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Random Actors Between the Middle East and the West: Three Case Studies.

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ABSTRACT (Italian)

Tra il 2005 e il 2012 si sono verificate tre controversie internazionali che, a partire da alcune istigazioni lanciate dall'Occidente, hanno provocato tensioni e proteste (a volte violente) in Medio Oriente. Tali conflitti, seppur di minore entità, si sono aggiunti alle tensioni tra il Medio Oriente e l'Occidente manifestatesi negli attacchi alle Twin Towers (2001) e alla conseguente guerra al terrorismo lanciata dagli Stati Uniti. Dopo la pubblicazione di 12 vignette su Maometto in Danimarca nel 2005 – poi reiterata nel 2008 – seguita dall'iniziativa “Quran-Burning Day” da parte del pastore protestante Terry Jones (2010) e dalla diffusione su Youtube di un video offensivo sulla vita di Maometto intitolato “The Innocence of Muslims” (2012), si sono susseguite altrettante crisi internazionali che hanno coinvolto i rispettivi società civili e attori istituzionali. Il ripetersi di questi episodi in meno di un decennio offre interessanti spunti di riflessione nel campo delle relazioni internazionali. Tutti e tre i casi, infatti, presentano delle similitudini su come le controversie si sono originate e successivamente sviluppate, seguendo un percorso che da piccoli dibattiti locali le ha trasformate in crisi internazionali. Tali similitudini sono alla base delle domande che hanno guidato la presente ricerca: in che misura i protagonisti delle tre crisi rappresentano dei nuovi attori del sistema internazionale? Rappresentano una sfida alla sovranità degli Stati Nazione nell'esercizio delle relazioni internazionali con il Medio Oriente? Possono essere considerati un nuovo *tipo* di attori del sistema internazionale? In caso affermativo, come andrebbero definiti? Tali quesiti si inseriscono all'interno di alcuni dei più importanti dibattiti nel campo delle relazioni internazionali. Primo fra tutti la fruttuosa discussione sul declino o meno degli Stati Nazione all'interno del sistema internazionale e il conseguente emergere di nuovi attori; una riflessione che si è rinvigorita con la fine della Guerra Fredda e il successivo svilupparsi della *globalizzazione*. Un secondo dibattito in cui si inserisce questa ricerca riguarda il confronto tra paradigmi strutturalisti e teorie che si concentrano sullo studio degli attori del sistema internazionale e le loro caratteristiche (agent-structure). Un dibattito che è stato sintetizzato dalla scuola costruttivista per la quale agenti e strutture sono mutualmente costruiti e posti in una relazione dialettica nella quale le strutture, create e reiterate dalle azioni degli attori, costituiscono al tempo stesso una cornice di opportunità e limiti che influenzano gli attori stessi. Infine, questo contributo si inserisce nel più ampio quadro di ricerca rivolto allo studio dei

network transnazionali e dei loro effetti sul piano della politica nazionale ed internazionale.

Il presente lavoro si compone di quattro capitoli che presentano le dimensioni storiche, teoriche e analitiche delle tre crisi internazionali. Nel primo capitolo si contestualizzano i tre casi di studio con una breve esposizione degli avvenimenti più importanti che hanno contribuito a creare un clima di tensione tra Occidente e Medio Oriente. La successiva presentazione dei tre conflitti rispetta la cronologia degli avvenimenti e si avvale principalmente di fonti giornalistiche provenienti da testate occidentali e mediorientali (scritte in lingue europee). La cronistoria delle controversie evidenzia le similitudini che intercorrono tra i tre diversi casi. Tali affinità riguardano:

- singoli individui in quanto principali attori che hanno dato inizio alle crisi;
- l'ideologia di tali individui;
- la dimensione inizialmente locale delle loro azioni; l'improvvisa internazionalizzazione delle crisi;
- la complessa interazione tra azioni locali ed esiti globali;
- la casualità che caratterizza lo sviluppo e la traiettoria delle tre controversie.

Nel secondo capitolo si delinea la cornice concettuale utilizzata per l'analisi dei casi di studio. La necessità di costruire solide basi teoriche richiede l'impiego di nozioni che possano spiegare eventi internazionali con micro input capaci di generare conseguenze di vasta portata. La presentazione critica dei principali paradigmi di relazioni internazionali ha lo scopo di far emergere il ruolo degli individui all'interno del sistema internazionale secondo le diverse scuole di pensiero. Se realismo e liberalismo apparentemente partono da premesse opposte (ottimismo e pessimismo), tuttavia la loro epistemologia riguardo agli individui condivide la tendenza ad aggregarli in quanto unità di analisi costante, il cui variare (non sempre ammesso) non incide nel sistema internazionale. Differentemente, la scuola neomarxista sposta il suo interesse alle strutture del capitalismo globale, riducendo l'agire individuale ad una meccanicistica obbedienza alle regole economiche che reggono il sistema internazionale. A partire da un approccio di tipo costruttivista, si evidenziano quindi alcuni contributi teorici che risultano determinanti per la definizione dell'agire individuale all'interno del sistema internazionale. A tal fine, gli studi di James Rosenau sulla rivoluzione delle capacità (skill revolution) e sulle dinamiche di "framgmentation" si prestano come validi strumenti di analisi per i casi studiati, poiché contengono concetti efficaci per l'analisi sia di fenomeni locali (micro) sia di eventi internazionali, ma soprattutto risultando indispensabili nello studio delle interazioni tra i diversi livelli di analisi

(micro-macro interactions). L'applicazione del paradigma di Rosenau è integrata da alcuni spunti tratti dalle analisi di Van Dijk sull'ideologia, necessaria per poter cogliere l'aspetto identitario ed ideologico dei tre casi di studio. Inoltre i contributi teorici della network analysis concorrono ad evidenziare il ruolo dei media e dei nuovi media come connettori tra attori locali e sistema internazionale. La combinazione di tali studi costituisce la cornice di analisi, denominata *random actors*, utile per lo studio dei tre casi esaminati dal punto di vista delle relazioni internazionali. Nello specifico, il concetto di random actors indica quei singoli individui che agiscono per lo più a livello locale, la cui ideologia riduce la loro conoscenza del sistema internazionale e distorce la percezione dell'altro; tuttavia le loro azioni possono casualmente avere rilevanza internazionale, poiché essi sono collegati – tramite small scale-free networks – ad un sistema internazionale globalizzato e “fragmentato”. Nel terzo capitolo l'attenzione è rivolta al contesto mediorientale per evidenziarne quelle variabili che contribuiscono a chiarire il quadro di analisi aggiungendo alcune precisazioni fondamentali. La presentazione storica delle relazioni tra Occidente e Medio Oriente mira ad inquadrare le tensioni attuali, e quindi anche i tre casi di studio, nel più ampio contesto delle relazioni internazionali tra potenze europee, Stati Uniti e Medio Oriente. Le sollevazioni arabe iniziate nel 2010 sono prese in considerazione in quanto manifestazioni dei grandi cambiamenti che hanno interessato la regione negli ultimi vent'anni. La liberalizzazione economica, l'aumento del flusso di turisti stranieri, l'anacronistica chiusura dello spazio politico e la recente diffusione di canali satellitari, telefoni cellulari e internet sono tutti fattori che hanno facilitato l'improvviso sviluppo delle proteste durante le tre crisi internazionali. Nel quarto capitolo il concetto di random actors è infine utilizzato per lo studio dei tre casi. Seguendo quanto contenuto nella definizione di random actors, l'analisi è suddivisa in tre differenti livelli. A livello micro (ambito locale), si evidenzia l'importanza della dimensione locale nella percezione del pericolo che ha portato i tre attori (Flemming Rose, Terry Jones e Nakoula Basseley Nakoula) ad agire in difesa dei propri valori. Ideologia ed identità sono variabili chiave che ci permettono di chiarire la traiettoria e i mezzi da loro scelti per la diffusione delle loro azioni. Il concetto di “rivoluzione delle capacità” espresso da Rosenau risulta essenziale per comprendere le nuove potenzialità per l'agire individuale introdotte dalla globalizzazione che si sono rivelate fondamentali per Rose, Jones e Nakoula nel portare a termine i loro obiettivi. A livello “meso”, l'analisi si rivolge alla funzione di alcuni network come connettori tra la dimensione locale e quella globale. Si nota, infatti, che nei tre casi di studio internet, i nuovi media internazionali e le reti migratorie sono responsabili della “fuga” delle controversie dai confini nazionali. La peculiare caratteristica di internet e dei social network di essere del tipo

“small” e “scale-free” spiega l'effetto dirompente dell'internazionalizzazione, ma introduce anche un certo livello di casualità nello svilupparsi delle dinamiche. Lo studio del livello macro si sviluppa, invece, seguendo il concetto di fragmentation proposto da Rosenau. Le diverse cause della fragmentation costituiscono altrettanti ambiti di analisi per i tre casi. Tra questi, la crisi delle autorità tradizionali, lo sdoppiamento delle strutture internazionali, l'esplosione organizzativa, l'accresciuta mobilità e l'indebolimento della territorialità e della sovranità statale sono elementi che, in diversa misura, chiarificano le intricate relazioni tra attori locali, nazionali, regionali e globali che hanno interagito nello sviluppo dei tre conflitti. La percezione che il proprio Stato non stia agendo adeguatamente alle dinamiche della globalizzazione è alla base della decisione presa da Rose, Jones e Nakoula di agire in maniera indipendente come reazione all'inerzia dei propri governi. Ma ciò non sarebbe stato possibile senza un parziale indebolimento della sovranità statale né senza la possibilità, per i tre attori, di usufruire dell'aiuto di svariate organizzazioni che hanno contribuito a diffondere le loro idee. L'esplosione organizzativa contribuisce inoltre alla rapida diffusione delle notizie e delle reazioni da parte delle società musulmane, mentre la crisi delle autorità tradizionali concorre nell'internazionalizzare le tre dispute inizialmente locali. Infatti, il richiamo ad uno scontro tra Occidente e Medio Oriente, tra valori liberal-democratici contro valori islamici implica il coinvolgimento di sfere di autorità universali all'interno di suddette controversie. Dispute che, in ultima analisi, sono originate dall'accresciuta mobilità delle persone che ha portato l'Altro nella quotidianità delle società occidentali, scatenando reazioni che inevitabilmente coinvolgono le società di accoglienza e i Paesi di provenienza. Il risultato dell'insieme di questi fenomeni è il progressivo indebolimento dei confini nazionali e il conseguente mescolarsi tra il piano nazionale e quello internazionale. Come nei tre casi studiati, Rose, Jones e Nakoula hanno reagito ai cambiamenti delle loro società (percepiti in quanto pericoli), ma le loro azioni sono state sottoposte a critiche e proteste internazionali, dando prova dello sgretolamento del confine che separa la politica interna da quella internazionale. In conclusione si vedrà che, sebbene i tre casi studiati indichino l'emergere di un nuovo tipo di attori del sistema internazionale che sfuggono controllo dello Stato, tuttavia è ancora troppo presto per poter affermare che tali avvenimenti comportino un ripensamento del ruolo degli individui all'interno delle relazioni internazionali. Solo se tali controversie si ripeteranno in futuro sarà possibile confermare le ipotesi contenute in questo saggio con solidi dati empirici. Sebbene sia rischioso valutare le implicazioni per la politica internazionale dei tre casi di studio, resta comunque doveroso esprimere alcune considerazioni sul significato di tali dinamiche. Le due visioni che più hanno influenzato la disciplina delle relazioni internazionali

all'indomani del crollo dell'Unione Sovietica, cioè l'idea di Huntington di un futuro scontro di civiltà e la visione della fine della storia proposta da Fukuyama, sembrano non essere in grado di cogliere la complessità dei fenomeni contemporanei. A tal fine, risulta doveroso sottolineare come questi tre conflitti, sebbene sembrano promuovere la tesi di Huntington, possano in realtà configurarsi come le fasi di un *confronto* non mediato dagli stati tra le società civili del Medio Oriente e dell'Occidente.

INTRODUCTION

In 2005 one major Danish newspaper (the *Jyllands-Posten*) published twelve cartoons depicting prophet Muhammad. The publication was justified by the newspaper as a reaction against self-censorship toward Islamic issues that was, according to the editor's ideas – menacing Denmark's freedom of speech. Similarly, in 2010 US pastor Terry Jones promised to burn the Quran (he did it one year later) and in 2012 an Egyptian Coptic published an offensive video about prophet Muhammad's life (He was portrayed as an idiot pedophile). Middle Eastern and Muslim societies always reacted to the three provocations: sometimes violently and sometimes with widespread and organized protests – as in the boycott campaign following cartoons publication. The similarities between the three cases and their recurrence within a short period of time (seven years) gave birth to this essay. As long as the crises have produced some longstanding consequences for the relationship between Denmark, US and Middle Eastern countries, it is interesting to study them from the point of view of international relations theories. Actually, there are multiple aspects that are worth to be studied, and some of them have been already explored by scholars. For example, the Danish Cartoon crisis have been studied from a juridical point of view, analysing Denmark decision not to prosecute the *Jyllands-Posten* for the cartoons publication¹, or from a cultural perspective, exploring the difficult relationships between multiculturalism and its implication for freedom of speech². Other scholars have already explored some aspects of the three cases that are relevant to world politics studies. For instance, Lindekilde has focused his attention toward transnational activism in the Danish cartoons case³, while Lidsky has explored the “incendiary capacity of social media” in the Quran-burning case⁴.

In this work, the attention is focused on the “actors” of the controversies. The sparks igniting the

1 See: Lagoutte, Stephanie. (2008) "The Cartoon Controversy in Context: Analyzing the Decision Not to Prosecute Under Danish Law." *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*, Vol. 33, n. 2, pp. 379-403

2 See: Kahn, Robert A. (2009) “Flemmign Rose, The Danish Cartoon Controversy, and the new European Freedom of Speech” Working Paper, University of St. Thomas School of Law, Legal Studies Research Paper n. 09-24

3 See: Lindekilde, Lasse (2010) “Soft Repression and Mobilization: the Case of Transnational Activism of Danish Muslims during the Cartoons Controversy” in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 451-469.

4 See: Lidsky Barnett, Larissa. (2012) “Incendiary Speech and Social Media” in *Faculty Publications*, paper 154, pp. 147-164.

three international crisis were actually generated by three single individuals that were able to gain international relevance and partially influenced their countries foreign policy. The purpose of the essay is to explore the role played by the actors in the three cases and to search for the structures that have amplified their actions until they reached global relevance. From a theoretical point of view, this implies the search of international relations theories linking individual agency with macro structures, but also to explore paradigms that combine domestic and international politics. Hence, the aim of this work is to analyse the three cases, but also to provide the theoretical framework needed to understand their complex developments and consequences. The structure of the essay reflect this dual purposes, alternating the description of historical, political and social facts with their analysis and theoretical implications.

The essay is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the political and historical background preceding the crises, paying special attention to recent tensions and unstable relationship between the Middle East and Western countries. A second section of the chapter provides a detailed description of the three international controversies, following a chronological exposition from the local origin to the last international developments. The sources used to describe the controversy are mostly newspaper and online-newspapers articles, both from Western and Middle Eastern press (the latter written in English or French). Finally, a third section of the chapter introduces the theoretical questions that have driven the research, providing a brief description of *random actors*, which is the theoretical framework purposely created to analyse the three cases.

The built of *random actors* definition is the subject of the second chapter. The complex dynamics of the three cases require proper theories that could grasp the interactions between individuals, their domestic context and the international system. Given this, on one side the chapter highlights which are the international relations paradigms that explore individual agency in world politics and, on the other side, it presents some eclectic theories connecting domestic micro-inputs to international macro outcomes. Particular attention is given to Rosenau's theories of skill revolution and fragmentation, which are considered the most suitable to analyse those cases. But for a more complete understanding of the crises, Rosenau's concepts are combined with Van Dijk's theory of ideology and some contributions from network analysis.

The historical, political and social context of the Middle East is explored in the third chapter. Context properties and Middle Easter specific issues are key variables to explain why the actors

– aimed to criticize or offend Islamic religion and traditions – were able to foment reactions in that region, with large media coverage and different forms of protests. The complex structure of Middle Eastern politics and the history of the relationship between the region and Western powers are more valuable to explain the turbulence following the three crisis, than widespread ideas about Muslim culture inconsistency with democratic practices.

Finally, in the fourth chapter random actors is deployed as a theoretical framework to analyse the three cases. The analysis follows the “dimensional” division of the framework, hence it is divided into three levels of analysis: micro or domestic, “meso” – pointing out local to global connectors – and macro or international level. The underlying assumptions leading the analysis and contained in the theoretical framework are that individual agency in world politics is made more and more possible by technologic revolution and globalising dynamics, while fragmentation and small-world networks could explain the butterfly effect generated by the three crises.

The essay concludes assessing the meaning of the controversies and their implications for future world politics. The aim is not to venture in future forecasts – which are impossible to do given the unpredictability and random evolution of the crises – rather, it is an attempt to assess if these controversies represent a trend toward a direct confrontation between civil societies which is not mediated by national states, or if they are symptoms of a “clash of civilisations” scenario between the Middle East and the West.

Chapter 1 – Cyclical patterns and rising questions: new actors in the global arena?

1.1 – Historical background.

In 2012 a simple low-cost video made by an Egyptian Coptic leaving in the US spread viral on the net, causing indignation, violent protests and unrest all-over the “Muslim world”¹. In the US, the Egyptian video-maker was arrested, although for reasons not dealing with the content of the video. This was the last of a series of “minor” clashes between the Middle East and the West, analogous to the 1988 publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. In this case, the protests in the Muslim world were led mostly by Iran where ayatollah Khomeyni launched a *fatwa* against the author. As a result, the revenge from the Iranian-driven protests against the book led to the killing of the Japanese translator, the injury of the Italian translator² and remarkable bombings targeting English libraries³. From that crisis other followed and in 2005, the publication of twelve “satiric” cartoons issuing Islam in the Jyllands-Posten – a Danish newspaper – triggered widespread reactions in the Middle East – including the boycotting of Danish products. In 2010 another crisis was triggered by reverend Terry Jones who planned to burn the Qur'an to “stand” against the islamisation of American society. But the Satanic Verses controversy happened in a quite different context if compared with the more recent episodes. Firstly, it happened in an international context characterized by the “cold peace” where violent outbursts were often contained by the superpowers in order not to brook international equilibrium. Secondly, it was started by the international publication of one book that was translated in several languages and world-wide sold (at least in the Western countries) meaning that the author himself would not have been able to diffuse its book without the help of publishing companies. Thirdly, Rushdie's book was “officially” targeted by Khomeyni's Iran, at that time still riding the wave of the islamic revolution and retailing its role as the champion of Islam. Another meaningful difference was the absence, at that time, of the 2.0 web architecture and international online media. There is no better way to define web 2.0 than quoting Wikipedia, one of the most diffused representative of

1 The expression *muslim world* could be misleading as it is vague and susceptible of different interpretations (see chapter 3). In this essay it will be carefully adopted referring to North African, Middle Eastern, Central Asian and Asian countries where the faith of the majority of the population is Islam (with its different doctrines and sects).

2 Fazzo, Luca. (1991) “Tradusse I 'Versetti Satanic' un iraniano lo accolte”. *La Repubblica*, July, 4, 1991.

3 “Il libro di Rushdie di nuovo sottotiro”. *La Repubblica*, September 15, 1989.

this web architecture, that describes it as follows:

“Although web 2.0 suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to any technical specification, but rather to cumulative changes in the ways software developers and end users use the Web. A Web 2.0 site may allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community in contrast to websites where people are limited to the passive viewing of content.”⁴

In fact, all the three 21st century controversies spread primarily through social networks, online media, bloggers networks and then through traditional press. Differently, what keeps together all these small conflicts, including Rushdie's book crisis, is the fact that they all have targeted Islamic religion and thus ignited reactions in the Middle East and the Muslim world. Following Benedetto Croce's statement that “all history is contemporary history”, this chapter introduces the historical context preceding the first of the three controversies as it is a necessary digression in order to contextualize them. The date of 9/11 2001 is chosen as the starting point for the historical presentation representing a turning point for the history of the Western relationship with the Middle East. While the Middle Eastern context will be specifically treated in the third chapter, the following paragraphs will introduce the wider international context during the first decade of the 21st century, from 9/11 to the Arab uprisings.

1.1.1 – The end of democratic peace?

The history of world politics is marked by several turning points. In 1929, the first world-wide international economic crisis signed the end of the “first” economic globalisation and the beginning of tormented decades, ending with two World Wars. Otherwise, in 1989 the end of the Cold War brought positive changes, fostering a new globalisation process, continuous technologic revolutions and, consequently, positive future forecasts. If the 1929 was the beginning of a strong realist critic to liberalism and idealism, 1989 carried a renewed trust towards liberal ideas such as transnational cooperation, democratic peace and global governance. Unfortunately, the 11th of September 2001 these ideas were questioned by the terroristic attacks against the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon. Since 9/11, the perception of world politics has dramatically changed, shifting from Fukuyama's “End of History” paradigm to Huntington's “Clash of Civilizations”. But if it initially seemed that the Clash of Civilisations would be the future international relations order, deeper analysis have shown that cooperation,

4 From *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0

transnational economic ties and globalisation dynamics persist – or even are getting stronger⁵. The consequences of 9/11 have been both domestic and international. At the domestic level, Western governments have reacted to terrorism enforcing domestic security measures – such as the US PATRIOT (Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act – and Western societies confronted themselves with new dilemmas regarding multiculturalism and the muslim presence in Europe, now perceived as menace to European cultural integrity. The islamic threat was exploited by right parties all over Europe to deploy restrictive migration policies and to criticize liberal and multicultural programs advanced by the left. At the international level, the US begun the well known “war on terror”. Started with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the operation was structured by the US administration as a global campaign aimed to eradicate terroristic bases located in failed and weak nations – now called *rogue states*. In 2003 the war was further enlarged with the invasion of Iraq. This second intervention was firstly justified as a measure to destroy Iraqi – suspected – weapons of mass destruction. But this menace turned out to be false: the Bush administration then “invented” the democracy-bringing explanation: Afghanistan and Iraq became part of a larger project aimed to bring democracy to the Middle East by means of war⁶. At the same time, the Bush administration started a world-wide ideological campaign in order to find support for its ground operations. The result was the creation of a new “enemy” – islamic terrorism – impersonating authoritarian repressive and retrograde rule against the champions of freedom and democracy⁷. This dichotomous view, far from being new in US history and recalling Cold War scenarios, was reinforced by the “axis of evil” discourse pronounced by president Bush at the Congress in which the world was divided between pro democracy nations (US allies) and rogue states; the latter risking to be “democratized” by Western intervention. Hence, after 9/11 the world seemed to be bipolar again with Western countries leading a new phase of democratisation. Regrettably, as Khalidi shows, the US-led coalition went basically unprepared at war, without a clear knowledge of the Middle Eastern context⁸. The war on terror has left the region with two non-democratic, civil war prone and failed states, with Iran – now left without serious rivals – as the real winner of this global campaign⁹. Furthermore, 9/11 and Western responses considerably increased Arab

5 See: Simmons, Beth A, Dobbing, Frank and Garrett, Geoffrey. (2006) “The International Diffusion of Liberalism” in *International Organization*, vol. 60, n. 4, pp. 781-810

6 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) *Resurrecting Empire. Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the new Middle East*. London, I.B Tauris, pp. 37-40.

7 Postel – Vinay, Caroline. (2005) *L'Occident et sa bonne parole. Nos représentations du monde, de l'europe coloniale à l'Amerique hégémonique*. Paris, Flammarion, pp. 149-169

8 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) pp. xix – xxiv

9 Robins, Philip. (2009) “The war for Regime Change in Iraq” in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of*

resentment toward the West (or those countries that have participated to Afghanistan and Iraqi wars) and, conversely, Western resentment toward Arabs and Muslims in general. This enmity was also caused by the fact that, while promoting democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan, Western countries were supporting undemocratic regimes elsewhere in the Arab world.¹⁰ The deterioration of US relations with Middle Eastern countries became evident when Turkey refused to allow NATO forces passage from its bases¹¹, fearing popular unrest; or even when Saudi Arabia – eager to see the end of Saddam Hussein's regime – carefully hid the fact that US was using its Saudi bases to launch attack into Iraqi territory.¹²

In 2004 and 2005 two terroristic attacks stroke Madrid and London. Together with the ongoing invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, they significantly contributed to rise reciprocal enmity between the Middle East and the West. The strongly polarized climate increased islamophobia in Western countries, multiplying the discriminations towards Muslim migrants. After 9/11 the establishment of a new mosque, honour killings committed by Muslim immigrants or simply their within Western societies became a central theme in the political debate and the media. The integration of Muslims within Western societies was suddenly problematic, leading, for instance, French government to ban the use of the integral veil for Muslim women in public spaces; a measure “viewed by supporters as a necessary step to preserve French culture and to fight what they see as separatist tendencies among Muslims”¹³

1.1.2 – From Iraq to 2008

As described, the global war on terror together with the attempt to enforce democracy in the Middle East have resulted in a resounding failure. The first consequence of this failure was that the unipolar American era, characterized by the spreading of democracy and capitalism all over the world was perceived (both by its allies and enemies) as dawning¹⁴. However, the “global war on terror framework persisted and other countries started to join this global campaign. This was

the Middle East, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 290-307. Here p. 304-305

10 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) pp. 38-48.

11 Nocera, Lea. (2011) *La Turchia contemporanea. Dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP*, Roma, Carrocci Editore, p. 113.

12 Gause, F. Gregory III (2009). “The International Politics fo the Gulf” in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 272-289. Here p 280

13 Erlanger, Steven. (2011) “France Enforces Ban on Full-Face Veils in Public” published in *The New York Time*, on April 11, 2011.

14 “Sogno americano e sonno europeo” (2010) Editorial in *Limes, rivista italiana di geopolitica*. N 1/2010, Roma, Gruppo Editoriale l'Espresso. pp. 7-24. Here p. 14-15

the case of Russia against Chechen separatists, or Middle Eastern secular regimes against their Islamic opposition¹⁵. The legacy of the war on terror and the democratisation campaign turned out to be counterproductive. The war on terror paradigm was exploited by several autocratic regimes (Middle Eastern and not) in order to gain Western acquiescence over the enduring lack of democracy in those countries. Internal opposition or secessionist movements were now read as terroristic threats connected to world-wide terrorist networks, letting autocracies and despots to gain the consensus of the Western world for their efforts against global terrorism¹⁶. The so called *double standard* together with the failure of democracy building in Iraq and Afghanistan and the unconditional support given by the US to Israel were all causes of the progressive loss of trust and “appeal” of Western societies as a model to be inspired to¹⁷. But the final “hit” to Western hegemony did not come from global Islamic terroristic network, nor from the islamisation of Western societies, rather it was an economic defeat. In 2007-2008 the end of the housing bubble in the US was followed by a global financial crisis resulting in the drastic fall of stock markets and subsequent recession and – as in the case of Iceland – economic collapse. What it is worth to note is that the crisis affected mainly Western economies while third-world and emergent economies scored positive growth rates (fig. 1).

Fig. 1: World map showing GDP real growth rates for 2009. CIA world factbook estimate of April 2010.

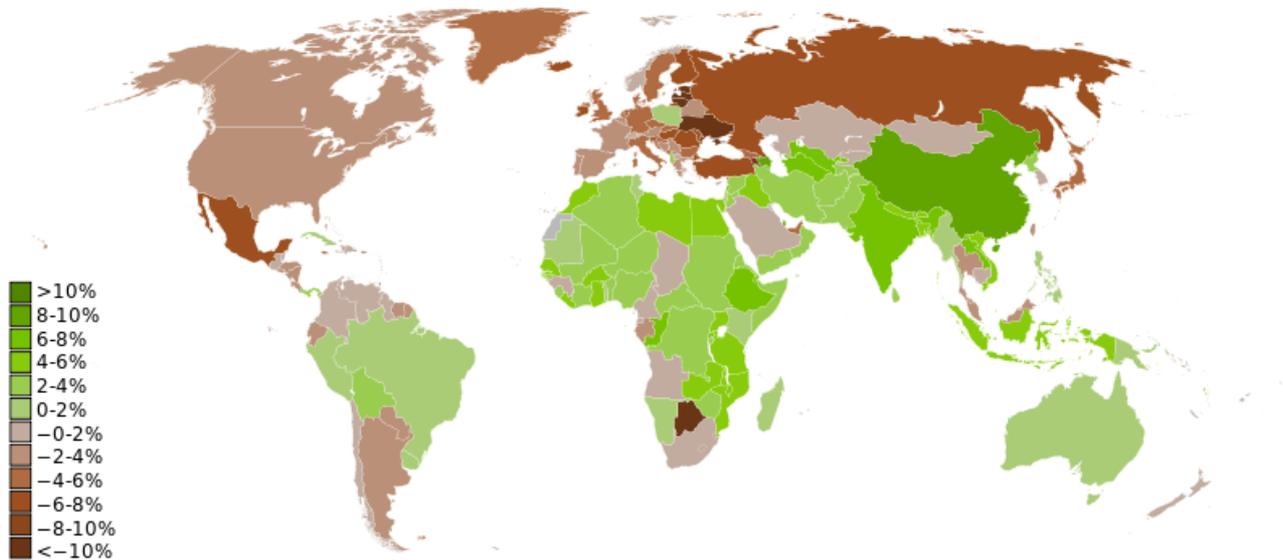


Image retrieved from Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia.

As a consequence, the US – as the place where the crisis started – suffered a progressive loss of

15 Bozasrlan, Hamid. Lectures at the Ca' Foscari University, February 17, 2012

16 As Bozasrlan suggested, this was the case of Russia with Chechen separatists, Egypt, Tunisia and Syria with Islamic opposition and so on. Bozasrlan, Hamid. Lectures at the Ca' Foscari University, February 19, 2012

17 Khalidi, Rashid. (2003) p. 122-124

international trust towards its economy stability among its creditors. Its economic model, based on – declared but substantially untrue – laissez-faire and liberal principles, loses its appeal as the *standard bearer* for all the countries to be confronted to.¹⁸ On a wider level, the crisis and its results, with Europe still trying to normalize its economies, has finally made explicit that “the West is no more the engine of the global growth”¹⁹. Conversely, China, India and the BRICs have been empowered both economically and politically by the crisis – having registered positive growth rates – and they managed to increase their international role thus forcing the US be co-hegemons with them in a new multipolar system²⁰.

1.1.3 – Lost in transition: how the world will look like?

The final withdrawal of US led-coalition troupes from Iraq in 2011 could be considered the momentum of the recognized downscaled international role assumed by America. The fact that the only superpower on the world was not able to prosecute its goals against a small and badly-armed failed state has risen the fundamental question about how the world will look like in the future. The promise – delivered with the end of the Cold War – of a stable unipolar international system was abruptly broken by the rise of new challenges. Aware of their changed role in the international system, the US, now led by Obama, have partially changed the way to achieve their goals, shifting from unilateral military intervention to newer pragmatic forms of foreign policy (sometimes more participative). The killing of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden (2011) in a secret small-scale operation in Pakistan and the criticized drone campaign sponsored by Obama both suggest that the US wants still to play their hegemonic role in the international arena, but using different strategies. The challenge today lies in the fact that the American Dream – read the Western dream – is not everybody's dream²¹, new visions of the world are competing with the model of a Westernise society as it was “imposed” firstly during colonial era and then through market expansion. These new voices have been empowered by the military and economic defeat of the West. Within this frame, Islamic terrorism tends to be read as the new enemy in the international arena, but a brief hindsight to it shows that, far from being a 21st century actor, its history is rooted in the long legacy of opposition against the imposition – through colonial rule –

18 “Sogno americano e sonno europeo” (2010) pp. 10-11.

19 Hulsman, John C. (2010) “Il prezzo della libertà” in *Limes, Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica*. N. 1/2010. Roma, Gruppo Editoriale l'Espresso, pp. 27-38. Here p. 35

20 Quercia, Paolo. (2010) “Nel mondo post-americano” in *Limes. Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica*. N. 1/2010, pp. 55-66. Here p. 55.

21 “Sogno americano e sonno europeo” (2010) p. 10

of secular Western models of society and forced changes towards European *modernisation*, imposed as if it was universal.²² Furthermore, in 2011 US economy was downgraded by Standard and Poor's from AAA to AA+, a move that eroded the confidence and the prestige of the – now - second biggest economy in the world²³. The weakening of the US inevitably results in a general wakening of the West, given its political economical and even ideological dependence from the United States – begun after the end of the II World War.²⁴ To conclude, after a decade of positive hopes for “The End of History”, in the global era the West feels itself economically threatened by China and the BRICs and politically and socially challenged by Islamic refuse of Westernisation. It is in this climate of dichotomous conflicts between different ideologies – about how the future world should be – where the three international controversies took place.

1.2 – Introducing the three international crises

The three international crises took place in the post 9/11 international context that has been described in the previous paragraphs. NATO invasion of Iraq and subsequent tensions created polarized international system where the tension between Westernisation and Islamisation have been read by some political leaders and scholars as a new “clash of civilisations”. In Europe and the US the crisis of multiculturalism²⁵ proceeded in parallel with mounting fears for “Islamisation” of Western societies. Within this framework, each controversy is representative of this climate.

1.2.1 – *The Danish cartoons controversy*

On September 30, 2005 one of the major Danish newspaper, the Jyllands-Posten, published twelve satiric cartoons about Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. The decision was taken by Flemming Rose, cultural editor of the newspaper, who invited several cartoonists to draw a sketch about how they see Muhammad. Some of them refused to answer, and among the twelve

22 For a complete analysis of the origins and developments of modern islamist thought see: Milton-Edwards, Beverly. (2005) *Il fondamentalismo islamico dal 1945*. Roma, Salerno Editrice, 2010.

23 These judges are given to national states by different rating agencies refer to solvency of a country, or its capacity in the future to repay its debit to its creditors. The range starts from AAA (the maximum) to C (the minimum).

24 Mini, Fabio. (2010) “Paura di non fare paura” in *Limes, Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica*. N. 1/2010, pp. 73-88. Here p. 73.

25 Nocera, Lea. (2011) *La Turchia contemporanea*. P. 112

draws that were sent to the newspaper, some were innocent cartoons that did not depict or concern Muhammad. Rose's decision was taken after he noticed that European media and entertainment industry in general were undergoing a sort of self-censorship regarding Islamic issues, because they were intimidated to threat arguments related to it.²⁶ The Danish context itself was particularly problematic regarding Muslim presence. Muslim migration in Denmark dated back to the 60's when the first immigrants “began to settle in Gellerup, a western suburb of Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city”²⁷. Here, some radical imams started to gain consensus among a relatively small part of the Muslim community, forming a radical sub-group that played a pivotal role in internationalising the cartoons controversy. As for the *Jyllands-Posten*, “it is know to be liberal in persuasion, a right-wing daily, but a serious and acclaimed one that appeals to the mid-upper level middleclass and the business community”²⁸. Interestingly, the same newspaper was awarded by the European Union with the prize “To Multiplicity, Against Discrimination” “for its positive coverage of successful cases of Muslim immigration in Denmark”²⁹.

Given this specific context, among the published cartoons two of it resulted particularly offensive for the Danish Muslim community. To worsen the already provocative publication, the date of the publication coincided with the beginning of the Ramadam, one of the most sacred duty of every Muslim, although it seems that the staff of the *Jyllands-Posten* was unaware of it.³⁰ Among the twelve cartoons, one of them (certainly the most controversial) depicted the face of Muhammad with a bomb on his turban (fig. 2) while another depicted the prophet in Heaven, speaking to some suicide bombers ascending to paradise and telling them “STOP, we ran out virgins” – mocking the idea that martyrs of Islam will receive sensual gratifications once dead (Fig. 3). The most offensive indeed was the one portraying prophet Muhammad with a bomb-turban. Actually, Islam forbids to represent Muhammad semblance and doing this is considered a blasphemous act.

26 Rose, Flemming. “Why I Published those Cartoons”, published in *The Washington Post*, February 19, 2006.

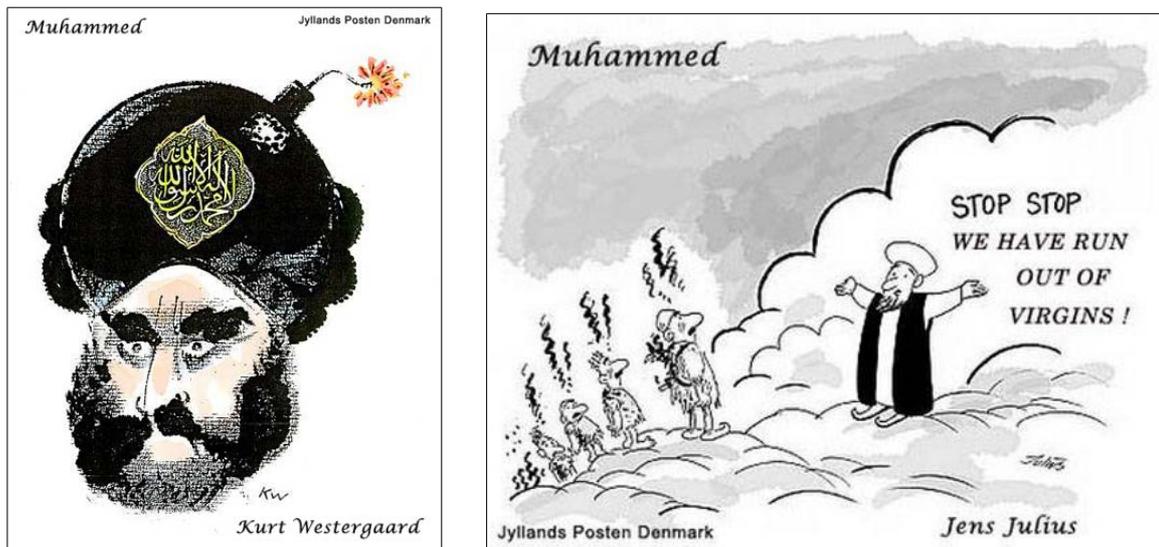
27 Ammitzbøll, Pernille and Vidino, Lorenzo. (2007) “After the Danish Cartoon Controversy”, *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2001, pp. 3-11, here p. 3

28 Rynning, Sten and Holmgaard Schmit, Camilla. (2006) “Muhammad cartoons in Denmark: from freedom of speech to Denmark's biggest international crisis since 1945” *UNISCI discussion papers*, n. 11, May 2006, pp. 11-21. Here p. 13

29 Ammitzbøll, Pernille and Vidino, Lorenzo. (2007), p. 4

30 Higgins, Andrew. “How Muslim Clerics Stirred Arab World against Denmark”. *The Wall Street Journal online*, February 7, 2006

Fig. 2 (left) and 3 (right): two of the twelve cartoons published by the Jyllands-Posten



Furthermore, the mentioned cartoon was seen as explicitly connecting the roots of Muslim religion (its founder) to the violent terroristic attacks carried out by Islamic fundamentalists (the bomb over its turban), as in the second cartoon where Muhammad was depicted like a terroristic leader.

The first reactions were local and came after about a week when a group of 16 different Danish Muslim groups condemned the newspaper asking for public apologies³¹. This group (called European Committee for Prophet Honouring ECPH) was formed and headed by one radical lebanese imam coming from Gellerup, a certain Abu Laban. The group found no responses and the newspaper, receiving only few calls asking for public excuses, underestimated the potential of the controversy. The period of time between October 2005 and January 2006 was crucial for the internationalization of the crisis. There are two different opinions about how it was internationalized, but the two agree about the central role played by Abu Laban and few other Danish imams. The foundation of the ECPH was pivotal as the group started to release harsh declarations to Danish media condemning the cartoons publication. Abu Laban and his group held several meetings with ambassadors from Muslim countries who finally requested a meeting with the Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen, the scope of which was discuss the issue of the twelve cartoons and obtain apologies (in October 12, 2005). The refusal by Rasmussen to held the meeting – justified as an act in defence of freedom of speech – was one of the causes that contributed to internationalise the crisis³². But another important event took place before the

31 “Paper threatened over drawings of Muhammad”. *The Guardian*, October 13, 2005.

32 Yilmaz, Ferruh. (2011) “The Politics of the Danish Cartoon Affair: Hegemonic Intervention by the Extreme Right” in *Communication Studies*, vol. 62, n. 1, pp. 5-22. Here p. 6.

beginning of widespread protests. In January 2006, Abu Laban and other imams traveled the Middle East and held meetings with the most prominent religious authorities. The aim was to sensitize them about the Danish situation. It seems that they diffused a dossier in which the twelve cartoons appeared together with more offensive material that was not published in Denmark but was however inserted within the dossier to prove the general islamophobic attitude toward Danish Muslims.³³ It is difficult to establish which of the two events have contributed to internationalise the controversy, rather, it seems more plausible that both of them contributed to “export” the protests from Denmark to the Middle East. Contemporary, at the beginning of December, the Organization of Islamic Countries held a meeting to discuss the controversy, accusing Denmark of hate speech and asking for apologies, indicating that the crisis was already escalated. In January 2006, the controversy spread on the net, creating a “virtual sphere of activism”³⁴. The result of the online campaign (conducted also with “traditional” ways of organization through flyers and clerics' friday sermons) was a widespread boycott of Danish products: within few weeks, the products of several Danish brands were retired from the shelves of Middle Eastern markets and supermarkets. The boycott led Arla Food, a dairy products corporation, to publicly apologize on his website, taking distance from the cartoons, the newspaper and Rasmussen's decision not to meet Middle Eastern ambassadors. By the end of February 2006, more than a hundred newspapers republished the cartoons³⁵ as the controversy attracted more and more attention. Together with internet campaigns, those facts contributed to ignite unrest in the Middle East and the Muslim World. In the same month, Danish embassies in Syria and Lebanon were set on fire, and attacks to Danish embassies were reported in Pakistan. In Afghanistan, protesters tried to attack US military base in Bagram and the reaction of Afghan security forces killed about 4 people during the demonstrations³⁶. Even al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden was found – after his death – to have invited jihadist fighters to target several Danish sites as a response to the cartoons publication. This escalation finally pushed Danish government to act in order to lower down the conflict. In February 2, 2006, Rasmussen appeared on Al-Arabiya declaring that it was no intention of the Danish people and government to offend Muslims. In January Flemming Rose had previously appeared on Al-Jazeera saying he was sorry that the published material resulted offensive to Muslims: but neither him nor Rasmussen nor the chief editor of the Jyllands-Posten excused for the fact of having published such material

33 Higgins, Andrew. “How Muslim Clerics...”

34 Shadid, Antony and Sullivan, Kevin. “Anatomy of the Cartoon Protest Movement” *The Washington Post online*, February 16, 2006.

35 Yilmaz, Ferruh. (2011) “The Politics of “p. 6

36 Higgins, Andrew. “How Muslim Clerics...”

– saying that freedom of speech cannot be questioned – rather, they were sorry by the fact that Muslims felt insulted by the cartoons³⁷ These measures partially lowered the level of the conflict, but further events showed that the controversy was far from being ended. In late July 2006, an attack at the Cologne train station in Germany foiled as the bombs failed to detonate. In 2007 four men were declared guilty for the attack and among them Jihad Hamad confessed that the attack was planned as a protest against the cartoons³⁸. Actually in 2006, after Rasmussen and Rose partial apologies, a German newspaper decided to republish the cartoons to “confirm” its commitment in defence of freedom of speech. In 2008, after Danish security forces discovered an attempt to bomb Jyllands-Posten headquarters, the newspaper decided to republish the cartoons unleashing another – although lower in intensity – round of protests and unrests. Nowadays, the controversy still drops its consequences and in 2012

“the clear conclusion of the PET [Denmark security agency] report is that eight months after the death of Osama Bin Laden, and almost seven years after the Mohammed cartoon controversy, militant extremist Muslims still see Denmark as a key target for potential terrorist acts.”³⁹

The spark of the Jyllands-Posten cartoons has triggered a mechanism of reactions and feedbacks still to be broken. These chain-reaction started in Denmark but affected the whole Middle East and the reaction of the latter triggered itself several responses in Europe. While the controversy was still going on, other two cases broke into this complicated low-intensity conflict, resulting in a general escalation of the relationships between the Middle East and the West.

1.2.2 – *The Dove World Outreach Centre takes the lead.*

The second international dispute started in a small christian Pentecostal community in Gainesville, (Florida) United States. Differently from Denmark or Europe in general where ethnic homogeneity was fostered by the construction of national states (after centuries of religious and ethnic wars), the United States were since the beginning a “Melting-pot”. The different waves of immigrants from all over the world contributed to the built of the US society, overlapping in a complex multi-ethnic and multi-religious population. However, “America has had a long history of intolerance and discrimination against minorities. Native Americans,

37 Holder, Cindy. (2006) “Debating the Danish cartoons: civil rights or civil power?” in *University of New Brunswick Law Journal*, Annual 2006, Vol. 55, pp. 179-185. Here pp. 180-183

38 “Lebanese bomb plotter imprisoned”. *Al-Jazeera English*, December 24, 2007

39 “PET: Denmark still top terrorist target”. *The Copenhagen Post*, February 1, 2012

Catholic, Jews, African Americans, the Japanese and others have, at one time or another, endured periods of discrimination”⁴⁰. As already mentioned, one of the deeper consequences of 9/11 was an exacerbation of islamophobia. But the reciprocal enmity between Islam and US citizens dates back to about four decades earlier. The engagement of the US in the Middle Eastern politics, their unconditioned support for Israel, the Iranian revolution and the hostages crisis and the Gulf wars⁴¹ all contributed to shape the present idea – empowered by fundamentalists from both sides – that the US are fighting a war against Islam and against the feared Islamisation of the West. After 9/11 discriminations against Muslim targets have increased and US media begun to stereotype Muslims as a violent community opposed to Western values⁴². Surprisingly, fundamentalism is “made in USA” as it was conceived by some radical Christians who sought christianisation of the US society to be achieved through the literal interpretation of the Bible. For instance, demanding the cancellation of evolutionist theories from high school programmes was part of their agenda because the Bible “says” that human beings have been created by God. Among them, two pastors published a journal called “The Fundamentals” (1910-1915), whence the term fundamentalist which was stuck to them⁴³. This was the context surrounding the controversy about the Park 51 Muslim Center, regarding the built of a community center (with an auditorium, a swimming pool, a theatre a memorial to the victims of 9/11 and other recreative spaces) to be located at two blocks from Ground Zero site. As the centre was planned to include a space for Muslim prayers, it was soon baptised by right wing activist Pamela Geller as the Ground Zero Mosque.⁴⁴ The controversy was hence distorted becoming another conflicting issue among Muslims and Christian in the US.

The Dove World Outreach Centre (DWOC) is a small christian pentecostal-style church similar to many others “found in cities and rural areas across America”⁴⁵ and it could be considered a fundamentalist church. The DWOC was founded in 1986 by Donald Northrup, an American businessman, “in the leaving room of his home”⁴⁶. Northrup intentions were to built “church for the rich, the poor, the young and the old. A church which is the expression of the fullness of Jesus Christ. A spiritual hospital where the hurting and the broken hearted are healed and

40 Takim, Liyakat. (2011) “The Ground Zero Mosque Controversy: Implications for American Islam” in Religions, *MDPI online Quarterly*, Vol. 2./2011, pp. 132-144. Here p. 133.

41 Idem, pp. 133-134

42 Idem, p. 134

43 Guolo, Renzo e Pace, Enzo. (2002) *I Fondamentalismi*. Bari-Roma, Laterza, p. 16

44 Takim, Liyakat. (2011), p. 136.

45 Gibson, David. (?) “Who is Pastor Terry Jones and Why Is He Burning to Torch the Koran?” Published in *Politics Daily*. <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/09/08/who-is-pastor-terry-jones-and-why-is-he-burning-the-koran/>

46 <http://www.doveworld.org/about-us>

restored”⁴⁷. Before the creation of the DWOC, Terry Jones, a hotel manager and part-time pastor born in Missouri, was sent to Germany by Northrup with the aim “to set up a sister church in a working-class neighbourhood in Cologne”⁴⁸. Here, Jones was able to build a large community (around 800 followers). Northrup died in 1996, and in 2001 Jones went back in Florida and took the lead of the DWOC. In 2008 the Cologne community broke the relations with Jones, accused for financial improprieties⁴⁹ and to “run the Cologne church like a sect leader and applied psychological pressure on its members, subordinating all activities to his will”⁵⁰. Today the DWOC is a small country church followed by approximately 30 people.

Pastor Terry Jones was already known in Florida for his fundamentalist positions toward Islam. In 2009 he published a book titled “Islam is of the Devil” – still available through his website – and in August of the same year, two children from the DWOC were expelled from local school because they wore t-shirt with the slogan “Islam is of the devil” – a slogan that appeared also on some placards outside the church. Until 2010 he was mainly a local actor known in its small community and followed by few people, his messages - broadcasting videos from Jones's bureau surrounded by Braveheart and Bush poster, a gun and the Bible – eventually followed by few other like-minded people connected to his personal website “Stand Up America Now”⁵¹ and social network accounts. Things changed in late July 2010 when he declared that he would burn 200 copies of the Quran. His idea was to symbolically commemorate the 9/11 anniversary, launching a message to US leaders to stand up against the Islamic threat. It seems that the initiative was also conceived after Jones noticed the existence of the Park 51 center building plan⁵². To launch his offensive, Jones started to post on Facebook and Twitter some messages explaining his idea in order to gather consensus and attract media attention. These first moves initially triggered small domestic debates and few local reactions: Florida authorities denied him a burnt permit and local meetings with Imams of the Florida Muslim communities were organized⁵³. Despite these local efforts to lower the tensions, Jones decided to continue with his campaign, and published a video on Youtube, explaining his point of view toward Islam and promoting his Quran-burning day. His actions were initially noted by US media, but online-published material and the rising attention given to it by US mainstream online press were

47 Ibidem

48 Gibson, David.(?) “Who is...”

49 Gibson, David.(?) “Who is...”

50 Sorrels, Niels. “Quran-Burning Pastor's Former German Church Denounces Him: He's 'Violent and Fanatical'”. *The Huffington Post Online*, September 8, 2010.

51 <http://www.standupamericanow.org/>

52 “US pastor 'suspends' Quran burning”. *Al-Jazeera english*, September 10, 2010.

53 Copeland, Larry and Hampson, Rick. “Fla Pastor issues new demands”. *USA Today.com*, September 9, 2010.

noticed by Middle Eastern media and spread on the web, triggering reactions on a global scale. Protests were held in Egypt, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Indonesia Pakistan and many other muslim countries. Several Christian associations and leaders (including the Vatican) condemned Jones, taking distance from his actions. Indonesian president stated that those kind of actions were a threat to global peace, and in Indonesia thousands protesters marched toward US embassy. Top Irani ayatollah and Hamas Prime minister condemned Jone's actions and in Pakistan and Palestine other protest were held⁵⁴ – in Pakistan a \$ 2.4m bounty was put on Jones⁵⁵.

In the United States Jones' actions attract the attention of the government, leading political and military representatives to engage in the dispute. President Obama and Hilary Clinton both condemned Jones' Quran Burning day in order to avoid a dangerous escalation between Muslim and Christian communities – escalation made more dangerous due to recent tension originated by the fear for Obama being Muslim⁵⁶. The military side reacted with a declaration of David Petraeus, at that time commander in chief of the NATO forces in Afghanistan, who declared that Jone's action could jeopardize US soldier security in the Middle East, as they could rouse the population to commit offensive actions towards Western soldiers and personnel. Finally, Robert Gates, US Secretary of Defence, called Jones attempting to convince him to desist from burning copies of the Quran. The reactions to Muslim's protest mixed together with Park 51 controversy 9/11 anniversary, leading to several “religious” incidents in the US. At the end of 2010 Jones declared to “suspend” the planned Burning Day, claiming the decision was taken after reaching an agreement with the New York Imam that the “Ground Zero mosque” would not be built⁵⁷. Actually, Terry Jones never met with New York Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf – who immediately denied that such an agreement was reached – but with the Imam of the Florida Muslim community. Jones declared that the latter promised him that Park51 center will be displaced, but the Florida Imam denied.

In March 20, 2011 Jones together with few followers and with the help of The Truth TV (a satellite channel owned by a former Muslim who converted to Christianity)⁵⁸ staged a “trial” to the Quran, after which the Book was set on fire. The video, lasting almost six hours, was posted on Youtube, but unexpectedly there was no relevant reactions in the Muslim world, either

54 “Protests against US Koran-burning sweep Afghanistan”. *BBC News*, September 10, 2010.

55 Boone, Jon and Rushe, Dominic. “Hamid Karzai...”

56 Gibson, David. (?) “Who is...”

57 “US pastor 'suspends'...”

58 Alvarez, Lizette. “Koran-Burning Pastor Unrepentant in Face of Furor”. *The New York Times Online*, April 2, 2011.

because it was shaken by the arab uprisings⁵⁹; and because US mainstream media decision not to cover the event (the video scored very few visualizations on Youtube). However, it was noticed in Afghanistan and after president Karzai publicly condemned the Jone's action, a crowd of protesters attacked the UN compound in Mazar-i-Sharif, leading to several deaths (12 died in total, among them 8 UN staff were killed).⁶⁰

The Quran-burning controversy overlapped with the Danish cartoons crisis and in November 28, 2012 the Egyptian High Court for Security have issued a death sentence toward Terry Jones (together with the film-maker of “the innocence of muslim” video) for the burning of the Quran in 2011.⁶¹ The aftermath left Jones with a drastic lowering of DWOC followers (now around 20 or 30)⁶². However, he still regularly publish online videos inciting to stop the Islamisation of America, and he has also prepared his own anti-Islam film, titled “The Innocent Prophet” clearly trying to ride the conflict wave generated by “The innocence of Muslims” crisis.

1.2.3 – 'The innocence of Muslims' saga

The last of the three international controversies sprang from a short low-cost video posted on Youtube. As the video was shot and uploaded from the US, the general domestic context of clashes between Muslims and Christian right-wing activists was similar to the one described in the previous paragraph.

The video, titled “The Innocence of Muslims trailer” or “Muhammad Movie trailer”, is a 13 minutes trailer of a low-cost movie that “portrays Muhammad as a pathetic fraud, a child molester. He is an unwanted bastard at birth”⁶³. It has been shot in just one real set as the other scene has been shot using the green screen technique (it requires low budgets and no sets). The quality is very poor and the film was shot in three months with 59 actors and 45 people behind the camera⁶⁴. One actor declared that the crew were cheated by the film-maker, saying to them

59 Altikriti, Anas. “Burning the myths about Islam”. *Al-Jazeera English*, April 11, 2011

60 Dean, Nelson. “Seven killed in worst-ever attack on UN workers in Afghanistan” *The Telegraph*, April 1, 2011.

61 “Egitto: a morte reverendo Jones, bruciò Corano. Si allarga la protesta dei giudici contro Morsi” *La Repubblica*, November 28, 2012.

62 Alvarez, Lizette. “Koran-Burning Pastor Unrepentant...”

63 “Libya: there is good reason to ban the hateful anti-Muhammad YouTube clips”. *Andrew Brown's Blog, The Guardian*, (?)

64 “Sam Bacile, Anti-Islam Filmmaker, In Hiding After Protests”. *The Huffington Post*, December 5, 2012.

that the movie was about ancient Egyptian warriors. Actually, the most offensive lines in the movie have been dubbed lately – the sound do not follow the movement of actors' mouths – adding words like “Muhammad”, “Islam” or “Quran” to the original lines performed by the actors. The film pretends to illustrate the history of Muhammad and the birth of Islam, but actually the way it is presented and the different episodes that are shown in the film suggest that “the belief criticized are entirely imaginary”⁶⁵. As reported by the newspapers, the movie was projected only once in a small Los Angeles cinema the 30 of June. For that occasion the movie director also hired two security guards – maybe fearing Islamic revenge.⁶⁶ But what originates widespread unrest in the Muslim World was the short 13 minutes trailer of the film translated in Arabic and posted on Youtube and not the entire movie – who has translated it is still unknown as the film-maker denied to be behind the translation.

At the beginning there was a mystery behind the author of the video because the name “Sam Bacile” associated to the user who uploaded it and to the rent of the only Hollywood set used, turned out to be a false name⁶⁷. But further investigations discovered that the video-maker was Nakoula Basseley Nakoula (now Marc Basseley Youssef), an Egyptian Coptic already jailed in the past for false identities used to open several bank accounts to conduce a cheque fraud scheme⁶⁸. Newspapers report that Nakoula was in touch with right-wing Christian charity organizations (used to borrow the Hollywood set used in the movie) and with some “counter-jihadist” or islamophobic movements. Among them, a certain Klein, affiliated to the same movement of the Norwegian mass murdered Breivik, and connected to other right wing islamophobic activists, such as the blogger Pamela Geller (active in the Park 51 controversy).⁶⁹ Even Terry Jones was partially involved in the promotion and distribution of the video through its website and among his followers⁷⁰

When the protests started, Nakoula, hiding beyond the name “Sam Bacile”, declared to The Associated Press to be a Jewish-born American who was able to shoot the movie thanks to financial support from 100 zionists, a clear attempt to ignite more protests and reactions both in the US and abroad.⁷¹ The protests spread in several muslim countries and in some cases were

65 “Libya: there is good reason..”

66 Leithead, Alastair. “Innocence of Muslims: Mystery of film-maker Sam Bacile”. *BBC News*, September 13, 2012

67 “Man behind Innocence of Muslims held after violating probation”. *The Guardian*, September 28, 2012.

68 “Writer of anti-Islamic film sentenced to year in jail”. *The Guardian*, November 8, 2012.

69 Blumenthal, Max. “Inside the strange Hollywood scam that spread chaos across the Middle East”. *The Guardian*, September 23, 2012.

70 Ibidem

71 Blumenthal, Max. “Inside the...”

lead by local leaders who profited the situation to mobilize masses⁷². Widespread protests in front of US embassies took place in the Middle East and even in Europe. In September 11, the US embassy in Libya was set on fire and the US ambassador and four other officers were killed. Despite initial misinterpretations by US security services, the attack was carried out by radical Islamic militants and it was already planned before the video publication. However, the confusion created by the video helped the terrorists in their task. Middle Eastern governments both condemned the violence trying to control them, but also expressed their disappointment with the video, asking to the UN or the US to act against whosoever was behind it⁷³. Pakistani Cabinet minister offered a \$100,000 bounty to anyone who kills Nakoula and in December 2012 Youtube was banned in Pakistan to protest for the video being still online⁷⁴. In Afghanistan, the Taliban attacked Camp Bastion British military base, stating that it was a reaction against the movie mocking their prophet⁷⁵. Other protests against US embassies took place in Egypt (with around 200 injured), Yemen, while smaller protests happened in Morocco, Iran – where Iranians protested in front of the Swiss embassy – Sudan and Tunisia.⁷⁶ The protests of the Muslim populations triggered other reactions in the US, at that time under electoral campaign. President Obama and Hilary Clinton condemned the video while the Libyan attack created an internal political crisis. In fact, the 9/11 Benghazi attack was initially suspected as a spontaneous reaction of the mob, but when it was discovered that it was planned well before the publication of the video⁷⁷, it caused several criticisms to the government for the lack of security and the confusing information given after the attack.

Some argue that this movie was deliberately planned to destabilize the US election campaign (rising fear for Islam and thus benefiting the Republican party) and the newly Arab societies not yet consolidated after the Arab Uprisings⁷⁸ – according to this version, the initial false declaration of Nakoula as Sam Bacile were meant to stir dangerous anti-Israeli resentment. According to Nakoula's declarations, the aim of the movie was to show that the Middle East felt in the hands of Islamist forces, inciting US politicians to act properly in order to confront the Islamic threat.⁷⁹

72 Abdul Bari, Muhammad. (2012) "Hate Video, Muslim Protests and dignified responses" *Al-Jazeera English.com*, September 20, 2012.

73 "Islamophobia Slammed". *Khaleej Times*, September 27, 2012.

74 Masood, Salman. "Pakistan Lift YouTube Ban, for 3 Minutes" *The New York Times online*, December 29, 2012.

75 "Prince Harry at Camp Bastion during Taliban Attacks". *BBC News Online*, September 12, 2012.

76 "Anti-Islam film protests spread across the Middle East" *BBC News Online*, September 13, 2012.

77 "US officials in Benghazi have 'grave concerns'". *Al-Jazeera English*, November 2, 2012 and "Benghazi embassy attack was 'deliberate'" *FT.com (reuters)*, September 29, 2012.

78 "Abdul Bari, Muhammad. "Hate Video..."

79 "Sam Bacile, Anti-Islam Filmmaker..."

“A group of fringe extremists had proven that with a little bit of money and an unbelievably cynical scam, they could shape history to fit their apocalyptic vision. But in the end, they were not immune to the violence they incited”⁸⁰.

Nakoula has been condemned to one year of prison, even if none of the violations charged to him were connected to the content of the video, but instead to the use of false identities – again – and the violation of his probatory condition (he was forbidden to use internet without permit).⁸¹ Together with Jones and Flemming, Nakoula has been sentenced to death by the Egyptian High Court for Security. But this story has also a positive outcome: ten days after the killing of the US embassy, a large crowd marched in Benghazi against the headquarters of an Islamic radical group connected to the US embassy assault. The protesters took over the building and expelled the islamist without firing a single shot, saying “I'm sorry America” “This is the real Libya”.⁸²

1.3 – From similarities to theoretical questions

From the description of the three cases that are analysed in this essay it is possible to notice that they follow similar patterns of development. First, they all regard low-intensity and non military conflicts between Western and Middle Eastern societies, mixing religious motivations with social and political claims – Muslims peoples protested against the US and not against the Church or Jesus, while the right-wing Christians feared social changes in their “pure” community. Second, the three episodes start from a provocation/insult generated in a Western country that mocked or criticize Islam or its prophet Muhammad. In other words it is the secular and modern Western society that “throw a stone” against the Muslim world, that even if it is not homogeneous, still reacts with unity against the slander of few basic religious principles which are considered “untouchable”. Third, the disputes start in a domestic environment as complaints against domestic problems: the domestic feature does not refers only to the national level, but could imply different scales of local environment. Fourth, the crises are triggered initially by one single individual who individually conceive, plan and carry out a provocative action, sometimes helped by some “collaborators”, but in none of the cases the controversy has been generated by an organized group of people (association, ONG, ethnic groups). Fifth, these individuals have in

80 Blumenthal, Max. “Inside the...”

81 “Writer of anti-Islamic...”

82 “Decrying attack, protesters overtake Islamist group's HQ in Benghazi”. *CNN.com*, September 22, 2012.

common that fact they have a strong ideology, and a categorised ideological vision of the world. Finally, the three case-studies shares a certain degree of *randomness*: actually there are plenty of hate-speech videos against Islam on Youtube, several newspapers publishing offensive material every day, and many different angry pastors and fundamentalists ready to burn holy books, but strangely, only those three “succeeded” in triggering some forms of international reactions. In these cases it is almost impossible to find a set of explicative variables that can account for the international spreading of such material. Rather, it seems to depend on a plethora of different variables: international order; special events such as elections or revolutions; media attention and decision by media to cover an event (that opens another field of investigation about why media decide to cover or not an event); historical turbulent moments; and many more. It is practically impossible to count all those variables and the way they mix together resulting in extraordinary consequences. The acceptance of a certain degree of randomness in the internationalisation of the crises could be the only viable explanation (see paragraph 2.6.4). A partial solution could be the simplification of this complexity to few “theorizable” variables, but the result will be probably too simplistic.

From a theoretical perspective, the three cases suggest that national states have partially lost the control over their foreign policy⁸³. It was no intention of Denmark or the US to ignite fire in a hostile and unstable region where – at least for the US – they have vital interests to defend. However, they seemed unable to control the events or to avoid the deterioration of their relationships with the Middle East. Even if it is clear that national states remain the principal actors in the international system, it is also true that their power are contended by other actors – individuals in these specific cases. As the new millennium steps forward, new kind of actors are contending the protagonist role in the global arena: financial markets; big corporations trusts; international media; and individuals⁸⁴. Hence, the similarities crossing these three controversies could be considered as an interesting starting point to formulate hypothesis and theoretical questions regarding international relations discipline, given that the rise of unknown and powerless individuals in the global arena is an intriguing challenge to the majority of international politics theories.

83 Laterza, Vito. “Innocence of Muslims: How fiction creates reality” *Al-Jazeera English*, September 19, 2012

84 James Rosenau has deeply investigated new roles played by individuals at the international level, see Chapter 2, paragraphs 2.6.1 and 2.6.2.

1.4 – Is sovereignty changing?

A preliminary issue that needs to be treated before rising some hypothesis, in order to avoid futile questions, concerns sovereignty in the 21st century. Actually if it is assumed that national sovereignty is “unlimited” and states control the totality of their internal and external outcomes, then it follows that the three international crises are the result of state machinations. At this regard it will not be difficult to find some “conspiracy theories” explaining, for instance, that Terry Jones was paid by the CIA to promote the chaos in the Middle East thus permitting the US to unleash a global war to gain full control of oil revenues. On the contrary, the total lack of state sovereignty does not represent the situation of the 21st century world as it would mean the disappearance of national borders, flags, Olympic games and many other national-related events.

Historically, the concept and practice of sovereignty originated in Europe. As argued by Lapidoth, “during the late Middle Ages, the notion of sovereignty was used by territorial rulers in justifying their aspirations to free themselves from the influence of the emperor and the pope”⁸⁵. This concept was gradually applied by the European powers and, after a series of constitutive wars⁸⁶ it prompts toward the creation of the Westphalian national states system. In Europe, the concept of sovereignty was thus strongly connected with territoriality, as a result of centuries of territorial wars and internal conflicts. But at the same time that sovereignty was fully achieved, it needed to be limited. In fact, “no space was left within which to anchor even so basic a task as the conduct of diplomatic representation without fear of restless disturbance, arbitrary interference and severed lines of communication”⁸⁷. As Ruggie shows, this paradox of sovereignty was related to religion: the problem was that the religion professed and practiced in the embassy chapel could be different from the religion of a state. “Rather than contemplate the heresy of a Protestant service at a Catholic court and vice versa [...] a fictitious space, designated as 'extraterritoriality', was invented”⁸⁸ and today this notion of extraterritoriality have been enlarged, comprehending “various types of functional regimes, common markets, political communities and the like”⁸⁹. This modification of sovereignty suggests that it is a dynamic concept, susceptible to changes and adjustments according to the political and international

85 Lapidoth, Ruth (1992). “Sovereignty in transition” in *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 45, Issue 2, pp. 325-346. Here p. 326

86 Ruggie, John Gerard (1993). “Territoriality and beyond: problematizing modernity in international relations” in *International Organization*, n. 47, pp. 139-174. Here p. 162

87 Idem, p. 164

88 Idem, p. 165

89 Ibidem

environment. Sovereignty has two aspects: one internal, referred to the fact that a state has the monopoly of power within its borders where no other states should interfere; the other external, that is the “independence and equality of states”⁹⁰. When European new born states defined their borders, they were “fighting” to be the only legitimate actor to exert power within that border. In order to convince people – once living without distinct borders – that now they were part of a nation, national states created myths, symbols and national discourses both to prevent secessions and to legitimate their internal sovereignty, thus creating a new *identity* for their peoples. In this frame, the national state replaced God or the Emperor as the only source of rights and duties for people: nationality became the source of people's rights – and the nation the only protector against their arbitrary violation. The price to pay to have rights recognized was essentially (but not only) *loyalty*. To summarize, internal sovereignty requires both identity and loyalty in order to function and to grant internal order and national homogenization.

In international relations discipline there has always been a strong debate around sovereignty, and the 21st century has brought new issues in it (see paragraph 2.1.3). What is at stake is the transformation of national sovereignty rather than its disappearance. Evans notes that “as wealth and power are increasingly generated by private transactions that take place across the borders of states rather than within them, it has become harder to sustain the image of states as the preeminent actors at the global level”⁹¹, thus implying that states have lost part of their sovereign powers (although he also argues that the traditional logic of national interest between equal sovereign nations still persists).⁹² It will be misleading to present here the many contributors that enrich this debate, however, Ferguson and Mansbach present the issue of sovereignty change from an interesting perspective. They argue that sovereignty is not substantially changed, rather people's identity and loyalties are actually changing.⁹³ In other words there is a retreat of the state from identity and not from international politics.⁹⁴ For the authors, ethnic and religious revivals, global challenges and global movement are shifting people's loyalties toward other sources of identity. During turbulent or transitory times, people could “wear” different identities⁹⁵, resulting in conflicting loyalties. The external result, is that national states have partially lost their power to control the international system and that they are no longer the only

90 Lapidoth, Ruth (1992), p. 328

91 Evans, Peter. (1997) “The Eclipse of the State? Reflections on Stateness in an Era of Globalisation” in *World Politics*, vol. 50, n. 1, pp. 62-87. Here p. 65

92 Ibidem

93 Ferguson, Yale H. and Mansbach, Richard W. (1999). “Global Politics at the turn of the millennium: changing bases of the “Us” and “Them” in *International Studies Review*, Vol. 1 Issue 2, pp. 77-107. Here p. 78.

94 Idem, p. 98.

95 Idem, p. 89 and Aime, Marco. (2004) *Eccessi di culture*. Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, p. 125

actors of that system. This brief discussion about sovereignty was necessary as it shows that sovereignty has never been truly absolute – as shown by the embassies question – and that today sovereignty is changing toward more complex forms of overlapping sovereignties between national states, ethnic and religious powers and international global forces. Consequently, it is possible to hypnotize that new kind of actors are eroding states traditional monopoly in the making of their foreign policy.

1.5 – New *random actors* between the Middle East and the West

The partial erosion of state sovereignty implies that parts of it have been distributed to different kind of actors that have been empowered by this erosion: the more a state loses its sovereignty, the more new actors are free to pursue their goals escaping state control. For instance, terrorist networks or mafia organizations are based mainly in weak state that have lost their sovereignty over part of their territory or are not able to enforce the monopoly of violence. However, sovereignty changes could be also positive as in the case of European Union or other forms of issue-centred cooperation (regarding for instance environment problems, nuclear proliferation). As above discussed, the three international crises have had negative impacts over their states (USA and Denmark). In the Danish Cartoon crisis Denmark suffered a strong economic boycott and has lost part of its legitimacy in the Middle East. The attacks on Danish embassies were symbolic acts expressing that part of Muslim countries population wants Denmark out of their nations. Internally, Denmark faced with ethnic and religious tensions and terroristic attacks risk. Similarly, Terry Jones jeopardize US military security in Afghanistan together with UN personnel, the US federal institutions were forced to cool down the tensions rising in the American melting-pot between “counter-jihadist” and radical Muslims. The video posted by Nakoula led – indirectly – to the burnt of the US embassy in Benghazi, domestic concerns about US expatriate security and the arrest of Nakoula himself. Finally, all the three controversies has risen important debates about freedom of expression, hate speech and religious issues in multicultural societies and their new meanings in a global interconnected society. Given these consequences, it is beyond doubt that Denmark and the United States did not conspire to create ad hoc international crises which finally backfired and, consequently, that Nakoula, Jones and Rose acted independently from their nations and eventually escaped its control – for lack of sovereignty or for miscalculation of the potential consequences. They highlight that Denmark

and the US were not able to control actions starting within their territory that shaped – worsening – their relations with the Muslim World.

These considerations are the basis of the fundamental questions that have guided this essay: to which extent the “protagonists” of these international crises represent new actors in the international arena? Are those actors competing with national states in the making of foreign policies towards the Middle East? And finally: do these events suggest that there is a new *type* of actors in international politics? If so, how should they be defined?

1.5.1 – *Random Actors definition*

The first part of this essay (chapter 2) is dedicated to answer the last question: how the actors of the three cases could be defined? As it discussed in that chapter, international relations theories focus mainly on macro dynamics and collective actors while in these three cases single individuals affected directly the international system. Of course, individuals have always played a role in the international system, but as in the case of leaders or revolutionaries, they were able to do it thanks to a certain amount of power they gained within their countries. In other words, individual's role in international relation has been played mostly by “leaders”: whether they were political leaders, chief of large economic companies, ONG leaders and so on. But the actors involved in the crises here analysed lack this status of leaders. They seem not to possess strategic resources such as capital, social capital, charisma or large spiritual influence. They are practically unknown even in their domestic landscape: Nakoula was an anonymous Los Angeles director/racketeer, Jones was known by his few followers and some right-wing christian activist and Rose was probably known by the readers of the cultural pages of the Jyllands-Posten, a newspaper written in Danish language. The only exception is pastor Terry Jones who actually is the leader of a small religious congregation, but he could be considered just a “local leader” without the resources to gain even national relevance. At first it seems that the status of these actors challenges the traditional theories of international politics as people's behaviour is traditionally considered to be constant, implying it could be aggregated to form a uniform collectivity. To partially surpass this obstacle, the concept of *random actors* will be provided as an adequate frame to understand these new controversies. Briefly, random actors could be defined as *single individuals who act mostly locally and whose ideology leads them to have a partial cognition of the global system together with a distorted view of “the other”; but whose actions could randomly have*

international relevance as they are linked – through small scale-free networks – to a globalised fragmented world. This definition is meant to stress some important feature. First, individuals will be considered as unique variables, whose behaviour can not be aggregated to a homogeneous collectivity. Second, they live and experience globalisation through their local context: Rose, Jones and Nakoula participate to the life of their local community and are concerned primarily with local problems or threats. In fact, the islamic threat is perceived in the measure it breaks into their *local worlds* (paragraph 2.6.1) and their protests are about local concern, ignoring other kind of *foreign* problems connected to Islam (for instance discriminatory practices in the Middle East). Third, they have a strong ideology that leads them to read the reality in a dichotomous way (for instance Muslims versus Western citizens); they feel that they have to defend their society from an external menace. Fourth, even if they are local actors, they are potentially connected to the world through different kind of networks. Specifically, the world wide web plays a crucial role in these controversies – through social network, new media, online newspapers, international news agencies – and it is structured as a small-world scale-free network. Fifth, the random connections characterizing small-world networks, together with the complexity of the international system with overlapping sovereignties, cultural clashes and fragmentative dynamics, all add a certain degree of randomness to the internationalisation of local actions. In other words, it is not possible to state that the international relevance acquired by Rose, Jones and Nakoula is connected to a specific explicative variable, or to a group of them: rather, it depends on several micro and macro aspects that randomly combine themselves resulting in an extraordinary butterfly effects. Finally, the inclusion of *fragmentation* within this definition, a concept elaborated by James Rosenau, is meant to underline the continuous micro and macro, local and global interactions, reactions and feedbacks characterising these three cases.

Chapter 2 – Could International Relations theories explain the turbulence between the Middle East and the West?

The study of international politics focuses its attention on the “outcomes” of world politics. An outcome could be defined as an event that aims to influence the international system or its actors. Otherwise it could be defined as “the effect of the policy measures on the behaviour of the target actors”¹. What is discriminant is the international relevance assumed by the outcome and thus it distinction between domestic policy outcomes and macro (regional, global) policies. However, the study of international politics has seen the proliferation of several different paradigms and schools of thought which differ over the fundamental aspects of both who are the actors of the international arena and which is the structure organizing today’s world politics. As a result, the same outcome could be meaningful for the realists or be ignored by the post-modernists, not to mention the different and divergent explications given to a same outcome by each school. Moving among these different schools is not always simple as each one of them includes some fundamental keys to understanding global politics and could not be totally rejected (except for rare cases of truly misleading theories).

One interesting turning point for the modern international relations discipline was the fall of the Soviet Union and the consequently profound reconstruction of the global order. Prior theories were mainly focused on issues regarding the cold peace, nuclear deterrence or the properties of a bipolar system.² The collapse of this order have opened a phase of profound rethinking of international politics with the emergence of a deep debate between scholars trying to explain the new era and its peculiar features. Some have tried to outline future scenarios³, but their prevision has proved to be whether too simplistic or too optimistic. That understanding the new global order was not such an easy task was clear to several scholars who preferred to concentrate their

1 Börzel, Tanja A.(2000) “Private Actors on the Rise? The Role of Non-State Actors in Compliance with International Institutions” in *MPI Collective Goods Preprint*, n. 2000/14, p.3.

2 Traditionally these have been realist-oriented theme. See for example: Mearsheimer, John J. (1988) “Numbers, Strategy, and the European Balance” in *International Security*, vol. 12, n. 4, pp.174-185; Waltz, Kennet N. (1964) “The Stability of a Bipolar World” in *Daedalus*, Vol.93, n. 3, pp. 881-909. The MIT Press.

3 The two most popular and opposed contributes about possible post cold-war scenarios are: Huntington, Samuel p. (1993) *The Clash of Civilization and the Remake of World Order*; Simon and Schuster, New York. and Fukuyama, Francis.(1992) *The End of History and the last Man*, Free Press, New York.

attention toward more specific tasks. The rising of several case-studies was a reflection of the perceived complexity and instability of the world politics after 1989.

The theoretical confusion and the chaotic landscape resulting from these dynamics configure a kind of “dialogue of the deaf”⁴ between scholars of International Politics; each one following its own path or issue without listening to critics' voices. Despite this chaotic landscape, there are also (possibly the majority) powerful theories that could become central analytic tools, useful to explain and to describe the dynamics that characterize today's global politics.

The Middle East and its international politics issues were not spared by these theoretical proliferation and specializations, as shown by different “trends” that have crossed the academic literature about the Arab World and its relationships with the West. Some hot topics were the democratization of the middle eastern countries; its chronic – and perpetual – authoritarianism; the Islamic threat etc.⁵ Again, the post cold-war world have proved to be more complicated than expected and the Arab Uprisings⁶ have shown the inadequacy of some theories – like those about the incompatibility of Arab culture and democratic aspirations or explaining the persistence of the authoritarianism in the Middle East – and political debates. But the middle East have traditionally been a field of uncertainty and unpredictability. Before and after the cold war, happenings such as the first intifada and oil embargoes have lefts scholars and analysts unprepared⁷. The outcomes that will be analysed in this essay fall within this field of uncertainty and abrupt outcomes. Moreover the main actors of our outcomes – i.e individuals – have normally been left aside by international politics scholars.⁸ The scarce attention given to individual is connected to another interesting debate among international politics scholar: the importance given to domestic factors in explaining the dynamics of world politics⁹, also known as

4 De Vries, Michiel S. (2001) “The Attack on the State: a Comparison of the Arguments” in *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 67, pp. 389-414: p. 408

5 For a critical presentation of democracy in the Middle East and authoritarian persistence see: Albrecht, Holgher and Achlumberger, Oliver. (2004) “<<Waiting for Godot>> Regime change without Democratization in the Middle East” in *International Political Science Review*, vol. 25, n. 4, pp. 371-392; Hinnebusch, Raymond. (2006) “Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization Theories and the Middle East: an Overview and Critique” in *Democratization*, vol. 13, n. 3, pp. 373-395. For a discussion about the islamist treat (especially after 9/11) see: Wiktorowicz, Quintan. (2001) “The new Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad” in *Middle East Policy*, vol. 8, n. 4. pp. 18-38

6 Accordingly to Mark Lynch (2012) I prefer to use the term “Arab Uprisings” instead of “Arab Spring” as the results of the 2010/2011 revolution are still to be detected and far from being totally positive. For a broad analysis and presentation of the Arab Uprisings see Lynch, Mark.(2012) *The Arab Uprisings. The unfinished Revolutions of the new Middle East*. Public Affairs, The Perseus book Group, USA

7 Fawcett, Louise. (2009) “Introduction: The Middle East and International Relations” in in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Pp. 1-17. Here p. 1

8 Rosenau, James N. (1986). “Before Cooperation: hegemons, regimes and habit-driven actors in world politics” in *International Organization*, vol. 40, n. 4, pp. 849-894, Here p. 857

9 Chaudoin, Stephen; Milner, Helen V.; Pang, Xung. (2012) “International systems and domestic politics: linking

the micro-macro debate.¹⁰ Given this complex theoretical landscape, the aims of this second chapter is to briefly present international relations main paradigms in order to highlight their view of individuals and the role given to them within the international system. This will be useful to identify some analytic tools to be applied on the analysis of the three international controversies. In the last pages of the chapter, a conceptual category, called *random actors*, will be suggested as a key to understand the role played by individuals in the chaotic international relations between the Middle East and the West. The *random actors* definition will also help to grasp the complex interaction between micro-macro variables and actors that seems to be a constant feature of the three analysed controversies.

2.1 – The realist and neorealist doctrine.

2.1.1 – The classical realist thought

Jackson and Sørensen trace the origins of the realist thought back to ancient Greece with Thucydides, then passing through Machiavelli (XV-XVI century.) and Hobbes (XVI-XVII century.)¹¹. The historical background of the three philosopher, together with their personal life, was probably the origin of their *pessimistic* view of the human nature¹². In Machiavelli's words:

“And thus it is that one is reputed liberal, another miserly, [...] one is reputed generous, one rapacious; one cruel, one compassionate; one faithless, another faithful; one effeminate and cowardly, another bold and brave; one affable, another haughty; one lascivious, another chaste; one sincere, another cunning; one hard, another easy; one grave, another frivolous; one religious, another unbelieving, and the like.”¹³

The conclusions Machiavelli derives from these premisses is that the prince (that stands for any leader of a nation) should be neither good nor bad, he just has to follow the good for his nation, behaving good or bad as a consequence.¹⁴ Hobbes also shared a pessimistic opinion towards individuals, which springs from the natural equality of every men's abilities, thus structuring a

complex theories with empirical models in international relations” in *International Relations* (2012). APSA 2012 Annual Meeting Paper, p. 1

10 An author who has focused its attention on micro-macro interaction is Rosenau, James N. (2003). *Distant Proximities. Dynamics beyond Globalization*. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, p. 22

11 Jackson and Sørensen. (2005) pp.70-76

12 Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes lived in different but similar historical epochs, marked by political fragmentation and power/social struggles. See Jackson and Sørensen (2005) pp.70-76

13 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il principe*, extract from chapter XV

14 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il principe*, chapters XVII and XVIII

“condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man”¹⁵. Similarly Hobbes observes that the nations are also characterized by substantial equality and thus suffering a similar status as

“in all times kings and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another”¹⁶.

But Hobbes concludes that the only feasible solution is that every man should renounce to its *jus naturale* in favour of only one person who will be the ruler of mankind, breaking the natural anarchic status of the world. Anarchy was seen both as a menace for peace but also recognized as a reality which princes and lords should be aware of in order to act properly to preserve power, peace and prosperity. What is worth to be noted is that the starting point of the classical realist's reflection were the individuals. They were treated as the key *variables* as their features were central to understanding the national or international order and to outlining how it should be structured by leaders to avoid chaos and anarchy. But individual's features were treated as constants. Actually the innate desires of human beings and the belief that individuals would offend and kill each other - in order to reach their goals – are the core premises of the classical realist thought. Expressed from a theoretical perspective, individual's *nature* is treated as the constant variable that explain the other observed variables (nation constitution, leaders' behaviour, international order).

These early contributes were central for the development of the modern realist school, emerging in the '20s as a critic to the liberals and a response to the first world financial crisis.¹⁷ The first author to criticize idealistic view of international politics – that was the mainstream of political thought at that time – was E.H Carr. In his book *The twenty years crisis: an introduction to the study of International Relations* (first published in 1939); he states that the main mistake made by idealists was to belief that rationality and cooperation were stronger than self-interest¹⁸. Carr's critics did not hit the public as happened in 1948 with the publication of Hans J. Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace*.¹⁹ In 1952, as a response to the debate between him and Ambassador Keenan's different views about US foreign policy, Morgenthau argued that the main difference between liberals and realists is that the latter

15 Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, chapter XIII

16 Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, chapter XIII

17 Jackson and Sørensen. (2005) pp.41-42

18 Guzzini, Stefano. (1998). *Il realismo nelle relazioni internazionali*. Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2008, p. 28.

19 Jackson and Sørensen. (2005) p.42

“Believes that the world, imperfect as it is from the rational point of view, is the result of forces inherent in human nature. [...] This being inherently a world of opposing interests and conflict among them, moral principles can never be fully realized but must at best be approximated through the ever temporary balancing of interest and the ever precarious settlement of conflicts.”²⁰

Morgenthau's focus was directed toward two main points, the centrality of power - and the consequent struggle among nations to gain power - and the need for nations to practice power politics in order to survive in the international arena; both regarded as the key feature of the international system. Interestingly, Morgenthau states that individuals, being obliged to renounce to their desire for power internally - as the only way to maintain internal order - transpose their struggle for power outside, at the international level²¹. The result is an anarchical order in which the struggle for power leads to nations' conflicts as their eventual cooperation and alliances. Therefore, modern realists too shared a pessimistic view of human nature that is considered to be constant and is used as a constant independent variable to build their theories of world system's order. Both Morgenthau and Aron²² were sceptical about the possibility of creating a rational theory of international relations as too many factors -both internal and external- and causal interaction were to be eventually included in this theory²³. However, their attention to the individuals was minor than the classical realists as they shifted their attention toward the nations (perceived as the natural continuation of individual's actions in a global scale) and political leaders as actors of the global arena, thus reducing the system's complexity.

2.1.2 – Neorealism and the fading of individuals.

Kenneth Waltz is considered to be one of the most influential neorealist intellectual. In his 1979 book *Theory of International Politics* he tries to “build a scientific explanation of the international politics system”.²⁴ In his works he tries to overcome the doubts expressed by Morgenthau and Aron stating that

“Neorealism's response is that, while difficulties abound, some that seem most daunting lie in misapprehension about theory. Theory obviously cannot explain the accidental or account for unexpected events. [...] A theory

20 Morgenthau, Hans J. (1952) “Another “Great Debate”: The National Interest of the United States” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 46, n. 4, pp. 961-988. Here p. 962.

21 Guzzini, Stefano. (1998) p. 37

22 Aron, Raymond. (1967) “What is a Theory of International Relations” cit. in: Waltz, Kenneth. (1991) “Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory” in *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 44, n. 1, pp. 21-37. Here p. 25

23 Waltz, Kenneth. (1991) pp. 25-26

24 Jackson and Sørensen. (2005) p.85 [translated by the author]

indicate that some factors are more important than others and specifies relations among them”²⁵

To reach his goal, Waltz sets forth a theory in which national states are the only relevant actors in the system, the latter being organized in a structure whose feature – together with a nation's material capabilities – are the explaining variable of the state's behaviour ²⁶. What is worth to note for the purpose of this essay is that Waltz

“takes some elements of classical and neoclassical realism as a starting-point – e.g. independent states existing and operating in a system of international anarchy. But he departs from that tradition by ignoring its normative concerns [...] He gives no account of human nature”²⁷.

Hence, even though considerations on individuals and their natural features were the bases of the realist thought, the neorealists - in order to reduce the system complexity allowing them to create a scientific theory - reverted this conception creating a rigidly organized - though anarchic - system, in which individuals do not play any relevant role in international politics. In this new paradigm the constant independent variable was shifted from individual to national states. Neorealists essentially retake realist's point of view for individuals, transposing it to nations. The result is that state is considered as self-interested and struggling to gain or maintain its power - that stands for human beings' desires. Seemingly, to reach its goals a nation will surely attack another nation if it is necessary, thus structuring an anarchic order were the stronger get the better.

2.1.3 – Some critics to neorealists

The structuralist approach created by Waltz was profoundly criticized by both liberals and newly-emerged approaches. Neorealism rigidity, if it fitted well in a stiff bi-polar system, was soon perceived as inadequate after the fall of the cold war structure – that was also a main neorealist's topic. Furthermore the structure rigidity does not allow any kind of random action as actors are forced to act only following the structure pattern, designed by states' material characteristics and their struggle to maximize their power. Regarding the structuralist rigidity, Sewell argues that

“the most fundamental problem is that structural or structuralist arguments tend to assume a far too rigid causal determinism in social life. Those features of social existence denominated as structures tend to be reified and treated as primary, hard, immutable [...] What tends to get lost in the language of structure is the efficacy of human

25 Waltz, Kenneth. (1991) “Realist Thought...” p.26

26 Jackson and Sørensen, (2005) p.85

27 Ibid. [translated by the author]

actions”²⁸.

Another important critic, regarding sovereignty and the role of the national state in the post cold war era, has generated a deep debate within international politics scholars. Some scholars argue that the state has become obsolete in the new globalised world as it cannot fulfil its main functions²⁹; others see the state-system threatened by both internal forces (separatist movements) and external pressures (the global market, regionalisation and international law)³⁰, hence the main critic is to the neorealists persistence to see states as principal (and possibly the only) relevant actors in the international system. Conversely, Rosenau argues that

“...neorealists are comfortable confining the micro level to nation-states as subsystems and tracing macro-micro interactions in terms of how states shape and are shaped by the international systems to which they are linked. Occasionally they treat interest groups and domestic publics along with states as micro-level subsystems, but their analyses rarely dig deeper into even more disaggregated levels of analysis. In effect, by limiting their conception of the micro level to collectivities [...] they never confront the possibility that individuals may be central actors on the global stage.”³¹

Regarding the Middle East it seems that neorealists missed the point again. Actually, excluding identity, religion and other relevant cultural aspects from their theories, they are unable to grasp the complex role played by ideology and culture in Middle Eastern politics³²

Finally, considering the scope of this essay – which is to understand and analyse some individual-driven outcomes in the international relations between the Middle East and the West – it is clear that even if classical realists paid some attention to individuals, they did not focus their attention towards individual agency in international relations. More specifically, realists do not attribute a relevant role to individuals because they treated them, their attitudes and behaviour as a constant, thus reducing the range of possible action to only an aggressive negative role. As for neorealism, it remains anchored to a rigid structuralist model of international politics – in which states plays the role of individuals in the classical realist view – that has no space both for individuals and randomness. Hence, while “material capabilities alone offer little help”³³ to

28 Sewell, William H. Jr. (1992) “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation” in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 98, n. 1, pp. 1-29. Here p. 2

29 Mathews, Jessica T (1997) “Power shift” in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, n. 1, pp. 50-66. Here p. 50-51.

30 For an interesting point of view about state system post-modern transformations see: Ruggie, John Gerard (1993). “Territoriality and beyond: problematizing modernity in international relations” in *International Organization*, n. 47, pp. 139-174

31 Rosenau, James N. (1986) p. 859.

32 For a discussion about ideology versus material constraints in middle eastern politics see: Hinnebusch, Raymond. “The Politics of Identity in Middle Eastern International Relations” in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Pp. 148-169.

33 Hemmer, Christopher and Katzenstein, Peter J. (2002) “Why Is There no NATO in Asia? Identity, Regionalism and

explain the complex international interaction between the Middle East and the West, it is also important to keep in mind that identity alone could be as much misleading, and that it is better to explore the interaction between material power and ideological variables rather than adopt only one paradigm.

2.2 – The liberal tradition

2.2.1 – The origins

The origins of the liberal school of international relations dates back to the 17th century with three main philosophers: Locke, Bentham and Kant³⁴. Even if they start from quite different positions, it is possible to state that they share an *optimistic* view of the human nature and capabilities. In opposition to Hobbes, John Locke wrote that

“To understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature [...] which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possession”³⁵

Hence every individual is the owner of specific natural rights (property, life and freedom), but to avoid sporadic abuses and injustices, mankind must exit from its natural state and constitute a civil society through a social contract.³⁶ The role of the state is thus to protect these rights and this specific nature of the nations is also considered a main constraint to war, as war is seen as a negation of human rights and thus against the rationality of both the states and humanity in general³⁷. Starting from a Hobbes-like point of view, Kant argued that

“The state of peace among men living side by side is not the natural state (*status naturalis*); the natural state is one of war. This does not always mean open hostilities, but at least an unceasing threat of war. A state of peace, therefore, must be *established*, for in order to be secured against hostility it is not sufficient that hostilities simply be not committed; and, unless this security is pledged to each by his neighbour (a thing that can occur only in a civil state),

the Origins of Multilateralism” in *International Organization*, vol, 56, n. 3, pp. 575-607. Here p. 577

34 Jackson and Sørensen.(2005) p.111-112

35 John Locke. (1690) *The second Treatise of Civil Government*, Cap 2 Sec 4-6

36 Cambiano, Giuseppe and Mori, Massimo. (2002) *Storia e antologia della filosofia, volume 2*. Laterza Editori, Roma-Bari, p.138-139

37 Jackson and Sørensen.(2005) p. 111

each may treat his neighbour, from whom he demands this security, as an enemy”³⁸

In his view human beings could cooperate to associate themselves within a pact in order to avoid abuses and to grant basic rights to each one. But Kant goes further, specifying that the civil constitution – born from the pact between humans – should adopt the republican form as the only way to grant to individuals the protection of their rights. As for the states, Kant imagines that

“states, like individuals, may be judged to injure one another merely by their coexistence in the state of nature (i.e., while independent of external laws). Each of them, may and should for the sake of its own security demand that the others enter with it into a constitution similar to the civil constitution, for under such a constitution each can be secure in his right. This would be a league of nations, but it would not have to be a state consisting of nations”³⁹

Hence, in the classical liberal doctrine people's and individuals' features (rationality, irrationality etc.) were the core premisses of liberal political thought, initially regarding the national level and then extending the national doctrine of rational-peace to the international level. Differently from the realists, they did not share one single idea about the nature of human beings (Locke was more optimistic than Kant) but they both believe that human rationality would lead people to cooperate in order to safeguard their natural rights. The theme of the individual's rationality has been one of the core points of liberalism (especially in economics) leading to some central theories such as John Stuart Mill's free market self-regulation theory.

2.2.2 – Modern liberalism, from Wilson until today

Despite the tragedy of the First World War was a clear symptom that nations were not eager to follow liberal doctrines, the end of the conflict was the beginning of a renewed liberal phase. The regained optimism was mainly due to the president of the United States liberal orientation expressed in his “fourteen points” declaration⁴⁰. Wilson believed that the building of a truly democratic state-system was the only solution to prevent a Second World War. In his famous declaration, he delineates fourteen principles that would inspire the constitution of the post-war negotiations and the emergent new world order. Among them, the most relevant were:

” I. [...] diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view

38 Kant, Immanuel. (1795) *Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch*. Section II.

39 Kant, Immanuel. (1795) *Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch*. Section II “Second definitive article for a perpetual peace”.

40 Jackson and Sørensen.(2005) p.37-38

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike."⁴¹

This brief fourteen-point declaration summarizes all the core assumptions of the liberal doctrine: the belief that democratic principles and democratic societies are more peaceful (point I, V and XIV); the idea that free trade among nations will reduce the risks of war (points II and III), the trust in international organizations as means to promote cooperation and peaceful relationships between nations (point XIV) and the attention paid to individuals as the final beneficiaries of the international systems and as possessors of essential rights (point V). The core idea of this new phase of the liberal thought was that "humans beings are rational and when they apply reason to international relations they can set up organizations for the benefit of all"⁴².

The year 1989 was seen as a triumph for liberal doctrines versus a realist-pessimistic view of international politics. As outlined by Fukuyama in his famous 1989 article "The end of History?", liberals read the fall of the Soviet Union as a prelude to the bigger and definitive expansion of liberal, democratic and capitalistic societies all over the world⁴³.

"But the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started: not to an "end of ideology" or a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism." And the death of this ideology [communism] means the growing "Common Marketization" of international relations, and the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states."⁴⁴

Fukuyama's argument expresses another core notion shared by many liberals: that the world-wide expansion of capitalistic economy, made possible by technological advances and progressive

41 President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points Discourse, January, 8, 1918

42 Jackson and Sørensen.(2005) p.39

43 Fukuyama, Francis. (1989) "The End of History?" *The national Interests*, summer issue, 1989 (online version from the original).

44 Fukuyama, Francis. "The end of History?"(quotation needed)

reduction in communication costs will bring democratization all over the world as liberal-democratic societies are considered more suitable for economic development. It follows that democratic nations, increasingly interdependent thanks to new economic ties, are unwilling to declare war to each other. This last condition is better known as the “democratic peace” theory.⁴⁵ The fall of Soviet Union was also the starting point for the liberal new conceptualization of civil society. Introducing the wide debate about origin, evolution and meanings of today's civil society is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is worth to note, accordingly to Cox, that the new liberal view on civil society stresses the separation (and opposition) between this and the state as a positive force led by the voluntary association among individuals aiming to preserve basic human rights from possible state abuses⁴⁶. Finally, liberalism as a theory of international politics view state agency as determined also by domestic variables such as “societal ideas, interests and institutions”⁴⁷. Far from being fully represented in this brief paragraph, the liberal tradition has developed several sub-schools that focus their attention on specific issues. These are: institutional (focused on international organizations, rules and their role in fostering peace and cooperation); interdependence; democratic (analysing the relations between democracy and peace) and sociological liberalism. A detailed presentation of each school would divert from the aim of the essay, and despite this differentiation, each school share the basic assumptions of the liberal school of thought.

2.2.3 – Some critics to liberalism

The major critics to liberalism come from the realist side. Realists observe that economic interdependence was stronger during the 18th-19th century than now, but this interdependence was not sufficient to prevent two world-scale conflicts and several others international disputes. Realists argue that nations remain the main actor in the international system and if they cooperate they do so just out of self-interest and calculation; this implies that whenever they want, they can break cooperation and open new hostilities⁴⁸. It has also been noted that the democratic-peace theory “only seems to work in liberals' relations with other liberals. Liberal

45 Oneal, John R. and Russett, Bruce M. (1997) “The Classical Liberals Were Right: Democracy, Intrepence and conflict, 1950-1985” in *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 41, pp. 267-294. Here p. 267.

46 Cox, Robert W (1999). “Civil society at the turn of the millennium: prospects for an alternative world order” in *Review of international studies*, 25, pp 3-28. Here pp. 5-9

47 Moravcsik, Andrew.(1997) “Taking preference Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics” in *International Organization*, vol. 51, n.4, pp. 513-553. Here p. 553.

48 Jackson and Sørensen.(2005) p.130-132

states have fought numerous wars with non-liberal states”⁴⁹. But the chasm between liberals and realists is far deeper, concerning central issues as domestic-foreign factors influence in world politics; structure versus agency debate and the ideas about future features of the international system⁵⁰ (peaceful, chaotic, etc.). On a deeper level, the very difference between them results from their opposite view of human nature: pessimistic realists do not believe in longstanding cooperation while optimistic liberals believe in rational and cooperation-oriented actors. As mentioned above, the liberalist tradition is strictly connected with the International Political Economy (IPE) discipline, believing that economic interdependence and capitalistic-liberal states are the starting-point for a peaceful and cooperative world order. The economic aspects of liberalism have been strongly criticized by other IPE paradigms - such as Marxism - the impact of which is relevant to the analysis of international politics. Concerning the role of individuals in the international system, it is worth to note that even if liberals admit the relevance of people and their agency, the liberal point of view seems to be too optimistic, viewing trans-national micro-relationships among individuals as fostering positive ties and creating a “global civil society”.⁵¹ Similarly to realists, they tend to simplify the complexity of the international system by stating few core assumptions: the rationality of individuals and then the rationality of states – as they are collectivities of individuals. But this simplification could be seen - again - as the attempt to set a constant and independent variable that explains the others.

2.3 – Neomarxist paradigms.

Marxism was born from the theories of Marx and Engels about the capitalistic economy and its society, the latter believed to be the result of the capitalistic specific way of production. Thus, marxists believe that politics are subjected to economic dynamics⁵² and that “the organization of capitalism determined political and economic outcomes at both the domestic and the international level”⁵³. Although Marxism was initially focused on domestic issues (the relation between bourgeoisies and proletariat) it has also developed theories about IEP and world politics. The study of capitalism expansion and the world-scale relation between bourgeoisie and

49 Doyle, Michael W. (1986) “Liberalism and World Politics” in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, n. 4, pp. 1151-1169. Here p. 1156

50 The reference here is to the two opposite forecasts made by Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama

51 For a presentation about the meanings of Civil Societies see Cox, Robert W (1999). “Civil society at the turn of the millennium: prospects for an alternative world order” in *Review of international studies*, 25, pp 3-28.

52 Jackson and Sørensen. (2005) p. 193-194

53 Katzstein, Peter J; Kehoane, Robert O and Krasner, Stephen D. (1998) “International Organization and the Study of World Politics” in *International Organization*, vol. 52, n. 4, pp. 645-685. The MITT press. Here p. 664

wealthy nations against proletarian and less developed countries were just some of the issues explored by marxists that give birth to dependence theories and unequal exchange dynamic theorisation. Immanuel Wallerstein has set forth an interesting theory that grasps the nature of world politics and the distribution of power among nations from a structuralist perspective.⁵⁴ In his view, the world-system is divided into three different “zones”: a core, a periphery and a semi-periphery. The first two zones interact following the dynamic of unequal exchange “which is enforced by strong states on weak ones, by core states on peripheral areas. Thus, capitalism involves not only appropriation of the surplus-value by an owner from a labourer, but an appropriation of surplus of the whole world-economy by core areas.”⁵⁵ The semi-periphery is introduced as a dynamic concept, rather political than economic, to specify that “the upper stratum is not faced with the unified opposition of all the others because the middle stratum is both exploited and exploiter”⁵⁶. In other words, the periphery stands for less-developed areas which are exploited by the core (most developed areas) in order to obtain resources, low-cost labour forces and to use periphery as the receiver of bad externalizations coming from the core (waste, low-quality outputs). In opposition to realists, Wallerstein argues that “capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world-economy and not of nation-states”⁵⁷ as the differentiation between core and periphery do not match national borders. The result is a system characterized by horizontal relationships among homogeneous zones that belong to the same functional category and vertical relations between differently ranked areas. What is worth to note is that in the core-periphery theory domestic groups of people could play a role in the international arena. Politics are subjected to class struggle and in the world-economy this struggle could sometimes gain a planetary level, resulting in a declassification of core areas to semi-periphery and vice-versa.

A different view of the international system that belongs to neomarxist doctrine is the *imperialistic* paradigm. The basic idea is that the new post-Cold War order, far from being more democratic, is marked by a strong hierarchical structure whose top is constituted by developed countries, international organizations (such as IMF, WB) major economical and military powers. The power structure grants more benefits to the core-countries and the main powers; the global system is characterized for imperialistic relationships among powerful nations towards powerless

54 Wallerstein, Immanuel. (1985) *Il capitalismo storico*. Einaudi Editore, Torino.

55 Wallerstein, Immanuel. (2005) “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis” in Hier, Sean P. (2005) [edited by], *Contemporary Sociological Thought: Themes and Theories*. Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. Toronto, Ontario. Here p.62

56 Wallerstein, Immanuel.(2005) p. 64

57 Idem, p. 63

ones, where the first profits from low-cost resources, under paid labour force and debt charges. The result is a structural perpetuation and reiteration of the gap between First and Third world.⁵⁸

Negri and Hardt in their book *Empire*⁵⁹, suggest another paradigm. For them, the distribution of power in the new globalised system could be imagined as “a pyramidal structure that is composed of three progressively broader tiers, each of which contains several levels”⁶⁰ as showed in fig.4 The command function is performed by the first tier – where power is located – and then mediated through the second level - that geographically distributes the power originating form the centre which is not connected to a specific territory – to the last tier, representing the “multitude”. But individuals in the last tier could not interact directly with superior levels, thus they need to be represented by collectivities, associations and media.⁶¹

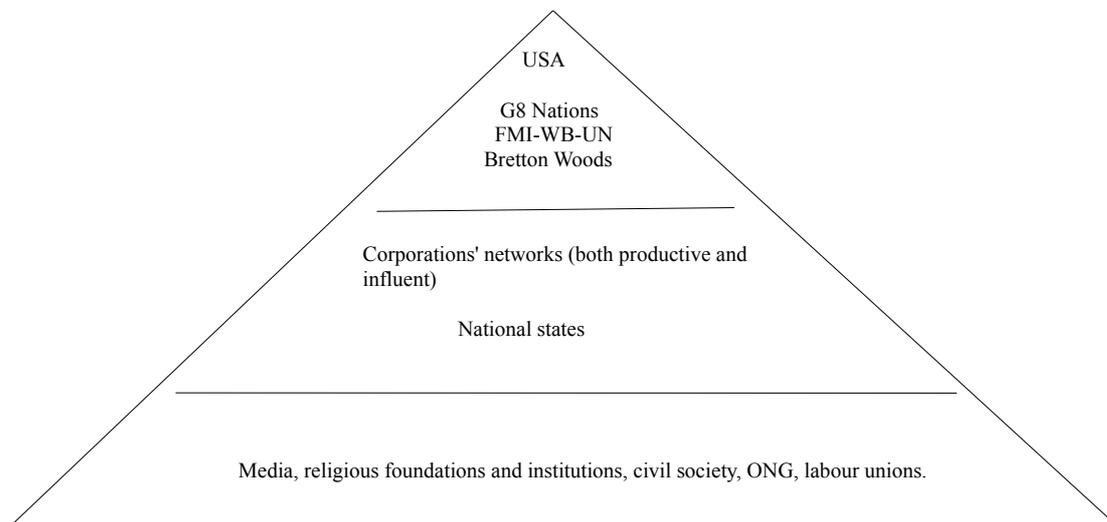


Fig. 4 Graphic scheme of the *Empire* structure. (Graphic by the author)

The marxist theories, far from being represented by these two examples, share basically the same vision of world economic systems influencing world politics and social interactions, giving more importance to structural explanation than to individuals. As to realists, the marxist school outlines a series of macro-structural dynamics (core-periphery; dependence, unequal exchange) that describe political world order as a result of the economic order. The actors in this system are embedded within the class relationship between world-capital and world-proletariat hence they have reduced space for agency in the international system. As for individuals, they are

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59 Negri, Antonio and Hardt, Michael. (2000) *Impero*. RCS Libri S.p.a, Milano, 2001

60 Idem, p. 290

61 Negri and Hardt, *Impero*, pp. 289-293

considered as in Negri and Hardt's "multitude" subjected to the global capitalistic dynamics. However, the marxists do not formulate they constant independent variable at the level of actors – as done by realists and liberals; in their paradigm the dynamics of capitalism and class struggles assume this role thus serving to explain the other variables. However, the marxists recognize that the capitalist structure is not fixed neither immutable – as it has changed several times since its beginning – but they believe that the core principle of capitalism, i.e the continued accumulation of capital used to accumulate more capital, is constant, thus representing the core assumption of their theories.

2.4 – Constructivism and the agent-structure debate

Constructivism is to be considered a set of principles and "a way of studying social relations"⁶² rather than a theory of international relationships. The core principle consists in the mutual and dialectic interaction between human being and social structures⁶³ in a way where "social relations *construct* people and [...] [c]onversely [human beings] make the world what it is"⁶⁴. Wendt has given and interesting insight about constructivism core ideas stating that

"1) Human beings and their organizations are purposeful actors whose actions help reproduce or transform the society in which they live; and 2) society is made up of social relationships, which structures the interaction between these purposeful actors"⁶⁵.

Hence constructivists pose their attention "in how actors and systems are constituted and co-evolve"⁶⁶. As it is not a theory *tout-court*, the aim of constructivism is not to provide a comprehensive description of the international system that could explain the whole of its dynamics, rather it is to define the variables of the system and their interactions. The spreading of constructivism firstly within social science and then throughout international relations discipline has opened a new debate between rationalist - both realists and liberals – and constructivists. To have an idea of this debate it is helpful to quote Katzenstein, Keohane and

62 Onuf, Nicholas. (1998) "Constructivism: a user's manual" in Kubalkova, Vendulka; Onuf, Nicholas and Kowert, Paul [edited by] (1998) *International Relations in a Constructed world*. M.E Sharpe Inc. New York. pp. 58-78. Here p. 58

63 Idem, p. 59

64 Ibidem

65 Wendt, Alexander. (1987) p. 337-338

66 Katzenstein, Peter J; Keohane, Robert O and Krasner, Stephen D. (1998) "International Organization and the Study of World Politics" in *International Organization*, vol. 52, n. 4, pp. 645-685. Here p. 677

Krasner:

“Rationalist theories derived from economics, for instance, offer the following heuristic: if you have a puzzle, formulate it as a problem for rational actors with unproblematic specified interests, competing in a situation characterized by scarce resources. Constructivist theories, in contrast, look to the humanities and sociology for insights into how “reality”, including the interest that partially constitute the identity of actors, is socially constructed”⁶⁷.

In other words, while rationalists try to set a relation between independent and dependent variables - in order to reduce complexity and to produce abstractions and theories - for the constructivist paradigm the central point is to look at all these variables as mutually dependent from each other, hence refusing to set one or more of them as independent thus explaining the others⁶⁸. These new orientation toward social dynamics leads constructivist to rethink one of the core issues in international politics that is the relationship between a structure (the international system) and the agents operating within this structure. The debate, already existing within the international relations discipline, was mainly between agent-oriented scholars who believe that agents and their feature create structure (realism and neorealism); and structure oriented scholars, who believe that structure shapes and lead agency (Marxism, institutional liberalism). Constructivism has brought another perspective in the debate, stating that neither structure nor agents could be considered independent, or if so, the price to be paid is an excessive simplification that will lead to a weak theory unable to grasp the complex interaction between agents and structures. More about, Wendt notes that the two main structuralist paradigms – neorealism and neomarxism – share a common mistake, that is to reduce the complexity of the system they try to describe by setting an independent variable that is used to explain the others.⁶⁹ As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, realism sets the states as the independent variable, in the sense that their material characteristics (population, territory, military and economic power) produce the anarchical structure of the international system. Thus changes at the level of states material features will result in a new structure configuration.⁷⁰ On the other side, neomarxism and institutional liberalism affirm that the capitalistic organization (the first) or international rules and institutions (the latter) act by influencing agents' behaviour and possibilities: changes in the structures will modify agents' possibilities, constraining them to

67 Idem, p. 646

68 See Wendt, Alexander. (1987) “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory” in *International Organization*, vol. 41, n. 3, pp. 335-370.

69 Idem, p. 337

70 Wendt, Alexander. (1987) “The Agent-Structure...” p. 341

adopt a different behaviour. The solution, as Wendt proposes, is to “[conceptualize] agents and structures as mutually constituted or codetermined entities”⁷¹, thus implying “that theories of international relations must have foundations in theories of both their principal units of analysis (state agents and system structures)”⁷². Even though constructivists are “skeptical about the possibility of formulating general covering laws, and they are pluralistic about appropriate research methodologies”⁷³, they still believe – differently from postmodernists – that there is an objective reality that could be analysed through a scientific method producing objective knowledge⁷⁴. The critiques to constructivism regard the tendency to “elevate constitutive processes a priori above all other causal influences”⁷⁵ thus missing the material aspect of international politics; also the lack of generalization and abstraction characterizing constructivist works is seen as weakening the force of constructivism as an alternative paradigm for the international relations discipline.

Concerning individuals and their role in international relations, constructivism theoretically does not exclude individual agency, but it has not – yet – explored this field, focusing mainly on larger units of analysis such as NGOs or global civil society movements⁷⁶. However, their epistemological conclusions are certainly useful to analyse the mutual interaction between agents and structures or between micro and macro dynamics. In the field of Middle Eastern studies, constructivism has also brought interesting insights into the role of ideology in shaping Middle Eastern policies and its relationship with the West, employing religious, cultural and historical-reflected aspects to explain this complicated relationship.

2.5 – Learning from plurality

The apparent chaotic plurality among international relations scholars – which the previous paragraphs try to give a brief demonstration of – could be turned into a stimulating richness useful to describe and understand today's turbulent world⁷⁷. Starting from constructivist

71 Idem, p. 350

72 Idem, p. 365.

73 Katzenstein, Peter J; Keohane, Robert O and Krasner, Stephen D. (1998), p. 676

74 Idem, p. 677

75 Hemmer, Christopher and Katzenstein, Peter J. (2002) “Why Is There no NATO in Asia? Identity, Regionalism and the Origins of Multilateralism” in *International Organization*, vol, 56, n. 3, pp. 575-607. Here p. 600

76 Rosenau, James N. (2003) p. 26

77 Rosenau, James. (1990) *Turbulence in world politics: a theory of change and continuity*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

assumptions on the importance of having foundation theories about every unit of analysis, the following paragraphs will explore the possibility to create a definition of *random actors* which aims is to provide a key tool to analyse three international controversies. As it will be showed, the attention is focused on both systemic and domestic/individual features, in order to built a theoretical frame that could grasp the characteristic of the agents but also their relationship with the multiple macro systems and structures with which they interact (regional systems, global media system, new media international network system etc.). In order to describe each variable implied in those events, it is necessary to abandon the one-paradigm orientation and to gather the ideas of the whole spectrum of international relations paradigms. For instance, if it is clear that neorealist assumptions such as state centric view and rigid structuralism do not fit well within today fluid politics, it could yet be a useful theory to clarify some aspects of the opposition between Middle East and the West or to recall on the relative importance of ideas and values that need to be balanced with material considerations (such as power distribution, military capacity etc.).

2.6 – *Random Actors*: building an analytical definition.

As outlined in the previous paragraphs, international system complexity that has emerged since the end of the Cold War has been reflected in the wide landscape of international politics theories. The Danish Cartoon Crisis, together with the Quran Burning Day and the Innocence of Muslim crises, at a first look seem to fit within this complex landscape of endless micro-macro interactions and feedbacks. Thus, to be able to analyse these events, it is important to provide an analytical framework that grasps 21st century complexity. Following constructivism ideas about building theoretical foundations for every unit of analysis, the theorisation will start from the individual (micro level). The second step will be to research micro to macro connectors and finally to provide an understanding of the macro level. Regarding the Middle East, it will be excluded from this theorisation as its features will be better analysed in the next chapter, searching some focal features of that area that partially explain why these international crises have engaged this specific territory.

2.6.1 – Micro-level: individuals as actors in the international system

“To understand the role of private actors, one has to look to both the macro and the micro levels, the former to understand how circumstances may provide opportunities for the initiatives of private actors and the latter to probe how and why some such actors seize the moment and exploit the opportunities”⁷⁸

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, individuals' role in international politics have been at least underestimated. The following paragraph will introduce the work of James N. Rosenau as he has been one of the few who has deeply explored the relation between individual's agency in an international context. The aim is not to simply adopt his theory, but to present and discuss its main suggestions regarding individuals and their features as actors in an international system.

In 1986 Rosenau stated: “for me the bedrock answer became clear through an inability to ignore, take for granted, or otherwise dismiss the presence of the individual in the configurations which constitute and sustain global life”⁷⁹. This sentence is even more meaningful considering both the ongoing Cold War and the tendency – at that time - for international relations discipline to focus on bipolarity and balance of power issues. Rosenau have been traditionally considered a liberal⁸⁰ scholar even if, as it will be showed, his works are characterised by an accentuated eclecticism, bridging together many different contributions from social sciences and other disciplines. The aim of his theories is to outline a set of features regarding the individual, in order to treat it as a new - variable to be introduced in the international system: “if micro units are to be incorporated in macro theories, the need to be precise in formulating what is meant by the “person” is no less acute than is the case for models of the “state” the “regime” or any macro unit”⁸¹. In his publications, Rosenau provides two main categorization of individual divided into four individual's *types* and several roles played by them. As for the types these are: citizen (also ordinary individual), leader, private actor, and activist⁸². The distinction is based mainly on the different positions covered by individuals in their society; if the citizen is the ordinary individual who suffers the forces coming from the macro-system, activists, leaders and private actors are directly interfaced with the international system. Between the three, leaders and activists share a common – but divergent – sense of responsibility for their society and act in order to “protect” it. While activists have to engage in transnational mass movements to have an impact on the macro-

78 Rosenau, James. (1990) *Turbulence in world politics: a theory of change and continuity*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 120

79 Rosenau, James N. (1986) p. 856

80 Jackson and Sørensen (2005) p. 113

81 Rosenau, James N. (1990) p. 116

82 Rosenau, James N. (2003) p. 27 and Rosenau, James N. (1990) p. 118

structures, leaders could be considered the mediators between domestic and international systems, thus possessing more chances to influence macro-structures. Finally, private actors are “able, by dint of special circumstances, to carry out independent actions in the global arena that may be consequential for the course of events”.⁸³ More about, these roles are not fixed, but are categories subjected to change, i.e. a citizen could engage in activist actions, or climb the ranks of her own society thus becoming a leader. All those types of individual are engaged in a constant adaptation to their changing societies. The engines of the change are “framegrative dynamics”, a concept used by Rosenau to grasp the complex and controversial changes taking place with globalisation (for instance, both centralizing and de-centralizing forces, global and local movements etc.).⁸⁴ Individual's reaction to these forces is the discriminant between their different roles: apathetic or alienated (they do not care about both themselves or their community); self-centred (they care of community only when changes in it influence their personal life); altruistic or ideological (they spend more energy and resources for the benefit of the collectivity), and democratic (they care both for themselves and for the community).⁸⁵ In his 2003 book titled *Distant Proximities. Dynamics Beyond globalization*, Rosenau outlines a sort of interaction between types and roles of individuals, elaborating the twelve-worlds theory. A “World” stands for a conceptual category describing an individual type. The twelve-worlds are also grouped in three main categories: local, global and private. The twelve worlds and their features are briefly summarized in table 1. Despite this categorization, Rosenau specifies that people, depending on circumstances and due to framegration, can shift from one category to another, thus changing their roles⁸⁶. For instance alienated or passives people could pass to a resistant or affirmative role, leaders can exploit the hunger of alienated people in order to mobilize them for their causes and turning them to be resistant locals. Rosenau theorise four possible motivations that lead individuals to change their position: life circumstances; territorial modifications; cluster of issues pushing individuals to take a different position; and identity crisis.⁸⁷ In three cases analysed, ideology plays a fundamental role both in Western and Middle Eastern societies and requires to be included as a central individual's feature. Unfortunately Rosenau has not included ideology in its theory. Concerning ideology theorisation, Teun A. Van Dijk has interestingly outlined a brief but complete definition of ideology that could also explain

83 Rosenau, James N. (1990) p. 118 (citation) and Rosenau, James N. (2003) pp. 27-29

84 Rosenau, James N. (1997c) “The Complexities and Contradictions of Globalisation” in *Current History*, vol. 96, n. 613, pp. 360-364. Here p. 362

85 Rosenau, James N. (1997a) pp. 284-298

86 Rosenau, James N. (2003) pp. 170-171

87 Idem, pp. 173-183

its basic functioning. For Van Dijk ideology can be simply defined as “a set of beliefs of a group and its individuals”⁸⁸; giving such a large definition in order to include also positive ideologies. Ideology has three dimensions: cognitive, social and discursive. The first dimension describes how ideology works in people's mind, creating structures and mental models that will influence both discursive expression and social action (the two roughly representing the social and discursive dimensions of ideology). Conversely, people interiorise cognitive ideological patterns through the discourse and the interaction with their social landscape.⁸⁹ Including this last contribution, random actors could be initially defined as *single individuals who act mostly locally and whose ideology leads them to have a partial cognition of the global system together with a distorted view of “the other*. This brief definition is meant to consider individuals as variable subjects whose features are relevant for their role in an international system. Firstly it specifies their singularity, highlighting that they are not treated as constant but that their characteristics (ideology-resources etc.) vary. Secondly, this definition point out individual's “position” or attitude toward global politics. Specifically, the four local worlds are considered to be the background of a random actor, as it is the place where she assimilate its ideology and takes its basic informations about the other.

88 Van Dijk, Teun A. (2003) *Ideologie. Discorso e costruzione sociale del pregiudizio*. Carocci Editore, Roma, 2004, p. 19 [translated by the author]

89 Idem, p. 37-38 and p.57

Table 1: twelve-worlds theory by James N. Rosenau. Graphic elaboration by the author on the basis of Rosenau, James N. (2003) *Distant Proximities. The Dynamics Beyond Globalisation.*

Twelve-worlds theory: synoptical presentation			
		Features	Forces/Dynamics of the group
LOCAL WORLDS: - populated by persons whose orientations are toward proximate horizons	1- Insular Locals	Only close facts are considered salient; their horizon is limited to the immediate community; active members in their own community.	Diminution of insular local due to globalization.
	2- Resistant Locals	They seek to preserve the meaning of local space by resisting the encroachment of global forces; negative view of globalization; active engagement trying to reduce the perceived negative aspects of globalization.	Immigration, de-localization, global market threats
	3- Exclusionary Locals	Localism is considered a “refuge” from the impact of globalization; engaged in what is perceived as passive resistance to globalisation; they believe to live 'outside the system'; reassertion of ethnic/religious values;	Increase of exclusionary locals from insular locals as globalization enters in their lives thus producing the need for new certainties and values.
	4- Affirmative Locals	Centrality of local dimension; positive attitude toward globalization; active in mediating globalization changes in their local landscape; indigenization	Industrialization and social changes, globalization.
GLOBAL WORLDS: - people whose thoughts and actions are worldwide in scale and not confined to any territorially bounded space.	1 – Affirmative Globals	Persons who contextualise globalising dynamics in both positive and non-territorial terms; not uniform in their view of global affairs; globalisation is inevitable and desirable; the leaders have high access to power; readiness to move;	Information technology revolution make them possible to act in a global scale; empowered by free global market and globalisation; loyalties transformation; conflicting with resistant globals
	2- Resistant Globals	They oppose not to globalization, but to its perceived negative aspects; trans-national activists; harsh critics of WB and IMF as a constant theme;	Becoming more numerous; conflicting with affirmative globals;
	3- Specialized Globals	Concerned about particular dimensions of the global scene (internationalization of the Western Intelligentsia);	Division between them for different values; tension between western and indigenous ones;
	4- Territorial Globals	Mainly public officials plus NGO's leaders, labor unions, professional societies; interested in how globalization affect (positively or negatively) the territory under their jurisdiction	Pressure by external powers
PRIVATE WORLDS: - people who are so remote from the course of events anywhere that they are not occupants of any of the local or global worlds	1- Alienated Cynics	Distrusting/angry /suspicious toward authorities and institutions; self-conscious of their disdain for the public arena;	Increase due to lack of trust in institutions' capability to influence global dynamics
	2- Alienated Illegals	Disdain for legal order, readiness to engage in violent acts; strongly ideological;	Globalisation enlarges their possibilities; recruitment;
	3- Tuned-Out Passives	They remain aloof from matters that require political involvement; active in charitable non politics works; the sources of their alienation appear too personal, to closed to consider alternative perspectives;	Increasing due to mistrust in a possible solution
	4- Circumstantial Passives	People under the poverty-line, their passivity is due to their social condition and constant need to concentrate to found a way to survive.	Increase due to globalization harshening of disparities; scarce cooperation, no power

But what is it meant for 'local'? For several reason in this essay local will not be identified with "national". Firstly, because national states are both wakened by external forces and internal ones (see paragraph 2.1.3). Secondly, today's loyalty crisis⁹⁰ (paragraph 1.4) together with the redefinition of individual's horizons in a new global dimension⁹¹ have diminished people's identification with a national state – that is, as Anderson describes, an imagined community⁹². Furthermore, diasporic communities and trans-national migration networks seems to suggest that "locality" and "local" dimensions are not strictly link to a territory (place), rather they include also affective and cultural aspects that could be de-contextualized and reproduce abroad (space) -for instance an indian immigrant can recreate a local indian space in the middle of a Western city. Thus the sentence "*who act mostly locally*" indicates that random actors' agency is mostly spent in a proximate landscape that they considered to be close-at-hand and where they feel that their actions will be effective.

2.6.2 – Actors or Agents?

Actor and agent are two terms that have entered in the common language of international relations theories. They refer to two similar concepts differing just for some nuanced features. On one side, the "actors" of an international systems are all the units that could influence that same system. For instance, state has been for long time considered the unique actor in global politics; now international organizations, NGOs and many others are also considered actors – even if their status as actors depends on which paradigm one refers to. In other words, actors are all those units that play a role in international politics, would it be for their power or for their position within the system. Similarly the term "agent" designate an actor who actually can influence or produce outcomes in international politics. Agency has been widely explored by constructivism as related to structure. Agency "denotes the ability to choose among different courses of action, to learn from previous experience, and to effect change"⁹³. As previously

90 See: Ferguson, Yale H. and Mansbach, Richard W. (1999). "Global Politics at the turn of the millennium: changing bases of the "Us" and "Them" in *International Studies Review*, Vol. 1 Issue 2, pp. 77-107 .

91 Rosenau has describe this new people attitude as part of the skill revolution. "Most people in the world can be hypothesized to have enlarged their competence in recent decades. Their multiple identities have become more manageable. Their scenarios have become lengthier and more elaborate. Their judgments have become sharper and more incisive. Their imaginations have become more wide-ranging and less inhibited. Their training is more intensive than ever before" Rosenau, James N. (2003) p. 233

92 Anderson, Benedict. (1983) *Imagined Communities: reflection on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso, London and New York.

93 O' Neill, Kate; Balsinger, Jörg; Van Deveer, Stacey D.(2004) "Actors, Norms and Impact: Recent International

described, agents and structures mutually influence each other, but the mere influence is not sufficient as

“agency entails a degree of conscious or unconscious choice, the ability to reflect the situation at hand, and the capacity to use reflexive knowledge to transform situations and to engage in learning as a result [...] in order to qualify as agents, actors must not only reflect on choices and learn from mistakes but also to exert transformative power”⁹⁴.

Therefore, random *actors* should be considered random *agents*? As the analysis of the three international controversies in chapter 4 shows, the actors of these controversies seem to lack the will and the consciousness of being agents in a global scale. Actually, even if they are engaged in different activities in their local reality - thus qualifying them as local agents - they all seem to have underestimate the global potential of their actions, being caught by surprise by the backfire generated by them. Moreover, the specific form of agency taken by an agent, its efficacy and eventually its impact on the international system, depend on the different structures constraining/empowering agents and on agent's access to material and social resources.⁹⁵ This last point rises another question: which are the structures that catalyse formerly local action to a global scale?

2.6.3 – Local and global connectors: network theory and the small-world paradigm

The initial definition of random actors given in the previous paragraph need to be completed in order to better grasp micro-macro dynamics. As already mentioned (paragraph 2.6.1), individual's features could partially explain their engagement or they position in the international system, but one single person alone would not be able to reach the other side of the world. Accordingly with constructivist structuration theory, (paragraph 2.4) “structures, then, are sets of mutually sustaining schemas and resources that empower and constrain social action”⁹⁶. Hence, it is fundamental to explore which are the structure/s empowering random actors. A brief look to the three international controversies suggests that the World Wide Web has played the role of “connector” between an initially local phenomenon that turns into a global one. But how

Cooperation Theory and the Influence of the Agent-Structure Debate” in *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 4, pp. 149-175. Here p. 155

94 Idem, p. 158-159

95 Idem, p. 155

96 Sewell, William H. Jr. (1992) “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation” in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 98, n. 1, pp. 1-29. Here p. 19

to include internet in a theoretical definition such as random actors? The answer could be found in the field of network theories. Network analysis is focused on the “investigation and measurement of network structures— emergent properties of persistent patterns of relations among agents that can define, enable, and constrain those agents”⁹⁷. The analysis of network structures aims to identify the roles played by actors within a network (micro or local analysis) and the form, length and other features of the relations established among network members.⁹⁸ In other words:

“network analysis concern relationships defined by links among nodes (or agents). Nodes can be individuals or corporate actors, such as organizations and states. Network analysis addresses the associations among nodes rather than the attributes of particular nodes. It is grounded in three principles: nodes and their behaviours are mutually dependent, not autonomous; ties between nodes can be channels for transmission of both material (for example, weapons, money, or disease) and non- material products (for example, information, beliefs, and norms); and persistent patterns of association among nodes create structures that can define, enable, or restrict the behaviour of nodes.”⁹⁹

Moreover, network analysis applied to international politics suggests that new kinds of powers balance the weight of “traditional” hard power as conceptualized in international relations theories (power from material resource i.e. military power, economic etc.). For instance, network analysis sees the centrality of a node and its number of connections as enhancements increasing nodes power.¹⁰⁰ There is a variety of different network structures, classified according to their properties. In the specific case of the world wide web, it could be classified as a small scale-free network.¹⁰¹ The small network theory tried to explain phenomenons such as the six degree of separation¹⁰². Briefly, small networks have a moderately clustered structure(which means with a majority of short connections between proximate nodes) with low or medium degree of random short-cuts connecting distant nodes and consequently remote clusters (fig. 5)¹⁰³. There are other types of networks, among them scale-free networks are characterised by an unequal distribution of power as “few nodes in the system are much better connected than average, while the majority

97 Hafner-Burton, Emilie; Kahler, Miles; Montgomery, Alexander. (2009) “Network Analysis for International Relations” in *International Organization*, n. 63, pp. 559-592. Here p. 559

98 Hafner-Burton.(2009) p. 561; and Freyberg-Inan, Annette (2006). “Just how small is this world really? An application of small world theory to the study of globalization” in *Global Networks*, Vol. 6 Issue 3, pp. 221-244. Here p. 225

99 Hafner-Burton. (2009) p. 562

100 Hafner-Burton.(2009) p. 570

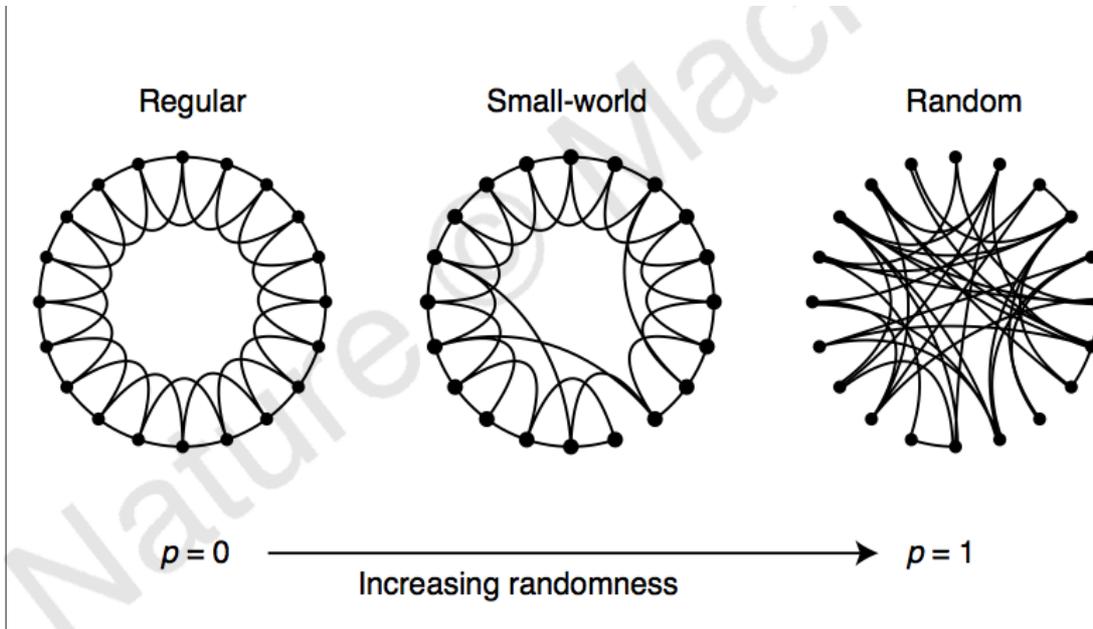
101 Freyberg-Inan, Annette (2006) p. 226

102 This theory, firstly outlined in 1967 by Stanley Milgram, suggests that every human being can established a connection with every other human being in only six steps. See: XXXXX

103 Watts, Duncand J and Strogatz Steven H. (1998) “Collective dynamics of 'small-world' networks” in *Nature*, vol 393, n. 4, pp. 440-442.

of nodes maintains relatively few connections”¹⁰⁴. More about, there could be small scale-free networks in which cluster and random shortcuts are combined with large hubs or nodes with lots of connections.

Fig. 5: Network lattice models with increasing randomness coefficient



Source: Watts, Duncan J and Strogatz Steven H. (1998) "Collective dynamics of 'small-world' networks" in *Nature*, vol 393, n. 4.

Thus considering the World Wide Web as a small scale-free network will help us to clarify its role as a connector between local and global dimensions, or better, as an amplifier for local actions permitting them to exceed local borders and reach international relevance. Theoretically, this is made possible through random shortcuts and the presence of large hubs randomly connecting distant clusters of nodes. We can then add this concept to our definition as follows: random actors are *single individuals who act mostly locally and whose ideology leads them to have a partial cognition of the global system together with a distorted view of "the other", but whose actions could randomly have international relevance as their are linked to a small scale-free network.*

2.6.4 – Introducing randomness

Network theory suggests that one constitutive condition of small networks is randomness. Watts and Strogatz show that from an ideal lattice model with no random coefficient and a totally random one, small networks lie between the two poles (fig. 5), with low-medium degree of

104 Freyberg-Inan, Annette (2006) p. 224

random connections between distant clusters of nodes.¹⁰⁵ Worthy, those random connections are responsible for the drastic decrease of the separation degrees between each two nodes in a network, which is what makes it a small network. This observation contrasts with the idea that social world is highly non-random as social connections are established firstly among nodes that share something (proximity; affinity, like-minded nodes etc.)¹⁰⁶. In fact, the scale-free network of the World Wide Web works differently from traditional social network. For instance, large hubs as Youtube are powerful central nodes common to the whole internet population (except for some excluded enclaves). In this situation, very big hubs enhance and multiply the opportunities to establish short-cut connections and operating as long range “bridges” between distant clusters. The bridge function is normally performed by central nodes with several connections, these nodes have the function to connect more isolated nodes that, through the bridges, enhance their range of action and are empowered as a consequence¹⁰⁷. By putting a multimedia content on large hubs, a relatively weak node can exploit bridged connections, resulting in a viral diffusion of the material uploaded. “Gangnam Style” video by Korean pop-star PSY is just the last example of unexplainable viral diffusion of a video through the web. On a wider scale, randomness has been considered a property of today's world politics. The lack of stable order (characterizing the previous bipolar and Westphalian eras) is believed to have introduced a certain degree of chaos and unpredictability within the international system. But far from being a new entry in international relations, the notion of chaos lies at its foundations. As we have seen in this first chapter (paragraph 2.1), realism describes the international system as fundamentally anarchic, hence chaotic, and both the classical realists and liberals agreed upon the idea that human beings without authority or political order would live in a chaotic natural state. But realism then finds in power distribution and nations' material resources a regular pattern to look at in order to make the system more predictable. Similarly, liberals theorize that rationality, institutional building and economic cooperation play a regulative role posing a limit to chaos. But randomness is not a synonym to chaos. If the latter means a totally unpredictable situation where a variable can take an infinite number of trajectories; “in a random system everything is possible. [...] Nevertheless, it does not mean that any following state can be whatever it can ever hypothetically occur. Somehow it can be one among many possible states, but not one among infinite”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, accepting a certain degree of randomness in international politics does not mean to renounce to

105 Watts, Duncan J and Strogatz Steven H. (1998) pp. 440-442

106 Freyberg-Inan, Annette (2006) p.222

107 Idem, p. 226; see also note 94

108 Plaza i Font, Joan Pere and Régis, Dandoy. (2006) *Chaos Theory and its Application in Political Science*. Paper presented at the ISPA – AISP congress, Fukuoka, 9-13 July 2006, p. 4

knowledge or theorization. Rather it suggests that in a complex international system, an outcome will be the result of mutual interactions between agents and structures (constructivist premise) with a certain degree of random interactions between the two.

2.6.5 – International system/s

This chapter has started with an introduction to the main schools of thought in international relations discipline. As described, each school outline a specific international system model that produces different theories the purpose of which is to explain international politics. None of them is exempt from criticism. In order to overcome this impasse, it is essential - again - to leave a one- paradigm position and gather the valuable contributions - or what has been left aside by criticism – of each school. One central phenomenon - worthy of having risen an enormous debate in almost every branch of social and political science - is globalisation. The term comprehend a wide range of phenomenons and, due to its pluralistic nature needs to be briefly explained. Globalisation has different dimensions: economical, social, political and cultural. As an economic dynamic, it refers primarily to the growing centrality of international flows of capital, goods and workforce throughout the globe. The social dimension regards the space and time compression, due to technological revolution in communication technologies – and a consequent shrinking-world perception. The political dimension concerns the awareness that the emergence of global threats (pollution, terrorism etc.) could not be solved with a state-centric logic, but with a common effort by all the nations affected by a specific problem (thus fostering cooperation and the creation of international/regional organizations).¹⁰⁹ For each of the four dimensions there are critics and supporters. For instance, if liberals view economic globalisation optimistically as fostering cooperation and increasing global livelihood, marxists argue that it amplifies inequalities among developed and underdeveloped countries; while realists argue that globalisation started in the 17th century (and was indeed stronger) but it has not granted peace nor cooperation among nations.¹¹⁰ Similarly, cultural globalization could have a positive aspect, allowing intercultural exchanges and multiculturalism, but at the same time anthropologist warn that globalisation is leading to westernisation i.e. disappearance of cultural traditions for adopting western-style consumerism.¹¹¹ These different views of globalization have been partially

109 See Scheuerman, William, "Globalization", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (edited by)

110 Jackson and Sørensen (2005) p. 225-232

111 See: Latouche, Serge. (1989) *L'occidentalisation du monde. Essai sur la signification, la portée et les limites de*

reunited by Rosenau's theory of *framgregation* which suggests that both localization and globalisation are causally linked. Framgregation thus includes both westernisation and retrenchment to traditional values, centrifugal forces towards international governance and centripetal dynamics generated by increasing national and subnational interests.¹¹² A further mixed paradigm described by Deaglio, designs an “archipelago globalisation” where cultural uniform and closed regions are marked by high internal interdependence and cooperation, but low interaction with other regions – mostly economic interactions¹¹³ (interestingly, this theory lies between Fukuyama and Huntington paradigms, see note 3). Therefore, even if there are hundreds international relations paradigms and theories, it seem that none of them denies that globalisation (in its large meaning) is the central property of today's world politics, contributing to shape international system structure toward new configurations. Even if it is a confusing concept that produces contrasting but simultaneous dynamics, it is clear that it must be included in any definition that pretend to analyse international outcomes. Thereafter, random actors will be those *single individuals who act mostly locally and whose ideology leads them to have a partial cognition of the global system together with a distorted view of “the other”; but whose actions could randomly have international relevance as they are linked – through small scale-free networks – to a globalised framgregated world.*

This final definition implies a theorisation of individuals (stressing on their own features and initially placing them to a local level); a “meso” level networked structure that act as a connector between local worlds and global system; a global system characterised by the contradictory dynamics of globalisation. Random actors as a concept stresses the movement from local to global and back, as “globalisation” and “framgregation” deeply affect local words and individuals, producing authority crises, cultural clashes and multiculturalism, loss and reaffirmation of traditional values and newly viral international outcomes such as the three international crises here analysed.

l'uniformisation planétaire. Paris Éditions la Découverte, 2005.

112 Rosenau, James N. (1997c) p. 362

113 See: Deaglio, Mario. (2004) *Postglobal*. Laterza, Bari-Roma.

Chapter 3 – Introducing the Middle East

The aim of the following chapter is to present today's Middle Eastern context and its socio-political structure. As stated in the first chapter, the Danish cartoon crisis, together with Quran-burning and Innocence of Muslim crises have interested the Middle East and, more widely, the Muslim World. The following chapter will introduce some interesting insight that could help to explain the reactions that took place during the three crises. First of all, it is important to premise that while Rose, Jones and Nakoula targeted Islamic *religion*, Muslim answers were marked by *political* reactions, directed against US and Western political institutions. To understand this of shift from religious to political claims, it is therefore important to introduce an historical review of the relationship between the Middle East and the West. However, before discussing such issues it is worth to point out the meaning of the terms “Middle East”, “Arab World” and “Muslim World”.

Despite “Middle East” has become a popular term among media and scholars, what it refers to is subject to different interpretations. The term was introduced by British after World War II to distinguish the region separating Europe from India¹. It replaced the previously used “Near East” locution, used in opposition to the Far East (India and China). Conversely, the colonial powers started to define themselves as “the West” implying the idea of a modern developed world, in opposition to the poor, traditional and mysterious East². Today “Middle East” is normally used to indicate the region going from Turkey to Yemen and from Egypt to Iran, but some use the term referring to a wider area including central Asia, Sudan and north Africa – also called MENA (Middle East and North Africa).³ Differently the “Arab World” necessarily refers to the specific region sharing Arab as the main language (and derived dialect) and Arabic culture, thus excluding Iran, Turkey, Israel and part of the Berber north Africa. Accordingly with Peretz, “it [the Middle East] is a unity in relation to the outside world rather than an inherent unity arising from similar geographical and social conditions or from a recent common

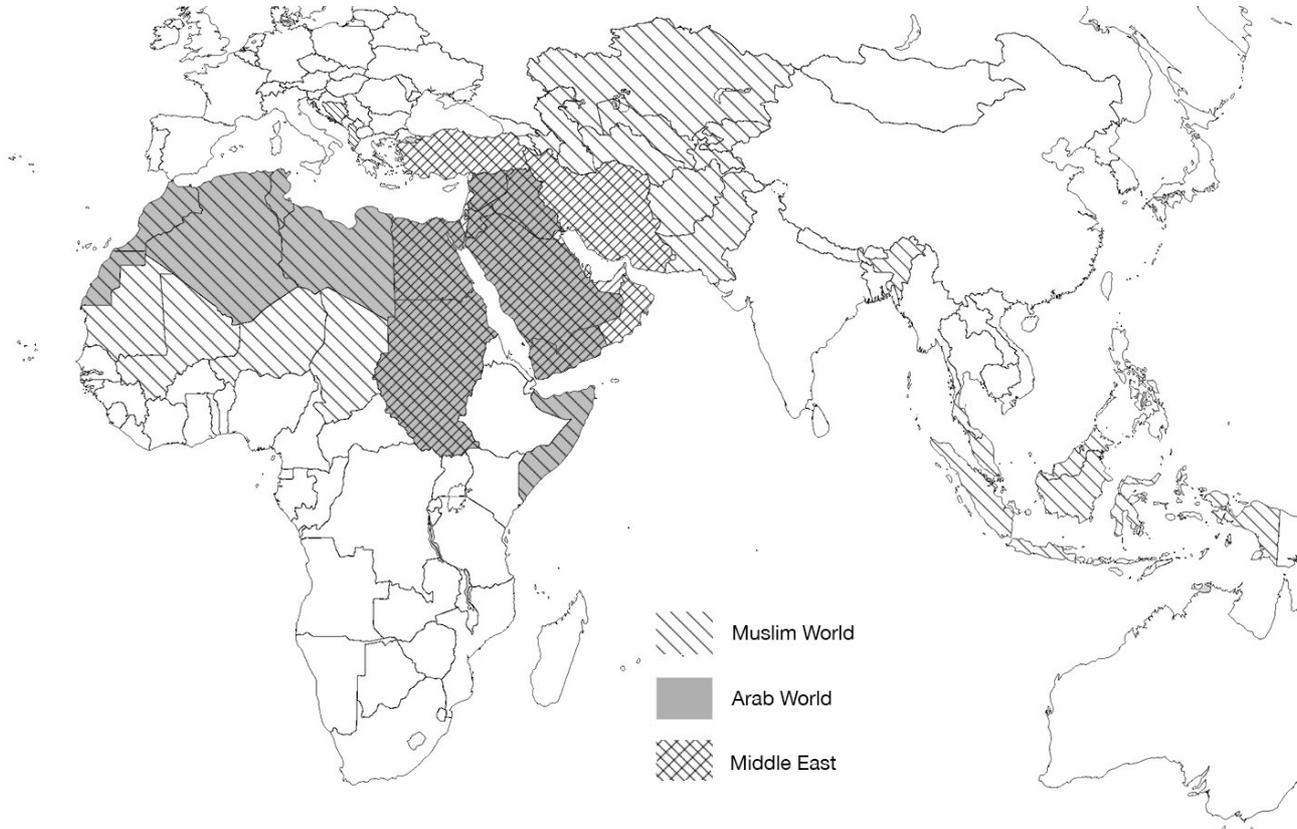
1 Peretz, Don. (1994) *The Middle East Today. Sixth Edition*. Westport, Praeger Publisher, p. 3

2 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) *Storia del Medio Oriente*. Bologna, il Mulino, 2010, p. 7

3 Fawcett, Louise. (2009) “Introduction: The Middle East and International Relations” in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 1-17. Here p. 3

history”⁴. However, it is possible to assume a minimum degree of unity given by Islamic traditions, both as a religion, a political force and a cultural background⁵.

Fig. 6: Muslim World, Arab World and the Middle East



The map shows the borders of the Muslim and World, the Arab World and the Middle East. It must be specified that Muslim World borders are more blurred than here presented, including Muslim enclaves in other countries or nations where Islam is followed by a large part of the population but not the majority.

The term “Muslim World” is perhaps the most artificial of the three terms. It refers to all those countries where the majority of the population adopt Islam as their religion, thus including the Middle East, central Asia, Asia (Indonesia, Xinjiang region of China, etc.), sub Saharan Africa (Niger, Mali etc.) and parts of Eastern Europe (Bosnia Herzegovina, Chechenia, Albania). In this essay, the term Middle East will be used in its wider significance, including North African countries. As for the term “Muslim World” it will be used to indicate the wider area subjected to protests regarding the three international crises here analysed, thus including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Philippines and, to a lesser extent, part of sub-saharan Africa. It is nevertheless important to underline that the three terms, and specifically “Muslim World”, indicate an incredibly heterogeneous region that, even sharing a common religion, is characterized by

4 Peretz, Don. (1994) p. 3

5 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 8

substantial differences in the practice of that same religion, and whose countries have different political and social systems, traditions and cultures.

3.1 – Historical introduction to the relationship between the Middle East and the West

3.1.1 – The Middle East encounters the West

Choosing an adequate date to start the historical presentation of the Middle East encounter with the West could be a daunting task. For the purposes of this essay, it is preferable to stress on the relationship among the Middle East with the *modern* Western Westphalian state system, however choosing the date of Westphalia peace (1648) would be misleading. Actually, before and after 1648, the Ottoman Empire was already struggling an uncertain battle contending eastern Europe against the Austro-Hungarian Empire – the last siege to Vienna was launched in 1683. The retreat of the Turks from Europe was fostered by Russian expansionism and since then the Ottoman Empire was unable to regain control of eastern European territories. Differently from these “border wars” fought between neighbouring countries at the edge of the Middle East, the year 1798 marked a turning point between the Middle East and the West. In 1798, Napoleon invaded Egypt occupying the country for the next three years. The previous border disputes left the heart of the Middle East apart, but Napoleon's invasion broke this quietness and “for the first time after more that four hundred years, the heart of the Islamic lands met Europe, bringing *modernisation*, while it [Islamic World] discovered a gap that needed to be filled, regarding the progress achieved by <the others>”⁶. According to Khalidi, this date

“is too early in the sense that there was a long hiatus between Napoleon's brief occupation of Egypt and Palestine and the much long-lasting European subjugations and occupation [...]. It is too late in the sense that well before Napoleon's invasion, both the Ottoman Empire [...] and Iran had for well over a century been experiencing a debilitating series of military defeats and the hand of the Europeans”⁷.

Despite these ambiguities, the year 1798 is pivotal to understand some of the contemporary issues concerning the Middle East: *modernisation* became since then a source of fragmentation of Middle Eastern and Muslim societies. For instance, the fracture line between modernisation supporters and its deniers lies at the origin of modern fundamentalism⁸. The sudden irruption of

6 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 10

7 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) *Resurrecting Empire. Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the new Middle East*. London, I.B Tauris, pp, 10-11.

8 Milton-Edwards, Beverly. (2005) *Il fondamentalismo islamico dal 1945*. Roma, Salerno Editrice, 2010, p. 12

Western modernisation in the Middle East and the continuous defeats suffered by the Ottoman Empire, gave rise to profound transformations: “while many remedies were suggested for reversal of this process of defeat and contraction, the one most generally accepted by regional elites was the adoption of Western forms of government and military organization, and reform of education and the legal system”⁹. The Ottoman Empire, together with almost independent Egypt and Tunisia, made big efforts towards modernisation (the Tanzimat in the Ottoman Empire, Muhammad Ali reforms in Egypt and so on). Generally, reorganization of the army, improvements of the tax system, modern education and the introduction of the European conception of the rule of law, democracy and nationalism fomented various movements aiming to import these western ideas in the Middle East¹⁰. At the same time – and even before Napoleon’s invasion – Islam was shaken by jihad movements, preaching the need for a return to the sources and purity of the true Islam as it was practiced among the first community constituted by Muhammad and His followers. The most successful of these movements and long-lasting of them was Wahabbism, born in Saudi Arabia at the middle of the 18th century by the actions of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab¹¹ (1703- 1792). These opposition between reformists and fundamentalists will play a crucial role in Middle Eastern politics, both domestically and internationally.

3.1.2 – *The colonization of the Middle East*

As soon as European national states posed an end to their wars, they started to think their role on a global scale and to project their power all over the world¹². If Europeans did not need an excuse to colonize and exploit African populations – considered an inferior race of human beings – things were slightly different for the Middle East given its glorious past of elevate civilisations and advanced culture. As argued by Khalidi, Europeans devised different kind of arguments to justify colonization:

“these ranged from overt racism that argued that some peoples were too primitive to be allowed to rule themselves [Africans], to the more sophisticated arguments of Orientalism about the regions where great civilisations had existed for millennia [Middle East and Asia]. Clearly, these had once been highly advanced cultures, and this

9 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) p. 11

10 Hourani, Albert. (1991) *Storia del popoli arabi*. Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1992, pp. 271-278

11 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 17-18

12 Postel – Vinay, Caroline. (2005) *L'Occident et sa bonne parole. Nos représentations du monde, de l'europe coloniale à l'Amerique hégémonique*. Paris, Flammarion, p. 39

elicited harder case-arguments about “stagnation” and the stifling embrace of tradition or religion”¹³.

European colonization of the Middle East started in 1830 with French invasion of Algeria and continued up to 1912 with French protectorate over Morocco and Italian invasion of Libya¹⁴. Actually, European intrusion in Middle Eastern territories was more ancient and begun with the Capitulations regime and proceeded during the 17th century with European economic hegemony through Trade Companies, leading “to the foundation of emporiums, the creation of postal and supplying stations on the coastal zones, the exercise of hegemonic exploitation of local resources”¹⁵. Before 19th century colonization, European powers also interfered with Ottoman administration to grant the protection of Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire¹⁶. Finally, during the first decade of the 19th century, Egypt, the Ottoman Empire and Tunisia run into high debts with European banks and were put under European financial control.¹⁷ Once European countries had colonized Middle Eastern territories, they adopted a wide range of different colonial ruling systems, from the inclusion of Algerian territory as a French province – without even the glimpse of self-rule – to various forms of autonomy given at times to Egypt or Iraq. The only territories that were not colonized were Persia (Iran), Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Yemen (with the exception of Aden). Far from being an easy task, the colonization of the Middle East turned out to be dotted by continuous uprisings, rebellions and liberation movements which forced European powers to “conquer, and reconquer, and often conquer once again, their Middle Eastern colonial possessions”¹⁸. The strategy adopted by European powers to deal with Middle Eastern colonies relied on the *divide et impera* principle, contributing to deepen the already existent fractures of the Middle Eastern societies. Generally, Middle Eastern countries found themselves ruled by a small minority of Western-educated elites who were eager to collaborate with colonial powers in order to throw off previous “traditional” rulers – for instance religious *ulama*¹⁹. Sometimes, the elites that were put on power belonged to specific ethnic and religious groups, eventually a minority, that do not fitted with the aspiration of the populations ruled by them. The results were permanent turmoil and several demonstrations before and during the whole colonial period and beyond, resulting in some of the most severe civil conflicts (for instance, in Mount Lebanon in 1860, Tunisia 1864, Egypt 1880-1881). During the First World

13 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) p. 17

14 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 20

15 Idem, p. 19

16 Hourani, Albert. (1991), p. 268

17 Idem, p. 282-283

18 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) p. 28.

19 Hourani, Albert. (1991), p. 277

War the Ottoman Empire allied with the central empires (Austro-Hungarian Empire, German Empire, Kingdom of Bulgaria) with the aim to contain Russian expansionisms in its territories. The Triple Alliance was defeated by the Triple Entente (France, England and Russia) forcing the acceptance by the Ottoman Empire of a hard redefinition of its power and borders.

3.1.3 – *The new Middle Eastern (dis)order*

The decades following the beginning of the First World War saw the redraw of the Middle Eastern order. As a reward for the Arab uprising of 1917 aimed to weaken the Ottoman Empire, British general sir McMahon promised to Mecca's sheik Husayn that England would have respected Arab aspirations for a great Arab Nation in the territories freed from the Ottoman Empire. Despite this promise and Arab aspirations, European powers took their decisions “in absolute disregard to the needs and aspirations of local populations”²⁰. Actually, there were two other agreements regarding the future of the Middle East that were opposed to the idea of an Arab state in the region. The first was the Sykes-Picot agreement in which France and Great Britain settled out the future partition of the Ottoman Empire in different “areas of influence”: Syria, Lebanon and the North Africa to France, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Aden to Great Britain, Morocco divided between France and Spain. The second agreement was the 1916 Balfour declaration, a document written by lord Balfour to the representative of the British Jewish community, where he stated that:

“His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”²¹

At the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was finally divided following the Sykes-Picot agreement – even ignoring the King Crane Commission suggestions and Wilson's principles. Actually, at the San Remo conference (1920) the winners of the First World War established the so called Mandatory system: the new territories born from the disaggregation of the Ottoman Empire were formally independent, but actually administrated by Europeans powers – at least until the new states proved to be able to self-rule themselves following Western principles. Iraq was created by England uniting three different Ottoman provinces, a decision taken to gather oil rich territories into one state, in fact “there never had been a state, empire,

20 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 64

21 *The Balfour Declaration*

or nation of Iraq before British statesmen created it in the wake of World War I”²². In 1921, after a popular referendum expressing the will of the population to be ruled by an Arab government, UK offered the crown of Iraq to Faysal, Husayn's son, to “compensate” Husayn's family for the promises done by McMahon. Similarly, the Palestinian region was divided in two (1921) and the crown of the Transjordan reign (the new state) was given to Abdallah, Husayn's older son (1923) while what remained of Palestine was administered by Britain. Finally, Great Britain started to actively support the – initially – small settlement of European Jewish in Palestine, beginning what will be the most unstable source of conflict for the Middle East.

The “national engineering” was practice also by France. The Greater Syria province, after a final desperate attempt of the National Arab Congress to declare the Reign of Greater Syria (with Faysal as its king, 1920)²³ was divided into two pieces, giving birth to Greater Lebanon state west to Syria. To assure its control of Lebanon, France made sure the new state being ruled by the small Christian Maronite community, western-educated and strongly allied to France (once being the majority of the population of the Mount Lebanon partially autonomous province before French inclusion of other areas to it to form the Greater Lebanon). The situation in Syria was since the beginning unstable and rebellious, forcing France to struggle and deploy the army (as in the 1925 uprising). In order to stabilise its control, France supported and actively empowered the small Alawites minority that climbed the army ranks in few years, becoming a trusted ally for France during its mandate²⁴.

In 1922 the Sultanate was abolished and modern Turkey took its place (1923) thus marking the end of the Ottoman Empire. In 1925, Turkey constituent assembly declared the end of the Caliphate, the supreme religious instance of the Sunnis; despite its symbolic role, the end of one of the most ancient Muslim institution generated debates and fears concerning Islam as a political doctrine.²⁵ The mandatory system ended after World War II (except for French north Africa becoming independent a decade later and Egypt, formally independent since 1922) with the first decolonisation wave, but few decades of European rule over the Middle East, national engineering and the European contribute to divide the Middle Eastern societies left the region with several unresolved nodes affecting future developments of the new-born states.

22 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) p. 92

23 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 67

24 Peretz, Don. (1994) *The Middle East Today. Sixth Edition*. Westport, Praeger Publisher, p. 403-404

25 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 95-96

3.1.4 – Nationalism, Palestine and Islam

Since the middle 19th century the Middle East, and the wider Muslim World, witnessed the development of several debates about culture, society, politics and religion. The *nahḍa* (renaissance, revival²⁶) materialized with the development of press, modern education, feminism and, most important, new political categories²⁷. Among them, Arab thinkers embraced the idea of nation, and developed it to fit with their societies. The notion of *watan* (nation, homeland) played a pivotal role during European occupation when several nationalist movements, from Morocco to Iraq, fought a wearing battle against colonial power in the name of national independence. Nationalist movements were the main actors during the decolonisation. For instance, in Egypt the *Wafd* party asked for the recognition of an independent Egyptian state after the end of World War I, and the British refusal erupted in the 1919 revolution, showing that Egyptian people already possessed a full national conscience and identity²⁸. Similarly, in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria and Iraq nationalist movements were the protagonists of the decolonization process. However, “Since every Arab country was faced with different struggles in relation to their European rulers, there was the tendency, at least among political leaders, to develop each one a distinct national movement and different ideologies to justify it”²⁹. The end of the Ottoman Empire and the constitution of separated and competing nations frustrated the hopes towards the creation of a greater Arab nation from the Hijaz to Syria – as desired by Husayn – and disoriented the populations who suddenly changed from being part of a larger empire to be citizens of nations without previous history as independent states (except for few historical nations such as Egypt). The beginning of the national state system coincided with the end of the Ottoman communitarian system of government based upon the recognition of ethnic and religious specific identities. The rupture of this political system and the forced embodiment of these communities within the same nation originated tensions that will remain latent within Arab countries for several decades, sometimes erupting as secessionist movements or – worse – civil wars. More important, the creation of separated national states frustrated the ideal of Arab unity shared by some Arab leaders as it was expressed in the pan-Arabic ideology, a rupture that will be determinant for the future development of Middle Eastern politics. The second fracture fostered by nationalism regarded Islam. The modern Middle Eastern nationalisms were embraced mostly by the emergent elites formed in the new western-style institutions, whose

26 Idem, p. 51

27 Peretz, Don. (1994) pp. 135-138

28 Campanini, Massimo. (2006) p. 79.

29 Hourani, Albert. (1991) p. 342.

intent was to create a modern independent society. The project of these elites was materialized in the new-towns built aside the old historic cities with theatres, foreign banks, modern services and where new ways of life were experimented by part of the Middle Eastern population, while another part of it remained anchored to traditional systems of values.³⁰ Specifically, Islam was a deep part of Middle Eastern identity, but its role in the public domain was drastically reduced in favour of secular, modern and constitutional nationalism.³¹ Religious institutions, such as Al-Azhar university, were no more the place where the future political elites were formed. Religious charges lost their importance, religious laws and juridical systems were replaced by civil laws and secular tribunals. These events gave rise to two different postures about the role of Islam in modern society. On one side, reformist thought tried to *modernise* Islam: in their view religion needed to be revisited to fit the modern categories of constitution, rule of law and nationalism. Al-Afghani was a prominent reformist thinker: in his view the acceptance and implementation of Western political categories did not necessary mean the acceptance of secular forms of society.³² On the other side, al-Wahhab (Saudi Arabia), Muwlanaw Mawdudi (India) and Hassan al Banna (Egypt) elaborated the basis of the fundamentalist doctrines. The idea underling all their different contributions was that only the return to the original purity of Islam and its every-day strict practice in accordance with the Quran and the Hadits could bring back the fasts and the power of the Islamic classical era, freeing Middle Eastern societies from Western dominance and corrupted secular elites³³. In this direction, Hassan-al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwaw al-Muslimeen*) with the aim to promote an integralist adoption of the Islamic law starting from the bottom, towards the lower classes left aside by the modernisation. The goal of the Muslim Brotherhood and other fundamentalist movements was to freed the Islamic *umma* from colonial rule and establish a form of government based on the Islamic law (*shari'a*). Despite pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic ideologies (integrative forces), ethnics secessionist movement and colonial borders impositions (fragmentary forces), nationalism has proven to be more persistent than the expectations, even if with significant variations³⁴. Lastly, nationalism was a time bomb for the multi ethnic artificially designed states, giving birth to nationalist claims by Armenian minority in Turkey (with the consequent Armenian genocide) and Kurdish nationalism divided between Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran.

30 Hourani, Albert. (1991) p. 336

31 Idem, p. 343

32 Milton-Edwards. (2005) p. 35

33 Idem, pp. 33-45

34 See: Hinnebusch, Raymond. "The Politics of Identity in Middle Eastern International Relations" in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 148-169.

The legacy of Western interference in the Middle East was, unfortunately, even worse than described until now. The Balfour declaration laid the foundations for the Jewish immigration in Palestine. During the first half of 20th century the Jewish nationalism movement (Zionism) was strongly organized, and started to buy and grab Palestinian lands incorporating them within their organized communitarian system (the lands acquired by the Jewish could be used only by Jewish people). With the augmentation of Jewish immigration (especially after World War II) the Palestinian situation degenerated into open skirmishes and massacres between the two sides. The weak British attempts to find a peaceful solution of the conflict were useless (provoking Palestinian and Jewish attacks towards British targets). After World War II, England was unable to retain the explosive situation ending its mandate over Palestine and ceding the case to the newborn United Nations. The UN partition plan made in 1947 was futile and in 1948, after Israeli independence declaration, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq attacked it but were resoundingly defeated by Israel. It would be misleading to presenting here the intricate evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rather, it is important to highlight some of its long-lasting consequences. Firstly, the conflict gave rise to the so called “Palestinian” cause and Palestine became a testing ground both for pan-Arabism and for each Arab nation eager to acquire regional hegemony. Secondly, the several wars that have dotted the Israeli-Palestinian relationships had always had significative consequences for Middle Eastern nations: Nasser rise and fall was strictly connected to the 1948 (his rise) and 1967 (his decadence) defeats. Lastly, Israel will be a constant source of instability and disorder for the Middle East due to its expansionist politics and consequent Arab responses.

3.1.5 – *The second encounter with the West: enter the USA*

During the colonial Era and until the end of the Second World War, US intervention in the Middle East was limited to oil exploitation in Saudi Arabia and to the creation of educational institutions in several Middle Eastern countries³⁵. At the end of World War I, Woodrow Wilson's commitment to self-determination, expressed both in his fourteen points declaration and in the final relation of the King-Crane commission, explains why the US were positively seen as a benign power against colonial rule and European interference.³⁶ America's deeper involvement in

35 Hudson, Michael C. (2009) “The United States in the Middle East” in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 308-330. Here p. 309.

36 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) pp. 30-31

Middle Eastern politics begun during the Cold War, aimed to contain Soviet expansionism in the region. Despite Middle Eastern strategic relevance due to Western dependence to low-cost Middle Eastern oil, US policy in the area was initially less aggressive than other parts of the world (Vietnam, Korea). The Baghdad pact (1955) or the Eisenhower doctrine were mild attempts that failed to shift Middle Eastern countries on the Western side. Actually, for the Middle Eastern governments “the real geo-strategic threat was Israel, not the Soviet Union”³⁷. Consequently, the more the US emphasized their unconditional support to Israel, the more Arab countries started to negatively view America's role in the Middle East, and eventually turned towards Soviet weapons supply, as for Nasserian Egypt and Syria. Even if after 1956 Israeli war US apparently sided with Egypt to stop Israeli invasion of Sinai peninsula, few decades later US appeal in the Middle East was practically null. But Israel alone would not be sufficient to explain how the US turned out to be the enemy of many Middle Eastern actors. Actually, America's involvement in the Middle East was marked by duplicity and self interests. For instance, in 1953 US and Britain organized a coup and trowed Mossadiq elected (liberal) government, restoring the Shah's regime as a response to Mossadiq nationalisation of oil companies. Moreover, since the Ba'athist seizure of power in Iraq, US ambiguous diplomacy recorded the shift from support to Iraqi and Irani regimes (50s and 60s), then support to Iran against Iraq (after Iraq shifted to Soviet side in the 70s), support to Iraq against Iran (after 1979) and finally “dual containment doctrine of the '90s, ending with 2003 Iraqi invasion and execution of Saddam Hussein and, contemporarily, hostility and sanctions toward Iran”³⁸. Finally, during and after Cold War, US have sustained personalistic autocratic regimes in Saudi Arabia, Gulf Monarchies, Jordan, post-Nasser Egypt – as long as they were aligned with America's interests – while criticizing and actively destabilizing other similar regimes in the name of Western values, democracy or Soviet threat. Emblematic of this double standard politics is the paradoxical change of significance regarding the “Afghan Resistance”. For instance, in a major Italian Catholic magazine, *Famiglia Cristiana*, of February 17, 1985, (Fig. 7) the mujahideens struggling against Soviet forces were portrayed as brave resitants fighting for the freedom of Afghanistan and the entire Western world. Surprisingly, the article incited Italians to pressure their government for acting in solidarity with Afghani mujahideens³⁹. Oppositely, today terms like *Taliban*, *Mujahideens* or simply *Afghan Resistance* indicate the enemies of freedom and democracy and a permanent threat to the

37 Idem, p. 311

38 Khalidi, Rashid. (2004) pp. 41-42

39 Bonanante, Mariapia “Servono ospedali nell'Afghanistan della resistenza” in *Famiglia Cristiana*, February 17, 1985, p. 116.

West – think what could happen if nowadays a leading catholic magazine incites Italian government to side with Afghan mujahideens! By the end of the 20th century, this situation reversed, the brief honeymoon between the Middle East and US was replaced by a renewed hostility erupting with the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Hence, despite America's positive relationship with Middle Eastern countries, Israel, oil interests and hostility toward Islam were the causes that led to reciprocal enmity, consolidating the already existing idea of hostile Western powers interfering in Middle Eastern affairs.

Fig. 7: The article of the Italian Christian Magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* titled: “Hospitals needed for resistant Afghanistan”

La visita in Italia di un medico afgano che combatte a fianco dei mujahiddin

SERVONO OSPEDALI NELL'AFGHANISTAN DELLA RESISTENZA

di **MARIAPIA BONANATE**

Daud Kabir è un medico ed è un mujahiddin, un resistente afgano. Appartiene all'Unione Medici Afghani Mujahiddin, l'associazione che raccoglie sessanta medici fuggiti dopo l'invasione sovietica e che ha sede a Peshawar, in Pakistan. Il 21 dicembre scorso è stato ferito alla mano sinistra dalle schegge di un colpo di mortaio, mentre nella valle di Paktia andava a curare alcuni mujahiddin feriti. In questi giorni è in Italia, dove al Rizzoli di Bologna i medici hanno cercato di recuperare l'arto perché possa ritornare ad operare, ma hanno dovuto amputargli l'anulare. È venuto a Torino su invito del Consiglio Provinciale e del



Il dottor Daoud Kabir (a sinistra), subito dopo essere stato ferito dalle schegge di un colpo di mortaio sovietico.

economici per realizzarli. Manciamo di tutto, di medicine, di viveri, di indumenti. I russi non solo bombardano i villaggi, ma distruggono i raccolti. Le malattie che un tempo erano sotto controllo, come la tubercolosi, sono ricomparse, le epidemie si diffondono facilmente perché gli organismi sono deperiti. Anche il morale delle truppe sovietiche è in ribasso. Ufficialmente i soldati sovietici caduti sono cinquantamila, in realtà sono molti di più».

— In questi ultimi tempi il senatore Norberto Bobbio, Presidente del “Comitato Internazionale di Solidarietà con la Resistenza Afgana” ha denunciato con parole molto dure l'indifferenza dell'Italia per questa tragedia. «C'è nel nostro Paese», ha detto, «una rimozione collettiva dalle coscienze del problema afgano». Dottor Kabir, che cosa possiamo concretamente fare per dimostrare che non vogliamo dimenticarvi?

«Vi chiediamo di sostenere i gruppi di volontari che ci aiutano. C'è ad esempio a Genova una associazione di medici e di paramedici, il Gruppo Alfa, che è pronta per venire nei campi profughi di Peshawar, ha rac-

3.1.6 – The nationalists coups, modern dictatorships and the rise of fundamentalism

The end of colonization left Middle Eastern new nations governed by fragile and precarious governments formed by formerly western-style nationalist movements. Their political program followed the lines traced by colonial powers towards modernisation, industrialisation and secularisation. However, scarce economic achievements, social tensions among secularist and religious powers and the resounding 1948 defeat were the pretext for several nationalist military coups affecting all the region. During the 50s and the 60s, “nationalists cups or upheavals took

place in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, North Yemen, South Yemen, the Sudan and Syria”⁴⁰. Despite some differences, the governments established by these coups turned out to be autocratic regimes, strongly militarized, pursuing modernisation and secularisation of their societies through highly developed repressive apparatus, economic central intervention and militarized political space. Despite the pan-arab ideology permeating those regimes, the second half of the 20th century was characterized by the fragmentation of the Arab world: the only experiment toward unification among Syria and Egypt (1958) failed after few years. These nationalists regimes proved to be incredibly persistent (Gaddafi in Libya, Bourghiba in Tunisia, Saddam Hussein in Iraq etc.) and the authoritarian system they created survived the eventual death of their leaders (as post-Nasserian leaders in Egypt or Ben 'Ali in Tunisia). While power configuration of the “older states” – nations that were partially autonomous during Ottoman era and that posses historical national identity⁴¹ – assumed the form of a *cartel state*, in which economic, military and social powers co-opt to form a hard core of unremovable power⁴², the new oil-have states have been affected by *rentierism*, indicating that they are financed by oil revenues and not by taxes, fostering patrimonial and personalistic use of political and economical powers by the owners of the oil revenues.⁴³ Despite the relative importance of the Cold War in the Middle East, superpower competition “anaesthetized political life in most Middle Eastern countries, encouraged the rise of military or military backed regimes, and generally served to stunt or distort the growth of indigenous political institutions”⁴⁴. Specifically, in the Middle East leftist and communist forces were persecuted and almost cancelled, “in consequence, what opposition there was drifted into the hands of religious organizations of various kinds, since, in Islamic countries, governments cannot, ultimately, close down the mosques”⁴⁵. Actually, it is during the Cold War, at the beginning of the 80s, that international terrorism begun to threat Western powers, gaining a renewed global role. As part of anti-communists struggle, US and Israel funded and supported religious radical organizations⁴⁶ (as for Palestinian Hamas to contrast socialist Palestinian Liberation Organization). The “Afghan saga”, during which the US financed and actively trained mujahideens against Soviet invasion was the paradigmatic example

40 Ibidem.

41 Luciani, Giacomo. (2009) “Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East” in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 81-103. Here p. 87

42 Bozarlan, Hamit. (2012) Lectures at Ca' Foscari University, Venice, February 17, 2012

43 Luciani, Giacomo. (2009) pp. 91-94

44 Slugett, Peter. (2009) “The Cold War in the Middle East” in Fawcett, Louise. (2009) *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 44-60. Here p. 45

45 Idem, p. 58.

46 Pappe, Ilan. *La pulizia etnica della Palestina*. Roma, Fazi Editore, p. 301

of how US intervention was deleterious both for the Middle East and the West. The victory gained by Islamic forces against Soviet superpower fuelled Islamists hopes already galvanized by the Iranian revolution. During the Afghan war, many young radical islamists from all over the Muslim World gather in Peshawar to be trained and to support the Afghan cause. These *Arab Afghans*, “veterans” of the Afghan struggle, spread all over the Middle East once the war ended, destabilizing and threatening regional and global security⁴⁷. Despite Cold War interferences and new political forces, the extraordinary endurance of Middle Eastern regimes led several analyst to search for theories to explain democracy lack in the Middle Est in various ways (see chapter 2 introduction). But suddenly in 2010-2011 uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt successfully overthrow their long-lasting regimes (at least they removed the head of the *cartel*) while civil war and Western intervention overthrown Gaddafi's regime. The uprisings spread throughout the whole Middle East, and protest were (and are) held in Oman, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria (now fighting a painful civil war), Algeria, Jordan and many more.⁴⁸ Those revolutions proved that despite regime endurance, Middle Eastern societies underwent significative changes that created space for renewed political participation for Middle Eastern peoples.

3.2 – Middle Eastern Frangmentation

“The term 'frangmentation', an awkward and perhaps even grating label that has the virtue to of capturing the pervasive interactions between the fragmenting forces of localization and the integrative forces of globalisation”⁴⁹

What has been presented until now suggests that the Middle East is a highly frangmented region, and Western powers played a pivotal role in fragmenting the region. However there are other few elements that contribute to reinforce this idea. If the Middle East is considered as an international sub-system, then frangmentation could be “resized” in order to consider integrative *regional* dynamics as the attitude toward pan-Arab unification or Islamic unity, versus localising forces, for instance nationalist particularism or sectarian divisions. Thus, *regional frangmentation* highlights specific Middle Eastern dynamics overlapping with Rosenau's frangmentative global forces. In fact, the Middle East has always suffered a sort of conflict between unity and division. As above mentioned, pan-Arabism was soon frustrated by European intervention splitting the

47 Milton-Edwards, Beverly. (2005) pp. 110-117

48 For a detailed account of the different uprisings see: Lynch, Marc (2012). *The Arab uprising. The unfinished revolutions of the new Middle East*. Public Affairs, Perseus Books Group, USA

49 Rosenau, James N. (1997c) “The Complexities and Contradictions of Globalisation” in *Current History*, vol. 96, n. 613, pp. 360-364. Here p. 362

Middle East in several national states, but also by selfish politics pursued by each Arab state. Competition to gain regional hegemony or ideological centrality among Arab leaders has marked Middle Eastern politics since the beginning of the 20th century. Similarly, Islamic religion undergoes regional fragmentative dynamics. The potential for unity of the whole religious community – *umma* – under Islamic law has been frustrated since the early years of Islam by profound divisions⁵⁰. Sunnis, Shi'ites, Wahhabis, Druses and several Sufi brotherhoods are examples of Islamic pluralism, representing the richness of the Islamic tradition, but also its divided identity. Moreover, already existent divisions were deepened by the borders traced by European powers and the establishment of secular regimes, provoking islamists refusal of the modern Middle Eastern order. To complicate this framework, each Middle Eastern nations undergo fragmentative dynamics that derives both from regional and global fragmentation. Traditional divisions between religious versus secular powers are surpassed by new divisions among anachronistic authoritarian regimes and modern innovations (international tourists flows, new-media) investing Arab societies.⁵¹ Here, the closure of political space and participation by the regimes cohabits with globalising dynamics, forcedly opening Middle Eastern societies and creating new spaces for political participation⁵². For instance, while retaining and reinforcing its personal power, Mubarak's 30 years-old regime embarked itself in deep economic reforms toward liberalism (necessary to access IMF and WB loans) that inevitably spread liberal ideas and needs for democracy in the Egyptian society.⁵³ Similarly, national identity fostered by the regimes is challenge by new transnational identities. The high percentage of young population being governed by elder's regimes fosters a sense of unity among the “Arab Youth” in opposition to their *ancient regimes*. The Arab uprisings themselves seems to follow fragmentative outcomes being at the same time revolutionary and conservatory processes, in fact the revolutionary charge of the Arab uprisings have reinforced some conservative powers (the army) at the same time opening a space for new revolutionary actors.⁵⁴

50 Milton-Edwards, Beverly. (2005) pp. 22-24

51 Bozarslan, Hamit. (2012) Lectures at Ca' Foscari University, Venice, February 19, 2012

52 Olivier Roy

53 Zakaria, Fareed (2011). “How Democracy Can Work In The Middle East”. *Time Magazine*, February 3, 2011.

54 Bozarslan, Hamit. (2012) Lectures at Ca' Foscari University, Venice, February 19, 2012

3.3 – What emerges from the Arab Uprisings

The Arab Uprisings have a pivotal role in highlighting the new Middle Eastern scenario. The unexpected revolutions suggest that Middle Eastern politics are changed and that Middle Eastern societies have undergone a sort of empowering dynamics. According to Lynch, these changes incubated for at least a decade before today's Arab revolutions, and some anticipation of them are traceable in the widespread solidarity movements to the second intifada (2000) or in the protests against 2003 US invasion of Iraq.⁵⁵ Speaking about the Egyptian revolutions, Anderson states that “this latent political wisdom reflects the changes that transformed Egyptian society over the last 25 years, even while the country's ageing and ineffectual autocracy remained in place”⁵⁶ United Arab protest are not a new phenomenon the political life of the region, but since 2011, those major protest were tolerated by the regimes because they were directed *outside*, representing a good release valve for the suffocating political life – this is surely true for the Cartoons crises and the other two that followed. Given the freshness of the Arab uprisings, there are few academics works that, rather than simply present a chronicle of them, tries to find some cautious explanations. If it is clear that the revolution in each country were considerably different – as the outcomes will be –⁵⁷ significant “changes” have affected the whole region and are relevant to the understanding of the three international crises. The growth of a new generation, media and new media diffusion in the Middle East and the emergence of a new empowered “Arab public sphere” are key features of today's Middle East⁵⁸. These aspects, mixed with the enmity toward the West rooted after centuries of colonization and politic manipulation, are fundamental to understand that widespread protests against the West have several historical precedents. What is new in this controversies, is why the protests started and how they have been diffused in the region.

55 Lynch, Marc (2012) p. 13.

56 Anderson, Lisa. (2011) “Demystifying the Arab Spring. Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya” in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 90, n. 2, pp. 2-7. Here p. 5

57 Idem, p.

58 Lynch, Marc (2012) pp. 12-13

3.4 – The Media in the Middle East

Table 2: Middle Eastern media and communication status.

Country	Population (2012 est.)	Telephones (2011)	Mobile telephones, millions (2011)	Broadcast Media	Internet Host (2012)	Internet Users (2009)
Morocco	32,309,239	3.566 million	36.554	State radio and Television foreign TV satellite broadcast 10 regional radio channels	277,338	13.213 million
Algeria	37,367,226	3.059 million	35.406	State Radio and TV Foreign satellite TV	676	4.7 million
Tunisia	10,732,900	1.218 million	12.388	Strong state control over private channels broadcast news form state news agency, Arab satellite television	576	3.5 million
Libya	5,613,380	1 million	10	State controls national medias (TV, radio), Arab satellite media available.	17,926	353,900
Egypt	83,688,164	8.714 million	83.425	mix of state-run and private broadcast media, Arab satellite television	200,430	20.136 million
Palestine	2,622,544	337,000 (2010)	2.405 (2010)	One state radio and TV, independent radio and stations channels, arab satellite television	miss.	1.379 million
Jordan	6,508,887	465,400	7.483	State owned or controlled media, Arab satellite TV	69,473	1.642 million
Syria	22,530,746	4.345 million	13.117	State censorship over private media, Arab and foreign satellite broadcasts	416	4.469 million
Lebanon	4,140,289	900,000	3.35	State and private television, at least two international broadcasters	64,926	1 million
Turkey	79,749,461	15.211 million	65.322	Mostly private broadcasting, state radio and TV, satellite television	7.093 million	27.233 million
Iraq	31,129,225	1.794 million	27	Private and state broadcasting (ethnic and religious channels), satellite television	26	325,900
Saudi Arabia	26,534,504	4.633 million	53.706	Broadcast media are state controlled, satellite television, home of Al-Arabiya broadcasting company.	145,941	9.774 million
Iran	78,868,711	27.767 million	56.043	state-run media with no private independent broadcasters, major international broadcasters transmit to Iran	197,804	8.214 million
Afghanistan	30,419,928	13,500	17.558	State, private and international broadcasters	223	1 million
United Arab Emirates (UAE)	5,314,317	1.825 million	11.727	Except Dubai's Media Free Zone, majority of state broadcasters, satellite TV	337,804	3.449 million
Yemen	24,771,809	1.075 million	11.668	State run TV and radio; saudis and Omani channels	33,206	2.349 million

Country	Population (2012 est.)	Telephones (2011)	Mobile telephones, millions (2011)	Broadcast Media	Internet Host (2012)	Internet Users (2009)
				accessible		
Oman	3,090,150	287,600	4.809	Mostly state broadcasters, Saudi, UAE and Yemeni satellite televisions	14,531	1.465 million
Qatar	1,951,591	306,700	2.302	State controlled Media, home of Al-Jazeera satellite television and online news	897	563,800
Kuwait	2,646,314	566,300 (2010)	4.4 (2010)	Majority of state broadcasters, satellite access to pan-arab channels	2,771	1.1 million
Bahrain	1,248,348	276,500	1.694	Majority of state broadcasters, satellite access to regional channels	47,727	419,500

Source: CIA world Factbook, accessed on December 30, 2012. Graphic elaboration by the author.

The use and diffusion of traditional media (printed press and radio) in the Middle East dated back to the 19th century. As above mentioned, during the *Nabda* several newspapers were founded (even before some leading European newspapers) and reached widespread diffusion within Middle Eastern societies. After one century, Nasser's "skilled use of radio helped him to strengthen his popular base in Egypt and the Arab World"⁵⁹, not so differently from Roosevelt's *fireside chats*. Today the Arab uprising have renewed the debate about media's role in the Middle East and in the revolutionary process. Despite initial euphoria rose by cascade proliferation of Twitter hash-tags about the revolutions, a brief look to the numbers in table 2 shows that internet is the prerogative of a small part of the population, who relies mostly on traditional press to get their informations.⁶⁰ It is undeniable that the information revolution in the Arab world has been one of the most important changes undertaken by Middle Eastern societies, opening new spaces for political debates and social activism: rather than produce social activism, the media have changed the way of doing it.⁶¹ SMS alerts of incoming protests and rallies, online political debates and social networks regular updates about what was going on in the streets certainly influenced the positive outcomes of the revolutions. Examples of media's role were Al-Jazeera satellite television cultivating the idea of one Arab Nation⁶² or its role in connecting the different protests of the Arab uprisings into one unified narrative⁶³.

59 Ghareeb, Edmund. (2000) "New Media and the Information Revolution in the Arab World: an Assessment" in *Middle East Journal*, vol. 53, n. 3, pp. 395-418. Here p. 396

60 Hofheinz, Albrecht (2005) "The Internet in the Arab World: Playground for Political Liberalization" in *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, March 2005, pp. 78-96. Here p. 84

61 Idem, p. 82

62 Dalacoura, Katerina (2012) "The 2011 Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications" in *International Affairs*, vol. 88, n. 1, pp. 63-79. Here p. 63.

63 Lynch, Marc. (2012) p. 12

3.4.1 – The Arab Wide Web

Due to internal differences, it is difficult to assess internet usage in the Middle East, the latter varying from country to country and diversely distributed within each nation. However, internet diffusion in the region is marked by few similarities among the Middle Eastern states. Internet was firstly used as a professional tool by journalists and NGOs: the first to get news and informations while the latter to better communicate with their mother organization and partners.⁶⁴ As the cost of regular access to the net are beyond the economic possibilities of most families, internet usage have spread among middle and upper urban classes: among them, young and women have registered the highest increase rate.⁶⁵ Despite the fact that internet is a world-wide uniform platform,

“two features are characteristic of the Arabic corner of the Internet as it presents itself today. First, religion has a greater weight than anywhere else in the world, and secondly, Arab users are particularly eager to engage in discussion – not least of politics, religion, and sex”⁶⁶.

Regarding religious usage of new information technologies, islamist movements have been early adopters of new technological devices: from Khomeyni's recorded cassettes to today online devotion experiences⁶⁷. Among the different internet tools, blogs are the most commonly used, even if “blogging remains the activity of a tiny elite”⁶⁸. In his article, Lynch outlined three types of bloggers: *activist* (using their blogs for political discussion, social action organization, campaigns diffusion) *bridgebloggers* (blogs directed to international publics, written in english or other foreign language, less engaged with political issues) and *public sphere bloggers* (treating arguments of domestic relevance, also politics, without engaging in some form of activism).⁶⁹ Of the three types, bridgebloggers are particularly relevant as they may constitute the random connections making the world-wide web a small scale-free network. Bridgebloggers can import international debate within their domestic environment of like-minded bloggers, eventually spreading online-treated argument in the “real-world” through face-to-face discussions. This is particularly relevant for salafi or religious blogger networks, where issues and debates born in the mosques continue via blogs and, conversely, online-born issues can spill over the society fostering debates within religious institutions. Interestingly, the net could be also intended as a

64 Hofheinz, Albrecht. (2005) p. 84

65 Idem, p. 83

66 Idem, p.90

67 See: Hirschkind, Charles (2012). “Experiments in devotion online: the youtube Khutba” in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.44, pp. 5-22.

68 Lynch, Marc. (2007) “Blogging the New Arab Public” in *Arab Media Society*, Issue 1, February 2007, p. 2

69 Lynch, Marc. (2007) p. 11-22

source of fragmentation as it is used by revolutionary and conservatory forces to promote and propagate their causes.⁷⁰ There is a wide gap between different Middle Eastern countries – for instance between high-networked Egypt, occupying the 21st position in the world internet users chart, and Afghanistan at the 101st position⁷¹ – and within those countries between rural and urban areas. However, the Arab uprisings have shown that the net has opened new spaces for political debate escaping regimes control, contributing to the development of a new Arab consciousness.

3.4.2 – Beyond internet: satellite televisions and pan-Arabic issues

Differently from internet, traditional media are more diffused in the Middle East and were early adopted by Middle Eastern societies. In understanding Middle Eastern media situation it is important to draw a differentiation between traditional media (printed press, television and radio) and new media (satellite television, transnational newspapers and magazine) these last being an innovation brought by technological globalisation. In the Middle East, traditional media have functioned since the beginning under heavy state control⁷². State intervention can vary from direct control and ownership, second-degree control (through governmental guided institution or steering committees) and indirect control (fear of repression, need to obtain governmental permit to run a newspaper)⁷³. The control over media is also reinforced by emergency laws that have been in force for decades suffocating freedoms and right of expression. It is in such a repressive context that new media have developed. A truly Arab satellite broadcasting begun in the 90s and the Gulf War was the catalyst of its development: 24 hours war coverage by Western media and the need for Arabic coverage of the conflict prompted the creation of autonomous Arab satellite channels⁷⁴. Since the '90s, transnational Arab broadcasting have become well-established and largely available in the region. Traditionally, new media have been saluted with optimism by Western scholars, believing they would create new spaces for political debate and a new public sphere – since then crushed by repression and emergency laws. But deeper insights shows that satellite television do not necessary mean free and independent media: actually problems

70 Dalacoura, Katerina. (2012) p. 69

71 CIA world factbook datas, accessed in December 30, 2012

72 Ghareeb, Edmund. (2000) “New Media and the Information Revolution in the Arab World: an Assessment” in *Middle East Journal*, vol. 54, n. 3, pp. 395-418. Here p. 400.

73 Mamoun, Fandy. (2007) *(Un)civil war of words: media and politics in the Arab world*. Westport, Praeger Security International. P. 23-24

74 Ghareeb, Edmund. (2000) p. 401

connected to media ownership and control affected also satellite televisions and transnational press.⁷⁵ On one side, satellite televisions are influenced by their owners' interest, and in the case of a state being the owner of it (Qatari Al-Jazeera or Saudi Al-Arabiya), the result is a controversial dynamic of internal censorship toward domestic scandals, but deep coverage of foreign troublesome issues⁷⁶. On the other side, transnational media are used by their owners as political tools. Since Nasser's large use of radio to spread pan-Arabic socialism in the region to today rivalry between Qatar and Saudi Arabia expressed through their leading media, Arab media have been "inherently political" thus implying that their study have to be anchored to the specific Middle Eastern social and political context.⁷⁷ Given the strong censorship surrounding traditional media, satellite television and other new media regained Arab people's thrust as professional and qualified sources of information, differently from traditional media seen as mouthpieces for their respective governments.⁷⁸ However some argues that Al-Jazeera and similar channels follow precise political goals dictated by their governments, stating that satellite channels do not dispose of the effective objective coverage they pretend to show⁷⁹. The themes treated by Middle Eastern media have suffered the high costs of criticizing the regime or going against the taboos surrounding Middle Eastern information, thus explaining the consolidation of few wide accepted themes that gain popular attention without attracting regime's sanctions⁸⁰. These are the Palestinian cause, Iraqi war/s, Islamic issues, anti-americanism and recently, the Arab uprisings. Regimes' toleration of media coverage toward these issues has led to the creation of a widespread pan-Arab set of topic themes in which Islam gained large coverage thanks to Islamic satellite channels and Islamic talk shows guested by major regional media. Regime's opposition toward Islamic movements has long excluded preachers and imams from media coverage, but satellite television and transnational media have made possible to broadcast religious content – produced in religious countries (Saudi Arabia mostly) or abroad – in the houses of Arab citizens living under secular repressive regimes (Egypt, Tunisia). But if Islamic broadcasting was partially hindered by secular regimes, anti-americanism and anti-Western content have been widely accepted by those same regimes, always trying to reduce popular dissatisfaction. Anti-americanism rose during the '60s from the "soviet propaganda adopted by

75 Mamoun, Fandy. (2007) pp. 120-122

76 Idem, p. 10-11

77 Idem, p. 138

78 Ghareeb, Edmund. (2000) p. 406

79 Mamoun, Fandy. (2007) pp. 10-11

80 Idem, p. 90

Arab nationalist regimes like that of Nasser”⁸¹, and have been abundantly nourished by Western unpopular policies in the region (see paragraph 3.1). Similarly, Israeli-Palestinian conflict is still a safe source of censor-free news that can attract public interests without upsetting Arab leaders. Interestingly, the pan-Arabic character of these new media, together with the creation of few regional “top stories” have contributed to the development of unified Arab narratives crossing national borders and pushing toward the creation of a new Arab public sphere.⁸² The “renewed pan-Arab identity and unified political agenda shaped over the preceding decade by the new public sphere”⁸³ have created “empowered publics”⁸⁴, ready to mobilize around few central topics. Interestingly, Islam and anti-West sentiment twist together in the three international controversies, sparking the reaction of part of the Arab publics that, until 2010, was forbidden to demonstrate for other causes. Actually, these “regime approved” topics were the only tolerated ground for unrests in the Middle East before the Arab uprisings. The combination of closed political space and highly mobilized empowered publics partially explain Middle Eastern and Muslim reactions to the provocations launched by Rose, Jones and Nakoula. However, these are Middle Eastern specific variables that are not necessary valid for other countries where demonstrations against the three crises took place. More important, it could be misleading to rely too much upon media influence as an explication of the three phenomenons. In fact, media are jus a small part of the bigger changes taking place in the region, including the development of a “new generation” more open to the international arena, deep economic changes, demographic explosion, weakening of patriarchal structures toward individualism and general opening toward external globalised forces (international tourism, technological advances).⁸⁵ In the next chapter the Middle Eastern context here presented will be crossed with theoretical issues outlined in chapter two and, together with *random actors* definition will constitute an appropriate analytical tool for the comprehension of the three international crises.

81 Idem, p. 89

82 Dalacoura, Katerina. (2012) p. 28

83 Lynch, Marc. (2007) p. 105

84 Idem, p. 23

85 Roy, Olivier. (2011) “Buon governo, individuo e libertà di fede” in *Oasis*, Year 7th, n. 14, Venezia, Studium Generale Marcianum, pp. 13-17. Here p. 13

Chapter 4 – *Random Actors*: an analysis of the three international controversies

The previous chapters introduced the three controversies, explaining the context in which they took place. Chapter two provided some theoretical issues that can explain the abrupt development of the crises from domestic to international disputes. This chapter gather the elements provided in the three previous chapters that will be framed within the *random actors* theoretical model. In chapter two random actors have been defined as *single individuals who act mostly locally and whose ideology leads them to have a partial cognition of the global system together with a distorted view of “the other”; but whose actions could randomly have international relevance as they are linked – through small scale-free networks – to a globalised and fragegregated international system*. In compliance with this definition, the following investigation is divided into three different level of analysis. The first level concerns the local dimension where each actor will be analysed as a local agent, paying particular attention to ideology and proximate “connections” with local networks or other like-minded agents. The second tier is focused on the local to global connectors, that are media and new media networks. In this section the role and the weight of the media in internationalising the controversies that ignited protests in the Middle East and the Muslim World is explored. The third level deals with the wider international context. The relational dimension between the Middle East and the West of the disputes is analysed following *fragegregation* as analytical frame, highlighting the simultaneous existence of integrative and fragmenting forces shaping both regional and global politics.

4.1 – *Local agents*

In the second chapter the role of single individuals in the international system have been explored, focusing on how it has been theorised by the different schools of international politics. Rosenau's theories and few other contributes have tried to develop theories of individual agency in world politics. The idea of *random actors* is a mix of these theories are here deployed as our

analytical frame for the first level of analysis.

4.1.1 – Single individuals

The first issue to explore is whether Rose, Jones and Nakoula should be considered as single actors or not; this aspect needs to be specified in order to fruitfully proceed with the analysis.

In the case of the Danish cartoons, Flemming Rose was part of the Jyllands-Posten newspaper company, thus suggesting that he did not act alone. Regarding the cartoonists, Rose declared that he wrote to the members of the association of Danish cartoonists “asking them 'to draw Muhammad as you see him'”¹ but he did not mention whether or not he explained to them why they were asked to draw Muhammad. However, as he was the cultural editor, cartoon's publication fell under his supervision and, besides, it was his own initiative to publish them as a way to protest against media self-censorship² – an initiative eventually approved by the chief editor of the newspaper. Similarly, even if Jones is the leader of a small christian community, he took the decision to start the Quran-burning campaign alone and he planned it and carried it out without relevant help from his followers. As a consequence some of his followers exited from the community after Jones started his attacks because they were disappointed³. More about, he launched his campaign from Twitter and Facebook pages related to his personal website “Stand Up America Now”, thus excluding the hypothesis that he was planning the Quran-burning day with his followers or in the name of the DWOC. Finally, Nakoula was alone in the different phases of filming and distributing his movie and the Cristian and Coptic organizations backing his work just helped him with material supplies, without actively participating (they were not concerned with what Nakoula was actually going to do). As witnessed by one actor, Nakoula lied to the crew about his real intentions, without even properly directing the actors and disappearing just after finishing the shooting phase⁴. He was the one who uploaded the video on youtube (without the permit of the actor crew) and he organized the only projection of the movie, done in a small cinema in Los Angeles⁵. It is doubtless that several actors concurred in spreading and internationalising Rose, Jones and Nakoula's actions, but all the actors that intervened (both collective and single actors) were not organized and did not follow any type of coordination between them. Furthermore, the decisions were all taken by the three actors alone. Each one of

1 Ibidem

2 Rose, Flemming. (2006) “Why I Published those Cartoons”, published in *The Washington Post*, February 19, 2006

3 Alvarez, Lizette. “Koran-Burning Pastor Unrepentant in Face of Furor”. *The New York Times*, April 2, 2011

4 Gross, Michael Joseph. “Disaster Movie” *Vanity Fair Online*, December 27, 2012

5 Ibidem

the other involved figures did a small part in the crises that became international, but none of them led the whole process nor was responsible for the entire development of the events.

4.1.2 – The Skill revolution and empowered individuals

One interesting challenge posed by the controversies is how was it possible that the actions of single individuals achieved international relevance in a very short time (few months). As presented in chapter two, Rosenau suggests that globalization and the technologic revolution have stimulated what he calls the individual skill revolution, defined as “the increasing ability of individuals and local entities to see their interests as served by further globalization”⁶. In other works, Rosenau defines the skill revolution as an increment of individual awareness about international dynamics, how they affect individual every-day life and individual increased possibilities to be international agents⁷, from which “it also follows that [...] the skill revolution enables citizens to have a greater impact of the course of events”⁸. Hence, the skill revolution outlined two different abilities, on one side, it suggests that individuals have enhanced their analytical skills. Satellite television, new media and multiple sources of information allow people to have a better cognition about the international system, how it functions and what are the consequences of specific international events on their daily life (awareness). On the other side, individuals are more capable to address their specific claims on a global scale while the engagement in various forms of collective action is made easier by fast communications and low transportation costs⁹. Given this theoretical frame is it possible to state that Rose, Jones and Nakoula were skilful individuals?

Table 3: The Skill revolution applied to the three case studies

Actors	Awareness	Empowerment
Flemming Rose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - perceives that Danish media are suffering self-censorship toward Islamic issues - misinformed about Islam - aware of Danish Muslim presence in Denmark - distorted knowledge about the Middle East and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of traditional press and satiric cartoons to criticize Islam - conscious use of satiric cartoons to promote his cause against media self-censorship - scarce use of new medias

6 Rosenau, James N. (1997a). *Along the domestic-foreign frontier: exploring governance in a turbulent world*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 101

7 Rosenau, James N. (1997 b). “A new dynamism in world politics: increasingly skilful individuals?” in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol 41, Issue 4, pp. 655-686. Here p. 658

8 Rosenau, James N. (1997a) p. 282

9 Rosenau, James N. (2007) “Governing the ungovernable: The challenge of a global disaggregation of authority” in *Regulation and Governance*, Vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 88-97. Here p. 92

Actors	Awareness	Empowerment
	issues related to the Muslim World	
Terry Jones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - convinced about an Islamic threat in the US and the Western world - never read the Quran - no idea of Islamic doctrine - poor idea of the international context (US Iraqi and Afghani wars; Middle Eastern context) - aware of US sensitivity to issues related 9/11 and Islam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good use of Internet and Youtube and social networks (Facebook and Twitter) - strategic use of symbolic messages to attract media attention - smart use of communication technologies - strategic use of traditional and new media - networked to other like-minded activists
Nakoula Basseley Nakoula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - as an Egyptian, possible knowledge of the Egyptian and the Middle Eastern context (non academic) - misinformed about Islam? - aware of the international tensions among US and the Middle East - aware of the precarious Middle Eastern equilibrium after Arab Uprisings - able to exploit US electoral campaign tensions - aware of the islamophobic climate in the US society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deep knowledge of Internet and Youtube potentialities - strategic usage of press ad media with provocative declarations - networked with other christian right-wing associations - skilled with online bank systems and consequent fraud schemes (cheque fraud) - empowered by new possibilities offered by online services (banks, public administration etc.)

Table 3 briefly show how the actors of the three crises were empowered by the skill revolution in carrying out their initiatives. Applying Rosenau's theory to the three actors suggests that Rose was the less empowered by the skill revolution. Actually, he just published the cartoons in the newspaper (traditional media), being caught by surprise by the backfire it provoked. Rose's awareness of the international context and its domestic consequences seems partially restricted. While he was mindful about media self-censorship characterizing both Danish and European media (he declared he was following some self-censorship Danish cases during the months before cartoons publication¹⁰), he seemed to lack international awareness about Middle East/West tensions and precedent similar cases (Rushdie's book). His surprise toward the protests held in the Muslim world and Europe and his declarations that, knowing what have happened, he would not had published those cartoon again¹¹, it is clear that he did not possess good "international" awareness before the crisis started. The protest against the Danish cartoons tells a different story. In fact, the small group of Imams who ignited Middle Eastern anger largely exploited both information technologies and low transportation costs. During the months after cartoons publication, they tried to attract media attention with demonstrations and provocative declarations¹². In a second phase, they sought to involve Middle Eastern

10 Rose, Flemming. (2006) "Why..."

11 Iidem.

12 Ammitzbøll, Pernille and Vidino, Lorenzo. (2007) "After the Danish Cartoon Controversy", *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2001, pp. 3-11. Here pp.

governments and the Danish government through meetings, press conferences and official declarations made by Middle Eastern ambassadors¹³, but this organization would not have been possible without fast communication services. Finally, the Imams group embarked in a trip throughout the Middle East to sensitize key religious figures about the cartoons case. Again, the quickness of their mission would not have been possible without modern transportation. The wider protest movements were also empowered by the skill revolution. The boycotting campaign of Danish products is paradigmatic of the use of internet, text messages and transnational media to organize and accomplish a successful campaign¹⁴. It also showed that the protesters had good knowledge about Danish corporations with their ramifications, at the same time being aware of the efficacy of boycott action against mass production and world-wide distribution chains. However, part of the campaign was sponsored by Middle Eastern governments¹⁵, reducing its significance as a symptom of the skill revolution.

In the Quran-burning case Jones proved to be incredibly skilled in the usage of communication technologies and new media. Actually, the Quran-burning day was launched via internet, releasing tweets, comments on Facebook, hosting a small video on Youtube and publishing the same video on his web site. The video was retaken and published by other like-minded blogs and was then connected to the protest regarding the “Ground Zero Mosque”. Once he caught media attention, Jones proved to be at ease with media and communication technologies. He used his symbolic religious language to release harsh declarations (with apocalyptic tone about the end of the free American society), creating suspense around the possibility of him really burning the Quran, and exploiting Americans' fear for Islamic terrorism. Jones was only partially aware of the wider international context. In his discourses, the Islamic treat is declined in local or national terms, as it jeopardize America's freedom and Christian identity. He seemed not to care about global issues related to Islam or Western relations with the Muslim World. Actually, he declared that it was not his intention to jeopardize US soldiers in Afghanistan, thus suggesting he did not know US delicate position in the Middle East.

Nakoula is the one who better shows the potentialities of the Skill Revolution. From the making of the video with advanced low-cost techniques (green screen) to his multiple connections with several Christian and Coptic associations (without being a formal member of any of them), he

13 Ibidem.

14 Maamoun, Ahmed and Aggarwal, Praveen (2008). “Guilty by association: the boycotting of Danish products in the Middle East” in *Journal of Business Case-Studies*, Vol, 4, N. 10, pp. 35-42. Here p. 36

15 Ibidem.

was incredibly able to “exploit globalisation”. He used multiple identities and multiple loyalties to gain the support of both Right-wing activists (such as Klein) and Coptic associations that were “used” by Nakoula to raise few funds and rent the Hollywood set used in the first scenes of the movie. The fact that he was forbidden to use the web without probatory approval reveals Nakoula's skilled and dangerous use of the net. In the case of the Innocence of Muslims, the web had a pivotal role. Rather than posting the entire movie, Nakoula opted for a short 13 minutes “trailer”, probably being aware that web content should be shorter than traditional media content as users can easily jump to other web pages. The short video was uploaded with the pseudonym “Sam Bacile” and contained the most offensive scenes of the movie (that were dubbed to change original dialogs) starting since the beginning with provocative lines against Islamic religion. Once the movie caught media attention – it seems that it was originally showed in a egyptian local television¹⁶ – Nakoula skilfully continued his recital, hiding beyond Sam Bacile pseudonym, and releasing false declarations to create a mysterious case around the video – articles titled like “Mystery beyond anti-islam movie maker” are countless. In the phase between the video going viral on the net and the discovery of Nakoula being behind it, Nakoula's relationships with right wing activists served to create more confusion about the video. Klein released several – contradictory – declarations alluding to a wider coalition of counter-jihadists actively working on the video saga and warning about a death menace pending on Bacile's head: “We [we who?] went into this knowing this was probably going to happens [referring to the protests]”¹⁷ or, “Sam is committed to this film, like the rest of us. I don't want to give too many details, but he was given an ultimatum that he had to leave his country or be tortured”¹⁸. Differently from Jones and Rose, Nakoula is probably more informed about international and Middle Eastern issues – he moved to the US from Egypt. However, his Egyptian background does not imply he know Islamic religion, but surely he knew Islamic traditions as he leaved in a Muslim majority country. Interestingly, he never took part in anti-Islamic actions before making the movie as he was busy with banks fraud, identity changes and drug dealing (he changed up to 12 different names¹⁹). Declarations like: “The movie is a political movie. It's not a religious movie. The U.S. lost a lot of money and a lot of people in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we're

16 Mekay, Emad. “The Muhammad movie: look who fanned the flames” *Columbia Journalism Review*, January 7, 2013

17 Blumenthal, Max. “Inside the strange Hollywood scam that spread chaos across the Middle East” *The Guardian*, September 13, 2012

18 Pelisek, Christine. “Anti-Muslim Movie Maker a Meth Cooker” *The Daily Beast*, September 13, 2012

19 “Writer of anti-Islamic film sentenced to year in jail”. *The Guardian*, November 8, 2012

fighting with ideas”²⁰, or when describing himself as an Israeli, suggest that he was well informed about Middle Eastern and World politics. Even the timing of the video release was not casual. It was released during the presidential campaign and near the 9/11 anniversary (two events that contributed to rise the tensions among Muslims and Christians in the US) and after the Arab Uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, menacing their delicate post-revolutionary equilibrium (major protest were held in Egypt and Libya indeed). However, even if the skill revolution empowers individuals and provide them new ways to get global information, it does not tell much about what kind of information individuals are now exposed to. In other words: does the skill revolution imply qualitative advanced for individual information? As above mentioned, Rose, Jones and Nakoula have scarce notions about Islam, the Middle East and, with exception of Nakoula, they are scarcely informed about world politics and difficult relationships between the Middle East and the West. Why?

4.1.3 – Ideology and proximity

In the built of the random actors definition ideology has been included to specify informational distortion caused by ideological assumptions that work as cognitive frame for the organization of knowledge and the orientation of social practices. It has been specified that ideology affects three different dimensions: cognitive, social and discursive (paragraph 2.6.1). Ideology inclusion in the random actors framework suggests to investigate how the skill revolution is adopted and used by the actors and how they filter the large amount of informations following their core values and beliefs. The three actors could be easily divided into two different groups: Rose on one side, while Jones and Nakoula on the other. This division is based on substantial differences regarding the basic assumptions of their ideology. Flemming Rose is the most acculturated of the three actors. He have had a brilliant journalistic career that brought him in the US, Moscow, and Chechenia, becoming finally the cultural editor for the Jyllands-Posten. It seems that he started to perceive Islam as a threat to liberal way of life during his sojourn in Chechenia²¹. As he declared, he took the decision to publish the cartoons “in response to several incidents of self-censorship in Europe caused by widening fears and feelings of intimidation in dealing with issues related to Islam”²². Following this and other declarations, it seems that he was struggling to

20 Peralta, Eyder. “What We Know About 'Sam Bacile,' The Man Behind The Muhammad Movie” *National Public Radio.org*, September 12, 2012

21 Laskin, Jakob. “The Controversialist” *Doublethink Online*, December 9, 2008.

22 Rose, Flemming. (2006) “Why I Published those Cartoons”, published in *The Washington Post*, February 19,

protects freedom of speech – and liberal freedoms in general – rather than against Islam itself. In one statement, alluding to his opposition to give public apologies for the cartoons publications, in he writes “the lesson from the Cold War is: If you give in to totalitarian impulses once, new demands follow. The West prevailed in the Cold War because we stood by our fundamental values and did not appease totalitarian tyrants.”²³ His radical commitment to defend Western liberals ideas is mixed with his impressions toward radical Islam as an anti-liberal force menacing the freedoms gained by European Enlightenment, compared to a menace equal to Soviet communism.²⁴ Thus Rose's ideology is a kind of “moderate” islamophobia, more oriented toward defending local freedom than to embrace a world-wide campaign against Muslims. This can explain why he did not care about the Middle Eastern context “the narrative [regarding the cartoon saga] in the Middle East is more complex, but that has very little to do with the cartoons”²⁵ nor he followed up with his campaign during the protests – he did not release provocative declarations and he partially apologise for the cartoons, although he lately declared that he was not apologising for the publication, as this imply to admit the victory of the radicals who ignited violent protests²⁶. Moreover, it is because he cared more about local freedom that he chose to publish the cartoons in a Danish newspapers and not in a world-wide medium of communication (Internet or English-written press). Hence, despite his dichotomous ideology, he perceived the world as divided between Western freedom and liberal sustainer, versus radical totalitarian enemies, no matter if they are radical islamists or communists.

If Rose have had some experiences with radical Islam (although he did not care about Islam itself or the Middle Eastern issues), Jones and Nakoula have a distorted view of Islamic religion. The cognitive dimension of ideology acted as a filter or a distorting mirror. The eventual informations they gather about Islamic issues are filtered and reframed to be coherent with their ideology. Their belief are more “total” then Rose's ones, they believe that “islam is of the devil” or “a penis-driven religion” or “a cancer”, hence reducing Islam to a monolithic religion without internal differentiation²⁷. This radical view is made stronger by Jones affiliation to fundamental born-again christian movements, whose goal is to actively engage and “stand-up” in the missionary effort aimed to save US society from evil forces (atheism, Islam, scientific thought

2006.

23 Idem

24 Laskin, Jakob. “The Controversialist”

25 Rose, Flemming. (2006) “Why I Published...”

26 Laskin, Jakob. “The Controversialist”

27 As noted by Van Dijk, ideology works eliminating differences among members of the outgroup (Islam), qualifying the whole group through the worst characteristics possessed by a small minority of group members. See Van Dijk, Teun A. (2003) *Ideologie. Discorso e costruzione sociale del pregiudizio*. Carocci Editore, Roma, 2004, p. 76-77

Obama administration)²⁸. Similarly, Nakoula also is permeated by this missionary will – even if it is not member of any church – but in a broader sense: his mission is to fight Islam world-wide, not only to protect US society, but to alarm the world that Islam will dominate the whole world if “we” do not react. Religion is central in Jones and Nakoula ideology, and given the universal character of both Christianity and Islam, it structures a universal oppositional ideology that identify Islam as the *evil*, a unified enemy without significative divisions or nuances, against the *good* consumerist and bigot US society (similarly to George Bush Jr vision). Hence, Jones and Nakoula's total ideology explains why they used the Web to spread their campaign against Islam, in order to reach wider public, but it also explains why, once the protests begin, they continued their “mission” with incendiary speech and harsh declarations to the international media to raise the level of the tension and prolong their campaigns.

However, despite Jones and Nakoula global vocation to engage in a clash of civilization against Islam, actually they were primarily engaged in local struggles as their domestic environment is what really matters to them. And it could not be different as the local dimension is the source of the self identity. It is in the proximate community that the self is defined and it is at the local level that we define who we are²⁹. Although the erosion of the self fostered by globalisation and the displacement of identity sources resulting from people's mobility³⁰:

“There is indeed currently something like an 'ideology of home' which has in fact come into being partly in response to the constant repetition and global diffusion of the claim that we now live in a condition of homelessness or rootlessness; as if in prior periods of history the vast majority of people lived in 'secure' and homogenized locales”³¹

This sense of homeless and erosion of the self leads individuals to be more vulnerable to identity claims by leaders or movements that promise to provide a clear and strong self identity. Hence, the qualification of random actors as local agents is central to understand the reason why such actors take stance to defend their local community, or in other words, their local sources of identity. They act to defend a set of core values that define their identity, from general Western values (freedoms, christianity) to specific contextual values (US moral tradition; Danish 'quiet' way of life etc). As a consequence, Rose, Jones and Nakoula are local agents, they decided to act when Islam was perceived as menacing their local dimension: Danish self-censorship episodes

28 Guolo, Renzo and Pace, Enzo. (2002) *I Fondamentalismi*. Bari-Roma, Laterza, p. 16-17

29 Gergen, Kenneth J. (2000) “The Self in the Age of Information” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, n. 1, pp. 201-214. Here p. 203

30 Idem, p. 206

31 Robertson, Roland. (1995) “Glocalization, Modernity and Spatialization of social theory: an Introduction” in Featherstone, Mike; Lash, Scott and Robertson, Roland. [edited by] *Global Modernities*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi SAGE Publications (1995), pp. 25-44. Here p. 35

for Rose; Ground Zero mosque, 9/11, presidential campaign favouring Obama for Jones and Nakoula; Muslim increased visibility in their societies – also due to the international context – for them all. However, they became global actors for a short period of time.

4.2 – From local to global: networks and media.

4.2.1 – Small-world networks: internet

In chapter two (2.6.3) we have discussed the centrality of small-world networks because of their potential shrinking effect made possible by few random long range connections between clustered nodes. Moreover,

“Because of the diverse interests of every internet user and the gigantic number of web pages, the linkages between web pages were thought to be randomly linked as a random network. The results of [the] study have disagreed with this expectation in a surprising way. Only a few pages have the majority of links, whereas most pages are only very sparsely connected [...] The physical structure of the internet (router level, domain level, web links), social networks like e-mail networks, the structure of software modules, and many more examples show surprising scale-free structures”.³²

Applying this model to the three international controversies could help to clarify how it was possible for three unknown individuals to provoke international turmoil. In small and scale-free networks, three elements play a pivotal role: clustering among proximal nodes (clusterisation), a certain degree of random long range connections and the presence of large hubs, or nodes with high number of connections far higher than the average number of connections of all the other nodes. In the Innocence of Muslim crisis the net played a pivotal role in internationalizing the controversy. Following this network models, Nakoula could be considered a node that holds a marginal position: not only he was unknown on the net, but he was also forbidden to use it because of previous crimes he committed, thus accentuating his marginal position on this network. However, Nakoula was linked with like-minded activists who became the proximal connections constituting a cluster of proximal nodes, where proximity is intended not in a spacial meaning, but as ideology affinity between like-minded people – spatial dimension is less relevant in virtual networks. The cluster formed by Nakoula with right-wing Christian and Coptic

32 Hein, Oliver; Schwind, Michael and Köning, Wolfgang. (2006) “Scale-Free Networks. The Impact of Fat Tailed Degree Distribution on Diffusion and Communication Processes” in *Wirtschaftsinformatik*, vol. 48, n. 4, pp. 267-275. Here p. 269

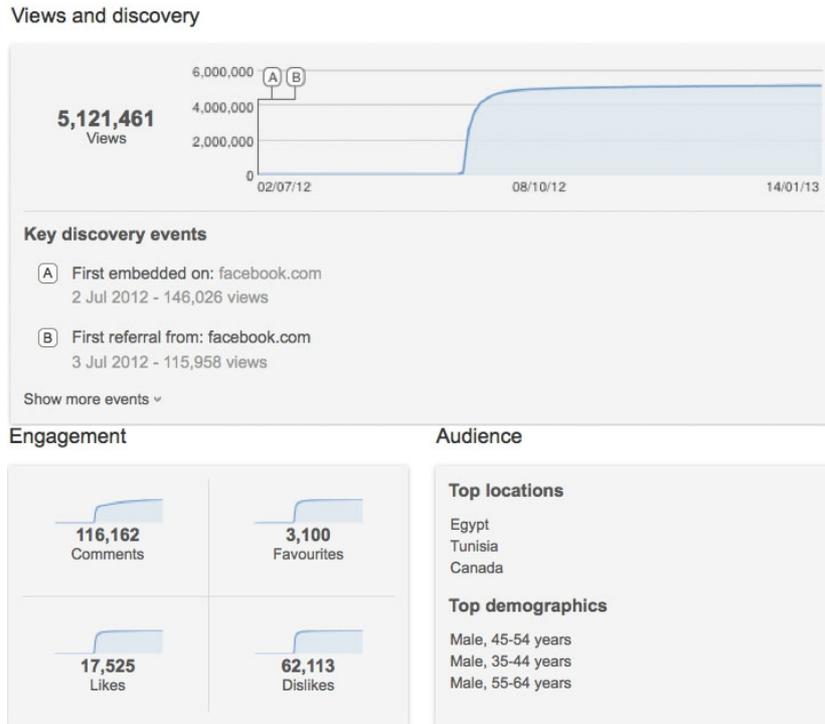
communities was exploited by him in the real life to get some resources³³ (money, structures, permits), and their links through the net were fundamental to promote Nakoula's video. The counter-jihadist activist Klein, pastor Jones, coptic activist Sadek and others posted and spread the video through their blogs, scoring the first visualizations for the “Muhammad movie trailer”³⁴. This is worthy because the number of visualisations scored by a video on Youtube has a pivotal role as higher visualisations increase the probability that the video will be among the first results related to queries containing keywords like “Muhammad”, “Muslims”, “Islam” etc, wether the search is done on Youtube or through other search engines (Google, Yahoo etc). In the Innocence of Muslims saga random connection were established between Nakoula's video and Middle Eastern local mass media via Youtube. The video, and its Arabic version, were noted by a small Egyptian tabloid that initially attributed it to Terri Jones³⁵ (Jones posted the video the 12th of september with his StandUpAmericaNow pseudonym). Since then, many other local media started to speak about the video until it became more and more relevant, being finally noticed by international media. Accordingly to scale-free network model, Youtube was a hub, or a node with high number of connections linking together distant clusters. Youtube stats (fig 6) shows that Egypt and Tunisia scored the highest number of views, thanks to their high number of internet users (chapter 3, table 3). Hence, trough Youtube, the video was rapidly linked to Egyptians and Tunisian internet users clusters, that eventually contributed to the diffusion of the video in the Muslim world posting and sharing it in Muslim oriented web pages and blogs, or trough social networks. Youtube itself could be considered as a separate network, however, differently from the World-Wide-Web in general, it could be considered a different kind of network. Actually, users do not link themselves, but subscribe to channels or simply watch videos uploaded by other users. It interesting to observe how in figure 6 the incrementation graphics of the video visualisations follow the theoretical spreading of an infection in classical random networks, that is a network where new every new connection is randomly linked to the already existent nodes without preference criteria(fig. 7)

33 Network analysis and small-world or scale-free networks have been used to analyse social structures with interesting results. See: Hein, Oliver; Schwind, Michael and Köning, Wolfgang. (2006) “Scale-Free Networks. The Impact of Fat Tailed Degree Distribution on Diffusion and Communication Processes” in *Wirtschaftsinformatik*, Vol. 48, n. 4, pp. 267-275; Hafner-Burton, Emilie; Kahler, Miles; Montgomery, Alexander. (2009) “Network Analysis for International Relations” in *International Organization*, n. 63, pp. 559-592. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

34 The same video published by Terry Jones with his “StandUpAmerica” nickname scored 1,878,384 visualisations (01-15-2013)

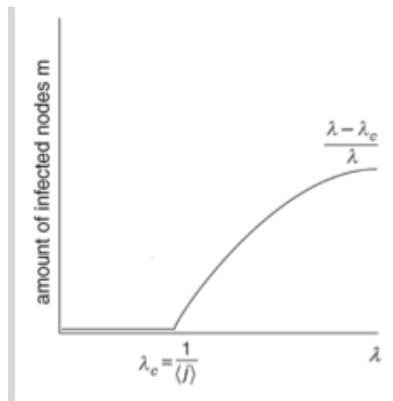
35 Mekay, Emad. “The Muhammad movie: look who...”

Fig. 6: Youtube stats about the video titled “Muhammad Movie Trailer”



).

Fig.7: The spreading of an infection in a classical random network. Source: Oliver Hein, Michael Schwind, Wolfgang König (2006)



Hence Youtube have increased the possibility of some random shortcuts between Nakoula and the cluster of Middle Eastern and Muslim users, shortcuts already included in the net and social media as small-world networks. This last characteristic increases the level of randomness and unpredictability of the three cases: actually there are hundreds videos against Islam on the net, but Nakoula's video was randomly caught by an Egyptian node (tabloid) clustered with several

other local nodes (through internet or other kind of links), resulting in a viral spreading of the video. The role of Internet in the other two controversies was partially balanced by the intervention of other local to global connectors (media, transnational migration networks). However, Jones chose started to promote his campaign via social networks and then published his video about the Quran-burning day on Youtube. Jones proximal links with like-minded activist's blogs (like Pamela Geller's) and his engagement in the protests against the Ground-Zero mosque assured to his video a certain visibility in the local/domestic cluster of right-wing activist, eventually becoming as popular as needed in order to attract media attention. Moreover, despite mainstream media decision not to cover the effective burning of the Quran in March 2011, "social media enabled the Quran burning in Florida to ignite deadly violence half- a-world away"³⁶. The Danish cartoons crisis is perhaps the less internet affected, although e-mail campaigns and chat rooms were nevertheless crucial for the development of the boycotting campaign following early protests³⁷.

4.2.2 – International media

Internet was not the only local to global connector in this three case studies. Actually, traditional and new media also contributed to internationalise them. The communication revolution of the 21st century have profoundly remodelled the role and the potentialities of the media. In the age of 2.0 web, it means that media could choose from an incredible wide amount of news from all over the world, and that the news presented are a very small selection of the available informations. In other words, international circulation of informations consists in the "choice of few facts together with their comments by a minority of individuals for a majority of consumers"³⁸. It is difficult to separate traditional media from internet. Actually, as industrial revolution effected traditional agriculture, resulting in modern mechanic agriculture, similarly communication revolution deeply affected previous forms of communication (printed press, radio, national television). Today the majority of TV channels, newspapers, magazines, tabloids and radio stations have their webpages were they partially broadcast their programs. Moreover, news agencies works

36 Lidsky Barnett, Larissa. (2012) "Incendiary Speech and Social Media" in *Faculty Publications*, paper 154, pp. 147-164. Here p. 151

37 Shadid, Antony and Sullivan, Kevin. "Anatomy of the Cartoon Protest Movement" and Lindekilde, Lasse (2010) "Soft Repression and Mobilization: the Case of Transnational Activism of Danish Muslims during the Cartoons Controversy" in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 451-469. Here p. 454.

38 Gerverau, Laurent. (2004) *Inventer l'actualité. La construction imaginaire du monde par les médias internationaux*. Paris, Éditions la Découvert, p. 8

mainly online, transmitting to mass media real time news from all over the world. In the Quran-burning controversy national and international media played a fundamental role. Jones initially launched his campaign via Twitter and Facebook. However, he did not received much attention and his idea was going to be ignored as many other provocations “available” on the web. Unfortunately, Jone's campaign was picked up by Religion News Service (www.religionnews.com), and Jones's popularity started to raise³⁹. After he posted an incendiary video on Youtube, mainstream media decided to pick up the story. At this point, it was a matter of time for Arab mass media to notice Jones's history and transmit it in the Middle East and the Muslim world. As outlined in chapter 3 (paragraph 3.4), in the Middle East internet remain scarcely diffused in the majority of the countries, excepting for Egypt, Tunisia and few others. However, satellite televisions, pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic newspapers are well diffused. The creation of a new Arab unified public sphere fostered by emerging regional media and the possibility to cover only few widespread and censorship-free issues could explain Middle Eastern media decision to follow Jones case. The Quran-burning dispute shows how media's role was pivotal. Actually, when Jones really burned the Quran, mainstream media decision not to cover this event completely changed the situation. Jones videos remained – almost – unnoticed (they scored very few visualizations on Youtube) and in the Middle East there were less turmoils than in the previous year (except for the Afghanistan attacks). It is important to specify that when Jones burned the Quran, part of the Middle East was shaken by the Arab Uprising that suddenly changed the political space and partially removed regime censorship, and this fact could explain why Arab media did not cover Jones actions since the beginning: on one side, the Arab Uprising were absorbing their first pages and breaking news sections; on the other side, the arab public sphere was now concerned with other issues and renewed political debates.⁴⁰ In the Danish cartoons controversy the search for media coverage was the leitmotiv of the controversy since its beginning. Rose obviously had the way trough reaching media attention made easy thanks to its position (cultural editor of the Jyllands-Posten), and actually he decided to engage a public debate using the newspaper rather than, fro instance, organising public conferences. The radical imams led by Abu Laban also tried to obtain media attention. They firstly tried to gain Danish media attention with radical and incendiary declarations. Then they seek media coverage by involving political figures in their struggle. They always asked for “public” – read media covered – apologies from the Jyllands-Posten or from Prime Minister Rasmussen. Finally,

39 “How the media ignited Koran burning story” *The Age.com*, September 12, 2010.

40 Altikriti, Anas. “Burning the myths about Islam” *Al-Jazeera English*, April 12, 2011.

they went in the Middle East seeking support by eminent religious figures – Mohammad Sayed Tantawi (head of Al-Azhar University) Ali Gooma (Egypt Grand Mufti) Muhammed Rashid Qabbani⁴¹ – that, besides being prominent religious figures, they are/were often guests of satellite television broadcasts. The penetration of the satellite television in the Middle East contributed to the spreading of the protests, resulting in the effective boycott campaign. In the case of the Innocence of Muslim video, traditional media “helped” the diffusion of the video from the net to the population in those countries with few internet users. The video remain unnoticed until the protests spread across the Muslim World. At that time, media started to search informations about the video, its author and the motivations behind it. The media strongly contributed to increase the tensions firstly because they initially gave credit to Bacile's declarations, and secondly because they created the mysterious aura surrounding the episode.

“In a time of global media interconnections, it is almost impossible to reach decisions or adopt practices about broadcasting or the Internet in one state that are not the consequence of or do not affect the political and legal climate of other states”⁴² and the three controversies are clear demonstrations of it. The publication of hate-speech material on a newspaper or on internet have triggered international reactions, even changing the long term the relations between the Middle East and the West. Even when the actions that begun the disputes were directed toward their domestic publics, as it was for the cartoons and the Quran-burning initiative, transnational media have exponentially enlarged their range of action, and proved the inadequacy of national borders in controlling information flows. Randomness was increased by this enlargement as “the bigger the audience, the greater the chance at least one audience member will respond with violence to speech that is offensive or advocates violence”⁴³, thus amplifying the voices of Rose, Jones and Nakoula.

41 Shadid, Antony and Sullivan, Kevin. “Anatomy of the Cartoon Protest Movement” *The Washington Post online*, February 16, 2006.

42 Monroe, Price E. (2002). *Media and Sovereignty: the global information revolution and its challenge to state power*. Cambridge and London, MIT press, p. 18.

43 Lidsky Barnett, Larissa. (2012) “Incendiary Speech and Social Media” in *Faculty Publications*, paper 154, pp. 147-164. Here p. 149

4.3 – Macro analysis: frammegration and its sources

The macro level of analysis take in consideration the international system and the relationship between the Middle East and the West. The characteristics of today's international system constitute the analytical framework to understand the macro implications of the three international controversies. As outlined in the random actors definition, globalisation should be included in such analysis, but to reduce the ambiguity surrounding this concept, Rosenau's frammegration paradigm will be adopted. Frammegration suggests that globalising and localising forces are mutually linked and inevitably coexists in the 21st century international system.

“In the political realm globalizing dynamics underlie any developments that facilitate the expansion of authority, policies, and interests beyond the existing socially constructed, territorial boundaries, whereas the politics of localization involve any trends in which the scope of authority and policies undergoes contraction and reverts to concerns, issues, groups and/or institutions that are less extensive than the prevailing socially constructed, territorial boundaries.”⁴⁴

At the international level, the three crises present these two aspects of frammegration, sometimes expanding the sphere of authority beyond the national level; sometimes narrowing and breaking wider authorities into narrower forms of it. In general, globalising forces have blurred the demarcation line between domestic politics and international politics – actually the fact that world politics are the result of “complex interactions between domestic and systemic factors”⁴⁵ is not new in international relations. Frammegrative dynamics applied to the three cases suggests the search of this double expansion and fragmentation of authority. In the Danish cartoons case Flemming Rose was concerned about freedom of speech in Denmark. Rose was struck when he noticed that a Danish children book author was unable to find an illustrator willing to depict Muhammad for his book.⁴⁶ His decision to publish satiric cartoons about Muhammad was meant to stimulate local reactions among Danish media, and eventually, to promote debates between Danish muslims and Danes. But differently from its intentions, his actions sparked an international confrontation “on the bases of Muslim and Western 'identities'”⁴⁷, necessarily

44 Rosenau, James N. (2006) *The Study of World Politics. Volume 2: globalisation and governance*. London and New York, Rutledge, p. 86

45 Chaudoin, Stephen; Milner, Helen V.; Pang, Xung. (2012) “International systems and domestic politics: linking complex theories with empirical models in international relations” in *International Relations* (2012). APSA 2012 Annual Meeting Paper, p. 3

46 Shadid, Antony and Sullivan, Kevin “Anatomy of the Cartoon...”

47 Yilmaz, Ferruh. (2011) “The Politics of the Danish Cartoon Affair: Hegemonic Intervention by the Extreme Right” in *Communication Studies*, vol. 62, n. 1, pp. 5-22. Here p. 11

involving spheres of authority wider than the national level: the involvement of Muslim leaders abroad and ambassadors from Middle Eastern countries were a symptom of this enlargement. At the same time, cartoons publication and the following international crisis encouraged Danish “moderate” Muslims to speak out, isolating the radical Imams and engaging several debates with Danish people; as a result, Danish Muslim community was fractured between radicals and moderate Muslims organizations⁴⁸.

Authority expansion in Jones' case is traceable in the fact that he started a local campaign against the Ground Zero mosque that finally resulted in an international crisis involving US government and military officials, the UN, Islamic leaders and Muslim protesters. Meanwhile, Jones pursued his own plans against the will of his followers and part of US citizens, reinforcing his subgroup of right-wing counter-jihadists within US society and going against US interests in the Middle East. Regarding religion, Jones actions highlights sectarian division within protestant churches, and his actions deepened this divide. Similar patterns are noticeable in the Innocence of Muslim crisis. While Nakoula's video flamed the protests in the Middle East and caused world-wide reactions, within the US this event reinforce sectarian divisions of the American melting-pot. Coptic fundamentalist joined with right-wing activist and Cristian fundamentalism, forming a radical block opposed to multiculturalism, Islam, Obama administration and so on. “At the same time that cultural affinities and technology (especially cheap, fast communications and travel) draw people together across boundaries [for instance Muslim protesters, or neo-conservatory movements] new definitions of identity and interest drive people apart within borders [Muslim migrants vs autochthonous]”⁴⁹.

Continuing with the description of globalising and localising dynamics in the three cases does not render the multiple aspects of fragementation as an analytical tool to understand complex international dynamics. Rather, taking separately each fragementation source to explore its role in the three cases could result in a better analysis and understanding of the controversies. Rosenau delineates eight main sources of fragementation, these are: skill revolution; authority crises; bifurcation of global structures; organizational explosion; mobility upheaval; microelectronic technologies; weakening of territoriality, states and sovereignty; globalisation of national economies.⁵⁰ Some of these aspects have been already analysed (the skill revolution,

48 Lindekilde, Lasse (2010) “Soft Repression...” p. 460

49 Smith, Gordon and Naim, Moises. (2000) *Altered States: globalisation, sovereignty and governance*. Ottawa, International Development Research Center, [p.11]

50 Rosenau analyses and describe the sources of fragementation from many points of view. All his works deal with the concept of fragementation. Therefore, see the bibliographic references for a list of his works.

microelectronic technologies); others have been partially treated in the previous chapters (sovereignty in paragraph 1.4; weakening of states in paragraph 2.1) and some others are less relevant for the analysis of the three crises (globalisation of national economies). The following paragraphs are an attempt to use this framework as an analytical tool for the three cases.

4.3.1 – Authority crises

Rosenau defines authority crisis on a macro level as processes that “weaken the ability of both governments and other organizations to frame and implement policies”⁵¹. In the Danish-cartoon controversy, Flemming Rose felt that Denmark was undergoing dangerous process of self-censorship regarding Islam. He then decided to act in order to stop this process. But was not it better if he advised the government about self-censorship and waited for official authorities (who are entitled to control and grant freedoms within a state) to find the correct policy and solve the problem? Rose's reaction, intended to promote domestic changes, exceeded national borders and generated tensions and conflicts with several Middle Eastern countries. Danish government was unable to manage the crisis and a vast boycott of Danish products hit some major Danish corporations whose sells in the Middle East dropped until 2008 – but the recovery was soon threatened by the revival of the conflict due to 2008 republication⁵² – and since then, Denmark rose his security alarm to prevent terroristic attacks in retaliation to the cartoons publication. In this specific moment, Danish government prerogative to implement its foreign policy was contested by Rose's actions who, although for a short period of time, contributed to the making of Denmark foreign policy. Furthermore, the fact that Danish government was unable to contain the crisis within his national borders suggests that it lost the capability to frame and control his domestic policies, at least for the short time of the cartoon controversy.

Jones and Nakoula's case are very similar to the Danish-cartoon controversies with reference to authority crises. They both felt that their government was not taking seriously the “Islamic threat” in their societies, their actions “was intended to stir the pot; if you don’t shake the boat, everyone will stay in their complacency”⁵³ as Jones declared. Jones' initiative jeopardized US military troops in the Middle East, despite US government attempts to cool down the pastor. The attacks

51 Rosenau, James N. (2006) *The Study...* p. 77

52 See: Maamoun, Ahmed and Aggarwal, Praveen (2008). “Guilty by association: the boycotting of Danish products in the Middle East” in *Journal of Business Case-Studies*, Vol, 4, N. 10, pp. 35-42. Here p.

53 Alvarez, Lizette. “Koran-Burning Pastor Unrepentant...”

to US embassies, to the UN compound and the Pakistani censorship on Youtube⁵⁴ definitively were negative outcomes for the US and they suggest that US authorities partially lost the control of their foreign relations in the Middle East during the development of the crises. Jones and Nakoula, the media and Muslim protesters engaged in a direct confrontation without national mediations, in some ways, Jones and Nakoula independently influences US foreign image and policy in the Middle East, forcing their government to step and try to lower the tensions.

In the Middle East, protests and rallies suggest that a certain degree of authority crises affect also Middle Eastern societies. “Unmediated communication”⁵⁵ of internet and new media increase probability of violent protests and multiple loyalties (pan-Islamic, pan-Arabic vs national/local identities) reduce regimes' ability to control their citizens. Actually, the most violent reactions to the three controversies were located in few weak states (Afghanistan, post-war Libya), where central national authority was weakened and contested both internally by ethnic and sectarian powers, and externally by other Middle Eastern states and terroristic networks. As outlined in chapter 3, Middle Eastern fragmentation between regional and sub-national forces explains the abrupt explosion of the protests, as the provocations launched by Rose, Jones and Nakoula recalls the history of Western dominance of the political life of the region; hurt the Islamic dimension of the Middle Eastern identities; and they also mixed with the recorded “humiliations” perpetrated by the West to the Middle East: ABu-Ghraib scandals, Mahmudiyah killings in 2006 and so on.

4.3.2 – Bifurcation of global structures

“While the bifurcation of world politics has not pushed states to the edge of the global stage, they are no longer the only key actors. Now they are faced with the new task of coping with disparate rivals from another world as well as the challenges posed by counterparts in their own world”⁵⁶. The bifurcation of global structures highlights the emergence of new actors on the global arena rather than the weakening of traditional powers to implement policies. From an analytical point of view it suggests to investigate the “newness” of the actors engaged in the three international crises and their possible competition with national states as relevant actors of the international

54 Masood, Salman. “Pakistan Lift YouTube Ban, for 3 Minutes” *The New York Times online*, December 29, 2012.

55 Lidsky Barnett, Larissa. (2012) “Incendiary...” p. 149

56 Rosenau, James N. (1997a). *Along the domestic-foreign frontier: exploring governance in a turbulent world*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 65

system. In the Danish-cartoon crisis “one sense of ‘newness’ concerns the way the affair was created, i.e. its mediatized and transnational nature, the quickness whereby it ‘spilled through’ otherwise nationally structured but increasingly ‘porous’ publics”⁵⁷. But even newer is the fact that the crisis was ignited by one single individual who decided to publish the cartoons as a political act against “Islamic censorship” in Denmark. Equally, Jones and Nakoula were able to ignite transnational protests after publishing provocative content on the net. There are some crucial elements to sustain the thesis that those actors represent something new in the international arena. First, they have largely “benefited” from new communication technologies such as social networks, and web 2.0 architecture. Moreover, the spark of the protests in the Middle East was made possible by connected Middle Eastern publics (Egypt, Tunisia,) and new satellite televisions, all of them developing between the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. Second, the actors themselves possess a set of capabilities that were not part of previous century individuals: literacy, computing literacy and high information availability are peculiarities of this epoch that have enabled the three actors to better engage in world politics (see Skill revolution, paragraph 4.1.2). Finally, today’s high degree of interdependence among national economies, time and space compression and migration flows helped the transnational spill over of the three crises. In other words, these actors represent new entries as their emergence is strictly connected to 21st century globalisation. On a macro level, bifurcation of global structures “facilitates the formation of new spheres of authority and consolidation of existing spheres in the multi-centric world”⁵⁸. This aspect is strictly connected with authority crises: Rose, Jones, Nakoula, Muslim Protesters and Danish radical Imams all acted in the name of higher spheres of authority and, consequently, they reduced national state ability to control their policies. Western identity in opposition to Islamic values, right wing commitment to fight against Islamisation of their society, Christian and Islamic fundamentalists struggling for the supremacy of their religion suggest that these actors believe that their loyalty and identity is connected to a different authority rather than to their national states. But these spheres of authority, some of which are older than the national state system (religious) are new in the measure that they are now transnational and not directly connected to a specific place. The fact that their actions jeopardized their respective nations shows itself that actors’ loyalty was directed toward different spheres of authority: religion for Jones, Nakoula and the radical Imams; Western culture for Rose. Bifurcation of global structure thus helps to grasp the

57 Lindekilde, Lasse; Mouritsen, Per and Zapata-Barrero, Richard. (2009) “The Muhammad cartoons controversy in comparative perspective” in *Ethnicities*, September 2009, n. 9, pp. 291-313. Here p. 298

58 Rosenau, James N. (2006) *The Study...* p. 77

emergence of new actors that makes more difficult to national state the control and implementation of their foreign policies. The multiple loyalties of the actors toward different authorities plays a pivotal role for the internationalisation of the crises: acting on the base of Muslim vs Western/Christian identities (the Islamic umma against European/US christendom) they set the bases for a global confrontation as religion and “civilization” constitute potential global spheres of authority.

4.3.3 – Organizational explosion

The concept of “organizational explosion” refers to the unprecedented proliferation of organizations of any type and at any level: “from neighbourhood organizations, community groups, regional networks, national states, and transnational regimes to international systems”⁵⁹. On a macro level, it “increases capacity of opposition groups to form and press for altered policies [and] divides publics from their elites”⁶⁰. The organizational explosion plays a background role in the three controversies, nevertheless it has contributed to their development and it is plausible that, without the engagement of multiple organizations, the three crises would not have been so explosives. Analysing the three cases with this lens reveals some interesting insights about the complex interaction between a huge number of collective actors that followed Rose, Jones and Nakoula's provocations. In the first case – the Danish-cartoons controversy – Muslim organizations contributed to the escalation of the crisis. During the first “domestic” phase, Abu Laban and his organization (ECPH) composed by like-minded Imams noticed the potential incendiary content of the cartoons and started domestic demonstrations asking apologies from the Jyllands-Posten and the Danish government. Contemporarily, they involved two Muslim international organizations within the controversy (the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League) that pressured Danish government and organized joint actions to obtain public apologies.⁶¹ In the second phase of the crisis, after it was internationalised, Middle Eastern grassroots organizations (Muslim and not) organized the boycott campaign, protests and rallies that took place the months after the cartoons publication. Jones and Nakoula profited of the similar right-wing/christian organizations to launch their initiative/video and to gain domestic popularity. They successfully connected their actions with

59 Rosenau, James N. (1997a). *Along...* p. 150

60 Rosenau, James N. (2006) *The Study...* p. 77

61 Ammitzbøll, Pernille and Vidino, Lorenzo. (2007) “After..”

US grass root movements such as the one against ground-zero mosque, or counter-jihadist organizations (Klein's) – Jones was the leader of his small christian organization with updated web-pages and several local activities. Nakoula benefited from both Christian and Coptic organizations (the latter connected with ground-zero mosque protests) to raise few funds, obtain permits to shoot his video and to access to post-production technologies otherwise too expensive for him. In the Middle East and the Muslim world, Muslim organization lead protests and rallies, released press communicates and actively work to mobilize their populations to join their cause (some commentators argued that the violent protest taking place in the three cases were hostages of few leaders of Islamic organization who seek to take advantage of the situation, expanding their influence to enlarge the numbers of followers⁶²). The brief analysis based on the organizational explosion concept thus reveal the weight of local and transnational organization in the controversies, partially balancing the weight of the media as the only medium conveying informations and mobilizing people.

4.3.4 – Mobility upheaval

Migration flows have been fostered by the expansion of capitalism and by the needs of free flows of money, goods and people for a perfect functioning of global markets. Huge migration flows are not specific dynamics of the 21st century (think to the great African and European mobilization during Americas discovery, or post-war European internal and international migrations). What Rosenau suggests with this idea is that people displacement today is made easier by low transportation costs, better and faster information and communication technologies. The domestic consequence of mobility upheaval is that it “stimulates imaginations and provides more extensive contacts with foreign cultures [and] heightens salience of the outsider”⁶³. From this perspective, all the three actors think that “diasporas [and migrations] can represent a threat to the nation-state and the liberal-democratic order”⁶⁴. Actually, Rose, Jones and Nakoula feared that growing Muslim communities will press to change Danish and US society following Islamic principle (although Rose and the others ignore which they be), dismantling Enlightenment achievements one by one and replacing them with oppressive and undemocratic sharia regimes. The macro consequences of mobility upheavals are an enlargement of “size and relevance of

62 Abdul Bari, Muhammad. “Hate Video, Muslim Protests...”

63 Rosenau, James N. (2006) *The Study...* p. 78

64 Cohen, Robin. (2008) *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*. [Second Edition] New York, Routledge, p. 171

subcultures, diasporas, and ethnic conflicts as people seek new opportunities abroad”⁶⁵. Transnational ties between migrants and their homelands contribute to “shrink” the world creating additional transnational networks. Religious minorities

“will mobilize around the creation of devotional congregations [...] and the recognition of their cultural practices. [...] Sacred and secular space will be constantly be under renegotiation with the surrounding communities and with other coreligionists [...] changes that arise as a result of transnationalism and the globalisation of religion include greater connectivity of dispersed religious communities, more horizontal linkages, which often displace traditional authority, and a greater politicisation of religious demands”⁶⁶.

Abu Laban and his organization perfectly exemplifies the above mentioned case. The Danish Muslim minority (or part of it) exploited its great connectivity with Islamic institutions in their homelands through which they fostered mobilization and protests against the cartoons publication. Abu Laban firstly mobilized Danish Muslims sending letters to the Jyllands-Posten and organizing small demonstrations near the newspaper headquarters. But as the group received no answers, it exploited transnational migration ties to involve Islamic institutions within the controversy, achieving international support against the cartoons. In this specific case the religious migration network could be interestingly compared to small-world network lattice. Actually, clusterisation between small radical groups and religious sects, the existence of large well-connected hubs (major religious institutions in the homeland) and random long range connections (promoted by migration ties with family, friends and other connections) suggests – but deeper analysis are required⁶⁷ – that other small-world or scale-free networks were involved at least in the Danish-cartoon controversy. The role of Muslims migrants in the other two crises was not particularly relevant for the escalation of the disputes, however, Muslim presence in the US was the main source of conflict between Muslims and right-wing activists which led to the beginning of Jones and Nakoula's controversies. In some ways, the Middle East is closer to Western societies as the ties between Muslim migrants and their homelands contribute to shrink the world. Consequently, the aftermath of 9/11 and the promulgation of the PATRIOT did not only worsen the relationship between Christian and Muslims in the US, but discrimination practices in the US have now international consequences as Middle Eastern countries and organizations are concerned with the status of Muslims abroad. Equally, domestic actions targeting a specific migrant collectivity (Muslims in the three cases), contain potential

65 Rosenau, James N. (2006) *The Study...*p. 78

66 Cohen, Robin. (2008) *Global Diasporas...*p. 154

67 While small-world network theories have been applied to internet and few other natural phenomenons, there are no studies connecting human migrations networks to small-world networks.

international relevance as migrants' homeland is pushed to react in defence of its citizens abroad.

4.3.5 – Weakening of territoriality, states and sovereignty

In the first chapter (paragraph 1.4) we have discussed the status of sovereignty in the 21st century as a premise for the hypotheses of this essay. Among fragmentation sources, one specifically regards state sovereignty and the salience of territoriality in defining identities and politics both at a domestic and international level. Rosenau describes the weakening of sovereignty, state and territoriality as a process that “undermines national loyalties and increases distrust of governments and other institutions” (domestic level) and “adds to the porosity of national boundaries and the difficulty of framing national policies” (international level); finally it lessens confidence in governments; renders nationwide consensus difficult to achieve and maintain”⁶⁸ (micro-macro level). Concerning the Danish-cartoons controversy, Lindekilde (et al.) states that, “above nations, such conflict was seen in the constitution of ‘Europe’ or ‘the West’ against ‘the Islamic world’, beneath state level it was seen between various collective actors, such as parties, media organizations and, of course, Muslim minorities”⁶⁹. In the same way, the Quran-burning and Innocence of Muslims controversy were depicted by media and other actors as clashes between Western and Islamic “worlds”. The way in which authority crises act on the individual level provoking mistrust towards governments and the formation of new loyalties have been already analysed in the previous paragraph (4.3.2), the accent here is posed on the modifications of state sovereignty. In the Danish-cartoons controversy, Denmark sovereignty was weakened both regarding its politics and its economics. Unable to solve the crisis within its borders, Denmark suffered the involvement of foreign actors in the Danish-cartoons case which was ultimately a case of domestic competence, regarding integration problematics with Danish Muslim minorities. As the case spread internationally, the integration of Muslim minorities in Denmark and its relation with freedom of speech became an international case debated inside and outside Europe⁷⁰. In the Middle East, several International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), NGOs and opinion leaders expressed concerns with raising islamophobic cases in Denmark, pressing the government to act and grant minorities rights. As already mentioned, this

68 Rosenau, James N. (2006) *The Study...*p. 78

69 Lindekilde, Lasse; Mouritsen, Per and Zapata-Barrero, Richard. (2009) “The Muhammad cartoons controversy in comparative perspective” in *Ethnicities*, September 2009, n. 9, pp. 291-313. Here p. 306

70 For a review of the debate in Europe and the US see: Kahn, Robert A. (2007) “Why there was no Cartoon controversy in the United States” University of St. Thomas School of Law, Working paper n. 07-28

was due both by international media coverage and by the actions of Abu Laban's group in Denmark. Thus, sovereignty weakening in the Danish-cartoons case was due to transnational networks, such as migration networks, structuring what Faist calls “transnational social space”⁷¹ or a series of transnational networks that “[predispose] locally bound social spaces to further border crossing transitions”. In other words, when transnational networks are subject of national politics, the effective social space involved in that policy exceeds national borders, following network connections. The result is that a state can lose the control of domestic policies in the measure they concern transnational actors. On the economic side, the massive boycott of Danish products caused a drop of Danish dairy products of the 85%⁷². Economic globalisation and deregulation (that is the retreat of the state from economic control) leave the Danish government with no power of intervention in the economic situation afflicting Danish transnational corporations. In other words, Denmark sovereignty have been weakened by global forces (economic globalisation, transnational migrations) but also by local forces (sub-cultures, internal divides).

If economic globalisation and transnational network menaced Denmark sovereignty, for the US the situation was different. As showed in the previous paragraphs, in the Quran-burning controversy Muslim minorities in the US played a marginal role. Here, national and international media contributed to release “security leaks” that flamed Middle Eastern protests, while in the Innocence of Muslim crisis it was a Youtube video to convey the spark. The incapability of US to avoid the crisis suggests that “the inevitability of crossborder data flow makes the task of controlling information almost impossible or, at the least, very costly”⁷³ for national states. And when the informations that escape are particularly delicate, they could led to international crises as in this two cases. Actually, state control over new media is not impossible and there are some states that have adopted different forms of internet control or restricted policies toward transnational broadcasting (China, Syria, Pakistan). Hence, the question for the US (and liberal democracies) do not regard media or new media threat to state control over information, rather it concerns the difficult balancing between “the freedom to receive and impart information and the needs of national security”⁷⁴ (the need for free information flow is also vital for economic

71 Faist, Thomas. (2000) *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004, p. 197

72 Maamoun, Ahmed and Aggarwal, Praveen (2008). “Guilty by association: the boycotting of Danish products in the Middle East” in *Journal of Business Case-Studies*, Vol, 4, N. 10, pp. 35-42. Here p. 37

73 Monroe, Price E. (2002). *Media and Sovereignty: the global information revolution and its challenge to state power*. Cambridge and London, MIT press, p. 17

74 Idem, p. 15

improvements). Actually, Nakoula was judged for violating its probatory regime, while Jones was charged for minor infractions regarding the absence of burning permits when he flamed the Quran, suggesting US intention to do not pose any limitation to freedom of speech (embodied in the First Amendment). Finally, the porosity of national borders was further aggravated by the involvement of “global religions”⁷⁵ The universal aspiration of Christianity and Islam implies that, regardless where the controversy starts and as long as it matters religion, it became competence of the respective religious authorities, calling the believers to defend their faith and religion. For instance, as the Vatican intervenes when Christians world-wide are discriminated, the same happened in the three controversies when Islamic leaders and believers stand up to defend their prophet or their religion. The subsequent difficulty for US to control their domestic problems with Muslim minorities is partly due to the religious component of the controversies. Again, sovereignty have been menaced by global forces (religions, international media, internet) and by local forces (right-wing activists, fundamentalists), confirming the hypotheses that random actors could, under certain circumstances, compete with national states in the making of their foreign policy. Interdependence, transnational networks, new media, multiple loyalties and religion are the elements that have mixed together during the three international controversies, temporarily weakening state capacity to control its foreign policy and causing unwanted outcomes (boycott, UN attacks, embassy attacks). Government's prerogative in implementing foreign policies and maintaining international relations with other states was partially questioned by emergent actors capable of influencing the course of the international relations between the Middle East, the US, Denmark and the West in general. Although national states are able to control information flow and to prevent its citizen to provoke international reaction and turmoils, liberal values in Western countries and Islamic values in the Middle East constitute the threshold of state sovereignty in the 21st century and a ground for confrontation between the Middle East and the West.

75 Cohen, Robin. (2008) *Global Diasporas...*p. 152 and Sheffer, Gabriel. (2006) *Diaspora Politics. At Home Abroad.* New York, Cambridge University Press, p. 65

CONCLUSIONS

The questions posed in the first chapter (paragraph 1.5) regarding the three controversies have been answered (sometimes implicitly) during the development of this essay. The following pages try to briefly answer to each of them, synthesising the main results emerging from the study of the three crises.

1 – To which extent the “protagonists” of these international crises represent new actors in the international arena?

Both in chapter two and four we have highlighted the newness of these controversies from the point of view of the actors that are involved in them. From a theoretical perspective, individual agency in the international system have been scarcely considered by international relations theories. This can be explained, accordingly with Rosenau, by the fact that individual capabilities to engage in international form of actions are made possible since two decades by the skill revolution and globalisation (economic, technological, cultural and political). From the analytical perspective, we have proved actors newness describing how they exploited contemporary mass communication technologies and different type of networks to perform their actions and reach international relevance. The reduced role given to individuals on IR theories suggests that maybe IR theories did not *need* to include individual agency within international system models as there was no such events similar to the three crises before them. The emergence of random actors as a new phenomenon is also proved by the lack of adequate responses of Denmark and the US, suggesting they were unprepared to similar backfires.

2 – Are those actors competing with national states in the making of foreign policies towards the Middle East?

Throughout the essay we have discussed state sovereignty in the “global era” highlighting how it is questioned both internally and externally by emerging powers. Random actors, or the actors of the three controversies, seem to follow these tendencies and do represent a challenge to national states. From the analysis in chapter four, it is possible to state that, if random actors do not

compete with national states in the making of their foreign policy, they nevertheless introduce a degree of unpredictability in the international relations between the Middle East and the West. With few resources and no traditional power in their hands, Rose, Jones and Nakoula were able to foment reciprocal enmity between Middle Eastern and Western societies in very short periods of time. This was made possible by the exploitation of new kind of powers emerging with globalisation; networks and transnational ties specifically. Consequently, Denmark and the US temporarily lost the control over the foreign relations with the Middle East and were not able to control the outcomes deriving from the crises. “Never have so many different nonstate actors competed for the authority and influence that once belonged to states alone”¹ and random actors represent new entries within this intricate system of overlapping actors.

3 – Do these events suggest that there is a new type of actors in international politics? If so, how should they be defined?

If the three international controversies will be followed by similar (maybe positive) dynamics (from single individuals to international outcomes), then they suggest that individual ontology in international relations theories should be partially integrated in the future, in order to include the increased possibility of individual's relevant role in international relations. Hence, in this first case the three crises suggest that Rose, Jones and Nakoula actually *are* new type of actors of the international system, capable of stimulating relevant IR outcomes. Conversely, if there will be no similar cases in the future – forecast are risky due to randomness and unpredictability – it means that those actors have represented just an exception to the rule, maybe due to today's transitional phase between two stable international systems (the bipolar era and a stable future international system). Despite the future of the international system, the aims of this essay required the conceptualization of a new type of international relevant actor to permit an exhaustive analysis of the three international controversies; due also to the lack of proper theories moving in this direction. To perform this task, we have created the random actors conceptual category, mixing theoretical contributes from IR theories and social sciences, believing that complexity requires interdisciplinary approaches in order to grasp nuanced border, circular interactions and multiple feedbacks. The definition of random actors (single individuals who act mostly locally and whose ideology leads them to have a partial cognition of

¹ Smith, Gordon and Naim, Moises. (2000) *Altered States: globalisation, sovereignty and governance*. Ottawa, International Development Research Center.

the global system together with a distorted view of “the other”; but whose actions could randomly have international relevance as they are linked – through small scale-free networks – to a globalised fragmented world) owes much to Rosenau's theories both for the micro and the macro level. The inclusion of a relational dimension between micro and macro dimensions (network theories) proved to be fundamental to link individual agency to the international system and to explain the randomness characterising the three cases. Finally the inclusion of ideology within this frame was useful to explain actor's decision to act and the direction of their actions.

Random actors on the rise: an assessment

It is finally worth to reflect upon the meaning of these three controversies for future world politics and the international system. Among the contributions describing the future world order after the fall of the Soviet Union, two received great attentions, gave rise to several debates and finally became the masterpieces of two different ways to look at world politics. One of them was Fukuyama's “The end of History”, published in 1989², while the other was Huntington's “The Clash of Civilizations?” published in 1993³. The first was an optimistic paper, forecasting that the Soviet Union regime was the last obstacle remained to stop the diffusion of liberal-democratic regimes, values and economies in every part of the world. The second was a pessimistic preview (or a self-fulfilling prophecy) describing a world where liberal capitalistic democracies (constituting a civilization block) would have to fight several rising enemies (constituting as many other civilizations) to survive; among them Islam was candidate to be West's next enemy. Despite fallacies and imprecisions in both of these articles, and the subsequent books, they deeply influenced academics, scholars and politics. Huntington's theories became neocon's mantra in foreign policy, while Fukuyama's vision was adopted by Bretton Woods organizations as the faith behind their recipes for democratisation and economic development. Newer versions of one or the other occasionally appear – as Barber's *Jihad VS McWorld*⁴ – and every new international politics outcomes have to be “tested” to see if world is moving toward Huntington or Fukuyama's predictions. Concerning Islam, Huntington's ideas raised many supporters and the facts following 9/11 and US wars seemed to prove that he was right and that the future world will be one of planetary clashes between civilisations. But as Said argued, “the Clash of

2 Fukuyama, Francis. (1989) “The End of History” *The National Interests*, Summer 1989.

3 Huntington, Samuel P.(1993) “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, N. 3, pp. 22-49

4 Barber, Benjamin. (1996) *Jihad vs. McWorld*. New York, Ballantine Books.

Civilizations' thesis is a gimmick like 'The War of the Worlds,' better for reinforcing defensive self-pride than for critical understanding of the bewildering interdependence of our time"⁵. How should we position the three international controversies regarding the Huntington versus Fukuyama debate?

We suggests that, even if the three crises carry a potential clash between the Middle East and the West, they hint something different, somehow more positive. As long as state intervention was minimal and limited to few appeasing declarations, the three controversies could be considered as dynamics between *civil societies*. The concept of civil society is a complex one and it is subject of continuous revisions. It indicates "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests"⁶. Following this definition Rose, Jones, Nakoula, Abu Laban and his organization, Middle Eastern organization, the boycott campaign movement, protesters, leaderless publics, local media and online public spaces were all part of the civil society. Interestingly, the three international controversies have also had positive outcomes: the Danish cartoons publication marginalises radical Danish Muslims; "catapulted the debate about Muslim integration into the top issues"⁷; improved Danes' knowledge about Muslims and Islam and several moderate Muslim leaders emerged as interlocutors with Danish authorities. In the Quran-burning controversy, Jones was marginalised and lost part of his followers, he was condemned by several christian associations; when he burned the Quran, few protests took place and he was ignored by the media. Finally, in the Innocence of Muslims controversy, in Libya and Tunisia the population marched in solidarity with US against who perpetrated violent protests in retaliation with the video, and in Libya people even attack terrorists headquarters to prove their were against US embassy attacks and the general tense climate following the Muhammad movie publication. All these positive outcomes counter-balance the weight of the bad news given by the media during the protests and suggests that rather than a clash, the three cases could represent an – although difficult – *confrontation*. "At war or peace, we are more neighbours than ever, like it or not".⁸ The three controversies carries the potential opportunity to engage a constructive confrontation between civil societies trough transnational networks and new media, without governmental mediation which will inevitably lead to tensions

5 Said, Edward (2001) "The Clash of Ignorance" *The Nation*, October 22, 2001.

6 CIVICUS: Civil Society Index Summary of conceptual framework and research methodology. Retrieved from www.civicus.org. CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation) is an international alliance of members and partners of the civil society. Among its activities, CIVICUS elaborates the Civil Society Report, analysing status of the civil societies of different countries.

7 mitzbøll, Pernille and Vidino, Lorenzo. (2007) "After the Danish Cartoon Controversy", *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2001, pp. 3-11. Here p. 7

8 Smith, Gordon and Naim, Moises. (2000) *Altered States*

and conflicts as government tend to promote their interests (and Middle Eastern populations have already experimented Western governments intentions)⁹. It is up to the moderate voices of both sides to step into the scene and “conquer” internet and media attentions, fighting against the “clash of ignorance”¹⁰ and isolating fundamentalist voices. The three controversies hint that clash-promoters like Rose, Jones and Nakoula are now exposed to international disappointment: if we will find the way to contain violence and incendiary speech without prejudicing basic freedoms, a truly democratic and global confrontation between Middle Eastern and Western values will be one step closer.

9 See paragraph 3.1

10 Karim, Karim H. and Mahmoud, Eid (2012). “Clash of Ignorance” in *Global Media Journal*, Canadian Edition, Vo. 5, Issue 1, pp. 7-27. Here p. 19-21

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