

CHAPTER 14. THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION.

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1. Introduction

The processes of political transformation can be performed through peaceful or violent changes. There are some factors that can impact on the way these processes take place in a particular scenario. In this regard, we find favorable external factors such as international or regional context (Panebianco 1996) that can promote non-violent changes to further lead to transitions to democracy (Calatrava 2012: 140; Whitehead, 2001). Conversely, situations with vacuums of power can also be come about where violence takes the lead as important component to favour the presence of terrorists or insurgents. Those wrongdoers are capable to destabilize a region and control certain areas in order to overthrow governments to further establish new states or other forms of political organizations. Those groups can take advantage of the absence of states or at least, the existence of coherent and sustainable states. They usually have a political aim: to end the state organization as a form of government and reinvent a new one or another nationality. In this way violence can generate processes of change with acute political and security implications.

After the so-called Arab Spring, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has lived an extremely complicated political change showing results that allow us to compare the

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political systems of different case studies (Szmolka 2015, 2014, 2013). Out of these comparisons, a common factor among these countries is that the regional context to promote democracy has not been supportive enough. Only in one case, that of Tunisia, it is possible to hold that the revolts have derived towards a transition to democracy (Martínez 2015). In the rest of the countries, either there have not been substantial changes, or they have ended in civil wars such the cases of Syria and Libya, with strong implications of the Islamic State. The conflict of Syria, for example, has turned into the cruellest and bloodiest as of the World War II for the number of civil victims and displaced people and refugees (Álvarez-Ossorio 2015). It also has a few characteristics of continuity with previous conflicts by presenting new and worrying indicators of a very significant cruelty. Iraq is destabilized and divided and Libya has important problems to establish a legitimate government. In this landscape we witness a type of conflict difficult to analyze.

The proclamation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)¹ on 29 June 2014, which also coincided with the centenary of the beginning of World War I, has a major impact on political and security alike. Its actions and expansion is changing the regional dynamics of MENA region as well as triggering processes of political and territorial change². It has generated too serious security threats, both in the latter region and beyond, due to the wave of groups of followers and spillover worldwide (Marsili 2015: 86). In this way ISIS has given a new twist to the war in Iraq and Syria as well as to the Libyan conflict on the following aspects: (i) amplifying and making the conflict more complex with connected implications on security, (ii) establishing a new mode of governance in the conquered territories and (iii) producing a new security framework in MENA region.

These issues are discussed throughout the work. We aim at studying precisely the political and security implications the performance of ISIS does have. In short, the work is organized as follows.

After a brief contextualization about the origins and goals of ISIS, we analyze the following sections: (i) the impact of ISIS in the security domain (type of conflict with its own signs of identity); (ii) the government exerted in the occupied territories; and (iii) the implications and impacts on the security realm throughout MENA region by focusing on two main domains: the international response to the threat provided by the international community, and the new configuration of regional and global alliances. Our main contribution due to the scarcity of studies in this regard is the analysis of the ISIS' conflict typology.

2. ISIS' conflict: Origins and Objectives

The State or Islamic Caliphate of Iraq and the Levant was proclaimed just ninety years after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished it in March 1924. The current Caliphate meant to symbolize the past greatness of some of the Islamic Caliphates³. It aims to revive or claim through war, conflict and destabilization of fragile states, a glory or a lost 'Golden Age' to establish itself as a global actor (Nuruzzaman 2015). Over a year and a half following to its inception in Iraq just right after the US invasion of 2003, ISIS expanded to Syria in 2011. Since then, it has rapidly advanced to conquer vast territories of both countries that entail a population of roughly 8 million people thanks to an expansive 30,000 troops Army in permanent growing. In the occupied territories ISIS has been perceived as a legitimate actor. It applies the law and exercises totalitarian governance. It acts, “de facto”, as a state without international recognition endangering the existence of other states in MENA region (Jordan 2015: 111). Therefore it defies undoubtedly the global order in nation states where the authority is institutionalized and not in a common system of religious authority (Philips 2014: 469).

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How ISIS has achieved this rapid advance in such a short period of time? The answer is not simple, but if we surf back into history to find some background to provide revealing data. In this sense, in Halil Inalcik's studies on the origins of traditional Islamic State explains the substantial Ottoman advance from the thirteenth century. The Ottomans aspired to the rich and fertile land of the Byzantines. A war for resources broke out and it drove ottomans to a dazzling advance through the Anatolian peninsula.

The rapid victory of the Islamic Ottoman State was due to various reasons: they offered more resources to the Byzantine population than the one provided by their own lords; they pursued a conciliatory policy towards Christians and also; they took advantage of the lack of unity among the Latin and Orthodox Churches. The territorial objective of the Ottomans was the fertile lands of the Byzantines. To that purpose the Gaza, 'Holy War', was launched in order to legitimize the war against Byzantium (Inalcik 1973: 6-15).

ISIS also had and still has a very clear territorial objective: the denial of colonial political map of the Middle East after the First World War. This implies to unite the territories divided by the Treaty of Sykes-Picot so as to build a new state by taking advantage of the fragile states of MENA region and exert governance inspired in a rigid interpretation of the sharia.

But that goal cannot be achieved without effective tools. ISIS possesses a powerful instrument: the execution of a war that spares no material or human resources. A warfare with participation of classic and new elements. A war that has a historical and chronological continuity with the past (restoration of the Caliphate), with mythical speeches attracting followers, with obsolete military means coexisting with latest technologies and by performing operations of

influence of postmodern societies in an asymmetric and hybrid war scenario. We will start by analyzing this effective and powerful tool to be able to dissect and scrutinize ISIS' signs of identity

3. Repercussions on the Security domain: ISIS War as a typology of conflict

The participation of ISIS in the MENA region conflicts has reversed the decreasing trend of international conflicts in frequency and intensity, a tendency which comes to happen since the fall of the Iron Curtain. The internal traces generated by ISIS across the countries where it operates as well as the extreme external and global impact of their actions have captured the attention of governments and media in a similar way. Study groups such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) at the University of Uppsala, currently defines the Middle East as the most violent region due to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq (Melander 2015: 7). War, armed conflict, crisis, terrorism, barbarism, extreme violence, genocide, extortion, slavery and sexual violence, black market, refugees and displaced persons crisis, mercenaries and international intervention, these are some the words associated to ISIS's phenomenon which are repeatedly heard and read. Most of them are already familiar terms due to the most ruthless of 90's wars on media: Balkans, Great Lakes and Caucasus.

Hence, can we categorize these variables and features in the same way Mary Kaldor did with her concept of 'new wars' out of the case studies of Bosnia and Caucasus, and especially based on the paradigmatic model of Bosnia (Mello 2010: 6)? Or should we categorize the ISIS' conflict as 'proxy war'⁴, 'hybrid war'⁵, of 'sportive war spectator'⁶ or 'fourth generation conflict'⁷ ' as provided by other authors?

Those typologies that proliferated in the 90's to name conflicts of various kinds, although in essence very similar, can provide some clarification on this matter. Which are then, the

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similarities and differences between the current conflict and those of the early 90's or even with respect to the preceding wars? And more significantly, against what typology we should compare ISIS' conflict among the wide variety of denominations we have noted? We opted for focusing primarily on the concept of 'new wars' to carry out our analysis. The reasons are conclusive: it is considered the concept more unifying⁸, prominent, detailed and of greatest impact as well as the most commonly cited by scholars on the security field to analyze contemporary conflicts (Malantowicz 2013: 52). In spite of detractors⁹ and even though some authors who wrote on this issue, as Herfried Münkler, stated clearly that the concept of "new wars" was not so new but "it was the return to something very old", it is quite clear that the conflicts arising in 90's had peculiar features (Münkler, 2005: 2).

After reviewing the works of Kaldor, and those of the "new wars- positioned" authors such as Münkler, Snow, Van Creveld, Bellamy, Hoslti, Duffield, Eppler, Mandel, Singer, Luttwak, we have established and agglutinated a series of categories on the new wars: (i) actors, (ii) causes, (iii) methods and strategies, (iv) forms of financing, (v) complex emergencies, (vi) geographical framework and (vii) legal legitimate framework, so as to come up with a comprehensive definition of "new wars":

"Those conflicts taking place in a geographical territory which is restricted to the conflict within the state, but with transnational implications; the causes of these conflicts are often identity (religious, ethnic) and contention for resources. The objectives are consistent with the causes since they are related to a particularistic identity policy. There is a multiplicity and fragmentation of the internal actors involved in the conflict (regular armed forces, criminal groups, self-defense units ...); cause complex emergencies requiring humanitarian and military response, leading to an internationalization of the conflict by reason of globalization, and generating as a result of the latter,

some forms of financing that obey to what is known as new economy of war (looting, extortion, foreign aid, black market). The assets, methods, tactics and strategies of fighting used are characterized by violence against civilians, asymmetry in the conflict, hybrid in the way warfare develops, different tolerance to casualties and finally, what we name as the legitimate and legal framework of these conflicts, featured by the erosion the monopoly of violence with a total disconcertment of the international law driving to practices and methods of senseless violence that fall in the area of barbarism '(Bados, Duran 2015: 33).

We will analyze empirically against this conceptual framework to conclude whether we witness another "new war" conflict or in contrast, there are some substantial differences as far as this analytical framework is concerned. The following table 1 shows the variables associated with indicators out of the signs of identity of these types of conflicts. This sort of operationalization allows us to reach the granularity of the conflict to be able to identify substantial differences which might reveal some kind of newness.

Table 1: Categories, variables e indicators of ‘new wars-type conflicts’

Categories	Variables	Indicators	Result
Actors	<i>Multiplicity and fragmentation of the internal actors</i>	Regular Armed Forces	Yes
		Paramilitary Groups	Yes
		Self-Defence Units	Yes
		Insurgents Groups, Rebels	Yes
		Terrorist Groups	Yes
		Warlords	Yes

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Causes	<i>Religious, tribal, or linguistic identities.</i>	Clan/Tribe	Yes
		Language	Yes
		Religion	Yes
		Otherness	Yes
	<i>Content for resources Greed</i>	Chance of economic benefits	Yes
Methods and strategies	<i>Violence against civilians</i>	Civilian casualties	Yes
		Military casualties	Yes
		Forced Displaced People	Yes
	<i>Asymmetry</i>	Difference in weapons and means.	Yes
		Difference in the Training standards	Yes
		Difference in economic resources and logistics	Yes
		Difference in recruiting capability	Yes
	<i>Hybridity</i>	Coexistence of high-tech weapons with conventional obsolete assets.	Yes
Concurrence of conventional combats with insurgent tactics.		Yes	
Blurry line between		Yes	

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		combatants and non-combatants	
	<i>Different tolerance to casualties</i>	degree of tolerance to casualties	Yes
	<i>Terrorism</i>		Yes
Ways of finance	<i>New economy of war</i>	Looting, pillage, robbery	Yes
		Extortion	Yes
		Corruption	Yes
		External support	Yes
		Black market	Yes
Complex Emergencies	<i>Humanitarian Response</i>	NGO, volunteer expatriates	No
		Agencies of United Nations in warfighting zone	No
	<i>International Military Response</i>	Foreign Regular Forces with International Auspices	Yes
		Foreign mercenaries	Yes
		Foreign Irregular Forces intervention outside of international law	Yes
Geographic framework	<i>Conflicts based and not based on the state</i>	Conflict not based on the state	Yes
		Within a state. Civil e internationalized conflict	Yes
Legal-legitimate framework	<i>Erosion of the monopoly of</i>	Rebel groups controls the territory	Yes

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<i>violence</i>	Warlords	Yes
	Other private actors	Yes
<i>Barbarity</i>	Torture and execution of prisoners of war	Yes
	Sexual violence	Yes
	Genocide/ethnic cleansing	Yes
	Massive murders	Yes

Source: (Bados, Duran, 2015)

After having showed the synthetized “new wars” features on the above table, we will analyze if ISIS’ conflict across MENA region fits the definition of 'new wars', has elements of other typologies or might even display new signs of identity.

Firstly, as to the category of actors, we have highlighted the variable “multiplicity and fragmentation of the internal actors”. The ISIS’ conflict makes clear not only the complexity for the large number of combatants, but also for the division among themselves. The indicators witnessed on the ISIS battlefield are as follows: the involvement of regular armed forces of different countries (Russia, US-led Coalition of 60 countries, Bashad Al-Asad Army, the ineffective Iraqi Army (Jordan 2015: 127); the self-defence units (Kurdish and Christian-Assyrian forces trained by Coalition and other external actors), insurgent groups (the so-called Syrian opposition and ISIS Army) and the creation of militias and non-state actors by proxy states such as Iran. We will centred now on ISIS, that although considered as an insurgent, its aspirations for getting the political power is a priority (Pollard et al 2015: 4), the reason to hold regular and professionalized forces. Despite being an amalgam of different factions out of the Iraq war, the current leader Abu

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Bakr al-Baghdadi has succeeded to consolidate an Army by acquiring new capabilities, expanding and professionalizing it for the last 7 years, starting when the conflict broke out in Syria. Nowadays ISIS is the largest and richest jihadist organization with clear objectives; they have a cohesive leadership structure; they are disciplined and count on experienced cadres from the former Iraqi Army (Jordan 2015: 123); they have set a continuous recruitment system; they have good logistics, competitive wages and social assistance to the soldiers' families; they also have an important military and ideological training and high morale (Pollard et al 2015: 9.).

Secondly, as to the causes of conflict, we identified two variables that also meet the “new wars” typology: the religious identities and the content for resources. In the first place, the political and religious backgrounds are a strong motivation for this form of political violence (Kaplan, Costa 2015: 932). The proclamation of the Caliphate targets to provide a framework of reference and membership to Sunni Muslims. However, that proclamation, in terms of statehood and religion, conflicts with previously existing entities, both Muslim states and other interpretations of Islam (Marsili 2015: 17), particularly with nations such as Saudi Arabia, guardians of the Islam holy places (Philips 2014: 497). The struggle for resources similarly (what we tag as greed, conquest of territory and the possibility of obtaining resources such as oil) is another major cause of the ISIS' conflict. The control of oil wells has been one of the main objectives of ISIS to finance the war and achieve their political goals.

The third category, methods and strategies, it is vitally important to understand the key issues of this conflict; variables such as violence against civilians, asymmetry, hybridity, different tolerance to casualties and terrorism have been identified. Primarily, the conflict in Syria and Iraq is the one that is producing more casualties (460.000), internal displaced people (IDP, 6,5 millions) and refugees (REF, 4,7 millions) since the Second World War¹⁰ (11 millions). Only the first ISIS

advances in Iraqi Kurdistan provoked 1 million of IDP (Phillips 2014: 353), refugees by millions in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and innumerable uncontrolled flows of people escaping to Europe as ever. As for the existence of asymmetry in the conflict it can be noticed dissimilarity in weaponry and means (especially air assets); dissimilar degree of training between ISIS and Iraqi units; unlike available economic resources and disparate recruitment capacity as ISIS has been able to recruit both local and foreign fighters from 90 different countries (Lister 2014: 23), letting apart its capability to recruit women across the world.

The ISIS appeal for young people is higher than the attraction Al Qaeda sparked in the beginning (Kaplan, Costa 2011: 927, 929). There are also hybrid indicators (mixture of conventional fighting with insurgent tactics, brutality, death cult and executions of prisoners) (Jordan 2015: 126). They possess sophisticated and high-tech weapons (out of those provided by US to the Iraqi armed forces) (Phillips 2014: 352) and not just as Münkler pointed out as a characteristic of the “new wars”, the use of leftovers (Münkler 2005: 98). It means the coexistence of means, materials and weapons of different generations and technology, not only within ISIS forces, but also in contrast with the Western countries’ armies, air forces in particular. Likewise the variable of different tolerance to casualties between ISIS and Western armies is also significant to open a meaningful gap in the conception of death, accentuating the asymmetrical nature of the struggle. The disregard for their own lives, coupled with the rapid adaptation of military tactics with modern weapons rend difficult to defeat them (Paasche, Gunter 2016: 12). Finally, the resort to terrorist actions, not only in the MENA region, but also in Europe and Africa, it is amplifying and expanding the conflict and producing changes in other security contexts. Consequently, this category once analyzed falls clearly into the definition of “new wars”.

Moving on the fourth category, the forms of funding, they also obey to a new war economy, -not legitimate economy, as noted in the” new wars” concept. The identified indicators on this domain range from looting, robbery, looting, extortion, corruption, foreign aid to black market. ISIS’ conflict undoubtedly satisfies them all. They exploit several sources of incomes such as selling oil on the black market (main source of financing), kidnapping of Westerners, selling of antiquities, extortion, raising taxes in the controlled territories and by means of agricultural resources (Lister 2014: 2).

Similarly, in the fifth category, as for the complex emergencies, ISIS has generated an international military and humanitarian response, but the latter one in the neighboring countries. The humanitarian response in the area of conflict is nonexistent. UNHCR and NGOs also operates in the bordering countries and there have been some humanitarian initiative carried out by UN and Red Cross in the form of food distribution. There is no NGO presence because there is no safe humanitarian space. At this point there is a substantial difference with the case of Bosnia, as a paradigm of “new war”, where there was a great array of international actors during the war and in the post-war stability operations, both at state, non-state and international level (Kaldor 1999). With regard to the international military response, there are foreign regular forces (Russia and the US-led coalition but without 'boots on the ground') and a high presence of foreign mercenaries who participate in the conflict attracted by ISIS offers on salary, housing and sex slaves (mainly from Morocco, Tunisia, Libya).

Concerning the geographical framework where the conflict takes place, there is a useful typology provided by UCDP. In accordance with its classification, we could categorize ISIS’ conflict as internationalized intrastate conflict what renders it similar to 90’s warfare. It happens between two states (Iraq and Syria) with different external branches, as well as an impressive

internationalization in terms of the number and variety of actors involved. As for the external ramifications of the conflict, it is also interesting to note that the existent fighting between ISIS and the Democratic Union of Kurdistan is a conflict not based on the state (Melander 2015: 2). All things considered we can deem it as an internationalized intrastate conflict. Finally, with regards to the indicators of the legitimate legal framework, the ISIS' conflict clearly meets the two key ones displayed on the table. Firstly, there is a strong erosion of the legitimate monopoly of violence due caused by rebel groups controlling a third of Iraq and Syria. Secondly, the spread practice of barbarity as a tool to get loyalty to the group (Bellamy 2002). This method includes torture, cruel executions of prisoners (decapitation and Crucifixion) (Paasche, Gunter 2016: 11), violence and sexual slavery of women and children, systematic rape, forced marriages and forced religious conversions (especially for women Yezidis)¹¹, ethnical cleansing and murder of almost entire populations who do not surrender to their demands. Furthermore, they also resort to spread terror by posting and broadcasting some of the videos on internet (Karadoc 2014: 600). Respecting the sexual violence, we find the capitalizing of women as spoils of war. Nonetheless this issue is far from new. It is as old as war itself. However we can talk about a "re-sexualization of this type of violence", by emphasizing that even though it is a very important feature of the "new wars", it is to be acknowledged that it is a regression to the war tactics of the Early Middle Ages. What is this difference between this sexual violence and that of the "new wars"? It becomes part of an ethnical cleansing as strategy of organized warfare. It constitutes therefore a way of war economy since the affected populations will voluntarily move somewhere else (Münkler 2005: 107-109). And this practice takes place in the current conflict

After this analysis it seems clear that the ISIS' conflict meets the "new wars" variables and indicators but with a greater emphasis on some of them such as the barbarism. Can we identify

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anyhow different elements with respect to Balkan wars as paradigm of the Kaldor's "new wars ", not present in our analysis of the table? Indeed there are. In addition to some issues already noted, as differences in the analysis of the variables and indicators, (changes in the international military response with participation without international auspices, the strategy of forced marriages, conversions and the issue of women as spoils of war), we identify the following ones not fitting in table 2.

(i) Firstly, we provide an indicator that we call "expansionism" whose expression is materialized by the Caliphate. Perhaps it is to be considered the most relevant as it is used as influential tool by some sectors of the Muslim world. Therefore, ISIS vocation of a worldwide expansion is one of the newest issues to consider. The announcement of the Caliphate in June 2014, a political and religious system that provided them with moral and materials which allowed them to gain followers across MENA region and even beyond. By bringing to life something old, when the later Caliphate, the Ottoman, was abolished 92 years ago and previous ones were proclaimed in the Middle Ages, gives them a continuity with a glorious past.

Currently, more than 43 organizations across the world between affiliates and supporters, have already expressed any kind of commitment to the organization.

However, the sphere of influence, support and adherence across MENA countries is to be regarded as fable in terms of internal socio-political impact, except for Libya and Yemen where ISIS-oriented organizations are playing an important role in their internal dynamics and clash for power.

As far as Libya is concerned, the chaotic situation of the country constitutes a perfect breeding ground for dozens of militias that freely operates thanks to the thousands of uncontrolled weapons present on its soil. Among those groups we find the ones that pledged loyalty to ISIS,

whose more active areas are located along the Mediterranean coast such as Sirte or Derna, taking over large parts of the significant financial resources. Consequently ISIS is not only gaining ground in the country that is placing under the rule of the Caliphate, but it also clearly affecting the political stability of Libya by challenging the establishment of a single government.

Yemen is another country with comparable conditions to those in Iraq and Syria in the sense that the Shiite government is unable to control the territory owing to the loyalty declared by some jihadi group operating across the country.

For the rest of MENA countries the situation is not uniform in the sense that some governments have been able to cope with the threat posed by those ISIS-faithful groups while for others, ISIS presence is affecting the internal political stability. In the first group of nations, it can be noted several arrests of alleged ISIS members and the dismantling of terrorist cells in the three Maghreb countries: Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Notably these operations are particularly concentrated in Tunisia, where the balance of forces seems to escape the conservative mainstream and precisely where opportunities of democratization are bigger (Jordan 2015:125). In addition Tunisia is the country that has suffered most from terrorist acts.

In Egypt however the situation is something different regarding the threat represented by the group Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, a group that pledged allegiance to ISIS. It mainly operates in the north of Egypt's troubled Sinai Peninsula, attacking Israel, Egyptian security forces, oil and gas infrastructure and personnel and, on one occasion, tourists.

(ii) Secondly, ISIS has developed a successful information operations campaign based on a powerful communication strategy with significant use of social networks. The utilization of Internet to recruit and attract international media, turn the protagonists of this conflict into active users of social networks such as Twitter and other internet resources like youtube or websites,

having become viral some of their material. They also publish their own magazine, Dabip, where their ideas, campaigns and victories are proclaimed, and the terror spread through the webcasting of executions and murderers. They know how to build and disseminate an ideological extraordinary propaganda to attract affiliates and franchise in MENA, Europe (France, Belgium, Spain and UK) and other remote areas (Nigeria, Indonesia).

The information strategy is composed of four lines of effort, which are determined and supported by core messages and subsequent strategic narratives. The first one is based upon getting support, both personal and financial; the second is focused on uniting all Sunnis on the battlefield; the third objective looks for spreading fear and frightening its adversaries, both internal and external. Finally, the fourth line tries to get across the message of the effectiveness of the organization by broadcasting its achievements and direct actions¹².

The proposal of the new variables and indicators that ISIS fulfils are shown on the following table:

Table 2: New categories, variables e indicators of ISIS' conflict

Categories	Variables	Indicators
Methods and strategies	Expansionism	Caliphate
	New technologies	Media Propaganda
		Social networks
Complex emergencies	International	Foreign Regular Forces
	Military response	without International

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		Auspices
Legal-Legitimate	Barbarity	Forced marriages
framework		Forced conversions

Source: By Authors

How can we consider those differentiating elements in the "new wars" typology? Can we fit them into some of the already existent new conflicts' denominations or can we create a new typology? How then can we call the war where ISIS is present? In view of the new identified indicators coupled with those of the ones out of the 'new wars' analysis set out on table 1, we propose a new conceptualization for this conflict: "neo-medieval high-tech war". In this way, the 'neo-medieval high- tech war' would entail the features of the 'new wars', in addition to the new indicators. Therefore, the ISIS' conflict is a warfare that engulfs multiple traditional signs of identity of the past decades' conflicts, and new indicators with clear characteristics of the past, Middle Ages, and the present, XXI century.

4. Type governance exerted by ISIS in the controlled areas: strengths and weaknesses

We have analyzed the features of ISIS' conflict in the field of security what let us approach the issue from the viewpoint of the type of conflict to propose a new definition. This new conceptualization is a powerful tool for the following reasons: (i) it refines the own signs of identity of the conflict in comparison to other definitions which permits a more precise and pragmatic analysis for the decision making process; (ii) all indicators identified key to help build this conceptualization allow ISIS to reach its political end-state: it means that designed violent actions,

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through war, have the maximum political impact to ultimately achieve the creation of an Islamic state. And indeed they had it. This state controls large territories as noted. Once a territory is conquered, ISIS takes into consideration some substantial elements to exert its dominance: the continuity of funding sources, the capability of law enforcement, the legitimacy and sense of belonging (Pollard et al 2015: 14 ; Nuruzzaman 2015). Therefore its aim is clearly a political one.

In fact ISIS has always stressed the political dimension over the military. The proclaimed Islamic State has an important political and economic organization, even though its features are known by indirect sources. Be as it were, it seems that they have created a context to provide what the Arab Spring was unable to (Kaplan, Costa 2015: 929). It signifies that they have been able to accomplish a key objective: legitimacy. But, how or what tools they have used to attain legitimacy? The answer is simple: there is nothing new. Let's see firstly how they have exercised the government to gain legitimacy (their strengths) and secondly, the weaknesses of its political organization.

First of all, albeit although the exercise of power is totalitarian (mass executions of dissenters and a rigid interpretation of sharia), they have managed to gain the local population's hearts and minds by providing them with material and non-material goods. As a matter of fact, within some populations, although afraid in the beginning, the perception has changed over time. It can be observed that they have mixed a mythical speech (past glories of the caliphates and a strict sharia), with a fairly rational discourse (Duran, Avalos 2013). Let's look at this mixture of religion and supply of material goods. On the one hand, the Caliphate provides religious and political sense of belonging. It can be easily checked out from the number of franchises that have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and the territories keen to join to them. In this system the sharia courts control the following issues: the prohibition of drugs, alcohol, snuff, gambling and non-

Islamic music; the control of clothing, gender separation and destruction of impious shrines. Police forces receive training (both men and women) to restore law and order and monitor the full compliance with the sharia. This rapid organization and mobilization comes to happen thanks to the offered wages.

Its main goal is to supply the same services that any state usually provide to its citizens: infrastructures, postal services, free health care, soup kitchens, loans, Islamic schools for boys and girls (food and gifts for free), and also even subsidies for commodities such as bread or transportation. They also have been filled the power vacuum of the municipal administration, creating new institutions or taking advantage of the old ones to remodel them. In In the occupied territories they create their own police, set up their own education system, establish courts with a strict interpretation of Sharia, provide health system, social services and a public administration taking into account a fair redistributive system (Pollard et. Al. 2015: 13). All of these actions have changed the perception of the population. Where does ISIS get the funding to provide all of these services? They have an organized taxing system and varied and interesting funding sources. This source of funding began operating before the Islamic state was proclaimed. Mosul was and it is the financial source of ISIS. Its primary sources are oil and gas, but it has other resources such as agriculture, water, cotton, electricity, kidnappings, external donations, extortion, etc. also controls industries, spanning from water, electricity, gas, to local factories, bakeries, as well as municipal services. This fact has placed ISIS in the position 161 out of the 214 world economies. They are richer than Burundi, Liberia and Belize (Pollard et al 2015;.. 12). Therefore, with all these resources at their disposal, it is not difficult to win the hearts and minds of populations and to simultaneously, build a mythical discourse on the basis of fully rational actions. However, in the exercise of power

not all their features are strengths. We can point out a number of indicators that can lead to significant weaknesses. Specifically we highlight four factors.

The first two indicators that we bring along are related to weaknesses in the realm of ideology. Firstly, even though the exercise of power can be described as totalitarian, we should make a number of clarifications as to the ideologies that withstand it. Concerning to the political arena in the 30's, Francis Fukuyama, stated that "there were two very powerful ideologies that were openly antidemocratic: fascism and communism". Nowadays the author says that 'the Islamic State and other Muslim fundamentalist groups are much weaker than Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union¹³'. Secondly the ISIS maintains a coalition with Sunni Arab tribes and former Baath Party cadres, although ideologically apart, they have a common point to share; ousting the Shiite government. These ties were established within Iraqi prisons in the years that the balance of power began to change in favor of Shiites (Jordan 2015: 119). Those links are essential for ISIS, since former Baath cadres are trained and educated professionals of the former Saddam Hussein Army and Administration. Thirdly, they lack international recognition and a legitimate economy (Pollard 2015: 2.). As noted, the proclamation of the caliphate challenges the international nation-state order and clearly shows a war economy or a "new war" typology. All of this has led to both a regional and international military response against ISIS which up to some extent, it is undermining its capabilities and their chances of success. Moreover, a war economy cannot be sustained indefinitely. Finally, its elites enjoy a maximum autonomy in the state. It means that there is no control of the state by the citizens, and therefore the imposed political regime is to be considered a dictatorship, more in particular a totalitarianism. The subsistence of these regimes can only be sustained by the provision of important material resources to the population.

4. New security framework in MENA region

The emergence of ISIS on the international scene has set off a transformation of the security framework and international relationships in the MENA region, with particular signs of identity that differ from the previous status. The features of the conflict already analyzed together with ISIS political objectives and exercise the government in the occupied areas have resulted both in a different international response to the conflict, and in a new configuration of alliances in the region.

On the one hand, the changes has been motivated by the absence of unanimity and consensus on a coordinated international response what has had an enormous impact on the relationships and geopolitics in the region. This circumstance has created a vacuum of power which has been interpreted by some countries as an opportunity to pursue their own national agendas. On the other hand, the fighting has shown up the divergence not only between the Shia and Sunni countries, but also among different countries with regards to some sensitive issues such as the Kurd question. This scenario has added complexity of the conflict, making any resolution more difficult to achieve¹⁴

These changes can be appreciated in two main domains as above mentioned: the international response provided to the threat by the international community, and the new picture of regional and global alliances.

a. **International response**

The international response to counter ISIS threat can be characterized as a lack of a strong response from large organizations such as UN, NATO or EU as well as a coordinated reaction among the big powers to achieve a single goal.

In this sense, United Nations Security Council has limited its response to pass a Resolution strengthening legal measures against those doing business with terrorist groups. It targets mainly Islamic State militants and it has called the states to fight “a global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security”. The text does not provide any legal basis for military action, although a coalition of nations - and Russia - are already bombing ISIS in Syria and Iraq. A similar attitude was adopted after the terrorist attacks in Paris when UN adopted a Resolution condemning this terrorist act of violence. The Resolution determines that ISIS constitutes “a global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security.”

With regards to NATO, unlike the former major crises happened after 1989, where the Alliance participation is to be considered as active (Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan), the Organization did not take this time any measure against ISIS. The Alliance inaction triggered the conformation of an ad-hoc US-led Coalition after the NATO Summit in Wales in June 2014. It is significant to note that all 28 NATO allies are involved in that coalition.

As for EU, the global financial crisis made European policy-makers look inward, led to a re-nationalization of foreign policy, and stalled the evolution of a common foreign and security policy for the following years (Kristina Kausch 2014:4). Thus, EU has once again proved how ineffectual the policies of common security have been, as well as those on counter-terrorism and immigration. The latter one unable to cope with the flood of hundred thousands of refugees who are

arriving to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea running away from the consequences of a war¹⁵. It has meant that each country has adopted measures on an unilateral basis in those three fields based on their own national interests and political agendas.

In the above mentioned panorama, after the attacks produced in Paris in November 2015, countries are coordinating their military responses either within the Coalition or individually as Russia, Turkey or China in a framework where Combat troops have been explicitly ruled out by countries involved, relying only on the air power. However, the prolonged nature of this campaign has led many to reignite the debate about whether the Coalition is doing enough and whether 'boots on the ground' is the next logical step.

b. New alliance framework.

Since 2000 US has followed in MENA region the so-called Orientalist (Jülide Karakoc 2014:597) strategy based on Sunni-based, Israel biased and anti-Iranian policies whose prominent actors and allies were Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel. By encouraging the ambitions of these states which intend to become dominant powers in the Middle East, the US contributed to its determination to come to be more active in MENA.

However, the emergence of ISIS has constituted a real challenge to that policy and it has modified the regional dynamics, alliances and politics in the region representing a threat to Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel as well as to US. Nevertheless the approach and proxies to fight the menace are pretty different among them. While for Arabia is an existential issue in terms of Shia - Sunni confrontation, Turkey, reticent in the beginning, started to consider ISIS as a threat after the terrorist bombing in Ankara¹⁶. Conversely, Israel considers it as a containable rather than strategic

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risk because the ISIS cannot challenge Israel’s own organized military forces, remaining Iran as primary threat.

As to the United States, the fighting against ISIS has shown new partners in the region, Iran and the Kurds, an approach that is frontally colliding with the former allies. To take sides with Iran, mainly after the nuclear deal¹⁷ is confronting Israel and Saudi Arabia policies, while the support to Kurds is colliding Turkey’s interests. Therefore, the former partners in the region, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are considered ineffective in the fight against ISIS. The place has been filled by the Kurds which are assessed as more suitable¹⁸ and by Iran as a necessary trip-mate to counter ISIS threat in Syria.

Besides, the position of USA and its allies in the Coalition (France, UK, etc.) is based upon, not only in seeking the defeat of ISIS, but also in overthrowing Basher al-Assad, a stance in clear opposition to Iran and other external powers, such Russia, China. Those powers along with Iran have showed up in the fight against ISIS as a way to get a good geopolitical position in MENA region, and as a clear Shia-based policy that includes keeping Bashar Al-Assad, opposing Coalition’s interest. The outline of the new alliances framework is shown on the following table where it can be noticed the conflicting grounds.

Table 3: New game of alliances in Middle East

Actors Countries	ISIS	BASHAR AL-ASSAD	KURDS
US	Defeat	Defeat	Support
RUSSIA	Defeat	Support	Support
CHINA	Defeat	Support	-----
IRAN	Defeat	Support	Support
ISRAEL	Defeat	Defeat	-----
SAUDI ARABIA	Defeat	Defeat	-----

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TURKEY	Defeat	Defeat	Defeat
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Source: By Authors

6. Conclusions

Through this chapter we aimed to study the political and security implications that the actions of ISIS are generating. Over the past two years ISIS has become a global actor who has changed many dynamics across MENA region and has caused external shocks and spillover that have impacted on the worldwide politics and the international security framework. Throughout the study it has been exposed the following issues: (i) the type of conflict in which the Islamic state is involved; (ii) the type of governance practices in the occupied territories; (iii) the new security framework.

Primarily, the most important and novel contribution provided by the chapter on the field of security it has been the analysis of ISIS' conflict typology in MENA region what shows own signs of identity. We have further scrutinized the large-scale security problems that war is causing. Once the indicators analyzed and some differentiations identified with respect to the features of the "new wars" concept, -in force since late 90's, we come to the conclusion that a new name for this war can be offered. Our proposal is "neo-medieval high-tech war". It means that we face a war that combines the old and traditional warfare characteristics with the latest technological advances, sometimes used masterly such as the communication campaigns and the propaganda broadcasted through the social networks..

Secondly, the most important political priority set by the ISIS is to establish a Caliphate and behave as a State. In this regard it has been our goal to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this supposed State so-called Islamic. We consider that its major backbone is the way ISIS gain

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legitimacy in the populations on the occupied territories. However its greatest weakness it falls on the ideological side, both the survival of its own ideology on the one hand, and the ideological difference with the groups they have signed alliances on the other hand.

In third place and finally, we have analyzed the impact of new security framework. The main results are markedly different from those of the 90's in which the major international organizations in the field of security and defense played a more active role in the conflicts (UN, NATO EU). Moreover, the emergence of ISIS has also led to a new configuration of alliances in the Middle East, where the Kurds and Iran have come to play a different role in the US foreign policy and thus has altered the relationship and set of alliances in the region.

Therefore, we can convene a new typology of conflict with many similarities and some differences with regard to the ones of the last decades; an insurgent and terrorist group which occupies vast territories and rules as a Government for the first time in history. It has also triggered new global configurations such as the pattern on the international response and the modification of regional and global alliances. All of this let us conclude that we witness a highly worrying political issue with global security repercussions.

7. References

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¹ The current "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) has had different names. We offer the latest, (ISIS). It is also now known as DAESH. In 2006 it was called the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) to self-call in 2013 "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) because of its involvement in the war in Syria. In June 2014 they proclaimed the Caliphate and resorted to the current name.

² ISIS controls territories in Iraq, Syria, Sinai and eastern Libya. It also has members in Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Israel and Palestine and wants to extend its power in Libya, Egypt (Sinai), Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Marsili 2015: 87)

³ For instance, ISIS condemns the las Caliphates and the Ottoman Empire for their deviance of a pure Islam (Marsili 2015: 87).

⁴ Wars scattered among various regional and/or global powers without facing a direct confrontation but through mercenaries, guerrillas, regular troops.

⁵ The hybrid warfare shows clearly the following four differentiators: the use by opponents either simultaneously or in a combined way of conventional troops, irregular forces, terrorist acts and

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organized crime. It also focuses on the effective control of the field of information and introduces elements of uncertainty and brutality (Hoffman 2012: 3).

⁶ We point out that the “spectator sport warfare” definition is called in such a way on the base of the Western intervention and the importance of air power as transcendental resource. There would be other contentious issues that characterize these wars and perhaps could not be applied to the conflict of ISIS, as the fact that they are based on the location of conflicts that meet the requirement to be desirable for the Western powers and offer offsets to fight off their own territory (McInnes 2006).

⁷ The term “wars of fourth generation”, describes mostly the decentralized nature of war. It is characterized as a conflict in which the lines between war and politics, military and civilians are not so clear. The “wars of fourth generation” can be summarized in five general traits: (i) fighting in a complex context in a low intensity conflict; (ii) tactics and techniques of previous generations occur; (iii) it is fought through a range of social, economic and military policies networks; (iv) it involves a mix of national, international, transnational and subnational actors. (Lind et al, 1989:... 2-11).

⁸ The “new wars” concept also engulfs features and indicators visible on the types of conflicts already named (hybrid war, sport spectator, proxy, and fourth-generation, war among people.

⁹ Kalivas (2001), Newman (2004), Lacina y Gedistch (2005), are, among others, the main detractors of the “new wars” followers as they basically defend the idea that there are no substantial differences between the “new” and “old wars”.

¹⁰ For casualties, source Syrian Centre for Policy Research (SCPR), a non-profit group. It claimed that the true figure is 470,000 almost double UN estimate. <http://www.economist.com/news/middle->

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