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Towards a Shi'a Bloc? The New Gulf After 2003: Shi'a Empowerment and Sectarianism

Abstract

This piece will present the concept of a 'Shi'a Bloc' and the idea of sectarianism as a political and social norm. I will start by observing the implications of the American invasion of Iraq and describe the subsequent Shi'a empowerment in Iraq and the wider region. By analysing the response from the Gulf rulers to this empowerment, I will examine how the Shi'a identity has been shaped accordingly and I will present the idea of 'Shi'a Bloc'. I will then analyse the sectarian strife and argue that sectarianism in the Gulf today can be considered as a political and social norm.

Introduction

Long before the regional crisis caused by the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS), the Iraqis were already witnessing the atrocious crimes of a civil war 'so extreme that it far surpasses most civil wars since 1945':¹ a sectarian civil war that broke out in the immediate aftermath of the American invasion in 2003 – a decade before the appalling sectarian crimes of the Islamic State fighters. By the time the Islamic State Caliphate was declared, three years had passed since the beginning of the Syrian war: more than four million Syrians had fled their homes, more than six were displaced within the country and more than 13 were in need of humanitarian assistance.² The 2010–2011 Arab Spring had spread to even the strongest of the kingdoms – with protests in Kuwait, Bahrain, even Saudi Arabia – showing that as strong and authoritarian as those regimes were, the resentment from certain components of their populations was extreme and the opposition movements, although repressed and persecuted, were active and determined to fight for political and social reforms. After decades of regional marginalization and Western containment, Iran, the 'Saudi rival', could not be restrained anymore: Iranian influence had become massive in Iraq and, to a certain extent, in the wider region as well.³ To fully understand these deep shifts in the region, one needs to look back at the early 2000s. To make sense of the ISIS crisis, the collapse of the regional balance of power and its deep polarization with relations between the Saudis and the Iranians never as bad since the Islamic Revolution, one needs to look at the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the removal of Saddam Hussein and the destruction of that fragile and delicate equilibrium which, up until then, had kept together the mixed and complex Gulf societies.

This article will present the concept of an emergent 'Shi'a Bloc' and the idea of sectarianism as a political and social norm. Discussing the crisis in the region, I will argue that the American invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam has resulted in a regional Shi'a empowerment, which has represented a major driver of change and consequent instability. I will problematize such an argument, underlying how it is used by the Gulf rulers to justify their increased repression against the Shi'as and I will discuss the challenge of analysing sensitive topics, such as Shi'a empowerment or sectarianism, in times of instability and precarious peace. By examining why Iraq is such a relevant country for Shi'a Islam, I will describe the reasons why the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the Shi'as rise to power in Iraq represented an incentive for empowerment for the Shi'a communities of the wider region. I will then observe the Gulf rulers' reactions to such empowerment, the dynamics triggered by the harsh Sunni rulers' response and, by arguing that there has been some pressure on Shi'a communities for economic cooperation and political opportunistic solidarity, I will present my concept of 'Shi'a Bloc'. I will then analyse the sectarian strife in the region, describing it not only as a political discourse exploited by rival groups, but also as a 'cultural embedded and historically honed aspect of self'.⁴

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¹ Edward Wong, 'A Matter of Definition: What Makes a Civil War, and Who Declares It So?', *New York Times*, 26 November 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/26/world/middleeast/26war.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Iraq%20civil%20warEdward%20Wong&st=cse (accessed 19 January 2016).

² Syria Regional Refugee Response – UNHCR data, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> (accessed 19 January 2016).

³ Vali Nasr interview with Joanne J. Myers, 'The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future', <http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20061018/index.html> (accessed 18 January 2016).

⁴ Augustus Richard Norton on Frederic Wehrey, *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf: From the Iraq War to the Arab Uprisings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Finally, I will provide a detailed comparison of the reality of sectarianism in the Gulf today with what is called ‘international norm’ and I will argue that sectarianism can currently be considered as a social and political norms.

New Gulf after 2003

It is by now a commonly accepted notion that to understand the profound changes which have shaped the region into a new Gulf – opening up, I would argue, to a new era, a new phase – one should look at the 2003 American invasion and the dramatic change in the capacity of Iraq to alter the balance of the region. With the American invasion, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the political outcome of the power struggle that broke out in the aftermath, a dynamic of transformation at multiple levels was set in motion: a dynamic that has started in Iraq and then spread across the whole region. Since then, recurring patterns and similarities have distinguished the governments’ and the local actors’ response to major events (such as the protests of the Gulf Spring and the war in Syria), if not, arguably, such events themselves. Ethno-sectarian affiliations, for instance, have become common currency in both the religious and political discourse and the actual policy-making of the Gulf rulers. And the common assumption that the Shi’as would never play a significant political role and Iranian influence would remain marginal has been undermined, if not overturned altogether.

The argument of the Shi’a empowerment is *per se* a disputed claim, seen as being used to justify increased repression of the Shi’as in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the wider region, as shown, for instance, by the sectarian rhetoric behind the war in Yemen; yet, that Shi’a empowerment is a current, factual reality and the evidence is plentiful. Shi’a opposition groups have been mobilising and protesting for political and social reforms in Kuwait, Bahrain, and even Saudi Arabia.⁵ The Shi’as have risen to power in Iraq, both at the level of central government and the local governorates. The role of Iran in Iraqi affairs since 2003, as well as in the international crisis caused by the war in Syria, has been crucial and Iran’s ally Bashar al-Assad has become an international ally in the fight against ISIS – despite the war crimes committed by the Syrian government against its own people. The international diplomatic status of Iran, in fact, has hugely improved: relieved by now from the burden of sanctions after decades of economic marginalization, Iran’s return to the global oil market, after the end of the embargo, has been causing concern amongst the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) monarchies.⁶ The GCC has, in fact, had growing concerns about the return of Iran to the international arena and in the global oil and gas market, as such a development is likely to increase the worldwide oil and gas supply (and competition), push down prices (and revenues) further, and, ultimately, lead to a weakening of the strategic significance of the GCC countries (a decline in fact already felt as a result of different reasons, firstly and foremost the shale oil and gas revolutions).⁷ All of the above is evidence of Shi’a empowerment: denying or dismissing such a reality in order not to ascribe to Saudi and Gulf monarchies propaganda is problematic, as it may prevent outsiders from fully understanding the region and the complexity of its deep internal shifts. Yes, the argument of Shi’a empowerment is used to repress Shi’a minorities in Gulf countries, but that does not mean that these minorities have not in fact been empowered and have mobilised to achieve political representation and civil rights. The deep polarisation of the Gulf today – with the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia at their worst since the 1980s and the strong sectarian rhetoric on both sides, seems to have polarised even the discourse around sensitive topics, as if a side should always be taken. The same difficulty seems to occur when discussing the issue of sectarianism. Part of the Saudi propaganda, as well as that of Iran, Iraq and the other Gulf countries’, denies sectarian hatred. Gulf rulers would never admit to conducting sectarian politics or exploiting their sectarian affiliations for geopolitical purposes: they would instead justify their acts in terms of national security. The Western mainstream discourse around the recent events in Syria and Iraq, as well as the worsening tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, tends to describe them quite simply. In the 7th century, following the death of the Prophet Mohammad, there was a schism amongst his followers over who would succeed him as their leader, and that schism led to a civil war. The two sides became known as Sunni and Shi’a and they have hated each other ever since. As simplistic as it may sound, that has been the narrative spread by the Western media.⁸ And in response to such misleading interpretations, the academic stance has often been to deny the religious element of the Gulf struggle and to stress its political nature. Indeed, that seventh-century succession dispute

⁵ Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, And The Arab Spring That Wasn't*, Stanford: Stanford, 2013.

⁶ Brenda Shaffer, ‘A Nuclear Deal with Iran: The Impact on Oil and Natural Gas Trends’, *The Washington Institute*, 27 January 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/a-nuclear-deal-with-iran-the-impact-on-oil-and-natural-gas-trends> (accessed 7 April 2015).

⁷ Jamal Abdullah, ‘The Shale Gas Revolution and its Impact on the GCC Economy’, *Al Jazeera*, November 2013, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2013/11/20131113114617658817.htm> (accessed 7 March 2016).

⁸ Max Fisher, ‘The Real Roots of Sunni-Shia Conflict: Beyond the Myth of “Ancient Religious Hatreds”’, *Vox World*, 5 January 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2016/1/5/10718456/sunni-shia> (accessed 4 March 2016).

has nothing to do with today's regional tension and the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which has had geopolitical implications that encompass nearly every major conflict in the region, is in fact 'very modern and very political',⁹ and the 'ancient hatreds'¹⁰ narrative could not be more wrong. Gulf sectarianism, however, is a complex phenomenon, and cannot be fully explained as an exclusively political struggle between the two super-powers of the region, Saudi and Iran. As it does not recognise borders, sectarianism has encountered different contexts and taken different forms, and in some contexts, such as in Iraq, the struggle between Riyadh and Tehran, has contributed to it, but does not explain it fully. As discussed later, it is, in fact, deeply intertwined with politics and *identity* and that is more complex than the idea of 'politics' in itself. Moreover, it is a reality at grass roots level: to exploit sectarian sentiment, such a sentiment needs to be present and distinct communities with a strong sense of belonging to a sect need to exist, to allow political exploitation of such identities. As Vali Nasr has argued, 'the Shi'a-Sunni conflict (...) is not just a hoary religious dispute, a fossilized set piece from the early years of Islam's unfolding, but a contemporary *clash of identities*'.¹¹ Dealing with this 'substructure that runs beneath Middle Eastern politics and continues to affect events',¹² this 'very old, [and] very modern conflict',¹³ is difficult and problematic. If stressing the religious element may not be helpful, the difference between the Gulf denial of sectarianism and the academic stance of 'not really about religion'¹⁴ may not be as great as one would like to think; paradoxically, the risk may be of inadvertently ascribing to the Gulf rulers' rhetoric.

As already stated, to understand what has happened in the region and why such Shi'a empowerment over the last decade can be observed, one needs to look at the early 2000s and the American invasion of Iraq. Since then, the capacity of Iraq to alter the balance of the region has changed dramatically. With the removal of Saddam Hussein and the end of the Ba'ath era, not only did the Shi'as rise to power in Iraq, but also, most importantly, Shi'a communities in countries finally saw an incentive for their own empowerment. This is true for a number of reasons; firstly and foremost, the importance of Iraq for Shi'a Islam, which is massive. As Faleh A. Jabar has eloquently put it, Iraq is 'the cradle of early and mature Shi'ism'.¹⁵ Ali, regarded by the Shi'as as the first Imam after the prophet Mohammad, moved the political centre of the caliphate to Iraq. He was killed in the Great Mosque of Kufa and buried in Najaf, the holy shrines of Shi'a Islam, both located in the south of Iraq. In the northern suburbs of Baghdad, in Kazimain, the seventh Shi'a Imam Musa al-Zakim was buried. The burial sites of Ali al-Naqi, the tenth Imam, and Hassan Askari, the eleventh Imam, are both in Samarra, 120 km north of Baghdad on the east bank of the Tigris river.¹⁶ And it is also in Samarra, in the basement of his house, where the twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi, went into occultation. The mosque in Hilla, south of Baghdad, marks the place of his expected reappearance.¹⁷ Since the eleventh century, Najaf, Karbala and Hilla have been the centres of Shi'a theology and jurisprudence and Najaf is still 'to this very day, the intellectual Vatican of the Shi'a world'.¹⁸ Shi'a arts and symbolism, Shi'a monuments and history enrich the south of Iraq; the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, 'was the seat of the caliphate which is most associated with the suppression of Shiism. That is exactly why there are so many shrines in Iraq all around Baghdad. That is where the Shi'a leaders died at the hands of the caliphs and were buried'.¹⁹

Shi'a empowerment

Thus Iraq, a state so central to Shi'a Islam, became a Shi'a country after 2003: indeed, it became one of the most important ones for the Arab world, being geographically (and geo-politically) located between the two super powers of the region, that is Saudi Arabia and Iran. Thus, it became the very first Shi'a Arab country. This would have overwhelming implications for the Shi'as of the Gulf. When it comes to numbers, the statistics are inaccurate and inconsistent as it is not convenient for the Gulf and Middle East rulers to record them precisely. The estimates are that the Shi'as are about 35% of the Middle East population and more than 70% in the Gulf.²⁰ Iran is the largest Shi'a

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Vali Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, New York: Norton, 2006, p. 20.

¹² Ibid., p. 20.

¹³ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴ Fisher, 'The Real...' (accessed 19 January 2016).

¹⁵ Faleh A. Jabar, 'Change and Continuity in Iraqi Shi'ism: From Universal Islam to Shi'a Identity Politics and Pragmatism', *Iraq Studies*, 2015, <http://www.iraqstudies.com/featured1.html> (accessed 20 January 2016).

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Al-Qurashi, Baqir Shareef, *The Life of Imam al-Mahdi*, Qom: Ansariyan Publications, 2006, p. 40.

¹⁸ Jabar, 'Change and Continuity...'.

¹⁹ Nasr interview with... (accessed 18 January 2016).

²⁰ Gulf2000 Project, Maps Collection, 'Persian Gulf – Religions' (accessed 20 January 2016).

country, being almost 90% Shi'a, and it has the greatest population of the region: about 75 million inhabitants.²¹ Pakistan is the third-largest Shi'a country in the world (after Iran and India), with almost 35 million Shi'as.²² In Lebanon, Shi'as are the largest single community, accounting for around 4.6 million.²³ In Bahrain, Shi'as represent the majority of the population and yet, Bahrain has a Sunni government.²⁴ The Shi'a minority in Kuwait is considerable – about 23%, in Qatar around 18%, whereas in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia it is definitely more limited, although numbers do vary (the estimates go from 10–12% of the population to more than 24% in Saudi Arabia, and around 10% in the UAE).²⁵ More significantly, Shi'a populations tend to be located where the oil fields and petroleum installations are, yet they do not receive any share of the local power or source of wealth. This is somewhat paradoxical, considering that they could see themselves as having a geographical claim to at least a share of the oil resources. That is the case in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, in the central area of Bahrain and Kuwait, in the south of Iraq, on the border between Iraq and Kuwait, in the west of Iran and even around Abu Dhabi, where the small UAE's minority is actually located.²⁶

Regardless of being the majority or minority, and their geographical location coinciding with the wealth of their countries, their status in the Gulf Muslim community and their political and economic situation has always been the same: no share of power or wealth proportionate to their numbers. So what happened in Iraq spread hope all across the region: Najaf and Kerbala finally returned to being the religious gathering-shrine for Shi'a Muslims, where the Shi'as from all across the Gulf could meet and empower their sense of belonging to their own religious sect. In January 2005, before the first Iraqi Parliamentary Elections, the most senior Iraqi ayatollah, Ayatollah al-Sistani, issued a fatwa that would represent an anchor of hope for all the Shi'as in the region: 'one man, one vote'.²⁷ 'One man, one vote' would benefit the Shi'as, and immensely so. Where they were the majority, as in Iraq or Bahrain, they would get the power; and where they were the minority, as in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, they would still get far more than they had at that time: 'they get a seat at the table; they get a share of the wealth'.²⁸ Their response to what happened in Iraq was similar all over the region, as all the Shi'a communities had, to a certain extent, the same problems, the same aspirations, perhaps the same attitude towards power.²⁹ Iraq was representing an opportunity, and the implications of that would become manifest quite early on. In 2005 the first municipal elections in Saudi Arabia since the 1960s took place: public participation in Sunni areas was about 25%, whereas in Shi'a areas it was around 45%.³⁰ Shi'a participation exceeded that of the Sunni by a margin of two-to-one: 'a sort of confidence [had] begun to seep into Shi'a politics'.³¹ Gulf governments could finally be challenged, with the Shi'as playing a role at last, and perhaps, in the future, even a significant one. And at this very stage, from the rulers' point of view, something crucial and decisive happened; something that would inadvertently influence the events that would follow, if not determine, one could argue, the destiny of the Shi'as of the region. The Sunni Saudi and Gulf monarchies' rulers harshly condemned the Shi'as as a whole. They confronted them as a unified political threat. Regardless of the actual tensions between Iranian and Arab leaders, they accused them of loyalty to Iran. They applied to them a set of attributes that would 'unify' and arguably simplify the complex and diverse Shi'a landscape – both politically and religiously. And by doing that, paradoxically, they defined even further their Shi'a identity. With their confrontational political rhetoric, they 'brought together' the different Shi'a communities, picturing the religious and political Shi'a landscape as even, uniform, despite the contrasting elements that characterise its different groups. Such Shi'a groups, consequently, started perceiving themselves as a unified targeted community, which, in fact, they were. The execution of the Shi'a cleric Nimr al-Nimr in January 2016 caused widespread bewilderment amongst the Shi'a communities of the region, although the cleric's beliefs were quite closely connected to Saudi domestic politics.³² He was even expelled from Iran because of his

²¹ Ibid., 'Iran, Religions' (accessed 20 January 2016).

²² Ibid., 'Pakistan, Religions' (accessed 20 January 2016).

²³ Ibid., 'Lebanon Religious Composition' (accessed 20 January 2016).

²⁴ Ibid., 'Shias in the Core Areas of the Middle East' (accessed 20 January 2016).

²⁵ Ibid. (accessed 20 January 2016).

²⁶ Ibid., 'Oil and Gas Deposits in the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea Basins in 2014' (accessed 20 January 2016).

²⁷ 'Iraq's Shias Go from Exclusion to Dominance', *The Economist*, 17 February 2005, <http://www.economist.com/node/3663599> (accessed

21 January 2016).

²⁸ Nasr interview with... (accessed 18 January 2016).

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Andrzej Kapiszewski, 'Saudi Arabia. Steps Toward Democratization or Reconfiguration of Authoritarianism?', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 5–6, October 2006, pp. 459–482.

³¹ Nasr interview with... (accessed 18 January 2016).

³² Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was a vocal supporter of the mass anti-government protests that erupted in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province in 2011, where the Shi'a majority have long complained of marginalisation. He faced a series of serious charges, including 'disobeying the ruler' and 'encouraging, leading and participating in demonstrations', allegations that human rights groups including Amnesty claimed violated free speech protections. According to his supporters, the cleric was careful to avoid calling for violence and eschewed all but peaceful opposition to the

differing views over Iran's *velayat-e faqih* ('the guardianship of the jurist').³³ Yet, after his execution, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei went so far as to say that Saudi Arabia would face 'divine revenge' for the execution, and the whole Shi'a community around the world grieved him as a martyr.³⁴

'The Sunni reaction, in itself, has been defining Shi'a identity, because in many ways Shi'a identity in the Middle East works somewhat like Jewish identity did in Europe: it is the gentiles who define you. You might have a lot of diversity between Shi'a groups – the diversity of language, tribe, economics, class; there are Iranians, there are Pakistanis, and even within Pakistan there are different ethnicities – but at the end of the day, it is the Sunni reaction, by and large, that defines Shi'a attitudes towards power'.³⁵ When in 2006 the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said that the Shi'as are 'almost always' more loyal to Iran than they are to their own countries, he was on one hand, dispossessing the Arab Shi'as of their own Arab identity and on the other hand, he was dismissing the crucial division between Arab and Persian Shi'as, which is in fact an essential factor of tension in some contexts – between Shi'a groups in Iraq, for instance.³⁶ Later on, with the Yemeni crisis, the same would happen with the Houthi rebels, who in September 2014 abolished and forced to flee to Aden and later to Saudi Arabia, President Abd Rabbu Mansur Hadi. For the Saudis, the Houthis are a Shi'a Iranian-backed terrorist group, but the Zaydis, the religious sect the Houthis ascribe to, is a branch almost unique to northern Yemen. The Houthis do have financial and military support from Iran, but their political agenda is not synonymous with Iran as the drivers of the conflict are primarily local.³⁷ And this strengthening and defining of the Shi'a identity went even further, I would argue, with the rulers' response to the 2011 uprisings in Saudi and Bahrain. The genuine protests for political and social reforms were repressed and criminalised as an Iranian-backed Shi'a attempt to subvert the Arab monarchies, although the uprisings did not have sectarian causes or ultimate objectives. Many of the protesters were Shi'a, but the majority of the Bahraini population is Shi'a and, in Saudi Arabia, being the most persecuted and marginalised citizens, they are also the most in need for political and social change.³⁸ Their Shi'a affiliation did not take them onto the streets, but it was used as justification of their persecution and consequently increased inter-Shi'a solidarity and a sense of belonging to their oppressed sect.

The Shi'a bloc

Given the empowerment of the transnational Shi'a network, Shi'a solidarity across different Shi'a branches and ethnic groups in the context of increased repression against the Shi'as, and, most importantly, given the rentier nature of the Gulf economies and the strategic positions held by the Shi'as all across the region, I put forward for consideration the idea of an emergent 'Shi'a Bloc'. Iran and Iraq are its main protagonists, followed by Shi'a groups in other Gulf countries which, despite their minority status, have been recently active as mobilizing opposition forces. This idea of a 'Bloc' intends to problematize the relations between the different Shi'a groups. It does not mean the suggestion of the notion of a 'monolithic' front. In the context of a national and regional power struggle, tensions within the Shi'a groups are in fact increasing. Yet, such inter-Shi'a rivalry does not seem to undermine the idea of a 'Bloc' I am suggesting; quite the opposite, in fact. In a political landscape characterized by instability, dual loyalties and volatile affiliations, a call for opportunistic political solidarity and economic cooperation seems to drive the alliances of the different Shi'a groups' which are part of this transnational space. The Basra region in southern Iraq, accounting for 70% of Iraq's oil wealth, perfectly embodies all the propositions above. The Shi'a grip on power in Basra is uncontested. There is no full agreement between all the Shi'a parties involved, yet, their political discourse is inflamed with sectarian Shi'a rhetoric³⁹ and their ties with Shi'a groups in the wider region seem to be very strong. Iran enjoys extensive ties

government. On one occasion, he urged protesters to resist police bullets using only 'the roar of the word'. As his role in the protests became more prominent, he warned the Saudi authorities that if they refused to 'stop bloodshed', the government's repressive tendencies risked it being overthrown. The state-run Saudi Press Agency announced in July 2012 that Nimr had been arrested and charged with instigating unrest, a chaotic incident during which the Shia cleric was shot and injured by police. See 'Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr: Shia cleric was a thorn in Saudi regime's side', *The Guardian*, 2 January 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/02/sheikh-nimr-al-nimr-shia-cleric-thorn-saudi-regime-side> (accessed 8 March 2016).

³³ Toby Matthiesen, 'The World's Most Misunderstood Martyr', *Foreign Policy*, 8 January 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/08/the-worlds-most-misunderstood-martyr/> (accessed 10 January 2016).

³⁴ 'Iran: Saudis face 'divine revenge' for executing al-Nimr', *BBC*, 3 January 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-35216694> (accessed 3 January 2016).

³⁵ Nasr interview with... (accessed 18 January 2016).

³⁶ Edward Wong, 'Top Iraqis Assail Egyptian Leader's Talk of Civil War', *The New York Times*, 9 April 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/09/world/middleeast/09end-iraq.html?_r=0 (accessed 21 January 2016).

³⁷ Peter Salisbury, 'Yemen and the Saudi-Iranian "Cold War"', Chatham House, 18 February 2015, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/yemen-and-saudi-iranian-cold-war> (accessed 21 January 2016).

³⁸ Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf*..., pp. 20–25.

³⁹ Reidar Visser, 'Basra Crude: The Great Game of Iraq's "Southern" Oil', NUPI Paper, No. 723, Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2007.

with both state and non-state players in Basra, which have enabled its full economic engagement with the area, despite the traditional Arab-Persian ethnic tensions.⁴⁰ A free trade zone between Iran and Iraq has been created, multiple cooperation agreements have been signed, illicit practices have been conducted: namely, the 'Iraqi special blend'⁴¹ – which allowed Iran to sidestep sanctions, participate in oil smuggling and alleged illegal trafficking of narcotics.⁴² Finally and most importantly, strong frustration animates local authority: Iraqi oil is Basra oil and yet, Basra is facing unemployment, power cuts and water shortages. Claiming a fairer distribution of oil revenues, Shi'a local power has demanded more autonomy from central government: a petition to hold a referendum to make the governorate an autonomous region, like Kurdistan, was approved in August 2015.⁴³

Sectarianism as a political and social norm

The rise of the Islamic State is one of the most tragic consequences of the above-described collapse of the regional balance of power and the fragile equilibrium of the mixed Gulf societies. The region seems to be on the brink of collapse. The empowerment of the Shi'a transnational network has represented a massive change in the regional balance of power and the Gulf rulers' response to such a shift has been extremely brutal. After the American invasion and the collapse of the Iraqi and police national army, Shi'a militias, since 2014 under the umbrella of the 'Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces', have taken over.⁴⁴ They represent the main forces against ISIS and at the same time a further threat to security. Some are affiliated to Iran, some to Al-Sistani, some to the Iraqi government: they all differ in weaponry, salaries and willingness to accept orders.⁴⁵ The country of Iraq is falling apart, breaking up into the region of Kurdistan, the Islamic State, and the oil-rich south – demanding autonomy from the central government.⁴⁶ The Syrian crisis will soon be in its fifth year. With the recent breakdown of the diplomatic relations, the tensions between Saudi and Iran have increased dramatically.⁴⁷ Finally, the dramatic fall in oil prices, doubled with the return of the Iranians into the market, is causing concern amongst all the Gulf oil-exporting countries, even Saudi Arabia.⁴⁸

The political rhetoric and foreign policy of Gulf regimes have become overtly sectarian. Rulers in the region now 'make decisions on the basis of a sectarian assessment of politics'.⁴⁹ Sectarian identities have become politicised and, arguably, by competing for filling the power-vacuum in Iraq, have become violent and militarised. The Gulf rulers' response to the Arab Spring, has fuelled communal and sectarian hatred: to divert the protesting population's attention from domestic issues, they responded to those demands with a political discourse fuelled with communalist and sectarian animosity, blaming their sectarian adversaries of '[finding] a scapegoat to deflect popular attention to an external enemy'.⁵⁰ Yet, as previously mentioned, to exploit sectarian sentiment, such a sentiment needs to be present at grass-roots level. Distinct communities with a strong sense of belonging to a sect and, arguably, with divergent nation-building aspirations need to be present, to allow political exploitation of such identities. 'The Shi'a-Sunni conflict [...] has become deeply embedded in popular prejudice, as stereotypes of plebeian Shi'as and their wrongheaded view of Islam have defined how many Sunnis have seen their kinsmen'.⁵¹ Sectarianism has been cynically exploited both by powerful rulers, such as Saudi Arabia, and 'insecure, easily manipulated monarchs',⁵² such

⁴⁰ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Basra, Southern Iraq and the Gulf: Challenges and Connections*, Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States, February 2012, No. 21, p. 23.

⁴¹ Humeyra Pamuk and Emma Farge, 'Iran sidesteps sanctions to export its fuel oil', *Reuters*, 2012, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-fuel-exports-idUKBRE8BJ0BY20121220> (accessed 5 February 2014).

⁴² International Narcotics Control Board, *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2007*, 2007, <http://www.incb.org/incb/annual-report-2007.html> (accessed 20 January 2012).

⁴³ Ahmed Al-Naemi, 'Iraq gives go ahead to Basra autonomy referendum', *The New Arab*, <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/8/18/iraq-gives-go-ahead-to-basra-autonomy-referendum> (accessed 9 May 2015).

⁴⁴ The Regional Centre for Strategic Studies – Economic Studies Program, 'Is the Influence of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces Growing?', 13 January 2016, <http://www.rcssmideast.org/en/Article/10598/Is-the-influence-of-Iraqs-popular-mobilization-forces-growing#.VqiwdFOLTeQ> (accessed 13 January 2016).

⁴⁵ Jonathan Spyer and Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, 'Iran and the Shia Militias Advance in Iraq', *Middle East Forum*, December 2014, <http://www.meforum.org/4927/how-iraq-became-a-proxy-of-the-islamic-republic> (accessed 20 January 2016).

⁴⁶ al-Naemi, 'Iraq Gives...'. (accessed 18 August 2015).

⁴⁷ 'Iran-Saudi Arabia row: Kuwait recalls ambassador from Tehran', *BBC*, 5 January 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-35231382> (accessed 5 January 2016).

⁴⁸ Future Energy Challenges in the GCC Region, OIES Forum Issue 96, May 2014, <http://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/OEF-96.pdf> (accessed 5 March 2016).

⁴⁹ Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf...*, pp. xii, xiii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁵¹ Nasr, *The Shi'a...*, p. 22.

⁵² Norton on Frederic Wehrey, *Sectarian Politics...*

as Bahrain, to foment divisions and divert legitimate claims for justice and political reforms; even though sectarian identity is 'no artificial construct, but a cultural embedded and historically honed aspect of self'.⁵³

The above-mentioned 'Shi'a Bloc' seems to occur in a regional context where sectarianism has become a political and social *norm*. A standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity is what it is generally defined as a norm.⁵⁴ And that seems to be the case in the Gulf today, as it has become thoroughly acceptable for the Gulf rulers to think in sectarian terms and shape their foreign policies in those terms. Norms involve standards of 'appropriate' and 'proper' behaviour by the judgments of a community or a society and Gulf peoples will never condemn their rulers for sectarian acts against the opposite sect. One can find only indirect evidence of norms (just as for most other motivations for political actions – interests, threats, etc), which in this case may be represented by the negative judgement from Western actors on sectarian policies combined with denial of the sectarian nature of certain acts from the Gulf rulers. There would be no need to mention, explain, or justify those acts, if there were no sectarianism. Finally, norms began as domestic and became international or regional – the latter in this case through the efforts of entrepreneurs. And, as Fanar Haddad has argued, in the Gulf and precisely in the Iraq post-American invasion, the role of ethnic and sectarian entrepreneurs has been crucial. Haddad distinguishes between three states of ethnic and religious identity: aggressive, passive, and banal.⁵⁵ In times of instability and competition for scarce resources, any group's collective sense of itself is likely to move from the banal or passive state to the aggressive. And in circumstances of state-failure, complete lawlessness and absolute uncertainty, people will turn to whatever grouping, militia, or identity that offers them the best chance of survival. Those are the 'ethnic and religious entrepreneurs, a certain type of sub-national political elite who will provide the community with what it desperately needs – safety, security and cohesion'.⁵⁶ But in doing that, they will legitimise their role in terms of a communalist identity that gives them popular support and political power.⁵⁷ So, in the hands of the ethnic and religious entrepreneurs, passive, irrelevant and non-political identity traits will be politicised and mobilised. Once this process has been set in motion, this dynamic can quickly solidify and is difficult to reverse.⁵⁸ Previously 'fuzzy' or passive identity traits can become politicised and 'enumerated'.⁵⁹

There is nothing inevitable about the unfolding of this process: the primary cause is the lack of institutionalized politics, the feeling of complete lawlessness and reduced chances of survival. As Vali Nasr has cogently argued, 'the Middle East sectarian pains are not divorced from the larger political and economic and security problems that ail the region. Dictatorships have failed to build inclusive political systems that share power and give a place at the table to all'.⁶⁰

Conclusion

With this piece I examined the deep crisis of the Gulf region analysing the regional Shi'a empowerment since the American invasion of Iraq and the sectarian strife caused by these changes in the regional balance of power. I problematized the argument of 'Shi'a empowerment', discussing the challenge of analysing sensitive topics in times of regional instability and precarious peace. The argument of Shi'a empowerment is, in fact, used by the Gulf rulers to justify their increased repression against the Shi'as; yet, it is a current factual reality that cannot be denied. I then described how the American invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam resulted in regional Shi'a empowerment; I looked at the importance of Iraq for Shi'a Islam, the Shi'as rise to power after the invasion and the 'confidence [that] began to seep into Shi'a politics' in the wider region.⁶¹ I described the status of the Shi'as in the Gulf; their actual numbers in each country; their making up to 70% of Gulf population; their strategic positions over the oil fields and petroleum installations of the region; and as yet, their marginalised and persecuted status in most of the countries. With Iraq representing an anchor of hope and the Shi'as mobilizing all over the region, I argued how the Gulf rulers' harsh response had paradoxically defined Shi'a identity even more, condemning them as a compact, unified, political threat, had simplified and 'unified' the complex and diverse Shi'a landscape, which is actually constituted of various ethnic

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ Marta Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Autumn 1998, p. 891.

⁵⁵ Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism In Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, London: C. Hurst & Co., 2011, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Andrea Kathryn Talentino, 'The Two Faces of Nation-Building: Developing Function and Identity', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 3, October 2004, p. 569.

⁵⁷ Haddad, *Sectarianism...*, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Joseph Rothchild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, p. 61.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁶⁰ Nasr, *The Shi'a...*, p. 28.

⁶¹ Nasr interview with... (accessed 18 January 2016).

and religious sub-divisions. Thus, I finally concluded my analysis of the Shi'a empowerment postulating the concept of a 'Shi'a Bloc'. This idea of a Bloc does not suggest a compact, 'monolithic' front, but rather it emphasizes the pressure for opportunistic political solidarity and economic cooperation that seem to drive the alliances of the different Shi'a groups. To prove this, I illustrated the example of Basra. After the analysis of the Shi'a empowerment, I focused on the issue of sectarianism. I described how the political rhetoric and foreign policy of Gulf regimes have become overtly sectarian and how rulers now 'make decisions on the basis of a sectarian assessment of politics'.⁶² I also argued, however, that to exploit sectarian sentiment, such a sentiment needs to be present at grass-roots level – 'the Shi'a-Sunni conflict [...] has become deeply embedded in popular prejudice'.⁶³ To conclude my analysis of sectarianism, I finally presented my own theoretical contribution – that is, the idea of sectarianism as regional political and social norm. I deconstructed the definition of 'norm' and applied its attributes to the phenomenon of Gulf sectarianism.

⁶² Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf...*, pp. xii, xiii.

⁶³ Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival...*, p. 22.

Salafism As a Tool of Post-Arab Spring Saudi Arabian Diplomacy

Abstract

Since the outbreak of the 2011 Arab revolts, the intra-Sunni contest for regional hegemony has developed into an ideological battle between the different factions of political Islam. From the very beginning, that kind of competition has been tested in Egypt, while all Sunni parties tried to determine the nature of the Islamist opposition in the Syrian civil conflict. Meanwhile, the resurrection of Jihadi Takfirism represented a golden opportunity for the same conservative powers to win the hearts and minds of the West, in the context of the ongoing war on terror. Thus, it is against this geopolitical and ideological background that we tend to evaluate the utilization of Salafism by the post-Arab Spring Saudi Arabian diplomacy.

Being ‘Haraki’ or ‘Taqlidi’? The intra-Salafist debate in Egypt

The post-Tahrir Square landscape has been reshaped again and again between the two parliamentary elections of 2011-2012 and 2015. As for the Salafists and their newly formed party Hizb al-Nour, the two elections produced quite different results as well. Previously, the party managed to gain 122 seats in parliament and this time it elected just eight of its candidates. Until now, there have been plenty of reports, all of them trying to explain the party’s electoral defeat in terms of its inability to secure its conservative popular base or even expand it, by attracting former Brotherhood voters, whereas the Salafists themselves are blaming the supporters of former president Muhammad Morsi for distorting their public image. According to some allegations, the party has even received 60 million dollars from a foreign state (most probably Saudi Arabia, without naming it) to finance its campaign, by deceiving the poor and buying their votes.¹ In addition to these attempts to explain what went wrong with Hizb al-Nour, Salafists of the most ‘quietist’ fashion question the compatibility between traditional missionary work (*al-Da‘wa al-Salafiyya*) and politics.

This last point has been dominant since the interwar period and it is not the first time that such a debate stemming from Salafi exposure to political realities arises.² On the contrary, this debate seems to be inherent and it has always affected the transnational religious actor’s utilization by a state actor such as Saudi Arabia, where Salafism is the only accepted ideology and the cornerstone of its diplomacy. Early Salafi brotherhoods in Egypt have tried many times to demonstrate the pious – reformist nature of their mission, as opposed to that of the rapidly politicized Muslim Brotherhood, despite the fact that even the Salafists themselves could not resist the adoption of the more attractive indoctrinational and charitable activities of the Islamists.³ However, any engagement with elections, demonstrations or armed revolts has been disregarded as ‘heretical’.

In their charters they strictly described themselves as being *Jamā‘iyyat Salafiyya*, avoiding terms like *Tandhīm*, *Hizb* or *Jamā‘a*, due to their disturbing political connotations. Being influenced by the methods of the Christian missions⁴, Muslim Brothers developed their own school, that of *Ikhwanism* or *al-Islam al-Haraki* (meaning the ‘activist’ Islam) and started exporting it in the early 1940s. Meanwhile the Salafists, being unable to attract diverse social groups outside the context of the mosque and the madrasa, ended up both socially and politically introverted.⁵ However, they were left to continue their preaching undisturbed by the authorities. In the aftermath of Sadat’s ascent to power, conditions were favorable for the Salafists in order to renegotiate their presence, along with the Islamists’ re-emergence in the

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¹ ‘Hizb al-Nour: hadhihi asua’ intikhabat fi tarikh Misr’ [Al-Nour Party: These Are the Worst Elections in the History of Egypt], *Al-Arabiya*, 22 October 2015, <http://www.alarabiya.net/ar/arab-and-world/egypt/2015/10/22/%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%B8%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87-%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA.html> (accessed 20 December 2015).

² Quintan Wiktorowicz, ‘Anatomy of the Salafi Movement’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, 2006, p. 218.

³ Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Daud, *Al-Jama‘iyyat al-Islamiyya fi Misr wa dauruha fi nashr al-da‘wa al-islamiyya* [The Islamic Associations in Egypt and Their Role in the Propagation of the Islamic Message], Cairo: Dar al-Zahra, 1992, pp. 104, 111, 135; Janine A. Clark, *Islam, Charity and Activism*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004, p. 51.

⁴ *Jarida al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* [Weekly Newspaper of the Muslim Brotherhood], Vol. 3, 6 March 1933, pp. 3, 15.

⁵ Hamd Ibn Sadiq al-Jamal, *Itijahat al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu‘asir fi Misr* [Orientations of the Modern Egyptian Islamic Thought], Riyadh: Dar ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1994, pp. 444–452.

universities. It is worth mentioning that, although Salafi students had the chance to merge with the Brotherhood after the latter's restoration back to political life, in the end they preferred to preserve their autonomy.⁶

This, of course, does not mean that these modern Sunni trends were completely separated from each other. There were mutual influences, as well as clashes occurring among their followers. During the period 1972–1977, they sowed their first seeds in society through which al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya (The Salafist Call) grew into a distinct association in 1984–1985. Since then, their ambivalent stance towards politics has been reflected in their relations with the Muslim Brotherhood during Hosni Mubarak's presidency. Despite the fact that they have always been defending their non-political preaching, nonetheless the debate between 'Taqlidis' (traditionalist quietists) and 'Harakis' (influenced by Ikhwanism) about the eventual political role of Salafism has never ceased. The establishment of the first Salafi party in 2011 was the greatest reminder of its existence. Was it possible for a group of bearded preachers, concentrating on fatwas and public morality to contest elections, just like any other political party? According to them, Hizb al-Nour has been established as their political arm in order to serve the goals of Da'wa in a Shari'a framework.⁷

Given the Salafists' evolution, the latest developments are of great interest: it is the first time that the intra-Salafi debate is revitalized in the light of an electoral defeat which has been preceded by an outstanding success. In any case, poor electoral results do not mean that Salafism as a transnational force has been defeated, but rather they are indicative of the limits of its controversial post-Arab Spring experimentations. Whilst accusing the Muslim Brothers of 'heresy', because they have been blending Islam with politics, the Salafists turned out to organize their own electoral campaigns, using religious discourse. Regardless of its controversy, political Salafism has been a reality. However, how did it function?

Although Egypt stands as an ideal case in order to study this experiment, we cannot isolate our analysis from its wider geopolitical context. Instead of just being a local by-product of the Egyptian insecure path towards democracy, Hizb al-Nour's tactics resulted from the interaction between domestic priorities and the strategies of foreign regional powers. By this, we do not imply that Egyptian Salafists had just been puppets in the hands of the Saudi monarchy, but rather represented the local expression of a transnational religious actor which usually suited the policies of a great Sunni power, claiming to be the protector of every Salafist in the entire world. Thus, a Salafi – Saudi ideological affinity with regards to the Egyptian example should be viewed within the limits and the dynamics of domestic – international linkages.⁸ This is the theoretical framework in our case.

Salafism and its importance to Saudi Arabian policies before and after the Arab Spring

Even before the establishment of modern Saudi Arabia (1932), Egyptian Salafism had been transformed into the official Wahhabi getaway to the Arab Middle East and North Africa. Needless to say that the term Wahhabism is never used by the Salafists themselves, while Saudi Arabian historiography describes the gradual creation of the kingdom as being a process of Salafi, i.e. a 'truly Islamic' awakening.⁹ Taking into consideration today's 'natural links' between Saudi Arabia and al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya in Muslim and non-Muslim countries alike, we should trace how this special relationship developed, as well as its political impact with special reference to Egypt.

The kingdom's founder, Ibn Sa'ud, has been mentioned as an Islamic reformer in early Salafist literature and retained cordial relations with Egypt's last king, Faruq, whom he visited in 1946. Apart from their enmity towards the Hashemites, the two monarchs were united by their common interest in fighting any form of radicalism that could shake their kingdoms.¹⁰ Therefore, they invested much of their political capital in promoting loyalist religious brotherhoods as a bulwark against communists and anticolonial nationalists. In this regard, both Salafists and the Muslim Brothers were among the best groups to guarantee public obedience to the rulers; however the latter had already shown some dangerous signs of extremism, e.g. the assassination of Prime Minister Nuqrashi Pasha in 1948. This incident was the first Takfiri act against a prominent political figure in modern times and it is mentioned today, by all the Salafi sources in order to underline Brotherhood's relation to terrorism. The fact that some of the youngest Brothers had resorted to violence alarmed king Faruq, who was afraid that he would be deposed by his own allies, despite the assurances

⁶ Daud, *Al-Jama'iyyat al-Islamiyya fi Misr...*, p. 181.

⁷ 'Hizb al-Nour huwa al-dhira'a al-siyasi al-wahid li-l-da'wa al-salafiyya' [Al-Nour Party is the Political Arm of the Salafist Call], *Anasalafy*, 30 December 2012, <http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=37583> (accessed 24 December 2015).

⁸ Jeff Haynes, 'Transnational religious actors and international politics', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2001, p. 153.

⁹ Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 192.

¹⁰ Tariq al-Bashari, *Al-Harakat al-Siasiyya fi Misr 1945–1953* [The Political Movements in Egypt 1945–1953], Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2002, p. 333.

given to him by the Brotherhood's second General Guide, Hasan al-Hudaybi, that he would eliminate the extremists.¹¹ The Saudis, of course, were also confused by these radical reorientations of Egypt's Islamists.

Regardless of the embryonic schism between moderates and extremists, which has finally developed into the emergence of Qutbism¹² and the subsequent Takfiri organizations of the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood proved to be a much more effective ally to Saudi Arabia in its struggle against Naser than the non-political Salafists. Being banned in Egypt, many Brothers sought refuge and made fortunes in Saudi Arabia in exchange for their contribution to the kingdom's Islamic policies. At the same time, the Brothers protected the Jordanian king from radical nationalists, while they twice tried to destabilize (1964 and 1982) the Ba'athist regime of Syria. Undoubtedly, Ikhwanism has been a political tool in the hands of the reactionary Arab monarchies, whereas Salafism has been confined to the quietness of the mosque and the madrasa. Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s two tremendous geopolitical developments had drastically helped its reactivation as a transnational actor in the wider Middle East: the containment of the subversive Iranian Revolution and the Western and Saudi backed Jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan.¹³

After having contained Naserism, the simultaneous Saudi Arabian involvement on these two fronts represented a golden opportunity for the richest kingdom of the Gulf to claim its guardianship over Sunni Islam and the Arab world in particular. Furthermore, the linkage between domestic priorities and regional aspirations had been apparent in Saudi policy designations: by preparing global Jihad against the Soviet 'crusaders' and the Iranian 'heretics', the Saudis hoped to enhance their immunity to any possible Takfiri challenges at home, even at the expense of peaceful Sunni – Shia relations, thus creating a legacy of mutual animosity for the next generations. The seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 and Anwar al-Sadat's assassination in 1981 were the bitter reminders of the Sunni Arab leaderships' vulnerability. As a result, the Saudi Arabian – Egyptian co-operation intensified once again. Both the Muslim Brothers and the Salafists were encouraged to provide their mechanisms in this Holy War, while the reutilization of Salafism presupposed the abandonment of its earlier taboos on Haraki Islam.¹⁴ Therefore, 'Haraki' and even 'Jihadi' Salafism developed under the auspices of state actors, albeit on one condition: Salafists had to be transformed into *Mujāhidīn* whether in Afghanistan or anywhere else strictly for the sake of the Ummah, whilst remaining loyal to their rulers in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Nonetheless, this strategy failed to protect Sunni countries from the actions of Takfirism, throughout the 1990s and the 2000s.¹⁵ The Afghanistan war alliance amongst the Brothers, the Salafists and the Jihadists disintegrated and each one of them assumed their former roles. The Jihadi veterans exported their experience to Algeria, Bosnia and the former Soviet republics, seeking to establish Islamic Emirates. Their Saudi patrons were embarrassed and had to apologize for having 'unintentionally' contributed to the spread of terrorism. The same fighters that used to be called *Mujāhidīn* became known as *Jihādiyyin – Takfīriyyin* following Qutb's path, as it has been indicated in a number of leaked Saudi cables. In short, Saudi Arabia has allowed the 'politicization' of non-political Salafism, without being able to define its limits. Therefore, the kingdom resorted to the 're-institutionalization' of 'Taqlidi' Salafism as the only means to contain the transnational threats it had unleashed, whilst not betraying its ideological hegemony over the Sunni world, i.e. to 'de-islamize' its foreign policy.

During the 1960s, the royal dynasty did not predict that the inclusion of the exiled Brothers in the Saudi educational mechanisms could lead to the rise of Brotherhood minded Salafists, three decades later. No matter how useful it proved to be in terms of the 1980s' policy objectives, the continuous interaction between royally 'tamed' Salafism and imported Ikhwanism could eventually undermine Wahhabi state ideology, especially in light of the Brotherhood's political reform demands. Thus, Saudi Arabia intervened once again in the transnational Islamist – Salafist movement, by distancing the Salafists from the Brotherhood. In the meantime, the kingdom has been donating money for the establishment of Salafi madrasas everywhere as a means to deal with growing Shiite or other radical Sunni influences.¹⁶ In any case, could the madrasa and the mosque alone serve as satisfactory tools in pursuing a counter-Jihadi and a counter-Ikhwani strategy?

In 2011, the kingdom found itself in an awkward position. During the previous two decades, its Salafist proxies had been preaching to Muslims about their obligation to obey the state and refrain from any sinful actions of *fitna*. The U.S.

¹¹ Latifa Muhammad Salim, *Faruq wa suqut al-malikiyya fi Misr 1936–1952* [Faruq and the Demise of Monarchy in Egypt], Cairo: Dar al-Madbuli, 1996, p. 717.

¹² Barbara Zollner, 'Prison Talk: the Muslim Brotherhood's Internal Struggle During Gamal Abdel Nasser's Persecution, 1954 to 1971', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2007, p. 416.

¹³ Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, London: Saqi Books, 1998, pp. 469–472.

¹⁴ Jerome Drevon, 'The Emergence and Construction of the Radical Salafi Milieu in Egypt', in *Political Violence in Context: Time, Space and Milieu*, Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh and Daniela Pisiou (eds), Colchester: ECPR Press, 2015; pp. 215–235.

¹⁵ Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi...', p. 213.

¹⁶ *Bombata Islamic Foundation, Asante Region, Ghana: no date*, The Saudi Cables, <https://wikileaks.org/saudi-cables/doc35221.html> (accessed 21 December 2015).

which had already been involved in Iraq, igniting by their interventions the Sunni – Shia hatred and offering new battlegrounds to Jihadists¹⁷, was generally satisfied by the Saudi – Salafi policy of keeping the rest of the Arab world ‘quiet’. However, the outbreak of popular uprisings changed the facts for Saudi Arabian diplomacy. The first Saudi move was to lead a campaign in order to contain the destabilizing effects of the Arab Spring in its neighborhood. As a result, the joint Gulf Cooperation Council’s invasion in Bahrain in March 2011 signaled that the Sunni Arab monarchs would not accept any further revolutionary spillover in their backyards.

On the other hand, the Saudis had to acknowledge that one of their most loyal allies, Hosni Mubarak, had been deposed, while the local Salafists could not do anything to avert public rage. Furthermore, the more passive they remained amidst the reopening of the domestic political space, the more they were exposed to Ikhwani charges on their complicity with a tyrannical regime. No matter how well trained the Salafists were to avoid ‘anti-Pharaoh’ terminology; the Saudis were forced to re-examine their political utilization of Salafism, while the Salafists themselves had to adjust to a new era of political openness. Wisely enough and despite the hesitations of the more quietists in addition to some negative fatwas, they broke their silence and finally participated in the 25 January Revolution, together with the Brothers, however stressing the need that demonstrations should be stopped and followed by a transitional process, including steps towards protecting social order and morality.¹⁸ Their ambivalent stance on whether to participate in the demonstrations or not, has been indicative of how a naturally anti-revolutionary movement wanted to be part of a revolution, motivated by pure political instincts. Salafists of course were driven by their own calculations, irrespectively of the Saudi agendas.

For their part, the Saudis felt that the time was ripe to exert their regional influence westwards, in the hotbed of the Arab Spring. Their kingdom was at least secure and instead of mourning over Mubarak, they chose to get involved in order to affect the political outcomes of his succession and prevent unpleasant developments. According to certain allegations, the Saudis paid four billion dollars to stabilize post-Tahrir Square Egypt.¹⁹ However, Saudi Arabia was not the only regional power that tried to take advantage of the ongoing waves of ‘democratization’. On the contrary, the power vacuum and the subsequent destabilization of Libya and Syria prepared the ground for the increased political, financial and even military intervention of medium-sized and small-sized powers, like Turkey, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Iran.²⁰ The stakes in each case had been different though. Unlike Syria, where Iran had plenty of good reasons to get involved and Sunni powers were forced to act in a more co-ordinated manner, Egypt turned out to be the bone of an intra-Sunni contention. In their view, Egypt could serve as a ‘crash test’ for Syria’s transition as well, given the fact that as early as 2011 Sunni powers thought that the demise of Asad was imminent. In short, revolutions were inevitably subjected to the regional power game between the ‘survivors’ of the Arab Spring. Judging by the ideological ties between Sunni state and transnational actors, Ikhwanism and Salafism proved to be the only available tools in the hands of the conflicting parties. This explains the degree of Egyptian Salafi dependence on the pursuits of Saudi diplomacy, as well as the degree of Saudi dependence on the post-Arab Spring Salafi orientations.

In Tunisia, the Islamist al-Nahda party had already won in October 2011 elections, paving the way for the Muslim Brotherhood’s electoral victory in Egypt. Immediately, Turkey offered support to their Freedom and Justice Party, modeled after Erdogan’s ruling Development and Justice Party. As for Qatar, it became a staunch ally of Turkey and the Brotherhood’s government as a means of challenging Saudi hegemony. While both monarchies had a vital interest in protecting the absolute power of their dynasties, especially from domestic Islamist movements, they were nevertheless active in supporting these same movements elsewhere. Although this strategy was the pillar of their post-Arab Spring diplomacy, Qatar went a step further. Backing President Morsi in Egypt did not come as proof of Qatar’s ‘commitment to the rights of the oppressed people’ as Erdogan has stated,²¹ but was rather the direct result of a small Gulf nation’s attempt to use its enormous economic power in order to seek the credentials of a regional superpower.

Therefore, it is against this geopolitical background that the Salafi political experiment has worked. Given the fact that Saudi diplomacy has been based on the production of quietists, the kingdom had to be cautious in its new approach towards Salafists. This time the Ikhwanis had to be affected by the Saudi sponsored political Salafism and not the opposite, as it happened during the last quarter of the 20th century. Meanwhile, the political engagement of the Salafists

¹⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom The Future of the Middle East*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, pp. 13–63.

¹⁸ Umaima Abdul Latif, *Salafists and Politics in Egypt*, Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha Institute, 2012, pp. 3–4.

¹⁹ *Al-Tanawul al-Rasmi wa-l-'Ilami al-Irani lisha'n al-mamlaka* [Official Iranian Reports Concerning the Kingdom]: 14 August 2011, The Saudi Cables, <https://wikileaks.org/saudi-cables/doc119504.html> (accessed 21 December 2015).

²⁰ ‘Turkey and Qatar: Close Allies, Sharing a Doomed Syria Policy’, *The National Interest*, 9 November 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/turkey-qatar-close-allies-sharing-doomed-syria-policy-14283> (accessed 26 December 2015).

²¹ ‘Erdogan: We Side with Qatar to Support Oppressed People’, *Daily Sabah*, 19 December 2014, <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/12/19/erdogan-we-side-with-qatar-to-support-oppressed-people> (accessed 21 December 2015).

had to be reconciled with the fact that many sheikhs of the Salafist Call had been constantly warning against any adoption of ‘unislamic’ political principles. In the end, Hizb al-Nour’s commitment to respect democracy and the 25th January revolutionary goals, whilst maintaining the Islamic character of the nation and safeguarding social peace²² served as a *modus vivendi* between pro-revolutionary ‘Harakis’ and non-political ‘Taqlidis’. According to the leading Salafi figure, Yaser al-Burhami:

“...we don’t accept democracy as far as it considers people instead of God to be the only source of power, however we accept elections as a means to control the rulers. This is actually an Islamic principle deriving from the Shura practice of our forefathers”.²³

Despite these controversies which in fact are acknowledged by the Salafists themselves, their political experiment has been integrated in post-Tahrir Square Egypt, thus bringing about two political results: Domestically, it reshaped the revolutionary process, whilst redirecting it towards a more conservative path. Regionally, it helped Saudi diplomacy in dealing with Turkish and Qatari ambitions. During Muhammad Morsi’s presidency, Salafists assumed the role of the co-partners in the first Islamist government of the country and at the same time were the Brotherhood’s only ‘religious opposition’.²⁴ Therefore, Salafists felt strong enough to reassert their position in the Islamist political space vis-à-vis the Brotherhood.²⁵ It could have been a political mistake if the Salafists remained in their mosques, while Morsi and the Brothers were trying to endorse their policies mostly inspired by Erdogan’s ruling experience. This would also be unacceptable to Saudi Arabia which allegedly invested millions of dollars in installing Hizb al-Nour in the whole process.

Salafists demanded to be part of the Ikhwani model of power, whilst fighting it on the grounds of restoring its ‘true Islamic character’. As it is indicated in some documents, the Saudis were aware that the intra-Salafist debate could lead to dangerous rifts inside Hizb al-Nour regarding the nature of its relationship with the Brothers;²⁶ however they did not consider the schism between ‘Harakis’ and ‘Taqlidis’ as detrimental to their policies. On the other hand, the Brothers were compelled to satisfy many Salafi demands due to the fact that they were constantly exposed to their criticism on religious or even foreign policy matters, e.g. the Egyptian – Iranian co-operation in the field of tourism.²⁷ As it happens in Europe, when right parties forge coalitions with far right partners, the ruling Brothers betrayed their own relatively moderate ideological platform, out of their belief that they could absorb the more conservative Salafi voters. That of course proved to be a fatal mistake, and the Saudi embassy in Cairo has been expecting this to happen, according to a leaked document.²⁸ In the end, the Brothers paid the price of being too close to Salafi positions in the form of losing the support of the more secular and liberal strata.

Just a single year of Ikhwani – Salafi rule has been enough to justify a new military intervention. On top of that, Salafists have been ready to express their loyalty vis-à-vis the army from the very beginning. It seems that, despite the hesitations of the more pro-Brotherhood Salafists,²⁹ Hizb al-Nour has already been examining the idea of substituting the Islamists in their political bargains with the powerful military establishment.³⁰ Whether intentional or not, the Salafists’ flirt with the army served Saudi policy in Egypt, regarding political stability after an eventual transfer of power. As it has been stated in a cable, the Saudis should keep a close eye on the eventual ‘Pakistanization’ of the Egyptian army with regards to its strength and special relationship with a domestic religious force. The Saudis were pragmatic: they knew that the Ikhwani government would not last and they were looking for an alternative role to be

²² Abdul Latif, *Salafists...*, pp. 12–13.

²³ ‘Haula al-Itiham bitahrim al-dimuqratiya’ [About the Accusation of Denouncing Democracy], *Anasafy*, 10 December 2011, <http://www.anasafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=31391> (accessed 24 December 2015).

²⁴ ‘Violent Tide of Salafism Threatens the Arab Spring’, *The Guardian*, 9 February 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/09/violent-salafists-threaten-arab-spring-democracies> (accessed 21 December 2015).

²⁵ ‘The Salafi – Muslim Brotherhood Feud in Egypt’, *Al-Monitor*, 21 February 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/02/muslim-brotherhood-salafist-feud-in-egypt.html> (accessed 21 December 2015).

²⁶ *The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Cairo, Telegram: 4 October 2012*, The Saudi Cables, <https://wikileaks.org/saudi-cables/doc68733.html> (accessed 21 December 2015).

²⁷ ‘Bayyan min hizb al-Nour bisha’n ziyara wazir al-siaha ila Iran’ [Al-Nour Party’s Declaration Concerning the Visit of the Minister of Tourism to Iran], *Anasafy*, 26 February 2013, <http://www.anasafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=38493> (accessed 24 December 2015).

²⁸ *The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Cairo, Telegram: no date*, The Saudi Cables, <https://wikileaks.org/saudi-cables/doc34756.html> (accessed 21 December 2015).

²⁹ *The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Cairo, Telegram: 4 October 2012*, The Saudi Cables, <https://wikileaks.org/saudi-cables/doc47727.html> (accessed 21 December 2015).

³⁰ ‘The Rise and Fall of the Salafi al-Nour Party in Egypt’, *Jadaliyya*, 14 November 2013, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15113/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-salafi-al-nour-party-in-e> (accessed 21 December 2015).

assigned to Hizb al-Nour. In this case, Salafists could play the same role that was given to the Brothers during their short honeymoon with Nasser after the Free Officers' Revolution (1952-1954).

This scenario was somehow repeated after Sisi's 3rd July 2013 'correctionist' coup,³¹ although its scale and durability remains to be seen, along with the full implementation of Sisi's promised road map and especially after the Salafists tremendous electoral defeat. In any case, Salafists have so far been successful in co-existing with the army, given the fact that they were allowed to campaign in favor of the new Egyptian Constitution and more specifically, it's 'Article 2' about Shari'a status, whilst retaining their activities intact. Meanwhile, Egypt was not transformed into a new Turkish – Qatari satellite and Ikhwani rule has been delegitimized as an inappropriate model for the countries under transition. This political result has been exactly in tune with the Saudi diplomacy of containing the Arab Spring, whilst maximizing the kingdom's regional influence at the expense of the Brotherhood's Sunni patrons. In light of the alarming chaos in both Libya and Syria, a counter-revolution has been supported by the generous financial backing of the Saudis and the Emiratis, who had finally managed to impose their own perception of post-Arab Spring politics on Turkey and Qatar.

Anti-ikhwanism and the war on terror

Following 3rd July, the Salafists had to legitimize Sisi's rule and actions and embrace the notion of 'patriotic duty' which is an anathema for traditional Salafists. In fact, Sisi offered them a replication of their role under Mubarak, however on more inclusive terms. He asked them to be both 'Harakis' and 'Taqlidis' in order to actively participate in Egypt's national reconstruction. Lacking the political experience of other parties, Hizb al-Nour agreed on Sisi's terms. It simply could not understand that Sisi would be the sole beneficiary of initiatives, such as the law against the atheists,³² at the expense of Salafism, unless they believed that they could persuade the more conservative segments of Egyptian society that their guidance was indispensable. In any case, electoral results suggest that Salafists were not rewarded. Furthermore, Hizb al-Nour did not realize that after their deal with the army, their continuous role in post-Tahrir Square Egypt would not be determined by their success in parliamentary elections. Probably, the Salafists secretly knew that already. A few months before the elections, a Hizb al-Nour spokesman said: "we are reformers not revolutionaries. Compromise is not a bad word".³³ In the wake of their latest defeat, the Salafists could simply resort to their Da'wa and their political experiment could be postponed, until favorable conditions are met. As the party's assistant secretary-general stated after the elections:

"The party's lacklustre parliamentary representation does not equate to the end of our work on the political scene, and is not indicative of weakness. The results may have been disappointing, but we shall examine the underlying reasons and endeavour to strongly return to the political arena".³⁴

Regardless of the last elections' outcome, the partnership between Sisi and the Salafists has been a reality for the past two years and it has been designed and further supported by Saudi policy makers in light of the emergence of ISIS.³⁵ Jihadism in the form of a self-declared Caliphate constitutes a security threat and at the same time, a new opportunity for the Saudis. The same applies to Sisi's rule as well, regarding the ISIS – affiliated Jihadists in Sinai. There is no doubt that the greatest political victim of ISIS has been the revolutionary process itself, because the threat blurred the lines between counter-revolution and counter-terrorism. In the meantime, since December 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood has been declared a terrorist organization by the Egyptian authorities. Once again, there was a strange

³¹ 'After the Arab Spring: the Return of the Generals', *Spiegel Online International*, 4 August 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/after-2011-uprisings-generals-regain-power-across-arab-world-a-984355.html> (accessed 21 December 2015).

³² Ishak Ibrahim, 'Egypt's National Plan to Fight Atheism', *The Tahrir Institute of Middle East Policy*, 8 August 2014, <http://timep.org/commentary/egypts-national-plan-fight-atheism> (accessed 21 December 2015).

³³ 'Salafism, Politics and the Puritanical', *The Economist*, 27 June 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21656189-islams-most-conservative-adherents-are-finding-politics-hard-it-beats> (accessed 26 December 2015).

³⁴ 'Sisi Supporters Secure Second-Round Election Victory', *Al-Monitor*, 1 December 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/egypt-parliamentary-elections-president-sisi-supporters.html> (accessed 26 December 2015).

³⁵ Jacob Olidort, 'The Al-Nour Party: a Salafi Partner in the Fight Against Terrorism?', *The Washington Institute*, 13 March 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-al-nour-party-a-salafi-partner-in-the-fight-against-terrorism> (accessed 23 December 2015).

coincidence between Sisi and both the Saudis and the Emiratis regarding their stance on the Brotherhood. In March 2014, Saudi Arabia also declared its old allies a terrorist group, together with the notorious al-Nusra Front and ISIL.³⁶

This coincidence revealed the close intimacy of Egyptian and Saudi interests. Both countries were supporting the same side in the Libyan civil war, fighting through their proxies against the Turkish – Qatari backed Islamists. Both countries also were invited to join the international anti-ISIS coalition. This invitation has been especially important to Saudi Arabia in order to portray itself as a victim of the same security deterioration that has been brought about by the failed exportation of the Arab Spring to the Middle East. Its interventions in other countries could be ‘justified’, despite the fact that both Saudi Arabia and Qatar had contributed to the rise of ISIS in Syria by actively supporting a diversity of Sunni militia against Asad and the Hezbollah, whilst allowing the fragmentation of the Free Syrian Army.

Although since 2015, Saudi Arabian military efforts have been focused on Yemen³⁷, where some kind of rapprochement with Qatar was possible, the war on terror narrative nonetheless remains dominant. Very recently, an Islamic anti-terror pact has been created; in which both Saudi Arabia and Qatar co-operate, regardless of their dispute concerning the political future of the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁸ However, apart from targeting Jihadists and of course Shiites, this narrative has been convenient in targeting the Ikhwani model as well. The strong anti-ikhwanism of the UAE for instance, is fully manifested in any new initiative of the Gulf monarchies. The Egyptian anti-terror campaign fits naturally in this discourse, due to its interest in linking the Brotherhood’s ‘problematic past’ to the current Jihadi threat, and post – 3rd July Salafists were ‘reinvented as the moderate counterweight’ to both the Brothers and the Jihadists. This has been another aspect of their political utilization, during the last five years. On a domestic, Egyptian level, Salafists were asked by the authorities to be anti-Ikhwani as part of their patriotism. On a regional level however, Salafi anti-ikhwanism meant much more: the ‘rebaptism of Wahhabi Islam’ as a ‘politically correct’ model and the international improvement of the Saudi Arabian public image.

Amidst the ongoing war on terror and the revitalized sectarian tensions, after the controversial Nimr al-Nimr execution, al-Da‘wa al-Salafiyya in Egypt and Europe, as it is illustrated by the Greek case,³⁹ has been fiercely defending the Saudi establishment and its policies. In most cases, the works of the great Salafi scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim and ‘Abd al-Wahhab are cited in order to prove Salafism’s innocence of Takfiri influences: Salafists resort to knowledge to defeat their enemies, while those who misinterpret Islam are prone to violence in the form of riots or even armed struggle. The fact that the teachings of these same Salafi scholars are used by the official Saudi historical narrative, explains Saudi Arabian anxiety to defend its very existence, as well as its almost fifty years old Da‘wa diplomacy. In this context, Salafi mechanisms especially in Europe are being reconstructed as the tools of a ‘cultural Wahhabi diplomacy’ through which a transnational actor (Salafism) and a state actor (Saudi Arabia) try to secure their place in the global interfaith dialogue. Judging by the Salafi presence in a country like Greece, it is suggested that apart from instructing the small Muslim community through their usual Da‘wa, Salafists spend a lot of energy to disassociate themselves from both ISIS and the Muslim Brotherhood in the eyes of a non-Muslim audience that visits their websites.⁴⁰ Despite the different backgrounds, Egyptian and European Salafists are assigned the same mission during a period of fear and turmoil.

According to the Salafi narrative, the Jihadi threat is downgraded to a product of ‘heretical misconception’ that should be combated by the Salafists themselves. By depicting the suicide bombers as sinners, Salafists want to ‘protect Jihad’ from Takfiri connotations.⁴¹ Whereas Jihad is represented to non-Muslims in Europe as a means of non-violent Da‘wa, the situation is more complex with regards to the Sunni audience: the Muslim youth must refrain from Takfirism and at the same time support Saudi actions in Yemen and Syria. The only legitimate Jihad should be that of the Sunni rulers against their enemies.⁴² In that sense, when the Saudi defense minister has been asked about the Islamic anti-

³⁶ ‘Saudi Arabia Declares Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Group’, *BBC News*, 7 March 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26487092> (accessed 23 December 2015).

³⁷ ‘In the Battle Against ISIS, Where Is the Arab Coalition?’, *Al-Monitor*, 18 November 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/islamic-state-gulf.html#ixzz3rstwDER1> (accessed 23 December 2015).

³⁸ ‘Saudi Arabia Launches Islamic Alliance Against Terror’, *The Medialine*, 15 December 2015, <http://www.themedialine.org/new-from-the-arab-press/saudi-arabia-launches-islamic-alliance-against-terror> (accessed 24 December 2015).

³⁹ ‘Al-Da‘wa al-Salafiyya fi-l-Yunan’ [The Salafist Call in Greece], official webpage, <http://islamforgreeks.org> (accessed 24 December 2015).

⁴⁰ ‘Jihad Between Islamic Orthodoxy and the Terrorists’, *The Salafist Call in Greece*, <http://islamforgreeks.org/2014/10/28/jihaad-lecture-full> (accessed 24 December 2015).

⁴¹ ‘The Salafi Position on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings’, *Salafipublications.com*, <http://www.salafipublications.com/sps> (accessed 24 December 2015).

⁴² ‘Al-Tadakhul al-‘Askari al-Rusi fi Suria marfud wa yumahid li-saytara Iran ‘ala al-mintaqa’ [The Russian Military Intervention Is Rejected Because It Facilitates Iranian Influence], *Anasalfy*, 14 October 2015, <http://www.anasalfy.com/play.php?catsmkba=60183> (accessed 24 December 2015).

terror pact's intentions in combating ISIS, he replied that "we will eliminate any organization that seeks to destroy us". That ambiguity, of course, is convenient.

As for the anti-ikhwani addition in the Salafi anti-terror narrative, Takfiri violence is not a new phenomenon, but its origins could be traced back to the Brotherhood's 'unislamic' political activities. During the last period, we have witnessed many Salafi attempts to explain the failure of the Ikhwani rule in Egypt, suggesting that the Brothers were doomed to follow this course from the very beginning, because they have been distorting religion in order to cover their false, 'Machiavellian' desires.⁴³ Even Bin Laden, who has been fighting for an 'Islamic cause' in Afghanistan, was misled by his Ikhwani advisor in Al-Qa'ida, the Egyptian doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri, according to the Salafists. The term *Kharijism*⁴⁴ that has been used many times in the past in order to delegitimize dangerous groups is invoked once again, while Salafists argue that Sunni Muslims were among the first victims of this kind of violence, citing the Brotherhood's policies of assassinations, as well as terrorist attacks on Saudi soil.⁴⁵ The fact that the Saudis themselves have been labeled as *Khawārij* by the Arab elites of the 1920s,⁴⁶ is completely omitted. It seems that the deeper European societies slip into the logic of islamophobia and the war on terror, the more will Saudi Arabia feel compelled to restore Islam's image (actually the kingdom's image) to the world and Salafism remains its most valuable tool in this ideological battle. However, this strategy has been based so far on the invention of 'distorters'.

Conclusion

The success of the Saudi 'Salafi diplomacy' is still under discussion. Its top priority in Egypt has been the containment of the Arab Spring and the collapse of Ikhwanism. Therefore the intra-Salafist debate between 'Taqlidis' and 'Harakis' seems to be retained on purpose, providing political solutions, whenever the kingdom needs them. As for the Salafists themselves, their ability to act in both a 'Taqlidi' and 'Haraki' fashion helped them keep their organizational and ideological integrity throughout a very turbulent period. Nonetheless, they did not achieve so far something better than being the domestic manifestation of a transnational bulwark. Regardless of the Saudi designations, Egyptian Salafists are still perceived as counter-revolutionary tools in the hands of a reactionary Sunni power and it is up to them if they are really interested in overcoming the vicious circle of their own utilization by others. Their views and interests in the Egyptian political landscape should be better defined vis-à-vis the character of the Salafi movement as a whole and the role of Saudi Arabia in the Sunni Arab world.

If we evaluate the political utilization of Salafism in terms of its overall contribution to Saudi diplomacy, we can see that there is something much more vital, than the political survival of Hizb al-Nour at stake. Salafists are increasingly recognized by European audiences as the only voices that represent Islam. Thanks to their efforts, Saudi Arabia remains a partner to a terror – stricken Europe, despite the fact that the kingdom has not shown any serious zeal in eliminating the 'Caliphate'. On top of that, there is no Western power so far to question its anti-terror partnership with a kingdom, where decapitations and amputations are enforced by law on a daily basis. Salafists had been active in demoralizing the 'modern Khawārij' and defending the Saudi state, whereas their patrons are preoccupied with imposing a new regional order in the Gulf, rather than fighting the 'distorters of Islam'. As for the increased anti-ikhwanism of the Salafi narrative, it is not clear whether it will help the Salafists in the long run. Unless the Saudi patron is really interested in changing course towards the Muslim Brotherhood and impose a Salafi – Ikhwani reconciliation as it happened in the past. In any case, and despite the latest implications of improved relations between the Brotherhood and King Salman,⁴⁷ the organization remains on the Saudi and the Emirati terror lists. Although Saudi Arabia and the Emirates share a common anti-ikhwani agenda, it is still unclear if we will witness any differentiation in their policies.

Unquestionably, the spillover of the Arab Spring has been potentially much worse than the Takfiri attacks, which have so far not managed to provoke massive revolutions. However, today is not 1985, neither is it 2011. The kingdom should do much more than resorting to Salafism or forging 'Sunni pacts' if it really wants to avoid ending up isolated,

⁴³ 'Al-Siyasa al-Mikafiliyya hal taa'thara biha al-Ikhwān? Wa kayfa yatajannabuha hizb al-Nour?' [Were the Brothers Affected by Machiavellian Policies, and How Will al-Nour Party Evade Them?], *Anasalafy*, 21 December 2015, <http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=62080> (accessed 24 December 2015).

⁴⁴ The term derives from the Arabic root *kharaja* meaning getting out. It has been invented by the Muslims themselves in order to describe a radical politico-religious movement of the 7th century that murdered the fourth Caliph 'Ali Ibn Abi Tālib after the battle of Siffin in 657 A.D. Since then the term has been used as an accusation during periods of tense Muslim infighting.

⁴⁵ 'Who Invented Suicide Bombings?', *The Salafist Call in Greece*, <http://ahmadeldin.org/2015/07/15/efeyreths-vomvistwn-autoktonias> (accessed 24 December 2015).

⁴⁶ John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam – The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Sa'udi Kingdom 1910-1930*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978, p. 92.

⁴⁷ Christine Smith Diwan, 'The (Limited) Rehabilitation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf', *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, 31 July 2015, <http://www.agsiw.org/the-limited-rehabilitation-of-the-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-gulf> (accessed 26 December 2015).

especially in light of the Iranian – Western rapprochement. There is still plenty of political room for Saudi Arabia in order to play a stabilizing and less sectarian role in a more multi-polar Middle East, otherwise its post Arab Spring ‘geopolitical emancipation’ could be reversed to its own detriment.

Weaving the Texture of Memories about the Egyptian Revolution of 2011: Autobiographical Fragments by Radwa Ashour

Abstract

This article deals with the autobiographical work of Egyptian writer Radwa Ashour which consists of two parts: *Athqal min Radwa* (Heavier than Radwa, 2013) and *Al-Sarkha* (The Scream, 2015). The article aims to show Radwa Ashour's participation in weaving the texture of memories about the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 by: stressing her social commitment expressed through her life and works; describing the structure of the autobiographical work; presenting the intertwining of the author's personal stories with the stories of others; and pointing to other media of memories about the revolution employed in Radwa Ashour's narrative.

Introduction

In *Athqal min Radwa: maqat'i min sira dhatiyya* (Heavier than Radwa: Fragments from an Autobiography, 2013), Egyptian writer Radwa Ashour (1946–2014) describes a scene in which she stands on the balcony of a seventh-floor apartment in a building in Cairene Tala't Harb Street. She looks at the masses of protesters in Tahrir Square who have been gathering there for months since the outbreak of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011. She reflects on who will depict what she has seen.¹ Then, she compares writing about the revolution with the weaving of the texture of memories by many writers:

“The events of the revolution will write who will write it. They will portray the good ones and the bad ones and tell us about the martyr and the killer. Maybe God will give us a male or a female writer who will be able to present the whole epic in a prose or poetic form. And maybe all the writers will take part in writing it, and not because they will write together, but because each of them will grasp a part of it; so that they will complement one another as if they were practising in Al-Khiyamiyya Alley.² Each of them will add to the stretched texture made by their hands, whether gentle or rough, in both cases possessed by the demon of talent and taught by the reputable craftsmen.”³

The article aims to show Radwa Ashour's participation in weaving the texture of memories about the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 by presenting her autobiographical work which consists of two parts: the aforementioned *Athqal min Radwa* and *Al-Sarkha: maqati' min sira dhatiyya: al-juz' ath-thani min Athqal min Radwa* (The Scream: Fragments from an Autobiography: the Second Part of Heavier than Radwa, 2015).⁴ This aim will be fulfilled in four steps: firstly, by stressing Radwa Ashour's social commitment, expressed through her life and works; secondly, by describing the structure of the autobiographical work; thirdly, by presenting the intertwining of the author's personal stories with the stories of others; and fourthly, by pointing to other media of memory about the revolution employed in Radwa Ashour's narrative. The reflections on these questions are set in the context of Arab women's autobiographical writing and cultural memory studies.⁵

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¹ Radwa Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa. Maqat'i min sira dhatiyya* [Heavier than Radwa. Fragments from an Autobiography], 2nd ed., Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2013, pp. 166–168.

² *Al-Khiyamiyya* – an alley in the historic part of Cairo which has been known for centuries for craftsmen's workshops specialising in the manufacturing of tents, see: Rasmi Fath Allah, 'Al-Khiyamiyya... mihna tanqarid! Al-Astawat hajaruha... wa al-amal fi al-jil al-jadid' [The Manufacturing of Tents... a Perishing Profession! The Reputable Craftsmen Left It... and the Hope Is in the New Generation], *Al-Ahram*, 30 October 2015, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/449678.aspx> (accessed 3 February 2016).

³ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., p. 168.

⁴ Radwa Ashour, *Al-Sarkha: maqati' min sira dhatiyya: al-juz' ath-thani min Athqal min Radwa* [The Scream: Fragments from an Autobiography: the Second Part of Heavier than Radwa], Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2015.

⁵ In so doing, I follow the path of Egyptian scholar Hala Kamal, set in her lecture entitled *Autobiography as Cultural Memory: Memoirs of Radwa Ashour and Ahdaf Soueif* presented at the French University in Egypt on 8 April 2014.

Protecting collective memory

In her life and works, Radwa Ashour followed her strong belief that an intellectual has to be committed to the struggle for freedom and civil rights. As a scholar, and for most of her academic career, a professor of English literature at ‘Ayn al-Shams University in Cairo,⁶ she was an active member of the National Committee against Zionism in Egyptian Universities during the presidency of Anwar al-Sadat (1970–1981) as well as a member of the 9th March Movement calling for the independence of Egyptian universities during the reign of president Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011).⁷

As a writer, she referred, directly or indirectly, to current social and political problems, such as: the violation of civil rights in Egypt, student demonstrations, the Palestinian question, and the First Gulf War,⁸ in various formats including autobiographies,⁹ autobiographical novels,¹⁰ contemporary¹¹ and historical novels,¹² and also collections of stories.¹³ In his article Sayed Mahmoud writes that, “Ashour’s life offers the perfect example of what is referred to as the ‘committed intellectual’. She belonged to the last generation of the writers of the 1960s who embraced the idea of political engagement without resorting to preaching”.¹⁴

This characteristic of the 1960s generation was also emphasised by Radwa Ashour who noticed that the defeat of the Egyptian army in the Third Arab–Israeli War of 1967 had a decisive influence on their, “exceptional alertness to time and place”. Moreover, writers of this generation were influenced by the previous wars (in 1948 and 1956) and the wars which followed the June War (i.e. in 1973, 1978, 1982 and 1991), shaking the Arab world in the second half of the 20th century.¹⁵ Another significant reason for this state of affairs was the experience of censorship, practiced by the authorities in Egypt and other Arab countries, to which these writers expressed opposition by writing the stories of their nations.¹⁶ “This endeavour – as Radwa Ashour confessed – has been a kind of cultural resistance which partly implies the protection of collective memory, a kind of cultural conservation in the face of the double threat of cultural imposition and cultural disintegration. To challenge the dominant discourse (a challenge, in my case, mounted from the triple periphery of nation, class and gender); to attempt to give history visibility and coherence, to conjure up unaccounted for, marginalized and silenced areas of the past and present, this has been my endeavour”.¹⁷ In another utterance the Egyptian writer emphasised that as an Arab woman and a citizen of the Third World, “she writes in self-defence and in defence of countless others with whom she identifies and who are like her”.¹⁸

From this perspective, it was impossible for Radwa Ashour not to take part in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and bear witness to its events.¹⁹ For a woman who had participated in a number of demonstrations against the conduct of the

⁶ Her academic output in Arabic includes critical essays on Arabic literature and the study of Ghassan Kanafani’s works as well as an edition of the Arabic translation of vol. 9 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (2005). She was also the editor of *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, 1873–1999* (with Ferial Ghazoul and Hasna Reda-Mekdashy, 2008). See: the list of her works in Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*, pp. 395–397; and in *Banipal*, <http://www.banipal.co.uk/contributors/860/radwa-ashour/> (accessed 3 February 2016).

⁷ For more about her life and activism see: Nada Ramadan Elnahla, ‘Radwa Ashour (1946–2014), A Literary, Cultural and Political Activist Icon, Echoing in Egypt’s Valley’, *Al-Jadid. A Review & Record of Arab Culture and Arts*, Vol. 19, No. 68, 2015, <http://www.aljadid.com/content/radwa-ashour-1946-2014> (accessed 3 February 2016).

⁸ For more detailed information about Radwa Ashour’s commitment see: Sayed Mahmoud, ‘Egypt Loses Committed Intellectual, Novelist Radwa Ashour’, *Al-Akhbar English*, 2 December 2014, <http://english.alakhbar.com/node/22723> (accessed 3 February 2016).

⁹ Her first autobiographical work was *Al-Rihla. Ayyam al-taliba al-misriyya fi Amrika* [The Journey. Days of an Egyptian Student in America], Bayrut: Dar al-Adab, 1983.

¹⁰ Radwa Ashour, *Atyaf*, Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1999; English translation by Barbara Romaine: *Specters*, Northampton: Interlink Pub Group, 2010.

¹¹ Radwa Ashour, *Hajar dafi* [Warm Stone], Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-‘Arabi, 1985; *Khadija wa Sawsan* [Hadija and Sawsan], Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1989; *Qit’a min Urubba* [A Part of Europe], Casablanca: Al-Markaz ath-Thaqafi al-‘Arabi, 2003; *Faraj* [Relief], Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2008; English translation by Barbara Romaine: *Blue Lorries*, Doha: Bloomsbury, 2014; *Al-Tanturiyya*, Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2010; English translation by Kay Haikinen: *The Women from Tantoura: a Palestinian Novel*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014.

¹² *Siraj*, Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1992; English translation by Barbara Romaine: *Siraj: an Arab Tale*, Austin: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 2007; *Thulathiyya Gharnata*, Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1994–1995; English translation by William Granara: *Granada: a Novel*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003.

¹³ *Ra’ytu al-nakhil* [I Saw the Date Palms], Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-Misriyya al-‘amma li-al-Kitab, 1989; *Taqarir al-sayyida Ra’* [The Reports of Miss Ra’], Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2001.

¹⁴ Mahmoud, ‘Egypt Loses Committed Intellectual, Novelist Radwa Ashour...’.

¹⁵ Radwa Ashour, ‘Eyewitness, Scribe and Story Teller: My Experience as a Novelist’, *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 2000, p. 87.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁸ Radwa Ashour, ‘My Experience with Writing’, trans. by Rebecca Porteous, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 13, 1993, p. 170.

¹⁹ This was also the case with other prominent Egyptian female intellectuals who have been revolutionaries for many decades, for example: Nawal al-Sa’dawi (born in 1931); see: Miriam Cooke, ‘Feminist Revolutionary Narratives from Egypt and Syria: Nawwal el Saadawi and Samar Yazbek’, *Informed Comment. Thoughts on the Middle East*, 3 July 2013, <http://www.juancole.com/2013/07/revolutionary-narratives-disappointments.html> (accessed 4 February 2016). Regarding the memoirs of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 from the example of a memoir by

Egyptian authorities for nearly forty years and who experienced imprisonment,²⁰ the 25 January Revolution was, “another lesson from the lessons of revolution during which she recognised the movement of time and generations and the role reversal”.²¹

Autobiographical fragments

The first part of Radwa Ashour’s autobiographical fragments, *Athqal min Radwa*, covers the period between autumn 2010 and 9 May 2013, while the second part, *Al-Sarkha*, was finished in September 2014. The former consists of 33 chapters, while the latter of 25 chapters, the last ones of which were clearly not finished because of the author’s worsening health.²² Although for Radwa Ashour the direct impulse to start writing an autobiography was the deaths of her brother and mother in September 2010 and her awareness of the passage of time,²³ the process of composing both parts of the work was determined by her fight against cancer, which included several bouts of surgery and therapy.²⁴ The outbreak of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 occurred while she was being hospitalised in Washington, so the development of events in Cairo and Egypt became the second axis of both parts of the autobiography alongside the serious illness.

However, the structure of this work, called “autobiographical fragments” by Radwa Ashour, is not easy to describe. The stories about the author’s medical treatment and her participation in the 25 January Revolution, which she told to the reader in a very direct way, are intertwined with many other stories about people, places and events happening both at the time of writing the autobiography and in the past. Some chapters are dedicated to specific events which took place not so long ago, for example: chapter 4 of the first part in which the author depicted her preparations for surgery and the time of convalescence in the company of her husband, Murid, and her son, Tamim.²⁵ In other chapters, recent events revive memories of past events, for example: in the first part, specifically chapter two, in which Radwa Ashour mentioned that there were hooligan attacks against students on 4 November 2010 at ‘Ayn al-Shams University, which had apparently been inspired by the security services. Subsequently, she went back to her memories about a security service employee who attended her lectures during the period from 1970 to 1990.²⁶ There are also chapters which include childhood memories, for instance: chapter 22 of the first part describing Ashour’s school education;²⁷ or stories about family members, for example: chapter 11 of the same part.²⁸ In some chapters the starting point is a story about a place, as in chapter 13 of the first part, in which the story about Al-Za‘faran Palace, the administrative headquarters of ‘Ayn al-Shams University, develops into stories about the author’s academic career and student demonstrations.²⁹ Other chapters characterise some people, for instance: chapter 14 of the second part with stories of four women who played a significant role in Ashour’s family life.³⁰ Some chapters resemble essays about certain processes or phenomena, for example: chapter 17 of the first part which reflects on the impact of revolutions on the history of Egypt in the 20th century.³¹

In chapter 23 of *Athqal min Radwa*, entitled “Between an autobiography and a memoir”, Radwa Ashour admitted that she was aware that her text was something between an autobiography and a memoir. What both genres have in common is – as she explained – that they present a personal experience in the chronological order or by disrupted chronology. The difference between the two is that an autobiography shows successive stages of life, while a memoir concentrates on a certain period of life or individual experiences.³² Later on, the writer confessed to readers that her

Mona Prince as well as from other memoirs by Egyptian women writers, see: Tahia Abdel Nasser, ‘Women’s Revolution and Tahrir Memoirs’, *Al-Ahram*, No. 1135, 14 February 2013, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/1410/23/Women%E2%80%99s-revolution-and-Tahrir-memoirs.aspx> (accessed 4 February 2016).

²⁰ Radwa Ashour described these experiences in her autobiographical novel *Atyaf*.

²¹ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., p. 66.

²² In the last chapters, which are relatively short, the author wrote some sentences which she intended to expand into longer fragments. The Publisher decided to publish the work in its original form, so that the interference was limited to some explanations and references to *Athqal min Radwa* in the footnotes, see: Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., p. 6.

²³ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 7–9.

²⁴ The initial surgery took place in December 2010, the next three sessions: in February 2011, in February 2013 and in August 2013, see: Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., p. 6.

²⁵ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 35–44.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 255–269.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 125–133.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 145–159.

³⁰ Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., pp. 99–118.

³¹ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 207–212.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 271–272. Due to the large number of theoretical studies and articles on autobiographical writing, only two articles about the classical forms of Arabic autobiographical works are mentioned here, see: Sergei A. Shuisky, ‘Some Observations on Modern Arabic Autobiography’,

theoretical reflection on crossing the borders of autobiographical genres was used by her to find a solution to the question of how to deal with the influx of events.³³ Her uncertainty over the appropriate form of expression concerned especially these events of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 which received press and television coverage immediately. Thus, she admitted that at a certain stage of writing about revolutionary events, it seemed to her that the most relevant form was a diary, in which she carefully wrote down dates, names and the course of events.³⁴

Ultimately, the autobiographical text by Radwa Ashour has a hybrid structure which is worth mentioning and is often employed in Arab women's autobiographical writing, such as, for example, in the memoirs describing the first 18 days of the 25 January Revolution: *Ismi thawra (Revolution is My Name)* by Mona Prince (born in 1970), and in *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution* by Ahdaf Soueif (born in 1950).³⁵ According to Egyptian scholar Hala Kamal, "each of the two narratives, thus, emerges as a hybrid text occupying an intergeneric location, where autobiography intersects with diary, memoir, history and journalism".³⁶

Weaving stories of the self and others

Radwa Ashour said that an autobiographical text is both a literary text and a historical document – a testimony of time and place in which the author lives. In such a text, the personal and the communal are merged.³⁷ Ashour's belief in the importance of the relationship between the individual and their community was symbolically expressed in the last pages of *Athqal min Radwa*. She remembered a scene which took place about 30 years ago: on a rainy day she saw the people of Cairo holding their hands to help each other bypass a flooded tunnel on their way. As she wrote later, she was recalling this scene in moments of despair whilst telling herself that she couldn't give up because she was a member of "the swarm of ants". What she meant was that she belonged to the family of not only her husband, Murid, and her son, Tamim, but also to that of the workers, revolutionaries and dreamers much ahead of their time; all those who did not accept defeat, who "die standing up like trees when it is meant to be".³⁸ This belief in a deep sense of belonging by an individual to their community was shared by Radwa Ashour with distinguished Egyptian writer Latifa al-Zayyat (1923–1996)³⁹ and with other Arab female authors of autobiographical works.⁴⁰

The intertwining of personal and communal stories in Radwa Ashour's autobiographical work will be illustrated here with regards to the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. As far as the personal story of the author is concerned, her active participation in the revolutionary events started in May 2011, after she had completed her medical treatment in Washington.⁴¹ It was the first time in five months she had gone to Tahrir Square and looked at revolutionary banners and graffiti on the walls. Then, she would return in the following months, take part in demonstrations during which tear gas was fired at protesters, which brought back to her memories about other demonstrations that had happened in this place years before.⁴² In one of the fragments describing Radwa Ashour's presence at demonstrations in Tahrir Square, she emphasised the help which she received from the young people who had gathered there:

"I would be there [in the scene of demonstration], among its details, dozens of times. I would stand or walk or shout or carry a flag; or maybe a young man would stretch his hand towards me: 'give me your hand, mother!'.

Journal of Arabic Literature, Vol. 13, 1982, pp. 111–123; Thomas Philipp, 'The Autobiography in Modern Arab Literature and Culture', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1993, pp. 573–604.

³³ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 271–272.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

³⁵ Hala Kamal, 'Women's Memoirs of the Egyptian Revolution: Mona Prince's *Ismi Thawra* and Ahdaf Soueif's *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution*', *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Symposium on Comparative Literature – Creativity and Revolution*, Cairo: Cairo University, forthcoming, pp. 577–595.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

³⁷ Salwa 'Abd al-Halim, 'Radwa Ashour: sha'rat ath-thawra al-misriyya lam tatahaqqaq [Radwa Ashour: the Slogans of the Egyptian Revolution Did Not Come True], *Al-Hayat*, 6 May 2014, <http://www.alhayat.com/Articles/2167949/> (accessed 5 February 2016).

³⁸ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 392–393.

³⁹ Latifa al-Zayyat, a long-time friend of Radwa Ashour, said that "one does not become a whole, unless he first loses himself in a whole, a totality greater than his narrow, individual self. The open door to true peace with the self is the door that opens on the belonging to the sum, the whole, in thought and word and deed", as cited in: Magda al-Nowaihi, 'Resisting Silence in Arab Women's Autobiography', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2001, p. 494.

⁴⁰ See: Pauline Homsy Vinson, 'A Muslim Woman Writes Back. Leila Abouzeid's Return to Childhood: the Memoir of a Modern Moroccan Woman', in *Arab Women Lives Retold. Exploring Identity Through Writing*, Nawar al-Hassan Golley (ed.), Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007, p. 95; Melissa Matthes, 'Shahrazad's Sisters: Storytelling and Politics in the Memoirs of Mernissi, El Saadawi and Ashrawi', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 19, 1999, p. 86.

⁴¹ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 59–63.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 114–123.

He would help me to climb a high pavement of *al-siniyya*.⁴³ Or maybe another young man would approach me, clasping his hands and saying: ‘mother, put your foot here’. (...) Or while in the square, we would take a decision to leave. We would say: we would cross it by moving towards Muhammad Mahmud Street, then we would walk along the street and turn left towards the house. Upon entering Muhammad Mahmud Street we would discover that the young ultras, fans of the ‘Al-Ahali’ football club, had already arrived in droves, with their drums and shouts.⁴⁴ The movement would change. Even standing would be difficult. There would be no place to set foot neither actually, nor metaphorically. Suddenly a young man would appear. He would pay attention. He would say: ‘Follow me, mother’. He would be in front of me, paving the way for us. A friend of mine would be behind me. The young man would repeat ‘Make a place for *hajja*,⁴⁵ make a place for *hajja*’ every step of the way. We would get to the entrance to Tala’t Harb Street, which is just a minute or two from the entrance to Muhammad Mahmud Street, in twenty minutes or more”.⁴⁶

However, Radwa Ashour’s revolutionary engagement was not limited to her participation in demonstrations. On 19–24 November 2011, when security forces attacked protesters gathered in Muhammad Mahmud Street (during the presidency of Muhammad al-Mursi),⁴⁷ the writer and her son were in pharmacies buying medicines needed in a field hospital in Tahrir Square. When Ashour reached the hospital – as she narrated – she felt a suffocating smell of tear gas which had been used by security forces half an hour before her arrival. Afterwards, along with two young doctors and her university colleagues, she went to a field hospital in the Dubara Palace church in Al-Sheikh Rihan Street, where she was given bullets fired toward demonstrators. Then, along with her female companion, she went to a place where the bullets were to be analysed.⁴⁸

Another example of Radwa Ashour’s involvement in the revolutionary events was her visit, in the company of other teachers from ‘Ayn al-Shams University, to a village where a female student named Hind lived. The girl was held captive by her family because of her participation in demonstrations. The family could not accept the fact that when Hind was in hospital, she explained in front of cameras that she had been attacked by policemen who had pulled her hijab; and that she had been beaten by them in front of a crowd and dragged to the headquarters of the State Council where she was once more beaten and even threatened with rape.⁴⁹ As the author concluded, “Hind’s story was a part of the story about the girls who were tortured and dragged along the ground in the previous months”.⁵⁰

Hind’s story is not the only one about people involved in the revolution which Radwa Ashour wove into her narrative. She mentioned a young man, Ahmad al-Shahhat, who climbed the building of the Israeli embassy and pulled down the Israeli flag during the demonstration on 21 August 2011 which had broken out in protest against the killing of Egyptian soldiers by Israeli forces. Ashour heard this story from her son, who had witnessed this event, and then she watched it on YouTube. “This young man – she wrote – has become an icon in Egyptian history”.⁵¹

Furthermore, in her autobiographical fragments, Radwa Ashour recalled other names of people who took part in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, such as: medical student Ahmad Jamal, whom she met in Tahrir Square and who gave her a collection of his stories about the revolution;⁵² musician Mustafa Sa‘id, who became one of the most famous performers of revolutionary songs;⁵³ student Mustafa ‘Isam, who was shot dead in front of his fellow students at the Cairo University campus;⁵⁴ and a friend of hers, ‘Ala al-Sayf, who was imprisoned, as were hundreds of thousands of other young people.⁵⁵ She also confessed:

⁴³ *Al-Siniyya* – the island in the middle of the square.

⁴⁴ See: Robbert Woltering, ‘Unusual Suspects: “Ultras” as Political Actors in the Egyptian Revolution’, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2013, pp. 290–304.

⁴⁵ *Hajja* – a woman who performed a pilgrimage to Mecca.

⁴⁶ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa...*, pp. 169–170.

⁴⁷ Lucie Ryzova, ‘The Battle of Muhammad Mahmud Street: Teargas, Hairgel, and Tramadol’, *Jadaliyya*, 28 November 2011, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3312/the-battle-of-muhammad-mahmud-street-teargas-hair-> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁴⁸ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa...*, pp. 297–302.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 213–220.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 186–196. Cf.: Bradley Hope, ‘Egyptian Spiderman’ Thrills Protesters at Israeli Embassy, *The National*, 22 August 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/egyptian-spiderman-thrills-protesters-at-israeli-embassy> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁵² Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa...*, p. 117.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 172–174.

⁵⁴ Mustafa ‘Isam was one of the students killed at Cairo University in November 2013, see: Ashour, *Al-Sarkha...*, pp. 71–78. Cf. *Ahram Online*, ‘Student Killed in Clashes with Police at Cairo University’, 28 November 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/87750/Egypt/Politics-/Student-killed-in-clashes-with-police-at-Cairo-Uni.aspx> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁵⁵ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa...*, pp. 139–147.

“I want to talk about Tahrir Square. I want to talk about Mina Danial, Ahmad Harara, Malik Mustafa, ‘Imad ‘Affat and the young Anas. I want to talk about two young men whom I never met. But when I saw them on a television programme, their images stuck in my head. I regarded it as my heritage, to pass it on to my grandchildren, so that they could pass it on to their offspring. I mean Tariq Mu‘awwad and Michael Karara carrying a flag in the first rows of protesters in Muhammad Mahmud Street”.⁵⁶

In addition to the stories of the people who were mentioned and named by Radwa Ashour in her autobiographical work, she also told stories of unknown people who took part in the revolution. Among them were: those who lost their sight or suffered from eye diseases as a result of tear gas attacks in Tahrir Square and neighbouring streets;⁵⁷ those who lost their lives in the clashes with security forces in ‘Abbasiyya Square on 29 April 2012;⁵⁸ those arrested in the New Cairo District in August 2013 who then suffocated to death inside a prisoner transport vehicles after firing tear gas;⁵⁹ women arrested during a demonstration in Alexandria in November 2013 who were subsequently sentenced to long imprisonment;⁶⁰ not to mention numerous others.

With reference to the autobiographical works of the aforementioned writer Latifa al-Zayyat, Magda al-Nowaihi, a prominent professor of Arabic literature, pointed out that, “through the insertion of other voices, then, she writes an autobiography that is simultaneously intensely personal and unabashedly collective, in which multiple selves come together to tell their stories and validate their singularity as well as their affiliation”.⁶¹ This is undeniably the case with the autobiographical fragments by Radwa Ashour.

Weaving the voices of others

Radwa Ashour claimed that often history books, memoirs, stories and novels were composed some time after the events they described. However, during the revolutionary events of “the Arab Spring” stories, images, video records and social media posts were created immediately.⁶² Interestingly enough, not only did Radwa Ashour appreciate the importance of these media in today’s world, but she also frequently referred to them in her autobiographical fragments.

One of these media is television, which allowed her to follow the events in which she could not participate. In a fragment of *Athqal min Radwa*, she described one of the demonstrations in the ‘Abbasiyya District in May 2012 by comparing the information from Tamim, who attended the event, with the images that she had seen on the television screen.⁶³ In another fragment, the writer mentioned that she had spent the whole of the 8th July 2013 with her husband and son in front of the TV watching the clashes between the army and supporters of the ousted president Muhammad al-Mursi.⁶⁴

The second medium employed by Radwa Ashour in her narratives are short films she has found on the Internet and those she has watched on different television channels. During her stay in Washington, for example, she repeatedly watched a video on-line which became a symbol of the “Jasmine Revolution”. It shows a man walking at night

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 287–288. In this quotation, Radwa Ashour mentioned names of protesters who were killed or seriously injured during the demonstration in front of the Maspero television building in October 2011, during the demonstrations in Muhammad Mahmud Street in November 2011, during the demonstration on 17 December 2011, during the Port Said football massacre on 1 February 2012, see: Mosireen, ‘The Maspero Massacre: What Really Happened (video), *Jadaliyya*, 11 November 2011, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3103/the-maspero-massacre-what-really-happened-%28video%29>; Abulkasim al-Jaberi, ‘Out of Sight, But Not Out of Mind: Mohamed Mahmoud Remembered’, *Egypt Independent*, 19 November 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/out-sight-not-out-mind-mohamed-mahmoud-remembered>; Yasmine Saleh, ‘Senior al-Azhar Sheikh Emad Effat Shot Dead during Cairo Protests’, *Reuters*, 18 December 2011, <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2011/12/18/senior-al-azhar-sheikh-emad-effat-shot-dead-during-cairo-protests/>; Nada El-Kouny, Naira Antoun, ‘Father of Youngest Port Said Victim Stirs Martyr Debate’, *Ahramonline*, 15 February 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/34552/Egypt/Politics-/Father-of-youngest-Port-Said-victim-stirs-martyr-d.aspx> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁵⁷ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., p. 222. Cf.: Mohamed A. Eldaly, Mohamad A. AbdelHakim, Rania S. Zaki and Ayman F. El-Shiaty, ‘Eye Trauma during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution’, *Graefe’s Archive for Clinical and Experimental Ophthalmology*, Vol. 251, No. 3, 2013, pp. 661–665.

⁵⁸ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 234–235. Cf.: *Citizenside*, ‘Violence Breaks Out in the Abbasiya District of Cairo, Egypt’, 29 April 2012, <http://www.citizenside.com/en/photos/news/2012-04-29/59841/violence-breaks-out-in-the-abbasiya-district-of.html#f=0/458399> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁵⁹ Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., pp. 66–67. Cf.: Patrick Kingsley, ‘How Did 37 Prisoners Come to Die at Cairo Prison Abu Zaabal’, *The Guardian*, 22 February 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/22/cairo-prison-abu-zabaal-deaths-37-prisoners> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁶⁰ Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., p. 89. Cf.: Patrick Kingsley, ‘Female Muslim Brotherhood Protesters Arrested in Alexandria’, *The Guardian*, 1 November 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/01/female-muslim-brotherhood-protesters-arrested> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁶¹ Al-Nowaihi, ‘Resisting Silence in Arab Women’s Autobiography’..., p. 486.

⁶² Salwa ‘Abd al-Halim, ‘Radwa ‘Ashur: taqayyud al-hurriyyat fi zaman ath-thawra hamaqa’ [Radwa Ashour: Restriction of Freedoms during the Revolution Is Foolish], *Al-Alwan*, 25 June 2013, <http://alawan.org/article12151.html> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁶³ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 237–238.

⁶⁴ Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., p. 28.

in Bourghiba Street in Tunis and shouting that the Tunisian leader Zayn al-‘Abidin Ben ‘Ali had fled the country.⁶⁵ With regards to the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, Ashour described a video with the aforementioned Ahmad al-Shahhat, who during a demonstration climbed on a high pole and hung an Egyptian flag on it. While she was watching the video, she was listening to a song, the words of which she also cited.⁶⁶ Similarly, the author quoted a fragment of a poem written by her son, which he recited in a programme on the Al-Jazeera Arabic channel. Then she watched a song, composed by Mustafa Sa‘id for Tamim’s lyrics, on television and YouTube.⁶⁷

The third medium incorporated by Radwa Ashour into her narrative is articles and social media posts which she has often quoted. In so doing, she made them testimonies legitimising what had really happened. In *Athqal min Radwa*, the writer referred to a series of articles written by Nawwara Najm on the first anniversary of the aforementioned violent clashes between the demonstrators and the police in Muhammad Mahmud Street in November 2011.⁶⁸ She also cited posts written by a young doctor, Malik ‘Adli, describing the same events and the so-called Maspero massacre that had happened two months prior, during which security forces attacked demonstrators, the majority of whom were Copts, in front of the Egyptian state television building.⁶⁹ In turn, in *Al-Sarkha*, Radwa Ashour depicted the demonstration of 26 November 2013 in front of the Egyptian Shura Council, which was organised in protest against a paragraph concerning competences of military courts in the proposed constitution.⁷⁰ The writer completed the information about the event by adding a testimony of another participant:

“Muna Sayf, who was among the arrested demonstrators, says: The police trucks transported us to the First Police Station in the New Cairo District. At the police station, we were told that they would release us. We refused to leave our colleagues. They sent members of security forces in civilian clothes to us. They beat us. They forcibly dragged us to a truck. The driver was driving quickly, then he stopped suddenly so that we collided with each other or we fell on each other. The car drove in circles with us inside until it entered the east road leading to the south of Egypt. The car went into the desert, then it stopped. They set us down and left us there. The car drove away. We decided to return to the station in order to wait for the young people who had been arrested with us”.⁷¹

There are many other examples of Radwa Ashour’s references to public documents, such as on the one hand a statement of the Ministry of the Interior regarding demonstrations⁷² or medical reports describing protesters’ injuries⁷³, whereas on the other hand there are testimonies of individuals, such as a letter written by the aforementioned prisoner ‘Ala Sayf addressed to his sisters Muna and Sana’.⁷⁴ All these voices woven by the writer into her narrative together with her own voice, help to recreate the cultural memory of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. According to the words of Anne Rigney, one of the most famous scholars of cultural memory, Astrid Erll, claims that, “remembered events are transmedial phenomena, that is, their representation is not tied to one specific medium. Therefore, they can be represented across the spectrum of available media”.⁷⁵ Accordingly, one can argue that the autobiographical fragments of Radwa Ashour exemplify how the circulation of remembered events proceeds through the aforementioned media.

Conclusion

The metaphor of weaving the texture of memories about the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, cited in the introduction, seemed to be of particular importance for Radwa Ashour, since it appeared in her autobiographical fragments on two more occasions. Firstly, when the author described a story written by the aforementioned Ahmad Jamal, whom she met in Tahrir Square. The story was about a doctor in a field hospital who had not slept for four days. The writer felt delighted by its simplicity and ability to capture a single moment from the infinitely numerous moments of the

⁶⁵ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 56–57. Cf.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0lJeRfEFrY> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁶⁶ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 188–189. Cf.: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dt8tfs7l_Jc (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁶⁷ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 64–65. Cf.: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yanlbg_56Q, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZqtLDWA5ng> (accessed 8 February 2016).

⁶⁸ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 287–290.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 304–305. Cf.: footnote 53.

⁷⁰ Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., pp. 88–89.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 89.

⁷² Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 203.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 224.

⁷⁴ Ashour, *Al-Sarkha*..., pp. 141–146.

⁷⁵ Astrid Erll, ‘Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Astrid Erll, Sara Young and Ansgar Nünning (eds), Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008, p. 391.

revolution. As Radwa Ashour explained afterwards, “A writer has to grasp their thread, spin it and weave, and finally to present a great texture which in its size and grandeur resembles a huge, complex meaning, as once miniatures did”.⁷⁶ Secondly, the metaphor of weaving the texture appears in a paragraph in which the author’s own artistic expression was compared to a fabric and she – as a writer – to a weaver.⁷⁷

In fact, Radwa Ashour took her duties as “a weaver of the memories” very seriously, even if she was sometimes uncertain about the point in describing well-known events, presented in a variety of ways. Her autobiographical fragments resemble a texture woven of multiple threads of memories about personal and collective lives, and the distant as well as recent past events. Among the first are: her childhood memories, descriptions of family members, friends and colleagues, detailed information about the surgery and medical treatment she underwent, stories about her everyday life in Cairo during the revolution, and many others. The second group of memories consists of: stories about the author’s participation in demonstrations, descriptions of events in which her family members or friends took part, descriptions of events about which she learned from the media or other people, descriptions of revolutionaries who became icons or martyrs, and many more. Moreover, the structure of Ashour’s fabric is complex because it was woven not only from the author’s words, but also from the words of others as well as from information from different media sources, such as videos, social media posts, documents and reports.

In conclusion, the discussion of researchers in cultural memory is worth recalling once again. This kind of memory, according to Astrid Erll, is shaped and built by literature alongside a range of other media.⁷⁸ Literature has a privileged role in, “giving voice to those previously silenced” and in “constituting an imaginative counter-memory⁷⁹ that undermines hegemonic views of the past”.⁸⁰ Literature, “can become a powerful medium, whose versions of the past circulate in large parts of society, and even internationally”.⁸¹

Taking this into account, one can say that Radwa Ashour’s autobiographical fragments certainly fulfil these functions by giving voice to individuals participating in revolutionary events, by speaking – sometimes in opposition to the official media coverage – about what really happened. Thus, Ashour’s work becomes one of many testimonies about the 25 January Revolution that will be read by Egyptians and perhaps by foreign readers as well.

⁷⁶ Ashour, *Athqal min Radwa*..., pp. 117–118.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁷⁸ Erll, ‘Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory’..., p. 391.

⁷⁹ Birgit Neumann, ‘The Literary Representations of Memory’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*..., p. 338.

⁸⁰ Ann Rigney, ‘The Dynamics of Remembrance: Text between Monumentality and Morphing’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*..., p. 348.

⁸¹ Erll, ‘Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory’..., p. 396.

The Culture of Fear As a Strategy of Online Jihadism

Abstract

In recent years many different jihadist movements have been born on the Internet, which is full of their information, views, discussions, and event. In this study the Inspire and Dabiq magazines have been chosen as global message sources of jihadism, and the Turkish online newspaper Habertakva (Piety News) has been cited as a local example. The content of these sites have been qualitatively examined in accordance with a conceptualization of “the culture of fear.” It is clearly apparent that the strategy of online jihadism depends on “manufacturing fear.” As a useful tool of modern state and modern mass media “the culture of fear” becomes a weapon of online jihadism.

Introduction

Many historical breaking points can be taken as a significant inception of modern jihadism. However the Afghan jihad movement became a funding priority for many groups who were against the military expansion of the Soviet Union.¹ The Soviet invasion sparked a broad uprising with different Islamist groups referred as the mujahideen. At the end of the war the Soviets lost around 15,000 soldiers with an additional 50,000 wounded. The mujahideen lost over 75,000, with at least that many having been wounded. As Afghanistan became a pawn on the Cold War chessboard, it also became the taproot of the modern global jihadist movement.² This war led to the revival of the notion of jihad as a collective duty for many volunteer Muslims. Many states provided technical and financial aid to the anti-Soviet resistance. A lot of organizations and establishments encouraged young Muslims throughout the world to fight against the Soviet army in Afghanistan. In the end jihadism became a double-edged sword for some Western countries which had previously supported the mujahideen. While the sponsor centers lost control over many different jihadist groups, the idea of holy war had already been exported worldwide.

When the direction of jihadism turned from the Soviet Union towards Western countries, its previously likeable face turned to one of horror. The ‘post-9/11’ ideological debates and the war on an ideological level against jihadism are nothing new³ and particularly after the September 11 attacks, global jihadism became perceived as the most horrific movement around the world. As a strong motivational source for jihadism, the invasion and occupation of Iraq changed all mutual perceptions between the Middle East and Western countries. In the mid-1990s Osama bin Laden declared the Western countries to be the greatest enemy of the Muslim World. As a most powerful and popular figure he encouraged his followers to fight this apparent enemy. Finally, the Syria issue which occurred after the Arab Spring elevated this unfolding phenomenon onto a higher level. For Europe, jihadism has a special chronology. Between 1994 and 1996 Europe functioned as an arena for local jihad. The jihadist struggle was limited to some small Algerian based groups who were against France. From 1998 to around 2003/2004, Europe became the main arena and backdrop for global jihad. Several terror networks were linked together having been trained by al-Qaeda. Their targets were the citizens of the United States, Israel and to a minor extent, France. After 2004 Europe became an explicitly direct target. A global jihad emerged when al-Qaeda inspired Islamist militants planned, prepared and executed attacks against European countries.⁴ Jihadist terrorism in Western Europe over the last few years can be attributed to multinational, transnational operations.⁵

During this brief period horrific mass casualty terrorist attacks became almost routine and banal in terms of mass media news coverage. All kinds of horror such as ritual beheadings and burning can now be observed on mass media sources. Such methods of execution and its mentality feeds the global fear against jihadism. Jihadism is a controversial concept which refers to the peripheral current of extremist Islamic thought. The term also refers to the use of violence in

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¹ Jarret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 3.

² Daniel Byman, *Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 3–4.

³ Walid Phares, *The War of Ideas Jihadism Against Democracy*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 2.

⁴ Petter Nesser, ‘Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 10, 2008, p. 925.

⁵ Petter Nesser, ‘Jihadism in Western Europe After the Invasion of Iraq: Tracing Motivational Influences from the Iraq War on Jihadist Terrorism in Western Europe’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No.4, 2006, p. 326.

order to establish true Islamic governance in accordance with Sharia.⁶ Generally, non-Muslim societies (and indeed some Muslim ones) and particularly Western countries live under the fear of jihadism. In accordance to this fact, a simple question emerges: What are the main components of this fear? This question also shapes the main problem addressed by this study.

Parallel to the development of new communication technologies, jihadist groups have gained new opportunities to generate propaganda. Popular social sharing sites, blogs and broadcasting sites are the new battle areas for jihadism. The Internet, as an extension of conventional mass media, is of major importance to the current global jihadist movement. It obtains ideological production and network-building within its supporters who are geographically distanced from each other. The global structure of the Internet is compatible with the global purposes of jihadism which tries to be active beyond natural and territorial boundaries.

When terrorism and the Internet are considered together, some new terms automatically emerge. *Cyber-terrorism*, *cyber-attack*, *'cybotage'* and *cyber-crime* are frequently used terms that are related to new communication technologies and terrorism. Most of these terms emphasize the practices that aim to break down or harm regular and legal information systems, and in this way affect the groups, governments, states, institutions and societies that are dependent on them. One major goal of cyber-jihadists is dependent on cyber-attacks. They have directed their use of the Internet to launch attacks on Western institutions. Hacking Western websites is perceived as one of the sacred tasks of every Muslim, according to al-Qaeda. Serving as a guide, '39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad'⁷ outlines online activities against the enemy of Muslims which are emphasized very clearly. Encouraging supporters to attack Western governments' websites is an important strategy for jihadist ideologists. In August 2012, a sympathizer of Boko Haram hacked into the records of Nigeria's secret service. In the spring of 2013 al-Qaeda's so called Electronic Army planned a massive cyber-attack against the US government and US companies. As a result of a general 'call to arms' for jihadists, many institutions were hacked into, including the US Customs and Border Protection, the US Office of Personnel Management, the National Bank of Texas and the United Services Automobile Association.

Another method of online jihadism is described as a "parasite" strategy. Hacking into legitimate websites and storing jihadist-related content is the main aim of this strategy. The content could then be seen by a great number of Internet users before the hacking action is removed and withdrawn.⁸ Other uses of the Internet are related to using digital communication and the spreading of its own propaganda. As Hanna Rogan mentioned:

"...al-Qaeda leaders, radical Muslim clerics, and strategic thinkers provide their supporters with political, theological and ideological writings, and militant groups and net activists distribute jihadist material on the various websites. The Internet has become a virtual library of jihadist material, granting easy access to everything from political, ideological and theological literature, via fatwas and khutbas, to videos of assaults and beheadings. In November 2003 (redistributed in October 2005), the 'deputy general emir' of the Global Islamic Media Center, Ahmad al-Wathiq bi-Llah, described the Internet as an 'al-Qaeda University of Jihad Studies' where the graduates undergo military training but also intensive ideological and morale training".⁹

Digital communication and its aspects

All technological innovations have unexpected side effects. Alexander Graham Bell thought the telephone would be useful for communication in business, but would not be accepted into people's homes.¹⁰ We are all now, of course, carrying this technology in our pockets. Similarly when the US Department of Defense undertook the first steps towards developing the Internet, the inventors probably did not envisage that this useful digital environment would be utilized by terrorist groups. The net's unique features distinguish this new medium from all former ones. The protean feature of the Net provides people, governments and interest groups with great opportunities in accordance to their specific needs. The Internet provides an unlimited action area for everyone, including illegal usage, at least in theory. The new environment offers a medium in which people can interact and coordinate their relations without relying on 'face-to-

⁶ Brachman, *Global Jihadism...*, p. 4.

⁷ Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Salim, '39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad', 2003, <https://archive.org/details/39WaysToServeAndParticipate> (accessed 12 November 2015).

⁸ Manuel R. Torres Soriano, 'Maintaining the Message: How Jihadists Have Adapted to Web Disruptions', *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 2, Issue 11, 2009, p. 22.

⁹ Hanna Rogan, 'Jihadism Online – A study of how al-Qaeda and radical Islamist groups use the Internet for terrorist purposes', *Forsvarets Forsknings Institutt / Rapport*, 2006, p. 24.

¹⁰ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *On the Internet*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 1.

face' contact. When basic interaction and networking are primarily conducted via the net, boundaries, limits and frontiers are rendered nonsensical. With the emergence of new communication technology, all kinds of actors have easier and cheaper opportunities to access modes of political communication. Money, ideas and 'tool' flows became increasingly independent of state borders because the Internet has a geography of its own.¹¹ The disembodiment of Internet users makes it difficult to handle the new medium. Some enthusiasts of the Net foresee that the importance of physical appearance will expire forever. John Perry Barlow, an ardent supporter of Net liberalism, says that it is "...a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live".¹² Of course this potentiality is valid for terrorists as well. The national states establish and base their existentiality on laws. The state is the only power regarding law making and law enforcement. In a Weberian sense, the state is the "form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory-and this idea of 'territory' is an essential defining feature".¹³

But in cyberspace power became useless in many cases. Everyone or every institution has power which can access a new world. Single-issue pressure groups such as environmental activists, human rights campaigners, Islamist opposition movements, and right or left wing militants have an extreme use of the Internet with different motivational aims, membership or ideologies. Every group has certain enemies against which they struggle and certain ideals to reach. In addition certain groups are increasingly turning to the Internet to provide information about their ideas, aims and the activities of their opposition. A diffusion of power among private companies, interest groups, individual users and governments creates a complex field. For instance one of the most notable features of virtual jihadism is its ephemerality. Many jihadist sites can easily disappear in a short time and then resurface under different names and with different Internet service providers.¹⁴ Digital media does not only enable disembodiment and flexible movement, it also provides freedom from space and time. David Harvey's conceptualization of time-space compression¹⁵ becomes much more perceivable with the spread of digital media modes of communication. During modernity the initial medium was mass media. Time was sequential, predictable, and linear. It was measurable and related to space. New communication technologies convert the sequential time from local to global. As digital culture increases on the processes of interaction it converts communication into multifunctional form.

The Net is cheap for extremist groups usage. A computer and a modem are sufficient tools for becoming a worldwide player. Internet features such as its distributed anti-hierarchical network structure, enables people to spread their feelings, opinions, thought, and ideas. The Internet also opens gates for a transformation of journalism. Journalism is no longer in the hands of media professionals. Everyone becomes a content producer in the Internet age. Ordinary people have the power of control on the communication flow. As Internet penetration increases globally, non-professional journalism gains much more importance on the attention of the public sphere. As ordinary people, online journalism is now open to all extremist groups. A terrorist can simultaneously be a journalist.

Online jihadism

After most of al-Qaeda's leaders were killed in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Arabian Peninsula, it has been seen that the communication strategy of jihadism has transformed sharply. Al-Qaeda increased its media production in the years following 9/11 to mainly compensate for the loss of training camp infrastructures which were functioning with a corresponding centrality among jihadists.¹⁶ Subsequently, jihadist ideologists packaged and served their ideas not only to their closed membership, but also in a more widespread manner to the world via social networks. Internet-based technologies have lowered the bar for the participation of jihadists as part of a global movement. The Internet serves a digital mujahideen new opportunities regarding distributing messages, and entering discussions with worldwide friends. It also provides the mujahideen with the reach to access true sources that are assumed as reliable. Jihadist websites also function as social networking fields in order spread propaganda. An unknown Internet propagandist's emphasis on the media is most enlightening in showing the importance of propaganda:

¹¹ Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 207.

¹² John Perry Barlow, 'A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace', Davos, Switzerland, 8 February 1996.

¹³ Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, Rodney Livingstone (trans.), Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2004, p. 33.

¹⁴ Akil N. Awan, 'Virtual jihadist media: Function, legitimacy and radicalizing efficacy', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2007, p. 392.

¹⁵ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p. 284.

¹⁶ Bill Braniff and Assaf Moghadam, 'Towards Global Jihadism: Al-Qaeda's Strategic, Ideological and Structural Adaptations since 9/11', *Perspectives On Terrorism*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 2011, p. 38.

“a) What if the Mujahideen had never carried a camera with them to the battlefield? b) What if the Mujahideen had never created hundreds of links nearly every day in order for people to observe? c) What if the Mujahideen had never had the appropriate program to make their videos look presentable? d) What if the Mujahideen had never created a Jihadi forum to communicate their media to the public? e) What if the Mujahideen had never created a strong system to protect the forums from being hacked into by enemies?”¹⁷

US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki was the pioneer of online jihadism. He was hailed as the ‘Bin Laden of the Internet’.¹⁸ His strategy depended on reaching supporters and fanatics through almost all possible media forms on the Internet. He created a blog, a Facebook page, and he broadcasted his propaganda videos via YouTube. In a short time his online propaganda and particularly his videos became one of the most popular forms of illegal content on the Internet. In 2010 Google removed most of the content related to al-Awlaki at the request of the US Congress.¹⁹ But as an impregnable area the Internet still remains as a source of al-Awlaki’s videos and articles. The power of social networking sites during the Arab Spring strengthens the idea of Internet usage for political purposes. The conflicts in Syria and Iraq opened new types of communication modes for the all sides. Twitter and Facebook have become the means of news flows from the battlefield. Many groups have produced and broadcast fervent videos *in situ* during armed conflict. These fresh images increase the effectiveness of propaganda. Moreover, on-line communication services such as Skype also facilitate connections between soldiers fighting *in situ* and the rest of the world. These kinds of services allow for direct, real-time communication links between jihadists.

The internet not only helps to spread information and messages; it also functions as a tool to recruit new members. In addition to ‘face to face’ propaganda, via the Internet many jihadist groups have attracted thousands of recruits from all over the world. One can easily reach numerous guides that describe how to join jihadist groups, with information including the routes, modes of transport, advice regarding airport security and a lot of useful advice for beginners. Via the Internet thousands, particularly from Europe, have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join the armed struggle. According to the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, social media represents an essential source of information and inspiration to Western fighters attending clashes in Syria.²⁰

Jihadist pioneers were more enterprising than virtually all other illegal groups. Azzam.com, the first website of al-Qaeda was established nearly 21 years ago. Digital modes of media regarding interest in jihadism have grown rapidly in recent years. And online environments have become the basic battle areas for jihadism. After the initial website more sophisticated ones have subsequently been established one. For instance, Technical Mujahideen Magazine and Cyber Jihadist’s Encyclopedia have both created new virtual realms providing support and motivational tools for jihadists and sympathizers. Hanna Rogan categorizes the different types of jihadist websites into three main groups. These are the official websites which are representing both jihadist organizations and some Muslim scholars. The second category regards sites which are established or supported by ordinary jihadists as discussion forums and blogs. Thirdly, there are sites of a different nature that can be classified as distributor sites.²¹ Lappin defines the activities of jihadism via digital realms with the metaphor “Virtual Caliphate.” Lappin says that: “The virtual caliphate’s members have repeatedly been encouraged by fellow online activists to ‘take over’ non-Islamist websites and engage in arguments to spread their ideology”²².

Creating the fear

Interest in online jihadism also tends to be rooted both globally and locally. In recent years, many different pro-jihadist websites were established in many different languages. This study focuses on the most effective online magazines which are published in English, namely *Inspire* and *Dabiq*, both of which serve as global jihadist message sources, and an online news site in Turkish *Habertakva* (Piety News – www.habertakva.com) which serves as a local message source. The Turkish courts banned this site in November 2015, as a reflex action of the state against the aforementioned illegal groups. With just a superficial inspection it is easy to sense the fear which has permeated the

¹⁷ Brachman, *Global Jihadism...*, p. 107.

¹⁸ Aamer Madhani, ‘Cleric al-Awlaki dubbed ‘Bin Laden of the Internet’, *USA Today*, 24 August 2010, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-08-25-1A_Awlaki25_CV_N.htm (accessed 17 December 2015).

¹⁹ <http://www.breakingnews.com/topic/anwar-al-awlaki> (accessed 21 December 2015).

²⁰ Joseph A. Carter, Shiraz Maher and Peter R. Neumann, ‘#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks’, *International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence*, 2014.

²¹ Hanna Rogan, ‘Jihadism Online...’, pp. 16–17.

²² Yaakov Lappin, *Virtual Caliphate: Exposing the Islamist State on the Internet*, Washington, D. C.: Potomac Books, 2011.

content of both magazines and the newspaper site. This usage of fear has a similar form to the “culture of fear”²³ characterization, which was employed by Noam Chomsky.

The logic behind the culture of fear depends on manufacturing consent. In other words, it appears as the consent of public manufacture by provoking their fears. At this point, news media forms provide useful tools for creating and feeding fear. According to research conducted by David L. Altheide, ‘production of fear’ increased nearly 173% in various newspapers throughout a 10 year period in the USA. And the research shows that public discourse changes when news reports associate fear with certain issues. As the discourse of fear pervades everyday life, more experiences seem to be captured by it.²⁴ Chomsky says that the fear of an evil enemy is the standard device to mobilize a reluctant population.²⁵ Creating fear is one of the effective strategies of the US media. Kellner portrays the spectacle of US media after 9/11:

“The 9/11 terror spectacle unfolded in a city that was one of the most media-saturated in the world and that played out a deadly drama live on television. The images of the planes hitting the World Trade Center towers and their collapse were broadcast repeatedly, as if repetition was necessary to master a highly traumatic event. The spectacle conveyed the message that the US was vulnerable to terror attacks, that terrorists could create great harm, and that anyone at any time could be subject to a deadly terror attack, even in ‘Fortress America’. The suffering, fear, and death that many people endure on a daily basis in violent and insecure situations in other parts of the world was brought home to US citizens”.²⁶

This study has two tendencies. One of them is to understand the framework behind the global message of online jihadism in *Inspire* and *Dabiq*. The other one is creating this understanding on a local level via the Turkish news site *Habertakva*. The first two magazines can be considered as ideological online publications. Perspectives, advice, declarations, jihadist ‘tips’ and ‘know-how’ articles about practice and interpretations shape the content of magazines as opposed to ‘instant’ news. On the other hand the *Habertakva* site is an online newspaper which focuses on such ‘instant’ news. It can be said that *Inspire* and *Dabiq* show ideological features that determine the statements about jihadist ideology. However, *Habertakva* is a practical site, which gains nourishment from such an ideological framework and applies it in the form of news.

In this study initially a content analysis has been conducted on four randomly selected issues of the aforementioned online magazines (*Inspire* issue numbers: 2, 7, 9, 13 and *Dabiq* issue numbers: 1, 5, 7, 12). The topics in the issues are categorized according to their subjects. These categories in *Inspire* are: Legitimization (56%), Motivation (21%), Technical Support (14%), and Strategic Support (9%). The categories in *Dabiq* are: Legitimization (78%), Motivation (14%), Technical Support (0%), and Strategic Support (8%). The results of the categories are in accordance with the magazines’ affiliations. The content of *Inspire* was shaped by the struggles and strategies of al-Qaeda which has no specific territorial interest. *Inspire* encourages individual jihadism (especially in USA) as opposed to armed conflict, and for this purpose it gives jihadists technical support regarding bomb manufacturing, remote control systems, and secure Internet advice. Besides this, *Inspire* recommends books and sites for the personal development of jihadists. The exertion of legitimization in *Inspire* depends on the general meaning of jihadist war.

Similarly the subjects in *Dabiq* are in concordance with the purposes of ISIS. In *Dabiq* the legitimization messages refer to the ‘state.’ The emphasizing of the caliph as the leader of the ‘state’ is clearly transparent in *Dabiq*. Both magazines try to motivate their readers in same way as applying fatwas, using the words of heroic leaders and highlighting military successes. But *Dabiq* only gives strategic support for different troops who are fighting in different fields especially in the Arab Peninsula. As the interests of a territorial ‘state’, there is no technical support for individual jihadists as is the case in *Inspire*. Another finding observes that the contents of both of magazines generate fear as a grave message for legitimization and motivation and is far more common than any other forms of messages. Fear is mentioned directly in 16% of all the subjects in *Inspire*. These occurrences equate to 19% of the total subjects in *Dabiq*. All of the other messages can be related to the legitimization and motivation behind the brotherhood between Muslims, the religious obligations jihadists, the importance of the caliph, the notion of paradise for martyrs etc. All of these factors however rank below the conceptualized generation of fear. Both *Inspire* and *Dabiq* have special chapters in

²³ Noam Chomsky, ‘The Culture of Fear’, https://chomsky.info/199607_/_/ (accessed 20 October 2015) and Noam Chomsky, ‘The Manipulation of Fear’, <https://chomsky.info/20050716/> (accessed 20 October 2015).

²⁴ David L. Altheide, ‘The News Media, The Problem Frame, And The Production Of Fear’, *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 1997, pp. 660–661.

²⁵ Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, London: Vintage Books, 1998, p. 28.

²⁶ Douglas Kellner, ‘9/11, Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation’, *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2004, pp. 43–44.

every issue to 'feed' the fear. *Inspire* has a "collection of quotes from friend and foe" chapter, whilst *Dabiq* publishes an "in the words of the enemy" chapter as a matter of routine course. In these chapters fearful, anxious, worried, and perturbed declarations and comments from Western politicians, academicians and citizens are used as sources motivation and legitimization.

In this study the content of *Habertakva* has been examined in order to compare the local jihadist message framework with the global ones. The news has been randomly chosen from *Habertakva* with keywords such as "Europe", "Islamic State", "Western countries", "Fear", "Death", "Assault", "Bomb", and "Suicide" etc. In total 132 news items have been examined. The framework of messages basically depends on the legitimization of ISIS as was the case with the results occurring from the study of *Inspire* and *Dabiq*. All other 'sub' messages feed the exertion of this legitimization. This exertion emerges on three nested stages. The first stage is directly related to the legitimization of ISIS. The second one is about the 'outside world', especially Western countries that are in alliance against Muslims. And the third stage is related to justifying the inevitable battle against this enemy, which includes the use of violence. The news which makes up the first stage, emphasizes life in the so-called Islamic State. For this purpose, some codes are utilized on the site. The most common codes used for the legitimization of ISIS in the news are:

- *Legal caliph, daily life, agriculture, harvest time, spring, festivals, Islamic Dinar, commerce, wedding and education*

People are portrayed as happy living under the ISIS regime. They all believe and trust a holy and legitimate caliph. Daily life in ISIS is seen as good in terms of its institutions and society at large. However, western countries are apparently attempting to break down this harmony. ISIS is seemingly no different from any other country. The state has its own education system, commerce and business is thriving, and people use their own currency, the 'Islamic Dinar.' Every aspect of life is apparently so normal that people marry and also celebrate holy festivals. The state also has its own food sources and its people are in no need of any other countries' aid.

Some news items have no text. They are presented as videos, such as "spring in the Islamic State" or "a wedding in the Islamic state." In these videos audiences can observe normal citizens in their place of work, in market places, and celebrating festivals. The usage of 'text free' messages is a standard routine in jihadism and as such jihadist propaganda has increasingly taken the form of sophisticated video and audio statements.²⁷

In the second stage news audiences can observe the perceived threatening discourse of western countries. The most common codes used for the legitimization of ISIS through the threatening demonization of the West are:

- *Crusade, massacre, mass destruction, assault, espionage and duplicity*

Many of the news topics related to Western countries begin with "Crusade." This message feeds the social memory of Muslims, all the perceived negative attributes related to the west, and all the activities of other nations in terms of massacre, mass destruction and assault. The other form of legitimization mentions collaborators and spies. People are forced into thinking that they are surrounded by 'betrayers'. Such betrayers are seemingly trying to harm Islamic society from inside. The news at the third stage generally relates to the previous stages. These types of codes are utilized for the legitimization of violence. These codes are:

- *Applying fatwas, the insulting of the Koran and Islam, suicide bombers portrayed as heroes, pro-jihadist European citizens, anti-Islamist European citizens, the execution of collaborators and the feeding of 'dead expectation'*

Brutal and savage methods of killing, including beheading and even death by burning, are legitimate according to fatwas, which are decisions made in accordance to religion rules and norms. The insulting of the Koran and its accompanying holy concepts by Western people is perceived as another form of legitimizing violence. This type of news feeds the anger and fury of Muslims. In the news, suicide bombers are portrayed as heroic humans. Their families, their professions and their social relations are also mentioned in the accompanying news coverage. Normal or even glorious profiles are created in the news about suicide bombers. They are deemed as good people fighting for Islamic society. This concept is in accordance with the culture of fear. Herman and Chomsky emphasize these kind of people, who are trusted by a public whose image has been created by the media. They may be our leaders or heroes, but all of them are created images. Fighting soldiers are always afforded a heroic and humane status.²⁸ European citizens are interestingly mentioned within the news coverage in order to create mutual perceptions. If European citizens attend to jihadist troops, this situation shows the legitimization of ISIS. If they're on the other side, it also feeds the legitimization. These kind of codes appear very frequently in the news.

²⁷ Soriano, 'Maintaining the Message...', p. 23.

²⁸ Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1998, p. 205.

One of the horrific methods is by feeding a huge amount of ‘dead expectation’. All news items about armed conflict and grievous assaults includes the phrase of “at least.” For example “at least 10 western soldiers are dead” or “at least 20 people are dead after bombing.” These kind of news items ‘normalize’ the concept of people dying. In the news, some ‘fear codes’ appear which are used for creating a perception against Europe and Western countries. After 9/11 George W. Bush described the conflict against jihadism as a war between freedom and fear.²⁹ Jihadist ideology tries to create the same atmosphere for its supporters. The fear codes used in the news give the idea that if jihadists win the war then the Muslims will be free. But if Western countries win it may result in fear permeating all situations. These are the some of the perceived features and actions charged against Western countries and their citizens in order to manufacture fear:

- *Rape, torture, occupation, murder, distrust*

The main message in this kind of news coverage is that Western countries and their citizens are evil and a source of fear but ISIS and jihadists have a form of power to fight and resist them. Western soldiers are portrayed in news coverage relating to rape, torture and murder. The Western states and their citizens usually mentioned in terms of distrust. In the news ISIS can also be portrayed as a source of fear:

- *Hell, horror, conquest, despair, panic, incapable*

In many news items the main emphasis is placed on the horrific power of ISIS. In these news items Western countries are portrayed as being frightened of the power of ISIS. Whilst on the battle field lost territories are described in terms of ‘occupation’, whereas gained territories are described with the term ‘conquest’. Western countries are portrayed in news coverage as being in a state of panic, fearful of jihadist assault and rendered incapable of preventing the activities of ISIS.

Conclusion

Everyday life is increasingly mediated by information technology. People experience events in the ecology of communication. The mass news media in particular, is the main source of mediated information which constructs public perception in a highly effective way. One of the effective ways of the mass news media is the promoting of a public discourse of fear. The messages of fear are images and targets of what and who is to be feared. The construction, expansion and routine use of a fear discourse creates a dangerous environment at a perceptible level. Fear is more visible and routine in public discourse than any other feeling that can be easily provoked. An overdose in the use of ‘fear culture’ is not the only theme of criticism that could apply to the American media industry. The communication environment that depends on perceptions of fear is part of our everyday world. Life is showed in the mass media as highly problematic, dangerous, and demanding of extreme measures to make innocent people feel safe. It can be said that the fear culture is one of the important components of global popular culture. The image of an insecure world which is full of murderers, thieves and terrorists, provides politicians and the arms industry a means to maintain their purposes. The public, driven by fear, will choose the desired route of policy makers.

New communication technologies, as an extension of news media, also exist in the realm that manufactures fear. But this new area is not only occupied by former news institutions. These technologies provide important battle grounds for jihadism as well. New technologies can be used in different ways in order to realize the purposes of jihadist ideology. As an effective tool, online journalism also feeds the propaganda of jihadists. According to this study, it clearly emerges that the strategy of online jihadism depends on “manufacturing fear” both at global and local levels. As a useful tool of modern state and modern mass media, the “culture of fear” becomes a weapon of online jihadism. In other words, jihadists make use of the Western media strategy in order to struggle against them.

The manufacture of jihadist fear depends on an emphasis on the legitimization of jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. Accordingly an online jihadist media belonging to ISIS demonstrates a legitimate caliph that every Muslim willingly obeys thus showing a legitimate political system. Another form emphasis employed in news content is the portrayal of normal life, which runs with all its social institutions in the so-called Islamic State. A safe and harmonious society is diffused throughout the structure of news coverage. Western countries are portrayed as the enemies of this secure atmosphere. Therefore the battle against an evil enemy is shown as inevitable and legitimate. All news coverage has an exertion of justifying the military actions of jihadist groups. Creating perceptible codes in the Western media manner, legitimizes all violence including beheading death by burning. In this manner even suicide bombers emerge as glorious heroes of Islamic society. Furthermore violence has been shown to be essential for peace and justice. Domestic

²⁹ Kellner, ‘9/11, Spectacles...’, p. 46.

enemies and collaborators also feed such fear. Spies and perceived traitors are the actors of the news that raise awareness in Muslims. Regarding a holistic interpretation of news coverage in general, jihadist ideologists try to create public records which justify a need to overcome the threat of Western countries.

Fear becomes the main component of a war tool for sustaining the jihadist battle on the Internet, and the culture of fear is not only a method of struggle against terrorism; it can also be employed in the methods behind terrorism as well. According to this study, it is understood that absolute mutual fear between Western states and jihadist groups is used as a basic underlying message in all news coverage. Western countries are described as 'the fountain of evil' regarding fear and the jihadists are portrayed as 'the fountain of fear' regarding evil. The subconscious messages of the news are related to this formula: If Western countries become a threat to Muslims who live in happiness, then all the struggles of jihadists become essential. Jihadism has the aim of providing justice and a safe atmosphere. For this aim, acts of violence are deemed tolerable and even legitimate.

Jihadists use journalism as part of a psychological warfare against their enemies. The Internet also provides the publication of a wider range of jihadist material that acts as a construct in the perceptions of the general public. Jihadist journalism practices and their websites, provide a great amount of information on ideological, operational, and structural aspects. The Internet is an important source for understanding the strategies of jihadism which assists jihadists in reaching out to a significant audience. The importance of jihadism will most likely increase in the future, as will the extension of new communication technologies which cannot be easily controlled by any centralized power. The unique features of the Internet facilitate the intensification of jihadism. This study illustrates communication technologies becoming so-called 'soft' weapons in the hands of jihadists with the strategy of manufacturing fear.

De-territorialized Phenomenon: ISIS As a Hybrid Criminal Terrorist Organization

Abstract

When in 2014 June the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham proclaimed itself as a Worldwide Caliphate, no one had anticipated that an insurgent group could be able to become the most violent and wealthiest terrorist-criminal organization in the 21st century. This paper assumes that ISIS as an international non-state actor has become a de-territorialized phenomenon which has undermined the classic concepts like state, territory, sovereignty and even threat. Hybrid feature and widespread threats of the Islamic State are accelerating the “Endogenous Socio-Political Reconstruction” conflicts in some regions. In this regard, the paper concludes that ISIS as a de-territorialized threat, is troubling and unsettling the European Union through its immediate and long-term de-territorialized effects.

Deterritorialization concept

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari first coined the term and concept of deterritorialization. For them, “the term is one of the relations between thought and territorial placing, between internal and external exile, and bears relation to notions of nomad thought, hybridity and diaspora”.¹ The notion of deterritorialization, as one of the main pillars of globalization, designates a process in which, “social relations are separated from geographical territories where people are living in a universe as a unit place”.² Deterritorialization as an anthropological concept determines, “the weakened ties between culture and place: certain cultural/social processes and relations seem to increasingly transcend their previously given territorial boundaries in flexible capitalist societies”.³ Gil-Manuel Hernandez argues that the elements which characterize globalized modernity and lead to the resonance of deterritorialization, are migration, mediatization and commodification processes and these processes can be, “understood as a proliferation of trans-localized cultural experiences”.⁴

As a prominent character of globalization, deterritorialization points to a kind of weighing of anchors of social relations which is not limited to a specific border territory and shows an increase in social forms of communications and networks.⁵ The communicative and mediatic networks as prominent vehicles of deterritorialization, will accelerate globalization by the development of deterritorialized social relations. This framework, due to trans-border social relations, causes a considerable transformation in the status of a local environment. In addition, mediatization as a catalyser of other parameters of deterritorialization such as migration, tourism and economic transformation, works as a privileged parameter, as well. According to Tomlinson, “mediatization is absolutely omnipresent in everyday contemporary cultural experiences, it therefore appears as clearly decisive in deterritorialized cultural experience”.⁶

García Canclini defines deterritorialization as “the loss of the ‘natural’ relation between culture and the social and geographic [local] territories”.⁷ But deterritorialization does not mean the end of locality, it can be defined as transformation into a more complex cultural space. More precisely, contemporary globalization tends to deterritorialization where social space can no longer be restricted within the framework of local cultures and territorial borders.⁸ In this framework, the deterritorialization process of social space mobility will go forward in line with nationalist dimensions of social identity dissolution. Moreover, the increase of transnational communications will result in identity variations, whilst from a different angle, it may bring about a deterritorialized religious and cultural solidarity.⁹

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¹ Stuart Elden, ‘Missing the point: globalization, deterritorialization and the space of the world’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, 2005, pp. 8–19.

² John Balyis and Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

³ Milton Keynes, John Clarke and Fabian Kessl, ‘Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of the Social’, A debate, *Social Work and Society International Online Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, <http://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/84/373> (accessed 3 December 2015).

⁴ Gil Manuel Hernández i Martí, ‘The deterritorialization of cultural heritage in a globalized modernity’, *Zapatillacolorida*, 2014, <https://www.scribd.com/zapatillacolorida> (accessed 8 October 2015).

⁵ Antony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

⁶ John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

⁷ Nestor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* [Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for entering and leaving modernity], Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/Grijalbo, 1990.

⁸ Gearoid Ó Tuathail, ‘The postmodern geopolitical condition: states, statecraft, and security into the twenty first century’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 2000.

⁹ Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

The development of mediatization, immigration and commodification which delineates modern globalization, will cause deterritorialization and is understood as a local experience on a universal level. Deterritorialization as a prominent feature of globalization, highlights the expansion of social communication as well as cultural debates in the modern globalized world.¹⁰ The “spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world” is called meta-geography.¹¹ In this meta-geographical globalized space where capital, individuals and money flows, various transnational networks will lead to creation of a space for non-state actors like banks, refugee groups, economic cartels and terrorist and organized crime networks. In this space, the function of power is no longer limited to territorial borders.¹² An international non-state actor such as the “Islamic State of Iraq and Sham” which has emerged in the insecure and unstable territory of Iraq, where a lack of identity and ethnic solidarity persists, is categorized as one of these kind of networks.

ISIS as a de-territorialized phenomenon

Among all the aforementioned features of deterritorialization, what accentuates ISIS as a de-territorialized phenomenon is the removal of individuals and objects from certain locations and space, in the context of “territorial fragmentation” and disembedding and decontextualizing identity associations and social relations in the context of “multi-national fighters”. In addition, the meta-geographical “endogenous socio-political reconstruction” threat has also highlighted the deterritorialization aspect of ISIS.

Maybe Pau Virilio, the French theorist, is right when he argues that, “deterritorialization is the question for the end of this century”.¹³ Geography replaced by time and territory has moved beyond the Westphalian model of state politics. Cultural and national associations and solidarity is being rendered meaningless. Security as a concept has been expanded and is no more restricted to specific borders and people. It has been de-territorialized. Frequent attacks by terrorists of unknown identification, drug and human trafficking by hybrid organizations, general identity dissolution; these are some deterritorialization characteristics which have been represented in the ISIS structure.

a) Territorial fragmentation

Territory is considered to be one of the three features of the Westphalian definition of the state. As Stuart Elden notes, territory is classically understood as a “bounded space under the control of people”.¹⁴ In other words, Paasi defined territory in that, “boundaries, along with their communication, comprise of the basic elements in the construction of territories and the practice of territoriality”.¹⁵ But, ISIS, as a de-territorialized actor has undermined the classical concept of territory. In this regard, territorial fragmentation refers to a situation which there is no longer an integral territory under the control of an entity. In fact, through deterritorialization, individuals are separated from a certain location and space and no longer belong to a specific territory and national identity.

Considering the territorial borders of the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), its borders are fragmented through different countries. Parts of the west and north of Iraq and parts of the east and north of Syria are the main self-proclaimed territorial borders of ISIS. More than 30 Jihadist groups had pledged allegiance to ISIS by the end of 2015; in Egypt’s Sinai province a group previously known as Ansar Beit al Maqdis, in Libya an extremist group of The Shura Council of Islamic Youth, in Algeria an Al-Qaeda’s splinter group named Jund al Khilafah, in Afghanistan and Pakistan a group under the leadership of former Taliban commander Hafiz Said Khan, Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Sanaa province in Yemen and the Hijaz and Najd province in Saudi Arabia.¹⁶ Moreover, some smaller groups and cells in different parts of the world such as Indonesia, Kosovo, parts of the Balkans, Algeria, North Caucasus and Xinjiang in China and the Philippines, make up the rest of the territories of the Islamic State where al-Baghdadi and ISIS have been supported. Therefore, the characterization of ISIS as a de-territorialized and diffused network has obscured the territorial nature of this modern global phenomenon on the one hand, and undermined the historical notion of territory and sovereignty, on the other hand.

¹⁰ Hernández i Martí, ‘The deterritorialization of cultural...’, <https://www.scribd.com/zapatillacolorida> (accessed 8 October 2015).

¹¹ Martin W. Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Met Geography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 35.

¹² Ibid., p. 39.

¹³ Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War*, translated by Mark Polizzotti, New York: Semiotexte, 1997.

¹⁴ Elden, ‘Missing the point...’ pp. 8–19.

¹⁵ Anssi Paasi, ‘Territory’, in *A Companion to Political Geography*, John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell and Gerard Toal (eds), Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

¹⁶ Cameron Glenn, ‘The ISIS Primer’, *Wilson Centre*, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-isis-primer#sthash.amU6Ts2o.dpuf> (accessed 29 November 2015).

b) Multi-national fighters

As depicted in the definitions of deterritorialization, internationalization, governmental borders dissolution along with the loss of individual identity in the formation of social interactions, are some characteristics of non-state actors in the globalized arena. Nikos Papastergiadis highlights the fact that deterritorialization leads to fissures within language and cultural identity.¹⁷ Therefore, “deterritorialization has been utilized to describe a cultural process, where the break between society and geography heralds a new age of unplaced human interactions as related to regional and nationalist identities and environmental issues”.¹⁸

ISIS as a de-territorialized non-state actor has recruited fighters of different nationalities who do not share ethnic and identity solidarity. Most of these people have been enticed by the Islamic State under the extensive and ideological umbrella of this insurgent group and some other reasons such as sexual adventures, financial attraction and a kind of patrimonialism protectionist system for women.¹⁹ The number of foreign fighters who have joined ISIS during this period, has raised serious concern for policy makers. They believe that these individuals could become the source of terrorist attacks and radicalism whenever they return to their home countries.²⁰ Hitherto, more than 25,000 people from a hundred different countries had joined the Islamic State by May 2015.²¹

c) De-territorialized threat

After the September 11 attacks when al-Qaeda was labelled as a “de-territorialized threat” by the United States, the concept of such a threat has come to the security studies agenda. In a broad sense, the de-territorialized threat can be defined as a threat against security, a threat against the existence and sovereignty of states, individuals and the international community, a menace that is not limited to a specific country’s territory borders and thus is a regional, trans-regional and/or transnational threat. As highlighted by Marie Stella, a de-territorialized threat is conceptualized through “mobility of criminal action” and “intentional motivations rather than political characters”.²² Many contemporary threats such as infectious disease, terrorism, and organized crimes are de-territorialized. They move beyond state borders and cannot be associated with any state or foreign policy. They are not created and controlled by national governments, rather, these threats are designed in a complex and transnational dynamic which threatens the international community.²³

“Endogenous socio-political reconstruction” conflicts as a means of threat in deterritorialization

Unlike mainstream thinkers, post-positivists and poststructuralists like Alexander Wendt, Robert Cox, and Mark Horkheimer have argued that concepts such as identity, ethnicity, culture and religion are socially constructed through social interactions. These parameters are endogenous to the socio-political historical interactions of human beings. By drawing attention to this aspect, the author uses “endogenous socio-political reconstruction” as a terminology for the function and role of concepts of identity, religion and ethnicity as the main level analysis for de-territorialized phenomena.

Identities, ethnicity, culture and religious varieties have become trans-localized within the framework of ISIS as a de-territorialized phenomenon. For a de-territorialized entity like ISIS, the main target is neither national nor ethnic solidarity. The identity, culture, ethnicity or religion of people who have been suppressed in countries or regions such as the Balkans, Kashmir, Xinjiang and Chechnya, have attracted them to a radical, strong and wealthy ideology for the purpose of overcoming their frustration, deprivation and exclusion.

Recent research and studies on “endogenous socio-political reconstruction” have concluded that such tensions and conflicts may result in violence and instability in most cases.²⁴ Chaim Kaufman believes that, when these conflicts

¹⁷ Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalisation, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

¹⁸ Elden, ‘Missing the point...’, pp. 8–19.

¹⁹ Farhad Khosrokhavar, ‘Les jeunes djihadistes révèlent des malaises de notre société’ [Young jihadistists reveal malaise of our society], *La Croix*, 2015 (accessed 22 November 2015).

²⁰ Zachary Laub and Jonathan Masters, ‘The Islamic State’, *Council of Foreign Relations*, 2015.

²¹ Jason Burke, ‘Islamist fighters drawn from half the world’s countries, says UN’, *The Guardian*, May 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/26/islamist-fighters-drawn-from-half-the-worlds-countries-says-un> (accessed 18 October 2015).

²² Marie Stella, ‘La menace déterritorisée et désétatisée: le cyber conflit’ [The deterritorialized threat and states: the cyber conflict], *Revue internationale et stratégique*, No. 49, 2003, pp. 165–171.

²³ Richard A. Matthew and George E. Shambaugh, ‘Sex, Drugs, and Heavy Metal: Transnational Threats and National Vulnerabilities’, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 1998.

²⁴ David Carment, ‘The Ethnic Dimension in World Politics: Theory, Policy and Early Warning’, *Third World Quarterly*, No. 4, 1994, pp. 551–582.

become uncontrollable for related communities and states, other states and/or non-state actors will intervene for their own security.²⁵ The history of the Xinjiang region of China, the Balkans in East Europe, the North Caucasus, the Kashmir region in Asia and Nigeria in Africa is tied up in different types of “endogenous socio-political reconstruction” conflicts. The ISIS emergence as a strong and wealthy ideological group, has been an appropriate situation for these movements to extend their demands by joining ISIS and using violence and terror.

Three regions in Asia are engaged with “endogenous socio-political reconstruction” conflicts and ISIS’ infiltration, simultaneously. The Xinjiang region of China, has always been strategically important to Beijing. This province, inhabited by more than 20 million people including 13 different ethnicities, has been a conflict region in China since 1950. An insurgent group known as the Islamic Party of East Turkistan planned a series of violent attacks against the central government of China.²⁶ Ethnic separatism and religious rhetoric, as well as a series of armed uprisings, has led to an increase of violence among the Uyghurs, the largest Turkic ethnic and Muslim group with a population of 10 million.²⁷ The government in Beijing believes that economic development in Xinjiang can weaken Uyghur interest in separatism and solve the problem of violence. “Beijing is connecting Xinjiang to Central Asia through roads, rails and pipelines to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. But these very openings are exposing Xinjiang directly to Islamic militants and arms, as well as the drug trade emanating from these countries and beyond”.²⁸ Some reports are showing that more than 1,500 recruits from Central Asia, including Uyghurs, are fighting for ISIS in Syria.²⁹

Kashmir is another Asian region which is suffering from ethno-religious conflicts. “Ethnic conflicts can have an important religious dimension. Religion is potentially a very important element of ethnicity; in fact, some ethnic groups have their primary origin in religion”.³⁰ Religious dominance and influence with regards to ethnicity is well illustrated in Kashmir. The origins of the conflicts in Kashmir date back to the end of the World War II and the colonialist partition of the British Empire. Ethnic and religious tensions among Kashmir people are not separable from each other and Jonathan Fox defines it as an “ethno-religious” conflict. According to some reports, there is militancy in Kashmir that has been attributed to ISIS.³¹

The North Caucasus is another part of the bloody and fragmented territories of ISIS that is involved in “endogenous socio-political reconstruction”. In Chechnya ethno-religious diversification has led to two wars with a death toll of thousands during the period of 2011–2012. According to a 2012 Crisis Group Report, alienation, xenophobia and discrimination are common to many residents in this region. As a result of political instability, poverty and unemployment, many people from Chechnya have migrated to Russia’s big cities. Additionally anti-Caucasian sentiment, ethnic tensions, and nationalist rhetoric has resulted in an increase in religious conflict and violence.³² In addition to the many the Chechens who fight in Iraq and Syria, “a group of fighters composed of people from Dagestan and Chechnya as well as from the Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan declared allegiance to ISIS in May 2014”.³³

The European Union is also among the regions dealing with “endogenous socio-political reconstruction”. The history of the Balkan region is tied up with “identity dissociation” and “ethnic conflict”, and it is therefore an easy place for an insurgent network like ISIS to take action. Accordingly, the American Centre for Democracy claims that, the largest numbers of European volunteers who have participated in Iraqi and Syrian Jihadist groups, are from the Balkans.³⁴ In a recent video released by the Al Hayat Media Centre, the main official ISIS ‘production house’, the organization is inviting Kosovan and Albanian Muslims to join them whilst threatening non-Muslim officials and members of the general public.

Africa is more or less dealing with “endogenous socio-political reconstruction”, as well. The combination of ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria has blighted the country’s landscape, since independence in 1960. “It is a situation

²⁵ Chaim Kaufman, ‘Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil War’, in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, Michael Brown et al. (eds), Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001.

²⁶ Enze Han, ‘Boundaries, Discrimination, and Inter-ethnic Conflict in Xinjiang’, *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2010, pp. 244–256.

²⁷ Elizabeth Van Wie Davis, ‘Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang, China’, *Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies*, 2008.

²⁸ Justin Rudelson, Xinjiang’s Uyghurs in the Ensuing US-China Partnership, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Uyghur Panel, June 10, 2002.

²⁹ Metin Gurcan, ‘How the Islamic State is exploiting Asian unrest to recruit fighters’, *Almonitor*, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/09/turkey-china-xinjiang-uyghurs-isis-prevent-extremism.html#> (accessed 6 November 2015).

³⁰ Carolyn C. James and Ozgur Ozdamar, ‘Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict: Kashmir and Indian Foreign Policy’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 17, 2005, pp. 447–467.

³¹ ‘Protesters again display ISIS flags in Kashmir valley’, *Times of India*, 17 October 2014 (accessed 22 December 2015).

³² ‘The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration I’, *Ethnicity and Conflict Crisis Group Europe Report*, No. 220, 19 October 2012.

³³ ‘Central Asian jihadist group joins ISIS’, *Long War Journal*, 7 May 2014.

³⁴ Gordon Bardos, ‘ISIS’s Balkans network’, *American Centre for Democracy*, 2015, <http://acdemocracy.org/isis-balkan-networks/> (accessed 21 September 2015).

where the relationship between the members of a particular ethnic group and other ethnic groups within a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society is characterized by fear and suspicion leading to violence".³⁵ Boko Haram, an insurgent and religious group, could be analysed in terms of these series of ethno-religious conflicts. Ideologically, as Mohammed Yusuf mentioned in an interview with BBC, Boko Haram not only opposes Western education but also Western culture and dominance. Boko Haram's violent activities have resulted in more than 10,000 casualties between 2011 and 2013.³⁶

A hybrid criminal terrorist organization

Michael Braun, a former director of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), noted that almost 19 of the 43 identified Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) are linked to organized crime groups and are engaged in illicit trades such as drug trafficking.³⁷ Since, FTOs are involved in illicit and criminal activities, some scholars and the DEA have labelled them as "hybrid organizations". The FARC, Taliban and recently ISIS are all examples of de-territorialized hybrid organizations. ISIS as a hybrid organization seeking to fund its operations, is teaming up with different organized crime groups in the Balkans, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East region whilst becoming an organized crime group, itself. Crime is can now be deemed as 'hybrid'. Hybrid crime and the notion of threat as Frank Hoffman points out, relates to "any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behaviour in the battle space to obtain their political objectives".³⁸

According to Levitt and Jacobson terrorist groups need to find new sources and illicit trades, such as drug and arms trafficking, human organ and human trafficking, as well as antique theft and smuggling, for the purpose of financing their operations.³⁹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that international drug trafficking is worth \$400–500 billion annually, which is equal to 6–9 per cent of total world trade. "Drug trafficking generates many different revenue streams, including the taxing of farmers and local cartels, as well as the provision of security for all aspects of production, trade, and distribution. Terror organizations do not, in general, require massive sums of money for their operations. Nonetheless, they must finance recruitment, training, infrastructure, government bribes, equipment, and logistics".⁴⁰

A terrorist organization and a global drug cartel share many traits; both oppose nation-state sovereignty, function best in ungoverned spaces, and depend on mutual 'shadow facilitators'.⁴¹ Both also have no regard for human rights, rely on the hallmarks of organized crime such as corruption, intimidation, violence, and are highly sophisticated organizations that operate with state of the art technology. Most analysts believe that FTOs copy their decentralized structure of cells from drug cartels. FTOs and drug cartels often rely on the same money launderers and have a capacity to regenerate themselves when dealt a blow, often re-emerging in a new or unrecognizable form. The main difference is in the source of motivation: while drug cartels are motivated entirely by profit, terrorist organizations are driven by politics or ideology.⁴²

ISIS is no longer solely an ideological-terrorist group. It is also an international non-state actor which acts as a hybrid criminal terrorist organization and finances and spreads its ideology, violence and its territorial reign of terror. Beside illegal oil trading, human and human organs trafficking, arms trading and stolen antique smuggling, the illicit drugs trade has also become one of the most lucrative financial sources for this group.⁴³

Human and human organ trafficking represent other financial sources of ISIS terrorist operations. Nickolay Mladenov, the former UN Special Representative for Iraq expounds that the Islamic State is, "using human trafficking

³⁵ Beloveth Odochi Nwankwo, 'Rhetoric and realities of managing ethno-religious conflicts: the Nigerian experience', *American Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2014, pp. 292–300.

³⁶ John Allen, *The Catholic Church: What Everyone Needs To Know*, Oxford: Oxford University Press London, 2013, pp. 166–167.

³⁷ Michael Braun, 'Drug Trafficking and Middle Eastern Terrorist Groups: A Growing Nexus?', lecture presented at *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Washington D.C., 18 July 2008.

³⁸ Frank G. Hoffman, 'Hybrid vs. compound war: The Janus choice: Defining today's multifaceted conflict', *Armed Forces Journal International*, October 2009.

³⁹ Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson, 'Countering Transnational Threats: Terrorism, Narcotics Trafficking, and WMD Proliferation', *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Focus 92, February 2009.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Refers to persons who can move weapon, laundered money and gain fraudulent international documents like passports, shipping licence, etc.

⁴² Levitt and Jacobson, 'Countering Transnational Threats...'

⁴³ Mahdokht Zakeri, 'The Nexus of Narcoterrorism and ISIS as a Transnational Threat', *Centre for Universal Drug Researches, Approaches and Studies (CUDRAS)*, 2015, <http://cudras.ir/en/2015-09-28-10-52-01/articles-and-reports/item/399-the-nexus-of-narcoterrorism-and-isis-as-a-transnational-threat.html> (accessed 9 October 2015).

as part of its sources of income”.⁴⁴ The chief of forensic pathology at Damascus University points out that more than 18,000 human body organs have been smuggled through the north of Syria during recent years.⁴⁵ Additionally, according to a report by OHCHR 2014, more than 25,000 women and children of Yazidi, Christian and other minority backgrounds have been imprisoned, sexually violated and sold by ISIS through a networking hub in Syria’s Raqqa.⁴⁶

Moreover, ISIS linkage with narcoterrorism not only provides a source of large revenue for insurgents, but it also enables them to expand their ideological territory across the globe through these networks. As Paul Shinkman has argued, the American military fears that ISIS might enter their borders via established drug smuggling routes.⁴⁷ Mexican and Colombian cartels have been using these routes to smuggle contraband for many years. FARC, the guerrilla drug smuggling organization, is now using submarines for trafficking cocaine and this has become a serious concern for the USA. As deputy commandant for operations of the U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral, Charles Michel stresses that the “...over 1,000 mile range of these submarines poses a great security risk to locations like Mexico and even West Palm Beach, Florida, and [there are] fears our government may not be able to stop them”.⁴⁸

EU’s security and ISIS’ threats

Considering the impacts of the ISIS threat on European Union security, the potential dangers have been divided into two categories of ‘threat’: immediate and long-term. Immediate dangers are those impacts which are discerned as occurring frequently during times of crisis and which influence the European continent and its civilians. These include terrorist attacks and a significant increase in organized crime activities. The other category concerns “long-term threats” which could well influence the EU for many years. The consequences of the migration crisis and an overall social disintegration linked to a developing identity crisis could be categorized as long-term dangers posed by ISIS with regard to European security.

a) Immediate threats

Rob Wainwright the director of Europol, believes that, “the so-called Islamic State has developed a new combat-style capability to carry out a campaign of large-scale terrorist attacks on a global stage – with a particular focus in Europe”.⁴⁹ Since Europe’s newcomers are highly vulnerable to radicalization, jihadist recruiters are interested in these people, thus the refugees can unfortunately be exploited in terrorist operations.

Additionally, as Wainwright estimated, the number of EU citizens who have joined ISIS is more than one million people. In this regard, each of them can return to their home countries and create a terrorist cell or conduct terrorist attacks in European countries. The Charlie Hebdo massacre in January 2015, the November 13th Paris attacks as well the January 2016 incidents that also occurred in France and more recently in Belgium, attest to the fact that ISIS is able to conduct terrorist operations in European countries by employing and training EU citizens who are then ready to return and conduct attacks in their home countries.

Besides the incidents that took place in France, ISIS, in a video message made available in January 2016, also threatened the UK and David Cameron.⁵⁰ Moreover, an emailed terror threat was sent, in November 2015, to the private address of the Interior Minister of Albania, Saimir Tahiri in.⁵¹ And, in a lengthy video released by the Al Hayat media centre, the announcement of future attacks in the Balkan region was entrusted to Albanian-language militants.

The ethno-religious conflict in the Western Balkans and transnational organized crime group’s activities have led lead to violence, extortion, corruption as well as radicalized, terrorist operations. “Organized crime offers terrorists much needed channels such as crime routes and access to weapons, thus enabling them to challenge public security as

⁴⁴ Ray Sanchez, ‘United Nations investigates claim of ISIS organ theft’, New York: *CNN*, 2015.

⁴⁵ Bob Unruh, ‘Grisly trade possibly tied to sex slavery’, *WND*, 2015.

⁴⁶ Nassir Al-Hassoun, ‘Islamic State reaps profits from organ trafficking’, *Almonitor*, 2014 (accessed 12 February 2016).

⁴⁷ Paul D. Shinkman, ‘Military fears ISIS is eyeing drug smuggling routes to enter US’, *USNEWS*, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/04/29/military-fears-isis-is-eyeing-drug-smuggling-routes-to-enter-us> (accessed 14 September 2015).

⁴⁸ Brent McCluskey, ‘ISIS Could Use Drug Smuggling Routes to Infiltrate U.S.’, *The Fix*, 2015,

<http://www.thefix.com/content/isis-could-use-drug-smuggling-routes-infiltrate-us-military-says> (accessed 3 December 2015).

⁴⁹ ‘ISIS focusing on EU, the threat of an imminent terror attack’, *Europol*, 26 January 2016, <https://www.rt.com/news/330151-isis-europe-terror-europol/> (accessed 12 February 2016).

⁵⁰ Raya Jalabi, ‘ISIS video threatening UK claims to show Paris attackers in Syria and Iraq’, *The Guardian*, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/24/isis-video-paris-attackers-iraq-syria-david-cameron> (accessed 12 February 2016).

⁵¹ Fatjona Mejдини, ‘Albania Minister Receives Emailed Terror Threat’, *Balkan Insight*, 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/islamic-state-threatens-albania-11-14-2015> (accessed 19 October 2015).

well as armed forces”.⁵² Organized crime groups and ISIS cells are seemingly derived from the supply and demand rule which deals with marketing strategies. The “Balkan route” is an apparently suitable ‘path’ for such groups. There are several spots in the Balkans which provide safe routes for illicit trafficking and these activities have increased because of illegal migration during recent years.⁵³ The Western Balkans provide major transit routes for drug trafficking, drug precursors (ephedrine) and manufactured synthetic drugs heading from Turkey to the EU as well as the firearms trade heading from Europe to Syria and Iraq. In addition, long queues of refugees waiting in line to pass EU borders have made it safer and easier for traffickers and drug mules from Syria and Iraq, disguised as refugees, to transport drugs, and as a result the so-called ‘North African Route’⁵⁴ has also been recently activated. “The Western Balkans region is considered as a ‘safe haven’ for war profiteers, career criminals and Islamic fundamentalists due to the weak governmental structures and deteriorating economies”.⁵⁵

The Islamic State of Iraq and Sham needs to find new sources to fund and extend its operations and ideological territories. One of these sources is achieved by teaming up with organized crime groups. The Balkans is one such European region where many organized crime groups are active in fields such as drugs and human trafficking, human organ smuggling as well as arms trafficking. Spain and Italy are the two other countries where organized crime groups are most active. As David S. Cohen, the former Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, points out, the ISIS budget for 2015 was \$2 billion with a \$250 million surplus.⁵⁶ The Islamic State has become the wealthiest terrorist group in history.

b) Long- term threats

The recent wave of migration to Europe has been unprecedented during recent years. As a result of the crisis and war in the Middle East and Africa, more than half a million refugees have migrated to Europe during the period 2013-2015. The recent wave of migration, primarily caused by the emergence of ISIS will probably have some long lasting negative consequences on the economy, culture and societies of the EU. As Alex Jackson argues, the loss of various aspects of cultural identity for first and especially second generation refugees, is one major disadvantage of the refugees’ influx into the EU, for both host countries and refugees. The creation of segregated ethnic areas is represents another issue. Any sort of discrimination against ethnic and minority groups will certainly lead to extremism, and political and social radicalism.

Health care systems represent another aspect that will exert increasing pressure on the economic systems of the EU. The refugees’ children will need to be educated, despite being unable speak the host nations’ native languages and this will require, amongst other things, a new economic approach. Moreover, due to rapid population growth, pressure on public services will rise. Unemployment, decreases in wages, as well as an increase of organized crime activity represent other disadvantages of the migration crisis that will threaten EU security. ISIS threats against the Middle East have spilled over to Europe. The immigration wave is one of the main consequences in terms of threats which, in the future, will endanger EU security and represent cultural, social and economic risk.

Some scholars like Melanie Phillips believe that, “radicalization emerges among Muslims that fail to integrate culturally and economically, from feelings of marginalisation from state and social structures, and from the resulting real and perceived discrimination”.⁵⁷ “Endogenous socio-political reconstruction” parameters represent a complicated mixture of characteristics which relate to ideology, identity and culture. Olivier Roy points out that “Western Muslims, often second or third generation immigrants, are unable to reconcile their Western identity with their heritage identity, and are constantly managing two sets of norms”.⁵⁸ Ideology and religion play important roles in identity building and the social formation of people. Moreover, according to the ‘dual identity’ theory, “second or third generation Muslims in

⁵² Schori Liang C., ‘Shadow Networks: The Growing Nexus of Terrorism and Organized Crime’, *Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)*, Policy Paper No. 20, 2011.

⁵³ European Parliament Study, ‘Europe’s Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between terrorist and organized crime groups in the European Union’, Directorate General for Internal Policies of European Parliament, 2012.

⁵⁴ From Syria to Jordan and then through Suez Canal and North Africa – Tripoli in Libya – to Spain and other EU countries.

⁵⁵ Arsovska Jana and Basha Dimal, ‘Globalizing the Western Balkans: Transnational Crime, Fundamental Islam and Unholy Alliances’, *Etudes Caribbean*, 2012.

⁵⁶ Haytham Mouzahem, ‘How the Islamic State gets its cash’, *Middle East Eye*, March 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/how-isis-gets-cash-39592257> (accessed 19 October 2015).

⁵⁷ Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within*, London: Encounter Books, 2006.

⁵⁸ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for New Ummah*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

the West are unable to identify with either their national or ethnic identity, and find comfort in the simplicity of extremist ideology”.⁵⁹

All the aforementioned threats are interrelated but as it can be seen the conflicts resulting from endogenous socio-political reconstruction are the main reasons behind extremism. Additionally, social disintegration and discrimination against single groups, is another important, consequential characteristic of migration over a long- term period. The “endogenous socio-political reconstructions” of most of the European fighters who have joined ISIS, had been suppressed by a dominant force or were at least neglected. Thus they try to raise their voices against this suppression through violence and extremism. Far from Islamic ideology, other groups and individuals have cooperated with ISIS simply due to its domination in terms of violence.

Conclusion

Deterritorialization as a consequence of globalization has undermined such concepts as borders, states, sovereignty and perceived threat. This is a process which dissociates identities and cultures, and weakens the ties between space and time. In this meta-geographical globalized space where capital, individuals and money flows, various transnational networks will lead to the creation of space for non-state actors like banks, refugee groups, economic cartels, terrorist groups and organized crime networks. An international non-state actor like the “Islamic State of Iraq and Sham” which has emerged in the insecure and unstable territory of Iraq, is categorized as being representative of these kinds and types of crime networks.

ISIS territorial borders have been established in a fragmented and haphazard manner throughout the Middle East and parts of North Africa. The Westphalian interpretation of state and sovereignty does not apply in this context. Its population has many different nationalities and lacks any discernible notion of identity and cultural solidarity. Moreover, the Islamic State threat has been de-territorialized due to widespread criminal activities and the current endogenous socio-political reconstruction conflicts around the world serving as a means of accelerating violence and perceptible threat. ISIS is no longer solely an ideological terrorist group, but in order to fund its operations and extensions, it also needs to find new sources as well as conducting and cooperating in illicit trades. Thus it has become a hybrid criminal terrorist organization.

Additionally, regarding the proximity of European borders to the Middle East, the ISIS threat has infiltrated the EU and as a de-territorialized phenomenon and a hybrid organization, it is threatening the social and economic security of the European Union. “Endogenous Socio-Political Reconstruction” conflict as a means of threat regarding deterritorialization, is potentially targeted at the creation of militant and ideological cells. The experiences of terrorist groups in Nigeria, Chechnya, Balkans, and the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and Kashmir show that a crisis in terms of identity, ethnicity and religion can result in violence. Therefore the current national identity conflicts in Corsica in France and the Basque region in Spain could potentially lead to a further creation in Europe of militant ISIS terrorist cells. Furthermore, as the numbers of refugees entering Europe increases, economic, cultural, ethno-religious and identity crises will escalate.

⁵⁹ Donald M. Taylor and Winnifred Louis, ‘Terrorism and the quest for identity’, in *Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences and Interventions*, Fathali M. Moghaddam and Anthony J. Marsella (eds), Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2004.

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2. John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 23.
3. Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State*, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 124.
4. Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Syria under Bashar: Between Economic Reform and Nationalist Realpolitik,' in *Syrian Foreign Policy and the United States: from Bush to Obama*, Raymond Hinnebusch, Marwan J. Kabalan, Bassma Kodmani and David Lesch (eds), St. Andrews: University of St. Andrews Centre for Syrian Studies, 2010, p. 20.
5. Zygmunt Komorowski, *Kultury Afryki Czarnej* [Cultures of Black Africa], Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1994, pp. 89–90.
6. Larry J. Dimond, 'Rethinking of Civil Society,' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 3, July 1994, p. 4.
7. 'Tunisia's al-Nahda to Form Party,' *Aljazeera*, 1 March 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/%20middleeast/2011/03/201131132812266381.html> (accessed 10 November 2011).
8. *Sudan Peace Act Report: 21 April 2003*, Washington DC: Department of State, 2003, www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rpt/2003/19790.htm (accessed 23 August 2013).

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9. Hinnebusch, 'Syria under Bashar...', pp. 20, 22.
10. Ibid., p. 186.
11. Ibidem.

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