THE SUCCESS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

The Rise and Organization of the Islamic State and a Sociological Understanding of it

Relatore

Prof. Lorenzo De Sio

Candidato

Matr. 069882
Daria Martina

Anno accademico 2014-2015
## Contents

1. **Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 3

2. **Chapter 1: THE ISLAMIC STATE, origins and organization** ........................................... 5
   2.1 THE ORIGINS OF THE GROUP ...................................................................................... 5
       2.1.1 From 1999 to 2006: AQI ...................................................................................... 5
       2.1.2 Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) (2007–2013) ................................................................. 6
       2.1.3 The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) – also known as al-Dawla or al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya (2013–2014) ........................................................................... 9
       2.1.4 The expansion in Iraq and the proclamation of the Islamic State in 2014 ..................... 10
   2.2 THE ISLAMIC STATE WORKS AS A STATE ................................................................. 14
       2.2.1 Territorial division and administration .................................................................. 15
       2.2.2 The military strength ............................................................................................ 16
       2.2.3 Financial situation .................................................................................................. 17
       2.2.4 The Media ............................................................................................................. 18
       2.2.5 How many foreign fighters have joined the Islamic State? ...................................... 18

3. **Chapter 2: SOCIOLOGY OF TERRORISM** ....................................................................... 22
   3.1 DEFINING TERRORISM AND SOCIOLOGY OF TERRORISM ........................................ 22
   3.2 FIVE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ........................................................................ 25
       3.2.1 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM ............................................................................ 25
       3.2.2 DYSFUNCTIONAL THEORY .................................................................................. 27
       3.2.3 THE WORLD-SYSTEM THEORY .......................................................................... 30
       3.2.4 CONFLICT THEORY ............................................................................................ 34
       3.2.5 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM ............................................................................ 37

4. **Chapter 3: INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE IN THE LIGHT OF THE LITERATURE** ........................................................................................................ 42
   4.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS ............................................................................................. 42
       4.1.1 An Islamic state construction .................................................................................. 42
       4.1.2 Al-Turabi’s Islamic state construction compared to the Islamic State ......................... 44
   4.2 THE POLITICAL ASPECT OF TERRORISM .................................................................. 45
       4.2.1 The strategic aspect ............................................................................................... 46
       4.2.2 A World-Systemic interpretation and the retaliatory aspect ...................................... 48
   4.3 SUBJECTIVE INTERPRETATION OF IS’ ROLE: FUNCTIONALISM, DYSFUNCTIONALISM AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AT CONFRONT ........................................... 49
   4.4 WHY IS THE ISLAMIC STATE SUCCEEDING IN RECRUITING FOREIGN FIGHTERS? ............ 51
   4.5 A COUNTERTERRORIST STRATEGY ........................................................................... 53

5. **Conclusion** ...................................................................................................................... 57

6. **BIBLIOGRAPHY** ............................................................................................................. 59

7. **Abstract in Italian** .......................................................................................................... 67
1. Introduction

Recently, the international attention has focused on the international and local role of the Islamic State, particularly in the light of the phenomenon of the foreign fighters. This work will concentrate on the analysis of this group and on the importance of sociology in the creation of a point of view on it.

There are many questions that will be addressed, among which: what is the Islamic State? How did it get its start? How many people have joined it?

The first chapter will present the Islamic State and will explain its origins, affiliation with and detachment from Al-Qaeda. This split is important to understand how it managed to establish a unique terrorist organization, as well as a unique Islamic state. Thus, the second part of the chapter will describe the Islamic State and the whole set of state institutions that oversee its functioning, as well as the phenomenon of the foreign fighters.

The second chapter will deal with another set of questions. What are the effects of terrorism on society? What are the causes of terrorism? Why do some engage in terrorism? Do they share common social origins? Are there social factors capable of incentivize personal reasons to commit a terrorist act?

In order to understand the Islamic State, it is firstly necessary to concentrate on the phenomenon of terrorism in general and on its analysis. To do so, a definition of terrorism is required. The second chapter will deal with the difficulties encountered in the assessment of the term “terrorism”, due to the sociological and political implications attached to the peculiarities of the phenomenon. The variety of definitions of terrorism clarifies the reason why scholars perspectives on it are different from each other. Thus, the second chapter will continue with the presentation of five sociological standpoints on the phenomenon of terrorism, namely Structural Functionalism, Dysfunctional theory, World-System theory, Conflict theory, and Symbolic Interactionism. All these
sociological theories are useful to explain what implications it has for society, and what causes stand behind terrorist acts.

Finally, the third chapter will solve other dilemmas. What is an Islamic state? Does the Islamic State reflects an ideal Islamic state’s features? Is Islam an essential component of the Islamic State? Are there any other aspects other than religion? Why are many people attracted by the Islamic State in particular?

The reason why many scholars of Islam cannot recognize the Islamic State as a state, is because to talk about an Islamic state, is not to talk about the Islamic State. The third chapter will offer an interpretation of an Islamic state by Hassan Al-Turabi, a Sunni religious man. Departing from his description, the study will show the differences between Al-Turabi’s Islamic state construction and the characteristics of the Islamic State. However, the Islamic State is not only about religion. Thus, the second part of the chapter, will concentrate on the political implications of terrorism, presenting the strategic and retaliatory aspects of the Islamic State. The third part, will show that the role the Islamic State is playing, keeping in mind the sociological theories about terrorism presented in the second chapter, can be subjectively interpreted. This explains why the group is having success in recruiting foreign fighters. The fourth paragraph, indeed, will deal with the phenomenon of the foreign fighters and will explain who joins the group and why. Lastly, the conclusion of the chapter will offer a counterterrorist strategy.
2. Chapter 1: THE ISLAMIC STATE, origins and organization

The Islamic State is a radical Islamic terrorist organization. It has established a state within states (Swaminathan, 2015), controlling a territory that is as big as Belgium (Sotnikov, 2014). Its origins, which date back to 1999, will be explained in the first part of this chapter. Furthermore, it will be clarified that IS was a former Al-Qaeda affiliate, and that only recently IS explicitly refused to be associated with Al-Qaeda. This split is important to understand how he managed to establish a totally unique terrorist organization, as well as a unique Islamic state.

Thus, the second part of the chapter will present the Islamic State, not as a terrorist group, but rather as a state. Indeed, it appears to work as a state thanks to the creation of a series of institutions and the adoption of policies that offer many services to “its people” and maintain order. Its success is due, in particular, to its effective strategy in the recruitment of foreign fighters. This is the last issue that will be addressed, beginning with a simple analysis of the number of people that have joined IS until now.

2.1 THE ORIGINS OF THE GROUP

2.1.1 From 1999 to 2006: Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

After the Gulf War, the Jordanian Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, and his militant group Jamāʿat al-tawḥīd wa al-jihād (Monotheism and Jihad), established in 1999, became famous during the very first stages of the Iraqi guerrilla warfare, through attacks against the Coalition forces, suicide attacks against civil targets and beheadings of hostages (BBC News, 2004).

In May 2003, Paul Bremer, head of the American armed forces at Baghdad, after having overthrown Saddam Hussein’s Sunni regime, released an administrative order that provided for the dissolution of the Iraqi army. Suddenly, 400,000 soldiers of the defeated army were excluded
from the army and denied their retirement. Many of them started to fight the Americans and the new – Shiite – Iraqi government, and began to organize themselves in battle groups, collaborating with each other in order to regain power in Iraq (Sly, s.d.).


In a letter to al-Zarqawi, in July 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri outlined a four-stage plan to expand the war in Iraq: expelling the American forces, establishing an Islamic authority (an emirate), involving the laic neighbors of Iraq, and engage in the Arab-Israeli conflict¹.

Zarqawi put various Iraqi insurgent groups together in January 2006, to transform the group into the Mujahideen Shura Council (فوين نايح، 2006). The purpose was mainly of propaganda, an attempt to give the group some kind of more Iraqi connotations (Roggio, 2006).

On June 7, 2006, al-Zarqawi was killed in a US air raid. Soon afterwards, the Egyptian militant Abu Ayyub al-Masri, known also as Abu Hamza al-Muhājir, and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi replaced him as the heads of the group, which changed again its name into The Islamic State of Iraq. (BBC News, 2006) (Barrett, 2014)

### 2.1.2 Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) (2007–2013)

According to a research of the American intelligence at the beginning of 2007, the Islamic State planned to take power in the central and western areas of Iraq and create a “terrorist

enclave” that could “break away from Kurdish and Shi’ite-dominated provinces once the coalition forces depart”. (Mahnaimi, 2007)

The US troops brought new forces for the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq. This enabled the capture of some high-level members of the group, like Abu al-Masri’s father-in-law Ali Fayyad Abuyl Ali, senior advisor of the group. ISI seemed weakened, though not defeated. (Roggio, Targeting al Qaeda in Iraq’s Network, 2007)

During 2008 a series of American and Iraqi offensives managed to drive the pro-Islamic State rebels away from their safe shelters (like Diyāla, al-Anbar and Baghdad), towards Mosul, in the north of the country. ISI saw itself in a difficult situation due to many reasons, in particular to The Sons of Iraq (Abnā’ al-‘Irāq) – also known as Anbar's Salvation (Inqādh al-Anbār), an Iraqi tribal coalition initially supported by the USA – who were informing on and fighting against the insurgents2. However, in August 2009, ISI managed to bomb the Iraqi Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance. (Barrett, 2014)

In 2009, the next ISIS’ leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was released from the American Camp Bucca detention facility, following a commission’s opinion that suggested his unconditional release. (Daly, 2014)

According to some ex-convicts’ statements, the camp was an outright center for the indoctrination and training of terrorists, with classes concerning the learning of basic procedures for the construction of bombs or how to commit suicide attacks. (Al Jazeera, 2009)

At the end of the same year, the chief of the American forces in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, declared: “‘Al Qaeda in Iraq has transformed significantly in the last two years. What once was

dominated by foreign individuals has now become more and more dominated by Iraqi citizens’,
Odierno told reporters at the U.S. military's main base in Baghdad. 'There's still a small foreign
element to al Qaeda, there are some who used to be Sunni rejectionists or ex-Baathists who are
involved in this because of course they don't want the government to succeed’” (Christie, 2009)

On April 18, 2010, the two principal leaders of ISI, Abū Ayyūb al-Maṣrī and Abū ʿOmar al-
Baghdādī, were killed in an Iraqi and American raid near Tikrit³. The next month, Abu Bakr al-
Baghdadi “is announced as the new leader for a greatly diminished ISI” (Barrett, 2014).

In a press conference in June 2010, general Odierno affirmed that 80% of the 42 main
personalities of ISI had been killed or captured by Iraqi and American forces, and that the group
would face hard times in finding new recruits and support⁴. However, in March 2011, protests
against the Syrian government of Baḥšār al-Asad began – this would permit ISI to take advantage
of the crisis. The following months, the violence between the protesters and the security forces
gradually militarized the conflict (Rodgers, Gritten, Offer, & Asare, 2015). In August 2011, Abu Bakr
al-Baghdadi let nine Syrian members of ISI go to Syria. Led by the Syrian Abū Muḥammad al-
Jawlānī (al-Golani), who also had the support of Zawahiri, the group started recruiting fighters and
building terrorist cells throughout the country (Barrett, 2014). On January 23, 2012, the group
announced itself as “Jabhat al-Nuṣra li-Ahl al-Shām”, best known as The Al-Nusra Front. Al-Nuṣra
rapidly developed, becoming a force supported by the Syrian opposition.

In the meanwhile, Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī continued his operations in Iraq. He declared the
beginning of a new offensive there, called “breaking the walls” with the purpose of freeing the
other members of the group who were detained in Iraq (Barrett, 2014). The campaign “breaking

---

Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/05/world/middleeast/05military.html?_r=0
the walls” culminated in July 2013, when the group put in place simultaneous raids at Taji and the prison of Abū Ghurayb, freeing more than 500 prisoners (al-Salhy, 2013).

2.1.3 The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) – also known as al-Dawla or al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya (2013–2014)

The fight in Syria soon eclipsed the insurgency in Iraq. “Abu Bakr therefore tried to reassert his leadership on both sides of the border” (Barrett, 2014), saying that al-Nusra was “merely an extension and part of the Islamic State of Iraq” and that the two groups were about to merge in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Atassi, 2013). Golani, opposing Abu Bakr’s view, turned to Zawahiri to rule on the matter (Barrett, 2014). In June 2013 Al Jazeera affirmed that it had received a letter from al-Qā‘ida’s leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, addressed to both the leaders. In the letter, he said he did not approved the merger and charged an emissary to supervise the relationships between the two groups, in order to end the tensions (Atassi, 2013). The same month al-Baghdadi published another audio contrasting with al-Zawahiri’s statement and decision (Al Jazeera & agencies, reporter: Basma Atassi, 2013) and continued his activity in Syria (The Daily Star Lebanon, 2013). In October al-Zawahiri ordered ISIS dissolution, giving the al-Nuṣra Front the task of continuing the jihād in Syria (The Daily Star, 2013). In February 2014, Zawahiri would finally repudiate any connections with ISIS (Barrett, 2014).

In July 2013 ISIS’ “A Soldier’s Harvest” campaign began, with the goal of intimidating and killing Iraqi security forces, and controlling the territory. The Next month, ISIS started its attacks in Syria on rebel groups, among which al-Nusra (Barrett, 2014).

In November 2013, Omar al-Chechen, Chechen leader of Jaish al-Muhajireen wa Ansar, or Army of the Emigrants and Helpers, pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi (Joscelyn, 2013).
2.1.4 The expansion in Iraq and the proclamation of the Islamic State in 2014

Since the beginning of 2014, ISIS has been furthering its territorial ambition; in few months it conquered Raqqa, in Syria, and Mosul in Iraq. (Barrett, 2014)

The map shows the areas controlled by the Islamic State and its territorial losses updated to April 2015 (Battle for Iraq and Syria in maps, 2015).

On June 29, ISIS proclaimed the restoration of the Islamic Caliphate (TGCOM24, 2014), with Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī as caliph⁵. Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami, spokesman of the Islamic State, affirmed that the group’s Shūra Council decided to formally establish the caliphate, describing it as “a dream that lives in the depths of every Muslim believer”, and that Muslims from all over the world should pledge their loyalty to the new caliph (Zelin, 2014).

In June 2014, Jordan and Saudi Arabia deployed their troops at the borders with Iraq immediately after Iraq lost or abandoned key areas of transit. These areas had been seized by ISIS, through massacres such as the Camp Speicher one (where 1,700 Shia soldiers were killed) (Al Jazeera And Reuters, 2015).

On July 4 Abu Bakr al Baghdadi appeared for the first time at a mosque in Mosul, where he gave a long speech on the newly established caliphate and called himself Caliph Ibrahim. (Barrett, 2014)

In July 2014 Abubakar Shekau, leader of Boko Haram (Nigerian Islamic terrorist group), promised his support to the new caliphate (AFP, 2014); in September 2014 launched an offensive in Adamawae and Borno, two states to north-eastern Nigeria, following the example of the Islamic State.

In July 25, the Yunus Mosque at Mosul was destroyed, because since it was also visited by Christians, was considered "meta di apostasia" (site of apostasy) by the Islamic State. Also, the Islamic State imposed to Christians of Mosul to abandon the city and leave their properties there or, alternatively, to pay a tax, otherwise they would be killed.

On August 8, 2014, President Barack Obama authorized the first air raids against the Islamic State in northern Iraq, and an expedition of humanitarian assistance for the people on the lam.

---


from the occupied areas. Thanks to the air support, the Kurds reconquered Guwair and Makhmur, two strategically located cities, and the Iraqi army launched two counteroffensives – one in the district of al-Bakri and the other in the district of Muqdadiyya.

However, on August 10, terrorists besieged 50,000 Yazidis hidden on the Sinjar Mountains, killing at least 500 of them and throwing them into mass graves. The United States organized a military mission to help the Yazidis and find a way out for the menaced civilians. On August 15, 2014 the European Council approved the weapon supply of the Kurds to help them limit the Islamic State advance. The next days, ISIS troops committed an additional massacre at Kocho, a Yazidi village, where they killed more than 80 men and kidnapped more than 100 women, after people refused to convert to Islam (currently the estimates are: about 3-5,000 killed Yazidis - especially men - and 4,800-7,000 captives - women and children, often sold as slaves) (Hopkins, 2014).

Moreover in September, many Syrian Kurds (about 130,000) were obliged to fly to Turkey to escape ISIS advance (Currently Turkey is facing a difficult humanitarian situation: it counts more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees) (BBC News, 2014).

---


The Islamic State committed other massacres in Syria, where in August killed more than 700 members of the Sunni tribe of Chaitat, which opposed its authority in the country.\textsuperscript{12}

On September 2, 2014, ISIS released a video in which showed the beheading of an American journalist (Steven Sotloff, abducted in 2013); after two weeks, it beheaded another American journalist (James Foley), as a reaction to US’ airstrikes against ISIS. This caused the counter reaction of president Obama, who, on September 10, authorized air raids against ISIS in Syria: "ISIL poses a threat to the people of Iraq and Syria, and the broader Middle East-including American citizens, personnel and facilities. If left unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond that region, including to the United States." What followed was the decapitation of a UK aid worker by IS (David Cawthorne Haines) on September 13. (Abdallah, 2014)

Since November 2014, other jihadist groups outside Iraq and Syria declared their affiliation with ISIS, taking the name of “Provinces” (wilāyat) of the Islamic State. Among them, the Sinai Province has to be mentioned, active in the Egyptian region of Sinai, as well as the Libyan provinces of Barqa and Tripoli that control – in the context of the Libyan civil war – Darnah and

Benghazi. Other affiliated groups are located in Algeria, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. (BBC Monitoring, 2015)

Since the beginning of the year, ISIS is also looting and destroying very important archeological sites and ruins: Mosul, Hatra, Dur Sharrukin, Nimrud. UNESCO promptly described those acts as war crimes.13

On February 3, 2015, ISIS burnt Muath al-Kaseasbeh (Jordanian pilot) to death. Jordan’s reaction, was the execution of two terrorists. (CBS News, 2015)

Since now, the only important and symbolic victory against ISIS dates back to March, when Iraq managed to drive a great amount of IS’ militants out of Tikrit (AFP, 2015).

2.2 THE ISLAMIC STATE WORKS AS A STATE

The Islamic State, de facto, has a control over a territory that extends from eastern Syria to western Iraq. “ISIS seeks to expand the Caliphate throughout Syria and Iraq and finally take control of them. After that, the states belonging to "greater Syria" will be annexed, that is, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and after them other countries in the Middle East and beyond” (The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2014).

---

2.2.1 Territorial division and administration

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the commander in chief. He has two deputies in Syria and Iraq: Abu Ali al-Anbari and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani respectively (Shubert & Thompson, 2015). The objectives of the group are gradually passed down the hierarchy, this “system of devolved authority has enabled The Islamic State to operate on many fronts at more or less the same time, both administratively and militarily” (Barrett, 2014).

The territory of the Islamic State is divided into provinces, such as the Iraqi provinces of Niniveh and Mosul, or the Syrian province of Barakah. The province of al-Raqqah is the capital of the Islamic State. Each province is governed by a ruler and protected by the Muraabiteen fighters. (The Islamic State, 2015)

The civilian administration of the State is supervised by the Provincial Council (Barrett, 2014). “The Islamic State uses brutal measures against its opponents and the minorities living
under its control (including mass executions)” (The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2014). Nonetheless, up until now the local populations seem to have tolerated IS violence and sometimes rather supported it. In fact, the Islamic State is bringing order in public life and is offering people desirable services (The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2014) – free electricity, free food, free medicines and medical assistance in hospitals. The reason, the State itself claims, is that aid is a central feature of an Islamic state. (The Islamic State, 2015)

The other social, military and administrative aspects of the Islamic State are assigned to various other Councils, like the Finance Council, the Media Council, or the Security and Intelligence Council. (Barrett, 2014) “The Shura Council is the highest advisory body and theoretically must approve Abu Bakr’s appointments and even the choice of who should succeed him as Caliph, which is decided by the Sharia Council. Theoretically, it also has the power to dismiss the Caliph if he fails to carry out his duties in accordance with the guiding (sharia) principles of the organization.” (Barrett, 2014)

2.2.2 The military strength

The Military Council task is to preserve and defend the Islamic State’s territorial holdings, and to enlarge its possessions. According to the US intelligence, the military is formed by 21,000/31,500 soldiers: they “are both volunteers, many from abroad, and conscripts, forced into service by local commanders either from individual families or from tribes in conquered areas” (Barrett, 2014)

Moreover, the Islamic State has proved to possess many weapons, both light and heavy arms, including mortars, anti-aircraft missiles and drones, and even chemical weapons. Most of
them were subtracted from the Iraqi and Syrian army. (The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2014)

### 2.2.3 Financial situation

The Islamic State is economically independent, and it is currently one of the wealthiest terrorist organizations in the world (Gray, 2014).

The Islamic State has a $2 billion dollars revenue per year\(^{14}\), of which “$25 million (...) is spent on its war efforts. The rest is used to run the State.” (The Islamic State, 2015). “It is an exceptional example of a terrorist organization which managed to acquire semi-national financial capabilities to fund its military infrastructure and allow it to establish an alternative governmental system” (The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2014).

In fact, IS has took control of many oil wells and oil field in Syria and Iraq (Khatib, Militant Group Moves to Create Islamic State in Iraq, 2014). The selling of petroleum represents the main income source of the Islamic State, giving a return of several million dollars per day (The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2014).

In addition, ISIS regularly practices extortion, robbery and trading in antiquities as other earning sources. They, for instance, have robbed the central bank of Mosul in June 2014, and took over $429 million dollars that they have transported to Syria, together with other million dollars and gold bars coming from other banks of Mosul.\(^{15}\) Moreover, it is receiving funds from private

---


benefactors\textsuperscript{16} and is imposing local taxes \citep{MeirAmit2014}. By 2012 ISIS included these financial activities in annual reports, providing for numerical information on its operations as a firm, encouraging potential donors \citep{Matthews2014}.

2.2.4 The Media

The Islamic State propaganda is implemented through professionally edited videos \citep[as “Eid Greetings from the Land of Khilafah”]{Cockburn2014}, social media accounts \citep[on Facebook, Twitter or VKontakte]{Cockburn2014}, and Ebooks \citep{IslamicState2015Ebook} and eMagazines \citep{DabiqMagazine}. The State assigns to each province a media channel and the task to “create its own videos and social media accounts to share its successes”. Also, the members of the Islamic State use hashtags \citep[i.e. #AllEyesOnISIS]{IslamicState2015} to promote a cause or message. \citep{IslamicState2015}

2.2.5 How many foreign fighters have joined the Islamic State?

According to the latest estimate of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), more than 20,000 foreign fighters have joined the Sunni militant organization in Syria and Iraq \citep{Neumann2015}. ICSR published a previous survey in 2013 showing the total of volunteers who joined the Islamic State in December 2013 \citep{ICSR2013}. At that time, the number amounted to 11,000. From 2013, they have almost doubled. The following tables compare the results of ICSR in the two years: the low estimate refers to the confirmed numbers, and the high estimate has been obtained cross-checking reliable sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>LOW-HIGH ESTIMATE (DEC 2013)</th>
<th>LOW-HIGH ESTIMATE (JAN 2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>68-123</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>386-1,016</td>
<td>1,500-2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>119-358</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>180-2,089</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>3 n.d.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>59-247</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>15-20 n.d.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>54-71</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>65-890</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>336-556</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>77-91</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>2 n.d.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>1 n.d.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>74-114</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2-96</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>382-970</td>
<td>1,500-3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>63-500</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>14-110</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>23-205</td>
<td>100-250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1-60</td>
<td>100-150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>76-296</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1 n.d.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>25-84</td>
<td>100-150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>4-20</td>
<td>50-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>63-412</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>34-240</td>
<td>500-600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>11-26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2-50</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1 n.d.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>33-40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>29-152</td>
<td>200-250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>43-366</td>
<td>500-600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>34-95</td>
<td>50-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRY</td>
<td>LOW-HIGH ESTIMATE (DEC 2013)</td>
<td>LOW-HIGH ESTIMATE (JAN 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>17-60</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>39-87</td>
<td>150-180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>12-23</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>9-140</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>18-60</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chechnya</td>
<td>36-186</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Xinjiang</td>
<td>6-100</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>14-150</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirghizistan</td>
<td>9-30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>68-150</td>
<td>100-150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>7-330</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (except for Chechnya)</td>
<td>9-423</td>
<td>800-1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>5-68</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Nearly a fifth of (the foreign fighter total are) residents or nationals of Western European countries” (Neumann, 2015). Additionally, notice from the tables that, of all the 20,000 foreign fighters who have joined IS, 6,000-9,100 (low estimate – high estimate) come from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan Turkey and Morocco. “If these fighters desert it, The Islamic State will probably be unable to maintain momentum and so be a far easier target for its enemies. If these fighters join al Qaeda groups, The Islamic State will have to abandon its hopes of dominating the salafist/takfiri environment. But on the other hand, if these fighters stay loyal to The Islamic State but leave Iraq and Syria, The Islamic State will certainly be the dominant force in ‘global jihad’ for some years to come.” (Barrett, 2014)
These numbers are significant because they reveal many things: the global support the Islamic State is receiving, the great influence of IS in the Middle East, the exponential degree of consent in terms of numbers. They also explain the reason why the Islamic State is grabbing international attention, and the importance of formulating a counterterrorist strategy. However, before any interpretation of the data, it is fundamental to comprehend what is the Islamic State role within the general phenomenon of terrorism. Sociology of terrorism is congenial to this purpose, for it takes in account the social aspects that may cause terrorism and encourage an individual to commit terrorist acts or join terrorist groups.
3. Chapter 2: SOCIOLOGY OF TERRORISM

3.1 DEFINING TERRORISM AND SOCIOLOGY OF TERRORISM

It is evidently noticeable that while subjects as psychiatry, psychology, political science, and social psychology, offer lots of researches and studies on terrorism, at the moment there is little sociology of terrorism. Sociology is maybe “one of the least utilized disciplines in our ongoing efforts to better conceptualize it” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). However, the events of September 11, 2001, may have changed that. Why? Those events appeared to make good on Urlich Beck’s claim that we are now living in a (global) risk society (Beck, 2002). Therefore, moving from the unhappy condition that makes terrorism one of the inherent aspects of our modern individual and social life, the current belief is that through a sociological analysis of terrorism, finally the social reasons for it will be possible to be identified (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). This will pave the way for more effective long term solutions. But in order to establish sociology’s position on terrorism, first it is necessary to define it.

What does one mean by terrorism? At the moment there is no academic consensus on the definition of terrorism. It is one of the most defined notions of recorded human history (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Various acts adopted by States against the phenomenon of terrorism describe it in different ways. For the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism, it consists of “any act or threat of violence, whatever it motives and purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property, or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize national resources” (General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, 1998). Not only definitions of terrorism are so numerous and change according to the points of
view of the different institutions, individuals, or States, they also change during time for a same person or agency. For example we can consider the many definitions given by the United Nations throughout time. In 1994, the UN defined terrorism as “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for particular purposes (that) are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them” (United Nations, General Assembly, 1994). Later, in 2005, a UN panel defined terrorism as any act “intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act” (United Nations Department of Public Information, 2005). The fact that terrorism definitions are so uncertain and copious is due to the fact that terrorism is a phenomenon in incessant evolution. Indeed, few things are certain about it, and “one is that terrorism has increased in volume and severity” (Jenkins, 1982). Therefore, terrorism cannot be unanimously defined by any shared meanings. On the contrary, many different meanings are attributed to it, depending on various points of view and sociological, psychological or political perspectives.

From a sociological standpoint we can observe many different positions about terrorism. “Schmid (1983) himself collected 109 different definitions for terrorism” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Jenkins (1982) claims that there is no appropriate set of words that can define terrorism and that sometimes the meaning of terrorism is extended according to the subjective set of principles of everyone. In fact, “some governments label as terrorism all violent acts committed by their political opponents, while anti-government extremists frequently claim to be the victims of government terror” (Jenkins, 1982). Bergesen and Lizardo (2004) first distinguish between state terrorism and terrorism by nongovernmental groups. Their focus is on the latter, and they define it
as “the premeditated use of violence by a non-state group to obtain a political, religious, or social objective through fear or intimidation directed at a large audience”, involving two or more countries. In his article, Turk (2004) states that an important recognition about terrorism is that it is a social construction. It is an interpretation of events and their supposed causes. He also believes that these interpretations are in any way neutral, but they are employed in a “war of words”, namely they are deliberately used to portray truth in order to influence perceptions of reality (Turk, 2004, p. 271-272). The war of words consists of opposing to some positive labels of “martyrs”, some negative others of “terrorists” and its ultimate purpose is to promote some interests. Turk, moreover, gives a definition of terrorism, that he believes it is the most common one: “the deliberate targeting of more or less randomly selected victims whose deaths and injuries are expected to weaken the opponent’s will to persist in a political conflict”, rarely involved with some kind of psychopathologic problems, but contrarily intended and motivated by political reasons (Turk, 2004, p. 273). The same thought about terrorism being neither politically neutral nor arbitrary, is sustained by many researchers, like Whitehead (1987) (Whitehead, 1986), or Krueger and Maleckova (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003). Brym, for instance, in his article writes that the first two lessons on suicide bombers are that they are not crazy, and that it is mainly about politics (Brym, 2007). The first lesson is given evidence by the witness, and only survivor of the 1983 attack on the United States Marine barracks in Beirut. The second lesson is deducted by the fact, among others, that the al-Qaeda group’s ambition of creating and controlling fundamentalist states in the Middle East arose only in under certain political conditions, namely after the American and British invasion of Iraq (Brym, 2007).
3.2 FIVE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

This part will deal with the five major theories of terrorism. The first paragraph introduces structural functionalism, beginning with the analysis of Durkheim’s theory. In his work (1950) he arrives to the following rule:

“La fonction d’un fait social doit toujours être recherchée dans le rapport qu’il soutient avec quelque fin social” (Durkheim, 1950, p. 109). (The function of a social fact is the relationship that the social fact has with its social utility).

Hence, starting with the idea that every social fact is functional to society, the sociological perspective of functionalism sees terrorism as a shock that is needed for society to change. The study continues with the theories of dysfunctional perspectives, which essentially criticizes functionalism and sees terrorism as a dysfunction for society. Another point of view belongs to World-System thinkers; applying their interpretations of reality, terrorism can be talked about in terms of ‘globological’ empowerment (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004), or can be seen as a blowback against American foreign policy (Johnson, 2002) or more generally, as an unintended reaction against the policies of a center by a semi peripheral area (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004). Conflict theory is the fourth perspective presented. It sees conflict between classes or opposing interests as the basic dynamism of society. Lastly, Symbolic Interactionism displays how subjective interpretations of reality explain human behaviors.

3.2.1 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

In elaborating his theory, Emile Durkheim analyzes the works and methods of Compte and Spencer; according to them, psychology always comes first and every social event, every decision is connected to the human private activity, nature and interests (Durkheim, 1950, p. 99-100). He goes on saying that this reasoning is certainly applicable to the doctrines of general sociology, but
he criticizes the fact that it cannot be applicable to all the sociological phenomenon without the risk of impoverishing them. Sociology is not, in fact, a psychological corollary, for the characteristic of sociological phenomenon is to exercise a sort of pressure on individual consciences. When Durkehim explains what social facts are, he states:

“Quand donc on entreprend d’expliquer un phénomène social, il faut rechercher séparément la cause efficiente qui le produit et la function qu’il remplit. Nous nous servons du mot de function de préférence à celui de fin ou de but, précisément parce que les phénomènes sociaux n’existent généralement pas en vue des résultats utiles qu’ils produisent.” (Durkheim, 1950, p. 99)

So one has to determine if there is a correspondence between the considered fact and the general needs of a social system, without preoccupying of knowing if that correspondence is intentional or not (Durkheim, 1950, p. 95). The idea is “that various social institutions and processes in society exists to serve some important (or necessary) function to keep society running” (Conley, 2011). Durkheim thinks that society is composed of interconnected systems. Normality is an assumption of functionalism and equilibrium is considered as one of the major tenants of social life. Any deviation from those assumptions are called “shocks”, and functionalists believe that society always recovers after shocks. Thus, functionalism sees crime as functional to the society (Durkheim, 1933 and 1938) and sees terrorism as a transitory deviation from the usual circumstances of society, and is, as a criminal act, functional to society (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010).

Ozeren and Cinoglu, following Merton’s argumentation about functionalism, offer four reasons why terrorism can be seen as functional to society. The first one is that people see terrorism as a menace to the social equilibrium and their life, so it becomes functional because it clusters individuals together against it, and creates a sense of belonging to the group opposing it. This cohesion would help prevent anomie, which is the situation in which actions are not properly regulated by common norms of society (Fulcher & Scott, 2011, p. 35). For Durkheim, “un fait social
ne peut être qualifié de normal ou d’anormal que par rapport à une espèce sociale déterminée, ce qui précède implique qu’une branche de la sociologie est consacrée à la constitution de ces espèces et à leur classification” (Durkheim, 1950, p. 76). Following this reasoned thinking, terrorists, just as other criminals, become “reference points”; these reference points are useful since individuals use them as standards for evaluation (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Consequently, considering terrorism as a standard for evaluation, society’s norms and behavioral expectations become clearer and necessary. Therefore, the second step in explaining functionalism of terrorism is that society uses it as a way to reaffirm the importance of social norms, and doing so, it safeguards the status quo. The third reason comes from the fact that changes in society often come about from a strong need for transformation and follow a social shock. In the case of terrorism, it represents a social shock that brings about a transformation that permits it to discover new ways in which to defend itself. These alterations make available to society a controlled path of change that was needed. Terrorism therefore is a predictable and required shock, and in a way, it helps society adjust for the better. (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010) The last motive that makes crime, and thus terrorism, functional is that following the stigmatization of deviants, people are able to recognize criminals thanks to social institutions (education system, justice system, media, etc.). Subsequently, they can observe the consequences of criminal behavior, which can make conformity more desirable (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010).

3.2.2 DYSFUNCTIONAL THEORY

Radcliffe-Brown in “On the concept of function”, exposes the postulate of the functional unit of society. The function of a particular social custom is the contribution that it gives to the entire social life, considered as the functioning of the total social system. A social system is the entire social structure of a society along with the togetherness of social customs, on which that
structure existence depends. This vision implies that a social system has a certain unit, that we can call functional unit. We can define this as a situation in which the social system tissue is woven in a way that allows a sufficient degree of consistency and harmony; therefore, without producing permanent conflicts that cannot be neither resolved, nor regulated (Redcliffe-Brown, 1935).

This concept of unit sustained by the function is criticized by Kluckhohn. According to him, the postulate of the functional unit of society cannot go with the lack of the empirical evidence. Thus he admits a variation of the unit, moved by the importance of the empirical observation. It is certain that every human societies have a certain degree of integration. However, not every society has that level of integration in which every activity or idea is functional for the society as a unit and also uniformly functional for all the individuals that are part of that society. On a parallel reasoned thinking, Merton (1957) recognizes that not everything functions to the benefit of the society in his critique to Durkheim. In fact, he writes about social functions and dysfunctions (Merton, 1957).

Some systems, in fact, work against the social structure because not every shock can bring about a smooth and needed change (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). In opposition to Durkheim’s definition of functions, Merton employs the term dysfunctions to describe those processes. The idea of dysfunction can also be extended to terrorism since it is also considered a form of crime (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Ozeren and Cinoglu believe that “since functionalists favor status quo over rapid change and desire evolution-like-slow-paced change protected from irregular shocks, terrorism is a dysfunction because it comes as a powerful shock” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Indeed, one of the greatest problematics and characteristics of terrorism is that it is extremely unpredictable. To explain why terrorism is seen as a dysfunction, I will analyze the concept of “dispositive of risk”. Interestingly, the dispositive of risk insurance emerged where politics and economics proved incapable of managing social problems (Vaughan-Williams & Peoples, 2012).
Let’s talk first about what a dispositive of risk is. Starting from Michel Focault’s analysis, a dispositive is the ensemble of “discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions” (Foucault, 1980). All these elements can be seen as the rationalities and technologies of a government. In the case of risk analysis, rationalities and technologies are translated as all the activities including calculations about possible futures and interventions to control those probable futures (Vaughan-Williams & Peoples, 2012). The objective of a dispositive of risk, hence, is to monitor the future in order to minimize its potentially dangerous effects.

Donzelot (1984) has shown, reporting an example dated back to the post-revolutionary French Republic, that risk offered a response to the problematics of specific social and historical problems. The problem was that poor people had no property and they were forced to sell their labor. Neither free access to work, nor other political or economic policies, were able to solve the situation. Instead, what really made a difference, was the adoption of mandatory insurance. The wage system was the first form of collective risk insurance, giving benefits outside work, and many other rights and protections. In this way, risk could mitigate the shameful opposition between the owners of capital and those who only owned their labor (Donzelot, 1984). “The dispositive of risk insurance modified the traditional understanding of risk as individual responsibility” (Vaughan-Williams & Peoples, 2012). Therefore, going back to the theory, one can say that, weighing the latent functions against dysfunctions of terrorism, dysfunctions would offset the contributions of latent functions (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010).

While society expects people to fit in and it attempts to attain that through sanctions, individuals expect protection from society. In the moment in which society miscarries to offer protection and peace, the individuals will start questioning even the very bases of society. However, terrorism is a “risk beyond risk” (Vaughan-Williams & Peoples, 2012), it is extremely
uncertain and unpredictable. This precludes society from properly protecting its members from the risks and consequences of terrorism. Eventually, people will feel that they are not receiving due protection in return for the respect of social rules, and they will lose motivation to conform and face anomie (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Another problem that makes terrorism a dysfunction is that it causes confusion of norms and values. They are fundamental for steering the members of a society towards socially accepted aims and in particular means to achieve those aims. “Any confusion (...) have the potential to generate serious problems in individuals’ selection of the means to achieve socially approved goals. Applying this to terrorism, seeing the power of terrorism to disrupt the status quo, individuals start to question the utility of the norms and values imposed upon them” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Interrelatedness among systems, equilibrium and cooperative recovery efforts after shocks, are fundamental to functionalism. All these three assumptions depend on trust and cooperation. Terrorism, posing threats to this indispensable harmony, is capable of bringing serious damages not only to the singular members of a system, but also to the system as a whole and disrupting the vital equilibriums of that system. This side effect of terrorism is defined by Ozeren and Cinoglu as a violation of trust.

3.2.3 THE WORLD-SYSTEM THEORY

This part will analyze world-system theories about terrorism. Not state terrorism, but rather violence used by non-state groups against innocents belonging to the world society in order to influence or someway affect some addressees for some political, social, or religious purpose. Bergesen and Lizardo believe that terrorism by nongovernmental groups involves at least two countries. For that reason they adopt a world-systemic approach in analyzing this phenomenon. The procedural point is equivalent to Durkheim’s (1964) classical understanding of social events as distinct realities that exist as sui generis social facts. A given fact is that human
evolution has been characterized by the establishment of economic and political interactions between different societies. These connections are fundamental and central for World-System Theory. In fact the units of the analysis are not societies considered singularly, but rather the “intersocietal systems” (Chase-Dunn) and its networks. These units are not static: they evolve throughout time and this change is due particularly to the effects of globalization, since it has exponentially increased the amount of existing networks.

World-System perspective has its origins in Marxian theories and the thinking of the dependentistas (Chase-Dunn). We can found Marxian heritages in the fact that the development of the world-system is determined by capitalist accumulation and global competition over wealth. Dependency approach considered the legacies of the long history of colonialism as responsible for the obstruction of development in the South. Elaborating on that, World-System theorists blame “core” areas of the world for the conditions of “peripheral” areas.

Some analysis have shown that this situation leads to many types of conflict, among which terrorism. This conflicts are embedded in cyclical rhythms. In fact, “from a world-system perspective, war, far from being chaotic, is an integral part of the international state system’s maintenance, normative structuration and economic and political selection (...). Terrorists, however, are the international state system’s outlaws, incapable of justifying their actions within this nation-centric ‘Westphalian’ system of rules and conventions, and unable to lean on tradition and custom in their attempt to engage in political violence” (Lizardo, 2008). Terrorists violate world-systems rules by breaching the implied process that fixes what actors are to be considered the legitimate controllers of the means of violence within the system (Lizardo, 2008).

Bergesen and Lizardo (2004) found that it appears under certain particular circumstances. One of the situations that characterize the world-system’s cycles is the rise and fall of hegemonic state, namely those states that are part of the core areas of the world. Periods of decline of core
states can be among those circumstances in which terrorism may appear (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004). Hegemonic decline is followed by Great Power competition and, ultimately, war. Using Shumpeter’s concept of “creative destruction”, world-system academics find that that after these events, a hegemonic center is reconstituted and accordingly, a new set of standards and rule is established. Hence, global order is undermined by hegemonic decline. “Private violence by groups against states seems to precede state-to-state violence as perhaps a sign of great unraveling the world-system periodically undergoes” (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004).

A feature of the phenomenon of terrorism is that it has the inclination to outburst in semi peripheral areas of the world-system. It is the case that it does not originates neither in the hegemonic zones, nor in the more underdeveloped periphery (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004). This fact is supported by various researches that demonstrate that terrorism and hate crime is negatively related with unemployment, and positively with education level (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003).

The conclusion of Bergesen and Lizardo is that terrorism is not an exogenous variable of the system, but rather an endogenous one: “not a plague upon the world-system but something produced by the world-system” (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004).

**World-Society/Polity theory**

The subject of international terrorism has not directly been addressed by world-society theorists, however, they have acknowledged the constant expansion of western cultural representations of universal standards during the same period that we observe a growth in international terrorism. The idea is that a causal relationship can be possible and it is elaborated on the top-down model of the intrusion of world-polity’s global standards of which world-society theories talk about. Expectations, rules and definitions of reality might produce defensive reaction that might, under some circumstances, take the form of international terrorism (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004).
Given that social existence is global existence and that social problems are global problems, it is like the progress in world society provides an indiscriminate empowerment for international action. The ‘globological’ product of the enlargement of global society would seem action empowerment across the globe. As Lizardo notices, this “means that individuals in Latin America suffering from the side effects of economic globalization should feel just as globally empowered to engage in international backlash terrorism as those of the Arab-Islamic Middle East” (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004). Nevertheless, even if Latin America and the Middle East should be analogously empowered, actions of international terrorism coming from those areas are not the same. The difference lays in the fact that in the Arab States, autocratic regimes suppress dissent more often with respect to Latin America. This leads, on the one hand, to a greater opportunity of expression within the political structures of states in Latin America, that keeps people’s dissatisfaction inside the country. On the other hand, little possibility of expression in the Arab States, turns discontent outwards, which may take the form of terrorism (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004).

**Blowback theory**

In the preface of the 2002 edition of his book, “The September 11th Blowback”, Johnson explains that his intention was to warn Americans about the nature of their foreign policy. “many aspects of what the American government had done abroad virtually invited retaliatory attacks from nations and peoples who had been victimized” (Johnson, 2002). His book had been written between 1998 and 1999, before the attacks at the twin towers. He claims that attack of that sort should be anticipated: “World politics in the 21st century will in all likelihood be driven by blowback from the second half of the 20th century – that is, from the unintended consequences of the Cold War and the crucial American decision to maintain the Cold War posture in a post-Cold War world” (Johnson, 2002). The attack of September 11th was perhaps the most outstanding
example in the history of international relations of the use of political terrorism to influence events.

As political terrorism is usually defined by firstly individuating its objectives, Johnson establishes a causal mechanism between the attacks and previous American action, linked by the desire of retaliation. The term “blowback”, indeed refers to the “unintended consequences of policies that were kept secret from the American people” (Johnson, 2002). This view on the causes of terrorism is supported also by Crenshaw (2001), who states that “terrorism should be seen as a strategic reaction to American power” (Crenshaw, 2001). Brym (2007) adopts a similar position when he argues that sometimes terrorism is retaliatory, even though it is not the only reason he gives for terrorism. That is the fourth lesson of his article, where he states that a research conducted with Bader Araj illustrates that, between 2000 and 2005, the majority of Palestinian suicide bombers were driven by the desire for reprisal (Brym, 2007).

“Given that international terrorism breaks out in semi-peripheral autocratic zones, this suggests that the great unraveling that eventuates in the Great Power rivalries that generate backlash/blowback terrorism against empires and hegemonic centers; or as a weakening of hegemonic authority that empowers resistance to local autocratic rulers; or a decline in support from the hegemonic center to dependencies in the semi-periphery that then encourages resistance in the form of terrorist attacks” (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004).

3.2.4 CONFLICT THEORY

Conflict Theory is “the idea that conflict between competing interests is the basic, animating force of social change and society in general” (Conley, 2011).
“Classical conflict theorists did not develop a separate perspective on terrorism. This does not necessarily mean that terror was not present in their times, however maybe the intensity of the incidents were not significant enough” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). However, as armed conflicts have significantly increased since World War Two, they have developed various perspective about the “new wars”. New wars involve different types of usages of violence like bombings, guerrilla assaults, etc., organized by armed groups against various types of targets (Oberschall, 2010). There are five theories about new wars, which are not mutually exclusive: Ancient Hatreds, Identity Politics, Manipulation Elites, Economic Roots, and Contention for Power. In sum, the hypothesis advanced by these theories are that: ethnic group membership is rigid and problematic issues and hate sentiments are part of the heritage of ethnicity; leaders of groups are able to create strong symbols that create social constructions that are subject to the manipulation of the elites and fragile; poor countries with an authoritarian regime are more subject to the influence of violence entrepreneurs; and contentious politics is the cause of challenges by those excluded from the polity over various issues, which can be religious freedom or oppressive government, etc (Oberschall, 2010).

Even though conflict standpoint gathers many variant perspectives on what concerns crime and criminality, one can definitely say they all include conflict over scarce resources, which “can be economical, prestige, power, and authority related, etc” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Marx and Engels (Communist Manifesto 1848) explain that there are two sides of modernity, a sociopolitical side and a socioeconomic one and this has to do with the two classes that are the protagonists in every society: proletariat and bourgeoisie. In every epoch, generally, there are two classes that are linked by an exploitative relationship, thus they are one against the other. What happens is that intermittent outbursts of violence accelerate the advent of the organization of a conflict between the two classes, and latent interests become clear. Other conflict theory scholars have already
challenged Marx thesis. For instance, Darhendorf overtakes Marx’s idea of dividing society in two,
basing his distinction on relations of production. After being in contact with and subsequently
influenced by some economists encountered in the 1980s at LSE, he realized that globalization has
renewed the old social and political structures through new economic forces. These forces may
even have generated a new global class and a new losing class (Dahrendorf, 2012). He believes
that we still live in a work society and that the proof is the fact that being unemployed is not
tolerable by an individual. That condition is capable of destroying a person’s self-esteem, and
make him/her totally not independent, but on the opposite, dependent on welfare (Dahrendorf,
2012). However, prestige is also demonstrated to be a scarce resource (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010).
In fact, “it’s not that there are not enough jobs to go around (…), (it’s) that there are probably not
enough jobs at a level of pay which most would associate with a decent standard of living”
(Dahrendorf, 2012).

The moment in which someone plans to commit a terrorist act, usually he or she does not
weigh the pros and cons of his/her actions, because the cause behind that act is the quasi-
spontaneous reaction to some kind of humiliation or frustration. (Hartmann & Uggen, 2012)
(Brym, 2007)

As already noticed, conflict theories do not put their effort on the phenomenon of
terrorism. Nevertheless, Ozeren and Cinoglu have tried to apply the theories extended their
arguments on the cause of new wars. According to their analysis of conflict perspective, another
outcome of this conflict is discrimination. Discrimination is seen as a powerful force that fuels
conflicts and accentuates divisions and contrasts between groups. Hence the only possible
resolution for discriminated groups is to knock down the whole system (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010).
So, conflict theorists consider terrorism “as nothing but a reaction to injustice, which is probably
created in the minds of terrorist due to misguidance, illiteracy, or unrealistic goals, and that
violent behaviors expressed by terrorist organizations are the result of individual frustration, aggression or showing a readiness to fight” (UK Essays).

Terrorists usually do not have the sufficient means (financial or political power) that are required to fund their projects, so they use terror as a means to shake the system in order to achieve their political objectives (UK Essays). In Ozeren and Cinoglu’s view, instead, conflict theorists believe that terrorists, often are members of the working class or at least are sufficiently close to it. “Although working class people are still a major source of recruitment for terrorist groups, new terrorist groups do not show predicted social characteristics, currently, we witness members of higher socio-economic layers who are actively participating in terrorism, such as Osama Bin Laden who was a member of a wealthy family in his country” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Indeed higher classes young people are more likely to participate in process of radicalization than lower classes people. The reason is that education let individuals accede more easily to politics, and impatiently desire a reaction to the discontents of political life (Turk, 2004, p. 278).

3.2.5 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic interactionism is a micro level theory that extends Mead’s belief that there is no single or objective reality (Mead, 1934). Symbolic interactionism theorists claims that people interpret realities subjectively and that they behave according to these interpretations. “Mead’s thought reflects a preoccupation with biological adaptation and a preference for behavioristic explanation” (Columbia College (Columbia University), 1956, p. 255). In fact, though some scholars may think that society gives roles to every individual, Mead is firmly convinced of the fact that people are not given roles, but they take them in the moment that they “internalize” social acts and interpret what society expects from them (Columbia College (Columbia University), 1956, p.
255). This does not mean that he refuses the idea that the social environment has no kind of influence over individuals, but simply that he believes that there is no mechanical reaction to stimuli from society. What influence an individual, is the social process in the form of “the generalized other”, whose attitude is the attitude of the whole community (Mead, 1934). So Mead says that the community as a whole exercises control over an individual the moment in which he or she takes the attitude of the generalized other without referring to any specific other individual of the community (Mead, 1934). The moment in which an individual interacts with other members of a society, his or her perceptions create subjective or collective realities, that will nonetheless apparently be considered as objective realities (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). For example, the meaning of a member of a criminal organization for a policeman and for another criminal will radically differ from each other.

It is a mistake to take the perceptions of these created realities as fixed, in fact perceptions are subject to constant change and reinterpretation. Their modification through time is due to individuals interaction with other persons or groups, which may change their thoughts and considerations about reality. Each person learns how to commit lawless acts through interactions with other criminals or criminal groups, and “members upon joining are resocialized to the group’s version of reality” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Indeed, Symbolic Interactionism considers involvement in group activities as important as simple interaction with other individuals.

Deviance can be clarified by Labeling Theory, which has “the belief that individuals subconsciously notice how others see or label them, and their reactions to those labels, over time, form the basis of their self-identity” (Conley, 2011). If an individual commits an action that is labeled deviant by society, consequently he or she also is labeled deviant. This first stage is called primary deviance. Subsequently, deviants see themselves labeled as such and this situation let them continue committing deviant acts. This second stage is called secondary deviance (Fulcher &
Scott, 2011). “Secondary deviance can quickly turn into a stigma, which is a label that changes the way people see someone, and how individual views themselves” (Conley, 2011).

According to symbolic interactionism, terrorism is treated as learned behaviors. Each person learns how to commit terrorism through interactions with terrorist. This learning process is well explained and is given great significance by the Learning Theory.

Social Learning Theory developed from Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory. The latter is particularly important for criminology and its contribution consists in individuating the cause of crime in the social context in which an individual lives. “The principle of differential association asserts that a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violations of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law” (Pauwels & Schils, 2014). In other words, if a person is more exposed to social messages favoring criminal behavior than to prosocial messages, criminal conduct is more likely to emerge. Social Learning Theory is a sort of extension of Differential Association Theory, for it tries to explain all types of criminal attitudes, change in behavior, and all kinds of factors that may or may not influence criminal behavior (Pauwels & Schils, 2014).

Social Learning Theory includes four learning mechanisms: differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement, and imitation. Differential association refers to the importance of direct or indirect group membership in influencing deviant behavior. The greater the priority, intensity, duration, and frequency of the differential association the greater the effect on behavior, so the theory in relation to terrorism is that the stronger someone's connection is towards a terrorist organization the better chance that person has of also exhibiting terroristic behaviors. The second learning mechanism is definitions. Definitions refer to an “individual's own value and belief system about what is and is not acceptable behavior” (Pauwels & Schils, 2014). There are two types of definitions, general definition and specific definition. General
definitions consist of broad observations about conformity that are influenced by orthodox norms and by religious or moral values. Instead, those definitions that align an individual with particular acts of crime are called specific definitions. The greater the number of definitions that favor violent acts, the more likely a person will engage in criminal behavior. So the more definitions an individual has that favor terroristic behavior the greater chance that person has of committing a terroristic act. The third learning mechanism is differential reinforcement. Differential reinforcement “refers to the balance of anticipated or actual rewards and punishments that follow behavior” (Pauwels & Schils, 2014). An individual refraining from committing a crime depends on a balance of past, present, and anticipated future recompenses or punishments for their actions. The fourth and final learning mechanism is imitation. Imitation occurs when individuals behave in a way that they have already witnessed others doing. The features, the behaviors and the consequences for those behaviors being observed, determine how much an individual imitates a behavior (Pauwels & Schils, 2014). All of these things need to fall into place in order for an individual to imitate a terrorist. The more direct or indirect social interaction a person has towards terrorism, the more likely they are to commit a terroristic act.

As observed, understandings of reality depend on individual interpretations of events, that in turn influence their behavior (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010) (Conley, 2011). Group membership in fundamental in this process because it accelerates the internalization of the realities presented by the group, namely, it hurries the learning process. “This is more evident in terrorist groups. For instance, Turkish Hizbullah, after the recruitment process has its new recruits undergo a very demanding resocialization process. The major intent of this resocialization is to have newcomers internalize the group’s version of realities. And as the best way to achieve that in a cost efficient way (time and money), Turkish Hizbullah have them involve in terrorist acts. The main purpose is to become the only reference group for its members” (Cinoglu & Ozeren, 2010). Hence, group
membership is one of the major determinations of individual interpretations of reality, which enables symbolic interactionism to explain crime, and thus terrorism (Conley, 2011).

To conclude, sociological theories are useful to understand the meaning of terrorism and the basic functioning that stands behind terrorist behavior. At this point, the study can proceed in the examination of the Islamic State, keeping in mind the interpretations of the theories that have been presented in this chapter. To do so, the third chapter will introduce the concept of “Islamic state as a construction”, then it will investigate possible understandings of the Islamic State as a sociological phenomenon.

In the second chapter it has been shown how classical theories of sociology have been adapted and applied to explain the phenomenon of terrorism. The conventional model of terrorism used as a point of departure for the various analyses has been the one of the Al-Qaeda group. Indeed, it has been since few years the predominant point of reference, particularly after the events of September 11, 2001. However, the Islamic State has brought terrorism to a new level. Zeid refers to an “upgraded terrorism”, meaning that the Islamic State has changed the way in which terrorism is conjectured (Zeid, 2014). And this is no surprise, since one of the biggest features and problematics of terrorism is that it is in constant evolution.

4.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

From a constructivist standpoint, an analysis about terrorism should depart from the fact that any institutions of our society are not given, but they are rather social constructions. This means that some specific events, characterized by some specific features, caused by some particular reasons, are addressed as terroristic attacks. As the second chapter abundantly clarifies, the first problem encountered with the analysis of terrorism is there is no universal definition of this phenomenon. Instead, a description of terrorism depends on the point of view adopted, and may even change over time, giving the continuing evolution and changes of this phenomenon.

4.1.1 An Islamic state construction

Hassan Al-Turabi is a very important Sudanese politician and Sunni religious man. He embodies an important role as he was determinant in the process of reintroduction of the Islamic
law - shariah - in his country. He is the leader of the National Islamic Front political party, inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist organization. He was convicted several times, among which in 1989, when he participated to a coup d’état that brought to power Omar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir. However, “Mr. Turabi was soon released and given a crucial role helping the new government to fashion its policies in accordance with Islam” (BBC News, 2009). Indeed, he is a promoter of the establishment of an Islamic state, which must have certain specific features and contrasts with the model of the Western state.

He says that, contrarily to the custom of Western societies of dividing the public sphere from the private one, in an Islamic State there cannot be such a division. The building of an Islamic state, in fact, must be conducted with the complete agreement and participation of an Islamic Society. Another feature is the refusal of secularism: in order to respect the principle of “tawid – the unity of God and of human life” – an Islamic state has to be religious (Al-Turabi, 1983). This clarifies the requirement of accordance between an Islamic state with its society. Moreover, “an Islamic state is not a nationalistic state because ultimate allegiance is owed to God and thereby to the community of all believers – the ummah”, which is the primary institution (Al-Turabi, 1983). Al-Turabi makes clear that this does not imply that an Islamic state would include the whole community of Muslims, but simply that it would be an open state, and would work towards the unity of the ummah. It is important to notice two things. First, the ultimate goal of the establishment of an Islamic state is not the creation of a universal Muslim world, “because Islam is open to humanity” (Al-Turabi, 1983). Second, the very conception of ‘state’, as prevails in Western countries, is compromised, for sovereignty is not a central characteristic of an Islamic state. Indeed, it should not be sovereign, but rather subject to the shariah. “One can call an Islamic state a republic since the shariah rules out usurpation and succession on grounds of political legitimacy”, representative in the sense that the shariah represents the convictions of people and
so their will (Al- Turabi, 1983). Importantly, “Muslims have a moral obligation to be fair and friendly in their person-to-person conduct toward non-Muslim citizens, and will be answerable to God for that. They must treat them with trust, beneficence, and equity” (Al- Turabi, 1983).

4.1.2 Al-Turabi’s Islamic state construction compared to the Islamic State

The first objective of the Islamic State has been the creation of a traditional caliphate. The caliphate was initially an elected consultative institution and “later it degenerated into an authoritarian government” (Al- Turabi, 1983). Indeed, “destroying ancient shrines and mosques, Isis is trying to eradicate every trace of Islamic tradition (...) (and) resembles a 20th century totalitarian state more than any type of traditional rule” (Gray, 2014).

A caliphate do not require a territory in order to exist as a religious and political institution, however the Islamic State continues to expand its territorial possessions (Mini, 2015). In an interview with Hassan al-Turabi, presenter Ziauddin asks: “Is it the idea of the nation-state in total conflict with the universalist and non-territorial teachings of Islam?” Al-Turabi answered that it is not totally true, since in his idea of an Islamic state, frontiers are not ultimate barriers to human relationships (Al-Turabi). This explains why IS has turned the focus on the establishment of a state. (Mini, 2015)

Even though the Islamic State has not been recognized as a state by many countries, it is a state and it behaves like a state. Indeed its members have “set up their own state-like institutions such as a court, a police system, and schools. They have also appropriated existing state institutions in Syria. And every time they take over a new area, they present it to their followers as evidence that they are indeed working on establishing and expanding states” (Khatib, Militant Group Moves to Create Islamic State in Iraq, 2014). Yet the Islamic State does not replicate the ideal Islamic state described by Al-Turabi, for it is not open to humanity, but rather it imposes its authority and its religious beliefs.
The conclusion may be that the Islamic State is not Islamic at all, and that it “actually represent(s) the legacy of the imperial history” (Al-Turabi). Since if the government is authoritarian, a state cannot be defined as Islamic. However, if one believes that reality can be subjectively interpreted, an interpretation of the shariah may be formulated so that the religious problem can be set aside. After all, the concept of modern state excludes any religious feature. Weber, about the concept of state, talks about three main notions: monopoly of the use of force, legitimacy, and territory (Fulcher & Scott, 2011). States control society through the use of force, which must be legitimate and exercised within a territory. And this is exactly what the Islamic State is doing: controlling people through its military and conquering territories. And even if people do not want to be dominated by IS, the moment in which they surrender to its authority – because they are afraid to resist it, or because they have little or no other choice – they recognize it.

4.2 THE POLITICAL ASPECT OF TERRORISM

Since the definition of terrorism depends on the points of view adopted, one can rightly think that views, in turn, depend on one’s political orientation.

Even if definitions of terrorism are different from each other, they obviously have something in common. States’ governments, international organizations, private agencies, and scholars, increasingly agree on the idea that terroristic attacks are motivated by political reasons. In fact, “terrorism is most usually defined, for empirical research purposes, as the deliberate targeting of more or less randomly selected victims whose deaths and injuries are expected to weaken the opponent’s will to persist in a political conflict (Turk, page 2) (... and it is ) rarely about psychopathology”. As Brym confirms with his first lesson of suicide bombers, they are not crazy (Brym, 2007). Many empirical researches conducted after having collected many cases and
analyzed them, confirm that terrorists are mentally stable. Brym clarifies why this is not just a matter of empirical researches, but there is also a logical explanation behind the results. “The organizers of suicide attacks do not want to jeopardize their missions by recruiting unreliable people” (Brym, 2007). He believes, moreover, that terrorism is not even mainly about religion, and only when strategy based on politics failures, “‘notions of martyrdom’ and ‘holy war’ gained importance” (Brym, 2007). This does not mean that most modern suicide bombers are deeply religious.

Considering the terroristic attacks that took place from 2001 on, at least those that captured the attention of European countries, the most frequent used justification for those attacks has been the hope of retaliation caused by the suppression by Western powers of many Sunni attempts of installing a Sunni regime, following the American and British invasion of Iraq. Hence, if that is the real justification, the very reason behind terroristic attacks is politics and conflict over control and domination. This explanation includes two aspects: a strategic one, and a retaliatory one, which can be respectively interpreted in the light of conflict theory and world-system theory.

4.2.1 The strategic aspect

With the death of Zarqawi and al-Baghdadi refusing to promise loyalty to Zawahiri, IS was about to collapse. However, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took advantage of the revolution against Bashar al-Assad in Syria and managed to “reactivate the networks that had supplied the Iraqis with fighters from across the border” (Filiu, 2014). He was able to revive the group, reformulating “the identity of ISIS as a Sunni organization dedicated to confronting Shiite domination in the Levant” (Zeid, 2014). This situation of strong leadership image associated with al-Baghdadi is connected with two of the theories about new wars presented in the second chapter, in the paragraph on conflict theory, namely Manipulation Elites and Identity Politics. As explained, elites and leaders
play strong roles, and are able to exert great influence and manipulate the other members of their group or community.

However, conflict theories cannot be fully applied to IS. In fact, if on the one hand conflict theorists believe that terrorism quasi-spontaneously react in response of a frustrating sentiment, on the other hand the Islamic State’s attacks are meticulously planned and their videos are extremely detailed. And the strategic aspect attributes particular importance to the high organizational and tactical level of the group.

The Islamic State pays particular attention to the methodology of its executions and their presentation to the public. Importantly, ISIS’ actions are portrayed simultaneously in two versions: one for the Islamic public, and one for the Western public. Experts of ISIS’ communication are perfectly aware of the fact that the West cannot stand the execution of single individuals and can better tolerate mass massacres, and that massacres of Westerns are needed in order to justify military interventions. Hence, single executions through beheadings shock Western states without causing their decisive intervention. On the other hand, the Islamic State shows mass slaughters to the Islamic public, because this is the form of violence that that public understands and mostly fears. (Mini, 2015)

Furthermore, the logic behind terrorism is often explicitly expressed in statements released by the members of terroristic organizations. The Islamic State, in fact, has repeatedly announced its future targets. For instance, in its video titled “A Message To Americans”, after the beheading of the journalist James Foley, the executioner blames the US for his death and goes on revealing the name of the next victim, journalist Steven Joel Sotloff. Showing the other man, the masked assassin says: “The life of this American citizen, Obama, depends on your next decision”. (Abdallah, 2014).
4.2.2 A World-Systemic interpretation and the retaliatory aspect

As Bergesen and Lizardo conclude in their world-systemic approach on terrorism, this phenomenon is something that depends on and is produced by the inter-relatedness of core, semi-peripheral and peripheral areas of the world. Following this reasoning, the rise of the Islamic State can be seen as a product of the failure of hegemonic power. In addition, the world-system theory about historical cycles is given support by the fact that someone sees ISIS as “an unintended consequence of the currently depressed momentum of the Arab Spring” (Rubeiz, 2014). Rubeiz, commenting the 2006 situation in the Arab world, states that they “are occupied four ways: rulers occupy freedoms, religious authorities occupy the mind, colonialists occupy territory, and local militias occupy the streets” (Rubeiz, 2014). These four categories fueled the Arab Spring, which has proved that people could not stand autocratic rulers, but on the other hand, the other three problems, namely “institutional religious hold on people's personal lives; root cause of foreign occupation; and the widespread presence of lawless militias”, remained (Rubeiz, 2014). “The first phase of the Arab Spring was about the significance of the public square, the second was the ascendance of moderate political Islam, the third was the return of state power through the military and the fourth phase was the birth of ISIS: re-asserting the power of the Islamic militia with a broader geographic base” (Rubeiz, 2014). Though the short term objective for the Arab states should be combating ISIS, a long term objective is necessary. In fact, Rubeiz firmly believes that if short term solutions only are formulated, when ISIS will be gone, it is likely that another terrorist group will appear.

Brym, after having conducted a research with the sociologist Bader Araj, found that even if sometimes terrorists act in order to gain some benefits after having outweighed the possible ones with the possible costs of an attack, “people are not calculating machines” (Brym, 2007). The
research shows that “the majority of Palestinian suicide bombers between 2000 and 2005, (...) (were) motivated by the desire of revenge and retaliation” (Brym, 2007).

So the blowback theory is another thesis that can be tracked in articles and papers trying to offer an explanation for IS rise. “The anger felt and hostility expressed by ISIS are not utterly groundless. The suppression of the (Sunni) Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the negligence to rectify Sunni grievances in Iraq, and Damascus's oppression of its Sunni majority has given ISIS an exploitative pretext to 'save' the Arab and Muslim worlds” (Rubeiz, 2014). Indeed, the aim of the Islamic State is of establishing a caliphate in its traditional framework and applying the shariah law in order to affirm the Islamic law, affirming Sunni domination while repelling Western influence and presence in states IS controls. Moreover, the Islamic State rise is often attributed to the previous American intervention. The Islamic State itself releases such claims, and the case of the American journalist deaths due to American air raids is an example.

4.3 SUBJECTIVE INTERPRETATION OF IS’ ROLE: FUNCTIONALISM, DYSFUNCTIONALISM AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AT CONFRONT

As it has already been clarified, functionalism and dysfunctionalism are two contrasting theories that oppose the role that “shocks” play in societies. According to Ozeren and Cinoglu's interpretation of functionalism about terrorism, it could be seen as functional because it becomes a reference point for people, it represents anomie and people understand how society expects them to behave. Moreover, it is functional in that it offers to society a path of change that was needed, namely a sense of cohesion against it and the possibility to find new ways to defend society. Applying to this phenomenon dysfunctional theories, terrorism can be seen as a dysfunction because it brings violation of trust: the members of a society see society as not protecting them and may confuse norms and values. However, being terrorism a social
construction, the way in which it is considered, a positive or negative thing for society, depends on one's point of view.

In the eyes of its members and supporters – one can say – the Islamic State is playing an essential role that is functional to the whole Islamic community.

One may think that foreign fighters are seeing the terrorist group as functional to their lives, creating a sense of belonging and bringing a needed change. This could be more a subjective point of view. But even considering the point of view of the whole group, the changes brought by the Islamic State may be considered as functional because, after having waited for a very long time, they have finally brought the concrete application of the shariah law and the creation of a caliphate. This is functional because a cohesive entity can educate people towards a certain kind of behavior, clarifying norms and rules a “devote believer” should follow and respect.

However, the Islamic State is functional merely in the eyes of those who support and are part of it. On the other side, the rest of Muslims do not agree with IS interpretation of Islam and implementation of shariah. Hence, from their standpoint, IS can be said as being a dysfunction of society. In fact, rules and norms are confused, and this misunderstanding may make people adhere to the group, who, consequently, assume a deviant behavior and are labeled as terrorists.

As already stated, for symbolic interactionists reality is subjective and behavior depends on subjective interpretations of reality. When an individual interacts with other members of a society, his or her perceptions create subjective or collective realities that will be considered as objective realities. This is the reason why recruitment through social media is so important. An ICSR analysis of 190 foreign fighters reveals that the conflict in Syria is the first one “in which large numbers of Western foreign fighters have been documenting their involvement in real-time” (Briggs & Silverman, 2014). It shows also that their information about the conflict comes from the so-called 'disseminators'. Disseminators are people who are not directly affiliated with the terrorist groups,
so many foreign fighters are going to Syria with “misguided conflict experience expectations” (Briggs & Silverman, 2014).

4.4 WHY IS THE ISLAMIC STATE SUCCEEDING IN RECRUITING FOREIGN FIGHTERS?

As a matter of fact, the Islamic State is succeeding in attracting many foreign fighters. The construction of group images is crucial at the stage of recruitment. Indeed, IS produces specific narratives about itself that appeals to those who want to become part of the group, promising redemption as a chance for purification and renewal and the reviving the ancient traditions of Islam (Saifudeen, 2015). In this process social media play a fundamental role.

But why do they join the Islamic State? At the beginning many of them wanted to protect Syrian population from the authoritarian regime of Assad. In fact Western countries disapproved the regime, and additionally “social media activity around the Syrian civil war appears to have generated a sense of personal involvement and passion” that has translated into action (Briggs & Silverman, 2014).

Many of them adhere to the group because they are looking for new friends and new identity because the country in which they live is not offering them many opportunities and adventures.17

“It is not the only group Westerns join, but it is the most appealing one thanks to its global outlook, which includes spreading the caliphate across the world, to its attempts to implement immediate shariah law – and to the glow of its military success”18. The reasons why foreign

---


fighters are attracted by the Islamic State are various. In their videos and photos uploaded on the Web, the Islamic State’s combatants show themselves with the luxuries that are available to them and they promise redemption for those who will go support them. “Poverty does not explain the lure of jihad for Western fighters. (…) Nor does religious piety”19. Indeed, many foreign fighters come from the middle-class. Moreover, some foreign fighters are new to religion.

About the profiling of foreign fighters, here’s the transcript of an interview with John Horgan, an expert on terrorism and security studies:

“Audrey Hamilton: I guess the most common question is, are there certain characteristics or a profile of the type of person who is most likely to become a terrorist?

John Horgan: No, is the short answer. It hasn’t stopped us from looking for such a profile, but four decades of psychological research on who becomes a terrorist and why hasn’t yet produced any profile.” (Horgan)

According to a study on Western foreign fighters conducted by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, the average age ranges from 18 to 29 (Briggs & Silverman, 2014). So Western fighters are often young people, students, and immigrants, facing difficulties with their job or relationship20. “Family ties have also been important factors. There have been several cases of siblings travelling to Syria either together or soon after one another. Generally, however, Western travelers have been met with strong opposition from their family members, many of whom may take contact with their children and try to encourage them to return” (Briggs & Silverman, 2014).

Hence, “There is no single pathway, no common socio-economic background, not even a


common religious upbringing among individuals attracted to foreign fighting in general or jihadist fighting in particular” (Stern & Berger, 2015). However, as already explained, the narratives that the Islamic State is creating are deeply manipulative. They are investing a lot on their image and on foreign fighters support. Thomas Hegghammer, indeed, in an interview with Bill Moyers, notices how foreign fighters are given much importance in the Islamic State's videos. First of all, foreign fighters are not militarily important for the group. However, being, “on average, more ideological that the typical Syrian rebel”, they can be used for particularly provocative tactics, like for instance beheadings or suicide bombings, to make the image of IS more cruel (Hegghammer, 2014). Moreover, the Islamic State releases, in very professional videos and in various European languages, its messages that are also often translated in other languages, like Russian or Indonesian, etc.21

4.5 A COUNTERTERRORIST STRATEGY

Though the Islamic group is attracting many foreign fighters, one should not think believe that within the group there is a strong level of cohesion, in fact “there are conflicting interests among the disparate elements Isis has recently recruited, and it’s not clear that it can govern a state on any long-term basis” (Gray, 2014). Researches and evidences demonstrate that ISIS rise is facing problems of consensus, especially as it concerns the conflict in Syria (Khatib, 2015). There, even if people accept the presence of the group, they are neither happy with the situation, nor agree with the Islamic State’s interpretation of Islam. The reason why they bear its presence is that the Islamic State is offering a situation that can be considered as being better than the Bashar

al-Assad’s regime and the failed Syrian opposition to the government. It is true that the Islamic State’s extremism is far worse than al-Qaeda’s ruling, but the scale of massacres of the Assad’s regime is worse than the Islamic State’s murders. Moreover, “Despite its brutality, ISIS imposed a sense of order in areas under its control that appealed to those who had been living either in the chaos of war or under the authoritarianism of a regime that was unpredictable in the way it handled citizens’ property” (Khatib, 2015). Moreover, it offers public services and refurbishes damaged infrastructure in the areas it controls (Gray, 2014). However, though the Islamic State is offering material benefits to people, on many other matters, they are violating social and individual rights. There is a degree of incapability due to the lack of a written jurisprudence that makes the population unsure about how to behave under IS rule. Seeing the many failures to contrast IS, “people are desperate to be saved but cannot rise up against the organization because they do not have the means to do so” (Khatib, 2015). But a military strategy alone has proven to be ineffective.

The strategy of intercepting terrorists, eliminating their leaders and destroying their bomb-making facilities, may appear at first as being very successful in contrasting terrorism. However, this kind of strategy does not take into account two important consequences that it may bring. “First, harsh repression may reinforce radical opposition and even intensify it. Second, insurgents may turn to alternative and perhaps more lethal methods to achieve their aims” (Brym, 2007). Though “some counterterrorist experts say that motivations count for little if capabilities are destroyed, (...) (as a matter of fact) they would be right if it were not for the substitutability of methods: increase in the cost of one method of attack, and highly motivated insurgents typically substitute another” (Brym, 2007).

This is why another kind of strategy that is being given much more attention for its effectiveness, is exercising empathy with the enemy (Brym, 2007). In Holder vs. Humanitarian Law
Project case, the Supreme Court of the United States concluded that talking to terrorists helps providing legitimacy to them, therefore communication with a terrorist group for any end, is considered as material support. Following this decision, Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod reacted saying that “American law has to find a way to make a clear distinction between illegal material support and legal actions that involve talking to terrorists privately in the hopes of reducing global terrorism and promoting national security”\(^{22}\). It is important to understand that sometimes direct interaction with terrorists is helpful rather than detrimental. “Once higher levels of trust and stability are established by such counterterrorist tactic, they can serve as the foundation for negotiations leading to a permanent settlement. Radical elements would inevitably try to jeopardize negotiations” (Brym, 2007). And even if negotiation with a terrorist group does not lead to concrete results, debating helps understand its point of view\(^{23}\). And this is essential, for “seeing the enemy’s point of view increases one’s understanding of the minimum conditions that would allow the enemy to put down arms” (Brym, 2007).

Moreover, the international community should also include in its strategy, attention for the human dimension of the current situation in the countries afflicted by the Islamic State domination (Khatib, 2015). In fact, people that do not want its presence, are becoming more and more passive towards the terroristic group, for they cannot, do not want to and are afraid to fight it. The fact that also a social attention to solve the problem is required is given support by the previsions of Lina Khatib. In an interview with Renee Montagne, reflecting on possible future actions by the Islamic State, she compares Mosul occupation with a possible seize of Baghdad by IS. She believes that one of the reasons why the Islamic State managed to take Mosul was that those Sunni people who belonged to the Army “had nothing to defend because they did not feel


they belonged to the Iraqi state”. Given that is much less likely that IS would actually seize Baghdad, because there, the army is much more linked to the government.
5. Conclusion

Terrorism is a phenomenon that cannot be described by a single, objective definition. Sociological theories have been interpreted to try to explain what terrorism represents for society, what are the sociological causes for it and what are its effects. Whereas a functionalist interpretation sees terrorism as functional because, thanks to it, people can identify and understand social norms, avoid anomie and group together against it, a dysfunctionalist interpretation perceives terrorism as a dysfunction capable of creating anomie. According to a World/Systemic approach, instead, terrorism can be seen as a reaction against the inner workings of the world-system. On the other hand, Conflict Theory interpretations attribute the causes of terrorism to conflict over scarce resources. Lastly, Symbolic Interactionism explains how people “learn” to behave as terrorists.

The truth is that terrorism is a combination of a little bit of every sociological theory. Subjective interpretations enable different understandings of terrorism. Thus, the phenomenon of the Islamic State can be differently interpreted too.

The overall illustration of the Islamic State organization and of the phenomenon of the foreign fighters clarifies why the international community is worried about the current circumstances and future developments of the situation. IS singularity is that never before has a terrorist organization been so effective in establishing a state and receiving support. Although foreign states do not want to formally recognize the Islamic State, it is a fact that an analysis of the modern concept of state demonstrates that it is actually a state. In fact, IS controls a territory, it maintains order through its legal system and its military, it adopts and implements policies, it has a system of taxation, it represents the will of its supporters, it has relationships with third actors outside its borders. Following Al-Turabi interpretation of an Islamic state, it may be that it IS
cannot be considered Islamic, however, even religion depends upon subjective interpretations, hence this is not an ultimate hypothesis. In addition, religion is not the only aim and feature of the Islamic State. Politics is central to the analysis. After all, the Islamic State can be seen, as a conflict over control and domination. This explanation includes a strategic aspect and a retaliatory one.

The retaliatory aspect can be addressed through a World-Systemic approach. Indeed the aim of the Islamic State is repelling western influence and presence in states IS controls. On the other hand, terrorists’ strategies can be tracked, for instance, in their statements about future objectives, or in the logic that stands behind the creation of narratives which are able to positively represent terrorist groups, making them appealing. And it is thanks to the constructions and narratives about itself that it promotes through its propaganda, that it is having an tremendous success in recruiting foreign fighters. The first thing we can notice about people who join the group is that there is no single profile of a “typical foreign fighter”. The second thing is that the reasons why they join IS are extremely various. Nevertheless, the fact that the Islamic State is greatly investing on foreign fighters may be a starting point in formulating a counterterrorist strategy.

Something has to be done. States must put their efforts in the development of an effective reaction against the Islamic State. As already showed, creating counter narratives could be a beneficial tactic. For not only they can displays what the Islamic State is actually doing, it may also incentivize the reaction of local peoples, who are becoming more and more passive to the situation.
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books:


**Websites:**


Hopkins, S. (2014, October 14). *Full horror of the Yazidis who didn’t escape Mount Sinjar: UN confirms 5,000 men were executed and 7,000 women are now kept as sex slaves.* Retrieved from The Daily Mail: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2792552/full-horror-yazidis-didn-escape-mount-sinjar-confirms-5-000-men-executed-7-000-women-kept-sex-slaves.html


from Taylor & Francis Online:


---

**Newspaper Articles:**


**Interviews:**


7. Abstract in Italian

Recentemente, l’attenzione mondiale si è focalizzata sul ruolo internazionale e locale assunto dallo Stato Islamico nonché sul fenomeno dei *foreign fighters*. Questo studio si concentra sull’analisi del gruppo terroristico e sul fondamentale ruolo svolto dalla scienza sociologica ai fini dell’elaborazione di un punto di vista volto alla comprensione di questo argomento.

Molte le questioni affrontate, a partire da alcuni concetti di base: ed, in particolare, cosa si intende per Stato Islamico? Quali sono le sue origini? Quanti sono gli individui che hanno aderito al gruppo? Qual è l’origine dei combattenti dell’IS?

Il primo capitolo individua nello Stato Islamico un’organizzazione terroristica di matrice Islamico radicale che controlla un territorio, grande quanto il Belgio, attraverso una serie di organi istituzionali dallo stesso costituiti e che ne regolano il suo funzionamento. Una delle caratteristiche chiave dello Stato Islamico è il fenomeno dei *foreign fighters*, letteralmente esploso esponenzialmente negli ultimi tempi. Infatti, in soli due anni, il numero di individui reclutati ed aggregatisi ai combattenti già sul territorio è pressoché raddoppiato, ed attualmente il loro numero conta più di 20'000 persone. Il quadro generale che si tenta di fornire sull’organizzazione dello Stato Islamico e sul fenomeno dei *foreign fighters* spiega perché la comunità internazionale sia fortemente preoccupata dalle vicende attuali che la vedono coinvolta, e dai possibili scenari futuri conseguenti al consolidamento dello Stato Islamico.

Il secondo capitolo, partendo dall’analisi del terrorismo sotto il profilo etimologico ed eziologico, affronta la strategia terroristica individuando quanti e quali effetti produce sulla società occidentale e sulle popolazioni locali. Perché determinati individui commettono atti terroristici? Esistono fattori sociali/politici/culturali, più o meno comuni, capaci di indurre/determinare nell’individuo la volontà di compiere atti di tipo terroristico?
Poiché il terrorismo non può essere descritto da alcuna definizione oggettiva e universalmente condivisa, il capitolo prosegue illustrando cinque teorie sociologiche ad oggi particolarmente accreditate, rielaborate e interpretate al fine di comprendere meglio tutti i possibili aspetti del terrorismo, le sue molteplici valenze, le sue funzioni e i suoi effetti, anche in chiave prospettica.

Secondo l’interpretazione cd. Funzionalista il terrorismo è – appunto - funzionale alla società, nel senso che gli individui, osservandone le regole e le manifestazioni, sono poi in grado di identificare e comprendere le norme sociali, evitare l’anomia (assenza di norme e regole) e raggrupparsi contro di esso.

L’esatto opposto vale per un’interpretazione del Disfunzionalismo, che percepisce il terrorismo come una disfuzione capace di creare anomia, ovvero quello stato di devianza dovuto alla mancanza di organizzazione attraverso norme sociali per assumere, proprio in assenza di tali norme, comportamenti anomali dal punto di vista sociale. Ancora, secondo un approccio Sistemico, il terrorismo deve essere considerato una reazione contro i meccanismi del Sistema-Mondo. Interpretazioni della Teoria del Conflitto, attribuiscono la causa del terrorismo a conflitti per risorse limitate. Tale conflitto nasce non solo per accaparrarsi beni primari tra individui che ne hanno accesso limitato, ma anche il potere ed il prestigio rientrano tra quei beni di natura strumentale per cui si accendono conflitti di natura elitaria. Infine, l’Interazionismo Simbolico spiega come le persone « imparino » a comportarsi come i terroristi per emulazione.

Il fatto è che il terrorismo può essere spiegato attraverso la combinazione di tutte le teorie presentate, dato che le interpretazioni soggettive permettono differenti comprensioni del fenomeno.

Con uguale approccio, varie interpretazioni possono essere utilizzate per risolvere altre problematiche. Cosa è uno stato Islamico? L’Islam è una componente essenziale dello Stato
Islamico? Quali altri aspetti sono importanti al di fuori della religione? Perché gli individui sono attratti dallo Stato Islamico?

La particolarità di questa realtà socialmente e culturalmente organizzata è che, mai prima d’ora un’organizzazione terrorista è stata tanto efficace nella creazione di uno stato Islamico e così fortemente sostenuta. Benché la comunità internazionale non voglia formalmente riconoscere lo Stato Islamico, l’analisi della concezione di stato moderno dimostra che l’IS è evidentemente un stato. Infatti, esso controlla un territorio, mantiene l’ordine grazie al suo sistema giudiziario e alla forza esercitata dal proprio esercito, adotta e implementa politiche interne, dispone di un sistema di tassazione, intraprende relazioni con entità terze al di fuori del proprio territorio, rappresenta la volontà dei suoi sostenitori.

La ragione per cui, invece, molti studiosi dell’Islam non possono riconoscere lo Stato Islamico è di natura ideologica e culturale, per la quale il concetto di “stato Islamico” non corrisponde al sistema di stato Islamico proposto dall’IS.

Il terzo capitolo presenta, dunque, l’interpretazione di uno stato Islamico di Hassan Al-Turabi, politico e religioso Sunnita. Partendo dalla sua descrizione, lo studio mostra le differenze tra l’idea di stato Islamico di Al-Turabi e le caratteristiche dello Stato Islamico creato tra Siria e Iraq. Basandoci sulla sua interpretazione, si conclude che l’IS non può essere chiamato “Islamico”, anche se, dato che anche la religione dipende da interpretazioni soggettive, l’ipotesi che esso non sia Islamico, non è fatto certo. Inoltre, la religione non è il solo aspetto al centro dell’attenzione dell’analisi fatta, ma anche la politica e le interazioni a cui essa assolve hanno un proprio ruolo. Perciò, il capitolo continua concentrandosi sul ruolo politico del terrorismo, e ne presenta due aspetti: quello strategico e quello di rappresaglia. L’aspetto di rappresaglia è trattato con un approccio Sistemico. L’obiettivo dello Stato Islamico, infatti, è di contrastare l’influenza e la presenza occidentale nei territori interstatali che esso controlla. L’aspetto strategico invece può
essere colto, ad esempio, nelle loro stesse dichiarazioni su obiettivi futuri, o nella logica che si nasconde dietro la creazione di narrative anche ad evocazione suggestiva, che favoriscono delle rappresentazioni positive del gruppo. Ciò chiarisce il motivo per cui l’IS sta avendo così tanto successo nel reclutamento dei foreign fighters, armonizzando le narrazioni in un contenitore mediatico appropriato ed assolutamente efficiente.

Il fenomeno dei foreign fighters è trattato nel quarto paragrafo ed individua chi si è unito al gruppo e perché. Al riguardo merita particolare considerazione il fatto che non esiste alcun profilo aprioristicamente e astrattamente individuabile che descriva il “tipico foreign fighter”. Inoltre, le ragioni per cui determinati individui decidano di far parte del gruppo sono le più disparate.

In ogni caso, la circostanza che l’IS investa fortemente sui foreign fighters viene ad essere assunta come punto di partenza per l’elaborazione di una strategia controterrorista, che viene discussa nel quarto ed ultimo paragrafo. Sicuramente il fenomeno determina la necessità improcrastinabile di un efficace sistema di intervento, in cui ciascuno stato membro della comunità internazionale determini una sinergia di sforzi capace di elaborare una strategia efficace contro lo Stato Islamico. In tutto questo, anche la creazione di contro narrative potrebbe assumere un ruolo davvero determinante per fermare l’ondata di foreign fighters ed incoraggiare la popolazione locale, la quale sta assumendo un comportamento di giorno in giorno più passivo, a reagire.