Complexity Theory, Democratic Transition and Public Policy Choices in Iraq

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Abstract

This article adopts *Complexity Theory* to improve understanding of Iraq's future patterns of democratic stabilization and consolidation. It emphasizes the importance of soft technologies, as well as hard technologies for making better public policy choices. The article also sheds light on Iraq's institutional evolution, on its processes and mechanisms of variation and replication. It emphasizes the importance of new culturally-sensitive public policies and political economies. The first part of the article briefly describes the main political, economic, social and cultural changes in Iraq since the fall of the Saddam regime. The second part discusses the system of social security in Iraq and in formerly ISIS controlled territories. The final section deals with important challenges of de-radicalization necessary that are necessary for the democratization, liberalization, institutionalization and consolidation of new institutions. A new spatial politics of public policy making in formerly ISIS-occupied territories is also discussed in the concluding section.

Introduction

This article adopts *Complexity Theory*, as discussed by Room and colleagues, in order to improve understanding of Iraq's future patterns of democratic stabilization and consolidation. The article emphasizes the importance of soft technologies, as well as of hard technologies for making better public policy choices (Room et al. 2017). Soft technologies include public policy and political economy *methods*, such as the choice of and the ways in which a determined public policy and political economy is implemented. Hard technologies involve, for example, the *instruments,* such as the practical tools to implement these policies. In this perspective, *Complexity Theory* becomes a useful theoretical account to address ISIS's nation-building activities, including processes of economic, political, cultural and social change (Room et al. 2017). Taking into account Parsons' (1951) and Luhmann's (1984) definition, Iraq's social system can be described as made of different sub-systems – eco-systems - with associated internal logics - pychological and institutional -. Improve understanding of the "co-evolution" of these complex ecosystems and the ways in which individuals interact (Room 2016a) at the politics, polity and policy level is important for choosing the right *public policy instrumentation* (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007), as well as for making Iraq democracy work and more resilient (Diamond et el. 2016).

In *Choice Architecture*, 2017 Nobel Prize Winner Richard H. Thaler and his colleagues Cass R. Sunstein, John P. Balz (2014) have defined the NUDGES approach, as comprising of six main principles for making good policy choices: iNcentives, Understand mappings, Defaults, Give feedback, Expect error, and Structure complex choices.

iNcentives refers to prices and incentives. More specifically, it has to do with: who uses, who chooses, who pays, who profits of (and by) a determined policy choice. *Understand mappings* concerns the right policy choices that lead to the welfare of society. This, for example, involves selecting which policies to choose among a wide variety of possible equally suitable alternatives. *Defaults* means avoiding the least pathway of resistance when this default option

(*doing nothing* or no change) leads to negative results (Thaler et al. 2014, p. 430). In complex systems, *Give feedback* is a necessary endeavor to avoid mistakes. For instance, *what rose the admiration of baseball fans and gives them joy is often the individual achievements of players. But the player there does not stand alone at the plate, because s/he is part of a team. Looks, throws, catches, hustles are all elements part of one big team*[1]. Giving feedback to players becomes, inevitably, necessary to ensure the consistency of their game choices. *Expect error* is a fifth important element in order to improve a policy-maker's choice architecture. If a player goes out there for himself/herself without thinking about the team (or caring about the team), he or she gets nowhere. The team must fit, players must expect errors and learn how to deal with them. *Structure complex choices* is hence the sixth and final element of the NUDGES approach. It involves the necessity of adopting different strategies for dealing with complex problems and choosing the best alternative with more trade-offs. Structure complex choices means, in brief, having in mind a structure of alternative suitable strategies. NUDGES include making the right choice of *public policy instruments* and the *methods* associated to their implementation, such as the ways in which a *public policy instrument* must be put in place (such as though through institutional adjustments or evolutions) (Steinmo 2010).

In *Behavioral Economics*, Richard Thaler and Sendhil Mullainathan (2000) have further discussed two important concepts in sociology and behavioral economics, as elucidated some time before by Herbert Simon (1955): *bounded rationality* and *bounded willpower*. Bounded rationality refers to the bounded rational cognitive processes that an individual faces in a determined institutional setting. This includes also the ways in which they deal with the *Descartes' Error* (Damasio 1994) – that is to say – the tensions that exist between their emotions and ir/rational behaviors. In other words, their *Feeling of What Happens* (Damasio 2000). Bounded willpower concerns, instead, the desires' contraints that actors face in their everyday life, especially when socialized in determined institutions. As Thaler and Mullainathan (2000) have rightly emphasized, departures from pre-

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1 Metaphor from the movie "The Untouchables" by Brian De Palma.

existing ir/rationalities are not rare (on path-departures, see also Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009; Cerami 2013). It is, in fact, often not uncommon to adopt "the rule of the thumb as a way to economize on cognitive faculties" (Thaler and Mullainathan (2000 p.3; see Room 2016b, pp.1-9).

In a recent attempt to improve Thaler's et al's NUDGES approach, Room and colleagues have highlighted the necessity to shifting "the focus from individual psychology to political economy" (Room 2016, p. 9). They suggest to better capture not only the "citizens' formal organizations - political, commercial, educational", but also their "more informal communities – religious, cultural, residential" (Room 2006b, p.6), around which, for example, Iraqis build their identities. Hence, as a multi-dimensional eco-system, ISIS must be investigated taking into full consideration its political, economic, social and cultural evolution. As Steinmo (2010) and Lewis and Steinmo (2012) highlight, institutions, organizations (including criminal or terrorist) and individuals evolve through gradual institutional changes. Also, they do so by "generating new variation upon which mechanisms of selection and replication" take place (Lewis and Steinmo 2012, p. 314).

This article sheds light on the processes and mechanisms of variation, selection and replication, emphasizing the importance of new culturally-sensitive public policies and political economies. Here, public policies concern all those choices that aim at administering, managing and reducing distributive and social conflicts (Haggard and Kaufman 2008, 2016) through political economy instruments. And, hence, they contribute to the reconstruction, stabilization and consolidation of countries affected by war, disaster or, more generally, by state fragility. A particular attention to human security (see Burgess et al. 2007), including the human rights dimension, in the the administration of policy choices remains vital.

This article is structured as follows. Part I briefly describes the main political, economic, social and cultural changes in Iraq since the fall of the Saddam regime. Part II discusses the system of social security in Iraq and in formerly ISIS occupied territories. The final section deals with important challenges of de-radicalization that are necessary for the democratization, liberalization,

institutionalization and consolidation of new institutions. A new spatial politics of public policy making in former ISIS-occupied territories is also discussed in the concluding section.

Political Changes in Iraq

Since the first Gulf War of 1980-1988, Iraq underwent a difficult transition to democracy which has been characterized by the emergence of civil conflicts and system instability. The second Gulf War in 1991, the international economic sanctions in 1991–2003, and the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003 did not succeed to resolve the internal problems, but have often exacerbated pre-existing ethnic and religious tensions. This has resulted in an increasing number of casualties, which, since 2003, have amounted to about 123,000 people (World Bank 2014, p. 4). However, the real number of deaths is estimated to be much higher than the one reported by official statistics. Similar considerations apply to the number of violent attacks which have dropped significantly since the beginning of the conflict.

In 2014, Iraq had an estimated population of approximately 32 million inhabitants. About 75-80 percent Arabs, and the remaining 15-20 percent of Kurdish Turkoman and Assyrian origins. The Kurdish minority lives for the most part in northeastern Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government, henceforth KRG). Islam is the official religion and accounts for almost 99 percent of the population. Shia Muslims correspond to 60-65 percent of the total population, while Sunni Muslims to approximately 30-34 percent. The remaining population is made of Christians (about 1 percent), Hindus, Buddhists, Jewish, and people not affiliated to the above mentioned religions (CIA World Factbook 2016).

Electoral engineering (Sartori 1994) has been key for the Iraqi transition to democracy, whose main goal has been to reduce the power of the Shiite-Kurdish majority, expanding the representation of the Sunnis. The intended consequence, most clearly expressed in the Iraq Study Group report of 2006 and in the 18 benchmarks of 2007, was to speeding up the de-baathification process.

Simultaneously, it limited the incentives for violence and sectarian conflict (Haggard and Long 2007, p. 2).

In order to bring democracy back to the table after decades of authoritarian subjugation, attempts at creating a more representative territorial structure have been made by national and international authorities. A proportional system of electoral representation was introduced after the fall of the Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. As a consequence, since the first elections in 2005, several different lists of independent candidates (almost 36 in the elections of 2014) have emerged. The first free elections have been held in 2005 and have seen the victory of President Jalal Talabani and of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (6 April 2005). Both have been re-elected in the polls of 20 May 2006. Mr Talabani, of Kurdish origin, represented, for the first phase of transition, the most prominent figure of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Mr al-Maliki represented, instead, the leading figure of the Shia leading coalition 'State of Law'. In the elections of 2014, Mr al-Maliki was re-elected as Prime Minister but was replaced in 2016 by a Shiite politician Haider al-Abadi[2]. Mr Fuad Masum, also of Kurdish origins, became instead the new President (Al Jazeera 2014; Wikipedia 2015).

In the light of a persistent electoral fragmentation of the political spectrum, Haggard and Long (2007, p. 3) have identified in the 'engineer's dilemma' a critical situation for future stabilization and consolidation attempts in Iraq. The 'engineer's dilemma' refers, in this case, to a situation in which the presumed institutional change aimed at enlarging the representation of the Sunni minority has ended up in an unexpected increase of violence. Among the problems of political inclusion associated with this failure in constitutional and electoral engineering (Sartori 1994; Goodin 1994), as a public policy instrument, the authors mention 'the fragmentation of the combatants, their weak representation in the formal political process, and the presence of extremists and the associated process of outbidding' (Haggard and Long 2007, p. 3). The fiscal and federal structure, which

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2http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iraqs-political-situation-dire-as-maliki-digs-in/2014/08/11/1c70942a-213a-11e4-958c-268a320a60ce_story.htm

continues to favor the two major allies (Shia and Kurds), also plays a dominant role in reducing the prospects for peace and stability. Interestingly, always according to the authors (see Haggard and Long 2007, p. 8), these problems of 'engineering' associated to political realignments (Haggard and Kaufman 2008) have contributed to exacerbate the demands of radical nationalists to re-establish a Sunni hegemony, and increasing the jihadists' requests for an Islamic 'caliphate'.

An additional important and often neglected issue of the Iraqis political system concerns the increasing autonomy of the Kurdistan National Assembly, which also thanks to the number of seats (111) and the relative power of the Kurdish minority, makes it *de facto* an autonomous regional state or, in other words, a 'state within a state' (UNPO 2013). This has clear repercussions not only for Iraq's future national unity and long-term stability, but also for future redistributive attempts. The territorial distribution of natural resources in the contemporary federal structure continues to favor existing winning coalitions, not avoiding the creation of insider-outsider divides. The limits of such a constructed 'consociational democracy', aptly highlighted by Lijphardt (1999), have become in this way more apparent (Haggard and Long 2007, p. 12). This can also be seen in the formulation of the new constitution, which, adopted by a referendum on 15 October 2005 (amended in 2013), has established a mixed legal system of civil and Islamic law, still subjected to multiple interpretations[3]. These political changes in Iraq, including the electoral changes, have altered the map of pre-existing distributive conflicts (Haggard and Kaufman 2008, 2016) with associated social tensions. This has also implied a redefinition of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) cleavage structure (centre-periphery and state-church relations) with subsequent voter realignments. In terms of territorial restructuring, new cleavages have emerged among actors in former ISIS, as well as non-ISIS occupied territories, including opposition within national elites versus local-regional opposition, as well as interest-specific opposition versus ideological opposition (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Fig. 9.1).

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3 According to the Arab Barometer for Iraq (2012, p.5), about 72 percent of respondents agree that 'religious practices should be kept as a private matter and separated from public life', 85 percent that 'religious leaders should not interfere in voters' decisions', whilst only 31 percent that 'Islamic law was appropriate for their country'.

Economic Changes in Iraq

In 2003, as a result of the US intervention against the Saddam regime, real GDP growth collapsed by 40 percent, increasing, from that time, at rate of 6-8 percent per year. This early trend witnessed a drastic reduction during the economic crisis of 2008-9 and the drop in oil prices in 2009 and in 2014-2015. The results of the initial fall in GDP growth, which followed the US intervention against Saddam Hussein in 2003 can be explained by the amenities of war and the resulting civil conflict, as well as by the associated collapse of oil production and exports. A situation of low oil prices occurred in 2009 (set approximately at 60 US$ per barrel) and in 2015, creating serious difficulties for policy-makers in financing social welfare and reconstruction programs.

In 2012, the oil revenues of Iraq accounted to approximately 80-90 percent of total revenues, whilst taxes amounted to only 2 percent (World Bank 2014, pp. 5-8). As Huntington (1991) has correctly emphasized, this has posed serious problems in terms of democratization and system stability, as the lower the level of taxation, the lower are the chances of citizens to ask for genuine representation. In the words of the author, 'no taxation without representation' and 'no representation without taxation' is possible (Huntington 1991, p. 65). In absence of a clear involvement of citizens in financing their own democracy, electoral requests become easily a gift of the political elites to 'their' citizens (Diamond 2008).

Despite efforts at structural adjustments, the country remains in all its parts an oil-based economy with well-known problems related to bureaucratic and political mismanagement. I described this: *oil-led state-captured capitalism* with associated *oil-led state-captured war-fare regime*, though, in former ISIS-controlled territories, war developments turned the system into an *Insurgent ISIS-captured capitalism with associated Insurgent ISIS-captured war-fare regime* (see Cerami 2018; see also Cerami and Stubbs 2013).

As Almukhtar (2015) explains, close to war-making activities, in Iraq, ISIS relies always more often on the acquisition of state assets of captured cities, as well as on money coming from different sources, redistributing them among the population to acquire legitimacy and support. The main sources of financing include: oil, natural gas, phosphate, cement, agriculture, revenue of criminal origin, extortion; kidnap and ransom, antiquities trafficking and donations (CAT 2016).

In June 2014, ISIS' estimated assets in Iraq corresponded to no less than $875 million. Its major revenue sources in 2014 were given by extortion and taxation activities in the Iraqi territory, which were estimated at $600 million. In addition, $500 million were, in fact, stolen from state-owned banks, $100 million from oil whose barrels are sold at half the official price. $20 million were raised by kidnapping ransoms (Almukhtar 2015). In 2015, ISIS expanded increasing its investments in people, paying its 20,000-30,000 fighters between $350 and $1500 per month according to their rank, skills and nationality (FATF 2015, pp. 29-30).

Similar estimations made by Lister (2015) state that there were approximately 30,000 ISIS armed members in early 2015, and about a half of these were foreigners of not Iraqi or Syrian origin. The ISIS total assets, presumably including also other occupied territories outside Iraq, should have, in reality, corresponded to $2 billion, with an annual revenue of $200 million to $300 million (Waterbury 2015). In 2016, ISIS oil revenue are estimated to range from $250 million per year to nearly $365 million per year, though these numbers have declined due to the airstrikes on tanks and oil refineries (Rand 2017, p.8)[4].

More recently, ISIS money may also come from stealing and redistributing credit cards, social welfare benefits, small loans, scooters, or even selling organs of dead fighters (for more information on such disgusting business, see also FATF 2017; May 2017). As in other countries, selling weapons

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4 Up-to-date information on ISIS financing mechanisms, including wage salaries, is provided by Jones et al. (2017).

can also be used as a corruption mechanism (see Enough Project 2017). Counterterrorist financing strategies can play here a crucial role[5].

As a telling article by Shatz (2015) has powerfully demonstrated, the use of public employment has had the unintended consequence of radicalization and terrorist reinforcement. Financing the terrorist organization ISIS, an umbrella of previously Al-Qaeda linked groups but with a clearer political and nation-building project, has, for example, been made possible by government subsidies to government employees who live in former ISIS-controlled territories (*wilaya or* 'protectorates') (Khatib 2015). This money estimated in several hundred million US$, have not only reinforced the local system of patronage and clientelistic relations. They have also provided additional support for an involuntarily sponsored ISIS administrative local economy, reinforcing the ISIS 'clear, hold, build' strategy (Khatib 2015). Financing ISIS has also meant taking the control of oil revenues and pipelines and of the relative bureaucratic redistributive apparatus (Sanger and Davis 2014). This has resulted in the emergence of local ISIS mini-states with local administrative governance mechanisms, banking and social investment policies. As Shatz (2005, p. I) has powerfully described, this nation-building activity has contributed to create 'hundreds of thousands of refugees, behead or crucify scores, if not hundreds of people, murder thousands, create sex-slave markets, destroy irreplaceable archaeological and cultural sites, steal property based on religious affiliation or ethnicity of the owner, use and train child soldiers and otherwise make life miserable for millions of people'. This has also implied the creation of its own ISIS currency (Milliken 2015). As a result of these economic changes, new forms of cooptation, as well as of acquisition and redistribution of resources have emerged. *Co-optation* – broadly understood as the capacity of the ruling elite to bind strategic actors via formal and informal institutions (Merkel and Gerschewski

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5 On methods of financing and counterterrorist financing strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa, see Cerami, A. (2015) https://alfiocerami.wordpress.com/2015/12/07/counterterrorist-financing-strategies-the-case-of-sub-saharan-africa/.

2011, p.1) has now shifted toward ISIS-leaders as new co-opters, who aim at substituting democratic participation by ensuring the inclusion of strategically important radical parts of the population into politics and the economy. How will the legal bureacracy of President Fuad Masum and of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's government deal with these emerging societal problems? Will they succeed to defeat the illegal and terrorist ISIS-bureaucracy?

Social Change in Iraq

As discussed by Wolchik and Curry (2015) in their volume on the Eastern European transition to democracy, social aspects of transformation with associated social pathologies are an important part of system change, often poisoning the political discussions of a country. Social aspects and social pathologies include alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, violence in the home, drug use and street crime, organized crime, human trafficking, smuggling, sex trade, tensions between various ethnic groups, discrimination and marginalization of minorities (Wolchik and Curry 2015, p. 30), not to mention an increase in state-organized crime relations. In the specific case of Iraq, the social costs of war with associated war amenities must also be added, as these have important repercussions on the socio-structural transformations in employment relations, in the availability of funds for security, also leading to an increase in terrorism and suicidal bombings.

To provide a brief picture of the main socio-economic transformations, since the 1960s, Iraq witnessed an exponential growth of the population. This was caused by the economic expansion following the increase in oil prices resulting from the OPEC decision of the 1970s (World Bank Development Indicators 2015). The subsequent sudden rise in revenues and in welfare significantly changed the lifestyle and political aspirations for liberty of many Iraqis. This included the materialization of a baby-boom, as it happened in Western Europe during the golden age of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1999; Pierson 2001), with an exponential rise in the number of new births. Changes in political orientation towards an increase in post-materialist values and the

secularization of the society, as aptly described by Inglehart (1990), have also materialized, though to a lower extent than in Western post-industrial societies. As a result of these societal changes, the percentage of the urban population rapidly increased, from approximately 40 percent of the total population in the 1960s to 70 percent at the end of 2012 (World Bank Development Indicators 2015).

Though comparable long-term labor market statistics for the same period are not available, in the 1990s Iraq witnessed a slow growth in employment. Important to note here is that, despite significant improvements, access to labor market remains predominantly male-dominated, with particularly high percentages of youth unemployment and especially among young women. A recent report of the IBRD/World Bank (2014, pp. 90-94), based on a seven day recall period, has shown that the almost totality of women (approximately 90 percent) are not in the labor force. The remaining 10 percent is employed in part-time jobs. Changes from part-time to full-time employment are observable for men. Employment, especially for men, is the highest in the central governorates of the country and has increased between 2007 and 2012 in Kurdistan and the Northern regions as well, where it has reached the national average of 70 percent. The southern governorates have witnessed, instead, a decrease in men employment (IBRD/World Bank 2014, pp. 94-95)[6].

Increasing poverty has been a clear outcome of the various civil conflicts, ethnic tensions and wars that have characterized the country since the advent of Saddam Hussein with his *contentious politics* (Tilly 2007) of discrimination and assassinations of political opponents and minorities. The al-Anfal Campaign against the Kurds conducted between 1986-1989 (or Kurdish genocide) is only one notable example of the crimes against humanity committed by the Saddam regime. The wars that followed, both for oil-related reasons, as well as for reasons concerned with the responsibility of the international community to protect against such massacres, as expressed in the Report of the

[6]Employment rates for women are substantially lower and range from 13 percent in Kurdistan to 9 percent in the North and the South (IBRD/World Bank 2014, pp. 94-95).

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) (see also Merkel and Grimm 2009), did not yet succeed to put an end to pre-existing socio-structural problems of development. Between 2007 and 2012, years where the first comparable statistics are available, the poverty headcount ratio at US$ 2 a day slightly changed from 22 to 21 percent of the population (World Bank Development Indicators 2015). In terms of regional divisions, in 2012, 58 percent of Iraq's poor lived in five governorates (Baghdad[7], Basra, Nineveh, Babylon and Thi-Qar), compared to 40 percent in 2007 (Word Bank 2014, p.19). Interestingly, the highest poverty rates have been found among households headed by women, unemployed, part-time workers, employed in the agricultural and fishing sector and construction. The lowest poverty rates among people employed in public administration and services and utilities. Here, it is important to note that the average wage in Iraq corresponds to $642 and the system is based on the male breadwinner model, which means that only men work in the household (World Bank 2014, p. 32). Taking into account the fact that a three bed room apartment outside the center of Bagdad costs $643 and one kilo of white rice $1.76, it becomes immediately evident that no single worker is able to feed his family with one single salary.

Important to note is that the United Nations economic sanctions have changed the traditional diet of Iraqis, lowering the availability of foods. Whilst the traditional diet of Iraqis included rice with soup or sauce, accompanied by lamb, fish and vegetables, today, because of food rations, because of the amenities of war people started to eat rice or another grain sometimes with sauce. The rations provided are estimated to last twenty to twenty-three days and include flour, tea, sugar, rice, beans, milk, cooking oil, soap, and salt[8]. What should be remembered is that Iraq needs to import a large quantity of food in order to feed its population. Oil-led economic growth helps to provide additional

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[7]Please note that according to the IBRD/World Bank (2014, p. 34) report, households in Baghdad need a minimum income that is on average 40 percent higher than the Baghdad poverty line.
[8]See Countries and Their Culture 2015. http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Iraq.html#ixzz3S6WDx9Gb

funding for imports and for price subsidies to basic goods, but it does not resolve the problem (FAO 2014).

In the case of Iraq, the existence of serious war related human development problems is associated with ever increasing vertical and horizontal inequalities - that is, inequalities existing among individuals and households and inequalities existing among social groups (ethnic, religious, etc.) (see Stewart 2008; Langer *et al* 2011). The unresolved territorial and ethnic disputes make the problem of the simultaneous transition to a democratic system based on market economic principles even more difficult (see Offe 1991).

To clarify, for Stewart (2008) and Langer *et al* (2011), vertical inequalities refer to the disparities that emerge among individuals and households in a determined society, while horizontal inequalities refer to the differences that materialize among the different social groups (ethnic, religious, etc.). In terms of vertical inequalities, through several de-commodification, stratification and de-clientelization strategies, welfare regimes are able to alter the dominant social positions among the members of a society. As a consequence of a differentiated access to welfare programs, social distances among individuals can, in this way, be reduced or enlarged through differential forms of social integration. In terms of horizontal inequalities, and due to the clientelistic approach to social protection in force in Iraq, welfare regimes have also the power to create important new social divides between the members of different communities belonging to the same nation. Members of an ethnic group, tribe or clan can, for example, be privileged by the dominant leaders through a preferential access to the labour market or social services and this has the potential to increase tensions and social conflicts, which, in turn, through mechanisms led by revenge or anger, may lead to system instability. In formerly ISIS-occupied territories the presence of new vertical and horizontal inequalities is an issue that must be addressed. It is perhaps not a case that ISIS-leaders are increasingly playing this card to obtain social acceptance.

Cultural Change in Iraq

Civilization in Iraq dates back to ancient Mesopotamia, whose traditions influence contemporary national pride and national identity. Contrary to most countries in the Arab world, in Iraq, Sunnis are a minority, whilst Shias represent the majority of the population. Before the US intervention, Iraq had a central planned economy and, as a legacy of the past, it is still common to access jobs through clientelistic relations in the government[9]. As a state-building objective, Saddam Hussein once stated that an educated and liberated mother is one who will give back to the country conscious and committed fighters for Iraq[10]. This understanding of family planning is, to some extent, still in place[11].

Recognizing the importance of the tribal structure is key for understanding the Iraqi modern civilization. Throughout the turmoil that have materialized in the country over the centuries, the tribe has always remained the most important social entity. In absence of strong central authority and an accountable bureaucracy (Weber [1922]1968), tribes have played the important function of "quasi-polities" whose leaders (known as *sheikhs)* have administered resources, social services, managed emerging social and ethnic conflicts, as well as providing law enforcement capabilities. In order to create an alternative, complementary but still loyal power structure, the Saddam Hussein regime reinforced the functions of tribes as vital socio-political sub-units, re-establishing tribal councils and putting them under direct control of mostly Sunni sheikhs[12].

Sunni tribes are particularly present in central and western Iraq, whilst Shiite tribes in the North. Kurdish tribes are, instead, predominant in the northern part of the country and, more specifically,

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9According to the Arab Barometer for Iraq (2012, p.52) approximately 65 percent of the population state that 'obtaining employment through connections is extremely widespread'.

10See Countries and Their Culture 2015. http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Iraq.html#ixzz3S6WDx9Gb

11According to the Arab Barometer for Iraq (2012, pp. 28-29), 'over 75 percent agree that men are better than women at political leadership', whilst approximately '25 percent of respondents believe that university education is more important for men than it is for women'.

12See Countries and Their Culture 2015. http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Iraq.html#ixzz3S6WDx9Gb

in Kurdistan. Recent estimations show that at least 75 percent of the Iraqi population belong to one of the country's 150 tribes[13]. Power relations in the tribes' social structure remain feudalistic and characterized by a strong hierarchy between members. These represent the basis for clientelistic *do ut des* bargaining, often exacerbating already existing sectarian divides (eg. Sunni vs. Shia dominated tribes) (Khan 2007). In this tribal-oriented society, individuals are protected, but their rights and autonomy are limited by the sheikhs and by the other members of the tribe. This particularly applies to women and children, who, as members of the family, do not have much right to choose about their own future[14]. The 'politics of revenge' is a particular important aspect of Iraqi clans and tribes (see Hames 2017). For clan and tribe members, seeking revenge is seen as a crucial and compulsory act for the maintenance of power and status. Every insult or affront must, in some way, be avenged (see also Eisenstadt 2007).

The importance of ISIS in changing cultural patterns in Iraq must be emphasized. It involves, for example, not only a radicalization and over-de-secularization of society, but also de-modernization. The increasing number of women who joined the organization as fighters (and, in case, martyrs) and built a new family (Saltman and Smith 2015) represents here a notable example of a new societal structure in the making, with associated emerging social order. This has a price. According to Fatf (2015, p. 13), ISIS fighters paying for a female slave approximately $13. In 2017, the price has increased between $35 or $50 (Jones et al. 2017, p. 11).

The Social Security System in Iraq

In Iraq, the formal social security system is based on the social insurance principle and depends on the attachment of citizens to the labor market or, when not accessible, on informal social security arrangements provided by the members of the family or the tribe. Due to the oil-based orientation of

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13See Countries and Their Culture 2015. http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Iraq.html#ixzz3S6WDx9Gb

14See GlobalSecurity.org 2005. http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/tribes.htm

the economy, public sector employees represent a larger part of the insured persons. In order to protect uncovered citizens, the government has established a *Public Distribution System* based on state-sponsored fuel subsidies and rations. The implications of this system are, first of all, high dependence from state-owned enterprises and state-driven labor market performance with a residual neo-liberal coverage for the non-employed, and, second, to food rations distributed to approximately 99 percent of the population (El Mekkaoui de Freitas and Johnson 2012, p.9). The fiscal space for such policies, therefore, greatly depends on oil revenues and state-budget availability of funds.

With regard to pensions, these rely on the social insurance principle, which implies that only workers in formal employment have access to retirement. Self-employed persons, agricultural employees, temporary employees, household workers, and family labor are excluded from pension entitlements. This situation becomes particularly worrying in the case of disability and survivor pensions, especially in a war-setting environment. The public distribution system is set to cover this deficit, but, as mentioned, it is often subjected to a lack of funds due to the drop in oil prices.

Similarly, access to health care is based on health insurance contributions. This implies that in absence of state-sponsored provisions only employed persons have access to full coverage. Important to note is that the subsequent wars in Iraq have destroyed most of the health facilities and this has, subsequently, resulted in a lack of infrastructures, medical equipment, personnel and medicines. As a report by UNOCHA (2015, p.2) has shown, approximately 20 per cent of the population (7 million people) cannot access even the most basic health care services, with women and children particularly vulnerable to poverty related diseases, forced marriage and sexual violence. The public health emergency in Iraq requires the reestablishment of basic medical services, especially in those areas controlled by armed groups where about 50 percent of health professionals have fled[15].

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15 http://www.save-iraq.info/download/205/

With regard to protection against unemployment, jobs are mostly provided by the state, unemployment insurance covers only a small part of the population. Usually, this involves those citizens who have worked in state owned enterprises and are attached to national and local political elites. Interesting to note is that employment protection law dates back to 1964 (with subsequent amendments) and, therefore, it has been established in a period antecedent to Saddam Hussein's rise to power. It is based on the social assistance principle, though highly residual in scope and coverage (US Social Security Administration 2014).

Finally, maternity and family benefits are also based on the social insurance principle and, thus, covering only a very small part of Iraqi women. In absence of full and decent employment, women continue to be seen as wives-mothers rather than active participants in the labor market. This is also, to some extent, represented in the attitudes of the Iraqi population toward women. According to the Arab Barometer for Iraq (2012, p.28), approximately 72 percent of respondents state that 'men and women should have equal work opportunities'.

The Social Security System in Formerly ISIS Occupied Territories

Drawing on Charles Tilly's (1985) seminal work entitled *War Making and State Making as Organized Crime*, it is possible to affirm that the functions that several rebel and terrorist organizations linked to ISIS carry out in their everyday lives (in particular, protective, extractive, and redistributive) are equivalent to those of a state and, therefore, turn the organization or the rebel group into something more than a simple loose confederation of organized 'self-made' criminals. It is not by chance that their members, once emotionally and institutionally affiliated to the organization, have started to: (1) carry out 'intelligence' activities typical of a state, such as those linked to searching and punishing possible spies within the territory under their control; (2) tax for the passage from one city to another city of any illicit contraband (e.g. drugs, weapons, laundered

cash and people)[16]; (3) collect profits, and protect and control the production areas; (4) recruit and provide subsistence to the marginalized peoples living in underdeveloped regions; and (5) deliver a range of social services to the population in need (see also Sanger and Davis 2014).

In this process of nation-state building, rentierism has becomes a complementary mechanism of state formation made possible by the acquisition and redistribution of natural resources. This nation-building process also requires a system of propaganda that occurs mostly through social networks (Khatib 2015), as well as the construction of a Weberian bureaucratic structure, necessary to ensure the state fiscal capacity to reduce a 'state failure' and state collapse. In this context, the creation of an ISIS organized rentier state represents a further impediment to the process of democratization in Iraq, as it aligns socio-political norms to the patrimonial nature of social interactions with associated religiously dominated loyalties (Thies 2015). In fact, as argued by Schwarz (2011, p. 427) for the Saddam era, "the massive influx of oil revenues during the 1970s enabled Iraq to pursue a policy of 'guns and butter' – extravagant spending on expanding its military-security machinery and on welfare benefits […] [which allowed] the regime to embark on a state-making project based on large-scale spending implemented in a top–down fashion and divorced from societal demands. These benefits mainly came in the form of state-provided jobs".

In order to increase its acceptance among the population, ISIS has also invested in infrastructures (such as building underground pipelines, employing engineers, etc.), in social services and social benefits. It has also made regular payments to the families of members killed or captured, purchases of diesel generators for distributing electricity, and mobilizes existing infrastructures to provide basic services, or engaging in agricultural production and taxation (FATF 2015, pp. 29-30)[17]. In

16 In 2016, ISIS taxation rates in Iraq and Syria range, in the agricultural sector, to $46 per irrigated hectare of land per year and 10 percent of wheat crop produced and their sale at the local market. There is also a tax on *Jizya* tax on non-Sunnis equivalent to $2,500 for delivering a certificate for Shiite or non-Muslim and $800 fee in order to leave the city in Raqqah. In addition, there is also $43 tax for an official Islamic State license plate, $23 per woman with a pack of cigarettes and a $10 per woman who shows her eyes (Robinson et al. 2017, Table 2.1, p. 12).
17According to Fatf (2015, p. 30), 'energy experts estimate that ISIS can rebuild a single oil refinery in 10 days for 230,000 USD'.

formerly ISIS-controlled territories, the largest expenditures in salaries estimated (between $3 million and $10 million every month) are, however, employed for ISIS police-state institutions, such as committees, media, courts, and market regulation and thus ensuring Tilly's security function (see Almukhtar 2015).

As a consequence, in order to de-radicalize extremists, the importance of *timing* and *sequencing* of reforms (Pierson 2004) in the implementation of public policy instruments must not be underestimated. Whilst guaranteeing security is an urgent and unavoidable necessity in order to make development, social security and democratization related projects really work, recalibrating and rescaling policy-making (Kazepov 2010; Stubbs and Zrinščak 2009) towards non ISIS-affiliated tribes represents an additional important element to take into account in system transformation. It affects positively the restructuring of *spatial politics* through the creation of new political boundaries (Bartolini 2005), as well as new boundaries of responsibilities (Ferrera 2005). This would necessitate the creation of new steering mechanisms (Mayntz 2003) and structures of more adaptive multilevel governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001), shifting responsibilities from ISIS to non-ISIS affiliated actors. In order to resolve the issue of a failing federalism, as discussed by Haggard and Long (2007), the creation of a system of multilevel governance, in which 'local states' interact among each other to ensure that national human development objectives are effectively implemented, would be needed.

Democratization: Liberalization, Institutionalization and Consolidation

A correct understanding of the facilitators of democratization becomes particularly important, especially in the presence of state fragility where conflict, poor development status, vulnerability to endogenous and exogenous threats, and the lack of a developmental state capable of addressing the emerging socio-economic problems in a consistent way are the key characteristics.

According to O'Donnel and Schmitter (1986), democratization, as a process, can be operationalized in three phases: liberalization, institutionalization and consolidation. Liberalization refers to the liberalization of the political regime and to the promotion of the associated political and civil liberties. Institutionalization implies the institutionalization of norms and practices, so that democracy becomes 'the only game in town' (Przeworski 1991, p.26). Consolidation denotes, instead, the consolidation of democratic institutional and cultural repertoires. These include the consolidation of the constitution, the consolidation of the system of interest and political representation, the consolidation of the democratic behavior and the consolidation of civic culture and civic society (Almond and Verba 1963; Merkel 2010, p.105).

In this context, the costs associated with the existence of 'fragile' states are enormous and can affect the economic development and system stabilization possibilities of the countries for several years to come (Naudé *et al.* 2011). Despite the persistence of some shortcomings, aid for democracy-enhancing projects continues to represent the most important element in democracy promotion and consolidation. However, while external democracy aid remains among the most important element in democracy promotion, it would be false to state that it is the only possible means. Here, it is also important to better understand and carefully examine the consequences of democracy. In fact, the evaluation of democracy by citizens is far from an irrelevant factor in system stability and change because it is a strong determinant in forecasting the durability of democracy (Bermeo 2009) in one country, as well as influencing future stages and waves of democratization. So far, the focus of experts has been on the positive consequences of democratization (Kapstein and Converse 2008; Houle 2009). But little attention has been given to the possible roll-back to authoritarianism and de-modernization (Diamond 2008). The "co-evolution" of these complex ecosystems, including their synergies and processes of variation, selection and replication in politics, polity and policy settings, for making Iraq democracy work (Putnam 2000) and more resilient has been far too often underestimated.

Conclusion

As a 'total social phenomenon' in the sense of Marcel Mauss (2000), ISIS can be described as an economical, juridical, moral, religious, mythological and esthetical multidimensional phenomenon that must be better understood and defeated. Linked to new ISIS counter-terrorist financing and more effective de-radicalization strategies, changes in the public policy administration domain must be implemented in order to reduce the negative emerging distributive and redistributive conflicts (Haggard and Kaufman 2016). These policy choices should include a redefinition of the main economical, juridical, moral, religious, mythological and esthetical forms and countours of radicalized Islam.

As an important ecosystem (*à la* Parsons 1951 and Luhmann 1984), the Iraqi labor market has been used as a means to ensure political loyalty (see Hirschman 1978). Its de-ISISization (not necessarily through military intervention) and democratization is needed. In Iraq, following the fall of the Saddam regime, and due to poor public administration capacity, the *governance architecture* of the welfare regime has remained highly underdeveloped and decentralized. Access to social services and distribution of welfare benefits has depended, for the most part, on non-state and religious actors (see Benthall and Bellion- Jourdan 2003; Gellner 1981). Tasks are now carried out by ISIS members. By shifting the responsibilities some tasks to non-ISIS linked religious and other non-state actors (such as clans and tribes), the pressures caused by the state inefficiencies in public administration can be reduced, though adequate *public policy instruments* (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007) must be found. In this way, the religious attachment of the population can be maintained, whilst democratizing the system of political, economic, cultural and social governance. Increasing participation of non-ISIS-linked non-state actors becomes, in this context, crucial to increase input and output legitimacy (Willets 2006; Cammet and MacLean 2014; Nasiritousi et al. 2015; see also

Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). New public policy instruments to de-radicalize ISIS non-state actors must be found.

What *Complexity Theory* adds to the understanding of Iraq future patterns of democratic stabilization and consolidation here is its main focus on soft technologies (public policy and political economy methods, including those methods linked to abrupt versus gradual institutional change, path-dependent versus path-breaking, or inclusive versus exclusive public policies) instead on simply hard technologies (such as only through military interventions and weapons). These soft and hard technologies are useful to block ISIS' caliphate-building activities, including processes of economic, political, cultural and social change (Room et al. 2017). As mentioned, the NUDGES approach has focused on iNcentives, Understand mappings, Defaults, Give feedback, Expect error, and Structure complex choices for making public policy decisions. Instead, the Nuzzle approach proposed by Room et al. (2017) also pays attention to the "citizens' formal organizations, as well as their more informal communities (including religious, cultural, residential, etc.) around which Iraqis and Kurdish identities are built. As a multi-dimensional eco-system, studying ISIS in its political, economic, social and cultural evolution becomes a necessary endeavour, as necessary is having clearly in mind its evolution, including processes of variation, as well as the associated mechanisms of selection and replication of institutions and social practices (Lewis and Steinmo 2012, p. 314).

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