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"I'm not afraid." Personal and public identity in the discourse of women political leaders in Italy

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The present study aims to explore the manner in which women political leaders construct their public and personal identity in and through the media, by identifying the topics discussed and the discursive strategies employed. The corpus is formed by 15 media interviews given by and articles about two Italian women politicians, Emma Bonino and Laura Boldrini. The framework applied is the discursive-historical approach (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2009). The results show that the women speakers attempt to construct their identity in a composite manner, uniting values such as firmness and courage with empathy and sensitiveness to social issues. Such self-presentations aim to project the speakers as role models and to encourage social change.

Key-words: *political communication, interviews, women leaders, identity.*

1. Introduction

In 2013, the parliamentarian Laura Boldrini was elected the President of the Deputy Chamber in the Italian Parliament. This was not her first public function, as she had formerly worked as spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Still, the quality of an important politician did not prevent her from being subject to offensive online campaigns, which included the posting of insulting messages and life threats. The case of Laura Boldrini raises the question regarding the masses' perception of women holding important public functions; it seems that their personal identity cannot be totally dissociated from their identity as public persons and politicians, neither by the media, nor by the general audience. Although previous research on the image of women in leadership positions has been conducted (e.g. Wagner and Wodak 2006), more investigations are needed in regard to the discursive construction of the women's identity, as politicians or as public persons, especially in the case of more conservative societies. Focusing on this gap, the present study adopts a linguistic and discursive perspective, aiming (1) to assess how the public and the personal identity of women politicians are presented in the media and (2) to identify the main features composing their identity and the linguistic means of realization employed in the construction of their identity.

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2. Background: journalism and the public agenda

Critical discourse analysis has provided, in the last decades, a useful framework for the study of media texts, especially because of its marked concern for the positioning of media discourse in relation to the social, political and cultural context. The traditional view of CDA represents media discourse in terms of the power relationships which exist within a given society. This leads to the idea that 'the current practices of journalism play an essential role in maintaining the class authority within the political system' (Richardson 2007: 40). Such a view emphasizes the factors external to the journalistic community, as being capable to exert a key influence on the content of media products and discourse. In the model advanced by Reese (2011), ideology represents the ultimate level of analysis in the investigation of the media, influencing all other levels of media production, from the recruitment of the journalists to the policies of the organizations they work in (Reese 2011: 11).

In response to the critical perspective, there are voices and research directions which seek to outline in greater detail the role of the media in the contemporary societies. The view of the media as agents of maintaining the status quo contradicts the pluralist perspective, which suggests a more balanced distribution of power within the different social actors or groups (Reese 2011: 11). Furthermore, generalizations are dangerous and it may be more useful to examine the status and the functions of the media taking into account the different contexts and the different states in which they function. A contemporary trend is represented by multicultural journalism, that allows the voices of marginalized or undercovered social actors to be heard. It is therefore a reductionist attempt to view all media communication as a merely downward process, from the social elites to the audience masses. Instead, the goal of journalism as a form of public service has shifted to 'an increasingly bottom-up application', paying attention to the desires of the audience (Deuze 2011:26). A similar perspective is adopted by Montgomery (2010), who focuses on the media coverage dedicated to persons who are not public figures, as sportspeople for example, but may become so as a consequence of this coverage (Montgomery 2010: 196-197).

In the sphere of political news, the relationship between politics and the media has become increasingly intricate. The view of media as a tool available to the political elites for the preservation of social control is contradicted by the representation of the media as an institution with an essential role in the achievement and maintenance of democracy, which aims to 'monitor government and those in power' (Robinson 2011: 152), to challenge their perspective and to control the activities of the structures of authority in order to prevent social abuses or injustice. Therefore, media may also represent a form of institutional power aiming to counteract the political power and to further the interests of the citizens. Still, this function may prove to be a double-edged sword, as presently the media

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seem to 'generate and encourage rather unrealistic expectations among laypeople' in regard to the politicians (Wodak 2011: 17-18).

In this context, the representation of women politicians in the media constitutes a topic in need of more detailed research. Particularly interesting are the findings presented by Wagner and Wodak (2006), who discovered that the media representations of successful women comprise values such as efficience and also femininity, 'an image of self-assured, but also non-threatening leadership role' (Wagner and Wodak 2006: 390). The two researchers have identified a 'double discourse' within the institutional environment, which allegedly sustained the democratic models of management, while at the same time maintaining the traditional models. This seems also to be the case in the context of the Italian society and media, where the texts forming the corpus show a clash of ideologies: that of feminine empowerment, allowing the women to take up significant public functions, and the traditional ideology, seeing only men as efficient leaders and as deserving to be in the spotlight of the media, on the public stage. When the latter form of ideology prevails, women leaders are subject to criticisms and judged as being less 'competent for the role' (Baxter 2011: 234). As a consequence, women political leaders need to construct their image by taking into account both ideological types and conciliating feminine and masculine values.

3. Corpus and methodology

The corpus is formed by 10 articles concerning Laura Boldrini and 5 articles concerning Emma Bonino, published online during 2013 and 2014, with one exception, the reiteration of an interview which had been first published in 2010. 14 articles were originally written in Italian, while one article had been written in English for *The Observer*, and afterwards translated into Italian. The article for *The Observer* was found in the 'news' category, while the other were classified as 'interviews'. Twelve of the articles followed the structure of a 'standard' interview, allowing the public person to present herself directly. Their structure consisted in: title, subsidiary title, a lead written by the journalist – interviewer, the questions and the answers. The other three showed a more intricate structure, combining the characteristics of an interview with those of the report. The latter texts included direct quotes from the politician's statements, inserted in the journalist's speech. In these cases, the voice of the journalist often reiterated what the politician had declared during the interview or elaborated her statements in order to construct a more coherent and concise narrative.

The texts have been identified through accessing the politicians' official webpages and the sites of Italian media. In some cases, the texts published in the media had also been posted on or copied to the politicians' pages, which suggests that the articles were perceived as favourable to the politician and even transformed, in

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this manner, from a mere media text into a tool for public relations. This trait constituted one criterion for the selection of the corpus, as the object of investigation was the construction of the politicians' identity by focusing on their projected positive image. A further feature of the corpus was that all texts posted on the newspapers' sites addressed a very wide and heterogenous audience. The texts available on the politicians' sites can be considered to address a more coherent public, encompassing mainly their supporters or the voters interested in their activity.

The two politicians interviewed have been chosen for several criteria. They are women and, at the same time, they were holding important public offices during the period when the articles were published. Laura Boldrini was the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputy, while Emma Bonino was the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Their mandates have not run completely smoothly, as both had to act during crisis situations. Boldrini faced the online stalking campaign against her and the media campaigns regarding the waves of immigrants arriving in Italy, while Bonino had to confront the case of the Italian *marò*, imprisoned by the Indian authorities. The investigation intended to assess how they coped with the crisis situations at the discursive level and whether the crises influenced the construction of their image.

The framework applied will be based on the discursive-historical approach ideated by Wodak (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2009), which pays particular attention to the discursive strategies employed within the texts in order to construct identities. Ruth Wodak (2011: 40) defines strategies as plans of practices, used with the purpose of achieving 'a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal'. The discursive-historical approach identifies five major categories of discursive strategies. Nomination is employed in order to construct and represent social actors, while predication characterizes social actors through evaluative attributions. The argumentation strategy encompasses the means by which the attribution of characteristics is sustained. The perspectivation or framing strategy is related to the expression of the speaker's participation in the discourse. Finally, the intensification and the mitigation strategies refer to 'the epistemic status of a proposition' (Wodak 2011: 40-42). For limitations of space, this article will focus mainly on the referential and the predicative strategies, discussing the other three categories in relation to the first two ones.

Further, the study is based on the assumption that individuals belong to various social categories, and thus they have a repertoire of different identities to draw upon (Abrams, Hogg 1998). A similar view is sustained by Bradley (1996), who argues that, in today's society, people draw their identity on a broad range of sources, linking the fragmentation of identity with the social fragmentation (Bradley 1996: 24). It is important to note that such parallel identities may also be contradictory, leading to the question which identity is assumed by the individual and in what context. Abrams and Hogg (1998) point out two subsystems of the self-concept, the social and the personal identity as being fundamental in the process of self-identification. Another category can be represented by the cultural identity,

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defined as 'the sense of belonging to a particular culture, past or present' (Bradley 1996: 24).

4. Discussion of results

The interviews selected present a degree of variation according to their content. They usually have an explicit main topic, addressing a current social or political problem, for example the situation of foreign refugees in Italy, the abuses against women, the case of Italian citizens held prisoners in foreign areas of conflict or the proceedings of the Italian Parliament. However, the approach to the main topic is not isolated, but the discussion is intertwined with other topics, of a secondary level, which are now and then foregrounded. Among the secondary topics coming to the surface are: the characterization of Italy and Europe and the presentation of the politician interviewed. The presentation of the interviewee as a person and not as a politician only represents the explicit topic in only one case, the interview-report 'Laura Boldrini: ecco chi sono' ('Laura Boldrini: this is who I am').

The analysis shows that both women politicians construct their identity at various levels simultaneously: as citizens (national identity), as state officials and members of a certain party (social identity), and, finally, as women and/or mothers (gender identity). Since most interviews discuss social issues, the general impression may be that the woman is left behind entirely or shadowed by her public role. Instead, in some cases, the journalist brings into discussion the interviewee's personal opinion, feelings or actions, thus constructing a two-fold structure. The person appears both as a leader and a woman, and reasons for the choices and decisions in the former area of life are searched in the second area, that of the gender identity.

4.1. Construction of the politician's public identity

The most common strategy employed in the interviews in order to refer to the politician's public identity is *nomination* or the referential strategy. This strategy fulfills, first of all, a major function, that of giving the readers accurate information about the topic of the article and about the public person presented in the article. It represents social actors by associating them to specific groups or by dissociating them from groups, consequently assigning them a particular identity (Richardson 2007: 49; Wodak 2011). In media discourse, the use of the nomination strategy is based on the assumption that the more important the person presented is, the more readers will the article attract. Moreover, the referential strategy is important because the manner of naming persons can influence the way they are viewed by the

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public and the relationship between the author of the article and the person named in it (Richardson 2007: 49).

In the news interviews and reports examined, the proper names constituted the most common form of nominating the public persons. Such nomination is usually done by the journalists or by other quoted persons, never by the interviewee herself. The title of the interviews is commonly formed by the politician's full name or surname only, followed by a direct quote from the interview. This manner of presentation indicated that the two politicians interviewed were assumed to be very well known to the audience, and therefore needing no more presentation of the public functions they were fulfilling at the time of the interviews. In some cases, as example (1.b.) shows, the names were used interchangeably with the professional anthroponym indicating her public role.

(1)

(a)"*Intervista a Emma Bonino: «L'Africa cresce. Per l'Italia è un'opportunità»" (Head title) (L'Unità, 10-01-2014) /* "Interview with Emma Bonino: Africa is growing. For Italy this is an opportunity." [Head title] *(L'Unità, 10-01-2014)*

(b)"*Intervista. La presidente della Camera. «Voltare le spalle a migliaia di migranti ha fatto solo danni.» (Head title) Boldrini: «La visita del Papa a Lampedusa è uno schiaffo all'egoismo.» (Subsidiary title)." (La Stampa, 04-07-2013) /* "Interview. The President of the Chamber. Turning our backs to thousands of immigrants has caused only damage. [Head title] Boldrini: The Pope's visit to Lampedusa is a smack against egoism. [Subsidiary title] *(La Stampa, 04-07-2013)*

A characteristic of the articles examined was the variation in the gender of the nouns employed in order to designate the public function held by the female politicians. The analysis showed that the articles included different modes of nominating the politicians in regard to their gender. In some cases, such differences were manifest even within the same text. These variations can be attributed to a clash between between the public role assumed by the women politicians and their gender identity.

(2)

(a) Female noun*: "Ecco l'intervista in cui la presidentessa della Camera si raccontava." (LB 4) /*"This is the interview in which the President of the Chamber talked about herself." (LB 4)

(b) Male noun*: "Il presidente della Camera: ci saranno sanzioni. […]" (LB 8). /* "The President of the Chamber: there will be punishments. […]" (LB 8)

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(c) Female noun followed by male noun within the same article: *" «I nostri soldati erano in servizio, non sono terroristi», dice la nostra Ministra. […] In questa intervista, raccolta nella fase di massima incandescenza del caso Marò, il ministro degli Esteri spazia a tutto campo e parla anche di sè." (EB 10). /* "Our soldiers were on duty, they are not terrorists, says our Minister. […] In this interview, taken in the hottest phase of the *Marò* case, the Minister for Foreign Affairs enjoys a full field and even talks about herself." (EB 10)

Another strategy regards the use of nicknames or substitute words for the real name of the politician. There was only one case in the corpus where Emma Bonino's name was changed through a wordplay, resulting "Boninox". The meaning of this nomination technique can be corectly interpreted only by taking into account its co-text, formed by the title and the introductory paragraph. As example (3) shows, the general perspective taken by the journalist is very favourable to Emma Bonino, representing her as tough, determined and hard-working. These traits are first indicated by the nomination in the title (*Bonino d'acciaio*/ 'Bonino of steel'), which may also be a reference to the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, also called "The Iron Lady". In this case, the wordplay in the title is not random, but it has been chosen by the author in order to endorse the direct quote following (*Mi batterò per riportare a casa i marò* / 'I will fight to bring the *marò* back home'). The interview taken focused mainly on the case of the two Italian *marò,* accused and detained by the Indian authorities. Presenting Bonino's endeavor, as the Minister for foreign affairs, in order to defend the two Italians, the journalist frames the story as a metaphoric fight, a perspective sustained by the verb used by the minister herself (*mi batterò/* 'I will fight'*)*. The wordplay 'Bonino of steel' has no depreciative connotation in this context, serving as a synthesis of the appraisal made by the journalist. This nomination technique is developed and explained further, in the lead aiming to present the politician. The other terms used in order to nominate Bonino are here *protagonista* ('protagonist'), *padrona* ('lady master', 'lady manager') and *one woman show*, all constructing a different frame besides that of conflict. This second frame consists in the representation of the public scene as a theatrical scene, paralleling the politicians' performance to that of the actors.

(3)

"Steel Bonino: I will fight to bring the *marò* back home. (Head title)
[…] To understand where she finds the physical and mental energy to be Emma Bonino. Or, as a praise to the most indestructible steel, Boninox. That is, a total protagonist. Unique in her way. Half the way between the street and the palace, lady manager of the political scene and in the first line on the civil scene, in Italy, in Europe and in the world. To follow her to Paris for a summit

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> on Siria, to Sierra Leone for the campaign regarding the abolition of the death sentence, to the Ivory Coast for the signing of economic agreements and to hold her for 20 minutes in her office in the Farnesina, before she leaves for Djibouti in order to relaunch the fight against feminine genital mutilation, is like watching a one woman show." (EB 10)

The predication strategy is also extremely important in the representation of the politicians in the public sphere. Politicians tend to construct their public image by using characteristics such as 'knowledgeability, honesty, trustworthiness, accountability, sense of purpose and humaneness' (Vandenbergen 1996: 390). The results of the current analysis indicate that the characteristics displayed and attributed to the two politicians involved revolve around two main areas: **authority** and **humanity**. As the two areas oppose each other, to a certain degree, the politicians interviewed had the task of conciliating them both in order to construct a coherent image.

Authority refers to the interviewee's professional preparation, but also to the authority deriving from the public function held. In regard to the professional and/or the institutional competence, a special type of competence of the female politicians is constructed in the articles examined. Both Boldrini and Bonino are depicted as professionals, yet their presentation does not include positive traits exclusively. The journalists bring into discussion some traits that could represent a topic of critique; however, the introduction of this topic does not serve the purpose of explicitly criticizing the politician, as the signalling of a possible flaw is often followed by a disclaimer. This is usually done through the introduction of the conjunction 'but', shifting the focus of attention to the second part of the journalist's utterance. Such strategy is visible in the next example, where Laura Boldrini acknowledges her lack of political experience. Instead of attempting to present it as a positive trait, she foregrounds a different type of competence and thus manages to create a positive frame for her election as the President of the Deputy Chamber. Global or European experience appears to be more important than having acted exclusively at the internal level, as a politician in the national area only. Laura Boldrini views her election as a sign of social change.

(4)

> "Q: To be a woman is not always better, so allow me to say that seeing you lead the Chamber is a source of pride for many women. You don't come from the field of professional politics, but from the beginning you have demonstrated that culture, style and institutional abilities can leave aside a specific curriculum.
> A: We ought not to be ideological and hence, women too are evaluated according to the experience, abilities, values. I have no political experience, I have never been a member of any party, but for 24 years I have worked in

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> different institutions of the United Nations, so I have a very clear idea about the concept of institutions. Being elected has been a surprise, but maybe this is a sign of change, too. […] I know that I will fulfill my duty with the greatest commitment and I will try to live it with great honour, the sense of responsibility and without sparing my forces." (LB 9)

The same strategy is involved in the following excerpt, coming from the lead of an interview with Emma Bonino. The discourse is structured here on two voices. The first utterance is a quotation, representing Bonino's own words, while the following paragraph expresses the journalist's voice. It is interesting here that the politician appears to be more modest than the journalist; Emma Bonino backgrounds her realizations, which leaves space for the journalist to speak. The journalist introduces the appraisal by distancing from the interviewee's words (*A sentir lei, Emma Bonino non ci pensava proprio… /* 'According to her, Emma Bonino really did not believe …'). The distancing is further sustained by the next utterance, using the conjunction /discourse marker *però* ('but'). The journalist manages to maintain the appearance of objectivity by referring to past actions of Bonino which were considered debatable, then shifts to the topic of interest for the interview (her activity in the area of foreign affairs). The author of the article creates a contrast between the two parts of this utterance. First, it is said that her political actions have been 'rightly' debatable, but no agent is introduced here. It is not explained who was against her and who sustained her. Then, her realizations in the international sphere are presented as common knowledge, through the strategy of generalization (sempre guardato con rispetto da tutti/ 'has always gained everybody's esteem'). Further, Bonino's authority is constructed by means of ennumerations. First, her previous employments are listed, enhancing directly her actual authority through this reference to her experience. Second, the places in which she has worked are ennumerated and the importance placed on the geographic variety is visible as they are positioned at the beginning of the sentence. This functions as an indirect means of endorsing her authority as it implies that Bonino knows the world because of her travels. The last characteristic of the politician appears here to be the courage.

(5)

> "«When they called me, I was in Egypt, and I considered myself to be retired, too». According to her, Emma Bonino really did not believe to be called for the function of Minister for Foreign Affairs on the day following her 65th birthday. But her curriculum did not lack anything. While her political actions and her militancy for civil rights in Italy are rightly controversial, her involvement in international issues has always gained everybody's esteem. As a representative of the transnational Radical Party, as an European Deputy and a Commissioner of the European Union for humanitarian aid, Bonino has

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> travelled the world in long and wide since 1979 with mobilisation campaigns and missions not without dangers. The Balkans, the African Great Lakes, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East have represented the theaters for her risky ventures during the years. […]" (EB 11)

In both cases, the politicians are presented as being not 'perfect', which allows the journalist to place emphasis on their election for the high-profile public functions, which therefore is framed as having been a surprise. The place where the strategy is inserted in the interview varies. Emma Bonino's presentation forms the introductory paragraph for the interview, while the question addressed to Laura Boldrini and her answer represent the last adjacency pair of her interview. The positions chosen suggest that it is a section of the interview with great impact on the audience: it either sets the reading key for the entire article or it functions as a sum-up of the ideas previously expressed.

The two speakers also manage to construct for themselves a type of authority, which is not limited only to the professional dimension, but also encompasses general human traits such as honesty and trustworthiness. These traits become manifest in the manner the interviewees handle questions which might be considered problematic or damaging their public face. The strategy used by both speakers is to accept the possible 'flaws', to acknowledge them, then shift the topic from the flaws to their qualities.

(6)

> "Q: From the right to the left wing, in the last 20 years, you have been sustained by different political forces. Nobody has ever called you a side-switcher?
> A: It happened. But I remain a radical militant. Proud to be like this. No one of us has ever been accused. Is it little? Maybe. For me, this is honour and glory."(EB 10)

The image projected by the politicians is not solely based on the expression of authority, which represents an upward trait, distancing the politician from the crowd, individualizing him/her and thus motivating their election for specific public role. Humanity represents, then, the necessary counterpart, since a politician who is perceived as distant and authoritative would not gain many supporters. In the general picture of the politician's public image, humanity can be represented as a downward force, destined to connect the public person with the crowds, to emphasize his/her understanding of general human problems. The term 'humanity' is used here in order to refer a general attitude of benevolence and fairness which is displayed by the politician and includes such traits as empathy, sensibility and care for the human rights.

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Empathy and care appear to be prominent aspects in the discourse of Laura Boldrini, who frequently advances a humanitarian perspective when talking about social problems. In many of her interviews tackling the topic of immigration in Italy, Boldrini takes a compassionate stance, repeatedly highlighting the necessity to help the persons in distress, and attempting to correct the wrong perception of immigrants and refugees as being a threat against native Italians. The following two examples show how the two politicians employ various strategies of perspectivation and argumentation in order to sustain their viewpoint and reject the opposed one.

In the corpus, a strategy used exclusively by Boldrini is personalization, based on the introduction of the first-person narrative in the discourse, with the aim of creating a more personal relationship between the speaker and the audience. This strategy is visible in the answer given by Laura Boldrini when asked about her reasons to visit Lampedusa years before and to become involved in the issues regarding the refugees. The paragraph below is the answer to the first question and sets a particular interpretation key for the entire interview. It should be noted that Laura Boldrini was interviewed here on the occasion of Pope Francesco's visit to Lampedusa and that her answers throughout the interview show a marked form of alignment with the stance taken by the Pope, pleading therefore for a more compassionate attitude towards the refugees arriving in Sicily.

(7)

> "In 2002 I arrived at the acceptance center organized on the airstrip. Tiny rooms, Somali people who had barely escaped death, phlebos in their arms. I asked one of them whether he would have made again the crossing which was about to kill him. He answered that, in Mogadishu, when he left the house every morning, he had no guarantee that he would be back. Making the journey, he had risked only once and for all. Then, in 2009, the Italian tradition of saving lives was broken by the indiscriminate rejections on the high seas, against the Geneve Convention. […] I was angry and disappointed because of that betrayal of the international laws which blocked the road for women and children, without identifying them and without allowing them to seek asylum." (LB 6)

The example above shows how individualization and personalization can be employed in order to create a powerful emotional narrative, shifting the focus of discussion from the rather impersonal area of political decisions to the moving stories of the experiences of particular individuals. The opposed strategy involves an attempt from the speaker to introduce a more objective frame in the discussion, bringing forth scientific arguments or solid evidence. Both Laura Boldrini and Emma Bonino appeal to this strategy, especially when the journalist's questions show a contrary viewpoint.

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Example (8) represents the exchange which opened an interview on the topic of immigration. No lead is inserted at the beginning of the article, which opens abruptly with the journalist's question, formulated in a dramatic tone. The first statement made by the journalist depicts a tragic image ('more bodies'), whose effect is augmented by the lack of information regarding the exact number of victims. This statement, in fact, sustains the journalist's evaluation of the situation as a 'stage of permanent emergency' and serves as a background for the direct question addressed to Boldrini. The question also functions as a critique towards the government which is considered to delay the adoption of efficient policies.

The way Laura Boldrini formulates her answer is illustrative for her conversational style during interviews, when she disagrees with the journalists' perspective. A strategy she often recurs to is to correct the journalist's statement through redefinition. This is what she does at the beginning of her answer in example (8), rejecting the interpretation advanced, of refugees as 'migratory waves', and using instead lexical items as 'asylum seekers' and 'persons', which she repeats throughout her statement. Her stance opposes clearly that of the journalist, who has chosen to discuss the issue by focusing on the victims, the corpses, and easily glossing over the problems encountered by the refugees surviving the travel. Moreover, the journalist's perspective appears to be rather italocentric, focusing only on the situation of Italy, which is presented as being close to a state under assault.

Laura Boldrini re-frames the entire issue by placing it in a wider context, that of the international affairs, thus indirectly criticizing the journalist's perspective, which was limited to role of Italy in this regard. She presents the immigrants as persons with reasons to flee from their countries and emphasizes these reasons ('wars and violations of human rights'). In this manner, the politician makes appeal to the humanity of the audience and the media as well, aiming to lessen the suggestion of threat and create empathy instead. Further, in contrast to the question, Boldrini uses arguments formulated in a clear manner and based on precise numbers and comparisons. She manages to reject the impression that the case of Italy was unique by discussing it in the international context. The final statement appears as a conclusion which is completely opposed to the premise formulated in the question (the number of immigrants arriving in Italy is still small compared to other countries).

(8)

"Q: President, more lifeless bodies picked up from the sea by our men, by the ships of the military navy and by the harbour captainships. How do you think we can pass from a permanent emergency season to a more coherent government policy for the migratory waves?

A: In this case, we cannot talk about a policy for the migratory waves. Here we are facing waves of asylum seekers, of persons running away from wars and from the violation of the human rights. All this depends on

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> what's happening around us. And, if it isn't clear that the areas of insecurity and crisis are growing at our borders, the numbers explain it: for the first time after the Second World War, the number of refugees in the world has exceeded 50 millions. In Syria there are more than 10 millions persons away from their homes and 3 millions have found a shelter in the neighbouring countries. […] As if in Italy 15 millions had arrived; instead, there are only 100 thousands [of refugees] of various nationalities, and they already seem to be many, too many. […]" (LB 7)

Unlike Boldrini, Emma Bonino appears to be more pragmatic in her statements. She rarely refers to her personal feelings on a certain issue, and consequently, the use of evaluative terms is scarce in her statements. The humanitarian stance is certainly present in her discourse, yet her representation of society is more often explained in terms of rights and obligations. Instead of focusing on cases which are personal, but also isolated, Bonino frequently frames the topic of discussion from a generalizing perspective. This happens in the text below, where she rejects the opinion expressed by the journalist, who does not ask a question but makes a comment encompassing two utterances. The second utterance in the journalist's comment gives a particular meaning to the first one, which would have appeared otherwise as a simple observation of Emma Bonino's views on the topic of immigration. Instead, the author of the article points out two cases, presenting them as 'facts' and advances a conclusion which he considers as demonstrated. In the light of the second utterance, the presentation of Bonino's stance appears to be indirectly criticized. In her answer, Emma Bonino maintains the discussion in the sphere of rational arguments, as two of her three utterances are introduced by cognitive verbs (*No conosco*/'I do not know'; *io penso*/ 'I believe'). The central utterance in her response, formulated in an apparently informal style, carries the most important weight. It shows Bonino's pragmatism and her inclination towards moderation; moreover, it advances a perspective which is not italocentric, but realistic and humanistic at the same time, treating individuals as persons and leaving aside prejudices regarding their national or ethnic origin.

(9)

> "Q: You sustain policies concerning a greater acceptance of the immigrants and an easier attribution of the citizenship. But such facts as the riot of foreign young persons in the suburbs of Stockholm and the attacks against army people in London demonstrate that even integration policies which are advanced like the Swedish ones and very open like the British ones do not guarantee the best results.
> A: I do not know a country in the world which had immigration policies without any trouble; very often, it is all about reducing the damage. A

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> foreigner is not a saint only because he is an immigrant, just as being born an Italian is not a warrant of holiness. Having said this, I believe that a policy of legalization, with acknowledged rights and duties, is a long-term policy." (EB 11)

The examples above show how 'humanity' is a salient dimension in the discourse of the politicians, especially visible in the discussion of two main topics: the issue of immigrants and the situation of the women within the Italian society. The texts reveal a diversity of viewpoints in these cases, especially on the topic of immigration. The journalists place themselves on a different or a more cautious position, questioning the validity of the integration policies. A possible explanation is that the journalists express, in this manner, the presumed views of at least a part of the audience. This leads to another particular trait in the discourse of Laura Boldrini and Emma Bonino, a trait following their authority and humanity. This third trait implies a corrective role which both speakers assume. Both speakers signalled situations which they considered as problematic and advocated the need for a change, not only at the level of political measures or policies, but also at the level of the collective mindset, of shared values and beliefs. This leads to the construction of a specific element in their images, as promoters of social change. It is interesting that the two interviewees formulated their viewpoints in regard to their country and fellow citizens not only in terms of praise, but also by criticizing it, although both politicians were holding public offices at the time the articles were written.

The critique towards the a negative aspect of the current situation and the argumentation in favour of change represent two discursive layers which become intertwined in the politicians' interventions. This is the case in example (10), where Laura Boldrini is asked whether the problems regarding the immigrants are exclusively due to the legislation or they express a certain insufficiency at the cultural level. Her answer includes a marked criticism towards the current state of affairs, which is expressed through the selection of adjectives with high evaluative meaning (dangerous, misleading, irresponsible). The speaker does not make direct accusations, but instead maintains the critique at a general level, using passive structures where the agent is deleted (*Tutto il resto è stato oscurato /*'All the rest has been left aside'; *è stato spesso purtroppo fatto /* 'it has often happened, unfortunately'; *è passata una nefasta equazione/* 'a dangerous equation has been accepted'; *dire alle persone… è qualcosa di veramente fuorviante e irresponsabile/* 'to tell the people... is something really misleading and irresponsible') and structures where the agent is presented in a secondary position (*la vicenda è stata presentata, dalla politica e dai media /* the issue has been presented, by the politicians and by the media). Social change is advocated by Laura Boldrini in this case through the repeated use of the strong deontic modality, expressed by the use of the impersonal Italian verb *bisognare* (*bisogna fare/* we must make; *bisogna veicolare/* we must convey).

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(10)

> "Italy needs a serious cultural work. During these years, a dangerous equation has been accepted: immigration is similar to security threat. All the rest has been left aside. In order to live happily in a composite society, we must make a quality leap at the cultural level and we must convey messages, which are not exclusively of fear, as it has often happened, unfortunately, but messages which are realistic. […] Because until now the issue has been presented, by the politicians and by the media, more in instrumental terms than as a resource and an added value. […] To tell the people that, because of the economic crisis, we must chase away immigrants and refugees and deny their rights is something really misleading and irresponsible." (LB 5)

The need for a social change is sustained by Emma Bonino as well, though she uses less evaluative terms. In the following excerpt, she shift the focus from the personal opinion to what can be termed common knowledge, by advancing rational arguments, like the references to the jobs and wage differences between men and women in Italy, in order to support her position. A particular attention deserves the formulation of the question, because of the use of the adverb *ancora* ('still'). In this manner, the journalist implies that the problems and the prejudices which women encounter may be only a subjective perception or even outdated and that the situation is different at present. Bonino accepts partially this view by comparing the current state of affairs with the discriminations in the past. Her answer thus seems to combine criticism with praise towards the Italian society, but this praise is only at the surface level. In fact, the speaker here highlights the idea that social change is still in progress and not completed.

(11)

> "Q: In Italy do you see the women as still being disadvantaged?
> A: The access to the job market and the wage differences show it. We don't have discriminations in the laws, we have them in our heads. The most difficult to delete. If I look back, I keep telling myself that we've come a long way. Change is possible, so it's worth insisting on it." (EB 10)

The insistence showed by both speakers on the necessary social changes derive from their assumed positions of authority. Only a person who holds discursive – and, in these cases, also social – power can express direct criticism towards other social actors, groups or communities. A special type of image of the politicians emerges from these texts: the two officials are not exclusively preoccupied to meet the expectations of all the citizens of their own country. Instead, they propose the model of a politician involved in general social and human issues, showing concern for marginalized categories within their own society as women or even external to their

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society, as the foreign immigrants. Boldrini and Bonino impersonate this politician model with 'global' concerns and who also prefers an honest discourse, even though it might offend a part of the electors.

4.2. The construction of the personal identity

There are not many instances in the corpus where the politicians talk openly about their private life. There is one interview with Laura Boldrini published in the magazine Famiglia Cristiana in 2013 whose topic is clearly stated from the beginning and aims to present Boldrini's life and her family (*Laura Boldrini: ecco chi sono*/ 'Laura Boldrini: this is who I am'). No such interview with Emma Bonino was found, still one interview with her included a first part regarding public issues and a second part formed by questions about her private life. Personal identity encompasses a variety of elements, ranging from the aspirations and desires of a person to her status and life outside the public scene.

In this section, I will focus briefly only on one aspect of the personal identity which was brought into discussion in the interviews analyzed, the motherhood. Not surprisingly, this topic is sometimes introduced by Laura Boldrini, who is the mother of a daughter. In the interview on Pope Francisc's visit to Lampedusa, she also recalls the meeting she and her daughter had with the Pope. This is an instance where the personal experience is brought forth in order to serve as an argument for a more general evaluation, a positive judgment of the work accomplished by the Pope. In other instances, however, Boldrini refers to her family, pointing out the conflict between her personal and her public life. As Wodak (2009: 18-19) notes, media increasingly tend to treat politicians as celebrities, following their moves and aiming to unveil all aspects of their life. Of course, it is debatable how much privacy a public person should enjoy. The risks associated with the publicization of the private life are revealed by Laura Boldrini in the following example. Here, her actions on the public and on the personal sphere are distinguished by the use of a specific type of predication, related to the sense of fear. The speaker starts by stating 'I'm not afraid', then through an apparent self-correction she concedes that she is afraid. In fact, she is talking about two different notions: as a politician and a public official, she positions herself as authoritative and courageous, disposed to combat the violation of the privacy rights through legal measures. At the same time, as a mother and a sister, she identifies herself as a common person, trying to protect her family.

(12)

> "I'm not afraid, murmurs the President of the Chamber […] I mean yes, of course. I am afraid when the photographers follow my 19-years-old daughter on her motorbike, I am afraid that she might be frightened and have an accident, my heart is about to explode. I am afraid when they wait in front of

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the house of my brother Enrico, the youngest of all my brothers, who suffers from a grave form of autism. I don't understand how they can do this and I am afraid for him. But I'm not afraid, now, to start a battle, if necessary." (LB 3)

In contrast to her, Emma Bonino has never had children. Unexpectedly, she reveals a maternal side of her personality, in response to a laconic comment made by the interviewer in the final section of a discussion. Her attachment to the children in her care is here indirectly expressed, by impersonal constructions (*è dura* /'it's hard') and by a statement with an impersonal subject (*Quel silenzio… era insopportabile*/ 'that silence… became unbearable'). This prompts the next question of the journalist, related to her regrets of not being a mother. Keeping in line with the discursive strategies which are characteristic for her, Emma Bonino frames again the discussion at the level of generalizing maxims, then acknowledges her own traits, in a way that can be interpreted both as a positive or as a negative appraisal.

(13)

"Q: You've had two girls in your care.
A: The girls came from different families. Then the families took them back. One knows it from the beginning, but when it happens, it's hard. That silence when I came back home became unbearable, and the girls went away I had to change the house as well. I still meet them. They have grown up, have had children and in a certain way I am the grandmother of three grandsons, too.
Q: Do you regret not having had children of your own?
A: A child is forever. And I've never had the courage to say forever." (EB 10)

The examination of the corpus indicates that bringing into discussion the personal identity of the politician fulfills various functions. First, it is meant to 'humanize' the politician (especially in marked cooperative interviews) or can be used by the journalist in order to deconstruct the politician's projected image, by drawing attention to the failures in her personal life. Second, the attention given to the different facets of the politician's life contributes to the promotion of the interviewed politician as a role model. It is important to note that none of the two female leaders has a 'perfect' family life. Laura Boldrini is divorced and a single mother, while Emma Bonino is single and has never had children of her own. Still, they are not judged by the journalist because of these aspects. Instead, they are presented as role models because of their career, their actions and their beliefs. At a more general level, the presentation of the politician's private life can also form an argument in favour of social change.

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5. Conclusions

The analysis has shown that the public identity of the Italian female politicians constructed in the media revolves around two main areas, authority and humanity. These findings are in line with the opinion formulated by Wagner and Wodak (2006) related to the need for women leaders to combine authority with femininity. However, the results also indicate a step further, as both interviewees were preoccupied with the representation of their authority as public persons. A characteristic deriving from the two areas identified was that the women leaders positioned themselves as promoters of social change as well, openly criticizing the discriminatory attitudes still existent in the Italian society and encouraging social change. The interviews also reflected a trend towards intertwining the politician's public life with the personal one, through the questions addressed by the journalist or through the insertion of personal experiences as argumentative devices. Another finding regarded the similarities and the differences emerging in the discursive styles and the self-presentations of the two politicians. Laura Boldrini appeared as more emotionally involved in the issues discussed, while Emma Bonino's discursive style indicated more moderation and pragmatism. However, although coming from different parties with different ideologies, they revealed the emerging of a new type of politician, with a more 'global' than national area of interest, preoccupied by the international human rights and by the general welfare of the people in the world

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Appendix 1: Original Italian versions of the quoted texts.

Example (3)

"*Bonino d'acciaio: «Mi batterò per riportare a casa i marò.»* (Head title)
[…] Capire dove va a trovare l'energia fisica e mentale per essere Emma Bonino. O, in omaggio al più indistruttibile degli acciai, Boninox. Ovvero una protagonista totale. Unica nel suo genere. A metà strada tra piazza e palazzo, padrona della scena politica e in prima linea su quella civile, in Italia, in Europa e nel Mondo. Seguirla a Parigi per un summit sulla Siria, in Sierra Leone per la campagna della abolizione della pena di morte, in Costa d'Avorio per la sigla di accordi economici e fermarla 20 minuti nel suo ufficio alla Farnesina, prima che riparta per Gibuti a rilanciare la lotta contro le mutilazioni genitali femminili, è come assistere a un one woman show." (EB 10)

Example (4)

"Q: Non sempre donna è meglio, però mi lasci dire che vederla presiedere la Camera è motivo di orgoglio per molte donne. Lei non viene dalla politica professionale ma fin dal suo insediamento ha dimostrato che cultura, stile e capacità istituzionali possono prescindere da un curriculum specifico.

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A: Non bisogna essere ideologici e perciò anche le donne vanno valutate in base a esperienza, capacità, valori. Io non ho esperienza politica, non sono mai stata iscritta a nessun partito però per 24 anni ho lavorato in varie istituzioni delle Nazioni Unite, quindi ho chiaro il concetto delle istituzioni. Essere eletta è stata una sorpresa ma forse anche questo è segno di un cambiamento […] Io so che svolgerò questo ruolo con il massimo dell'impegno e cercherò di viverlo con grande onore, senso di responsabilità e senza risparmiarmi." (LB 9)

Example (5)

"«Quando mi hanno cercata ero in Egitto, e credevo di essere anche in pensione». A sentir lei, Emma Bonino non ci pensava proprio di essere chiamata a fare il ministro degli Esteri all'indomani del compimento del 65° anno di età. Il curriculum non le mancava. Mentre l'azione politica e la militanza per i diritti civili in Italia sono giustamente controverse, il suo impegno nelle tematiche internazionali è sempre stato guardato con rispetto da tutti. Nelle vesti di esponente del Partito Radicale transnazionale, di eurodeputato e di Commissario dell'Unione Europea per gli aiuti umanitari, la Bonino sin dal 1979 ha battuto le strade del mondo in lungo e in largo con campagne di mobilitazione e missioni non prive di pericoli. Balcani, Grandi Laghi africani, Corno d'Africa e Medio Oriente sono stati negli anni I teatri delle sue rischiose iniziative […] " (EB 11)

Example (6)

"Q: Da destra a sinistra, negli ultimi vent'anni si è appoggiata a diverse forze politiche. Mai nessuno le ha dato del voltagabbana?

A: È successo. Ma io rimango una militante radicale. Fiera di esserlo. Non uno di noi è mai stato inquisito. Poco? Può darsi. Io me ne faccio onore e gloria." (EB 10)

Example (7)

"*Nel 2002 raggiunsi il centro di accoglienza allestito sulla pista d'atterraggio. Stanze minuscole, somali scampati alla morte e con le flebo al braccio. Chiesi ad uno di loro de avrebbe rifatto la traversata che stava per ucciderli. Mi rispose che a Mogadiscio ogni mattina che usciva di casa non aveva la sicurezza di farvi ritorno. Col viaggio aveva rischiato una volta sola. Poi nel 2009 la tradizione italiana di salvare vite fu calpestata dai respingimenti indiscriminati in alto mare contro la convenzione di Ginevra. […] Mi indignò e mi deluse quel tradimento del diritto internazionale che*

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sbarrò la strada a donne e bambini senza identificarli e impedendo la domanda di asilo." (LB 6)

Example (8)

"Q: Presidente, altri corpi senza vita raccolti in mare dai nostri uomini, dai mezzi della marina militare e delle capitanerie di porto. Come crede che si possa passare da una stagione dell'emergenza permanente a una più coerente politica di governo dei flussi migratori?

A: In questo caso non si può parlare di politica di flussi migratori. Qui siamo di fronte a flussi di richiedenti asilo, di persone che scappano da guerre e violazioni dei diritti umani. Tutto questo dipende da quanto sta accadendo intorno a noi. E se non fosse chiaro che ai nostri confini stanno aumentando le aree di instabilità e di crisi, le cifre ce lo spiegano: per la prima volta dal secondo dopoguerra il numero dei rifugiati al mondo ha superato quota 50 milioni. In Siria ci sono oltre 10 milioni di persone fuori casa, e 3 milioni hanno trovato rifugio nei paesi confinanti. […] Come se in Italia ne fossero arrivati 15 milioni; mentre siamo a quota 100mila, di varie nazionalità, e già sembrano tanti, troppi. […]" (LB 7)

Example (9)

"Q: Lei è favorevole a politiche di maggiore apertura agli immigranti e di più semplice riconoscimento della cittadinanza. Ma fatti come la rivolta dei giovani di origine straniera delle periferie di Stoccolma e gli attacchi contro I militari a Londra dimostrano che anche politiche di integrazione avanzate come quelle svedei e molto aperte come quelle britaniche non garantiscono I migliori risultati.

A: Non conosco paese al mondo che abbia avuto politiche dell'immigrazione senza problemi: si tratta, molto spesso, di contenere I danni. Uno straniero non è un santo per il fatto che è immigrato, così come nascere italiani non è garanzia di santità. Detto ciò, io penso che una politica di legalizzazione, con diritti e doveri riconosciuti, è una politica lungimirante." (EB 11)

Example (10)

"L'Italia necessita di un profondo lavoro culturale. In questi anni è passata una nefasta equazione: immigrazione uguale minaccia alla sicurezza. Tutto il resto è stato oscurato. Per riuscire a vivere con serenità in una società composita, bisogna fare un salto di qualità a livello culturale e bisogna veicolare messaggi, che non siano solo di paura, come è stato spesso purtroppo fatto, ma messaggi che siano realistici. […] Perché finora la

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vicenda è stata presentata, dalla politica e dai media, molto più in termini strumentali che come risorsa e valore aggiunto.[…] Dire alle persone che siccome c'è la crisi economica dobbiamo cacciare gli immigrati e I rifugiati e abbattere I loro diritti è qualcosa di veramente fuorviante e irresponsabile." (LB 5).

Example (11)

"Q: In Italia vede le donne ancora svantaggiate?

A: Lo dicono l'accesso al mercato del lavoro o la diversità di stipendi. Non abbiamo discriminazioni per legge, le abbiamo nella testa. Le più faticose da eliminare. Se guardo indietro mi dico che di strada se n'è fatta. Cambiare si può, allora tanto vale insistere." (EB 10)

Example (12)

"Io non ho paura, mormora la presidente della Camera […] Nel senso che certo, si. Ho paura quando i fotografi inseguono mia figlia di 19 anni in motorino, ho paura che possa spaventarsi e avere un incidente, mi si gonfia il cuore. Ho paura quando si appostano sotto casa di mio fratello Enrico, il più piccolo dei miei fratelli, che soffre di una forma grave di autismo. Non capisco come possano farlo e ho paura per lui. Ma non ho paura io, adesso, di aprire un fronte di battaglia, se necessario." (LB 3)

Example (13)

"*Q: Ha avuto due figlie in affido.*

A: Erano bambine di famiglie diverse. Poi le famiglie se le sono riprese. Questo uno lo sa dall'inizio, ma quando capita è dura. Quel silenzio quando rientravo era insopportabile, e quando se ne sono andate le bimbe ho dovuto cambiar casa anch'io. Le vedo ancora. Sono diventate grandi, hanno avuto dei figli e in qualche modo sono anch'io nonna di tre nipoti.

Q: Rimpiange di non aver avuto dei figli?

A: Un figlio è per sempre. E il coraggio di dire per sempre io non l'ho mai avuto." (EB 10)

Appendix 2: Sources forming the corpus.

LB1: "Laura Boldrini, la politica italiana che non si lascia intimidire dalle minacce di stupro" di Lizzy Davies
http://www.lauraboldrini.it/news/laura-boldrini-la-politica-italiana-che-non-si-lascia-intimidire-dalle-minacce-di-stupro/

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LB 2: "L'intervista di Laura Boldrini a Tv Talk.
http://www.europaquotidiano.it/2013/11/23/lintervista-di-laura-boldrini-a-tv-talk/
LB 3: Boldrini: "Io, minacciata di morte ogni giorno. Non ho paura ma stop all'anarchia del web".
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LB 6: Intervista. La Presidente della Camera: "Voltare le spalle a migliaia di migranti ha fatto solo danni".
http://www.lastampa.it/2013/07/04/italia/politica/boldrini-voltare-le-spalle-a-migliaia-di-migranti-ha-fatto-soltanto-danni-579d8cuOEHo7ezDzS1Ov9O/pagina.html
LB 7: Laura Boldrini: "Diamo delle alternative alla traversata di mare".
http://www.lastampa.it/2014/08/25/italia/cronache/laura-boldrini-diamo-delle-alternative-alla-traversata-del-mare-T5qlvsWjIypj4RsgTWpsOP/pagina.html
LB 8: Il presidente della Camera: ci saranno sanzioni. L'indignazione la devi saper elaborare, gestire, indirizzare. "Atti intollerabili in un Paese civile. Ma il governo sui decreti deve cambiare".
http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2014/gennaio/31/Atti_intollerabili_Paese_civile_governo_co_0_20140131_2a7d9e52-8a43-11e3-8a07-49542433a791.shtml
LB 9: Intervista al Presidente della Camera. Boldrini: "I cittadini dovranno innamorarsi delle istituzioni."
http://presidente.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/presidente17/attachments/interviste_articoli/files/000/000/005/rad139CA.pdf
EB 10: Bonino d'acciaio: *«Mi batterò per riportare a casa i marò.»*
http://www.emmabonino.it/news/11185
EB 11: L'Europa è confusa, io no. http://www.emmabonino.it/news/10765
EB12: "L'Europa federale? Ora o mai più"
http://www.corriere.it/esteri/13_maggio_19/bonino-intervista-europa-federale-ora-o-mai-piu_81704f68-c066-11e2-9979-2bdfd7767391.shtml
EB 13: Emma Bonino: "Cessate il fuoco in Siria per favorire I negoziati"
http://www.lastampa.it/2014/01/13/esteri/emma-bonino-cessate-al-fuoco-in-siria-per-favorire-i-negoziati-owtlQcgdvUXoSblTGFTRAI/pagina.html
EB 14: Intervista a Emma Bonino: "L'Africa cresce. Per l'Italia è un'opportunità".
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