PARADIGMATIC SHIFTS IN STRATEGIC RIVALRIES

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Abstract: *Until recently, since the end of the Cold War, we never witnessed such an amplitude. Strategic rivalries manifested especially at regional level after the Cold War period, culminated with the Ukrainian crisis, a peak in the last manifestation of international rivalry, basically due to the peripheral actors involved, the Ukrainian crisis demonstrated that international interstate rivalry is still playing.*

This paper proposes a brief analysis of several regional strategic rivalries and advances the existence of a new type of international strategic rivalry, a far more complex than the interstate type, rivalry which became more and more visible on the international scene with the emergence of ISIS, initially a declared fundamentalist terrorist organization that during last two years became a more complex entity.

Keywords: *strategic rivalries, extended/multistate strategic rivalry, ISIS, international law, national law, terrorism*

1. Introduction

The emergence and development of conflicts/crisis at regional or international level was generally approached as being the internal problem of a State, in its relations with neighboring States. Therefore, the conflict or crisis was perceived as having strict local causes (social, cultural, ethnic or religious ones, causes that generally are related to historical memory of parties engaged in conflict), Thus, in majority of studies approaching conflict, there is less, if not at all present, the influence of strategic rivalry among the States whose sphere of influence, as an example, there is situated the territorial development of certain conflicts. Or, in a very

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particular case of ISIS, there is no state involved as leadership and chain of command, the operations of the ISIS fighters are mainly conducted in a territory that belong to different officially recognized states (Syria and Iraq) with some extent in the Lybia and Nigeria which are already well known *caliphate colonies*[2] That is why, in this article, we briefly approach a series of conceptual traits regarding strategic rivalries, relating present work with previous one in the field of international conflicts.

2. Terminological aspects: inter-state strategic rivalry and extended/multistate strategic rivalry

Relating own previous research in the field of ethnic and religious conflicts with the strategic rivalry theories we can note the fact that a particular type of strategic rivalry is atypical if we refer to the standard theories.

Setting as referential definition in our study the one promoted by William Thompson, according to which strategic rivals must mutually perceive each other as:

- competitors[3];
- source of actual or future threats that have the potential to get a military dimension[4];
- enemies[5],

we can take advantage by the fact that such definition allow us to identify strategic rivals through foreign policy historic analysis in order to determine critical moments when two states or two entities on the international scene perceived each other according to the above mentioned defining criteria.

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[2] Mirco Keilberth, Juliane von Mittelstaedt and Christoph Reuter, *The 'Caliphate's' Colonies: Islamic State's Gradual Expansion into North Africa,* in Der Spiegel No. 47/2014, 17 nov. 2014, at http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-expanding-into-north-africa-a-1003525.html

[3] William Thompson, *Principal rivalries*, Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 39, nr 2, iunie 1995, pp.195-223

[4] *Ibidem*

[5] William Thompson, *Identifying rivals and rivalries in world politics*, International Studies Quarterly, vol 45, nr.4 , 2001, p. 560

Unlike interstate type of strategic rivalry, that is supposed to engage at least two states as parties involved, the *extended/multistate strategic rivalry* is constructed on the identity criterion, the basic rivalry criterion being the ethnic or religious one.

In our case build around the ISIS evolution, the religion provides us a significant example, because since the beginning of the XXIst century it could be observed the trend to manifest the strategic rivalries founded on religious criteria with strong and clear signals even before 9/11 2001, through the international promoting and diverse political and academic debates around works such as Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, works that, in fact, develop some older ideas and creating the perception that are used to the construction of a state foreign policy at the regional or global level. Thus, even if the War against Terror desired to be, at declarative level at least, a fight against radical islamist elements, through generalization and aggressive dissemination on media channels, it was perceived, especially in the Muslim world, as a war conducted by the Christian West against Islam. This kind of perception helped form a trend, not mandatory located at the Muslim world level, but in the Western world, trend that promotes on the one hand the defence of material and spiritual Islamic values against a West that is perceived as satanic and invading, and on the other hand promotes the attacking of the Western world and increasing influence of Muslim religion in the Western Christian fief.

In this created context, we can consider that exist the conditions for the emergence and manifestation of a particular type of strategic rivalry that are manifesting inside an *extended* geographical region, presenting a non-state/multi-state trait, a strategic rivalry between the values of the West and those of Islam.

Complex character of this type of strategic rivalry is emerging from the similar complex nature of the involved parties. In this religious founded rivalry a series of fundamentalist-radical terrorist organizations and movements conduct their activities on the territory of several states (figure no.1) with followers from more than several states, states that are located on different continents: Asia, Africa, Europe etc (figure no. 2 and figure no.3).

Figure no. 1. Areas controlled by the Islamic State (ISIS) on the territories of two independent states: Syria and Iraq[6]

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[6]www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21614226-why-and-how-westerners-go-fight-syria-and-iraq-it-aint-half-hot-here-mum?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/ed/itaintshalfhotheremum
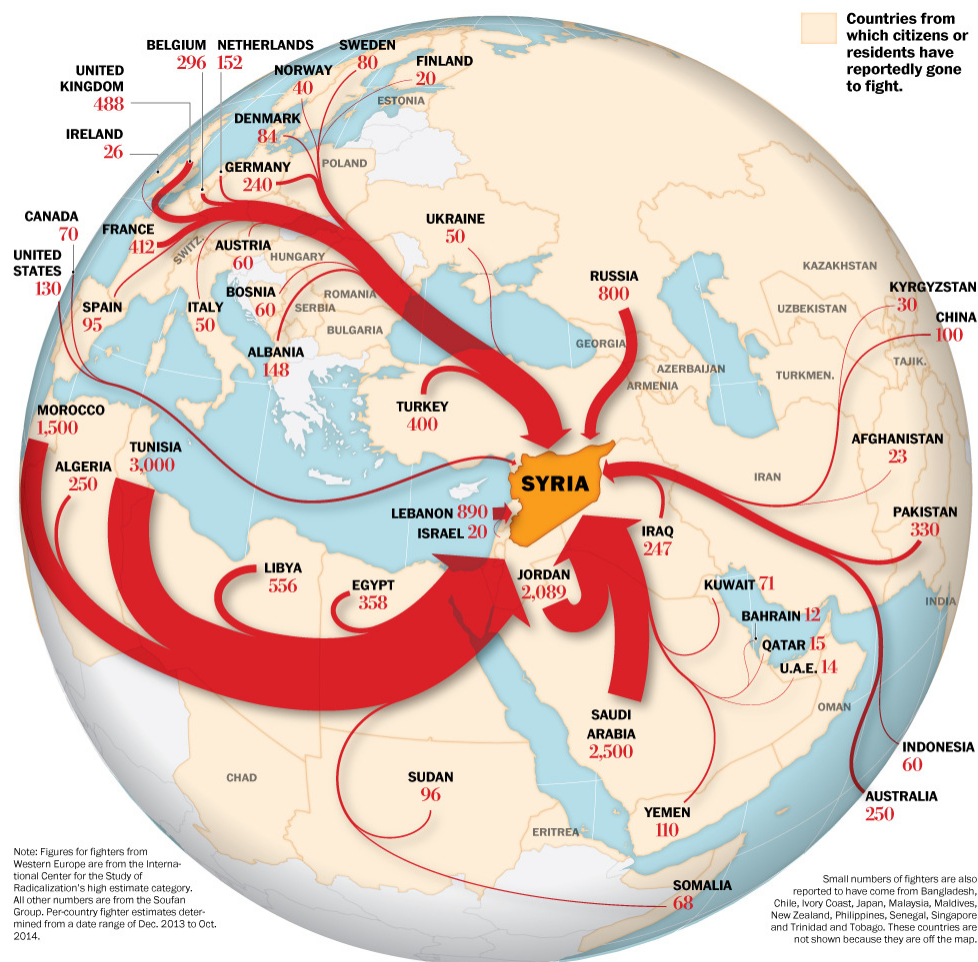
Figure no. 2. Situation on October 2014 of countries of origins for foreign fighters in Syria[7]

[7]www.washingtonpost.com/world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2014/10/11/3d2549fa-5195-11e4-8c24-487e92bc997b_graphic.html

Foreign fighters flow to Syria

The number of foreign fighters joining the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq now exceeds 20,000, up from the 15,000 estimated last October. According to ICSR, nearly a fifth of the fighters come from Western European nations.
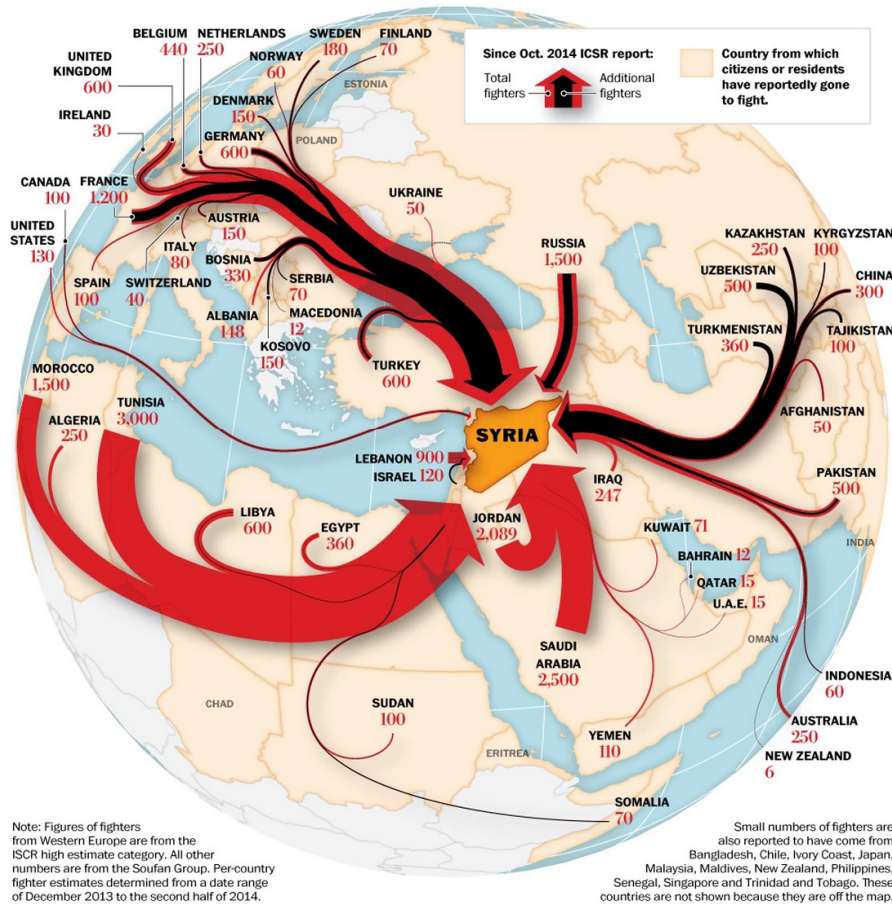
Figure no. 3. Situation on January 2015 of countries of origins for foreign fighters in Syria[8]

Unlike inter-state strategic rivalry, in the case of Islamic State we deal in our analysis with citizens from a multitude of states, many of them from

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[8]http://knowmore.washingtonpost.com/2015/01/27/more-than-20000-foreign-fighters-have-joined-isis/

European states, which fight under the flag of a former organization (ISIS) which today is called by its leadership a state, The Islamic State, declaratively a global caliphate[9]. Thus, we can affirm that the fighters are bond together by the Muslim cultural, religious identity banner and islamist political militancy.

Therefore, the analysis of the parties engaged in the conflict proves a very difficult one, the more so, usually to the religious affinities are attached criteria of geographic proximity, as it is the case in regions like North Africa, Near and Middle East, Central and Eastern Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia).

3. Extended/multistate strategic rivalry and the challenges rising in the field of international law

The emergence of Islamic State poses a series of challenges not only in the fields like study of conflict or terrorism. It also challenges the very foundation of international law as we know it.

Since the declaration of Islamic State on 29 June 2014 as a worldwide caliphate[10], and the discovery of a series of internal documents of Islamic State leadership[11] and taking also into consideration the reaction of international community regarding Human Rights abuses[12] committed by the Islamic State, we can conclude that are witnessing a new sensitive situation in the international legal field.

As we know, the western constitutional doctrine formulated a number of three constitutive elements of the state, elements characterized by the organic unity. Existence of these three elements is affirmed in documents as *The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States,* signed in 1933 during the seventh International Conference of American States,

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[9] Mirco Keilberth, Juliane von Mittelstaedt and Christoph Reuter, *Op. cit*, at www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-expanding-into-north-africa-a-1003525.html

[10] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-declares-new-islamic-state-in-middle-east-with-abu-bakr-albaghdadi-as-emir-removing-iraq-and-syria-from-its-name-9571374.html

[11] www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274
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[12] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14984&Lang-ID=E

which codified the declarative theory of statehood as part of customary international law. The text of the Convention stipulated that the state as a subject of international law must meet a series of conditions regarding its content and structure[13]:

- permanent population;
- a determined territory;
- a government;
- the capacity of entering relationships with other states

Also, as subject of international law are recognized the national liberation movements that meet several criteria[14] such as:

- representative leadership with the capacity of effective authority on a territory;
- existence of an liberated territory;
- organized armed forces with the potential to lead to an end the liberation struggle.

Since the discovery of internal secret documents in the house of a deceased lider of ISIS[15], Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khlifawi (former intelligence officer in Saddam's Iraq Army, best known as Haji Bakr), on January 2014 it was proven that from 2010 a strategy for the Islamic State and its internal structures was built (figure no.4).

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[13] Stelian Scăunaş, *Drept internaţional public,* Editura C. H. Beck, Bucureşti, 2002, p. 83

[14] Raluca-Miga Beşteliu, Drept internaţional. Introducerea în dreptul internaţional public, Editura ALL Beck, Bucureşti, 1998, pp. 133-136

[15] www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html
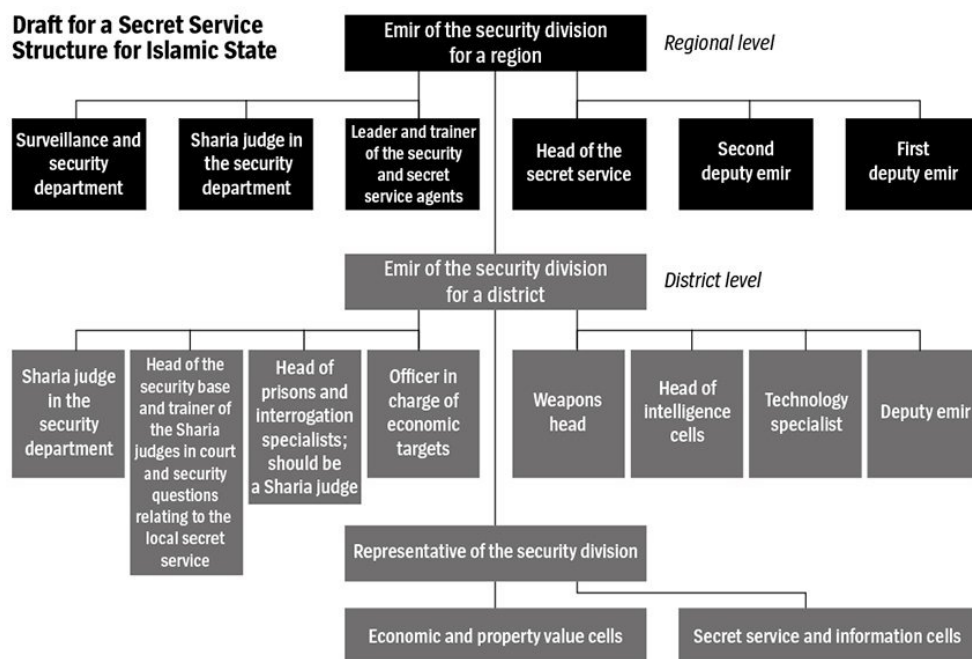
Draft for a Secret Service Structure for Islamic State

Emir of the security division for a region — *Regional level*

Surveillance and security department

Sharia judge in the security department

Leader and trainer of the security and secret service agents

Head of the secret service

Second deputy emir

First deputy emir

Emir of the security division for a district — *District level*

Sharia judge in the security department

Head of the security base and trainer of the Sharia judges in court and security questions relating to the local secret service

Head of prisons and interrogation specialists; should be a Sharia judge

Officer in charge of economic targets

Weapons head

Head of intelligence cells

Technology specialist

Deputy emir

Representative of the security division

Economic and property value cells

Secret service and information cells

Figure no. 4. An English language draft rendered after Haji Bakr hand notes[16]

Since those documents indicates the existence of a central hierarchical structure, we can conclude that premises could exist for a strategy which objectives could be the recognize of Islamic state as a national liberation movement.

Conclusions

As a conclusion we could affirm that the actual state of the international scene is in a continuing transformation, the new actors that emerged, their nature and actions, lead to approach international relations from a new, out of the box perspective, as the traditional theories seemed to prove their limits.

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[16] www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html

The emergence of new non-state actors, that challenges the contemporaneous world order, by creating a new type of strategic rivalry, must urge to a focus on international legal norms, updating them to keep up with reality from the international scene. Certainly, those signals regarding Human Rights abuses have roots on the reality ground. In this case haw can international community intervene and sanction those committing these abuses? In order to not be caught in the corner by the sometimes cruel reality, the totality of international law subjects, with the great benefit of the states and organizations, must find conceptual unity and interest convergence, so that updated international legal norms to apprise any future manifestation that harm human life.

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