To What Extent Can Islamic Trotskyism Be Called a New Factor in Global Politics?

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"Some have written fatwas calling for the dissolution of the [Islamic] State. They have claimed that it is a paper state, an Internet state. They have encouraged criminals to act against it. Blood has been shed on account of their fatwas"

Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, former war minister of the ISIS, October 24th, 2008

Abstract

Drawing attention to the striking similarity between Trotskyism, radical proto-version of Communism and Wahhabism Salafi jihadism, preached by the Islamic State, this thesis raises the question if, despite the intense use of theological backing when justifying violence practices, the group mostly exploits religion to accommodate its of lust of power. To analyze the combined religious-political nature of ISIS, this thesis introduces 'Trotskyism' as a category, a subset of violent ideologies that follow a similar strategic path and adopt similar political language even if the message they strive to deliver is different. Trotskyism, whether Red or Islamic, employs moral rigidity of religious zeal to produce highly determined movements that consider the population's costs incurred in the struggle inferior to the greatness of their universal goals. The first theoretical chapter builds upon the current academic debate on religion's coercion-inducing potential and the irrationality of religious violence, questioning the very applicability of both. The second data section chapter demonstrates how Red and Islamic Trotskyisms strongly resemble each other in their a) origins, b) ideologies, and c) methods. The last chapter considers the movement's unique features and conceptual modification caused by the context and ways of its development.

The conclusions of this thesis generate valuable practical insights regarding ISIS' particular case and contribute to broader theoretical knowledge. The very understanding of militant religion is separated from the understanding of religion per se: the former becomes a religion-politics hybrid, turning from individual's self-purification to a forceful restructuring of the public realm. There is no predestination for this conceptual transformation to occur but rather social, political, and economic conditions, allowing for it. Exposing the flaws of of clear-cut classification between rational and irrational, which exists in scholarly literature now, this thesis highlights the importance of conceptualized typology of violence, not "religious" versus "secular" but "Trotskyist" versus both.

Keywords: Islamic Radicalism, Islamic State, Religious Violence, Religion and Politics;

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1. Introduction

From the first appearance of the Islamic State (ISIS) in 2013 in the Syrian Civil War to the publication of the group beheading captives in 2014 and the #JeSuisCharlie social media campaign reacting to the Charlie Hebdo attack in 2015, it has been hard to find a more or less politically concerned individual who does not talk of the menace of Islamic terrorism or a somewhat influential government which does not aim at eliminating or, at least, managing it. This social obsession is hardly unexpected, considering the level of civilian deaths, the geographic scope and disturbing frequency of the terrorism instances for which Wahhabist Salafi jihadists have claimed responsibility. However, the perceived centrality of Islam, described as the first and foremost cause of extremism, is deeply unsatisfying as it fails to grasp the complexity, breadth, and historical precedents of the phenomenon. The actual priorities set up by the Islamic State are unclear due to its determination to build its legitimacy elaborating on a purely religious authority which depicts a spiritually-motivated struggle as the group's first and foremost preoccupation. The material side of the jihadist violence, concerned with the very physical grabbing and consolidation of power, is, however, hard to ignore. Regardless of all the 'we-care-only-about-Islam' rhetoric, ISIS took physical governing seriously, creating banknotes, bureaucracy, etc, and having a very clear map outlining their geographic aims.

This, in turn, raises the question if, despite the intense use of theological backing when justifying violence practices, the group mostly exploits religion to accommodate its anti-West geopolitical ambitions and lust of regional hegemony? Is it likely that rather than acting as an independent force which determines and shapes policies for its own sake, religion is kept on a short leash, fragmented through biased interpretations and turned into a tool of propaganda? Crucially, such an assumption does not doubt the importance of the religious component but calls for a further reassessment of its configuration vis-a-vis other variables. Islamic beliefs do contribute to the

radical rhetoric of the Wahhabist Salafi jihadists but they can hardly be seen as the unique or sui generis reason behind it. This major flaw signals the necessity of conceptual refinement, therefore, calling for the articulation of a more precise and sophisticated term for analysing the combined religious-political nature of the movement.

The analysis of the historical roots of 'Red Trotskyism' seems of great importance for the successful completion of this task as it demonstrates that the case of religious resources employed to achieve extremist ends is not brand new. In theory, the ideology of 'Trotskyism', named after the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, is completely and — quite violently — atheistic. It refers to one of the early versions of Communism which was far more radical and believed in the feasibility of international revolution leading the proletariat to unite and overthrow bourgeois rule by joint efforts. In practice, it was often promoted by people who were previously pious themselves or raised in ascetic communities, who then abandoned the pursuit for the godly heaven to accomplish their goals on earth, mainly, to construct a perfect millennial society. This highlights a somewhat eschatological nature of Trotskyism whose daring purpose, as can be reflected in the words of Ernst Bloch, is to acquire "the power to create a true and lasting home here on earth" rather than to "wait patiently for a home in eternity" (qtd. in Rose 2017). Thus, even in the case of Red Trotskyism, many of the first revolutionaries, coming from religious background of conservative Jewish families, were able to transfer their religious intensity from the traditionally rigorous value system in service of their transformed Communism-based morale, shifting their political preferences and revising their ideological content yet leaving the fanatical faithfulness untouched (Rabinowitch 109). Wahhabist Salafi jihadism preached by ISIS takes a similar stance when it redirects the loyalty to Islamic dogmas per se in the service of its narrow expansionist agenda preoccupied with an acceleration of religious resurgence and terrorist vendetta against the self-defined 'Western Crusaders'.

Consequently, 'Trotskyism' whether Red or Islamic can be described as a universal instrument of strategic extraction because it converts faith into absolute devotion to the revolutionary cause which appears to be mainly political in the end. Taking advantage of moral rigidity and a Manichean logic typical of religious zeal, Trotskyism produces highly determined movements that consider the population's costs incurred in the struggle inferior to the greatness of the regimes it is about to bring. Crucially, the aims of Trotskyism are not simply grand but global: it is not one state but the whole world that becomes a revolutionary target. The utility of a Trotskyist approach for analysing ISIS is remarkable as it shifts the focus from the movement's religious characteristics and regional habitat to its ideological program, strategic preferences, and hospitable social conditions. Importantly, Trotskyism can neither be derived from an orthodox reading of the religion nor can it develop as a part of strictly institutionalized inflexible church, but rather it stems from religious pluralism and sectarianism. The religious pluralism favoured by modernity, which has been characterized by a looser hierarchy and which grants more independence in theological matters, allows for ideational twists and freedom of manoeuvre. Such conditions render the appearance of new self-reliant Trotskyism (Red and Islamic) feasible. This explains why both Red and Islamic Trotskyisms have little connection to mainstream Russian Orthodoxy and Sunni or Shia Islam but partially were influenced by various autonomous factions, including, in the case of ISIS, Wahhabism and Salafism.

Importantly, the reconceptualization of Wahhabist Salafi Jihadism as a recurrent political and global pathology, the most intense, yet not unique, of its kind, questions its origins in Islamic theology and cultural specificities of the Middle East and, thus, dramatically de-romanticizes the religious essence of the movement, shifting our focus to its size and geopolitical ambitions. Crucially, this also questions the invincibility of Islamic Trotskyism, not only pointing out to the collapse of its red forerunner but also highlighting the tactics that were responsible for this failure.

Generally, the example of Red Trotskyism that struggled to adapt to reality and in the end evolved into a more pragmatic yet less ideologically adamant Communism underlines the danger faced by all the movements in the category, namely, a risk of dying out, unable to implement overly ambitious objectives or tailor the methods to unfavorable circumstances. However, a less optimistic implication would acknowledge Trotskyism's fitness to produce lots of mess to clean up even after the movement's 'rationalization' and rebirth into a new entity (as it happened with the USSR).

At first, this thesis will explain the need for an introduction of Trotskyism as a new way to think about this particular kind of religion-politics interfusion, critically analyzing the current academic debate on religion's coercion-inducing potential and the irrationality of religious violence and challenging the very applicability of both. Secondly, in order to scientifically show why Wahhabist Salafi jihadism can fairly be called 'Islamic Trotskyism', the thesis will demonstrate the striking similarities in the forms of these two movements by separately considering the resemblance of a) their origins (the social, political and economic circumstances underlying their emergence), b) ideologies (the morality embedded in their judgements and broader aims they pursue), and c) methods (the tools and strategies employed for consolidation of power, efficient indoctrination and maximization of appeal). Finally, this thesis will support the claim of Islamic Trotskyism being a new factor in global affairs, demonstrating the movement's unique features and conceptual modification caused by the context and ways of its development.

Through such a comparison, it will be possible to arrive at conclusions which present the term 'Trotskyism' as a category, a subset of violent ideologies that follow a similar strategic path and adopt similar political language even if the message they strive to deliver varies depending on cultural, historical, social specificities. This insight, in turn, moves the scholarly debate on religion and violence forward by reconceptualizing the very notion of *militant* religion to be differentiated from merely *politicized* religion or religion per se, highlighting the impact of socio-economic

conditions as powerful triggers behind such divide, and offering a more complicated understanding of religious rationality once violence has erupted.

2. Theory Section: Academic Debate on Interplay of Religion, Violence, and Rationality

Part 1 - Does Religion Lead to Violence, or Violence Takes Advantage of Religion?

Whether looking at increase in global rates of people's religiosity, Russia's aggressive patronizing of Orthodox Church, or power consolidation by theocratic regimes of Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East, today's political reality is clearly influenced by religion. Although the impact of this influence is debatable and, depending on one's opinion, ranges from state-beneficial promotion of human rights and civic responsibilities to threatening resurrection of archaic inequalities and religion's grip over public space, the tangible presence of religious variable *per se* can no longer be taken out of the equation (Altinordu and Gorski 77, Feldman 221, Göle 12, Habermas and Reemtsma 51, Casanova 12, Toft et al. 74). Of course, almost any kind of faith (or spiritual commitment for that matter) can be seen as having potential to provide ideological resources, subversive to existing authorities, and trigger mobilization among their followers. And yet it is bellicose, destructive and purposefully politicized expressions of one's devotion to the sacred that deserve particular attention.

Indeed, with global jihadism, now led by ISIS, not only intensifying dogmatic dissemination but moving beyond underground agitation and claiming a very physical space in Syria and the Levant region, studying the complex interplay of religion and political violence is more vital than it has ever been since the times of religious wars and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. It seems religion and militancy have grown deeply interwoven. However, it is not clear which one of the two is pulling the strings and which one is following (and whether that is even the right way to think

about the relationship). In other words, the question is whether it is a certain type of belief in the sacred that renders people more violent or it is the political will to resort to violence that exploits these beliefs?

Trying to decipher this 'chicken and the egg' puzzle, many scholars have recognized the primacy of the sacred, highlighting religion's not necessarily malicious yet inherent ability to push its followers to physically aggressive measures. For Mark Juergensmeyer, American scholar and sociologist, even though religion does not need to be the sole cause of bloodshed, certain characteristics of the religious imagination tend to provide moral excuse for brutal action and, therefore, greatly heighten the likelihood of violence, wherever there is religious politics involved (8). Having examined the rise of religious terrorism all over the world from France and Britain to India and Japan, Juergensmeyer sees Islamic radicalism as only, "the most spectacular", aspect of the general trend. In short, it is not specific religious teachings but their generally absolutist character that truly matters, precisely due to such teachings' tendency to invoke and justify fanatical political violence by framing it as a part of universal struggle for all-human good. The notion of such 'cosmic wars' that can be found in the sacred texts of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and other major religions often gets internalized by its followers who consider their political struggles to be earthly continuations of the mythical battles of divine significance (Juergensmeyer 12). With mankind's survival and dignity being at stake, such "culture of violence" induces rigid categorizations creating a simple world where any cruelty committed by believers is justified by the nobility of final goal as well as demonic nature of the religion's enemies (ibid). Crucially, not only does this portray joining the religious quest spiritually rewarding but also nurtures a sense of chaos and instability rendering taking arms essential and warranted. As Juergensmeyer puts it, "if the world is perceived as peaceful, violent acts appear as terrorism; if the world is thought to be at war, violent acts may be regarded as legitimate" (9).

Following a similar logic but arriving at less general conclusions, John R. Hall, an American political scientist, approaches the issue from the sociological perspective, arguing that, when "contained" by the state, some religions can turn counter-hegemonic and generate ideological resources to radically revise existing political orders (Juergensmeyer et al. 362). Building upon Rene Girard's work, Hall revisits the idea of a blurred socially-established division between the sacred and the profane, which allows violence to be equally well-integrated both within the former and within the latter, depending on intra-communal norms. Once it is seen as a "sacred duty", violence becomes ritual and serves to protect believers from the greater evil, allegedly represented by the "scapegoat" (namely serving as symbolic embodiment of all earthly evil) targets of religious zeal (Juergensmeyer et al. 364). Violence and physical aggression, thus, are naturally merged with the belief in the scared, being, in Girard's words, "a primordial religious act intended to sustain the sacred in the face of population" (qtd. in Juergensmeyer et al. 365). Likewise, James W. Jones, American scholar of philosophy and political science, explains religion's power to beget violence by highlighting the deep psychological appeal of radically militant absolutist rhetoric which plays on people's "need for something absolute, certain, infallible" (392). Exposed to comforting oversimplified reality, believers feel strong gratitude for axiomatic goodness, that they are granted, and are keen to prove their sincere devotion by taking up arms. Importantly, this is not to suggest that absolutism, per se, necessarily leads to violence but rather to show how, by all-encompassingly glamorizing the greatness of certain beliefs while fully discrediting the others, it creates a particular kind of unconditional loyalty among its supporters who often grow ready to commit whatever they are being asked for. Such highly dedicated and unquestioning state of faith psychologically facilitates people's decision to kill ideological adversaries in pursuit of fulfilling their moral duty, rendering violence more likely.

Although it is possible to argue that religion is likely to trigger insurgency due to the dichotomizing format and psychological appeal of spiritual devotion it tends to engender, many scholars are highly critical of this claim, viewing political will rather than belief in the sacred as the driving force behind coercive action. To put it simply, in their opinion, it is not religion that causes violence, but violence that employs religion as ideological cover-up. In sharp contrast to Juergensmeyer, R. Scott Appleby, an American historian, is critical of the idea of religious politics' innate propensity to invigorate use of brutal force, highlighting the inherent "ambivalence of the sacred" (295-302). Developing and changing over centuries and generations, religious texts and teachings are full of contradicting messages on many issues including terrorism and martyrdom (ibid). Consequently, it is not religion per se that is to blame but specific believers who decided to stick to the most bloodthirsty interpretations. Moreover, precisely due to its adaptability, religion often becomes a force for good, producing not only radical terrorists but also non-violent militants, who exhibit no less dedication to peacebuilding, charity and forgiveness than their bellicose counterparts to their murderous cause. As Appleby puts it, "ambivalence provides an opportunity to cultivate tolerance and openness toward the other...empowering those elements of the religious community are acts of civic responsibility in today's world" (303). Demonstrating more evidence of how religion can be a flexible material in the hands of politicians, Appleby discusses Bosnia and Northern Ireland as examples of 'ethno-religious' and 'ethno-nationalist violence' where faith, deliberately mingled with the ends that have little or no connection with religion, is used to sacralize merciless warfare or suicidal attacks (312).

Taking a similar stance, Saba Mahmood, a Pakistani-American scholar of religion and anthropology, defends the sacred against the rage-inducing accusations, arguing that religion itself and Islam in particular are under continuous attack of the secular nation-state. Having abandoned the Enlightenment's ideas of people's right to decide on their faith being one of the reasons behind

the initial disentanglement of the sacred and political, the state has grown asymmetrically powerful, intervening in the religious matters to police and 'modernize' religious thought instead of ensuring freedom of conscience and acting as equal partner (332). As Mahmood describes it, "the political solution...resides not so much in the separation of state and religion or in the granting of religious freedoms, but in the kind of subjectivity that a secular culture authorizes" (328). This pursuit of aggressive power maximization is especially clear in case of the United States' "pedagogical strategy" launched as a part of the 'war on terror' campaign against the fundamentalist Muslims whether militant or not. Allied with the liberal Muslims thinkers, the US seeks to renovate Islamic beliefs, forcing religion to incorporate "the discourse deemed not dangerous for America's strategic interests and Western values" (331). For Mahmood, religion, initially not violent, gets defensive and radicalized in response to ongoing intervention by the secular authorities.

Bruce Lawrence, American scholar on religion, also focuses on Islam, considering the conditions in which it resorted to violence in the past. Initially non-aggressive, fledgling Islam of the early jahiliyya, 'the state of ignorance', aimed at pacifying the rest of the Arab society, eradicating brutal practices such as female infanticide and so on. Moreover, Muhammad's expansionist wars, such as the Ridda wars against the Bedouin tribes, were politically rather than religiously motivated. Importantly, Lawrence draws a distinction between jihad ('protection of umma') and maghazi ('raids') and futuh ('conquests'). The prominence of the latter signifies the primacy of politics over religion, rendering proto-nationalism rather than Islam responsible for the early Muslims' aggressive measures. As Lawrence puts it, "jihad is a sidebar, not a central feature of the narrative of early Muslim warfare" (133). Later on, invocation of the 'holy war' was hardly a religious enterprise rather being a reaction to European colonialism, which domesticated and, thus, discredited local elites and impoverished the masses. As Lawrence describes, "most of pre-industrial revivalist movements emerged in response to decay that resulted from diversion of

global trade" (141). In modern times, jihad was revitalized by Osama Bin Laden but was supported not out of religious zeal but due to the persuasive narrative of the mujahideen's victories over the Soviets in Chechnya and Afghanistan and Americans in Lebanon, Somalia, and Riyadh. Thus, based on historical analysis, Islamic violence was never purely religious but always fused with geopolitical and strategic considerations.

Thus, most of the scholars writing on the religion-violence matter take a categorical stance, with different intensity either labelling the sacred as naturally prone to produce violence or demonizing the militant actors as puppeteers pulling the strings of the religious zeal. William T. Cavanaugh, American scholar of political theology, considers the question from a completely different angle, challenging the very meaningfulness of the division between the secular and the sacred with both notions being artificially constructed to benefit hegemonic ambitions of the nation-state (79). As he puts it, "what counts as religious or secular in any given context is a function of different configurations of power" (82-83). Having analysed a range of scholarly arguments that depict religion as conducive for militancy, Cavanaugh highlights the lack of specific characteristics of what can be considered 'religious' but also deliberate disregard for coercive actions that bear no connection to the sacred. For example, modern societies condemn faith-driven martyrdom as bigotry but accolade martyrdom in the name of homeland, identical in essence yet 'civilized' by its nationalistic overtones (89). Given such categorizational ambiguity, it is not possible to identify if it is religion or not that causes the bloodshed. Of course, some forms of the devotion to the sacred can well convince their followers to take up arms, but this kind of ability is not reserved to the sacred alone with the secular regimes often acting in exactly the same manner. As Cavanaugh writes, "ideologies and institutions labeled secular can be just as absolutist, divisive, and violent as those labeled religious" (131-133).

This scholarly ambivalence on religion-violence correlation might seem confusing from the first sight but provides promising theoretical insights when considered in a broader analytical perspective. Although every argument examined above makes important observations on specificities of religious energy and how it is linked to political coercion, it offers only a fragmented vision of an issue and can be much more valuable if analyzed in combination with other seemingly contradicting claims. In other words, all these different theories trying to defend religion or, in contrast, expose its rage-inducing nature are not so conflicting in the end if the very understanding of militant religion is challenged, problematized and separated from the understanding of religion per se. In line with its initial purpose (arguably reflected in uninterpreted texts of holy scripture), religion needs to be understood as dealing with spiritual aspects of human life, urging its followers to comply with its commands on the personal level so to focus on their own piety and morality. However, when people start seeking to externalize and objectify their faith and turn from each individual's autonomous self-purification to a forceful restructuring of the public realm, it is not religion alone that guides them but rather some complex interweaving of religious dedication and political ambitions, framed in uncompromising interpretation of scriptural hermeneutics. In this context, Trotskyism, characterized by all-encompassing exploitation of religious vigour to fuel the particularly extensive use of violence, represents an extreme case of this phenomenon, not simply eating up on the sacred to get a stand in the secular but trying to enforce its faith-promoting methods and ideological agenda on a truly global scale.

However, the appearance of such religious-political hybrids and especially its development into full-scale Trotskyism is neither normal nor inevitable. As Juergensmeyer rightfully observes, many religions contain notions of 'cosmic wars' constructing totalistic and exaggerated vision of the reality in the minds of their believers. And yet, believing in the metaphysical battle of good and evil happening in everyone's soul is very different from actually fighting and killing in this battle in

the world around. Consequently, it is important to elaborate on Juergensmeyer's argument, trying to understand what are the conditions in which the 'cosmic war' dilemma ceases to be a spiritual concept and becomes a matter of earthly action. Looking at socio-political environment in which Trotskyism, both Red and Islamic emerged, thus, helps to see how religious militancy often has sectarian nature, which allows for dogmatic blurring, needed to justify externalization of 'cosmic war'. Following the same logic, Hall's idea of religion granting sources for anti-establishment struggle and providing psychological refuge by eliminating ambiguity of the world requires similar contextualization. Indeed, it is true that religion is capable of performing mobilization and world simplification functions but it is especially in times of economic crisis, political havoc and inequality when these functions are on high demand. As with Juergensmeyer, this again signals the need for a detailed investigation of Trotskyism's origins, closely connected to intra-state and regional crises.

Moreover, not only does a Trotskyism-based analysis help to understand the circumstances shaping people's decision to shift their religiosity from the metaphysical to the concrete, but it can also provide important insights on the tools they use to render their endeavour successful as well as on the massive propaganda work they conduct. Interestingly, it is rethinking of religion-defending theories of Mahmood and Cavanaugh that can greatly contribute to consideration of both the former and the latter. As far as Trotskyism's tools are concerned, Mahmood's idea of secular state launching theological attack on the religion rather than trying to ensure its autonomy from the political sphere can be applied the other way round with religion getting aggressive and the secular state being on retreat. In other words, in Trotskyism it is religion which acts as an internal sovereign, growing less concerned with the integrity of its content and freedom of conscience and instead trying to reformulate the secularity according to its own beliefs and norms.

In the same way, Cavanaugh's critique of religion-secular arbitrary division seems very reasonable when analyzed in the light of Trotskyism's ability to fuse the sacred and the secular, feeding on religious resources but asking for political credit. Reversing the actions of the Western nation-states, Trotskyism takes advantage of its self-acclaimed 'religious' identity to legitimize its violence as godly and necessary as opposed to sinful and greedy violence of the secular actors.

Thus, elaborating on the aforementioned scholars, the case studies of Red and Islamic Trotskyisms are academically promising when trying to understand the structural conditions which drive religious entities into outright violence but also the characteristics of these religious entities once they have taken up the arms. In other words, thoroughly examining power-consolidation methods and the ideological core of both movements will help uncover not only the possible causes behind the appearance of religion-politics hybrids, but also the peculiarity of the message that such hybrids wish to deliver and strategic toolkit they are likely to employ.

Part 2 - Is Religious Violence Inherently Irrational?

It seems there is little if any certainty about the function performed by the sacred in the political life. The nature of the religion-violence interconnection leaves room for a lively discussion, and even if one recognizes religion as a source of coercive action, the characteristics of this action remain very debatable. The main question that pops up is whether religious violence is irrational, born out of unconditional devotion to the divine, or if it is analytical and sober and obeys the laws of reason and calculations of necessity? The former point of view is persuasively supported by Juergensmeyer who highlights religion's ability to transform human nature, washing away rationality of both the perpetrators and the victims. In the first case, caught up in the flames of fanatical faith, seemingly ordinary people, moderate and law-obedient in everyday life, become capable of committing merciless crimes that they would have been appalled by under usual

circumstances (8). For Juergensmeyer, it is, thus, the impact of religion that explains "why bad things are done by people who otherwise appear to be good...by pious people dedicated to a moral vision of the world" (7). In the second case, extreme brutality and "ritual intensity" of violence creates uncontrollable fear among the civilian targets who start to irrationally criticize the state for failing to ensure the right to personal security, even if from logical perspective the state's efforts cannot be ignored. In general, religious militancy, used to fill mass imaginations with images of death, predestination, and ritual sacrifices, seeks to achieve symbolic empowerment rather than concrete fulfilment of geopolitical aims. As Juergensmeyer puts it, instances of religious martyrdom can be described "as forms of public performance rather than aspects of political strategy" (127).

Appleby is not so critical of the religion's influence on its supporters, and yet his concept of religious militancy as "the willingness and even an eagerness-to sacrifice oneself, one's family, one's loved ones, and one's most precious possessions in the service of a noble cause" indirectly suggests a degree of irrationality typical for all the acts driven by the sacred (301). If Salafi martyr, willing to bomb a building full of innocent civilians, and compassionate peacekeeper, promoting reconciliation as a member of religious NGO, follow the same logic of spiritual self-expression, then the worthiness of this logic is measured by emotions and fanatical dedication and not by common sense or strategic considerations. In other words, if one is equally rational in when deciding to kill and to protect, then one's rationality is not really rational. Talking of both activists and fundamentalists, Appleby emphasizes their common belief in religion's potential to remedy any kind of social crisis, which can also be interpreted as a sign of impracticability.

As opposed, Cavanaugh again turns the questions upside down: it is not irrationality of religious violence that requires examination but rather credibility of the conditions in which the belief in this irrationality was constructed. He argues that, taking advantage of artificial division between the secular and the sacred, Western states since the times of the Enlightenment have been

carrying out a consistent information campaign to present religious zeal as anti-progressive and fanatical, a "dangerous impulse that must give way in public to rational, secular forms of power" (101-103). In contrast, violence authorized by the nation-state has always been glorified as peacemaking and logical, necessary to keep religion's lust for blood under the leash. Thus, religious 'irrationality' is in practice a very rational "legitimating myth" promoted by the secular actors to marginalize and weaken religious communities internally and justify foreign expansion against the Middle East countries which, due to their devotion to the sacred, are deemed inherently unable to comprehend anything but military force (294-295). In addition, taking pre-Westphalia religious wars as an example, Cavanaugh argues that when religion becomes militant, it remains rational simply because its imperatives are closely interwoven with various political, economic and social variables being at stake (239-240).

Juergensmeyer, Appleby and Cavanaugh all have a valid point, and yet, similarly to the case of religion-violence relationship, the utility of their arguments can be greatly enhanced by rethinking religious rationality or, more precisely, the rationality of religiously-charged Trotskyist movement in more sophisticated terms. Based on complex intermingling of the globalist political ambitions and intransigent sectarian beliefs, Trotskyism challenges the very feasibility of clear-cut categorization, being hard to describe as fully 'rational' or fully 'irrational'. Indeed, it is precisely due its hybrid nature that enables Trotskyism to combine dubiously reasonable suicidal martyrs, frenetic field commanders and mujāhidīn with highly organized and politically motivated leadership, which seems quite familiar with cost-benefit analysis and strategic thinking. It is, thus, possible to slightly twist the question, no longer trying to rigidly classify religious violence as either logical and materialist or fanatical and self-destructive but rather analyzing which characteristics are dominant and which ones are kept on a leash.

This kind of reconceptualization allows to both capture hierarchical intricacy of Trotskyist movement and to explain why its ideology and methods have to be studied in separation. The former, applied *to the objects* of the movement, plays on the spiritual dedication of the followers, and, as Juergensmeyer argues, degrades people's character by providing moral justification through rhetorics of 'cosmic war'. The latter, applied *by the subjects* of the movement, uses highly sophisticated techniques of indoctrination and persuasion, and, similarly to what Cavanaugh's nation-state does, portrays secular otherness as irrationally aggressive and unable to understand anything but brutal force. Importantly, studying methods and ideology in separation helps to notice another complexity, connected to religious violence of Trotskyist kind, namely the paradox of quite rational means leading to questionably rational ends. Indeed, in Trotskyism scientifically created propaganda tools, based on studies of human nature and psychology, is aimed at fulfilling overly ambitious hopes of international revolution, global khalifa and other universal projects. The question here is what should be examined and is of greater importance: the rational geopolitical will behind the power-grabbing imperative or irrational scale of this power-grabbing?

In this light, looking at the case studies of Islamic and Red Trotskyism will allow to begin to answer and refine these questions by simultaneously examining movements' far-reaching hopes and more practical down-to-earth strategies of making these hopes come true. Revealing Trotskyism's ability to combine highly utilitarian and completely fanatical elements, this kind of juxtaposition will be a living challenge to the very applicability of rigid rationality-based judgement, thus, moving a religious violence-rationality debate forward. Importantly, due to lack of data, resources, and time, this paper will mostly focus on the *objects* of the movement, speculating on the characteristics of the *subjects* which rendering interviews with the latter a potential objective of further research in the future.

Part 3 - Why Did ISIS Come Around?

Although in the recent decades instances of religious violence have stemmed from a variety of sources ranging from Orthodox Judaism underlying Baruch Goldstein's attack on the Cave of Patriarchs in 1994 to Dharmic Buddhism driving Aum Shinrikyo to release nerve gas in Tokyo's subway in 1995, it is Wahhabi Salafi jihadism, embodied by ISIS, that has decisively pulled ahead of all the 'competitors', both in terms of number of civilian deaths and international outreach. Not to mention massive battle deaths in Syria, only in 2018 terrorist attacks organized by the group have killed 101 people in 11 states including Russia, Australia and Canada and more than 768 people in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Lister 2018). Talking of the latter feature, the one of global presence, the US Department of State has recently updated the list of "terrorist designations", banning Americans from interacting with the ISIS-affiliates in West Africa, Philippines, Somalia, Tunisia, and Egypt (2018). In light of such terrifying success but also for the sake of this paper, it is important to revisit ISIS' origins, examining scholarly debate on how the new leader of global jihadism has come about.

Having conducted a robust analysis of post-Arab Spring transformations in the Middle East, Marc Lynch, American political scientist, argues that ISIS' emergence can be explained by the failure of democratic undertakings as well as political chaos and repression that this failure has unleashed. Trying to utilize previously unseen scale of mass mobilization for their strategic benefit, oil-rich autocratic regimes, non-Arab local actors such as Iran and Turkey and some members of international community have all interfered in 2011 popular uprisings, funding different groups and, thus, breaking integrity and power of the collective action. As Lynch puts it, "regional powers ensured that the opposition forces remained fragmented, dashing any hopes of a common and endogenous post-revolutionary democratic transition" (859). In this context, significant increase in state coercion and attacks on the civil society and, importantly, Egypt's military coup against the

democratically elected Brotherhood's government, have shattered any hope for a peaceful political change, heightening the appeal of violent action and "ISIS-style jihadism" (Lynch 861). Seizing the opportunity, ISIS managed to establish itself in conflict-torn Syria, Iraq, Yemen and later on Libya. For Lynch, thus, the group did not appear as a result of deliberate strategy but rather was an occasional consequence of the Middle East geopolitical deadlock, created by regional monarchies' quest for survival and delegitimization of democratic narrative (865).

Similarly elaborating on the structural characteristics of the Middle East, Fawaz Gerges, American-Lebanese academic based in the UK, offers a history-based interpretation of ISIS as coming from continuous malfunctioning of the state institutions and consequent vacuity of social security and basic public goods. As Gerges writes, "ISIS' ability to do stems more from the fragility of Arab state system than its own strength as a strategic actor" (4). Apart from their inability to ensure adequate living standards, regional powers, too preoccupied with participation in the Sunni-Shia rivalry, not only failed to foster binding nationalistic feelings among their populace but further reinforced intra-state divide along the religious lines. Surrounded by such "social and sectarian crisis", many ordinary Sunnis can only ensure their survival if they accept the rule of ISIS which fills in the authority gap, building civilian infrastructure, providing food and maintaining some kind of legal order (Gerges 261). In other words, although most Sunnis rejected ISIS, Gerges' argument makes the case why an important number did not. Crucially, from this perspective, it is not religious devotion but existential despair that drives people into jihadi hands. Moreover, ISIS itself can be seen as being guided by mostly political motives, favoring civil wars not for ideological reasons but because it is able to thrive, parasitizing on the failed states and getting profits from the criminal economy. As Gerges writes, "the group's religion is important inasmuch as it allows Isis to exploit a poisonous political and social environment, and to offer an alternative model to secular authoritarianism" (291).

Samantha Mahood and Halim Rane, American scholars on international relations and the Middle East also question the extent of ISIS' religious dedication but, unlike Gerges and Lynch, come up with an agency-driven explanation, highlighting the organization's capacity to manipulate traditional hermeneutics into accommodating Wahhabist Salafi jihadism's political agenda (18). Having identified 11 major narratives that most frequently appear in Dabiq, ISIS' official agitational journal, Mahood and Rane's findings demonstrate how the group's claimed pursuit of seemingly spiritual imperative overshadows very specific material goals, achievement of which is directly beneficial for ISIS rather than for Islamic faith in general (21). For example, invoking crusader narratives and narratives of Muslim oppression, Dabiq utilizes the concept of ummah, the global Muslim community, urging all the believers to unite, to protect the Islamic faith from Western invasion. However, despite being a spiritual goal, this religious message is also heavily political, promoting loyalty exclusively to Wahhabist Salafi jihadist brand of Islam and justifying ISIS' push for territorial expansion.

Likewise, by arguing, as a part of jahiliyya ('state of ignorance') narrative, that Islam has to be purified from apostate disbelievers, corrupted by sinful modern lifestyle, ISIS launches a powerful propaganda campaign against its political opponents, liberal Muslims and intellectuals willing to cooperate with the West. As Mahood and Rane explain, "ISIS is attempting to delegitimize all interpretations of Islam other than its own and discredit the diversity of religious thought and interpretations within Islam, past and present" (24). Following similar logic, Reza Aslan shows how ISIS does not fully comply with Juergensmeyer's concept of 'cosmic war': it is not so interested in waging "eternal, unending, and ultimately unwinnable conflict" against intangible evil rather aiming at creating a very physical caliphate and seizing very materialistic power (Juergensmeyer et al. 261).

This tendency to consider ISIS as first and foremost politically motivated and, consequently, rational actor is, however, criticized by many scholars as failing to grasp the group's uniqueness vis-a-vis the rest of the jihadist movements. Graeme Wood, a Canadian-American journalist, argues that the emergence of ISIS can only be understood in the context of radical Islamism, resulting from a demand by certain segments of the population to create a different social order that adheres to their fundamentalist understanding, norms and customs of archaic Arab communities (Wood 2015). For Wood, mistaking ISIS for a copy-version of Al-Qaeda was a costly miscalculation for which West has been paying bitterly. Unlike its relatively modern, flexible predecessor, ISIS has no interest in hiding in the underground, retreating or 'betraying' its uncompromising vision to win extra supporters. For example, the group has legalized slavery and widened a range of heretical sins, even though such bigotry shocks and deters potential recruits. As Wood reflects on such adamant dedication, "the fighters of the Islamic State are authentic throwbacks to early Islam and are faithfully reproducing its norms of war" (ibid).

Thus, the examined range of scholarly literature provides roughly three ways in which the emergence of ISIS can be approached, focusing on structural specificities of the Middle East politics as a trigger behind jihadi resurgence, the group's ability to manipulate local grievances and crisis of secular authority to seize the power, and its zealous fundamentalist religiosity and militant commitment to revival of archaic practices of the past. Although well-argued and supported by impressive research, all these explanations seem too narrow-focused and rigid and, thus, unable to capture the true complexity of the ISIS, either reducing it geopolitical circumstances (Lynch and Gerges) and political opportunism (Mahood and Rane) or putting it on a pedestal of unparalleled religious absolutism (Wood). The former dramatically oversimplifies versatility and ambiguity of the issue, the latter turns it into anti-progressive scarecrow by cutting out the political side. In this context, the framework of Islamic Trotskyism helps to broaden the picture and bring all the

explanations into the discussion, simultaneously analyzing the origins ("the Middle East argument"), ideology ("the religion argument") and methods ("the political agency argument") of the phenomenon.

But, most importantly, comparing Wahhabist Salafi jihadism to seemingly unrelated Trotskyism, which is aggressively secular and takes place in completely different social and political environment, helps to challenge claims regarding necessary connection of religious extremism to the regional features and Islamic beliefs. Although Trotskyism is defined as a category of violent movements, all marked by some general indicative characteristics, every individual representative inevitably has distinctive features, depending on a variety of local factors which have surrounded its emergence and growth. Elaborating on the scholars above, it is important to keep such case-specific variations in mind, developing a deeper sense of genesis of every phenomena. However, a failure to de-contextualize Wahhabist Salafi jihadism begets conceptual primitivization. The problem is that the aforementioned distinctive features of Islamic Trotskyism, decorative and 'overwater' elements such as the Middle East social customs, Arabic monarchism, or Islamic influence per se (as opposed to religious influence in general) often get exoticized, exaggerated and mistakenly seen as the movement's defining sides leaving its broader category-based aspects largely unanalysed. In brief, the use of cross-cultural analysis allows to truly test ISIS' uniqueness, examining the group across time and space rather than analyzing it in a merely historical perspective next to similarly jihadist, Islamic and terrorist Al-Qaeda.

Crucially, this is not to deny the importance of Islam or the Middle East framework but to differentiate between the content, individually defined by cultural-historical circumstances, and the form, universal for all the ideologies of the Trotskyist type. After all, it is only after appearance of Islamic successor that Red Trotskyism has become a recurrent political phenomenon, representing particular subset of ideologies, rather than being a peculiar yet singular one-time event.

Consequently, despite its founding function, Red Trotskyism can only contribute to religion-violence debate when considered in pair with Islamic Trotskyism which makes careful investigation of the latter the basis of the Trotskyist theory, not a case study used to illustrate it. This need to emphasize categorical identity while also keeping the case-specific landscape in mind renders simultaneous examination of ideology, methods, and origins of Red and Islamic Trotskyisms both promising and justified.

3. Data Section: Comparison of Red Trotskyism and Islamic Trotskyism

Part 1 - Origins: "The Rule of Disbelief"

With the genesis of religious violence in general and ISIS in particular being attributed fundamental importance in the theory section, a combination of the Salafi jihadism and Sunni Wahhabism needs to be considered 'Islamic Trotskyism' in light of key similarities in the origins which it shares with its 'red' forerunner. Following the logic of Gerges, Lynch and other scholars, it is difficult to disagree that historical background and preconditions play a crucial role in determining the 'mission' and 'code of honor' of political movements, dictating both the ends they seek to achieve and the means they are willing to employ throughout the process. Importantly, the circumstances of the movement's formation also shape the readiness of its representatives to 'externalize' their religious devotion, switching, as it was explained above, from individual spiritual self-perfection to militant reconstruction of the public space. Hardly inherent to human nature, radicalism rarely appears for no reason: 'political' soil should be nourished by social unrest, inequalities and suffering before extremism and zealotry blossom. In the cases of Red Trotskyism and Wahhabist Salafi jihadism all the relevant ingredients were at hand for the doctrines to emerge and expand.

One of the most important factors in both situations were high levels of social division with minorities following a luxurious lifestyle and the majorities struggling for bare existence. In the Russian Empire, these were the peasants who made up 80 per cent of the population and the proletariat who having formed interconnected communities and accessing key industries and infrastructure on a regular basis held a potentially significant power in the cities (Mandel 15). The former, despite the Emancipation of Serfs in 1861, still remained dependent on the noble families, tied by redemption payments and suffering from 'land hunger'. The latter, receiving miserable wages with no compensation given for injuries or longer hours and devastated by increased taxation, felt hopeless of gaining political representation in any legitimate manner. Additionally, this economic crisis was further aggravated by Russia's at best mediocre performance in the First World War. An all-encompassing military effort affected civil society in a variety of ways ranging from inflation, food shortages, and debt crises to conscription, enormous combat casualties and, most significantly, large-scale civilian deaths. The latter, amounting to 1,140,000, according to Russian historian Vadim Erlikman, infuriated the masses to a point where they became comprehensible for Trotskyist propaganda (18).

Similarly, the post-WWII era in the Middle East was marked by the fast compartmentalization of societies. Not only did rapid population growth (with 60 percent of the world population corresponding to 23 percent of world territory) beget rising levels of poverty and unemployment, but also, when combined with ongoing modernization, clearly exposed sharp contrasts in well-being and prosperity. According to Bernard Lewis, this ambivalence worked as some sort of relative deprivation theory: Westernization provided the tools to achieve previously unimaginable richness yet failed to ensure an equal distribution or increase in the amount of resources available. This generated and highlighted new enormous disparities, "thanks to the flow of Western consumer goods, which afford vastly greater opportunities for the public display and

enjoyment of wealth" ("Communism and Islam" 6). Besides, as Anatoly Vishnevsky points out, this demographic trend turned uneducated, unsatisfied and passionate youth, willing to shape the regime according to their needs and their ideas, into the dominant part of the population. Likewise, at the end of the 19th Century, the Russian Empire experienced a baby boom with the population boosting from 65 million up to 91 million over 20 years; crucially, the majority of births corresponded to the peasants' families (Korobatov 2016).

Another common theme underlying the rise of both Trotskyisms was a massive disappointment in the regimes and widespread belief in the rotten nature of the elites, reflected in not just one-time anti-masses conspiracy but in general irredeemable unfitness to rule over the honest yet exploited peoples. In the Russian Empire, it was the Bloody Sunday of 1905 that fanned the fire of public discontent when peaceful demonstrators, marching towards the Winter Palace to present their claims, were attacked by the Cossacks, which resulted in 132 demonstrators being killed and much more injured (Salisbury 122). For many peasants, this unexpected and undeserved brutality unveiled the repressive nature of the Tsarist rule. No longer was Nicholas II perceived as the understanding 'Father' who had been merely deceived by the sinful aristocrats; he was now considered to be the most corrupt of them (Rabinowitch 274). Moreover, later on, taking into account the growing unpopularity of self-defeating lasting war, the Trotskyists succeeded in depicting the conflict as a mindless imperialist struggle which cost millions of peasant lives. From Trotskyist point of view, exactly the upper classes were to blame for all the deaths and instability.

Similarly, in case of Salafi jihadism, the radical sectarian policies of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki were equally destabilizing when recalling Baghdad's turmoil, as far as public feeling of betrayal is concerned. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that rather than suffering merely from the religious divide, the Syrian people were tyrannized by extensive state coercion when the authorities launched a campaign of repression against the peasants and the poor middle bourgeoisie. Crucially,

the primary source of the outrage felt by the exploited was a misunderstanding of why Assad's government - many representatives of which originated exactly from the targeted social stratas - waged a campaign against their own 'brothers'. As the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) wrote in a report in 2011, "today's ruling elite has forgotten its roots" (qtd. in Cockburn 26).

Furthemore, even having escaped to the countryside in search of a safer life, Syrian farmers were unable to escape the attention of corrupt police and government officials who asked for bribes in exchange for security. Such a legitimized marauding seemed especially detrimental when being considered in the context of already existing hardship: neither peasants, exhausted after four years of drought nor small-scale entrepreneurs bankrupt by cheap exports from Turkey, nor urban workers, hit by low salaries and constant inflation were capable of staying economically stable or politically indifferent (Cockburn 30). No wonder that this amalgamation of unfortunate circumstances and the oppression of the authorities generated massive hatred leading Syria to fall into a state of strife and polarization: the door was opened, and 'defending' Salafi jihadism was welcome to enter.

Significantly, the radical aforementioned doctrines of Trotskyisms were embraced not only by the poor and disenfranchised ones but also by a far more powerful part of community, the professional military. During the Tsarist rule there were many liberal-minded officers and field commanders who shared the oppositional moods condemning absolutism and dreaming of political freedoms, rotation of power and elections. Once the Revolution started and the Russian Empire ceased to exist, even former royalists turned to the Trotskyists viewing it as the only movement capable of restoring some sort of a firm state authority in the chaos of civil violence (Mandel 10, Rabinowitch 274). The importance of this support cannot be underestimated since these savvy soldiers later constituted the skeleton of the Red Army, undertaking administrative tasks and

disciplining unorganized crowds, which played an important role in warranting military victories over much more competent and orderly Whites.

Coming back to the Middle East case, after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003, many Iraqi soldiers, already viewing the necessity to recognize the national defeat humiliating enough, found the control measures enforced by the foreign occupants, namely the complete dissolution of the army and compulsory resignation, especially degrading. Typically having a long line of warrior-ancestors to look back upon and seeing no other ways to save their 'honour', the representatives of the Iraqi military elites often claimed their allegiance to Salafi jihadists, swelling the ranks of the insurgents with qualified and passionate fighters. This, according to Cockburn, dramatically shifted the balance of power with Americans being able to control only Iraqi islands just a year later (35). Moreover, it was discovered that approximately 8 out of 25 'deputies', working for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader, in Syria and Iraq by being in charge of finance, arms, local governance, military operations and recruitment when had served in Hussein's army and were American POWs (Hubbard and Schmitt 2014).

Finally, in both cases precisely the ability to achieve self-sufficiency and autonomy due to an abundance of natural resources to a significant extent rendered first the survival and then the maturation of Red and Islamic Trotskyisms viable. The young Soviet state's industrial development and military build-up partially were a consequence of the mineral-packed Ural mountains and the vast oil, gas and timber resources of Siberia which the Trotskyists had at hand. Likewise, oil trade from Syria and Iraq is believed to be the major source of profit of ISIS. As Charles Lister states, its daily sales rose up to 70, 000 barrels in the days following its early conquests, which accounts to $1.5 million (12). Additionally, the role of human capital should not be neglected, and the Wahhabist Salafi jihadism seems to be in a better starting position than its red colleague. If the Soviets had to first raise and educate the workforce having either eliminated or forced to flee a

well-qualified bourgeoisie, then ISIS has acted in a more rational manner. According to Matthew Levitt, it "heavily relies on specialised labour and in many cases has paid and protected pre-existing skilled workers to remain at their posts and maintain oil fields" (29).

Thus, Wahhabist Salafi jihadism preached by ISIS can be called 'Islamic Trotskyism' to a very high extent as its background is very similar to the one of Red Trotskyism. Like Red Trotskyism, Salafi jihadism stemmed from the severe compartmentalization of society and striking inequities in the welfare which, when connected to expanding populations and lack of resources, generated public dissatisfaction, thereby, facilitating the process of recruitment. Additionally, in either situation, by joining the radical opposition, disenfranchised groups hoped to cease being abused by the corrupt authorities while gaining new means to overcome their economic troubles. Besides, both movements managed to keep high levels of self-reliance largely due to natural riches and trained manpower. Finally, in both cases Trotskyism was backed by professional soldiers which consulted or headed the 'ideological' leadership, shared valuable skills, knowledge, and strategies, and enabled training of the younger members, allowing movement to expand and strengthen.

Part 2 - Ideology: "Slaughter Is Mercy"

As it was commented on the theoretical debate, analyzing the ideological essence of Trotskyism helps to understand how it constructs a pretentiously fanatical religious identity to anticipate and sacralize brutalities committed by its followers while simultaneously discrediting any kind of opponents' response as inherently immoral and unnecessary. Coming back to the comparison method, Wahhabist Salafi jihadism can be called Islamic Trotskyism as its ideological doctrines and beliefs resemble the content of Red Trotskyism in many ways. By its very definition, Trotskyist ideology has to be global, aiming to disseminate its values far beyond the borders of initial domain. It is not enough to convert as many individuals as possible rather the fight is of the

Juergensmeyer's 'cosmic war' character: what is at stake is mankind as a whole, and there can be no victory unless Trotskyism's complete political and spiritual dominance has not been established and fortified. Red Trotskyism teaches that only through a brutal restructuring of society when all the nobles, aristocracy, intelligentsia, and priests are annihilated as a class, can people usher in a new era of prosperity and peace under the fair rule of proletarian dictatorship (Trotsky qtd. in The Militant 4). Here the necessity of violence becomes crucial in both cases. The fundamental difference between Trotskyism and Communism is that hardcore Trotskyism, in truth, believes in the feasibility of such a universal mission, and for Trotsky, Russia ought to become only the first stage towards the flames of the global Proletariat Revolution. As he claimed in 1917, "To us internationalism is not an abstract idea existing only to be betrayed on every opportune occasion…but is a real guiding and wholly practical principle. A lasting, decisive success is inconceivable for us without a revolution in Europe" (qtd. in Spenser 8). Crucially, paving the way to such a world, relentlessly moving towards and fighting for its future is what is supposed to provide every Trotskyist with the eternal creed which is worth devoting one's life to.

Similarly, Wahhabi Salafi jihadism operates with global variables: its ultimate goal is as ambitious as the restoration of a great Khilāfah and decontamination of the world through consistent elimination of all the disbelievers (Bin Laden 121). The first part is closely linked to the ideas of 'baya's' and 'jahil' referring to 'allegiance' and 'ignorance' correspondingly, since the ones who assist in the construction of the Khilāfah, the mujāhidīn, are the harbingers of salvation while the ones who ignore or refute their holy duty, the tawāghīt, are forever cursed. Nothing matters more than this resurgence as it grants "each individual Muslim a concrete and tangible entity to satisfy his natural desire for belonging to something greater" (Wood 2015, Dabiq #7 57). According to al-Baghdadi, "the war will not be over until the caliphate covers all eastern and western extents of

the Earth, filling the world with the truth and justice of Islam and putting an end to the falsehood and tyranny of jahiliyyah" (qtd. in Dabiq #5 108).

If Trotskyism's theory suggests that, inspired by the example of the USSR, the oppressed classes of other states will similarly break their chains and inflame a civil war, then its Islamic successor foresees two colossal battles - the one in Syria between the 'crusaders' and the armies of Islam commanded by 12 caliphs, and the one against Jews in Jerusalem (Wood 2015). As far as the second part regarding non-Muslims is concerned, the Takfiri ('disbelief') doctrine renders the task of religious cleansing a moral obligation of any virtuous Salafi jihadist which was highlighted by the ISIS whose spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-'Adnani who has frequently urged 'the truest' Muslims to slaughter Westerners all over the globe whether soldiers or civilians (qtd. in Bunzel 36). Significantly, both movements are unlikely to ever abandon the bloodshed no matter how successful they are in implementing their objectives since in order to stay alive and attractive they have to unconditionally rely on some source of absolute (Manichean-ly understandood) evil, there should always be somebody evoking pure hatred. Red Trotskyism doubted the ability of the West to convert completely and supposed that some remnants of 'capitalist poison' will remain, calling for the necessity of constant struggle. In a similar manner, Salafi jihadism disregards any option of peaceful co-existence: as the unknown author of the article *Why We Hate You & Why We Fight You* puts it, "even if you were to pay jizya and live under the authority of Islam in humiliation, we would continue to hate you" (Dabiq #15 31, Durie 223).

Moreover, the concept of a 'holy war' per se is equally present in both Trotskyisms. The notion of 'jihad', usually associated with Islam, is well-known and refers to the sacred warfare led by the Muslims for the purposes of purifying the world and enhancing Allah's glory: "so when you meet those who disbelieve, strike their necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them" (Muhammad: 4 qtd. in Dabiq #7 21). However, Robert Wistrich argues that an almost identical idea

was promoted by the early Russian revolutionaries Trotsky and Zinoviev who argued for "a true people's holy war in the first place against British imperialism" (401, 402). Elaborating on Wistrich's claims, one can propose that, to a certain extent, it is the example of 'Red-jihadism' that played an important role in triggering the awakening of Arab consciousness. Neither were the Arabs so impressed by the atheist promises of Trotskyism nor regarded it as a proper alternative to their political structure, but rather they witnessed a high efficiency of turning violence into a sacred act of self-purification necessary for every individual. It is notable that in either situation the scale of the task and the nobility of intentions easily outweigh the atrocities which had to be carried out throughout the process. After all, as Abu Bakr Naji argues, all the great empires rose from a bloodbath (35). Significantly, both movements seek to incorporate the murders of the antagonists into a 'peaceful' framework of quotidian routine rendering brutality a normal and usual feature of daily reality. As Graeme Wood finds out with astonishment, ISIS supporters can "mentally shift from contemplating mass death to discussing the virtues of Viennese coffee, with apparent delight in each" (Wood 2015). As discussed in Juergensmeyer's criticism of religious imagination, mujāhidīn's ability to alienate themselves from the victims facilitates the process of murder which is seen as a merciful liberation from sinful life rather than as violent crime. In short, Trotskyist propaganda whitewashes both the very act of murder and the reasons behind: only those, who deserve to die, get killed - for their own moral good. This embrace of atrocities based on the complete dehumanization of the adversary is reminiscent of Red Trotskyism that similarly justified the employment of terror claiming that "the principle of the 'sacredness of human life' remains a shameful lie, uttered with the object of keeping the oppressed slaves in their chains" (Trotsky 78).

Additionally, in either case, Trotskyisms appear to be extremely paranoid when dealing with internal divisions and domestic opposition as they both expressed readiness to combat such traitors in an extensively ferocious manner. Talking about the Russian scenario, Trotsky and Lenin argued

that there is an international conspiracy of the bourgeoisie which, having acquired great capital, political influence and military skills over the ages of domination, possesses a significant preponderance of power, thereby posing a threat to ferocious yet still immature and fledging Trotskyism. So, the only way to prevent this 'Hydra' from "nesting everywhere, settling everywhere, establishing connections everywhere" is to behead it at home (Marx 248). Such a strategy of Red Terror was embraced and carefully implemented in the form of anti-kulaks purges, the genocide of the Cossacks, politics of War Communism, and general repression carried out by CheKa, the secret police. As the famous Russian poet Alexander Blok wrote, reflecting the dominant moods, "to the grief of our bourgeois,/We'll fan a worldwide conflagration" (8). Needless to say, the North Intervention of the Allies attempting to, as Winston Churchill put it, "strangle Bolshevism in its cradle" (at this point this was still Trotskyism) provided a 'valid' reason for suspicion and coercion as essential and just measures of self-defense.

Similarly, Islamic Trotskyism underlines that there is a remarkable difference between the enemies who confront it due to being born in disbelief and the ones who fight it whilst claiming to preach Islam as well. The former might survive if they decide to convert while the latter, who "prefer to sit in the shades of the tawāghīt and crusaders rather than perform jihād against the kuffār", defame the very nature of their religion and, therefore, are subjects to merciless slaughter (Dabiq #11 9). With the discord sown by these 'traitors' being deemed so malignant, ISIS has advocated for 'defensive jihad' arguing that it cannot wage a full-scale offensive on the Western 'murtads' (disbelievers) as long as it is threatened by the local 'apostate' secularists (ibid). As al-Baghdadi once mentioned, "the rulers of Muslim lands are traitors, unbelievers, sinners, liars, deceivers, and criminals…we believe that fighting them is of greater necessity than fighting the occupying crusader" (qtd. in Bunzel 10). However, like in Red Trotskyism, the West is seen as inherently dangerous and willing to attack. According to Lewis, for the majority of the Islamic

peoples, “Western imperialist' is a natural and normal collocation of terms, like German measles or Spanish flu” (4).

Moreover, in both cases, ideological relevance and, to a certain extent validity, rest upon the complete and all-encompassing rejection of alien values, namely Western liberal-democratic agenda. As far as Red Trotskyism is concerned, its whole mission seems to revolve around the West and castigate the very essence of Capitalist societies, starting from the oppressive economic structure and ending with aggressive foreign policies aimed to conquer new lands and enslave new peoples (Marx 251). For Trotskyism, Western-style consumerism and competition back moral degradation and urge people to manipulate each other, constraining their ability for mutual assistance. Similarly, Wahhabist Salafi jihadism intends to defend the integrity and godliness of the umma from the kuffār seeking to ‘islamize’ its sinful beliefs and pratices (Dabiq #11 19, Wistrich 419). This deep-rooted condemnation determined extremely negative attitude towards the human rights and political freedoms the underlying purpose of which is to not only to legalize but to perpetuate overall depravation, “mocking of Islam and Muhammad”, protecting drunkards and sodomites, excluding faith from the state affairs, urging people to humiliate each other through the freedom of speech. Reflecting on feminist and liberal rethinking of female role in the workplace and family, Dabiq laments rapid decay of traditional womanhood, which is no longer represented by Mary who was forced to give up her modesty and obedience and “lay on the altar of secular liberalism” (Dabiq #15 25). Having observed such a moral decadence, the ISIS, thus, claims not to let it sneak into the Middle East, and this finds a receptive audience. It is notable that a very similar attitude is seen when Trotsky laments liberal freedoms, in particularly freedom of the press: “the Press as a trusty weapon of the struggle with corruption...but the two countries with the greatest “freedom” of the Press – North America and France – which, at the same time, are countries of the most highly developed stage of capitalist corruption” (The Militant 5).

Thus, Wahhabist Salafi jihadism to a high extent can be referred to as Islamic Trotskyism and deemed to be a new factor of global politics due to many similarities in ideological doctrines which it shares with Red Trotskyism. Both Trotskyisms are based on the articulation of a global-scale goal for which achievement they require a massive struggle while the outcome of this struggle will shape the destiny of the world. Consequently, every moral person is obligated to live and die for the sake of the 'cosmic war' deed whilst benefiting from this dedication as it provides a source of internal revelation and clearly indicates which path to follow. Both Trotskyisms declare the holy war on 'disbelievers', express their willingness to shed the rivers of blood with the priority being put on the extermination of internal enemies. Finally, in either case, the transmission of Western values is seen as a contagious pandemic, relentlessly seeking to weaken the virtuous ones. In terms of anti-jihadist strategy implications, the aforementioned feature renders the final victory permanently incomplete highlighting the need of always being on the lookout for the next attack.

Part 3 - Methods: "Expose Their Evil"

Even though some political movements can be marked by common ideological mantra and originate from very similar circumstances, they might take completely opposite directions depending on the tools they use and factors they take advantage of on their way to the consolidation of power. As argued in the theoretical section, it is not only the 'cosmic war' rhetorics and radicalizing environment but also strategic toolkit that needs to be closely studied when analyzing movement's ability to transform the functions of the sacred from providing merely internal theoretical guidance to inducing very real wordly bloodshed. Consequently, Wahhabist Salafi jihadism's belonging to Trotskyist category can be seen in light of the operational similarity between the Red and Islamic variations, whose methods strikingly resemble each other if not are completely congruent. First of all, in both situations the initial publicity followed by a massive

zealotry for ones and attractiveness for the others, was achieved through a robust and large-scale application of terrorism: although the extent and the character differed, the intention to evoke fear and admiration is identical.

Talking about Trotskyism, many historians consider the policies of Red Terror when certain social groups were subject to extrajudicial punishments to be one of the ramifications of terrorism due to many common features such as taking and executing hostages, publishing evidence of reprisals to demoralize the opposition and targeting individuals solely on the basis of belonging to the politically confrontational minority (Kautsky 12). According to Trotsky, "the revolution does require of the revolutionary class that it should attain its end by all methods at its disposal – if required, by terrorism" (67). Additionally, Trotskyists are known to admire the early Russian revolutionary organizations such as People Will or The SR Combat Organization, in which members were engaged in the open acts of terrorism having killed or wounded about 17,000 people including high-ranking officials such as two Ministers of Interior and Tsar Alexander II (Figes 138). However, although incredibly important in terms of ideological heritage, inspirational attractiveness, and the utility for propaganda, neither of those groups amounted for a proper proto-Trotskyist movement due to lack of global ambitions, narrow operational domain and limited skills of conversion.

As far as Wahhabist Salafi jihadism is concerned, the Islamic State seems to have mastered the art of spilling innocent blood in a variety of creative ways over a wide range of locations (this a very backhanded compliment, if a compliment at all though). According to CNN, over a period of time from 2014 till 2017 more than 2043 of people in 29 countries were killed and dozens injured as a result of 140 ISIS-organized or -inspired martyrdom operations (Lister et al. 2017). The strategies applied are reminiscent of Red Trotskyism, although they are far more diverse and coordinated: it has been revealed that al-Baghdadi has set up a whole war ministry dividing the responsibility for

the terrorist acts among ex-members of Iraqi intelligence who drafted the general 'plans'. Then, being conspiratorially laid, these 'plans' are passed over to the local field commanders heading small autonomous networks who formulate the details and carry out the tasks. This prevents the leak of information and enhances the groups' capacity to maneuver, responding to changes while allowing for overall coordination by the general staff due to establishment of 'drop times' (Hubbard and Schmitt 2014). Similarly to the Trotskyists, ISIS have definitely incorporated the experience and knowledge of their Iraqi predecessors confronting the US occupants in 2007: as one American official admits, "these guys know the terrorism business inside and out, and they are the ones who survived aggressive counterterrorism campaigns during the surge" (ibid).

Furthemore, both Trotskyisms have tried to justify and encourage terrorist attacks for the purposes of igniting fear in all who oppose them. Wahhabist Salafi jihadists used to leave the details of their brutal vengeance laid bare for the world to tremble: for example, the 3rd and 4th issues of Dabiq, the official magazine published by ISIS, included the images of the beheaded American journalists James Wright Foley and Steven Sotloff (Manne 2016). Coming back to the early Soviets, Trotsky, too, believed that it is a feeling of dread that begets the triumph of revolution. As he puts it, "a victorious war, generally speaking, destroys only an insignificant part of the conquered army, intimidating the remainder and breaking their will. The revolution works in the same way: it kills individuals and intimidates thousands" (Trotsky 5).

Claiming to support the needs of the other majority, both Trotskyisms tried to apply mass politics on a very large scale taking advantage of populist slogans and making great conclusions based on poor evidence. First of all, the exaggeration of the threats posed by ideological or religious enemies and the scale of reprehensible practices - whether Capitalist or anti-Islamic - present in the Western societies, enabled both movements to cultivate some sort of 'apocalypse' phobia among their populaces. This persuaded the people that they are doomed to be converted and oppressed if

they do not immediately support the aggressive pre-emptive strike led by extremism and violence. As far as Wahhabist Salafi jihadism is concerned, the references to 'End of Times' proved to be extremely effective when recruiting new members both from the Middle East and from the overseas territories: the latter ones were thrilled to be engaged in the greatest battle supposedly determining the destiny of all of mankind while the former were easy to persuade seeing apocalypse as the reason behind the collapse of their states and chaos of sectarian politics they have witnessed (McCants 102). Although being less pessimistic and arguing that the victory of the proletariat has been pre-determined by the "mad gallop" of history, Red Trotskyism also instructs its proponents not to postpone the revolution as Capitalists might become invincible (The Militant 5).

It is notable that in both situations, despite the different nature of accusations, Jews were said to play a relevant role in bringing about disorder and instability. In the case of Red Trotskyism the emphasis was obviously put on the promotion and embodiment of Western ambitions by the state of Israel. For example, Britain's behavior towards Palestine was passionately castigated during the Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920 held in Baku as "acting for the benefit of Anglo-Jewish capitalists, it drove Arabs from the land in order to give the latter to Jewish settlers; then, trying to appease the discontent of the Arabs, it incited them against the same Jewish settlers" (Murawiec 215). Needless to say, the Islamic State is far more concerned if not hysterical about the Jews waiting for their Messiah to unite them under the flag of pan-Judaism campaign: as ridiculous as it sounds, it works well enough to advertise the urgency of protection from "the evil of the Dajjāl" (Dabiq #11 17).

Moreover, both Troskyisms build up on the ideas of brotherhood and internationalism, which as history shows, appeal to people. The story of all the workers joining each other in the struggle with the common imperialist enemy is in truth the starting and crucial point of Trotskyist globalism which prioritized ideological dedication over birth-citizenship and strove to push Russian

revolutionaries for identifying their nationality as "universal and neutral" (Spenser 9). Similarly, immediately after its creation in 2014, al-Baghdadi introduced Khilāfah as a new homeland which equally welcomes for all the true believers, and the appearance of which cancels out any other loyalties one might have been bound by. As Shaykh Ibrāhīm Ibn 'Awwād al-Husaynī states, "the Syrian mujāhid doesn't hesitate to trample on the Syrian flag, and the American mujāhid doesn't think twice about setting fire to the "star-spangled banner" when they have recognized that their strength is in their unity upon tawhīd, not in any racial affiliations" (Dabiq #11 20). Such a cordial invitation expressing the readiness to endorse anybody from anywhere into the fold of Islam (precisely its Wahhabist Salafi jihadist denominator) often seems promising causing the influx of foreign fighters and their families to Syria and urging them to burn demonstratively their passports upon arrival (Wood 2015). As in Red Trotskyism, liberatory logic is important: it is not just brotherhood and unity, but equality that is appealing - all truly faithful are equal and can be equally saved regardless of their social status, nationality and professional past.

Furthermore, when comparing the methodology of Red and Islamic Trotskyisms, it is difficult not to notice expansionist appetites of both these movements that used foreign invasion to boost their power and influence in the region. For the latter, crossing the borders and bringing the righteous wrath on the heads of the tawāghī symbolizes the beginning of the second phase of holy war, "offensive jihad" which has become possible only upon the extermination of internal enemies: as Cole Bunzel argues, the mere fact of this action bears a great significance signaling the might and virtue of the Islamic State (12). Furthermore, according to Harleen Gambhir, the ISIS military attacks occurring abroad follow three major directions: "Interior Ring" including Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, the "Near Abroad Ring" including the parts of the Middle East and North Africa claimed by Khilāfah and the "Far Abroad Ring" including Europe, the US, Southeast Asia, and their Cyberspace (2). Summing up, in the Interior Ring by conducting military

attacks ISIS tries to provoke the governments to get engaged in the conflict which would polarize their populations creating favourable conditions for civil conflict or deter them from supporting the Western powers and their allies. In the Near Abroad Ring ISIS greatly supports local jihadist groups capable of independent fighting, thereby, paving the way for future expansion. Finally, in the Far Abroad Ring the ISIS-led terrorist acts beget social divisions due to disagreements on the security policies, massive public fear generates anti-war sentiments while constant activity on the web facilitates the detection and online recruitment of marginalized foreign individuals (ibid). Similarly, Red Trotskyism was determined to physically fight the surrounding imperialists: in 1919 the Soviet State declared a war on Poland and moved armies towards Warsaw. However, this was quickly met by the Polish counteroffensive under the command of Pan Pilsudski, whose strategic genius when combined with the incompetence of mostly non-military members of Soviet general staff, temporarily crashed the Trotskyists' ambitions for immediate world dominance. Despite being a complete failure, this can still illustrate the movement's will to overseas aggression, a feature very similar to its Islamic successor.

Additionally, both Trotskyisms dedicate (or did so) a great amount of time and money to state-run propaganda. The Islamic State has been continuously engaged in so-called 'media operations' with a special ministry responsible for dissemination of official print and digital media products among the locals. The number of kiosks (media points) built for this purpose is estimated to be more than 60 only in Iran. The content of the media provided pleasant images of happy and prosperous people, livestock and laughing kids depicting the caliphate as a heaven on earth as opposed to chaos and suffering of foreign lands abandoned by Allah: as described by the media administration, their work also contributes to jihad since they "fight on the domestic front to convey the reality of ISIS's military campaigns" ("The Virtual Caliphate" 23). Coming back to the Russian case, a volume three times the length of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* would, perhaps, be unfit to cover

all the psychological techniques developed by the Soviet government but the fact that its phase of pure Trotskyism did not last for a long time restricts the scope of what can be considered. Similarly to ISIS, the Trotskyists paid significant attention to newspapers such as *Pravda* and political satire which praised the Red heroes and make fun of the Western capitalists and the Whites (Rhodes 217). Wall posters with bold font and bright colors, revolutionary songs and ideological talks played on radio, and first movies deemed to assist in tackling the problem of massive illiteracy: the latter proved to have the most powerful effect on the peasants and workers usually being deeply touched by the purposefully heart-breaking images of "Britain's colonial policy in India, the work of the League of Nations, the starving Berliners, etc" (Lenin qtd. in Rhodes 218). Besides, both movements are characterized by the strategy of 'going to the people' based on the assumption that direct face-to-face conversation boosts the story's credibility in the eyes of the audience and eases the manipulation of its feelings. The Islamic religious promoters periodically visit smaller communities playing with children and helping the families, skillfully combining this with religious and political indoctrination while the Trotskyist Agitprop organized lectures and discussions covering the history of class struggle and the future challenges generated by the oppressors ("The Virtual Caliphate" 20, Rhodes 219).

Thus, the striking similarities in the methods and strategies used by these two movements provide a valid justification for calling Wahhabist Salafi jihadism Islamic Trotskyism, viewing it as a new variable in the international affairs. Summing up, both Trotskyims launched a full-scale terrorist campaign to intimidate and demoralize their enemies while drawing inspiration and elaborating on the experience of their extremist predecessors. Both encouraged populism luring the crowds by the ideas of international brotherhood and fraternity and justifying bloodshed through an apocalyptic worldview and stressed the urgency for self-defense. Both also exaggerated the Western threat and blamed Israeli foreign policies. Finally, the two movements attempted to expand beyond

their borders, invading neighboring countries and both were devoted to state-run propaganda advertising their doctrines in a variety of creative ways.

4. Islamic Trotskyism as Conceptual Transformation: #GenerationKhilafah

There are no doubts that Wahhabist Salafi jihadism in many instances is reminiscent of the Red Trotskyism employing similar practices, promoting similar doctrines and stemming from similar circumstances. However, having its maturity accompanied by globalization blurring the national borders and empowering international organizations, it turns out to be a somewhat different creature, far more mighty, modern and at the same time traditional. Crucially, the unprecedented level of development achieved by Islamic Trotskyism whose ability to win its own land, murder a huge number of ideological enemies and establish a vast network of supporters all over the globe to some extent distinguishes it from its red forerunner that, in the end, failed to move towards the actual implementation of its aims. Although both cross-reference of these two movements' origins and assessment of the doctrinal similarity of their claims are perfectly feasible, the would-be status of Red Trotskyism impedes the examination of its methods as it is only possible to imagine what it would have employed if it had not gotten stuck in the limbo, being more than a crafted political theory but less than a proper state structure. This limitation, thus, highlights a distant standing of Wahhabist Salafi jihadism that happens to be the only Trotskyism capable of carrying out such a qualitative leap into the realm of the geopolitical power struggle.

Paradoxically, the key to Islamic Trotskyism’s empowerment seems to lie in its ambivalent yet extremely practical attitude towards great changes. Interestingly, religion serves as a filter that determines which parts of the modernity are worth being adapted to. Even though the very presence of such a mechanism highlights the importance of Islam, the pragmatic selectiveness of this decision-making unveils the politics and strategic considerations behind. In other words, Islamic

Trotskyism seems to vigorously condemn some harmful aspects of the changing world yet tolerating the sinful nature of the other beneficial ones, resisting the prolonging of past injustices but endorsing the mastering useful inventions.

On the one hand, unlike its Red forerunner, Islamic Trotskyism claims its strategies and concepts to be as old as Islam itself: there always was a great Muslim caliphate, there always was a practice of holy war, and it is the Western crusaders who disrupted the normal flow of reality. Crucially, as claimed, they did not cause the rise of the new ideology but merely awakened the sleeping force and, therefore, resigned themselves to a brutal retaliation - this is not senseless violence, rather, as they put it in the 15th issue of Dabiq, a 'hate crime'. It is interesting how in this context 'crime' assumes reasonable action aimed to punish existing injustices after rational consideration of their significance, while at the same time is based on a deep individual need for ritual revenge. As far as the former is concerned, it is possible to distinguish between two 'hate dimensions' - the older one concerning cultural and religious decadence and more recent one lamenting military invasion.

In the first case, as Lewis decisively claims, robust, pro-Western redesigning of all spheres of social life and forced adoption of unfamiliar, even reprehensible for Islam practices such as modernization, democratization, and consumerism caused "the outbreak of rage against these alien, infidel, and incomprehensible forces that had subverted his dominance, disrupted his society, and finally violated the sanctuary of his home" ("The Roots" 6). Growing fear of Western imperialism which was deemed a missionary, aggressive attempt to proselytize Christendom nurtured Muslims' cohesion in rallying under the flag of religious radicalism providing the leaders of the religious revival with a powerful impetus to start identifying their enemies as the enemies of God ("The Roots" 8). Talking about the second case concerning armed invasion, Western states have shown a long string of bad luck when seeking to strengthen the democratic rule in the Middle East and

failing this task with unfailing regularity: the division of the Ottoman Empire by the Allied powers now interpreted by Salafi jihadists as collapse of the last Khilāfah, the establishment of Jewish State in the heart of Islamic lands dubbed by the mujāhidīn 'Sykes-Picot conspiracy', the humanitarian interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya all of which erupted into civil wars, Islamic Trotskyism did not need to bother looking for whom to blame (Cockburn 34). As Naji points out, by bringing in the troops and constructing military facilities, the US built its own coffin helping to "increase the jihadi expansion and create legions among the youth who contemplate and plan for resistance" (41). The ongoing nightmare of Syrian civil war can also be added to the list. Although the US never claimed to act as a part of humanitarian intervention, some might argue it was the fear of the violence of earlier interventions that led Assad regime to preempt the war and save his skin, unleashing military terror against the rebels and the civilians and, thus, opening a new arena for ISIS' jihadists to enter.

Coming back to the sense of internal moral duty inevitably directing the mujāhidīn' consciousness in the service of holy vengeance, it is extreme religiosity which is of paramount importance. Although it often seems to be political rather than a religious organization which misreads and cuts the Quran for the sake of showy watchwords, the Islamic State jihadists nevertheless do devote a lot of time to practicing Islam even if sticking to its most politicized ramification. In this light Islamic Trotskyism is incomparably more fanatical than the original movement. As Martin W. Slann observes, Red Trotskyists would have certainly preferred to postpone seeing the next world despite their readiness for self-sacrifice while Wahhabist Salafi jihadists almost crave it: indeed, those who say "Israelis love Pepsi-Cola, we love death; that's why we'll win" are hard-core (5).

On the other hand, Islamic Traditions demonstrates its keenness to bend with the wind having developed high levels of evolutional capacity and adaptability to technological innovation,

especially in the sphere of digital media: for Naji, this virtual jihad is a counteroffensive against the "deceptive media halo" of the West (12). First of all, ISIS have mastered the art of decentralized dissemination which seeks to, according to Gambhir, "'crowd source' its publicity while maintaining a strategically unified message" ("The Virtual Caliphate" 19). Therefore, the creation of numerous open user-friendly forums and extensive exploitation of popular social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and You Tube has enabled Islamic Trotskyism to construct a global interconnected community of online supporters who promote its ideas, spread propaganda videos, digital magazines and audio podcasts, and, more importantly, translate content into multiple languages. The empirical evidence highlights the efficacy of this strategy, especially on Twitter: by February 2015, pro-ISIS users had been posting more than 90,000 times per day (Vitale and Keagle 9).

Furthermore, the invention of, as Gabriella Weimann coins it, 'virtual pack', a combined portfolio of DIY explosive tutorials, texts of Wahhabist prayers and the latest fatwas issued by the radical clergy, online chat forums run by operating jihadists and so on, which strengthens the resolve of individuals granting access to unlimited amount of propaganda materials any time they want significantly, thus, facilitating and accelerating one's transformation from 'online activist' into actual combatant or terrorist (Berger 107). Finally, Islamic Trotskyism has not only engaged in informational warfare but organized a robust and efficient bureaucratic apparatus called the Base Foundation. This employs experienced editors, producers and journalists capable of generating highly qualified 'niche' content targeting Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Turkish-speaking populations ("The Virtual Caliphate" 24). Thus, if ordinary Red Trotskyism only fantasized of world fame, the media capacities of its Islamic successor have turned it into virtual hydra, which is capable to survive even given today's ground retreat of ISIS. As Gambhir reflects on such

resilience, “even if a province fails online or offline, the leadership and overall Khilafah (Caliphate) leadership project is still safe and can grow elsewhere” (“Islamic State” 12).

Finally, in the case of terrorism, ISIS neither accolades the traditional values nor utilizes the fruits of modernity rather presents its actions as a single continuous pattern: it is argued that already at the times of first crusades, Muslims reckoned how to efficiently counterweigh superior forces of the enemies by operating in small mobile groups (Naji 30). However, modern terrorism is far more strategic and well-designed: as Naji instructs, it is expedient to first target petroleum industries forcing the opponents to disperse their troops rendering populations, especially tourists, vulnerable and breeding public fear (ibid).

Importantly, even though current defeats in Syria threaten ISIS’ geopolitical and military standing, the propagandist appeal of the Islamic Trotskyism, remains powerful, promoted on the web and embodied by affiliate movements in Africa and Asia. As put by Michael Waltz, the U.S. Representative for Florida's 6th congressional district, “ISIS is defeated as a caliphate but absolutely not as a movement. It’s metastasizing” (Burke 2019). Similarly, recent analysis conducted by the Institute for the Studies of War highlights how, in preparation for a counter-offensive, ISIS has been quite successful, invigorating jihadist networks in historical Sunni areas all over Iraq and uniting their leaders under common agenda of claiming Syria back (Wallace 2019). In this light, celebrating victory over the ISIS and equating Islamic Trotskyism to its fully dismantled Red forerunner seems a little premature, whether looking at the movement’s ideological power or its warfare-ranging potential.

Thus, although definitely deserving the title of ‘Islamic Trotskyism’, Wahhabist Salafi jihadism cannot be fully classified as just one of Trotskyism-alike ideologies. Rather it ‘upgrades’ the whole concept raising it to a new level of global influence never reached before by any other movement. Having managed to combine religious rigidity of the Ancient times with striking ability

to immediately absorb the technological innovations, it now represents a powerful fusion of the self-sacrificing fanaticism lamenting the loss of traditional values and scientific rationality determined to benefit from all the advantages globalization has to offer. This contradictory yet extremely stable basis turns Islamic Trotskyism into a powerful enemy being hard to grasp, harder to dislodge and seemingly impossible to exterminate.

5. Conclusion

This paper introduces and utilizes the notion of Trotskyism as an overarching political identity which allows for the cross-reference of such historically, socially and culturally distinct movements as the proto-version of Russian Communism and Wahhabist Salafi jihadism. Responding to the main research question, Wahhabist Salafi jihadism can be called 'Islamic Trotskyism' to a very high extent and considered not just a new actor in the international arena but a decisive force to be reckoned with. Although paying significant attention to spiritual practices and fundamentalist rhetoric, it is not an Islamic unit per se: as in any of Trotskyist movements, it is not the conceptual essence but the character of ideological zeal that remains religious. This ability to exploit faith for the purposes of popular mobilization, redirecting the emotional capital and dedication it evokes in the service of extremist agenda, has to be recognized by policy makers and adequately incorporated in any counter-terrorist approach.

Importantly, Trotskyism can only entail movements of 20th and 21st Centuries due to a massive scale of the action it seeks to undertake. As Oliver Roy, a French political scientist, argues, today's radical Islamists are different from fundamentalists of the past. Unlike their state-oriented predecessors, they seek to build a civic society, the members of which would not only preach violent interpretation of Islam but also claim their loyalty to the belief per se rather than to certain territorial entity that serves as this belief's embodiment (10). In other words, the scope of intended

conquest is really wide, reaching far beyond sovereign, regional and even continental borders and aiming at creating a new worldwide ummah, united in its faith and free of any national sentiments (ibid). Consequently, although it might be of some resemblance with the revolutionary movements of the past, Trotskyism should be seen as a product of modernity. Indeed, the construction of a truly global ideology (and even consideration of such a goal) has become feasible quite recently with internationalism of both methods and intentions rendering the combination of violence and religion more ideological, efficient and powerful. However, even though there were no precedents of Trotskyism in history before the 20th century, new cases which could also be categorized as forms of Trotskyism are probably yet to come, enabled by globalization, modernization and, sad enough, democratization.

When compared against scientific criteria based on their conceptual and procedural characteristics, Trotskyisms contain many similarities. Like its red forerunner, Islamic Trotskyism appeared in highly compartmentalized societies where already existing tensions were exacerbated by the rapid growth of population not being accompanied by the equal distribution of modernization's advantages. Indeed, the revolutionary appeal of both Trotskyisms was greatly heightened by a lack of political representation, economic disparities and unrestricted coercion of the exploitative state. Ideologically, it is similarly internationally oriented, claiming to be a vehicle of salvation being the only source of genuine moral truth, declaring a holy war on disbelievers and fiercely opposing the spread of Western liberal-democratic values. The methods favoured by Islamic Trotskyism also largely resemble Red Trotskyism as they consist of bloody terrorist attacks aimed to polarize and intimidate the enemy, foreign expansion for the purposes of proselytizing and boosting international status, internal purges to rid of domestic opposition and massive propaganda vilifying the West and foreseeing Apocalypse unless followers from over the world unite under the flag of radicalism and violence.

Crucially, such a striking resemblance greatly diminishes the charismatic enigma of the Wahhabist Salafi jihadism demonstrating its belonging to a broader pathology of political movements which are transnationally-oriented, elaborating on the crisis-mentality sentiments and highly pragmatic with regard to the use of violence and theology-based rhetoric. This arguably diminishes the inspirational features of Islamic Trotskyism, politicizing the ends it pursues and highlighting important discrepancies between a purely religious narrative that the Islamic State sticks to and a highly rational, utilitarian logic which seems to underline this story-telling.

Helping to mitigate a previously identified problem of over-contextualization, a parallel analysis of Red Trotskyism and Wahhabist Salafi jihadism highlights the centrality of form, framework, and modus operandi while diminishing the relevance of content. Although playing fairly important roles in their particular cases, neither religion nor an anti-bourgeoisie agenda can be deemed the only necessary elements in the general formula for Trotskyism to put down roots and flourish. Extremely useful for policymakers, they demonstrate the context-specific features that require separate examination yet cannot be seen as universal characteristics of Trotskyism as a whole. In brief, it is the employment of extreme violence, international ambitions, uncompromising populist rhetoric and fanatical devotion to the apocalyptic cause that cannot be taken out of the equation with revolutionary sentiments and theological interpretations having a somewhat secondary contribution of putting flesh on the already existing spinal cord of the category.

Crucially, the conclusions drawn in this paper not only generate valuable practical insights when dealing with ISIS' particular case, but are also significant in their contribution to the broader pool of theoretical knowledge. Exposing the religiously charged yet politically oriented nature of Wahhabist Salafi jihadism and demonstrating its striking resemblance to atheist proto-Communism, Trotskyism-based analysis of ISIS moves forward the academic debate on the nature of religion and violence relationship, illuminating the centrality of conceptual transformation of what religion

entails. As explained in the paper, popular radicalization, rancor and, eventually physically coercive action occur when the function of faith as guiding force behind spiritual and individual self-improvement turns into a life-demanding goal to mercilessly change not just one concrete society but the world as a whole. In short, it is not politicized religion that is inherently violent but the change in understanding of religion per se.

This idea adds a new dimension to religion-violence discussion, allowing to accommodate the existing scholarly opinions but also to rethink and problematize them in a more complex perspective. For example, in line with introduced differentiation between religion, informed by politics yet focused on *oneself*, and not-quite-religion, killing in politics and focused on *everyone around*, Juergensmeyer's concept of 'cosmic war' and Hall's observation of religion's mobilizing and counterhegemonic function seem to be applicable to the latter rather than to the former. Indeed, neither uncompromising absolutism nor mobilizing capital of religious beliefs alone pose a threat to social stability: it is deliberate and consistent attempts to externalize and forcefully disseminate those beliefs that induce violence. Importantly, a valuable theoretical implication, which stems from this idea, is that religion has no innate propensity to cause coercive action. As this paper argues, religion only becomes dangerous when it ceases being a clear-cut religion, abandoning individual's endeavour at self-improvement to grow obsessed with civil reconstruction. However, there is no predestination for this conceptual transformation (as named above) to occur but rather structural social, political, and economic conditions, considered in the Trotskyism-based analysis of ISIS, that render it feasible and likely.

Approaching the question of rationality of religious violence, this paper shows how Trotskyism, a beast of its own kind, grows too complex to be characterized as rational or irrational, skilfully mingling religious elements (beliefs and ideas in case of Islamic Trotskyism, unquestionable loyalty to the cause in case of Red Trotskyism) with lust for political power. It

seems, then, that Trotskyism can hardly be used to judge the reasonableness of religious violence, simply because Trotskyist violence is not purely religious. However, even if this problem is ignored, there is still a question on which part of Trotskyism should be regarded as dominant. Is it rational fanaticism, which, highlighted by Juergensmeyer's view on religious terrorism as logicless "public performance" and Appleby's equating of religious martyrs and charities as being similarly spiritually inspired, manifests itself in the propagandist messages and behaviors of ordinary followers? Or is it the quite rational techniques and strategic thinking, the ones that, proving Cavanaugh's idea of politicized religion being informed by quite materialistic considerations with religion's irrationality simply validating Western "legitimating myth", the movement's leadership has applied to get this message implemented?

Thus, emphasizing heterogeneity and intricacy of Trotskyism's logic, this paper stays in continuity with academic debate on religious violence and rationality, building upon the existing arguments, and yet it also turns theoretical discussion into a different direction, questioning the utility of unequivocal clear-cut classification between rational and irrational that exists in scholarly literature now. Importantly, mapping out a new route for scholarly research, this conclusion highlights the importance of entirely different, complex and conceptualized typology of violence, not "religious" versus "secular" but "Trotskyist" versus both.

On the level of case studies' comparison, although it continues the legacy of its red forerunner, Islamic Trotskyism transforms the definition by adding unique features: it is a bizarre hybrid of radically exclusionary religiosity and fanaticism coupled with strategic thinking and cutting-edge media toolkits. From this light, Islamic Trotskyism is a political phenomenon: it pursues its objectives on an unprecedented scale revealing the need to address the challenges posed by these objectives with unprecedented effort. "We're all on the same side. We're all breathing", - said Jon Snow to the fighting lords skeptical of ever raising danger, but there is no Jon Snow

around, and neither the US nor Russia and China nor European powers seem ready to fully cooperate fighting the common threat. Without a doubt, geopolitics matters as well as the personal ambitions of the leadership - but we never know which Walls have fallen and which beasts have been raised from the dead until we find the zombie armies on the doorstep.

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