with a “pro-Islamic policy” which he categorises as an act of surrender. While Minerbi’s approach is often partisan and tends to absolve Israel from any wrongdoings in the conflict, he does suggest inconsistencies in the Church’s approach to political matters that are worthy of investigation.

Minerbi begins his by singling out Samir Khalil Samir and his frequent discussion of what he identifies as the ills of Islamic society. According to Minerbi, Samir represents a trend within the Catholic Church that pushes for a zero tolerance approach to Islamists and extremists. A rare glimpse into this Catholic hard-line

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40 Minerbi, "Benedict XVI and Islam," 64.

approach to Islamism, Minerbi states, seems to have emerged in the early years of Benedict XVI’s papacy and was particularly evident in the Regensburg lecture of September 2006. Both Minerbi and frequent critic of Catholic-Muslim relations Sandro Magister believe that the Church should pursue this hard-line approach and be aware of the potential damaging consequences of the current pro-dialogue method. According to Magister, *La Civiltà Cattolica* is not doing enough, and even if it is opening a discussion on fundamentalist and terrorist Islam, “it does this without even the slightest note of criticism of this nexus of violence and faith.”

Aside from focusing on the problems of mismanagement within the Roman curia, the critiques of Sergio Minerbi and Sandro Magister bring the issue of appeasement of Islamic demands to the fore. As analysed in the introduction of this thesis, in Regensburg the Pope quoted from a dialogue between a thirteenth century Emperor and a Persian intellectual and reported some unfavourable remarks made by the Emperor regarding the Prophet Muhammad. Yet the Pope’s subsequent apology to the Muslim world for a comment which did not reflect his own views on Islam was, in Minerbi’s and Magister’s view, a return to the pro-Islamic policy which the Vatican has developed since Vatican II. According to both critics, the apology and the openness of the Vatican to Muslims are mistakes that pave the way for Islamic extremists to rise to power and achieve more influence over Islamic and Western masses. While Minerbi’s dislike of Islam comes through, he does raise the noteworthy issue of supposed conciliation that both the Catholic Church and the West have often promoted in order to deal with problems involving Islam in Europe. La

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Civiltà Cattolica’s position, particularly in the post-De Rosa period dominated by Giovanni Sale’s articles, is clearly in favour of a more soft-counterterrorism approach based on dialogue and the desire to avoid the humiliation of Muslims. This humiliation, Sale often suggests, is reflected in the imposition of Western-style democracies in Islamic countries and needless defamation in the West of sacred Islamic images.43

Could Minerbi and Magister’s harsh criticism of how Jesuits are responding to violent Islamic extremists be exposing counter-productive elements in the Jesuit pro-dialogue approach? Their approval of De Rosa’s inflexible stance and refutation of Sale’s dialogue-based theories suggest that the Church should be taking a stronger position against Islam. Further investigation into their work may reveal why the Church favours conciliation over the creation of clearer boundaries between the two religions.

While maintaining his hypothesis that the Holy See seems to have lost track of the different trends within Catholicism’s attitude towards Islam, Minerbi moves from praising Samir’s efforts to refuse any kind of discussion with Islamic fundamentalists to a full-blown attack on Sale’s soft-counterterrorist approach. He uses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a point of reference and criticises the Catholic Church for what he believes is a bias toward the Palestinians demonstrated in the

2010 official document *Instrumentum Laboris.* The document refers to the suffering and displacement of Palestinians, by stating: “The Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories is creating difficulties in everyday life, inhibiting freedom of movement, the economy and religious life due to Israeli occupation.” On this point, Minerbi criticises the Church’s lack of impartiality and what he believes is its support for the Palestinian cause.

In the first of two attacks, Minerbi criticises Sale for seeking a dialogue with Islamic parties and ignoring the significant role played by radical Islam in twenty-first century terrorist activity. For Minerbi, the distinction made by Sale between radical and moderate Islam is unfounded since Minerbi believes the entire religion of Islam to be the problem. In a section of his article which refers to the recent Arab Spring, Minerbi asserts that a religious movement such as the Muslim Brotherhood cannot become a modern political party and adopt democratic values because “what we are witnessing now is not an Islamic spring, but a resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism that leaves no space for any kind of moderate Islam.” Given the recent ousting of President Morsi, it seems that Minerbi was justified in assessing Egyptian Islamism’s incompatibility with democracy. His claim nonetheless requires us to delve further into *La Civiltà Cattolica* in order to discover more reasons behind

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45 *Instrumentum Laboris,* 1.
47 Minerbi, "Benedict XVI and Islam," 68.
its pro-dialogue approach to Islam and its hopes for the rise in a moderate Islam throughout the Arab world.

La Civiltà Cattolica’s anti-Semitic articles in the early decades of the twentieth century still echo within the pages of Jesuit Catholicism’s intellectual history. The practice of engaging in polemics on other religions has been rejected by the journal in favour of a pro-dialogue approach that is reflected in Sale’s work. In all of his writings, Sale’s suggested solution to much of the political, social and cultural conflict which is taking place between Islam and the West in the twenty-first century is to allow the Muslim people to make their own policies and project their own future. Sale reminds his readers that the revolutions which have occurred in recent years throughout the Islamic world are protests aimed at establishing higher moral standards and better living conditions for all people. Echoing the words of Pope Benedict XVI, Sale portrays the Arab Spring as a positive phenomenon for all Muslims and an opportunity for countries which have in the past been exploited and humiliated by the West to finally have their own voice. It seems that Sale is less worried about the possibility of radical Islam taking root throughout the Islamic world and intent on highlighting the success stories of groups fighting for democracy, equality and improved living conditions.

Minerbi is not convinced that La Civiltà Cattolica has fully renounced its anti-Semitic past and he uses Sale’s consistent portrayal of Israel as a superpower which oppresses disadvantaged Palestinians as an example of Catholic anti-Semitism. To this end, Minerbi questions why the journal focuses more on Israeli

settlements within Palestinian territories and less on the persecution of Christians in Palestine and in some Islamic countries. He finds it inconceivable that in the face of ongoing persecution of Christians in the Middle-East the Catholic Church has not hardened its policy on Islam. From the attack on the Syrian Catholic Cathedral of Baghdad on 31 October 2010 which killed 58 people, to the attack on the Coptic Cathedral of Alexandria in Egypt on New Year’s day, 2011, and the ongoing diaspora of Christians escaping persecution, Minerbi wonders why the Church has not endeavoured to cut ties with Islam but has instead sought new bonds of friendship with it.\(^{50}\) The Holy See has on different occasions expressed its great disappointment and sorrow at the news of such acts, yet it has persisted in what Minerbi views as a fascination with the spirituality of Islam.\(^{51}\) The French Church’s criticism of France’s ban on the burqua and the support given by former archbishop of Milan Msgr. Tettamanzi for the building of a new mosque in Milan further exemplify the Church’s commitment to maintaining friendly relations with a religion which, according to Minerbi, seldom reciprocates.\(^{52}\)

This raises another question: why does the governing apparatus of the Holy See keep silent? In closer connection to this study, why does La Civiltà Cattolica continue to seek bonds of friendship with Islam when the efforts of creating such bonds have often been fruitless? One answer is suggested by Minerbi himself,

\(^{50}\) Minerbi, “Benedict XVI and Islam,” 70.

\(^{51}\) Minerbi, “Benedict XVI and Islam,” 70.

\(^{52}\) This issue as well as the Church’s position in its regard is discussed at length by Edmond Farahian S.I., “A Proposito del Velo Islamico,” [On the Islamic Veil] La Civiltà Cattolica II, no. 3693 (2004): 209-312.
perhaps in a disdainful manner, yet in terms which encapsulate part of the answer to the current situation between Catholicism and Islam:

A new organisation in France called l’Observatoire de l’Islamisation has recently claimed that the Vatican is one of the most active institutions in trying to counter the demonization of Islam. In the last two years the Vatican intensified its outreach to Islam, making several friendly overtures to the Muslim world, probably because the Roman Curia does not know what else it can try in order to weaken Islamic pressure on the Christians in the Middle East.\(^53\)

On the one hand, Minerbi has understood what can be termed the “self-interest” of the Catholic Church in maintaining friendly relations with Islam. As discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, the Church’s dealings with Islam are often in the interest of the Christians residing in Islamic countries. While a great proportion of these Christians inhabit lands that permit religious freedom, this is often limited to a “liturgical freedom,” or the act of worshipping in a defined place. Elements of true religious freedom, such as publically proclaiming one’s faith or proselytising, are often prohibited and can be met with the death penalty. Furthermore, La Civiltà Cattolica has on different occasions pointed out that the Church is concerned for its holy sites such as the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the town of Bethlehem and other places of significance to Christianity.\(^54\) Such sites are often threatened by the political unrest of the Arab-Israeli conflict and at risk of falling into the hands of extremists who may forbid pilgrimages or even modify their very structures. On the other hand, the post-Vatican II Catholic Church, through various decrees such as Nostra Aetate

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\(^53\) Minerbi, "Benedict XVI and Islam," 70.
\(^54\) In 2002 the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was besieged from 2 April to 10 May by 250 Palestinian militants. After 39 days the militants turned themselves in to Israeli authorities. The event is discussed by Marchesi in Giovanni Marchesi, S.I., "La Basilica della Natività a Betlemme Occupata E Assediata," [The Nativity Basilica in Bethlehem Occupied and Besieged] La Civiltà Cattolica II, no. 3648 (2002): 523-626.
and *Lumen Gentium*, and today through *La Civiltà Cattolica*, has vowed to commit to the search for new avenues of rapprochement with Islam. The Jesuits of *La Civiltà Cattolica* who strictly adhere to this vow, Giovanni Sale first and foremost among them, argue that while Islamic terrorists pose a threat to the survival of Christians both in the Middle-East and in Western countries, such individuals are far outnumbered by those Muslims with whom a dialogue can be initiated and maintained. Efforts to maintain good intercultural and interfaith relations are seen by the Jesuits as the strongest weapon against Islamic terrorism. In this context, it would have been interesting to analyse the Jesuits’ response to Minerbi. There has been, however, no such response.

**A Soft Weapon against Terrorism: Self-criticism, a Challenge to Relativism and the Rediscovery of Europe’s Christian Identity**

Followers of Catholic media will have heard leading Catholic figures, including Pope Francis, representatives of pontifical councils such as Jean Louis Tauran, and Catholic intellectuals, speak of the need for Christians and Muslims to “know” each other in order to develop an attitude of mutual respect. However, during their pontificates, Benedict XVI and John Paul II argued that without the conscious act of Christian self-criticism and self-awareness, this reciprocal knowledge of the other cannot take place. This approach, considered by the contemporary Catholic Church as fundamental to the construction of bonds of friendship with Islam, has been overlooked by critics of *La Civiltà Cattolica* such as Minerbi and Magister. It is,

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however, discussed at length by Enrico Cattaneo S.I., who in an article entitled “L’Invito di Benedetto XVI all’Autocritica” [Pope Benedict’s Invitation to Self-criticism], published on 5 July 2008, lays emphasis on Pope Benedict’s call for self-criticism and his warnings against the dangers of the separation of the concepts of faith and reason in modern Western society. Cattaneo claims that this message, which emerged clearly in Benedict’s encyclicals and in the Regensburg address, is aimed particularly at Western Christians. Furthermore, it is intrinsically tied to the rediscovery of a Christian identity which has largely been relegated to the private sphere throughout the West. As stated in Pope Benedict’s second encyclical, Spe Salvi (2007), “flowing into this self-critique of the modern age there also has to be a self-critique of modern Christianity, which must constantly renew its self-understanding setting out from its roots.”

Cattaneo draws attention to both John Paul II’s and Joseph Ratzinger’s (in his role as both Cardinal and Pope Benedict XVI) discussions of the so-called ills of modern society. Issues such as modern relativism’s denial of objective truth, ethical relativism, the Western crisis of morality, fideism, interreligious dialogue, the myth

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of progress, and science and morality have often been at the heart of late twentieth and twenty-first century official Catholic discourse. Among these, relativism is framed by Cattaneo as an obstacle to improvement in Christian-Muslim relations. According to Ratzinger’s scholarship, relativism has become one of the great challenges of the twenty-first century. An excerpt from Cardinal Ratzinger’s *Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice* homily in 2005 captures the essence of what, according to the Church, is at stake:

> How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves - flung from one extreme to another: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth. Every day new sects spring up, and what St Paul says about human deception and the trickery that strives to entice people into error (cf. Eph 4: 14) comes true.

> Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labelled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be "tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine", seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.60

In his various *Civilità Cattolica* articles on the issue, De Rosa frames modern relativism as a radical challenge to Christian morality and faith, for it undermines its rational premises, namely the philosophy of being (metaphysics), the existence of an objective truth, the existence of natural law, the existence of a triune God and the

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59 The myth of progress is discussed by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, sec.22. Benedict explains that the ideal of progress, if handled by individuals with ill intentions, can become a process of destruction.

existence of divine Revelation. In the past thirteen years, La Civiltà Cattolica has attempted to elucidate this modern day negation of the fundamental elements of the Christian faith. In regards to dealing with ills such as Islamic terrorism, it has tried to communicate that, without what a rediscovery of Christian identity rooted in the unity of faith and reason, modern day Western society is at greater odds with the Muslim world and thus closes off possibilities of working together to counter terrorist violence through dialogue. While the Church has generally opposed Huntington’s Clash of Civilisations theory, it nonetheless clearly believes that if the West does not re-evaluate and re-embrace its Christian roots, the instances of conflict with Islam will become more frequent. In this context, La Civiltà Cattolica identifies relativism as the greatest obstacle to the rediscovery of Christian heritage.

Benedict’s 2006 Regensburg lecture combines the two concepts of self-criticism and relativism into one discussion about the rediscovery of the unity of faith and reason. The Regensburg address did not specifically mention Islamic terrorism, nor was it, contrary to media reports, a direct attack on Islam. However, the speech was delivered on 12 September 2006, exactly one day after the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 bombings, and it did begin by quoting the comment made by Emperor Manuel II Palaeilologos to a Persian intellectual in the twelfth century:

‘God is not pleased by blood – and not acting reasonably is contrary to God’s nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats.’

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63 Manouel II Paléologue, « Entretiens avec un Musulman. 7e Controverse » in Sources Chrétiennes n115, Paris 1966, as cited in Pope Benedict XVI, Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections.
The two key terms which the Pope focused on were “speech” and “reason,” otherwise framed as the kind of rational dialogue which he sees as the key to strengthening relations between Christians and Muslims in the twenty-first century. Therefore, while the Regensburg address cannot be interpreted as the presentation of a counter-terrorist strategy, it did create a connection between the Church’s scholarly tradition on the unity of faith and reason and today’s pressing issue of connection between violence and religion. What the Pope attempted to convey in Regensburg was that a West which has become incapable of considering the religious dimension in discourse, whether it be of a political, cultural or social nature, is a West which finds itself unable to properly interact with the Islamic people – a people who base much of their thinking on religious principles and the guidance of spiritual teachers. In the same way, an Islamic individual who excludes rationality from his or her interaction with members of a Western culture will find it impossible to engage in dialogue. This explains why the lecture began with a dialogue between a Byzantine Emperor and a Muslim intellectual, two figures who serve as symbols of a West shaped by Christianity and Hellenistic thought and a Muslim East guided by Qur’anic principles.

In his address, Benedict began his analysis of rationality by emphasising the good which modern reason, the Enlightenment and scientific method have brought to the West. He argued that his critique has in fact “nothing to do with putting the clock back to the time before the Enlightenment and rejecting the insights of the modern age.” However, the lecture asserts that, if reason is reduced to the

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64 Benedict XVI, *Faith, Reason and the University.*
empirically verifiable, and Christianity to an irrelevancy, then humanity risks being ruled by subjectivity. The danger, as seen by Benedict, is that through this subjectivity, or relativism, the ethical risks losing its power. He asserts that questions of origin and destiny, of religion and ethics have no place within collective reason as defined by science and are therefore relegated to the realm of the subjective. The subject then decides, on the basis of experience, what he or she considers tenable in matters of religion, and the subjective conscience becomes the sole arbiter of what is ethical.\textsuperscript{65} The Pope thus illustrates his views on the dangers posed by a rationality divorced from faith in the West and by a faith separated from reason in Islam.

It is here that the essence of Catholic thought on soft-counterterrorism comes together. \textit{La Civiltà Cattolica} and the Papacies of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and now the vocally pro-dialogue Francis suggest that there is a possibility for the supposed clash of civilizations to turn into a dialogue between civilizations. The lens through which they see this happening consists of a new, balanced unification of the concepts of faith and reason that reside at the core of both Christian and Islamic civilizations. They emphasise that the West faces the same challenge as Islam in that it has lost sight of the unity between a sense of religion and of rationality that complement each other and work together to build a balanced character. For this reason, the Westerner finds it difficult to be self-reflexive and develop that self-understanding needed to progress to an inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue with Islam. As scholars of Catholic thought, both Benedict XVI and the Jesuits of \textit{La

\textsuperscript{65} Benedict XVI, \textit{Faith, Reason and the University}.}
Civiltà Cattolica call on what they see as an essentially Christian West to engage in this self-critique before proposing solutions for Islam.

The same paradox which emerged in the discussion of religious pluralism arises: the consideration of a unification of faith and reason, while leading to a stronger sense of Christian identity, should not lead to a comparison of which religion is better, but should encourage believers to cooperate in the battle against the common enemy of violent extremism. It should, first of all, encourage an awareness of the true Christian spirit, a spirit which, as La Civiltà Cattolica’s 6 May 2006 editorial on religious pluralism states, recognises that Christians are always unable to live their religion fully and are therefore unfaithful to it. For this reason the Christian faith requires its followers to be in a continuous conversion to God, because they must be aware that their human nature renders them inadequate to live their religion to the full.66 Here, an excerpt from Joseph Ratzinger’s first book as Pope Benedict XVI provides a fitting observation. Speaking of the Christian roots of Europe, and of the claim that the mention of such roots might offend the feelings of the many non-Christians living in Europe, Pope Benedict asserts: “Whose identity is offended by this? The Muslims, who so often tend to be mentioned in this context, feel threatened, not by the foundations of our Christian morality, but by the cynicism of a secularised culture that denies its own foundations.”67 The Civiltà Cattolica writers believe that only once the recognition of this Christian morality is reintroduced in Western culture, will West gain the ability to engage in the genuine

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dialogue of cultures and religions that is so urgently needed today. In this context, the goal of dialogue is to reinvigorate a sense of rationality in order to pave the way for a cohesive interaction of faith and reason in both camps.

In light of these findings, Cattaneo argues that Regensburg should not be seen as a “gaffe” (social blunder), but as a conscious intervention that changed the dynamics of interreligious dialogue and brought attention to some of the more pressing issues of our time. Given the significant increase in interreligious initiatives in the years following Regensburg, Cattaneo makes a poignant and credible observation. The Regensburg lecture indeed provoked a crisis in Christian-Muslim relations, yet it brought relevant and topical issues, present in both the Christian and Muslim world, to the fore. For Muslims, it has triggered the need to openly discuss issues such as religious freedom and the dangerous relationship between religion and violence, for Western Christians, it has urged them to confront what Benedict calls the “Western crisis of morality” in which relativism stifles a self-critical approach and impedes interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Furthermore, in addressing the crisis caused by Regensburg, the Vatican shifted its position on Islam and refined its pro-dialogue approach to it; the shift reverberated throughout the Catholic world and has been evident in the pages of *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

The openness that the contemporary Catholic Church demonstrates towards Islam forms part of a sustained effort to fulfil the much debated documents on interfaith relations published at the Second Vatican Council. This study has illuminated the soft-counterterrorist narrative of *La Civiltà Cattolica* in a way which

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68 Cattaneo, "L'Invito di Benedetto XVI all'Autocritica," 35.
singles out the various proposed solutions to the pressing issue of modern day political violence. While the attempts of scholars such as Magister and Minerbi to undermine the validity of the Jesuit proposals raise a number of questions as to the effectiveness of the Jesuit rhetoric on this topic, this chapter has also brought to light highly relevant and useful theses. These have come through in Sale’s, De Rosa’s, Farahian’s, Cattaneo’s and Pope Benedict’s suggestions that in order to use dialogue with Muslims as a weapon against the propaganda of terrorists, the West needs to develop a respect for the sanctity of the Islamic religion. Such respect can only grow from the strengthening, not weakening, of the West’s own Christian identity. In light of the ever-changing political environment in the Islamic world, the importance of narratives of non-violence such as those found in *La Civiltà Cattolica* becomes evident. In order to be effective, however, these should rest on common agreement among Christians and Muslims on the issues of religious freedom, the respect of the human person and the respect of human rights.
Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has not been to suggest that the Jesuit writers of *La Civiltà Cattolica* possess an ultimate solution to the pernicious problem of Islamic terrorism. Rather, its purpose has been to illuminate the different articulations within the Jesuit journal’s discourse on Islamic terrorist violence in the context of this topic’s dominant narratives and in light of the Catholic Church’s historical response to political violence and to the Islamic religion in general. This study nonetheless suggests that *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s scholarship can potentially be a powerful instrument in the global attempt to counter violent extremism.

The analysis has shown that *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discursive formulations on Islamic terrorism merit scholarly attention as they both build on and challenge established political and academic positions on this central problem for the modern age. One of the Jesuits’ major targets is the categorisation of Islam as an inherently violent religion that is responsible for the actions of Islamic terrorists. The Jesuits try to counter this assertion by portraying Islam as a religion of peace and by holding various embodiments of modern political Islam accountable for the blending of religious belief and terrorism: Islamic terrorists, in order to justify their acts of violence, use religion to win the approval of the broader Islamic community. On this point, the scholarship of Giovanni Sale is particularly dedicated to challenging the views of conservative authors who seek to establish a direct link between Islam and violence. Sale’s work, challenges that of more critical fellow Jesuit scholars Giuseppe De Rosa and Samir Khalil Samir by engaging in an extensive analysis of
Jihad as a non-aggressive and purely defensive notion, using the works of the founders of Islamic fundamentalism. While he does not excuse the rhetoric of individuals such as Hassan al-Banna, A'la Abul Maududi and Rashid Rida from having created a fertile ground in which violent extremism could grow, Sale concludes that much of their work views violence and the use of force as a last resort and as self-defence.

In contrast to those scholars who believe that religion is the cause of global conflict and that in order to create a more peaceful world there must be “less religion,” the Jesuits suggest that violent extremism cannot be solved by ridding the world of religion but instead requires a deeper understanding of the historical tradition of religions and of the principles they value. This means gaining knowledge of other religious traditions so as to avoid simplistic generalisations and hasty, unfounded conclusions. In the case of Islam, the Jesuits agree with the views of their leader, Pope Francis, in the search for that true and authentic Islam that rejects violence and urges believers to live better lives. In the same line of reasoning, they also support the essential point that Pope Benedict XVI attempted to convey at Regensburg University in 2006 concerning the need for the West to rediscover its Christian identity before proposing changes for Islam. Here, the message of Catholic intellectual thought on ways to prevent further developments of violent extremism is clear: a secularised Western culture that fails to understand the importance of that which Muslims hold most dear, that is God, will find it difficult to engage in the interfaith and intercultural dialogue needed to combat Islamic terrorist ideology and propaganda.
Conclusion

One of the more significant challenges faced by the Jesuits in their attempts to distance the religion of Islam from accusations of terrorism and violence is their discussion of Islam’s closeness with politics. Islam is, after all, a religion closely intertwined with politics and views its involvement in the political realm as a religious responsibility. It has been argued that violent Islamists take advantage of this link between religion and state affairs by transforming political conflicts into religious wars against infidels. The challenge for the Jesuits has come to the fore in Sale’s discussion of Islam and democracy and in what seems to be his scepticism about the possibility of compatibility of the two. Nonetheless, Sale is adamant that Western-style democratic systems should not be imposed on the Islamic world and that Muslims need to be able forge their own paths to more democratic methods of government. Sale hopes that these, in turn, condemn forms of violent extremism and deal with Islamic terrorists accordingly. In fact, the fourth chapter has shown that the issue is not so much the need to separate religion from politics in the Islamic world - although Sale clearly expresses a desire to see Islam used simply as a point of ethical and moral reference and less as a dictator of the norms of state and politics – but the need for Islamist governments to gain popularity with the people they govern by denouncing all forms of violence and coercion and supporting religious freedom, religious pluralism and human rights.

Closely linked to this vision of an Islamic world that works towards ideals of religious pluralism and the promotion of human rights is the Jesuits’ denunciation of the US-led invasion of Iraq and campaigns in Afghanistan. The presence of foreign troops in Iraq and Afghanistan has given more political ammunition to those armed
Conclusion

Islamists who call for a religious war against the Christian West. Jihadi Islamists exploit the fact that many Muslims view the presence of Western military forces in Islamic countries as a new, twenty-first century attempt to conquer, subject and humiliate the Islamic world. Extremists use the resentment still felt by Muslims towards European colonialism as a tool of recruitment into terrorist organisations. What seems to particularly worry the Jesuits of *La Civiltà Cattolica* is that armed activities will be directed not only against foreign troops or those Islamic regimes that support the presence of Western military forces, but also against Christians living in the Islamic world. The ongoing persecution of Christians who are on the receiving end of political conflict redefined as Holy War is a matter of great concern for the Catholic Church and the Jesuit journal. For this, the Jesuits emphasise the need for Islamic governments to defend the rights of non-Islamic believers.

The thesis has also considered the debate surrounding the “closing of ranks” approach taken by persecuted Christians living in the Islamic world who want to avoid violent reprisals from armed extremists. While the Jesuits consider this option to be counterproductive to improving relations between Christians and Muslims and to the fight against Islamic terrorism, they warn Christians against publically manifesting the Christian faith or inviting Muslims to join the Christian religion in environments that strictly forbid these practices. On this contentious issue for the Church, *La Civiltà Cattolica* sees a much greater and fairer solution to guaranteeing the safety of Christians in the Islamic world in its hopes for the implementation of religious pluralism by Islamic governments. The purpose of support for religious pluralism, the Jesuits emphasise, must not be to coerce Muslims to join Christianity,
Conclusion

nor to create a syncretic “sameness” of all religions; the purpose must be to find an
in-between point where believers will be able to gain “knowledge” of each other and
coexist peacefully. Ultimately, the Jesuits view true religious pluralism as the key to
mutual collaboration against the common threat of violent extremism – a menace that
threatens the lives of both Christians and Muslims.

Finally, this study has considered *La Civiltà Cattolica’s* call to use religious
pluralism and interfaith dialogue as weapons against the propaganda and ideology of
Islamic terrorists as a new, alternative soft-counterterrorist approach. In light of
popular Western scholarly formulations and mainstream media narratives that tend
to portray Islamic terrorists as alienated, irrational individuals who can only be dealt
with via hard counterterrorism measures, *La Civiltà Cattolica* proposes that soft
power should be considered an essential component in the fight against violent
extremism. This power, the Jesuits argue, may find fulfilment in respectful interfaith
and intercultural dialogue that does not take anything away from one’s personal
spiritual and cultural beliefs and customs but instead seeks common ground on which
to deal with violent extremism: the implementation of respect for religious pluralism
and collaboration against the manipulation of religion for violent ends; the training
of bilingual cultural mediators who are trusted by the target audience; the finding of
a fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and the general consideration of the
importance of the unity of faith and reason. Thus, as the fifth chapter has discussed,
the priority is “changing the climate” within both the Western and Islamic world so
as to drain the rivers on which Islamic terrorism navigates. The Jesuits, in accordance
Conclusion

with the views of the Vatican, argue that the use of military and police force alone cannot put an end to global Islamic terrorist attacks.

While this thesis has pointed out certain instances in which this interfaith collaboration against violent extremism has taken place, the *A Common Word* initiative sparked by the Regensburg controversy being among the most popular recent interactions, the Catholic Church’s and *La Civiltà Cattolica’s* challenge for the years ahead remains to find willing interlocutors who share their views. In the meantime, however, their prescriptions may begin to have significant impact if they reach the Western audience for which *La Civiltà Cattolica* was initially created. Here, the Catholic Church’s and the Jesuits’ emphasis on the need for Western civilisation to return to a vision of human nature and rationality from which the religious dimension is not excluded is fundamental. Only then can the much cited Clash of Civilisations be turned into a dialogue of cultures and of faiths.
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