

Master's Degree programme – Second
Cycle (*D.M. 270/2004*)
in Relazioni Internazionali Comparete

Final Thesis

The Islamic State statehood and the concept of state in the Middle East

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Matteo Legrenzi

Co-supervisor

Ch. Prof. Antonio Trampus

Graduand

Salvatore Di Vita

Matriculation Number 854046

Academic Year

2015 / 2016

Table of contents

Abstract	4
Introduction	14
I. THE CONCEPT OF STATE	17
1.1. A historical overview	17
1.2 Fundamental Work on the State	20
1.3 International Law	24
1.4 State as historical construction	26
II. STATE FORMATION IN MIDDLE EAST AND THE CAUSES OF ITS INSTABILITY	28
2.1 A historical reading	29
2.1.1 The state formation in the Middle East	31
2.1.2 The state development in the Middle East	38
2.2 Economical politic - Rentierism	42
2.3 Indentity Politics	44
2.3.1 Tribes	46
2.3.2 Minorities	48
2.3.3 Nationalism	50
2.3.4 Sectarianism	53
2.3.5 Islam and politic	54
2.4 Conclusion	56
III. ISIS FORMATION	63
3.1 ISIS: contextualizing its formation	65
3.2 Structure	69
IV. THE ISLAMIC STATE AND ITS STATEHOOD.....	75
4.1 Is IS a state or not?	75
4.1.2 Consideration on IS statehood	81
4.2 The importance of statehood	84
Conclusion	95
Bibliography	97

Abstract

Il 29 giugno 2014, l'organizzazione nota col nome di Stato Islamico di Siria e Iraq proclamò la restaurazione del Califfato, cambiando il proprio in Stato Islamico. In questo modo, i territori conquistati dal gruppo tra Siria e Iraq divennero territori di uno stato, e la bandiera che su di essi sventava la bandiera di uno stato. Il veloce - seppur, non inatteso - sviluppo dello Stato Islamico e la sua separazione pragmatica da al-Qaeda ha minato il precario equilibrio del Medio Oriente. Per di più, questi eventi hanno rappresentato e continuano a rappresentare una nuova sfida per la comunità internazionale, aprendo un nuovo dibattito che riporta il concetto di stato al centro dell'attenzione. Può lo Stato Islamico essere considerato uno stato a tutti gli effetti?

Per cercare di sviluppare un discorso che tenesse conto di tutti gli elementi che ne fanno parte, i capitoli di questa tesi seguono un avanzamento zumato per cui ad ogni domanda ne segue una sempre più specifica.

Nel primo capitolo si è cercato di definire il concetto di stato: che cos'è lo stato? Questo concetto può essere analizzato da diverse prospettive che conducono a diverse conclusioni. Infatti, sebbene vi sia un enorme quantità di studi a riguardo, non esiste una definizione univoca capace di descrivere in modo inequivoco questa forma di organizzazione politica. Questo problema riflette una condizione del mondo naturale, vale a dire la variabilità dei fattori nel tempo e nello spazio. Inoltre, questo concetto può essere analizzato da diversi punti di vista, sia esso storico, sociologico o giuridico.

Secondo la teoria hegeliana, lo stato non è solo un artefatto che scaturisce dall'arbitrio umano, bensì è parte di una strategia divina. Per questo motivo svolge la funzione etica di fornire agli individui autocoscienza attraverso la creazione di un'identità comune. Elemento centrale diviene dunque la libertà di soggettività, che appare

solo nello stato moderno come risultato di un equilibrio tra soggettività e universalità.

Per Karl Marx lo stato è un sistema astratto ed irrazionale di dominazione politica che nega la natura sociale dell'uomo e lo aliena dalla genuina partecipazione alla vita pubblica. Le elite rappresentano gli interessi privati, la burocrazia mira ad ottenere il potere statale per i suoi interessi mentre la società civile è essenzialmente egoista. Dunque, secondo la teoria strumentalista di Marx ed Engels lo stato è uno strumento di coercizione e amministrazione che può essere usato per vari scopi da qualunque interesse riesca ad appropriarsene. Tuttavia è necessario per moderare i conflitti tra le classi e li mantiene entro i confini dell'ordine sociale.

Un concetto che non può essere evitato parlando di stato è il concetto di potere. Gianfranco Poggi afferma infatti che lo stato è un fenomeno principalmente ed enfaticamente collocato all'interno della sfera del potere politico. L'idea dello stato come potere politico è corroborata dalla pratica del ruolo della coercizione. Poiché lo stato non può esistere senza la forza, il potere politico di uno stato consiste nel monopolio della violenza. Potere dunque come legittimità che si esprime nell'intenzione delle persone di attenersi a decisioni prese dall'apparato statale e, se necessario, rischiare le loro vite per difendere il territorio comune dello stato.

Contro la frammentazione del concetto di stato, lo sviluppo del diritto internazionale a partire dal XX secolo ha condotto ad una maggiore universalizzazione del concetto di stato. Lo stato è l'attore primario del diritto internazionale, infatti - affinché questo sia pienamente applicabile - è necessario che ogni territorio sia sotto il controllo di un'autorità. A partire dalla Convenzione di Montevideo sui Diritti e Doveri degli Stati del 1933, si afferma l'idea che uno stato, per definirsi tale, deve avere a) una popolazione permanentemente b) confini stabiliti c) un governo d) la capacità di entrare in relazione con altri stati.

Alla luce di queste diverse prospettive, si può affermare che lo stato moderno è una forma politica di governo che, ad un certo punto della storia, l'essere umano ha scelto per regolare (primariamente) tutti i tipi di relazioni: politiche commerciali, economiche, familiari ecc... Esso si basa sul compromesso tra privato e pubblico. Tut-

tavia queste definizioni possono risultare viziate da fattori contingenti. Questo è, usando un concetto foucauldiano, un discorso che veicola una certa visione del mondo. Il valore del discorso non sta nella sua verità quanto nella sua efficacia, stabilendo precisi concetti interpretativi. Dunque è possibile decostruire questo discorso per smascherarne il punto di vista. Si può infatti sostenere che lo stato è la forma politica di governo che, ad un certo punto della storia, un preciso gruppo di comunità stanziata in una precisa area geografica ha sviluppato per le ragioni sopra menzionate. Questa forma di governo è stata usata come modello, in alcuni casi, o imposta in diversi modi, senza considerare le condizioni necessarie né le profonde differenze tra le differenti società umane.

Per queste ragioni, avvicinando lo sguardo sulla nostra area di interesse, l'interrogativo che guida il secondo capitolo è: in che modo lo stato si è sviluppato nel Medio Oriente?

Quest'area è caratterizzata da un'instabilità (sia essa interna o esterna) che appare strutturale, soprattutto se si guarda alle entità statali che ne fanno parte. Per rispondere a questa domanda e cercare di individuare gli elementi di instabilità, si è cercato di procedere con un'analisi che ricercasse diverse prospettive.

In primo luogo si è rivelata necessaria una lettura storica. Autori come David Fromkin affermano infatti che il Medio Oriente come oggi noi lo conosciamo è il risultato di decisioni fatte dagli Alleati durante e dopo la Prima Guerra Mondiale. Dal 1815, l'impero Ottomano divenne perfettamente integrato nella lotta per il potere in Europa, per cui la parte del tardo impero ottomano è incomprensibile in isolamento dalla storia europea. Da una parte vi erano Russia e Gran Bretagna, impegnate nel "Great Game", una lotta strategica per il predominio su Asia e Medio Oriente. La guerra Russo-Ottomana e il conseguente Congresso di Berlino del 1878 indebolirono pesantemente l'Impero, portandolo alla perdita di molti territori a favore di potenze che andavano dal Montenegro all'Iran. Inoltre, nel 1903 La Germania iniziò la costruzione della *Baghdadbahn*, la ferrovia che avrebbe dovuto collegare Berlino a Baghdad. Questo causò preoccupazioni di Francia, Gran Bretagna e Russia. Durante

e dopo la guerra la strategia principale fu dunque quella del *divide et impera*: la corrispondenza epistolare tra McMahon e lo sceriffo della Mecca Hussein ibn Ali; le relazioni tra gli inglesi e la famiglia rivale dello sceriffo, i wahabbiti di Ibn Saud; il trattato di Sykes-Picot e la dichiarazione Balfour; l'accordo di Saint Jean de Maurienne e il Trattato di Sevres. Sono tutti tasselli di una politica che portò alla disgregazione dell'impero ottomano a discapito degli interessi delle potenze europee. Sotto l'egida della Lega delle nazioni, l'impero fu diviso in mandati, colonie larvate da cui nacquero stati mai esistiti prima e spesso senza omogeneità.

Tuttavia, al di fuori degli aspetti storico-culturali ci sono altri aspetti propriamente "geografici", i quali contribuiscono alla specificità dell'area. Un elemento che riguarda da vicino la politica e la società è la massiccia presenza di giacimenti petroliferi, che ha portato allo sviluppo di quelli che vengono definiti *Rentier State*. In questa tipologia di stato, la rendita del petrolio, quindi esterna allo stato, predomina le altre fonti di guadagno. Qui è solo un piccolo gruppo a generare questa rendita, mentre il resto della popolazione lo riceve. Secondo Luciani, in Medio Oriente il petrolio gioca un importante ruolo nella determinazione dei confini e nel permettere l'esistenza di stati indipendenti in questa regione. Il fenomeno del *reinterism* fa sì che, venuta meno la funzione fiscale dello stato da un lato e la funzione produttiva della società dall'altro, lo stato venga percepito come una proprietà del governante. Non vi è dunque necessità di legittimità e rappresentazione democratica poiché la loro forza risiede proprio nell'indipendenza finanziaria dalla società.

Comunque, una delle più grandi sfide alla stabilità del Medio Oriente viene dalle politiche identitarie. L'identità è un fattore che caratterizza la società e può essere usato da diversi attori. Halliday individua tre forme di identità per la società araba: religiosa, panaraba e locale. Le tribù sono ad esempio un elemento che influisce nelle politiche identitarie. Sebbene questi gruppi non siano specifici del Medio Oriente, in quest'area hanno delle particolarità come il fatto di non essere etnicamente divergenti. Le società tribali rappresentano un particolarità nella visione occidentale dello stato moderno. Compito delle tribù era ed è quello di garantire il rispetto delle regole della società che esse rappresentano e perciò il loro ruolo è stato fortemente indeboli-

to e messo in discussione dallo stato, il quale ha in certo qual modo usurpato questo ruolo. Questi gruppi non si sono conformate al modello statale poiché non hanno sviluppato quel tipo di istituzioni e ideologie legittimizzanti comuni in occidente. Per capire la complessità delle divisioni esistenti nelle entità statali del Medio Oriente, bisogna riconoscere l'interconnessione di etnicità, settarismo e tribalismo.

All'interno del discorso identitario, un'altro elemento che contribuisce alla creazione del mosaico mediorientale è la presenza di diverse minoranze, le quali costituiscono comunità compatte e definite. Con il sistema dei mandati, le potenze europee favorirono le minoranze non arabe, come i cristiani maroniti in Libano, gli ebrei in Palestina. Al contrario, i curdi vennero divisi tra Turchia, Iraq, Iran e Siria. I gruppi etnici possono creare movimenti separatisti come ad esempio nel caso dei curdi, la più grande minoranza etnica in Siria e Turchia.

Una delle maggiori ideologie che ha contribuito alla creazione di diversi tipi di identità è certamente stato il nazionalismo. Il nazionalismo arabo nasce nel XIX sec. sulla base dei concetti europei di patria e patriottismo, in opposizione all'Impero Ottomano. Una forma particolare che prese il nazionalismo è quello di pan-ideologia. Il pan-arabismo raggiunse un riconoscimento formale con la creazione della Lega Araba nel 1945.

Se da un lato quindi il nazionalismo diventa pan-arabismo, dall'altro è direttamente legato con il concetto di stato-nazione. Questo tipo di nazionalismo è stato usato come valore durante conflitti intra-statali. Questa retorica fu ad esempio usata nella guerra tra Iraq e Iran del 1980-1988 da entrambe le parti, esaltando vittorie del passato. Attualmente questi movimenti nazionalisti hanno spesso pretese territoriali, mostrando un approccio massimalista. In periodi diversi, Siria, Egitto e Iraq hanno privato ad estendere la loro sovranità rispettivamente su Libano, Sudan e Kuwait.

Tuttavia, mentre il nazionalismo aspira a raggiungere la sovranità, il settarismo risultato di circostanze politiche - aspira a diritti e autonomia. La mobilitazione popolare è molto sensibile alla narrativa settarista, che diventa uno strumento nelle mani di vari attori, come governi, forze straniere, gruppi o singoli individui. Ci sono diverse ragioni che inaspriscono il settarismo in Medio Oriente, come l'identificazione

dei regimi con specifiche comunità religiose. La situazione di quest'area è stata definita la nuova Guerra Fredda del Medio Oriente, in cui la competizione per il controllo geopolitico dell'intera regione passa attraverso il dominio religioso da parte di due attori: l'Arabia Saudita sunnita e l'Iran sciita.

L'ideologia islamica è stata spesso usata in contrapposizione con il pan-arabismo o il nazionalismo locale, quest'ultimi visti come simboli di decadenza spirituale. Le prime forme di pan-islamismo fu diretto contro i poteri coloniali. Sia il pan-arabismo che il pan-islamismo fanno ricorso alla retorica della lingua araba come elemento centrale di identità, mentre memoria e tradizione sono elementi essenzialmente moderni. Questi sono movimenti moderni che selezionano e riformulano elementi dal passato per venire incontro a propositi contemporanei. Inoltre è necessario porre queste ideologie all'interno del loro contesto storico e politico. L'elemento religioso viene utilizzato per contrastare un potere preconstituito o per giustificare un potere ottenuto. È stato soprattutto durante la guerra fredda che l'Islam divenne un'ideologia politica, in seguito all'esperienza dell'Afganistan e dell'Iran. In questo periodo il fondamentalismo divenne una forza trans-nazionale. L'idea della restaurazione del califfato può essere trovata in molti movimenti e finalmente implementata dal gruppo dello Stato Islamico, che rappresenta se stesso proprio come un attore transnazionale.

Il gruppo dello Stato Islamico risulta incomprensibile senza avere prima una visione totalitaria degli elementi sopra citati, e per questo motivo i due capitoli sopra vogliono fornire una chiave di lettura per l'interpretazione della statualità dello Stato Islamico.. Il terzo capitolo cerca dunque di fornire una ricostruzione storica del processo di formazione del gruppo, che si sviluppa tra Afganistan e Iraq nel periodo post-11 settembre. Lo Stato Islamico beneficia della crisi e dalla disintegrazione del sistema statale di diversi paesi in seguito alla primavera araba e della controrivoluzione guidata dalla famiglia Saud. Il Califfo si mostra come sovvertitore di patti conclusi dagli infedeli sulle rovine della Sublime Porta, dagli accordi di Sykes-Picot, origine della divisione del Levante e della Mesopotamia da Parte di Francia e Gran Bretagna.

Lo Stato Islamico ha una capitale, la città siriana di Raqqa, ed è diviso in unità amministrative chiamate *wilayat*. Ha provato a mostrare una progressiva istituzionalizzazione dei suoi territori e l'espansione dei suoi progetti. Inoltre, il califfato ha sviluppato otto elementi fondamentali per l'esercizio del controllo che sono il Consiglio della Sharia, il Consiglio della Sura, il Dipartimento Finanziario, il *Ahl al-hall wa al-aqd*, Il Consiglio Militare, il Consiglio di Sicurezza, l'Organizzazione Amministrativa e il Consiglio dei Media. Attraverso queste strutture lo Stato Islamico governa il territorio, previene la criminalità, gestisce le finanze di tutto il territorio, gestisce il suo esercito, la propria polizia, il proprio territorio, l'attività propagandistica, ma garantisce anche servizi alla propria popolazione.

Dopo aver presentato il concetto di stato, le caratteristiche della formazione dello stato in Medio Oriente e le sue specificità ed in infine lo Stato Islamico, diviene a questo punto lecito domandarsi se lo Stato Islamico risponda ai requisiti necessari per acquisire la statualità, se dunque sia possibile definire effettivamente stato lo Stato Islamico. Questo si è dimostrato molto attivo nella tassazione e nella creazione di lavoro, seppur attraverso riscatti proventi del petrolio e la zakat, la tassa riservata ai non musulmani che vogliono restare sul territorio. Un altro settore è quello della sicurezza domestica, dal momento che il modo di operare è più simile a un organizzazione militare. Inoltre si è mostrato attivo anche nel fornire servizi sociali alla propria popolazione, infatti ha sviluppato diversi dipartimenti atti alla fornitura di servizi quali stipendi, forni, elettricità. Tuttavia

L'American Institute for the Study of War descriveva nel 2015 lo Stato Islamico come un post-state che ha saputo legare la propria legittimità come movimento alla sua abilità di regnare, non solo di combattere. Dunque gli elementi centrali sono l'abilità militare ed il controllo politico, dal momento che possiede istituzioni funzionali, un governo, delle leggi e dei cittadini. La struttura governativa è divisa in due categorie: amministrativa e orientata ai servizi.

Lo Stato Islamico ha inoltre fondato la propria legittimità sulla preponderanza dell'elemento religioso sul campo politico, ed il suo potere è il risultato di un mandato divino. Tuttavia, un'altra fonte di legittimità è stata anche dovuta alla fornitura di

servizi sociali. D'altro canto, come già accennato, la forza muscolare di un forte esercito garantisce la sovranità necessaria anch'essa al mantenimento della legittimità.

Parte della sua strategia è basata sul settarismo, ascritto alla categoria più ampia di politica identitaria. Lo Stato Islamico ha fatto un grande ampio utilizzo di questa, come è possibile vedere. Lo Stato Islamico si basa su un'ideologia Salafita Jihadista. Si rifà dunque in parte all'esperienza della Fratellanza Musulmana, in parte al Wahhabismo, dunque un Salafismo puritano che richiede un'interpretazione letterale dell'Islam e un ritorno alla sua primordiale purezza, nonché una sua purificazione dal politeismo (definizione in cui ricade lo shiismo). Con jihadismo si fa riferimento ad un movimento politico o individuale che focalizza in primo luogo il proprio discorso sull'attuazione di un'inflessibile e violenta campagna chiamata jihad. A questa doppia definizione si aggiunge, nel delineare l'ideologia dello Stato Islamico, un'altra specificazione, che consiste nella linea dura ed estremista all'interno della scuola Salafita Jihadista. Questo è proprio ciò che lo distingue da al-Qaeda, seguendo la linea dura di al-Zarqawi, e ciò che rafforza il discorso identitario. Il termine Takfir (infedeli) è usato in modo restrittivo ed esclusivo, incrementando il numero di avversari. Inoltre, fa ricorso a elementi di un'ideologia locale, quali le tribù, e al contempo ad un'ideologia "universale", inviando il loro messaggio ai "musulmani da ogni parte".

Il discorso riguardo lo Stato Islamico fa sorgere un'altra domanda: per chi è importante capire se lo Stato Islamico è uno stato o meno? Nel quarto capitolo, abbiamo individuato tre categorie principali.

In primo luogo ci sono i jihadisti che mirano a stabilire un potere territoriale, in particolare a restaurare il califfato. Un precedente tentativo di stabilire un potere territoriale e rintracciabile nell'Emirato Islamico dell'Afghanistan. Ci sono stati numerosi tentativi di un controllo territoriale *de facto*, e queste entità sono state definite proto-stati jihadisti che hanno come caratteristiche comuni il fatto di sviluppare progetti ideologici e internazionali, atteggiamenti aggressivi e un certo successo nel creare un governo legittimo.

Una base teorica della strategia dello Stato Islamico risiede nel testo *The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Islamic Nation Will Pass*, che sviluppa una metodologia militare atta a compiere il fine ultimo della creazione di uno Stato Islamico.

In secondo luogo c'è quella parte di società occidentale per cui, quello potrebbe essere un semplice problema linguistico dal momento che denominare un cosa in un certo modo può essere abbastanza per renderla differente, implica una conseguente scelta strategica. Definire lo Stato Islamico organizzazione terroristica, come fatto dal presidente Obama, o chiamarlo stato determina un'approccio strategico differente.

Infine vi è quella parte di mondo musulmano che si trova all'interno della società occidentale. Attraverso un attento utilizzo dei media, come la rivista ufficiale Dabiq, lo Stato Islamico è riuscito a diffondere la propria ideologia ben al di fuori dei confini mediorientali. È stato già affermato che i proto-stati jihadisti hanno l'utilizzo dell'ideologia come elemento comune. L'ideologia è intesa come elemento emotivo e istintivo che richiede identificazione sentimentale più che un consenso razionale. Luise Althusser pubblicò nel 1970 un saggio chiamato *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, che aggiunge al repressive state apparatus (governo, amministrazione, esercito, polizia...) della teoria marxista dello stato, il concetto di ideological state apparatus (chiesa, scuola, famiglia, media, cultura...). In quest'ultimo l'intermediazione della classe dirigente (che detiene il potere) assicura l'armonia tra ideological state apparatus e repressive state apparatus.

L'ideologia ha avuto un ruolo centrale nel proselitismo dello Stato Islamico. Potremmo definirlo uno stato basato sul Ideological state apparatus, ma ciò non basterebbe. La sua ideologia dominante, il salafismo-jihadista e la sua linea dura (che rafforza la sua identità distinguendolo da al-Qaeda) è massicciamente diffusa dal Ideological state apparatus. Questo è dunque perfettamente inserito nel globalizzato mondo contemporaneo, raggiungendo in questo modo ogni soggetto suscettibile a questo tipo di ideologia, supportato dal concetto transnazionale di Umma.

Per queste ragioni, possiamo affermare che lo Stato Islamico un proto-stato jihadista in cui l'Ideological state apparatus a raggiunto un alto grado di internazional-

izzazione. Infatti IS ha finito per essere identificato con il proprio apparato ideologico e dunque con la propria ideologia.

Introduction

On June 29, 2014, the Sunni Salafist jihadist organization¹ known as Islamic State of Iraq and Levant proclaimed Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi its caliph and changed its name in Islamic State - as a new caliphate². In this way, it posed the flag of a State on the conquered territories between Iraq and Syria. The quick - even not unexpected - development of IS and its pragmatical separation from al-Qaida undermined further the precarious equilibrium of the Middle East. Furthermore, this event represents a new issue for the international community. It opens a new debate and puts the concept of state into the spotlight.

The main question is if the Islamic State can be considered a state. Is the Islamic State a formal state? Scholars and experts of geopolitic tried to answer this question using the limited datas in their possession. The relevance of the answer is related to the fact that is important to understand how other subject have to engage with IS. To understand if it is a State or a terroristic group can conditions the international strategy of other states to face this problems. However, to answer this question is necessary to dissemble it, developing a discourse that analyses all the elements subtended by this argument.

First of all, it is indispensable to understand what the concept of state refers to. What is a "State"? (how do you define a state?) This idea can be analyzed from different perspectives that can lead to different conclusions. Indeed, there are various elements that are used to define a state: some territorial other refers to a population,

¹ Yonah A., Dean A., *The Islamic State. Combating the Caliphate without Borders*, Lexington Books, London, 2015, p. 33.

² *Ibidem*, p. 7.

(some conceptual) legitimacy, power, independency. These elements can be found in different degrees in different_state.

Thus, following the thread of the discourse to the main answer, one is naturally led to wonder if there is a universal kind of state. Turning now to the Middle Eastern context asking the question: How has the state developed in the Middle East? Looking at this area, it can be assumed that the State is characterized by a structural instability that starts at least by the end of the Ottoman Empire, or even before its end. Therefore, we are interested in what are the main causes of this lack of equilibrium. In the Middle East there are some elements that, mixed with each other, converge to give a certain specificity³ to this region. For example historical elements, like the process of formation of the state and the post-colonial period; economical elements, like the presence of important reinter states; sociological elements, like tribes and minorities, and the strong presence of the religion with its separatism. Authoritarian States, Reinter States, Weak States, Failed States, Political Islam. Many of these elements generate sentiments characterized by trans-national aspects like Pan-Arabism or Pan-Islamism. The knowledge and understanding of this mix of features is a necessary precondition to explain the context in which the new entity of the Islamic State has been developed.

Thus, the debate arrives at the most central question of this analysis: For who is it important to understand if the Islamic State is a state or not? IS wants a territory. The separation from Al-Qaeda is a clear clue of it. Another indication should be on the name itself. They present themselves as *the* Islamic State and not as *an* Islamic State⁴ like the Islamic Republic of Iran. The concept of *Umma* is recurring in the public discourse, and the materials provided by IS itself as the magazine Dabiq, can show its politic. However, there are many uncertainties about the statehood of this entity that can possibly be defined as a counter-State.

³ Ayubi N. N., *Over-stating the Arab State. Politics and Society in the Middle East*, I. B. Tauris, 2009, p. xii.

⁴ Mc Cants W., *The ISIS Apocalypse*, St. Martin's Press, 2015, p. 6.

The importance of this study is due to the necessity to analyze what IS claims to be, how it is actually acting, how the international system is facing it and how all these factors are delimited in the Middle Eastern context can give a key to understand what is happening in the territories of Iraq and Syria. One of the most ancient places in which human society took its first steps.

I. THE CONCEPT OF STATE

The first mandatory step to tackle the discourse about the statehood of the Islamic State lies in the general concept of State. For this reason, it is fundamental to understand the meaning - or the meanings - conveyed by this word. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the huge amount of studies and debates about State, there is not a single definition that describes in an unequivocal way this form of political organization. This problem reflects a condition of the natural world: the variability of factors in time and space. The multiplicity of the human society nature around the world - due to different environmental and historical situation - and its continuous flux make this discussion very shimmering *fugitive*. At the same time, this variability changes also the human perception of the world and of its phenomena.

In addition, the discourse about state is complex, due to the fact that it can be analyzed from the outlook of different subjects: history, sociology and law. Not only, Bobbio assumes that "this immense field of study is conventionally divided between two disciplines which are didactically distinct: political philosophy and political science".⁵

1.1. A historical overview

The first necessity is to briefly present the historical conditions that brought to the formation of the modern state. Therefore, tracing an evolutionary path of the State, Carneiro argues that human being started the process of aggregation into larger politi-

⁵ Bobbio N., *Democracy and Dictatorship. The Nature and Limits of State Power*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989, p. 46.

cal units around 5000 BC, while in 4000 BC we can situate the formation of the first state in history (intended as an autonomous political units).⁶ However, the traditional debate around the State is relatively recent since, as Bobbio writes, it starts with Plato's *Statesman* and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* to Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Schmitt's *Die Diktatur*⁷. He also assumes that the term *state* "achieved its position through the diffusion and prestige of Machiavelli's *The Prince*".⁸

However, the shift from the ancient forms of government - the great empires on one hand and city-state in the other hand - to the properly modern state can be localized in space and time: "Western Europe in the period 1100 to 1600".⁹ It is possible to identify some elements that made possible this change. For example, the relative stabilization of European powers allowed the development of a sense of "common identity among local communities."¹⁰ Another element that contributed to the state-building process was the spread of the Christian Church, that was endowed with characteristic of the state, like enduring institutions and papal sovereignty¹¹.

Poggi identifies "a historical sequence of three types of rule system"¹² that are integral part of the development of the state: feudalism, the *Ständestaat* and the absolutism. The first one starts with the Carolingian empire around the 8th century, and its geographical limited to the lands of France and Germany. This system was characterized by a vertical distribution of power even more fragmented in smaller systems.

⁶ Carneiro R. L., *A Theory of the Origin of the State: Traditional Theories of State Origins are Considered and Rejected in Favor of a New Ecological Hypothesis*, in Hall J. (Edited by) *The State. Critical Concept*, London, 1994, p. 433.

⁷ See, Bobbio N., 1989, p. xviii.

⁸ *Ibidem*. p. 57.

⁹ Strayer J. R., *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, Strayer J. R., p. 12.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, Strayer J. R., p. 15.

¹² Poggi G., *The Development of the Modern State. A Sociological Introduction*, Stanford University Press, 1978, p. 16.

The passage to the *Ständestaat* - as "the polity of the Estates"¹³ - happened between the late 12th and the early 14th century. This was allowed thanks to the rising of the town intended as politically autonomous entities, the strengthening of the territorial ruler power to the detriment of feudatories power, so the change to a new and wider system of rule. "In short the *Ständestaat* differed from the feudal system essentially in being more *institutionalized* in its operations, in having an explicit *territorial* reference, and in being dualistic, since it confronted the ruler with the *Stände* and associated the two elements in rule as distinct power".¹⁴ The switch from the *Ständestaat* to the absolute system took place from the 16th to the 17th century. During this period

The strengthening of territorial rule and the absorption of smaller and weaker territories into larger and stronger ones - processes that had gone on throughout the historical career of the *Ständestaat* - led to the formation of a relatively small number of mutually independent states, each defining itself as sovereign and engaged with the others in an inherently open-ended, competitive, and risk-laden power struggle.

In this period we assist to the emergence of the civil society, given to the fact that the bourgeoisie - a bigger and bigger section of the population - was not more considered as estate but as class, together with a capitalistic production. This represented a break with the ancient régime, bringing more attention on the "public sector". These factors brought, from the 18th century, the decline of the absolutism. The 19th finally saw the emergence of the constitutional state.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

1.2 Fundamental Work on the State

After the circumstances and preconditions that allowed the development of the modern state, the it rise spontaneously the main question: what is a state?

In the Hegelian vision "the state is part of a divine strategy, not a merely human arbitrary artifact".¹⁵ For this reason, the state is a rational entity that also fulfill an ethical function: it gives self-consciousness to the individuals. It makes possible the construction of a common identity of citizen with the state. In fact, this identity is a pillar in the Hegelian theory since "The state is actual only when its members have a feeling of their own self-hood and it is stable only when the public and the private ends are identical". But there are other fundamental elements like freedom and subjectivity, that appear only in the modern era and in the modern state as a result of the equilibrium between subjectivity and universality. This is due to the politicization of life, since "political relationship of man becomes the dominant relationship". However, the main point is for Hegel the "freedom of subjectivity", even if his idea is constructed around a monarchic system.

From the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*,¹⁶ Marx developed an idea of state deeply imbued with economic thought. From one side Marx agrees with the division in separate spheres of state and civil society - characterized by egoism and self-interest -, from the other side "he also denies that this separation is immanent or inevitable and that the state can transcend the war of each against all and secure the common interest of all its citizens". Marx sees the state as an irrational abstract sys-

¹⁵ Anvieri S., *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 177. As reported by Avineri, Hegel, in his work *Philosophy of Right* at § 258, says that "Es der Gang Gottes in der Welt, dass der Staat ist" (*Ibidem*, p. 176). All the following parts on Hegel come from the Anveri S. book chapter 9 (*The State - The Consciousness of Freedom*, pp. 176-193).

¹⁶ Marx K., *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, 1843, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, London, 1975. All the following part on Marx come from the chapter 1 of the book Jessop B., *The Capitalist State. Marxist Theories and Methods*, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1982.

tem of political domination which denies the social nature of man and alienates him from genuine involvement in public life". The state elite represents the private interests, the bureaucracy aims to obtain state power for its interest and the civil society is essentially egoist. Therefore, the basis is the interest, and state become in this vision an instrument of class rule. In the instrumentalist thesis of Marx and Engels the state "is an instrument of coercion and administration which can be used for various purposes by whatever interests manage to appropriate it. In continuity with the Hegelian dichotomy of the state sphere and the civil society sphere, there is the role of the state as factor of cohesion in the social formation, since for Engels "the state is necessary to moderate the conflicts between antagonistic classes and to keep them within the bounds of social order". According to, Weber the state, that has a bureaucratic nature,

Is a compulsory organization with a territorial basis. Furthermore, today, the use of force is regarded as legitimate only so far as it is either permitted by the state or prescribed by it... The claim of the modern state to monopolize the use of force is as essential to it as its character of compulsory jurisdiction and of continuous operation¹⁷.

The main features are the organized violence to allow the domination of a group of people over the others. This is possible thanks to a certain grade of legal-rational legitimacy, for this reason it tends to maximize rationality.

In an attempt to give a general definition, Tilly argues that

An organization which controls the population occupying a definite territory is a state insofar as (1) it is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory; (2) it is autonomous; (3) it is centralized; and (4) its divisions are formally with one another.¹⁸

¹⁷ Poggi G., *Weber. A Short Introduction*, Polity Press, 2006, p. 110.

¹⁸ Tilly C., "Reflections on the history of European state-making", in *The formation of national states in Western Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975, p. 70.

Instead, according to Jordan it is "a system of relationships which defines the territory and membership of a community, regulates its internal affairs, conducts relations with other states and provides it with identity and cohesion"¹⁹. While the World Bank in its 1997 *World Development Report*, claims instead that the 'state' is to be taken to be more or less the equivalent of 'government'.²⁰

A concept that cannot be avoided describing the state is *power*. Poggi starts its book *The State*²¹ introducing the concept of power. He explains that the state "is a phenomenon principally and emphatically located within the sphere of political power".²²

For Hegel, who thinks to a constitutional monarchy, there are different kind of power

- (a) the power to determine and establish the universal - the Legislature;
- (b) the power to subsume single cases and spheres of particularity under the universal - the Executive;
- (c) the power of subjectivity, as the will with the power of ultimate decision - the Crown.²³

For Marx and Engels the state is instead a public power "that develops at a certain stage in the social division of labour and that involves the emergence of a distinct system of government which is separated from the immediate control of the people

¹⁹ Jordan B., *The State. Authority and Autonomy*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1985, p. 1.

²⁰ The World Bank, *World Development Report 1997, The State in a Changing World*, Washington DC, The World Bank, 1997, p. 1.

²¹ Poggi G., *The State. Its Nature, Development and Prospects*, Polity Press, 1990, pp. 3-18.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²³ See, Anvieri S., p. 186.

over whom it exercises authority. A degree of economic surplus is needed to support this 'public power' and its realization of socially necessary and/or class functions".²⁴

For Weber there are three types of power that differ "according to the nature of the resources in question - respectively, means of coercion in the case of politico-military power, means of production in the case of economic power, means of interpretation in the case of a third power form, which we may call ideological."²⁵

The idea of state as political power is corroborated by the practice of the role of coercion. States cannot exist without a police force or any armed forces.²⁶ In this way, the political power of the state consists in the monopoly of violence. This power is expressed through the issue of command and the legitimacy²⁷ that is "expressed in people's willingness to comply with decisions made by the state apparatus, and, if necessary, to risk their lives defending the common territory of the state"²⁸. Power is also a central element of the instrumentalist theory, that employs the power structure research, "which views the organized control, possession, and ownership of key resources (wealth, status, force and knowledge) as the basis for exercising power in any society".²⁹

²⁴ See, Jessop B., p. 21.

²⁵ See, Poggi G., 2006, p. 43.

²⁶ Berger P., *Invitation to Sociology*, Doubleday, New York, 1963, p. 69.

²⁷ See, Poggi G., 1990, p. 7.

²⁸ Barrow C. W., *Critical Theories of the State. Marxist, Neo-Marxist, Post-Marxist*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, 25.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

In order to maintain its legitimacy, a state (or who is in charge to rule it) needs sovereignty, since "the state is a sovereign entity"³⁰. In this way, the state

is an abstraction, a conceptual ordering of the locus and extent of sovereign authority. As such, it requires government of some form to transform the abstraction called state into the actual exercise of sovereign authority. What makes state forms of government unique is that they are the sole exerciser of sovereignty within the state's territory [...]. Subordinate governments may exist, as in a federal system, but they remain subordinate to the authority of the central government. When more than one government claims sovereign authority, the state either does not exist or is in a condition of civil war.³¹

1.3 International Law

Against the fragmentation of the concept of state, the development of international law, especially in the XX century, led to the notion of a more "universalized" concept of state. During the past century the state structure of the whole world changed on a massive scale following two world wars, the end of the last empires, the end of the decolonization and the end of the cold war with its wake on the XXI century. The states that constitute the present world are 206³², and the concept of *terrae nullius* is no more relevant³³. In fact, the existence of the *terrae nullis* would legitimize milita-

³⁰ Nelson R. B., *The Making of the Modern State. A Theoretical Evolution*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006, p. 7.

³¹ Ibidem, pp. 7-8.

³² That United Nations classified in three group on the basis of the status of their membership on the Organization: 193 member states,[1] two observer states, and 11 other states. (Press Release ORG/1469 3 July 2006, "United Nations Member States", United Nations).

³³ Shaw M. N., *International Law*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 177.

ry intervention of other states to occupy a certain area without any control. To make the international law fully applicable it is necessary that every territory is under the control of an authority. This is the reason that make easier the birth of new states than the complete extinction of failed states.

Strayer affirms that "a man can lead a reasonably full life without a family, a fixed local residence, or a religious affiliation, but if he is stateless he is nothing. He has no rights, no security, and little opportunity for a useful career. There is no salvation on earth outside the framework of an organized state".³⁴ In this sense, the international system is based on the fact that every human being need to under the authority of a state, since there is not a central unified power.

These factors delineate the reason why the state is considered the main actor of the international law. The Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States, 1933, assumes that the states should have "(a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with other states". So, a state needs the presence of one or more individuals (governors) that expect to regulate the lives of the other individuals (ruled), permanently settled in a territory delimited by boundaries, and from which they manage to be obeyed (effectivness) without depend from other States (independency).³⁵

The level of effectivness indicates the capability to maintain the public order and a sufficient grade of coexistence between the ruled. However, it seems that this requirement of effectivness works less strictly related to a body that strive for become a state for the first time than to what is called a failed state. A failed state is an entity that, despite having represented a state in the past, it does not have an effective government anymore. This can be given to a civil war or an external militar intervention. The continuity of failed states is justified assuming that to accept the extinction of a

³⁴ Strayer J. R., *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 3.

³⁵ Focarelli C., *Diritto Internazionale I. Il sistema degli stati e i valori comuni dell'umanità*, CEDAM, 2012, pp. 5-8.

state it would create a territory *nullius* susceptible to occupation and appropriation from other states. This would violate the principle of self-determination.

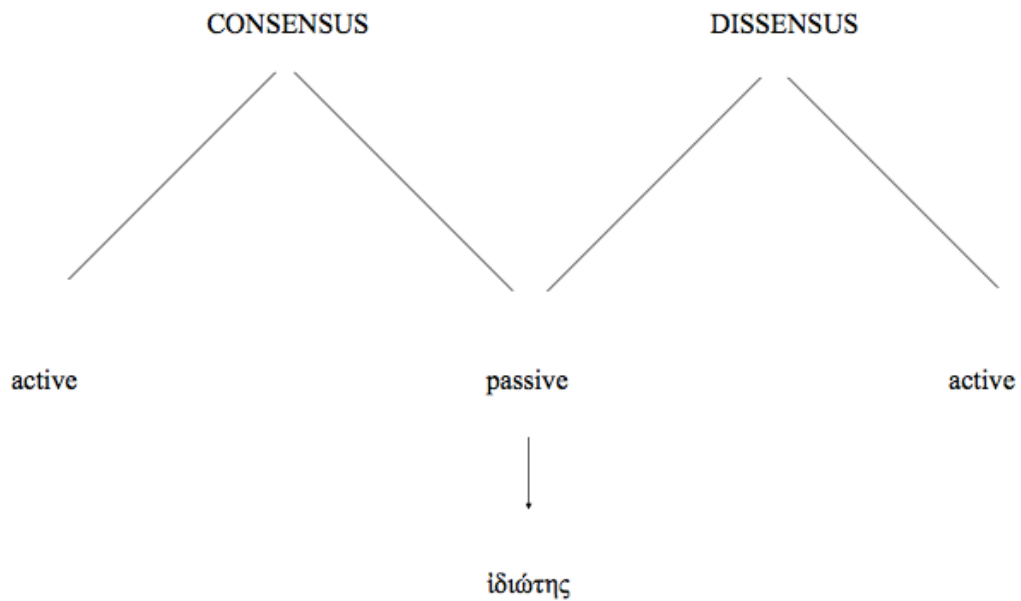
This principle can be the right of a single member, of the population as a community or of the state to the non-interference on his relations with other states. The self-determination became synonym of decolonization and the population that had this right has been not only incentivized to decolonize, but in a certain measure they have been forced to become state, that is to assume the kind of political organization that is the european state.³⁶

1.4 State as historical construction

In the light of all these different perspective, it could finally be said that a modern state is the political form of government that, at a certain point in history, the humankind chosen in order to regulate (primarily) all kind of relationships: political, commercial, economical, familiar, etc. It is mostly based on the compromise between private and public, freedom and restriction. This one is concretized in the formulas *have to do* and not *have to do*, which rule most of the citizens life. In addition to this, whatever is the shape of the state, his power is based on the consensus of the community that shapes the state. The consensus of the citizen gives legitimacy to power, violence, currency, law. For example, in Hegel's view "law is not an external imposition, which ha subsequently to be legitimized in one way or another, but an expression of the individual's will"³⁷. Nevertheless, this consensus can be active or passive, that comes from inaction. If the consensus can be both active and passive, the dissensus can just be active because if passive it goes on the same passive behavior of the passive. The passive are those that were defined *idiotes* in ancient greek society and that corroborate the actual system with their passivity.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ See, Anvieri S., 178.



However, this definition is, evidently, compromised by contingency factors. This is - to intend it in a Foucauldian way - a discourse that vehicles a certain view of the world.. The value of the discourse is not in their truth but in their efficacy, establishing precise interpretative concepts. So it is possible, with a certain amount of intellectual honesty, to deconstruct this discourse to unmask its point of view.

It could be finally said that modern state is the political form of government that, at a certain point in the history, a precise group of communities permanently settled in a precise geographic area - for example Weber considers the state to be one manifestation among others of a wider historical particularity of the West, particularly evident in modernity³⁸ - chosen for the above-mentioned reasons. This form of government has been used as model, in some cases, or imposed in different way, as we will see in the next chapter, without considering the necessary conditions nor the deep differences between the different human societies.

³⁸ See, Poggi G., 2006, p. 105.

II. STATE FORMATION IN MIDDLE EAST AND THE CAUSES OF ITS INSTABILITY

In the previous chapter we saw the condition that brought the development of the state. To make it clear, once again,

The historical particularity of the state stems from two considerations. First, the earliest historical appearances of the state were not sudden events, but were the result of a complex and original elaboration of previous political arrangements, which have left their own imprint on the state itself. Two of these arrangements, according to Weber, were themselves peculiar to the late-medieval, early modern phase of European history: the distinctive, 'Western' variant of feudalism (a phenomenon which also appears elsewhere), and the so-called *Stéindestaat* or 'polity of the estates', which is, itself, exclusively a European phenomenon³⁹.

If we consider the state a typically western phenomenon, the next question is: How the state has been developed in the Middle East?. This is a central point of this work. In order to understand if ISIS is a state, we need not only to understand what *state* means, but also what state means in the precise area of the Middle East.

During the twentieth century the elites of states in this area have "have faced varying degrees of difficulty in building exclusive monopolies of coercive authority and control largely because they have been unsuccessful in developing the forms of popular legitimacy necessary to support their rule".⁴⁰ Although they have large bureaucracies and armies they are often weak in collecting taxes, winning wars or exercise a

³⁹ See, Poggi G., 2006, p. 105.

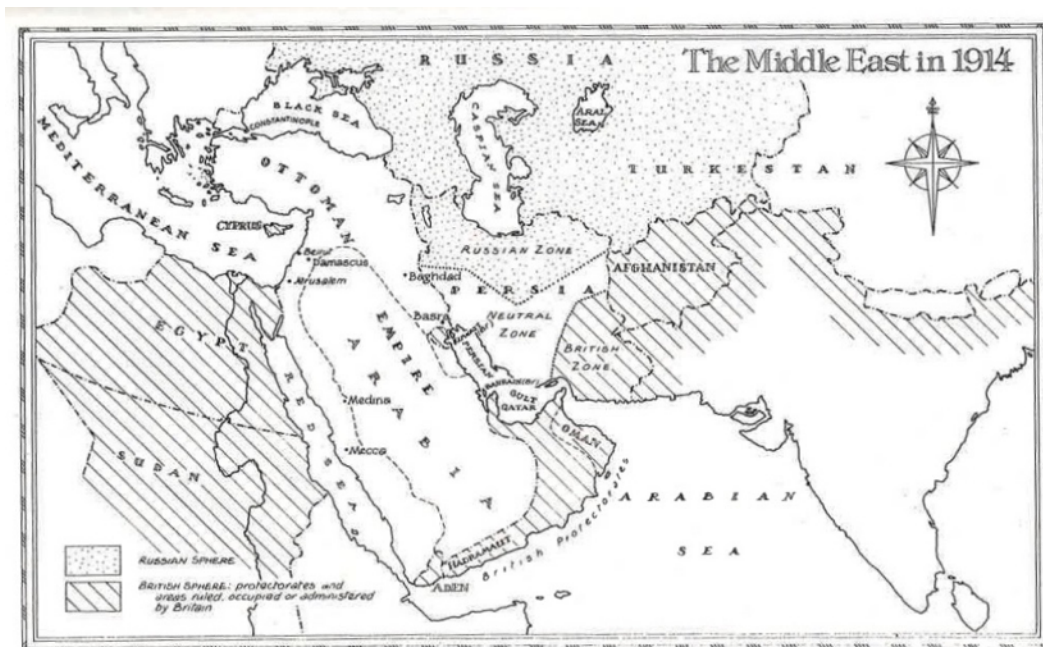
⁴⁰ Khoury P. S., Kostiner J. (Edited by), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, University of California Press, 1990, p. 3.

real hegemonic power. Nor do they have an ideological apparatus that can bring the state from the mere use of coercion into the moral and intellectual sphere.⁴¹

Thus, without a proper spacial contextualization it is not possible to develop a clear discourse. However, there are many other features and elements that further complicate the understanding of this concept.

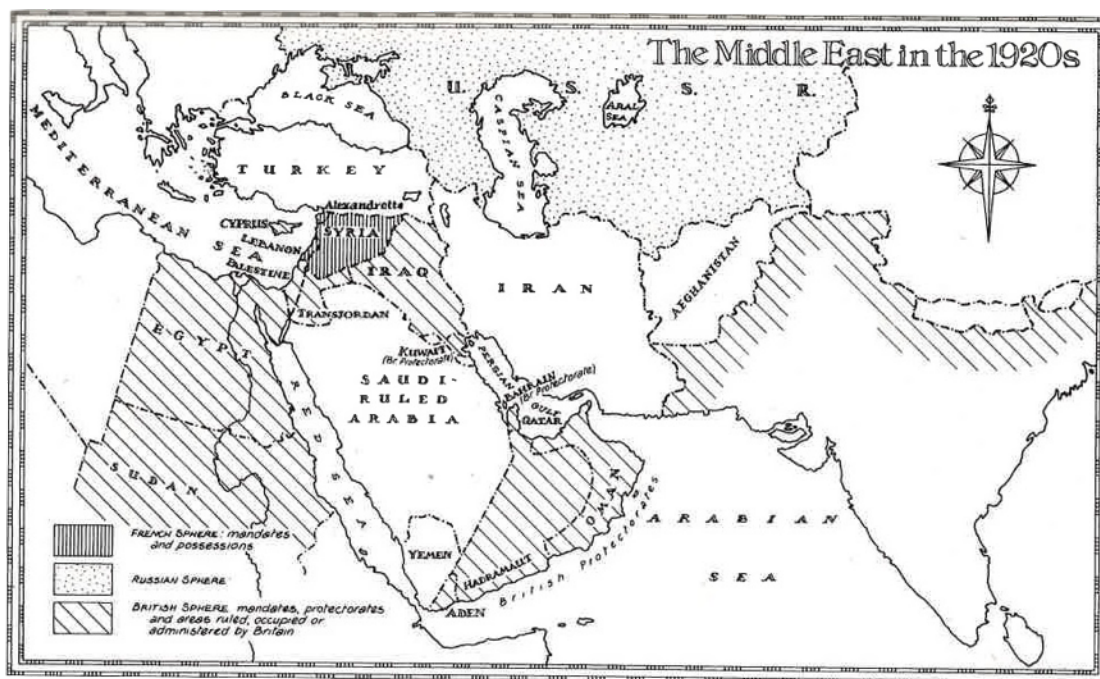
2.1 A historical reading

In order to understand the present conditions of the subjects that compose the Middle East, the prerequisite is to know the circumstances that led to their formation. As we can see from the map below the shape of this area was completely different at the dawn of the First World War.⁴²



⁴¹ See, Ayubi N. N., 2009, p. xi.

⁴² The two maps below are from the book Fromkin D., *A Peace to End All Peace*, Kolt Paperback, 2009, pp. 13/19.



David Fromkin opens his book claiming that "the Middle East, as we know it from today's headlines, emerged from decision made by the Allies during and after the First World War".⁴³ Indeed, European powers played a considerable role in the formation of the present Middle East. However, since the world continuously changes and so does the human mindset, also the words used to describe places or ideas progressively change. For these reasons, it is necessary with a conceptual clarification. A useful concept in this discourse is that of Near East, that Yapp introduces in his book *The Near East since the First World War* and that he defines it as "the region west of the Iranian frontier and could be distinguished from the Far East, composed by China and Japan and the Middle East, comprising the area which intervened between the Near and the East"⁴⁴. Concretely, this term was used to represent the area of the Ottoman Empire until the First World War, after which it was assim-

⁴³ See, Fromkin D., p. 7.

⁴⁴ Yapp M. E., *The Near East since the First World War. A History to 1995*, Pearson Education Limited, 1996, p. 1.

lated into the Middle East concept that "began to be used to include the Arab states that emerged from the Ottoman Empire"⁴⁵.

2.1.1 The state formation in the Middle East

The Ottoman Empire arise in the XIV century in north-western Anatolia, and in the 1650 it occupied parts of three continents.⁴⁶

However, in the XIX century the Empire was divided by the struggle between its center and periphery - intensified by the growing nationalism. The modernization forces were often associated with "Europeanization" and, consequently, its relationship with the European powers⁴⁷.

After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Ottoman Empire became fully integrated into the struggle for power in Europe. This makes late Ottoman history incomprehensible in isolation from European history. The story of European colonialism, of Anglo-Russian strategic rivalry, of the Austrian quest for stability—all hold vital keys to understanding Ottoman policy in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸

Britain and Russia were in fact occupied by "the Great Game", a strategic battle to control the Middle East and central Asia. Britain wanted to preserve the passage to India, of which Queen Victoria was Empress since 1877. While, the Russians desired to expand their territories to the south and the east "to fill out an entire conti-

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ Imber C., *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650. The Structure of Power*, Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 1-8.

⁴⁷ Hanioglu M. S., *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 203-211.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

ment from ocean to ocean"⁴⁹. Furthermore, slowly, the financial involvement of other European powers rose increasingly.

In 1878 the Ottoman Empire suffered a disastrous defeat in the Russo-Ottoman war. After the Berlin Congress of the same year, "from Iran to Montenegro, states gained territory at the Ottoman expense"⁵⁰.



(Map of the Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire after the Berlin congress of the 1878⁵¹)

After 1878, for various reasons like the annexation of Cyprus and the invasion of Ottoman Egypt, the relationship between the Empire and Britain started to break down.⁵² In this context Germany started to play an even more important role, helped by the development of the railroads and their strategic function on the basis of the

⁴⁹ See, Fromkin D., p. 29.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

⁵¹ See, Hanioglu M. S., p. 122.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 35

ideas of Mackinder⁵³. In 1903 Germany started the creation of the Baghdad Railway that should have linked Berlin to Baghdad and Baghdad to Basra. This obviously caused concerns for Britain, France and Russia, because "the Germans *were* trying to support the Sultan, perceiving him as their most indispensable ally in an increasingly hostile international environment".⁵⁴

As Fromkin noticed

There were not many directions in which they could look. Much of the surface of the globe was already taken: a quarter by the British Empire and a sixth by the Russian Empire. The Western hemisphere fell within the ambit of the Monroe Doctrine and thus was shielded by the United States. The Middle East was the only vulnerable region left. There were rumours of French ambitions in Syria; of Italian and Russian designs further north; and of rival Greek, Bulgarian, and Austrian claims to the west".⁵⁵

The outbreak of the war was linked in some way with the fate of the Ottoman Empire. European powers during all the war continued to prematurely split the remains of still existing the Empire. The main strategy was the *divide et impera*. In 1915 the British High Commissioner in Egypt McMahon started a correspondence with the Sharif of Mecca Hussein bin Ali, member of the Hashemite family which origins starts from Hashim, great-grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad⁵⁶. In his letters McMahon hinted an intent to agree with the creation independent Arab State, while he was "deliberately trying to mislead the sharif"⁵⁷, fomenting in this way the nationalist sentiment of the periphery of the Empire and the jihad. At the same time,

⁵³ Fromkin D., 2009, p 31.

⁵⁴ McMeekin S., *The Berlin-Bagdad Express. The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 48.

⁵⁵ Fromkin D., 2009, pp. 45-46.

⁵⁶ See, Yapp M. E., 1996, p. 71.

⁵⁷ Barr J., *A Line in the Sand. The Anglo-French Struggle for the Middle East, 1914-1948*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2013, p. 20.

Britain had a relationship with other Arabian chiefs, even with Hussein's rival, the wahhabi Ibn Saud.⁵⁸

Simultaneously, in 1916 Britain and France signed the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement that divided the area promised to Hussein bin Ali in two parts. The present Syria and Lebanon was given to France, and Iraq and Jordan to France,⁵⁹ while the Holy Places should be placed under an international administration⁶⁰. The Agreement, after revealed by the Bolsheviks⁶¹, caused disappointment among Arabs, since Hussein proclaimed the Arab Revolt and proclaimed himself the King of the Arabs⁶².

A third event that contributed to a further fragmentation was the Balfour Declaration of 1917. It consisted of a document written by the Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Walter Rothschild that consented the creation of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.⁶³ This was not mentioned in the Sykes-Picot Agreement or in the relationship with Hussein.

In order to support territorial claim of Italy in the Empire, since it entered the war "in return for British and French promises of territorial gain that eventually included a share in the partition of the Ottoman Empire"⁶⁴, it were signed in the 1917 the Agreement of St Jean de Maureienne, that never came into effect as consequence of the Russian Revolution.

With the end of the war, the winners imposed their will following "a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable gov-

⁵⁸ See, Fromkin D., 2009, p. 183.

⁵⁹ See, Barr J, p. 26.

⁶⁰ See, Fromkin D., 2009, p. 286.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 344.

⁶² *Ibidem*, pp. 222-223.

⁶³ Gelvin J. L., *Il Conflitto israelo-palestinese. Cent'anni di guerra*, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 2007, p. 105.

⁶⁴ See, Fromkin D., 2009, p. 389.

ernment whose title is to be determined"⁶⁵. However, imperialism emerged again precisely by these principles. In fact, the article 22 of the The Covenant of the League of Nations, created on the basis of the XIV point from the Wilson statement⁶⁶, affirmed that

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant. [...] The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.⁶⁷

With a specific reference to the territory of the Ottoman Empire

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.

⁶⁵ President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, 8 January, 1918, The Avalon Project (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp).

⁶⁶ See, Gelvin, 2007, ' . 112.

⁶⁷ *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, The Avalon Project (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp)

San Remo Conference of 1920, officialized in Treaty of Sèvres⁶⁸, reclaimed what was decided in the precedent agreement of Sykes-Picot and St Jean de Maurienne. This caused the resentment among the Arab population⁶⁹.

In this period the Middle East as we know today were created, with states that did not exist before - or at least not in these forms - and often without homogeneity. Iraq, "an old name for southern Mesopotamia"⁷⁰, politically "consisted of the three Ottoman *vilayets* (provinces) of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra"⁷¹, administrated separately and without a natural capital. It was ruled by Faysal of the Hashemite family. 80% of the population was Arab speaking, 15% Kurdish and the rest Turkoman and Persian; 90% was Muslims, divided between Shias and Sunnis, with an important Jewish community; 80% "of the cultivators accepted a tribal social structure but only about 10 per cent of the total population lived in pure nomads. The remaining 20 per cent of the population lived in towns".⁷²

Transjordan, the present Jordan, "had no historical unity under the Ottomans, consisting in the early nineteenth century of three districts connected with Palestine and Syria",⁷³ but it was relatively homogeneous. Both the nomadic and the settled population were mainly Arab and tribally organized.⁷⁴ Under the rule of Amir Abdullah, second son of the Sharif Husayn, gave political unity to the state and the Hashemite family still rule the country.

⁶⁸ See, Fromkin, p. 403.

⁶⁹ Fieldhouse D. K., *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914–1958*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 69-70

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

⁷² Yapp M. E., *The Near East Since the First World War. A History to 1995*, Pearson Education Limited, 1992, p. 69.

⁷³ See, Fieldhouse D. K., p. 220.

⁷⁴ See, Yapp M. E, p. 140.

In Syria, where Faysal were initially declared King of the United Syrian Kingdom (that included also Palestine and Lebanon)⁷⁵, almost 80% of the population was rural; "between the 10 and the 15 percent of were bedouin who carried on pastoral activities in the east. [...] Eighty-five per cent of the population was Muslim, four-fifths Sunnis the remainder Shias, consisting of Druzes, Isma'ilis and 'Alawis or Nusayris, the last named group being much the largest Shia sect comprising nearly 12 per cent of the population was Christian"⁷⁶.

Lebanon "had never been a state or even a defined geographical region"⁷⁷, and it was mainly composed by different tribes. In 1914 four fifths of the population, of 400,000 people, were Christians, of which 60% Maronites, and one-fifth were Muslims. The Maronites, "the only community in the region which could be trusted to promote French interest",⁷⁸ demanded an increase of their territories. This caused the resentment of the Sunni Muslims for the separation from Syria, and also the rapid raising of the Muslim population given the high rate of birth.⁷⁹

McMeekin, at the end of his book, wonders how would have been this area if the Empire had not participated to the war, or if European powers had not interfered so much with its development. Either way, even if the *if play* cannot be won by history, he underline a central argument for our discourse. This brief historical presentation was aimed to stress the accent on the fact that "the state that emerged after empire were largely inherited by post-colonial elites, a result of imperial, not indigenous, agency".⁸⁰ To be more clear, what has been said it is the historical basis for some elements that will be central in our debate. It is evident that the state weakness which

⁷⁵ See, Fieldhouse D. K., p. 253.

⁷⁶ See, Yapp M. E., pp. 85-86.

⁷⁷ See, Fieldhouse D. K., p 304.

⁷⁸ See, Yapp M. E., pp. 85.

⁷⁹ See, Yapp, 1995, pp. 104-106.

⁸⁰ Cumming S. N., Hinnebusch R. (Edited by), *Sovereignty After Empire. Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia*, Edinbourg University Press, 2012, p. 4.

characterize the Middle East has its roots in when and how these states has been created, with pressure or imposition of external powers. The lack of legitimacy of which many states suffers is related to the fact that the ruling classes are often alien and out of touch with the local societies. This is the case of Jordan o Syria in which the Hashemite family from Hajj was putted on the leadership.

2.1.2 The state development in the Middle East

After the presentation of the circumstances that led to the creation of the modern state in the Middle East, we need to present some important historical events of the post-war period that relates, directly or indirectly, with the birth of the Islamic State.

One of the paramount issues affecting the stability of the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli conflict⁸¹. The birth of Israel, declared in 1948, changed the demographic structure of the area. In fact, Israel's population increased from about 900,000 in 1948 to 3 million in 1971. At the same time, this caused the emigration of about 1 million Palestinians to the neighboring countries as refugees. The war of 1948/1949 showed the superiority of Israel and the unpreparedness of the various Arab armies⁸², giving a strong boost to Arab nationalism.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt in 1956 led to a new phase of the war. This event caused the attacked Israel, which still showed its militar superiority, in agreement with the Anglo-French forces. However, contrary to Israel, they remained isolated on the international stage. In this way, the Franco-British political

⁸¹ The information about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are taken from Gelvin J. L., *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, Cambridge University Press, 2014; Di Nolfo E., *Storia delle relazioni internazionali. Dal 1918 ai giorni nostri*, Laterza, 2008.

⁸² Pappe L., *The Ethinc Cleasing of Palestine*, Oneworld, 2006, p. 238.

defeat at Suez in 1956 gave Nasser's Egypt a growing regional weight extending the effectiveness of Egyptian pan-Arabism. Its influence further grew after the independence of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. However, Nasserism was opposed by conservative regimes because of the elements linked to nationalist and secular socialism. These aspects also prevented a coalition with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was proved to be one of the elements that gave rise to Islamic fundamentalism. Nasser also had to contend his influence with that of the Baath Party (Party of the Resurrection) in Syria and Iraq. The Soviet Union showed itself immediately as an ally of Arab nationalism, providing weapons to Arab radicals. To prevent the risks of Nasser's influence, in 1961 the British granted full independence to Kuwait and thereafter abandoned their positions in the Persian Gulf.

In a few years the United States replaced the French and British. They got involved in the area by the Truman Doctrine in 1947, which included the provision of economic aid to Greece and Turkey in place of the English. The Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 extended the aid to all Middle Eastern states in difficulty, as well as those threatened by communism. In this new context, Arab nationalism came to be associated with international communism.⁸³

In 1973, the Arab-Israeli conflict was brought into the international scene with the Yom Kippur War. In this context, Egypt (now under the leadership of Sadat) and Syria attacked Israel by surprise. Israel that previously showed its superiority during the Six Day War of 1967 expanding its territories at the expense of the two states and the Palestinian territory. The situation in the Middle East had seen several changes from the Suez Crisis: the *coup d'état* by Colonel Gaddafi in Libya, and by Jafar al-Nimeiri in Sudan. The Baath party opened the way to power to Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and to Hafez al-Assad in Syria. This turned the political geography of the whole area into an anti-Israeli position. In addition, the coordinated actions of the Palestinians by the PLO had become ever more resolute and dangerous.

⁸³ See, Yapp M. E., p. 415.

In 1979, the Iranian revolution overthrew Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (in power since 1941), which led to the creation of the Islamic Republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The loss of an ally like Reza Pahlavi was a severe blow to US influence in the region. The Khomeini revolution represented a destabilizing element because it could become a dangerous example for other Islamic communities, especially in countries ruled by self-proclaimed secular parties and in those countries with Shiite minorities, such as Iraq. The latter, led by Saddam Hussein, was engaged in a war with Iran between 1980 and 1989, for territorial issues and regional hegemony. The war was infamous for the episode of the use of chemical weapons by Iraq. Despite all the efforts and losses, it ended in a situation of *status quo ante bellum*.

In 1990, Iraqi troops occupied the whole territory of Kuwait, which territories were repeatedly claimed by Saddam. In addition, the aid received by the Soviets during the war against Iran, and positive relations with the US left Saddam to assume that he was able to act in a favorable international context. In the post World War I period, Iraq often claimed that Kuwait was separated from it by the 1899 agreement, and officially by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. This event fits perfectly into the revivalism of pan-arabism rhetoric and a refusal of borders imposed by the British and French. This led to an international intervention and Iraq was subjected to heavy penalties. UNSCOM was created to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire terms, and an embargo was imposed on Iraqi businesses. In 1996, Iraq attacked the Kurdish minority in the country, which had to suffer the American retaliation. Relations between the two countries remained very tense, and the Anglo-American air force bombed different areas in Iraq in 1999.

In 2003 America invaded Iraq. According to White House strategists, a free Iraq would have provided an example that could have reshaped the Middle Eastern politics. To support its vision, president Bush emphasized the danger of Islamic terrorism and the Member accused of protecting him. Osama and associates have risen well to the strategic threat ranking. A perfect substitute for the Soviet Union. That's why the

second Bush war on terror will be long, maybe since the Cold War. America has finally found the Enemy sottrattole by Gorbachev. But as the Soviet empire was located in time and space, Islamic terrorism is potentially infinite and global. Iraq invaded by the Americans is not the promised land for an experiment in neo-Jeffersonian democracy. Meanwhile, this state exists only on paper. In fact Iraq appears as a set of territories that express loyalty and different interests, many of which are subject to external appetites. Already reconstruct a semblance of national state will be a difficult task. Manage it from a military protectorate seems almost impossible. Bush started the war without having local allies with which to build together the post-Saddam. Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds have no common goals for the war and are divided by solid internecine rivalries.

Since the end of 2010 the Middle East and North Africa have been experienced a series of revolts known as the "Arab Spring". The various uprisings have had different results in the countries crossed by the protests against the regimes. In Tunisia there is a difficult transition to democracy, the military in Egypt have recovered power after a brief period of the Muslim Brotherhood government, and Libya, Yemen and Syria are raged by war. These events have profoundly marked the present situation Middle Eastern states, since the power vacuum left by the fall of Saddam Hussein, and the civil war in Syria have opened the way for such phenomena as the advance of the Islamic State.

One again, it is important to clearly affirm that the aim of this historical excursus is directed to demonstrate the basis of the element of our debate. In the Cold War period until our days, the state weakness, resulting from the modality of the state formation itself, was exacerbated. The lack of legitimacy has been reinforced by the externality of the leadership as in Syria, where the Assad family is part of a minority group. At the same time, in many states this leadership had to compromise, as we will see, with tribal and non-state forces, widespread in the Middle East.

In add to this, the political debate has been influenced by the events of the twentieth century: the anti-colonial rhetoric towards the post-Ottoman Empire state system,

the hate of Arab population against Israel as a colonial entity aided by foreign powers, the anti-American rhetoric, perceived as an entity capable of destabilizing entire countries to meet their own interests. These elements have become fundamental in the movements of Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, and in the rhetoric of the non-state groups.

2.2 Economical politic - Rentierism

Except the sociological and cultural aspects, there are other aspect more "geographical" and "physical" that contribute to the *specificness* of this area. An element that affects the politic and, as a reflection, the society is the huge presence of oil-fields. Even if it is not a particularity of just this area, it brought to the development in the Middle East of what are called Rentier state, and again, even if they are not exclusive of this area, they are largely associated with Arab states. Levins writes:⁸⁴

In order for a particular economy or state to qualify as “rentier,” rent should predominate its sources of income and should be externally derived. Internal rent essentially represents merely a situation of domestic payment transfers. Furthermore, in a rentier state, only a few groups are engaged in the generation of rent; the majority merely distributes or receives it. Therefore, a small portion of society generates the majority of the wealth; the remainder being only engaged in the distribution and utilization of the wealth created⁸⁵.

⁸⁴ Chalrlotte Levins, “The Rentier State and the Survival of Arab Absolute Monarchies”, *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion*, 14 (1), 2012, pp. 388-423.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 390.

The countries that export oil has been classified⁸⁶ in five different groups: mature democracies; "factional" democracies; paternalistic autocracies; modernizing autocracies, and predatory autocracies. Gulf nations are classified as paternalistic autocracies. In this kind of system the government benefits from the economic power, developing the idea that wealth come not from work but from certain external conditions. This way to rule is also linked in some ways to the concept of tribe, since in those groups the loyalty is obtained by spreading benefits. Similarly, the government of the rentier state acts in the same way spreading external rent.

According to Luciani⁸⁷, the oil in the Middle East played an important role in shaping the boundaries and allowing the existence of independent states in this region, together with the influence and the interests of external powers. He depicts rentier states as a particular form of state in which society does not have the function that it has in the normal (production) states. This is a direct consequence of the absence of the fiscal function of the state, since they do not need to tax while just distributing the resources obtained. "The state is viewed as the property of the ruler, and the distributive function, which is played in order to maintain a desired balance in the segmented society, is understood as the essential function of government."⁸⁸ It does not need legitimacy and democratic representation while their strength lies in the financial independence from society.

On the contrary, it has been noticed⁸⁹ that countries as Iraq, Iran and Libya suffered (and are still suffering) serious crisis despite the oil revenue. In this direction,

⁸⁶ Eifert B., Gelb A., Tallroth N. B., *The Political Economy of Fiscal Policy and Economic Management in Oil-Exporting Countries*, The World Bank, Africa Regional Office, Office of the Chief Economist, October 2002, p. 5.

⁸⁷ Luciani G., *Oil and political economy in the international relations of the Middle East*, in Fawcett L. (Edited by), *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 103-126.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 115.

⁸⁹ Hollo J. Z., *Rethinking Rentier State Theory: Qatar and the Rise of Smart Money*, *Fair Observer*, 11 October 2013, (http://www.fairobserver.com/region/middle_east_north_africa/rethinking-rentier-state-theory-qatar-rise-smart-money/#sthash.E9j3ha9G.dpuf).

oil is seen as a double edged sword since it can catalyze opposition and protests if revenues are not *equally* distributed⁹⁰. However, it is indisputable that oil is a tool in the hand of the ruling class, which Gulf monarchies have been able to use to consolidate their position in both internal and external politics.

2.3 Indentity Politics

Legitimacy is a central element in the Middle Eastern political debate, as an indicator of the presence of certain instability factors. Yapp assumes, about the legitimacy debate in the Middle East, that on the one hand has been said that states, regimes, governments and leaders have no authority; on the other hand, he assumes that the power of the institution, like the power that derives from the army, give them authority⁹¹. Gelvin identifies different factors that contributed to the emergence of authoritarian governments in Middle Eastern states. First of all, "authoritarian structures were inscribed into the DNA" of most of these states. He divides the states into those who emerged during the interwar period (Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia) in which military power had a central role; then there are those that maintained the structures of the colonial period (Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE and Lebanon); finally there are the post-colonial republics (Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen). Other factors that we have already seen are the role of the western powers, for which democracy was not a priority in the achievement of their interests, and the oil. The last one is the fact that economical development has been identified with social justice, and power has been concentrated in the government has instrument to guide the economic development.

⁹⁰ Okruhlik G., *Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of Opposition: The Political Economy of Oil States*, in *Comparative Politics*, April 1999, pp. 295-315.

⁹¹ See, Yapp M. E., pp. 35-37.

However, many challenges to the stability of state systems in the Middle East come from identity politics⁹². Burke defines the concept of identity "as a relation between the person and social structure".⁹³ According to him, the process of identification occurs in a double sense, since it can be inclusive in the case of identification with others or exclusive in the case of identification from others.

In a certain way, there is a parallel with the concept of *Orientalism* by Edward Said⁹⁴ in which East and West can be seen as two cultural constructions, something that produces a spatialization of the otherness. The East becomes an ideal space (in the ethnological sense of space of ideas) of what the West is not, and by defining the characteristics of the East, the West defines in turn its identity. The East is a cultural construct, and not an entity given once and for all. As a mirror symmetry, this spatialization of the otherness crystallizes the identity of the West.

This is to show that identity is a powerful factor that characterizes society and can be used by different actors. Halliday defines three forms of identity for an Arab: religious, pan-Arab and local⁹⁵. He also introduces the concepts of *qawmi* (national or pan-Arab) and *qutri* (local). This tripartition is reinforced by a symmetrical distinction made by Zubaida when he writes about Islam and nationalism. He defines "three overlapping bases for conceiving the political unit in the Middle East: (1) the territorial nation-state, such as Egypt, Iraq or Turkey; (2) pan-Arab nationalism (for the Arabs); and (3) Islam".⁹⁶

We are going to analyze some of the major groups and ideologies that strengthen the sense of identity and fragment in this way fragment the society.

⁹² Telhami S., Barnett M. N. (Edited by), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 1.

⁹³ Freese L., Burke P. J., *Persons, Identities, and Social Interaction*, in Markovsky B., et al. (Edited by) *Advances in Group Processes*, Vol. 11, JAI Press, pp. 1-24.

⁹⁴ Said E. W., *Orientalism*, Vintage Book, 1978.

⁹⁵ Halliday F., *The Middle East in International Relations. Power, Politics and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 210.

⁹⁶ Zubaida S., *Beyond Islam, A New Understanding of the Middle East*, IB Tauris, 2011 p. 176.

2.3.1 Tribes

The first of these groups are tribes, an integral part in Middle Eastern societies. We are here in the local (*qutri*) dimension opposed to the *qawmi* (*qawmiyya*), or better in the *qabaliyya* (tribalism)⁹⁷. Tapper defines a tribe as a "localized group in which kinship is the dominant idiom of organization, and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct"⁹⁸. Caton reports⁹⁹ that, according to Marx, family and tribes constitute the forms that characterize society in the earliest stage of human history, and the tribe is the form in which the state first emerge. In fact, tribes are not a specific phenomenon of the Middle East, but on the contrary are spread in different parts of the world. Nevertheless, the tribes of this area are characterized by some particularities. For example, Tibi underlines that Middle Eastern tribes are substantially different from African ones, because Arab tribes are not ethnically divergent¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, they were resistant to assimilation into wider kind of communities that transcended the tribal group.

With the raising of Islam and the development of the concept of *umma*, tribes had inevitably to come in contact with this new phenomenon. However, what happened in this phase was not the progressive elimination of these groups, but instead their subordination and a sort of collaboration of the various tribes with Muhammad in what is called *pax Islamica*.¹⁰¹

These groups were not strictly linked to nomadism since the majority were sedentary and involved in cultivation. They guaranteed the respect of the social life rules

⁹⁷ Tibi B., *The Simultaneity of the Unsimultaneous: Old Tribes and Imposed Nation-States in the Modern Middle East*, in in Khoury P. S., Kostiner J. (Edited by), p. 138.

⁹⁸ Tapper R., *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, London, 1983, p. 6-9.

⁹⁹ Caton C. S., *Anthropological Theories of Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East: Ideology and the Semiotics of Power*, in Khoury P. S., Kostiner J. (Edited by), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, University of California Press, 1990, pp. 74-104.

¹⁰⁰ See, Tibi B., p. 131.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, pp. 127-152.

and, therefore, their role was undermined by the state¹⁰². In his essay, Caton, through the word of Ibn Khaldun¹⁰³, notes¹⁰⁴ a specific aspect in the exercise of power in tribes. In fact, the leader has not the power to oblige the others to execute his will. Rather, the leadership is based on group spirit and feeling.

Furthermore, tribal societies represent a particularity in the western view of the modern state. They "have not conformed to models of state formation as known in the West because they have not developed the kinds of legitimizing institutions and ideologies that have been common in the West".¹⁰⁵ Even more, Western imperialism and oil revenue forced these groups "to strengthen their state functions or dissolve"¹⁰⁶. In fact, state formation in the MENA countries led to the "breakup of traditional forms of tribal authority and the erosion of old tribal loyalties"¹⁰⁷. Despite this, even if the state influenced and changed them and their strength has been reduced, tribal groups still persist in the Middle East.

For these reasons, both Caton and Tibi, see tribes as a destabilizing element inside the state, and even if these two entities influence each other

That the state's strategy of bringing the tribal population indirectly under its control is a double-edged sword is apparent when khans, who become heads of extremely powerful confederacies, then challenge the state's power during periods when it is weak. There is thus contained within the model a dialectical relationship between the power of the state and the power of the tribal elites.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² See, Yapp M. E., p. 6.

¹⁰³ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal, 1967.

¹⁰⁴ See, Caton C. S., p. 87.

¹⁰⁵ See, Khoury P. S., Kostiner J., 1990, p. 19.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ See, Caton C. S., p. 100.

In this way, the states characterized by the presence of tribal society have hardly developed those instruments necessary to achieve a sufficient grade of legitimacy.

For example, the Saudi royal family often made appeal to tribalism at home as well as abroad to promote a wide range of interests. For example, by strengthening the loyalty of the people of *najd* to attempt to bring down the regime of al-Assad in Syria; to challenge the government in Baghdad controlled by the Shiites, and the effort to bring the Sunni tribes in Bahrain to the polls in order to reduce the weight of the Shiite vote. However, Riyadh has also fought tribal identities nationwide at times when they were threatening social peace or attempts to create a Saudi nationalist sentiment. Manipulation of tribal affiliations serves to maintain the status quo of a conservative political culture, cementing the unity and stability around the royal family.

Hence, these states developed a propensity to use coercion in order to impose their will, but in this case tribes too represented an obstacle in the use of this force.

In the final analysis, to understand the complexity of the existing societal subdivisions in Middle Eastern nation-states, we must recognize how intertwined ethnicity and sectarianism are with tribalism. In this sense the tribe, not as a social organization but rather as a referent of identity and group solidarity, is the most important element of what we may call ethnopolitics. It is a central element in the current crisis of the Middle Eastern nation-state, and it has contributed in certain cases (such as Lebanon and Sudan) to the nation-state's disintegration.¹⁰⁹

2.3.2 Minorities

Another element that contributes to the creation of Middle eastern mosaic is the presence of the minorities. Nisan writes that even if minorities do not aim to create a

¹⁰⁹ See, Tibi B., pp. 140-141.

state, they create a compact and defined community¹¹⁰. He divides the most important minorities in Middle East between non-Arab Muslims and heterodox (Kurds, Berbers, Baluch, Druzes and Alawites), Christians (Copts, Armenians, Assyrians, Maronites) and Jews. Yapp points out the attention on the fact that the mandates system reinforced the European "tradition of protecting the interests of non-Muslim minorities in the Near East"¹¹¹. This is for example what happened in Lebanon with the Christian Maronite population and in Palestine with the Jews population. On the other hand, as we seen above, Kurds were divided between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria by the treaty of Lausanne¹¹².

Therefore, we can add in this discourse another element: ethnic groups. It has been explained¹¹³, for example, that even if Alawites are ethnically Arabs they base their identity on the myth of a common descent and belief and can be described as ethnic group separated from Syrian community. The Alawite is composed of four tribes and the ruling elite in Syria comes from the Matawira one. Initially, instead of our days Syria, were created four different states: Aleppo, Jabal al-Druze, and Damascus; Alexandretta was treated as a separate region, and the last one was the Alawite state¹¹⁴. During their mandate, the French, supported minority groups like Alawites and Druzes, in order to have major control over a divided society. Finally, when Alawite affiliated with the Ba'ath party and came in power during the '70, transformed a political ideology to a sectarian affiliation¹¹⁵.

However, unlike this case in which a minority group came in power, in other case these communities can originate ethnic separatist movement. This is the case of

¹¹⁰ Nisan M., *A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McFarland & Company, 2002, pp. 24-25.

¹¹¹ See, Yapp M. E., p. 7.

¹¹² Ibidem, pp. 100-106

¹¹³ See, Tibi B., pp. 137-143.

¹¹⁴ See, Fieldhouse D. K., p. 256.

¹¹⁵ Pipes D., *The Alawi Capture of Power in Syria*, Middle Eastern Studies, 1989 (<http://www.danielpipes.org/191/the-alawi-capture-of-power-in-syria>)

Kurds¹¹⁶, which represent the largest ethnic minority in Turkey and Syria, and "are amongst the most militant and persistent in their demands for ethnic and political recognition"¹¹⁷. They are not a completely compact community since it is composed by numerous groups and sects. Kurds speak different dialect, and even if the majority is Sunni Muslim there are other heterodox minority groups and sects. Nevertheless, "

Kurdish ethnicity is much older than Kurdish nationalism. An "imagined community" of Kurds, a well defined Kurdish *ethnie* has existed for many centuries, although its definition was perhaps less inclusive and populist than the present one.¹¹⁸

For these reasons, Kurds represented and represent in many occasion a challenge to the state system in Middle East.

2.3.3 Nationalism

One of the major ideologies that contributed to the creation of different kinds of identity has certainly been nationalism. Whilst *Arab nationalism* emerged in the nineteenth century on the basis of the European concept of patria and patriotism, it essentially grows in opposition to the Ottoman Empire¹¹⁹ for various reasons. As Khalidi assumes

¹¹⁶ Kreyenbroek P. G., Sperl S. (Edited by), *The Kurds. A contemporary overview*, Routledge, 2000.

¹¹⁷ Koohi-Kamali F., *The development of nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan*, in Kreyenbroek P. G., Sperl S., p. 135.

¹¹⁸ Bruinessen van M., *Kurdish society, ethnicity, nationalism and refugee problems*, in Kreyenbroek P. G., Sperl S., p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Martin Kramer, "Arab Nationalism: A Mistaken Identity", *Daedalus*, 122 (3), pp. 171-206.

In its fully developed form represented an expression of identity and of group solidarity within the projected new format of the nation-state by an amalgam of old elites and new social forces at once desirous of seeing their society resist control by outside forces and deeply influenced by the example and the challenge of the West¹²⁰.

In its first form, it was helped first of all by the struggle between the Turkish center of the Sublime Porte and Arab periphery of the Empire. Turkish administrators ruled for centuries in the name of Islam, even if they were not Arabs and did not speak Arabic language. Therefore, in the last phase of the Empire, when its power was decreasing, in the Arab Middle East it appears a discontent known as Arab "awakening". It was developed especially in response to two processes that were taking place in this area: the Turkification, with the failed aim of the creation of the *homo Ottomanicus*, and Zionism. As we have seen, this sentiment of nationalism against the Empire was used by Britain during the First World War, and in this way the Arab Revolt with the desire of an "Arab nation" became a part of the *divide et impera* strategy of European powers.

However, Khalidi stresses the attention on the fact that Arab nationalism and **Pan-Arabism** have not to be mixed each other, and - furthermore - "in most cases in which Arab nationalists have had a chance to put their ideas into practice, they have not favored the idea of a single Arab nation-state"¹²¹. The Arab nationalism in the form of Pan-ideology achieved a formal recognition with the creation of the Arab League in 1945, which however did not change the imperial maps of the Middle East, and the exacerbation of the Palestine question, and it reached its peak during the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, in 1958 Egypt and Syria were assimilated in the United

¹²⁰ See, Khalidi, pp. 1364-1365.

¹²¹ Khalidi R., "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature", in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 5, 1991, p. 1365.

Arab Republic¹²², after a referendum in both the countries in which more the 99 per cent of the population was favorable to the Union. This was supported, on the Syrian side, by the Ba'th party, founded in 1947 as an Arab national party indeed, sustaining the idea that "the Arab Fatherland constitutes an indivisible political and economic unity"¹²³. On the Egyptian side, by Gamal abd-Nasir, symbol of the fight against the imperialist West after the Bandung conference of 1955 and of the Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, UAR was abolished in 1961 after a Syrian coup, preceded by an inexorable decline of the relationship between the Ba'th and Nasir, due to an even more dominant role of the latter one.

Therefore, we can see the double face of what we are defining Arab nationalism. If from one side we saw the *qaumi*, as Pan-Arab, on the other side there is the nationalism directly linked to the concept of nation-state. This kind of nationalism was sometimes used as value during **intern-state** conflicts. It is for example the case of Anwar al-Sadat, who gradually distanced himself from the Pan-Arabist cause supported by his predecessor Nasir, and gave pride of priority to the value of the Egyptian patriotism. He subordinated the Palestinian question and the clash with Israel to the exaltation of this value.¹²⁴ The nationalist rhetoric was also used from both the sides during the Iran Iraq war of 1980-1988, exalting victories past¹²⁵. Actually, these nationalist movements often had territorial claims, showing a maximalist approach. In different times, Syria, Egypt and Iraq have tried to extend their sovereignty respectively over Lebanon, Sudan and Kuwait.

¹²² See, Dawisha.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

¹²⁴ See., Dawisha A., p. 264.

¹²⁵ See, Halliday, p. 201.

2.3.4 Sectarianism

Finally, to have a more complete view of the Middle Eastern society and its fragmentation, we need to consider is the widespread **sectarianism**. "In the society of the Fertile Crescent, few persons were accustomed to regarding themselves as Arabs. As in Ottoman times, most continued to classify themselves by religion, sect, and genealogy. They were Muslims or Christians, Sunnis or Shiites, Maronites or Druzes, members of this or that clan, family, tribe, village, or urban quarter"¹²⁶. It can be defined as an exclusive kind of identity, meaning that it exclude a major number of others thereby favoring a local and religious identity and undermining a Pan-Arab identity. Gelvin¹²⁷ makes a distinction between nationalism and sectarianism, since the first aim to sovereignty while the second, that emerge as a result of political circumstances, aim to autonomy and rights.

Identity, and so the sectarian narratives, is linked in different ways to the power. The popular mobilization is sensible to this kind of narrative, that become an instrument in the hand of various actors, like government, foreign powers, or an individual or group.

There are at least reasons that exacerbated the sectarianization in the middle East. First of all there is the identification of the regimes with a specific religious community, regardless the fact that is a minority (Syria and Bahrain), or a majority (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Turkey, post-Saddam Iraq). The second cause is linked to the repercussion of the Syrian civil war, that caused a huge flow of refugees in Turkey and open the fight between Hizbullah and Sunni Syrian opposition. Another element of instability is linked to what Gause III says, which describes the actual situation of the Middle East as an identity based Cold War, "the new Middle East Cold War", in which the main actors are the Shia Iran and the Sunni Saudi Arabia. In this way, the competition for the geopolitical control of the whole region is passes through the religious dominance. Finally, actors like Islamic State used the sectarian narrative as a

¹²⁶ See, Kramer M., p. 180.

¹²⁷ See, Gelvin J. L., p. 101-105.

matter of policy, for example targeting non-Sunni population to the aim of create a caliphate with a pure Islamic community.

2.3.5 Islam and politic

However, as we have already said, these are not the only forms of Arab nationalism. Islamic ideology has been often used in contraposition with Pan-Arabism or local nationalism, seen as symbol of spiritual decadence. Sayyid Qutb, the founding ideologue of modern radical Islam, claimed:

I believe that the bonds of ideology and belief are more sturdy than those of patriotism based upon region and that this false distinction among Muslims on a regional basis is but one consequence of crusading and Zionist imperialism which must be eradicated.¹²⁸

In this view, Islam is incompatible with nation state. The earliest forms of pan-Islam were directed against the colonial powers. To some extent, local and regional nationalisms from one side and pan-islamism on the other side were developed roughly at the same time. For example, both the pan-islamic ideology and the pan-Arab one have often resorted to the rhetoric of the Arabic language as a central element of identity. Moreover, all these movements, while making use of memory and tradition are essentially modern. "They are modern movements that select and reformulate elements from the past to meet contemporary purposes." These have been able to assimilate the nationalist rhetoric or, as we shall see, the same aspects of anti-Islamic rhetoric. For example fundamentalist ideology has recourse to the idea of a

¹²⁸ Zubaida S., *Law and Power in the Islamic World*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2003, pp. 182-219.

return to sharia law, perceived as an idealized past of purity, although there are some authors that dubitate of a very well defined past characterized.

So, it is necessary to place these ideologies within their historical and political context.

Another characteristic of these movement is to be political. These movements are political movement because they resort to religion in order to counter a pre-constituted power or to justify themselves their power once obtained. It was especially during the Cold War that Islam turned into a political ideology. At first, the expansion of Islamic movements is encouraged by the United States, as the best defense against the Soviets. In fact, their presence in Afghanistan had favored the creation of a common front of the Islamic groups, as well as the mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Iran and Pakistan. The latter he received increasingly large amounts of aid from the United States, used to arm anti-Soviet guerrillas.

Even more, the actions of its militants, fueled by Iran on one side and Saudi Arabia on the other, made Islam an international force. Fundamentalism has a strong transnational character. The idea of the restoration of the caliphate, that can be found in many movements and finally implemented by the Islamic State group, represent itself a transnational element. Or similarly, the concept of umma, as the whole Arab community that goes beyond the national and territorial divisions. In fact nationalism has been often accused by Islamists for having contributed to the division of the Umma.

Sharia law plays an important role in the creation of an identitarian sentiment, as preservation and reinforcement of Islamic values, often opposed to the "western". Therefore, "it is a major demand of almost all Islamist movements, and even features in the demands of some elements speaking for 'Muslim communities' in Western countries".¹²⁹

¹²⁹ See, Zubaida s., 2011, p.13.

The notion that political Islam is a source for identity politics has been reinforced by the processes of globalization and democratization and by the spread of neoliberal economics, reinforcing the role of Islamists and islamic movements in political system, given their active contributions to reconstructing programs after the harsh consequences of socioeconomics changes. In this optic, we need to distinguish two different shapes of political Islam: "an increasing involvement in the democratization process by mainstream movements after the success of pro-democracy popular uprising in toppling autocratic regimes and a growing inclination toward violence by fringe groups."¹³⁰ We will just take in consideration the second form since is part of our debate.

2.4 Conclusion

The end of the empires should have completed the "universalization of the Westphalian state system"¹³¹. Nowadays this idea is hardly criticized since "empire-like entities and smaller units, for example, world cities, have become more viable, while the sovereignty of nation-states is under siege"¹³². Consequently, there are many attempts to built a new terminology that could better describe this situation. For example, in this context it is useful the concept of "post-colonial state". With this term,

¹³⁰ Esposito J. L., Shahin E., (Edited by), *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 1

¹³¹ Cummings S., Hinnebusch R., *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia*, Edimburgh University Press, 2011, p.1.

¹³² *Ibidem*.

scholars¹³³ indicate the states born after the Second World War and during the Cold-War as result of the decolonization. This kind of state often inherited the colonial institutions. Helfont even suggests that these states "were designed to protect the state from its own people rather than to protect it from outside militaries". The term "imported state", used by Badie, better transmits the idea of the exportation of political models"¹³⁴

Even more, looking at the recent history it seems unquestionable that, for some reasons, democracy barely takes root in the MENA countries. In line with this, and together with the fact that democracy has been assumed as a "universal value"¹³⁵ by the international community, the idea of the Middle East as an "exceptional" area has developed. Mahdavi wrote that, even the Arab Spring and the post-ideological or post-Islamist discourse, the rise of ISIS and other recent issues in the Middle East "have contributed to the revival of an old discourse of Middle East Exceptionalism"¹³⁶. My question is: Does exceptionalism really exists? What I am problematizing is the relevance of the term "exceptionalism".

The end of the Cold-War brought the world into an era characterized by the Western liberal democracy as "the final form of human government"¹³⁷. Despite the first

¹³³ Dodge T., *After the Arab Spring: power shift in the Middle East?: from the 'Arab Awakening' to the Arab Spring; the post-colonial state in the Middle East* IDEAS reports - special reports, Kitchen, Nicholas, ed SR011. LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, 2012; Helfont S., *Post-Colonial States and the Struggle for Identity in the Middle East since World War Two*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 23, 2015; Yom S., *Authoritarian State Building in the Middle East: From Durability to Revolution*, CDDRL, Working Papers, 121, February 2011.

¹³⁴ Badie B., *The Imported State. The Westernization of Political Order*, Standford University Press, Standford, 2000, pp. 5-88.

¹³⁵ Sen A., *Democracy as a Universal Value*, Journal of Democracy 10.3, 1999, pp. 3-17.

¹³⁶ Mahdavi M. (Guest Editor), Contemporary Social Movements in the Middle East and Beyond, *Sociology of Islam*, vol 2, pp. 103-104.

¹³⁷ Fukuyama F., "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

enthusiasm, it became clear that not the entire world was moving in the same direction. On the contrary, these differences would produce, according to Huntington, a "clash" between different civilizations. Especially was rapidly noticed that in the Arab world "Western democracy strengthens anti-Western political forces"¹³⁸. Many scholars¹³⁹ raised questions about why the Middle East is so resistant to democracy. Examined from the neoliberal and realist theories of International Relations, this exceptionalism has been depicted as driven by the forces of the global economic liberalization and the regional balance of power¹⁴⁰. The perception of a Middle East exceptionalism is in some way an extension of the Orientalist outlook that describes the Middle East as a monolithic entity. In accordance with this view the Bush administration started the Greater Middle East Initiative to spread democracy via "contagion"¹⁴¹.

However, is exceptionalism the right term to depict and interpret this situation? The problem of terminology seems to be of great importance. For example, Sadiki asks if the concepts that belong to the nomenclature of Western democratization readily can be applied to the Arab Middle East¹⁴². Furthermore, Bayat developed a new and more appropriate terminology that could describe the political life of Middle

¹³⁸ Huntington S. OP, "The Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1993, p. 32.

¹³⁹ Heydemann S., "Is the Middle East Different?," *Journal of Democracy*, 7(2), 1996, pp. 171–175; Bellin E., "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders," in M. Posusney and M.P. Angrist, eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2005; Stepan A., Robertson G. B., *An 'Arab' More Than 'Muslim' Electoral Gap*, *Journal of Democracy* 14, July 2003, pp. 30–59.

¹⁴⁰ Salamey I., *Middle Eastern Exceptionalism: Globalization and the Balance of Power*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, Democracy and Security, 5:249–260, 2009, p. 257.

¹⁴¹ Sadiki L., *Rethinking Arab Democratization: Elections without Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp 146-198.

¹⁴² See, Sadiki L., 2012, p. 8.

Eastern populations, without borrowing Western concepts¹⁴³. First, to fight against the idea of the Middle Eastern exceptionalism he finds some peculiar forms of activism and consequently he introduces the idea of the *social nonmovements* that he defines as "the collective action of the noncollective actors"¹⁴⁴. He refers to the disfranchised people: urban poor (such as the mass movement of rural migrants in Cairo and Istanbul), Muslim women (like the Iranians "bad-hijabi", not totally covering their hair with the headscarf) and youth with their activism (but not with the meaning of student movements). So, if on the one hand the inaction by which was described the Middle East led the West to think that change can be brought only from the outside - from above (that is the thinking that has characterized American foreign policy of the 90s and of the post-2001), on the other hand Bayat limelights this idea by showing how the drivers of change start from below, from the weak categories. According to Bayat, nonmovements are strongly effective because, starting from below, they are action-oriented (not ideologically driven), are a form of directly practice and specifically they are not "politics of protest, but of practice" (p. 19). He assumes that they are highly common and strongly effective in Middle East because "authoritarian states do not tolerate any independent and organized dissent" (p. 25), and furthermore they are related with the everyday life of people, or whatever Bayat calls the "art of presence". So, rather than by the active revolution, understood as struggle, change is led by the "everyday resistance". Rather than by the "social movement", that is a typically Western category, by "social nonmovement".

In my opinion, also the term exceptionalism is something obsolete deriving from the Orientalist ideology. Our world is very diversified, and every region has its own particular history, culture and society. Therefore: Exception of what? Describing a part of the world as *exceptional*, implies consequently that the rule can be found in another place. In a sort of "fetichism" for democracy, West continues to perceive it in

¹⁴³ Bayat A., *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 19.

the view offered by Huntington and Fukuyama, while the places that cannot adapt their life to this model are considered exceptions. On the contrary, there is a possibility that the Islamic world would develop a typical form of "democracy with adjective"¹⁴⁵ through, for example, the categories showed by Bayat as post-islamism or the social non-moment¹⁴⁶. Though, the idea of a post-islamist society was presented by Roy, as a society "in which the Islamic parenthesis has profoundly altered relationships between Islam and politic by giving the political precedence over the religious in the name of religion itself"¹⁴⁷. In the same direction, Dabashi identifies the Arab Spring, "the first effectively post-ideological uprising in the Muslim encounter with post/colonial modernity", with the overcoming of the ideological post/coloniality¹⁴⁸. I presented all these theory to underline that not only another path to the democracy is possible, but also that it seems possible a different destination.

In conclusion, it is evident that there exist some structural problems that make it difficult to introduce democracy in the Middle East. However, in the discussion about this region we should not forget that many of these countries were born as colonies veiled with the name of mandates, just after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. They had never existed as states before. We should not forget the strong presence of the two superpowers during the Cold War, with their support to some rebels or some regimes. We have not to forget the particularities of the Middle East; like the huge presence of oilfields, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the presence of Islam as an anti-colonial flag. Even more, with its continuous enormous presence in the Middle East, Western countries are affecting the possibility to istituite a democracy, and at the same time are probably changing the linear evolution of these coun-

¹⁴⁵ Levitsky S., *Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research*, World Politics, 49/4, 1997.

¹⁴⁶ Supra, Bayat A., Amsterdam University Press, 2010 pp. 1-26.

¹⁴⁷ Roy O., *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, Hurst & Co, 2004, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Dabashi H., *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, London: Zed Books, 2012, p. 164.

tries. According to me, the western idea of considering an area as exceptionalist is related with the same attitude that we can trace in the main idea of the *Stages to Growth*¹⁴⁹. We should not only *re-think* the Arab world, we should also stop to think about it from a Western perspective and start to simply try to understand it from a local standpoint. It should be accepted that a region could develop its own form of state administration without be an exception. It has to be accepted in its "uniqueness", as every state and every person in the world is unique. Finally, "uniqueness" is the term that I propose instead of exceptionalism. Since "the end of the history" is not yet arrived it cannot be assumed as "universal" a system of government. Dignity must be given to the differences, and to the possibility to develop something different. Something unique.

The point is that only a few of the factors presented above are specific of this area. Tribes, collapsed empires, oilfields, authoritarian states, post-colonialism are in many other countries, while Islam has been amply exported. For these reason, the terms unique or specific do not derive by the fact that there are only in this area, but by how these elements are linked and mixed each other.

The state is a central problem in the three religious communities of the Mediterranean area. For the Jewish world, the state building represents the culmination of a long process that, especially after the Holocaust, rapidly accelerated. In the western world the secular state weakened the Christian churches, that developed new relationships with civil power. Thus Catholicism, in the optic of the democratic pluralism reception, started a presence in it often assigned to democratic movement of christian inspiration. Regarding the oriental christians, from the XIX century, Orthodoxy became a decisive component of identity and national legitimation.

In the Islamic world, has we said, suffered a period of political subordination to the western world. In this period, was abolished the caliphate as universal institution of islam, which was impossible to recreate unless some attempts that resulted to be

¹⁴⁹ Rostow W. W., *The Economic Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, 1960.

mere associative forms of countries or institutions. However, the end of the caliphate was not followed by the end of the umma, destined to be strengthened. In this way, Arab nationalism and arabism are the means for the arab renaissance, and the difference with the secular western state are accentuated by the arising of radical religious movement.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Riccardi A., *Il Mediterraneo nel Novecento. Religioni e Stati.*, Edizioni San Paolo. 1994., pp. 7-9-

III. ISIS FORMATION

Very briefly. The roots of the Islamic State date from the arrival in Iraq of Abu al-Musab Zarqawi. In 1999 here he founded a militant jihadist group, named *al-Jamaat Tawhid wa 'l Jihad*¹⁵¹.

In 2003 it started the invasion of Iraq by United States. This will led to the Saddam Hussein falls. Meanwhile, Bashar al-Assad, ascended to the presidency of Syria in 2000, supports the entry into Iraq of foreign fighters in anti-American function. In 2014, the group of al-Zarqawi affiliated to al-Qaeda. It was renamed al-Qaida in Iraq¹⁵² and with the sound of bombings and beheadings tried to unleash a civil war between Shiites and Sunni Iraqis, until he was killed in 2006.

The failure of al-Zarqawi was mainly caused by the fact of not being able to hybridize his organization with the local society, thus remaining a foreign body. So much so that at the time of his death, thanks to the brutality of the attacks against the population, the Islamist group was isolated. In May 2006, al-Maliki become prime minister in Iraq's post-war transition; meanwhile it was founded the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)¹⁵³. In March 2011 began the uprising in Syria; a year after the ISI founded a subsidiary in Syria in an anti-Assad, Jabat al-Nusra¹⁵⁴. In March 2013 it is founded the Isis (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, where al-Sham is the expression of what was once designated Syria).

¹⁵¹ Zelin A. Y., *The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement*, Research Notes, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, No 20, June 2014, p. 1.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, pp. 1-4.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁴ *Islamist group claims Syria bombs "to avenge Sunnis"*, Al Arabiya News, March 21, 2012.

As declared by the leader al-Baghdadi in 2007, he talks “to all Sunnis, and to the young men of Jihadi-Salafism in particular, across the entire world.”¹⁵⁵ In this way we can define the Jihadi-Salafist ideology of IS.

Part of this ideology lays on the inheritance of Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Salafi movement founded by Hassan al-Bana in 1918. They refuted every link to the West exalting a return of a purified Islam, to reconnect muslims to their past; the application of the sharia in the political sphere is the way of the truth. It aimed to the Egypt independence as first step to the union of the Arab world, in which the restoration of the caliphate was the ultimate objective.¹⁵⁶

Salafism, as a doctrine of the sunni Islam, has to be intended as Modern-Salafism, and in this perspective is associated to the movements of wahhabi inspiration, that follow a literal interpretation of Islam. This wahhabi form is based on the concepts of *tawhid*, the unity of God, of shirk, the purification of islam by polytheism and *bid'ah*, the rejection of polyteism. The idea was the return to the primitive purity of Islam, and some form of *ihitjad*. So a Modern Pritanical Salafism.¹⁵⁷

When we refer to jihadism we mean "an individual or political movement that primarily focuses its attentio, discourse and activities on the conduct of a violent uncompromising campaign that thy term a jihad."¹⁵⁸

However, this is not sufficient to explain IS ideology. In fact, even if it is true that this is based on Jihadi-Salafism, there is a further characteristic necessary to explain the organization, that is the hardline orientation within Jihadi-Salafism. This is the element that divide IS from Al-Qaeda¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁵ Abū ‘Umar al-Baghdādī, “Wa-in tantahū fa-huwa khayr lakum,” Mu’assasat al-Furqān, 8 July 2007. Transcript in *al-Majmū‘ li-qādat Dawlat al-‘Irāq al-Islāmiyya, Nukhbat al-l’ām al-Jihādī*, 2010, pp. 26–35.

¹⁵⁶ Choueiri Y. M., *Il Fondamentalismo Islamico*, Il Mulino, 1993, pp. 74-75.

¹⁵⁷ See, Esposito J. L., Shahin E., (Edited by), pp. 27-28.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 616.

¹⁵⁹ Bunzel C., *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper No 19, March 2015, p.7.

3.1 ISIS: contextualizing its formation

The premises made on the second chapter are necessary to find a suitable method to put the development of the Islamic State in discourse of the state system in this area, taking into account all the criteria and the variables of the regional situation. If Middle Eastern states barely fit in the first part of the discussion of state, it can be difficult, or in some ways inappropriate, to adapt these parameter to the phenomenon of the new Islamic State.

The Islamic State is the result of the facts and elements that we have seen in the previous chapter. In fact, it is forged in the wars of the post-September 11 in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then infiltrated the Syrian disorders. At the same time, IS benefits from the crisis and the disintegration of some states/regimes (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen ...) induced by the "Arab Spring" and the counter-revolution led by Saudi. Double tsunami, which dug immense geopolitical empty from the Sahel to Central Asia. A witness to the decline of institutions created by European colonialists following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, until the deposition of the last caliph in 1924. Today, the actual Caliph shows himself as subverter of the pacts concluded by the infidels on the ruins of the Sublime Porte, since the secret agreement Sykes-Picot, source of the subsequent division of the Levant and Mesopotamia between Britain and France. The void left by the 'National States' promoted and initially controlled by the Anglo-French invitation to flowering of ancient and recent informal powers, tribal entities and jihadi groups hunting for resources and ungoverned territories. In fact, as we have seen before, a particular element of this area that make it a more complex scenario is the tribal component. Saud family often made the appeal tribalism at home as well as abroad to promote a wide range of interests. By strengthening the loyalty of the people of *najd* to attempt to bring down the regime of al-Assad in Syria; the challenge to the government in Baghdad controlled by the Shiites to the effort to bring to the polls the Sunni tribes in Bahrain in order to reduce the weight of the Shiite vote. However, Riyadh has also fought tribal identities nationwi-

de at times when they were threatening social peace or attempts - since the early nineties - to create a Saudi nationalist sentiment. Manipulate tribal affiliations serves to maintain the status quo and of a conservative political culture, cementing the unity and stability around the royal family.

IS is the child of a deep crisis. In particular, the disintegration of Iraq and Syria. The Middle East in the public debate evokes indefinite territories between North Africa and the Eastern and Central Asia that are no longer a set - if they have ever been. If we were forced to declare a geopolitical figure for this non-region, we would choose the fragmentation.

The case of Iraq and Syria is part of this complex plot, between the British and French colonial strategies, geopolitical conditions related to oil and nationalist movements that helped to draw the map of the Middle East known until today. Since the first post-Ottoman phase, Islamic fundamentalist movements and mass revolts appeared on the scene, of which the last was in 2011. Sunnis are a majority in Syria for four decades dominated by the Alawite clan of al-Asad, while in Iraq, compared to the Shiites, who represent a minority with Saddam Hussein was up to a decade ago to power in the armed forces and in the administration. Both Syria and Iraq today are former States, present only on the map. And no one in the West or the Middle East, apart from the Is, has a geopolitical alternative to national unity mantra repeated in a cloying by international diplomacy.

In 2013 a Middle Eastern Security Report of ISW, pinpointed two major problem drivers of instability in both the states. First the sectarianism, used to catalyze certain "us" identity against a "them". In Iraq, Al-Maliki used the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to reinforce the sectarian polarization. His centralization of power provoked anti-government protests in many Sunni Arab areas. Furthermore, he pursued a de-Baathification of Iraq, "an attempt to purge Iraqi politics of those who had been active in Hussein's regime, largely targeted Sunnis."¹⁶⁰ In the light of this element, it is easier to

¹⁶⁰ p. 10.

understand a particularity of the member composition of IS. Many of the members of the former regime are passed to the Islamic State of tribes that were traditionally faithful to Saddam.¹⁶¹ In addition, many of the Baathists officers were at the same time also *sheikhs* of the tribes¹⁶². At this point, it is obvious that IS is "Iraqi-friendly," succeeding where al-Zarqawi had failed. The movement is "glocal", attracting foreign volunteers, but it is not perceived as alien by the people, for the top and middle management are almost all Iraqis. Secondly, the IS starts from its birth with a fair popular support, the clan from which Sunni *sheikhs* and former soldiers linked to the movement.

An important point of this success can be found on what happened the year before: the tent city protest against the government appeared in Sunni cities¹⁶³. The protesters demanded two things, namely the fight against corruption and improving the conditions of the Sunnis, in terms of public services, political representation and role in the armed forces and security. Maliki replied with weapons and there were also dead.

In Syria external groups like Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) leveraged on the religious element, while "Sunni and Salafist militant groups have used anti-Shi'a rhetoric and anti-Iranian sentiment to justify their own actions". In fact, some scholars¹⁶⁴ see the present situation as a cold war based on sectarianism, played by different actors but led by Saudi Arabia and Iran. In this context, it was easy for IS to

¹⁶¹ Nakhoul S., *Insight - Saddam's former army is secret of Baghdadi's success*, Reuters, Jun 16, 2015 (<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-baghdadi-insight-idUKKBN0OW1UR20150616>).

¹⁶² Coles I., Parker N., *How Saddam's men help Islamic State rule*, Reuters, December 11, 2015 (<http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-islamicstate/>).

¹⁶³ Ruhayem R., *Protests engulf west Iraq as Anbar rises against Maliki*, BBC News, January 2, 2013 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20887739>).

¹⁶⁴ Gause F. G. III, *Beyond Sectarianism. The New Middle East Cold War*, Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, Number 11, July 2014.

win in a few years the favor of the Sunni population of Iraq and Syria, and in a few months almost one-third of Iraq, having already controlled almost half of Syria. Moreover, to promote the Islamic State have been two macro-dynamics in place throughout the Middle East: the growing religious radicalization and political polarization resulting from the strategic confrontation between the Sunni bloc, led by Saudi Arabia, and the Shiite, led by Iran.

A central element on the analysis of the present Middle Eastern crisis, is the presence in the area of weak states and failed states. Syria and Iraq appear in the list of Fragile State index 2015, the first at the eighth place, and the second at the twelfth place¹⁶⁵. The American Center for Strategic International Studies consider this two states proper "failed states", and describes IS as result of these disorders¹⁶⁶. Failed states are characterized by the "collapse of central government to impose order, resulting in loss of physical control of territory, and/or the monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Crucially, it can no longer reproduce the conditions for its own existence"¹⁶⁷.

Therefore, the situation seems to be at a crossroads: either reconstitutes this national unity, evoked in each redundant Middle East conference, or the possibility to face with the balkanization of the Middle East. As specifies Alireza Doodstdar "In Iraq, the cities that are now controlled by ISIS were some of those most resistant to American control during the occupation and most recalcitrant in the face of the newly established state. The destruction that these cities endured seems only to have hardened their residents' defiance. Fallujah, the first Iraqi city to fall to ISIS, is famous for

¹⁶⁵ The list appears on the United States think tank Fund For Peace (<http://fsi.-fundforpeace.org/rankings-2015>).

¹⁶⁶ Cordesman A. H., *ISIS and the "Failed State Wars"*, Center for Strategic International Studies, October 2, 2015, p. 11.

¹⁶⁷ GSDRC, *Definitions and Typologies of Fragile States*, University of Birmingham: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2012 (<http://www.gsdr.org/go/fragile-states/chapter-1-understanding-fragile-states/definitions-and-typologies-of-fragile-states>).

its devastation during U.S. counterinsurgency operations in 2004. It still struggles with a legacy of rising cancer rates, genetic mutations, birth defects, and disabilities blamed on depleted uranium in American munitions"¹⁶⁸.

In other words, the Islamic State has filled the vacuum of state institutions delegitimized if not openly hostile, and provided to the Sunnis the only alternative political currently existing. Not surprisingly, the Is trying to present itself as a model of government antithetical to corruption and inefficiency of Baghdad and Damascus.

3.2 Structure

To properly discuss about the statehood of IS, we should introduce its structure and methods. The ambition of IS to organize itself in the form of State appeared early. On 29 June 2014 the then Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant proclaimed the establishment of the "caliphate" in the conquered territories in Syria and Iraq. In a statement released on the Internet he invited all Muslims to ally¹⁶⁹. The caliphate was abolished by Ataturk in 1924¹⁷⁰, along with other manifestations of the Muslim tradition. Restoring the caliphate, IS heals a wound never healed, that restless unnerves still many Sunnis. Then, it followed the change of the name in Islamic State, identifying Abu Bakr al-Bagdad as the leader, awarded the rank of caliph, or successor and vicar of the Prophet. The title of caliph is a form of guarantee for the theological leader of IS because it is a direct derivation from the Islamic tradition and implicitly en-

¹⁶⁸ Doodstdar A., *How Not To Understand ISIS*, The Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion, October 2, 2014 (<http://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/how-not-understand-isis-alireza-doostdar>).

¹⁶⁹ Cunningham E., *Islamic State leader al-Baghdadi calls on followers to unleash 'volcanoes of jihad'*, The Washington Post, November 13, 2014.

¹⁷⁰ Hanioglu M., *A Brief history of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 197.

tails that all other authorities - the king of Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain - lose their legitimacy, so as the presidents of the Muslim states, which are considered subservient to the West. The caliph - that must be very experienced in matters of *sharia* must descend from the tribe Quraysh and should be healthy¹⁷¹ - exercise absolute power. Everyone must obey to him, including members of the various departments of the Is.

This "state" has a capital, the Syrian city of al-Raqqa, and is divided into administrative units called *wilayat* (provinces), term and historical concept of islam¹⁷². While some areas are actually managed by the group, diverse areas declared annexed actually know his presence very partial, since IS failed to rule in its¹⁷³. The value of the *wilaya*, hitherto, is propaganda: IS wants to show the progressive institutionalization of its territory and the expansion of its project. The state apparatus of the caliphate has eight fundamental element.

The Sharia Council (acting closely with the Shura Council) is the most important and powerful organ of IS, which has the task of managing the caliphate in terms of religious and theological nature. Its members have to make sure that governors and committees adhere to the correct interpretation, according IS, of the Islamic law. It connected two bodies. First, the legal structure that governs the courts sharia¹⁷⁴, prevents crimes, establishes penalties, promotes good behavior. Together, the department in charge of preaching, recruitment, and to control the spread of the media, led

¹⁷¹ Levy R., *The Social Structure of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 285.

¹⁷² In May 2015, were created the wilayat of Baghdad, al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkûk, Salah al- Din, al-Furat, al-Falluga, Ninive e al-Ganub; in Siria the wilayat of Aleppo, Hims, Damasco, al-Hayr, al-Raqqa e al-Baraka (Roggio B., *ISIS' 'Southern Division' praises foreign suicide bombers*, The Long War Journal, April 9, 2014, <http://www.-longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/04/isis-southern-division.php#>)

¹⁷³ "In urban and centrally-located areas [...] ISIS tends to develop more robust governance structures (See, Caris C. C., Reynolds S., July 2014, p. 14).

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp.18-19.

by Abu al-Muhammad al-Adnani¹⁷⁵. The Sharia Council spreads messages and posts, writes the speeches of al-Bagdadi and produces comments for the production of media of IS.

The Council of Shura is formed by the decision-makers who define the organization's policies. It is the highest advisory body of IS, which in addition to appoint provincial governors would also have the right to depose the "Caliph" al-Bagdadi. The Council is led by Abu al-Arkan al-Amiri. It also "decided to establish the Islamic Caliphate".¹⁷⁶

The Department of Finance finances the operations of the organization, collects taxes and manages the spoils of war. The revenue derives from the sale on the black market of crude oil¹⁷⁷, phosphate, natural gas, surrenders obtained with the kidnappings¹⁷⁸, the sale of archaeological finds¹⁷⁹ and the imposition of duties on trucks of goods in transit. But also donations of people (mainly from the Gulf countries¹⁸⁰); donations to charity (*zakat*) gathered in mosques for *jihad* in Syria then ended up in the hands of IS; assets and resources confiscated in the conquered areas: hospitals, shops, restaurants, and other waterworks, produce millions of dollars; taxes and sala-

¹⁷⁵ York R., *Know Thy Enemy: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*, lulu.com, 2015, p.72.

¹⁷⁶ As revealed by Abu al-Muhammad al-Adnani (Dyer G., *Don't Panic: ISIS, Terror and Today's Middle East*, Random House Canada, 2015, p. 141.

¹⁷⁷ Solomon E., Chazan G., Jones S., October 14, 2015, *ISIS Inc: how oil fuels the jihadi terrorists*, Financial Times. Retrieved November 16, 2015.

¹⁷⁸ Rasheed A., *ISIS: Race to Armageddon*, Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, p. 56.

¹⁷⁹ Giovanni, Janine; McGrath Goodman, Leah; Sharkov, Damien. *How Does ISIS Fund Its Reign of Terror?*, Newsweek, November 6, 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Josh R., 14 June 2014, *America's Allies Are Funding ISIS*, The Daily Beast, Retrieved 21 September 2015.

ries received by businessmen, farmers, landowners; the *jizya*¹⁸¹ paid by non-Muslims for protection; revenues from sales of agricultural products (IS controls a third of grain production in Iraq).

The *Ahl al-hall wa al-aqd* (those that dissolve and bind). It is a group that includes high ranking, highly qualified people such as commanders and emirs, to process bills and policy proposals. It is a kind of parliament inspired by political Islamic legal tradition. It was the *Ahl al-hall wa al-aqd* to decide to set up the "caliphate" and to elect the "Caliph"¹⁸².

The Military Council is the most important executive body which oversees militias of "caliph." It handles all the military aspects of the Islamic State: strategy, planning, weapons, spoils of war, operations and military forces, border defense. Each sector is formed by three battalions of 300-350 fighters. The battalions include several companies 50-60 fighters. The staff also includes special commands, suicide fighters, specialized in logistics forces, snipers and more¹⁸³.

The Security Council manages the security and intelligence, policing internal intelligence to root out internal and external enemies of the caliphate. Among his duties there is also the personal security of the "Caliph"¹⁸⁴. It also check that the requirements of the "Caliph" are implemented in the provinces. The same applies to the judicial sanctions. The Council specializes infiltrating its members in rival organizations and counterintelligence operations. Check the special units such as fighters and suicide undercover agents in coordination with the military council. His platoons are

¹⁸¹ Specer R., *ISIS forces Iraqi Christians to pay jizya, tells them to convert to Islam or face the sword*, www.jihadwatch.org, June 23, 2104; Caris C. C., Reynolds S., July 2014, p. 16.

¹⁸² See, Bunzel C., p. 18.

¹⁸³ Caris C. C., Reynolds S., July 2014.

¹⁸⁴ Barret R., *The Islamic State*, The Soufan Group, November 2014, p. 31.

scattered in all provinces, with the task of managing mail and coordinate communications between the Council bodies. It also has a body all specialist in political assassinations, kidnappings, extortions.

The Administrative Organization. The conquered territories are reorganized into provinces traditionally called *wilaya*¹⁸⁵. Each of which is divided into *qitaat* (sectors), with leaders of the two branches of government, local administration and services for Muslims. The governor of the *wilayat* is the *wali*, whose immediate subordinates are the emirs (or leaders) who control an area assigned to them, namely that of sharia, the military and others. Sixteen administrative divisions of IS in Iraq and Syria. The *wilayat* retains their original name and call the Sub-Districts with the name of their main city.

The Council for the Media works for the dissemination Salafist and jihadist ideology; it processes the public statements to spread on Internet and in the caliphate. It is in charge of communication, marketing, social media, publications. There is the Channel of the Caliphate¹⁸⁶ (television), a monthly magazine titled *Dabiq*¹⁸⁷ coming out in several languages including English and Arabic, as well as other publications. Each *wilaya* has a media center right: the provinces so they can create and distribute content propaganda, making a show of the activities that take place within them. The different media agencies are subject to a central ministry, which pours the contents into four sources: al-Furqan, Al-I'tisam, al-Hayat (English only) and Agnad Foundation, which specializes in creating Anashid (songs). At the head of the Media Coun-

¹⁸⁵ The Provincial Council "oversees the civilian administration of the State through its 18 provinces". (Ibidem, p. 31).

¹⁸⁶ Withnall A., *Isis to launch first 24-hour online TV channel featuring British hostage John Cantlie and flagship show 'Time to Recruit'*, Independent, Sunday 18, 2015.

¹⁸⁷ Gambir H. K., *Dabiq: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State*, Institute for the Study of War, August, 2014.

cil's Ahmad Abousamra¹⁸⁸ (Ahmad Abu Samra), American, which is the accused mastermind of videos IS widespread so far.

Therefore, the administration of IS is a set of institutions and norms among whose objectives is clear to liberate the territories from non-Sunni communities: Shiites, Christians, Kurds, Yazidis and other ethno-religious minorities. The aim is to re-establish an order based on shared norms and values. Its operational divisions are: *dawa*¹⁸⁹, which enforces Islamic law, the Koran spreads and converts the infidels; *al-hisba*¹⁹⁰, the religious police with headquarters in a church desecrated of Raqqa, which should "promote virtue and pursue vices"; *al-Talim*¹⁹¹, responsible for teaching the Koran in schools. The bureaucratic paradox is that if you still want to live in those territories you just need to pay a fee. This, more than any other, highlights the "sense for the state" of IS.

¹⁸⁸ Zennie M., *The American computer wiz running brutally effective ISIS social media campaign: College-educated son of top Boston doctor is on FBI Most Wanted list*, Dailymail, 4 September, 2014.

¹⁸⁹ See, Caris C. C., Reynolds S., July 2014, p. 15.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 15-17.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 15-18.

IV. THE ISLAMIC STATE AND ITS STATEHOOD

4.1 Is IS a state or not?

If in the previous chapter we tried to present IS in an objective way through the data available, now we have reached the center of this research, in which it is important to understand if the stateness level of IS is enough to consider it a state or not.

Quinn Meacham in his article¹⁹² claims that there are two ways to define the notion of statehood: as the main actor of the international system or as an institution with specific functions. Although IS does not fit in the first definition, the Caliphate is performing some important functions. Even if the Islamic State does not have all of the characteristics that we usually attribute to states, it does have many of them, and to date its trajectory is toward increasing levels of stateness. Meacham found that the sectors in which IS is more active are *tax and labor acquisition*, through oil revenues, ransom from kidnapping and the *zakat*, and *domestic security*, since IS operates much more like a military organization than either a rebel insurgency or a local police force; in some ways, also in providing *social services*. Even if in chapter III we have seen that IS developed various departments to furnish services to its population, the author of the article sustains that IS is not acting as a state in the definition and the regulation of citizenship, as well as in managing international relations and in the facilitation of economic growth.

¹⁹² Meacham Q., *How much of a state is the Islamic State*, The Washington Post, February, 2015.

A different view is given by the American Institute for the Study of War¹⁹³. It sustains that "Isis is no longer a mere terrorist organization, but one that operates like an army",¹⁹⁴ and depicts it as "an alternative to modern states"¹⁹⁵, a post-state that "has attached its legitimacy as a movement and an idea to its ability to rule, not merely to fight"¹⁹⁶. ISW identifies IS centers of gravity with two main fields: the military, an institution expertly led and based on strategic capabilities; the political control, since "the Islamic state is operational, with functional institutions, governance, laws, executors, and citizens"¹⁹⁷. IS developed a structured governance system, divided "into two broad categories: administrative and service-oriented"¹⁹⁸. Between the administrative offices there is the *Da'wa* (the call), focused in religious outreach and proselytism; the *Hisba*, the religious police "promote virtue and prevent vice to dry up sources of evil, prevent the manifestation of disobedience, and urge Muslims towards well-being"¹⁹⁹; *al-Talim* (education), focused on the Islamic sciences, such as study of the Quran, rather than physics or mathematics, while there is no evidence of instruction in secular subjects or in any technical skills, nor is there any indication of ISIS formal schooling beyond the elementary level; the courts, major component of IS's Caliphate vision, and the local police that act as the "executive body for the court".²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Accused to "favor an aggressive U.S. foreign policy. (Chandrasekaran R., *Civilian analysts gained Petraeus's ear while he was commander in Afghanistan*, The Washington Post, December 19, 2012).

¹⁹⁴ Lewis J. D., *The Islamic State: A counter-strategy for a counter-state*, Middle East Security Report 21, Institute for the Study of War, July 2014, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp 22-23.

¹⁹⁸ Caris C. C., Reynolds S., *ISIS Governance In Syria*, Middle East Security Report 22, Institute for the Study of War, July 2014, p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ ISIS Wilayat Aleppo twitter post, "the history, situation, borders, statistics, and the fighting fronts", June 25, 2014, <http://justpaste.it/HalabReport>.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

IS developed also some services oriented offices for the Muslim community. It provides humanitarian assistance in the form of clothing, gasoline, medical services or food, for example through the direct control of food production spot like bakeries²⁰¹.

As we have seen in the first chapter, a fundamental characteristic of a state is legitimacy.

The principal element through which IS reach legitimacy is religion.²⁰² Like Zubaida affirms, this is a common feature in the contest of the state governance

Prior to the development of modern secular ideologies regarding political systems (of which more below), the main ideational fields available for political legitimacy and for conducting political contests and struggles were derived from religion, in Europe and in the Middle East.²⁰³

Particularly in the Middle East, we have seen in the second chapter the preponderance of religion in the political field, that brought to the development of movement like Political Islam. Therefore, IS linked from the very first moment its legitimacy to the emotional sphere of human - inevitably, since it bore as a jihadist organization.

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani claimed to his audience that Allah will inevitably conduct them to the victory²⁰⁴, therefore IS power is claimed to be the result of a heaven mandate. For example, the first issue of Dabiq describes "The Concept of Imamah (Leadership)" through the words of the Prophet and other religious said and stories.

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 20-23.

²⁰² Raluca Codruța Luțai, *The Islamic State – Aspects of Sovereignty*, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, in *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology*, Autumn/Winter 2015, Vol. 6 Issue 2, p. 149.

²⁰³ See, Zubaida S., p. 81.

²⁰⁴ issue 4, p 7.

Another element of legitimacy, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is built providing good and services²⁰⁵. IS supplies humanitarian aids, bakeries, water, electricity and salaries. These services are perfectly inserted in the propaganda perpetuated by Dabiq, in which there are some sections in which are shown the aids provided by IS.

The discourse about legitimacy cannot be afforded without mentioning sovereignty. In fact, legitimacy is strictly linked to this element. IS based its capacity to maintain sovereignty on a strong army, and by showing its strength to the international community on Dabiq²⁰⁶.

Finally, part of the strategy of IS is based on sectarianism that we can ascribe to the political identity. We have said that Burke claims identity can be divided in inclusive and exclusive. IS made an intensive use of exclusive identity, much more than other jihadist groups, while reinforcing at the same time an inclusive one. In fact we can see how the two types influences each other reciprocally. The hard sectarian line of IS is based - as we will see - on the ideas of al-Zarqawi. The term takfir (infidels) is used in a more restrictive way to increase the number of enemies and possible target of its attacks. Beyond "the west" and Israel, the first targets are Shia and Kurds. Attacks against this population are largely celebrated on the magazine Dabiq.

We have also said that Halliday proposes two sphere of identity for an Arab, that are *qawmi* and *qutri*, and IS tried to uses both the elements to construct its identity. For example, in the first Issue of Dabiq it is underlined the importance that IS gives to tribes, that represent the local identity:

The Islamic State has an extensive history of building relations with the tribes within its borders in an effort to strengthen the ranks of the Muslims, unite them under one

²⁰⁵ See, Raluca Codruța Luțai, p. 150; Pollard S. E., Poplack D. A. & Casey K. C., *Understanding the Islamic State's competitive advantages: Remaking state and nationhood in the Middle East and North Africa*, in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 27, 2015.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

imam, and work together towards the establishment of the prophetic Khilafah. Its practice of a ending tribal forums, addressing the concerns of the tribal leaders and accepting their bay'ah is regularly met with success.²⁰⁷

This means that IS tried to reinforce a *qutri* identity. Nevertheless, tribes that opposed to IS where hardly attacked, like al-She'at tribe which suffered the killing of 700 of its men in Raqqa²⁰⁸. Notwithstanding the attention to the local dimension, in the same passage previously cited it is underlined that "the mission of the Islamic State is neither local nor regional, but rather global". In fact, in the same issue Dabiq speaks to "Muslims everywhere"²⁰⁹. But even if its message can be pan-Islamic - since it want to represent the caliphate as the homeland of all the Muslims - it considerably contains the number of subjects that can fill this set.

Religious identity reinforces in this way legitimacy, since legitimacy is partly based (as we have seen) on religion.

The same concepts used in this analysis (territory, population, legitimacy, sovereignty...) has been used in the Dabiq to repeatedly debated our main topic about the stateness of IS.

In the Issue 8 appeared an article by John Cantlie titled Paradigm Shift²¹⁰, in which the author described the spreading through western public opinion and leaders that IS should no longer be treated as "terrorist organization, pure and simple", as Obama claimed, but as a more complex phenomenon. The author in his rhetorical discourse sustains that

generally one doesn't expect a mere "organization" to lay siege to cities or have their own police force. You certainly don't expect a mere "organization" to have

²⁰⁷ Dabiq, *The return of Khilafa*, Issue 1, p. 12.

²⁰⁸ Celso A. N., *Dabiq: IS's Apocalyptic 21st Century Jihadist Manifesto*, Political Sciences & Public Affairs, Vol. 2, issue 4, 2014, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ Dabiq, Issue 1, p. 7.

²¹⁰ Cantlie J., Paradigm Shift, on *Dabiq*, Issue 8, 1436, pp. 64-67.

tanks and artillery pieces, an army of soldiers tens of thousands strong, and their own spy drones. And one certainly doesn't expect a mere "organization" to have a mint with plans to produce their own currency, primary schools for the young, and a functioning court system.²¹¹

He proposes to use the word "country", since according to him nobody has legitimacy in these territories except IS itself. No Bashar al-Asad, nor Iraqi government, nor the Free Syrian Army.

In the Issue 12 the same author published the article Paradigm Shift Part II²¹², in which he reiterated and reinforced the same theories, calling IS "a genuine state".

This reality of the Caliphate is confirmed by many things, the people living under its governance, for one. For the first time in years, Muslims are living in security and their businesses are doing a roaring trade. The zakāh system has been up and running, taking a percentage of peoples' wealth and dispersing it to the poor. The gold dinar coins first mentioned a year ago are now being minted, in preparation for their circulation. Sharī'ah courts are established in every city and are judging by the laws of Islam. Corruption, before an unavoidable fact of life in both Iraq and Syria, has been cut to virtually nil while crime rates have considerably tumbled.²¹³

While comparing IS strength with the problems that are facing the other Middle Eastern states, he uses the words of western journalists to sustain his thesis. He uses the words of Tim Arango which says on his article *ISIS Transforming Into Functioning State That Uses Terror as Tool*²¹⁴ that

the group is putting in place the kinds of measures associated with governing: issuing identification cards for residents, promulgating fishing guidelines to preserve stocks, requiring that cars carry tool kits for emergencies. That transition

²¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

²¹² Cantlie J., Paradigm Shift Part II, on *Dabiq*, Issue 12, 1437, pp. 47-50.

²¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

²¹⁴ Arango T., *ISIS Transforming Into Functioning State That Uses Terror as Tool*, New York Times, 21 July 2015.

may demand that the West rethink its military-first approach to combating the group. "I think that there is no question that the way to look at it is as a revolutionary state-building organization," said Stephen M. Walt, a professor of international affairs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Another opinion that support his thesis comes from an article published by Ronald S. Magnum in the Georgia - Caucasus Strategic Studies Institute²¹⁵

The Islamic State meets all requirements of international law to be recognized as a State: it has a governing structure, it controls territory, a large population, is economically viable, has a large and effective military, and provides governmental services such as health care to its population. Dealing with it as if it were a terrorist movement is a non-starter. It is a State and if the West wants to defeat it, it must accept either

- (1) the Islamic State is enough of a threat to world (or even regional) peace and security that the West is willing to go to war with it, or
- (2) the costs of a war are too great and the West must plan to contain the Islamic State and ultimately negotiate with it as a sovereign state.

In both the articles by Joh Cantlie, what the author repeatedly says is that IS cannot be defeated by bombs and airstrikes but it requires a political strategy.

4.1.2 Consideration on IS statehood

Pursuing the goal of the statehood, IS undergoes a process of gradual bureaucratization,²¹⁶ ended up in some cases disappointing extremists because it tends to "nor-

²¹⁵ Magnum R. S., *Defeating the Islamic State*, Georgia - Caucasus Strategic Studies Institute, May 29, 2015.

²¹⁶ See, Lewis J. D., July 2014, p. 21; Sherlock R., *Why business is booming under Islamic State one year on*, *The Telegraph*, 8 June, 2015.

malize." In addition, the structure of state IS in many respects is not unlike that of other countries recognized and cherished by the West, such as Saudi Arabia. There are two equal and opposite realities to be taken into account: IS is an organized state structure; IS is not a state structure, although is organized. Both claims are true.

On one hand, IS wants to talk and speak a legal-administrative language that plays traditional and historical institutions of Islam while distorting the meaning, because it needs to create cohesion within it mainly because of the heterogeneity of its members, which puts at risk structure favoring do the rivalries. And because without institutional structures the social and economic fabric of the subject would collapse.

On the other hand, IS is a military group that really does not govern the conquered territories but, in general, it takes resources and uses. The plunderer states are common in Middle Eastern history. For example that of Nadir Shah, in the eighteenth century, whose projects criminals short term allowed him to collect a booty enough to survive until the next plunder. Then as now, the prey was being asked to pay a ransom or a fee to emigrate or to live peacefully in his territories. In this context, for IS the need for organization in the territory - with a headquarters and departments - would only a logistic need, for example to store weapons, to hold in custody the hostages, to house the troops, guarding the many armored, weapons and whatever else captured enemies. Both of these aspects are practical and do not exclude each other, because the control on the territory varies intensity depending on the area and their value in terms of resources and strategic potential²¹⁷.

But then: is IS a state? It is possible to define it "state" because it has a top-down structure and bureaucratic, with a head of government and various ministries? If the state is an entity that controls a territory, has the government institutions and is able to develop their own policies, to enact and enforce laws that controls the territory, then IS can be considered a State. If the state must be able to defend its territory and interests through the security forces, must be able to maintain an administrative and economic system that allows citizens to live, then Is can be considered a State.

²¹⁷ See, Caris C. C., Reynolds S., July 2014, p. 14

Is this state sustainable? From the point of view of the socio-political level of intimidation it will ensure control over the population. It is mainly on the repression that the Islamic State has based and continues to base its political, military and administrative. Symbol of this state of terror is the central square of Raqqa, formerly known as the Paradise Square, now called Hell Square, where the exhibits Is the corpses and severed heads of those who have transgressed²¹⁸. In economic terms, the finances of IS rely on the black market in oil and much more, being able to ensure a system of remuneration affiliates timely and satisfactory, that it also attracts foreign fighters. IS is an occupation regime structured and institutionalized with infiltrators and supporters in many villages in Syria and Iraq. However, the ability of IS to expand, as well as to maintain the control of the conquered territory, is uncertain.

Is IS a state and a bureaucratic system, or simply a terroristic group? Both things. It certainly presents a state structure articulated, that overlaps with the existing one in the conquered territories. At the same time this structure is not solid because: a) the composition of its leadership and its military / political risk because it is similar to a form of piracy, counting among its ranks several affiliates including foreigners, according to any case in so far could bring profit; b) its top-down system is threatened by the existence of parallel structures in its actual state, with real commanders and added commanders, emirs of IS ousted or put to flight by improvised leaders; c) the ideology that follows, based on complete and uncritical participation, on an outdated economic model inspired by redistributive models that have proven unsuccessful in the past, it threatens its sustainability. Internal contradictions are the main enemy of the Islamic State. Starting from the awareness that the level of institutionalization and bureaucratization reached by IS and its real power are two different things.

²¹⁸ Townsend M., *Inside the Islamic State's capital: Red Bull-drinking jihadists, hungry civilians, crucifixions and air strikes*, The Guardian, November 30, 2014.

4.2 The importance of statehood

The discourse about IS statehood make rises another question: For who is important to understand if IS is a state or not? According to our analysis, there are three main categories²¹⁹ to who is relevant the identification - or to who is relevant the non-identification - of IS with the concept of state.

1) Jihadist who aims to establish a territorial power and, in particular, to restore the caliphate.

The first step to construct an answer for our question and identify the first category is to trace - or better to track down - the development of the idea of the Islamic State foundation.

As we already said, al-Zarqawi caused a methodological divide between Al-Qaeda and his new-born group, inasmuch Osama Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri considered al-Zarqawi utterly extremist from the moment he did his first moves. In fact, the idea of the creation of a state of Islam was a priority for him since 2001. Thus, while the aim Bin Laden was to attack the Americans and to incite Muslim ate against them, al-Zarqawi "wanted to first overthrow local autocrats and eliminate the traitorous Shi'a, whom he belived were collaborating with the Americans to subjugate the Sunnis. His strategy was to ignite a sectarian civil war."²²⁰

An important contribute to the establishment of the Islamic State as restoration of the Caliphate is a book published on internet in 2004: "*Management of Savagery*:"

²¹⁹ The names of these categories are arbitrary, and are just related to the interconnection between the groups that these names can represent and their ideas (if present) about IS; not the groups in their entirety.

²²⁰ McCants W., *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, St Martins Pr, 13 October 2015, p. 11.

The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Islamic Nation Will Pass."²²¹ In an article, Hassan sustains that the book is part of a list of books that influence ISIS. "Isis-affiliated cleric said that Naji's book is widely read among provisional commanders and some rank-and-file fighters as a way to justify beheadings as not only religiously permissible but recommended by God and Muhammad."²²²

The aim of this book is to provide a detailed strategic guide to bring the establishment of the an Islamic State, intended as the Caliphate, through the jihad. As Abu Bakr Naji wrote on his book:

The management of savagery is the next stage that the Umma will pass through and it is considered the most critical stage. If we succeed in the management of this savagery, that stage (by the permission of God) will be a bridge to the Islamic state which has been awaited since the fall of the caliphate. If we fail e we seek refuge with God from that e it does not mean end of the matter; rather, this failure will lead to an increase in savagery!!²²³

An eminent precedent of the attempt to establish a territorial power from a jihadist group can be found in the Islamic Emirate of Afganistan²²⁴. In fact, Zarqawi spent a period in Afghanistan after the fall of the emirate²²⁵. McCants reminds that

In medieval Islamic thought, an "emirate" (imara), or government of a region, is subordinate to the "state" (dawla), the empire ruled by the caliph. But in the absence of the caliph, jihadists today sometimes use "state" and "emirate" inter-

²²¹ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass* Translated by William McCants, 23 May 2006.

²²² Hassan H., *Isis has reached new depths of depravity. But there is a brutal logic behind it*, *The Guardian*, 8 February 2015.

²²³ Abu Bakr Naji, point 4.

²²⁴ The Emirate of the Talibans lasted from 1994 to 2001 and was led by Mullah Umar (Nojumi N., "The Rise and Fall of the Taliban" in Crews R. D. and Tarzi A., (edited by) *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 90-117.

²²⁵ See, McCants W., p. 9.

changeably when talking about the government of a country they'd like to create²²⁶

Clarified this terminology, it is important to understand that emirate is not a purpose as ambitious as the caliphate. There have been many attempts to the creation of such entities with *de facto* territorial control, like Ansar al-Islam in Northern Iraq between 2001 and 2003 (which established training camps and sharia courts) or the Somali Shabab that controlled a large territory divided in wilayat. Lia Brynjar, that calls this entities jihadi proto-states, affirmed that main common characteristics of these subjects are ideological and international projects, aggressive behavior and commitment to effective governance.²²⁷

However, IEA has been harshly criticized in the Dabiq magazine, especially the leader Mulla Umar charged with being nationalist²²⁸, since he denied "any intent of conducting operations or expanding outside the modern-day borders of Afghanistan defined by the crusaders"²²⁹, and to not aiming to establish a "general sharia caliphate"²³⁰.

Ultimately, from this brief historical path, it results that on one hand there is a part of the movement of islamic fundamentalism that aim to a certain territorial control. On the other, there is a part of this section that uses the rhetoric of the restoration of the caliphate as the ultimate aim, in relation to which the territorial control represent just a means.

²²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²²⁷ Lia B., *Understanding Jihadi Proto-States*, in *Perspective on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, August 2015, pp. 31-35.

²²⁸ Issue 10, p. 20

²²⁹ Issue 6, p. 24

²³⁰ Issue 10, p. 20

2) *Western society*

We can find other two major groups for which the statehood of IS is significant. The first one is a part of the western society who want to look at IS as a state instead of a terrorist organization, for the reason that we are going to see.

In the field of international relations, realism is a theory "that addresses how states achieve security and [...] attempts to explain the security strategy a state should choose."²³¹ According to this theory the, Institute for the Study of War "ISIS is no longer a mere terrorist organization, but one that operates like an army. It is no longer just an army, but one that is conquering land in Iraq and Syria to establish new ideological rule, in line with al-Qaeda's endgame. This is no longer a war of ideas against an extremist group with sparse networks, ashy strategic messaging, and limited technical offensive capability."²³² To sustain this theory, ISW depicts ISIS as a post-state, an alternative to modern states.

This can be a simply linguistic problem, since the act of calling an object in a determinate way can be enough to make it different. Nevertheless, this linguist problem involves a political problem linked to the strategy to use to fight IS, that can change according to the nature of the enemy. For this reason, to define IS a terrorist organization or state can entails different strategy. In this respect, Lewis wrote:

It is necessary to avoid framing a U.S. counter-terrorism strategy to defeat IsIs as if it were. [...] It is therefore necessary for the U.S. to consider ways to defeat IsIs, not only to preserve the integrity of the Iraqi state, but to preserve our own security. [...] as pressure grows in Washington for a response to the crisis that has engulfed the region, policymakers must move beyond the assessment phase and begin building a comprehensive strategy. This effort must begin with a close examination of the sources of strength, intentions, and vulnerabilities of the Islamic

²³¹ Collins A., *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p 14.

²³² Lewis D. J., *The Islamic State: a Counter Strategy for a Counter State*, Middle East Security Report 21, July 2014, p. 4.

caliphate created by ISIs. Only then can a coherent counter-strategy emerge. First, we must understand the threat²³³.

This tendency has been detected by the already cited article by John Cantlie where he shows that a part of the western society calls IS "terrorist organization", while another part try to give it different names. He claims that

to concede that the Islamic State is indeed a state in any spoken comment would be an admission of their victory that no political leader is currently prepared to make. So they deliberately continue to call them the "so called" Islamic State, ISIL, IS, ISIS, Daesh and whatever the next nom de jour is in a move to show: "Pah. Fiddlesticks! We don't even know what their name is. We've got this in hand."²³⁴

Thus, the linguistic choice is the epiphenomenon of a strategy that from one side concerns the military field, and on the other side the behavior on the public line that derives from the grade of evaluation implied in the words.

3) Western Muslim

Before to present this last group, it necessary to present the concept of ideology, since we have presented above this element as common in the jihadi proto-state. Ideology is structured as a set of assertoric affirmations, that pretend absolute and unconditional adhesion. Moreover, it lies on the emotional and instinctive element more than the rational one: it requires sentimental identification, not rational consensus. While the aim of the philosophical dialogue is the understanding, made possible by the communication inclined to the truth, the aim of ideological assertoric proposi-

²³³ Ibidem.

²³⁴ See, Cantlie J., p. 48.

tions is to demarcate the differences between the contenders. It is presented in the form of intangible dogmas.²³⁵ Louis Althusser published in 1970 an essay called *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)*²³⁶. Althusser assumes that²³⁷ the marxist theory that describe the state as the repressive state apparatus (government, administration, army, police, etc.) is incomplete. He adds another element that is often confused with the repressive state apparatus: the ideological state apparatus (church, school, family, media, culture etc.).

"the unity of the different Ideological State Apparatuses is secured, usually in contradictory forms, by the ruling ideology , the ideology of the ruling class. [...] It is the intermediation of the ruling ideology that ensures a (sometimes teeth-gritting) 'harmony' between the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses, and between the different Ideological State Apparatuses. "²³⁸

To find the last group of people to whom is important to understand if the islamic state is a state we need to ask another question: who are the recipients of the messages of IS?

To answer this question we need to look at its channel of communications, first of all the online magazine Dabiq. Therefore, IS speaks firstly to every Muslim.

O Muslims everywhere, glad dings to you and expect good. Raise your head high, for today – by Allah’s grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership. It is a state where the Arab

²³⁵ Gatti R., *Filosofia Politica. Gli Autori, i concetti, i problemi*, Editrice La Scuola, 2011, pp. 17-18.

²³⁶ First appeared in Althusser L., *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essay*, London, New Left Books, 1971.

²³⁷ Althusser L., *On the Reproduction of Capitalism. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Verso, 2014.

²³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 247-248.

and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers.²³⁹

Initially, the words of IS are directed to the "Muslims everywhere", to the Umma as a transnational element of which IS declare itself homeland.

Consequently, the *Hijrah*, the migration is the imperative broadcasted through *Dabiq*, especially the first issue, for muslims who live everywhere outside the territories of IS.

The first priority is to perform hijrah from wherever you are to the Islamic State, from dārul-kufr to dārul-Islām. [...] Second, if you cannot perform hijrah for whatever extraordinary reason, then try in your location to organize bay'āt (pledges of allegiance) to the Khalīfah Ibrāhīm. [...] Finally, if you cannot do any of the above for reasons extremely beyond your control, inshā'allah your intention and belief that the Islamic State is the Khilāfah for all Muslims will be sufficient to save you from the warning mentioned in the hadīth, "Whoever dies without having bound himself by a bay'ah, dies a death of jāhiliyyah" [Sahīh Muslim]."

The term *jahiliyyah*, usually referred to the pre-Islamic world, is used by IS to describe the world outside the Caliphate. The principal message, repeated as a mantra, is the undelayable need to execute both *hijrah* from *dar al-kuffar* and *jihād*.

For IS, *Kuffar* are infidels, wether they be Muslim or not; in fact Muslims are the first victims of IS activities. It condemns Muslims that do not perform *jihād* at the same way of western *kuffar*. However, it often refers to the West, even not always directly, for example by referring to "western" ideologies such as freedom of choice²⁴⁰, or describing the intrinsic violence of the capitalistic world; a violence intended to impoverish the life of the Muslims.

²³⁹ Dabiq, The return of Khilafa, Issue 1, p. 7.

²⁴⁰ issue 2 p 11.

The modern day slavery of employment, work hours, wages, etc., is one that leaves the Muslim in a constant feeling of subjugation to a kāfir master. He does not live the might and honor that every Muslim should live and experience. It is as if Bilāl (radiyallāhu ‘anh) never were emancipated to live a free man, the Islamic State of Madīnah were never established, and the verses of jihād, jizyah, and war booty were never revealed upon the Prophet of the Muslim Ummah!²⁴¹

Through the pages of Dabiq we can find lots of references to the West. For example, when it is declared that "there is a slogan repeated continuously by apologetic “du’āt” when flirting with the West and that is their statement: “Islam is the religion of peace,” and they mean pacifism by the word peace. [...] How far is their claim from the truth, for Allah has revealed Islam to be the religion of the sword."²⁴² The idea of pacifism, strongly condemned, has been, according to Dabiq, "supported by the British crusaders".²⁴³ During the period of its territorial expansion, Dabiq made a comparison between IS, described as strong and successful, and the Western world

Much to the dread of western political leaders, the Islamic State is now truly moving with great momentum. As an entity enjoys success, it attracts more to its fold, thereby causing expansion and breeding more success until it achieves some sort of critical mass, the point at which it becomes self-perpetuating, self-sustaining. And for the moment, the talk about the Islamic State is not even of its continued expansion in the Arab nations of the Middle East, but its reach into the homelands and living rooms of ordinary people living thousands of miles away in western cities and suburbs. The Islamic State has now become a global player.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ issue 3 p. 29

²⁴² Issue 7, p. 20

²⁴³ Ibidem

²⁴⁴ issue 5, p. 36

In a point it addresses women, but at some point it seems to speak to western women.

The opponents often repeat that those who perform hijrah to the Islamic State belong to a marginalized class in their former lands, living in difficult conditions between unemployment, poverty, family problems, and psychological disorders. But I saw something contrary! I saw sisters who divorced the Duniyā and came to their Lord, striving. I saw sisters who abstained from a life of luxury and abundant wealth. I saw sisters who abandoned a beautiful home and luxurious car, and ran for the cause of their Lord, as if they were saying. [...] I met a sister who was six months pregnant accompanied by her husband coming from Britain. I was surprised by this adventurer, so I said, "Why didn't you wait a bit until you gave birth to the baby you are carrying and then perform hijrah!" She answered, "We could not handle waiting any longer. We melted yearning for the Islamic State!"²⁴⁵

Until 2015 "more than 550 Muslim women from Western countries have joined ISIS and moved to its proclaimed 'Caliphate' in Syria and Iraq."²⁴⁶ Anita Perešin found different motivations for this "attraction" that fall outside the strictly religious reason. They left to IS, with or without the families, to respond to the "call to hijra" by Al-Baghdadi, with the idea to defend the ummah (under attack by the infidels) and to participate in the process of state-building. A preponderant part is occupied by political and civil reasons since some of them act as humanitarian activists to help Syrian population, or since they want to abandon "racism and a lack of religious freedom, xenophobia or negative attitudes toward Muslim immigrants in the West". Other motivations that women have expressed, include adventure, alienation, dissatisfaction with their lives, searching for alternatives, romantic disappointments, adolescent rebellion, or other forms of discontent.

²⁴⁵ issue 8, p. 34

²⁴⁶ Perešin A., *Fatal Attraction: Western Muslimas and ISIS, in Perspective on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 3, August 2015, p. 21.

The Soufan Group revealed that up to December 2015 that "between 27,000 and 31,000 people have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State and other violent extremist groups from at least 86 countries" and "the number of foreign fighters from Western Europe has more than doubled since June 2014".²⁴⁷ Since that period, approximately 2500 people from European countries decided to leave to Syria as much as Russian, while just 250 Americans did the same.

The reasons that encourage people to join the group are mainly personal than political. For example, has been found that the involvement of a member of the family in the groups or in the radicalization process can be a decisive reason to influence the choice to leave. In the case of France and Belgium, the European countries with the highest number of foreign fighters, the sense of marginalization of the immigrants appear to be a central element for the radicalization. Through its propaganda campaign, IS try to make life under its rule more attractive for this possible recruits. This was defined the Jihadi-cool subculture that inspired young British men²⁴⁸.

However, after the cut of the salaries IS did because of the low oil prices and high costs of the war, even if foreign fighter have higher income per month than local fighters, the number of foreign fighters it seems slowly decreasing.²⁴⁹

In IS strategy expressed on Dabiq first, who cannot perform *hijra* should have tried to act as a lone wolf. IS appears to have succeeded more than al-Qaida in triggering so-called "individual jihad" operations by unaffiliated sympathizers in the West.²⁵⁰ In an article Mandelsohn Barak wrote that "between October 2015 and August 2016 radicalized individuals, as well as "wolf packs," carried out over 20 attacks

²⁴⁷ The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters. An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, December 2015, p. 4.

²⁴⁸ Ernst D., 'Jihadi-cool' subculture drives youth to Islamic State, says Muslim Council of Britain adviser, *The Washington Post*, August 2014.

²⁴⁹ Lashkari A., *Is the number of foreign fighters joining ISIS really plummeting?*, *Europe News Week*, April 29, 2016.

²⁵⁰ Hegghammer T. and Nesser P., "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West", *Perspective on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, August 2015, p. 27.

in response to the Islamic State's call to indiscriminately kill "nonbeliever" civilians."²⁵¹

Therefore, if from one side IS want to be a threat for the global state system, from the other side it is trying to adopt and to use their models and institutions, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

These characteristics are useful to attract muslim that live in the western state, that live in the at the border of the society.

"The me has come for those generations that were drowning in oceans of disgrace, being nursed on the milk of humiliation, and being ruled by the vilest of all people, a er their long slumber in the darkness of neglect – the me has come for them to rise."

²⁵¹ Mandelsohn B., *ISIS' Lone-Wolf Strategy and how the West should Respond*, Foreign Affairs, August 25, 2016.

Conclusion

The Islamic State is now losing its ground and its territories, attacked on different fronts and from different actors. However, it represented and still represents an important issue for the international system, since the group of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria proclaimed itself a state while challenging at the same time the state system of the Westphalian order.

This thesis revolves around the term "State": it is possible to define the Islamic State a state? Certainly, its rise is a predictable event - if not necessary. It is an entity that occupied the political vacuum left by weak and failed states, using the same elements that create a sort of structural instability in the Middle-Eastern states. For this reason, this thesis shows first of all a key for the interpretation of the Islamic State statehood. It cannot be analyzed in isolation, but it has to be contextualized in relation to the elements that characterize the state in the Middle East.

The second part it is strictly related to the statehood. We tried to present its structure and its method of governance and, than, the subjects that are affected in different ways by IS. It performs various characteristics that are part of a state. It has a territory and a population in it. It manages the finance and provides some social services to its people. It has power, demonstrated by monopoly of the violence through the military power and the political control, performed with institutions and a law system.

Given the blurring boundaries of the parameters, the terminology is highly variable. However, it also depends on the element on what we concentrate our attention. IS can be considered a counter state, since it challenged the state system. It can be considered a proto-state, or better a jihadi proto-state. We have proposed many attempts by other jihadist groups to obtain territorial control and we have seen that a common feature of this proto-states is to have an ideological project. This is the element that can be central in the definition of the Islamic State. According to Althusser,

state is the state apparatus, in which the intermediation of the ruling class ideology - which holds the power - ensures the harmony between repressive and ideological state apparatus.

Ideology played a central role in IS proselytizing. Thus, we could define IS a state based on the Ideological state apparatus. But this is not sufficient. It is necessary a further specification. Its ruling ideology, the Jihadi-Salafism and its hardline orientation that separates IS from Al-Qaeda (which strengthen its identity), is massively spread through the ideological state apparatus. This apparatus is perfectly inserted in the globalized contemporary world, reaching and appetizing in this way every subject susceptible to this kind of ideology, supported by the traditional concept of Umma.

Finally, we can affirm that IS is a jihadi proto-state in which the ideological state apparatus reached a high grade of internationalization. Islamic State ended up to be identified with its ideological state apparatus and, finally, with its ideology.

Bibliography

- Althusser L., *On the Reproduction of Capitalism. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Verso, 2014.
- Anvieri S., *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge University Press, 2003
- Ayubi N. N., *Over-stating the Arab State. Politics and Society in the Middle East*, I. B. Tauris, 2009.
- Badie B., *The Imported State. The Westernization of Political Order*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000.
- Barr J., *A Line in the Sand. The Anglo-French Struggle for the Middle East, 1914-1948*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.
- Barret R., *The Islamic State*, The Soufan Group, November 2014.
- Barrow C. W., *Critical Theories of the State. Marxist, Neo-Marxist, Post-Marxist*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.
- Bayat A., *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2010.
- Bellin E., "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders," in M. Posusney and M.P. Angrist, eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2005.
- Berger P., *Invitation to Sociology*, Doubleday, New York, 1963.
- Bobbio N., *Democracy and Dictatorship. The Nature and Limits of State Power*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989.
- Carneiro R. L., *A Theory of the Origin of the State: Traditional Theories of State Origins are Considered and Rejected in Favor of a New Ecological Hypothesis*, in Hall J. (Edited by) *The State. Critical Concept*, London, 1994.
- Choueiri Y. M., *Il Fondamentalismo Islamico*, Il Mulino, 1993.
- Collins A., *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

- Cummings S., Hinnebusch R., *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia*, Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Dabashi H., *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, London: Zed Books, 2012.
- Di Nolfo E., *Storia delle relazioni internazionali. Dal 1918 ai giorni nostri*, Laterza, 2008.
- Dyer G., *Don't Panic: ISIS, Terror and Today's Middle East*, Random House Canada, 2015.
- Gatti R., *Filosofia Politica. Gli Autori, i concetti, i problemi*, Editrice La Scuola, 2011.
- Gelvin J. L., *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Haliday F., *The Middle East in International Relations. Power, Politics and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Esposito J. L., Shahin E., (Edited by), *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Fieldhouse D. K., *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914–1958*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Focarelli C., *Diritto Internazionale I. Il sistema degli stati e i valori comuni dell'umanità*, CEDAM, 2012.
- Fromkin D., *A Peace to End All Peace*, Kolt Paperback, 2009.
- Freese L., Burke P. J., *Persons, Identities, and Social Interaction*, in Markovsky B., et al. (Edited by) *Advances in Group Processes*, Vol. 11, JAI Press, 1994.
- Hanioglu M., *A Brief history of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Imber C., *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650. The Structure of Power*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.
- Jessop B., *The Capitalist State. Marxist Theories and Methods*, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1982.
- Jordan B., *The State. Authority and Autonomy*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1985.

- Khalidi R., "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature", in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 5, 1991.
- Khoury P. S., Kostiner J. (Edited by), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, University of California Press, 1990.
- Koohi-Kamali F., *The development of nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan*, in Kreyenbroek P. G., Sperl S, 2003.
- Kreyenbroek P. G., Sperl S. (Edited by), *The Kurds. A contemporary overview*, Routledge, 2000.
- Luciani G., *Oil and political economy in the international relations of the Middle East*, in Fawcett L. (Edited by), *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Levy R., *The Social Structure of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Mahdavi M. (Guest Editor), *Contemporary Social Movements in the Middle East and Beyond*, Sociology of Islam, vol 2, 2014.
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works Vol. 3*, London, 1976.
- McCants W., *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, St Martins Pr, 13 October 2015.
- McMeekin S., *The Berlin-Bagdad Express. The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2010.
- Naji Abu Bakr, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass* Translated by William McCants, 23 May 2006.
- Nisan M., *A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McFarland & Company, 2002.
- Nelson R. B., *The Making of the Modern State. A Theoretical Evolution*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- Nojumi N., "The Rise and Fall of the Taliban" in Crews R. D. and Tarzi A., (edited by) *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009
- Pappe L., *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld, 2006.

- Poggi G., *The Development of the Modern State. A Sociological Introduction*, Stanford University Press, 1978.
- Poggi G., *The State. Its Nature, Development and Prospects*, Polity Press, 1990.
- Poggi G., *Weber. A short introduction*, Polity Press, 2006.
- Rasheed A., *ISIS: Race to Armageddon*, Vij Books India Pvt Ltd.
- Riccardi A., *Il Mediterraneo nel Novecento. Religioni e Stati.*, Edizioni San Paolo. 1994.
- Rostow W. W., *The Economic Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, 1960.
- Roy O., *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, Hurst & Co, 2004.
- Said E. W., *Orientalism*, Vintage Book, 1978.
- Salamey I., *Middle Eastern Exceptionalism: Globalization and the Balance of Power*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, Democracy and Security, 5:249–260, 2009.
- Shaw M. N., *International Law*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Strayer J. R., *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Tapper R., *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, London, 1983.
- Telhami S., Barnett M. N. (Edited by), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Tilly C., "Reflections on the history of European state-making", in *The formation of national states in Western Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975.
- Yapp M. E., *The Near East since the First World War. A History to 1995*, Pearson Education Limited, 1996.
- Yonah A., Dean A., *The Islamic State. Combating the Caliphate without Borders*, Lexington Books, London, 2015.
- York R., *Know Thy Enemy: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*, lulu.com, 2015.
- Zubaida S., *Beyond Islam, A New Understanding of the Middle East*, IB Tauris, 2011.
- Zubaida S., *Law and Power in the Islamic World*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2003

Articles and Papers

- Althusser L., *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essay*, London, New Left Books, 1971.
- Arango T., *ISIS Transforming Into Functioning State That Uses Terror as Tool*, New York Times, 21 July 2015.
- Bunzel C., *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, p. 18., The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper No 19, March 2015.
- Caris C. C., Reynolds S., *ISIS Governance In Syria*, Middle East Security Report 22, Institute for the Study of War, July 2014.
- Celso A. N., *Dabiq: IS's Apocalyptic 21st Century Jihadist Manifesto*, Political Sciences & Public Affairs, Vol. 2, issue 4, 2014, p. 3.
- Chandrasekaran R., *Civilian analysts gained Petraeus's ear while he was commander in Afghanistan*, The Washington Post, December 19, 2012.
- Chalrlotte Levins, "The Rentier State and the Survival of Arab Absolute Monarchies", *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion*, 14 (1), 2012.
- Coles I., Parker N., *How Saddam's men help Islamic State rule*, Reuters, December 11, 2015.
- Cordesman A. H., *ISIS and the "Failed State Wars"*, Center for Strategic International Studies, October 2, 2015.
- Cunningham E., *Islamic State leader al-Baghdadi calls on followers to unleash 'volcanoes of jihad'*, The Washington Post, November 13, 2014.
- Dabiq. All the Issues.
- Dodge T., *After the Arab Spring: power shift in the Middle East?: from the 'Arab Awakening' to the Arab Spring; the post-colonial state in the Middle East*

- IDEAS reports - special reports, Kitchen, Nicholas, ed SR011. LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, 2012.
- Doodstard A., *How Not To Understand ISIS*, The Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion, October 2, 2014.
- Eifert B., Gelb A., Tallroth N. B., *The Political Economy of Fiscal Policy and Economic Management in Oil-Exporting Countries*, The World Bank, Africa Regional Office, Office of the Chief Economist, October 2002.
- Ernst D., '*Jihadi-cool*' subculture drives youth to Islamic State, says Muslim Council of Britain adviser, *The Washington Post*, August 2014.
- Fukuyama F., "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.
- Gambir H. K., *Dabiq: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State*, Institute for the Study of War, August, 2014.
- Gause F. G. III, *Beyond Sectarianism. The New Middle East Cold War*, Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, Number 11, July 2014.
- GSDRC, *Definitions and Typologies of Fragile States*, University of Birmingham: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2012 (<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/fragile-states/chapter-1-understanding-fragile-states/definitions-and-typologies-of-fragile-states>).
- Giovanni, Janine; McGrath Goodman, Leah; Sharkov, Damien. *How Does ISIS Fund Its Reign of Terror?*, *Newsweek*, November 6, 2014.
- Hegghammer T. and Nesser P., "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West", *Perspective on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, August 2015.
- Hassan H., *Isis has reached new depths of depravity. But there is a brutal logic behind it*, *The Guardian*, 8 February 2015.
- Helfont S., *Post-Colonial States and the Struggle for Identity in the Middle East since World War Two*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 23, 2015.
- Heydemann S., "Is the Middle East Different?," *Journal of Democracy*, 7(2), 1996.
- Hollo J. Z., *Rethinking Rentier State Theory: Qatar and the Rise of Smart Money*, *Fair Observer*, 11 October 2013.

- Hubbard B., Schmitt E., *Military skill and terrorist technique fuel success of ISIS*.
The New York Times. 27 August 2014. Retrieved 23 October 2014.
- Huntington S. OP, "The Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3,
1993.
- Islamist group claims Syria bombs "to avenge Sunnis"*, Al Arabiya News, March 21,
2012.
- Josh R., 14 June 2014, *America's Allies Are Funding ISIS*, The Daily Beast, Re-
trieved 21 September 2015.
- Kramer M., "Arab Nationalism: A Mistaken Identity", *Daedalus*, 122 (3)
- Lashkari A., *Is the number of foreign fighters joining ISIS really plummeting?*, Eu-
rope News Week, April 29, 2016.
- Levitsky S., *Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Re-
search*, World Politics, 49/4, 1997.
- Lewis J. D., *The Islamic State: A counter-strategy for a counter-state*, Middle East
Security Report 21, Institute for the study of War, July 2014.
- Lia B., *Understanding Jihadi Proto-States*, in Perspective on Terrorism, Vol. 9, Issue
4, August 2015.
- Magnum R. S., *Defeating the Islamic State*, Georgia - Caucasus Strategic Studies
Institute, May 29, 2015.
- Mandelsohn B., *ISIS' Lone-Wolf Strategy and how the West should Respond*, Foreign
Affairs, August 25, 2016.
- Mecham Q., *How much of a state is the Islamic State*, The Washington Post, February,
2015.
- Nakhoul S., *Insight - Saddam's former army is secret of Baghdadi's success*, Reuters,
Jun 16, 2015 (<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-baghdadi-insight-idUKKBN0OW1UR20150616>).
- Okruhlik G., *Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of Opposition: The Political
Economy of Oil States*, in Comparative Politics, April 1999.
- Perešin A., *Fatal Attraction: Western Muslims and ISIS*, in Perspective on Terror-
ism, Vol. 9, Issue 3, August 2015.

- Pipes D., *The Alawi Capture of Power in Syria*, Middle Eastern Studies, 1989.
- Pollard S. E., Poplack D. A. & Casey K. C., *Understanding the Islamic State's competitive advantages: Remaking state and nationhood in the Middle East and North Africa*, in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 27, 2015.
- Reuter C., *The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State*, Der Spiegel, 18 April, 2015.
- Roggio B., *ISIS' 'Southern Division' praises foreign suicide bombers*, The Long War Journal, April 9, 2014, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/04/isis-southern-division.php#>).
- Ruhayem R., *Protests engulf west Iraq as Anbar rises against Maliki*, BBC News, January 2, 2013 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20887739>).
- Raluca Codruța Luțai, *The Islamic State – Aspects of Sovereignty*, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, in *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology*; Autumn/Winter 2015, Vol. 6 Issue 2.
- Sadiki L., *Rethinking Arab Democratization: Elections without Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Sen A., *Democracy as a Universal Value*, Journal of Democracy 10.3, 1999.
- Sherlock R., *Why business is booming under Islamic State one year on*, The Telegraph, 8 June, 2015.
- Solomon E., Chazan G., Jones S., October 14, 2015, *Isis Inc: how oil fuels the jihadi terrorists*, Financial Times. Retrieved November 16, 2015.
- Specer R., *ISIS forces Iraqi Christians to pay jizya, tells them to convert to Islam or face the sword*, www.jihadwatch.org, June 23, 2104
- Stepan A., Robertson G. B., *An 'Arab' More Than 'Muslim' Electoral Gap*, Journal of Democracy 14, July 2003
- The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters. An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, December 2015.
- The World Bank, World Development Report 1997, *The State in a Changing World*, Washington DC, The World Bank, 1997

- Townsend M., *Inside the Islamic State's capital: Red Bull-drinking jihadists, hungry civilians, crucifixions and air strikes*, The Guardian, November 30, 2014.
- Withnall A., *Isis to launch first 24-hour online TV channel featuring British hostage John Cantlie and flagship show 'Time to Recruit'*, Independent, Sunday 18, 2015.
- Yom S., *Authoritarian State Building in the Middle East: From Durability to Revolution*, CDDRL, Working Papers, 121, February 2011.
- Zelin A. Y., *The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement*, Research Notes, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, No 20, June 2014.
- Zennie M., *The American computer wiz running brutally effective ISIS social media campaign: College-educated son of top Boston doctor is on FBI Most Wanted list*, Dailymail, 4 September, 2014.