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Capital's Violence against Revolutions: Political Islam and the Case of the ISIL

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Elements of a Marxian conceptualization of religion and political religion

In the "Introduction" to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1975), Marx states that criticism of religion is the basis of every critique (Marx 1975, 175). This statement points toward at least two essential aspects of Marx's critical methodology: on the one hand, it signifies the coherence and unity of Marx's criticism of capitalist society through time—Marx begins with the critique of the bourgeois concept of right and the bourgeois state and continues with the critique of religion, the critique of philosophy, and the critique of political economy; on the

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other hand, it reveals the historical materialist core of Marx's method, which aims at revealing the terrestrial and human essence of the phenomena he intends to criticize.

Religion, in Marx's view, is a social relation constituted by historically specific human activity; "Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But, *man* is no abstract being encamped outside the world. Man is *the world of man, the state, society*" (Marx 1975, 175). Therefore, the alienated image of the world that is produced by religious consciousness is the product of human's social being—its social activity and practice. Thus, as an alienated picture, it is the reflection of alienated social relations, which in turn has split into civil and political societies (society vs. state). "The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against *the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma*" (Marx 1975, 175). Therefore, religion as "the spirit of spiritless conditions" and as the product of perverted human relations does not propose any solution to the existing human condition but is a part of the problem; the soul provided by religion is marked by its being the approval of the absence of human spirit and a humane life; hence, religion "is the *opium of the people*" (Marx 1975, 175).

The critique of religion so conceived, as is the case with every critique, has before itself the task of unfolding the human essence of the phenomena it attempts to criticize; critique can be radical only if it grasps the root or the essence of the matter. When it comes to religion, to the state, and the civil society, or to put it more aptly, when phenomena of capitalist society are the subjects of criticism, radical criticism must reveal the *ad hominem* root, the human essence of these social relations. As Marx puts it, "The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that *man is the highest being for man, hence with the categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being*" (1975, 182). Radical criticism of religion has to reveal that religion is no other than the state which for Hegel represents the march of the God on earth; such criticism is not possible if not complemented by a criticism of the conditions yielding the constitution of religion and its emergence as a social political force. Rather than being a problem of "culture" or of "enlightened masses" or even one of "classes" in the physical sense of the word, the problem of a criticism of religion, of philosophy and of modern state is first and foremost a political problem. It is not only theory that has to conform itself to reality, but as Marx put it earlier, reality should strive toward the theoretical: theory is not conceptualization in the sense of forming a mere "reflection/image" of the real, rather it is a reflection upon the real; thus, it is the logical reconstruction of the real that inevitably amounts to changing reality. Similarly, revolutionary politics is not a reflection of the physical reality of a revolutionary class; rather, it is the reflecting upon the revolutionary conditions that emancipates the class and society in general. Just as reality of society should strive to reach up to the point of theory, the same can be said with regard to revolutionary politics and practices.

Marx holds on to this method of criticism in his polemics against Bruno Bauer in "On the Jewish Question" (1975) explicating this worldliness of religion. Marx argues that not only religion is not in contradiction to the perfection of the state, but also in the most advanced capitalist societies such as the United States, it experiences a revival. Thus, as the expression of a defect, the existence of religion in modern capitalist society is the expression of a defect essential to the state and to capitalist society. "The contradiction between the state and religion in general [is] the contradiction between the state and its [human] presuppositions in general" (Marx 1975, 151). Religion, alongside other superstitions, is not the source but a manifestation of human condition; it is reproduced, alongside those conditions, within the existing social relations. In other words, neither religious superstition nor other forms of social inequalities (gender, ethnic, etc.) are questions in themselves and by themselves; regardless of their

historical root, they are the modes of existence of different temporalities of the capitalist relations of production and are questions of the existing society and the expressions of the general inequality and unfreedom under the capitalist mode of production. Fetishizing and ontologizing these questions means dealing with these questions in theological terms only. However, according to Marx, the question is to locate the place and the source of the reproduction of theology within the existing society, just as the question is to underscore the source of inequality as well as the form of political institutions in this society.

Furthermore, religion is the expression of the dominant morality of the capitalist society. It is not the expression of fraternity of the members of the human race or of the community of the believers, but is the form of existence of the egoism that is essential to capitalist society. "Religion has become the spirit of *civil society*, of the sphere of egoism, of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. It is no longer the essence of *community*, but the essence of *difference*. It has become the expression of man's *separation* from his *community*, from himself and from other men - as it was originally. It is only the abstract avowal of specific perversity, *private whimsy*, and arbitrariness" (Marx 1975, 155). Thus religion is the expression of the alienated human existence: it is egoistic because it is now the law of the private sphere; the law of the individual. Religion is "Bentham" (as Marx later would formulate it in *Capital*). Religion (and "ideology" in general) is at the service of politics, just as the private sphere, the civil society is the basis of the state, and not the other way around; the servitude of religion and ideology to politics is that aspect that is ignored by Bruno Bauer then and by the traditional left as well as apologetic defenders of religion later; such views consider religion not a historical product in need of continuous reconstitution and reproduction, but a trans-historical system of beliefs with an unalterable essence. Hence, they fail to conceive of the root of the politicization of religion and the sanctification of the political within the existing social and historical conditions and instead consider it a deviation from the norm. When it comes to the phenomenon of political Islam, thus, they fall short in conceiving of its historical specificity as a bourgeois movement and as a specific form of the "march of God on earth" or as the "religion" of today.

The so-called Christian state is the *imperfect* state, and the Christian religion is regarded by it as the *supplementation* and *sanctification* of its imperfection. For the Christian state, therefore, religion necessarily becomes a *means*; hence, it is a *hypocritical* state... [The real state] can disregard religion because in it the human basis of religion is realized in a secular manner. The so-called Christian state, on the other hand, has a political attitude to religion and a religious attitude to politics. By degrading the forms of the state to mere semblance, it equally degrades religion to mere semblance. (Marx 1975, 156)

Religion is a human product and not the other way around. It is the perverted image of perverted social relations. Accordingly, this mode of alienation reaches its height with the formation of the democratic state or the republic. "The separation of the "spirit of the Gospel" from the "letter of the Gospel" is an *irreligious* act" (Marx 1975, 158). The state and its human basis, in such a case, pushes religion to speak in a language other than the language of divinity. Therefore, politicized religion is not religious politics but is political religion; in this sense, it is a political phenomenon reflecting the political and social reality of capitalism. Therefore, a criticism of political religion cannot be based on a theological or even a historicist account of religion. Political religion in particular and religion in general is a present-day phenomenon the criticism of which cannot be separated from the criticism of the existing political and social

order because it is “the human *basis* of Christianity [that] is the basis of this [religious] state. Religion remains the ideal, non-secular consciousness of its members, because religion is the ideal form of the *stage of human development* achieved in this state” (Marx 1975, 159).

In *The German Ideology* Marx states that the dominant ideas in every epoch are those of the dominant class because just as the dominant class owns the means of material (physical) production, it also owns the means of mental (ideational) production (Marx & Engels 2010, 59). If the product character of ideas is abstracted from, that is, if it is ignored that similar to physical products the ideas are also produced by humans that are related to each other under historically specific social relations of production, then the conclusion may be reached that ideas are transhistorical as is the case with Hegel’s conceiving of the Concept and that history is under the rule of ideas and is the moments of the self-determination of the Concept (Marx & Engels 2010, 61). This perversion, in turn, is the consequence of the division of manual and intellectual labour, which itself is another mode of existence of the separation of head (the capitalists) and hands (the proletariat) in capitalist society. The separation of the mental and manual labourers in the class also amounts to conceiving of an opposition or even a conflict within the class between the ideologists (the producers of ideas) and those who are seemingly passive receptors of ideas but are in fact the active members that do not have the time to make up illusions about themselves; a conflict which in the case of real confrontation that would endanger the class will automatically vanish (Marx & Engels 2010, 60).

Similar to all ideational products such as law, ethics, or aesthetics, religion, too, is a social relation, which is the product of the dominant social relations of production. Religion is not an archaic system of beliefs or an outdated collection of ethical and moral codes but is a contemporary product of these relations and thus the expression of the terrestrial interests of (a faction of) the class. Furthermore, religion as the manifestation of the interests of the ruling class expressed in the form of the interests of the whole society becomes a truly universal force under the capitalist relations of production. The god of religion reaches its maturity in the concept of capital as the invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, and the universal force that organizes the whole affairs of the world. It is this universality acquired under the rule of capital that enables religion to enter the scene as a political force; capitalism does not simply revive the dead corpse of religion but constitutes it in its most perfect form. Hence follows the claim of politicized religion, and in particular of political Islam, to representing the whole “Muslims”, as if the Muslim population has been delivered from the belly of Islam; a stance that has its mirror-image in the discourse of right-wing Western politicians such as Trump who stamps all the people from Islam-ridden countries as “terrorists”, or in the discourse of the “left-wing” intellectual apologists of Islam who preach tolerance toward religion and Islam as if everybody born in those countries should automatically considered Muslim. The class character of contemporary religion explains how at political level Islamism and racism and fascism constitute and necessitate each other reciprocally.

Politicized religion of pre-capitalism is theological politics; to the contrary, politicized religion of capitalism is political religion or political theology. Religion, in pre-capitalist society “is the spirit of the state” (Marx 1975, 155); however, in capitalist society, religion, by being reduced to the realm of private law, acquires a political character.

Such a difference in the form of the relation between the political (the state) and religion is the manifestation of the immediate form of dominance in pre-capitalist societies versus its mediated form in capitalist society: religious politics is the expression of immediacy and the unity of the political and the civil (private). The sense of belonging to a community in pre-capitalist societies is real; the actual position of human persons is determined by the “naturalness” of the local bonds that are defined by the immediate power of local sovereigns.

The power of the sovereign is concrete, visible, and tangible, just as the god of that stage is tangible and visible in the form of the Church. Outside such defined positions, the mere person is void of any determinateness, identity, and sense of personhood. Political religion, to the contrary, is the expression of the mediated form of dominance; it is not one's "natural" position within the community but one's position within the web of the relations of production that determines one's personality as an individual. Although capitalism will always resort to immediate forms of repression in cases of emergency, the deployment of power upon the individual citizen is mostly based on internalization of social relations or the constitution of the very individual as social relations. Under capitalism, the exertion of power of capital upon the individual acquires an invisible form. As Marx states, "The Roman slave was held by chains; the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads. The appearance of independence is maintained by a constant change in the person of the individual employer, and by the legal fiction of a contract" (1992, 719). Similarly, the god of the capitalist political religion is invisible and private; it has an abstract form and is accessible to every individual (it is universal). The God or the Allah is the universal mediation through which the individuals who allegedly belong to that religion are posited as bearers of particular identities, just as the use-value of a commodity is posited only as the bearer of value (Marx 1992, 138). In pre-capitalist society the god of politicized religion is the *generalized* expression of the will of the local master and the privileges that god and its representatives enjoy are those limited by the actual privileges attributed to an *estate*. To the contrary, the god of political religion under capitalism is the abstract "universal" manifestation of the will of the bourgeois *class* in form of universal imperatives, abstract individual, the abstract equality before the law of capital, and the *concept* of right. Capitalist political religion is not the continuation of the politicized religion of pre-capitalist societies, just as, say, the Christian-Democratic Party of Germany is not the continuation of the Crusade mentality, or just as political Islamic movement is not the continuation of, say, the Ottoman caliphate or the Safavid dynasty. Rather, the capitalist political religion is a peculiar political means of constituting the rule of capital: Just as pre-capitalist overwork turns into a monstrous exercise of power over workers once is grafted by the "civilized horrors of overwork" for the sake of production of value (Marx 1992, 345), politicized religion and its Allah turns into a monster which "comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (Marx 1992, 926) as the means of the rule of capital.

In this sense, as Patrick Murray (1988) notes, Marx's critique of the capitalist political economy not only does not contradict his critique of religion (192), but also there is always an element of a critique of theology in Marx's approach. Thus, while formulating the concept of commodity fetishism Marx draws parallels between religion and commodity fetishism.

In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. (Marx 1992, 165)

What makes this analogy a logically strong and sound one is the essential unity between the "products of the head" and the "products of the hand". Both products reflect the social relations between humans and the objectivization of these relations in the form of the relation between things, so that the products of human activity become sensible things which are at same time supra-sensible (Marx 1992, 165). God becomes an actually perfect god as the

specifically capitalist relations of production that aim at nothing beyond production of value are constituted, so that value becomes both the subject and the substance.

[Value] differentiates itself as original value from itself as surplus-value, just as God the Father differentiates himself from himself as God the Son, although both are of the same age and form, in fact one single person; for only by the surplus-value of £10 does the £100 originally advanced become capital, and as soon as this has happened, as soon as the son has been created and, through the son, the father, their difference vanishes again, and both become one, £110.

Value therefore now becomes value in process, money in process, and, as such, capital. (Marx 1992, 256)

Just as God is the unity of the father and the son and the state the unity of the private and the political individual, capital is the unity of the two poles of the circulation of capital, that is, M and M' (Murray 1988, 192). In fact, the aforementioned are different forms of appearance of the capitalist social relations of production between humans. Therefore, a critique of the god and of the religion of capitalist society inevitably is and should be a critique of capital. These points should be understood in the context of the integrity and unity of Marx's method. Fetishism is to conceive of the relation between things as social relations and the relation between humans as a relation between things: Hence, as stated above the relations of domination, like all other relations in the capitalist society assume a mediated form.

Religion, as the product of this society, which continuously is reconstituted, is a specific form of existence of this mediated relation –just as is the state, laws, etc. Just as the state is the mediator between humans regulating their affairs and actualizing their relations (as atomic individuals with the tendency of fighting against everyone else), religion too is the expression of this mediated relation: the god of religion, the soul of a perverted world without a soul, is itself perverted: it is the manifestation of a perverted bond among the individuals and it is rooted, allegedly, in a world beyond, that is, the world of the supra-sensible sensible. Similar to other political and legal forms of existence of capital, it thus posits identities: Muslims, Christians, Sunnis, Shiites, Catholics, Protestants; just as is the case with a flag, an ethnicity, a nationality, a race, etc. While religion allegedly brings about a feeling of fraternity among the members of its community, it facilitates the enmity between different factions and sects. Thus follows the war of Jihadists against the infidel as well as the war between different factions of political Islam, say, the Shiite and the Sunni factions. A Marxian analysis that aims at going beyond the phenomena in order to reveal the essence has to explain why the political order of the bourgeoisie assumes such a specific form in such a specific era. Hence follows the question concerning political Islam in general and the ISIL in particular.

Political Islam and the administrative-political crisis of the international bourgeoisie

Political Islam is the political religion of the present-day capitalism; thus, it should be analyzed, explained, and criticized with reference to the world today and its historically specific social and political conditions. Historically, political Islam is a movement that emerged in the Middle East and North Africa after the WWI and following the dissolution and the eventual fall of the Ottoman Empire. However, with the rise of Arab nationalism and other nationalist independent movements in the region, it was largely marginalized for a long

period. It was the failure of Arab nationalism in resolving the Palestinian question in general and its defeat in the 6-days War in particular that for the first time provided political Islam with the opportunity to enter the political scene as an actor. Yet, up to the 1979 Iranian Revolution and its eventual defeat during the 1979-1981 period political Islam did not emerge as a major political force regionally and internationally.

The 1979 Revolution in Iran succeeded in toppling the Shah's monarchy; the main actors of the revolutionary uprising that began in 1978 were the members of the newly-formed working class that had been "freed" from their feudal bonds and were pushed to move to cities residing in the slums that were formed at the periphery of urban areas and metropolises such as Tehran; students and the left intellectuals, as well as women and youth were the other acting subjects. The Shah initially tried to suppress the uprising appealing to atrocious measures but soon it became clear that such attempts would fail. In response, the Shah retreated; he removed Prime Minister Hoveida, who was at this position for fifteen years, replacing him with a "moderate" figure in the hope of stopping the revolution; however, the more he stepped back the more people's demands increased.

Politically speaking, three major political movements confronted during the 1979 Revolution: The pro-West monarchist-nationalist movement that was already in power and represented by the Shah's monarchy and the Iranian state; the anti-West nationalist-religious movement that formed a wide spectrum of political parties and groups from Ayatollah Khomeini to the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party and the pro-China Ranjbaran Party; the working-class movement, which lacked its party organization at the moment of the revolution. Eventually, in order to save the bourgeois regime in Iran, the West brought Ayatollah Khomeini to the scene as the "leader" of the revolution; bourgeoisie had failed to stop the revolution with its classical tactics of repression and the Shah's monarchy had been toppled thanks to the 10-11 February uprising; the revolution, thus, should be stopped with the use of its own weapons. This task was realized by the Ayatollah and the nationalist-religious movement that saw the incarnation of its own horizon and demands in his person. Despite its fractured constitution, the nationalist-religious movement of bourgeoisie had the task of suppressing the revolution before itself. As Hekmat put it aptly then,

The basic and general outlines of the counterrevolutionary struggle are quite clear:

- 1) The Iranian revolution must be suppressed; the revolutionary workers and toilers and their political organisations must be crushed; the *Ariyamehrian* repression must prevail throughout the country and, in one word, the bourgeois counter-revolutionary order must be restored in the society; and
- 2) A new cycle of capital accumulation must start; the defeated workers and toilers, under an unprecedented poverty and destitution, must render their labour power for the lowest price to capital in absolute silence and capitulation, so that the economic crisis of capital tends to abate and, in one word, a productive order corresponding to a capitalist country dominated by imperialism returns to the country – an order of which the mercenary Shah was the genuine representative and the guarantor of its provision for all strata of capital. (1981)

Eventually, the political Islamist movement managed to suppress the revolution. The task that Shah could not succeed in realizing was accomplished by the Ayatollah. In order to suppress the revolution, the Shah massacred the masses on September 8, 1978 and yet he failed; however, the chain of suppressing the revolution came to its conclusion by the massacre of June 20th, 1981 done by the Islamists (Hekmat 1995). The political Islam's seizure of power

is thus not the consequence of the 1979 Revolution but the result of its suppression and defeat. Hence, in its “initial” form, political Islam represents a right wing political movement of bourgeoisie that brought to the fore of the political scene with the task of saving and restoring the bourgeois state and reconstituting the capitalist relations of production. In this sense, it is the bourgeois state in the period of the state of emergency. So be the case, it is a transitory phenomenon and a provisional state – once the task of restoring the order for a new cycle of production of value, exploitation of surplus-value, and accumulation of capital is accomplished, it will be replaced by the “ordinary” capitalist state. Yet, the duration of this interim period depends on several international factors and the power balances between different factions of the international bourgeoisie, and the international political situation.

Durability is a relative concept. Eventually there will come a time when the region will completely repel Islam and turn it into an antiquated phenomenon. Though it will still exist for people to watch, research, and even follow, it will in practice not play any part in people’s lives. When this time will come, however, entirely depends on political trends in these countries and specifically the struggle for socialism and freedom. It is possible that still more generations will be forced to endure this Islam; and most definitely, some “scholars” will see Islam as eternal. But there is nothing eternal and structural in the Middle East’s Islamism. (Hekmat 2001)

The 1979 Revolution happened in a bipolar world; the fate of this revolution was determined by the confrontation between the free market capitalist west and state capitalist east; the collapse of the bourgeois state in Iran in 1979 would mean that the country would leave the so-called “free world” in order to join the Soviet camp. This was not permissible from the west’s perspective; the rise of political Islam was in fact a part of the strategy of forming a “green belt” encircling the Soviet Union; another step to this end was supporting and nurturing Mujahidin in Afghanistan against the Soviet-backed regime. Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet bloc has had tremendous effects on the fate of political Islam and the political role it can assume, just as is with every international institution such as the UN and economic and military pacts such the NATO.

Political Islam traditionally has been an obstacle in the way of the integration of the Middle East and North Africa into international capitalist order; as mentioned above, it is rooted in and feeds upon the Palestinian question, which in turn, is a great source of political and economic instability and insecurity in the region. As Hekmat notices, the west has considered the integration of the Middle East into the Western capitalist camp as unfeasible, partly, due to the alliance between the west and Israel (2001). The presence of “radical” political Islamic movements (those factions of political Islam that have anti-West tendencies) in the region adds to such unfeasibility. This in turn intensifies the economic and political instability and insecurity in the region, which has triggered many social uprisings as was the case in 2009 in Iran.

Although political Islam is at the phase of collapse, certain international developments amounted to its conjectural upheaval. The appearance of “moderate” political Islam, a name given to a faction of the Islamic regime in Iran that advocates integration into the world capitalist system and cooperation with the west, is the clearest evidence in favour of the thesis that political Islam is at the process of fall and final collapse. “Moderate” political Islam is the manifestation of the retreat of this movement from some of its essential aspects such as anti-Americanism and anti-Israeli jargon. It is a retreat that was realized under the economic and political pressure of the west from above and the political and social pressure from below

exerted by the masses seeking freedom, equality and a humane life. Such a retreat is a suicidal move on the part of “radical” political Islam as it means loss of its identity and determinateness.

“Moderate” political Islam eventually turned into a notion signifying those factions of political Islamist movement that intend to collaborate with the US and the west. It was introduced as a model that would facilitate the full integration of the Middle East and North Africa into the world capitalist system. One aspect of the project was to reveal that Islam was in harmony with democracy and human rights; it was to be used for redesigning the region under the title of the “New Middle East Project”. This project itself was a response to the requirements put forward by the realities of the post-Cold War world – new zones of influence were to be drawn, the power balances would be established anew, and new regional and international alliances would be formed. Turkey and the AKP administration was seen as the role model for the implementation of the so-called “moderate” Islam.

To this end, it was argued that such a model would be more acceptable to the people of the region as the majority of them were Muslims. Ironically, this idea was also promoted by the “left” intellectuals under the pretext of “tolerating the culture and belief of others” or the fight against the so-called “Islamophobia. Accordingly, societies consist of essentially inalterable identities such as religion, ethnicity, race, gender etc. each of which has a transhistorical character. Furthermore, these countries were labelled as “Islamic” or “Muslim” as if such classification was itself truly neutral and value-free. Such a view that has been shared by both the left and the right in the west is blind to the historical determinateness of those so-called “identities” which need to be reconstituted continuously; such a view trans-historicizing them, elevates identities to the level of fetishes; it fails to see these identities and among them religion as social relations and that each of them are only one factor among several other ones that determine societies and individuals. As Hekmat aptly puts,

Any classification and labelling has a purpose behind it. Islam has been around in Iran for one thousand four hundred years and has obviously left its mark on certain things. But this is only one element in portraying this society - the same way that oppression, monarchy, police state, industrial backwardness, ethnicity, language, script, political history, pre-Islamic way of life, people's physical characteristics, international relations, geography and weather, diet, size of country, population concentration, economic relations, level of urbanisation, architecture, etc. are. All of these express real characteristics of the society. Now if out of the hundreds of factors that create differences between Iran and Pakistan, France and Japan, someone insists on pointing to the presence of Islam in some aspects of life in this society and brands all of us with this label ... then they must have a specific agenda. Iran is not an Islamic society; the government is Islamic. Islam is an imposed phenomenon in Iran, not only today but also during the monarchy, and has remained in power by oppression and murder. Iran is not an Islamic society. They have tried to make it Islamic by force for twenty years and failed. Calling the Iranian society Islamic is part of the reactionary crusade to make it Islamic. (2001)

The Arab Revolutions provided the opportunity for “moderate” political Islam to show its counter-revolutionary and anti-human capabilities. In Egypt, for instance, The Muslim Brotherhood and Mursi stood by the Mubarak regime and the army for a long while and only after three consecutive governments were toppled by the revolution came to the fore and seized power through the elections that were boycotted by the majority of the Egyptian people.

It soon became clear that the Muslim Brotherhood had nothing in common with the demands of the revolution – freedom, bread, human dignity – and that in fact it was a force against the revolution. Eventually, the massive demonstrations against the Mursi administration pushed the army to seize power in order to both suppress the revolution and to save the bourgeois regime in Egypt. Just as the Arab revolutions were showcases of the intensification of the class struggle, “moderate” political Islam showed that it functions as a means to suppress the class struggle in the state of emergency – regardless of its success or failure in this matter.

The “moderate” political Islamic movement had also been challenged in its epicenter, that is, Turkey during the massive uprising of the June 2013 that was brutally suppressed by the Erdogan-AKP administration. All in all, “moderate” political Islam, similar to its “radical” ancestor, entered the scene as a force of the “party of order” against the revolution. In Turkey too, the Gezi uprising of the June 2013 should be considered as the manifestation of the intensification of class struggle – the 2013 uprising is the sibling to the Arab revolutions as well as the Occupation Movement and the movement of the 99% (Azeri 2014). These latter, in turn, are symptoms of the deepening of the economic and political crisis of the international bourgeoisie and the intensification of the class war globally.

The eventual collapse of the neo-cons’ strategies in the Middle East in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq gave new grounds to the political Islamic movements. A phenomenon such as ISIL is the immediate product of the failure of the US strategy and politics in the Middle East and should be considered in the context of the “political-administrative crisis of the international bourgeoisie” and the intensification of the class struggle of which the former is a consequence. As Taghvai formulates it,

The developments in Greece and Spain and the rise of anti-austerity candidate in the Labour Party of Britain are the showcases of the administrative crisis of bourgeoisie in the west. This crisis, however, reveals itself in the Middle East in the form of the alliances and the power struggle between the Islamic states and movements. The ‘Islamic State’ of the ISIL is the fascistic form and Ocalan’s ‘democratic confederalism’ is the bourgeois-liberal form of the alternatives of the regional bourgeoisie in response to and rooted in the strategic aporia and the multilateral administrative crisis of the international bourgeoisie. (Taghvai 2015, 6)

This crisis that is manifested in the rise of ultra-right and neo-fascism in Europe and the US is the bourgeoisie’s “natural” reaction to the intensification of the class struggle. Neo-fascism in the west and political Islamic fascism in the Middle East mutually reproduce and legitimize one another.

Conclusion

Commenting on the ISIL Zizek states that “ISIS, is the latest chapter in the long story of the anticolonial awakening – the arbitrary borders drawn after World War I by the great powers being redrawn – and simultaneously a chapter in the struggle against the way global capital undermines the power of nation states.” (2014) Zizek misses the point totally because he not only recapitulates the “culturalist” essentialism that is common to the postmodernists, the traditional left and the right-wing political movements that fetishize the socio-historically constituted identities, but also implicitly legitimizes the ISIL by depoliticizing this movement through labelling it a “perverted modern” phenomenon that is a “disgrace to true

fundamentalists" (2014). In other words, the problem of the ISIL is that it is not reflecting the true essence the devoted fundamentalist believes in; it is a disgrace because it betrays the culture which it claims to represent; the ISIL is not "really fundamentalist in the authentic sense of the term" (Zizek 2014) meaning that, perhaps, its members do not fit the Hollywood image of "fundamentalist terrorists" since their leader, Al-Bahgdadi, wears "an exquisite Swiss watch" (Zizek 2014) and because they are using the social media and other technological devices quite perfectly. Contrary to Zizek's view, a proper analysis of the ISIL and political Islamist terrorism should begin not from religion as an ancient system of beliefs and ethical-moral codes but as a phenomenon of today's world and an element of the political confrontations of our era.

The aforementioned political collapse has provided the regional bourgeoisie with the opportunity to claim a greater share of power in the region and world-wide; political Islam has been functioning as a lever in the hands of this faction of bourgeoisie. The ISIL came to the scene in particular as a reactionary force of the party of order against the Syrian revolution. On the one side of this "inner" conflict of the international bourgeoisie we see the Islamic Republic, the Syrian regime, and Russia; on the other side, we see Turkey-Qatar-Saudi coalition, the ISIL and other Jihadists, and the US and the west. These alliances form the two poles of political Islam, the so-called "Shiite" political Islam led by Iran and the so-called "Sunni" or "Salafi" political Islam led by Saudi, Qatar and Erdogan's Turkey. The variety of the forces forming these two poles clearly shows that political Islam "confronts and competes with other poles within the capitalist world, especially hegemonic blocs, over its share of power and influence in the world capitalist order. This political Islam does not necessarily have any given or defined Islamic jurisprudent and scholastic content. It is not necessarily fundamentalist and doctrinaire" (Hekmat 2001). The common thread that keeps these forces together is their enmity against the Syrian revolution; these factions of political Islam are not the expression of different Islamic sects; rather, the sectarian differences and identities such as Shiite or Sunni are constituted and reproduced through political Islamist movement by the terrestrial interests of different factions of bourgeoisie and their political struggle for gaining a greater share of power.

The problem of the critique of religion, and of political Islam in particular, is first and foremost a political problem. Religion, as a "system of beliefs" and political Islam as a *political movement* is rooted in the existing human conditions and the relations of production; they continuously are reproduced within these relations. Therefore, rather than being archaic phenomena, religion and political Islam are capitalist phenomena. Furthermore, political Islam, with all its factions, is the means of bourgeoisie in order to suppress the revolutions in the Middle East (known as the "Arab Spring"). Both the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah (or the so-called Shiite) and the Turkey-Saudi Arabia-Qatar-Jihadists (including the ISIL and other so-called "Sunni") factions are counter-revolutionary forces that although allegedly refer to the "ideological" roots of Islam as 1400-year-old religion are politically at the service of capital. Politics is not derived from "ideology"; rather, "ideology" is at the service of politics. Political Islam is the flag of regional bourgeoisie in its struggle with other factions of the international bourgeoisie for acquiring a greater share of power in the "unipolar" post-Cold War world. ISIL is one of the factions of political Islam, a branch of the reactionary regional bourgeois forces in this confrontation that takes place in Syria.

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