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## The Islamic Khilafa State as a Post-/ Anti-National State Formation: Challenges of the Changing Understanding of 'Citizen' and 'Nation' to Europe

Routinely, people, who have, over the past five years, travelled to Western Asia to settle, are being referred to, in the Western popular discourse, as 'foreign fighters'. Though, admittedly, many among them did join various armed groups, a rather significant part of them did not or even could not have become members of armed groups. This is first of all true of children who travelled with their parents but also young females, in the Western popular parlance pejoratively called 'jihadi brides'. However, even these categories aside, those (young) men who did join armed groups in Syria and Iraq, though they may be identified as 'fighters', may also not be regarded (and certainly many among them do not see themselves) as 'foreign'. As the overwhelming number of people who travelled to West Asia joined the Islamic Khilafa State (IKS), their status in the entity is more of 'naturalized citizens', whose naturalization process is epitomized in the joining of the armed forces of the Islamic Khilafa State. Those, who did not (or could not) join the IKS armed forces, became citizens through pledging allegiance to the khalifa (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) and by performing what they themselves regard as compulsory hijra – relocation from the lands of unbelief to the land of Islam under the declared khilafa. The khilafa project initiated by the Islamic State is a unique phenomenon, not only from the point of view of the theories of international relations but also in respect to the classical notions of state formation and nation building, and puts the conceptualization of citizenship in a new light. As such, it poses new challenges not only from the perspective of narrow military security but also from a much broader one, particularly, to the countries, among them European, the citizens of which forsake their original social contracts for a new one.

### Introduction

There is nothing extraordinary about the emergence of new state formations, either in place of other states or as seceded parts of still existing states.

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The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was ripe with the (re)appearance of over a dozen independent states in Europe alone, with another dozen elsewhere in the world. What is common to all of those states is their nature – they are nation-states,<sup>1</sup> in most cases bearing the name of the titular ethnicity. In other words, by gaining sovereignty, the ethnic groups turned into nations. This, of course, does not mean that the new states are mono-ethnic, but it certainly implies that the narrative of nationhood and statehood is based on the storytelling by the titular ethnicity.

2014, however, presented the world with a surprise – the emergence of a territorial entity – the Islamic Khilafa State (Arabic *dawla al-khilafa al-islamiyya*), which, though it claims statehood by using two words in its official title to confirm its status as a state, is nowhere near the classically understood nation-state. The first word in the original Arabic, *dawla*, is a modern standard term for ‘state’ and should not evoke any uneasiness. There are several Arab countries that use this word in their official name – for instance, the State of Kuwait or the State of Qatar. The second word, *khilafa*, however, is a surprising one as it is a classical term<sup>2</sup> that may be loosely translated as ‘viceroycity’ or ‘viceroysip.’ To make sure that in its nature the new formation profoundly differs from the rest of the contemporary states, the prefix ‘Islamic’ was added by its founding fathers. This, however, is not exceptional, even among today’s states – think of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Mauritania. So, what remains exceptional in the title is the nascent entity’s claim to ‘viceroysip.’

This article, however, is not intended as an analysis, let alone, a critique of the notions of this ‘viceroysip’; nor are its intentions to (de)legitimize the IKS claims to it. It is, rather, about how the emergence and survival of the IKS has affected, or indeed, widened, the perceptions of ‘nation’ (‘nationhood’) and ‘citizen’ (‘citizenship’) in the context of a state formation like the IKS, which is certainly of a non-nation-state type. Though, arguably, this change may be regarded to be only valid for the IKS itself, I dare to consider it as valid to the entire world, and particularly Europe, of which thousands of citizens chose to forsake their original social contracts for the sake of the IKS. Emigration (considered by them a sacred duty of hijra) is only one, arguably, lesser side of the challenge stemming from this changed perception of being a citizen and belonging to a nation. Return migration to Europe of the IKS citizens after its

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<sup>1</sup> Opello W.C., Rosow S.J. (2004) *The Nation-State and Global Order: A Historical Introduction to Contemporary Politics*, Second edition, Lynne Rienner Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy H. (2016) *Caliphate: The History of an Idea*, Basic Books.

dismemberment by the world powers is the other, and bigger, challenge, if not an outright threat. So, this article, besides looking into the changing perception of ‘citizen’ and ‘nation’ that was given lease by the emergence of the IKS, looks into what challenges this change has brought along, specifically in the face of the imminent destruction of the IKS as a state formation.

There is also an implicit aim of this article, which is this: by turning ‘foreign fighters’ from ‘terrorists’ into (naturalized) ‘citizens,’ even if only hypothetical, to challenge the perpetuated pejorative hegemonic popular discourse on the IKS as a mere terrorist group with no statehood (and nationhood) vision.<sup>3</sup> But this probably warrants a disclaimer: the author of this article has no intentions to endorse the IKS as a legitimate state, his sole purpose being to invite a look at the IKS through a normativism-free lens, that is phenomenologically without bias or prejudice. By doing so, one may not only better grasp the many processes going on in relation to it, not least of which is migration of third country nationals to the IKS, but also enrich the theorization of the concepts of citizenship, naturalization, and nation building. Moreover, when the IKS is crushed and is no more as a territorial entity, the ideology and vision that it stands for will almost certainly find adherents elsewhere with some of the original IKS citizens becoming once again muhajirun (and/or ‘foreign fighters’). In other words, the IKS ideology is certain to survive the IKS as a state project and therefore the analysis of its ideological aspects will remain valid beyond IKS dismemberment.

## 1. The Islamic Khilafa State as a... State

Though the entity under research here is a rather short-lived phenomenon – the IKS came into formal existence in the summer of 2014, only to last for less than three years (as of the time of this writing in January 2017, its largest city, Mosul, was already under siege by an anti-IKS coalition and the attack on the capital city Raqqa was under preparation), its history is somewhat longer. It started as a bold attempt to create an Islamic (albeit still arguably nation-) state out of the ruins of post-Hussein Iraq in the mid-2000s. Then, under the US occupation, it went through a lethargic phase at the end of the 2000s, only to emerge as a major regional actor in the post-Arab Spring Middle

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<sup>3</sup> The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and particularly the one whose straightforward critique of the earlier version of the text provoked the author to look even deeper into the issue of the Islamic Khilafa State’s state-building efforts and look for more evidence of it.

East, which soon (by 2014) found itself in control of swaths of what used to be territories of two post-colonial nation-states, namely, the Republic of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, as argued by Saltman and Winter, “while the sheer amount of land that IS controls is significant, it is not the most important thing to take into account. Rather, what is more striking is the fact that it is a de facto state. Its actions are not underground; it seeks – and, to an extent, has – popular legitimacy.”<sup>4</sup> Saltman and Winter are not, however, the only ones who have recognized the attempts at state-building by the IS. By now, a plethora of researchers and observers have made notice of or even acknowledged this, among them Shany et al., Cronin, le Dret, Belanger-McMurdo, Bernstein, Günther and Kaden,<sup>5</sup> to mention but several.

As a rule, these researchers and observers go through the four major qualifications for an entity to pass for a state, enshrined in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States of 1933.<sup>6</sup> They are 1) a permanent population, 2) a defined territory, 3) a government, 4) a capacity to enter into relations with other states. Although with the changing fortunes of the IKS in the past five years, the situation in regards to all these qualifications has fluctuated, there is a tentative agreement among some<sup>7</sup> that the IKS does qualify as an attempt to meet these criteria. Furthermore, Article 3 of the Convention stipulates that “The political existence of the state is independent of

<sup>4</sup> Saltman E.M., Winter Ch. (2014) *Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism*, Quilliam Foundation, p. 31-32, <https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/islamic-state-the-changing-face-of-modern-jihadism.pdf>, 2017-01-24.

<sup>5</sup> Shany Y., Cohen A., Mimran T. (2014) *ISIS: Is the Islamic State Really a State?*, The Israel Democracy Institute. <http://en.idi.org.il/analysis/articles/isis-is-the-islamic-state-really-a-state/>, 2017-01-23; Cronin A.K. (2015) “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>, 2017-01-23; le Dret V.P. (2015) “International Law: An Analysis of the Montevideo Convention and ISIS’s Statehood Claim”, *Affairs Today*, <http://affairstoday.co.uk/analysis-of-the-montevideo-convention-and-isis-statehood-claim/>, 2017-01-23; Belanger-McMurdo A. (2015) “A Fight for Statehood? ISIS and Its Quest for Political Domination”, <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/10/05/a-fight-for-statehood-isis-and-its-quest-for-political-domination/>, 2017-01-23; Bernstein E. (2015) “Is The Islamic State A ‘State’ In International Law?”, [https://www.academia.edu/17570619/Is\\_the\\_Islamic\\_State\\_a\\_State\\_in\\_International\\_Law](https://www.academia.edu/17570619/Is_the_Islamic_State_a_State_in_International_Law), 2017-01-20; Günther Ch., Kaden T. (2016) *The Authority of the Islamic State*, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 169, <https://www.eth.mpg.de/pubs/wps/pdf/mpi-eth-working-paper-0169>, 2017-01-20.

<sup>6</sup> Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, 1933, <https://www.ilsa.org/jessup/jessup15/Montevideo%20Convention.pdf>, 2017-01-19.

<sup>7</sup> Saltman E.M., Winter Ch. (2014) *Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism*, Quilliam Foundation, <https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/islamic-state-the-changing-face-of-modern-jihadism.pdf>, 2017-01-24; Shany Y., Cohen A., Mimran T. (2014) *ISIS: Is the Islamic State Really a State?*, The Israel Democracy Institute. <http://en.idi.org.il/analysis/articles/isis-is-the-islamic-state-really-a-state/>, 2017-01-23; Cronin A.K. (2015) “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>, 2017-01-23.

recognition by the other states. Even before recognition the state has the right to defend its integrity and independence, to provide for its conservation and prosperity, and consequently to organize itself as it sees fit, to legislate upon its interests, administer its services, and to define the jurisdiction and competence of its courts.<sup>8</sup>

As the objective of this article is not to engage in the discussion on the feasibility or, even less so, legitimacy of the IKS as a state, the overview of the IKS's attempts at state-building is presented below only as a blueprint for the discussion on the (changing) perception and nature of citizenship and nation. The latter aspect is seen by the author to be the value added of this article, since within the broader discussions on the nature of the IKS, the double aspect of the nation-building and its citizenry remains marginal.

Control for a protracted period of time of territories, inhabited by between six and ten million people – various sources have used differing estimates – obliged the leadership of the IS to act like a government. The symbolic change happened when the IS was declared to have become khilafa – a political system recognizable in historical, albeit oft-mystified, Arab caliphates.<sup>9</sup> So, in the decade from its inception, the Islamic State, from a guerrilla group closely associating itself with al-Qaida's ideology and using terrorist tactics, became, if anything, a state, which arguably met the four qualifications set out in the Montevideo Convention. Let us briefly consider them.

*Government.* One could as well start with the government. But not merely the presence of an individual or a group of them who claim governmentship; they need to have the monopoly of power in the territory they claim to govern, otherwise it would at best be a failing or even failed state. The monopoly of power, though its legitimacy might come from a social contract between the rulers and the ruled, inevitably includes an armed hand, starting with a police force, secret services, going through the courts, border guard, and into armed forces. All other armed groups are to be suppressed and all criminals trespassing the laws, prosecuted.

The IKS is a state not least because its leadership has declared it to be a state and controls the territory and its inhabitants with an iron fist, but first of all because it acts like a government.<sup>10</sup> The IKS leadership apparently was convinced that seizing of territories in Western Iraq and Eastern Syria was just the first step in the future history of this newly reborn, but this time eter-

<sup>8</sup> Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, 1933, <https://www.ilsa.org/jessup/jessup15/Montevideo%20Convention.pdf>, 2017-01-19.

<sup>9</sup> Kennedy H. (2016) *Caliphate: The History of an Idea*, Basic Books.

<sup>10</sup> Alkhouri L., Kassirer A. (2015), Governing The Caliphate: The Islamic State Picture, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/?p=35830>, 2016-11-14.

nal, caliphate. Therefore, its proceeding to act like a government should not be surprising. The state (or rather the government) needs to have appropriate state institutions (ministries or departments). Even the Emirate of Afghanistan under the Taliban had some semblance of such institutions.

The IKS appears to have an administrative structure fairly close to that found in modern states.<sup>11</sup> And these administrative structures are tasked with supervising appropriate fields, like economy, healthcare, social care, education, and so forth. For instance, in the bigger cities, the IKS does run (it is another question, how well) educational and healthcare facilities, infrastructure maintenance, sanitation, and garbage collection and disposal companies where it employs salaried staff.<sup>12</sup> This way, the IKS has a rather big state sector and state employee body reminiscent of any modern state. Admittedly, much of the infrastructure and their staff were simply taken over from the former states of Iraq and Syria. In this regard, both the IKS starting point and the stance, vis-à-vis the state-building, sharply contrasts with that of the Taliban, which, upon taking it over, inherited a country with practically no functioning infrastructure or professional state employees. It likewise contrasts al-Qaida's stance on state-building, which it has always shunned away from, even in the territories controlled by it.

It goes with saying that the laws in the IKS are draconian, if viewed from a Western liberal post-religious perspective. Disregarding the question of whether all IKS' laws are Islamic in their nature, the main question is whether the rule of law (no matter how harsh) prevails – only then one could talk of the state's monopoly of power. And on this account, the IKS has been accused of having lived up to expectations. Though the rule of law, particularly when the laws evidently disregard universal human rights, does not by itself legitimize the regime and its state, the criterion of the monopoly of power allows one to talk about the entity as having a major feature of statehood. In this regard, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the Taliban or Kampuchea under the Khmer Rouge (to which Schmid<sup>13</sup> compares the IKS), not to speak of the USSR or Nazi Germany, were states, even if with inhumane regimes. The IKS regime is yet another in this long string of regimes of a similar nature.

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<sup>11</sup> Aoude S. (2014) "The State of Things to Some: The Statehood of ISIS between Practice, International Law, and Religion, p. 6-9, [https://www.academia.edu/9951214/The\\_Statehood\\_of\\_ISIS\\_between\\_practice\\_international\\_law\\_and\\_religion](https://www.academia.edu/9951214/The_Statehood_of_ISIS_between_practice_international_law_and_religion), 2017-01-24.

<sup>12</sup> Dreazen Y. (2014) "From *Electricity to Sewage*, U.S. Intelligence Says the Islamic State Is Fast Learning How to Run a Country", *Foreign Policy*, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/19/from-electricity-to-sewage-u-s-intelligence-says-the-islamic-state-is-fast-learning-how-to-run-a-country/>, 2017-01-20.

<sup>13</sup> Schmid A.P. (2015) "Challenging the Narrative of the "Islamic State", ICCT Research Paper, p. 1, <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ICCT-Schmid-Challenging-the-Narrative-of-the-Islamic-State-June2015.pdf>, 2017-01-24.

Finally, the government has to have an ideological platform, needed for the vision of how to run the country – this is what makes it different from criminal gangs controlling (sometimes rather big) parts of urban conglomerates in some of the world’s metropolises or even regions (like drug cartels in Central and Latin America). Next to the monopoly of power, the IKS certainly has that – an ideological platform (which is admittedly totalitarian) – also. And this is exactly where al-Qaida and the IS profoundly differ – while al-Qaida has been constantly postponing the establishment of the caliphate due to the other, arguably more urgent, task – global jihad against the encroaching infidel ‘far enemy’ – the ‘crusader-zionist’ alliance, to use OBL’s parlance, the IS opted for the ‘re-creation’ of the first Muhammadan state in Yathrib/Madina at the expense of the failed Muslim nation-states allegedly ruled by apostate ‘close enemies’ – national governments that are seen by the IS and its supporters to either serve the ‘far enemy’s’ or their own interests, which in any case are seen to be non- and even anti-Islamic.<sup>14</sup> For the IKS, the statehood takes precedence over jihad, or rather, jihad is subordinated to the state-building project.

*Territory.* This essential qualification for statehood appears to also be met, at least in regards to territories around the formal capital Raqqa in what used to be the eastern part of Syria, which, as of January 2017, the IKS has been holding in its hands for over three years. And although, admittedly, the IKS does not have permanent defined borders, as argued by Shany et al., they are “not necessary in order for the existence of a territory to be recognized; for example, although the borders of the State of Israel were not explicitly recognized when the state was established, and some of them remain in dispute until this very day, this does not detract from Israel’s legal status as a state under international law.”<sup>15</sup>

*International relations.* Capacity to enter into relations with other states is another qualification indicated in the Montevideo Convention. However, as Shany et al. argue, “[t]he capacity to engage in relations with other states seems to be the least important requirement of the Montevideo Convention. This criterion pertains to the entity’s ability to conduct foreign relations; it does not necessarily mean that other states agree to maintain diplomatic, economic, or other relations with it. In other words, a state that is not recognized by most

<sup>14</sup> Bunzel C. (2015) *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, Analysis paper No. 19, The Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-ideology-of-the-Islamic-State.pdf>, 2016-11-14.

<sup>15</sup> Shany Y., Cohen A., Mimran T. (2014) *ISIS: Is the Islamic State Really a State?*, The Israel Democracy Institute. <http://en.idi.org.il/analysis/articles/isis-is-the-islamic-state-really-a-state/>, 2017-01-23.



states in the world can still theoretically meet this criterion.”<sup>16</sup>

To make sure – the IKS does not and, one may be certain, would not seek UN membership. And that for a simple reason – the IKS would not want to legitimize itself through such a membership that it sees as a compromise or even defeat of its *raison d'être* – the IKS negates legitimacy of the UN itself. However, as it is known, non-membership in UN does not mean absence of statehood – Switzerland's case would suffice as an example. IKS's disinterest not only in the UN membership but in any other international organizations and even alliances sharply contrasts with other emerging modern (nation) states' stance – the majority of newly formed states in the recent decades sought world's recognition. In this regard, the IKS is a post-modern (and, as will be shown further, post-nation) state. At the same time, however, it is also a pre-modern state, as it claims caliphateship as its political system.

*Population.* The last of the four qualifications for the statehood enumerated in the Montevideo Convention is population, without which, arguably, there may be no state, as the government, which itself is composed of people (i.e. representatives of the population), would simply be meaningless without the population to be governed by it. However, population and nation, in the sense of citizenry, do not necessarily always coincide. As mentioned earlier, the population of the IKS at one point might have stood at ten million. However, it is not known, how many among them identified with the IKS and considered themselves to be its nation/citizens.

## 2. Citizenship of and in... the Islamic Khilafa State

If the Islamic Khilafa State may be regarded to be engaged in a state-building process of sorts, it needs to have citizens, whatever they are called or however they are understood and stratified. The population of the IKS may be crudely divided into two categories: autochthons (former citizens of Iraq and Syria), making up the overwhelming majority, and immigrants (Arabic *muhajirun*), in the popular Western parlance almost universally referred to as 'foreign fighters.' The number of third country nationals who have moved to the territories ruled by the IKS or its affiliates is estimated to have passed 30,000.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Shany Y., Cohen A., Mimran T. (2014) *ISIS: Is the Islamic State Really a State?*, The Israel Democracy Institute. <http://en.idi.org.il/analysis/articles/isis-is-the-islamic-state-really-a-state/>, 2017-01-23.

<sup>17</sup> The Soufan Group (2015) *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, [http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf), 2017-01-23.



The presence of the latter is the object of the present article, for it is they who make the case of the IKS quite unique in regards to the changing perception of the concept of citizenship and the consequences of this change to the wider world and Europe in particular. It is through them that the IKS has become both a post-nation (as it disregards the principles of social contracts most modern nations and states are built on) and at the same time a pre-modern (and by extension a pre-nation, as it revitalizes the classical Islamic understanding of the state and the nation) state.

Citizenship in the IKS certainly functions differently from the classical understanding of citizenship, not least because the IKS does not issue its own identity documents valid for traveling abroad, though there have been unverified reports that the IKS purportedly started issuing its own passports immediately following its declaration of establishing of a sovereign state.<sup>18</sup> The citizenship of and in the IKS is more of a spiritual citizenship (or ‘virtual citizenship’), and in this regard, the IKS citizenship is a post-modern phenomenon.

The IKS, as a post-nation state, does not recognize the colonial legacy of Arab ‘nations’ – for it, there are no Syrians, Iraqis, Jordanians, or Saudis. The proclaimed khalifa Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is reported to have said that “[t]he Islamic State does not recognize synthetic borders, nor any citizenship besides Islam.”<sup>19</sup> Further, the IKS portrays itself as a state that disregards ethnic background of its citizens. All that matters, then, is religious identity – the nation of the IKS may be composed only of believing (however understood by the IKS government) Muslims, the equivalent of the classical *umma* – the commonwealth of the world’s Muslims. However, while hypothetically all Muslims may become part of the IKS’s nation (then the IKS’s nation would coincide with the universal *umma*), so far only those who have consciously made a bond with the IKS are considered by it to be its citizens. The IKS would say that the best from among the *umma* have become its citizens, something that naturally is vehemently disputed by those Muslims who do not follow the IKS ideology.

The question of actualization of the citizenship in the IKS is directly related to physical moving to the territory of khilafa, in the parlance of the IKS, performing *hijra*. The declared khalifa al-Baghdadi, in connection with the

<sup>18</sup> al-Arabiya (2014) “ISIS Allegedly Issues ‘caliphate’ Passport”, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/05/ISIS-allegedly-issues-caliphate-passport.html>.<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/world/middleeast/militants-in-mosul.html>, 2017-01-24.

<sup>19</sup> Bunzel C. (2015) *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, Analysis paper No. 19, The Brookings Institution, p. 24, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-ideology-of-the-Islamic-State.pdf>, 2016-11-14.

declaration of the founding of the Islamic Khilafa State, in an audio address reportedly called in unequivocal words the Muslims of the world to hijra: “O Muslims in all places. Whoso is able to emigrate to the Islamic State, let him emigrate. For emigration to the Abode of Islam is obligatory.”<sup>20</sup> This call is reflected in the painstaking advocacy for hijra in the official IKS magazine *Dabiq*’s third issue, published in August of 2014, a couple of months after the declaration of the Khilafa. The *Dabiq* may be seen as a reflection and publicization of the official IKS citizenship and naturalization policy. Though by mid-2014, there had already been numerous muhajirun for whom hijra was foremost a means to jihad, with the establishment of the IKS, it acquired a new aspect – enhanced attraction for hijra for hundreds of females and entire families.<sup>21</sup> In other words, though hijra-for-jihad to the Iraqi and Syrian territories had by then been a well-known phenomenon, the emergence of the IKS gave it a new impetus. And with it, a profound change in the understanding of citizenship.

The prototype of hijra is Muhammad’s relocation from his native Mecca to Yathrib back in 622. The *raison d’être* of hijra is conscious premeditated relocation from the environment in which one cannot fully lead an Islamic way of life (in the classical Islamic jurisprudence, identified as Dar al-Harb) to an environment where Islam is fully lived (Dar al-Islam) or where one may hope to create conditions for that. The IKS propaganda machine has gone to lengths in persuading potential immigrants to perform hijra, perceived as *fard ain*, obligatory, on every (believing) Muslim, from wherever they live, for the territories outside of the control of the IKS, the purportedly renascent Dar al-Islam, all are Dar al-Kufr (‘abode of unbelief’), irrespective of whether they are Muslim majority or minority countries ruled or not by Muslim regimes. In this sense, obligation to perform hijra encompasses the Muslims of all the world, though the destination may vary – besides the Syrian and Iraqi territories, it may be any other *wilaya* (province), including but not limited to Libya, Nigeria, Afghanistan, or anywhere else where there are groups which have pledged allegiance to the IKS. This way, the matter (and with it, the problem) of hijra has been made into a global issue.

<sup>20</sup> Bunzel C. (2015) *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, Analysis paper No. 19, The Brookings Institution, p. 32, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-ideology-of-the-Islamic-State.pdf>, 2016-11-14.

<sup>21</sup> Sherwood H., Laville S., Willsher K., Knight B., French M., Gambino L. (2014) “Schoolgirl jihadis: The female Islamists leaving home to join Isis fighters”, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/schoolgirl-jihadis-female-islamists-leaving-home-join-isis-iraq-syria>, 2017-01-23; Simsek B., Satter R. (2014) “Turks Leave for ‘Family Friendly’ IS Group”, Associated Press, <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-turks-leave-for-family-friendly-is-group-2014sep24-story.amp.html>, 2017-01-24.

There are several types of muhajirun, who either have made it to the IKS or at least have attempted to make hijra but have been stopped by law enforcement agencies in their countries of origin or third countries. The first and the most spoken of category is the already mentioned ‘foreign fighters’ – usually in the person of young males. Though there is no doubt that for the overwhelming majority of these males, hijra was a means to jihad, understood by them exclusively in militaristic terms, one may not infer that all of those who moved to the IKS territory indeed became ‘fighters.’ For instance, at least three young Latvians (all local converts to Islam) made hijra to the Middle East<sup>22</sup> but it is not known if they actually became ‘fighters’ in the sense of using weapons of any sort and engaging in combat.

In any case, the overwhelming majority of those men who made it to the IKS territory, became its fighters. However, following Hegghammer’s<sup>23</sup> analysis of Muslim foreign fighters, one should abstain from referring to those who have come from abroad as ‘terrorists’; though, calling them ‘insurgents’ would also be not warranted. On the other hand, looking from a phenomenological point of view, would it not be justified to see them as being part of the IKS’s armed forces<sup>24</sup> engaged in fighting other states’ (like Iraq, Syria, and Kurdistan) armed forces and armed militias? Would it not be reasonable to see the overall armed struggle on the side of the IKS as the expression of an ‘independence war’?

Especially if one recognizes that the Arabs inhabiting these territories hardly identify with the post-colonial nation states of Iraq and Syria, and separatist feelings on the side of Sunni Arabs in the post-Husseini Iraq have not only been felt on a rhetorical level but put into practice since practically the beginning of the occupation of Iraq by Americans.<sup>25</sup> After all, are they not fighting for a sovereign state, however understood by them? Today, admittedly, it is dressed in Islamic attire but if there is no more IKS, that does not automatically mean that the population will want to rejoin Iraq or Syria respectively.

In view of this broader and more complex picture of socio-political developments in the territories straddling across the border of Iraq and Syria,

<sup>22</sup> The Baltic Times (2016) Several Latvians join IS to fight in Syria, 2016-03-07, [http://www.baltictimes.com/several\\_latvians\\_join\\_is\\_to\\_fight\\_in\\_syria/](http://www.baltictimes.com/several_latvians_join_is_to_fight_in_syria/), 2017-01-23.

<sup>23</sup> Hegghammer Th. (2010) “The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad”, *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 3, p. 53-94.

<sup>24</sup> Cronin A.K. (2015) “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>, 2017-01-23.

<sup>25</sup> International Crisis Group (2013) *Make or Break: Iraq’s Sunnis and the State*, Report 144, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iraq/make-or-break-iraq-s-sunnis-and-state>, 2017-01-24.

the main actors of which are the autochthonous Sunni Arabs, incoming muhajirun may be seen as contributing to the effort the driving force of which are the locals, who created both the predecessors of the IKS and it itself. In this regards, muhajirun are at the receiving end and at the mercy of the locals – to be or not to be accepted as ‘naturalized citizens’ who become such through joining the armed forces of the state in the making. It is unfortunate that there is no research, which could shed some light on how ‘foreign fighters’ are received and perceived by the local populations in the territories of the IKS.

The second category of immigrants encompasses young single females.<sup>26</sup> They are estimated to make a tenth of all muhajirun.<sup>27</sup> The IKS does not allow women to take part in combat operations, so qualifying them as ‘foreign fighters’ would be a misleading label. On the other hand, they may be seen, and indeed are seen by the IKS, as engaging in jihad through non-combat activities, like serving on the IKS borders or the morals police.

Finally, there are families with children, the least spoken about category, possibly because it is arguably the smaller part of the muhajirun but also because of the sensitivity of such cases. *Dabiq*, in its pages, often portrays the IKS as an ideal place for families and is certainly welcoming this type of muhajirun. Though there are hardly any estimates, let alone any reliable statistics, on families, who have moved to the IKS, there are nonetheless a number of reports on such families from the UK and several other countries.<sup>28</sup> At least one family (with both parents of convert background) is known to have made hijra from both Estonia<sup>29</sup> and Latvia.<sup>30</sup>

Though among the muhajirun, there might be a rather high percentage of pragmatists and adventurers who went to the IKS for different reasons than religion/ideology, and their movement may not be regarded as hijra in the true

<sup>26</sup> Rafiq H., Malik N. (2015) *Caliphettes: Women and the Appeal of Islamic State*, Quilliam Foundation, <https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/caliphettes-women-and-the-appeal-of-is.pdf>, 2016-11-18.

<sup>27</sup> Sherwood H., Laville S., Willsher K., Knight B., French M., Gambino L. (2014) “Schoolgirl jihadis: The female Islamists leaving home to join Isis fighters”, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/schoolgirl-jihadis-female-islamists-leaving-home-join-isis-iraq-syria>, 2017-01-23.

<sup>28</sup> Sherwood H., Laville S., Willsher K., Knight B., French M., Gambino L. (2014) “Schoolgirl jihadis: The female Islamists leaving home to join Isis fighters”, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/schoolgirl-jihadis-female-islamists-leaving-home-join-isis-iraq-syria>, 2017-01-23; Dutch News (2014) “Two more Dutch families head for Syria, taking their children”, 6 September 2014, [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/09/two\\_more\\_dutch\\_families\\_head\\_for\\_syria](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/09/two_more_dutch_families_head_for_syria), 2017-01-24.

<sup>29</sup> Roonemaa H. (2015) “Estonian man converted to Islam and went to fight with ISIS in Syria”, *Delfi.ee*, 22 January 2015, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/en/news/estonian-man-converted-to-islam-and-went-to-fight-with-isis-in-syria?id=70620007>, 2017-01-23.

<sup>30</sup> Security Police of Latvia (2016) *Annual Report 2015*, p. 21, [www.dp.gov.lv/en/?rt=documents&ac=download&id=15](http://www.dp.gov.lv/en/?rt=documents&ac=download&id=15), 2017-01-23.

sense of the word, the overwhelming majority of females must have made the hazardous journey out of religious conviction and with the hope to find, if not paradise on earth, than at least the most Islamic environment available. Most of the families must have had these expectations also, augmented by the never tiring IKS propaganda machine through the fancy online magazines like *Da-biq* (in English)/*Vostok* (in Russian)/*Dar al-Islam* (in French), but also through their twitter accounts and the like of those women who have made hirja successfully and settled in the IKS territory. What their real experiences were (like failure to integrate because of the language but also cultural background barriers, contempt, if not racism, from the side of the locals and so on) is a totally different question. But in any case, when talking about the current migratory processes in and around the Middle East, one should see not only the outflow but also the inflow (albeit, admittedly, on a far lower scale) of migrants with the ensuing consequences for both the host society (in this case, the local IKS population) and the immigrants (muhajirun) themselves.

There are several ways to become a citizen of a state through naturalization. One of them is directly related to military service for the country. The USA has been practicing this method of naturalization – a foreign national who joins the US Army may expect a sped up process of naturalization. The other one is through family reunion/marriage – an immigrant spouse of a citizen may expect easier naturalization.

In the IKS, the basic criteria for naturalization is allegiance to khalifa – in other words, whoever has declared (and abides by) his or her commitment to the ideology of the IKS, becomes its citizen. Those serving in its armed forces only naturally become its citizens, for their very joining of the armed forces passes for allegiance to the cause of the state-building. So, the designation of ‘foreign fighter’ is obsolete and irrelevant from the perspective of the IKS – there are no foreign fighters in the IKS, only naturalized muhajirun who serve in the armed forces of the country. This, naturally, does not apply to ‘foreign fighters’ fighting on behalf of numerous militias or the Iraqi or Syrian regimes as they do not identify with any state or territorial entity in the area of their operation but rather with the particular armed group.

Though many of the naturalized IKS citizens retain their original citizenships (while some have publicly destroyed their passports), for the IKS, ideally speaking, it is irrelevant – the IKS does not recognize other countries as legitimate entities and, as indicated above, accepts only ‘Islamic citizenship.’ On the other hand, passports (and citizenships attached to them) of some countries become an asset or even a tool, for they enable IKS citizens to move

freely around the world, including for armed operations.

In order to prevent the naturalized IKS citizens from returning to their countries of origin, some of those countries started considering stripping IKS citizens of their original citizenship – this would further seal the muhajirun's fate as citizens of only the IKS. In the event of the likely IKS fall, such people, with the states of their origin officially regarding them as terrorists, would potentially find themselves in a legal limbo. This would add yet another novel aspect in the development of the concept of citizenship (and, in particular, the understanding of the state protection of its citizens).

What makes the IKS unique and post-modern is that one may become a naturalized IKS citizen without actually having ever set foot in the territory controlled by the IKS – it suffices that one pledges allegiance to its khalifa. This way, the IKS has 'provinces' physically far removed from the mainland IKS in eastern Syria and western Iraq. These provinces include patches of land purportedly ruled by, or at least in, the name of khalifa in North and Western Africa, Central and South Asia, where the inhabitants of those regions are claimed as citizens of the IKS by it, though it is not known how many among them subscribe to or are even aware of this. In the same vein, European Muslims, who might have not moved an inch away from their original motherlands but have (not even necessarily publicly) pledged allegiance to khalifa Abu Bakr, may be regarded (and indeed regard themselves) as having become 'non-resident naturalized citizens' (or virtual citizens) of the IKS. Their number may be significantly higher than that of those who made or at least attempted to make hijra. In other words, the 'physical muhajirun' may well be outnumbered by 'spiritual muhajirun.' From the European states' perspective, this is of lesser relevance – what is important, that this new perception of citizenship and belonging to a nation and a state has not only arrived to Europe but already poses numerous challenges.

### 3. Challenges to Europe

Russia alone is estimated to have 'exported' up to 3,000 muhajirun and altogether 10,000 or so Europeans have made hijra to the Middle East since 2012, arguably, primarily to the IKS-controlled territories. A share of them is known to have died (been killed) with scores having returned to their motherlands. With the likelihood of the IKS's dismemberment by adversary forces growing by the day, the situation of these naturalized citizens of the IKS becomes very precarious. Though many among them, particularly those fighting in the IKS armed forces, will be killed, either on the battlefield or later, in the

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custody of the victorious side, a large share of them will be 'deported' to the countries of their origin, among them European. And this is where the real challenge might begin.

By 2015, most European countries had, one or another way, criminalized hijra, and not only to the IKS, but more universally, and naturalized IKS citizenship in particular, with some countries, in addition to criminal persecution, considering the stripping muhajirun of their national citizenship. Though, admittedly, a needed step, criminalization of hijra to the IKS, only addresses the consequences – it does not tackle the issue of why Europeans, in the first place, would want to forsake their held European citizenship along with their European identity and opt for a discovered Islamic identity and citizenship. So, though in certain cases the criminalization of hijra may serve as a deterrent, in most cases it merely drives hijra underground and thus makes it more clandestine. In other words, it does not address any root causes. Therefore, the emerged mental option for the perceived 'Islamic citizenship' (virtual citizenship), successfully promoted by the IKS, in the case of the demise of the IKS, would find other avenues to actualize itself practically. Thus, the challenge of hijra would certainly survive the life-span of the IKS.

The apprehended muhajirun, like one of the Latvians, or those who did not stay in the IKS, like two Estonian Muslims or four Chechens in Poland, like thousands of others all over Europe, they have already faced charges and have even been convicted of joining or aiding terrorist organizations. With the return of the 'deported' muhajirun, the numbers of those who would be prosecuted have the potential to increase significantly, in some countries up to ten-fold. While in the case of those who have served in the IKS armed forces, the prosecution may be swift and fair, with females and children this would not be as smooth, as has already become evident with those who were apprehended before managing to get to the IKS territories.

Though the criminalization of hijra will have its legal consequences for the muhajirun, an even bigger challenge awaiting Europe (and muhajirun) is their social stigmatization, which is already manifest in the countries where returned or deported muhajirun have faced courts. The local media is pregnant with biased reports on these individuals but also the general developments pertaining to Islam and Muslims, which portray those suspected of being sympathetic toward the IKS and its ideology, if not as an outright threat, then at least as some sort of 'aliens' not belonging to the European cultural milieu. Therefore, there is a great risk that former (attempted) muhajirun, once released from custody, would face stigmatization, marginalization, and discri-



mination, something that would inevitably push them away from the majority society and potentially (back) into the hands of radical groupings.

Forms of othering of muhajirun and other Muslims in Europe, leading to segregationism, may take on different shapes and be referred to by different names, among them racism, supremacism, chauvinism, and xenophobia. Much of the stigmatization of the muhajirun and Muslims broadly, however, is caused by the perverted prevalence of Muslimophobia<sup>31</sup> (also referred to as Islamophobia), a form of contemporary Orientalism,<sup>32</sup> which has permeated practically the entire European society and for the past several decades has been on the rise. Muslimophobic attitudes and actions may come from very different sources in, and segments of, the state and society – the government, political parties, non-Muslim faith communities, lay NGOs, informal civil society groups, media, educational system (textbooks), and even arts.

Muslimophobia, in all its forms, is purportedly one of the indirect causes of radicalization of European Muslims – there abound testimonies by European Muslims, both of immigrant and convert background, who point to the non-Muslims' negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims as having been central in the individual's decision to become a (devout) Muslim, all the way to radicalization.

Though Muslimophobia may be regarded as a factor in a Muslim's decision to 'go radical,' in and by itself it would not facilitate such a transformation. It would more likely lead to apologetic isolationism. The root causes of Muslim radicalization lie deeper than the negative Europeans' attitudes toward Muslims. Radicalization of (European) Muslims needs to be viewed through the prism of the broader, indeed global, developments related to the question of the place of religion in one's personal as well as social (and political) life. European Muslims, like their brothers and sisters-in-faith, have been increasingly pulled into the whirlpool created by convulsions of Islamic revivalism, and particularly its Salafi-jihadi strain, recently epitomized in the IKS.

Islamic revivalism is seen by researchers<sup>33</sup> as a reaction to both modernization of the Muslim societies and polities since the 19<sup>th</sup> century but also the older processes of what revivalists themselves deem to be spiritual and social deviations from 'true,' original, pristine Islam. The declared aim of Muslim revivalists is the bringing about (or back) of a holistic Islamic system that would govern both the public and the private life of citizens of the envisioned Islamic

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<sup>31</sup> Erdenir B. (2010) "Islamophobia qua racial discrimination: Muslimophobia", *Muslims in 21st Century Europe: Structural and Cultural Perspectives*, ed.: Anna Triandafyllidou, Routledge.

<sup>32</sup> Said E. (1978) *Orientalism*, Penguin books.

<sup>33</sup> Demant P.R. (2006) *Islam vs. Islamism: The Dilemma of the Muslim World*, Praeger.

polity. The ways to attain this, however, differ significantly among the revivalists. Though the majority of revivalists are peaceful and believe in a non-violent path of re-Islamization, a minority are impatient and consider more aggressive means, including armed takeover of the state structures, to be more appropriate.

Islamic revivalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become a global phenomenon, enhanced, *inter alia*, by the rapidly developing information technologies, which spread information and ideas instantaneously to the countless number of 'open ears' among them in Europe. The IKS's message to European Muslims, through its online media, has proven to be very appealing to scores of them. The majority of them did feel or, after having read the IKS's propaganda texts, started feeling out of place in Europe, as their spiritual needs seemed to have been unmet or, even worse, blocked by the socio-political make-up of the European societies and the states. Effective squeezing out of religion from the public but also private realms in Europe has antagonized part of its inhabitants, among them some Muslims who took it personally and perceive premeditated anti-Islamic politics to be behind the whole process. Some of them, then, decide to resist this.

Radicalization of some (European) Muslims, thus, needs to be seen through the prism of the inner struggles of individual Muslims, who fail to cope with, and therefore reject, the general trend where the European societies (and states) have effectively become post-religions and, from the point of view of these Muslims, have become the 'new barbarians' with no (more) transcendental purpose in their lives. For such Muslims, Europe, as Dar al-Harb, leaves no option but to become a muhajir, if not physically, then at least spiritually. And as long as there is a hope to perform hijra to a perceived Dar al-Islam, in the person of the IKS or other, there will remain a potential that some European Muslims will (seek to) become 'naturalized citizens' in their imagined piece of 'true' Dar al-Islam.

## Conclusions

The statehood project of the IKS is probably doomed but not because of the lack of zeal among its citizens. It is, first of all, doomed because the world's major powers are averted to the idea of having such a political entity that puts into question the Westphalian system that gave birth to modern nation states. However, in view of its peculiar nature as an extra-territorial state and its 'spiritual citizenship,' pushing the IKS out of the territories in Syria and Iraq would not automatically mean its destruction, as long as there are physical 'provinces' – khilafa has no exceptional attachment to a land (though, admittedly, the Middle East has a special place in its statehood imagination) and could be

‘relocated’ to any other area that could serve as Dar al-Islam. Moreover, as long as there are IKS citizens dispersed around the world as a new type of diaspora, there is a likelihood that there might be further attempts to (re)gain independence for the IKS, for, once let out of the bottle, the jinni of khilafa might be difficult to put back in the bottle where it had been for a century after the abolition of the khilafa institution by the Turkish Parliament at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But even if the khilafa does not re-emerge in some other immediately recognizable avatar, the statehood, and by extension nationhood, project of the IKS has already challenged the conventional understanding of state formation, state- and nation-building, meanings of migration, naturalization and citizenship worldwide and particularly in Europe. If the political scientists take the IKS as a statehood project seriously, there is plenty to rethink in the bigger picture of international relations and the geopolitical processes in the world.

The changing perception of belonging to a nation and its state (the conventional social contract) among some of the European Muslims, and particularly those who chose the path of hijra (even if only spiritual, for the time being), in the event of the demise of the IKS and the inevitable (forced) return of some to their motherlands, will further raise the prospect of challenges already faced by European states and societies. Criminalization of hijra is one of the reactions universally adopted by European states. However, this criminalization addresses consequences (of radicalization) rather than causes. The causes of radicalization of some of Europe’s Muslims, in part accelerated by Muslimophobia, remain unaddressed.

Therefore, in the near future, the dismissive posture of the European political and intellectual elite vis-à-vis the IKS as a mere terrorist group and European nationals as simple ‘foreign fighters’ will need to give way to a much more insightful analysis of not only the IKS phenomenon, but also the entire notion of the nation, the state and citizenship, with a new understanding of (global post-nation state) citizenship represented by the IKS being just one of the alternatives to be taken seriously. The Pandora’s box has not only been opened, it has been broken, therefore, there are no quick fixes, while there are numerous potential challenges, many of which, admittedly, may seem to be too distant, if not altogether hypothetical, to governments of some European states. But it may be very wrong and detrimental to the national security of any European country, no matter the size of its Muslim population, to treat them as such.