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Salafism: From a Religious Movement to a Political Force

Salafismo: de un movimiento religioso a una fuerza política

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ABSTRACT: Globalization has introduced rapid changes in the social, political and economic realms of life. It has provoked perturbing and turbulent effects and has challenged established and rooted notions of identity. Globalization has also changed the essence of religion and its role in international affairs. Religion is growing in countries with a wide variety of religious traditions and levels of economic development. Islam is also experiencing a genuine revival. Salafism is a primarily theological movement in Sunni Islam concerned with purifying the faith. Islamic Salafism, as other major religious movements of today, has become universal and less affiliated with any one territory, and more personal and private, increasingly embodying a spiritual search for self-fulfilment. Salafism has also evolved from being a non-political ideology to develop into a political force.

KEY WORDS: Salafism, Extremism, Terrorism, DAESH.

RESUMEN: La globalización ha producido cambios importantes en los aspectos sociales, políticos y económicos de la vida. Dichas transformaciones han provocado efectos turbulentos y perturbadores que han desafiado los conceptos de identidad establecidos y consolidados, asociados con las estructuras sociales tradicionales. La globalización tiende a crear un mundo más inter-conectado, pero también más fragmentado. Las identidades religiosas, locales y globales, han comenzado a fusionarse, porque la globalización está transformando la esencia de la religión y su papel en la escena internacional. Además, choques culturales, relativos a sentimientos religiosos, a la pertenencia a diferentes grupos étnicos o a valores ideológicos y cosmovisiones diferentes, a menudo se encuentran en la raíz de muchos de los problemas que amenazan la seguridad internacional en nuestros días.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Salafismo, Extremismo, Terrorismo, DAESH.

"Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you"

Friedrich Nietzsche

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has introduced important changes in the social, political and economic realms of life. Those transformations have provoked perturbing and turbulent effects and have challenged established and rooted notions of identity associated with traditional social structures (Moghadam 2008). Globalization tends to create a more unified and yet more fragmented world. Global and local religious identities are becoming linked because globalization is changing the essence of religion and its role in international affairs (Thomas, 2010). Furthermore, clashes of culture, related to religious beliefs, ethnicity or different values often lie at the root of current security problems (NATO, 2010).

Contrary to expectations of social scientists, social theorists, and historians of the past century, religion does not seem to have disappeared as a social force (Queen, 2010). Around the world religion is on the rise. It is growing in countries with a wide variety of religious traditions and levels of economic development, suggesting that neither poverty nor social exclusion is solely responsible (Thomas, 2010).

Religion is adapting to political cultures, including democratic cultures, everywhere, be they in Western Europe or Islamic states. The most significant aspect of the evolving relationship between religion and culture is the close interaction of religious movements and national politics (Barkey, 2011).

Islam is also experiencing a genuine revival and globalization is also making religion more pluralistic. It is no longer imposed or taken for granted by prevailing cultures. In the Muslim world this shift is also taking place and debates are ongoing in many countries about issues such as the lines between Islamic law and religious freedom, the role of women in society, and regulations regarding conversion and proselytizing (Thomas, 2010).

Islamic Salafism, as other major religious movements of today, it is setting itself free from cultural moorings. Salafism has not lost its importance, but it has become universal and less affiliated with any one territory, and more personal and private, increasingly embodying a spiritual search for self-fulfillment (Barkey, 2011)[1]. In the post-Arab spring context, Salafis across the Middle East region see themselves as the rightful guardians of the public sphere, and are acting to ensure that others see them that way, too (Mc Cants 2012). Nowadays, the ideas of literalistic Salafists are ascendant in Muslim communities from Egypt and the Persian Gulf to Western Europe (Lynch, 2010). Current interpretations of Salafism range from a solely personal religious conviction with an emphasis on purifying the believer's way of life to a so-called *Jihadi* orientation that demands its followers to take on the fight against Western governments and "apostate" Muslims (specially Middle Eastern) regimes held responsible for the suffering of all Muslims (Heinke & Persson, 2016).

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[1] Roy claims that the major religious movements of today (Pentecostalism, Protestant evangelicalism, and Islamic Salafism) are fundamentally separating from the cultures in which they developed, although they acknowledge what Roy calls "floating cultural markers: *halal* fast food, eco-kosher, cyber-fatwa, *halal* dating, Christian rock, transcendental meditation".

Globalization gives greater influence to ethnic and religious diasporas, which are contributing to the changing nature of international security and are one of the most significant types of non-state actors in international relations. Nowadays, members of diasporas can also join religious groups in their countries of ethnic origin. The Internet and cheap airplane tickets, for example, give young, rootless, and alienated Muslims in the diaspora the opportunity to construct new, radical identities by joining a virtual *Ummah*, or global Islamic community (Thomas, 2010).

The success of fundamentalist movements stems from their capacity to appropriate secular culture and render it more religious. And at the same time that religious groups engage secular culture to reform it, they themselves become more secular (Barkey, 2011)[2]. Globalization has blurred the lines between religious organizations involved in advocacy, proselytizing, or social welfare and purely terrorist organizations. It is these kinds of both local and global social networks that allow people to support or facilitate the operations of terrorist groups (Thomas, 2010).

In Syria and elsewhere, many Salafi preachers call for their followers to fight jihad. Ibn Taymiyyah is often referred to as their Sheikh of Islam, meaning that his teachings are central to the lives of "pious or good" Muslims (Vicente Caro, 2017)[3].

The Salafism also parallels that of other ideologies, namely its attempt at creating a new identity for its adherents. Several scholars have argued that Muslims and Western converts adopting Salafism tenets suffer from a crisis of identity (Roy, 2005; Khosrokhavar, 2005). To those who are disoriented by modernity, Salafism provides a new sense of self-definition and belonging in the form of membership to a supranational entity. Salafi-jihadists attempt to install into Muslims the notion that the only identity that truly matters is that of membership in the *umma*, the global Islamic community that provides comfort, dignity, security and honour upon the oppressed Muslims (Moghadam, 2008).

In the later decades of the twentieth century the Arab Middle East saw the rise of violent Islamist groups influenced by both Muslim Brotherhood activism and Salafi exclusivism. These groups, including Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Group, in Egypt, and the Armed Islamic Group and the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat, in Algeria, were the forerunners of today's Jihadi- Salafi groups. Ideologically, their main inspiration was Sayyid Qutb, a prolific Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood ideologue who advocated a radical, revolutionary version of Brotherhood activism (Bunzel, 2015). Qutb is a controversial figure within the movement. His extreme ideas split the Brotherhood's top leadership in Egypt (Hansen, 2017). To Qutb, contemporary society was populated by hypocrites and apostates who had substituted the rule of man for the rule of God (Lynch, 2010). These groups inspired by Qutb's ideas aimed to overthrow the established governments and replace them with Islamic states (Bunzel, 2015).

This paper is intended to show the evolution of Salafism from being a nonpolitical ideology to develop into a political force. The first chapter of the article shows the genesis of Salafism and

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[2] This mutual transformation is most visible in places where religious groups have reacted to the secularization of society by engaging in politics. Entering the public sphere has forced Islamists, for example, to adopt modern forms of organization, rationalize their thinking and practices, and revise their positions in historically contextualized ways in order to become more relevant and more effective.

[3] Taymiyyah's ruling on the Druze and the Alawites is one example of Salafism's history of producing extremism. In his ruling, the Islamic scholar describes the Druze (an esoteric religious group) as "kafir", meaning unbelievers, and declares that anyone doubting that is also an unbeliever. He would make it permissible for their women to be enslaved, for their property to be seized, and for them to be slaughtered.

also analyses its special relations with other concepts and movements such as fundamentalism, Islamism, and Wahhabism, which are vital to understand Salafi ideological and political evolution. The second chapter is focused on the study of the DAESH[4], the richest and most violent terrorist group in modern history, which has evolved from a geographically contained insurgent group to a quasi-conventional army with global impact (Black, 2014).

THE ORIGIN OF SALAFISM. IT´S RELATION WITH FUNDAMENTALISM, ISLAMISM, AND WAHHABISM

Salafism is a primarily theological movement in Sunni Islam concerned with purifying the faith (Haikel, 2009). The term Salafī derives from *al-salaf al-sālih.* , meaning "the venerable ancestors" of the first generations of Islam whom Salafis seek to emulate (Bunzel, 2015). A distinctive Salafi intellectual genealogy extends to medieval times. Movements or religious leaders advocating a return to the pristine fundamentals of faith can be traced back to at least the thirteenth century, when Ibn Taymiyyah, realising the total decadence of the Abbasid caliphate that led to the Mongol invasion, siege and sacking of the city of Baghdad (1258), called for a definition of Islamic belief in an absolutist and literalist manner (Kepel, 2006, 219).

Salafism emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century (Kepel 2006, 219). The arrival of colonial rule kicked off the search in Muslim lands for the answer to what went wrong, that is, how the natural order of things—namely, Muslim rule over Muslim lands—was overturned. One of the most popular answers, and also the most simplistic, was that the natural order was crumbling because Muslims were no longer faithful to the fundamentals of Islam (Ayoob, 2016). Salafi reformists called to maintain the unity of the *Ummah*, or global Islamic community, and criticised the complicity of governments in Muslim countries with colonialism as one of the main reasons for decadence and nationalist rivalries (Adamec, 2001: 233). The only way to remedy this situation, the thinking went, was to return to the pristine age of Islam, the period covering the first four decades from the founding of the Muslim polity in 622, when the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors exercised power. (Adamec, 2001: 233). Salafists define Islam as anything that was explicitly condoned by the Prophet and that was upheld by his first three generations of Sunni followers (until the ninth century). Everything that appeared after that is considered as un-Islamic (Olidort, 2015). This longing for a return to pristine Islam included the re-creation of that imagined golden age's political system. These ideas were grafted onto the increasingly dominant European style nation-state, creating the hybrid notion of Islamic state, or rather the Islamic nation-state. They also considered despotism as the enemy of Islam, rejecting any notion of personal power (Adamec, 2001: 233).

Salafism has sought to "purify" Islam of Western influence and centuries' worth of "deviant" digression, including Shiism, Sufism, and even non-Salafist Sunni. Traditional Salafist texts are focused on theology, without mentions to strategy or goals (Olidort, 2015).

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[4] DAESH, is the Arabic acronym for Al Dawla al-Islamyia fil Iraq wa'al Sham. It is used in this paper to supplant the more widely used English ISIL or ISIS. First it was Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), with the Levant and Syria referring to a region stretching from southern Turkey through Syria to Egypt. Then in June 2014, the group renamed itself Islamic State (IS), suggesting its ambitions to be a worldwide caliphate rather than just in the Middle East. Opponents of the term Islamic State say it is neither Islamic nor a state. The term DAESH is now gaining favour. It sounds like the Arabic words Daes ("one who crushes something underfoot") and Dahes ("one who sows discord"). The acronym has even become an Arabic word in its own right, with its plural "daw'aish" meaning "bigots who impose their views on others".

Despite early Salafism's most prominent advocates resorting "to a somewhat freewheeling interpretation of the sacred texts" (Kepel, 2006: 220), contemporary militant segments of the movement advocated the study of texts in a more literal and traditional sense (Kepel, 2006: 220). Purist Salafis stress a literal reading of the religious texts and largely refuse to accept the established body of qualified interpretation (Hellyer and Brown, 2015).

The writings of the Ibn Taymiyya and his students provide the core Salafi theological corpus (Bunzel, 2015) and it is not a coincidence, then, that these militant factions prefer to adhere to the doctrines of Taymiyyah, who serves as an example of "a man of righteous conviction willing to sacrifice himself" (Wiktorowicz, 2006: 212), instead of the nineteenth century reformist writings of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935) (Kurzman, 2002).

Salafism reacted to the Westernisation of the Muslim world and opposed the conservative clerics. Salafis rejected the authority of later interpretations or *taqlid* (tradition) and emphasised the restoration of Islamic doctrines to the pure form and adherence to the Quran and Sunna (Esposito, 2002: 275). Salafism focuses on eliminating idolatry (shirk) and affirming God's Oneness (*tawhid*). Salafis view themselves as the only true Muslims, considering those who practice so-called "major idolatry" to be outside the bounds of the Islamic faith (Bunzel, 2015). Those worshiping—or perceived to be worshiping— stones, saints, tombs, etc. are considered apostates, deserters of the religion. These include the Shiites and, for many Salafis, democrats, or those participating in a democratic system (Bunzel, 2015). The hard core of the Salafi jihadists view all existing Muslim societies as fundamentally, hopelessly corrupt -- part of a *jahiliyya*, which means "age of ignorance", from which true Muslims must retreat and isolate themselves (Lynch, 2010).

Salafi reformers promoted the *Ijtihad* (effort of reflection) and introduced a new model of actions such as public debate and the use of the press (Esposito, 2002: 275). Salafi reformists called to maintain the unity of the Ummah, or global Islamic community, and criticised the complicity of governments in Muslim countries with colonialism as one of the main reasons for decadence and nationalist rivalries. They also considered despotism as the enemy of Islam, rejecting any notion of personal power (Adamec, 2001: 233). At the turn of the twentieth century, Salafism aspired to generate political reform that would lead to the revitalisation of the Muslim community. However, politics has never been Salafism's ultimate objective, despite its contemporary splits into purists, politicos and jihadis (Wiktorowicz, 2006). Rather, it is "to educate and cultivate Muslims upon *tawheed* (Islamic monotheism) and adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet". It is for this reason that Salafism "frown[s] upon forming political parties with partisan loyalties" (Speckhard, 2011: 91).

During the past two decades, the role ascribed to Islam by political movements, inside and outside the West, has augmented greatly (Antunez & Tellidis, 2013). Islam consists of many varying types of religious activism, of different natures, objectives, values and ideology, which Roy (2004, 1994) has broadly categorised as "Islamism" (political Islam), Islamic nationalism and neo-fundamentalism (divided between mainstream and jihadist).

The Western media often give the impression that the embattled and occasionally violent form of religiousness known as "fundamentalism" is a purely Islamic phenomenon. This is not the case. Fundamentalism is a global phenomenon that during different periods of history has surfaced in every major faith in response to perceived problems caused by a faith interpretation

more adapted to the current societal context than the concrete historical and social conjuncture and context of the faith when it was created or emerged. The term "fundamentalism", initially used to describe an ideological stream that developed into a movement within the Protestant community of the United States in the early part of the twentieth century (Nagata, 2001; Boer, 2005), is defined in this study as religious movements or streams based on an affirmation of faith that defines belief in an absolutist and literalist manner (Antunez & Tellidis, 2013). "Fundamentalism" is neither an uncommon phenomenon to all religions (Esposito 1995, 32; Lewis, 1988: 117), nor is it historically new with regards to Islam. Armstrong (2001) shows how fundamentalism has emerged and consolidated in many of the world's major religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The transition from a pre-modern to a modernized society in colonized countries has been traumatic. Secularization has been often been experienced as an assault and it is perceived as a threat to the faith. Religion has frequently become embattled and even militant and some groups believe that they are fighting for survival and they can lash out violently. Furthermore, "Fundamentalism" has frequently taken the form of "religious patriotism", replacing the 19th century European model of nationalism with one based on religion (Armstrong, 2006).

Just like other religions, the history of Islam is not short of instances whereby several groups sought to purify or reform the beliefs, values, ideology and practices of believers. Often, these attempts followed the self-defined principles of the religious leader (or group of leaders) and, as such, were fervently antithetical to the critical interpretation or adaptation of sacred texts (Esposito, 1995: 32). "Fundamentalism" and "Islamism" have been frequently confused and conflated to the extent that both terms have become synonyms in contemporary usage. Graham Fuller describes Islamic fundamentalism as a more conservative subset of Islamism (2003: 48). According to Fuller, "for fundamentalists the law is the most essential component of Islam, leading to an overwhelming emphasis upon jurisprudence, usually logically conceived" (2003: 48). Lapidus locates the difference between mainstream Islamists and fundamentalists in the "political", arguing that while "Islamist" refers to those with primarily political agendas', a fundamentalist is a political individual seeking a more purified version of Islam (Lapidus, 2002: 823).

Islamism is going to be defined here as synonymous to "Islamic activism". That is, "the active assertion and promotion of beliefs, prescriptions, laws, or policies that are held to be Islamic in character" (International Crisis Group, 2005: 1). "Islamic character" is defined by the *Sharia* or Islamic law, interpreted to a greater or less rigid degree, according to different streams and movements. Although the goals of the different Islamist groups could be similar, the level of Islamic influence in the society differs, as do the means, the characteristic actors and the deadlines to reach their purposes (Antunez & Tellidis, 2013).

Nowadays, Islamism might offer meaning to those who are confined to gloomy urban ghettos Islamist groups might be the only ones working on the ground to improve certain people's lives. For many Muslims around the world, Islamism may offer a better life in the here and now -- and not just in the hereafter -- than do many of the alternatives. Even moderate Islamists prioritize religion over all other identities and promote its application in law, society, culture, and politics. Their proselytizing, social work, party politics, and organization of parallel civil societies have all helped transform societies from below (Lynch, 2010).

The Muslim Brotherhood still supports some ultraconservative ideas. However, various offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as in Morocco and Jordan, have taken part in

democratic elections, and have been a force pushing for democratization. In Tunisia the *Ennahda* Party promotes democracy and human rights, seeks for consensus with its secular opponents and does not care whether female parliamentarians within the party wear *hijabs* (Hansen, 2017).

There is a vast and important gap between the Salafi vision of enforced social uniformity and the moderate Islamist vision of a democratic state, with civil institutions and the rule of law, populated by devout Muslims (Lynch, 2010). For Salafists, a movement such as the Muslim Brotherhood is too political, too accepting of civil institutions, and insufficiently attentive to the formalistic and public rituals of Islam. They urge Muslims to separate from Western societies in favor of their own allegedly pure Islamic enclaves. Another thing that should be kept in mind is that, besides the different stances on politics and economy, the terms "fundamentalist" and "Islamist" also ascribe different societal roles to women. While the "fundamentalist" accepts nothing less than house confinement for women, "Islamists generally tend to favour the education of women and their participation in social and political life: the Islamist woman militates, studies, and has the right to work" (Roy, 1994: 38). The Muslim Brotherhood has encouraged women to wear the veil, but only so that they can demonstrate virtue while in universities and the workplace. The Salafis, meanwhile, want women at home and strictly segregated from men. True liberals should prefer Ramadan because he offers a model for Muslims of integration (Lynch, 2010).

Other important issue to keep in mind is the establishment of the caliphate. The Muslim Brotherhood also emerged in response to the rise of Western imperialism and the associated decline of Islam in public life, trends it sought to reverse via grassroots Islamic activism. They championed the restoration of the caliphate as the ideal system of government for the Islamic world, a popular theme in the earlier 20th century. However, for the Muslim Brotherhood building a caliphate was more of a long-term goal than an immediate objective (Bunzel, 2015) and they evinced "a relative indifference" to actually restoring the caliphate (Mitchell, 1969: 235). Despite of this, Muslim Brotherhood's emphasis on the caliphate is particularly significant, as the earliest jihadist ideologues and groups emerged as radical splinters from the Brotherhood (Bunzel, 2015).

Although Salafis do not make up a majority of the population in any of the Middle East and North Africa countries, they have been able to set the political agendas. One of the main reasons for that it is the vast funding they receive from fellows in the wealthy Gulf monarchies, particularly in Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. This money is invested on social programs and proselytizing (Mc Cants, 2012).

It is unclear what percentage of Egypt's population Salafis make up, but they control a quarter of the parliament, where Salafis have agitated for a constitution that recognizes the paramount authority of Islamic law. They have also pushed for legal codes that reflect the Koran's commandments (Mc Cants, 2012)[5].

In other countries, Salafis make up even smaller percentages of the population and have less institutional clout, but their penchant for vigilantism makes them feared nonetheless. To push their conservative agenda, Salafi activists have taken to the streets, where they have ransacked alleged symbols of Western decadence such as bars and art exhibits and clashed with police in protests against the secular state (Mc Cants, 2012).

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[5] Each year, millions of dollars flow out of the Gulf and into Salafi charities and satellite channels like the one that touched off the riots. By comparison, liberal NGOs receive far less support from the wealthy countries in the region.

Among Muslims all over the world there is currently a dramatic competition across and within groups, above all, to the fierce war between the Salafi purists who call for a literalistic Islam isolated from modernity and the modernizing pragmatists who seek to adapt Islam to the modern world. In this context, Salafists are gaining in influence everywhere, driven largely by the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood's model of political participation and the continued flow of Gulf oil money to literalistic institutions and individuals. The purity of Salafism offers simple answers to Muslims who are facing profound crises of identity and alienation (Lynch, 2010).

Wahhabism is another reformist movement of the eighteenth century, concerned with the moral reconstruction of society. It was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a Hanbali scholar, in Arabia. Like Salafism, Wahhabism proclaims *tawhid* (monotheism) as its primary doctrine. The perceived moral decline and political weakness of the Muslim community in Arabia spurred the emergence of the movement (Esposito, 2003a: 333). Frustrated by the moral decline of his society and the "heterodox" religious interpretation imposed by the Ottoman Empire, Abd al-Wahhab, proposed a return to an idealized Islamic past through the reassertion of monotheism and reliance on the Quran and *hadith* (a collection of traditions containing sayings of the Prophet Mohammed), rejecting medieval interpretations of Islam and jurisprudence. Wahhabi jihad involved the destruction of tombs and shrines and the enforcement of proper ritual practices, as well as cleansing Islam of Shi'ism (Bunzel, 2015).

Wahhabism belongs to the category of movements that seek a return to a strict application of the Sharia while opposing both Western encroachment and the intellectual, artistic and mystical tradition of Islam itself, and all this in the name of an early puritan Islam considered to have been lost by later generations. Elements of the movement are referred to as Wahhabis by opponents, but refer to themselves as *Muwahhidun*, or those upholding the doctrine of *tawhid*. In the eighteenth century, Abd al-Wahhab partnered with Muhammad Ibn Saud, at the latter's request, to begin the unification of all tribes in the Arabian Peninsula (Blanchard, 2009). Abdul-Wahhab's ideas inspired an important religious and political movement, which spread and disseminated throughout the Arabic peninsula. Nowadays, it is the most important source of inspiration in the religious sphere of the Saudi Kingdom and a serious dimension of its political domain. Since the foundation of the modern kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, there has been a close relation between the Saudi ruling family and the Wahhabi religious establishment (Blanchard, 2007: 4). In the late 18th century Wahhabism was wedded to the Saudi political establishment and remains so today. The alliance with the Saud family helped the Wahhabis to impose their version of the faith across Arabia by waging jihad against perceived heretics for the sake of eliminating *shirk* or idolatry and affirming *tawhid* (Bunzel, 2015). It is worth noting that, like DAES today, the first Saudi state, which was founded in the eighteenth century, also emerged out of a political vacuum by taking advantage of territorial opportunities created by regional neglect (Olidort, 2016a).

The establishment of the Saudi kingdom provided the Wahhabi movement with a state, which included the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, increasing its relevance in the Muslim world (Martin, 2004: 727). Supported by the vast wealth from oil discovered in the decades following the creation of the Saudi state, Wahhabi influence on Muslim culture and thinking drastically rose following a tripling in the price of oil in the mid-1970s (Kepel, 2006). Since that moment, the Saudi government spent tens of billions of dollars to promote Wahhabism throughout the Islamic world, through the construction, support and operation of mosques, madrasas and other religious institutions preaching the Wahhabist doctrine (Al-Fadl, 2005). As a result, local

interpretations of Islam that are not as strict as the Wahhabi doctrine are side-lined and increasingly substituted by it (Al-Shirian, 2003). Yet, because of the cross-pollination of Wahhabism, teachings of the Muslim brotherhood (members of which were given sanctuary in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s) and Salafi interpretations, the doctrine that was exported by Saudi Arabia after the 1970s is better described as "neo-Wahhabism" (Stanley, 2005).

The implications of this are significant, because it is at this point that militancy and radicalisation, both in the Wahhabi and Salafi doctrines, begin to emerge in contemporary times. According to Moussalli (2009), after the creation of the Saudi state, Wahhabism was changed from a revolutionary and theological puritan movement to a movement of a conservative social, political, theological and religious *dawa* (purest form of religion). As a result, Saudi Wahhabi clergymen remained loyal to the royal family and supported the positions of the Saudi regime at different occasions and events, such as the Second Gulf War in 1991, the Bin Laden issue and the American attacks against Afghanistan and the Taliban in 2001. This stance diverged greatly from the non-state Wahhabi base's opinions and increased the role of neo-Wahhabism among the Saudi population, who increasingly began to distance themselves from their government's decision to co-operate with the West in the aforementioned instances. It is at this historical conjuncture that the jihadi segment of Salafism (Wiktorowicz, 2006), or neo-Salafism (Stanley 2005) and neo-Wahhabism, converged on the predicament of a more-direct and puritan reinterpretation of the traditional teachings of Islam – despite the fact that their origins were quite different (Stanley, 2005; Wiktorowicz, 2006: 207).

Nowadays, Wahhabism and Salafism are often used interchangeably (Wiktorowicz, 2006: 207), with Wahhabism considered by some to be "a particular ultra-conservative orientation within Salafism" (Murphy, 2006). Other commentators describe Wahhabism as a formerly separate current of Islamic thought that appropriated the "language and symbolism of Salafism" until the two became "practically indistinguishable" in the 1970s (Al-Fadl, 2005: 79). Later significant Salafi thinkers came from the Wahhabi movement (Bunzel, 2015).

SALAFISM AND JIHADISM: DAESH

Salafism is a minority faction within Islam, and most of its adherents are nonviolent. But this ideology is prone to radicalization and some of the Salafist doctrines can be exploited and used to justify the extremism found in terrorist groups in the Islamic world (Vicente Caro, 2017)[6]. DAESH, like al-Qaeda, identifies with a movement in Islamic political thought known as Jihadi-Salafism, or Jihadism for short. The group's leaders explicitly adhere to this movement (Bunzel, 2015). Jihadi-Salafism is a distinct ideological movement in Sunni Islam. It encompasses a global network of scholars, websites, media outlets, and, most recently, countless supporters on social media. The movement is predicated on an extremist and minoritarian reading of Islamic scripture that is also textually rigorous, deeply rooted in a pre-modern theological tradition, and extensively elaborated by a recognized cadre of religious authorities (Bunzel, 2015).

In the last 20 years jihadism has thus been increasingly dominated by its Salafi dimension (Lav, 2012). Rather, works by Ibn Taymiyya and the scholars of the Wahhabi tradition have

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[6] In 2015, Sheikh Aadel al-Kalbani, the former imam to the Grand Mosque in Mecca, even said that the Islamic State (ISIS) was a result of the Salafi version of Islam and that the question of how this ideology was fuelling terrorism must be addressed with transparency.

become the ideological backbone of the movement (Bunzel, 2015). Salafi-jihadists present a program of action, namely *Jihad*, which is understood in military terms. They assert that jihad will reverse the tide of history and redeem adherents and potential adherents of Salafi-jihadist ideology from their misery (Moghadam, 2008).

In conjunction with the rise of jihadist groups, there also appeared a loose-knit network of independent scholars who gave ideological substance to the emergent jihadi movement. Influenced more by Qutb and the Brotherhood early on, these scholars gradually distanced themselves from him and adopted a more Salafi orientation. Their focus on the more violent aspects of Salafism gave birth to Jihadi-Salafism (Bunzel, 2015). These scholars provide scriptural exegeses that provide a theological rationalisation for the violence of the radicals (Roy, 2017).

Martyrdom is extolled as the ultimate way in which jihad can be waged, hence the proliferation of suicide attacks among Salafi-jihadist groups (Moghadam, 2008). The systematic association with death is one of the keys to understand today's radicalization: the nihilist dimension is central. "What seduces and fascinates is the idea of pure revolt. Violence is not a means. It is an end in itself" (Roy, 2017). Salafi-jihadists also openly justify the killing of civilians, including Muslims, under a logic of the ends justifying the means (Moghadam, 2008).

Sectarian identities were supposedly formed in the Middle East centuries ago, and yet they seem to breed the region's bloodiest conflicts today (Olidort, 2016a). DAESH, the most important Jihadist group in modern history, has been able to capitalize Sunni Arab fears and resentment of Shiite leadership in Iraq and Alawite leadership in Syria (Terrill, 2014). DAESH has manipulated anti-Shiism to exploit political and economic grievances against both Assad's Shiite–Alawite regime and the dispossession of Iraq's Sunnis under the government of then-Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki (Olidort, 2016a).

The anti-Shiite element in Jihadism derives from Salafism historical animus toward Shiites. Salafis are by no means the only Sunni Muslims to show hostility toward the Shiites in Islamic history. Salafis, however, have made anti-Shiism a central component of their identity (Bunzel, 2015). Some groups and states have integrated sectarian themes into the very fabric of their political, cultural, and educational systems. Sectarianism, in other words, has been institutionalized. Even some non-state communities, such as the Salafis, have institutionalized their sectarianism. Salafis claim that their conservative version of Sunnism adheres to a literal understanding of the faith that the Prophet Muhammad and his earliest followers practiced. They thus consider Shiites apostates. Although lacking (and in most cases even resisting) the call for a state, Salafis have systematized their opposition to Shiites over the course of the twentieth century by promoting medieval theological treatises that support their religion stance (Olidort, 2016a).

The on-going Syrian conflict has deepened traditional Shiite and Sunni rift and attracted extremist on both sides; even it started as a peaceful popular revolt against a dictator. Although religion is not the driving factor of the rebellion, Salafism as a religious ideology serves a sectarian purpose. It can be used to distinguish "true" Sunnis from Shiite Assad loyalists, and it has become a tool for mobilization and a source for comfort and justification in times of war (Vicente Caro, 2017). This can be attributed to many reasons; going from the rise of extremist Sunni groups backed by the Gulf States; to the involvement of Hezbollah, supported by Iran; and the decline of the initial secular movement deprived of enough regional or international support.

In Syria, the uprising against the Assad's regime has become an increasingly sectarian war. This is a consequence of identity politics, which have dominated Syria since its establishment after World War I and especially since the first Assad regime came to power in 1970 (Van Dam, 1996; Terrill, 2014). Sectarian identity has also been the dominant factor in Iraqi society since 2003 (Terrill, 2014). DAESH is exploiting the increasing tension between Iraq's Sunni minority and the Shiite-led government (Visser, 2014). DAESH "offensive jihad" is directed mainly against the region's Shiites. Apart from theology, the perception that the Shiites have expansionist designs on the Middle East "necessitates" fighting them (Bunzel, 2015). It is possible to affirm that Identity and sectarian polarization in Syria and Iraq provided the perfect conditions for DAESH's establishment in both countries. This presence will not be rolled back easily (Terrill, 2014).

The crucial goal of DAESH is to attract Muslims from all over the world to Iraq and Syria, where the group has focused the almost totality of its efforts and resources to consolidate and expand its territory. Nevertheless, in its online magazine *Dabiq,* DAESH asks Muslims already in the land of the infidels to "attack, kill, and terrorize the crusaders on their own streets and in their own homes."[7] The main mission of DAESH in the Far Abroad (US, Europe and Asia) is destabilization of the current political order. In order to reach this goal, DAESH also encourages radicalized Muslims in Europe to remain at home to recruit others and launch local attacks. These attacks are intended to polarize Western societies and deter strikes on DAESH targets in Iraq and Syria (Mc Fate & Gambhir, 2015). DAESH offers young volunteers a narrative framework within which they can achieve their aspirations. So much the better for DAESH if those who volunteer to die (the disturbed, the vulnerable, the rebel, without a cause) have little to do with the movement, but are prepared to declare allegiance to DAESH so that their suicidal acts become part of a global narrative (Roy, 2017). The Salafi-jihad identifies the alleged source of Islam's conundrum in the persistent attacks and humiliation of Muslims on the part of an anti-Islamic alliance of what it terms "Crusaders," "Zionists" and "apostates" (Moghadam, 2008).

DAESH approach to the doctrine of jihad also bears a distinctly Salafi imprint. Traditionally, Jihadists, have espoused "defensive Jihad", casting their militant acts as defensive in nature. They perceive the Middle East to be under attack by secular "apostate" rulers and their Western "crusader" backers. Although DAESH advocates for "defensive jihad" too, they also emphasizes the offensive form of jihad, which in the Wahhabi tradition is premised on the uprooting of *shirk* or idolatry, wherever it is found (Bunzel, 2015).

DAESH employs religious rhetoric and symbols to advance their cause. Although they selectively pick from the Islamic tradition only those elements that advance their narrow agenda, they nevertheless draw from the same religious sources that inform the lives and practices of more than a billion other Muslims (Moghadam, 2008).

Terrorist groups use wisely cultivated victim narratives to play on intense popular frustrations, especially during crisis of governance. Al-Qaeda is a case in point: from the beginning, Osama bin Laden emphasized "the humiliation of Muslims at the hands of Western oppressors and called on his followers to reclaim their dignity as God's chosen people". DAESH has invoked

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[7] *Dabiq*, Islamic State online magazine, "From Hypocrisy to Apostasy. The Extinction of the Grayzone", Issue number 7. All the issues of DAESH propaganda magazine Dabiq can be found at the site of "The Clarion Project: Challenging Extremism, Promoting Dialogue". Available at: https://clarionproject.org/ (last visited on 10 April 2017).

similar themes in Iraq, exploiting Sunni anger at the Shia government in Baghdad. In this way they also attract people seeking to assert their identity and self-worth (Mazzar, 2014). DAESH's adoption of this acutely severe version of Jihadi-Salafism is attributable to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the founder of al-Qaeda in Iraq who studied theology with the prominent jihadi scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Bunzel, 2015). The speeches of the different leaders of the group drew extensively on established Salafi authorities, many of them from the Wahhabi tradition (Bunzel, 2015).

Similar to other ideologies, the Salafi-jihad sharply distinguishes between its adherents and those who reject its doctrines. (Moghadam, 2008). Their core narrative of "us" (the *Ummah,* community, or *Ummat al-Mu'minin,* the community of believers) defending against "them" (the non-believers conducting an alleged "War against Islam") secures a strong bond among the followers while alienating them from both Western citizens and other Muslim believers (Heinke & Persson, 2016). However, the *Ummah* is at best a pious wish and at worst an illusion: in fact nowadays conflicts are first and foremost among Muslims themselves (Roy, 2017).

Westerners are commonly described as infidels, while moderate Muslims and Arabs are labelled apostates. To the most extreme Salafi-jihadists, Muslims who reject the tenets of Salafi-jihad are tantamount to infidels, thus deserving of death (Moghadam, 2008).

Ideology is critical to terrorist groups for a number of reasons including the roles it plays in recruitment and in the ongoing motivation of fighters and other adherents and sympathizers. They make efforts to "shape society"; and to distribute propaganda that speaks directly to local circumstances, in Europe or in the Middle East. From their perspective, the goal is to grow the movement and further extend its global reach while maintaining an appreciation of site-specific context needs, and parameters of operation. Such skilful adaptation to local circumstances has served the adversary well over time (Cardash, Cilluffo, & Marret, 2013).

DAESH ideology can be defined as a radical interpretation of Salafism, according to which Islamic rule must be established by violent Jihad that can include terror and terrorist acts (Kepel, 2006). Salafism is viewed by a large number of Muslims worldwide, from immigrants in Western countries to those living in the metropolis of the Middle East, as a way to renew Islam in the face of modern times. It is attractive because of its claims of authenticity and its textual associations and because it offers an emotional and puritan alternative to other interpretations. In Western countries, many younger Muslims face a crisis of identity, and they identify neither with the hosting society nor with their families' country of origin. For them, Salafism, which underscores Islam's universality, is a way to differentiate from both societies, providing them a new identity. In Muslim countries, Salafism is appropriating secularism's traditional role of defending the socially and politically weak against the powerful (Antunez & Tellidis 2013). They provide the followers (the true believers) with an idea of their "true purpose" and a sense of belonging to a transnational community in which he or she is unconditionally accepted (Heinke & Persson, 2016). DAESH is successfully exploiting both phenomena with recruitment purposes, offering them an opportunity of victory and retribution.

However, the relation between the group's strategy, politics and religious ideology is complex, and understanding it is the first step to challenging it. Salafism was traditionally non-political and emphasized God's undisputed and sole sovereignty (*Hakimiyyat Allah)* and viewed the Quran and the *Sunnah* of Muhammad as the only acceptable sources to define right and wrong (Heinke & Persson, 2016). Secular political ideologies, nation-states, political parties,

and so on were all considered as un-Islamic, because they were not explicitly authorized by the Prophet (Olidort, 2015a). Despite of this, DAESH and other groups have been able to make Salafist theology relevant to real-world political grievance. It openly discards the political terminology of Western inspired constitution and modern politics, using instead discussions of the *Hadith*, early theological thoughts, and statements from specific pre-modern figures thought to uphold the Salafist belief. Its achievement will depend on its firm commitment to create and consolidate a theologically authentic state rather than a political one (Olidort, 2015a).

According to the stance of DAESH and other Salafi inspired groups, Muslims have been dominated by the West because they abandoned "true Islam". They assure that all men who are not ruled by God, including the majority of Muslims, are in a state of *Jahiliya* (ignorance and darkness) that is similar to what which prevailed before the rise of Islam in Arabia. DAESH believes Islamic Law (*Shariah*), must be the basis for all legislation; that Muslims must return to the original teachings and the early models of Islam; and that the western military, economic, political, social, or cultural influence in the Muslim world is un-Islamic and must be dismissed. To reach this goal is essential to rebuild, consolidate and expand the Caliphate. The restore and the success of the Caliphate and the reestablishment of Muslim hegemony will be an unquestionable proof of God's support to His faithful (Rogers, 2014).

Certain devout Muslims also feel a scriptural empathy for the militant group. They see parallel between DAESH's mission and prophecies in Islamic holy texts of an "end-time caliphate" following the fall of dictators in the Arabian Peninsula. They are also reminded of the inevitable apocalyptic fight between the forces of an Islamic messiah figure, who is supposed to fight under a black flag, and those of the Antichrist (Liow, 2014).

DAESH follows a distinctive variety of Islam whose beliefs about the path to the Day of Judgment matter to its strategy. DAESH actions must be analysed in the framework of a commitment to returning civilization to a seventh-century legal environment, and ultimately to bringing about the apocalypse. DAESH often speaks in codes and allusion that sound odd or old-fashioned to non-Muslims, but refer to specific traditions and texts of early Islam (Wood, 2015). DAESH does govern, and its claims to statehood and the Caliphate are part of its propaganda. However, its appeal to potential recruits lies principally in its distinct apocalyptic narrative (Ford, 2016)[8] and in its promise of a purist Salafi utopia. DAESH theological narrative promotes: "The Middle East's regional crises are part of an apocalyptic sectarian war, for which DAESH' Sunni utopia is the antidote" (Olidort, 2016b).

DAESH size remains unclear but it is thought to include thousands of fighters, including many foreign combatants. It has surpassed al-Qaida as the most dangerous group. Al Qaeda and DAESH share stringing similarities: both emerge from the Salafist strand of Islam, seek to restore the caliphate, and employ indiscriminate violence against Westerners (Mendelsohn, 2016). In a previous incarnation, DAESH was even a branch of al Qaeda. It is possible to assess than the ideological similarities between DAESH and al Qaeda are more significant than the differences (Watts, 2016). Both groups fundamentally adhere to the principle articulated by al Qaeda founding member Abdullah Azzam three decades ago. In fact, many of the differences that do exist between DAESH and al Qaeda are rooted more in clashing egos and tone than in

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[8] The Center on religion and Geopolitics conducted a study of Salafi-jihadist propaganda of DAESH and two other groups from April 2013 to summer 2015. The researchers found that 42 percent of the sources studied contained "explicit references to the end of days".

substance (Hoffman, 2016). However, some differences between DAESH and al-Qaida are not merely about power and control of the jihadist movement; the groups have some differences when it comes to strategy, tactics, and religious authority. They differ on issues such as the implementation of their particular interpretation of the Islamic law and the right of one group to impose its authority over all others. The groups don't disagree on the legitimacy of all of the issues aforementioned, but al-Qaida is more patient and DAESH is generally more radical and uncompromising (Mendelsohn, 2014a). In principle, both groups adhere to Salafi theology and exemplify the increasingly Salafi character of the Jihadist movement. But the Islamic State does so with greater severity. In contrast with al-Qaeda, it is absolutely uncompromising on doctrinal matters, prioritizing the promotion of an unforgiving strain of Salafi thought (Bunzel, 2015). DAESH and al-Qaeda are both ideas and entities. They are based on the central idea that they have a divined mandates for ordering human society. This ordering is to be accomplished through implementing their triumphalist version of the *Shariah*, which the extremists believe is an individual obligation must fulfil. Along with this, DAESH, as al-Qaeda before, is also committed with an ideology, an extreme version of Salafism, and a Jihadist methodology. DAESH is also a networked organization with a clear membership, hierarchy and leadership. DAESH accepts all al-Qaeda's essentials of this ideological and methodological vision and disputes only the timing and manner of its implementation (Habeck, 2015).

DAESH military victories in Syria and Iraq beyond raising DAESH' profile also diminished al-Qaida's status. Al Qaida and its sponsored groups were able to gain, but not consolidate, some territory in Yemen, Somalia, and northern Mali. However, these territories cannot be compared, in size and significance, with the lands controlled by DAESH today. Although al Qaida started the march toward the reestablishment of the Caliphate, it is DAESH that is realizing it (Mendelsohn, 2014a). DAESH is actively seeking to establish a system of governance—whether it's issuing edicts on how to treat minorities or designing educational curricula. This process builds channels for DAESH to apply and perpetuate its doctrines, as well as gain credibility from those around the world who share its vision (Olidort, 2016a)[9].

The idea of a renewed Islamic state reaches back the abolition of the Caliphate in Istanbul. This is very important for both the potential recruits and the already inhabitants of the state, especially among those who believe that religion cannot function in a state that does not implement *Shariah* Law. Now some Muslim believers have the possibility to leave secular societies to emigrate, following the footsteps of the Prophet in his *Hijra* from Mecca to Medina (Azinovic & Jusic, 2015). DAESH narrative, using Islamic text and traditions, call upon Muslims everywhere to migrate to Syria and Syria to become members of the Caliphate (Kibble, 2016).[10]

For those socially, cultural, and economically disenfranchised by life, both in Western countries and Middle East and North of Africa, DAESH offers the promise of a genuine Islamic state, full of opportunity for those who accepts its authority. Indeed, the group magazine,

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[9] The same is true of Syrian opposition groups. Al Nusra Front and Ahrar al Sham have set up courts and judiciary bodies that mete out their version of justice.

[10] The central pillar of the Daesh narrative is the idea of the new caliphate. However, those who are unable to join are encouraged to undertake jihad in their own countries.

Dabiq[11](Ford, 2016)*,* consistently put side by side pictures and stories of DAESH social support for its people (i.e., medical care to children, repairing bridges and roads, etc.) with profiles of fighters who were killed, allegedly in defence of such projects. DAESH offers to those who join its cause both physical and spiritual fulfilment; material incentives (concubines, money) and ideological ones (the promise of a society whose claims truly represent the vision of the Prophet (Olidort, 2015b).

DAESH establishment of courts, welfare institutions, and essential services are part of an attempt to build a "social contract": a system based on reciprocal obligations in which civilians are guaranteed protection and basic rights in exchange for support the caliphate in the form of either taxes or military service. In this way, DAESH intend to convince Muslims all over the world to be creating a system of Islamic governance that emulates that model of the seventh-century caliphate. In a civil war in which all of the options are bad, the social contract offered by DAESH, heavily inspired by medieval religious, political, economic, juridical, military and social jurisprudence, is preferred by many as the lesser evil (Revkin, 2016).

Success also breeds legitimacy. During 2013 and 2014, al Qaida's main tactic against DAESH was to try to delegitimize the movement, through the statements of well-known religious scholars (Mendelsohn, 2016). The consensus among Muslim religious scholars is that although DAESH draws on some Sunni Islamic references, its interpretations and applications of those references lie far outside an acceptable range. They affirm that DAESH is deviant and that its interpretations are wilfully divergent from the tradition of classical Sunnism (Hellyer & Brown, 2015). However, DAESH was able to counter this campaign with the support of some young scholars and social media platforms. Young extremists also begin to perceive al Qaida as "old fashioned" and disconnected with reality. It plays on the side of DAESH, and its incipient caliphate, giving them credibility and legitimacy (Mendelsohn, 2014a). Furthermore, DAESH leader, al-Baghdadi is not regarded only as a religious scholar but also as a battlefield commander and tactician. It makes DAESH more attractive to young fighters than al-Qaeda, which is led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, "a mere Islamic theologian" (BBC, 2014).

DAESH has also taken a more pragmatic posture in its military-political strategy. The group has adopted and adapted *Baathist* notions on military and political matters, giving their caliphate a realistic "gloss" (Habeck et al. 2015). DAESH members who have previous ties with Saddam Hussein's *Baath* Party either hold senior leadership positions, such as the regional *emir* or provincial governors, or are directly tied to al-Baghdadi himself. This suggests the importance DAESH has placed on those with leadership experience resulting from time served in Saddam's regime (Raymond, 2015).

Symbolism also works to DAESH' advantage. DAESH has become the icon of the global jihad. The establishment of the so called Islamic State is vital in this development. After DAESH began to control territory in 2012, it could truly claim to be a state in fact and not just in theory, attracting the attention of Muslim youngsters all over the world. ¨It is far more exciting to be fighting for a caliphate that has returned than for a distant promise of its return under al Qaeda¨ (Mc Cants, 2016). DAESH's advances have helped it pick up more recruits, weapons and money. Virtually overnight, it has gone from terrorist group to terrorist army (Simcox, 2014). In

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[11] *Dabiq*, the title of Daesh' online magazine is also a name which contain huge religious symbolism. Dabiq is a town from Syria where, according to some Islamic traditions, the final battle of good versus evil will be waged at the end of the days.

the past, al Qaida, Syrian rebel groups, and numerous scholars criticized DAESH claims of representing a genuine Islamic Emirate by arguing that control over territory was essential for the creation of Islamic Emirate. Nowadays, DAESH functions as a state, controlling a vast territory with millions of residents, whereas al Qaeda operates primarily as an organization with considerably fewer resources. To the extent that that al Qaeda's branches have territorial possessions, they are significantly smaller and of less strategic importance than are ISIS-controlled territories (Mendelsohn, 2016). Now, DAESH holds cities, roads and infrastructures in a territory larger than many countries. Further, Baghdadi's forces (merely 5,000 men) defeated 90,000 soldiers on a march toward Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid Caliphate for 500 years (Mendelsohn, 2014a). DAESH is in an effort to expand its control over new territory and natural resources (primarily oil fields and water dams that it can use for income and tools of war), enforce its harsh ideology, and strengthen its own primacy within the *jihadi* camp (Mendelsohn, 2014b).

Another reason for DAESH's appeal is its sectarianism. DAESH challenge is seen by some Muslims as an extension of the Sunni-Shiite schism. The group's struggle against Bashar al-Assad's regime is considered legitimate in fundamentalist Sunni-Salafist circles. In much the same way, DAESH militancy in Iraq is also seen as a consequence of Sunni grievance against the Shiite-led regime in Baghdad (Liow, 2014). The jihadist enemy has changed from previous conflicts. In Syria and Iraq the fight is primarily against other Muslims, not against Soviets, Serbs, Jews or Christians as before (Klausen, 2016)[12]. The jihadist insurgents in Syria and Iraq, irrespective of their factional differences, share a strategic interest in expanding the conflict to the whole of the Middle East so that they can revert detested Sykes-Picot borders that effectively divided the collapsing Ottoman Empire into British and French protectorates (Klausen, 2014).

Despite DAESH has long focused its energies local and regionally, recent attacks in European soil show the group must be changing its strategy and going global. Indeed, the process is circular: as DAESH became more threatening, Western countries stepped their intervention against it. In turn, DAESH had even more reasons to strike at them. Going global also offers a host of recruitment advantages. DAESH can manipulate grievances of Muslims in the Western world, beyond the Iraq and Syrian conflict. Going global elevates the group's status, improving its self-image and making it more attractive for young recruits. "Anti-Western terrorism" provokes headlines in a way that local fighting does not. Such kind of propaganda is priceless for DAESH recruitment purposes (Byman, 2015).

The phenomenon of European foreign fighters is not a new one. There are many previous examples of people that, for a variety of reasons and with different (ideological) backgrounds, have joined a violent struggle abroad. In more recent years, at least few hundred citizens or resident across Europe took part in the civil conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina or went to fight in Afghanistan, Iraq and other areas of conflict (Bakker, Paulassen & Entermann, 2013).

However, the number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq today is exceptional and greater than for any conflict in recent memory. The power of the sectarian message and the cross-border flow of information and people help to explain this unprecedented phenomenon. DAESH spectacular victories in Syria and Iraq, capitalizing on a widespread Sunni revolt to being

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[12] However, DAESH narrative also includes inter-confessional violence. For example Jihadi street preachers have used anti-Semitism to recruit followers and terrorists and their supporters have exploited the same concept to justify violence.

governed by Shia-dominated governments in both places (Pape, Ruby & Bauer, 2015) improved its credibility and improved its appeal for a Western community of young radicals it seeks to court (Byman & Shapiro, 2014).

DAESH exceptional success to attract foreign fighters forces us to pay special attention to the motivation of those youngsters who decide to joint its ranks. The most commonly cited reasons for individuals joining rebel forces are the horrific images of the conflict, stories about atrocities committed by government forces, and the perceive lack of support from Western and Arab countries. Those people feel that they belong to a global Muslim community or *Umma,* where loyalty and allegiance are defined through confessional identity. They feel obligated to defend their fellow believers in Syria. In many cases, these individuals only fully adopt radical doctrine and ideology when they are on the ground and in contact with hardened fighters (ICSR, 2013). Based on this, it is possible to affirm that DAESH recruitment, at least in early stage, has to be analysed in the largest context of the humanitarian crisis in Syria (Liow, 2014).[13]

A December 2015 report of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism assures the specific motivations behind the individual departures may vary, ranging from altruism to more egotistical reasons. Most of them depart in company of like-minded others. Some are status-seekers, others are identity-seekers and yet others zealots - or a combination of all three. Some of those who left early for Syria had a genuine altruistic humanitarian impulse to assist Muslims in need. That humanitarian motive appears to have declined since the proclamation of the caliphate. Now many appear to depart with the wish to live in what they were made to believe is a "true Islamic society" and they wish to assist in state-building and in being part of a great Islamic revival. "They have been told that it is the individual duty of every Muslim to defend Muslims and fight infidels". Yet many simply appear to seek excitement and adventure looking for a thrilling adrenalin rush of extreme experiences. Some want to impress their friends back home, progressing from being a zero to become a hero. Some others might be troubled souls haunted by mental health problems, depressed and suicidal, who want to die - but gloriously. Yet others are attracted by the opportunity of acting out aggressive, sexual and/or criminal macho impulses with a weapon in hand. For some it is the prospect of camaraderie and bonding in a kind of warrior brotherhood. For yet others it is the willingness to fight and die for a 'good cause', driven also by desire to earn both earthly (spoils of war) and heavenly rewards (paradise). Often the motives of those who are recruited as fighters appear to be mixed (Schmid & Tinnes, 2015).

The Soufan group suggests that the motivation for people to join violent extremist groups in Syria and Iraq remains more personal than political. The majority of DAESH video production appeals to those who seek a new beginning rather than revenge for past acts. A search for belonging, purpose, adventure, and friendship, appear to remain the main reasons for people to join DAESH the Islamic State. The great majority of its recruits continue to go to Syria with the intention of acting there rather than training to become domestic terrorists (The Soufan Group, 2015).

Internal motives stem from what an individual wants or needs for himself, in terms of the perceived benefits of membership in an extremist group, such as a feeling of belonging, escape

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[13] The universal sympathies among Muslims have undoubtedly prompted a large number of humanitarian missions to depart for the conflict zone. Many members of those missions may well have set off with noble intentions. But once they arrive in territory held by DAESH, it is not difficult to imagine how they would be exposed to DAESH indoctrination and recruitment.

into a new identity, adventure, or money. Foreign fighters have personal needs that are met by joining an organization, and those personal needs may become more important over time. Traditionally, jihadist fighters have found internal motivation in the promise of perceived religious rewards such as entry into heaven. But for many, perhaps most, jihadists, religious motivations are necessary but not sufficient to explain the leap to violent action (Stern & Berger, 2015). Individual members of DAESH are of course driven by numerous factors; not all members are motivated by—or even aware of—the ideology of the group that they support. The Islamic State as a political entity, however, is inconceivable apart from its ideology (Bunzel, 2015).

DAESH draws not only those seeking religious morality. It is also successful among those looking for adventure, personal power, and sense of self and community. And, of course, some people just want to kill, and DAESH welcomes them, too. The group's brutal violence attracts attention, proves power, and attracts people to the action. DAESH operates in urban settings and offers recruits immediate opportunities to fight. The group also procures sexual partners for its male recruits (some of them these women volunteer for this role, but most of them are coerced or even enslaved). Some teenagers are attracted to the group without even understanding what it is (Cronin, 2015).

A March 2015 report from Lebanon-based Quantum Communications provides some additional insight into the motivation of foreign fighters to go to Syria and Iraq (Quantum Communications, 2015). A majority of fighters were identified as "status" and "identity" seekers driven by money and recognition, on the one hand, and by a construct providing a transnational identity or offering a sense of belonging on the other (Revkin & Mhidi, 2016)[14]. Geographically, Western external fighters were firstly "identity seekers" and secondarily "thrill seekers" in search of a restyled 'Call of Duty' narrative (Tucker, 2015).

What draws young people in Western countries to jihadi violence is mainly a search for something a lot less definable: for identity, for meaning, for belongingness, for respect. The real starting point for the making of a home-grown jihadist is not radicalization but this kind of social disconnection, a sense of estrangement from, resentment of, society. It is because they have already rejected mainstream culture, ideas, and norms that some Muslims search for an alternative vision of the world (Malik, 2015). The recruiters are aware very well aware of the heightened vulnerability of youth to the offer of an "anchor" for their life (Heinke & Persson, 2016). Issues of identity have long been recognized as being central to radicalization and are not unique to Muslims. The underlying ingredients are always the same: righteous indignation, defiance, a sense of persecution and a refusal to conform (Maher, 2015).

Some Muslim immigrants are not integrating well in Christian-Heritage societies (Adida, Laitin & Valfort 2016a)[15]. As a result, Europe is creating a class of under-employed immigrants

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[14] Interviews with former ISIS fighters from Syria reveal five primary motivations: First some Syrians join ISIS because they are true believers who are ideologically committed to the goal of establishing a caliphate that is governed according to the sharia. Second, some Syrians join ISIS because they are either wanted criminals or are captured enemy combatants who are promised amnesty in exchange for pledging allegiance to ISIS. Third, a significant number of Syrians join ISIS for economic reasons. Forth, a group of people join because they view the Assad regime as the ultimate enemy, and ISIS as the greatest threat to its survival. Finally, some Syrians join ISIS simply because they are opportunists "trying to maximize power and money".

[15] The cause of this failure of integration in France, for example, is twofold: Islamaphobia on the part of French society and Muslim immigrants' tendency to identify more with their home communities.

who feel little or no connection with their host societies (Adida, Laitin & Valfort 2016b). In many Western countries, some young Muslims residents or citizens from Asian-African origin also face a crisis of identity, and they identify neither with the hosting society nor with their families' country of origin. For them, to turn to radical ideas, which underscores religious universality, is a way to differentiate from both societies, providing them a new identity (Mazzar, 2014). They are an easy target for radical groups. Their parents are frequently unable to provide cultural or spiritual guidance, while their communities may lack Imams with a modern, democratic orientation. This create a "lost generation" or "generation in transition" as these youths don't fit in with the culture their parents left behind, and yet don't fit in with the culture of the host country. Disconnected from the tolerant traditions of their families' original homelands, these teenagers are susceptible to foreign propaganda and sermons that preach narrow and hateful interpretations of Islam (Antunez & Tellidis, 2013).

It is not surprising that many DAESH European foreign fighters are either converts to Islam (Stern & Berger, 2015)[16], or Muslims who discovered their faith only relatively late[17]. In both cases, disenchantment with what else is on offer has led them to the black-and-white moral code of religious radicalism (Malik, 2015). What unifies these two groups is not Islam; it is a sense of generational revolt. This is why Oliver Roy describes the threat not as the radicalization of Islam but as "the Islamization of radicalism": "The terrorists are not an expression of a radicalization of the Muslim population, but rather reflect a generational revolt that affects a very precise category of youth" (Roy, 2016)[18]. Violent radicalicalisation is not the consequence of religious radicalization, even if it often takes the same paths and borrows the same paradigms. The fact that these young people choose Islam as a framework for thought and action is funda,mental (Roy, 2017).

The proximity of the Syrian conflict to Europe, easiness to obtain visa for transit countries, and relatively inexpensive travel, makes it to potential fighters particularly attractive. Recruits can travel by themselves or via charity or aid missions. Communiqués issued by terrorist groups in Europe advise foreign fighters against arriving in Syria without pre-existing connection. The emphasis, therefore, is on first establishing a reliable link with fighters inside the country, who

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[16] Among Western recruits, a disproportionate number of converts can typically be found. Converts are often especially vulnerable to fundamentalist ideas, often combining wild enthusiasm with a lack of knowledge about their new religion, making them susceptible to recruiters.

[17] French jihadist are for the most part either second-generation French citizens – the children of relative non-religious immigrants, who were born and raised in France – or native French converts – French citizens with no immigrant background who have converted to Islam.

[18] According to Roy, nearly all the French jihadis belong to two very precise categories: They are either "second-generation" French (born or raised from a very young age in France) or they are "native" French converts. Roy affirms that there is not a "revolt of Islam" or one of Muslims, but a specific problem concerning two categories of youth. The key in this revolt is the absence of the transmission of a religion that is culturally integrated. Members of the second generation do not adhere to the Islam of their parents. They almost never have a history of devotion and religious practice and have been always in the margins of Muslim communities. They are "Westernized" and have all shared in the youth culture of their generation (including drinking alcohol, smoking weed, and flirting with girls in nightclubs. Many of them have spent time in prison. And then, suddenly, they (re)converted, choosing Salafi Islam, "an Islam that rejects the concept of culture, an Islam possessing of norms that allow them to reconstruct the self by themselves. Because they do not want anything of the culture of their parents or of the Western culture that has become a symbol of their self-hatred." Young converts, similarly, adhere to a "pure" form of religion, an "Islam of rupture": generational rupture, cultural rupture, and, finally, political rupture. They were radicalized within a small group of "buddies" who met in a particular place (neighbourhood, prison, sport club); they recreate a "family", a brotherhood.

will then facilitate safe passage to terrorist groups on the ground. There is also evidence that some foreign fighters in Syria are using the internet to communicate with, and incite, both families and friends at home (Maher, 2013). Travelling to the battlefield has become remarkably easy to accomplish. Recruits can simply travel to Turkey (an easy trip by car, train, or plane requiring no visa for EU and US citizens) and then cross into Syria along its vast and porous border. Social media also helps: DAESH and other radical groups offer ample online tips on how to contact them (Byman & Shapiro, 2014).

The reach of the Islamic State's recruiting effort has been multiplied by an enormous cadre of operators on social media. The terrorist group itself maintains a 24-hour online operation, and its effectiveness is vastly extended by larger rings of sympathetic volunteers and fans who pass on its messages and viewpoint, reeling in potential recruits (Callimachi, 2015). DAESH has been particularly successful in recruiting its members through social media. It relies heavily on Twitter and Facebook to reach out to potential recruits (Banco 2014). It is possible to affirm that DAESH has an outstanding understanding of how to propagate a compelling social media propaganda campaign to draw and sustain support for its cause (Feaking & Wilkinson, 2015).

Syria may be the first conflict in which a large number of Western fighters have been documenting their involvement in conflict in real-time, and where social media represents an essential source of information and inspiration to them. In their minds, social media is no longer virtual: it has become an essential facet of what happens on the ground. A large number of foreign fighters receive their information about the conflict not from the official channels provided by their fighting groups, but through so-called disseminators – unaffiliated but broadly sympathetic individuals who sometimes appear to offer moral and intellectual support to terrorist groups in Syria. Private individuals, who are mostly based in the West and who have never set foot inside Syria, possess significant influence over how the conflict is perceived by those who are actively involved in it. ICSR has revealed the existence of new spiritual authorities who foreign fighters in Syria look for inspiration and guidance. Although there is no evidence to suggest these individuals are physically involved in facilitating the flow of foreign fighters to Syria, or that they are coordinating their activity with terrorist groups, they are playing the role of cheerers: their statements and interactions can be seen as providing encouragement, justification, and religious legitimacy for fighting in the Syrian conflict, and are playing an important role in radicalizing some individuals (Carter, Maher & Neumann, 2014).

The worsening conditions in Middle East are forcing many refugees towards Europe. Since the refugee crisis began, a part of European media has shown Iraqi and Syrian refugees as outsiders, whose values and culture oppose European values and culture. In this context, many Europeans, including journalists, have widely generalized about the massive amount of information about the refugees, Muslim immigrants, oversimplified conceptions, opinions, or images and regurgitated an incomplete narrative to the larger population.

Anti-immigration rhetoric increasingly goes hand-in-hand with another terrible 21st century phenomenon – Islamophobia (Sloan, 2014). Some commentators attribute this surprising and sudden wave of anti-Islamic sentiment and anti-refugee hatred to rising defensive nationalism and a sense of insecurity in a Europe because traditional stability appears to be under threat (Culik, 2015). The crisis of the refugees has also activated a good amount of latent xenophobia, leading to anti-Islam protests, attacks on asylum centres and a good deal of bigoted bluster. Some governments in Eastern Europe have even specifically indicated they do not want to

accommodate non-Christian refugees, out of supposed fear over the ability of Muslims to integrate into Western society (Tharoor, 2015).

Some political leaders are applauding and manipulating a growing nationalistic sentiment among youth in many places, which is generated by due to economic woes, unemployment and frustration. At times, this nationalistic sentiment is being used to target against other religious communities and breed religious intolerance. Religious intolerance is a fertile recruitment ground for radical movements and entices lone wolf attacks. Attackers can be only "DAESH sympathisers", prompted by a sense of shared community, political disagreement, feelings of injustice over poverty and life in the dole, loyalties to another country and oppressed brethren. They may not have contact with "DAESH prime", may not have trained in foreign lands and may not, in fact, ever leave their home soil. And with each new act of violence inspired by or committed in the name of DAESH, radicalization and polarization of the society rages on (Burton, 2005). DAESH attackers can be "Idealists", identified with the suffering of Muslims (real or perceived), "Respondents", who react to the experiences of their own religious group, and, last but not least, "lost souls, who are adrift, isolated and perhaps ostracized, and find purpose with a radical group. The lost souls are "ripe for the plucking" by recruiters (Kershaw, 2010).

Although there is no clear-cut profile of European foreign fighters, some organizations have tried to find common characteristics among them (Maher, 2013; Roy, 2017)[19]. The majority of those who left for Syria and Iraq are single males, usually between 16 and 29 years old (The Soufan Group, 2015)[20]. Males are the large majority; women with or without children form a minority (Bakker, Paulassen & Entermann, 2013)[21]. An average of 17% of the fighters are females (Van Ginkel& Entenmann, 2016).

According to the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, the majority of them in Europe has an immigration background or come from ethnically mixed marriages, with at least one of the parents being Muslim. The same report also confirms a sizeable number of converts to Islam among them. Also, preliminary research indicates that the mental-health status of foreign fighters might also play a role (Van Ginkel & Entenmann, 2016). Most come from a lower-class background but some have middle-class parents (Adida, Laitin & Valfort, 2016b)[22]. Levels of education vary; these are, for instance, higher in the United Kingdom than in Germany (Van Ginkel & Entenmann, 2016).

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[19]In the British case, for example, some data suggest that many of those people travelling to Syria as foreign fighters are: male; in their twenties; of Afro-Asian origin; with recent connections to higher education; and with links to individuals or groups who have international connections. In France most of terrorists share a number of common features: second generation; fairly well integrated at first; period of petty crime; radicalization in prison; attack and death (weapons in hand) in a standoff with the police.

[20]According to the December 2015 Soufan group report, most of recruits are in their 20s, but some are much younger.

[21] However, in one sample of 474 foreign fighters from the 25 Western countries one in seven of the militants were girls or women.

[22] Some of the jihadis are also people who come from educated, relatively well-off families and have university degrees. Usually they are harassed by a real or perceived discrimination in the competition for a middle-class job and they are drawn to the Salafist circles not by poverty but by unreachable ambitions. These circles give their members material and emotional rewards if they demonstrate absolute loyalty. They cannot return to former secular lives and can be persuade to make ultimate sacrifices for the group, including suicide murder.

Some of them are sons and daughters of refugees from previous conflict zones (e.g. in the case of Austria: Bosnia, Chechnya) or have themselves already had a jihad tour in a previous conflict (Bakker, Paulassen & Entermann, 2013). However, almost none of them have had military training or experience in their home country when they left (Van Ginkel & Entenmann, 2016).

Marginalization among some immigrant communities appears to have played a role in the radicalization process. Radicals are in fact often orphans or come from dysfunctional families (Roy, 2017). Quite a large number of young Muslims from Europe who became foreign fighters have a criminal record in their home country and may have spent time in prison (Watts, 2016; Buchanan & Haeyoun, 2016)[23]. Some have been taking illicit narcotic drugs and they wish to leave a bad past behind (The Soufan Group, 2015). Radicals are almost all "born-again" Muslims who, after living a highly secular life (frequenting clubs, drinking alcohol, involvement in petty crime) suddenly renew their religious observance, either individually or in the context of a small group (Roy, 2017). To those alienated youngsters, DAESH offers an attractive alternative of belonging, purpose, adventure and respect. DAESH offers them a new identity that is less determined by their past than by their potential contribution in the future (The Soufan Group, 2015). Radicals are not necessary rebelling against their parents personally but against what they represent: humiliation, concessions made to society, and what they view as their religious ignorance (Roy, 2017). Radical groups gave the disfranchised a new home, purpose and direction (Watts, 2016). In order to do this, they have created an intricate network of connections between brothers, school friends, gang members, prison comrades, and an older generation of mentors (Klausen & Johnson, 2016). Social centers, Quran classes, or mosques, but may as well be institutions (notably including prisons) can be exploited by charismatic leaders to reach potential recruits. In those places they can educate juveniles about their narrative of the ideal society (Heinke & Persson 2016). It is important to highlight the importance of prisons in radicalization processes: prisons put them in contact with radicalized peers and far outside of any institutionalized religion. Prisons amplifies many of the factors that fuel contemporary radicalization: the generational dimension; revolt against the system; the diffusion of a simplified Salafism; the formation of a tight-knit group; the search for dignity related to respect for the norm; and the reinterpretation of crime a legitimate political protest (Roy, 2017).

Regarding the radicalization process, it was reportedly very short (Van Ginkel & Entenmann, 2016), with the whole process generally taking weeks rather than months (The Soufan Group, 2015). Most move into action in the months following their religious "reconversion or conversion", but have usually already exhibited signs of radicalization (Roy, 2017). Radicalization does not usually occur in the framework of mosques, but individually or within the group. Religious fervor arises outside community structures, belatedly, fairly suddenly, and not long before terrorists move into action (2017).

Most of the radicals are deeply immerse in youth culture (they go to nightclubs, pick up girls, smoke and drink), their dress habits also conform to those of today's youth brands (baseball caps, hood, in other words street wear, and not even of the Islamic variety), and their musical tastes are also those of the time (they like rap music and go out to clubs). Naturally, they are also gaming enthusiast and are fond of violent American movies (Roy, 2017).

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[23] Nearly half of those identified in connection to the Paris and Brussels attacks had criminal records prior to joining, including for such offenses as carjacking and bank robbery.

We are not only confronting organizations and doctrines, but also a highly seductive subculture, which we can define as *cool jihad*. Music, rituals and customs may be as important to jihadist recruitment as theological treatises and political arguments. In short, jihadism offers its adherents a rich cultural universe in which they can immerse themselves. This is probably a key source of its attraction (Hegghammer, 2015). Furthermore, DAESH offers the possibility of conjoining jihad and counterculture activity. Many of the Westerners who turned to jihad have a history of counterculture activity prior to violent activity.

With regard to the place of residence before travelling, between 90% and 100% originate from large metropolitan areas or peripheral suburbs. Many originate from the same neighborhood, which seems to indicate that there are pre-existing (extremist) networks operating in these areas, that a circle of friends radicalize as a group and decide to leave jointly for Syria/Iraq, or recruit each other from abroad (Van Ginkel & Entenmann, 2016).

Hotbeds of recruitment have emerged scattered within the global influx. Some are small, like the Lisleby district of Fredrikstad in Norway; others are well-established and well-known hubs of extremist behaviour, such as the Molenbeek district of Brussels. The existence of these hotbeds results from the personal nature of recruitment: an emotional act, frequently involving family or a close acquaintance in the radicalization process. Where one joins, another is more likely to follow. Ghettoized areas with close connected groups of youngsters, often lacking a sense of purpose or belonging outside their own circle, have proved to generate a momentum of recruitment that spreads through personal contacts from group to group. In the countries with the largest flows, DAESH recruitment has become more focused and localized in specific areas, with, family and friends are playing a greater role (The Soufan Group, 2015). Youngsters are radicalized within a small group of "buddies" who met in particular place (neighbourhood, prison, sport club); they recreate a "family", a brotherhood (Roy, 2016). The overrepresentation of siblings highlights the significance of the generational dimension of radicalization (Roy, 2017).

While the power of DAESH social media outreach is undeniable, it appears more often to prepare the ground for persuasion, rather than to force the decision. As hotbeds develop, recruitment through social media becomes less important than via direct human contact, as clusters of friends and neighbors persuade each other to travel separately or together to join the DAESH (The Soufan Group, 2015). In this context, justification for extremist action is either developed or greatly intensified by group dynamics: the group, which provides camaraderie and a sense of significance, become extremely cohesive under isolation and threat (Kershaw, 2010).

An ideology and a narrative that can inspire are particularly dangerous in the hands of a skilled field operator who can punch up the message to make punch up the message to make it spread farther and more powerfully and thereby expand the pool of recruits and sympathizers. Those foreign fighters who return are more effective operatives than nonveterans. They are well positioned to train and inspire others (Cardash, Cilluffo & Marret, 2013). The average rate of returnees to Western countries is now at around 20-30%, presenting a significant challenge to security and law enforcement agencies that must assess the threat they pose (The Soufan Group, 2015). The fighter can return home to keep the cycle going. Seasoned by battle he acquires a new authority among his neighbours and followers. It allows him to recruit and radicalize others and send them into fry (Byman & Shapiro, 2014).

The Salafi-jihadists' goal is to raise awareness among Muslims that their religion has been on the wane. Whereas Islam used to be at its peak during the first centuries of its existence, Salafi-jihadists urge Muslims to understand that the tide has turned, and that Islam is in a constant state of decline in religious, political, military, economic and cultural terms (Moghadam, 2008). They can continue with this "ideologization" by strengthening the perception of global Muslim suppression; the picture of Islam under threat, triggering the belief that the Muslim community and the radicalized individual exists in a state of permanent self-defence (Heinke & Persson, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Globalization has introduced rapid changes in the social, political and economic realms of life. It has provoked perturbing and turbulent effects and has challenged established and rooted notions of identity. Globalization has also changed the essence of religion and its role in international affairs. Religion is growing in countries with a wide variety of religious traditions and levels of economic development. Islam is also experiencing a genuine revival.

Salafism is a primarily theological movement in Sunni Islam concerned with purifying the faith.It emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the arrival of colonial rule. In order to revert Muslim decadency, Salafism called to return to the pristine age of Islam, the period covering the first four decades from the founding of the Muslim polity in 622, when the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors exercised power. Everything that appeared after that is considered as un-Islamic.

Islamic Salafism, as other major religious movements of today, has become universal and less affiliated with any one territory, and more personal and private, increasingly embodying a spiritual search for self-fulfilment. Salafism has also evolved from being a non-political ideology to develop into a political force. Nowadays, the ideas of literalistic Salafists, cross-pollinated by Wahhabism and the teachings of the Muslim brotherhood, are ascendant in Muslim communities from Egypt and the Persian Gulf to Western Europe. During this transformation, Salafism has been influenced by different streams and groups, such as Islamism, Wahhabism and Jihadism. Current interpretations of Salafism range from a solely personal religious conviction with an emphasis on purifying the believer's way of life to a so-called Jihadi orientation.

The success of fundamentalist movements stems from their capacity to appropriate secular culture and render it more religious. And at the same time that religious groups engage secular culture to reform it, they themselves become more secular. Salafism also parallels that of other ideologies, namely its attempt at creating a new identity for its adherents. To those who are disoriented by modernity, the Salafi-jihad provides a new sense of self-definition and belonging in the form of membership to a supranational entity.

Salafism is gaining in influence everywhere, driven largely by the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood's model of political participation and the continued flow of Gulf oil money to literalistic institutions and individuals. The purity of Salafism offers simple answers to Muslims who are facing profound crises of identity and alienation. At the turn of the twentieth century, Salafism aspired to generate political reform that would lead to the revitalization of the Muslim community.

Salafism is a minority faction within Islam, and most of its adherents are nonviolent. But this ideology is prone to radicalization and some of the Salafist doctrines can be exploited and used to justify the extremism found in terrorist groups in the Islamic world. DAESH, like al-Qaeda, identifies with a movement in Islamic political thought known as Jihadi-Salafism, or Jihadism for short. The group's leaders explicitly adhere to this movement. Jihadi-Salafism is a distinct ideological movement in Sunni Islam. It encompasses a global network of scholars, websites, media outlets, and, most recently, countless supporters on social media.

The combination of battlefield successes, declaration of a caliphate, and a fruitful online presence has facilitated DAESH's mass recruitment among youngsters living in both Western countries and in the Middle East. They view the group as the leading and most preeminent jihadist organization.

DAESH' popularity will likely rise among radicals all over the world and that will translate into more funding and volunteers for the group. This pattern closes a perilous vicious circle. This model of real or perceived permanent victory is vital for DAESH propaganda but requires incontestable and long-lasting success. DAESH need to maintain its victorious path to continue being attractive for successful recruits all over the world, who constantly monitor DAESH campaign mainly through social media. It is possible to asses that its military victories and its capability to extend its so-called caliphate to other countries is DAESH centre of gravity. DAESH stagnation in intractable conflicts in Syria and Iraq may alter its capability to attract both funds and recruits.

To stop DAESH from building a state, Western countries must break its hold on swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria, the geographic areas central to the group's apocalyptic narrative. To invalidate the group's theological cause, they must engage with a broad array of actors across the ethnic and religious spectrum to not only help them fight DAESH, but also reclaim and rebuild their land and reach reconciliation. A policy of striking DAESH recruitment should not only involve countering the ideology but also rewriting DAESH narrative of events: the framing of sectarian conflicts in sectarian terms and the perception that DAESH is the solution to these conflicts.

DAESH is involved not only in war but with governance and law-making. As DAESH evolves from an insurgent group into a sovereign state it needs to convince civilians that its social contract is more than just empty rhetoric. For now, in the absence of viable alternatives, many civilians perceive the DAESH contract as their only option.

Those countries fighting DAESH must empower local actors who want to rebuild stable and inter-sectarian states and, at the same time, continue to destroy DAESH infrastructure and state capabilities, stopping cash flow and disrupting access to natural resources.

Ideological and jihadist methodology must be considered when seeking to understand and combat the group, since DAESH uses its ideology to shape its appeal to Muslims, to justify its murder and enslavement of innocents, and to create its governance structures in Iraq and Syria. Contemporary counter-terrorist operations mainly focus on intelligence, law enforcement and military capabilities in order to weaken or combat terrorist organizations. But, in order to be effective, counter-terrorist efforts should also aim at delegitimizing DAESH narrative.

A counter-rhetoric that is based on liberal pluralist principles, which speaks to Muslim audiences in their own terms and includes references to Islamic political cosmologies and

traditions should be employed to delegitimize DAESH rhetoric. Political and diplomatic efforts must be done to make those sectarian voices less influential.

What draws young people in some Western countries to jihadi violence is a search for something a lot less definable: for identity, for meaning, for belongingness, for respect. Those youngsters who face social disconnection, a sense of estrangement from, resentment of, society, are an easy target for radical groups.

DAESH will continue calling Muslims to come to their Islamic State and continue to ask those within Western countries to attack within their own countries. Recent attacks in European soil show the group must be changing its strategy after a series of military defeats in Syria and Iraq and going more global. It could also being turning back from an almost conventional army to a more geographically contained insurgent group in Syria and Iraq.

Furthermore, recent events have provoked in some Western countries a notably strong wave of xenophobia and Islamophobia. Muslims are seen by some opinion formers not only as a security threat but also as a menace to European homogeneity and "Christianity". In a context of unemployment and poverty, homelessness and increasing disparity it is not difficult for some politicians to exploit and manipulate working class frustration and anger towards the immigrants and refugees.

European centre parties have failed finding persuasive answers on issues such as globalization, immigration, and integration. The left plays the rhetorical card of unconditional inclusion, and the right plays the rhetorical card of security. The polarization of the debate has left a dearth of language through which remaining moderate politicians can articulate how Europeans should think about Islam, refugees, and migration. The starting point must be a clearheaded articulation and reassertion of liberal values.

Greater local social and economic inclusion, could reduce the alienation of potential foreign fighters, it is ultimately no match for the theological pull of the DAESH narrative. Radicalization is a multidimensional phenomenon "transversal" to different fields of expertise. Anti-radicalization strategies must include families and local communities and be designed by teams with multi-disciplinary capabilities, including among others sociologists, psychologists, and religious leaders and scholars.

To defeat these terrorist it is necessary to counter their narrative, engaging in the religious domain where they maintain freedom of movement. It is necessary to articulate a discourse which must include knowledge of Islam, and Islamic history and language.

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