THE SYRIAN CHAOS
THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA: CONSEQUENCES
FOR EUROPE'S SECURITY AND DEFENCE

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RESUMO

As denominadas Primaveras Árabes criaram um vazio de poder potenciando o Caos no Oriente Próximo com o derrube dos regimes de cariz ditatorial. Este artigo analisará o Conflito Sírio como epicentro da desestabilização regional e a luta entre os blocos Sunita e Xiita utilizadas para um realinhamento geoestratégico e geopolítico dentro de um contexto de rivalidades na civilização Muçulmana. Os grupos radicais Salafitas e Wahabistas tomam posições para criar um novo modelo político, provavelmente uma nova ordem mundial. O Estado Islâmico afirma-se na política internacional. A Europa está agora ameaçada pelo terrorismo transnacional e por um enorme fluxo de migrantes num período de estagnação económica e incerteza política. Há divisões no projeto europeu enquanto os ataques jihadistas continuam. O Continente está em estado de alerta e em alguns casos em estado de emergência.

ABSTRACT

The Arab Spring has increased the chaos in the region by replacing the local and historical dictatorships with a political power vacuum. The struggle between Sunni and Shi'ite factions is being used as a tool of geo-strategic alignments and regional geopolitics, and also a clash within Muslim civilisation. Radical Islamic religious groups have taken advantage of the dispute to create a new political model, probably a new world order. A revolutionary reality, the Islamic State, takes its place in world politics. Europe is now threatened both by cross-border religious terrorism and massive flows of migrants at an extended period of economic stagnation. There is disagreement within the EU as jihadist attacks continue. Europe remains on maximum alert and in some cases in a state of emergency.

Keywords: Syria; Sunnis/Shi'ites; Islamic State; Jihad; Russia/Iran; European Security an Defense

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1. INTRODUCTION

"The (obviously necessary) fall of the Berlin Wall buried all aswpirations for emancipation, replacing them with the idea of competition. Aimé Césaire: 'I have an obscure desire: I have an unquenchable thirst'. The West does not yet understand this aspiration of the people of the south for a more equitable and just world, or their determination to achieve their goals. In the West, the very suggestion there could be another world order has been discredited. The hatred is feeding, now more than ever, the gap that today separates words from actions." (Ziegler, 2012: 145)

Academic analyses are very different from military pragmatism and action, although peace and conflict studies – including war studies – involve the convergence of several academic disciplines. Military action may be also instinctive – what happens. In war studies, and in order to achieve the necessary operational success, the approach has to be multifaceted. Military schools are increasingly becoming universities, not only because they teach exact sciences, including new technologies, but also because they teach Social Sciences in an academic way. This article is the product of a new model of Security and Defence military education that seeks to include military academic researchers in the many aspects of political decision-making in the context of International Relations analyses for the success of European security. Without engaging in analytical strategic thinking, no nation can form lasting alliances or be respected as a worthy enemy.

With the exception of the few researchers cited in the references below, due to the lack of resources (the consistent lack of resources) Portugal is not producing an adequate International Relations analysis of the influence of religion in contemporary politics and conflicts. The truth is that both the world and international conflicts have become increasingly religious and the religious phenomenon is again attracting the attention of international academic researchers in our NATO ally, the United States. Whether we like it or not, people today have different identities. We have lost our ardent faith in the great causes and are caught up with the materialism of the Western neoliberal world where our bellies are full and our heads are empty; we are completely ignorant of that other world, where bellies are empty but heads are full of ideas, not necessarily the same as ours. There is an abyss separating the north, where some have everything, from the south, where others have absolutely nothing. Social media spreads appealing images of the northern lifestyle; a way of life that is based on a material comfort and levels of consumption out of the reach of those who live outside the West. Religion has become the only way of making up for this exclusion. The raw materials for this model of unlimited consumption are in the south, as is the demographic explosion.

Syria is not just a battlefield; it is also a laboratory for the political models of the future and a glimpse into a possible new world order. All the major regional and international players are engaged in the conflict and its resolution. It is encouraging cross-border terrorism and seems like the prelude to a global war. The traditional military concept of controlled chaos cannot be applied to the situation in Syria.

This analysis will examine, in as much detail as possible in an article of this length, both, the contemporary Islamic phenomenon and regional geopolitics, then relate them to possible risks to European Security and Defence.

We will retain definitions and concepts in their original language to prevent them from losing their meaning in the discussion.

2. RELIGION AS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA

> "Sunni Muslim theologians do not agree the Alawites belong to the Islamic community (Ummah). During the middle ages, the Sunni scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) believed them to be heretics and called on all to oppose them as a deviant sect." (Guidère, 2012: 170)

The Syrian conflict is neither a religious war nor is it a war between religions, although it may be the motor or excuse needed to cause a war of interests, devoid of content if the religious element is absent. There is no need to have studied philosophy of religion or theology to know that throughout history religion has divided men and caused conflicts and war. In Social Sciences, there are many who accept that for as long as man exists there will be religion, simply because it is impossible to eradicate the anxiety causing the need for the divine from the human psyche, human biology or neural chemistry. Politics exploits religion and religion exploits politics to create and shape wills, encouraging certain interests by defending defined goals that are effective in determining the way people behave. However much we try to idealise social and political secularism, 'religion always comes back' (Kung, 2010: 531).

The Syrian conflict represents a realignment of the strategies of the two Cold War blocs projected in a different form following the 1989 collapse of the Berlin Wall; through religion and in the Near East. On one side stands Russia, a long-time ally with influence over the Assad family regime that is colluding with the theocratic Shi'ite regime in Iran. On the other side stands the Western bloc in alliance with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf oil States, Turkey and Egypt – all part of the Sunni Islamic world. Israel is the West's main strategic pivot in the region.

2.1 THE RELIGIOUS MOSAIC

> "That fear first created the gods is perhaps as true as anything so brief be
> on so great a subject." (Santayana, 1905: 28)

Syria has always been an unrivalled religious mosaic. The Alawites held political power in Syria since France, the former colonial power departed, represent just 12% of the population. Sunni Muslims make up 60%, [2] with various Christian groups – Greek Orthodox, Melkites, Syriacs, Maronites, Chaldo-Assyrians, Roman Catholics and protestants – combined accounting for 9% and Armenian Christians a further 4%. The remainder is made up of Druze 3%, Circassians and Yazidis, no more than 100,000 each. The struggle for power between the Sunni majority and these combined minorities - the regime's power base, has been a constant theme in the contemporary history of Syria.

The religious basis of the conflict began with an exegetical analysis, the tafsir (تفسير) of the Quran –¬¬ Baha'ism (بهائية) – a spiritual union of all humanity, the unity of religion. In Islamic terms, it is also the union of beliefs, the real Umma (أمة), the global Muslim community and the long sought-after Islamic nation. Political Pan-Arabism, a reformist movement that seeks – or sought – the union of all Arab countries, took advantage in the past of this religious concept as it attempted to create a union of all Arabic political parties, which came to be called Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party's (حزب البعث العربي – قطر سوريا) in Arabic means renaissance or new politics. One language, one culture, one Caliphate, one empire: it was a dream of religious and political unity, it served the interests of and was inspired by the former Soviet Union, presenting its only opportunity to have influence over the region and the Arab world during the Cold War. It was a socialist system grafted on to Islam. 'President Assad was a willing and shrewd tactician ... the Syrian regimes were dominated by the splinter group of the Shi'ite Alawis ("those who belong to Ali")' (Kung, 2010: 516). For at least two generations Syria has been the only hereditary republic in the Middle East.

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[2] The Kurds are included in the Sunni majority of which they make up 9%. There are also Yazidi Kurds on the border with Iraq. The banned Syrian Muslim Brotherhood is also a Sunni organisation;

2.2 POLITICAL SHI'ITE ISLAM

The first modern theocracy emerged in the Republic of Iran at the beginning of the end of the Cold War dichotomies. On his return from exile in France, Ayatollah Khomeini introduced a puritanical and orthodox doctrine while establishing his new political regime in Tehran. This change led Iran to break completely from its American ally, signalled dramatically when the US Embassy in the Iranian capital was stormed in 1979 and several American diplomats taken hostage.

If Islam does have a hypostatic politico-religious calling it is the Shi'ites who expresses this belief most forcibly. 'Shia Muslims believe the Imam is not just a political leader in the community, he is also its spiritual leader, with the two position held by the same person' (Saeed, 2010: 203). The genealogical legacy of the Prophet's succession both mystifies and promotes anthropomorphism excluding Allah, the only intangible entity. It is a way of bringing Allah's prophetic messages closer to man, to the human thing. In this way, and right up to the present day, the dynastic successor to the Prophet Muhammad (محمد) becomes a Godly expression through its alter-divine quality. The political shape of Islamic Shi'ite beliefs is provided by the Ayatollah (آية الله), a Quranic exegete that also finds governance solutions for man in religious messages, whether or not they be faithful Muslims.

The Palestinian Hezbollah (حزب الله), also Shi'ite with bases in Lebanon, always received support and training from Damascus and Tehran. In Iran, they were instructed by the Revolutionary Guard, a fine example of Iran's religious involvement in the politics of the region.

2.3 MILITANT SUNNI ISLAM

On the other side of the conflict stand the Sunnis and their political alignments with regional and non-regional allies. The Islamic State (IS), ISIS or Daesh, as this belligerent political movement is known, is to the current conflict in Syria what al-Qaeda (تنظيم القاعدة) was to the Afghan conflict. In Afghanistan al-Qaeda took advantage of the geo-strategic situation to fight the Soviet Union on behalf of the United States and the West. In the Syrian and Iraq conflicts the Sunni groups and nations who were, and remain, allied with the United States and the West counterbalance Iran's presence in the region. IS was born of a schism within al-Qaeda in the territory it currently dominates and continues to grow to occupy strategic positions throughout the world, but particularly in Syria, Iraq, the Sinai, Libya, Afghanistan, Africa and Europe: indeed, wherever necessary.

> "The first meeting between (Abu Musab) al-Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden took place in Kandahar, the de facto Taliban capital. It went very badly ... with al-Zarqawi's arrogance and his 'rigid religious views' offending Bin Laden ... It was at the mosque that al-Zarqawi first discovered Salafism, a doctrine that in its modern form advocates a return to theological purity and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Salafites not only believe that democracy and west are fundamentally incompatible with Islam; they also see them as being responsible for corrupting Arab civilisation." (Weiss & Hassan, 2015: 22)

These two politico-religious belligerent groups believe other Islamic beliefs to be apostate, a corruption of the Prophet's true message and claim to be the true heirs of the exclusively Sunni medieval Caliphate of Abbasid. To them, the world is divided between the Mujahadin (مجاهدين), who are present everywhere and the Jews and their Crusader allies. Like all religious messages lending themselves to endless exegetical interpretations, it is a simplistic view of something that is very complex. 'Much of the political theory of Sunni Islam was developed during the Abbasid period and is based on the need for Muslims to remain faithful to the sacred law, to the Sunnah of the Prophet and the traditionally-accepted community practices' (Saeed, 2010: 206). The question that is inevitably posed in military and security terms is: how did the Sunni nations in the region that were allied to the West lose control of al-Qaeda and IS? The United States, until recently did not wanted to become a direct participant in the conflict, made a poor deal with Syria's '*religious wasps nest*' as it sought to find its own strategy for the region. The United States is no nearer to having its own Security and Defence dynamic in the conflict and Israel is being affected at home by the militant Sunni terrorist group Hamas (حماس) knife intifada.

2.4 FROM THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON TO MARTYRDOM

The strategy of jihadi Islam is global, long-term and incorporates many exegetical currents. It has ideological and operational levels and reverts to an immediate praxis with a political/eschatological vision based on human liberation – although in a fundamentally religious way rather than in the secular sense. It is extremely appealing in that it is born in and feeds on social exclusion, poverty, oppression, legitimate aspirations for the future and the absence of a short-term perspective.

> "The Islam war effort Jihad is an Arabic word with etymological roots in the verb *jahada*, meaning fight, effort or struggle ... offers support to Muslim people being oppressed by non-Muslim occupiers and an armed struggle against secular governments in Muslim countries, the West in general and the United States in particular. Jihad is a basic concept of Islam and is full of meaning". (Duarte, 2015: 79)

The entire dynamic of the war in Syria and of jihad in general, is cloaked to a martyrdom myth blind to the light of reason. In religious terms – *understood by those who can understand* – it is probably the best expression of this phenomenon. Martyrdom in war or as an isolated act carried out according to one's beliefs is expiation, consolation, union with the only possible deity: Allah. It is a providential plenitude that recasts human material existence full of injustice. In the case being studied here, it offers believers and the oppressed salvation throughout they can finally achieve their sought-after peace in divine grace. It is as much Sunni as it is Shi'ite and forms part of the Intifada (الانتفاضة), a legitimate rebellion against oppression.

> "The (Islamic) nation cannot survive without the scent of martyrdom and the fragrant perfume of blood spilled in God's name, and people will not be shaken from their lethargy other than to discuss martyrdom and the martyrs that fill their days and their nights'." (Al-Zargawi, In Cockburn, 2014: 122)

Appeals to martyrdom are not exclusive to Islam. During the fifth century Saint Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, who was killed by Vandals in North Africa, said: 'Death does not create the martyr; rather it is the cause for which the person dies'. The Shinto Kamikazes who venerated their emperor-god were not mentally ill; they had their own philosophical and social aesthetic that was imbued with the cult of death: the Cherry-Blossom cult. (Ohnuki-Tierney, 2002, 2006) They also had a concept of theological beauty and goodness that the ancient Greeks called, and even possibly a religious/political transcendent aesthetic. Their acts formed part of their cultural values – death saved the honour of both the martyred soldier and the emperor – it was the zeitgeist of that age, of that Japan. [3] For religious terrorist killers such as the Sicarii (סיקריקים), Roman-era Jewish assassins in what is present-day Israel, death was not important just as long as the Romans were expelled from their sacred land of Jerusalem. Studies of Unconventional War are full of other examples of extreme violence warriors, such as the Ninja, that with no honour would take the life of others at the same cultural Japan that produced the Samurai, the first code of ethics about the warfare game of humans. The Assassins of Hassan-i Saabah, the first *fida'is* of the Order "Old Man of the Mountain" are probably the inspiration of modern days Islamic terrorist as they where historically and geographically in the same territory occupied by Syria and Iran today. These are just some of many examples

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[3] An attempt to interpret the symbolism of cherry blossoms and their viewing in relation to Japanese identities made her realise how the Japanese state from the end of the nineteenth century through to the Second World War manipulated this cherished symbol of the people, especially its folk aesthetic, in order to co-opt them for their own purpose – such as waging war and imperial expansion, without people realizing it (http://www.anthropology.wisc.edu/Ohnuki-Tierney);

that show how martyrdom forms part of many cultures and religions. It could be called a certain act – suicide-terrorist – but in our view, the union of these two definitions would be wrong, particularly when we wish to associate the concept with martyrdom. Suicide is a psychological affectation triggered by a neurological disease: martyrdom is not. Humans tend naturally to try to stay alive – except the martyr volunteer, who is part of the religious dynamic. Martyrdom is, therefore, the supreme redemptive sacrifice, a true demonstration of faith through the complete surrender to others in the love of a deity. It is not difficult, therefore, to explain to a believer why the Islamic State is able to recruit young fighters from Europe and elsewhere for the war in Syria, or where they need them.

Of course war starts with a human state of mind produced by a sort of pure mental madness; terrorism is a war tool like many others. The face of evil, I suppose!

3. REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS IN THE CONFLICT

> "North Africa and the Middle East have been shaken by the Arab Spring that began with the so-called Jasmine Revolution, initially ignited by public outrage over the self-immolation of a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, on 17 December 2010 ... The roots of discontent in these countries lie in their poverty." (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2015)

Syria's location in the Fertile Crescent means it has been of great strategic interest for much of human history. It was, and still is, at the crossroads of trade routes between east and west. All of the great empires either established themselves there or transported their merchandise over its territory. Persians, Greeks, Romans, the Crusaders from northern Europe, Venetians, Ottomans, French and Russians have all fought here to establish either a right of access and passage, or the total domination of Syria. The region is also the birthplace and a sacred site for mankind's three great monotheistic religions of humanity. Even today, albeit for different reasons, this centrality makes itself felt with the presence of oil and natural gas: one-third of the world's oil and gas reserves are in the neighbouring countries and it is either moved through pipelines crossing Syria or via the Suez Canal, increasing the price of transportation at a time when the price of fossil fuels is at a historically-low level.

For this reason and others the United States keeps its Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain, from where it patrols the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, and its Sixth Fleet at Naples with the same STRIKFORNATO Commander-in-Chief based in Oeiras, Portugal, from where NATO patrols the Mediterranean and parts of the Atlantic. In addition to the military facilities under construction in Syria, Russia has an airbase at Lattakia and a naval base at Tartus. 'According to the minister, Moscow has not requested

to expand its military bases in Syria; however, the door has been left open by Damascus ... Air missions are coordinated from the Information Centre in Baghdad, established and maintained by Russia, Iran, Syria and Iraq'.[4] The United Kingdom completes this regional military balance – or imbalance with its (extra-territorial) sovereign bases in Akrotiri and Dhekelia on Cyprus. While the chaos of the Syrian conflict has many causes, it is our opinion the main ones are geographic demographic, economic and of course the referred consequences of the Arab Spring that dismantled the political *status quo*.

3.1 THE DEMOGRAPHIC EXPLOSION

For some time now demographic growth and religion have made it difficult to ensure social inclusion and secular education.[5] Islam and local cultural traditions prevent effective population control and locally implemented policies follow a strategy of population growth that has resulted in an authentic time bomb which has now exploded. The actual consequences for European security are just as the strategists and analysts have been predicting for some time now.

> "One human problem that presents itself with great acuity today is the demographic imbalance between the northern and southern shores. A north that is demographically stationary or even in recession and a south experiencing a demographic explosion and which is also feeling migratory pressure from sub-Saharan Africa, that is turning the Mediterranean into a stepping stone for access to Europe from the south, which is contributing to a significant change in the ethnic and cultural landscape of this European region. (Correia, 2010: 155)"

3.2 THE ECONOMIC IMPLOSION

The transition from a socialist to a market economy after years in which the economic and political interests of the Alawite/Ba'athist governing elites were centrally controlled has resulted in the collapse of the existing social contract. This is both because of the political erosion and because the easy money that once flowed into the region has dried up. The Syrian State failed at the moment the Syrian nation collapsed into corruption and hereditary despotism. This has been a pattern repeated across the region, particularly – but not exclusively – in Syria's old ally Egypt. 'Over the years, the rhetoric of socialism lapsed ... Businessmen became more and more involved with the party and the party became more and more involved with them ...

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[4] Sputnik News, 'Síria aceitaria hospedar novas bases militares russas', 8 October 2015, http://br.sputniknews.com/mundo/20151008/2367175/Siria-aceitaria-novas-bases-russas.html#ixzz3qQBj4IFF;

[5] In this context we need to distinguish between secular education and the religious education offered in the madrasas (المدرسة);

Major businessmen were appointed to key government posts in areas closely related to their economic interests' (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013: 471). It was a just small step from this reality to the Arab Spring. For all of the reasons mentioned already here, the Arab Spring in Syria collapsed into a completely uncontrollable chaotic conflict.

> "To the social frustrations and political exclusion are added the social changes in Muslim countries, to the economic challenges of globalisation, Iran's disturbing games, the Israeli-Syrian conflict and the superseded 'resist and obstruct' strategy promoted by the regime ... At the beginning of April 2011, popular indignation burst forth, first in the Alawite strongholds of Daraa and Lattakia, where it was met with bloodshed. There followed a long and macabre series of massacres (more than 7,000 dead at the start of 2012) as the international community watched on helplessly. Russia and Iran continued to support the Syrian regime and to oppose any international action designed to resolve the conflict. (Guidière, 2010: 176)"

3.3 The New American War Model

The US option for the different applications of soft power in International Relations has been a constant. Social networks have presented opportunities for influencing and distracting people, even in the Near East. The old hard power response of boots on the ground has been politically superseded in the wake of the disastrous intervention in Iraq. Over recent years, the art of war has become technological, cybernetic and robotic, and also the easier path to a nightmare in the Syrian case. The fact is that recent US Security and Defence Strategy may even have benefited from the new technological means at its disposal, and has led to a reshaping of the old decision-making structures; however, it is clear that, in Syria in particular and the Near East in general, it has been a complete failure. Since the end of the Cold War the US administration has buried itself in endless bureaucracy with the aim of removing power from the traditional military system and to replace it with diplomacy, a number of security agencies and government departments. It was an economic option that endangered the Security and Defence of some of its allies, maintaincularly in Europe, unable to restructure their systems to maintain their own security without NATO. The threats are currently many and entirely unpredictable: war has become perennial and there is no end in sight to the emergency security measures put in place in Europe.

3.4 The Political Vacuum Caused By The Arab Spring

In this regional political power vacuum, caused by a strategy for strengthening political alliances, economic and security capacity in the Far East, the United States has fragmented the region and weakened Europe's defences. This resulting vacuum

has been occupied by a new type of regional power: IS, a truly political-religious phenomenon formed in a state organisation model. In terms of an International Relations definition, this new format has all the prerogatives of a state, even issuing their own currency.

All the current sterile debate about what to call it is totally absurd. In philosophical terms, it is not the name of the thing that describes it but the essence in itself that matters. In juridical terms the *nomen iuris* is irrelevant to any definition; things don't change just because they have a different name. It is truly dispiriting to watch political leaders lose time making rhetorical and semantic points during public speeches just because they don't know how to react or formulate a response to this new threat that is menacing Western civilization.

3.5 THE NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Al-Nusra (جبهة النصرة لأهل الشام), al-Qaeda's Syrian branch, was initially enthusiastic about the possibility of joining up with its fellow Sunni movement, IS, to fill the void caused by the chaos and to jointly seize power in Damascus. 'Al-Baghdadi ... went further, announcing that al-Nusra and ISIS were uniting into one cross-regional jihadist enterprise to be known as the Islamic State of Iraq and *al-Sham* (ISIS), which has alternatively been translated as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, by substituting the Arabic al-Sham for its Western translation, Levante)' (Weiss & Hassan, 2015: 22). However, the struggles for power, ideology and territory resulted in a breach – surprising as that may seem –based on a territorial disagreements that were a legacy of the time of the Ba'athists, communists, pan-Arab nationalists and other Islamists who wished to return to the historical dispute of the 1916 Syke-Picot agreement signed by France and the United Kingdom. 'On 2 February 2014, global al-Qaeda formally ended its association with ISIS, issuing a public statement that: "ISIS is not a branch of the Qaidat al-Jihad [al-Qaida's official name] group, we have no organisational relationship with it, and the group is not responsible for its actions"' (Weiss and Hassan, 2015: 223). The real question to be addressed now is: are we facing a new world order with new political models, and if so, do they have a future in the region?

3.6 THE CHAOS OF WAR

Currently, the IS (الدولة الإسلامية في العراق واشلا م) and Al-Nusra are separate and both are being fought by a coalition of allies in the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), including the United States, United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Australia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco. [7] Troops loyal to the

government in Damascus, along with forces from Russia and Iran, through Hezbollah and their military advisers, are directly involved in the armed conflict, fighting IS and Al-Nusra indiscriminately while also waging war against the Syrian Revolutionary Command Council (السورية), the Western-backed Sunni coalition opposed to the Assad regime. The Syrian Kurds (ناتسدروک یافاژۆر) and the Peshmerga (پێشمهرگه), both with have links to the United States and the West, find themselves caught in the middle of the confusion as they try to defend their territory and survive, just as they have done throughout their history by forming alliances with whoever offers to help them to do so.

There is undoubtedly disorder in this conflict - a clash within Muslim civilisation for regional supremacy. It is not between the West and the East, although the West is involved through natural local alliances; Turkey, a NATO ally, has been a focus for geopolitical interest in the region as it seeks to become a regional power (Cf. Marsilli, 2015: 85 – 105).

The distribution of funds for purchasing war materiel and the logistics of a campaign vary within the confusing alliances of the many different participants. It is a reflection of local intrigue and so-called parallel diplomacy, most of which is capillary and interconnected, and generally without a consistent strategic plan. Decisions are made in the heat of the moment and vary between war tactics, guerrilla warfare and pure banditry. Islamic State and al-Qaeda, having lost the funding they initially received from international Sunni groups and nations, have seized control of oilfields and refineries, the produce they sell on the black market – incredibly, even to Turkey and Russia. Extortion is commonplace, with money raised through ransoms paid for hostages and the proceeds of human trafficking to Europe, as well by dealing in archaeological artefacts, art and also the control and taxation of the drugs trafficked, mainly heorin from Afghanistan.. The financial pragmatism of nations here demonstrates their betrayal and disregard for either international law or international agreements.

3.7 COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA

"New information technologies and social networks are used to both recruit fighters in the West and indoctrinate believers in an effective, modern and efficient manner by use of the Internet. The message, because it establishes an identity and guarantees action, generates the possibility of being the most rational choice possible in a very real way. If we add the media propaganda to this, particularly on the Internet, participation in this movement (whether al-Qaeda or Daesh) is open to all with the globalisation of collective action. (Duarte, 2015: 115)

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[7] Canada withdrew from the coalition following the victory of Justin Trudeu's Liberal Party in the elections of 19 October;

International IS fighters are extremely technologically competent, well prepared and capable in spreading their jihadi message to the world and at the same time, in manipulating the population under its territorial control. 'They cut the Internet, but we didn't even want it anymore', said Rudeina, 17, who fled the Islamic State for a refugee camp in Jordan. 'If we looked at the Internet, we would see people living in the outside world. That made us sad. Seeing the outside world was just another sorrow' [8]. Through their international network of collaborators and agents, IS has demonstrated its skill and ability at the highest operational level and has managed to upset the superpowers that were thought best prepared against cyber-attacks.

> "Ferizi is accused of passing the data to Islamic State member Junaid Hussain, a British citizen who in August posted links on Twitter to the names, email addresses, passwords, locations and phone numbers of 1,351 US military and other government personnel. He included a warning that Islamic State 'soldiers … will strike at your necks in your own lands!'" [9]

They navigate the deep and the dark net with ease, unmonitored and free from constraint. 'They're a bunch of killers with good social media' said President Obama at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, last year. We fully agree with the president's a very scathing remark.

3.8 A New Reality

Daily life in the areas liberated from the Assad regime that now form part of this peculiar state is carried out in an atmosphere of terror both within and beyond its boundaries. Information and disinformation techniques are applied with Islamic rigour – apparently making sense for some youths tired of being surrounded by corruption and living a life with no future or meaning. This youth has a relatively basic schooling, but it can also be higher especially in Western countries. It is this new cultural identity that appeals to them: they feel they belong to something new and that has power over the powerful. This is how all truly international revolutions start.

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[8] K. Sullivan, 'Life in the Islamic State', The Washington Post, (1 October 2015), http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/life-in-the-islamic-state/2015/10/01/women/;

[9] E. Nakashima, 'US accuses hacker of stealing military members' data and giving it to ISIS', The Washington Post, (16 October 2015), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-a-first-us-charges-a-suspect-with--terrorism-and-hacking/2015/10/15/463447a8-738b-11e5-8248-98e0f5a2e830_story.html;

> The Islamic State uses its brutal and often arbitrary justice system to control the millions of people who live in its territory. By publicly beheading and crucifying people suspected even of disloyalty, the militants have created a culture of horror and fear that has made it virtually impossible for people to rise up against them ... people ruled by the Islamic State are subject to the extreme laws of police and judges who are mostly foreigners from Tunisia, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Russia, France, Britain and other countries ... militants make legal judgements based on an extreme interpretation of Sharia law'.[10]

Sharia (شريعة) law and how it is practiced within the territories controlled by Islamic State is merely, in Western terms, a Court of summary execution sentences without appeal or contradictory norms.

We must examine and learn from the historical processes in order recognise similarities with the present. As George Santayana once said: 'those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it' (2005). Right now history is being made in Syria as possible future political models are being moulded for a world that appears unattractive and backwards to Western civilisation. Apparently we have not learned much from history.

4. AND NOW EUROPE?

> "Ye shall be summoned to fight against a people given to vehement war, then shall ye fight, or they shall submit. Then if ye show obedience, Allah will grant you a goodly reward, but if ye turn back as ye did before, He will punish you with a grievous penalty." [11]

Within this international realignment, Syria has become the setting for the great battle between superpowers. As Stephen Walt notes in his recent article in Foreign Policy on the day-to-day struggle of the protagonists for leadership in finding a resolution for the conflict, Syria serves as an indirect measure and assessment of the leaders' strategies by assessing their forces and political abilities [12]. The dispute being analysed is restricted to the Russian and US presidents, it is truly symptomatic. Other theories, it is in our opinion very consistent, explain how Russia – because it cannot confront Europe and NATO on its own territory – has gone disproportionately further into the conflict in Syria to minimise the risks it took in Ukraine:

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[10] K. Sullivan, 'Life in the Islamic State', The Washington Post, (1 October 2015), http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/life-in-the-islamic-state/2015/10/01/women/;

[11] Quran, Chapter 48 Verse 16, http://www.wright-house.com/religions/islam/Quran/48-victory.php;

[12] S. M. Walt, 'Who is a better strategist: Obama or Putin?', Foreign Policy, (9 October 2015), http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/09/who-is-a-better-strategist-obama-or-putin/;

"Geographic preoccupations are apparent now in Russia's intervention in Syria on behalf of Putin's ally, Bashar al-Assad. The Russians have a naval base in the port city of Tartus on Syria's Mediterranean coast and if Assad falls, Syria's new rulers may kick them out. Putin clearly believes it is worth the risk of confronting NATO members in another geographic sphere". (Marshall, 2015: 304)

And what is the role of the European Union? How can it defend itself from this international threat and from the uncontrolled escalation of violence caused by tensions in the Middle East? How do we foresee the response to the present crisis? Those are the big question posed in this article.

A strategy is required, 'as terrorist attacks seem very strategic, the response should be too' (Miliband, 2015: 1–8). The reality, however, is that Europe is not defending itself; it is merely surviving for now, attempting to minimise the consequences of a refugee crisis on a scale unknown since the Second World War and trying to escape from terrorist massacres.

4.1 NEGLIGENT POLICY MAKING

There are those who believe European policy-makers have received detailed information about the imminent and unprecedented phenomenon of boat people arriving from the other side of the Mediterranean. Information and analyses have arrived in Brussels without anyone paying it the slightest attention. Immobility has been the only response from a fragmented decision-making process. The EU is blocked: it is divided and afraid, its internal stability is at risk, caused by a growing wave of xenophobia and social tensions encouraged by extreme-right political groups. Mosques and refugee centres are attacked and burned, while some right-wing politicians in positions of power build barricades of barbed wire around its country borders. The panic is general and uncontrolled. Economic stagnation has aggravated the perception of risk, while real, must be considered politically with a view to taking resolute action against the more pressing threats. The EU has not moved: it is an inert and bureaucratic groupor bloc of nations.

It is said lightly in the press, with no substantial prove, that 9,000 IS fighters are among the refugees nonsense! And yet no-one has seriously examined the impact millions of Muslim refugees will have on European culture. Serious questions remain to be answered: is cross-border terrorism being controlled, and in what way and by what method is this being assessed in the current situation? While writing this article, the British government announced the Russian passenger jet that crashed in the Sinai after exploding in mid-air while en route from Sharm el-Sheikh to St Petersburg had been brought down by IS. Flights from Ireland and the UK to Sharm el-Sheikh were cancelled and the Egyptian president, General Ab-

del Fattah el-Sisi, during a quick visit to London to meet the British Prime Minister David Cameron, asked for understanding and assistance during this difficult time in the Middle East. According to these same reports, the 20,000 British tourists in the country were to be brought home on Royal Navy warships and in RAF military transports. Then, on 13 November the worst massacre the city has experienced in living memory took place in Paris. A total of 130 people died and the entire country was placed in a state of emergency: borders were closed, the Schengen agreement suspended and a curfew was put in place in some cities. At least 1,500 troops helped the French police as the IS claimed yet another attack, this time taking place in a hotel in Bamako, capital of the former French of Mali. A panicked President Fran-çoise Hollande then invoked the 42nd article of the EU treaty for mutual defence in case of aggression against a Member State. His declaration was very clear to us and definitly we agree with Stephen Walt: 'ISIS is a Revolutionary State' (2015: 42 – 47). France has awarded IS the legal status of a State in International Law and Europe is formally at war with it – a war declared by France at a moment of extreme pressure. The chaos has spread to the European territory and its politics. Europe does not understand well the new trends of ideological salafism (سلفي) and wa-hhabism (وهابية) Islam, specially its religious and social causes. This war is very ideological and cannot be fought only with fire power. It will not work.

5. CONCLUSION

> "Muhammad is the apostle of Allah, and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers but compassionate among each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves, seeking grace from Allah and His good pleasure." [13]

That there is panic in international political circles unaccustomed to such severe challenges is only to be expected. It is not yet known whether this is a moment of conjuncture or if it is the beginning of a new world order similar to that began with Bolshevism, no-one at that time believed would succeed – it would be short-lived, they said, yet it became a historical fact that affected the world for more than 70 years.
There is a dissonant harmony between civilisations in the common history of Islam and the West, and particularly in the Mediterranean basin. The borders

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[13] *Quran*, Chapter 48 Verse 29, http://www.wright-house.com/religions/islam/Quran/48-victory.php;

separating Europe from the countries of the south are permeated with the geo--strategic conflicts left over from the Cold War. Europe is secular while the Near East has experienced a rapid and violent religious radicalisation. Uncontrolled Islamic emigration takes place with people fleeing wars and penetrating to the very heart of the European continent along the ancient routes followed by the armies of the Ottoman Empire as they drove towards Vienna (Walker, 2006). The United States and Russia, neither of which has been directly affected by the wave of clandestine immigration on Europe's southern flank, have formed alliances on the ground that has only served to exacerbate the conflict. IS seized the moment to declare a global jihad: Europe's weakness was its real opportunity. The *acquis communitaire*, or the EU community under construction, is based politically on concepts such as human rights and democracy. Unlike its American ally, Europe is secular and without any identifying Christian cultural symbols. No-one knows for sure whether the long-term consequences of such large, uncontrolled and insecure processes will eventually lead to the collapse of the formed identity, the ethos, of the European project.

NATO, through its Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, speaking during a visit to Lisbon as part of the 2015 Trident Juncture military exercise, spoke of the need to be more vigilant in the Mediterranean in the wake of both the Syrian conflict and the confusion of the failed Libyan State post-Gaddafi. It is the borders of the EU and NATO that are being menaced, he said; meanwhile, on the other side of the Mediterranean, Turkey and Russian threaten each other over the shooting down of a Russian war plane.

Disagreements within the EU and over S&D continue as the continent hangs on under the protective umbrella of a post-Cold War NATO that remains completely unprepared for the new realities of global wars, that of various intensities, but of a permanent nature.

Overall there is no 'strategy of knowledge'[14].

The final task of this new chapter on European security rests with the political decision-makers, and that's exactly what we're waiting for: leadership in the Europe we want to build.

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[14] A. Moreira, 'A estratégia do saber', Diário de Notícias, (9 December 2015), http://www.dn.pt/opiniao/opiniao--dn/adriano-moreira/a-estrategia-do-saber-4920952.html;

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