Terrorism, Orientation and Substantial Directions

Islamic Terrorism in the Syrian Context

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Abstract

Terrorism and its causes have been widely discussed in academic literature, and especially the issue of Islamic terrorism has gained broad popular, academic and political interest. However, theories of terrorism do not seem to engage with the orientated aspect of terrorism and how terrorism can be ideologically orientated. The dominant understanding of terrorism in scholarly works argues that terrorism cannot be created by the state; rather it can be manipulated or triggered by it. Especially in the wake of the Arab Spring those theories do not engage in studying the interplay of state strategy and ideology in the making of the phenomenon while at the same relegating the effect of humiliation and colonialist heritage and the industrialization of the body terrorist. This paper brings a new theoretical understanding about the causes of terrorism in the Middle Eastern context in the wake of the Arab Spring. This understanding draws from the theory of ideology by Louis Althusser, and the concept of orientation by Sara Ahmed in order to reach a better diagnosis of the phenomenon. Examining journalistic works written about terrorism in this context, this thesis identifies the processes of ideological orientation to produce terrorism.

1. Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my friend and my guide Bassel Khartabil who was executed in the cellars of the security branches of Syria in 2015. He was and still is my inspiration for the continuous fight against tyranny, domination, and the muffling of voices. I want to tell him that I will never forget.

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2. Foreword

Terrorism is such a spiky topic because it lies at the heart of the political system of every state and system of power and because it as a concept explicates a boundary between legitimacy of use of force by some actors and the illegitimacy of others: states as rational actors are allowed to use violent means in the name of sovereignty, while non-state actors usage of violence is often defined as terrorism. Although states are as capable, and indeed are, to terrorize people and use violence against them, studies around the topic are mostly inclined to treat the non-state violence, i.e. terrorism.

In addition to that, terrorism has been constructed in different phases of history to fit into the narratives and discourse which fit certain systems of power. We hear how states use the rhetoric of fighting and combating terrorism, while they themselves are committing the worst violent acts. They also discursively construct terrorism in a certain way which relegates the different conjunctures of the genesis of terrorism into the perspective that would fit the discourses of power. Take for example al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization which combines among its members criminality, accumulated grievance, a network of international funding, and the history of its foundation as a political and military tool for systems of power. All these conjunctures of factors are transformed into a unified designation; an Islamic terror organization, but not an organization of aggrieved people, not an organization of international funding and money laundry, not an organization originally founded by states to fight other states. All we hear about al-Qaeda is the terrorist Islamic organization.

In this the thesis laying between the hands of the reader, I am aware of all these problematics of the issue of terrorism and acknowledge that states can qualify to be among the most prominent terrorist organization in the way they subjugate, dispossess, frustrate, wholesale kill, and most importantly do not stand accountable for the atrocity they commit. However, and due to the unfathomable and extended dimension of the topic, the thesis uses selected theoretical literature which focuses on studying the phenomenon from non-state terrorism spectacles, to investigate if these theories are adequate to explain the causes of the Islamic terrorism in the Middle Eastern context.
3. Introduction

In the wake of the Arab Spring and the ongoing conflict in Syria, over five hundred thousand were killed as by 2016 mostly by the Syrian regimes and its allies. Half of the population was dispersed, and thousands of refugees reaching Europe causing what has become known for ‘the worst migration crisis in the modern history’ were drowned in the Mediterranean (Human Rights Watch, 2017; UN, 2016). In addition, tens of thousands where being slaughtered in the prisons and detention centers, among which there were children and pregnant women (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Many of those detainees and arrestees were accused of terrorism or supporting terrorist activities, and they were trialed in the Syrian Court of Terror which was established shortly after the outbreak of the civil movement (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

I was also arrested in early 2012 for my involvement in the demonstrations and the civil disobedience activities. Among the early accusations which were directed against me was the accusation of being a terrorist, and I remember the guard once addressing me and the people stuffed and suffocated inside the cell: “You are twenty millions terrorists you m…” and he used the F word. I was lucky enough and only luck and maybe my mother’s ‘prayers’ set me free, but one of my best friends Bassel Khartabil, who the Foreign Policy described to be one among the “Top 100 Global Thinkers” (Foreign Policy, 2012) was executed for many accusations among which terrorism, espionage, and treason.

All the atrocities did not help to interfere to stop the massacre. Rather, the Syrian regime and other international actors emerged as partners in fighting the Islamic terrorism. In this turmoil of political asymmetry and inconsistency, succeeding in gathering the forces to fight the Islamic Terrorism of ISIS, but not the ‘causes’ of its emergence and or its funders, one cannot but to ask what has Islamic Terrorism achieved for the Syria people? When the legitimate causes for political change were substituted with war on terror, one cannot but to suppose that terrorism has a function in this context (Al-Qassem, 2018).

But where are the civilian’s demands in this context? When is the Syrian military regime going to stand accountable for the killing of over five hundred thousand civilians, the destruction of most of the cities and sub-cities of Syria, the torture and execution of peaceful activist, and so on and so forth? And most importantly, how have terrorism and Islamic groups formed despite
the civil nature of the movement? This social movement for democratic change was hijacked by the scene of terror that these organizations committed in the name of Jihad and in the name of the revolution, and that was what the Syrian regime exactly wanted and worked for to block any political settlement that would entail its demise.

All the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime and its allies, the international asymmetry in addressing the catastrophe, the death of the migrants in the Mediterranean escaping the hell they are facing every day, the violations of human rights among ethnic minorities, the destruction of a whole country and so on and so forth are of course very important to study. However, the engendered terrorism emerging after the civil forces in Syria refused to retreat or to withdraw their demands for change is also of high importance to be studied. Its importance lays in the supposition that because of terrorism, consolidating the Syrian regime and repeating another circle of colonization and ideological domination in the current course of events in Syria was made possible.

Looking at the research and literature on terrorism I realized how extensive the studies conducted on the topic are. They trace the typology of the phenomenon and how it has taken different forms and figurations due to successive historical periods and has been used to achieve certain gains and to achieve publicity and horror to realize demands by force. Even the extensive study of discourses on terrorism shows how politics uses and benefits from the image of terror to gather the public around the politics of the elites and to pass certain ideological schemes. Moreover, terrorism has also been studied from the lens of effect and what damages it causes on the societies hit by terrorism like psychological, political and economic effects. There is also a huge literature on the causes of terrorism which tries to trace the root causes for resorting to the use of violence among certain societies.

However, passionate about the effects of the engendering terrorism in the Syrian revolution, in the way it elucidated the demands of the civil forces for change and justice, and in the way it has turned the country into another colonial and imperialist project, I have not found any satisfactory answer in the existing literature about the causes of the emergence of this wave of terrorism.
In other words, what seems to be understudied in this body of literature is not how powers and their agents construct the terror to achieve political consensus by constructing the others violence as illegitimate violence, or violence with unjust means to achieve unjust ends, to borrow from Benjamin Walter, but how power itself creates terrorism in order to reach that construct. In other words, ideology (which is the relations of power) does not only reproduce the image but it reproduces the phenomenon itself.

3.1. Problem Statement and Research Question

After 9/11 most of the terrorist attacks we hear about in mass media nowadays follow the designation terrorist when they become conducted by individuals who claim to identify themselves as Muslims. Constructed discursively in this way, in the media terrorism has been regularly associated with Islam. Furthermore, in contemporary academic research, especially after 9/11, the focus seems to be more directed towards studying what has become called for the “Fourth Wave” of terrorism, which claims that the most frequent forms in current times terrorism is Islamic. Any attack against civilians must be a terrorist act if it is committed by Muslim bodies while if the same type of violence is committed by non-Muslims, especially in western contexts, these attacks do not qualify for terrorism, nor the predators qualify for terrorists. The case of Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas in 2017 for example, when the predator killed over 50 people was not called terrorist attack (Hernandez, et.al, 2017), nor the attack on the North Thurston high school in Lacey in 2105 was called for a terrorist attack either. In comparison, Stockholm attack in 2017 when a truck driver hit civilians and caused the death of five people and the injury of tens was called for terrorist attack (Aftonbladet, 2017). Also the labeling of the knife attack in the Finnish city of Turku that caused the death of two people was a terror attack (Lindström and Rapp, 2017). In other words, it has become a taken for granted ‘fact’ when media spreads news about any terrorist attack, that the predator must be a migrant and/or of migrant background specifically with Islamic background.

In any case, critical discourse studies show how this construct Muslim/terrorist is an ideological tool to exploit the phenomenon of terrorism to pass certain agendas of gathering the public around the politicians or what Noam Chomsky argues for “Manufacturing Consent” in the
sense that mass-media is driven by the interest of the elites to create a consent in the public about
certain events (Herman and Chomsky, 2008). In other words, ideologies manufacture the image
of terrorism to use it for other purposes of passing economic, military and hegemonic agendas of
domination (Herman and O’Sullivan, 1989).

In addition for being used as a construct serving ideologies, terrorism can be seen as
caused by ideologies. I do not mean with ideology here the religious or political ideology; I mean
by ideology the system of power. Yet, theories around terrorism do not see ideology as a creator
of terrorism. Most studies around terrorism do not show how ideological regimes use terrorism
as back-up plan to oppose social demands. Although ontological studies mention how states have
used announced terrorist strategies to suppress oppositional demands two centuries ago in the
case of France and regime de terreur (Hoffman, 2006, Neumann, 2016), they do not engage with
how modern states use unannounced terrorist strategies as a political strategy (Butchard, 2017).

In the realm of research about terrorism which focuses on the power of discourses in
exploiting the phenomenon of terrorism for political ends and the on the social construction and
discourses about terrorism, the causality of terrorism is being less pondered. To say it in different
words, the ideological usage of terrorism has been extensively studied in works of Noam
Chomsky who questions how the perceptions of power and terror are understood between the
largest power and their alleged enemies, and how powers, like the U.S., use this unclear
perception to maintain its interests and positioning (Chomsky, 2003). It has also been studied by
Naomi Klein who sees in terrorism the perfect discursive tool to pass neoliberal and corporative
capitalism (Klein, 2007), and also Herman and O’Sullivan who see in the discourses of terrorism
a tool that would be sustained to maintain hegemonic position (Herman and O’Sullivan, 1989).

Even though these theories discuss how power and ideology are intertwined with the
discursive construction and the usage of the phenomena, they do not engage with issues of
ideology and power in explaining the causes of it. This line of research and theorization on
terrorism has given less attention to the materiality of ideology and how ideology works to create
the conditions for reconstructing the construct. In this regard, the thesis will not focus on how the
term ‘terrorism’ is ideologically constructed and deployed to describe certain forms of violence
but not the others, which has been the topic of research for many, but rather on the role of
ideology in creating the conditions and preconditions for constructing this construct. In this thesis the pre-conditions and conditions for this construction are identified in the material conditions but also in the realm of public and academic discussions. To say it more explicitly, the thesis sees that the existing literature on terrorism does not focus on the effect of systems of power on the subject and thereby orientates our understanding of the phenomenon through delimiting the object and scope of analysis. This delimitation cannot be seen as independent of or separate from the ideological processes.

The form of terrorism that was engendered in the wake of the “historical period” of the Middle Eastern revolutions and the Arab Spring (Danahar, 2013) which broke out in late 2010 in MENA countries cannot be explained by the previous literature. In this thesis, I argue that neither the theories that engage in analyzing the role of ideology in constructing the image of terrorism, nor the existing literature on the material causes of terrorism can give an adequate explanation to the engendering terrorism in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring. The existing literature seems not to provide a solid theoretical explanation about the connection between ideology and the causes of terrorism.

Rather than focusing on the ideological construction of the image of terrorism, I will argue that the construction of the materialist pre-conditions of terrorism, in the context of Syria, is also affected and formed by ideological processes, a feature which has not been dwelled upon by previous literature. This thesis will focus on analyzing the role of the state as an instrument of ideology, as discussed by Luis Althusser (2008), and its role in creating the conditions and pre-conditions for terrorism in the Syrian context. The thesis sees in the current literature that tackles the causes of terrorism as not engaging with the materialist role of the state in reproducing the ideological construct of Islamic terrorism. Therefore, the thesis also tries to deepen the understanding of the role of the state in the equation of terrorism.

Social movements for change in Syria broke out in early 2011 following the train of movements in other Middle Eastern countries. With the course of time, the image of this movement became connected with imageries of violence and terrorism. Suspicion about it the for being violent or religion-based grew bigger especially when the scene of this movement was converted into a scene of terrorism with the rise of ISIS and other religious groups (or terrorist
groups), a scene which did not only have its consequences on the local level of Middle Eastern countries, but also on Western countries.

As we can read in research on the causes of terrorism, scholars argue that terrorism cannot is not created or designed by the state, and that if a state wants to manipulate and, trigger, or sustain terrorism, the state relies on the pre-existing social conditions to trigger terrorism (Bjorgo, 2005). To a certain extent that can be seen true. Yet, if we compare first-hand experiences from that region provided by journalists who have visited the site, we see a discrepancy between what theories around terrorism consider as cause and what explanation journalistic descriptions provide us with for the emergence and proliferation of terrorism in the Middle Eastern context. In other words, the work of these journalists allude to that states and powers are not only contributing to the sustaining or triggering of terrorism as Bjorgo argues (2005: 257-260), they are also creating the very pre-conditions for the emergence of terrorism. in the thesis I will raise some incidents in the context of Syria where this creation of the pre-conditions is visible such as the state’s agenda of radicalizing individuals in the prisons on to be then released and handed military and strategic plans of creating terror and terrorist imagery which I will discuss in later sections.

Furthermore, the theories that inform politics about terrorism, in addition to the critical theories about the causes of terrorism, seem to overshadow the materialist functionality of terrorism in opposing demands for political change, in addition to the relationality of terrorism in reproducing other circles of dispossession and domination. Those theories, whether intentionally or not, seem by the way they dismiss the power of ideology in orientating terrorism, and the way they situate the study of terrorism outside the realm of the state, to be reproducing ideology. Even in the way they conceal or disclose facts about the causes of terrorism. Therefore, this study will start by posing the following question: how can theory help us to understand the causes of Islamic terrorism and its function in times of the political change in the MENA region?

The problem that we have before us lies at the heart of the politics of our time in the sense that terrorism is the embodiment of the corruption and asymmetry of our modern time politics. This can be noticed when we see how the international system does not provide a concrete definition of what terrorism is but rather defines it the way it fits powers. In addition to
that, and due to the concentration of terrorism in ‘post-colonial’ states, powers present themselves as irresponsible for this phenomenon. Take for example the Middle Eastern countries and the recent Arab Spring. These countries are considered as decolonized countries and the terrorism emerging from these countries is positioned as a product of the culture of those countries which does not fit into the ideal of the modern system, especially when those countries encounter modernity (Neumann, 2016). In other words, the cause of the emergence of terrorism in the Middle Eastern countries is ascribed to the incompatibility of those societies with the modernity ideals (Neumann, 2016 Wright, 2006). Many studies around terrorism, on the other hand, are mostly engaged in showing how those cultures inherently comprise medieval understanding of how societal problems should be solved, i.e. by resorting to violence and cultural norms like Jihad to solve their problems.

Moreover, even the critical theory about terrorism seems to feed the ideological framework when it distances itself from the role of ideology in orientating the materialist conditions for the emergence of the phenomenon. The incapacity of even critical theories to address this issue, explicated the dogmatic nature of discussion around terrorism, which delimits the ways in which we can understand and discuss it. Although the work of Tore Bjorgo (2005) tries to give a comprehensive account of the root causes of terrorism in the Middle East and in other places, where the socio-economic relations appear to be the most crucial factors behind this phenomenon, it does not mention how the ideological structures create the environment for the purpose of reproducing these same socio-economic relations such as systematic impoverishment, and organized radicalization. In other words, by not talking about the processes of ideology, rather distancing itself from facing it, the thesis argues that critical theory can be reproducing the ideological in the way it analyzes the terrorist insurgency as a matter of reaction rather than an ideological intentional action.

In the revolutions of the Middle East which broke out in 2010, and the engendered terrorism focused mostly in Syria and Iraq, this terrorism can be seen as an ideological function caused and preserved by the ideological forces, not as many critical scholars argue that terrorism is not created by the state (which is another agent of ideology) but rather needs pre-conditions to be manipulated by the state (Bjorgo, 2005), to oppose demands for political change. The theories
around terrorism do not provide us with theoretical tools to understand this functionality and causality. Against the background of the proliferation of Islamic Terrorism in the scene of the Arab Spring, especially in Syria, one needs to understand the role of ideology in this phenomenon.

Furthermore, many Marxist scholars have argued that the cases of terrorism can be seen as the ‘fissure’ in the capitalist system embodied for example in the attacks on World Trade Center (Baudrillard, 2001). Yet, the intentional acts of manufacturing terrorism in the case of Arab revolutions, especially in Syria, do not seem to have been discussed theoretically. The acts of driving the legitimate social demands into a scene of terrorism do not seem to have theoretical arguments or explanations. In other words, when we investigate the materials and first-hand experiences and accounts from countries like Syria in the wake of the Arab Spring, we notice an epistemological discrepancy in applying the existing theoretical approach(s) to the causality and the functionality of terrorism.

The question that we want to answer here is:

○ How can the role of ideology in producing the causes of terrorism be theoretically understood in the context of the Arab Spring?

○ What can we add to the definition of terrorism in light of this investigation?

3.2. Context

When the revolutions in many Arab countries broke out in late 2010 and early 2011, the totalitarian and tyrannical regimes that have long existed in these countries refused to listen to the political demands of the people. They tried to crush and suppress those movements using ruthless military machines, and rhetoric of treason and terrorism. Many critics and journalists argue the demands of these people of the Middle Eastern countries for democracy, self-determination and freedom were not anticipated, and their emergence posed a threat to the established international order and geopolitical interests in the sense that these movements wanted to challenge and dismantle old systems of domination and colonial heritage in the Middle East (Danahar, 2013, Gerges, 2013). What we can see from the media coverage of these
movements is that media has followed a standardized level of conformism to power constellations which would not permit certain dimensions of these political movements to appear, dismissing this political movement as a democratic, non-violent, anti-colonial, and most importantly non-religious movements. In the media these movements were actively constructed as civil wars explained in Charles Glass’s work (2016), and thereby creating a certain impression about them being savage and violent rather than acknowledging and describing them as serious cries for a different political order and power equation. Also Patrick Cockburn explains how the focus of media on certain events on one day to totally become disinterested in them on the other (Cockburn, 2015), can imply that media has intended to confuse the audience about the nature of the massacre in Syria and that the description of civil war that western media has adopted to describe the Syrian revolution is to prepare the audience to receive the engendered terrorism as a naturally emerging in that geography. In other words, the aspirations of the people to break free from the colonial continuity and to be treated as “first worlds” people (Danahar, 2013), were discursively constructed as civil wars and a place for terrorism (Neumann, 2016).

On the other side, the totalitarian regimes seem to have seized these conformist standards of mass media to pass a similar deluding picture to preserve their legitimacy (Glass 2016, Weiss and Hassan, 2016). Yet, what really put the nail into the coffin of those revolutions, as many critics argue, is the islamization of these movements, on which many critics argue to be ‘alien’ to the morals of the revolution (Kilo, 2016), and for being a ‘blessed’ work by the Syrian regime (Kaile, 2014) and to confirm the constructed image of these movements as violent, war-like, and not the least extreme Islamist.

From North African countries, to Middle Eastern countries, those civil movements demanded changes for rights and participation and political reformations. The demonstrators in these countries have been long governed by totalitarian regime consolidated by the colonial heritage of demarcation which took place in the Middle East in the wake of WWI (Glass, 2016), when the Ottoman Empire was defeated and when its territories of the Middle East were demarcated by France and Britain. The demonstrators were focused on establishing democratic governance where everybody could have a role in a country. Among these countries was Syria. The ‘nationalist’ regimes in these countries have ever since the 1960s become more brutal, not only
crushing anyone who dares to question their legitimacy, but also denying rights of other segments of the society including Kurds and Palestinians and others. These movements were actively constructed by the tyrannical regimes as pathological, alien, and ideological.

With time lapse, the demonstrations which broke out in 2010 in these countries have more or less succeeded to overthrow some figures of the old regimes. Egypt has overthrown Mubarak and paved the way for democratic elections, Libya has also overthrown Gadhafi (not to mention NATO’s blatant intervention), Tunisia has overthrown Bin Ali, and Yemen has overthrown Abdullah Saleh. Yes, most of those regimes were substituted with other forms of tyranny and dictatorships like in the case of the Sisi of Egypt, yet going out to the streets and demanding for the change of those regimes was something new and represented a challenge and a threat to the old regime, and to the established order (Danahar, 2013). This was not the case in Syria, however. The revolution in Syria enters its 8th year now and the people of Syria have pleaded for international protection and political settlement to stop the destruction caused by the Syrian regime. Many people from Syria’s ethnic spectrum died for this cause, they were killed by the regimes brutal apparatuses. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, more than two hundred thousand people were arrested, and still under detention, while 60 thousands were killed under torture among which 110 children (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2018). Amnesty International has also released a report about 13,000 people “hanged secretly” in the notorious Saydnaya prison (Amnesty International, 2017).

The Syrian regime continued since the beginning of the demonstrations in 2011 its brutal suppression of the movement and the international community has not succeeded in doing anything towards the escalating death toll except by rhetoric of condemnation, in addition to the contradictory discourses about the nature of the civil movement and the increasing death toll (Glass, 2016). Around 2012, after a year of brutal crushing of the demonstrations and the civil neighborhoods and the social incubators of those protests, the Syrian opposition forces (formed by defectors from the Syrian national army) started to use light weaponry to defend the civilians as the regime targeted every residential area that came out in protest in the different cities of Syria (BBC Arabic, 2014). Under those violent circumstances, groups carrying Islamic mottos started to emerge. These groups were argued to fight the Syrian regime and defend the people,
while receiving funds from many countries around the globe (Glass, 2016). Among these groups, there was Al-Nusra Front, Jaish Al-Islam, Ahrar Alsham, ISIS and many others.

It is true that the demonstrations in Syria, like many other Arab countries, are emerging from a society of Muslim majority, and where Islam and, in many cases Arabism, are considered to be the identity of the people. Yet this does not mean that the movement which came out for change was religious or Islamic. The movement included many non-Muslims and non-Arabs who were and still part of this movement, including influential figures in the oppositional forces from different ethnic and religious background. This civil movement is described to be alien to any of these descriptions of being ideological or religious and the only thing that could give a unified description about its nature is for being indescribable (Al-Haj Saleh, 2017). The Syrian regime, however, has worked actively in portraying and framing the movement as Islamic or terrorist and used this pretext of fighting Islamic groups to crush the movement killing hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, and arresting tens of thousands of people.

3.3. Aim and Motivation

Because millions of people want to bring change, because they are fed up with injustices and domination, because they flee tyranny subjugation, because their legitimate demands are made into Islamic terrorism, and because of the execution of many individuals of low and high intellect in the prisons of Syria—among whom my friend Bassel Khartabil to whom I am dedicating this paper-- I want to investigate the causes of Islamic Terrorism in the context of the Syrian revolution hoping to provide a new theoretical concept which would yield a solid tool to counterargue discourses of terrorism. If I understand the causes of this kind of terrorism, I would be able to analyze how and why the recent endeavors of certain MENA countries to gain its self-determination ended up in discourses of Islamic Terrorism and the combating of it, while simultaneously consolidating old, tyrannical, and totalitarian regimes. In addition to that, understanding the causes would help to block other circles of dispossession presented, for example, in Donald Trump’s statement on the war on terror (CNN, 2016) in which he is patronizing the combating of this phenomenon and espousing it with politics of confiscation.
The questions that I intend to answer in this investigation is what the causes of the international ‘Islamic’ terrorism engendered in the Syrian scene are and how theory explains it in comparison to first-hand experience and on-the-spot materials explanation of it? How can we redefine Islamic terrorism based on the materials from the Syrian and Middle Eastern scene?

Therefore, I argue that the causality of terrorism is of high importance to be studied in order to understand how ideology uses this phenomenon to pass further ‘imaginary’ relations and further alienation of the public awareness. A new understanding of how to deal with this violence is needed. This violence which does not only take innocent lives at the receiving end but also at the sending end by both direct terrorism and by the processes of the combating of it. Also understanding the causes of the Islamic terrorism engendered in the Syrian scene might help us to better understand the processes that make the Arab Spring as one of the factors that put International Jihad in motion according to Cockburn (2015), and Neumann (2016). To understand how the Arab spring known for many for its peaceful nature, turned into a scene of Islamic terrorism.

Indeed, the causality of terrorism has also been studied and scrutinized by many researches. It has been defined as structural, including economic, social, and political reasons, it has been studied on the individual including psychopathology, rationality and so on. However, what appears in the current forms of terrorism is that it combines all these causes in addition to something else, something that theory has not developed; something that I argue for being a structural necessity.

As mentioned previously, the research on terrorism focuses on studying how terrorism appears as an ideological necessity to reproduce the fear in order to facilitate maintain of power. However this research seems to understudy that terrorism is also a structural necessity, and that ideology causes the material conditions for its emergence in order to be reused by ideologies.

How can we understand this?

Ideology which is the system of power has also material conditions and it actually creates the material condition as Althusser argues (2008). So, in order for terrorism to be an ideological construct, it must have ideological materialist causes.
Therefore, understanding the causes of Islamic terrorism might/ might not help us to better evaluating, deconstructing arguments and systems that Islamic Terrorism is the threat of the global peace, relegating concomitantly the social demands into a scene of threat ovulating.

Thus, the thesis makes an argument that the causalities of terrorism are of high importance to be studied in order to understand the processes of the emergence of the phenomenon whose effect facilitates passing further ‘imaginary’ relations and further alienation of the public awareness.

3.4. Obstacles in the Making

One of the most prominent difficulties I faced during this investigation is how to contextualize the problem. Although Syria is the starting point of this thesis, still the Middle East is recurrent and appears as the point of focus. The reason for this confusion is that the Middle East is still colonized--parts of the state of Syria for example are still under occupation-- and its cartography is the work of the colonization and the colonial heritage by Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 between Britain and France. Therefore, incorporating Syria the way we see it on a map into this thesis was an impossible task for me especially that it does not appear this way in my memory. For me the state of Syria demarcated in the wake of WWI is a colonial memory that will never be accepted.

The pre-colonial Syria includes Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Even parts of southern Turkey and parts of eastern Iraq were also parts of the pre-colonial Syria.

Another shortcoming I can identify in my thesis is that I tend to use journalistic release. Since journalism has a tendency to be conformist to politics and ideologies (Jonsson, 2008), there are some incidents which I find crucial to support the argument and which are not being theoretically developed yet. For example, I will use Der Spiegel’s report on one of ISIS fraction and how this fraction is exposed to be the work of the state (Reuter, 2015)

The literature on the topic of terrorism is so broad. Therefore, due to the scope of the thesis, I have not been able to cover all the research and literature on terrorism, which is why the thesis cannot and does not claim providing an exhaustive account on the phenomena. I have
focused on the literature that I have found fruitful to develop and expand on the theoretical understanding of terrorism which I also adopt a critical stance towards.

### 3.5. Organization of the Thesis

The paper shall unfold as follows. The first part is about the methodological perspective. It will also explain the materials used in this thesis and their relevance for this topic in addition to my critique of them in the way they fall into the trap of reproducing the ideological construct.

Section number 5 will try to provide a definition of the concept terrorism, to be followed by a brief history of terrorism and its typology and its most recent figuration in the Syrian context in section 6. The writings of some of the influential scholars and researchers on terrorism and security issue who also inform political decisions about this phenomenon will be dwelt upon. I will lay special focus on how terrorism as phenomena came to be associated exclusively with Islamic terrorism in the section “Fourth Wave”: Ideological Conflict.

In section 7 I will briefly discuss some theories that deal with why and how terrorism emerged as the enemy to the world. I will discuss on the one hand how some of the prominent theories in the studies of terrorism reproduce this construct and how on the other hand has this construct become an ideological tool for further domination and dispossession (Herman and O’Sullivan, 1989, Klein, 2007).

In section 7.2, I will try to present some previous theories about the material causality of Islamic terrorism ranging from socio-economic to psychological reasons and critically discuss their adequacy in explaining the causes of terrorism in the current Middle Eastern context.

In section 8, I will introduce my theoretical evaluation of what needs to be developed in theory in order to better engage with the current course of events in the Syrian scene and with the emergence of ISIS and other terrorist organizations. This section will highlight how these organizations are deployed, funded, and supplied by states, a fact that has not been theorized or downplayed in previous studies. I combine Sara Ahmed’s concept of orientation with Althusser’s theory on ideology to develop the notion ‘ideological orientation’ as an explanatory tool to understand the unraveled Islamic terrorism in the Middle Eastern context. I use journalistic works to explicate the scope of applying this concept on the Syrian context.
Towards the end of the paper, my findings about how theories of causality can be improved to address the phenomenon will be presented. I will also try to introduce suggestions for a new definition of terrorism.
4. How to answer these questions

4.1. Methodology

The thesis takes a form of a critical theoretical analysis aiming to evaluate theories and existing research on terrorism. It will combine critical reading of established theories on terrorism and close reading of ‘on-the-spot’ journalistic reports produced in the wake of the Arab Spring, more specifically in Syria.

My starting point relies on a critical realist perspective, an approach to knowledge which relies on ontological realism on the one hand, and on epistemic relativism on the other hand (Maxwell, 2012). From the ontological premise of critical realism, terrorism can be perceived as an existing phenomenon that can be studied in its own right. However, based on the epistemological premises of critical realism what we can know about terrorism is always constructed in a specific historical, social and cultural context and therefore not independent from our ways of understanding and describing it. The critical realist methodology argues that even if ontological studies position themselves as realist, there is an immanent possibility for them to be epistemological interpretivist (ibid.). In other words, critical realism argues that ontological studies alone, in our case theories on terrorism, are less objective because they do not accept that the knowledge produced includes epistemological relativism. According to critical relativist perspective all knowledge that we can derive from the world is situated and constructed in a specific context, and therefore do not describe any reality independent of our thinking and meaning making (ibid).

I will resort to use ‘on-the-spot’ journalistic reports in this thesis because they provide accounts of first-hand experience in the context of Syria. These journalistic works include detailed descriptions on the material circumstances of the emergence of terrorist groups, and therefore provide for good material for discussing the material context. These works can be used to reflect upon those dimensions emerging in this context, which I argue are often relegated from theoretical accounts on terrorism.
Two key concepts inform this thesis: that of ideology discussed by Louis Althusser (2008), which describes the relations of ‘elites’ or the ruling groups to the social reality. Althusser describes ideology as a set of relations and social models defined by the ruling class and mediated to the ruled subjects through a set of institutions. Althusser’s notion of ideology includes also analysis of the material dimension of ideology which is channeled through what he calls for ideological state apparatuses. In addition to the concept of ideology, the thesis relies on Sara Ahmed’s (2005) concept of orientation understood as the effect of material reality in forming and directing bodies towards certain directions from which bodies find their anchoring points.

The interest of this paper is not in analyzing the discursive construct of this phenomenon, rather to problematize its materialist functionality in the way the phenomenon is used to achieve certain goals. This functionality is produced in interplay of discursive and material processes in the Syrian political scene and the engendered terrorism. I will use the word terrorism to refer to Islamic terrorism throughout the text because it has been constructed as the most prominent form of terrorism, as I will discuss in the next. Nevertheless, I encourage the reader to include imaginary inverted commas (‘terrorism’) around the word terrorism and terrorist whenever they encounter the word in the text.

4.2. Materials

Although Stefan Jonsson (2004) argues that journalism is argued to be conformist and standardized to fit certain political ideologies by “dictating what is worth knowing and looking at”, and for being “constraining the modes of presentation” and limiting causal explanation to 'monotopic' interpretations, I will resort to “on-the-spot” book-length journalistic reportages because they are better in bringing some dimensions—often in coded language or in indirect signals—that mainstream media does not see as something worth reporting as they describe the events and circumstances in more details (ibid.).

The journalist materials used in this thesis are focused mostly on the terrorist organization of ISIS, not because it was the only organization operating in the Syrian scene,
rather because it became the pretext for the international agreement on the war of Islamic Terrorism, as explicated for example in the Global Coalition Against Daesh, an agreement made between 75 countries which was founded in 2014 to fight ISIS terrorism (Global Coalition, 2018). In addition to that, these reports bring a broader geopolitical and socio-economic context to the emergence of ISIS and other terrorist groups, thereby can provide a more complex understanding about the functionality and causality of the Islamic terrorism in that context.

Yet, the aim of the thesis is not to specifically study ISIS, rather to derive from the materials tackling this organization some theoretical knowledge which might fit into analyzing the causes of Islamic terrorism in general. It is important to emphasize that I do not claim that the knowledge derived from this analysis is a standard explanation for the causes of Islamic terrorism but rather my analysis in this thesis aims to bring about another dimension that would add to the theory explaining similar cases. As Bjorgo (2005) argues that terrorism is multi-faceted and have different expressions that cannot be unified in one form covering all forms of terrorism.

The thesis will derive empirical materials from three book-length reportages namely My Journey into the Heart of Terror (Todenhöfer, 2016), Isis: Inside the Army of Terror (Weiss and Hassan, 2016), and Syria Burning (Glass, 2016) because the writers have first-hand experience in the context of Syria and the emerging terrorism. The thesis will also incorporate other journalistic works like The Rise of Islamic State (Cockburn, 2015) and Anatomy of Terror (Soufan, 2017). These works provide multi-dimensional description of the various actors and of the circumstances prefiguring the Syrian revolutionary moment. This paper critically discusses the “on-the-spot” journalist and narrative works which cover the emergence and operation of ISIS and other Islamic organizations during the time of the revolutions of Arab countries i.e. works produced in the wake of the Arab Spring to the development of theory on the functionality of terrorism.

It should be noted that the authors of the main materials are western journalists with seemingly wide experience in war zones and areas of conflicts. Their writing should be
considered as written from this position. Only very few western journalists could visit ISIS’s territories and come back safe. Jürgen Todenhöfer is the first western journalist to make this trip on which he provides his account in the book. Also Hassan Hassan and Michael Weiss’s work draws on interviews with ISIS fighters to understand their motivations behind joining this organization. In other words, these journalistic works are still written from a certain perspective and they can be seen as partisan. Still, the information they provide about the fund and supply of terrorism are very important and relevant especially since academic research around the topic is not yet developed to include this data.

Nonetheless, these materials can also be seen as ideological in the sense that they both construct something and relegate other things. Although Michael Weiss’s and Hassan Hassan’s work provide important materials about the genealogy of ISIS since its early formation to its franchise in Syria and how the political leaders in Syria and Iraq have designed and manipulated international politics by using the card of terrorism to consolidate their regimes (Weiss and Hassan, 2016), their work also carries ideological baggage. Their work is actively distancing the U.S’s foreign policy and the imperialist history as a part and parcel in designing and orientating terrorist groups. The most important critique against their position can be explicated in page (117-119) in which they consider the arbitrary imprisonment of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (the leader of ISIS) in the US-led prison Camp Bucca as something of less importance. In other words, when Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who is a PHD holder, was mistakenly arrested and put to the US-led prison Camp Bucca for 11 months, this does not seem to bother the writers as an essential factor for the radicalization of this person. By doing this they actively reject the U.S. role in orientating bodies. Their framing of causes of terrorism, and the lacks in acknowledging the effect of such occasions, constructs a certain image of terrorism and orientates the reader.

Among the materials I use is Cockburn’s work, The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution (Cockburn, 2015). In this work the author appears to be more ‘Westernized’ because of his insistence on depicting the insurgency of ISIS as a Sunni revolution, thereby following certain ideologies by reproducing the image of the threat as Sunni threat (Cockburn, 2015). The author, moreover, constructs this threat in a way which would
create certain understanding in the mind of the western reader when the territory of ISIS is compared to a space “bigger than the UK” with population equivalent to the Finnish population (ibid). In page 27, Cockburn states: “the newly declared caliphate was expanding by the day. It now covered an area larger than Great Britain and inhabited by some six million people—a population larger than that of Denmark, Finland, or Ireland” (ibid). His work might be understood as orientative and making the reader believe that ISIS insurgency is a Sunni one and that people living and coming from those territories might one day out-number the European populations. Still, his aesthetical style might provide us with a deeper understanding of the causes of ISIS which are not dealt with in theories around terrorism like for example the state practical deployment of terrorist organizations.

Also, Todenhöfer’s work shows much power position and privilege in the sense that he claims knowledge about the creed of Islam in addition to the way he shouts at the terrorist as if he is going for an adventure (2016). His account, as the title My Journey into the Heart of Terror reflects an advantageous position in conducting such a voyage and also demonstrates a resemblance of a white man’s travel to the Orient in the footsteps of Charles Marlow into the Heart of Darkness.

In short, all the books should be read as they are; accounts written from a specific position by people conducting visits to the scene in the Middle East, and not locals with direct experience of terror. They can also be seen as social acts that have implications on how terrorism is understood in the minds of the reader. Furthermore, as influential writers their work and descriptions might have broader resonance also amongst politicians.
5. Contemporary Definitions of Terrorism

Despite the global efforts to address and combat terrorism which can be seen in the efforts of international organizations like the United Nations office of Counter Terrorism, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Terrorism Prevention, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee and the other sub-committees, one cannot find, neither a unified definition of terrorism, nor any definition of it. The concept stays disputed and misused. These organizations rather take terrorism as something understood that everybody would understand upon the reading of the term, and connect it with the different types of criminal activities that can be fulfilled through terrorist methods. The UNODC for example, has many campaigns to combat terrorism and the concomitant crime which can lay behind the terrorist activities like drugs, human trafficking and organized crime, albeit they do not provide a definition of terrorism. Even in the wake of 9/11 the United Nations and the other substantial parts of this body has failed to define the term (Saul, 2006).

According to Bruce Hoffman, terrorism is also so difficult to define because the meaning of the word has changed over time, and besides the semantic confusion over what can qualify as a terrorist, a rebel, or a guerilla fighter, there is no general agreement on the definition (Hoffman, 2006).

Furthermore, states and international organizations have different and varied definitions of the term. For some, a terrorist attack is the threat of or the actual use of illegal force and violence by non-state actors to attain political, economic, religious, or social goals through fear, coercion, or intimidation (GTD, 2017). For others terrorism is defined by the nature of the act, not by the identity of the perpetrators or the nature of the cause (cf. Bjorgo, 2005). According to the international research organization Rand Corporation, which informs government agencies, international organizations, and foundations among others, terrorism is defined as the use of or the threat of violence calculated to create fear and alarm, intended to coerce certain actions. Its motive must include a political objective and is generally directed against civilian targets and can be conducted by a group or by an individual (Rand, 2018). There are many other different definitions of the word based on who is defining it. The US State department has its definition,
The US Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Department of Defense (Hoffman, 2006). The UN defines terrorism by means of outlawing the unlawful delivery, placement, discharge or detonation of explosive against a place of public use, a state or government facility with the intention to cause extensive destruction resulting in major economic loss (UNGA, 1997).

Furthermore, many scholars see terrorism as a political crime (Ross, 1993) or as a method of political violence that is subsumed under conspiracy, together with mutinies, coup d’état, political assassination, and small scale guerilla wars (Gurr, 2015: 11). Also, for some official organizations and some states, if the act of violence carries bona fide objectives it should be decried as terrorist (Neumann, 2016).

In any case, I will use Hoffman’s definition of terrorism in RAND webpage as a working definition:

*Terrorism is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider “target audience” that might include rival ethnic or religious groups, an entire country, a national government or political party, or public opinion in general. Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorist seek to obtain the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either local or international scale* (Rand, 2018).

Seemingly, the current definition of terrorism is based on the act of violence to achieve political gains by the different forms of practices of violence regardless of the motivations and the reasons behind it. Although all these definitions are not agreeing on a unified definition of terrorism, there is a general agreement to exempt the states, which are as capable as non-state actors of employing terrorist methods, from the definition. As the general definition sees terrorism as the
usage of violence in the pursuit of political, religious or ideological objectives, states are still seen as legitimate actors and the international community supports the states use of violence, at least epistemically, as an adjunct to political reform movements of various types, conducted by the state., while this same community generally condemns the species of violence that carries the label “terrorism” (Cohan, 2005). Additionally, terrorism has also comprised an evolving relation with organized crime and grey market activity like arm trading, money laundry, and drugs, human trafficking, etc., a relation which has been much facilitated by globalization (Roth, 2017, Um, 2011).

To sum up, the application of the concept of terrorism is problematic because it does not yield a clear definition on whom and what qualifies as terrorist/terrorism. Rather than being an objective title for certain acts or certain groups, the concept of terrorism implies a specific construction of the social reality or a specific discourse. The designation of terrorism is not only a term to evaluate and classify certain acts of violence on the one hand and distinguish them from others on the other hand, it can also be seen as a social act that has implications. The concept of terrorism does not merely reflect the reality but it also constructs it. Terrorism is a concept which does things not only discursively but also in the material life. Philip Jenkins pinpoints how the construction of the image of terrorism in media also affects law enforcement priorities (2003: 150).

The definition of terrorism is seen as clearly reflecting power relations which determine who is to be defined as terrorist. The role of global power relations in designating terrorism have become increasingly obvious especially after the fourth wave, which will be discussed in next section, where terrorism emerges as Islamic, and where terrorism is constructed to be conducted by non-state actors. How we perceive terrorism and which actions we associate with terrorism are also historical, fluid and changing in time. The changes in the perception of terrorism, and which imageries of terrorism become meaningful depictions of the phenomena also relate to how the role of the state is perceived in relation to individual terrorist groups. State sponsorship of terrorism like in the case of Libya, Iran, and Iraq has been perceived as credible in certain historical periods but in the current debates, partly due to the media’s role in constructing certain
image of terrorism, states interference in producing terrorism has been obfuscated (Jenkins, 2003: 162).

6. Historiographical Understanding of the Concept of Terrorism

Before I turn to discuss how ideology renders the concept of terrorism into a functional tool, and before I discuss the causality behind Islamic terrorism in the Middle East in general and in the context of the Syrian revolution in specific, I need first to provide a short overview of how the development of the phenomenon, its definition, and its ideological implications have been described. We need also to keep in mind that political violence has been ubiquitous throughout human history.

6.1. Historical Overview of the Ontology of “non-state terrorism”

Terrorism has gone through historical change of the designation. According to many scholars, terrorism can be categorized in four waves: “anarchist”, “anti-colonial”, “new left” and “religious”, each started in a country but spread to others and each lasted for approximately a generation 25-30 years. (Neumann, 2016: XV).

Probably the earliest forms of using organized terrorism was deployed by the state, in particular, the revolutionary French government or the regime de la terreur (1793) where the then revolutionary government deployed violent methods against counter-revolutionary forces to establish order (Neumann, 2016, Hoffman 2006). Even though the first appearance of terrorism can be associated with state violence, later terrorism has been mostly connected to violence used by non-state actors.

However, and in later historical periods and with the advent of nationalism a new era of terrorism emerged. Terrorism started to be constructed as the violence committed by non-state actors (Neumann, 2016, Hoffman, 2016). In the context of the Russian Empire in 1880’s an organization carrying the name Nordnaya Volya (the people’s will) adopted the dictum of “propaganda by deed” referring to acts of violence that are carried out as an example with the objective of igniting popular revolts (Neumann, 2016, Hoffman, 2006). One of their deeds was to assassinate the Czar, which took place in public and by detonating some explosions in 1878
(ibid.). For such a group the dictum “propaganda by deed” implied also the selective targeting of political figures (ibid). The violence this organization used was neither indiscriminate nor random. In 1873 also in Ireland, a group called Clan na Gael used tactics of skirmishes by attacking and bombarding institutions and buildings to commemorate their deeds and achieve their propaganda (ibid.). Propaganda by deed later became the strategy which characterizes many of the acts deemed as terrorist.

After that, terrorism as a political means started to spread and find its roots in many places around the world. Many organizations in Europe and elsewhere started to emerge trying to realize their political agendas like the nationalist and separatist movements of which we can mention the IRA in Ireland, ETA in the Basque region, AIIB in Japan, to mention a few (Treverton and Hoffman, 1990). Until the 1970s, terrorism still retained its revolutionary connotation. Terrorism up until the 1970’s has been categorized into three ‘waves’: anarchist, anti-colonial, and the new left, which all are characterized for the usage of violence for political ends by non-state actors (Neumann, 2016, Hoffman, 2006).

6.1.1. The “Fourth Wave”: Ideological Conflict and Religious Terrorism

According to Peter Neumann, since the year 1968 the world has witnessed a surge of religion-motivated radical groups (Neumann, 2016 34-35). We have for example the Army of God that emerged in the U.S. attacking abortion clinics which presented itself as a defender of the nation aiming by its violent activities of attacking abortion clinics to wake the nation from its moral decay (ibid). This religiously motivated violence is described as the fourth wave of terrorism. Nevertheless, Islamic terrorism emerges as the most important category in this escalating wave and the most prominent religious terror organizations are argued to be Islamic (Neumann, 2016, Hoffman, 2006). Especially after the attacks of 9/11, committed by al-Qaeda, terrorism has become more linked to Islamic Terrorism (Hoffman, 2006).

The organizations operating in this wave are characterized by their religious imperatives, using terrorism as a nihilistic end according to Hoffman (2006: 81-130). They are argued to derive their violent ideology from Jihadism, which is a combination of Salafism—the violent theory of Islamic revolution and the Wahhabis religious doctrine. Many Islamic militant groups
have their implications from those doctrines, albeit with divergent means of deployment. There are those who employ violence like Hamas and those who aim to achieve their goals through community work like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Neumann, 2016: 39).

Dated to 1979, according to Neumann, Islamic Terrorism has had a religious anchoring point from which Islamic militants derive their ideology of violence and nihilism. In Neumann’s opinion, the history of political Islam or Islamism was born when Islam encountered modernity or Western-style modernity in particular (Neumann, 2016: 35). The Islamic groups became aware about their crisis especially when the ‘Muslim world’ became governed and ruled by the West, which asserted its imperial interests and scrapped the social and cultural norms (ibid). Their essential reaction was not to resist colonialism but an attempt to rediscover their identity (ibid). These fundamentalist movements that emerged in various parts of the predominantly Muslim world have preached a supposedly pure and uncorrupt Islam, which was based on scripture, in order to restore their society and identity. The most important puritans among the many engendered Islamic groups are the Salafists that emerged in Egypt (Neumann, 2016: 36). They were not revolutionary or political at that time according to Neumann’s analysis. They were just puritans and their ideology resembled other religious groups. They were against the moral decay which proliferated in the Muslim society. Neumann makes this comparison of religiously-motivated groups in his work where he likens them to earlier forms like the Army of God.

The group’s most prominent teacher was Sayed Qutb who reinterpreted the Muslim Brotherhood’s Islamism into ideology of violent revolution. In Qutb’s preaching, the founder of the militant Islamism, the motif was to restore the pure Islamic society after it had morally decayed by means of force. (Neumann, 2016:37, Wright: 2006)

However, what is seen as a religious terror organization for one can be a freedom fighter for other. Hamas, and other Palestinian Islamic movements, for example, have been long classified as terror organizations (Hoffman, 2006; 81-130), while for the locals, they are seen as resistance movements. In the Sage Handbook of Resistance, many Islamic movements are discussed—although depicted as patriarchal—as resistance movements which fight the military
and cultural incursions by Western powers, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia (Courpasson and Vallas, 2016: 78; 94).

6.2. Islamic Terrorism during the Syrian Revolution

Reviewing all religiously motivated groups within this paper will be an impossible task. My purpose from this short overview is to pave the way to introduce the very recent wave of Islamic terrorism or what could be described as the fifth wave of terrorism operated by ‘religious’ groups within the context of the Arab Spring, within which organizations like ISIS or Daesh, or ISIL or the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant, the Al-Nusra Front and others, have emerged. These organizations are argued to be connected with the fourth wave which Bin Laden and other Qaeda members set in motion in 1980s, and which is agreed upon to be a branch of al-Qaeda which set in motion the international jihad (Neumann, 2016: 57). Nevertheless, they are depicted as a new form of terrorism, somewhat distinct from the established fourth wave of terrorism for being more gruesome, violent and indiscriminate in their actions (Neumann, 2016, Todenhofer, 2016).

For many, ISIS is the continuation of the conflict of the 2000s in Iraq and the legacy of the al-Qaeda-affiliate, (Hassan and Weiss 2016, Cockburn, 2015, Neumann, 2016). Besides being considered as one of the bloodiest terrorist organizations in the world and also the richest among them (Todenhofer, 2106), ISIS emerged in two phases. It was first created in the context of the occupation of Iraq in 2003 by a militant with a long criminal record called Abu Mosab Al-Zarqawi who was killed by an American drone attack in Iraq in 2006 (Weiss and Hassan, 2015: 20-40, Neumann, 2016, Cockburn, 2015) to be later succeeded by another militant called Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, who is depicted as seizing the opportunity of the political stalemate created in the wake of the Arab Spring, where no political settlement was made to stop the massacre caused by the Syrian regime and its allies (ibid, Glass, 2016).

According to a report published by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland (Start, 2016), ISIS has conducted 4900 terrorist attacks worldwide, and caused the death of 33,000 people and the injury of 41000 in addition to 11,000 cases of kidnapping and hostage-taking.
What is so special about ISIS, according to Neumann, is not the foundationless Islamic caliphate which did not lay the foundations of knowledge, education, freedom and justice, rather it is the scope of achievement it has done. It has achieved a state-building project and become such a magnet for international jihadist and that it has mobilized a younger generation and employed new more extreme methods (Neumann, 2016: 56). The major difference between al-Qaeda and ISIS is that the latter has used more ruthless ideology, and that they believe the process of state-building has to come first, not at the end.

Another organization that started to operate in the Syrian context is the Al-Nusra Front (Jabhat Al-Nusra). This organization is famous for its milder ideology and for being more preferred as Al-Qaeda affiliate than ISIS (Neumann, 2016). There have also been many other organizations like the Islamic Army, Ahrar Al-Sham and others that proliferated in the Syrian context. What unifies these organizations, despite their philosophical differences, is that they are considered among the most prominent Islamic movements in the Syrian scene, being funded by international actors, (Glass, 2016, Cockburn, 2015) and most importantly, created and designed by the states (Reuter, 2015, Weiss and Hassan, 2016, Soufan, 2017, Spencer, 2016).
7. How has Islamic Terrorism been tackled in the Theoretical Literature

Terrorism has been tackled on many fronts. From the battlefields of Afghanistan to the media discussions of Noam Chomsky terrorism yields an opponent to confront. In academic writing the topic of terrorism has also been tackled from different perspectives. There is extensive literature studying this phenomenon. This thesis will focus on two points in the scholarly discussions on terrorism: the ideological/discursive and the cause/effect perspectives that have been taken up in the theoretical literature on terrorism. The reason for limiting the knowledge interest of this thesis to these two fields is first of all because the analysis of this paper will bring a crucial conduit by analyzing the materiality of ideology in the context of Syria, and thereby contributing to the research on the relation between ideology and causality of terrorism. I will first discuss these fields of studies separately. In the next section I will utilize these discussions to understand another dimension for the emergence of terrorism additional to the existing literature on both the relationship between ideology and terrorism and on the causes of terrorism.

The first line of research on terrorism, the ideological, sees in terrorism an ideological industry maintained by ideologies and discourses to serve hegemonic and accumulative ends (Herman and O’Sullivan, 1989). It also explains that our perception of terrorism is formed by the interaction of bureaucratic agencies, academics and private experts (Jenkins, 2003). Furthermore, terrorism has also been analyzed as an ideological necessity to wage wars and to subjugate countries for the sake of capitalist accumulation (Klein, 2005), to erect walls and to spread politics of fear, securitization and anti-migration (Fekete, 2009), and to orchestrate popular xenophobia by moral entrepreneurs (Morgan & Poynting, 2012). In this line, other researchers have also focused on the genealogy of terrorism, its development, and its philosophy and modes of operation as discussed in section 6.

In other words, this line of research analyzes the phenomenon of terrorism as a social construct and aims to understand the ideological usage of it. It sees in terrorism an aggregating device to achieve certain political, economic and hegemonic ends. However, this line fails to grasp the role of ideologies, not in discursively constructing terrorism, but in how terrorism is materially created which I will turn to in section 8. In the this section, I will present the concept of ideology, and discuss how some of the most prominent writers who inform politics about
terrorism engage in constructing and reconstructing the imagery of terrorism and the function of this reconstruction.

The other line of research which focuses on the cause and effect of terrorism, includes for example research on the psychological and economic implications of terrorism; how they affect and are affected by the psyche and economy of societies (cf. Enders and Sandler, 2006 on the economic implications of terrorism and Borradori, Derrida and Habermas, 2003 for the philosophical and psychological implications in the time of terrorism). This line approaches post-terrorism times and explores the emotions of despair, fear, and anger that arose after the terrorist attacks. It analyzes the reactions to the attacks through the lens of terror management theory, an existential psychological model that explains why humans react the way they do to the threat of death and how this reaction influences their post-threat cognition and emotion (cf. Pyszczynski, 2003 for the psychological impact of terrorism and Moghadam and J. Marsella, 2004 on the psychological motivation of terrorism). In addition, this line of research situates the causes and effects of terrorism within a broader political and economic cause and effect (cf. Courpasson and Vallas, 2016). Terrorism has also been studied as an evolving relation to global organized crime. In section 7.2., I will discuss some theories that critically engage in examining the causes of terrorism in order to understand how the existing literature has conceived the causes of terrorism. As I have already noted, I identify a discrepancy of how these theories explain the causes of terrorism.

What these two lines of research, the one focusing on the ideological and the other on the material cause and effect of terrorism, have in common is that they focus on terrorism as an existing phenomenon with an autonomous mode of operation. In other words they seem to agree with Bjorgo’s argument that the state is not a responsible actor for the creation of the conditions for the proliferation of terrorism. Most importantly, they see the processes of the emergence of terrorism to be working without external political and economic interference by states and other agents. These works seem to relegate the active role of the states in designing, creating and managing terrorist operations and their relationality to the cause/effect approach. Thereby, I see in them, and in the way they do not engage with the roles of the ideological in creating terrorism, other reproductive forces of the ideological. In other words they do not build a connection
between the field of studying ideology and terrorism, and the causality of it. After reviewing the existing literature on these two fields, I return to this part in the next section.

7.1. Ideological construction and reconstruction

In section 4.1, I have introduced the theoretical concept of ideology. However, before I discuss how studies around terrorism can be seen as ideological reproduction, I need first to deepen the theoretical concept of ideology and how it is used in this thesis. Ideology has been defined in the Marxian tradition as a system of ideas, representations and relations stemming from the mind of the ruling class and imposes itself on the conditions of relations between people and things as a natural relation (Althusser, 2008; Zizek, 1989). Therefore ideology implies power, the power of the elite in defining the rules. Slavoj Zizek’s abstract work *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) draws the patterns on how to understand ideology and its processes. For Zizek the thoughts of the capitalist elites construct the subjects abiding the system as moralistic, using their formula of worked hours=wages= freedom, while yielding other subjects who do not abide this presupposition as enemies (ibid). For him, in order for the capitalist ideology to accumulate, it must produce a system which convinces its subjects about certain ideals as being the moralistic ideals, which are in fact nothing but the capitalist ideology’s latent thought of accumulation (ibid: 11-53). On this regard, ideologies need institutions and organs to channel these ‘ideals’ to the subjects. These institutions combine, among the many state institutions like the religious institutions and the press, they also combine school and other educational institutions, or what Althusser calls for the Ideological State Apparatuses, ISA (Althusser, 2008: 1-60).

The theory of ideology, however, exclusively focuses on the configuration of the relations within the capitalist system. What it does not dwell upon is the intertwining of the colonial dimension within the structures of power in the context of post-colonial states, where the relations of power (ideology) are also defined by colonial structure which cannot only be reduced to capitalism. The elites or the dominant groups are not only defined by the capitalist structure(s) but also by other relations of domination and dispossession like post-coloniality (c.f. Hardy, 2016). The content of ideology is not the focus of this thesis; however the context of
Syria should not be disconnected or even discussed without acknowledging the relation between ideology and the history of colonialism.

In the writings of many scholars and experts in the topic of terrorism, despite the accurate depiction of how terrorism has evolved and changed its strategies and philosophy over time, there is an obvious relegation of the social and economic and political circumstances surrounding the context for its emergence. The stance these scholars take by distancing their studies from the materialist context of the emergence of the terrorist groups can be seen as reproducing the ideological construct.

In other words, the approach that research of studying terrorism takes can also be divided into two categories on the basis of their epistemological premises. On the one hand, the critical studies of terrorism, as discussed above, show how terrorism is being constructed and used to serve powers (c.f. Herman and O’Sullivan, 1989 on how state’s experts produce the image and understanding of terrorism which feeds the presumption needed for hegemonic ends, and Naomi Klein, 2005 on how terrorism is being politically used to pass other accumulative ends). This approach critically tackles power relations but only in the discursive construction of terrorism and its uses. When we read critical theories of ideologies, we understand how terrorism has emerged as the villain and the ‘enemy’ of the global, and that systems of power work actively in portraying it as the enemy of the global welfare and stability. As many scholars argue, terrorism has become a tool or a weapon for the ideology to maintain the status quo, and to benefit from the phenomenon of terrorism to achieve political ends (Herman and O’Sullivan, 1989, Yousef and Mohammad, 2005).

On the other hand, we have the descriptive research which could also be described as ontological and which ‘neutrally’ investigates the genealogy, history, and evolvement of terrorism and terrorist organizations (cf. Hoffman, 2006, Neumann, 2016, Treverton and Hoffman, 1990). What can be noticed in many writings of the most prominent scholars and experts in this line of researching terrorism, like Peter Neumann and Bruce Hoffman that the focus is not on the motivations and the causations of these insurgencies following the ontological line of discussing terrorism (Neumann, 2016, Hoffman, 2006). Their works, in other words, is focused on the ontology, the philosophy and modes of operation, and the genealogies of the
terrorist groups, while distancing the ideological from their analysis of terrorism. When they do discuss ideology, the common characteristic in these works is that they tend to treat ideology as relevant to understanding terrorism in terms of religious doctrines as motivating and endowing terrorist actions.

Despite the accuracy of Neumann’s and Hoffman’s analysis, what their formulation of the terrorism seems to do is to supply the ideological with what it needs, with what makes Islamic terrorism as an eminent fear, a fear that has become, to borrow from Zygmunt Bauman, “liquid fear” (Bauman, 2013), a fear which exists in all the corners of life and which needs subsequently securitization everywhere. We can see similar patterns of how ideologies use and construct terrorism for political, hegemonic, and accumulative ends. They perpetuate it as Neumann does as something which is unending, as something that exists everywhere and waiting for the right moment to hit (Neumann, 2016: 40). In addition to that, ontological studies of terrorism depict it as something out of time, as something medieval (Ibid. 33). Bruce Hoffman’s work Inside Terrorism (2006), for example, although gives accurate description of the genealogy of the different forms and tactics of terrorist groups, it does not attend to the pain of the aggrieved people from which terrorism emerges. His treatment of the Islamic terrorism in specific is concomitantly relegating all other factors that motivated individuals within these organizations to follow them and only construct them as Islamic motivated (Gupta, 2005).

Further, they unify doctrine of Islamic terrorism to be centered on the concept of jihad (Neumann, 2016). In addition to that, they depict terrorism as a global phenomenon threatening global welfare and peace, thus yielding this phenomenon as something that needs gathered global forces to combat, without engaging with the reasons for its proliferation. For instance, Peter Neumann argues that Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have only been the manifestations of a wider social, political, and religious movement whose ideas and networks have spread and taken root in countries around the globe (Neumann, 2016: XV). It might be true that many jihadists and terrorist groups are gathering around the ideological implications of jihad, a concept that legitimizes the usage of violence in very specific and constrained cases, a concept that has become so much distorted along the other distortions in post-colonial states, yet, ideologies are working to a certain extent to misrepresent these organizations by painting them all as jihadist,
while in fact their members can have different motivations ranging from self-interest to collective interest (Gupta, 2005). These acts of unifying this insurgency as Islamic can be seen as disorientating the public to believe in a thing which is not exactly is and simultaneously, misdirect the public policy (Maleckova, 2005). We notice in Neumann’s writing also how Jihadism is constructed as something unstoppable and at the same time as something creeping to the modern world and which will cause instability. For example, in Neumann’s writings, he presents the doctrine of Salafism as a danger waiting for the right time and space to start its revolution (Neumann, 2016: 40). He also tends to unify the religiously motivated violence as having one rationale as something out of time and mythical (ibid.).

In addition to labeling most forms of religious terrorism in the “Fourth Wave” and further as Islamic and thereby all terrorist as jihadists, Neumann also constructs a moral hierarchy between the terrorists/Islamism and modernity. Neumann refers to liberal ideals such as global peace, stability and present Islamic terrorism as a threat and fundamentally different from the way they describe the western way of living. Yousef and Mohammad (2005) refer to this discursive construction where liberal standards such as democracy, liberty and peace are used to construct a certain image of terrorism as patriotic model of modernity. According to them this construction of the image of terrorism is further reproduced by a litany of myths and fabrications which have been built up to justify Western interests and policy. The moral evaluation this type of writings pass, an evaluation that takes its reference point from current ‘modern’ standards, constructs the danger of terrorism as an opposing power to the current processes of modernity and global welfare (Neumann, 2016: XV), which in itself represents an autonomous, self-generating power sweeping all communities and that cannot be stopped by short-term measures without uprooting its philosophy (ibid.).

Neumann’s treatment of the “Fourth Wave” of terrorism and further, delineates the contrast between Europeans and non-Europeans. The way Neumann describes how Islamic terrorism hitting leisure places in European cities and connect those atrocities to ISIS and other Middle Eastern terror groups gives the impression that although terrorism is a continuity of violence, the Islamic terrorism is something else. It appears in his writing, and especially the way it is categorized as the Fourth Wave, as different type of threat creeping to the west, a threat
which is characterized with savagery and out-of-timeness as the circulated picture about the beheadings and brutal actions of terror groups in the Middle East show.

Moreover, the diagnosis about the religious wave of terrorism dated to 1979 according to many scholars like David Rappoport, and Peter Neumann describes that Islamic Terrorism is the most prominent ideological terror in it (Neumann, 2017, Rapoport, 2013). Peter Neumann explains what it is to be Islamist in contrast to be a Muslim. “Islamism was born when Islam encountered Western-style modernity” (Neumann, 2017: 35). It is with this particular differentiation between “Western-styled modernity” and others, regardless if the writer is supportive of western modernity or not, the idea of Europe or the west and the other’s violence emerges. It is with this differentiation between the western forms of violence anarchist, anti-colonial, and the new left versus Islamism, jihadism, and Islamic terrorism the peculiar ideological discourse emerges in Neumann’s writings.

In other words, the way Neumann and other schools of thoughts categorize terrorism; the peculiar idea of the contrast between Islamic terrorism and other forms of terrorism emerges, especially when they connect the Islamic terrorism to the society from which it is emerging. This can be shown in how Neumann presents the social movements for change within Arabic/Islamic territories as providing the right milieu for jihadist movements (Neumann, 2016; 46).

In addition to labeling most of the Fourth Wave terrorism as Islamic and all terrorist as jihadists, Neumann also construct a moral hierarchy between the terrorists/Islamism and modernity. The moral evaluation this type of writings pass, an evaluation that takes its reference point from current ‘modern’ standards, constructs the danger of terrorism as an opposing power to the current processes of modernity and global welfare (Neumann, 2016: XV), which in itself represents an autonomous, self-generating power sweeping all communities and that cannot be stopped by short-term measures without uprooting its philosophy (ibid.). In the writings of Neumann, Islamic terrorism is also being constructed as an approaching and unstoppable threat. He compares the “population of ISIS” to that of the members of the United Nations and state that ISIS has a larger population than half the members of the United Nations (Neumann, 2016: 75). What is the purpose of this comparison, one wonders. This kind of comparing of the size of population of people living under ISIS with the population of Western states is also recurrent in
other writing (Cockburn, 2015: 27). We notice from Neumann’s analysis of the fourth wave of radicalization, i.e. the Jihadist movement, the focus on this movement is only on the religious background. In other words, Neumann describes the genealogy of this wave and which scholars affected and supported this wave with little attention to why they started to do this. His sole explanation was that it wanted to establish a pure society and to participate in the political life but not allowed. (Neumann, 2016: 33-40).

Furthermore, Neumann insists on depicting the underlying logic of the “Fourth Wave” of terrorism as Islamic and that it has difference in tactics in comparison to earlier forms. For him, Islamic terrorism has adopted the same logic of the “propaganda by the deed”, “lone wolves” and the idea of violence as symbolic cathartic. Neumann’s treatment of terrorism argues that this movement has mobilized a younger generation, pursued similar but far further-reaching ends, founded new institutions and employed even more extreme methods than were seen before (ibid: 57). He focuses on the salient trends in terrorism and the scale of destruction and bloodshed terrorist individual and organizations incur and rationally choose.

Similar line of argumentation and depiction of terrorism is also present in Bruce Hoffman’s writings. Hoffman also focuses on the scale of horror religious terrorist groups cause depicting individual terrorists and terrorist groups as rationally choosing their tactics without much focus on the motivations and the grievances, on which these groups base their resort to violence (Hoffman, 2006; 83). Moreover, although Hoffman mentions state-sponsored terrorism like in the case of the French Revolution (Hoffman, 2006), he does not engage with how contemporary terrorism can be the work of the states which can cause the emergence of terrorism and create and orientate its causes. In the writings of Bruce Hoffman (2006), one of the most prominent scholars on the issue of terrorism, we see similar patterns of modernity ideals. This patriotic model of modernity ideal in research which is based on the liberal standards such as democracy, liberty and peace constructs a certain image of terrorism, which is further reproduced by a litany of myths and fabrications which have been built up to justify Western interests and policy (Yousef and Mohammad, 2005).
What this construction of terrorism that Neumann’s and Hoffman’s writing implicate is that it separates terrorism from its political environment in the way they do not take into consideration the state’s active role in manipulating terrorism, and in the way they do not attend to the pain of the aggrieved people, while at the same time treat it as autonomous, and the terrorists as rational actors. This construction is based on western criteria of modernity and rationality which also creates an image of the Arab Islamic culture as a suitable breeding ground for terrorism.

The purpose of this section is not to reconstruct Islamic terrorism as something moralistic, or as a legitimate reaction, the purpose is rather to argue that ontological studies on terrorism are in most cases reproducing the ideological and that their ontological view on Islamic terrorism reflects the “given inherent barbarism of the Arab culture that has been universalized in the form of Islam” (Khan, 2006; 153), especially that Islamic terrorism, since 9/11 has been actively viewed as “value imperialism”, and that the ontological view on the Arab/Islamic culture sees it as inherently barbaric culture which generates terrorism (ibid.) besides being orientalist in their representation of Islamic terrorism (Bassil, 2018).

7.2. Causality

Both the critical ideological perspective and the descriptive or ontological perspective on terrorism that I have discussed previously, can be considered as reproductive of the construct since they do not dwell on the motivations of terrorism as argued by Khan (2006) in his critique of Bruce Hoffman. Besides taking modernity ideals like ‘global security and welfare’ they do not yield much explanation about the motivations and causes of the terrorist insurgency. Therefore, I argue that studying the causality of terrorism would provide us with more concrete explanations around how ideologies distort our understanding of terrorism.

There is a general assumption among the research on terrorism that trying to identify its root causes is a naïve idea because the more deep-rooted the cause the more general it becomes and the less directly connected to terrorism it appears (Bjorgo, 2005; 2). An example of these deep-rooted causes is modernization and globalization which have both positive and negative effects besides that it cannot be removed. (ibid)
Why do we need to understand the causes of terrorism then? Because if we don’t address the conditions that produce it and provide fertile ground for its proliferation, then the war on terrorism will only produce more terrorism. In addition to that, defining the real roots of terrorism might enable us to stop it before it happens.

How we understand the discourses of terrorism, as it has become linked to Islamic communities, also has implications on the securitization of migration. Anti-migration discourses often espouse migrants, especially those coming from the Middle East, with savagery and security threat (Svenska Dagbladet, 2017, Miller, 2016). This argument of securitization has been used to erect walls in the face of migrants who die in thousands in their ways to the ‘safe haven’ of the west. This question of relation between the securitization of migration and the discursive image of terrorism is acute. As we have argued have previously, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the outbreak of Arab Spring migrants, and the engendered migratory waves to Europe, anti-migration discourses perceive migrants as threat and often espouse them savagery (Svenska Dagbladet, 2017, Miller, 2016). This argument of security, among other arguments, has been used to erect walls in the face of migrants who die in thousands in their ways to the ‘safe haven’ of the west.

Therefore, by defining the roots causes of terrorism, we will be able to create a counter argument to these politics of fear and securitization in addition to dismantle systems of powers which I see as the main cause for this phenomenon of terrorism, whether ideologically or materialistically. We need to understand the causes of terrorism in order to investigates whether ideology, drawing on Althusser argument, creates the material conditions for the emergence of terrorism and thus for the reproduction of the ideologies (Althusser, 2008). By this understanding we might be able to deconstruct the dichotomy of migrants/threat, and thereby provide a stronger counter-argument against anti-migratory discourses.

7.2.1. How have the causes of Islamic terrorism been theorized?
Tore Bjorgo (2005) classifies terrorism as terrorism from above (state terrorism) and another from below. The terrorism from below can be left-wing revolutionary terrorism and religiously motivated one (as discussed in section 6) and regardless of its form, its outcomes are the
combinations of different factors (Bjorgo, 2005; 2). Indeed, none of the causes of terrorism are mutually exclusive in the sense that most of the approaches to the causality of terrorism can be borrowing from each other. Rather than explaining terrorism as a result of a single cause these explanations often portray a multifaceted picture of the causes of terrorism. Nevertheless, studies on terrorism focus and privilege different causes.

The most prominent causes of Islamic Terrorism can be explained by three categories of theories. These categories combine both individual and structural explanations as causes for terrorism. Structural causes include socio-economic variables like modernization, poverty and deprivation which are seen among the most salient causes for the emergence of the phenomenon of terrorism.

7.2.1.1. The politico-socio-economic variable

One line of research on the causes of terrorism sees in the socio-economic factors the major explanation for the emergence of terrorism. Many studies consider the dearth of democracy (especially in the Middle East) which prevents certain opposition groups from expressing themselves as a cause of terrorism. In many cases poverty and lack of social justice and law enforcement seem to be among the most prominent factors for terrorism. One of the explanations in this approach sees in the deterioration of socio-economic conditions and the perceived inequities caused by the capitalist system as main instigators for the terrorist actions carried out by some groups. These inequities are manifested in the economic corruption of both internal economic elites and international economic powers (Yousef and Mohammad, 2005).

These factors are also relevant in the case of terrorism in Pakistan as advanced by Syed et al. (2015) and Haider et al. (2015) who see in the low public expenditure on schools and education, the weak law enforcement, and the penetration of the countries policy by foreign actors result in increased terrorist activities in Pakistan. Also in the case of terrorism in South Asia as discussed by Ghulam et al., the causes of the increase of terrorism are ascribed to socio-economic and political factors which are linked to poverty and class struggle (2014). Also in the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria (Ogunrotifa, 2013) examines the endemic socio-economic problems caused by global capitalism and describe them as factors behind this insurgency.
In this approach, Marx’s historical materialism is argued to be pivotal to study the motivations behind the proliferation of the terrorist groups. In other words, this approach sees in the modes of the current capitalist system a main reason for the emergence of these insurgencies especially that this system bases itself on a flawed supposition as argued by Zizek (1989) in the way it does not consider the broad circumstances for the appearance of the body ready to deliver. This is what many Marxist scholars call for the historical materialism which is being relegated from the equation of the capitalist global order from which terrorism emerges as an embodiment of that distortion of socio-economic relations.

It will be relevant here to additionally bring in Baudrillard’s diagnosis of 9/11 as a phenomenon which represents the structural deficiency of the capitalist system or what he calls the fissure (Baudrillard, 2001), a fissure that belies the ideology of the capitalist system in the sense that it relegates the different conditions for the emergence of the laborers ready to deliver work and focuses on the equation of worked hours/ wages/ liberty instead according to (Zizek, 1989).

Among the structural causes that have been studied as motivational for terrorism is the facilitator or the accelerator. This line of thoughts consider modern news media, transportation, weak state control of territory, the international circumstances which make it easy to employ terrorist methods as the components of these causes (Bjorgo, 2005).

### 7.2.1.2. The Psycho-sociological Approach and the rational actors

In their research on the psychological causes behind the insurgents’ tendency to commit terrorist acts, Post, et al. (2009) argue that terrorists do not show any striking psychopathology and that their psychological motivations might however be described either as acting for the collective benefit, or the altruism, or out of personal despair (ibid) which has also been argued by Um (2011).

In this case, when the accumulated grievances emerging from structural causes are channeled and translated by ideologues and/or political leaders, psychological motivations emerge as the causes for terrorism. This is also discussed by Ali Khan (2006) in his criticism of
Hoffman’s ontological approach to terrorism (1998) who does not take into consideration the accumulated grievances of people committing terrorist acts.

These psychological causes can be also channeled by the triggering causes of momentous or provocative events, a political calamity or some other events that call for revenge or action like in the case of the “Bloody Sunday” where British soldiers massacred people in Belfast in (1972) and which resulted in IRA’s reaction to this massacre by a wave of bombardment (Bjorgo, 2005).

Among the other psychological motivations discussed as causes of terrorism is the crisis of confidence, conflict of legitimacy, and crisis of legitimacy are also considered as psychological causes in the way pave the way for radicalization (Yousef and Mohammad, 2005). In other words, terrorism is discussed as the outcome of a profound de-legitimization that a large number of people undergo in relation to the established social and political order (ibid) which is in fact related, to the alleged fear that the West undermines and threatens the social and cultural identity of certain people (Neumann, 2016, Moughadam, 2004, Mashuri and et.al. 2016).

This line of thought sees in the radicalization and the affiliation to terrorism and terrorist groups a rational act committed as a self-identification mechanism. This is shown by a study on doctors and health cadres joining terrorist groups (Vogel, 2016) and by Jurgen Todenhöfer’s interview with Abu Qatadah (or the German Christian) who, despite being highly qualified, finds in joining ISIS as a jihadist a way for identification (Todenhöfer, 2016).

There is also an extensive work on the acts of radicalization as a rational act for self-identification among the individual who join terrorist groups. The acts of radicalization among the British youth for example, shows a case of how societies can alienate individual and thus these individuals tend to seek their identity and inclusion by joining such organizations which open their arms and doors for the international recruits (Robinson, et al., 2017).

Also rational acts of radicalization, the motivation for these acts can also be to bring justice to the collective community as in the case of Palestinian suicide-bombers. Ali Khan’s *Theory of International Terrorism* (2006) argues that acts of humiliation and accumulated grievances caused by colonial powers are very important motivations for the act of terrorism. He
mentions how Palestinians tend to commit violent acts against the Israeli settlers due to a history of grief and humiliation that has bestowed upon them (ibid).

Still, it might be true that terrorists do not show striking psychological pathologies as discussed by Bjorgo (2005) and Hoffman (2006) and that they act out of rational motivations, however, this fine line of differentiation between what is rational and what is irrational or psychopathologic is something that needs further investigation which is a research topic on its own right. What can be said, however, that what is rational for one might be pathological for another. Frantz Fanon provides an example of the socially constructed nature of what is considered pathological in discussing the honor culture and the honor of the tribe or the Assabiya that Ibn Khaldoun has discussed extensively as an emotional rationality which might be diagnosed as pathologic (Fanon, 2004, Ahmed, 2005). In other words, Fanon Franz’s canonic analysis of the post-colonial Algeria shows how the cultural dimension of honor is essential in diagnosing the tendency for violence among aggrieved people who suffer from severe psychological issues (Fanon, 2004).

Nevertheless, stating that terrorists are rational and not pathologic can be refuted if we consider how their ‘rationality’ in radicalization and committing terrorist acts is bound. In other words, when Bjorgo argues that terrorists are rational actors, the idea of rationality seems to be connected to the terrorists’ rational argument through which they explain their motivations of committing the violent act. However, as Um argues, the rationality of the terrorists is bound and conditional to irrational memories (2011). In other words, when terrorists connect their rational acts of destruction and killing to traumas and grievances, this connection sounds rational. However, the element of grievances and traumas, which often not considered by ontological studies according to (Khan, 2006), is in itself irrational, and thereby the equation that terrorists acts are rational is refuted because as Um argues, it is a bound rationality (Um, 2011). One interesting thing that is worth being mentioned here is how terrorist acts committed by white individuals are exempted from terrorism by the argument of psychopathology and irrationality shown in the case of Stephen Paddock who shot more than fifty people in Las Vegas (BBC, 2017) but this is not our point of discussion and is in itself a topic of social psychology that can be investigated separately.
8. What is understudied in these theories?

8.1. Understanding the Syrian context through ideology and orientation

It might be true that the causes which engendered terrorism in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries in the wake of the Arab Spring can be ascribed to the aforementioned socio-economic and political factors or the psychological motivations as discussed in section 7.2. We can read the work of Patrick Cockburn (2015), how ISIS members are discussed to have revolted in this gruesome way due to the economic conditions and political alienation, or due to the psychological motivations represented in the dis-identification and re-identification among international ‘jihadist’ of different social ranks as discussed by Jorgen Todenhöfer (2016), or as an act of revenge for the grievances caused by the ruthless military regime discussed by Glass (2016), or even as a criminal activity hiding behind an announced political and religious motivation (Hassan and Weiss, 2016, Um, 2011). However, the journalistic works developed in regards to the proliferation of Islamist and terrorist groups in the wake of the Syrian revolution brings in another dimension which I argue for not having a theoretical explanation. The causes for the emergence of terrorism and terrorist activities in that context combine another dimension of causality that has not been discussed or identified in theories around the causality of terrorism. By using journalistic reports on the activities of different terror groups in Syria, the thesis aims to develop a new critical concept to explain the causes of the emergence of these groups.

What seems to be missing whether in the theories of causality or ideology on the one hand, and in the ontological studies on terrorism on the other hand, is how powers actively orientate the terrorist organizations and its personnel, and how terrorism serves not only a ideological discursive function, but also political and economic function. In our case here, in the context of Islamic terrorism in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries, theories studying the ideological construct of terrorism and its usage, in addition to research on the causality of terrorism fail to grasp the fact that powers have orientated and created the pre-conditions for the genesis of terrorism. In addition to that, what is understudied in the causality of terrorism is how the sustaining terrorism is conducted by states and functional for the state.
This dimension about the causality that the thesis is trying to advance sees in states and relations of power a creator and designer of terrorism. In other words, although states and systems of power are structurally deficient (Zizek, 1989, Baudrillard, 2001) and the outcomes of this deficiency can be seen as causes for the emergence of terrorism and terrorist activities as discussed in chapter 7, yet, the state has an active role in the structuring of terrorism. I will turn to the theories of ideology and orientation which can help us to understand how terrorism is orientated within the ideological structure in next section.

I believe combining these theories would provide a more substantial understanding of the causes of terrorism in the Syrian context that the previous theories could not deliver. In later sections, I will use the journalistic works produced in the Syrian context to analyze the functioning of the ideological orientation in the context of the emergence of Islamic terrorism.

The theoretical argument advanced in this thesis lends from two theories to construct the concept of ‘ideological orientation’ which yields a tool to help to conduct the analysis. This concept is borrowed both from Althusser’s theory and the Marxian tradition of ideology (Althusser, 2008; Zizek, 1989) and Sara Ahmed’s theory of orientation (Ahmed, 2006).

Starting by the latter, Ahmed’s concept of orientation explains how bodies emerge as an effect of the different materialist relations in which bodies find their anchoring points that form the orientation these bodies take and direct their conscious decisions to pursue a certain path (Ahmed, 2006). The theoretical concept of “orientation” advanced by Sara Ahmed (2006) yields a very useful tool that can provide a multifaceted explanation about terrorism in the Syrian context in the way it situates the relationality of spatiality and corporeality in the making of bodies and their choices. In other words, Ahmed’s argument about how the materialist reality creates “the orientation point from which the worlds unfolds: the here of the body and the where of its dwelling” (ibid. 8) can explain why certain bodies tend (become orientated) to use violence and terrorist methods.

Yet, Ahmed’s concept of orientation alone does not explain the dimension of power, in the analysis which the theory on ideology dwells upon. Ahmed’s theory is not sufficient to
discuss how relations to the world and its material figuration are defined by the ruling groups. Therefore, I will fuse Ahmed’s concept with Althusser’s concept of ideology. If we combine Ahmed’s analysis of the spatial and materialist relations to the corporal figuration with Althusser’s concept of the materiality of ideology, and how ideology constructs the material life through its apparatuses including the state, we can develop a more comprehensive understanding on how terrorism can be designed and managed by states and powers.

Althusser (2008) defines ideology as the system of ideas and representations and relations stemming from the thoughts of the ruling systems and imposes itself on the conditions of relations between people and things as a natural relation. In addition to that, ideology has ideological apparatuses at its disposal, which Althusser calls for Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). These apparatuses work to reproduce the ideal of the ideology and create the material on which ideologies can further their system of relations. The creation of the material conditions within which ideologies can function with ease is what Althusser calls for the materiality of ideology. The theory of ideology advanced by Althusser argues that ideology reproduces the material conditions which will reproduce the imaginative discourses of ideology. In other words, powers create conditions for the social construct to emerge the way it fits the ideological discourses. If we combine Althusser’s argument about the materiality of ideology and Sara Ahmed’s theoretical argument about how materials orientate bodies in the context of terrorism, we can see an ideological orientation towards terrorism.

Althusser argues, knowledge is something mediated and constructed to fit the idea of the elites through infiltrating the school system or what Althusser calls for the Ideological State Apparatuses ISA, (2008). Ideology reproduces its materialistic relations through its apparatuses, one of them being knowledge production. Therefore, knowledge production both in the media and political discussion and in academia is conceived as reproductive of the relation on which ideology bases its imagination. The relationship between ideology and scholarly writing has been discussed in the previous section, therefore the focus will be directed next to how the materiality of ideology can be seen to unfold in the context of Syria. I am aware that this thesis is also discursively produced, and cannot be reflecting the world “as it is”. However, the aim is to
provide a multifaceted understanding based on critical examination of existing theories, and therefore a qualified explanation that can be fruitful for the understanding of terrorism as a phenomenon.

In order to understand and explain the ideological processes in Syria, I am providing three concepts. Drawing from the previous discussions on Althusser and Sara Ahmed I advance the notions of ideological orientation, premeditation and structural necessity to help us understand how the production of terrorism and ideology are intertwined in the context of Syria.

8.2. Deterministic Ideological orientation

If we agree with Tore Bjorgo’s argument that terrorism is not created by the state and that it needs pre-conditions if the state wants to monopolize, trigger, or sustain terrorism (Bjorgo, 257-260), how can we then understand the creation of the pre-conditions? How would then the acts of imprisonment of people and the torture and degradation in the ideological apparatuses of the prisons they face whether in Iraq or in Syria be understood? What does it mean to confiscate some bodies freedom for ten months ‘by mistake’ and detain them without being given the chance of defending themselves and explain their positions as in the case of Al-Baghdadi discussed by Weiss and Hassan (2016)? How would a person imprisoned mistakenly and tortured with the most savage methods turn out? In this section I will discuss empirical cases of imprisonment, humiliation and contingent release of prisoners and international funding of terrorist groups which explicate how the processes of ideological orientation of terrorism figure in the context of the engendered terrorism in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries.

From the materials I have used in this investigation I could find many indications about how states create the pre-conditions for terrorism. One of the ways in which states have affected and orientated people who have later turned to terrorism is through the use of imprisonment. Post-colonial regimes have manipulated the emotions of the people and made them fall to the trap of their emotions to later on imprison them, torture them, and made them as ready explosive materials. We see in Weiss’s and Hassan’s account how the Syrian and ex-Iraqi dictators have orientated the people who wanted to resist the American occupation to Iraq in 2004 by facilitating the travel of local men and even other international resistance fighters to Iraq, to later
imprison them upon their return. They put these people to prisons where they faced the most horrible types of tortures as the many reports on these prison show (Human Rights Watch, 2005) where they, among the many sadistic methods of tortures, faced electrodes and psychological manipulation. They turned these people into something that they can control and deploy the way these regimes and ideologies wish.

In Saydnaya prison for example, prisoners are counted as dead because of the horror they experience there. So many reports about this prisons were released (Amnesty International, 2016) where the methods of torture resemble Naomi Klein’s description of the shock therapy in the way electrodes and psychological de-patterning are practiced upon the people to turn them into a white paper ready to be written upon with whatever fits the ideology (Klein, 2007). Also in the infamous US-led prisons in Iraq prisoners face the most sadistic sorts of torture (Human Rights Watch, 2005, Puar, 2007), which if it would do anything, it would turn them into monsters. Abu Baker Al-Baghdadi (who becomes the leader of ISIS) was imprisoned in the American led prison in Iraq, Camp Bucca, where he was mistakenly imprisoned (Weiss and Hassan, 2016). Regardless of the type of torture he and other inmates have faced, he was deprived of his freedom for almost a year with no legal accusation or law enforcement processes. He, in other words, was treated as a brute, a state of being that many detainees during the protests in Syria have also experienced, and was relegated to the level of nothing. How do we then understand the pre-conditions for terrorism if not as the work of states?

This explanation dwells on the individual levels and not all the members of the different terrorist organizations wither in Syria or in other Middle Eastern countries have experienced--although we do not know who among the people committing those brutal acts of beheading and rape attended those prisons. Yet, those acts of ideological orientation figure also on the collective level in the way they orientate and disorientate the masses by certain political articulations that if it did anything, it deepened the wound and the grief.

During the early months of the protests in Syria in 2011, the international community had a very asymmetric positioning from the crimes Assad and his allies committed against the civilians long before armed groups started to appear (Glass, 2016). During that time, world leaders gave promises and statements about the support of the Syrian cause and the necessity to
make Assad step down (ibid). They gave the people in Syria an impression that their calls are heard and their agony is observed, which is reflected in the labels local coordination committees gave to the demonstrations some of which will be mentioned in a chronological order from the first demonstration in Mars 2011 to December 2011. The Friday of Dignity, the Friday of Glory, the Friday of Durability, the Friday of Determination, The Good Friday, the Friday of Rage, the Friday of Confrontation, the Friday of the Freewomen of Syria, the Friday of Azadi (a Kurdish word for freedom), the Friday of Home Guards, the Friday of the Children of Freedom, the Friday of the Tribes, the Friday of Saleh Al-Ali (for the honor of an Alawite historic figure), the Friday of the Detainees of Freedom, the Friday of the Signs of Victory, the Friday of Rather Death than Humiliation, the Friday of International Protection, The Friday of The National Council Represents Me, the Friday of No-Fly Zone, etc.

Those names coincide with international political statements and the content of the names of these Fridays reflects those utterances. For example in August 11th 2011 Barack Obama made a statement demanding Assad to step down which was also backed by other countries (Ukman and Sly, 2011, Usborne and Wright, 2011. The name of the Friday following this event - Signs of Victory - reflects this statement. On another occasion in December 2011, the statement by the United Nations high commissioner calling for international action to protect the civilians in Syria was followed by a direct demand by the demonstrators toward the international community to provide for a buffer zone by calling the following Friday the Friday of No-Fly Zone (Bakri, 2011).

We can see that these utterances by the international community orientated the scene towards believing that something will happen and that confrontation is an indispensable step. I participated in all these demonstrations and I can recall the context and the circumstances for this labeling. They came as interactive responses to the promises, lies, double-moralities, and the identifiable schemes being woven in the international forums, such as maintaining the regime of Assad as Israel-friendly regime, which can also be seen in Israeli official statements about the threat Israel facing with the outbreak of the Arab Spring (Danahar, 2013). As a participant in these demonstrations, I experienced how the labels of demonstrations reflect the ideological
orientation of the subjects who, ironically would not be the ones receiving international endorsements, but rather the dictator regime which still until this moment holds its representation in the international forums.

Later on, this international positioning appeared to be suspicious and uncertain about the nature of the atrocities being committed in that spot of the globe. In other words, after the international community created the hope for the people that some change will be brought by utterances of supporting the civil demands and drawing red-lines on what Assad regime is tolerated to do, the international community has gradually started to change its rhetoric from totally believing in the causes of the people-- with the huge data being spread on the internet about the massacre being committed-- to uncertainty about the nature of the crime and whether it is being committed by Assad or by somebody else. Take for example the repeated visits to Syria by UN deploys who have failed not only to reach a political settlement but also failed to give a diagnosis about who is committing the crime in the Syrian scene despite the fact that it is only the Syrian regime and its international allies are the ones who had the military and arms in Syria during the early stages of protest (Glass, 2016).

This asymmetric position of supporting the demands and causes of the people and projecting them as legitimate on one day, only to withdraw the support on another, while simultaneously labeling the conflict as a civil war have projected the conflict as a conflict between two equal sides (Glass, 2016). In other words, the term civil war seems to equalize between the criminal and the criminalized. In addition to that, the statements made by the international community by disowning Assad gave empty promises to endorse and sanction the claims of the people and support oppositional forces with weapons on one day, only to deny this support on the other day (Glass, 2016) can be seen as orientating the masses and contributing for creating the pre-conditions for terrorism and violence in general.

If we agree with Bjorgo that terrorism is not state-created and that it needs the pre-conditions to crystalize in this form of terrorism or in the other, those politics of orientating the space into believing that there is ‘no justice on earth and that we need to make justice by our own hands’, as the argument of many terrorist goes, in addition to deceive the public with false promises which have prepared the people for armed struggle as their claims appeared to be
legitimate, can only be seen to create the pre-conditions for the proliferation of violence and emergence of terrorism. In other words, those deluding politics can be seen as ideological orientation devices the way they orientate the people into believing that their causes are proved legitimate, to later disorientate the people with politics of uncertainty about the nature of their causes. This orientation and dis-orientation, would yield bodies into empty paper ready to be filled with anything powers dictate upon them. These orientation and disorientation processes resembles again Naomi Klein’s discussion of the shock doctrine practiced on Iraqi’s upon the invasion of Iraq in 2004 where the shock doctrine worked on “de-patterning “ the people and prepare them to accept any solution, or projects that would fit into the schemes of the hegemon (Klein, 2007).

Thereby, if politics create these materialistic conditions of orientation, dis-orientation, and reorientation, as demonstrated in the asymmetric international community’s articulation about the nature of the massacre in Syria, then how bodies orientate themselves amidst these relations cannot be seen as totally independent from politics, ideologies and systems of power. Also, if Bjorgo’s argument about the pre-conditions that facilitate the emergence of terrorism are independent form the state and powers’ creation of terrorism, then we cannot but oppose Bjorgo by saying that it is the state and power relations who create these very pre-conditions not the other way around. How would then the acts of imprisonment of people and the torture and degradation in the ideological prisons they face in these places wither in Iraq or in Syria be understood? What does it mean to confiscate some body’s freedom for ten months by mistake and detain them without any judicial rights or without being given the chance of defending themselves and explain their position? What does it mean to imprison people mistakenly and torture them with the most savage method one can imagine? These acts can only be understood as creating the pre-conditions for those people to be triggered by any event.

By the same token, the emotions of humiliation that states triggered and provoked in already aggrieved societies, and the denial of existence/ indifference towards their claims can also be seen as orientative devices or emotional orientative devices in other contexts of the Middle East. The thesis as argued earlier, does not aim to give explanation about all forms of Islamic Terrorism, but the following example is worth mentioning to demonstrate how the
ideological orientates the conditions and create the pre-conditions for the emergence of terrorism. Although Palestine is technically a separate case from Syria, yet, and as argued earlier, the people in the Middle East do not consider it as different and their societal and political endeavors are the same. In addition to that, many terrorists, who have Arabic roots, use the pretext of the occupied Palestine to commit their attacks against the west (Hassan and Weiss, 2016). Therefore, the case of Palestine is not separate from the context of producing terrorism within the national borders of Syria.

Nevertheless, the agreement to announce Al-Quds as the capital of Israel can also be seen an intentional act of humiliating not only for Palestinians but also for millions of Muslims and Arabs who see in this place one of their holiest places. Instead of helping the aggrieved populations of Gaza and other territories in Palestine and alleviate the rage of the people, who in many cases identify with the agonies of the Palestinians and radicalize to support them—as we hear from many militants and jihadists-- these acts of disregarding the emotions of those aggrieved people and adding insult to their injury can be seen as an intentional act of humiliation, and thereby repeating the same causes which would lead someday to the acts of radicalization. As the Coptic pope in Egypt states that this act is flouting the emotions of millions of Arab people (Al Jazeera News, 2017). Acts of intentional humiliation and ideological orientation do also figure in the conscious furthering of the colonial heritage as Theresa May celebrates Britain's role in creating Israel and the dispossession and dispersion it entailed after 100 years of the crime (Wintour and Beaumont, 2017). These acts of humiliations and deepening the grievances are caused by both regional and international actors in indirect ways but also in many times, by direct and deliberate acts.

In the Syrian context similar patterns of these emotional orientating devices can be identified. When we read the “on-the-spot” journalistic reportages, we notice that, in contrast to the ontological studies of Neumann and Hoffman, who have relegated this emotional aspect in their works, and in response to Bjorgo’s argument that the states do not create terrorism but maybe sustain it (Bjorgo, 2005:257), we notice that states works actively in creating the pre-conditions and the triggering factors that might lead to terrorist genesis. Glass’s work (2016) indicates to how the processes of international political and diplomatic interference in the Syria
scene orientates, disorientates and re-orientates it. The promises of big powers to supply oppositional forces with arms to resist Assad have created a false hope in the minds of the oppositional political and military forces. These promises can be seen as preparing the scene to open up for violent confrontations. This example can be more clarified when we read how some of the international players have legitimized the Syrian National Council as the representative of the Syrian people but without providing a solid enforcement of this legitimization, and to later on delegitimize this same SNC (ibid. 3-9). These acts can be understood as preparing the people for confrontation without real confrontation. In other words, it left people not able to retreat or to advance, and thereby they become disorientated and made ready to follow the first orientating points they face. This understanding would provide a counter-argument to Bjorgo that states are not responsible for the creation of terrorism because the latter must have pre-conditions to be triggered by the former (Bjorgo, 2005: 257). But is not these international acts and rhetoric of disorientation are creating the pre-conditions?

The international community, on the other side, expressed its ‘worries’ about the ‘civil war’ going on in Syria. It also had a varied stance from the Syrian regime and the social movements. We see in Glass’s work how the U.S and other big powers were one day by the side of the Syrian people legitimizing its oppositional representatives and demanding Assad to step down, to be less supportive of the oppositional forces and more inclined to talk to Assad on the next day (Glass, 2016: 1-90). This act of negotiation with the murderer is also insulting the hundreds of thousands of already aggrieved people.

Later on ISIS and other terrorist organizations captured the scene and appeared as a more serious risk to global peace and security. In 2014, ISIS consolidated its position in an oil-rich area between Mosul in Iraq to the far north eastern side of Syria. They abused and ruthlessly killed people of different ethnicities living in that area, including Christian and Kurds. The international community agreed to wage a war on what it called the Islamic Terrorism, where the Syrian regime, backed by Russia and Iran who provided and participated in the killing and liquidation of protestors and opposition, emerged as a partner in this war.

Nevertheless, if we argue that violence and trauma are one of the causes of the counter-violence and radicalization in among the rebel forces -- as Frantz Fanon's (2004) study on the
psychological effects of colonialism and trauma on the fighters of the FLN (National Liberation Front) in colonial Algeria in 1954 shows – the international community works to further this trauma by attacking terrorism instead of treating its causes, a policy that can be shown in the International Coalition for Fighting ISIS (Global Coalition, 2018). Why has not the international community, terrified and threatened by the ruthlessness of those bloody organizations, interfered to stop the causes for their emergence? Do we see in the utterances of international actors to legitimize or to delegitimize the oppositional forces in Syria an orientating act towards more violence, let alone the international fund? How could the international community agree to conduct a military operation to fight Islamic Terrorism but not to stop the suffering of the dispersed and aggrieved population?

In other words, terrorism is not only emerging as rational, autonomous acts of violence which ideologies are not responsible for, on the contrary, ideologies are responsible for the repetition and reproduction of the same conditions which cause terrorism and its pre-conditions. Ideologies orientate spaces and bodies toward terrorism, not by accident, nor by uncalculated politics, rather with premeditation.

8.3. Premeditation

If we accept Bjorgo’s argument that the state does not design or create terrorism, rather trigger it or sustain it (Bjorgo 257-260), then what can we see in states intentional release of pre-radicalized people in a sensitive times of political chaos?

Three month after the outbreak of the demonstrations in Syria in Mars 2011, the Syrian regime made an amnesty which—not surprisingly-- caused the release of 82 ex-prisoners who were imprisoned for their Salafist and extreme ideologies and practices and whose release marked the beginning of the militarization of the Syrian Revolution (Oudat, 2015, Spencer, 2016). These people were arrested in earlier years for their extreme ideologies and even involvement in jihadi movements whether in Iraq or Afghanistan, and were imprisoned in the infamous Saydnaya prison where they become even more radicalized by the torture they faced in that notorious prison as explained in the previous section. Four among those fanatics and ‘radical Islamists’ figures formed and became the leaders of Islamic terror organizations in the
Syrian scene like Zehran Alloush who became the leader of the Islamic Army (Jaish Al-Islam) (Spencer, 2016), Abu-Mohammad Aljulani, who became the leader of Al-Nusra front (Spencer, 2016, Soufan, 2017, Hassan and Weiss 2016), and Amr Al-abssi, who became the leader of Majlis Shura Al-Mujahideen, and the “Isil kidnapper-in-chief and recruiter of European jihadists” (Spencer, 2016), and Hassan Abboud the leader of Ahrar Al-Sham (ibid).

Those figures, beside their ruthless ideology and opposition of democracy are argued to divert the Syrian revolution into the course of militarization and Islamization which depicted Assad as a prey of international terrorism so that its regime can be saved the scrutiny of the increasing condemnation by the international community. In addition to those organizations, the Syrian regime has also mastered and structured the creation of one of ISIS faction in Syria as a report from Der Spiegel shows (Reuters, 2015).

All these acts can be seen to be premeditated acts to create an abyss of terrorism where the Syrian regime achieves the realization of the ideological construct about the nature of the Middle Eastern spaces being a place for terror and barbarity and that the Syrian regime is the legitimate force which would keep stability in the country.

But not only was the Syrian regime involved in this game. Many international actors have also released radicals after being put into the same circumstance of radicalization similar to Saydnaya Prison (Hassan and Weiss, 2016, Stilwell, 2018) in addition to ‘mistakenly’ dropping aid to ISIS fighters (MacAskill and Chulov, 2014) and supporting ISIS and other terrorist organizations with weaponry (Angelovski, Patrucic, and Marzouk, 2016).

These radicalized individuals who later formed organizations, were funded by many international actors including the Gulf countries, and Turkey, in addition to facilitation of the travel of international ‘jihadists’. We can see in many journalistic investigations that countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and some western countries have financed terrorism and facilitated the travel of jihadi fighters (Glass, 2016, Cockburn, 2015, Todenhöfer, 2016).

This premeditated acts of supplying terrorism with personnel, strategic plans, direct or indirect fund and supply of armory, can only be seen as the work of the state and as the materialistic tool that the state(s) will use for strategic, economic, and hegemonic ends.
8.4. Structural Necessity

I come now to the final discussion of the role of terrorism in the Syrian context. As we can read in the journalistic works, terrorist organizations were intentionally and consciously supplied with political cover, fund, arms and personnel supply. The Al-Nusra front for example, was supplied with fund and political coverage by many Arab countries including Qatar and Saudi Arabia in addition to the U.S. and other European countries (Todenhöfer, 2016: 55). Glass’s work also shows how many international players have supported the activities of terrorist groups in Syria whether with funds or weapons hoping that these organizations will yield a strategic and political influence in the Syrian mark (Glass, 2016). Todenhöfer also argues that big powers were informed about the activities of the emerging terrorist groups (Todenhöfer, 2016: 16) and they even encouraged what became to be called terrorist groups to establish a territorial power that would be a counterpoint to Assad (ibid; 15, Aljazeera, 2016), which in other stances can be interpreted to establish an access to the wealth in that country as demonstrated in Trump’s speech where he openly demands the restoration of the oil-rich points so that terrorist groups will not be able to fund themselves (CNN, 2016). If Naomi Klein’s analysis of how the shock therapy was practiced on the people of Iraq in order to de-pattern them so that they accept the U.S’s neo-liberal policy (Klein, 2007), then Islamic terrorism in Syria can follow the same patterns in the way it legitimizes interference and accumulative ends presented in the Global War on Terror and in Trump’s speech. Presented this way, terrorism in this context emerges as a structural necessity channeled by the ideological to dominate bodies and to exploit spaces.

In addition to the materialist function of creating terrorism, which is to consolidate old regimes, keep the political status quo, and pass ideologies of accumulation and dispossession, Islamic Terrorism has served another role of perpetuating the fear. According to Todenhöfer meeting with Abu Qatadah from ISIS, the beheadings which conducted against the British, American, and Syrian soldiers were communicated to their governments before the act, but these governments deliberately turned a blind eye on (Todenhöfer, 2016:73).
9. Conclusion

To sum, Islamic terrorism has been tackled on the discursive level and shown how it serves politics for aggregating voices to pass certain political agendas of securitization, militarization and dispossession. It has also been studied in the terrain of its economic and psychological effect on societies hit by terrorism. Islamic Terrorism has also been tackled from the causality lens where structural and individual causes have been the most prominent points of focus. However, the terrorism engendered in the wake of Arab Spring does not fit into those theoretical treatments to understand its causes.

By analyzing some of the materials and the journalistic reports produced in the wake of the Arab Spring and in the context of the engendered terrorism in Syria, new indications about the orientative role of ideology have been shown which previous theories need to incorporate in order to reach a more inclusive understanding of the phenomenon. Book length journalist reports produced in the wake of the Arab Spring and the engendered terrorism show strong evidences of the state’s design, creation, and fund of terrorism in order to yield a materialistic function to maintain political status quo. Those indications can be understood and explain terrorism as a political necessity and strategy to maintain systems of power and to provide supply for ideological constructs. In other words, terrorism in this context appears as a structural necessity contrary to the description of being a structural deficiency argued by Baudrillard in the wake of 9/11 (2001) in the way states creates, finance and maintain it.

Based on this analysis, I can now add to the definition of the Islamic terrorism in the Middle Eastern context as a violent back-up plan created, designed, used and perpetuated by the states to serve a function of subjugation and to perpetuate the circle of domination, hegemony and concomitant dispossession. From this perspective, Islamic terrorism can be defined as the state’s violent use of power to coerce and subjugate social demands.

During this investigation, I came through a conceptual issue that I found very problematic and worth further research. There is a general agreement in theories about terrorism that the individual committing terrorist acts are rational actors and do not show psychopathological signs. I found this concept very problematic because the history of accumulated trauma among
colonized people-- shown in Fanon’s study on the colonial subjects in Algeria-- cannot be denied as motivational psychological cause for terrorist acts. In addition to that, the argument of rationality considers the instant explanations by terrorist bodies tendency towards violence act due to vengeance or honor-related issues a rational argument. However, these arguments on rationality can be analyzed and deconstructed from social psychological perspective. Further research is needed on this issue if we want to better understand and be able to combat terrorism.
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