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The community of Sant'Egidio, a non-governmental transnational actor acting within the international order: Sant'Egidio's peacemaking endeavors in Mozambique, Algeria, and Kosovo

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Introduction

The current research is concentrated on the community of Sant'Egidio, a non-governmental transnational actor depicts as an extra-state confessional entity for which its transnational diplomatic actions as well as its charity projects undeniably epitomize a post-westphalian order. Seeking to build and be embedded in a connected world, Sant'Egidio gives a great importance to its capacity to mobilize itself and to create linkages and closeness when the initial purposes are either tackling poverty and delivering relief services or managing and mediating a contemporary crisis that impairs citizens and elites to live peacefully together. Qualified as a Christian association, a community of faith or a NGO, we expressly treat with an original type of non-state actor that gradually climbs the ladder of politics. Indeed this study is inspired by the political and cultural changes of the contemporary world. Alongside states, today world politics involve many new categories of non-state actors, which aim at redrawing the map of diplomacy long dominated by either a Westphalia system or the topography of international organizations privileging exclusively official and formal political entities.

Thus, it appears interesting to look at the *mechanisms* of the contemporary changes in world politics. Evolving in a *borderless* world where the globalisation fosters continuously new type of skill and technologic revolution, people seem more able than ever to be interconnected with each other but above all to be responsive to issues that dehumanize the world. New skills, new scope of research and new ambition may gradually emerge shedding light on group of people who manage to build together grassroots organization with the aim to act collaboratively at transnational level. As we will notice in the present study, those *bottom up* initiatives reveal a smooth but powerful structuration of a transnational civil society having the ability to reframe the course of action by encouraging the establishment of worthy linkages inside and outside traditional diplomatic channels.

Today, these new unofficial diplomatic actors claim their rights to be listened and considered as authentic and valuable performers having the skills and required attitudes to deliver services to people or countries that find themselves in complex and delicate position. Clearly we are dealing with new actors and venues that completely change the landscape of diplomacy. Contemporary diplomatic actors such as NGOs, eminent person diplomats or faith-based actors are changing the rule of the game of politics acknowledging that precious and historical prerogatives of states are gradually privatized: the exercise of diplomacy in a context of a process of mediation is an illustrative

example. The puzzle of politics is more complex than ever; the mechanism of the privatization of diplomacy sheds light on states that appear either powerless or overwhelmed by *how and why doing politics.* On the contrary, unofficial actors, which represent – in our study – grassroots religious movement appear to be willing to enhance their *raison d'être* and to help the weakest; the people or country which do not find an answer to their problem in state or intergovernmental proposals.

Living in a world where official diplomacies seem old-fashioned in dealing with new categories of conflict, informal actors are willing to fill the vacuum by seducing target leaders and audiences with a new plethora of instruments and strategies. However, we should not keep in mind a linear and peaceful line of conduct when we address *the process* of diplomatic interventions carry out by unofficial actors: complementary methods of action may be useful in certain circumstances. Despite the probability to see the emergence of different type of synergy between official and unofficial actors, non-state actors are intriguing to study mainly because they open a new *toolbox,* which encompasses *a soft power* able to work with or overtake the traditional *hard power* used by institutional bodies.

In our present study, the community of Sant'Egidio typifies a faith-based actor that is willing to adjust the politico-cultural imperfections trigger by a world, which lacks leadership, authenticity, transparency and legitimacy. However, the community of Sant'Egidio does not aim *to be the pilot of the aircraft* when diplomatic emergencies are at stake. The community of Sant'Egidio is a small but reliable community of faith, which seeks to use its entire human, spiritual and democratic resources in order to cure the illness that impairs the world to progress peacefully towards new pattern of thought. But methods, means and attitudes used to pave the way towards peace are not an easy task, however. A long way backs for us in the understanding of the scope and pace of peacemaking's efforts promoted by the community of Sant'Egidio in Mozambique, Algeria and Kosovo.

Conclusion

Throughout our study, the objective has been to characterize and measure the emergence of an unofficial actor, the community of Sant'Egidio, active in the oldest and cherished prerogative of the nation-state: diplomacy in the process of mediation. Our theoretical framework allowed us to both raise our awareness and give proper tools to discern the diplomatic activities endorsed by such an informal-authentic actor. First, by choosing Transnationalism and Network paradigms, we have been able to understand the mechanisms that distinguish interconnection encompassing a plurality of actor – both states and non-states actors –from interconnectedness happening exclusively at a state-centric level. Even though those paradigms do no claim that states are out of the interconnected world in which we live today, it demonstrates, however, that relationship between states do not prevail anymore in international relations. Moreover, taking distance from a monolithic political world, those paradigms made us receptive towards new forms of association as a mechanism, which is not static: dynamism, interdependence and continuous political penetration highlights these new type of human mobilizations. Providing us a toolkit for identifying and measuring the persistent patterns of relations that structure and shape the ties between agents, this theoretical background enabled us to appreciate the dynamics and scopes of human relationships when process of mediations are occurring in country spoiled by violence, fear and poverty.

Second, we attempted to organize the structure of our theoretical framework by keeping an eye on *the process* and *conditions* that motivate informal actors to seek peacemaking initiatives worldwide. It was particularly relevant to look at reasons and factors – internal and external – that explained us in which circumstances civil society's organizations have been able to build new ties and ambitions to deal with such a world in continuous mutation. In other words, observing a shift in the distribution of power, we tried to understand not only the *sources* of this new mosaic of governance but above all the *consequences* that could help us to perceive this new bottom-up process. Evolving in an interdependent world where borders seem just like a drawn on a map, we noticed that people are more inclined to reason beyond a national framework: mentalities and citizenship shifts in part because of this *debordering effect*. Thus, we must say that a new type of identity emerges; cosmopolitan's affiliation appears to push these sensitized individuals to set up transnational operations in order to defend their *ethos* but also to spread human values and principles aiming at fostering a sense of responsibility and

capacity.

In other words, in a context of decentralisation's processes where the source of initiative and energy shifts from the top to the lower level of human organization, we have been suitably immersed in the study of the raising awareness of the people who are henceforth active and not passive in the conduct of international relations *inside*, *outside* and *between* their home country and foreign nation-state.

Additionally, this background allowed us to better appreciate two crucial changes regarding the regulation and implementation of diplomacy in emergency situations. Today, peacemaking activities, *understood in the sense of the management of conflicts through the use of mediation*, appear to be gradually privatized: civil society organisations enter in the room of high politics by setting up transnational operations aiming at achieving peace. Despite a remarkable self-empowerment regarding the formation of citizens' mindset – an informed and receptive citizen of the current developments happening worldwide -, the realization of grassroots strategies to handle bloody crisis is occurring mainly because of two reasons. First, we noticed that states downsize their role as service providers both domestically and transnationally.

Second, we face today new categories of conflict: we are not coping only with inter-states conflicts but also with intra-states conflicts. Qualified as deep-rooted or intractable conflicts, peacemakers are dealing with complicated asymmetrical and multi-dimensional conflicts that shed light on the unconformable position on the subject of official actors: the use of hard power seems more and more ineffective to solve deep-rooted issue dividing or alienating citizens for years. Indeed, our theoretical background explained us that new instruments, schemes of thinking, and politico-cultural approach had to be advanced in order to suitably assess the intensity as well as the reasons of this new category of conflict. In other words, the appeal of unofficial actors is mainly because they rely on strategies that aim at looking for and handling causes of conflicts by repairing the social fabric of the communities affected by the hostility. In this fashion, as our study analyses the peacemaking's efforts fostered by a catholic community, we discover another politico-cultural direction that had to be read in parallel with the phenomenon of the privatization of diplomatic channel: the humanization and moralization of diplomacy.

As we have seen there is a need to infiltrate into the crisis, to grasp the nature and intensity of the conflict and finally to shift the mutual-perception of groups' identity and interests in order to pave the way towards peace: the understanding of the conflicting parties' psychology is therefore critical. Faith-based actors, putting the emphasis on core-values such as family, empathy, pacifism, the sanctity of life, attempt to penetrate the inside of individuals by diffusing a soft but powerful medicine based on human and moral concepts. Displaying a new type of transcendental identity, faith-based mediation was explored in order to understand the activation of this anthropological dimension in conflict management's situation. Undeniably, our research on the traditional way to proceed *before* and *during* a process of mediation allowed us to perceive the main pillars of such a diplomatic intervention.

However, as we have seen through the concept of Multi-Track diplomacy, we could not have any rights to assume that official actors are definitely obsolete when we refer to a process of mediation. Even though Track II – nongovernmental process encompassing many different type of actors - or Track 1.5 – proceeding of mediation between nongovernmental and official actors - helped us to adequately perceive the scope and the strength of a process of mediation managed under the good offices of such original actors, the theory enlightened us also towards another scheme of thinking: collaborative action and synergy between all actors is often conducive for grasping better outcomes. Indeed, the share of opportunities and resources may produce mutual enrichment. Finally, we decided to categorize and understand the community of Sant'Egido from the inside in order to first confirm the theoretical contribution and second prepare the ground for the analysis of our case studies. This section was particularly relevant because we learned what were the different diplomatic channels promoted by the community of Sant'Egidio. First, we noticed a *preventive diplomacy* through the embeddedness of the relevant stakeholders working for the religious organizations. Second, we explored the *interreligious platform* organized each year by the community of Sant'Egidio; a peculiar space that enables on the one hand free politico-religious debates between politico-religious leaders; on the other, the creation of new relationships and linkages. Third, we look at the moral status, methodology, source of power, and core-values enhanced by the community of Sant'Egidio in order to correctly value its ability as well as its propensity to engage in a contemporary conflict. Eventually, it should be noted that the religious and

moral background enabled us to envelop with more adroitness the diplomatic activity cultivated by the community of Sant'Egidio.

Therefore, it is on this theoretical basis and to answer to our research question *"under what conditions does the community of Sant'Egidio is able to build a process of mediation in order to embrace effectiveness?"* that we opted to a qualitative analysis – in conjunction with books and formal statements - based on semi-structured interviews. The exploitation of these interviews aimed at discussing on the three following hypotheses.

The first hypothesis postulated that the identity of the third-party is critical to enhance a process of mediation. Our three case studies have confirmed the hypothesis. The transcendental power of the identity of the community of Sant'Egidio was effective both *before* and *during* the process of mediation. It should be noted that antagonist parties from Mozambique, Algeria, and Kosovo have been willing to entrust the process of mediation – facilitation for Algeria – to the community of Sant'Egidio because they knew that this faith-based actor had no political or economic vested interests in their respective country. Moreover, the autonomous status of the community of Sant'Egidio, join by its transparency, – through informal meetings and parallel activities -, gratuitousness, and honesty – its humanitarian approach and reputation - boosted target stakeholders to improve their trust in such an actor that had the only ambition to bring peace and serenity in territories shattered by war.

Additionally, the lack of leverage and manipulative means attracted target negotiators because they knew that Sant'Egidio did not have the capacity to impose a scheme of action for paving the way towards peace. Animated by a pluralistic heart, we must underline that the impartial and neutral positions of the community of Sant'Egidio shed light on its willingness to never choose one side in particular: both sides were systematically treated on an equal footing. Gradually a confident atmosphere was built. The implementation of a humanistic approach based on respect and generosity allowed the disputing parties to evolve in a peaceful and confident atmosphere; a climate conducive to a mutual recognition because *step-by-step* they learned a new common language. This new language was penetrated by a vocabulary emphasizing moral and human values such as the sense of the family, unity, and reciprocity. Embedded in a peaceful language, the identity of the community of Sant'Egidio did not simply *attract* disputing parties to join the table of the mediation, it also *transformed* their attitudes and methods of reasoning by implementing an authentic space of discussion that could not be found in their home

country. Moreover, even though the religious identity was less powerful in Kosovo, it contributed to the consolidation of this virtuous framework. Join by the use of moral suasion, the organization of prayers impacted on the psychology of the antagonist parties: it was perceived as a sign of respect. In conclusion, the identity of the community of Sant'Egidio brought guarantees as well as trusts before and during the process of mediation. The disputing parties never had doubt over the scheme of thinking of the parts of the community of Sant'Egidio.

The second hypothesis presupposed that the embeddedness of the networking of relevant stakeholders coming from the community of Sant'Egidio is conducive to the setting up of a comprehensive process of mediation. Our three case studies have validated the hypothesis. By fostering humanitarian campaigns, interreligious and cultural dialogue or interests to take place in the region in order to develop a constructive proximity with key political or religious leaders, the community of Sant'Egidio has been able to penetrate slowly the politico-civil society. The consequences are multiple. First, this local settlement enabled Sant'Egidio to develop a profound *understanding* of the crisis situation and its origins. The knowledge of the conflict situation was capital for two mean reasons. On the one hand, to nourish and extend the awareness as well as the reflection of the community of Sant'Egidio. On the other, to transmit an image of a faith-based actor that is *interested* in meeting native people – official or unofficial – in order to constitute its own appreciation of the circumstances at stake: it was capital for gaining the trust of the parties.

Second, in connection with the first point, the relevant stakeholders have been persisting in building network relationships with key persons in order to constitute worthy human interconnections. In our three case studies, we observed that it was nearly always *via* religious contacts – Christian or Muslim – that the community of Sant'Egidio entered in connection with prestigious and central political leaders. This spillover effect was essential to set up *early talk:* a learning process took place slowly enabling the parties to show their true face. Third, the implementation of relevant stakeholders coming from the community of Sant'Egidio allowed unveiling their unique personality. Indeed, the question of transparency and goodwill were paramount in order to convince opposing parties that they were dealing with an actor, which *cares* about the collateral impacts of the conflict situation. This human and/or humanitarian appeal was often considered as a first step for producing a *breakthrough* inside the target political society. Just to be clear, in the case of Algeria, it was mainly through the long-standing ecumenical dialogue with both Christian

and Muslim communities that the community of Sant'Egidio has been able to shed light on essential values such pluralism and tolerance. In conclusion, the question of embeddedness was crucial to prepare a fertile ground for the subsequent good offices's operations launched by the community of Sant'Egidio.

The third hypothesis postulated that the peacemaking's efforts foster by the community of Sant'Egidio are enhanced by the conjunction of official actors. Our three cases studies have partially confirmed the hypothesis. Even though we may agree that there was a favourable enthusiasm for the three diplomatic initiatives - resulting in the adoption of politico-legal statement endorsing the course of action - the international community has not been active either *inside* the process or *beyond* the table of mediation in Algeria. We highlighted many reasons but the most important ones were: first, the argument of non-interference on the parts of the regime; second the strategic position of western countries such as France and Italy that paralyzed them from the outset. As a result, we had to deal with a passive and conservative position on the parts of the most essential official players that could have a productive impact in the conflict situation. Neither *stick* nor *carrot* politics have been used by the international community in order to put pressure on the regime to accept the agreement.

However, for Mozambique and Kosovo, we noticed the activation of Track One diplomatic channel *beyond* the table of mediation. Indeed, even though the nature of these conflicts is radically different, the international community committed itself to put pressure on – friendly for Mozambique and more aggressively for Kosovo, especially regarding Milosevic – the disputing parties to move forward in order to accept the peace/technical agreement. Indeed, in both cases, when the mediation was blocked, secret or informal meetings took place directly between the international community and the target negotiator. In this case, the *raison d'être* of the activation of Track One was not simply to support or to boost the process of mediation; it was also to ensure that a spirit of friendliness and trust lasts until the signature of the agreement. Therefore, the implementation of a parallel diplomatic channel has been perceived as efficient to foster the process of mediation: synergy and complementarity strategies were effective.

Moreover, in the case of Mozambique, we had to deal with a specific situation where Track One was directly *involved* either as mediator or observer. First, Italy was present at

the table of the mediation. Its presence was legitimated mainly because it contributed directly to the internationalisation of the conflict. Moreover, it ensured a slight institutional framework where both parties could discuss freely while keeping an eye on the scope of the outcomes: guarantees were fundamentals. Observers joined the table of mediation for two mean reasons. First, when there was an impasse, a broader flexibility started flourishing. Observers never had an active role but they had the power to meet the disputing parties – in the attempt to reason the disputing parties – and to provide advices and information to mediators about eventual opportunities or plans of action.

Second, as the peace agreement was based on politico-military issues, the international community gradually join the table of mediation in order to give its expertise: technical issues had to be solved by experts. Moreover, the question of the implementation of the agreement as well as the transitional period had to be elucidated with the presence of key players as the UN or the United States. The community of Sant'Egidio had to accept the cooperation with such official leaders in order to enforce the agreement. At different stage of the process, new complementarities had to be created in order to ensure that the peace agreement will last. The case of Mozambique is an illustrative example of the implementation of the Multi Track system.

We are conscious that our observation is strictly limited on our case study as well as on the content of our interviews. By attempting to establish a comparative system based exclusively on three case studies, we highlighted concrete conclusions that could be useful to analyse other conflicts situations where non-state actors are playing the role of mediator. The Carter Center is good example. Moreover our method to analyse the evolution of the process of mediation may have been original in order to grasp *internal* factors that motivated and legitimated the community of Sant'Egidio in its action of good offices. However, it seems reasonable to think that only a part of the puzzle has been resolved. Other factors and hypotheses could have been asked in order to widen our field of study. I think personally to the political structure of the country that could help us to better understand and measure the scope and level of influence of the diplomatic strategies developed by the community of Sant'Egidio. Therefore, our observation and conclusion must be completed by additional reflections. But it can also represent to us a fertile ground on which we could elaborate new method of analysis.

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