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**An analysis of the Islamist radicalisation process**

**Individual patterns, experts and institutional perspectives and media narrative in  
the Italian context**

Supervisor: Prof. Fabrizio Coticchia

PhD Candidate: Dott.ssa Elena Dal Santo

*To my family*

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## Introduction

This research project is aimed at understanding and describing how the radicalisation process is seen, understood and narrated by institutions, experts, professionals and the media with the final purpose of elaborating a comprehensive description of the phenomenon combining multiple interpretations and viewpoints.

Research on terrorism has grown rapidly after 9/11: among all terrorism related articles published between 1971 and 2002, 54% were dated 2001 or 2002<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, only few articles result to be based on empirical data, while thought pieces are predominant<sup>2</sup>. Research on the reasons behind domestic and transnational terrorism has identified “a myriad [of] root causes”<sup>3</sup>. Because of security concerns and the sensitivity of the topic, governments tend to avoid “sharing the necessary primary source information with academia, [...] which has the methodological skills but lacks data for a major breakthrough”<sup>4</sup>. Enhanced synergies between governments and academia as well as improved empirical analysis are essential in order to understand the phenomenon and address its complex roots.

According to several scholars and policy makers, the surreal images of the disastrous collapse of the Twin Towers in September 2001 have inaugurated a new era of terrorism<sup>5</sup> and efforts have been developed in this regard to identify the peculiar elements that characterize the current wave of terrorism. According to Hoffman, for example, the modern terrorism mindset is intrinsically interlinked with the role of the media: contemporary terrorist acts entail a twofold objective, that is, on the one hand, committing the act itself, and, on the other hand, achieving a good media coverage of the event<sup>6</sup>. The role played by the broader context in shaping the terrorist phenomenon is crucial also in Neumann’s description of the latest manifestations of terrorism: Neumann argues that the key and specific aspects of the ongoing wave of terrorism can only be understood if the broader environment is considered, starting from modernity and globalization<sup>7</sup>. Notwithstanding, some scholars challenge the concept of old and new terrorism and warn about the risks implied in supporting this distinction. This is the case of Martha Crenshaw, who explains changes in the modus operandi of most recent terrorist groups by taking into consideration specific opportunity structures provided by a certain environment rather than as a result of the nature of the phenomenon itself<sup>8</sup>.

The proliferation of studies in this subject area has also led to the spread of an ad-hoc terminology, which requires some explanation and contextualization. Since the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) attacks, “the

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<sup>1</sup> Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy and Alison Sherley, ‘Are Counter-terrorism Strategies Effective? The Results of the Campbell Systematic Review on Counter-terrorism Evaluation Research’, *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 2:4 (November 2006), p.7

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.8

<sup>3</sup> Todd Sandler, ‘The analytical study of terrorism: Taking stock’, *Journal of Peace Research* 2014, 51:2, 257–271

<sup>4</sup> Marc Sageman, ‘The Stagnation in Terrorism Research’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2014, 26:4, pp.565-580

<sup>5</sup> Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Debate over "New" vs. "Old" Terrorism’, 2007, presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, [internet] available at: [www.start.umd.edu/start/publications/New\\_vs\\_Old\\_Terrorism.pdf](http://www.start.umd.edu/start/publications/New_vs_Old_Terrorism.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside terrorism*, ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, p. 248

<sup>7</sup> Peter R. Neumann, *Old and new terrorism: Late modernity, globalization and transformation of political violence*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, p. 4

<sup>8</sup> Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Debate over "New" vs. "Old" Terrorism’, 2007, pp. 30-34, presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, [internet] available at: [www.start.umd.edu/start/publications/New\\_vs\\_Old\\_Terrorism.pdf](http://www.start.umd.edu/start/publications/New_vs_Old_Terrorism.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

term 'radicalisation' has become central to terrorism studies and counter-terrorism policy-making<sup>9</sup>. Although there is no agreed definition on the meaning of radicalisation, it is commonly depicted as a process<sup>10</sup>. Radicalisation is linked to the adoption of "an extremist belief system"<sup>11</sup> with the scope of promoting changes but is not necessarily linked to the use of violence<sup>12</sup>. As a matter of fact, many people hold radical ideas but do not engage in any terrorist activities<sup>13</sup>. Violent radicalisation is the "process of adopting an extremist belief system with the intention and justification of using violence to achieve political, religious or social goals"<sup>14</sup>. Numerous and diverse efforts have been put in place to understand and describe the process, which could be approached and analysed from different disciplinary perspectives. The "relative deprivation theory" and the "exposure theory", for example, might provide for a lens of analysis to explain why individuals engage into radicalisation pathways. Results and theories elaborated within the social movement studies have greatly contributed to the ongoing debate. Tilly, Tarrow and McAdam, for example, have analyzed the role played by the political system and the state propensity towards repression when studying collective violence<sup>15</sup>: this standpoint has been of inspiration for a branch of the terrorism studies that has focused on the processual and relational understanding of violence<sup>16</sup>. Several authors<sup>17</sup> have highlighted the importance of going beyond the individual focus to broaden the analysis to the socio-political context and the biographical exposure to violence. In this study the expression "radicalisation" will be used if implying violence and the contextual socio-political factors will be taken into account in the analysis of the causes of violence. In addition, it is worthy to underline that radicalisation can be driven by various inspirational factors: for the purpose of this study, the focus of the data collection and analysis will be limited to Islamist driven radicalisation<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Arun Kundnani, 'Radicalisation: the journey of a concept', *Race & Class*, 54:2 (Oct-Dec 2012), p. 3

<sup>10</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Gary LaFree, 'Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation', *IJCV*, 6:1 (2012), p. 4

<sup>11</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, 'Risk assessment decisions for violent political extremism', Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada (2009), p. 4 [internet] available at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>12</sup> Alex P. Schmid, 'Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review', *ICCT Research Paper*, March 2013 [internet] available at: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>13</sup> Randy Borum, 'Radicalisation into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4 (2011), p. 8

<sup>14</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, 'Risk Assessment of Radicalisation to Violence, Application of VERA-2 in Prisons', at the Council for Penological Co-operation, 11th Working Group Meeting, 11 January 2016

<sup>15</sup> Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, *Dynamics of contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

<sup>16</sup> Didier Bigo and Daniel Hermant, *La relation terroriste. Analyse de la violence politique des organisations clandestines dans les democraties occidentales* (Paris: Etudes Polemologiques/Documentation francaise, 1998)

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide bombers: Allah's new Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Gilles Kepel, *The war for Muslim minds: Islam and the West* (Harvard University Press, 2004); Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Laurent Bonelli (ed.) *Le passage par la violence politique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011)

<sup>18</sup> The author is aware of the limitations and implications arising from the terminology chosen for the current project. The term Islamism is not neutral and has experienced an increased popularity after 9/11 in association with a political interpretation of Islam. Defining Islamism as the political movement of the advocates of contemporary political Islam has some impact in terms of depoliticization and disempowerment of some of the instances brought forward by Islam in the political arena. Aware of these risks, the author does not engage into a comprehensive assessment of the differences between Islam and Islamism as this would be out of the scope of the current project. However, the author does embrace the idea that these two concepts are different and uses the term Islamism in line with the use that it is commonly retrieved among terrorist scholars such as Roy and Kepel, thus referring to a totalitarian *weltanschauung* linked to the world political order and structure.

The term extremism, often used in connection to radicalisation, is a “culturally relative” word in the sense that views are labeled as “«extreme» within one cultural context or time”<sup>19</sup>: political ideas/ideologies can be defined as extreme when they “oppose a society's core values and principles”<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, to radicalisation, extremism is not necessarily linked to violence: “violent extremism consists in promoting, supporting or committing acts which may lead to terrorism and which are aimed at defending an ideology advocating racial, national, ethnic or religious supremacy or opposing core democratic principles and values”<sup>21</sup>.

Finally, disengagement and deradicalisation are two widely used terms in counter-terrorism literature. The rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist inmates often requires disengagement activities, which aim at producing a behavioral change, such as, for example, modifying the role played in a group. Disengagement does not imply necessarily “a change in values or ideals, but requires relinquishing the objective of achieving change through violence”<sup>22</sup>. Unlikely, deradicalisation necessitates “a cognitive shift— i.e., a fundamental change in understanding”<sup>23</sup>.

The present research project builds on the previous studies conducted on terrorists and/or on terrorist groups with the aim of contributing to the international debate by collecting and analysing primary data for the Italian case-study. Available literature suggests that predictability is extremely difficult: scholars agree in stating that “there is no one pattern or profile of terrorists”<sup>24</sup> and analyses of past perpetrators have revealed that they have been rather “unremarkable individuals, who have led unremarkable lives, have held unremarkable jobs”<sup>25</sup>. Although a direct causal link between socio-economic disadvantage and radicalisation has not been found<sup>26</sup>, there are some elements that may be conducive to terrorism, such as political frustration<sup>27</sup>, socio-economic, cultural and historical conditions<sup>28</sup>. It is indeed fundamental to underline that

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<sup>19</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, ‘Risk assessment decisions for violent political extremism’, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada (2009), pp. 4 [internet] available at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>20</sup> Paul Neuman, ‘Prisons and Terrorism Radicalisation and De-radicalisation in 15 Countries’, A policy report published by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), 2010, p. 12 [internet] available at: <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Prisons-and-terrorism-15-countries.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe, ‘Dealing with Radicalisation in a Prison and Probation Context’, RAN P&P - practitioners working paper [internet] available at: [ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-news/docs/ran\\_p\\_and\\_p\\_practitioners\\_working\\_paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-news/docs/ran_p_and_p_practitioners_working_paper_en.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>22</sup> Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Ellie B. Hearne, ‘Beyond Terrorism: Deradicalisation and Disengagement for Violent Extremism’, *International Peace Institute*, October 2008, p. 1 [internet] available at: <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/beter.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>23</sup> Council of Europe, ‘Dealing with Radicalisation in a Prison and Probation Context’, RAN P&P - practitioners working paper [internet] available at: [ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-news/docs/ran\\_p\\_and\\_p\\_practitioners\\_working\\_paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-news/docs/ran_p_and_p_practitioners_working_paper_en.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>24</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, ‘Risk assessment decisions for violent political extremism’, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada (2009), p. 5 [internet] available at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, ‘The Radicalisation Process: From Conversion to Jihad’, prepared by US Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Division, 10 May 2006, p. 2 [internet] available at: [cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf](https://cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>26</sup> Jitka Maleckova, ‘Impoverished Terrorists: Stereotype or Reality?’ in Tore Bjørgo (ed.) *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, Reality and Ways Forward* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 33-42. Maleckova concludes that ‘neither the participants nor the adherents of militant activities... are recruited predominantly from the poor... [and] poverty on a national level does not predict the number of terrorist attacks carried out by individuals coming from a country’

<sup>27</sup> Christiane Nischler and Roger Morefield, ‘An actor oriented empirical model of the roots of terrorism’, *Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, 24:3 (Fall 2012), p. 53

<sup>28</sup> Domenico Tosini, ‘Sociology of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: A Social Science Understanding of Terrorist

every terrorist is moved by his/her own specific motivations, that could be intrinsic (the motivation comes from within, the person feels a calling), extrinsic (the motivation comes from outside/external factors) or a combination of the two. Given these premises, it may be time to abandon the why question to address the “how variable”: as stated by John Horgan, director of the University of Massachusetts Lowell's Center for Terrorism and Security Studies, “we may never fully crack the code, but we won't make any progress at all by continuing to obsess over the question of Why? Truth be told, it's probably unanswerable. A better starting point is to answer the How? questions: How do people become involved in terrorism? How is a specific role in the movement assigned to them? How does the recruiter find them, or vice versa? And how is trust established in an online relationship that could well end in death for at least one of the parties?”<sup>29</sup>.

This research is guided by the interest to address the how question for the Italian case-study, through the identification and analysis of the main characteristics linked to the Islamist radicalisation occurring in Italy . and relies on the idea that the concept of terrorism entails very different representations and meanings elaborated and put forward by different and diverse actors. Consequently, different perspectives will be taken into consideration to develop a holistic picture, starting from the assumption that the meaning of what terrorism is “is decided through symbolic labelling, social agreement and a range of inter-subjective practices [and] is constituted by and through the discursive practices which make it a concrete reality for politicians, law enforcement officials, the media, the public, academics and so on”<sup>30</sup>. As claimed by Neumann, terrorism is “a deeply political enterprise which cannot be understood by looking at individuals and their 'action pathways' alone”<sup>31</sup>. This research will thus attempt to shed light on how Islamist radicalization occur in Italy by examining its conceptualization and narration by a heterogeneous group of stakeholders dealing with the phenomenon in their professional endeavors and from a socio-political angle. In line with such a perspective, the following research questions have guided the current study: what are the relevant institutions, experts and professionals’ conceptual interpretations of terrorism and radicalisation?; How does - according to the relevant institutions, experts and professionals - the Islamist radicalisation process occur in Italy?; How can the phenomenon of radicalisation be prevented and countered according to the relevant institutions, experts and professionals? Addressing these questions will allow to identify and analyse various conceptions of the Islamist radicalisation process occurring in Italy with the final purpose of elaborating a comprehensive description of the phenomenon combining multiple interpretations and viewpoints. The data collected will contribute to advance knowledge on the meaning(s) of Islamist radicalisation in the Italian context, on the pathways to radicalisation according to relevant stakeholders and on the institutional and professional responses to the phenomenon.

As the phenomenon of radicalization is complex and heterogeneous in nature and is influenced “not only by the dynamics of political contention but also [by] historical precedents and processes, Italy has been selected as a case-study for the purpose of this project. Italy presents unique characteristics in the European panorama: although the country has served as a basis for “sophisticated jihadist networks”, it has experienced only minor episodes of violent extremism in its own soil<sup>32</sup> and limited cases of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>33</sup> despite the presence of the Vatican and the military involvement in the Middle East. In addition,

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Threat’, *Sociology Compass*, 1:2 (2007), pp. 671-675

<sup>29</sup> John Horgan, ‘Don't Ask Why People Join the Islamic State — Ask How’, *Vice News*, 10 September 2014, [internet] available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wjyygy/dont-ask-why-people-join-the-islamic-state-ask-how> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>30</sup> Richard Jackson, ‘An argument for terrorism’, *Perspectives on terrorism*, 2:2 (2008), p. 28

<sup>31</sup> Peter R. Neumann, ‘The trouble with radicalisation’, *International affairs*, 89:4 (2003), p. 892

<sup>32</sup> Vidino, L. ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy’, p. 31

<sup>33</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Italy's Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ICCT-Marone-Italys-Jihadists-in-the-Syrian-Civil-War-August2016-1.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

few studies have been conducted on Islamist radicalization in Italy<sup>34</sup>. Finally, Italy has experienced a huge wave of terrorism in the 1970s, known as “Years of Lead”, which may be an asset both for potential terrorists and institutions from an organizational perspective.

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<sup>34</sup> See Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, ‘The Buccinasco pentiti: a unique case study of radicalization’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:3, pp. 398-418, 2011 and ‘Radicalization, Linkage and Diversity: Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe’, Occasional Paper, *RAND Corporation*, July 2011; Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016 and ‘Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq’, *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 2016, 7:1, pp. 20-35; Andrea Beccaro and Stefano Bonino, ‘Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Italian Exceptionalism and Its Limits’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2019, pp. 1-18

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## Chapter 1 - The complex and multi-disciplinary efforts of defining the radicalisation process and developing de- and counter-radicalisation strategies

Literature on terrorism has increased exponentially after the attacks towards the Twin Towers in 2001 and the subject has been approached from the perspectives and with the tools of various disciplines<sup>35</sup>, such as political science, international relations (IR), security studies, communication studies, social psychology, and social movement studies (SMS). Each disciplinary standpoint has been driven by different research questions and objectives. IR scholars, for example, mainly focus on the role played by the terrorist threat in the international arena, while the communication studies primarily examine media-connected aspects and SMS refer to the interdisciplinary academic efforts developed so far to explain social mobilization and contentious politics to identify the socio-political dynamics behind participation in a terrorist group.

Given the scope of this research, literature pertaining to four main areas of study will be further scrutinized. By analyzing socio-political perspectives, a representation of terrorism as a form of collective/political violence as well as a result of a nihilist generation rebellion movement will be provided. Through the eyes of practitioners, a portrayal of the radicalisation process and the counter-terrorism measures will be elaborated. By referring to the psychological dimension, the process of becoming a terrorist and the main ingredients for radicalisation will be described. Finally, the main criminological theories on terrorism will be presented and discussed.

### *The socio-political perspective(s): terrorism as a form of collective/political violence and/or as a result of a nihilist generation rebellion movement*

The notion of political terrorism falls into the broader umbrella of political violence: politically motivated terrorism exploits political violence as a tool to achieve its goals<sup>36</sup>. In line with this perspective and as claimed by Hannah Arendt<sup>37</sup>, violence holds an instrumental nature: it is a mean to reach an objective and, as stated by Crenshaw in 1981, terrorism resorts to violence to communicate “a political message”<sup>38</sup>. Table 1<sup>39</sup> provides a context for the concept of terrorism in the broader arena of the “political action”:

<i>State of Peace</i>	
<i>State Actor</i>	<i>Non-state Actor</i>
<i>Conventional Politics</i>	

<sup>35</sup> Edwin Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies. Comparing Theory and Practice* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015), p. 76

<sup>36</sup> Max Kaase, ‘Partecipazione, Valori e Violenza Politica’, in Raimondo Catanzaro, ed., *La Politica della Violenza* (Il Mulino: Bologna, 1990), p. 12

<sup>37</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On violence* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Orlando, 1970)

<sup>38</sup> Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Causes of Terrorism’, *Comparative Politics*, 13: 4 (July 1981), p. 379

<sup>39</sup> Alex Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political terrorism: A new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories, and literature* (Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick, 1988), pp. 58-59

I. Rule of Law (Routinized rule, legitimated by tradition, customs, constitutional procedures)	I. Opposition politics (Lobbying among power holders, formation of opposition press and parties, rallies, electoral contest, litigation [use of courts for political struggle])
<i>Unconventional Politics</i>	
II. Oppression (Manipulation of competitive electoral process, censorship, surveillance, harassment, discrimination, infiltration of opposition, misuse of emergency legislation)	II. Non-violent Action (Social protest for political persuasion of rulers and masses; demonstrations to show strength of public support; non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and other forms of non-violent action)
<i>Violent Politics</i>	
III. Violent Repression for control of state power III.1. (Political Justice, Political Imprisonment) III.2. Assassination III.3. State-terrorism (torture, death, squads, disappearances, concentration camps) III. 4. Massacres III. 5. Internal War III. 6. Ethnocide/Politicide/Genocide	III. Use of Violence for contestation challenging state power III. 1. Material destruction III. 2. Assassination (Individuated political murder) III. 3. Terrorism (De-individuated political murder) III. 4. Massacres III. 5. Guerrilla Warfare III. 6. Insurgency, Revolution (if successful)
<i>State of War</i>	

**Table 1 - The Spectrum of Political Action (author's elaboration based on Schmid, 2004)**

Opposing the interchangeability of terrorism and political violence, Donatella Della Porta<sup>40</sup> distinguishes the notion of terrorism to the broader concept of political violence by identifying 4 main factors that define and characterize the phenomenon of terrorism. The first element refers to the nature of the actors, in the sense that terrorism implies the use of violence in a conflict involving political actors. The second feature concerns the nature of the group, which is illegal by definition. The third characteristic is linked to the dimension of the group: participation in terrorist groups is usually limited to a minority, which is one of the elements that allows distinction between terrorist groups and guerrilla/revolutionary movements. Finally, the fourth factor is the modus operandi, because terrorist groups mainly use violent tactics.

Summarizing these characteristics, the following operational definition of terrorism has been provided by Della Porta: terrorism is “the activity of those illegal organizations of reduced dimension that, through the continuous and almost exclusive use of forms of violent action, aim at achieving mainly political objectives”. The operational definition provided by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD)<sup>41</sup>, one of the largest terrorism databases worldwide, recalls some elements of Della Porta’s explanation as it refers to an “intentional act of violence or threat of violence by a non-state actor”. Nevertheless, from 1998 the GTD, currently known as GTD2, has also added the presence of at least two of the following three criteria: “the violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal; the violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims; the violent act was outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law”<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Il Terrorismo di Sinistra* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1990), pp. 18-20

<sup>41</sup> Gary Lafree and Laura Dugan, ‘Introducing the Global Terrorism Database’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 06 April 2007, 19:2, pp.181-204

<sup>42</sup> Edwin Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies. Comparing Theory and Practice* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015), p. 20

Despite the fact that various scholars, policy makers and practitioners have studied the phenomenon of terrorism and have provided several interpretations, there is no universal agreed definition. According to Schmid, there are several reasons why it is so difficult to elaborate a common definition of terrorism. The main challenges are represented by the following aspects<sup>43</sup>: the legal-socio-political divergent nature of the concept; the “(de)legitimization and criminalization” implied in the definition process; the various types of terrorism; the change of meaning in the past 200 years. Given that the definitions of terrorism can refer to a broad range of heterogeneous phenomena, it is a responsibility of the researcher to further narrow down the scope of his/her work.

Difficulties in identifying a comprehensive and universally accepted definition of terrorism reflect the diversity of the existing scientific contributions on the subject. The analysis of the available literature on terrorism could be facilitated by distinguishing the approach adopted: “top-down approaches” mainly study “political, social, economic, or even evolutionary circumstances” as sources of terrorism, while “bottom-up approaches” primarily focus on the individual and the group.<sup>44</sup> Della Porta<sup>45</sup> provides an extensive analysis of the limits of the levels of analysis usually applied to the study of political violence, namely the system (macro), the group (meso) and the individual (micro)<sup>46,47</sup>. The micro level, usually based on a psycho-social approach, mainly focuses on the aggressive instinct of certain individuals leading to political crimes. The limitations of this perspective are related to the fact that the biographical scope tends to downplay the role of other factors, such as, first of all, the context in which the individual lives and acts. Differently from the micro level of analysis, the meso perspective develops around the role and dynamics of the group: through this lens, terrorist groups can be seen as anti-systemic movements that use violence to find their way in a political system in which old members refuse to exit<sup>48</sup>. Finally, the macro approach attempts to explain the origin of terrorism through a study of the system and its variables (mainly economic, social, political and cultural ones). This perspective can both refer to structural reasons, such as social cleavages or violent cultural tradition, and to context-specific explanations, for instance rapid modernization process or intermediate stages of the economic growth.

Not only are these perspectives not mutually exclusive, but there are some approaches that take into consideration the “interactions between circumstances and actors [...] such as rational choice theory and relative deprivation/oppression theory”<sup>49</sup>. The integration of the three levels of analysis should take into consideration the subjects and the theories connected to each perspective, as represented by Figure 1 below.

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<sup>43</sup> Alex Schmid, ‘Terrorism-the definitional problem’, *Case W. Res. J. Int’l L.*, 36 (2004), p. 395

<sup>44</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49: 1, February 2005, p. 11

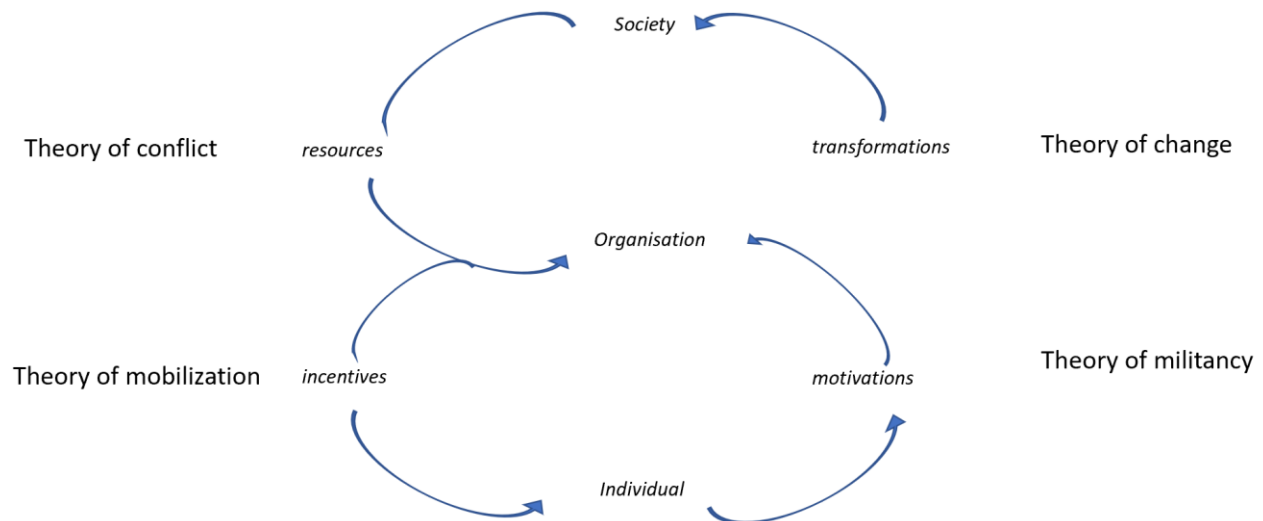
<sup>45</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Il Terrorismo di Sinistra* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1990), pp. 21-28

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20

<sup>47</sup> Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Causes of Terrorism’, *Comparative Politics*, 13: 4 (July 1981), p. 380

<sup>48</sup> Charles Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1978), pp. 172-188

<sup>49</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49: 1, February 2005, p. 11



**Figure 1 - Approaches to collective action in relation to the level of analysis (author's elaboration based on Della Porta, 1990)**

While the micro level is usually explored in the psycho-social theories<sup>50</sup>, the meso and macro perspectives have been studied extensively in the attempt to understand violence from a socio-political standpoint. Considering terrorism in its group dimension, for example, has allowed scholars to apply theories and frameworks of analysis from the vast sociological branch that studies the social movements. In the last 30 years, social movement theory (SMT) has been increasingly used to study forms of political violence by Gurr<sup>51</sup>, Tilly<sup>52</sup>, Della Porta and Tarrow<sup>53</sup>, Della Porta<sup>54</sup>, Hafez<sup>55</sup>, Beck<sup>56</sup>, as well as by the critical terrorism studies<sup>57</sup>. Tilly, Tarrow and McAdam have emphasized the role played by the political system and the state propensity towards repression when studying collective violence, claiming that radicalism is influenced by the structure of political opportunities<sup>58</sup>. This standpoint has been of inspiration for a branch of the terrorism studies that has focused on the processual and relational understanding of violence<sup>59</sup>. Several authors<sup>60</sup> have highlighted the importance of going beyond the individual focus to broaden the analysis to the socio-political context

<sup>50</sup> For psychological theories in the study of terrorism see the dedicated sub-heading

<sup>51</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Why men rebel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015)

<sup>52</sup> Charles Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1978)

<sup>53</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, 'Unwanted children: Political violence and the cycle of protest in Italy, 1966–1973', *European Journal of Political Research*, 1986, 14:5-6, pp. 607-632

<sup>54</sup> Donatella Della Porta, 'Research on social movements and political violence', *Qualitative sociology*, 2008, 31:3, pp. 221-230

<sup>55</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims rebel: Repression and resistance in the Islamic world*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003)

<sup>56</sup> Colin J. Beck, 'The contribution of social movement theory to understanding terrorism', *Sociology Compass*, 2:5, 2008, pp. 1565-1581

<sup>57</sup> Jeroen Gunning, 'Social movement theory and the study of terrorism', in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, Jeroen Gunning, eds., *Critical terrorism studies: A new research agenda* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 156-177

<sup>58</sup> Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, *Dynamics of contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

<sup>59</sup> Didier Bigo and Daniel Hermant, *La relation terroriste. Analyse de la violence politique des organisations clandestines dans les democraties occidentales* (Paris: Etudes Polemologiques/Documentation francaise, 1998)

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide bombers: Allah's new Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Gilles Kepel, *The war for Muslim minds: Islam and the West* (Harvard University Press, 2004); Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Laurent Bonelli, ed., *Le passage par la violence politique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011)

and the biographical exposure to violence. A social-movement framework could “de-exceptionalise terrorism by conceptualizing it as part of a wider, evolving spectrum of movement tactics, thereby [...] challenging its ideological underpinnings”<sup>61</sup>. Relying on the conviction that political violence “can neither be explained in a vacuum nor in isolation from other forms of contention”, this approach focuses on the broader context of “social, political and cultural conflicts”<sup>62</sup>. The importance of considering the surrounding context has been emphasized not only by scholars of the SMS but also by well-known terrorist experts<sup>63</sup>. The SMS is, nevertheless, providing a significant contribution to the study of terrorism through its tools and frameworks of analysis, that put at the heart of the approach the “processual dimension”<sup>64</sup> and the “broader political struggles”<sup>65</sup>. Using the categories of the SMS, Wieviorka defines terrorism as “the most extreme and distorted form” of antimovement, which manipulates the essential principles of a social movement, namely identity, opposition and totality<sup>66</sup>.

Another well-known example of a macro analysis has been provided by David Rapoport in his theorization of the four waves of modern terrorism. As a matter of fact, Rapoport’s model refers to the global dimension, challenges the organizational scope mainly adopted by terrorist experts (meso level) and explains terrorism as a “a cycle of activity [...] characterized by expansion and contraction phases”<sup>67</sup>. According to Rapoport, the first expression of modern terrorism is to be found in the anarchist violence originated in Russia in the 1880s against the state perceived as the source of injustices. Anarchism has been followed by the anti-colonial wave, dominated by indigenous people demanding independence from Western countries (1920s-1960s). The third phase, beginning in the 60s, is represented by the New Left, inspired by the war in Vietnam and aimed at substituting capitalism with redistribution of wealth. Finally, the fourth wave, beginning in the 1990s and still ongoing, is characterized by its religious nature and, in particular, by the opposition of the Islamic religion to Western life-styles and corrupted morality<sup>68</sup>. The theory elaborated by Rapoport provides a new lens to analyze the phenomenon of terrorism from a broader geographical and historical perspective and unfolds new research areas, especially considering the uniqueness of the fourth wave of terrorism, the only one not generated by secular forces. Neumann builds on Rapoport’s work to scrutinize the phenomenon of new jihadists travelling from the West to join the Islamic State (IS). According to Neumann, IS represents the fifth wave of terrorism: the Islamic State entails the heritage of the experience of al-Qaeda but has managed to develop new strategies and tactical approaches as a consequence of globalization<sup>69</sup>. The author explains how Islamism is not an historical product of Islam but is rather the result of the clash between Islam and the

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<sup>61</sup> Jeroen Gunning, ‘Social movement theory and the study of terrorism’, in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, Jeroen Gunning, eds., *Critical terrorism studies: A new research agenda* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 157

<sup>62</sup> Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou and Stefan Malthaner, ‘A contentious politics approach to the explanation of radicalisation’, in Chares Demetriou, Stefan Malthaner and Lorenzo Bosi, eds., *Dynamics of political violence: a process-oriented perspective on radicalisation and the escalation of political conflict* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), p. 2

<sup>63</sup> Martha Crenshaw, ‘Thoughts on relating terrorism to historical contexts’, in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in context* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 7

<sup>64</sup> Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou and Stefan Malthaner, ‘A contentious politics approach to the explanation of radicalisation’, in Chares Demetriou, Stefan Malthaner and Lorenzo Bosi, eds., *Dynamics of political violence: a process-oriented perspective on radicalisation and the escalation of political conflict* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), p. 3

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

<sup>66</sup> Michel Wieviorka, *The making of terrorism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 5

<sup>67</sup> David Rapoport, ‘The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism’, in Audrey Cronin and James Ludes, eds., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), p. 47

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 50-65

<sup>69</sup> Peter R. Neumann, *Radicalized: New Jihadists and the threat to the West*, London: IB Tauris, 2016

colonial era and Western modernity<sup>70</sup> and further analyses the Islamic State's strategy in light of contemporary globalization.

Scholars and professionals in the field of terrorism studies have been trying for decades to elaborate a comprehensive analysis of the root causes of the phenomenon as well as the elements that facilitate the engagement in terrorist groups. In this attempt, Martha Crenshaw, one of the world's most famous terrorist experts, identifies two sets of conducive factors that combine the three levels of analysis discussed above, namely the micro, meso, macro levels: Crenshaw distinguishes between "preconditions", that are "factors that set the stage for terrorism over the long run", and "precipitants", that are "specific events that immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism"<sup>71</sup>. Preconditions can be further divided into "permissive factors", providing the conditions for terrorism to occur, and situational characteristics directly encouraging terrorist acts, such as the grievances of an identifiable subgroup, that experiences and/or perceives a sense of injustice, or the limited opportunities in terms of political participation. Among the permissive factors, Crenshaw identifies modernization and its promotion of interconnected networks of individuals and services, the "social facilitation", namely the fact that terrorism is accepted or even promoted as a viable political custom by a certain society and the institutional unwillingness or inability to prevent terrorism. A clear description of "preconditions" and "precipitants" represents a challenging task. Various authors have examined the permissive factors and the situational motivating elements from specific and diverse perspectives. According to Peter Neumann, for example, three elements play a key role in the radicalisation process, namely grievances, ideology and recruitment: "without grievances—real or perceived—radical ideologies will not resonate. Without ideology, grievances may lead to crime and other forms of disorder and delinquency but are unlikely to result in politically motivated violence. And without recruitment, it will be impossible to channel individuals' sense of political frustration into collective action"<sup>72</sup>.

In France, three main analytical standpoints have emerged in the last decade, namely the explanations provided by Olivier Roy, Gilles Kepel and François Burgat. Olivier Roy offers a peculiar analysis of the phenomenon, which he describes as a "Islamization of radicalism" rather than a "radicalisation of Islam"<sup>73</sup>. Roy rejects both the "culturalist" and the "third world" explanations, questions the existence of structural causes and explains jihadism as a generational and nihilist revolt that "occurs around an imaginary hero, violence and death — not Sharia or utopia"<sup>74</sup>. According to Roy, socio-economic explanations are not sufficient to understand the phenomenon, while there is a clear generational factor that is linked to a psychological dimension<sup>75</sup>: ISIS and al-Qaeda offer to a nihilist generation a way to turn from losers to super-heroes by addressing personal grievances, providing a sense of belonging and promoting a sensational narrative<sup>76</sup>. This perspective is linked to the anthropological analysis of the phenomenon provided by Atran, according to whom radicalisation is the expression of a quest for significance by young people that struggle for an identity in an apathetic and contradictory world negatively affected by globalization<sup>77</sup>. Roy's standpoint echoes Sageman's refusal in identifying poverty, lack of education, employment or social responsibility as

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Martha Crenshaw, 'The Causes of Terrorism', *Comparative Politics*, 13: 4 (July 1981), p. 381

<sup>72</sup> Peter R. Neumann, *Joining al-Qaeda: jihadist recruitment in Europe* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 7

<sup>73</sup> Olivier Roy, 'The Islamization of radicalism', 11 January 2016, [internet] available at: <http://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/01/11/opinion/u/the-islamization-of-radicalism/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Olivier Roy, 'Islamic terrorist radicalisation in Europe', in Samir Amghar, Amel Boubekour and Micheal Emerson, eds., *European Islam: Challenges for society and public policy*, Centre For European Policy Studies Brussels, 2007, pp. 52-60

<sup>76</sup> Olivier Roy, *Generazione ISIS: Chi sono i giovani che scelgono il califfato e perché combattono l'occidente* [Le djihad et la mort] (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017), pp. 83-86

<sup>77</sup> Scott Atran, *L'Etat islamique est une révolution* (Paris: Les Liens Qui Libèrent Editions, 2016)

radicalisation factors<sup>78</sup>. Nevertheless, contrary to Roy, Sageman is more reluctant to use the “youth” lens of analysis, while sees in networks, namely social and family ties, the mechanism by which people become involved. Bonanate offers a similar viewpoint, attributing the origins of terrorism to the self-perpetuating “immobilisme” of a “blocked society” that is strong enough to preserve itself (presumably through popular inertia) yet resistant to innovation<sup>79</sup>. Crenshaw framed a similar concept stating that “students or young professionals, with prior political experience, are disillusioned with the prospects of changing society and see little chance of access to the system despite their privileged status”<sup>80</sup>.

Contrary to Roy, Gilles Kepel emphasizes the role played by Islam in the radicalisation process. Kepel argues that radicalisation is brought forward by young EU residents that oppose European values in the name of Islam and, in particular, in the framework of Salafism<sup>81</sup>. Although both break with the blasphemous European environment, Kepel identifies two branches of Salafism. One, a form of sublimation for unemployment, identity malaise, or real addiction, supports a violent and armed jihad. The other combats through Qur'anic verses and quotes of the Prophet<sup>82</sup>. In his study on France, Kepel represents 2005 as the key to understand jihadism in the country. In 2005, France witnessed popular uprisings led by a generation that is, for the first time, citizen of the “host country” and, in the name of this citizenship, advances claims and requests. From 2005 on, a new era with access to digital forms of communication and recruitment has begun. Finally, in 2005 Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's magnum opus “Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah”, in English “The call for a global Islamic resistance” was published online inspiring hundreds of jihadists<sup>83</sup>.

Finally, François Burgat criticizes both the positions of Roy and Kepel underlining that they entail the risk of forgetting the bigger picture and the effects of Western foreign policies in fueling frustrations and radicalisation. Concerning Roy's thesis, Burgat emphasizes that portraying radicalized individuals as socially failed, intellectually and politically invertebrate may overshadow the political demands behind terrorist acts. Meanwhile, he suggests that the religious explanation of radicalisation provided by Kepel ignores completely the role played by Western powers and policies, thus absolving Western countries from all responsibilities. According to Burgat, the causes of radicalisation are to be found in in-house policies and foreign politics that do not allow people to fully live their lives<sup>84</sup>.

From a certain perspective, Alessandro Orsini expands the views of Roy and his analysis of the psychological frustrations, by providing a broader socio-anthropological framework of analysis. From the analysis of terrorists' bibliographies, Orsini has developed a model to explain the phases of the radicalisation process, known with the acronym DRIA: the first phase is represented by the disintegration of the social identity (D), followed by the reconstruction of the social identity through a radical ideology (R), the integration in a revolutionary sect (I), and the alienation from the surrounding environment (A)<sup>85</sup>. Orsini clarifies that his analysis refers to what he calls “vocational terrorists”, namely people that have decided to sacrifice their lives

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<sup>78</sup> Mark Sageman, ‘A strategy for fighting international Islamist terrorists’, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618:1, 2008, p. 224

<sup>79</sup> Luigi Bonanate, ‘Some unanticipated consequences of terrorism’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 16:3, 1979, pp. 197-211

<sup>80</sup> Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Causes of Terrorism’, *Comparative Politics*, 13: 4 (July 1981), p. 384

<sup>81</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Fitna: Guerra al cuore dell'Islam* (Roma: Laterza, 2004), pp. 238-239

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239

<sup>83</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Terreur dans l'Hexagone: Genèse du djihad français* (Editions Gallimard, 2015)

<sup>84</sup> François Burgat, *Comprendre l'islam politique: Une trajectoire de recherche sur l'altérité islamiste, 1973-2016* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), pp. 254-272

<sup>85</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 67

in the name of a spiritual goal<sup>86</sup>, driven by ideological motivations and fearless of death<sup>87</sup>. A vocational terrorist is characterized, according to Orsini, by several peculiar characteristics, that can be described as: radical catastrophism, waiting for the end, obsession with purity, identification of evil, obsession with purification, exaltation of martyrdom or desire to be persecuted, and purification of the means through the end<sup>88</sup>. These elements lead to the elaboration of a shared narrative on the basis of which vocational terrorists plan their actions in the framework of the “DRIA model”: the psychological frustrations, also referred to by Roy, lead to a disintegration of the social identity (D), that is usually followed by the reconstruction of the identity through a radical ideology (R): jihadi ideology is one among other possible ideologies that allows the reconstruction of the identity providing new existential reference points<sup>89</sup>.

The theories presented above represent only the pick of an ongoing and lively academic debate on terrorism and violent radicalisation. Although the topic is certainly connected to the notion of political violence, many scholars have tried to outline the characteristics that make terrorism a unique phenomenon. Heterogeneity is common not only in the effort to identify a definition but also in the theoretical explanations elaborated so far on this subject. Della Porta has provided a key contribution to the debate by proposing a three-levels categorization in studying terrorism: macro, meso and micro perspectives. The macro level of analysis can be traced back to the attempts to scrutinize terrorism from an historical point of view, such as in Rapoport and Neumann’s work, as well as in the efforts of social movements scholars to study the phenomenon from the contentious politics perspective. Some experts have focused more on factors rather than levels of analysis, such as Crenshaw’s preconditions and precipitants or Orsini’s DRIA model. Finally, a heated debate is currently taking place in France between Roy, the father of the “Islamization of radicalism”, who reads the phenomenon as the outcome of a nihilist generation, Kepel, who is drawing attention of the role played by a certain religious interpretation, and Burgat, who is mainly focusing on the counter-effects of Western foreign policy. The different standpoints described in these paragraphs represent a clear example of the complexity of the topic under investigation and the heterogeneity of the perspectives that can (and continue to) be adopted to study it.

### *The practitioners’ response: the radicalisation process and the counter-terrorism measures*

The academia is not the only actor interested in further analyzing and understanding the phenomenon of terrorism. Policy makers and practitioners are equally interested in the topic although usually driven by different motivations and purposes. The most famous analysis in this regard and with a special focus on Islamist terrorism has been elaborated by the FBI counterterrorism division, and, in particular, by Silber and Bhatt. Silber and Bhatt have outlined 4 phases in the process of radicalisation<sup>90</sup>: from the pre-radicalisation phase, in which internal and external factors unique to the person exercise their influence, the individual enters into the self-identification phase, in which he/she is alienated from former life and builds relationships with like-minded people. Self-identification is followed by indoctrination, that leads the individual to think that action is necessary and unavoidable, and, finally, by jihadization/action, namely the moment in which

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<sup>86</sup> Alessandro Orsini, ‘Interview with a terrorist by vocation: A day among the diehard terrorists, Part II’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 36:8, 2013, pp. 672-684

<sup>87</sup> Alessandro Orsini, ‘Poverty, ideology and terrorism: The STAM bond’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35:10, 2012, pp. 678-679

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 671

<sup>89</sup> Alessandro Orsini and Marie Caillat, ‘La radicalisation des terroristes de vocation’, *Commentaire*, 4, 2016, p.784

<sup>90</sup> Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, ‘The Radicalisation Process: From Conversion to Jihad’, prepared by US Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Division, 10 May 2006, [internet] available at: [cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf](http://cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

the individual participates in a form of action such as attack/jihad, facilitation, recruitment or financing. In 2007, the Danish Ministry of Justice commissioned a qualitative review in which the author, Tomas Precht, identifies a “typical pattern of radicalisation” echoing the four phases conceptualized by Silber and Bhatt: pre-radicalisation; conversion and identification with radical Islam; indoctrination and increased group bonding; actual acts of terrorism or planned plots<sup>91</sup>. Figure 2 represents the radicalisation model theorized by Precht, highlighting the key characteristics of each phase.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Pre-radicalisation	Conversion and identification	Conviction and indoctrination	Action
<p><b>Background factors</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Muslim identity crisis</li> <li>2) Experience of discrimination, alienation and perceived injustices</li> <li>3) Living environment, neighbourhood and family</li> <li>4) Personal traumas</li> <li>5) Relative lack of Muslim public debate on Islamist terrorism in the West</li> </ol> <p><b>Meeting places (opportunity)</b></p> <p>Mosque Internet School, youth clubs or work Prison Sport activities Family and friends</p>	<p><b>Conversion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) From no faith to religious identity</li> <li>2) More radical interpretation of Islam</li> <li>3) Shift from one faith to another (e.g. Christianity to Islam)</li> </ol> <p><b>Identification</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increased identification with and acceptance of the cause of extremism</li> </ol> <p><b>Triggers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Glorification of Jihad, activism, “wanting a cause”</li> <li>2) Foreign policy towards the Muslim world</li> <li>3) Charismatic person /leader</li> </ol> <p><b>Meeting places</b></p> <p>Same as phase 1</p>	<p><b>Conviction</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Isolation from former life</li> <li>2) Increased training</li> <li>3) Assignment of roles</li> <li>4) Ready for action</li> </ol> <p><b>Catalyst</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overseas travel (religious or camp training)</li> <li>3) Group bonding</li> <li>4) Local training camp</li> </ol> <p><b>Meeting places</b></p> <p>Private homes Countryside/cars Places difficult to detect</p>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Preparation</li> <li>2) Planning</li> <li>3) Execution</li> </ol> <p><b>Reinforcement</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overseas travel</li> <li>2) Group bonding</li> <li>3) Training camp</li> <li>4) Videos etc</li> </ol> <p><b>Key components</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Financing</li> <li>2) Target selection</li> <li>3) Surveillance</li> <li>4) Fabrication of bomb or other means of terror</li> <li>5) Test run</li> </ol> <p><b>Meeting places</b></p> <p>Same as phase 3</p>

Figure 2 - Precht's model of radicalisation (Precht, 2007, p. 34)

The four phases identified by Silber and Bhatt remind of Sageman’s four prongs, although according to his assessment phases do not necessarily occur sequentially. Marc Sageman, a psychiatrist and former CIA officer, has theorized the strong and crucial role played by collectivity and networks in the radicalisation process, also known as “the bunch of guys” theory in virtue of the emphasis attached to friendship and kinship<sup>92</sup>. According to Sageman, the first aspect of the radicalisation process is represented by a sense of moral outrage originated by the pain suffered by fellow brothers and sisters in a dynamic of “vicarious humiliation”<sup>93</sup>. In order to push an individual towards terrorism, the moral outrage needs to be read through an “enabling interpretation” that links the sense of injustice with the personal experience and life and that is

<sup>91</sup> Tomas Precht, ‘Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: From conversion to terrorism’, Danish Ministry of Justice, December 2007, p. 5, [internet] available at: [http://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Arbejdsomraader/Forskning/Forskningspuljen/2011/2007/Home\\_grown\\_terrorism\\_and\\_Islamist\\_radicalisation\\_in\\_Europe\\_-\\_an\\_assessment\\_of\\_influencing\\_factors\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Arbejdsomraader/Forskning/Forskningspuljen/2011/2007/Home_grown_terrorism_and_Islamist_radicalisation_in_Europe_-_an_assessment_of_influencing_factors__2_.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>92</sup> Arun Kundnani, ‘Radicalisation: the journey of a concept’, *Race & Class*, 54:2, 2012, pp. 3-25, p. 14

<sup>93</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 72-73

usually related to the perception of an ongoing war on Islam. The third phase of the radicalisation process is represented by the interpretation of personal experiences as an expression of the war on Islam. Finally, the individual is brought to the next level of the violent radicalisation path through the role played by mobilizing networks, namely “other people who share their outrage, beliefs, and experiences, but who are further along the path to violence or who are willing to explore it with them”<sup>94</sup>. As Sageman underlines, it is not necessary to live through these phases in a chronological order and the rationale behind participation is usually emotionally motivated: “explanation for their behavior is not found in how they think, but rather in how they feel”<sup>95</sup>.

The contribution of psychology to the practitioners’ domain is not limited to the work of Sageman, although the latter remains one of the most well-known authors in this field, especially thanks to his extensive analysis of the biographies of 172 jihadist terrorists<sup>96</sup>. Randy Borum, a psychologist who served as police officer and police instructor in the United States, developed a “four-stage conceptual model” highlighting the main turning points in the radicalisation process: the process begins with a sense of injustice, grievance, for which a target (policy, person or nation) is considered guilty. The actor considered responsible “is then vilified [...], which facilitates justification or impetus for aggression”<sup>97</sup>. The process of radicalisation theorized by Borum is represented in Figure 3.

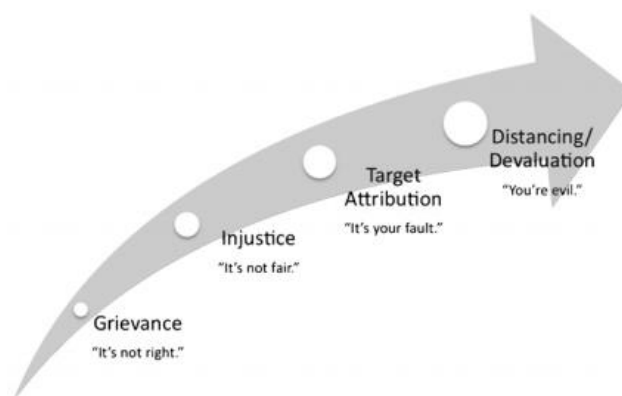


Figure 3 - Borum's Four-stage Model (source: Borum, 2011, p. 39)

It is a common trend, among practitioners, to underline that phases or indicators of radicalisation are a useful tool but should not be read or implemented in a rigid and uncompromising manner as radicalisation is a dynamic and subjective process. Phil Gurski, for example, has identified twelve indicators of al-Qaeda-inspired radicalisation after having served for more than thirty years as an analyst in the Canadian intelligence. Before presenting them, he underlines the risks connected to the use of indicators: there could be false positives and false negatives, signs are not always presented in radicalized individuals, and indicators are not proof. With these preconditions in mind, Gurski lists the following 12 elements as indicators of violent radicalisation: sudden increase in intolerant religiosity; rejection of different interpretation of Islam (including tendency to embrace Salafism); rejection of non-Muslims; rejection of Western characteristics (i.e.

<sup>94</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 84

<sup>95</sup> Mark Sageman, 'A strategy for fighting international Islamist terrorists', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618:1, 2008, p. 225

<sup>96</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding terror networks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004

<sup>97</sup> Randy Borum, 'Radicalisation into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4, 2011, pp. 38-39

democracy, legislation, gender equality, etc.); rejection of Western policies; association with like-minded people (confirmation bias); obsession with jihadi and extremist sites and social media; obsession with the narrative; desire to travel to conflict zones; obsession with violent jihad; obsession with martyrdom; obsession with end-times<sup>98</sup>. From his analysis, Gurski results deeply skeptical towards theories of causal relationships and predictive drivers<sup>99</sup> and rather suggests to focus on the specific cases and the related context.

Generally speaking, practitioners share the idea that predictability is extremely difficult: “there is no one pattern or profile of terrorists”<sup>100</sup> and analyses of past perpetrators have revealed that they have been rather “unremarkable individuals, who have led unremarkable lives, have held unremarkable jobs”<sup>101</sup>. Although a direct causal link between socio-economic disadvantage and radicalisation has not been found<sup>102</sup>, there are some elements that may be conducive to terrorism, such as political frustration<sup>103</sup>, socio-economic, cultural and historical conditions<sup>104</sup>. Some international organizations, such as the UN and the OSCE, have identified several factors that may lead to terrorism, including “prolonged unresolved conflicts, dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, lack of rule of law, violations of human rights, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization and lack of good governance”<sup>105</sup>. From a practitioner perspective, on top of the general assessment of conducive preconditions, it is indeed fundamental to take into consideration the case-specific motivations, that could be intrinsic (the motivation comes from within, the person feels a calling), extrinsic (the motivation comes from outside/external factors) or a combination of the two.

From the theories presented above, it is evident that the debate on the definition and understanding of terrorism and radicalisation has not been limited to the academia. Policy makers and practitioners have significantly attempted to assess and address the terrorist threat, although their efforts differ from those of the academia for two main aspects: first, policy makers and practitioners are driven by the purpose of protecting people’s life and, second, preventive policies and counter-terrorism measures may change drastically according to their interpretation of violent radicalisation.

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<sup>98</sup> Phil Gurski, *The Threat from Within: Recognizing Al-Qaeda-Inspired Radicalisation and Terrorism in the West* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 75-93

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, pp. 43-44

<sup>100</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, ‘Risk assessment decisions for violent political extremism’, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada (2009), p. 5 [internet] available at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsracs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>101</sup> Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, ‘The Radicalisation Process: From Conversion to Jihad’, prepared by US Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Division, 10 May 2006, p. 2 [internet] available at: [cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf](http://cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>102</sup> Jitka Maleckova, ‘Impoverished Terrorists: Stereotype or Reality?’ in Tore Bjørgo, ed., *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, Reality and Ways Forward* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 33-42. Maleckova concludes that ‘neither the participants nor the adherents of militant activities... are recruited predominantly from the poor... [and] poverty on a national level does not predict the number of terrorist attacks carried out by individuals coming from a country’

<sup>103</sup> Christiane Nischler and Roger Morefield, ‘An actor oriented empirical model of the roots of terrorism’, *Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, 24:3, Fall 2012, p. 53

<sup>104</sup> Domenico Tosini, ‘Sociology of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: A Social Science Understanding of Terrorist Threat’, *Sociology Compass*, 1:2 (2007), pp. 671-675

<sup>105</sup> UN General Assembly, ‘The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, A/ RES/60/288, 2006, p. 4; OSCE Ministerial Council, ‘Ministerial Statement on Supporting the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy’, Madrid, 30 November 2007, p. 1

### *The criminological theories*

Despite the differences between common crimes and terrorism, it is evident that the latter presents the main characteristics of a crime. Although terrorism has just recently become a priority in the criminologists' agenda<sup>106</sup>, terrorism studies could benefit from the application of criminological expertise, theories and research methods<sup>107</sup>. In the following paragraphs, the main theories applied to the phenomenon of terrorism will be briefly presented and discussed.

Environmental criminology has often been applied to the study of terrorism. The environmental criminology consists of crime opportunity theories<sup>108</sup>, such as the rational choice<sup>109</sup>, the routine activities<sup>110</sup> and the crime pattern<sup>111</sup>. These various theories and approaches have been adopted by different scholars to explain terrorism and its manifestations. Dugan, LaFree and Piquero, for example, have applied the rational choice scheme to the analysis of terrorist-motivated airline hijackings and have found "mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of deterrence-rational choice policies"<sup>112</sup>. The rational choice approach has been used also by Perry and Hasisi to analyze the motivations of jihadist suicide attackers: according to their findings, suicide attackers, like ordinary offenders, are mainly driven by the attempt to maximize their (future) self-gratifying benefits<sup>113</sup>. The Situational Crime Prevention (SCP)<sup>114</sup>, which derives from a combination of approaches listed above, has been of inspiration for Clarke and Newman in their attempt to outsmart terrorists. Clarke and Newman claim that crime, as all other human acts, is the result of the "interaction between motivation and opportunity"<sup>115</sup>: this dynamic relationship results in the opportunity structure for terrorism, represented in Figure 4.

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<sup>106</sup> Joshua D. Freilich and Gary LaFree, 'Criminology Theory and Terrorism: Introduction to the Special Issue', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27:1, 2015, p. 2

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>108</sup> Gary LaFree and Joshua D. Freilich, *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), p. 354

<sup>109</sup> According the rational choice perspective, the offender estimates the probability of success as well as the costs or benefits linked to committing or not committing the crime: if the equation is positive, the offender is likely to commit the crime

<sup>110</sup> According to the routine activities theory crime occurs when three elements converge in time and space: a likely offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian. For further literature on the routine activity theory, see Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson, 'Social Change and Crime Rate Trends : A Routine Activity Approach', *American Sociological Review*, 1979, 44:4, pp. 588-608

<sup>111</sup> Crime pattern claims that crime occurs at the intersection between the environment of the offender and that of the victim. For further reading on this approach see Paul J. Brantingham and Patricia L. Brantingham, 'Environment, routine and situation: Toward a pattern theory of crime', *Advances in criminological theory*, 5:2 (1993), pp. 259-94

<sup>112</sup> Laura Dugan, Gary LaFree, and Alex R. Piquero, 'Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings', *Criminology*, 43: 4 (2005), p. 1059

<sup>113</sup> Simon Perry and Badi Hasisi, 'Rational choice rewards and the jihadist suicide bomber', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27:1 (2015), pp. 53-80

<sup>114</sup> Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) is aimed at reducing the opportunities for crime to occur

<sup>115</sup> Ronald V. Clarke and Graeme R. Newman, *Outsmarting the Terrorists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006), p. 7

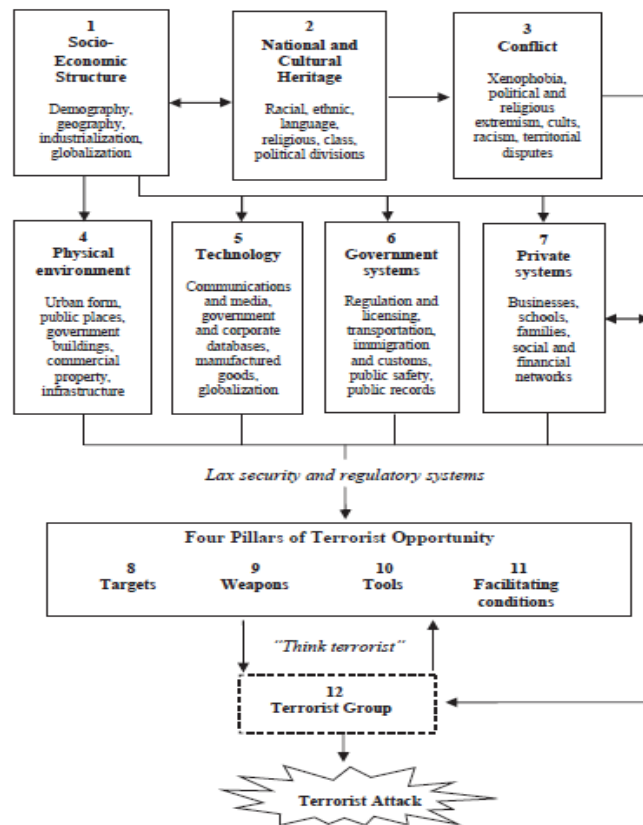


Figure 4-Opportunity structure for terrorism (source: Clarke and Newman, 2006)

A different branch of criminological theories examining terrorism focuses on strains. Through the analysis of strain-based explanations of terrorism and the assessment of their weaknesses, Robert Agnew has developed a General Strain Theory (GST) of terrorism. Based on the GST central claim that “certain strains [...] increase the likelihood of a crime”, Agnew affirms that “that terrorism is more likely when people experience ‘collective strains’ that are: (a) high in magnitude, with civilians affected; (b) unjust; and (c) inflicted by significantly more powerful *others*, including ‘complicit’ civilians, with whom members of the strained collectivity have weak ties”<sup>116</sup>. These collective strains, that could be objective or perceived, increase the likelihood of terrorism as they hamper “negative emotional states”, affect social control by reducing collective social ties, foster models and beliefs that promote terrorism and enhance collective responses. Agnew concludes by emphasizing that the GST does not claim to provide an exhaustive explanation of the phenomenon: it sheds light on some of the several causes of terrorism and it does not include in the analysis the “larger social forces that contribute to the development of the strains”<sup>117</sup>.

As shown by the theories presented above, the criminological approach always recognizes the role played by the context, the surrounding culture and the social relationships. In this regard, social learning theory can also be referred to in the study of terrorism. From this perspective, “terrorist behavior is, more often than not, a learned (albeit often subcultural) behavior”<sup>118</sup>. According to Akers and Silverman, the reference/peer

<sup>116</sup> Robert Agnew, A general strain theory of terrorism, *Theoretical Criminology*, 14: 2, 2010, pp. 135-136

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, pp. 140-148

<sup>118</sup> Coleen Ryan, Jeffrey Vanderlick and Whitney Matthews, ‘A paradoxical analysis of social learning theory as applied to the potential reform of terrorist offenders’, *Professional Issues in Criminal Justice*, 2:1 (2007), p. 100

group provides the ideology and embraces “attitudes, beliefs and values” that justify violence for “a noble end”<sup>119</sup>.

Many criminological approaches share similarities with other disciplines that have been studying the phenomenon of terrorism. Criminology usually focuses on three levels of analysis, the individual (micro), the group (meso) and the country (macro)<sup>120</sup>: this structure echoes some approaches fostered in the field of political sciences, described in the dedicated sub-chapter. In support of the macro level of the analysis, Chermak and Gruenewald, who have studied different samples of violent extremists in the U.S.<sup>121</sup>, underline the importance of taking into consideration the broader contexts in which terrorists act and suggest to expand the use of criminological theories, for example the social disorganization approach, to further scrutinize the differences identified among the groups. As a matter of fact, through the analysis of data referring to 101 countries and an almost 30 years timeframe, Fahey and LaFree found that social disorganization, conceived as state instability, is consistently associated with increases in terrorist attacks and fatalities<sup>122</sup>. In the attempt to define generally applicable mechanisms of political radicalisation, also McCauley and Moskaleiko resume the three levels of analysis: they identify 12 mechanisms of radicalisation operating at individual, group, and mass level<sup>123</sup>. Among the individual mechanisms, McCauley and Moskaleiko include personal and group grievances, echoing some psychological explanations focusing on the role of humiliation in leading towards terrorism. Furthermore, McCauley and Moskaleiko also theorize the concept of “unfreezing”, namely the process by which an individual escapes fear by searching for “new routines and new connections that can provide safety”<sup>124</sup>: this concept is linked to the criminologist control theories, according to which individuals are more open to commit crime when they are less integrated into society<sup>125</sup>.

### *The psychological dimension: the process of becoming a terrorist and the main ingredients for radicalisation*

From a psychopathological perspective, very few studies have been conducted on major clinical illnesses among terrorists and existing research demonstrates that, generally speaking, terrorists do not suffer from serious psychiatric illnesses and not even personality disorders<sup>126</sup>. As claimed by Horgan, there is “evidence for lack of abnormality, [...] evidence for normality [...], and developments in the context of alternative explanations for abnormal (including violent) behaviour”<sup>127</sup>, which may also be motivated by organizational

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<sup>119</sup> Ronald L. Akers and Adam Silverman, ‘Toward a social learning model of violence and terrorism’, *Violence: From theory to research* (2004), pp. 25-26

<sup>120</sup> Gary LaFree and Joshua D. Freilich, *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), p. 5

<sup>121</sup> Steven Chermak and Jeffrey A. Gruenewald, ‘Laying a foundation for the criminological examination of right-wing, left-wing, and Al Qaeda-inspired extremism in the United States’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27:1 (2015), pp. 133-159

<sup>122</sup> Susan Fahey and Gary LaFree, ‘Does Country-Level Social Disorganization Increase Terrorist Attacks?’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27:1 (2015), pp. 81-111

<sup>123</sup> Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskaleiko, *Friction: How radicalisation happens to them and us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80

<sup>125</sup> Joshua D. Freilich and Gary LaFree, ‘Criminology Theory and Terrorism: Introduction to the Special Issue’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27:1 (2015), pp. 5-6

<sup>126</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches’, *Journal of Conflict resolution* 49:1 (2005), p. 12

<sup>127</sup> John Horgan, ‘The search for the terrorist personality’ in Andrew Silke, ed., *Terrorists, victims and society* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 2003), p. 16

needs<sup>128</sup>. Although not suffering from major clinical disorders, it is nevertheless true that terrorists “may exhibit identifiable psychological traits or may have been influenced by identifiable social factors”<sup>129</sup>. In the following paragraphs, some of the various psychological theories and approaches applied to the study of terrorism will be presented and discussed.

First psychological approaches to the study of terrorism, such as the identity theory, the narcissistic rage and the paranoid theory, draw mainly from the psychoanalytic domain, which mainly focuses on the role played by early childhood factors. The identity theory is particularly efficient when it comes to explain the radicalisation path of young people: according to various scholars, teenagers and young adults turn to violence in search for “a sense of purpose and self-worth”<sup>130</sup>. This dynamic echoes the explanation theorized by the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, who described the violence of the oppressed against the colonial powers as a path to find the self-identity, and is also connected to the political analysis of the phenomenon elaborated by Olivier Roy<sup>131</sup>. Another psychological theory used in the attempt to understand terrorism is narcissism. According to Crayton<sup>132</sup>, the so-called narcissistic injury may result into a pathological exaltation of self (leader’s profile), into the attempt to join the archaic omnipotent figure (follower’s profile), or a combination of the two. In both cases, the narcissistic rage generates an aggressive attempt to eliminate the source of injury. The narcissistic perspective is partially linked to the identity theory in the sense that it refers to terrorists as “timid, emotionally damaged adolescents [...] in search of affiliation and meaning”<sup>133</sup> and may also be connected to the novelty-seeking theory, according to which young adults are extremely vulnerable to “ideologic and passionate solicitations” as they begin their “lifelong quest for meaning”<sup>134</sup>. As claimed by Sageman, “[terrorists] believe that they are special, part of a small vanguard trying to build a better world in the name of a cause”<sup>135</sup>.

The search for a role in the group is well depicted by Victoroff in Figure 5, where the roles usually played in a terrorist group are represented<sup>136</sup>. Various authors underline the role played by organizational dynamics in joining terrorist groups and, consequently, the importance being aware of roles and levels when trying to understand the psychology of terrorists<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>129</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches’, *Journal of Conflict resolution* 49:1 (2005), p. 17

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, pp. 22-23

<sup>131</sup> Olivier Roy, *Generazione ISIS: Chi sono i giovani che scelgono il califfato e perché combattono l’occidente* [Le djihad et la mort] (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017)

<sup>132</sup> John W. Crayton, ‘Terrorism and the Psychology of the Self’, *Perspectives on Terrorism* (1983), pp. 33-41

<sup>133</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches’, *Journal of Conflict resolution* 49:1 (2005), p. 24

<sup>134</sup> Saul Levine, ‘Youth in terroristic groups, gangs, and cults: The allure, the animus, and the alienation’, *Psychiatric Annals*, 29:6 (1999), pp. 342-343

<sup>135</sup> Marc Sageman, ‘A strategy for fighting international Islamist terrorists’, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618:1 (2008), p. 224

<sup>136</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches’, *Journal of Conflict resolution*, 49:1 (2005), p. 6

<sup>137</sup> Bart Schuurman and John G. Horgan, ‘Rationales for terrorist violence in homegrown jihadist groups: A case study from the Netherlands’, *Aggression and violent behavior*, 27 (2016), p. 57

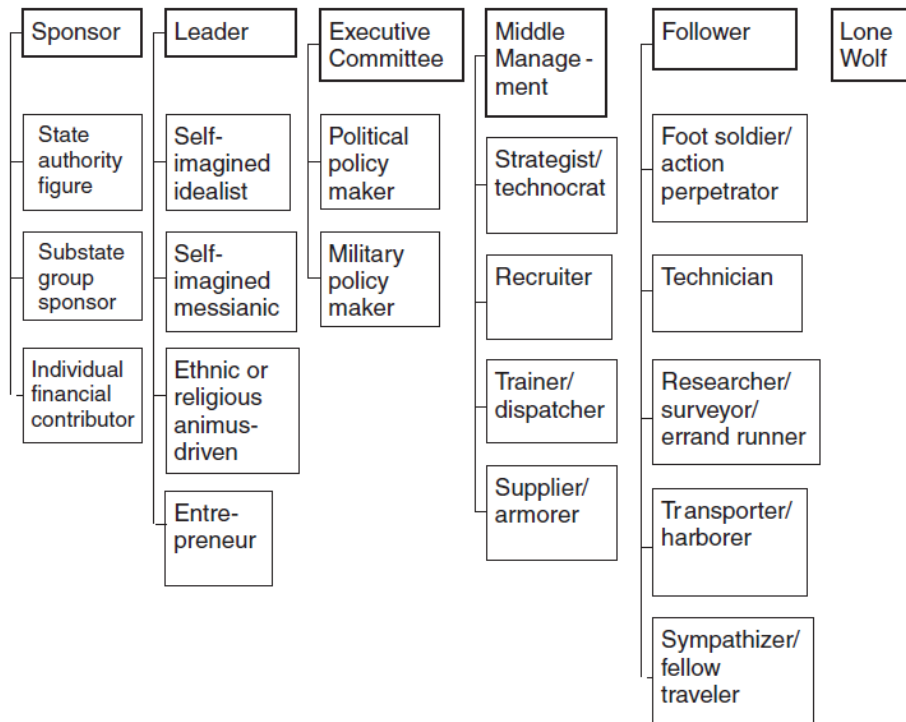


Figure 5 - Roles and Types within Terrorist Hierarchies (source: Victoroff, 2005)

More recently, it has become evident and generally accepted that the study of terrorism shall take into consideration both “psychological predispositions [...] and the external environment”<sup>138</sup> because terrorism is “probably *always* determined by a combination of innate factors, biological factors, early developmental factors, cognitive factors, temperament, environmental influences, and group dynamics”<sup>139</sup>. In this regard, a major contribution is represented by the work of John Horgan, director of the University of Massachusetts Lowell's Center for Terrorism and Security Studies, who abandoned the attempt to explain the root causes of terrorism to focus on the process by which individuals get involved in terrorist groups: “we may never fully crack the code, but we won't make any progress at all by continuing to obsess over the question of Why? Truth be told, it's probably unanswerable. A better starting point is to answer the How? questions: How do people become involved in terrorism? How is a specific role in the movement assigned to them? How does the recruiter find them, or vice versa? And how is trust established in an online relationship that could well end in death for at least one of the parties?”<sup>140</sup>.

Claiming that the attempt to identify profiles overshadows the dynamics by which an individual become a terrorist, Horgan focuses on the features of an environment conducive to involvement in terrorist activities and identifies some “predisposing risk factors”: emotional vulnerability; dissatisfaction with current activity; identification with the victims; conceptualization of violence as not immoral; sense of reward arising from

<sup>138</sup> Martha Crenshaw, ‘The psychology of political terrorism’, in John T. Jost and Jim Sidanius, eds., *Political psychology: Key readings* (New York: Psychology Press, 2004), p. 414

<sup>139</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches’, *Journal of Conflict resolution*, 49:1 (2005), p. 34

<sup>140</sup> John Horgan, ‘Don't Ask Why People Join the Islamic State — Ask How’, *Vice News*, 10 September 2014, [internet] available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wjyygy/dont-ask-why-people-join-the-islamic-state-ask-how> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

the engagement; family/social ties to people sharing similar feelings and experiences<sup>141</sup>. In particular, Horgan encourages psychological research to shift the focus on the process of becoming a terrorist and emphasizes that a “process model of terrorist behavior” would allow to understand how different people from diverse backgrounds “engage [and] move through the process in different ways”<sup>142</sup>.

The processual and gradual nature of the phenomenon of radicalisation is recognized also by Kruglanski, who describes the factors that may increase radicalisation probability in what he calls the three N’s model: needs, narratives and networks<sup>143</sup>. In the N’s scheme, radicalisation is prompted by the attempt to identify a source of meaning (“activation of the significance quest”), the identification of the means to achieve the significance (namely violence for the subject under investigation) and the “commitment shift”, namely the rise of the identified goal over any other<sup>144</sup>. The significance quest can be triggered, for instance, by attacks towards the identity. This is the case, for example, of “Muslim immigrants to Europe who encounter widespread disrespect, if not rabid “Islamophobia” on the part of native populations in their host countries”<sup>145</sup>. Discrimination towards a group and its values increases the ties within the group and leads to a deep feeling of exclusion towards the outside: these tensions create a conducive environment for terrorism ideology to grow<sup>146</sup>. Choosing violence as the means to satisfy the need requires a surrounding supporting narrative or ideology<sup>147</sup>, which is usually characterized by the following elements: a sense of grievance and injustice; the identification of a culprit; the elaboration of a morally acceptable method to destroy the injustice<sup>148</sup>. Finally, as claimed by Sageman, the potential engagement turns into actual involvement through social ties (network)<sup>149</sup>. The role played by family and friends’ networks is a trigger element in the involvement process, as affirmed by Kleinmann in a study on 83 cases of homegrown Sunni terrorists in the US: in terms of recruitment, a crucial role is usually played by militants, families and friends, as “internal mechanisms alone are not sufficient for radicalisation”<sup>150</sup>. In line with a processual and gradual expression of the phenomenon, Moghaddam elaborated the metaphor of the “staircase to terrorism”, claiming that the steps become more and more narrow towards the top. At the ground floor the individual suffers from a perceived deprivation, at the first floor he/she tries to identify options to address the injustice and reached the second, displacement of aggression, when previous attempts fail. A moral engagement into the terrorist organization and its narrative brings the individual to the third floor, while the socialization into the tradition, methods and goals of the group lift him/her up to the fourth floor. Finally, at the fifth floor the individual is psychologically and morally ready to commit a terrorist act<sup>151</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> John Horgan, ‘From profiles to pathways and roots to routes: Perspectives from psychology on radicalisation into terrorism’, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618:1 (2008), pp. 84-85

<sup>142</sup> John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, 2<sup>nd</sup>ed (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 99-100 and pp. 162-163

<sup>143</sup> David Webber and Arie W. Kruglanski, ‘The Psychology of Terrorism’, in Brad J. Bushman, ed., *Aggression and Violence: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Psychology Press, 2016), pp. 290-304

<sup>144</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski et al., ‘The psychology of radicalisation and deradicalisation: How significance quest impacts violent extremism’, *Political Psychology*, 35:S1 (2014), p. 74

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75

<sup>146</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski et al., ‘What should this fight be called? Metaphors of counterterrorism and their implications’, *Psychological Science, in the Public Interest*, 8 (2008), p. 120.

<sup>147</sup> David Webber and Arie W. Kruglanski, ‘The Psychology of Terrorism’, in Brad J. Bushman, ed., *Aggression and Violence: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Psychology Press, 2016), pp. 290-304

<sup>148</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski et al., ‘The psychology of radicalisation and deradicalisation: How significance quest impacts violent extremism’, *Political Psychology*, 35:S1 (2014), p. 77

<sup>149</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding terror networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 130

<sup>150</sup> Scott Matthew Kleinmann, ‘Radicalisation of homegrown Sunni militants in the United States: Comparing converts and non-converts’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35:4 (2012), p. 279

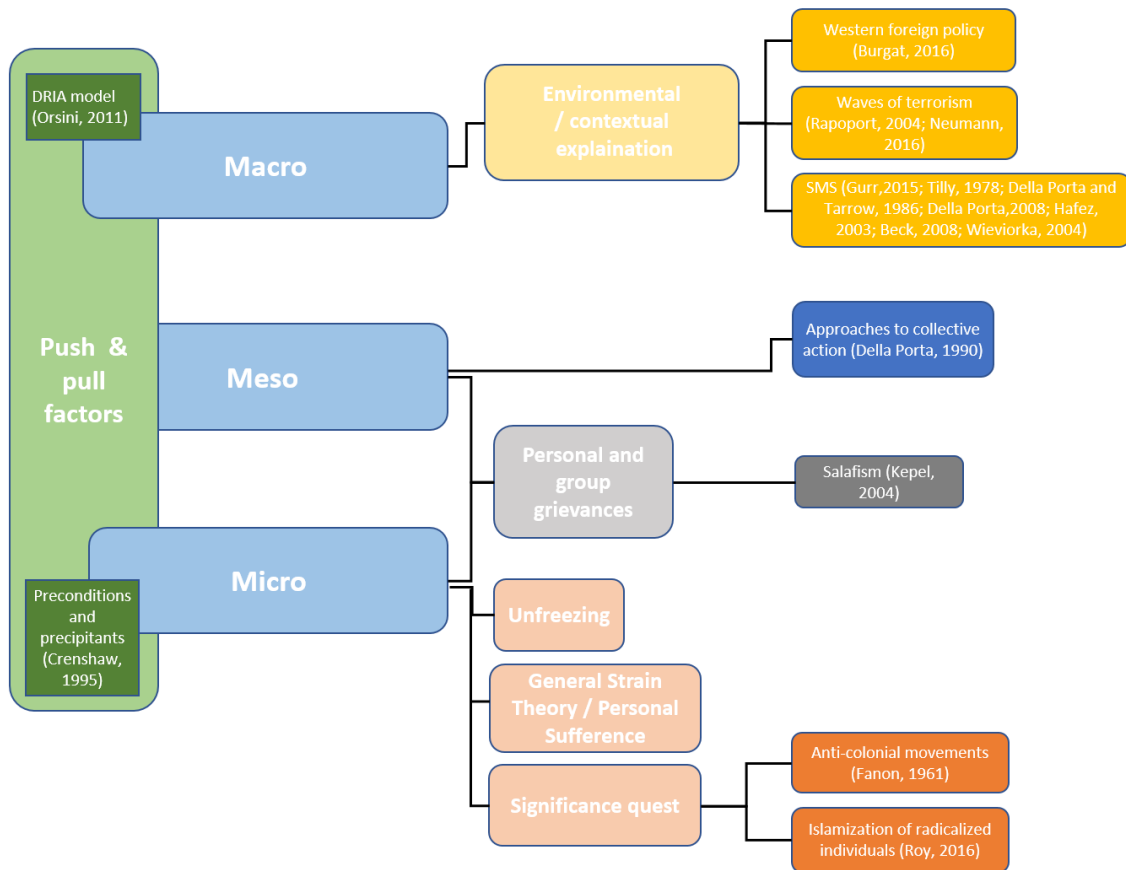
<sup>151</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam, ‘The staircase to terrorism: a psychological exploration’ *American Psychologist*, 60:2 (2005), pp. 161-169

## *Conclusions*

Much has been published on terrorism from different disciplinary perspectives and through the use of various research methods, revealing “a myriad [of] root causes” behind domestic and transnational terrorism<sup>152</sup>. The literature analyzed in this chapter refers only to some of the various and diverse theories that have been elaborated on the subject and with the primary intent of examining the main theories and research elaborated on the key aspects of the radicalisation process. Although pertaining to different disciplines and perspectives, many of these interpretations are interlinked. In the attempt to visually represent these linkages, Figure 6 highlights the main connections among the theories taken into consideration above and provides some direct references to the related scholars. The push and pull factors approach, in which we could include Orsini’s DRIA model and Crenshaw’s preconditions and precipitants, appears to be cross-cutting compared to the other theories, as it provides a connection between the various levels of analysis of the macro, meso, and micro standpoint. The latter is linked to various theories pertaining to the different levels: the macro level is strictly connected to environmental and contextual explanations of terrorism, such as, for example, Burgat’s analysis of the role played by Western foreign policy, Rapoport and Neumann’s theory of the waves of terrorism and the Social Movement Studies; the meso level echoes Della Porta’s analysis of collective action and is also linked to personal and group grievances theories, in which Kepel’s explanations of the role of Salafism could be included; finally, the micro level is related to various studies focusing on the individual level, such as the unfreezing theory, the general strain theory, and Kruglanski’s significance quest, which, in turn, entails some connections with Fanon’s analysis of anti-colonial movements and Roy’s theory of Islamization of radicalized individuals.

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<sup>152</sup> Todd Sandler, ‘The analytical study of terrorism: Taking stock’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 51:2 (2014), pp. 257–271



**Figure 6 - Interdisciplinary interconnections among terrorism theories (author's elaboration)**

Terrorism research suffers from the “inability [...] to build on previous research” and from the lack of interdisciplinary approaches<sup>153</sup>, even if terrorism requires engagement and collaboration among different disciplines: history, anthropology, religious scholars are key to assess the context; sociologists and political scientists have the skills to conceptualize phenomena and identify structures; criminology has the expertise to examine and predict conditions conducive to radicalisation and terrorism and psychology studies focus on the individual vulnerabilities that increase possible engagement into violence<sup>154</sup>. Although interdisciplinarity and exploration/exploitation of cumulative knowledge should be guiding principles in this area, very limited studies are conducted according to these principles. In addition, challenges in the terrorism studies are not represented only by the difficulties in establishing connections among various disciplines and sectors but are also linked to the lack of primary data and empirical research. Despite increasing academic interest in the topic, conceptual/opinion articles are predominant, while only a minor part of the available literature results to be based on empirical data<sup>155</sup>, due to various causal factors. As claimed by Silke, terrorism is a critical research topic because of its violent nature, the challenges it poses to objectivity<sup>156</sup>, and the governmental tendency to avoid “sharing the necessary primary source information with academia, [...] which has the

<sup>153</sup> John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, 2<sup>nd</sup>ed (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 34

<sup>154</sup> Gary LaFree and Joshua D. Freilich, *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), p. 347

<sup>155</sup> Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy and Alison Sherley, ‘Are Counter-terrorism Strategies Effective? The Results of the Campbell Systematic Review on Counter-terrorism Evaluation Research’, *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 2:4 (November 2006), p. 496

<sup>156</sup> Andrew Silke, ‘The devil you know: Continuing problems with research on terrorism’, *Terrorism and political violence*, 13:4 (2001), pp. 4-9

methodological skills but lacks data for a major breakthrough”<sup>157</sup>. Although recently terrorism studies have been benefiting from more academic rigor, increasing variety in research methods and enhanced collaborative research<sup>158</sup>, there is still an enormous need for empirical data to validate claims and models theorized<sup>159</sup>.

Lack of cumulative knowledge, primary data and interdisciplinarity represent central issues in this field of study: recent intellectual efforts are growing “in size, but less in layered intellectual depth”<sup>160</sup>. Being aware of the limits and lacunae of the terrorism studies, this project is intended to build on the available literature and research pertaining to different disciplines, exploit the models theorized by scholars and practitioners and provide a contribution in terms of empirical data collection. Hence, the added value of this research project relies in the attempt to collect primary data and analyze them with the tools and from the perspectives developed by the above-mentioned different disciplines within a rigorous framework of critical self-reflexivity<sup>161</sup>. In particular, the current work aims at providing a contribution to the field of terrorism studies by with the objective to understand and describe the various meanings that the radicalisation process undertakes in Italy through the analysis of the multiple voices that contribute to their co-construction.

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<sup>157</sup> Marc Sageman, ‘The Stagnation in Terrorism Research’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26:4 (2014), pp. 565-580

<sup>158</sup> Andrew Silke, ‘Contemporary Terrorism Studies’, in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, Jeroen Gunning, eds., *Critical terrorism studies: A new research agenda* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 48

<sup>159</sup> John Horgan, ‘The Case for Firsthand Research’, in Andrew Silke, ed., *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 30

<sup>160</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, ‘Mapping terrorism studies after 9/11’, in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, eds., *Critical terrorism studies: A new research agenda* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 14

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33

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## Chapter 2 - Addressing the notion of terrorism and counter-terrorism from the international, EU and national perspective

### *How 9/11 attacks have changed the UN approach to terrorism*<sup>162</sup>

Within the framework of the United Nations, the issue of terrorism has been dealt mainly by the General Assembly until the 1990s<sup>163</sup>. Different approaches and measures have been adopted by the United Nations on the issue of terrorism, as a response to what Rapoport<sup>164</sup> would define as the diverse waves of terrorism: the historical context as well as the nature of the perceived threat have influenced the reaction and the interventions promoted at international level by the UN. The first General Assembly resolution on the topic was adopted in 1972<sup>165</sup> on “Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or takes innocent human lives or jeopardizes fundamental freedoms, and study of the underlying causes of those forms of terrorism and acts of violence which lie in misery, frustration, grievance and despair and which cause some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to effect radical changes”. This resolution sheds light on the importance of the topic for the international community and approaches the issue not only in terms of security but also emphasizing the importance of understanding the root causes of terrorism<sup>166</sup>. This first official UN document, followed by others on the same topic<sup>167</sup>, envisaged the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism. The Ad Hoc Committee was unsuccessful in defining terrorism<sup>168</sup> because of two main reasons: on the one hand, Western countries were afraid that such a

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<sup>162</sup> For additional literature on terrorism, counter-terrorism and international law see, among others: Ben Saul, *Research Handbook on International Law and Terrorism*, ed. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014); Helen Duffy, *The 'War on Terror' and the Framework of International Law*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Katja L.H. Samuel and Nigel D. White, *Counter-terrorism and International Law*, eds. (Oxon: Routledge, 2016); David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf, *International Terrorism and World Security*, eds. (Oxon: Routledge, 2015); Gilbert Guillaume, ‘Terrorism and international law’, *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 53:3 (2004), pp. 537-548; Antonio Cassese, ‘Terrorism is also disrupting some crucial legal categories of international law’, *European Journal of International Law*, 12:5 (2001), pp. 993-1001; M. Cherif Bassiouni, *International terrorism—Multilateral conventions 1937-2001* (Ardley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2001); Rosemary Foot, ‘The United Nations, counter terrorism, and human rights: institutional adaptation and embedded ideas’, *Human Rights Quarterly* (2007), pp. 489-514.

<sup>163</sup> Jane Boulden and Thomas G. Weiss, *Terrorism and the UN: before and after September 11*, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 9-14

<sup>164</sup> David Rapoport, ‘The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism’, in Audrey Cronin and James Ludes, eds., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), p. 47

<sup>165</sup> United Nations, General Assembly resolution 3034 (XXVII), *Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or takes innocent human lives or jeopardizes fundamental freedoms, and study of the underlying causes of those forms of terrorism and acts of violence which lie in misery, frustration, grievance and despair and which cause some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to effect radical changes*, A/RES/3034(XXVII), 18 December 1972

<sup>166</sup> Bibi van Ginkel, *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy* (Antwerp: Intersentia, 2010), p. 147

<sup>167</sup> United Nations, General Assembly resolution 31/102, *Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or takes innocent human lives or jeopardizes fundamental freedoms, and study of the underlying causes of those forms of terrorism and acts of violence which lie in misery, frustration, grievance and despair and which cause some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to effect radical changes*, A/RES/31/102, 15 December 1976 and United Nations, General Assembly resolution 32/147, *Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or takes innocent human lives or jeopardizes fundamental freedoms, and study of the underlying causes of those forms of terrorism and acts of violence which lie in misery, frustration, grievance and despair and which cause some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to effect radical changes*, A/RES/32/147, 16 December 1977

<sup>168</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, ‘International terrorism: A new mode of conflict’, in David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf, eds., *International terrorism and world security* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 23

definition could include state terrorism and impact their national sovereignty; on the other hand, the so-called “third world countries” expressed concerns that such a definition could affect national liberation efforts. Given the difficulties in gathering consensus for a globally accepted notion of terrorism, the international community focused its attention and efforts on preventing and fighting specific terrorist acts<sup>169</sup>. Some progress was made on the elaboration of a definition in 1996, when, in the non-binding declaration to supplement resolution 51/210, the UN General Assembly referred to terrorist activities as “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them”<sup>170</sup>.

At regional and international level, approximately 30 treaties have been elaborated on international terrorism and related aspects<sup>171</sup>. It goes without saying that the 9/11 attacks changed the international scenario: the first international legal reaction was promoted by the UN and, more specifically, by the UN Security Council that adopted unanimously resolution 1368<sup>172</sup>, condemning the attacks. The Security Council resolution 1368 was shortly followed by a comprehensive anti-terrorism resolution<sup>173</sup> outlining measures to prevent and combat the financing of terrorism: in Security Council resolution 1373 Member States are asked to implement measures to combat the financing of terrorism and adopt adequate legal provisions to address this matter. Resolution 1373 led to the establishment of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). The CTC is guided by the Security Council resolutions 1373 and 1624<sup>174</sup> and is mandated to support Member States in their counter-terrorism preventive efforts both within their borders and across regions. Due to the complex nature of the activities envisaged in its mandate, the CTC is assisted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), established in 2004. The CTED is tasked with operationalizing the policy decisions made by the CTC, conducting expert assessments of each Member State, and facilitating technical assistance.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 marked a change within the United Nations, reflecting the distinction, operated at theoretical level, between old and new terrorism: according to Neumann, new terrorism is characterized by different structures, aims and methods<sup>175</sup>, thus requiring innovative and tailored responses. The UN moved from being a platform of discussion on the definition of terrorism to endorsing a more active role in which the UN Security Council itself adopted various resolutions to combat terrorism, with a specific focus on repressive rather than preventive measures<sup>176</sup>. The CTC abandoned the attempt to elaborate an official definition in favor of an ad hoc approach “deciding whether an act is terrorism «where

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<sup>169</sup> Bibi van Ginkel, *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy* (Antwerp: Intersentia, 2010), p. 9

<sup>170</sup> United Nations, General Assembly resolution 51/210, *Declaration to Supplement the 1994 Declaration on the Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism*, A/RES/51/210, 17 December 1996

<sup>171</sup> Bibi van Ginkel, *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy* (Antwerp: Intersentia, 2010), p. 10

<sup>172</sup> United Nations, Security Council resolution 1368, *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts*, S/RES/1368, 12 September 2001

<sup>173</sup> United Nations, Security Council resolution 1373, *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts*, S/RES/1373, 28 September 2001

<sup>174</sup> United Nations, Security Council resolution 1624, *Prohibition of incitement to commit terrorist acts*, S/RES/1624, 14 September 2005

<sup>175</sup> Peter R. Neumann, *Old and new terrorism: Late Modernity, Globalization and the Transformation of Political Violence* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), pp. 17-28.

<sup>176</sup> Bibi van Ginkel, *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy* (Antwerp: Intersentia, 2010), pp. 266-267

necessary» and referring political controversies to the Council or other bodies”<sup>177</sup>. Notwithstanding, in 2004, United Nations Security Council resolution 1566 condemned terrorist acts, referred to as “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature”<sup>178</sup>. The definition provides a framework of action for the United Nations and its Member States, although it neglects any reference to the political nature of terrorism<sup>179</sup>. In the aftermath of the Twin Towers attack, the General Assembly as well initially abandoned its attempts to approach the phenomenon in a holistic manner to focus on security aspects<sup>180</sup> but reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive perspective by adopting the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006<sup>181</sup>. The Strategy outlines four pillars, described in the Plan of Action, that underline the importance of addressing conducive factors, enhancing human rights protection and improving Member States capacities to prevent and combat terrorism. The first pillar comprises a set of measures to address conditions conducive to terrorism, including promoting socio-economic development, reducing the appeal of terrorism and addressing conflictual situations. Particular attention is devoted to the need to “pursue and reinforce development and social inclusion agendas [to] reduce marginalization and the subsequent sense of victimization that propels extremism and the recruitment of terrorists”, along with the promotion of “cooperation and assistance [...] in the fields of rule of law, human rights and good governance to support sustained economic and social development”<sup>182</sup>. The second pillar identifies strategies and provisions to prevent and combat terrorism, ranging from enhanced cooperation among countries to establishing dedicated centres to address the phenomenon, improving borders control and combating terrorism financing. While the third pillar is focused on strengthening States’ capacities to deal with terrorism, the fourth one is devoted to promote protection of human rights and the rule of law while combating terrorism as “effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing”<sup>183</sup>. The Strategy, based on the unanimous consensus of the 191 UN member states, represents a central document as it is meant to coordinate international efforts in preventing and countering terrorism as well as because it emphasizes the importance of addressing root causes of terrorism and the cruciality of human rights protection in any counter-terrorism initiative<sup>184</sup>. Given the complex and constantly evolving nature of terrorism, the Strategy is revised every two

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<sup>177</sup> Ben Saul, ‘Definition of Terrorism in the UN Security Council: 1985-2004’, *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 4:1 (2005), p. 157

<sup>178</sup> United Nations, Security Council resolution 1566, *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts*, S/RES/1566, 8 October 2004

<sup>179</sup> Ben Saul, ‘Definition of Terrorism in the UN Security Council: 1985-2004’, *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 4:1 (2005), p. 165

<sup>180</sup> Bibi van Ginkel, *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy* (Antwerp: Intersentia, 2010), p. 173

<sup>181</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 60/288, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/60/288, 8 September 2006

<sup>182</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 60/288, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/60/288, 8 September 2006, p. 4

<sup>183</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 60/288, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/60/288, 8 September 2006, p. 9

<sup>184</sup> Paul Norman, ‘From enforcement to strategic partnership: the contemporary challenge of the United Nations in countering terrorism’, *Security Journal*, 20: 3 (2007), p. 207

years by the UN General Assembly<sup>185</sup>. In the 2014 United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review, Member States highlighted their concern regarding some emerging trends and threats, including the increasing use of technology by terrorism groups and the growing number of recruits, especially among foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)<sup>186</sup>, while in the 2016 revision<sup>187</sup> further attention is paid to the role to be played by civil society organizations and communities in developing strategies to counter the risks posed by violent extremism. The 2016 UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review also stresses the importance of human rights protection and promotion in the fight against terrorism, calls upon Member States to respect the right to privacy in surveillance efforts, and emphasizes the urgency to further assess and address the drivers of radicalisation. In 2017, the Secretary-General Guterres proposed an amendment of the UN counter-terrorism architecture, adopted by the General Assembly with a consensus resolution on 15 June<sup>188</sup> and leading to the establishment of a new Office of Counter-Terrorism overseeing both the work of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office (CTITF) and the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT). As shown by the evolution of the UN counter-terrorism approach in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after an initial focus on security responses as a reaction to 9/11 attacks, the United Nations have dedicated increasing efforts and attention to identify and address the root causes of the phenomenon and the related conducive factors. Similar to the trends registered in the academia, where from 2002 onwards a growing number of academic articles have focused on the analysis of the root causes of terrorism<sup>189</sup>, the UN has strengthened its focus on understanding the trajectories of violence. In 2017, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has published a report entitled “Journey to extremism in Africa: drivers, incentives and the tipping point for recruitment”<sup>190</sup> and the recently appointed Secretary-General António Guterres has stressed the need to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism through enhanced cooperation both within the UN system as well as through the engagement of national authorities and the empowerment civil society organizations<sup>191</sup>. The priority of such actions is evident in the matrix of UN Counter-Terrorism projects and activities compiled by CTITF in 2018: 120 projects were listed under the first pillar of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, namely “Measures to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism”, second only to the number of projects (125) under the third pillar, “Measures to build States’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard”<sup>192</sup>.

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<sup>185</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 62/272, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/62/272, 5 September 2008; United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 64/287, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/64/297, 8 September, 2010; United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 66/282, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review*, A/RES/66/282, 12 July 2012

<sup>186</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 68/276, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review*, A/RES/68/276, 13 June 2014

<sup>187</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 70/291, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review*, A/RES/70/291, 19 July 2016

<sup>188</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 71/291, *Strengthening the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/71/291, 15 June 2017

<sup>189</sup> Matteo Vergani et al., ‘The Three Ps of Radicalisation: Push, Pull and Personal: A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence about Radicalisation Into Violent Extremism’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2018), p. 7

<sup>190</sup> United Nations Development Programme, ‘Journey to extremism in Africa: drivers, incentives and the tipping point for recruitment’, 2017, [internet] available at: <http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>191</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 72/840, *Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/72/840, 20 April 2018

<sup>192</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 72/840, *Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General - Annex II Supplementary*

### *Evolution of the EU counter-terrorism efforts*<sup>193</sup>

Cooperation among European states on the topic of terrorism dates back to the 1970s, when Europe was repeatedly hit by “various Middle Eastern terrorist groups”<sup>194</sup>. The attention rose in 1972, when eleven Israeli athletes were taken hostage and killed by the Palestinian group Black September during the Munich Summer Olympics<sup>195</sup>. In 1976, 12 EC states established a structure for regular consultations on terrorism and policing, known as TREVI and comprising different thematic working groups, a ministerial coordination mechanism and a senior official meeting platform<sup>196</sup>. The TREVI meetings were characterized by a confidential nature that attracted criticism by members of the European Parliament given the potential impact this forum could generate on civil liberties<sup>197</sup>. While TREVI was active on an operational level, in 1979 the so-called Dublin Agreement was adopted to ensure a harmonized and uniformed implementation of the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (ECST)<sup>198</sup>. Despite the legislative efforts put forward at EC level, various states perceived the ECST and the Dublin Agreement as a threat to their sovereignty and autonomy in dealing with terrorism and, only after the finalisation of the European market, the establishment of a common judicial framework became feasible<sup>199</sup>. The TREVI thematic working groups were subject to a reorganization after the adoption of the Treaty of Maastricht, signed in 1992 and entered into force in 1993, which introduced a three pillars structure for the European Union, namely the European Communities pillar dealing with economic, social and environmental policies, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) pillar, concerning foreign and military policies, and the Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters (PJCCM), targeting the fight against crime. Tasks and responsibilities originally assigned to TREVI were re-framed under the third pillar and, in particular, through the creation of Europol, an EU law enforcement agency<sup>200</sup>. In 1999, the European Council adopted the Tampere Programme, aimed at providing guidelines on EU policies and priorities on the area of freedom, security and justice<sup>201</sup>. Despite the attempt and willingness to enhance collaboration among EU member states on security matters, including terrorism,

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*information: activities of United Nations entities in support of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/72/840, 20 April 2018

<sup>193</sup> For additional literature on EU counter-terrorism policies and measures see, among others: Oldrich Bures, *EU counterterrorism policy: a paper tiger?* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013); Raphael Bossong, *The evolution of EU counter-terrorism: European security policy after 9/11* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012); Javier Argomaniz, ‘Post-9/11 institutionalisation of European Union counter-terrorism: emergence, acceleration and inertia’, *European Security*, 18:2 (2009), pp. 151–172; Rik Coolsaet, ‘EU counterterrorism strategy: value added or chimera?’, *International Affairs*, 86:4 (2010), pp. 857-873; Javier Argomaniz, Oldrich Bures, and Christian Kaunert, ‘A decade of EU counter-terrorism and intelligence: A critical assessment’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 30:1-2 (2015), pp. 191-206; Christian Kaunert and Sarah Léonard, ‘EU counterterrorism and the European neighbourhood policy: an appraisal of the southern dimension’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:2 (2011), pp. 286-309; Richard Jackson, ‘An analysis of EU counterterrorism discourse post-September 11’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20:2 (2007), pp. 233-247

<sup>194</sup> Raphael Bossong, *The evolution of EU counter-terrorism: European security policy after 9/11* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 25

<sup>195</sup> Stef Wittendorp, ‘Unpacking ‘International Terrorism’: Discourse, the European Community and Counter-Terrorism, 1975–86’, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54:5 (2016), pp. 1233-1249

<sup>196</sup> Tony Bunyan, ‘Trevi, Europol and the European state’, in Tony Bunjan, *Statewatching the new Europe*, ed. (London: Statewatch, 1993)

<sup>197</sup> Stef Wittendorp, ‘Unpacking ‘International Terrorism’: Discourse, the European Community and Counter-Terrorism, 1975–86’, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54:5 (2016), pp. 1244

<sup>198</sup> Oldrich Bures, ‘EU Counterterrorism Policy: A Paper Tiger?’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18:1 (2006), p. 58

<sup>199</sup> Juliet Lodge, ‘Terrorism and the European Community: Towards 1992’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1:1 (1989), p. 32

<sup>200</sup> Rik Coolsaet, ‘EU counterterrorism strategy: value added or chimera?’, *International Affairs*, 86:4 (2010), p. 857

<sup>201</sup> European Council, ‘Tampere European Council 15 And 16 October 1999: Presidency Conclusions’, 1999, [internet] available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam\\_en.htm#c](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam_en.htm#c) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

limited actions followed the adoption of the Programme<sup>202</sup>. In addition, in the pre-9/11 context, counter-terrorism cooperation was perceived as an internal subject matter: the EU as such did not promote any collaboration with third countries and agreements on counter-terrorism were performed on a bilateral level<sup>203</sup>.

Similar to the dynamics that characterized the evolution of the UN approach to terrorism, the 9/11 attacks significantly accelerated the elaboration of a Community framework to counter terror<sup>204</sup>: various extraordinary meetings, held in the months following 9/11, led to an enhanced judicial and police collaboration<sup>205</sup> and to the adoption of several decisions aimed at combating terrorism<sup>206</sup>. The EU counter-terrorism policy has been deeply influenced by tragic events that undoubtedly pushed EU member states to agree on topics considered controversial in a peaceful context. In the aftermath of the Twin Towers attack, the Commission itself invited EU member states to exploit the “momentum [...] to making real and rapid progress”<sup>207</sup>. The “momentum” led to the adoption, in 2002, of the EU Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism (2002/475/JHA), according to which terrorist offences are committed with the aim of “seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act; or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation”<sup>208</sup>.

EU counter-terrorism policies and measures often refer to UN Security Council Resolution 1373, in particular to paragraph 1, on preventing the financing of terrorist organisations, and 2, on countering terrorist attacks, collaborating in multilateral criminal investigations, improving border controls<sup>209</sup>. Although EU actions first focused on enhancing ground cooperation through the adoption of legal instruments and binding agreements<sup>210</sup>, the Madrid train bombings in March 2004 marked a change in the EU approach to counter-terrorism: European actors shifted attention towards border control measures and related aspects as a

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<sup>202</sup> Rik Coolsaet, ‘EU counterterrorism strategy: value added or chimera?’, *International Affairs*, 86:4 (2010), p. 858

<sup>203</sup> Jörg Monar, ‘The EU as an international counter-terrorism actor: Progress and constraints’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 30:2-3 (2015), p. 334

<sup>204</sup> Sarah Leonard, ‘The Use and Effectiveness of Migration Controls as a Counter-Terrorism Instrument in the European Union’, *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, 4: 1 (May 2010), p. 34

<sup>205</sup> Evelien Brouwer, ‘Immigration, asylum and terrorism: A changing dynamic legal and practical developments in the EU in response to the terrorist attacks of 11.09’, *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 4 (2002), pp. 1-26. A special meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs and Civil Protection Council was held on 20<sup>th</sup> September to enhance a stronger cooperation in the judiciary, among police control activities and within the intelligence services.

<sup>206</sup> Multiple organs of the European Union, such as the General Affairs Council, the Justice and Home Affairs and Civil Protection Council and the European Council, called special meetings in order to approve emergency measures on the war on terror, namely the ‘Plan of Action to Combat Terrorism’, the ‘Coordination of Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Terrorism’, the ‘Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, Defining a Common Understanding of Terrorist Acts’, the ‘Framework Decision on the European Arrest Warrant and Surrender Procedures’, the ‘Common Position on Combating Terrorism’, the ‘Common Position on the Application of Specific Measures to Combat Terrorism’, the ‘Regulation 2580/2001 on Specific Restrictive Measures Directed Against Certain Persons and Entities with a View to Combating Terrorism’, and the ‘Decision Establishing the List Provided for in Article 2(3) of Council Regulation 2001 L. 344’.

<sup>207</sup> Commission of the European Communities, ‘Increasing the Capacity of the EU to Fight International Terrorism’, 18 September, SEC (2001) 1429/3, quoted in Raphael Bossong, ‘The Action Plan on Combating Terrorism: A Flawed Instrument of EU Security Governance’, *JCMS*, 46: 1 (2008), p. 35

<sup>208</sup> Council of the European Union, ‘Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism’, 2002/475/JHA, *Official Journal L 164*, 22 June 2002, pp. 3-7, [internet] available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32002F0475> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>209</sup> Evelien Brouwer, ‘Immigration, Asylum and Terrorism: A Changing Dynamic. Legal and Practical Developments in the EU in Response to the Terrorist Attacks of 11.09’, *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 4 (2002), pp. 400-401

<sup>210</sup> Sarah Leonard, ‘The Use and Effectiveness of Migration Controls as a Counter-Terrorism Instrument in the European Union’, *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, 4: 1 (May 2010), p. 34

priority in the development of the EU counter-terrorism policy, as demonstrated by the 2004 Declaration on Combating Terrorism, which envisaged increased border control, improved cooperation in the judicial sector, as well as enhanced information sharing and called for the establishment of the Position of a Counter-Terrorism Coordinator<sup>211</sup>. In addition, Annex 1 of the Declaration qualifies the purpose of ensuring “effective systems of border control” as one of the seven strategic objectives to combat terrorism<sup>212</sup>, as subsequently reasserted in the revised “EU Plan of Action on Combating Terrorism”<sup>213</sup>. The 2005 bombings in London reinforced the need to better understand the radicalisation process and the root causes of terrorism<sup>214</sup> and led to the adoption, in late 2005, of the European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy<sup>215</sup>. The strategy is built around the following four pillars: prevention, protection, judicial prosecution and response to terrorist attacks. The document outlines the key characteristics of the threat the EU is called to face through a collective and coordinated approach, namely the fact that terrorism represents an attack towards the core EU values, that terrorist networks can draw upon increased financial and technological resources, and that the causes of this phenomenon are complex and multifaceted<sup>216</sup>. In the Strategy, special attention is devoted to the need to assess and address home-grown radicalisation and recruitment occurring within the EU<sup>217</sup>. The importance of focusing on preventive strategies and strengthening international cooperation, especially in the judicial sector, was stressed also in the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism<sup>218</sup>. The crucial need to prevent terrorist attacks is further emphasized in the 2008 amendment to the Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA<sup>219</sup>, which expands the list of criminalized activities.

Despite evident efforts in improving the EU counter-terrorism policies and strategies, several criticisms have been raised on the limitations of the EU approach. The diverse priorities and standpoints represented within the Justice and Home Affairs Council and the complex Council infrastructure have hindered, in certain occasions, the capacity to efficiently respond to counter-terrorism needs<sup>220</sup>. The opposing views among different national representatives are also a result of the different perceptions of the terrorist threat among the various EU countries<sup>221</sup>: a 2006 Eurobarometer public opinion survey found that terrorism belongs to the category of secondary concerns, with only 10% of the interviewees including terrorism among the two most

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<sup>211</sup> Council of the European Union, ‘Declaration on combating terrorism’, 7906/04, 29 March 2004

<sup>212</sup> Ibid

<sup>213</sup> Council of the European Union, ‘EU Plan of Action on Combating Terrorism’, 1 June 2004, [internet] available at: <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2004/jun/eu-action-plan-terr-04.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>214</sup> European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, ‘The European Union’s Policies on Counter-Terrorism Relevance, Coherence and Effectiveness’, January 2017, p. 33, [internet] available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583124/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)583124\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583124/IPOL_STU(2017)583124_EN.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>215</sup> Council of the European Union, ‘The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, 30 November 2005, 14469/4/05 REV4, [internet] available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47fdfb28d.html> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>216</sup> Jörg Monar, ‘Common threat and common response? The European Union’s counter-terrorism strategy and its problems’, *Government and Opposition*, 42:3 (2007), p. 298

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, p. 296

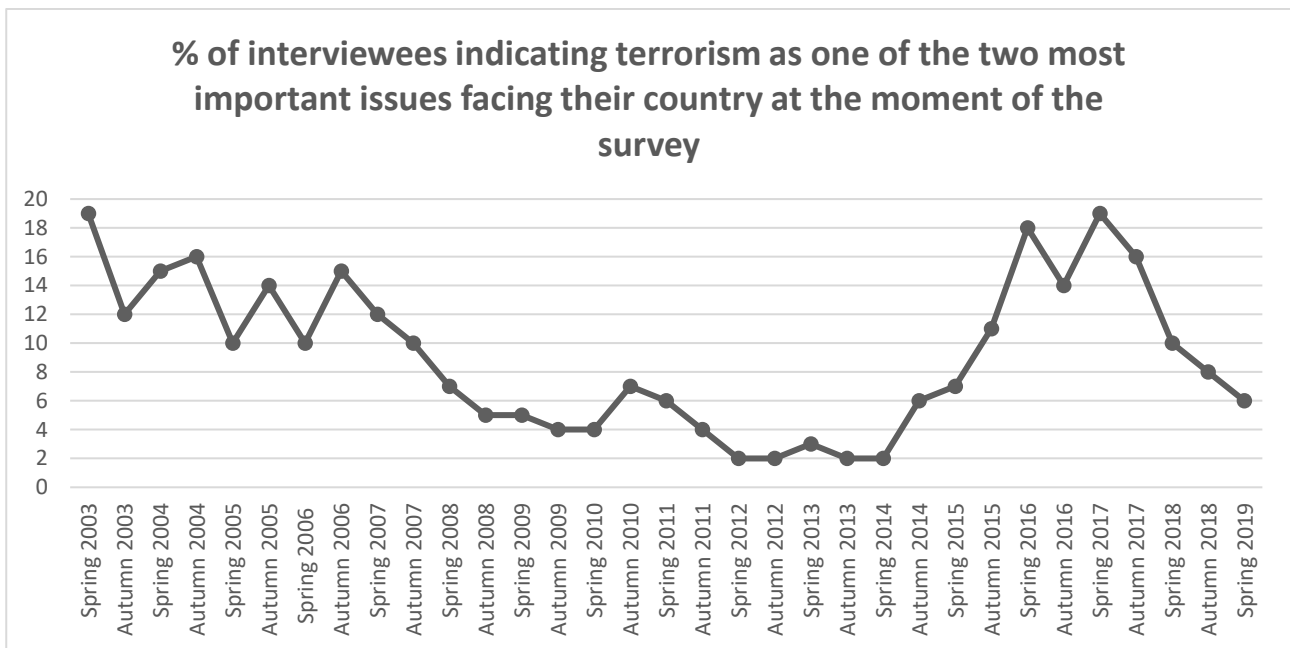
<sup>218</sup> Council of Europe, ‘Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism’, *CETS No.196*, 16 May 2005, [internet] available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168008371c> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>219</sup> Council of the European Union, ‘Framework Decision 2008/919/JHA of 29 November 2008 amending Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism’, 2008/919/JHA, *Official Journal L 330*, 9 December 2008, [internet] available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008F0919> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>220</sup> Jörg Monar, ‘The EU as an international counter-terrorism actor: Progress and constraints’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 30:2-3 (2015), p. 348

<sup>221</sup> Jörg Monar, ‘Common threat and common response? The European Union’s counter-terrorism strategy and its problems’, *Government and Opposition*, 42:3 (2007), p. 300

important issues facing their country at the moment of the survey<sup>222</sup>. Notwithstanding, this perception has varied significantly over the past years, fluctuating between a major and a minor concern depending on the specific historical context and the occurrence of terrorism attacks on the European soil. Figure 1 portrays the number of interviewees indicating terrorism as one of the two most important issues facing their country at the moment of the survey from 2003 to mid-2018. The high level of concern registered in the aftermath of the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) attacks has been replaced with a relatively low level of apprehension between 2008 and 2015. The issue of terrorism has once again become of considerable importance since 2015, following the Charlie Hebdo shooting and other violent terrorist episodes that have taken place on the European soil.



**Figure 1 - Percentage of interviewees indicating terrorism as one of the two most important issues facing their country at the moment of the survey from 2003 to mid-2019 (author's elaboration based on Eurobarometer data)**

Additional limitations of the EU approach are linked to the fact that, although various decisions and agreements have been adopted in the aftermath of 9/11, only a restricted number of documents have entered into force. Effectiveness lacunae are due to diverse reasons, including the limited EU enforcement capabilities as well as the existing gaps in establishing an effective coordination between the EU and the national level<sup>223</sup>. Finally, several challenges are linked to the lack of cooperation among intelligence services and law enforcement agencies of the European member states: bilateral collaboration is sometimes still preferred over collective cooperation with Europol and Eurojust.<sup>224</sup>

The fight against terrorism is identified as one of the main components addressed in the EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five steps towards a more secure Europe<sup>225</sup>, a document intended to pave the way for a

<sup>222</sup> European Commission, 'Standard Eurobarometer 65: First Results', *Eurobarometer Surveys*, July 2006, p. 8 [internet] available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb65/eb65\\_first\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb65/eb65_first_en.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>223</sup> Oldrich Bures, 'EU Counterterrorism Policy: A Paper Tiger?', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18:1 (2006), p. 72

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73

<sup>225</sup> European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The

common approach to EU security challenges. The EU Internal Security Strategy launched the creation of a radicalisation-awareness network, the EU RAN, intended to gather together experts, policy makers and key stakeholders to share knowledge and raise awareness on the issue of radicalisation. The European efforts in preventing radicalisation, especially among young people, are reiterated in several documents, such as the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled “Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's response”<sup>226</sup> and the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled “Supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism”<sup>227</sup>. The fight against terrorism has become central in the European debate to the point that it has been identified as one of the three priorities of the European Agenda on Security, launched in 2015, along with organized crime and cybercrime.

The EU counter-terrorism agenda experienced some additional changes from 2015 to 2018 as a result of a series of terrorist attacks on the European soil as well as in virtue of the increasing phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters joining the Syrian and Iraqi battlefields. The terrorist episodes that took place in 2015, 2016 and 2017, among which the Charlie Hebdo shooting (January 2015), the Paris attacks (November 2015), the bombing in Brussels (March 2016) and the attacks performed through the use of a vehicle in Nice (July 2016), Berlin (December 2016) and Barcelona (August 2017), led the EU to promote a broader notion of security conceived as a responsibility that should be shared and managed by all the members of the Union in a cooperative manner<sup>228</sup>. The attack on Charlie Hebdo was immediately followed by a Joint Statement<sup>229</sup>, signed in Paris on 11 January by Ministers of Interior and Justice of the member states, promoting a set of measures targeting people's movements to and within Europe, such as the adoption of a European Passenger Name Record (PNR) framework, the illegal trade of firearms and the illicit use of the Internet for propaganda and recruitment purposes. The importance of the priority areas identified in the Joint Statement of 11 January has been further emphasized by the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator<sup>230</sup> in view of the informal meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Riga, Latvia, on 29 January 2015<sup>231</sup>. The latter led to the

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EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five steps towards a more secure Europe', COM/2010/673, 22 November 2010, [internet] available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52010DC0673> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>226</sup> European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response', COM/2013/941 final, 15 January 2014, [internet] available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/documents/com/com\\_com\(2013\)0941\\_/com\\_com\(2013\)0941\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/com/com_com(2013)0941_/com_com(2013)0941_en.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>227</sup> European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Supporting the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism', COM/2016/379 final, 14 June 2016, [internet] available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/library/publications/2016/communication-preventing-radicalisation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/publications/2016/communication-preventing-radicalisation_en.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>228</sup> European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council – delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union', COM/2016/230 final, 20 April 2016, [internet] available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0230> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>229</sup> Council of the European Union, 'Paris Declaration of 11 January 2015', Brussels, 16 January 2015, [internet] available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5322-2015-INIT/en/pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>230</sup> Council of the European Union, General Secretariat, 'EU CTC input for the preparation of the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Riga on 29 January 2015', Brussels, 17 January 2015, [internet] available at: <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2015/jan/eu-council-ct-ds-1035-15.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>231</sup> Didier Bigo et al., 'The EU Counter-Terrorism Policy Responses to the Attacks in Paris: Towards an EU Security and Liberty Agenda', *CEPS Paper in Liberty and Security in Europe*, 81 (February 2015), pp. 4-6

adoption of the Riga Joint Statement by the Ministries of Interior and Justice of the member states. The Riga Joint Statement<sup>232</sup> encourages improved control mechanisms regarding travels within, to and from Europe, recommends further actions to combat terrorism financing and calls for improved cooperation and information-sharing among member states as well as with the private sector. The measures adopted in the aftermath of the Paris attack in January 2015 mainly focus on surveillance and systematic monitoring of all citizens movements with an emergency-driven approach, thus posing questions to two central values of the European Union, namely the freedom of movement and the democratic rule of law<sup>233</sup>.

The Kouachi brothers, responsible for the execution of the Charlie Hebdo shooting, are believed to have being trained in Yemen<sup>234</sup>: the connection with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula shed light on the transnational nature of terrorism and on the threat posed by the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. The concerns regarding foreign terrorist fighters increased in November 2015, when six different attacks involving at least seven returnees from Syria/Iraq believed to have fought with the Islamic State<sup>235</sup> were performed in Paris and led to the death of 130 people. According to a study conducted by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), approximately 4000 people are believed to have left Europe from 2011 to 2015 to join jihadist groups, with a great majority of young male adults living in large metropolitan areas or suburbs<sup>236</sup>. Figure 2 provides a comparison between the estimates of the total number of foreign terrorist fighters who have allegedly left Europe to join militant organizations in Syria and Iraq elaborated respectively by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR)<sup>237</sup> in January 2015 and by ICCT in April 2016<sup>238</sup>. The numbers are remarkably similar and both refer to France, Germany and the United Kingdom as the countries providing the largest numbers of fighters. ICSR also estimates that 10 to 30 per cent have left the conflict zone to return to their country of origin, with some individuals stuck in transit countries<sup>239</sup>. Since 2016 the number of people travelling to conflict areas has been declining<sup>240</sup> and at the end of 2018 less than

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<sup>232</sup> Council of the European Union, 'Informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Riga on 29 and 30 January 2015', Brussels, 2 February 2015, [internet] available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5855-2015-INIT/en/pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>233</sup> Didier Bigo et al., 'The EU Counter-Terrorism Policy Responses to the Attacks in Paris: Towards an EU Security and Liberty Agenda', *CEPS Paper in Liberty and Security in Europe*, 81 (February 2015), pp. 15

<sup>234</sup> Alan Yuhas, 'How Yemen spawned the Charlie Hebdo attacks – the Guardian briefing', *The Guardian*, 14 January 2015, [internet] available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/14/yemen-aqap-civil-war-extremism> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>235</sup> Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, eds., *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2016, p. 9, [internet] available at: [https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52

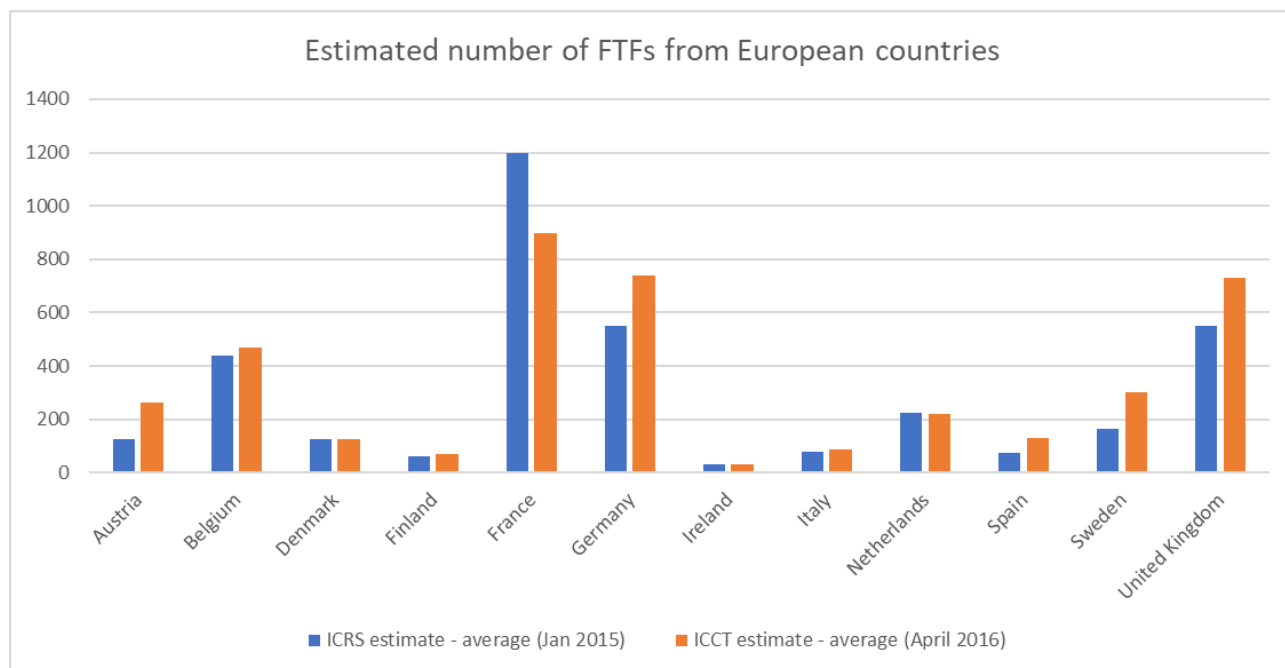
<sup>237</sup> Peter R. Neumann, 'Foreign fighter total in Syria/Iraq now exceeds 20,000; surpasses Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s', *ICSR*, 26 January 2015, [internet] available at: <https://icsr.info/2015/01/26/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>238</sup> Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, eds., *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2016, p. 9, [internet] available at: [https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>239</sup> Peter R. Neumann, 'Foreign Fighter Total in Syria/Iraq Now Exceeds 20,000; Surpasses Afghanistan Conflict in the 1980s', *ICSR*, 26 January 2015, [internet] available at: <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>240</sup> European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 'Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020', 2020, [internet] available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020>, p. 44 (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

2000 people were believed to still be in Syria and Iraq, with France and UK presenting the highest numbers (respectively 710 and 345 people)<sup>241</sup>.



**Figure 2 - ICSR and ICCT estimates of the number of foreign terrorist fighters who have left Europe to fight in Syria and Iraq (author's elaboration based on ICSR and ICCT data)**

The notion of foreign fighter is not new: around 100,000 individuals have participated as combatants in foreign civil wars since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>242</sup>. In compiling a comparative analysis of historical foreign fighter insurgencies, David Malet has demonstrated that the recruitment of foreigners in local wars does not represent a new phenomenon and has elaborated an assessment of the recruitment strategies put in place in different historical conflicts<sup>243</sup>. Malet found that recruitment messages tend to refer to “shared identity communities – whether religious, ideological, or nationalist – [and] shared transnational identities” and suggests that counter measures should focus on disrupting the mobilization process and diminishing the salience of the transnational groups through which recruitment is conducted<sup>244</sup>.

Although the phenomenon is not new, the extent of the issue is particularly impressive nowadays, with the UN suggesting that between 30,000 and 42,000 foreign terrorist fighters are believed to have travelled to Syria and Iraq<sup>245</sup>. The lack of clear figures can certainly be ascribed to the difficulties in collecting reliable data from the field. Notwithstanding, it partially also derives from the lack of a shared definition: while Malet

<sup>241</sup> European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, ‘Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019’, 2019, [internet] available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2019-te-sat>, p. 40 (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>242</sup> David Malet, ‘What Does the Evidence Tell Us about the Impact of Foreign Fighters on Home-grown Radicalisation?’, *Radicalisation Research Briefing*, 6 July 2015 [internet] available at: <http://www.radicalisationresearch.org/debate/malet-foreign-fighters-home-grown-radicalisation/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>243</sup> David Malet, *Foreign fighters: transnational identity in civil conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

<sup>244</sup> David Malet, ‘Why foreign fighters?: Historical perspectives and solutions’, *Orbis*, 54:1 (2010), pp. 112-113

<sup>245</sup> CTED, ‘The challenge of returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters: Research perspectives’, *CTED Trends Report*, March 2018, p. 4, [internet] available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CTED-Trends-Report-March-2018.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

refers to foreign fighters as “non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflict”<sup>246</sup>, other authors and organizations stress the importance of the underlining motivations that pushed an individual to join a foreign conflict, ranging from ideology to religion and kinship<sup>247</sup>. Among the latter, Hegghammer claims that the current phenomenon is the result of a “populist pan-Islamism” subcurrent established in the 1970s and aimed at gaining political relevance through an alarmist propaganda<sup>248</sup>.

Despite the lack of a clear and agreed definition of the concept of foreign terrorist fighter, both international criminal law and international humanitarian law can count on “a sufficiently developed set of norms and regulations” to deal with the phenomenon<sup>249</sup>. At the European level, the extent of the threat posed by “jihadists travelling from Europe to Syria and other hotspots”<sup>250</sup> was acknowledged in 2013, while in 2014 the European Council called for a “determined action [...] to stem the flow”<sup>251</sup> and in 2015 the phenomenon was identified as a priority issue in the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015-2020<sup>252</sup>. In addition to supranational policies, several EU member states adopted specific measures aimed at reducing the risks posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters, including strengthening investigations, confiscating passports and repressing expressions of radical Islam<sup>253</sup>, with short-term and repressive perspectives far surpassing soft preventive policies<sup>254</sup>.

The attacks in Brussels in March 2016 further strengthened the need to hit international terrorist networks by improving information-sharing and mutual legal assistance<sup>255</sup>. As a matter of fact, two of the three suicide bombers that detonated the two explosive devices at the airport and the bomb at a metro station in the city centre were linked to the terrorist cell that organized the Paris attacks in November 2015<sup>256</sup>. The need for further cooperation additionally increased after the attacks in Nice and Berlin in 2016, along with increased concerns raised by the rise in lone-wolf threats<sup>257</sup>. As a reaction, in addition to the creation of an EU Internet

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<sup>246</sup> David Malet, *Foreign fighters: transnational identity in civil conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 9

<sup>247</sup> Alex P. Schmid, ‘Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates: Conceptual and Data Issues’, *ICCT Policy Brief*, 2015, p. 4, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ICCT-Schmid-Foreign-Terrorist-Fighter-Estimates-Conceptual-and-Data-Issues-October20152.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>248</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, ‘The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters’, *International Security*, 35:3 (2010/2011), pp. 56-57

<sup>249</sup> Andrea De Guttry, Francesca Capone, and Christophe Paulussen, eds., *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond* (The Hague: TMC Asser Press, 2016), p. 519

<sup>250</sup> Council of the European Union, ‘Foreign fighters and returnees from a counter-terrorism perspective, in particular with regard to Syria’, Brussels, 28 May 2013, [internet] available at: <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2013/jul/eu-council-terr-coordinator-syria-9946-13.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>251</sup> European Council, ‘Special meeting of the European Council – Conclusions’, 30 August 2014, [internet] available at: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144538.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144538.pdf)

<sup>252</sup> Council of the European Union, ‘Draft Council Conclusions on the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015-2020’, Brussels, 10 June 2015, [internet] available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9798-2015-INIT/en/pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>253</sup> Edwin Bakker and Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, ‘Jihadist Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in Western Europe: A Low-Probability, High-Impact Threat’, *ICCT-Research papers*, October 2015, p. 8

<sup>254</sup> Edwin Bakker and Mark Singleton, ‘Foreign fighters in the Syria and Iraq conflict: Statistics and characteristics of a rapidly growing phenomenon’, in Andrea de Guttry, Francesca Capone, Christophe Paulussen, eds., *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond* (The Hague: TMC Asser Press, 2016), p. 22

<sup>255</sup> European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, ‘The European Union’s Policies on Counter-Terrorism Relevance, Coherence and Effectiveness’, January 2017, p. 36, [internet] available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583124/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)583124\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583124/IPOL_STU(2017)583124_EN.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>256</sup> Colin P. Clarke, *Terrorism: The Essential Reference Guide* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2018), p. 49

<sup>257</sup> European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, ‘The European Union’s Policies on Counter-Terrorism Relevance, Coherence and Effectiveness’, January 2017, pp. 36-38, [internet] available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583124/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)583124\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583124/IPOL_STU(2017)583124_EN.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

Referral Unit under the umbrella of the Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre in 2015<sup>258</sup>, the European Commission identified a series of initiatives aimed at creating a "Security Union" through the improvement of coordination mechanisms among EU member states and within the framework of the European Agenda on Security<sup>259</sup> and, in January 2016, Europol established the European Counter Terrorism Centre.

### *The Italian approach from the years of lead to contemporary waves of terrorism*<sup>260</sup>

Italy, chosen as a case-study for the purpose of this project, represents a unique case in the contemporary European panorama because the country has experienced only minor episodes of violent extremism and limited cases of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>261</sup>, although it has been a basis for Islamist-inspired terrorist organizations<sup>262</sup>. The Italian experience, thus, results to be of extreme interest also in comparison with the realities of other European countries as well as in relation to the counter-terrorism policies and strategies adopted by the European Union.

Italy has an extensive experience in the field of terrorism as the country has lived through more than two decades of social and political incidents, known as the "years of lead". Left-wing and right-wing forces promoted violent turmoil with the aim of exacerbating the social conflict and subvert the established order by targeting specific symbols of the State as well as a broad range of citizens<sup>263</sup>. The political tensions experienced by Italy also reflected the logic of the Cold War and the conflictual dynamics dominating the international arena, as further explained in the following paragraphs.

Although it is quite difficult to identify a clear time-frame for the years of lead, it is commonly acknowledged that Piazza Fontana (1969) marked the beginning of a series of violent politically motivated episodes and bloody clashes between leftist groups, such as the Red Brigades and Front Line, and right-wing actors, such as National Vanguard and New Order, leading to a total number of almost 15,000 incidents from 1969 to 1986<sup>264</sup>. The years of lead counted 150 deaths and more than 650 injuries<sup>265</sup>, with the last two murders being

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<sup>258</sup> European Parliament, 'European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2015 on the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations', 25 November 2015, Strasbourg, [internet] available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2015-0410+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>259</sup> European Commission, 'European Agenda on Security: Paving the way towards a Security Union', Commission Press Release, 20 April 2016, [internet] available at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1445\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1445_en.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>260</sup> For additional literature on terrorism in Italy during the Cold War see, among others: Indro Montanelli and Mario Cervi, *L'Italia degli anni di piombo* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1991); Luigi Manconi, *Terroristi italiani: Le Brigate Rosse e la guerra totale 1970-2008* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2008); Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank, *The rise and fall of Italian terrorism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987); Vittoriofranco S. Pisano, *The dynamics of subversion and violence in contemporary Italy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987); Monica Galfré, *La guerra è finita: L'Italia e l'uscita dal terrorismo 1980-1987* (Bari: Laterza, 2014); Nicola Tranfaglia, 'Sulle cause e sui misteri del terrorismo in Italia', *Studi Storici*, 30: 3 (1989), pp. 565-578; Giorgio Galli, *Piombo Rosso: La storia completa della lotta armata in Italia dal 1970 a oggi* (Milano: Baldini Castoldi e Dalai, 2005); Marc Lazar and Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *Il libro degli anni di piombo: Storia e memoria del terrorismo italiano*, eds. (Milano: Rizzoli, 2010); Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: the religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011)

<sup>261</sup> Francesco Marone, 'Italy's Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War', *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ICCT-Marone-Italys-Jihadists-in-the-Syrian-Civil-War-August2016-1.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>262</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics', *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 31

<sup>263</sup> Camillo Regalia et al., 'Forgiving the terrorists of the Years of Lead in Italy: The role of restorative justice beliefs and sociocognitive determinants', *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 18:5 (April 2015), p. 610

<sup>264</sup> Christopher Dittmeier, 'The Rise of Ideological Violence in Republican Italy', *Conference Papers - Midwestern Political Science Association 2009 Annual Meeting* (2009), p. 2

<sup>265</sup> Antonella Colonna Vilasi, *Il terrorismo* (Milano: Mursia, 2009), p. 31

performed in 1999 and 2002 towards two university professors collaborating with the government on labor market reforms<sup>266</sup>. In the first four years of turmoil, the great majority of violent episodes were performed right-wing militants<sup>267</sup>: in 1969 alone, 145 bomb blasts occurred, of which two thirds were classified as expressions of extreme right movements<sup>268</sup>. In this context of violent contentious politics and deep transformations of the societal order, an internationally known extreme leftist organization, the Red Brigades, launched its first activities, whose level of violence progressively increased<sup>269</sup>.

The international dimension played a significant role on the exacerbation of the conflictual dynamics. After World War II, Italy became a cause of concerns because of its economic situation as well as because of the growing size and popularity of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the biggest communist party among the existing Western European democracies. In 1947, the first Prime Minister of Italy, Alcide de Gasperi, founder of the Christian Democracy party (DC), visited the US and managed to obtain a loan of 100 million dollar by Eximport Bank, that he exploited as a lever to expel the communist and socialist parties from the governmental coalition: the exclusion of the leftist representatives from the government arena exacerbated the tensions between right- and left-wing positions, hence increasing polarization and extremism<sup>270</sup>. The level of conflict reached its peak in the late 1960s, marking the beginning of the “years of lead”.

The Red Brigades have attracted the attention both of the institutional security forces as well as of the academia in the attempt to understand the reasons behind the engagement into violence. The movement developed in the context of a wild economic growth that affected the country by destabilizing and deeply transforming its production patterns, housing and consumption habits<sup>271</sup>. In addition, at the beginning of the 1970s, the left-wing movements were mainly focused on fighting against the possibility of a dictatorial coup d'état<sup>272</sup>. Various authors have studied the organization and have tried to identify and assess the motivations of its members. Orsini has described the key characteristics of a Red Brigadist, that include an apocalyptic vision of the history leading to the conception of revolution as a mission to purify the world, a de-humanization of the enemy, the acceptance of violence as the only way in such an oppressing context, a “black and white” mentality, and the perception of being a victim on the margins of society<sup>273</sup>. According to some scholars, the dynamics behind this phenomenon can be better understood if the focus is shifted from the individual to the group: the identification of the members with an idealized group led to the necessity of conserving the group at any cost, including perpetuating violent acts and expelling any reformist inspirations<sup>274</sup>.

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<sup>266</sup> Marc Lazar and Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *Il libro degli anni di piombo: Storia e memoria del terrorismo italiano*, eds. (Milano: Rizzoli, 2010), p. 8

<sup>267</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: the religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 102

<sup>268</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: the religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 104

<sup>269</sup> Carole Beebe Tarantelli, ‘The Italian Red Brigades and the structure and dynamics of terrorist groups’, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 91: 3 (2010), p. 544

<sup>270</sup> Silvia D’Amato, ‘From BR to ISIS. The Italian domestic and international response to terrorism’, *European Politics and Society*, 19:4 (2018), p. 419

<sup>271</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: the religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 93-100

<sup>272</sup> Marc Lazar and Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *Il libro degli anni di piombo: Storia e memoria del terrorismo italiano*, eds. (Milano: Rizzoli, 2010), p. 18

<sup>273</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: the religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 1-29

<sup>274</sup> Carole Beebe Tarantelli, ‘The Italian Red Brigades and the structure and dynamics of terrorist groups’, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 91: 3 (2010), pp. 556-558

Furthermore, in addition to the violent bipolar struggle between black and red terrorism, from the late 1950s to the 1980s Italy also experienced some episodes of secessionist terrorism, especially concerning Sardinia and the northern region of Alto Adige, as well as some limited attacks performed by Middle-Eastern terrorist organizations<sup>275</sup>.

The legislative reaction to the above-described terrorist wave comprised both to the adoption of some restrictive measures as well as the creation of special forces mandated to prevent and counter further violent acts, such as the Central Security Operations Service (NOCS) and the Special Intervention Group (GIS), both still active within the Italian law enforcement agencies. A trend is identifiable in the progressive shift of powers from the judiciary to the police for interrogation and investigation purposes<sup>276</sup>. Among the laws passed during the years of lead, the Reale Law of 1975 introduced a series of significant repressive measures, still in force despite minor amendments, including the prohibition of granting bail for accusations of terrorism<sup>277</sup>. In 1978 the Decree Law 59 added a series of measures to the regulatory framework to facilitate the activities of the police bodies and the judicial authorities in the prevention and repression of terrorism and other crimes: it was the first time that the Italian penal code recognized the role played by having a terroristic objective in the perpetration of a crime<sup>278</sup>. Given the escalation of attacks and casualties, a new Decree Law was elaborated and soon converted in Law 6 of February 1980, also known as Cossiga Law. The Cossiga Law introduced new amendments to the criminal law and the code of criminal procedure with a twofold purpose of strengthening the criminal reaction to terrorism while providing favourable treatment for the repentant terrorists willing to collaborate with the investigators<sup>279</sup>. The Cossiga Law initiated the debate on the role of the “pentito”, namely a person who, after the arrest, repents for his/her previous participation in criminal or terrorist organizations and decides to collaborate with the judiciary to support the investigations. A Decree Law, converted into Law 82 of 1991<sup>280</sup>, introduced the notion of collaborators of justice (“collaboratori di giustizia”), further modified by Law 45 of 2001 into judicial witnesses (“testimoni di giustizia”). The establishment of a framework for collaboration with justice for former repentant members of the terrorist organizations was crucial for advancing the investigations and demolishing the network, as demonstrated by the achievements obtained in this regard by the General Dalla Chiesa.

Italy experienced additional forms of terrorism in the 1990s, ranging from the spread of jihadism in Europe in the late 1980s and the early 1990s to the return of the Red Brigades at the end of the millennium. Contrary to the current wave of “home-grown terrorists”, the first Islamist terrorist networks in Europe were mainly promoted by first-generation immigrants planning operations in other geographical areas. The reorganization of al-Qaeda performed by Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri allowed for the establishment, in the last half of the 1990s, of a global operational platform connecting training camps, battlefields and radical mosques<sup>281</sup>: in line with this pattern, Italy served as a strategic base for small militant groups, with the Islamic Cultural Institute (ICI) situated in via Jenner, Milan, acting as a major point of

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<sup>275</sup> Silvia D’Amato, ‘From BR to ISIS. The Italian domestic and international response to terrorism’, *European Politics and Society*, 19:4 (2018), p. 420

<sup>276</sup> Guido Neppi Modona, ‘Legislazione di emergenza e istituzioni parallele nell’ordinamento penale’, *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 8:1 (1979), p. 100

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100

<sup>278</sup> Chiara Zampieri, ‘Il garantismo del Partito socialista italiano negli anni del terrorismo: un altro capitolo del «duello a sinistra»?’, *Mondo Contemporaneo* (2016), p. 70

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80

<sup>280</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 8 of 15 January 1991, ‘Nuove misure in materia di sequestri di persona a scopo di estorsione e per la protezione di coloro che collaborano con la giustizia’, converted into Law 85 of 15 March 1991, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 64 (16 March 1991)

<sup>281</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 21

reference for the European jihadist movement of the 1990s, especially for what concerns the recruitment and support of the combatants in Bosnia-Herzegovina<sup>282</sup>. Several additional radical Islamist groups, often connected to the ICI, developed in the north of Italy in the late 1990s, such as the radical mosque of Cremona, established by members of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group accused of planning terrorist attacks both in Cremona and Milan<sup>283</sup>. In addition to Islamist terrorist networks, between the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the New Red Brigades tried to re-establish the values and objectives revindicated by the Red Brigades with a special focus on combating the reforms of the labour sector. The group managed to perform two assassinations and few attacks towards selected targets but never reached the impact and extent of the old network.

Considered its past experience, the Italian regulatory framework and security apparatus did not result to be unprepared in the context of new terrorist waves for what concerns counter-terrorism regulation and operations aimed at dismantling terrorist networks. Notwithstanding, some amendments and new provisions have been discussed and adopted in the last fifteen years in Italy. A Decree Law, converted into Law 438 of 2001<sup>284</sup>, was approved following the attacks perpetrated by al-Qaeda on the United States to identify strategies to prevent and counter potential attacks on the Italian soil. New provisions comprise the possibility to use preventive and judicial interceptions and the extension of certain procedures used for combatting specific crimes, such as drug trafficking or money laundering, to counter-terrorism activities. The Law also acknowledges the international nature of terrorist acts by claiming that terrorism purposes can also be traced in acts of violence directed against a foreign state, an institution or an international body. Finally, Law 438 of 2001 includes also the financing of terrorist activities among the crimes prohibited and sanctioned by law. In the years following 9/11 attacks, the regulation of migration flows attracted special attention with the purpose of enhancing private and public security. The Government tightened national migration policy to reduce the perceived risks posed by migrants, including the potential arrivals of terrorists on the coasts of Italy<sup>285</sup>. In response to the Madrid and London bombing attacks, the Italian government elaborated the Decree Law 144 of 2005, later transposed into Law 155 of 31st July 2005<sup>286</sup>, which describes urgent measures to contrast terrorism. Law 155 provides incentives for foreigners intended to collaborate with the law enforcement to combat terrorism, such as a special permit of stay for investigative cooperation and an EC residence permit for long-term residents for remarkable contributions in terrorism prevention. In addition, a broad discretionary power is attributed to the executive branch in terms of deportation: art. 3 provides the Minister of Interior with the power to expel a foreigner if there is reasonable ground to believe that his/her stay in the territory of the State can in any way facilitate terrorist organizations or activities, including international ones. Finally, a temporary strengthening of the secret of state is provided by the law to postpone appeals against deportation. Provisions listed in Law 155 suggest that the fight against terrorism is

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<sup>282</sup> Francesco Marone, 'Il nuovo volto del terrorismo jihadista', *Il Mulino*, 64:2 (2015), p. 295

<sup>283</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics', *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 33

<sup>284</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 374 of 18 October 2001, 'Disposizioni Urgenti per Contrastare il Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 244 (19 October 2001) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 438 of 15 December 2001, 'Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 18 ottobre 2001, n. 374, recante disposizioni urgenti per contrastare il terrorismo internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 293 (18 December 2001), pp. 7-12

<sup>285</sup> Elena Dal Santo, 'How the War on Terrorism Affected Migration Policies in Europe in the Aftermath of 9/11: EU Reaction in Comparison with Italian Response', *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights*, 3 (September-December 2012), pp. 86-87

<sup>286</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 144 of 27 July 2005, 'Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 173 (27 July 2005) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 155 of 31 July 2005, 'Conversione in Legge, con Modificazioni, del Decreto-Legge 27 luglio 2005, n. 144, Recante Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 177 (1 August 2005), pp. 27-30

“of prominent interest compared to the jurisdictional assessment of the crime under consideration” and attributes significant powers to the Minister of Interior, who can authorize deportations in the name of national security, a concept that is extremely difficult to define and that may be affected by personal and political considerations<sup>287</sup>. The Italian legislation to combat international terrorism adopted in the first decade of the new millennium results to be an answer to the need to provide a rapid response to serious terrorist attacks committed abroad rather than the outcome of a reasoned and organic assessment of the gaps and possible improvements of the anti-terrorism legislation. In line with the international scenario driven by the temptation of “governing by crime”<sup>288</sup>, Italy favoured an emergency approach. Notwithstanding, restrictive measures alone are not sufficient to address a much more complex phenomenon, that requires also a long-term plan envisaging further understanding, mutual dialogue and a reasoned response to its root causes: Italy has the great opportunity to replicate the strategy used to counter its past waves of terrorism by resorting not only to legislative and law enforcement operations but also to an increased awareness and a cultural swift, as accomplished in the years of led<sup>289</sup>. Furthermore, legislative efforts implemented in the first years of 2000 attracted criticism, especially from right-wing Italian politicians, arguing that the provisions adopted are not adequate to protect the country from the threats posed by international terrorism: a heated debated has developed between the supporters of “tougher legislative measures [along with the establishment of] an Italian ‘homeland security’ ministry” and the advocates of a balanced approach “between improving security measures and protecting personal freedoms”, emphasizing the advantages of the current multi-ministerial and intergovernmental approach in the fight against terrorism<sup>290</sup>.

Following the UN Security Council adoption of resolution 2178 on measure to prevent and counter the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>291</sup> and after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, in January 2015, Italy introduced further regulations<sup>292</sup> concerning the phenomenon of the foreign terrorist fighters, broadened the list of punishable criminal offenses and decided to penalize also some merely preliminary acts<sup>293</sup>: as a result of the implementation of Law 43 of 17 April 2015, the involvement in any terrorism-related activity is punished with imprisonment, also including individuals organizing and promoting travels envisaging

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<sup>287</sup> Elena Dal Santo, ‘How the War on Terrorism Affected Migration Policies in Europe in the Aftermath of 9/11: EU Reaction in Comparison with Italian Response’, *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights*, 3 (September-December 2012), pp. 88-89

<sup>288</sup> Tania Groppi, ‘Il dialogo tra corti in materia di antiterrorismo: strategia giurisprudenziale o convergenza culturale?’, *Politica del diritto*, 42:1 (2011), pp. 3-43

<sup>289</sup> Alessandro Ferrara, ‘Verso una costellazione neo-imperiale?’, *Rassegna italiana di sociologia*, 44:1 (2003), pp. 21-22

<sup>290</sup> Kristin Archick et al., ‘European approaches to homeland security and counterterrorism’, Library of Congress - Washington DC Congressional Research Service, July 2006, p. 24, [internet] available at: <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a453727.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>291</sup> United Nations, Security Council resolution 2178, Addressing the growing issue of foreign terrorist fighters, S/RES/2178, 24 September 2014

<sup>292</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 7 of 18 February 2015, ‘Misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 41 (19 February 2015) converted with amendments by the Italian Parliament into Law 43 of 17 April 2015, ‘Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 18 febbraio 2015, n. 7, recante misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 91 (20 April 2015), pp. 1-7

<sup>293</sup> Giuseppe Marino, ‘Il sistema antiterrorismo alla luce della l. 43/2015: un esempio di "diritto penale del nemico"?’, *Rivista italiana di diritto e procedura penale*, 59:3 (2016), pp. 1388-1426

terrorism objectives as well as individuals joining terrorist networks abroad despite the nature of their membership. The first application of these provisions occurred in December 2016, when the court of Milan sentenced the foreign fighter Maria Giulia Sergio, also known as Fatima, to nine years of imprisonment<sup>294</sup>. Finally, additional measures were adopted to counter any form of terrorism financing, especially through Law 153 in 2016<sup>295</sup> and Decree Law 90 of 2017<sup>296</sup>, which transposes the EU Directive 2015/849.

The framework described above currently regulates the punishment of the terrorism-related criminal offences in the Italian legislation, following the provisions of several article of the criminal code, mainly art. 270 and subsequent articles, art. 280 et seq., art. 302 and art. 312. Particular efforts have been devoted to countering terrorism financing: in 2001 a dedicated Financial Security Committee, CSF, was established with the aim, inter alia, to prevent the infiltration of terrorist organizations into the Italian financial system. The Committee, which functions as a point of connection for the actors operating in this sector, drafts and updates the list of individuals and organizations involved in the activities of terrorist groups and enjoys, in the acquisition of information, particularly penetrating powers. The list of names elaborated by the CSF is transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, in turn, sends it to the EU Community bodies responsible for drawing up the list of individuals and entities that finance terrorist activities<sup>297</sup>.

While significant interventions have been performed in the Italian context to strengthen repressive instruments, similar efforts have not been put in place to enhance preventive measures. After 9/11, Italy has given priority to a criminal justice approach based on prosecution and punishment, producing both positive as well as negative effects on the fight against terrorism: while the fear of arrest and conviction functioned as a reason not to travel back home for some foreign fighters, “family members and friends were discouraged from passing on information to authorities”<sup>298</sup>. Notwithstanding, prevention and intelligence efforts may play an increasing significant role in the Italian attempt to ensure domestic security and avoid terrorist attacks to occur<sup>299</sup>. As affirmed by Stefano Dambrosio, an Italian Deputy Public Prosecutor engaged since the 90s in the fight against organized crime and terrorism and member of the Lower House from March 2013 to March 2018, Italy can count on a solid set of repressive measures but still lacks a flexible regulatory framework to

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<sup>294</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of Maria Giulia Sergio case-study see Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, ICCT Research Paper, The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), August 2016, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ICCT-Marone-Italys-Jihadists-in-the-Syrian-Civil-War-August2016-1.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>295</sup> Italian Parliament Law 153 of 28 July 2016, ‘Norme per il contrasto al terrorismo, nonche' ratifica ed esecuzione: a) della Convenzione del Consiglio d'Europa per la prevenzione del terrorismo, fatta a Varsavia il 16 maggio 2005; b) della Convenzione internazionale per la soppressione di atti di terrorismo nucleare, fatta a New York il 14 settembre 2005; c) del Protocollo di Emendamento alla Convenzione europea per la repressione del terrorismo, fatto a Strasburgo il 15 maggio 2003; d) della Convenzione del Consiglio d'Europa sul riciclaggio, la ricerca, il sequestro e la confisca dei proventi di reato e sul finanziamento del terrorismo, fatta a Varsavia il 16 maggio 2005; e) del Protocollo addizionale alla Convenzione del Consiglio d'Europa per la prevenzione del terrorismo, fatto a Riga il 22 ottobre 2015’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 185 (9 August 2016 Suppl.)

<sup>296</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 90 of 25 May 2017, ‘Attuazione della direttiva (UE) 2015/849 relativa alla prevenzione dell’uso del sistema finanziario a scopo di riciclaggio dei proventi di attività criminose e di finanziamento del terrorismo e recante modifica delle direttive 2005/60/CE e 2006/70/CE e attuazione del regolamento (UE) n. 2015/847 riguardante i dati informativi che accompagnano i trasferimenti di fondi e che abroga il regolamento (CE) n. 1781/2006’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 140 (19 June 2017 Suppl.)

<sup>297</sup> Maria Chiara Noto, ‘Il terrorismo internazionale e le sanzioni del Consiglio di Sicurezza nella giurisprudenza italiana: il caso Daki’, *Rivista di diritto internazionale privato e processuale*, 44:3 (2008), p. 739

<sup>298</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, ICCT Research Paper, August 2016 and ‘Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq’, *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 2016, 7:1

<sup>299</sup> Kristin Archick et al., ‘European approaches to homeland security and counterterrorism’, Library of Congress - Washington DC Congressional Research Service, July 2006, p. 19, [internet] available at: <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a453727.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

address the evolution of the phenomenon from a preventive perspective<sup>300</sup>. According to Dambruoso, it is necessary to target the social origins of the radicalisation process: working with individuals at risk of radicalisation is not sufficient, the entire community should be engaged in any preventive efforts<sup>301</sup>. Lorenzo Vidino, one of the most prolific and recognized authors in the field of Italian jihadism, identifies the lack of a solid preventive strategy as a major weakness in the Italian counter-terrorism approach and reports the disappointment of several “high-ranking officials at the National Police, the Carabinieri, and AISI” regarding the lack of a preventive normative structure and adequate resources to address first signs of radicalisation<sup>302</sup>. Andrea Manciuilli, Head of the Italian Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (2014-2018) and Rapporteur of NATO PA-GSM (2015-2017) in charge of the reports on Daesh, Isil and al-Qaeda, has repeatedly underlined that prevention is essential to address the current wave of terrorism given the risks of endogenous radicalisation and the large pool of sympathizers that can be easily mobilized by Daesh for violent attacks<sup>303</sup>.

The country’s approach might change in the near future to complement repressive measures with preventive efforts. A first attempt in this regard is represented by the draft law on “measures for the prevention of jihadist radicalisation and extremism”, firstly submitted to Italian Parliament in January 2016. The preventive strategy described in the draft Law S.2883<sup>304</sup> identifies some key elements: specialized training for law enforcement agencies and institutional personnel, targeted activities in schools, awareness raising campaigns, disengagement and rehabilitation programmes in prison settings, and the establishment of a National Centre on Radicalisation (CRAD) mandated to develop the annual strategy to prevent and counter radicalisation. The strategic guidelines elaborated by CRAD are to be implemented at local level by dedicated regional centres and shall be elaborated reflecting crucial principles such as the inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and the inter-agency cooperation. Draft Law S.2883 represents the first attempt to establish a comprehensive approach to prevent radicalisation in Italy following the numerous recommendations developed by the United Nations and the European Union. The draft law has been discussed for almost one year by the Parliamentary Commission and has been approved by the Lower House in July 2017, after 3 months of discussion by the Assembly and the adoption of significant amendments and improvements, including: a stronger emphasis on the need for specialized training for all actors dealing with the phenomenon; the establishment of CRAD, of regional coordination centres on radicalisation (CCR) as well as of a Parliamentary Committee for the monitoring of the phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation and violent extremism; the identification of additional funds for the implementation of the measures foreseen by the Law; and the set-up of a toll free number and experimental counselling centres<sup>305</sup>. Although the discussion

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<sup>300</sup> Lodovica Bulian, ‘Contro il rischio estremismo manca un piano sui giovani’, *Il Giornale*, 08 April 2018, [internet] available at: <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/contro-rischio-estremismo-manca-piano-sui-giovani-1513384.html> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>301</sup> Claudio Bertolotti, ‘Così l’Italia può sconfiggere l’estremismo jihadista’, *Panorama*, 29 September 2017, [internet] available at: <https://www.panorama.it/news/cronaca/italia-sconfiggere-estremismo-jihadista-isis/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>302</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Italy’s Lack of CVE Strategy and Initiatives’, in Lorenzo Vidino, *De-Radicalisation in the Mediterranean: Comparing Challenges and Approaches*, ed., (Milan: Ledizioni, 2018), pp. 16-18

<sup>303</sup> Simona Sotgiu, ‘Attacco alla Francia, perché la prevenzione è l’arma migliore contro Isis: Parla Manciuilli’, 23 March 2018, [internet] available at: <https://formiche.net/2018/03/francia-prevenzione-contro-isis-manciuilli/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>304</sup> Italian Parliament, Draft Law S2883 approved by the Lower House on 18 July 2017, ‘Misure per la prevenzione della radicalizzazione e dell’estremismo violento di matrice jihadista’

<sup>305</sup> A more detailed description of the amendments proposed by the Parliamentary Commission and the Assembly is available on the Lower House website at the following link: <http://www.camera.it/leg17/126?tab=3&leg=17&idDocumento=3558&sede=&tipo=> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

on Draft Law S.2883 has been inserted repeatedly into the agenda of the Upper House of the Italian Parliament, it has, unfortunately, never been approved, probably in the attempt to prioritize other issues before the 2018 national elections.

Among many other characteristics, the main features of the Italian case-study can be summarized as follows: contrary to other neighbouring countries, at the time of writing, namely end of 2018, Italy has not been hit by any Islamist terrorist attack and presents a very limited number of foreign terrorist fighters; the Italian government has established in 2016 a Commission composed by an heterogeneous group of experts and professionals with the objective of assessing the current jihadist threat in the country; finally, in its fight against terrorism and in the attempt of preventing attacks on the Italian soil, deportations have been extensively enforced by the Ministry of Interior, especially after 2015. The following paragraphs will scrutinize the above-listed elements to provide additional information and data on the uniqueness of the Italian case-study.

Italy represents an exceptional case in the European panorama because, although the country has served as a basis for “sophisticated jihadist networks”, it has experienced only minor episodes of violent extremism on its own soil<sup>306</sup> as well as few cases of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>307</sup>. Because of the limited scope of the phenomenon as well as its sensitive nature, literature and research on the “new waves of terrorism” in the country, its forms and radicalisation paths are very restricted<sup>308</sup>. In a study conducted in 2014, Vidino analyzed first cases of home-grown jihadism, while underlining the role played by traditional recruitment networks: the number of people that have been socialized in Italy and present intolerant attitudes towards Western values and traditions is extremely small and, on this basis, the author estimates the presence of approximately fifty home-grown jihadists and a broader number of sympathizers<sup>309</sup>. The phenomenon, according to Vidino and as suggested also by the Italian information system for the security of the Republic<sup>310</sup>, is strongly fuelled by the Internet, although radicalisation may happen only in combination with specific individual socio-psychological attitudes and within the framework of particular socio-economic contexts. Although Italy has often served as a transit country for foreign fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq<sup>311</sup>, less than 600 people left Italy for joining ISIS fight between August 2016 and July 2020: according to the most recent estimates provided by the Italian Minister of Interior, 125 individuals have been identified as foreign fighters between August 2016 and July 2017<sup>312</sup>, with an increasing trend leading to 146 individuals believed to have

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<sup>306</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 31

<sup>307</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016; Francesco Marone, ‘Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq’, *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 7:1 (2016)

<sup>308</sup> See Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014; Lorenzo Vidino, ‘The Buccinasco pentiti: a unique case study of radicalisation’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:3 (2011), pp. 398-418; Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Radicalisation, Linkage and Diversity: Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe’, Occasional Paper, *RAND Corporation*, July 2011; Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016; Francesco Marone, ‘Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq’, *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 7:1 (2016), pp. 20-35

<sup>309</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, pp. 76-77

<sup>310</sup> Italian information system for the security of the Republic, ‘2012 annual report to the Italian Parliament’, p. 46, [internet] available at: <https://www.sicurezza nazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/relazione-annuale/relazione-al-parlamento-2012.html> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>311</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016, p. 3

<sup>312</sup> Minister of Interior of Italy, ‘Dossier Viminale - Ferragosto 2017’, Report of the National Committee of the Order and Public Security, 15 August 2017, p. 9, [internet] available at: [http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/modulistica/dossier\\_15\\_agosto.pdf](http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/modulistica/dossier_15_agosto.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

left the country between August 2019 and July 2020<sup>313</sup>. The figures include not only citizens and residents but also foreign nationals who lived in the country for medium or short periods of time<sup>314</sup>. This number is significantly low in relation to the 5000 individuals<sup>315</sup> that are believed to have left west Europe for Syria and Iraq between 2013 and early 2017. If compared to some neighbouring countries, the uniqueness of the Italian case is even more evident: it is estimated that between 900<sup>316</sup> and 1910<sup>317</sup> people left France to join Daesh's cause before December 2015 and that 690 French foreign fighters are currently fighting in Syria and Iraq<sup>318</sup>, while, by September 2015, 230 people have been identified as foreign fighters travelling from Austria to the Daesh battlefield. Although Italy, contrary to many other European countries, has not been hit by any major Islamist terrorist attacks yet and despite the fact that very few people left from the peninsula for joining the Daesh cause, the country holds a prominent position in the IS propaganda material: references to Italy, the Vatican and Rome appear very often in IS official propaganda<sup>319</sup>, thus confirming the symbolic role played by the city of Rome.

In its attempt to deal with the "new wave of terrorism"<sup>320</sup>, the Government of Italy, besides revising and expanding counter-terrorism legislation, has established in 2016 a Commission to study the current jihadist threat in the country within a timeframe of 120 days and by conducting an independent analysis<sup>321</sup>. The group, formed under the auspices of the Prime Minister, consisted of 19 experts in the field of terrorism belonging to different specializations and disciplinary domains, namely the academia, research institutes, the journalistic sector, and the psychological and pedagogic fields. The experts were mandated to conduct a study on the issue of jihadi terrorism in Italy, assessing the scope of the threat, addressing the limits in existing legislation and counter-terrorism measures and developing recommendations for the next future. The establishment of the Commission to study the phenomenon of radicalisation and jihadist extremism represents another specificity of the Italian approach to prevent and counter terrorism. Various coordination groups and multi-stakeholder platforms have been set up at regional level, such as the European High-level

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<sup>313</sup> Ministero dell'Interno, Dossier Viminale 1 Agosto 2019 - 31 Luglio 2020: Un anno di attività del Ministero dell'Interno, 15 August 2020, [internet] available at: [https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2020-08/dossier\\_viminale\\_2020.pdf](https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2020-08/dossier_viminale_2020.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>314</sup> Francesco Marone, 'Italy's Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War', *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016, p. 5

<sup>315</sup> EUROPOL, 'TESAT: European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018', 2018, p. 26, [internet] available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2018-tesat-2018> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>316</sup> Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, eds., *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2016, p. 31, [internet] available at: [https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>317</sup> Richard Barrett, 'Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees', The Soufan Center, October 2017, p. 12, [internet] available at: <https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v3.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>318</sup> Alissa J. Rubin, 'She Left France to Fight in Syria. Now She Wants to Return. But Can She?', *The New York Times*, 11 January 2018, [internet] available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/world/europe/emilie-konig-france-islamic-state.html> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>319</sup> Francesco Marone and Marco Olimpio, "'Conquisteremo la vostra Roma". I riferimenti all'Italia nella propaganda dell'IS', *ISPI Working Paper*, 27 February 2018, pp. 9-10, [internet] available at: <http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/conquisteremo-la-vostra-roma-i-riferimenti-allitalia-nella-propaganda-dellis-19744> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>320</sup> Peter R. Neumann, *Radicalized: New Jihadists and the threat to the West* (London: IB Tauris, 2016)

<sup>321</sup> Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 'Insediata commissione di studio su fenomeno radicalizzazione ed estremismo jihadista', 1 September 2016, [internet] available at: <http://www.governo.it/articolo/insediata-commissione-di-studio-su-fenomeno-radicalizzazione-ed-estremismo-jihadista/5640> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R)<sup>322</sup> or the G5 Sahel<sup>323</sup>, for enhancing the cooperation among experts, institutions, law enforcement agencies, and civil society representatives. However, similar efforts are rare at national level and, when existing, are usually more oriented at combining analytical aspects with operational measures and policy development<sup>324</sup>. Contrary to other coordination groups, the Italian Commission has been characterized by a strong analytical objective and an independent nature, thus resulting in a unique experience in the field of governmental-sponsored counter-terrorism efforts. The experts gathered together for four months, from September to December 2016, and presented the results of their work in January 2017, emphasizing the role played by the Internet and the prison settings in fostering radicalisation in Italy<sup>325</sup>. These findings have been confirmed by the Ministry of Justice, that refers to the presence of 365 inmates at different stage of radicalisation for the year 2016: while 124 detainees have been notified for potential vulnerabilities to radicalisation, 76 have received special attention from the prison administration for suspected linkages with jihadi ideology and for recruitment attempts, and 165 prisoners have been closely monitored either because convicted for terrorism related crimes or because of recruitment attitudes<sup>326</sup>. An increase in these data has been confirmed by the Ministry of Justice for 2017: among the total number of 506 detainees at different stage of radicalisation, 150 resulted vulnerable to radicalisation, 114 might have entailed connections with jihadi ideology and recruitment networks, and 242 prisoners have been either accused or convicted for terrorism related crimes<sup>327</sup>. The experience of the Commission partially filled the lacunae of the country's academic sector on the topic and, at the same time, indicated a certain level of flexibility within the Italian Government in developing, improving and amending its counter-terrorism policies.

In the fight against terrorism, Italy, as many other countries, foresees the use of administrative measures, which include arrangements and dispositions that are halfway between preventive and restrictive

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<sup>322</sup> The High-level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) has been set up by the European Commission to advise and assist “on how to improve cooperation and collaboration among the different stakeholders and in particular with Member States [...]; in the further development of Union policies aiming at preventing and countering radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism, including by elaborating a set of principles and recommendations taking into due consideration findings of existing and future EU funded research in the area; [...] in exploring options for future more structured cooperation mechanisms at Union level in the area of preventing and countering radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism”, European Commission, ‘Commission Decision of 27.7.2017 setting-up the High-Level Commission Expert Group on radicalisation’, Brussels, 27 July 2017, [internet] available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=34061&no=1>; (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>323</sup> The G5 Sahel was established in February 2014 to enhance the cooperation among its members, namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad, to ensure security and promote development, [internet] available at: <http://www.g5sahel.org/index.php/qui-sommes-nous/le-g5-sahel> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>324</sup> See, for example, the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV): NCTV, established by the Dutch Minister of Security and Justice, collaborates with partners within the government, the research community and the private sector, to protect the Netherlands from threats that could disrupt the Dutch society

<sup>325</sup> Repubblica, ‘Terrorismo, Gentiloni: "Il pericolo viene dalle carceri e dal web ma in Italia meno radicalizzazione"', *Repubblica*, 05 January 2017, [internet] available at: [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/01/05/news/terrorismo\\_gentiloni\\_pericolo\\_radicalizzazione\\_jihadista\\_carceri\\_e\\_web-155442038/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/01/05/news/terrorismo_gentiloni_pericolo_radicalizzazione_jihadista_carceri_e_web-155442038/) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>326</sup> Ministry of Justice, ‘Relazione del Ministero sull'amministrazione della giustizia anno 2016’, Inaugurazione dell'Anno Giudiziario 2017, Dipartimento dell'amministrazione Penitenziaria, [internet] available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno\\_giudiziario\\_2017\\_dap.pdf](https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno_giudiziario_2017_dap.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>327</sup> Ministry of Justice, ‘Relazione del Ministero sull'amministrazione della giustizia anno 2017’, Inaugurazione dell'Anno Giudiziario 2018, Dipartimento dell'amministrazione Penitenziaria, [internet] available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno\\_giudiziario\\_2018\\_dap.pdf](https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno_giudiziario_2018_dap.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

instruments<sup>328</sup>. Administrative measures limit, by definition, the role of the judiciary, they are often based on intelligence information, entail a controversial historical legacy and are believed not to be as effective as expected with most radicalized individuals<sup>329</sup>. Administrative measures to counter terrorism may include various provisions, such as: terrorists listing and targeted sanctions for listed individuals, ranging from travel limitations to property restrictions and properties seizure; administrative detention for individuals who represent a threat for national security; deportation for national security reasons; and measures to counter the foreign fighters phenomenon, ranging from seizure of passports to house arrests and citizenship revocation<sup>330</sup>. Administrative measures, firstly used to counter terrorism financing, have recently gained in popularity and many European countries, including Italy, currently refer to such tools for a much broader scope of issues<sup>331</sup>. The manifestation of two clear distinct paths between penal and administrative measures in the fight against terrorism has become evident in the Italian peninsula immediately after 9/11 attacks. The investigations conducted by the General Investigations and Special Operations Division, DIGOS, in the aftermath of the attacks in New York and Washington, brought to the identification of a terrorist cell, active in the area of Milan. The investigation focused on three individuals, namely Daki Mohammed, Bouyahia Maher Ben Abdelaziz and Toumi All Ben Sassi, suspected of being involved in terrorism financing and provision of paramilitary training in the Middle East. The preliminary hearing judge acquitted Daki from the charge of participating in an international terrorist association and described the three cases as guerrilla fighters. The accused was acquitted from all charges by the Court of assizes of Milan. The Criminal Court of Cassation, in sentence 1072 of 17 January 2007, set aside the judgement under appeal and referred the case to another section of the Court of assizes, which in November 2007 sentenced Daki to four years of imprisonment for participation in an international terrorist association. Sentence n. 1072 draws a cross-cutting line between the judicial and the law enforcement approach in countering terrorism: firstly, the Criminal Court of Cassation confirms the exclusion of intelligence sources for the purposes of proof and, second, it emphasizes the exclusive administrative value of the registration of an individual, or of an organization, in the UN Committee 1267 list by claiming that inclusion in the terrorist organizations lists cannot be treated as a proof but upholds a value merely for investigation purposes<sup>332</sup>. As mentioned above, Law 155 of 31st July 2005, comprising urgent measures to contrast terrorism, expanded the criteria for administrative deportation: by amending the existing Consolidated Law 286/1998 on migration policy and aliens' status<sup>333</sup>, art. 3 of Law 155/2005 invests the Minister of Interior (or the delegated Prefect) with the faculty to expel a foreigner whose presence on the Italian soil may facilitate terrorist activities. Although appeal against the expulsion can be submitted to the territorial administrative court, the execution of the provision can be suspended in no case and the appeal is deferred if the acts are protected by the investigative secrecy or by the secret of state until when the content of the acts can be communicated to the

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<sup>328</sup> Bérénice Boutin, 'Administrative Measures against Foreign Fighters: In Search of Limits and Safeguards', *ICCT Research Paper*, December 2016, p. 3, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/administrative-measures-against-foreign-fighters-in-search-of-limits-and-safeguards/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>329</sup> Kent Roach, 'Thematic conclusions and future challenges', in Kent Roach, *Comparative counter-terrorism law*, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 746-755

<sup>330</sup> Martin Scheinin, 'Impact of post-9/11 counter-terrorism measures on all human rights', in Manfred Nowak and Anne Charbord, *Using Human Rights to Counter Terrorism*, eds. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), pp. 112-118

<sup>331</sup> Bérénice Boutin, 'Administrative Measures against Foreign Fighters: In Search of Limits and Safeguards', *ICCT Research Paper*, December 2016, p. 3, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/administrative-measures-against-foreign-fighters-in-search-of-limits-and-safeguards/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>332</sup> Maria Chiara Noto, 'Il terrorismo internazionale e le sanzioni del Consiglio di Sicurezza nella giurisprudenza italiana: il caso Daki', *Rivista di diritto internazionale privato e processuale*, 44:3 (2008), p. 735

<sup>333</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Legislative Decree n. 286 of 25 July 1998, 'Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 191 Supplemento Ordinario n. 139 (18 agosto 1998)

administrative court. If such a period exceeds the two years, the administrative court may set a deadline by which the administration is required to produce new elements for the decision or to revoke the contested provision. Finally, since this special administrative deportation order may not be subject to the same requirements and conditions foreseen by the Consolidated Law 286/1998, it may permit the omission of the translation into the foreigner's language as well as of the information regarding the jurisdictional remedies to be pursued against the expulsion decree. At the same time, it may not imply the prohibition of return to the national territory<sup>334</sup>. Administrative deportations have been extensively used by Italy, especially in the last years<sup>335</sup>, to the point that they have become a key characteristic of the Italian counter-terrorism approach: from January 2015 to beginning of March 2018, 262 individuals have been expelled and repatriated to their country of origin<sup>336</sup>. According to some experts, the use of administrative deportations, combined with a restrictive law on citizenship attribution, contributes to explain the absence of terrorist attacks on the Italian soil so far<sup>337</sup>. Notwithstanding, such measures also entail controversial aspects in virtue of the broad freedom recognized to the ministerial authority in assessing the situation and making a decision *ante delictum*<sup>338</sup>. The scope and impact of administrative deportations executed by Italy after the Charlie Hebdo shooting as well as the profiles of the expelled individuals and the portrayal of the phenomenon by the media will be further scrutinized in the following chapters.

## Conclusions

The terrorist attacks of September 2001 have marked a change in the counter-terrorism policies at international, regional and national level: the momentum was seized by different actors to reach agreement on declarations and dispositions that were previously stimulating conflictual debates. Despite general interest and some efforts in this direction, an agreement has not been reached over a definition of terrorism, although two elements usually recur, namely the "aggression against noncombatants" and the attempt "to influence a target audience and change [its] behavior [accordingly]"<sup>339</sup>. Both the United Nations and the European Union strengthened their position in the fight against terrorism at the beginning of the twenty-first century, by improving, in particular, repressive strategies as a first reaction to the attacks of 9/11, Madrid (2004) and London (2005). The importance of preventive measures was soon brought back to the political debate and legislated upon both by the UN and the EU.

While numerous policies have been elaborated and adopted at international and regional level, national counter-terrorism legislation was also revised and enhanced in many countries, both to reflect and

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<sup>334</sup> Paolo Bonetti, 'Terrorismo e Stranieri nel Diritto Italiano. Disciplina Legislativa e Profili Costituzionali. 2<sup>a</sup> Parte: Il Terrorismo nelle Norme Speciali e Comuni in Materia di Stranieri, Immigrazione ed Asilo', *Diritto, Immigrazione e Cittadinanza*, 4 (2005), p. 21

<sup>335</sup> Francesco Marone, 'The Use of Deportation in Counter-Terrorism: Insights from the Italian Case', *ICCT*, 13 March 2017, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/the-use-of-deportation-in-counter-terrorism-insights-from-the-italian-case/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>336</sup> Minister of Interior of Italy, 'Sicurezza, espulso 32enne tunisino', Press Release, 1 March 2018, [internet] available at: <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/sala-stampa/comunicati-stampa/sicurezza-espulso-32enne-tunisino> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>337</sup> Francesco Marone, 'The Use of Deportation in Counter-Terrorism: Insights from the Italian Case', *ICCT*, 13 March 2017, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/the-use-of-deportation-in-counter-terrorism-insights-from-the-italian-case/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>338</sup> Nicola Gullo, 'Prevenzione del Terrorismo, Tutela dell'Ordine Pubblico e Diritti Fondamentali degli Stranieri: Riflessioni sull'espulsione degli Stranieri Prevista dall'art. 3, D.L. N. 144 del 2005', *Diritto & Questioni Pubbliche*, XVII (2 dicembre 2017), p. 466

<sup>339</sup> Jeff Victoroff, 'The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49:1 (2005), p. 4

implement UN and EU recommendations as well as to prevent attacks on the national soil. Among the European countries, Italy represents a special case: although it has been used as an operational basis by several terrorist networks and represents a recurrent subject in IS propaganda, it has not experienced major violent Islamist attacks yet and presents a limited number of foreign fighters leaving for Syria and Iraq compared to its neighbours. Reasons why Italy has not been hit by an Islamist attack so far are numerous and heterogeneous, including the experience of the security forces and the existence of a strong counter-terrorism apparatus<sup>340</sup> developed during the years of lead, the management of the urban and rural spaces, as well as the approach and legislation concerning the migratory flows and the mechanisms for citizenship award. Many experts and scholars applaud the extensive use of deportations as a strategy to prevent terrorist violence on the Italian soil, although these measures entail controversial aspects. Even though Italy relies on a strong set of repressive measures, preventive strategies are still limited, if not lacking completely: this poses a question concerning the country's capability to prevent, in the near future, radicalisation and possible terrorist attacks on the Italian territory. Through an analysis of primary data and secondary sources, the following chapters will provide an analysis of the radicalisation patterns occurring in Italy from the institutional perspective, will assess the efficaciousness and lacunae of existing strategies and laws to prevent and counter radicalisation, and will further scrutinize the role played by administrative deportations in the fight against terrorism.

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<sup>340</sup> Andrea Beccaro and Stefano Bonino, 'Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Italian Exceptionalism and Its Limits', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2019), pp. 7-10

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## Chapter 3: Research design and methods

### *Research design*

This research fits into the broader literature on terrorism and builds on multiple disciplinary perspectives and, in particular, political sciences, sociology and anthropology as described in the first chapter.

The theoretical framework of reference includes some main conceptual components, namely the notions of radicalisation, extremism, de-radicalisation and disengagement. Since the Madrid and London bomb attacks, “the term ‘radicalisation’ has become central to terrorism studies and counter-terrorism policy-making”<sup>341</sup>. Although there is no agreed definition on the meaning of radicalisation, it is commonly depicted as a process<sup>342</sup>. Radicalisation is linked to the adoption of “an extremist belief system”<sup>343</sup> with the scope of promoting changes but is not necessarily linked to the use of violence<sup>344</sup>. As a matter of fact, many people hold radical ideas but are not engaging in any terrorist activities<sup>345</sup>. Violent radicalisation is the “process of adopting an extremist belief system with the intention and justification of using violence to achieve political, religious or social goals”<sup>346</sup>. The definitions of radicalisation refer to two main theories, namely the “relative deprivation theory”<sup>347</sup> and the “exposure theory”. Tilly, Tarrow and McAdam have emphasized the role played by the political system and the state propensity towards repression when studying collective violence<sup>348</sup>. This standpoint has been of inspiration for a branch of the terrorism studies that has focused on the processual and relational understanding of violence<sup>349</sup>. Several authors<sup>350</sup> have highlighted the importance of going beyond the individual focus to broaden the analysis to the socio-political context and the biographical exposure to violence. For the purpose of this study, the contextual socio-political factors have been taken into account in the analysis of the causes of terrorist motivated violence. In addition, it is worthy to underline that, although radicalisation can be driven by various inspirational factors, for the purpose of the current research, only Islamist driven radicalisation has been considered.

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<sup>341</sup> Arun Kundnani, ‘Radicalisation: the journey of a concept’, *Race & Class*, 54:2 (Oct-Dec 2012), p. 3

<sup>342</sup> Donatella Della Porta, ‘Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation, Guest Editorial’, *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 6:1 (2012), p. 4

<sup>343</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, ‘Risk assessment decisions for violent political extremism’, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada (2009), p. 4 [internet] available at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>344</sup> Alex P. Schmid, ‘Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review’, *ICCT Research Paper*, March 2013 [internet] available at: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>345</sup> Randy Borum, ‘Radicalisation into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories’, *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4 (2011), pp. 37-62

<sup>346</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, ‘Risk Assessment of Radicalisation to Violence, Application of VERA-2 in Prisons’, at the Council for Penological Co-operation, 11th Working Group Meeting, 11 January 2016

<sup>347</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970)

<sup>348</sup> Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, *Dynamics of contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

<sup>349</sup> Didier Bigo and Daniel Hermant, *La relation terroriste. Analyse de la violence politique des organisations clandestines dans les democraties occidentales* (Paris: Etudes Polemologiques/Documentation francaise, 1998)

<sup>350</sup> See, for example, Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide bombers: Allah’s new Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Gilles Kepel, *The war for Muslim minds: Islam and the West* (Harvard University Press, 2004); Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Laurent Bonelli (ed.) *Le passage par la violence politique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2011)

Existing literature and empirical analyses conducted on terrorists' radicalisation suggest that predictability is extremely difficult: scholars agree in stating that "there is no one pattern or profile of terrorists"<sup>351</sup> and analyses of past perpetrators have revealed that they have been rather "unremarkable individuals, who have led unremarkable lives, have held unremarkable jobs"<sup>352</sup>. Although a direct causal link between socio-economic disadvantage and radicalisation has not been found<sup>353</sup>, there are some elements that may be conducive to terrorism, such as political frustration<sup>354</sup>, socio-economic, cultural and historical conditions<sup>355</sup>. It is indeed fundamental to underline that every terrorist is moved by his/her own specific motivations, that could be intrinsic (the motivation comes from within, the person feels a calling), extrinsic (the motivation comes from outside/external factors) or a combination of the two.

Given the nature of the phenomenon under consideration and the findings obtained so far by the terrorism studies, several authors claim the need to abandon the "why question" in favour of the "how variable": as stated by John Horgan, director of the University of Massachusetts Lowell's Center for Terrorism and Security Studies, "we may never fully crack the code, but we won't make any progress at all by continuing to obsess over the question of Why? Truth be told, it's probably unanswerable. A better starting point is to answer the How? questions: How do people become involved in terrorism? How is a specific role in the movement assigned to them? How does the recruiter find them, or vice versa? And how is trust established in an online relationship that could well end in death for at least one of the parties?"<sup>356</sup>.

This research process attempts to address the "how question" for the Italian case-study, through the identification and analysis of the concept of radicalisation in the Italian context. The decision to focus on one case-study has been motivated by the assumption that a sound study of the radicalisation process and the conceptualization of terrorism by concerned actors requires an in-depth explorative research: since radicalization is influenced "not only by the dynamics of political contention but also [by] historical precedents and processes"<sup>357</sup> and given that "there is no one path to radicalism and no common profile, but each case must be analysed individually"<sup>358</sup>, it was decided to narrow the scope of this project to one specific country. Italy has been selected as a case-study for different reasons. First, it represents a unique case in the European panorama as, besides the presence of "jihadist networks", the country has experienced limited episodes of violent extremism in its own soil<sup>359</sup> despite the presence of the Vatican and the military involvement in the Middle East. Second, Italy has experienced a huge wave of terrorism in the 70s, which has

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<sup>351</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, 'Risk Assessment of Radicalisation to Violence, Application of VERA-2 in Prisons', at the Council for Penological Co-operation, 11th Working Group Meeting, 11 January 2016, p. 5

<sup>352</sup> Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, 'The Radicalisation Process: From Conversion to Jihad', prepared by US Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Division, 10 May 2006, p. 2 [internet] available at: [cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf](http://cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>353</sup> Jitka Maleckova, 'Impoverished Terrorists: Stereotype or Reality?' in Tore Bjørgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 33-42. Maleckova concludes that 'neither the participants nor the adherents of militant activities... are recruited predominantly from the poor... [and] poverty on a national level does not predict the number of terrorist attacks carried out by individuals coming from a country'

<sup>354</sup> Christiane Nischler and Roger Morefield, 'An actor oriented empirical model of the roots of terrorism', *Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, 24:3 (Fall 2012), p. 53

<sup>355</sup> Domenico Tosini, 'Sociology of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: A Social Science Understanding of Terrorist Threat', *Sociology Compass*, 1:2 (2007), pp. 671-675

<sup>356</sup> John Horgan, 'Don't Ask Why People Join the Islamic State — Ask How', *Vice News*, 10 September 2014, [internet] available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wjyygy/dont-ask-why-people-join-the-islamic-state-ask-how> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>357</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, 'Patterns of Radicalisation in Political Activism: An Introduction', *Social Science History*, 36:3 (Fall 2012), p. 317

<sup>358</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics', *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 29

<sup>359</sup> Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy', p. 31

undoubtedly affected the country's counter-terrorism approach and apparatus. Finally, literature and research on radicalisation in the Italian context is limited<sup>360</sup> and would definitely benefit from further expansion and empirical research on the field.

Given that the concept of terrorism entails very different representations and meanings, several relevant perspectives will be taken into consideration to develop a holistic picture, starting from the assumption that the meaning of what is terrorism "is decided through symbolic labelling, social agreement and a range of inter-subjective practices [and] is constituted by and through the discursive practices which make it a concrete reality for politicians, law enforcement officials, the media, the public, academics and so on"<sup>361</sup>. Unfortunately, it was not possible to establish contacts with radicalized/allegedly radicalized individuals throughout the research for the reasons explained below and, consequently, individual radicalisation patterns will be analysed through the lenses of the representations provided by relevant institutions, experts and professionals categories. This will allow for the development of a comprehensive understanding of how Islamist-drive radicalisation occurs in Italy according to relevant stakeholders: instead of assessing the individual perspective of allegedly radicalized individuals, this research will analyse how this process is seen, understood and narrated by institutions, experts, professionals and the media. In line with such a perspective, the following research questions have guided the current study: what are the relevant institutions, experts and professionals' conceptual interpretations of terrorism and radicalisation?; How does - according to the relevant institutions, experts and professionals - the Islamist radicalisation process occur in Italy?; How can the phenomenon of radicalisation be prevented and countered according to the relevant institutions, experts and professionals? Addressing these questions will allow to identify and analyse various conceptions of the Islamist radicalisation process occurring in Italy with the final purpose of elaborating a comprehensive description of the phenomenon combining multiple interpretations and viewpoints. The data collected will contribute to advance knowledge on the meaning(s) of Islamist radicalisation in the Italian context, on the pathways to radicalisation according to relevant stakeholders and on the institutional and professional responses to the phenomenon. The examination of these multiple and complementary perspectives functions as a proxy for the elaboration of an overall description of the reasons for, phases of and consequences of Islamist radicalisation in the Italian context while also providing an insight of how the phenomenon is experienced and narrated by relevant social actors. Given the sources of the data collected, the analysis might also allow to draw some initial conclusions regarding the extent, nature and appropriateness of the counter-measures currently in place to address the phenomenon.

The current study, given its focus and nature, does not have generalisation purposes or ambitions but is rather focused on providing an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under consideration through the intensive study of a particular context represented by the Italian experience. However, broader reflections can be elaborated starting from the Italian case for similar units of analysis following a case-to-case transferability attempt based on drawing generalization from a "proximal similarity model"<sup>362</sup>.

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<sup>360</sup> See Lorenzo Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics', *ISPI*, Milano 2014; Lorenzo Vidino, 'The Buccinasco pentiti: a unique case study of radicalization', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:3 (2011), pp. 398-418; Lorenzo Vidino, 'Radicalization, Linkage and Diversity: Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe', *Occasional Paper*, *RAND Corporation*, July 2011; Francesco Marone, 'Italy's Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War', *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016; Francesco Marone, 'Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq', *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 7:1 (2016), pp. 20-35; Andrea Beccaro and Stefano Bonino, 'Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Italian Exceptionalism and Its Limits', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2019), pp. 1-18

<sup>361</sup> Richard Jackson, 'An argument for terrorism', *Perspectives on terrorism*, 2:2 (2008), p. 28

<sup>362</sup> Denise F. Polit and Cheryl Tatano Beck, 'Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies', *International journal of nursing studies*, 47:11 (2010), p. 1453

## *Approach and methods*

As claimed above, defining the notion of radicalisation, as well as the related concepts of terrorism and violent extremism, is an extremely controversial and debatable exercise. Contributing to improve knowledge of the radicalisation process through primary data collection and analysis represents an even more challenging task given a broad range of difficulties such as, for example, the violent nature of the phenomenon, the reluctance of individuals involved in terrorist activities to participate in research activities, the complex and multidisciplinary nature of the topic and its political sensitivity<sup>363</sup>. An additional challenge is represented by the influence exercised by the author in the design and conduction of the research: radicalisation is a social phenomenon and, in its analysis, the researcher plays a central role in affecting “the collection, selection, and interpretation of data”<sup>364</sup>. Consequently, the following paragraphs will provide an overview of the methodological approach adopted throughout the research as well as the underpinning ontological and epistemological assumptions that have been guiding the elaboration of this project, in a reflexivity effort to make the co-construction of the findings more explicit<sup>365</sup>.

First, the design and the implementation of the research have been influenced by the academic and professional<sup>366</sup> experience of the author in the field of terrorism. The direct and long-lasting experience with the topic under consideration has allowed for the development of a critical perspective of how the concept of terrorism is defined in different sectors as well as on the impact of counter-terrorism measures on the phenomenon. Putting forward such clarifications is necessary in light of the epistemological and ontological perspectives upheld by the author, who embraces a social constructivist approach according to which terrorism is “a deeply political enterprise which cannot be understood by looking at individuals and their 'action pathways' alone”<sup>367</sup>, it is a “social fact produced in discourse”<sup>368</sup>. Within such a framework of analysis, the focus on terrorism discourse and how terrorism is narrated is essential<sup>369</sup> and language plays a central role in shaping the way the world is constructed<sup>370</sup>.

These assumptions have informed and guided the data collection process both in terms of the nature of the data as well as for what concerns the methods adopted for their analysis.

Three main types of data have been taken into consideration for the purpose of this study: a) the reports by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate (DNA) from 2001 to 2017 to describe how the threat is portrayed and dealt with by national institutions; b) ten in-depth interviews with representatives belonging to different institutional and professional sectors<sup>371</sup> to analyse expert and professional perspectives on the concept of radicalisation, its manifestations in Italy and possible preventing and repressive strategies; c) press articles reporting the news of deportation of suspected terrorists published either on national or local

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<sup>363</sup> Andrew Silke, ‘The devil you know: Continuing problems with research on terrorism’, *Terrorism and political violence*, 13:4 (2001), pp. 1-14

<sup>364</sup> Linda Finlay, “‘Outing’ the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity”, *Qualitative health research*, 12:4 (2002), p. 531

<sup>365</sup> Ibid

<sup>366</sup> The author has collaborated for several years with international organizations in the conduction of research initiatives and in the implementation of technical cooperation projects in the field of terrorism.

<sup>367</sup> Peter R. Neumann, ‘The trouble with radicalisation’, *International affairs*, 89:4 (2003), p. 892

<sup>368</sup> Rainer Hülse and Alexander Spencer, ‘The metaphor of terror: Terrorism studies and the constructivist turn’, *Security Dialogue*, 39:6 (2008), pp. 571-592

<sup>369</sup> Ibid, p. 572

<sup>370</sup> Jacob L. Stump and Priya Dixit, ‘Toward a completely constructivist critical terrorism studies’ *International Relations*, 26:2 (2012), p. 206

<sup>371</sup> The interviewees affiliation included representatives of the following categories: lawyers dealing with terrorism-related cases, scholars promoting an improved understanding of the phenomenon, law enforcement agencies, and journalists.

newspapers between 2015 and 2017 to assess how individual radicalisation pathways are narrated by the media.

Given the intent of identifying and interpreting meaning from the data collected as well as linkages between the concepts and notions identified through the data analysis<sup>372</sup> to shed light on how Islamist radicalisation occur in Italy, qualitative content analysis has been used as a research technique to cluster similar meanings into a reduced number of categories<sup>373</sup>. In particular, two complementary approaches were adopted throughout the project, reflecting the definition provided by Hsieh and Shannon of conventional content analysis and of summative content analysis<sup>374</sup>. Such a methodological choice is motivated by the nature of the topic under consideration as well as by the limited literature available on the subject, which justifies the idea of letting the data guiding the identification of the relevant categories<sup>375</sup> through an interpretivist sensibility<sup>376</sup>. An inductive approach was preferred over a deductive one given the little knowledge on the Islamist radicalisation process in Italy<sup>377</sup>, with codes directly derived from the data. While a stronger focus was devoted to manifest content during the conventional content analysis, latent content was also taken into consideration in the summative content analysis<sup>378</sup>. The following paragraphs describe more in details the types of data collected and the methods applied for the analysis, in particular providing an explanation of the choices that guided the use of conventional content analysis for the first two sets of data and the adoption of summative content analysis for the media articles on suspected terrorists' deportations.

#### *DNA reports*

The first set of data analysed is represented by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate yearly reports elaborated from 2000 to 2017. Such data were selected because of the prominent DNA role in leading the investigative operations in the counter-terrorism domain and its numerous partnerships at national and international level on the topic. The reports provide an insight on how cases of suspected or sentenced terrorism offences have occurred on the national territory from the 9/11 attacks onwards. Furthermore, these official publications provide an overview of how the concept of terrorism at institutional level has evolved over the past years, consequently allowing for a more thorough understanding of how the institutional approach itself has changed over time.

The seventeen reports selected for the research comprised an average of 750 pages each for a total of approximately 12500 pages. While some of the documents are publicly available and can be retrieved online, others have not been published. Consequently, a copy of all the reports was collected through an in-person meeting at the Directorate's office in Rome. The conventional content analysis approach was adopted for the study of the reports. Throughout the reading and analysis of the text, units of meaning comprising "words and statements that relate to the same central meaning"<sup>379</sup> have been identified and coded through the software NVivo 11. Codes have been drawn from the textual data in an inductive approach and have subsequently been clustered into categories grouping together "those codes that are related to each other

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<sup>372</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, 'Content analysis' in Erik Barnouw et al., *International encyclopedia of communication*, eds., pp. 403-407 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989)

<sup>373</sup> Robert Philip Weber, *Basic content analysis* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1990)

<sup>374</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, 'Three approaches to qualitative content analysis', *Qualitative health research*, 15:9 (2005), pp. 1277-1288

<sup>375</sup> Nancy L. Kondracki and Nancy S. Wellman, 'Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education', *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 34 (2002), pp. 224-230

<sup>376</sup> Lee Jarvis, 'The spaces and faces of critical terrorism studies', *Security Dialogue*, 40:1 (2009), p. 21

<sup>377</sup> Elo Satu and Helvi Kyngäs, 'The qualitative content analysis process', *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62:1 (2008), p. 109

<sup>378</sup> Ulla H. Graneheim and Berit Lundman, 'Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness', *Nurse education today*, 24:2 (2004), p. 106

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid*, p. 106

through their content or context” in an effort to advance abstraction for reporting results.<sup>380</sup> Given the limited literature on the phenomenon under investigation, it was decided to allow for codes co-occurrence throughout the data analysis, with the purpose of exploring and examining the associations between concepts emerging in the reports. An analysis of codes co-occurrence has been performed through a codes’ matrix showing the amount of occurrences a code co-appears with another within the same or part of the same unit of meaning. Table 2 represents the coding frame resulting from the analysis of the data, with the thirteen codes clustered into four categories.

Categories	Codes
<b>Counter-terrorism measures</b>	International collaboration on terrorism
	Legislative and operative counter-terrorism tools
	National coordination of investigations
	Need for action
	Need for national coordination of investigations
	Need of a revised mandate for terrorist investigations
<b>Terrorism and organized crime</b>	Harmonisation of terrorism and organized crime investigations
	Nexus between organized crime and terrorism
<b>Terrorism presence on Italian soil</b>	Territorial presence of Islamist terrorism
	Internal terrorism
<b>Terrorism features</b>	International-Islamist terrorism
	Terrorism and prison
	Terrorism financing

*Table 2 (author’s elaboration)*

Table 3 provides a description of the four categories elaborated throughout the analysis, grouping content sharing a commonality<sup>381</sup>.

Categories	Description
<b>Counter-terrorism measures</b>	This category refers to all the measures (implemented or needed) to counter the threat posed by terrorism, both including operational and legislative arrangements at national and international level
<b>Terrorism and organized crime</b>	This category reports examples and forms of links between terrorism and organized crime as well as hints regarding possible synergies between the legislative frameworks governing these two phenomena

<sup>380</sup> Christen Erlingsson and Petra Brysiewicz, ‘A hands-on guide to doing content analysis’, *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 7:3 (2017), p. 94

<sup>381</sup> Ulla H. Graneheim and Berit Lundman, ‘Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness’, *Nurse education today*, 24:2 (2004), p. 107

<b>Terrorism presence on Italian soil</b>	This category concerns the manifestations of Islamist terrorism on the Italian national territory identified through investigations as well as other episodes of terrorism derived from the historical polarization emerged during the years of lead
<b>Terrorism features</b>	This category regroups the references to key characteristics identified in the DNA reports concerning the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism broadly speaking, including its manifestations in the prison settings and different forms of financing

*Table 3 (author's elaboration)*

The National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate yearly reports will provide insight and information on terrorist activities on the Italian soil, building on investigative data and findings. Given the historical presence of organized criminal groups, some forms of collaboration and/or overlapping areas of interest are expected to emerge between terrorism and organized crime. Furthermore, in line with the evolution of the phenomenon and its manifestations at European level, the concept of terrorism itself as well as the institutional approach to deal with it are expected to take on new facets over the years, especially after the amendments of the legislative framework.

#### *Qualitative interviews with experts and professionals*

Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives belonging to different institutional and professional sectors to analyse expert and professional perspectives on the concept of radicalisation, its manifestations in Italy and their perspectives on preventing and repressive strategies. The interviews took place between January and May 2017 and between February and September 2020, lasted approximately one hour each and followed an interview guide aimed at addressing three main elements: the process of radicalisation, its causes and phases; peculiarities of the Italian case-studies; and the possible countering measures. An assessment of the various professionals who deal on a daily basis with the challenges posed terrorism was conducted and led to the identification of several categories relevant to be involved in the data collection process, including institutional representatives; penitentiary personnel working with inmates suspected to have undertaken a radicalisation pathway; psychologists active both inside and outside the prison settings; lawyers dealing with terrorism-related cases; scholars promoting an improved understanding of the phenomenon; representatives of the civil society, such as NGOs, teachers and religious leaders. While members of all these sectors have been approached and invited to take part in the research, some of them refused to participate often because of the sensitivity of the topic. This led to the selection of a group of ten interviewees affiliated to the following categories: journalists, scholars, law enforcement representatives, lawyers, and parliamentarians.

The coding process was performed following the same approach used for the DNA reports, with units of meaning coded on NVivo 11 inductively and clustered into categories. For the interviews as well codes co-occurrence was envisaged to identify concepts associations. Table 4 represents the coding frame resulting from the analysis of the data, with the thirty-seven codes clustered into seven main categories.

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Radicalisation</b>	Definition of radicalisation
	Division between communities as radicalisation factor

	Individual and group dynamics
	Radicalisation process and phases
	Radicalisation studies
	Reasons for radicalisation
<b>Concepts related to radicalisation</b>	Foreign fighters
	Islam expansive nature
	Islamism
	Jihadism
	Nexus between organized crime and terrorism
	Terrorism
<b>Engagement into violence</b>	From radicalisation to engagement
	Internet from radicalisation to engagement
	Mosques from radicalisation to engagement
	Prisons from radicalisation to engagement
	Radios from radicalisation to engagement
<b>Measures to prevent and counter radicalisation</b>	Acceptance of intelligence and LEAs
	Activities for youths as a preventive measure
	Actors of alternative narratives
	Alternative narratives
	Counter terrorism legislation
	Deradicalisation measures
	Importance of prevention
	Integration as a preventive measure
	Key actors for preventive and counter radicalisation measures
<b>Measures to prevent attacks</b>	Deportation
	Importance of intervention to prevent attacks
<b>Italian experience</b>	Italian foreign fighters
	Italian legislation
	Italian strategies to prevent and counter radicalisation and terrorism
	Previous Italian anti-terrorism experience as an asset
	Radicalisation in Italy
	Reasons for Italian uniqueness
<b>Other countries experience</b>	EU approach to the phenomenon
	Failure of de-radicalisation initiatives in France
	Radicalisation in France

*Table 4 (author's elaboration)*

Table 5 provides a description of the seven categories elaborated throughout the analysis, highlighting the common elements on which grouping was performed.

Categories	Description
<b>Radicalisation</b>	This category refers to the elements highlighted by the interviewees concerning the radicalisation process, including definitions, alleged motivating factors, phases, and dynamic processes
<b>Concepts related to radicalisation</b>	This category reports concepts referred by the interviewees in relationship to the notion of radicalisation
<b>Engagement into violence</b>	This category describes the spaces and manners through which radicalisation turns into engagement into violence
<b>Measures to prevent and counter radicalisation</b>	This category regroups the references to measures, either existing or advocated by the interviewees, aimed at preventing radicalisation or countering its initial forms of manifestation
<b>Measures to prevent attacks</b>	This category includes the measures, either needed or already in place, to halt terrorist attacks
<b>Italian experience</b>	This category covers references to the Italian experience on Islamist radicalisation, its forms of manifestation and possible preventive strategies
<b>Other countries experience</b>	This category refers to the experience mentioned by the interviewees of countries other than Italy with reference to the Islamist radicalisation process and forms of terrorism

*Table 5 (author's elaboration)*

Initially the project envisaged the conduction of interviews also with another sample comprised of radicalized and allegedly radicalized individuals and, in particular, inmates identified as radicalized or at risk of radicalisation by the penitentiary police. The purpose was to analyse their narratives, the mechanisms used/allegedly used to convey radical messages and the processes involved in the radicalisation path. Interviews with detainees identified as radicalized or at risk of radicalisation were aimed at providing a micro level of analysis with the intent of comparing it with a meso level of analysis focused on the organizational perspective, in line with the approach promoted by Della Porta in analyzing political violence through a combination of different perspectives<sup>382</sup>. An extensive exchange of emails and phone calls with the Special Secretariat of the Head of the Penitentiary Administration Department was initiated in May 2016 to present the project and request access to the penitentiary system to conduct the interviews. After a thorough assessment of the request, in July 2017 the authorization was officially rejected by the Penitentiary Administration Department. Consequently, it was decided to revise and expand the project to include an additional set of data concerning the pathways undertaken by suspected radicalized individuals subject to deportation measures considering the threat represented. Data in this regard were collected through media articles, as further explained in the following paragraphs.

In line with existing theoretical interpretations of the phenomenon, slightly different and sector-related analyses of the concept of radicalization, its forms and phases and the vulnerability factors that trigger the process are expected. While the various standpoints might compose an exhaustive overview of the issue under consideration, each perspective will most probably remain anchored to the specific domain, in line with a frequent gap in the terrorism studies, which struggle with the elaboration of a comprehensive and multidisciplinary analysis of the phenomenon. With reference to the Italian case-study, experts and professionals' inputs may represent a precious contribution to explain the uniqueness of the Italian

<sup>382</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 10-11

experience. In particular, a general agreement is expected on the role and impact of the anti-terrorism apparatus and mechanisms set up during the “years of lead” in the prevention and fight against current terrorist threats. However, literature and recent political discussion suggest that some criticism might be raised on the lack of a full-fledge preventive strategy backed up by a tailored legislation.

### *Media articles on deportations*

In the aftermath of the Madrid and London attacks, through Law 155 of 31st July 2005 on urgent measures to contrast terrorism<sup>383</sup>, the Minister of Interior has been entrusted with the power to expel a foreigner in name of national security. Despite the lack of a publicly available registry of the deportation provisions enforced, such measures are sometimes referred to in official press releases published on the institutional website of the Ministry of Interior and some of the episodes are also reported by local and national newspapers. While the average number of people expelled between 2005 and 2014 was 14, after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, in January 2015, deportations increased significantly, with a total number of 237 individuals deported to their country of citizenship between 2015 and 2017<sup>384</sup>. It was thus decided to collect available data on the phenomenon of the deportations with a specific focus on the dispositions enforced between January 2015 and December 2017. In light with the methodological approach described above and considering the importance of language in narrating terrorist episodes, it was decided to focus on press articles published on both local and national newspapers. Given the lack of an official list of expelled individuals, a first effort consisted in triangulating the measures reported on the Ministry of Interior website with news published on the media. Such an analysis led to the elaboration of a comprehensive list of individuals expelled for their suspected engagement into terrorist activities. For each deportation, the following elements were searched and reported when available: name, nationality, city of residence in Italy, deportation date, defence lawyer, and additional notes. All of this information was collected through an analysis of publicly available data. On the basis of such details, a more analytical process was initiated, with the purpose of systematically identifying the press articles published on the deportation procedures occurred between 2015 and 2017. In order to include different reporting strategies and journalistic styles, articles published on both local and national newspapers were collected. In particular, articles were selected if published in any local newspaper and/or in one or more of the following three nationwide newspapers: La Repubblica, Il Giornale, and La Stampa. The three newspapers have been selected in relation to their diffusion on the national scale, their diverse underlying socio-political orientation and their different reporting style to ensure wide representativeness and heterogeneity of sources. For the great majority of the cases taken into consideration, the deportation was not reported on all of the selected media sources and the final set of data comprised a total of 346 articles, for which a table indicating the sources of the articles analysed for each case of deportation and the related hyperlink(s) was developed. A summative content analysis has been conducted on the text of the identified articles “with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content [...] to explore usage”<sup>385</sup>. The initial research technique consisted in assessing the frequency

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<sup>383</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 144 of 27 July 2005, ‘Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 173 (27 July 2005) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 155 of 31 July 2005, ‘Conversione in Legge, con Modificazioni, del Decreto-Legge 27 luglio 2005, n. 144, Recante Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 177 (1 August 2005), pp. 27-30

<sup>384</sup> Marco Olimpio, ‘La misura delle espulsioni per estremismo’, *ISPI Commentary*, 14 Dicembre 2018, [internet] available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/la-misura-delle-espulsioni-estremismo-21803> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>385</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, ‘Three approaches to qualitative content analysis’, *Qualitative health research*, 15:9 (2005), pp. 1283-1284

of some selected words (keywords), considered relevant on the basis of the literature review and the previous research phases. The keywords, reported in Table 6, have been regrouped into three main categories, respectively referring to the type and nature of the threat; the actors involved in the investigative process and in the deportation; and how and where the signs of radicalisation have been detected.

Type and nature of the threat	Actors involved in the investigative process and in the deportation	How and where the signs of radicalisation have been detected
Keyword	Keyword	Keyword
Attentat*	Alfano	Carcere
Estremis*	Digos	Deten*
Foreign Fighter	Giudic*	Facebook
Guerra Santa	Ministro	Messaggi*
Islam*	Minniti	Post
Jihad*	Polizia	Propagand*
Minaccia*	Prefett*	Social
Radical*	Procura*	Twitter
Salafis*		Video
Sicurezza		Web
Strag*		
Terroris*		

*Table 6 - List of keywords searched in the text for the summative content analysis clustered per thematic category (author's elaboration)*

Although assessing the frequency of certain terms can be a quantitative exercise, in line with the methodological perspective embraced for this study, further qualitative efforts have been put in place for an “interpretation of that quantification” of words<sup>386</sup> with the purpose of obtaining an insight on how terms are used within specific contextual frameworks<sup>387</sup> beyond the manifest level to unveil the latent meanings of words<sup>388</sup>. Among the main limitations of such a technique, there is the risk of ensuring credibility and a rigorous interpretation process. Such a challenge can be overcome through different strategies, such as, for example, the establishment of a team of co-researchers as a platform for debating the diverse perspectives<sup>389</sup>. As for the nature of this project such a solution was not possible, consistency and credibility were ensured by the sequential steps adopted in the data analysis process: selected keywords for the summative content analysis have been defined as a result of the literature review as well as the findings of the conventional content analysis performed on the DNA reports and on the qualitative interviews conducted with professionals and experts. In this way key terms and their comprehensive meanings passed through a sort of validation process in which existing knowledge on the topic informed the summative phase.

According to some scholars and experts, the prominent use of deportations, along with other measures such as a restrictive law on citizenship, is a key element to understand and explain how Italy has been able to

<sup>386</sup> Áine M. Humble, ‘Technique triangulation for validation in directed content analysis’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8: 3 (2009), p. 37

<sup>387</sup> James W. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein, D. (1999), ‘Rethinking validity and reliability in content analysis’, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27, pp. 258-284

<sup>388</sup> Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (New York: Macmillan, 1992)

<sup>389</sup> Frances Rapport, ‘Summative analysis: A qualitative method for social science and health research’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9:3 (2010), pp. 270-290

prevent attacks on its soil<sup>390</sup>. However, literature has also emphasized some critical aspects related to the high rate of expelled people for counter-terrorism purposes and has denounced the risk of reinforcing the idea of an underlying nexus between migration and the terrorist threat<sup>391</sup>. In line with these perspectives, the analysis conducted on the media articles and official press releases are expected to reveal a certain range of uncritical praise of the measures adopted as well as some forms of discrimination linked to the foreign origins of the expelled individuals.

### *Conclusions*

Conducting research on the issue of violent radicalisation and, more broadly, on terrorism entails a series of challenges because of the difficulties in accessing primary data and the sensitivity of the topic itself. Such barriers have been encountered also within the framework of this project. As a matter of fact, lack of institutional authorization prevented access to an additional set of data represented by the interviews with the detainees considered radicalized or at risk of radicalisation by the prison administration. Furthermore, some of the individuals contacted for the interviews in light of their role and work refused to participate because of the sensitivity of the subject. This was particularly true for those professionals active within rigorous institutional sectors, such as prison personnel and psychologists working in the prison settings. In addition, the phenomenon under consideration is complex in nature, relatively understudied for what concerns the Italian case-study and can be approached from many different disciplinary perspectives. For all these reasons, it was decided to adopt a qualitative perspective, with the intent of developing a thorough and in-depth insight on the main research questions that have been guiding this project and, in particular, to assess how Islamist radicalisation occur in Italy. Starting from the assumption that terrorism is “a social fact [and that] the wider cultural-political meaning of [the acts of terrorism] is decided through symbolic labelling, social agreement and a range of inter-subjective practices”<sup>392</sup>, qualitative content analysis was adopted to enhance understanding of how terrorism is narrated and how concepts and notions identified through the data analysis are interlinked.

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<sup>390</sup> Francesco, Marone, ‘The Use of Deportation in Counter-Terrorism: Insights from the Italian Case’, *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT)*, 13 March 2017, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/the-use-of-deportation-in-counter-terrorism-insights-from-the-italian-case/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>391</sup> Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, ‘Immigration, Islamic Radicalization and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants’ Expulsions for Security Reasons’, *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), p. 276

<sup>392</sup> Richard Jackson, ‘An argument for terrorism’, *Perspectives on terrorism*, 2:2 (2008), p. 28

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## Chapter 4 - The Islamist terrorist threat in Italy: an analysis of the institutional perception

### *An overview of the institutional actors dealing with terrorism in Italy*

Terrorism is dealt by various institutions in Italy, each approaching the issue from a specific perspective and covering different aspects of the phenomenon. The division of tasks and roles results to be quite complex, as portrayed by Silvia D’Amato (Figure 1)<sup>393</sup>. Among the many institutional actors involved in the management of terrorism, four ministries in particular share competencies with regard to the subject, namely the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Economics and Finance and the Ministry of Justice.

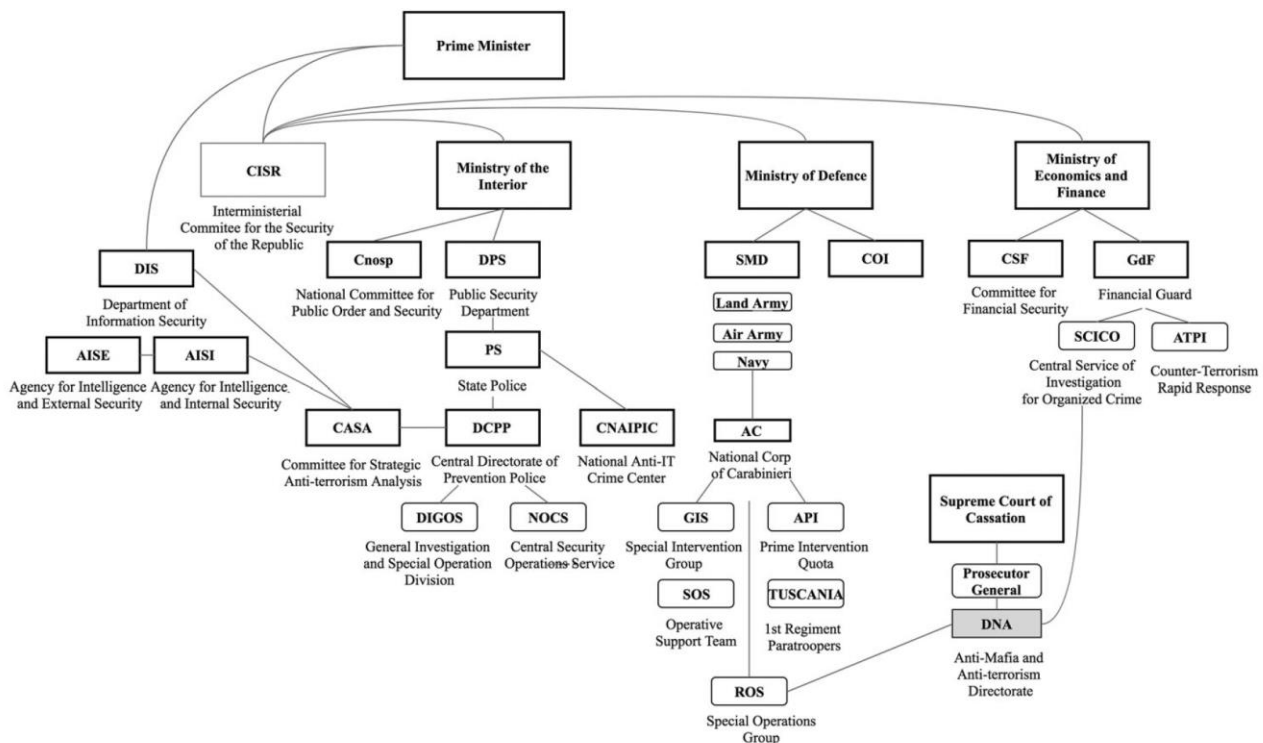


Figure 1 – Overview of the main Italian institutional actors dealing with terrorism (source: D’Amato, 2018)

As regulated by Legislative Decree 300 of 1999, “the Ministry of the Interior is entrusted with the functions and duties of the State [concerning] the protection of public order and security”<sup>394</sup>. The fight against terrorism falls under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior for all aspects representing a challenge for the public order and security. The issue of terrorism is addressed by the Ministry of Interior through its bodies in charge of the national security and, in particular, the Central Directorate of Prevention Police (DCPP) within the

<sup>393</sup> Silvia D’Amato, ‘From BR to ISIS. The Italian domestic and international response to terrorism’, *European Politics and Society*, 19:4 (2018), p. 422

<sup>394</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Legislative Decree 300 of 30 July 1999, ‘Riforma dell’organizzazione del Governo, a norma dell’articolo 11 della legge 15 marzo 1997, n. 59’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 203 (30 August 1999, suppl. ord. 163)

Public Security Department<sup>395</sup>. In 2004 the Minister of Interior officially established a coordination mechanism meant to strengthen the collaboration of the institutional actors dealing with terrorism. Such a mechanism, known as the Counter Terrorism Strategic Analysis Committee (CASA), has been formally created through a decree issued by the Minister on 6 May 2004 concerning a national plan for the management of terrorist events<sup>396</sup>. CASA provides a permanent venue for coordination between the judicial police and intelligence services and is constituted by the Central Director of the Prevention Police, acting as President, and representatives of the Carabinieri Corps, the Department of Information Security (DIS), the external (AISE) and internal (AISI) intelligence services and the Financial and Penitential Police. On top of a cooperation mechanism at national level, the Counter Terrorism Strategic Analysis Committee also performs coordination functions with counterparts in other European countries. Finally, the powers of the Ministry of Interior to counter the issue of terrorism have been further strengthened in 2005, with the adoption of the Decree Law 144, later transposed into Law 155 of 31st July 2005<sup>397</sup>, comprising urgent measures to contrast terrorism. In particular, as of 2005 the Minister of Interior has the power to expel a foreigner if there is reasonable ground to believe that his/her presence in Italy can facilitate terrorist organizations or activities, while appeals against deportation have been made more difficult through a temporary strengthening of the secret of state. The Ministry of Defence is concerned with the fight against terrorism for all aspects related to the management of the Italian defence and the coordination of the activities performed by the Italian military forces. Although the topic of terrorism is not specifically referred to in the legislation describing the tasks and responsibilities of the Minister, article 580 of the Legislative Decree 66 of 15 March 2010 on the “code of the military system” states that “for needs connected with the prevention and contrast of terrorism, including international terrorism and organized crime, the Carabinieri corps is authorized [...] to carry out extraordinary recruitments, within a spending limit of 10 million euro starting from the year 2008”<sup>398</sup>. In the context of maintaining the public order, various actors are involved, in Italy, in counter-terrorism activities, such as the Special Intervention Group (GIS), the Central Security Operations Service of the State Police (NOCS), and the Counter-terrorism Rapid Response forces (ATPI) of the Finance Police (Guardia di Finanza). Furthermore, investigative activities concerning organized crime and terrorism are coordinated by the Carabinieri Special Operations Group (ROS), a specialized investigative unit created in the years of lead. The role of the Ministry of Economics and Finance in the fight against terrorism is mainly absorbed by the Financial Security Committee (CSF), established in 2001 to prevent the infiltration of terrorist actors in the Italian financial system. The Committee serves as a coordination platform for the actors operating in this sector and is composed by ministerial representatives as well as representatives of the Bank of Italy, the Finance Police, the Carabinieri Corps and the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate (DNA). CSF is in charge of reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs individuals and organizations involved in financing of terrorism<sup>399</sup>.

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<sup>395</sup> Silvia D’Amato, ‘From BR to ISIS. The Italian domestic and international response to terrorism’, *European Politics and Society*, 19:4 (2018), pp. 422-423

<sup>396</sup> Luciano A. D’Angelo and Franco Roberti, ‘Le Unità Antiterrorismo nel Sistema dell’efficienza investigativa’, in Andrea Antonio Dalia, ed., *Le Nuove Norme Di Contrasto Al Terrorismo. Commento Al Decreto-Legge 27/7/2005, N.144*, Torino: Giuffrè Editore, 2006, p. 104

<sup>397</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 144 of 27 July 2005, ‘Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 173 (27 July 2005) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 155 of 31 July 2005, ‘Conversione in Legge, con Modificazioni, del Decreto-Legge 27 luglio 2005, n. 144, Recante Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 177 (1 August 2005), pp. 27-30

<sup>398</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Legislative Decree 66 of 15 March 2010, ‘Codice dell’ordinamento militare’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 106 (8 May 2010, suppl. ord. 84)

<sup>399</sup> Maria Chiara Noto, ‘Il terrorismo internazionale e le sanzioni del Consiglio di Sicurezza nella giurisprudenza italiana: il caso Daki’, *Rivista di diritto internazionale privato e processuale*, 44:3 (2008), p. 739

Within the judicial apparatus, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate (DNA) represents a central actor for the fight against terrorism. The DNA, led by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Prosecutor, is composed by 20 public prosecutors and coordinates the investigations conducted by the Anti-mafia District Directorates (DDA). In performing its functions, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate can work with some police units, such as the Carabinieri Special Operations Group (ROS). Thanks to its mandate as well as to its network of contacts at international level, the DNA is a primary actor in Italy when it comes to the identification of new investigative strands. In the fight against terrorism, particular attention has been paid in the last years by DNA on “investigating and dismantling transnational networks operating from Italy”<sup>400</sup>.

Finally, the role of the Prime Minister of Italy in the management of security has significantly evolved in the past thirty years, with an intensification of powers and functions in the last fifteen years. The management of security services was firstly regulated by Law 801 of 24 October 1977<sup>401</sup> which placed the supervision of the intelligence under the joint direction of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Defence, regulating the division of operational tasks between two structures, the Information and Security Service. Thirty years later, Law 124 of 3 August 2007<sup>402</sup> strengthened the powers of the Prime Minister, since then formally in charge of supervising the intelligence services, and revised the structure of the security apparatus by creating AISI, in charge of the management of the intelligence for internal security, and AISE, for the management of information for external security. The Prime Minister also plays a role in connection to the Italian approach in the fight against terrorism with regards to the classification of information given that, following Law 124 of 2007, the secret of state is enforced and can be removed uniquely by the Prime Minister.

### *An overview of the evolving concept of terrorism through a qualitative analysis of the DNA yearly reports*

The National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate was created in 1991 to coordinate the investigations concerning organized crime. Its mandate was revised and expanded in order to cover also the topic of terrorism in 2015<sup>403</sup>, with a decree law adopted just after the Charlie Hebdo shooting. Although formally the scope of action of the Directorate was enlarged only in 2015, the DNA has been indirectly working on the issue of terrorism for much longer. As a matter of fact, since 2001 the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate has been part of the Financial Security Committee to prevent the infiltration of terrorist

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<sup>400</sup> Silvia D’Amato, ‘From BR to ISIS. The Italian domestic and international response to terrorism’, *European Politics and Society*, 19:4 (2018), p. 422

<sup>401</sup> Italian Parliament, Law 801 of 24 October 1977, ‘Istituzione e ordinamento dei servizi per le informazioni e la sicurezza e disciplina del segreto di Stato’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 303 (7 November 1977)

<sup>402</sup> Italian Parliament, Law 124 of 3 August 2007, ‘Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica e nuova disciplina del segreto’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 187 (13 August 2007)

<sup>403</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 7 of 18 February 2015, ‘Misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 41 (19 February 2015) converted with amendments by the Italian Parliament into Law 43 of 17 April 2015, ‘Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 18 febbraio 2015, n. 7, recante misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 91 (20 April 2015), pp. 1-7

organizations into the Italian financial system<sup>404</sup>. Furthermore, the DNA recurrently underlined in several of its annual reports the need to strengthen coordination at national level in the field of terrorism, expressed its support towards the establishment of a shared database comprising the Directorate's data, and advocated for multi-sectoral investigations given the nexus between organized crime and terrorism.

Given its prominent role in leading the investigative operations in the counter-terrorism domain and its numerous partnerships at national and international level, the DNA yearly reports from 2000 to 2017 have been analysed with a twofold objective: first, the reports provide an overview on how cases of alleged or sentenced terrorism offences have occurred on the national territory from the 9/11 attacks onwards; second, the material elaborated by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate provides an overview of the evolution of the concept of terrorism at institutional level and, consequently, allows for a more thorough understanding of how the institutional approach has changed towards such a dynamic phenomenon. The National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate yearly reports provide first-hand data and information on terrorist activities occurring in Italy through the collection and analysis of investigative findings. Given the official mandate of the Directorate as well as the prominent presence of criminal groups on the national territory, some forms of nexus between terrorism and organized crime are expected. Furthermore, following the increased number of attacks in the European panorama and the institutional efforts to prevent and counter them, a dynamic understanding of the concept of terrorism itself as well as of the institutional approach to deal with it is expected to emerge from the analysis of the reports.

The seventeen reports selected for the research comprised an average of 750 pages each for a total of approximately 12500 pages. Throughout the reading and analysis of the text, units of meaning comprising "words and statements that relate to the same central meaning"<sup>405</sup> have been identified and coded through the software NVivo 11. Codes have been drawn from the textual data in an inductive approach and have subsequently been clustered into categories grouping together "those codes that are related to each other through their content or context" in an effort to advance abstraction for reporting results.<sup>406</sup> Given the limited literature on the phenomenon under investigation, it was decided to allow for codes co-occurrence throughout the data analysis, with the purpose of exploring and examining the associations between concepts emerging in the reports. An analysis of codes co-occurrence has been performed through a codes' matrix showing the number of times a code co-appears with another within the same or part of the same unit of meaning. Table 7 represents the coding frame resulting from the analysis of the data, with the thirteen codes clustered into four categories: counter-terrorism measures; terrorism and organized crime; terrorism presence of the Italian soil; and terrorism features.

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<sup>404</sup> Italian Parliament, Law 431 of 14 December 2001, 'Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 12 ottobre 2001, n. 369, recante misure urgenti per reprimere e contrastare il finanziamento del terrorismo internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 290 (14 December 2001)

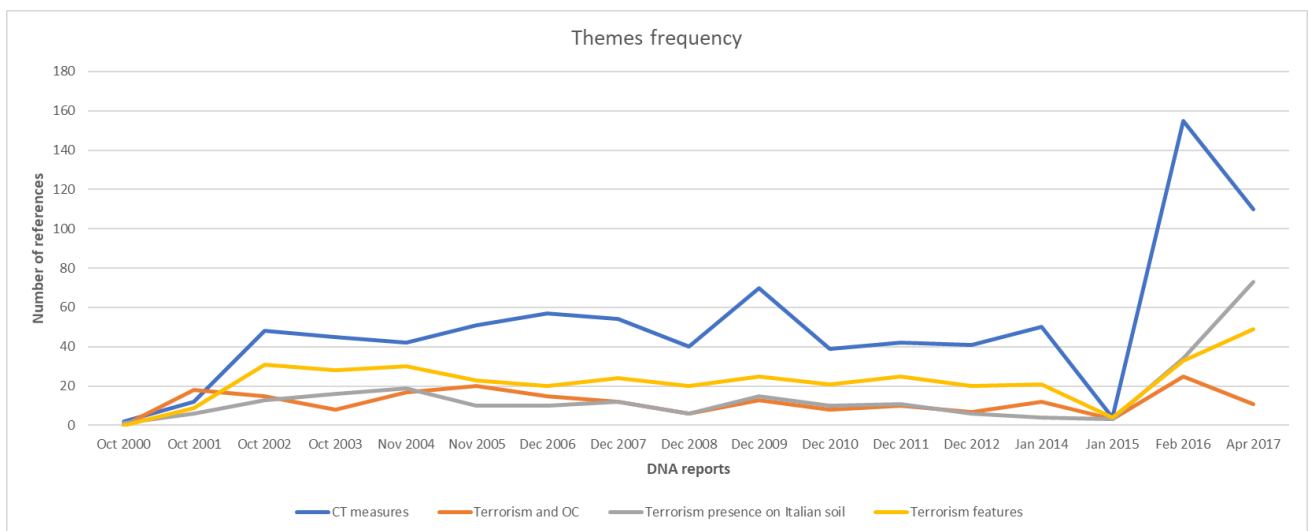
<sup>405</sup> Graneheim, U. H. and Lundman, B. 'Qualitative content analysis in nursing research', p. 106

<sup>406</sup> Christen Erlingsson and Petra Brysiewicz, 'A hands-on guide to doing content analysis', *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 7:3 (2017), p. 94

Categories	Codes
<b>Counter-terrorism measures</b>	International collaboration on terrorism
	Legislative and operative counter-terrorism tools
	National coordination of investigations
	Need for action
	Need for national coordination of investigations
	Need of a revised mandate for terrorist investigations
<b>Terrorism and organized crime</b>	Harmonisation of terrorism and organized crime investigations
	Nexus between organized crime and terrorism
<b>Terrorism presence on Italian soil</b>	Territorial presence of Islamist terrorism
	Internal terrorism
<b>Terrorism features</b>	International-Islamist terrorism
	Terrorism and prison
	Terrorism financing

*Table 7 (author's elaboration)*

The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the main content of the four categories along with an assessment of how they evolved overtime. For what concerns the latter, Figure 2 below clearly shows a pick in the number of references (in absolute terms) per each category after the expansion of the DNA mandate occurred in February 2015, aimed at formally including the competences for terrorism related investigations.



*Figure 2 (author's elaboration)*

### Counter-terrorism measures

Given its central and crucial role in leading investigative operations concerning organized crime and, after February 2015, also terrorism, it is not surprising that the most frequent category resulting from the analysis of the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate reports is related to counter-terrorism measures. Such a category comprises the following six codes: international collaboration on terrorism; legislative and

operative counter-terrorism tools; national coordination of investigations; need for action; need for national coordination of investigations; need of a revised mandate for terrorist investigations. Under the umbrella of the international collaboration, reference is usually made to the synergies between the DNA and other relevant institutions at bilateral, European and global level, including the participation to international conferences and synergies in conducting investigations. Legislative and operative counter-terrorism tools represent the most recurrent code with the counter-terrorism measures. Reference in this regard covers legal measures, norms as well as operational mechanisms that regulate and concern terrorism investigations. The operational set up described in the reports refers to an extensive network composed by the District Anti-mafia Directorates (DDA), present at each public prosecutor's office located in the administrative capital of the Court of Appeal, coordinated at national level by the DNA. District prosecutors have thus played a crucial role in supporting the DNA in the conduction of the investigations, as resulted by a significant increase in the number of interception activities. Interceptions are often referred to as a powerful tool in the conduction of investigations on terrorism and organized crime:

The successful outcome of the preliminary investigations in these sectors is largely entrusted to the interception activities of telephone and environmental communications, guided by valid information sources and investigative insights. Especially since the other means of researching the evidence are, at least in the first phase of the investigations, almost never practically useful. Any execution of search orders would ultimately jeopardize the conduct of investigations. Nor does it seem realistically conceivable [...] the possibility of acquiring useful elements by hearing people informed of the facts<sup>407</sup>.

The huge pool of information along with the operational system developed to investigate organized crime (SIDDA/SIDNA) are also mentioned several times to explain why and how the DNA could provide for an efficient conduction of terrorism investigations:

The Italian judicial information assets [...] find in the DNA and in its systems the natural center of reference and analysis. Ultimately, this is one of the most advanced systems in the world (certainly the most advanced among the judicial databases), which guarantees security, confidentiality and traceability and allows synergistic processing of data relating to serious crimes throughout the country. A system which, by allowing to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge in the field of terrorist offenses, offers timely support for judicial and non-judicial assessments<sup>408</sup>.

[...] the complex database set up and developed at DNA, at the price of labor and considerable costs, could be adequately extended to the subject of terrorism, thus using and optimizing an already available tool, the progressive development of which, as is known, required years as well as corresponding institutional resources<sup>409</sup>.

Among the most cited legal measures referred to in the DNA reports there are the Decree Law 144 of 2005, later transposed into Law 155 of 31st July 2005<sup>410</sup>, which describes urgent measures to contrast terrorism,

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<sup>407</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Discorso inaugurale anno giudiziario 2002', Rome, 29 October 2001

<sup>408</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2009 – 30 giugno 2010', Rome, February 2016

<sup>409</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, December 2010

<sup>410</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 144 of 27 July 2005, 'Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 173 (27 July 2005) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 155 of 31 July 2005,

as well as the norms and regulations adopted to counter the financing of terrorism, such as the Legislative Decree 109 of 22 June 2007 on the measures to counter terrorist financing and the activities of countries that threaten peace and international security, also in application of EU Directive 2005/60/EC<sup>411</sup> and the Legislative Decree 231 of 21 November 2007 on the implementation of Directive 2005/60/EC on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing and of Directive 2006/70/EC which comprises implementing measures and subsequent amendments and additions<sup>412</sup>.

In approximately half of the codes regarding legislative and operative counter-terrorism tools, the text was also coded as terrorism financing, within the category terrorism features (discussed below). Such an occurrence can be explained by a combination of factors: while the DNA did not have a formal mandate for terrorism investigations until the adoption of the Decree Law 7 of 18 February 2015, since 2002 the Directorate has been part of the Financial Security Committee, established in 2001 with the purpose of monitoring the functioning of the prevention and sanctions system established to counter the financing of terrorism and money laundering:

indeed, with reference to the dramatic rise of international terrorism and the need to combat it effectively also with regards to the financial profiles, on the anti-money laundering perspective, the mechanism for reporting suspicious financial transactions - created precisely for the prevention and repression of the use of money laundering system - has also been appropriately geared towards the identification of financial movements aimed at supporting terrorism<sup>413</sup>.

The participation into the Financial Security Committee has allowed the DNA to play an active role into terrorism investigations with a specific focus on financial aspects:

the significance of [...] the system of reports on suspicious financial transactions on the anti-terrorism front appears significantly sustained by the finding that, between October 2001 and June 2008, the UIC/UIF received 3,514 notifications<sup>414</sup>.

The remaining codes identified within the framework of this category concern the need for revised measures to ensure an efficient and coordinated action to detect and counter the terrorism threat, and, in particular, the need for national coordination of investigations, the need of a revised mandate for terrorist investigations and the more generic need for action to address a threatening situation. Part of the gaps and challenges emphasized by the DNA in its reports have been addressed through a revision of the mandate leading to a national coordination of investigations. A clear trend from the concerns regarding the lack of an appropriate coordination mechanism backed up with efficient and flexible operative tools and a tailored

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‘Conversione in Legge, con Modificazioni, del Decreto-Legge 27 luglio 2005, n. 144, Recante Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 177 (1 August 2005), pp. 27-30

<sup>411</sup> Italian Council of Minister, Legislative Decree 109 of 22 June 2007, ‘Misure per prevenire, contrastare e reprimere il finanziamento del terrorismo e l'attività dei Paesi che minacciano la pace e la sicurezza internazionale, in attuazione della direttiva 2005/60/CE’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 172 (26 July 2007)

<sup>412</sup> Italian Council of Minister, Legislative Decree 231 of 21 November 2007, ‘Attuazione della direttiva 2005/60/CE concernente la prevenzione dell'utilizzo del sistema finanziario a scopo di riciclaggio dei proventi di attività criminose e di finanziamento del terrorismo nonché della direttiva 2006/70/CE che ne reca misure di esecuzione e successive modificazioni e integrazioni’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 290 (14 dicembre 2007), Suppl. Ord. 268/L

<sup>413</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Discorso inaugurale anno giudiziario 2002’, Rome, 29 October 2001

<sup>414</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2007 – 30 giugno 2008’, Rome, December 2008

mandate to the appreciation for the adoption of measures meeting these needs can be traced in how the related codes evolved from October 2000 to April 2017. While the urgency for a legislative and operative revision remained highly emphasized until 2015, a significant swift can be identified after the adoption of Decree Law 7 of 18 February 2015, with increased references on the national coordination mechanisms put in place by DNA (see Figure 2).

The reports elaborated until 2015 underlined the lacunae of the system in providing for a national coordination of terrorist investigations. Such a gap results to be even more striking when considering that, following the Legislative Decree 374 of 2001, District Prosecutors have been attributed investigative powers on terrorism without an overarching coordination:

it is appropriate to observe, once again, [that] attention should be drawn to the inconsistencies and discrepancies of the regulatory framework, which continues not to provide for DNA specific attributions of coordination and on impulse in the matter of terrorism, similar to those that it undertakes it in terms of organized crime. And the hiatus, so to speak, appears even more meaningful in consideration of the fact that jurisdiction in the matter of terrorism has been appropriately reserved for the District Prosecutors<sup>415</sup>.

we continue to support the opportunity to coordinate investigations into terrorism, as it does happen for investigations on organized crime. Regardless of the structure to which this coordination is attributed, I think it is necessary above all because, at European and international level, 26 District Prosecutors cannot certainly sit at the table and share information with the judicial authorities, on the contrary it is preferable that a single interlocutor undertakes this role, one who is able to collect the information scattered throughout the territory, through investigations by the various District Prosecutors<sup>416</sup>.

Although the involvement of District Prosecutors was meant to positively contribute to an improved conduction of terrorism investigations, an overall overarching coordination remained missing:

the simplification effect of the system achieved in this way was not accompanied by an equally necessary modification of the rules on the inter-district coordination of investigations<sup>417</sup>.

The National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate stressed that an improved coordination at national level would be essential to address the nature of the terrorist offences:

national coordination is necessary as terrorist / subversive organizations are structured forms of crime that act in various territories with actions that, almost always, present links, relationships, and connections with each other. A "global reading" therefore facilitates investigations and the adoption of similar models for their performance<sup>418</sup>.

The emphasis on the need for national coordination of terrorist investigations went hand in hand with the accent on the need of a revised mandate for terrorist investigations and the need for action, in light of the

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<sup>415</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2012 – 30 giugno 2013', Rome, January 2014

<sup>416</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2006 – 30 giugno 2007', Rome, December 2007

<sup>417</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Discorso inaugurale anno giudiziario 2003', Rome, 18 October 2002

<sup>418</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Discorso inaugurale anno giudiziario 2002', Rome, 29 October 2001

complex and evolving nature of threat and as a follow up to the legislative measures introduced in 2001 and in 2005:

After the legislative interventions of 2001 and 2005, the framework of the means of contrasting terrorism and subversion is waiting to be completed with other interventions, through a progressive adaptation of the regulatory instruments to the evolution of the phenomenon<sup>419</sup>.

The new threats of Islamist international terrorism make it necessary to gradually adapt the regulatory instruments and operating practices to a constantly changing organized crime scenario. [...] The question we ask ourselves is simple and straightforward: is our regulatory system adequate for a threat of this intensity? [...] The new forms of Islamic terrorism, characterized by highly mobile formations in the territory, without a precisely localized base and with a strong propensity for organized crime offenses, have made it impossible to postpone the adaptation and enhancement of the overall system of countering terrorism<sup>420</sup>.

The lacunae identified by the DNA in terms of lack of coordination as well as lack of appropriate mandate, and appropriate legal and operational measures, have been significantly addressed in 2015, when the Decree Law 7 of 18 February 2015 outlined a series of urgent measures to combat terrorism and attributing to the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate the competences to coordinate at national level the investigations on terrorism:

The simple extension of DNA database to terrorist offenses immediately makes available to the various national and international interlocutors a unique information asset, which allows an action to combat crime which can be prosecuted only thanks to the collection of the information available to the various Italian Public Prosecutors. [...] This information asset represents much more than the simple sum of the information available to the public prosecutor's offices from which it is obtained, as it can count on all the information that arises from info-sharing, from analysis, integration and comparison with other databases and all that is available on the net [...]<sup>421</sup>.

To sum up, the analysis conducted show that an improved coordination and revised investigative arrangements are urged by the DNA to address the threats posed by terrorism at national and local level through an improvement of the already existing pool of information available at the Directorate on terrorism and organized crime.

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<sup>419</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2012 – 30 giugno 2013', Rome, January 2014

<sup>420</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>421</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

### *Terrorism and organized crime*

In DNA annual reports the link between organized crime and terrorism is often highlighted and it is recommended to enhance synergy regarding the investigations on these phenomena. This category regroups together two codes, the nexus between organized crime and terrorism and the harmonization of terrorism and organized crime investigations. According to the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate many are the overlapping interests and common areas of action shared by these two forms of crime, such as illicit trafficking, money laundry and narco-trafficking as a source of funding for both phenomena:

nor, likewise, can we forget that international terrorism needs to continuously feed itself through the tools of money laundering, which therefore increasingly emerges as a multifaceted enemy, an important obstacle on the path of the international community<sup>422</sup>.

on the routes of international trafficking - especially those related to money laundering - end up with the interplay of organized crime of the mafia type and events of international terrorism. [...] illicit cigarette trafficking is often used to cover far more serious activities, such as terrorism and organized crime. [...] the most interesting and, at the same time, most alarming among the new emergencies recorded concerns the intertwining between illegal migration and that of international terrorism of Islamic fundamentalist origin<sup>423</sup>.

Such synergies and forms of collaboration have increased, according to the DNA, in the recent years in light of global destabilizing events that create a conducive environment for the nexus to flourish:

[...] the near outbreaks of civil war or, anyway, of related intense episodes of social tension lead to reasonably predict illicit and large trafficking of arms, people and goods of all kinds, in a context that is certainly favourable to criminal and terrorist consortia<sup>424</sup>.

in the previous report it was already observed that the aforementioned financial recession and the ongoing economic depression have been widening and not reducing the space for illicit financial operations, money laundering and terrorist financing<sup>425</sup>.

The diverse types of collaboration between these two forms of crime require a harmonization of the terrorism and organized crime investigations because:

to be absolutely effective, the judicial contrast to international terrorism must be conducted in connection with the fight against other forms of organized crime and with a unitary spirit among all the institutions involved, while rigorously respecting roles<sup>426</sup>.

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<sup>422</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2008 – 30 giugno 2009', Rome, December 2009

<sup>423</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2009 – 30 giugno 2010', Rome, December 2010

<sup>424</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2011 – 30 giugno 2012', Rome, December 2012

<sup>425</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2012 – 30 giugno 2013', Rome, January 2014

<sup>426</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

In a nutshell, the reports analysed reveal that terrorism and organized crime tend to use similar funding mechanisms and have strengthened their collaboration in areas and regions where destabilizing events have created conducive environments for illicit activities to flourish.

#### *Terrorism presence on Italian soil*

The continuous interest and involvement of the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate in the terrorism phenomenon, even before the official extension of the mandate, has led to the compilation of a very rich set of data and information on the forms that the actual presence of terrorism undertakes in the Italian context. This category, terrorism presence on Italian soil, comprises two codes, namely territorial presence of Islamist terrorism and internal terrorism. The latter refers to cases of terrorism that belong to the peculiar Italian context, such as forms of terrorist subversion undertaken by the Italian organized crime network as well as cases related to the phenomenon of the Red Brigades or forms of anarchist insurrection. Given the focus and purpose of the current research, special attention will be paid to the first code mentioned above, the territorial presence of Islamist terrorism, as the references to this topic provide an enlightening insight on the main research question guiding this study, namely how Islamist radicalisation occur in Italy. References within this code provide elements to both identify some of the recurrent patterns in the Islamist radicalisation journey in Italy as well as to gather data on how the process of Islamist radicalisation is perceived and described at institutional level. In this regard, in February 2016 the DNA affirms that:

the phenomenon of radicalisation in Italy currently presents the same characteristics, although not yet the same dimensions, with which it occurs in other European countries. Some factors that initially delayed the development of the phenomenon - such as the absence or scarcity of second or third generation migrants or the limited cases of conversion - are gradually disappearing. The lower number of cases is substantially due to the smaller size of the pool of people vulnerable to radical messages. Reaching the "critical mass" already present in other Western European countries, where entire municipalities with a Muslim majority characterized by a low standard of well-being and schooling exist, is however possible in the long term, due to the constant flow of migrants who reach Italy<sup>427</sup>.

The Directorate underlines in several reports that the phenomenon in Italy is still limited if compared to other European countries and as demonstrated by the available numbers:

according to data from the Ministry of the Interior, 34 people have been arrested for terrorism between 1 January and 25 October 2016, while 57 have been deported. 110 individuals would fall within the notion of foreign fighters "connected with Italy" [...] according to the same sources; among these, 32 are believed to have died in the Syrian-Iraqi theatre, 17 are believed to have returned from the conflict (although only 6 would be in the national territory). Among the foreign fighters, 10 are women (of whom 8 with Italian citizenship), 11 are converted (but only 3 are believed to have converted in Italy), 5 are minors<sup>428</sup>.

The episodes and cases of terrorism on the Italian territory are reported according the Districts of the Courts of Appeal in which investigations were initiated. Several references occur over time in the same Districts, namely Milan and Brescia (region of Lombardia), Bologna (region of Emilia Romagna) and Naples (region of Campania). Since 2002, the DNA reports the presence of "a cell linked to the international terrorist

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<sup>427</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>428</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

organization that refers to Osama Bin Laden in the region of Lombardia<sup>429</sup> and links the presence of terrorism to the economic and financial wealth of the region:

the primary value, nationally and internationally, of Lombardia, from a commercial, industrial, economic and financial point of view, is inevitably reflected on the projections and profiles related to any phenomenon having financial content, implications or implications, such as, indeed, terrorist financing<sup>430</sup>.

In terms of terrorist activities occurring in the region and identified through the investigative apparatus, examples of terrorism financing are reported for the districts of Brescia and Milan:

the financial transaction, which passed through the Western Union's Brescia agency and was connected to the bloody terrorist attack that took place in Mumbai, India. The investigations led to subjects of Pakistani origin. [...] the overall investigations of the Brescia District Prosecutor's Office should be recalled, concerning, among other things, the activities of the imam operating at the mosque in Cremona and well known to the news: investigations duly extended to the financial profiles<sup>431</sup>.

the "pseudo bank called Banca Al Taqwa Ltd.", over the years, has been the source of "multiple financing activities for various political groups and organizations of various kinds and nationalities, all characterized by their common belonging to Islam". The same GIP [judge for preliminary investigations] further noted that "The vastness and diversification of international relations and the financing activities carried out by the suspects through the companies and the bank they manage also demonstrate the central and strategic role of the group in spreading religion, culture but probably also Islamic fundamentalist violence"<sup>432</sup>.

Transport of goods and weapons to support and finance terrorism has been detected also by the Bologna district, which has identified "a trafficking of military equipment from Italy to Somalia, aimed to promote and finance the activity of the terrorist organization Al Shabaab"<sup>433</sup>. The district of Bologna covered "numerous proceedings concerning jihadist terrorism"<sup>434</sup>. From 2013 to 2015, thanks also to the collaboration established among different law enforcement agencies, nine investigations were initiated and demonstrated that Bologna served as a privileged territory for members of international terrorist groups to carry out recruitment, transfer new recruits to war zones, fundraise, and collect arms and weapons:

[a proceeding] promoted against two Moroccan subjects [...] found in possession of computer material of jihadist nature. [...] [a proceeding] promoted against three individuals of Italian origin, [believed to

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<sup>429</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Discorso inaugurale anno giudiziario 2003', Rome, 18 October 2002

<sup>430</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2008 – 30 giugno 2009', Rome, December 2009

<sup>431</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2008 – 30 giugno 2009', Rome, December 2009

<sup>432</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2008 – 30 giugno 2009', Rome, December 2009

<sup>433</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2010 – 30 giugno 2011', Rome, December 2011

<sup>434</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

have] had relations with a subject linked to international terrorism of Islamic origin. [...] [a proceeding] promoted against a Syrian individual investigated for [...] association for the purpose of terrorism, including international terrorism, as [he served] as a jihadist fighter, who legitimately passed through Italy to undergo a maxillofacial surgery, then first moved to Denmark and then to Sweden [...]. The investigations, at the moment, have not allowed to reach suitable evidence to demonstrate the existence of the alleged offense. [...] [a proceeding] promoted against an individual, Iman of a city in Romagna, investigated [for] recruitment of young Muslim Arabs stationed in that territory for terrorist purposes, including international terrorism, in favor of ISIS. [...] [a proceeding] promoted to carry out investigations [...] on a citizen residing in Castel Maggiore, who suffers from mental problems, arrested in Iraq on charges of illegally entering that state with the intention of joining the Islamic State militias. [...] [a proceeding] promoted to carry out investigations [...] on the statements made by a restricted inmate at the Bologna District House, regarding the presence in jail of jihadist activists. [...] [a proceeding] promoted [...] against an individual under investigation [...] for having disseminated signs praising ISIS [...]. [...] [a proceeding] promoted [...] on an Egyptian citizen who transited in Italy from France, suspected of recruiting people to be transferred to Syria and other war zones. [...] [a proceeding] promoted [...] on a Kosovar citizen domiciled in the province of Modena, suspected of planning an attack in Vienna<sup>435</sup>.

Several additional cases have been reported in the subsequent years by the district of Bologna, including investigations regarding trajectories of some foreign fighters:

In detail, the contrast and control [...] actions mainly concern North African foreigners residing and / or gravitating in the province of Bologna, active from a political - confessional profile. These are subjects who, in some cases, were in contact with others, already involved in previous investigations, ideologically attested to positions belonging to Islamic fundamentalism and in contact on the Internet with Islamists to recruit new followers, collect and disseminate information related to terrorist organizations operating abroad and mainly in the Middle East and Africa. [...] some of the most relevant procedures are also reported below, also in light of their complexity: [...] FILANGIERI Giampiero arrested on 21 July 2014 by Kurdish internal security forces at the border crossing of Ibrahim Khalil (ZakhoKurdistan), between Turkey and Iraq, as he had no Iraqi entry visa, brought back to Italy on 3 May 2015, and subjected [...] to the special surveillance prevention measure with obligation to stay in the municipality of residence, for a period of one year; [...] BOUAKKAZINE Imed [...] to whom multiple audio / video / image files reproducing battles and fights in various war scenarios have been seized (especially in Syria, Chechnya and Palestine), some of which with clear reference to the terrorist organization called "Islamic State -IS"; various individuals of Tunisian and Egyptian origin, investigated for setting up an association for terrorism purposes composed of jihadist militants active in the province of Ravenna engaged in criminal activities concerning both the training and the transfer to conflict zones of potential Foreign Fighters, militants in Islamic State terrorist training as well as the collection of funds for such terrorist training through drug dealing activities; [...] ALEOTTI Luca, following the monitoring of the social forums of individuals suspected of gravitating to Islamic extremism, which made it possible to identify a Facebook profile named after "LUCA GUERRA - Safy Allah", in which the terrorist formation of the Islamic State I.S.I.S. and the Syrian "JABHAT AL NUSRA" are advertised and the hatred against the Islamic Shiite, Catholic and Jewish religions is exalted<sup>436</sup>.

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<sup>435</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>436</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

Examples of the existing connections between organized crime and terrorism have been highlighted in several of the investigations reported by the DNA, especially in connection to certain areas that, because of their economy and location, are particularly vulnerable to illegal forms of trade. This is, for example, the case of Naples. In light with the nature of the territory and its function as commercial and trade hub, the references concerning the District of Naples report illicit trafficking of war materials as a form of support to terrorism activities:

in these ports [Gioia Tauro and Naples], in the past, waste had been seized, especially from the processing of raw materials and above all of a ferrous nature, directed towards non-European areas characterized by the existence of war and / or terrorist phenomena; subsequently, and nowadays, it appears that these types of exports have been replaced by those of processed products such as engines, crossbows and similar items which suggest their nature as components of war material<sup>437</sup>.

[the District of Naples has concluded investigations for] criminal association, trafficking of common and war firearms, counterfeiting of identity and administrative documents - against sixteen people belonging to the Italian "branch" of the Algerian terrorist organization called "Takfir Wal Hidijra" [representing] 15-20% of Algerian Islamic terrorism [...]. The "Italian" cell, operating mainly in Naples, Milan and Veneto (Bassano del Grappa), was in constant connection with similar groups making up the Takfir network, operating in France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Germany and England. In Naples, the Takfir had an important structure, in constant contact with the Marseille group, the most important of all [...]. The members of the "Takfir" are chosen by co-optation on the basis of "personal" data (the particular ability to commit a crime) or "territorial", in the sense that the affiliates are chosen also because of their roots in a specific city or neighbourhood. The choice of Naples as the logistics base of the Takfir network is not accidental, but is due to its "strategic" position in the Mediterranean and the presence of a large colony of Algerian immigrants<sup>438</sup>.

The nexus between organized crime and terrorism seems not to be limited to illicit trafficking but to concern also the phenomenon of migrants smuggling and human trafficking. Following the landing of a ship of the Italian Navy transporting a few hundred migrants of predominantly Somali and partly of Eritrean nationality at the Port of Salerno, in April 2015, interceptions were initiated and confirmed that the migrants smuggling had been performed by a criminal organization, whose leader "is subject to the attention of a Member State of the European community because he is suspected of providing support for Islamic terrorism structures. It is therefore not risky to hypothesize the existence of links and stable contacts between organizations that exploit illegal immigration operating in Europe and belonging to Islamic terrorist organizations"<sup>439</sup>. Additional investigations by the DDA of Catanzaro against Tarif Abo Robeih, a Syrian-born smuggler already convicted for facilitating illegal immigration, revealed that migrants transported were subject to recruitment attempts: in particular, Robeih is believed to have carried out indoctrination and recruitment activities "against both migrants transported from Turkey on board of the boat he conducted as well as on those present at the

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<sup>437</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2010 – 30 giugno 2011', Rome, December 2011

<sup>438</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Discorso inaugurale anno giudiziario 2002', Rome, 29 October 2001

<sup>439</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

C.A.R.A. of Sant'Anna, the centre to which he had been transferred immediately after boat docking following the failure to validate a previous detention order"<sup>440</sup>.

Besides the performance of illicit activities aimed at financing and supporting terrorism organization abroad through the shipment of relevant material, investigations have also revealed that recruitment operations have occurred on the Italian territory, both online and offline. The preventive operations by the office of the commissioner of Gioia Tauro, including checks and searches, led, for example, to the "discovery of written material praising "Islamic jihad" with the use of violence", while the "postal police through web monitoring, discovered channels and links praising ISIS and, in any case, the "Islamic jihad" and on which instructions were also provided in relation to the manufacture of explosive devices"<sup>441</sup>. Similarly:

in October 2014, the Carabinieri Special Operations Group (ROS) of Padua, coordinated by the DDA of Venice, carried out numerous searches in various locations in the area of Belluno and in Friuli, as part of investigations into the links with more radical Islamism. Investigators believe that recruitment activities were organized for the purpose of terrorism by three subjects originating in the Balkan area, long residing in the province of Belluno, and then migrated to Syria as Jihadists in the ranks of ISIS: one of the three is believed to have died in combat in Syria<sup>442</sup>.

also in the Tuscan region, it has been found that the internet, the social networks and, in general, IT tools, represent the almost exclusive means used to propagate "terrorist" ideas and to make proselytes<sup>443</sup>.

The diffusion of propaganda material has been identified in several occasions through local investigative efforts. Investigations on a suspected individual, Andrea Campione, converted under the name Abdul Wahid As Siqilli, have led, for example, to the identification of:

some individuals [...], mostly Italian citizens residing in different regions and also abroad, converted to Islam who carried out a systematic translation and publication on the internet, of apologetic documentation of jihadist terrorism. In the published documents, martyrdom and the sacrifice of life as a function of violent actions and terrorist acts against "unbelievers" and Jews were exalted, and information was provided on how to carry out attacks<sup>444</sup>.

Attempts to raise support and recruit new members have been traced also in reception centres housing asylum seekers and migrants:

ABSHIR Mohamed Abdullahi [...] carried out repeated activities of incitement to commit crimes for terrorist purposes, against co-religionist guests of the reception facility for asylum seekers "Happy Family" of Campomarino. [...] in order to strengthen the incitement efforts, he exploited his quality of

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<sup>440</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>441</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>442</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>443</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>444</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

charismatic leader [...] and Imam of the local Islamic community in order to organize prayer activities, during which he invited to Jihad against infidels; disseminated Islamic terrorist activity, in particular by watching, with some of them, and expressing laudatory comments at bloody images and videos of actions attributable to extremist Islamic organizations, including murders by firearms and slaughter [...] and referring to [people] housed in the same centre [...] the intention [...] to go to Syria to fight; it also exalted the terrorist attacks in Paris, and the suicide martyrdom, identifying the Rome railway station as a target [...] finally he threatened to death [those] reluctant to adhere to his incitement activity<sup>445</sup>.

Propaganda and recruitment attempts have been carried out not only from the Italian soil, but also by the people that managed to leave Italy to join the territories controlled by terrorist organizations. In this regard, the DNA reports some messages shared by Mohamed Koraichi, who travelled to Syria with his entire family in 2015:

Koraichi has in fact carried out a recruitment action from Syria towards other people present on the territory of the Italian State, authorizing them to reach the terrorist organization but, above all, seeking - also with the help of additional members of the same organization - to convince them to carry out violent actions directly within our country, through the commission of attacks [...]. This is the most significant news: completely coherently with the general indication from the top of the terrorist organization, a specific indication is given to conduct attacks within our country. For their insight, some messages are herewith reported, calling to act within Western countries and our country: «We live in good, we are good, a good that has no end and is uncountable, we pray God who has given this to us and we are saved .... we don't care about the infidels, if Russia is grouped together, if America is united, Europeans and those from the north are grouped together, Christians, traitorous Muslims, (incomprehensible) all of them have gathered against us but God is ours is not theirs, with the will of God we will fight and destroy them and with the will of God, with the love of God we will soon invade them but they will not invade us, with the will of God. God has sent us their planes that are bombing us day and night, but with the will of God it is enough to wake up in the morning, in the evening, praying and naming God, the prayer, reading the Koran, going towards God, God will take from you the dead ones in the jihad and God will take the good fighters for himself and this is an order from God; there are two options or the victory or to die as a Jihadist [...] I swear, there is happiness when you are there fighting ... you feel happy, you feel calm and even more when you kill those enemies [...] I swear my brother that these operations [by] these lone wolves are better than 20 thousand attacks, I swear my brother, because it frightens them, it blocks them to their limit and they cannot make it because the infidels, when you attack them over their houses, they will never live in peace, do you understand? since they come to you and attack you, you attack them, their country is peaceful, they want to live in peace, security, happiness, but when you attack them, only one attack like this, I swear that you make them tremble, you make them tremble from the deep, my brother Abderrahim as you know, I swear my brother that these operations, I swear that they are fantastic, they are the best; [...] all the leaders of the Islamic people are very happy with these operations of the lone wolves [...] those are the infidels, my brother you live among them, with them, God is great, I swear my brother, I swear it is the best thing that the person attacks the enemies deep in their houses [...]. Other message containing similar indications: Abderrahim, you must know, how it is the current situation of Muslims in Iraqi territory, Sham, Khourssana, Libya, Sinaa and everywhere, [they have been] humiliated [...]. You have to take revenge on them, revenge on Muslims. You have to spit in their face, take out your

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<sup>445</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

knives, you must never show pity on them, I swear they don't deserve it, they are enemies of God and his Prophet [...]»<sup>446</sup>.

In some cases, propaganda and recruiting strategies were both aiming at encouraging the person to join the terrorist organization while, at the same time, supporting the idea of performing a terrorist attack in Italy:

Abderrahim Moutaharrik, a 28-year-old kick-boxer of Moroccan origin residing in the Lecco area. According to a dynamic now usual in various European countries, but relatively new in Italy, Moutahatrik regularly communicated, via whatsapp and other platforms difficult to intercept, with various contacts located in the territories controlled by the Islamic State. Some conversations were aimed at planning the migration of his family (wife and two young children) to the territory of the Islamic State, others led to believe that his interlocutors were directly encouraging him to carry out attacks on Italian territory<sup>447</sup>.

The consumption of terrorist propaganda and material represents an entry point for the DNA to identify individuals at risk of engaging into violence or already engaged into violent activities. Among the reported cases, few examples are provided below:

[investigation concerned 3 individuals] 2 of which of Afghan nationality and the remaining Pakistani, held accountable, in various capacities, for association with the purpose of terrorism, including international terrorism and facilitating illegal immigration. The investigative activity started on 16 December 2015, when a Carabinieri patrol, during a normal preventive service, noticed and controlled 4 Afghans [...] while recording videos inside an important shopping mall of the city. The investigation confirmed that one of the two Afghans [was] downloading videos and proclamations praising jihad and photographs depicting fighters; the other Afghan [...] had made other videos in sensitive places. The 4 individuals resulted to be in close contact with a Pakistani and an Afghan [...] both active in facilitating illegal migration<sup>448</sup>.

the Trieste Police Headquarters reports the recent investigations [...] concerning some Macedonian citizens suspected of making jihadist propaganda and in close connection with members of the Macedonian terrorist organization called "Aktivna Islamska Mladina Oktisi" ("Active Islamic Youth of Oktisi). In addition to the publication of photos and ISIS propaganda videos, the various apology behaviors also included "friendships" with subjects currently included in the ranks of ISIS fighters and placed on the list of Foreign Fighters who left Italy, as well as phone contacts with exponents whose names had emerged in other investigations, for the crimes of association with the purpose of international terrorism and criminal association aimed at facilitating illegal immigration (people expelled from the national territory).

The material downloaded from the internet as well the contacts entertained through web platforms have been instrumental in identifying various episodes of suspected radicalisation trajectories, as it is the case for the Tunisian citizen Nussair Louati as well as other individuals deported for national security reasons:

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<sup>446</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>447</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>448</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

as it emerged from contacts maintained through his Facebook profile with jihadist fighters operating in Syria, he was ready to leave for Turkey to then reach the jihadist groups of the IS (Islamic State) already engaged in terrorist actions in Syria<sup>449</sup>.

other investigative activities of a preventive nature have allowed [...] to carry out two expulsions from the Italian territory, for reasons of national security, of potentially dangerous foreign citizens due to their web contacts with exponents linked to Islamic radicalism<sup>450</sup>.

Different measures have been adopted to reduce the risks posed by the terrorist propaganda and recruitment attempts. The Directorate reports an interesting example in this regard:

[...] the case of an Italian woman, converted to the Islamic faith and gradually radicalized after the marriage with a Tunisian subject, in turn pervaded by religious fanaticism and recipient of an expulsion order issued by the Minister of the Interior on 7 June 2016 for terrorism grounds. Also in this case, the proposal for the application of the personal prevention measure of the PNA, which for the first time has specifically qualified the scope of the prescriptions to be imposed by including «the ban to surf the internet and make contacts through the web, the ban to attend mosques or other meeting places of individuals characterized by similar religious fanaticism and any other prescription deemed effective for the purpose of preventing terrorism» represents the result of a fruitful collaboration between the Brescia District Prosecutor and the National Directorate<sup>451</sup>.

After the expansion of its mandate, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate has enlarged its reports to also include several references to the individual trajectories of people that joined Islamist terrorist organizations. This is the case, for example, of Sergio Maria Giulia, one of the most famous Italian foreign fighters, who succeeded in convincing both her parents as well as her sister to leave for Syria:

the investigation carried out by the Milan District Attorney against Sergio Maria Giulia and others [...] allowed to reconstruct the departure of the Sergio / Kobuzi family unit from the territory of the State in September 2014, the arrival in the occupied territories, and the subsequent intense activity carried out to motivate the relatives to join the terrorist organization. The Sergio investigation had also made it possible to reconstruct the effective organizational structure of the so-called Islamic State, capable of receiving foreign fighters from all over the world, according to precise and effective organizational rules, and then sorting them in the various occupied territorial areas according to their geographical origin, taking care of the military training of men and the placement of women in different roles functional to the needs of the organization. The Sergio investigation had also made it possible to reconstruct the expansionist aims of the terrorist organization, as well as the effective religious police system within the occupied territory<sup>452</sup>.

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<sup>449</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>450</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>451</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>452</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

Sergio Maria Giulia is believed to have been in contact with Bushra Haik, a Syrian citizen born in Italy and residing in Saudi Arabia, delivering lessons online, managing a forum and organizing meetings via Skype to attract new recruits.<sup>453</sup>

Similarly, the 2017 report also makes reference to the investigation conducted on two young Moroccan citizens, Aboulala Tarik and El Mkhayar Monsef, residing in Milan, who joined ISIS in 2015:

the two young people left the national territory on 17 January 2015, through the airport of Bergamo - Orio al Serio, to reach Istanbul and subsequently the territory of the Islamic State. Both young men then carried out military training and became mujahidin for the Islamic State. The young people's radicalisation process has been reconstructed (in particular for what concerns Monsef EL MKHAYAR). From the territory of the Islamic State both young people, but in particular Monsef EL MKHAYAR, carried out an intense proselytism activity towards other young people, aimed at convincing the interlocutors to embrace the war jihad and to join the Islamic State. Based on certain elements, it has been possible to demonstrate that ABOULALA died in combat, and following the death of his friend, the proselytizing activity of EL MKHAYAR became even more intense<sup>454</sup>.

The DNA reports the departure of an additional individual in 2015, Maghzaoui Sami, of Tunisian citizenship:

[Maghzaoui] was a normally integrated person, married to an Italian citizen (and then separated). The investigations carried out have made it possible to reconstruct the departure in June 2015, the arrival in Turkey and then in Syria, the participation in a sharia school, the military training, the decision to die as a "martyr" and the actual death in a suicide action allegedly carried out in Iraqi territory (September 2015), with subsequent direct communication to the family of the death by an exponent of the Islamic State, with the sum of one thousand dollars being made available to the family "for the sacrifice"<sup>455</sup>.

The travel to territories controlled by ISIS is not limited to individual trajectories but also concerns entire families, as it is the case for:

a Moroccan citizen (TASKOUR Ahmed), his wife and two children aged 9 and 13; the family reached the territory of the terrorist organization between December 2014 and January 2015, managing to leave Italy without leaving traces and arousing suspicion. TASKOUR - once within the territory of Daesh - has carried out military training and has taken on a significant role within the terrorist organization, particularly in the field of propaganda. From the territory of the Islamic State, an intense and effective activity of propaganda / threat / proselytism was carried out by the suspect on behalf of the terrorist organization. Taskour has also induced his young son to participate in this activity, who has consequently played an active role in propaganda / claiming terrorist actions carried out in Europe, in particular in France<sup>456</sup>.

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<sup>453</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>454</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>455</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>456</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

an Albanian woman named Berisha Valbona. The woman, married with three children (two girls aged 11 and 10 and one boy), left the family with only the 6-year-old boy with her. The investigation made it possible to reconstruct the departure, which took place on 17.12.2014, from Orio al Serio airport to Istanbul, and the subsequent arrival in the Syrian territory occupied by the terrorist organization. The organization of the departure took place from Kosovo by a Serbian citizen, known as a foreign fighter and who had reached Turkey on a date coinciding with that of Valbona. The story is remarkable because it demonstrates the attractiveness of the so-called Islamic state in the period following its proclamation, and the ability to organize departures also for women, who bring male children with them in view of radical education and training<sup>457</sup>.

the departure from the state territory (from the province of Lecco) of an entire family [...] consisting of a radicalized Moroccan citizen (KORAICHI Mohamed), an Italian converted wife (BRIGNOLI Alice) and three young children (aged 6, 4 and 2); the departure from Italy took place on 21.2.2015. [...] the whole family has reached the territory of the organization and the man has carried out military training<sup>458</sup>.

From an analysis of the profiles of the people who left Italy to travel to Syria or Iraq, the Directorate concludes that it is difficult if not impossible to extrapolate common trends or profiles:

The first known case of an Italian foreign fighter who died in Syria is that of Giuliano DELNEVO, son of the Genoese middle-class, converted to Islam; two others are those of Munifer KARAMALESKY and Ismar MESINOVIC, workers of Balkan origin, well integrated in small agricultural communities in the Belluno area. Among the first Italian foreign fighters, there is also Anas EL ABBOUBI, a young Moroccan who grew up in Italy who, after a rapper career, had become radicalized, trying to develop the Italian branch of the transnational movement Sharia4 and, after having been arrested by the DIGOS of Brescia and released following an order from the criminal court, had joined the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS). As it results from these cases, there are no recognizable common elements among the various individuals who decide to join the violent Jihad<sup>459</sup>.

Individuals such as Maria Giulia SERGIO, Louati NOUASSIR, the homeless Tunisian from Ravenna who was dealing drugs before radicalizing and trying to leave for Syria, and Hosni HACEM BEN HASSEN, the forty-nine year old imam of Andria linked to the old network of Viale Jenner and architect of a massive proselytizing activity, they ultimately have very little in common, even if they all remain linked by a path of radicalisation.

In terms of motivating factors that might lead people to join terrorist organizations or support the commitment of terrorist offences, the Directorate refers to the annual reports elaborated by the security services from 2009 onwards and, in particular, to “the presence of «migrants of second generation, or individuals born and raised in Western countries who, made vulnerable by situations of economic, social or

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<sup>457</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016’, Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>458</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016’, Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>459</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016’, Rome, 12 April 2017

emotional distress, adhere to the violent option following a path of radicalisation favored by online propaganda and the conditioning of coreligionists defending extremist positions»<sup>460</sup>.

The investigations led by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate led to some insight also on the structure and modus operandi of ISIS, also for what concerns its presence on the Italian context:

ISIS / DAESH requires to anyone who wants to carry out an act of terrorism in its name only the bond of an oath of loyalty and "public" alliance to be sent, by any means, to a media officer of the Islamic State. This act, in fact, amplified by the media power of the IS, is part of a subtle strategy aimed at carrying out attacks in places not directly controlled by the Islamic State, effectively cancelling the differences between a foreign fighter and a so-called "lone wolf" who, in most cases, is a self-taught person able to act without logistical support and without hierarchical orders, thus becoming unpredictable. Furthermore, the recently acquired information constitute a solid basis for supporting the hypothesis of the existence in Europe of an ISIS operational centre which is assigned the task of directing, financing and covering the attackers, equipped with executive autonomy and support located in different States. A centre that is also able to indicate the methods of entry and exit from European countries through a tested mechanism in which Italy, both for its conformation and for its proximity to African and Balkan countries, represents a transit country. In this sense, the terrorist organization should be considered, rather than as a static structure, as a network capable of putting in contact people assimilated by a common political-criminal project<sup>461</sup>.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the DNA has also reported some criticalities regarding the investigations on this subject matter, "such as the difficulty of finding interpreters, either because of the multiplicity of the Arabic dialects or for the fear that the interpreters themselves manifest towards the intercepted individuals"<sup>462</sup>. Among the measures adopted to overcome the challenges in conducting terrorist investigations, the Directorate affirms that:

various interception systems and objectives are being studied and implemented. A satellite traffic interception system has also been studied which should lead (if this will be possible) also through technological developments of collection systems, not only to the interception of traffic, but also and above all to the geo-location of the monitored telephone<sup>463</sup>.

The findings related to the terrorism presence on the Italian soil confirm that radicalization occur in Italy following similar patterns identified in other European countries. Although sharing experiences with its neighbouring countries, investigations show that Italy is mainly exploited by terrorist organizations for recruitment, fundraising, and collecting arms and weapons, with specific activities taking place according to the characteristics of some regions or cities. Terrorist activities occur both online and offline, with recruitment and fundraising attempts being implemented both by individuals on the national territory as well as by foreign fighters who left Italy to join the territories controlled by terrorist organizations. The people

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<sup>460</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>461</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>462</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>463</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

who left the country for Syria or Iraq present very different profiles and a comprehensive analysis of the push and pull factors remain challenging given the heterogeneity of the sample, although migrants of second-generation are portrayed as an at-risk group.

### *Terrorism features*

While reporting ongoing and completed investigations, in its reports the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate elaborates also several analyses of the main characteristics and key aspects of the terrorism phenomenon. This category, terrorism features, regroups together the three following codes: International-Islamist terrorism, providing more general descriptions of the phenomenon and its evolution; terrorism and prison, touching upon the manifestation of terrorism dynamics in the detention environment; and terrorism financing, unfolding the main sources of funding for terrorist organizations.

The first code analysed below concerns general considerations on International-Islamist terrorism. Thanks to the vast and generous investigation material and the information gathered through international cooperation, the DNA reports provide a very rich set of data on the structure and modus operandi of Islamist terrorist organizations. Strong emphasis is put by the Directorate on the new and evolving dynamics brought forward by the current manifestations of international terrorism, as “the phenomenon of international terrorism, in its current forms, knows no borders of States and regions, in an increasingly accentuated scenario of globalization and interdependence between States and international bodies”<sup>464</sup>. New tactics and a broader extent of the phenomenon have been traced in the number and nature of the recent attacks:

the dramatic nature of the phenomenon was shown by the most serious terrorist attacks since 11 September in the United States. The massacres of Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 had already shown, according to the most acute analysts, that confronting those who practice asymmetric war according to old schemes is completely useless. This becomes even more true if this war extends globally. The transformation of global terrorism also undermines established Western intelligence techniques. [...] What happened in Paris on 13 November 2015 certainly represented an escalation compared to the dramatic attacks recorded not only in recent months, but also in recent years in Europe<sup>465</sup>.

Part of the concerns regarding the security threat posed by the new forms of international terrorism derive from the key role played by two barely new groups of actors, namely the so-called lone-wolves and the foreign fighters, especially in light of the possibility that they could return back to Europe after having gained military training and experience in ISIS-controlled territories:

the terrorist threat of jihadist nature has brought to light two phenomena so far unknown that have proven to be extremely dangerous: the phenomenon of foreign fighters and the phenomenon of so-called "Lone wolves", the first concerns subjects recruited in western countries and meant to participate in armed conflicts or commit terrorist acts abroad, the second concerns those who,

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<sup>464</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015’, Rome, February 2016

<sup>465</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015’, Rome, February 2016

following a deep radicalisation and self-training, are projected towards the idea of carrying out isolated but no less devastating terrorist actions<sup>466</sup>.

the size and modalities of the attacks shaped what were the main concerns of analysts and investigators, namely the possibility that European subjects "survived" from conflict theaters such as Iraq and Syria - the so-called foreign fighters - could return to Europe and carry out terrorist actions planned abroad, taking advantage not only of the experience and military capabilities acquired but also of the collaboration of elements located on the European territory and the support of foreign militants sent specifically to participate in the attacks. It then emerged that several of the subjects involved were already in various capacities known to the French and Belgian authorities as extremists, some of whom were "veterans"<sup>467</sup>.

Many peculiarities are highlighted in the Directorate's reports in terms of structural set up and internal regulations of the terrorist organizations, including the very strong presence at local level, solid forms of collaboration with the surrounding environments for financing purposes and the ability to house and assign a role to all interested affiliates, including women and children:

we are faced with a new phenomenon in which terrorist organizations control territories and exploit their financial, natural, artistic-archaeological and human resources; local terrorist groups have close connections - ideologically, operationally and financially - with parent organizations but a "molecular" system also emerges, in which the components have autonomy and self-activation capacity<sup>468</sup>.

through numerous investigations, the ability of the so-called Islamic state was confirmed and highlighted for what concerns welcoming and managing within the occupied territories not only men to be assigned for military training and combat, but also entire families. This is the main characteristic of the so-called Islamic state, that is, of a terrorist organization that has a territory and is therefore in a condition of being attractive to women and entire families, including children, in a way that is completely consistent with the effective and continuous propaganda carried out by the organization through its periodical publications and more generally through the network<sup>469</sup>.

Finally, it seems that a key role for the diffusion of propaganda material and for recruitment purposes has been played by the Internet and, in particular, by news channels of communication, such as social media and instant messaging platforms. Strong communication capacities have been identified in the production, by ISIS, of tailored communication products and media outputs:

the internet certainly emerges as the main means of getting in touch with jihadist ideology, of deepening it, of getting in touch with other individuals already radicalized or who share a path of radicalisation. But the web also represents the tool to move to an operational phase, once the decision to mobilize has been made (whether this mobilization consists of a journey to an area of conflict or in the preparation of an attack in Italy), or to identify a aid in the execution of a terrorist act. As it is

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<sup>466</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>467</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>468</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>469</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

known, the same jihadist groups are responsible for the propaganda: IS has reached a level of penetration in terms of communication that is certainly not negligible: there are video products, branded Hayat Media Center, and magazines published by subversive groups [...]. These media have designed their communication skills on Western-style formats, imitating the North American style. A good part of the communication, according to experts, has adopted the same language of cinema products or videogames. But obviously the spread of jihadist propaganda has had a real explosion with the use of a series of social media that allow individuals, even only partially interested, to enjoy or disseminate materials with propaganda content: Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Paltalk, Instagram, Whatsapp, Ask.fm, Tumblr and Telegram are also widely used by members of the jihadist formations<sup>470</sup>.

As underlined by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, the process of radicalisation is not unique nor linear and different individuals might undertake different radicalisation pathways:

radicalisation has often been defined by scholars as a "process by which an extremist value system is adopted, including the willingness to use, support or facilitate violence as a method for social change". It is therefore a process of gradual transformation, during which a subject experience a change in his/her own system of values, until he/she reaches the legitimacy of violence and the justification for its use to achieve political objectives. [...] radicalisation means, in general, the swift of an individual or a group to sharing deeply of an extreme political vision compared to those considered more central in the political body of reference at a given moment historian. The gradualness of the phenomenon, however, must not be deceiving. As it will become clearer later, it is entirely plausible, and some investigations show it, that the transition to a condition of radicalisation can be very sudden or, on the contrary, remain silent for an indefinite time before giving rise to a real traumatic emergence<sup>471</sup>.

the radicalisation methods also underline a diversity of path. Many individuals engage into self-radicalisation, mainly in small virtual communities and/or physical space. Even the assessment of the major unifying element of the radicalisation processes, i.e. the use of the network, must be carried out with particular attention, because it plays a role that is not always the same in the circumstances in which it comes into play. In some cases of so-called self-radicalisation, the internet seems to be the only source of inspiration; in others, it is complementary to ongoing radicalisation processes in the physical world (sometimes in a mosque and/or in small groups of friends). The evolution of radicalisation appears equally different: some, in fact, manage to establish contacts with transnational organizations such as the Islamic State or al Qaeda; others, by choice or incapacity, remain unaffiliated. Within this scenario, neither the ongoing investigations, nor the reflections carried out by other agencies, allow to attribute a specific role to the migration phenomenon in the radicalisation process. The radicalized subjects - for the most part - are not from illegal immigration, nor do they show contact with that world<sup>472</sup>.

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<sup>470</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>471</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>472</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

Despite different phases and elements characterizing each singular radicalisation process, the Directorate underlines the cross-cutting role played by the web in facilitating the path towards radicalisation of various individuals:

[...] in the radicalisation processes, the Internet plays the central role of a virtual space where self-radicalisation processes take place, where ideological training and "military practice" take place thanks to the potential offered by the web, an increasingly essential tool for interacting with the jihadist universe and capable of guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality. [...] Thanks to the internet, a subjective situation of discomfort can be sublimated in the desire to participate in the violent struggle in defense of Islam in conflict areas such as Syria and Iraq, or to fight against the West on his/her own territory<sup>473</sup>.

Furthermore, among the primary pushing factors identified by the DNA, there is a common sense of neglect and alienation in relationship to the surrounding community and culture:

it can certainly be claimed that the possible causes of radicalisation include resentment towards the surrounding society, the desire to change life and atone for, by adhering to religious dictates, one's own "faults", the search for identity and the camaraderie that belonging to a new group involve. But a decisive role seems to be played also by the condition of abandonment and by the perception of one's own sense of estrangement from the value system of the western society<sup>474</sup>.

With reference to the identification of common characteristics among the individuals vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment, the DNA emphasizes the lack of a uniformed or standard profile:

the individuals who have adopted the jihadist ideology, in Italy as in all European countries, present a range of profiles that varies enormously: refugees, criminals living on the margins of society, successful graduates and small entrepreneurs, newly adolescent girls, 50-year-old men, graduates in Islamic theology, newly converted individuals without any religious education<sup>475</sup>.

The analyses elaborated by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate provide for a precious insight on the Italian case-study. While stressing the unique extent of the phenomenon regarding Italy, including the low number of foreign fighters and the absence of attacks performed on the national territory, the Directorate underlines the similarities with other European countries in terms of process and at-risk population:

the phenomenon of radicalisation in Italy has now taken on the same characteristics, although not yet the same dimensions, with which it occurs in other European countries. Some factors that initially delayed the development of the phenomenon - such as the absence or scarcity of second or third generation immigrants or the limited cases of conversion - are gradually disappearing. The lower number of cases is substantially due to the smaller size of the pool of people vulnerable to radical messages. The achievement of the "critical mass" already present in other Western European countries, where entire municipalities with a Muslim majority characterized by a low standard of well-

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<sup>473</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>474</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>475</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

being and schooling exist, is however possible in the long term, due to the constant flow of migrants who reach the Italy<sup>476</sup>.

as a matter of fact, according to various estimates, against the 110 "Italian" foreign fighters, France generated about 1500 and Germany 1000: even much smaller countries than ours have seen a much higher mobilization (see, for example, the 500 foreign fighters from Belgium and the 300 from Austria). The analysis of these data allows us to affirm that if the presence of real recruitment groups, structured organizations and massive language propaganda activities is a frequent phenomenon in France, Great Britain, The Netherlands or in the Scandinavian countries, it is instead a condition still sporadic and embryonic in our country<sup>477</sup>.

Despite the low level of impact experienced so far by Italy in terms of terrorist attacks and affiliates, Islamist terrorist presence on Italian soil can be traced back to the 1990s. The different evolution of the phenomenon within the Italian context can be explained by two main factors, namely the strong existing anti-terrorism apparatus as well as the limited pool of potential recruits:

Contrary to what could be imagined considering the current European situation, Italy was one of the first European countries to be affected by a jihadist presence. Already in the early 1990s activities of various networks of North African origin were recorded. It has been observed that during the conflict in Bosnia the Italian jihadist scene played a leading role, so much that the Emir of reference for all foreign fighters engaged in the Balkan conflict was identified in the then Imam of the Milanese mosque located in Viale Jenner, the Egyptian Anwar Shabaan. Nonetheless, in the 2000s when most European countries began to be affected by a growing threat from both external and indigenous jihadist groups (the so-called "homegrown"), the situation in Italy did not evolve accordingly. According to some national studies, the phenomenon is due, on the one hand, to the repression carried out by the Italian authorities against "traditional" jihadist networks and, at the same time, to the lack of growth of indigenous groups. As a matter of fact, in the first half of the 2000s, the presence of autochthonous jihadist forms of radicalisation in our country, recorded in the rest of Europe, is not detected<sup>478</sup>.

The studies carried out on the phenomenon of radicalisation have led to the elaboration of two analytical reconstructions which, working in synergy, help to explain the "uniqueness" of the Italian case, that is, two attempts to provide an answer to the "why" Italy has not achieved, at least for the moment, the same levels of radicalisation present in other European countries: an explanation is based on a demographic-sociological observation; the other emphasizes the response of the Italian anti-terrorism system. As for the former, it is based on the consideration that in states such as the United Kingdom or France the first massive arrivals of Muslim migrants date back to the phase of progressive de-colonization of Africa and the Indian Sub-continent and to the immediately following period and, therefore, they are placed around the sixties of the twentieth century. In Italy, the history of this type of immigration is certainly more recent and, consequently, the number of people belonging to the second and third generations, or of individuals born in Italy with foreign parents, or even grandparents, or who arrived in the country in the age of first schooling is inevitably much lower. [...] Furthermore,

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<sup>476</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>477</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>478</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

some very interesting studies point out to the lack of a clear homogeneous ethnic presence in closed contexts in Italy; in other words, in general, ghetto neighborhoods with an Islamic majority would be lacking in Italy: places that in other European countries often represent a basin of jihadist radicalisation and mobilization (think of Molenbeek in Brussels). Moreover, the ongoing investigations do not reveal, in Italy, the possibility of identifying the same level of impact of some organized extremist groups, which appear, instead, more structured in other territories; groups like Sharia4Belgium or al Muhajiroun, which abroad - if not always from the point of view of mobilization, at least from that of ideological training - have formed hundreds of jihadists in Italy do not seem equally active. According to some studies, carried out on a purely sociological level, the phenomenon would derive from the contemporary presence on the territory of non-radical Muslim communities that represent a powerful counter-thrust to the solitary or autonomous radicalisation of individuals, involved in a "virtuous" Muslim context. As anticipated, the second line of explanation of the low level of radicalisation (if compared to the European scene) would be linked to the Italian anti-terrorism system. The Italian peculiarity certainly lies in the long tradition of contrasting not only this phenomenon but, above all, in the attitude of coordination between various law enforcement and intelligence agencies, substantially imposed by the active presence of the classic mafias, which have often led to the need for the police and judiciary to deal with investigative and law enforcement problems similar to those posed by the fight against terrorism<sup>479</sup>.

Finally, few considerations are put forward by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate in terms of measures to counter terrorism, its spread and the process of radicalisation identified through investigations. In particular, additional efforts should be put in practice in this regard to tackle the terrorism propaganda and its consequences:

the need to counter the danger inherent in the propaganda and dissemination activities of the ideology aimed at promoting radicalisation and loyalty as well as the recruitment and logistical support in favor of jihadist terrorist partnerships is evident <sup>480</sup>.

The second code analysed under the broader category of terrorism features concerns terrorism and prison. Prisons, similarly to the web, provide for a context in which radicalisation and recruitment are facilitated because of the peculiar environment and its characteristics:

Ongoing investigations show that two places, one physical and one virtual, have taken on particular importance in the dissemination and internalization of jihadist ideology, in Italy as well as in other countries: these are places of detention and the web. [...] on the basis of the latest anti-terrorist operations carried out in Italy, it can be said to be proven that for some individuals the radicalisation took place entirely or in good bread in a prison environment or at least "para-custodial". [...] But this evaluation introduces a further theme of reflection, the possible analogy, as regards the conditions that favor the affirmation of radical practices, between prisons and accommodation centers for

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<sup>479</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>480</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

immigrants, where often the substantial conditions of life do not differ, at least in this respect, from actual detention<sup>481</sup>.

Because of the closed environment and the control exercised within it, prisons also represent a favourable context for the conduction of investigations. In the past years, the national Prison Administration has been able to identify propaganda activities occurring during the detention period:

In this regard, thanks also to the attention of the Department of Prison Administration (DAP) for the training of staff in this field, numerous investigations are pending which, precisely taking inspiration from the examination of writings, drawings and conduct of Islamic prisoners, led to the identification of individuals, in the majority of cases held for facilitation and supporting crimes of illegal immigration and more rarely for common crimes, which evaluated carefully, demonstrated concrete signs of radicalisation and proselytizing activities, including through the use of violent behavior, in relation to other prisoners of Muslim origin who were unwilling to adapt to the strictly orthodox behaviors imposed by them [...]. Among the investigations concerning terrorism, some reported cases relate to individuals in detention. They arose either from reports from the detention centers or from statements by other inmates<sup>482</sup>.

Individuals in prison are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation given their condition of detainees with no or limited contacts with the outside world, the stigma linked to their status and the uncertainty for their future life after release. Consequently, the Prison Administration shall strengthen its preventing efforts through increased monitoring, improved training for the prison personnel and enhanced opportunities for the Muslim inmates to profess their faith:

the "need to belong to a group" by common prisoners of Islamic faith, who, if left to themselves, experience detention as a failure compared to their expectations when they arrived in Italy and can therefore be attracted by a terrorist group that makes them feel more important. To avoid the risk of "radicalism" in prisons, a possible source of formation of terrorist cells, it seems appropriate to invest first and foremost in the intercultural training of the staff of the Prison Police and in the opening of prisons to re-educators of Muslim faith, adequately trained and moderated. There is no doubt that the main prevention tool to be implemented is to allow prisoners of Islamic faith to live their religiosity in conditions of dignity. Finally, the constant monitoring of detainees who appear to be highly radicalized must be applied also at the end of the detention, through specific prevention activities by the police forces in order to get to the expulsion order where necessary<sup>483</sup>.

The last code analysed under the framework of this category is terrorism financing, identifying the sources and mechanism of funding set up by terrorist organizations. Investigations demonstrate that terrorism counts on diverse forms of financing, both pertaining to legal and illegal economic dimensions. For what concerns illicit forms of funding, different types of actions and activities are exploited, such as money laundry, drug and arms trafficking, kidnapping, migrants smuggling and various forms of illicit trade:

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<sup>481</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>482</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>483</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

undercover operations have repeatedly allowed for surprising results, both from the point of view of the number and level of people arrested, and from that of the quantity of drugs seized, including substantial consignments of heroin, a substance that is forcefully returned to the forefront of the market, also due to a sort of taxation of traffickers, carried out through the lowest prices charged compared to those of cocaine, and for a probable surplus on the market of this substance, due to the interests in its production by trainings terrorist and guerrilla<sup>484</sup>.

international terrorism is self-financing mainly through drug and weapon trafficking, as well as extortion and kidnapping<sup>485</sup>.

according to recent estimates, the IS accumulates about three billion dollars a year with very large criminal activities, as confirmed by the resolutions adopted by the United Nations in 2015: drug trafficking, smuggling of oil and works of art, trafficking in arms and tobacco, migrant smuggling, extortion and kidnapping, corruption and money laundering. [...] These are criminal activities which, in order to be carried out, require a vast relational network of complicity external to the terrorist-mafia association<sup>486</sup>.

The National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate reports also a significant exploitation of legal and para-legal economic mechanisms for terrorism financing. In this respect, charitable hedging activities and informal banking, such as the Hawala and Hundi systems, result to provide a perfect platform for terrorist organizations for rapid and easy transfer of funds:

the aforementioned "informal circuits" - which have historically developed in some areas of the third and fourth world, in particular in Asia and Africa, with the examples of Somalia and Sudan - overlap almost entirely with the official financial circuits. [...] The main advantage offered by the mechanisms in question is that of avoiding normal banking procedures, while getting to move large quantities of money around the world, often without leaving a trace of their path. And if, on the one hand, these "informal circuits" allow for the transfer of liquidity to countries where, for reasons of political and economic stability, there is no efficient financial structure, on the other hand, they appear to produce, for the managing organizations, the profit of considerable commissions (to guarantee the destination of remittances): in such a situation, it cannot be excluded that part of these remittances may be destined to finance some terrorist organization, which, by adventure or by choice, in a context of ethnic or ideological or religious affinities, has to operate in the same geographical areas [...]. And it has to be mentioned that such a situation functions as a fixer, in the chaotic progress of international markets, providing multiple opportunities for opaque and deviant operations to any interested person<sup>487</sup>.

the financing of terrorism, although it can also be achieved through recycling techniques, could also take place through the use of informal channels, as well as, of course, through the exploitation of the legal economy. [...] Indeed, the investigative case studies have shown that the aforementioned

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<sup>484</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2010 – 30 giugno 2011', Rome, December 2011

<sup>485</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>486</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

<sup>487</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2011 – 30 giugno 2012', Rome, December 2012

"informal banking circuits", while allowing for the concealment of the path followed by the hidden financial flow, often end up leaving traces, in the official circuit, of the so-called "last step": especially when this constitutes a transfer carried out on a transnational scale, as it is often not possible to ignore, in this context, the technical assistance and the capacities guaranteed only by the authorized systems (so-called money transfers). Precisely in the light of such a scenario, then, the system of report of suspicious financial transactions outlines further profiles of particular interest on the anti-money laundering front and can provide a significant contribution for the identification of sources of terrorist financing<sup>488</sup>.

The exploitation of legal channels of funding, along with some additional peculiar characteristic linked to the structure and operational set up of the organizations, make it more challenging to counter terrorism financing: "the sums necessary for organizational and operational needs are generally not of high amount; the funds typically have a lawful origin and their use for illicit purposes is concealed through entrepreneurial or charitable façade activities; the transfer of resources takes place through both formal and informal diversified circuits. These characteristics make it increasingly difficult to be identified"<sup>489</sup>.

Despite the challenges in tracking legal and illegal transactions for terrorism financing, Italy has set up an efficient reporting mechanism, led by the Financial Information Unit (FIU), which has collected several alerts regarding suspected attempts to fund terrorism:

in the period from September 1997 to the first half of 2009, the FIU received from banking and financial intermediaries 89,702 reports of suspected money laundering transactions and 3,940 relating to terrorism<sup>490</sup>.

In light of the growing phenomenon, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate "has stipulated, with both the DIA and the Guardia di Finanza, memoranda of understanding aimed at preventing and combating the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering or terrorist financing. With these protocols, a new analysis strategy of the FIU reports has been adopted, conducted by a working group created ad hoc which, with the rich information of the FIU reports through queries to the SIDNA / SIDDA databases and others available, allows to select reports that are likely to be used in court proceedings [...] or for further investigations"<sup>491</sup>.

In a nutshell, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate emphasises the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of the phenomenon under consideration: radicalisation does not occur in a unique manner and does not always follow the same patterns, although some elements are particularly important in the process, such as the role of the internet and the sense of cultural and emotional alienation. Terrorism activities can count of a various set of financing sources, ranging from money laundry to migrants smuggling as well as the exploitation of legal and para-legal economic activities. The uniqueness of the Italian

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<sup>488</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2009 – 30 giugno 2010', Rome, December 2010

<sup>489</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

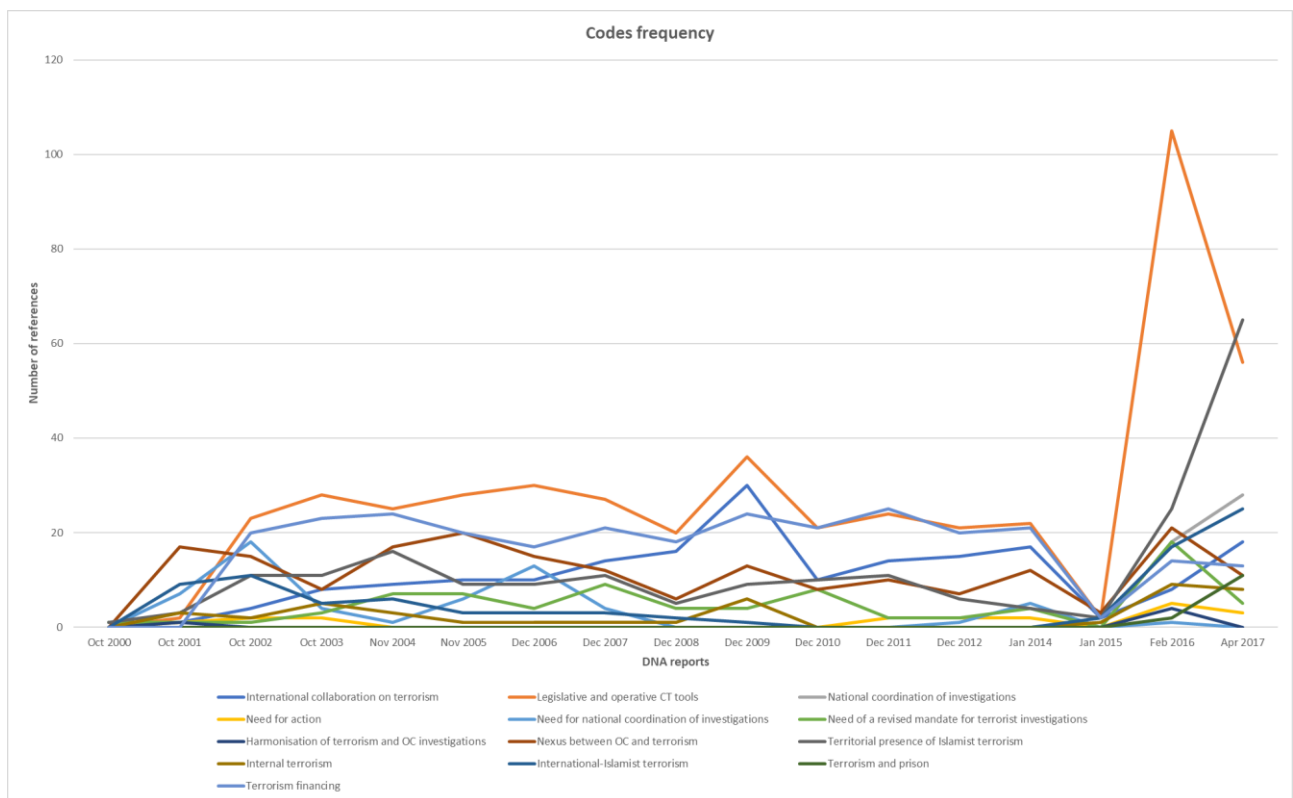
<sup>490</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2008 – 30 giugno 2009', Rome, December 2009

<sup>491</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2014 – 30 giugno 2015', Rome, February 2016

experience can be explained, according to the Directorate, by the strong national anti-terrorism apparatus and the limited pool of potential recruits.

### *How the concept of terrorism has evolved in the DNA annual reports*

The quotes reported above from the DNA yearly reports along with the analyses elaborated by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate provide for a comprehensive and multi-faceted overview of the phenomenon and its evolution both at global as well as national and local level. While an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the current wave of terrorism, its modus operandi, radicalisation pathways and presence on the Italian soil will be provided for in the next chapters also building on additional data, some considerations will be proposed herewith below on the evolution of the concept in the DNA reports analysed. As it becomes evident from the description of the various categories presented above, 9/11 attacks marked a turning moment for increased attention and, subsequently, reporting on the phenomenon. Contrary to expectations, similar trends cannot be identified following the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) attacks. Such a finding could be partially explained by the fact that the maximum attention possible was already devoted to the issue of terrorism after 2001, with no significant changes occurring in the following years. As demonstrated by Figure 3, a second key turning point is represented by the Charlie Hebdo shooting (January 2015), which led to the adoption of Law 43 of 17 April 2015. The expanded list of punishable criminal offenses and the criminalization of preliminary acts resulting from the new legislation have led to a remarkable increase in the number of investigations classified under the umbrella of terrorism and to the collection of a vast array of terrorist cases and evidence regarding the manifestations of the phenomenon on the Italian territory.



**Figure 3 (author's elaboration)**

In line with the new legislative framework, after January 2015 the DNA reports present an outstanding focus on legislative and operative counter-terrorism tools, explained both by the expanded investigative focus as well as by the need to further strengthen some investigative mechanisms in light of the broader area of action pertaining to terrorism offences. Similarly, the revised mandate shed light on the presence of Islamist terrorism on the national soil, with an increased number of cases under investigation and many data collected by the judiciary as well as the law enforcement apparatus on how the phenomenon manifests itself in Italy.

### *Conclusions*

The analysis of the seventeen annual reports elaborated by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate from 2000 to 2017 have led to the identification of thirteen codes clustered into four main categories: counter-terrorism measures; terrorism and organized crime; terrorism presence of the Italian soil; and terrorism features.

In terms of counter-terrorism measures, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate stressed several times the need for an improved coordination at national level in order to tackle terrorism and its dynamic nature along with a revised mandate for terrorist investigations and, more in general, prompt actions to address an ever-growing threatening situation. Such needs and gaps have been partially addressed by the adoption of Law 43 of 17 April 2015, which provided for a more solid coordination framework backed up with efficient and flexible operative tools. For what concerns technical aspects linked to the conduction of counter-terrorism investigations, a crucial role is recognized to be played by the already existing DNA infrastructure for data analysis, the so-called SIDDA/SIDNA system, aimed at managing all fact-finding activities concerning investigations on organized crime and, at a later stage, extended to terrorism. The remarkable pool of information available at the Directorate is built on the information obtained through investigations conducted on the national territory by the District Anti-Mafia Directorates and can count on the valuable inputs provided by interceptions, portrayed as a particularly powerful tool in the conduction of investigations on terrorism and organized crime.

For what concerns the second category identified in the reports by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, terrorism and organized crime, the nexus between these two different forms of crime can be identified in the exploitation of common funding mechanisms, such as illicit trafficking, money laundry and narco-trafficking. Building on its investigative findings, the DNA also points out that forms of collaboration between terrorism and organized crime have been increasing in the last years in light of a series of global destabilizing events creating more favourable conditions for such a type of synergy.

The third category analysed above, namely terrorism presence on the Italian soil, offers the most interesting insight and data on how terrorism manifests itself in the national and local context. In terms of the extent and characteristics of the phenomenon, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate emphasizes that, although numbers in Italy are much lower than in other European countries, radicalisation itself does occur in a very similar manner all across Europe. Although, generally speaking, terrorist organizations take advantage of the Italian territory for recruitment, transferring new recruits to war zones, fundraising, and collecting arms and weapons, the specific characteristics of some regions or cities make them more vulnerable to certain types of exploitation. This is the case, for example, of Milan or Naples: while the former provides for occasions for terrorism financing given its prominent commercial, industrial, economic and financial role, the latter has been exploited for illicit trafficking in light of its nature of commercial and trade hub. Investigations have also demonstrated that, besides the performance of illicit activities aimed at financing and supporting terrorism organization abroad, recruitment attempts have been carried out in the national context. Although recruitment and diffusion of propaganda material are usually channelled through

the internet, episodes of attempted recruitment have also been identified in off-line contexts, such as in reception centres housing asylum seekers and migrants. Efforts to gain further human and financial support have been put in place both by individuals on the Italian territory as well as by some of those who managed to leave Italy to join the territories controlled by terrorist organizations with the twofold objective of encouraging additional people to join as well as by supporting the performance of a terrorist attack in Italy. The heterogeneity of the people who left Italy to travel to Syria or Iraq does not allow for generalizations in terms of standard trends or profiles, as demonstrated by the fact that travels were performed both by individuals as well as by entire families. Motivating factors also remain difficult to be outlined given their diverse nature. Notwithstanding, building on data from the security services, the DNA identifies second-generation migrations as an at-risk group, whose vulnerability is to be traced in situations of economic, social or emotional distress. Finally, regarding the investigations the Directorate reports some challenges, especially related to language and cultural barriers, as well as some technological developments implemented to further enhance investigative capacities.

The last category analysed above refers to terrorism features and provides a more general overview of the phenomenon at international level, its funding mechanisms and manifestations in specific environments, such as in the prison settings. The National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate reiterates, in its reports, that current forms of terrorism present a new and evolving nature, ranging from the active role played by new actors such as lone-wolves and foreign fighters to the strong structural presence and organizational set up put in place at local level and the significant production of tailored propaganda material. Data collected through national investigations as well as from international collaboration have allowed the DNA to claim that there is not a unique pathway to radicalisation, although the internet does play a crucial role in many radicalisation processes along with a shared sense of neglect and alienation towards the surrounding context and set of values. The uniqueness of the Italian case study, with limited numbers of foreign fighters and no attacks being performed on the national territory, is explained, according to the DNA, by the strong anti-terrorism apparatus as well as by the limited pool of potential recruits. Finally, investigations have shed light on the different forms of terrorism financing, including money laundry, illicit trafficking, kidnapping, migrants smuggling as well as the exploitation of legal and para-legal economic activities, such as charitable hedging activities and informal banking.

The data collected through the examination of the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate reports will be further discussed in the following chapters, along with additional primary data, to provide an overview of the radicalisation patterns occurring in Italy as well as to assess the institutional response towards such a dynamic phenomenon.

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## Chapter 5 - The Islamist terrorist threat in Italy: an analysis of experts and professionals' perception

### *An overview of the stakeholders dealing with terrorism in Italy*

In addition to institutional actors belonging to the law enforcement and judiciary apparatus, various professionals deal on a daily basis with the challenges posed terrorism. Such a vast group of actors include penitentiary personnel working with inmates suspected to have undertaken a radicalisation pathway, psychologists active both inside and outside the prison settings, lawyers dealing with terrorism-related cases, and scholars promoting an improved understanding of the phenomenon. In addition to such professional categories, various other elements of the civil society may enter into contact with individuals at risk of radicalisation, such as representatives of NGOs, teachers and religious leaders.

Each professional category plays a specific role in relation to the phenomenon under consideration. The penitentiary personnel is in charge of the management of the prison population, including inmates accused of or sentenced for terrorism-related offences. Such a position implies a key role in monitoring and detecting early signs of radicalisation occurring within the prison settings as well as tailored skills and competences to manage detainees charged with terrorism offences, ranging from surveillance to rehabilitative activities. On a broader level, the penitentiary administration deals with the challenging task of elaborating and implementing, in collaboration with other actors, long-term rehabilitation and reintegration plans which will allow the reinsertion of the inmates into society after release. The penitentiary personnel are often supported, in their efforts, by psychologists working with inmates to provide emotional support and enhanced understanding of individual vulnerabilities and potential resilience strategies. Psychologists' interaction with the issue of terrorism may also occur outside the prison settings and with people undertaking a radicalisation pathway. Such a relationship can take place during dedicated psychotherapy sessions as well as through broader projects and initiatives aimed at tackling the issue. Suspects of terrorism-related crimes also interface with lawyers after the formal opening of an investigation by the specialized prosecutors belonging to the Anti-Mafia District Directorate. Finally, the entire process, its multifaceted interpretations and diverse lenses of analysis represent the main areas of interest for several scholars and academics willing to promote an increased understanding of the phenomenon through different disciplinary perspectives.

With the objective of collecting insight and analytical inputs from many of the diverse professional categories dealing with radicalisation and terrorism, in 2016 the Italian Government set up a Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus<sup>492</sup>. The Commission represents a unique effort to enhance the institutional understanding of the phenomenon from a multidisciplinary perspective: the body was composed by 19 experts, ranging from scholars, to journalists, psychologists and pedagogists, who met for four months to discuss the extent of the threat posed by Islamist terrorism in Italy as well as potential recommendations for the way forward. Although the report elaborated by the Commission remains confidential, the main findings have been publicly presented at the beginning of 2017<sup>493</sup>.

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<sup>492</sup> Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 'Insediata commissione di studio su fenomeno radicalizzazione ed estremismo jihadista', 1 September 2016, [internet] available at: <http://www.governo.it/articolo/insediata-commissione-di-studio-su-fenomeno-radicalizzazione-ed-estremismo-jihadista/5640> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>493</sup> Repubblica, 'Terrorismo, Gentiloni: "Il pericolo viene dalle carceri e dal web ma in Italia meno radicalizzazione"', *Repubblica*, 05 January 2017, [internet] available at: [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/01/05/news/terrorismo\\_gentiloni\\_pericolo\\_radicalizzazione\\_jihadista\\_carceri\\_e\\_web-155442038/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/01/05/news/terrorismo_gentiloni_pericolo_radicalizzazione_jihadista_carceri_e_web-155442038/) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

Building on the data collected through in-depth qualitative interviews with representatives of the Commission as well as other professionals with relevant experience on the issue of terrorism and radicalisation, the following paragraphs will provide an overview of their perspective regarding the concept of radicalisation, its manifestations in Italy and possible preventing and repressive strategies.

As discussed in the previous chapters, different disciplinary sectors have elaborated various theories and analytical perspectives, building on specific research methods and interpretative viewpoints. Existing theoretical interpretations of the phenomenon suggest that experts and professionals might refrain from claiming the existence of a unique radicalisation pathway, while slightly different and sector-oriented analyses of the concept of radicalisation, its forms and phases and the vulnerability factors that trigger the process are expected. Although their various standpoints might compose an exhaustive overview of the issue under consideration, each perspective will most probably remain anchor to the specific disciplinary sector of affiliation, in line with a frequent gap in the terrorism studies, which struggle with the elaboration of a comprehensive and multidisciplinary analysis of the phenomenon. With reference to the Italian case-study, experts and professionals' inputs may represent a precious contribution to explain the uniqueness of the Italian experience, with only minor episodes of violent extremism<sup>494</sup>, few foreign terrorist fighters<sup>495</sup> and limited literature on "new waves of terrorism" in Italy<sup>496</sup>. In particular, a general agreement is expected on the role and impact of the anti-terrorism apparatus and mechanisms set up during the "years of lead" in the prevention and fight against current terrorist threats. However, literature and recent political discussion suggest that some criticism might be raised on the lack of a full-fledge preventive strategy backed up by a tailored legislation.

### *An expert and professional perspective on the concept of radicalisation, its manifestations in Italy and possible preventing and repressive strategies*

Ten in-depth interviews have been conducted with professional and expert representatives belonging to the different professional sectors outlined above with the purpose of analyzing their perspectives on the concept of radicalisation, its manifestations in Italy and possible preventing and repressive strategies. The interviews followed an interview guide targeting three main themes: the process of radicalisation, its causes and phases; the Italian case-study; and the possible countering measures. The qualitative content analysis performed on units of meaning inductively coded on NVivo 11 led to the identification of thirty-seven codes clustered into seven main categories: radicalisation; concepts related to radicalisation; engagement into violence; measures to prevent and counter radicalisation; measures to prevent attacks; Italian experience; and other countries experience. Table 8 summarizes the codes and the related categories under which they have been clustered.

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<sup>494</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics', *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 31

<sup>495</sup> Francesco Marone, 'Italy's Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War', *ICCT Research Paper*, The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), August 2016, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ICCT-Marone-Italys-Jihadists-in-the-Syrian-Civil-War-August2016-1.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>496</sup> See Lorenzo Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics', *ISPI*, Milano 2014; Lorenzo Vidino, 'The Buccinasco pentiti: a unique case study of radicalisation', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:3 (2011), pp. 398-418; Lorenzo Vidino, 'Radicalisation, Linkage and Diversity: Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe', Occasional Paper, *RAND Corporation*, July 2011; Francesco Marone, 'Italy's Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War', *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016 and 'Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq', *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 2016, 7:1, pp. 20-35

Categories	Codes
<b>Radicalisation</b>	Definition of radicalisation
	Division between communities as radicalisation factor
	Individual and group dynamics
	Radicalisation process and phases
	Radicalisation studies
	Reasons for radicalisation
<b>Concepts related to radicalisation</b>	Foreign fighters
	Islam expansive nature
	Islamism
	Jihadism
	Nexus between organized crime and terrorism
	Terrorism
<b>Engagement into violence</b>	From radicalisation to engagement
	Internet from radicalisation to engagement
	Mosques from radicalisation to engagement
	Prisons from radicalisation to engagement
	Radios from radicalisation to engagement
<b>Measures to prevent and counter radicalisation</b>	Acceptance of intelligence and LEAs
	Activities for youths as a preventive measure
	Actors of alternative narratives
	Alternative narratives
	Counter terrorism legislation
	Deradicalisation measures
	Importance of prevention
	Integration as a preventive measure
	Key actors for preventive and counter radicalisation measures
<b>Measures to prevent attacks</b>	Deportation
	Importance of intervention to prevent attacks
<b>Italian experience</b>	Italian foreign fighters
	Italian legislation
	Italian strategies to prevent and counter radicalisation and terrorism
	Previous Italian anti-terrorism experience as an asset
	Radicalisation in Italy
	Reasons for Italian uniqueness
<b>Other countries experience</b>	EU approach to the phenomenon
	Failure of de-radicalisation initiatives in France
	Radicalisation in France

***Table 8 – Codes and categories elaborated by the author as a result of the interviews’ qualitative content analysis***

		Concepts related to radicalisation						Engagement into violence						Radicalisation				
		Foreign fighters	Islam expansive nature	Islamism	Jihadism	Nexus between OC and terrorism	Terrorism	From radicalisation to engagement	Internet for radicalisation to engagement	Mosques from radicalisation to engagement	Prisons from radicalisation to engagement	Radios from radicalisation to engagement	Definition of radicalisation	Division between communities as radicalisation factor	Individual and group dynamics	Radicalisation process and phases	Radicalisation studies	Reasons for radicalisation
Italian experience	Italian FTF	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Italian legislation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Italian strategies to prevent and counter radicalisation and terrorism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Previous Italian anti-terrorism experience as an asset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Radicalisation in Italy	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Reasons for Italian uniqueness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Measures to prevent and counter radicalisation	Acceptance of intelligence and LEAs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Activities for youths as a preventive measure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Actors of alternative narratives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Alternative narratives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	CT legislation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Deradicalisation measures	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Importance of prevention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Integrations as a preventive measure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	Key actors for preventive and counter radicalisation measures	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Deportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other countries experience to prevent	Importance of intervention to prevent attacks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	EU approach to the phenomenon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Failure of de-radicalisation initiatives in France	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Radicalisation in France	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

Table 9 - Codes co-occurrence (author's elaboration)

Table 9 provides an overview of the codes co-occurrence: as easily observable, co-occurrence mainly occurs when key concepts are also referred to the Italian experience as often interviewees tended to link their views on radicalisation with the Italian experience, as a result of their in-depth knowledge of the country's situation, main strengths and weaknesses.

The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the main content of the seven categories. The analysis, elaborated on the professional and expert perceptions, will concern various aspects linked to the phenomenon of radicalisation, both including general considerations on the topic as well as more specific perspectives on the Italian case-study.

### *Radicalisation*

Six codes have been grouped together under the category radicalisation, which includes various aspects of the radicalisation process, from definitions to alleged motivating factors, phases, and dynamic processes. A crosscutting consensus can be retrieved among the interviewees regarding the definition of the notion of radicalisation. All participants refer to the adoption of a set of ideals and ideas that are contrary to the society's mainstream values:

Radicalisation is a strong conviction in one's own ideas which are also considered exclusively, without the possibility of mediation and negotiation [...], therefore an absolute form of conviction<sup>497</sup>.

Radicalisation is a process of extremization [...] of beliefs taken from a wide range of principles and ideologies. [...] Radicalisation is this form of extremization by a social or even a generational class that interprets and takes possession of a part of the collective cultural symbolic heritage in an agonistic key to affirm its right to be. It is a form of political proposal, a form of socialization<sup>498</sup>.

In my opinion, radicalisation is the process by which an individual acquires a binary code mentality [...] in which only two categories can be distinguished: good and evil<sup>499</sup>.

Such definitions reflect existing theories according to which radicalisation is described as the adoption of "an extremist belief system"<sup>500</sup> with the scope of promoting changes through or throughout the use of violence<sup>501</sup>. The answers collected report an intrinsic contrast between the extreme ideas embraced by the radicalized individual and the prevalent societal beliefs, the adoption of "«radically» different ideas about society and governance"<sup>502</sup>.

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<sup>497</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>498</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>499</sup> Interview n. 5 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>500</sup> D. Elaine Pressman, 'Risk assessment decisions for violent political extremism', Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada (2009), p. 4 [internet] available at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>501</sup> Alex P. Schmid, 'Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review', *ICCT Research Paper*, March 2013 [internet] available at: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>502</sup> Peter R. Neumann, 'The trouble with radicalisation', *International affairs*, 89:4 (2003), p.875

While for some participants the concept of radicalisation implies “the use of violence to pursue an ideological goal”<sup>503</sup> or a political objective<sup>504</sup>, for others violence is not necessarily part of the radicalisation process, except when referring to the notion of violent radicalisation. Such a standpoint is aligned with several interpretations elaborated by both scholars and professionals, such as Horgan and Borum, who suggest that extreme “political beliefs and (violent) political action” are not necessarily connected and can be analysed separately<sup>505</sup>. In line with this distinction, it was also argued that it is not possible to provide a legal definition of radicalisation, as norms regulate and punish acts: radicalisation in this sense might “culturally or ideologically orient” actions that could be sanctioned by the law<sup>506</sup>.

Almost all of the interviewees discuss the concept of radicalisation in general, without allusions to any specific ideology. Notwithstanding, three participants immediately refer to a specifically ideologically motivated type of radicalisation, reported as Islamism, defined as “an extremization of certain political Islam”<sup>507</sup>. Within such a definitional framework, radicalisation results to be:

An individual and mental condition concerning whoever begins to grasp the most misleading messages of Islam. [...] Radicalisation is a mental condition that triggers the willingness to self-immolate in the name of the Islamist cause<sup>508</sup>.

A rejection of the Western culture, of the dominant culture [...] that surrounds the migrant<sup>509</sup>.

Such an interpretation reminds of Roy’s interpretation of the phenomenon as the “Islamization of radicalism” through which ISIS and al-Qaeda have been able to address the grievances of a nihilist generation while promoting a sense of belonging and elaborating a sensational narrative<sup>510</sup>.

In the attempt to define the factors that increase vulnerability and exposure to radicalisation, respondents have provided diverse and complementary answers. The main aspects highlighted include a deep feeling of discontent, abandonment and frustration, a challenging transition between adolescence and adulthood, the failure of societal integration and a mixture of heterogeneous elements, including religious and economic motivations. For one respondent, radicalisation is mainly resulting from a general lack of shared values accompanied by strong feelings of frustration. In such a context, recruiters have been able to develop an attractive narrative promoting a new apocalyptic utopia and a targeted response for each individual need:

There are two elements, two beacons that attract moths. One, the actually fair indignation for the Assad’s massacres in Syria, that is an element on which, in a second phase, the attractiveness of an apocalyptic utopia and of a new man is grafted [...]. The attractiveness of our ideological world is waning more and more [...]. [In] an interview with a failed suicide bomber, [he] explains why his

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<sup>503</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>504</sup> Interview n. 9 – Turin, May 2017 - scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>505</sup> Peter R. Neumann, ‘The trouble with radicalisation’, *International affairs*, 89:4 (2003), p.879

<sup>506</sup> Interview n. 10 – online, September 2020, lawyer

<sup>507</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>508</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer– Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer– Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>509</sup> Interview n. 10 – online, September 2020, lawyer

<sup>510</sup> Olivier Roy, *Generazione ISIS: Chi sono i giovani che scelgono il califfato e perché combattono l’occidente* [Le djihad et la mort], Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017, pp. 83-86

frustration, his isolation, his lack of meaning led him to say "well, at least I can be a shayd, this gives meaning to my life"<sup>511</sup>.

These feelings of abandonment and dissatisfaction are particularly common among young people that are experiencing the critical transition between adolescence and adulthood, especially nowadays that teenage years last forever<sup>512</sup>. Interviewees report that such a difficult shift, if not backed up with an adequate societal support, may increase exposure to radicalisation:

Individual vulnerability from the point of view of psychological and identity aspects, lack of work, frustration, the inability to see the future, the search for adventure as well as the quest for an identity [are] factors that no longer have a form of social mediation. In the end they are always factors that have pushed everyone to growth because in adulthood one ultimately entered with his/her own identity and with a future that was linked to his/her work. [...] the black flag [of Daesh] has given the possibility, to those who could not find it, to have an identity behind which to hide, to those who were pissed off to show their anger with a religious and political excuse, to those who are convinced religiously to affirm their religiosity [...], to those who wanted to play the role of the revolutionary to find a space to make the revolution, to those simply looking for the adventure of going and trying the adventure, to those who wanted the emotional intoxication of how to kill a person to try to kill a person<sup>513</sup>.

Certainly, forms of search for identity in the uncertainty of our time or within the difficulties of self-positioning in contemporary society [...] are often present in numerous individuals<sup>514</sup>.

Such analyses build on key elements put forward by various psychological theories and, in particular, by the identity theory according to which, young people engage into violence in search for "a sense of purpose and self-worth"<sup>515</sup>. In addition, the existence of a conflictual relationship with the dominant societal values is also very much in line with the anthropological theory developed by Atran, who claims that radicalisation is the expression of a quest for significance by young people that struggle for an identity in an apathetic and contradictory world negatively affected by globalization<sup>516</sup>. In addition, contrast with the mainstream values and culture is more evident in urban settings, especially in the north-east of Italy, where there is no underlying situations of economic deprivation but rather a stronger identity clashes<sup>517</sup>.

The failure of a successful process of societal integration has also been identified among the various factors that contribute to increasing the risks of radicalisation.

Radicalisation is always a problem that affects the public space and which concerns the integration of some social classes<sup>518</sup>.

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<sup>511</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>512</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>513</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>514</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>515</sup> Jeff Victoroff, 'The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49:1 (February 2005), pp. 22-23

<sup>516</sup> Scott Atran, *L'Etat islamique est une révolution* (Paris: Les Liens Qui Libèrent Editions, 2016)

<sup>517</sup> Interview n. 10 – online, September 2020, lawyer

<sup>518</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

While for some, marginalized individuals are at least partially victims of broader dynamics, for others lack of integration is the result of a personal decision and choice:

My proposal is that we distinguish between two fundamental concepts. The concept of social exclusion from the concept of social marginality. [...] social exclusion is a condition of objective deprivation [...], while social marginality is a socio-psychological condition that can also affect people of high status [...]. If you make a comparative study of the lives of these [individuals], it turns out that all of them have gone through a process of distancing from the fundamental values of society, at a certain point they no longer recognize themselves in the values of this world<sup>519</sup>.

Among the vulnerability factors there is not marginalization but the unwillingness to integrate into our system of values. [...] These are people who already live in a marginalized condition, seeking redemption for an existence that is worth nothing<sup>520</sup>.

Finally, many respondents refer to the existence of a series of factors and elements that can contribute in increasing radicalisation, including for example economic reasons and religious ideologies<sup>521</sup>. According to such a perspective, it is almost impossible to distinguish between the different and heterogeneous aspects at the basis of the phenomenon:

In my opinion there is no specific factor but there are a number of factors. It is an extremely complex, extremely heterogeneous and variegated process. If there is a lesson [to be learned] in studying cases of radicalisation, it is the heterogeneity of profiles, from the socio-economic point of view, from the psychological point of view, from the family point of view, from the personal point of view<sup>522</sup>.

You have cases of economic fragility but you have cases of economic strength, of wealthy people, you have cases of political protest, therefore a lack of alternative means of expression, and others [...] who instead express themselves politically and who nevertheless undergo a further process of radicalisation<sup>523</sup>.

The identification of a series of diverse and complementing factors fueling radicalisation reflect existing theories which reject the idea of poverty, lack of education, employment or social responsibility as unique reasons for explaining radicalisation pathways<sup>524</sup>.

While different perspectives can be retrieved in the attempt to define radicalisation, there is a general consensus among scholars and practitioners that radicalisation is a process<sup>525</sup>. Such an agreement emerges also in the data collected:

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<sup>519</sup> Interview n. 5 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>520</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>521</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>522</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>523</sup> Interview n. 5 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>524</sup> Marc Sageman, 'A strategy for fighting international Islamist terrorists', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618:1 (2008), p. 224

<sup>525</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Gary LaFree, 'Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation, Guest Editorial', *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 6:1 (2012), p. 4

[Radicalisation] is a process that involves getting closer, progressively selecting and deepening convictions, progressively increasing the sense of belonging to the group. This is also accompanied by a selection performed by a mentor [...] <sup>526</sup>.

Some claim that defining the phases of the radicalisation process is meaningless<sup>527</sup> or rather an impossible task<sup>528</sup>:

Phases in the processes differ greatly depending on the different individuals, in some cases we had slower and more linear processes, in other very rapid processes, perhaps conditioned by external events or even by propaganda on the web<sup>529</sup>.

There is not a single path, a common trajectory over time. There are radicalisation paths that last a few weeks and others that last years. There are some that are very linear, while some are not. Some are individual processes and some are group processes. [...] some are linear, while others have moments of neglect and then return. [A standard pathway] absolutely does not exist. Then it is clear that we often see dynamics that you can find in many cases but not in all<sup>530</sup>.

The profiles are very varied and variable and therefore you cannot trace a single path, as if radicalisation was a train: you get on and then there are fixed tracks, if you don't get off, the train arrives at destination, the destination being, in this case, a terrorist act. No, it is not like this. There are many paths, as it can be seen from people's profiles<sup>531</sup>.

In contrast with this standpoint, others support the idea that phases exist<sup>532</sup>, even if they are not always linear and clear:

The first step is that of lowering the level of communication, [...] closing and reducing the space for communication. The next step [is] the formation of small circles that promote an identity strategy of mutual legitimation according to the us-them dynamics. The identity strategy [consists] in a progressive self-marginalization within a symbolic universe<sup>533</sup>.

Maybe those who already come from violent crime paths just need to re-orient their behavior that is already radical and violent [...]. On the contrary, others, who are not yet violent but [...] maybe are religiously very observant, need to radicalize their behavior to ensure that violence is the only Possibility of affirming their ideas. Hence, we are turning around, moving some phases of the process but they remain the same<sup>534</sup>.

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<sup>526</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>527</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>528</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>529</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>530</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>531</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>532</sup> Interview n. 5 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>533</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>534</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

The idea of a set of phases driven by the search for identity reflects many of the available theories that describe the radicalisation pathways, such as the explanation put forward by Orsini in the DRIA model, according to which the first phase is represented by the disintegration of the social identity (D), followed by the reconstruction of the social identity through a radical ideology (R), the integration in a revolutionary sect (I), and the alienation from the surrounding environment (A)<sup>535</sup>. A violation of the self, which can be at the basis of the search of identity, can be retrieved also in other authors perspectives. Sageman's interpretation of the phenomenon, for example, claims that the first aspect of the radicalisation process is represented by a sense of moral outrage originated by the pain suffered by fellow brothers and sisters in a dynamic of "vicarious humiliation"<sup>536</sup>. Such a moral outrage is then further connected to personal experiences of sufferance, which allows for personal experiences to be interpreted as an expression of the war on Islam. The final step, consisting of engagement into violence, is triggered by mobilizing networks. Similarly, Borum's "four-stage conceptual model" affirms that the process begins with a sense of injustice, grievance, for which a target (policy, person or nation) is considered guilty. The actor considered responsible "is then vilified [...], which facilitates justification or impetus for aggression"<sup>537</sup>.

### *Concepts related to radicalisation*

Interviewees have often referred also to other concepts related to the notion of radicalisation. In particular, the following six codes have been regrouped under this category: terrorism; Islamism; Islam expansive nature; jihadism; foreign fighters; and, nexus between organized crime and terrorism.

The concept of terrorism is strictly related to the notion of radicalisation, has radicalisation may lead to forms of violence conceptualized as terrorist attacks. Violence thus represents the trait-d'union between these two concepts:

A violent radical [individual] is basically a terrorist as much as a non-radicalized albeit violent [individual] can be a terrorist<sup>538</sup>.

[Radicalisation implies] the use of violent means therefore asymmetrical violent means, which go beyond the framework of conventional warfare<sup>539</sup>.

However, for some respondents the notion of terrorism is misleading, and it would more appropriate to talk about Islamism and/or jihadism, where Islamism is defined as "the conception of Islam not as a pure testimony of faith but as a political project"<sup>540</sup>. Such a standpoint addresses some of the main elements attributed to the notion of Islamism by various scholars, ranging from sociologists, to orientalist, theologians and historians. While the term was firstly used by French writers at the end of the seventeenth century almost as a synonym to Islam, a swift in meaning can be noted after the revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini

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<sup>535</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 67

<sup>536</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 72-73

<sup>537</sup> Randy Borum, 'Radicalisation into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4 (2011), pp. 38-39

<sup>538</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>539</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>540</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

as well as after the 9/11 attacks<sup>541</sup>. Various scholars, also including renowned authors in the field of terrorism studies such as Roy and Kepel, have started using this expression when referring to what they previously called “political Islam” or “fundamentalist Islam”. Defining Islamism is indeed a challenging task: while for some authors such an expression refers to the political movement of the advocates of contemporary political Islam<sup>542</sup>, for others Islamism can be seen as a tool to affirm identity in an anti-colonial struggle<sup>543</sup>. For some authors the key characteristic of Islamism is its link with the religious sphere: “‘Islamism’ is a religious ideology with a holistic interpretation of Islam whose final aim is the conquest of the world by all means”<sup>544</sup>. Such a stand-point overlaps with another code identified throughout the interviews, namely the idea of Islam holding an expansive nature:

In Islam, on the other hand, the expansive element is inside, doctrinally speaking, there is no possibility of an Islam without expansion. [...] In the absence of ethical and value points of reference in the public space, from an Islamic point of view it means that I am moving in an empty, deserted public space. This public space needs to be filled and I have a duty to do so because Allah told me. So, if I find myself in front of a manager of the public space tells me "Look, you can do what you want", then I wonder why at this point you too do not respect Islam<sup>545</sup>.

A usually associated concept is that of jihadism, whose definition is again very controversial. Although the term is a modern neologism not born with the Islamic history, it has become quite popular as its use allows for a quick reference to the attempt to impose extremist Islamic views through the use of violence<sup>546</sup>. In line with such an interpretation and in relationship to the notion of Islamism, jihadism has been defined by one of the respondents as:

A form of political Islam [which] considers jihad, violent jihad, holy war, the most important among the precepts of Islam. [...] Jihadism, in its modern form, as it has materialized let's say from 11 September onwards [...], has as its first objective the application of the Sharia law<sup>547</sup>.

One of the peculiar characteristics of the new waves of terrorism is the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and such a notion has been referred to also during the interviews. Recent massacres occurred in Europe have shown the extent of the threat both in terms of the number individuals being involved in Syrian and Iraqi warfare as well as with regards to possible returnees planning attacks in Europe<sup>548</sup>. These concerns affect also Italian experts and professions dealing with the issue of terrorism, although the phenomenon in

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<sup>541</sup> Mehdi Mozaffari, ‘What is Islamism? History and definition of a concept’, *Totalitarian movements and political religions*, 8:1 (2007), p. 18

<sup>542</sup> Renzo Guolo, *Il fondamentalismo islamico* (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 2014)

<sup>543</sup> Francois Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movements in North Africa* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993)

<sup>544</sup> Mehdi Mozaffari, ‘What is Islamism? History and definition of a concept’, *Totalitarian movements and political religions*, 8:1 (2007), p. 21

<sup>545</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>546</sup> Jarret M. Brachman, *Global jihadism: Theory and practice* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 4-5

<sup>547</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>548</sup> Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, eds., *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2016, p. 9, [internet] available at: [https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

Italy is still very limited<sup>549</sup>. One of the respondents explained the phenomenon of foreign fighters as a result of the Syrian crisis:

The fundamental reason for the availability of foreign fighters [...] is a new fuse being triggered by the Syrian revolution. [...] Because the dynamic of the Syrian crisis is clearly a popular revolution dynamic. It is a revolution of the poor against the rich, not of the Sunnis against the Alawites as is thought. It is against the rich<sup>550</sup>.

Finally, a last concept raised by the interviewees is that of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, very much present also in the DNA reports analysed in the previous chapter. Such a connection is acknowledged with reference to the Italian experience and in particular for what concerns the “recruitment of manpower and the problem of displaced migrants”, in which “there is the role of organized crime but there is a risk of interaction with Islamic fundamentalism”<sup>551</sup>.

### *Engagement into violence*

The use of violence has often been discussed as a slightly separate issue in comparison with radicalisation, in line with the subtle distinction between radicalisation and violent radicalisation<sup>552</sup>. Consequently, a separate category has been elaborated, regrouping the following five codes: from radicalisation to engagement; Internet from radicalisation to engagement; mosques from radicalisation to engagement; prisons from radicalisation to engagement; radios from radicalisation to engagement. This category describes the spaces and manners through which radicalisation turns into engagement into violence.

According to the interviewees, “the key step is the moment of the exit from the network, it is the moment in which the individual is ready to act”<sup>553</sup>. However, defining the main characteristics of this turning point is almost impossible and different theories have been elaborated in this regard. For some, engagement into violence require a set of criteria, such as previous experience with violence along with the adoption of extremist political ideas, a social conducive environment and a process of physical preparation process<sup>554</sup>. For others, common factors include a sense of community victimization, a radical shift in individuals’ cognitive frames as well as other additional variables related to the psychological and emotional spheres, group dynamics or material needs<sup>555</sup>. The challenge in identifying a unique explanation to this process is acknowledged also by the participants:

I do not know what the triggering cause is but I can observe that certainly there are three cases [...], there are cases in which one individual embraces throughout his/her own entire life a fundamentalist standpoint and never takes up arms, cases of those who shift from one to the other and cases in which the person goes back on his/her way. But knowing what happens in the soul of the person, [...] there

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<sup>549</sup> Interviews n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus and n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentary

<sup>550</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>551</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>552</sup> Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, ‘The edge of violence: Towards telling the difference between violent and non-violent radicalisation’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24:1 (2012), pp. 1-21

<sup>553</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>554</sup> Manni Crone, ‘Radicalisation revisited: violence, politics and the skills of the body’, *International Affairs*, 92:3 (2016), pp. 587-604

<sup>555</sup> Michael A. Jensen, Anita Atwell Seate and Patrick A. James, ‘Radicalisation to violence: A pathway approach to studying extremism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32:5 (2020), pp. 1067-1090

is a mysterious component of freedom in virtue of which one, in the end, makes these choices. Here, however, there is already the mystery of evil<sup>556</sup>.

A definitely easier task consists in defining the spaces, either physical or virtual, in which such a swift occurs. Although there is a general consensus regarding the fact that “engagement takes place either on the web or through direct contact”<sup>557</sup>, four main scenarios have been identified as favorable contexts, namely the Internet, mosques, prisons and radios.

The great majority of the interviewees agree on the fact that the web entails a set of conditions that facilitate the switch from an individual radicalisation pathway to a broader framework of action:

The main characteristic of the links between the sympathizers is, however, of an individual nature, of an auto-radicalisation connected to the world of the web and social networks<sup>558</sup>.

However, several times it has been underlined that Internet plays such a crucial role because of its general and widespread popularity in contemporary societies. Hence, the web is not a conducive environment per se but in virtue of its frightening pervasiveness<sup>559</sup>:

I don't see it as a specific aspect of Islam, of the problem of radicalisation, it's a problem of our time<sup>560</sup>.

I am one of those who tend to diminish somehow the role of the Internet, for me it is often exaggerated. But it absolutely exists, it is fundamental. [...] Let's say that in the West the cases in which there is no online component now I am not sure they exist. Everyone now is a consumer of jihadist propaganda<sup>561</sup>.

Nowadays, the web is particularly used by and familiar to a certain sector of the society, namely that of young people. In this sense, their level of exposure and vulnerability is amplified by their active participation in online platforms and messaging applications. Studies in this regard confirm that the Internet can function as a tool “for adolescents to experiment with possible identity commitments” in a poorly monitored environment<sup>562</sup>:

The web plays an extremely important role but, from my point of view, it does so because it is a significant relational system especially for digital natives who, today, are the majority of the radicalized individuals. [...] Given the age of those who become radicalized, who are digital born, therefore digital natives, the Internet assumes a significant value in relational terms at least as much as face-to-face. [...] The network gives everyone the opportunity to follow his/her own path, so perhaps it is more dangerous because it is easier to open a door, it is easier to orient, because in the end the web is paradoxically a form of solitary relationship<sup>563</sup>.

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<sup>556</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>557</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>558</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>559</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>560</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>561</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>562</sup> Sanne B. Geeraerts, ‘Digital radicalisation of youth’, *Social Cosmos*, 3:1 (2012), p. 27

<sup>563</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

This interpretation is in line with the idea that similar platforms, such as radios<sup>564</sup>, play an analogous role in different and less technologically advanced contexts, as they did in the past when the Internet was not available or so popular.

Besides virtual avenues for engagement into violence, two additional environments have been identified during the interviews as sensitive contexts, namely mosques and prisons. What these two settings have in common is the role of the network: as claimed by various authors, a potential engagement turns into actual involvement through social ties<sup>565</sup>:

The fundamental step, I believe, is the aggregation of the mosque, before or after the prayer. In that moment, the moment of aggregation and meeting between similar individuals, it is there that people recognize each other and isolate from the group<sup>566</sup>.

Direct contact is not necessarily with the Imam, but with someone who attends the mosque offering benefits and a reassuring message<sup>567</sup>.

In contrast with such standpoints, some respondents claim that the role of mosques is not that prominent anymore, especially for what concerns the case of Italy:

There was a first phase [...] in which recruitment took place in mosques. [...] mosques are now subjected in Italy to a very careful supervision. Our services have thousands of informants in all places where Muslims meet<sup>568</sup>.

It's not even a radical mosque dynamic [as confirmed by] the magistrates, the Digos, the Ros. Every now and then [radical individuals] go to the mosque but are actually turned away<sup>569</sup>.

The concept of aggregation and bonding with individuals sharing similar values and objectives is also what makes prisons to function as a conducive environment:

The other path is that of prisons, which is emerging significantly [...]. Many questions arise regarding the meaning of radicalisation in prisons [...]. A prisoner is vulnerable for so many reasons, so he is made more available. It is like an Italian abroad who suddenly discovers s/he is Italian and Catholic because he goes to church, right? It's the same dynamic when you go to jail, finding friends immediately. In fact, we often speak, especially abroad, of convenience radicalisation processes in prisons<sup>570</sup>.

Such a perspective reflects existing literature according to which detention represents a challenging moment and requires coping strategies which may include the identification of a group providing a framework for identity. Recruiters can take advantage of the vulnerable situation by proposing a distorted religious discourse. Few empirical studies have been conducted in the prison settings to assess the extent of the

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<sup>564</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>565</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding terror networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 130; Arie W. Kruglanski et al., 'The psychology of radicalisation and deradicalisation: How significance quest impacts violent extremism', *Political Psychology*, 35:S1 (2014), p. 77

<sup>566</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>567</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>568</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>569</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>570</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

phenomenon but some research show that detention can provide a framework for enhanced linkages and collaboration. This is the case, for example, of Amedi Coulibaly, who murdered four people at a kosher supermarket in Paris, and Cherif Kouachi, one of the attackers of the Charlie Hebdo shooting: the two met in Fleury-Merogis<sup>571</sup>, the largest prison in France, where they might also have been mentored by an Al Qaeda recruiter.

### *Measures to prevent and counter radicalisation*

Following the assessment of the phenomenon, its manifestations and evolution, interviews subsequently focused on the measures, either needed or already in place, aimed at preventing radicalisation or countering its initial forms of manifestation. This category groups together nine codes: acceptance of intelligence and LEAs; activities for youths as a preventive measure; actors of alternative narratives; alternative narratives; counter terrorism legislation; deradicalisation measures; importance of prevention; integration as a preventive measure; key actors for preventive and counter radicalisation measures.

The importance of enhancing and promoting prevention results to be crucial for many experts and professionals to complement restrictive measures. While the latter focus on the short-term and are essential to address the most pressing threats, the former act on the long-term to “neutralize the good reasons [...] to be a terrorist”<sup>572</sup>:

Providing every Western country with preventive, not just repressive, regulations that allow intervention on the processes at their birth and the first manifestations is very important<sup>573</sup>.

Improved integration and peaceful coexistence are seen as a preventive measure, as a tool to create a common identity, a sense of belonging and to reduce cultural and social cleavages within the communities themselves:

It should be borne in mind that a social universe devoid of symbols and of identity elements, devoid of opportunities to reconstruct one's own role in a community facilitates radicalisation. Because no one can be educated in the neutrality of the public space. [...] Social defences are built also through community identity<sup>574</sup>.

What is also needed is to build a sense of living together, a sense of belonging, a sense of citizenship.<sup>575</sup>

Such a standpoint holds particularly through in the broader European context, in which many “different sensitivities” are present and “common rules and values” are missing<sup>576</sup>. Establishing a link between the lack of successful integration and its possible influence towards engaging into a radicalisation pathway has become a common practice among government representatives and policy-makers<sup>577</sup>. However, such an approach might also lead to unexpected consequences and side-effects: connecting the lack of social

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<sup>571</sup> Sandra Walklate and Gabe Mythen, ‘Fractured lives, splintered knowledge: Making criminological sense of the January, 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris’, *Critical Criminology*, 24:3 (2016), pp. 333-346

<sup>572</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>573</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>574</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>575</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>576</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>577</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, *The new Muslim brotherhood in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 220

inclusion and cohesion with radicalisation implies that discriminated minorities suffering from poor integration become risky actors in a security discourse<sup>578</sup>.

The idea that common values and a shared identity can contribute preventing radicalisation leads to the centrality of youth. During adolescence “physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations coincide to enable young persons [...] to construct a viable pathway toward their adulthood”<sup>579</sup>. Consequently, special efforts shall be devoted to develop activities for young people as a preventive measure:

The third thing to do is to create alternative poles of interest for young people especially [...] poles of attraction of meaning, to channel the use of their own time alternatively with respect to those of the web and, naturally, they must pass through multimedia platforms<sup>580</sup>.

The importance of promoting a different discourse is referred to by many interviewees when talking about preventive strategies:

The main counter strategy is of course the elaboration of a reactive Islamic discourse [...]. Therefore, the first thing to do is to promote as much as possible the relationship with the Islamic world which conceives Islam as a faith and not as a political program<sup>581</sup>.

Social media can provide an excellent platform to convey alternative narratives, although “the structure of the media favors the simplification of the message, not the nuances. Instead, what is needed is to blur the message, that is to learn to understand that there are lights and shadows and that something can mean A or B depending on the context in which it is said”<sup>582</sup>. Literature reports conflictual perspectives and findings regarding the effectiveness of alternative narratives: while some authors have stressed the possible risks implied in putting forward counter-narratives<sup>583</sup>, others claim that some initial positive effects can be identified within existing preventive frameworks<sup>584</sup>. For the time being, limited empirical evidence is available concerning the impact of counter and alternative narratives and various standpoints can be identified when it comes to defining who shall develop and promote such discourses. While some claim that scholars and experts are in a position to demonstrate, through their knowledge and primary data, the weaknesses of terrorist organizations at macro level<sup>585</sup>, for many it is crucial that new narratives are developed and owed by the recipients themselves<sup>586</sup>. This might include the formal engagement of relevant governmental institutions of the countries which have direct and in-depth experience with the Islamic discourse<sup>587</sup>. Given

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<sup>578</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Methodological practices in social movement research*, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 217

<sup>579</sup> James E. Marcia, ‘Identity in adolescence’, *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, 9:11 (1980), p. 160

<sup>580</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>581</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>582</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>583</sup> Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen and Karin Ingrid Castro, ‘The trouble with counter-narratives’, *DIIS Report*, 2017, [internet] available at: <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/197640> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>584</sup> Jan-Jaap van Eerten et al., *Developing a social media response to radicalisation: The role of counter-narratives in prevention of radicalisation and de-radicalisation* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2017), p. 113

<sup>585</sup> Interview n. 5 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>586</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>587</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

the multifaceted and multisectoral nature of the phenomenon, all the actors of a society might have a say in this process, which shall be based on a profound and in-depth cross-cultural contamination<sup>588</sup>:

Actors are certainly multiple, [...] the whole civil society [shall be] involved, from institutions to Muslim communities. [...] It is a deeply segmented audience. If you have a segmented audience, let's say that the objective of the communication policy is the same but the ways in which it is delivered in terms of the channels, the stylistic elements, and the actors of this policy, are extremely different, each consistent with the segment of the audience addressed. So, it can be an institution, it can be associations, it can be NGOs, it can be parents' associations, it can be the imams of Muslim communities and so on<sup>589</sup>.

Although a central management and coordination might be desirable, it is important that such a narrative does not come directly from the state as otherwise its credibility is questioned<sup>590</sup> alongside with the freedom of expression granted in Western societies<sup>591</sup>.

A general agreement can be observed regarding the exhaustiveness and comprehensiveness of the Italian counter-terrorism legislation<sup>592</sup>. Notwithstanding, an improved regulation of the cyber-space<sup>593</sup>, which might include stricter norms counter the spread of terrorist propaganda<sup>594</sup>, could help preventing and halting the phenomenon. In addition, a general lack of coordination in terms counter-terrorism policies and legislation negatively affects joint transnational efforts among NATO and EU countries<sup>595</sup>. From an operational perspective, a greater acceptance of the work of the law enforcement agencies and the intelligence services could contribute to improve preventive strategies at large<sup>596</sup> along with improved monitoring online and in critical settings such as prisons<sup>597</sup>.

Within the broader framework of the measures to prevent and counter radicalisation, different strategies can be promoted to intervene before the radicalisation processes start, while they are occurring or after they have happened<sup>598</sup>. As for the notion of terrorism, a lack of clear definition can be observed when referring to the nature and type of policies developed to address the phenomenon: while deradicalisation generally coincides with swift in the mindset, a socio-psychological transformation of the individual who is no longer interested in using violence to support his/her own ideas<sup>599</sup>, often it is confused with disengagement, namely a behavioural change which does not necessarily imply a profound revision of one's own ideas. In order to promote a socio-psychological reform within a deradicalisation framework, multiple actors shall be involved,

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<sup>588</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>589</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>590</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>591</sup> Interview n. 5 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>592</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>593</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>594</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>595</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>596</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>597</sup> Interview n. 10 – online, September 2020, lawyer

<sup>598</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>599</sup> John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements* (Routledge: London, 2009), p. 153

not only the police, as it is “an immense cultural work, [...] which requires an epistemological change. [If we talk about] Islamist radicalisation, knowledge of the Islamist ideology is necessary. I can consider it as a pretext and instrumental, that the real reasons are other, but I must at least understand their language so to de-construct it”<sup>600</sup>. Enhanced understanding could be supported by improved occasions for inter-religious dialogue and additional religious education opportunities in schools<sup>601</sup>. Intervening at the very beginning of the radicalisation process is surely desirable<sup>602</sup> and could be done with the support of various actors, including that of a “mentor to support the person in a very individualized recovery program to prevent him/her from continuing in this radicalisation trajectory”<sup>603</sup>. In addition to mentors, many other actors could be involved in preventive and counter radicalisation measures:

From families to teachers and social workers or those who work within social health services who can come into contact with similar phenomena [...] but also those who carry out public security tasks, starting from the municipal police, public security agents, up to the prison guards. Finally, a central role can be played by the religious leaders, especially those who act in prison, and not only those of the Islamic religion<sup>604</sup>.

### *Measures to prevent attacks*

In addition to measures aimed at preventing radicalisation or countering its initial forms of manifestation, an additional category has been identified regrouping the measures, either needed or already in place, to halt terrorist attacks. Two codes constitute this category, namely the importance of intervention to prevent attacks and the practice of deportation.

In a security discourse, intervening to maintain stability is essential and this applies also in cases of terrorism:

In Maslow's pyramid, security is at the lowest level of necessity: if I'm not in a safe environment, I can't develop anything. So, I need to have security. [...] The security policy requires that if you represent a threat to my safety, I must finish you off. This is the security policy, that is always and necessarily a short-term solution<sup>605</sup>.

The use of deportation represents one of the most recurrent policies adopted by Italy to address the threat posed by possible terrorist attacks:

[Expulsion] prevents the formation of a nucleus of subjects who embrace the jihadist ideology. It is clear that it is not perfect, it is not the solution. However, in my opinion it is one of the factors that contributed to keep the levels of radicalisation lower<sup>606</sup>.

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<sup>600</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>601</sup> Interview n. 10 – online, September 2020, lawyer

<sup>602</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>603</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>604</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>605</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>606</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

Although the use of administrative deportations is believed to have limited terrorist activities on the Italian soil<sup>607</sup>, such measures also pose controversial questions regarding the power assigned to the ministerial authority<sup>608</sup> as well as the limited opportunities to challenge the provision before its operationalization<sup>609</sup>. Furthermore, the impact of foreigners' expulsion has been compared to the attempt of "emptying the sea with a spoon" as it affects single individuals and merely transfers the problem from one country to another<sup>610</sup>.

### *The Italian experience*

Interviewees have an in-depth experience of the Italian case study, being them experts and professionals mainly active with the national context. The following six codes have thus been clustered under a dedicated category, which refers to the Italian experience on Islamist radicalisation, its forms of manifestation and possible preventive strategies: Italian foreign fighters; Italian legislation; Italian strategies to prevent and counter radicalisation and terrorism; previous Italian anti-terrorism experience as an asset; radicalisation in Italy; reasons for Italian uniqueness.

Italy is usually referred to as a unique case in the European panorama because, although the country has served as a basis for "sophisticated jihadist networks", it has experienced only minor episodes of violent extremism in its own soil<sup>611</sup> as well as limited cases of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>612</sup>. An overall consensus can be observed among experts and professionals on the fact that the uniqueness of the Italian case-study is mainly due to the limited presence of migrants on the national soil, as the radicalisation process can build on some vulnerable factors, such as frustrations or forms of discrimination towards ethnic minorities<sup>613</sup>: "today's jihadism is a second, third generation phenomenon" and Italy does not currently have a significant presence of second and third generations of migrants<sup>614</sup>: "we don't have the third generation yet and somehow this saved us"<sup>615</sup>. While for many this is the only element that makes the Italian case unique<sup>616</sup>, for others additional characteristics can help explain the Italian peculiarities, such as the urban set up<sup>617</sup>: "in Italy mono-cultural and extremely disadvantaged districts are missing, with some exceptions"<sup>618</sup>.

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<sup>607</sup> Francesco Marone, 'The Use of Deportation in Counter-Terrorism: Insights from the Italian Case', *ICCT*, 13 March 2017, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/the-use-of-deportation-in-counter-terrorism-insights-from-the-italian-case/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>608</sup> Nicola Gullo, 'Prevenzione del Terrorismo, Tutela dell'Ordine Pubblico e Diritti Fondamentali degli Stranieri: Riflessioni sull'espulsione degli Stranieri Prevista dall'art. 3, D.L. N. 144 del 2005', *Diritto & Questioni Pubbliche*, XVII, 2 (December 2017), p. 466

<sup>609</sup> Interview n. 8 – Vicenza, February 2018, lawyer

<sup>610</sup> Interview n. 10 – online, September 2020, lawyer

<sup>611</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, 'Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics', *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 31

<sup>612</sup> Francesco Marone, 'Italy's Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War', *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016 and 'Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq', *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 2016, 7:1

<sup>613</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>614</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>615</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>616</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>617</sup> Interview n. 10 – online, September 2020, lawyer

<sup>618</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

Radicalisation in Italy passes through “classic” channels, such as “the management of the process via Internet”<sup>619</sup> and builds on forms of frustration that are commonly identified by existing literature as vulnerability factors, such as marginalization<sup>620</sup> and limited socio-economic opportunities, especially for what concerns teenagers:

Our big problem is that we are a blocked society with an immense demographic problem and for which in fact the younger generations are struggling to find space. [...] teenagers struggle to find their way. Of course, this is true for those who are already here but it is even more true for those coming from outside who do not even have a family network that can support<sup>621</sup>.

There are cultural peculiarities, peculiarities linked to certain communities that are typical of each country. But the dynamics are more or less similar in their dissimilitude, in their heterogeneity everywhere<sup>622</sup>.

It appears that radicalisation in Italy is significantly linked to the country’s role in serving as a logistical base, while a limited number of individuals have left or are willing to leave the country to join the Syrian or the Iraqi battlefield<sup>623</sup> or Sarajevo, being it the closest combat zone<sup>624</sup>. Despite the limited numbers, cases of radicalized individuals concern a variety of profiles, from “converts [to] women, even very young”<sup>625</sup>. The small extent of violent terrorist motivated episodes on the Italian territory and the narrow number of foreign terrorist fighters is often related to the country’s historical anti-terrorism experience<sup>626</sup>, which is generally seen by experts and professionals as an asset in countering the phenomenon nowadays:

Investigations are finally carried out and we do them better than all the others because we have experience and staff who have been fighting for thirty years with a widespread presence on the territory, through infiltrators, rumors, etc., in the fight against mafia and drug trafficking.<sup>627</sup>

The anti-terrorism apparatus is strictly connected to the legal framework from which it derives. Practitioners and experts agree on the fact that the Italian legislation on the topic of terrorism is quite comprehensive and additional norms would not help addressing the issue:

I really don't think we need an additional law because in general there is very often the illusion that making the law solves the problem but this is not the case<sup>628</sup>.

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<sup>619</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>620</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>621</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>622</sup> Interview n. 9 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>623</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>624</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>625</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>626</sup> Interviews n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer, 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian and 8 – Vicenza, February 2018, lawyer

<sup>627</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>628</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

The Italian system is a full system in the sense that there are judges, jurisprudence, the Constitutional Court and the Court of Cassation that participate, to some extent, to the regulatory framework. I am not a fanatic of the laws, too many laws are made, I am also for a somewhat dynamic vision of the law<sup>629</sup>.

However, several interviewees underlined that the specific aspect of prevention could actually be further strengthened also from a legal perspective, in the sense that “it would also be useful for our country, which has excellent repressive regulations and a very efficient anti-terrorism system, to adopt a preventive type of legislation, to expand its ability to intervene and prevent certain processes from developing”<sup>630</sup>. The lack of a broad spectrum of preventive measures in Italy has been underlined several times both at academic level<sup>631</sup> as well as by the press<sup>632</sup>. Such a gap is necessarily connected with some specific and technical challenges arising from the elaboration of preventive norms, ranging from the difficulties in punishing a behavior before its occurrence to the necessary reforms of the existing framework to accommodate additional norms:

It is very delicate at the regulatory level, as behavior must be concerned [...]. The law has done some interesting things in my opinion [...]: if you are trained, if you highlight that there are career paths that lead to the figure of the terrorist, [...] you can be arrested for [engaging into] that career. This is already a step forward. [...] Other than that, I think it is extremely difficult. I believe that the law has done what it could, the rest of prevention passes through intelligence, above all<sup>633</sup>.

If you have to do a [...] structure that recognizes the radicalized subject, you have to review everything that relates to the legislation on the professional secrecy of the [...] ones who come into contact with the individual. [There is] a whole series of things that are absolutely not regulated at the moment: [...] when I send someone to intervene the responsibility must be managed legally<sup>634</sup>.

I believe that there are few magistrates who are capable of understanding this phenomenon of terrorism and of applying the law consistently. I understand the enormous problem of the magistrates [in not pursuing] ideas, as we must pursue evidence. [...] In my opinion, little is done about this in the sense that we do not have specialized, sensitized magistrates, who know the culture of the terrorist<sup>635</sup>.

Finally, within the Italian legislation framework a special role is played by migrants’ expulsions for security reasons. Expulsions have been significantly implemented in Italy after 2015 both as a preventive as well as a repressive counter-terrorism tool<sup>636</sup>. This type of provision can arise from a penal perspective or it can be categorized as an administrative arrangement: while for judicial expulsions, the deportation follows

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<sup>629</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>630</sup> Interview n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>631</sup> See, for example, Lorenzo Vidino and Francesco Marone, ‘The Jihadist Threat in Italy: A Primer’, *ISPI report*, Analysis No. 318, November 2017, p. 7; Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, ‘Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants’ Expulsions for Security Reasons’, *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), pp. 253-280

<sup>632</sup> Roberto Galullo, ‘I punti deboli: misure di prevenzione e web’, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 23 March 2016 [internet] available: [https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2016-03-23/i-punti-deboli-misure-prevenzione-e-web-063459.shtml?uuid=ACJuUNtC&refresh\\_ce=1](https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2016-03-23/i-punti-deboli-misure-prevenzione-e-web-063459.shtml?uuid=ACJuUNtC&refresh_ce=1) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>633</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>634</sup> Interview n. 9 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>635</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>636</sup> Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, ‘Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants’ Expulsions for Security Reasons’, *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), p. 263

investigations establishing guilt of the criminal offence, in case of administrative expulsions, it is the Ministry of Interior or the Prefect that issue the measure following a security concern. In the latter case, the main concerns result from the fact that, once the individual has been expelled, no further investigations are conducted to collect evidence for or against the decision and the appeal against the decision is the only option<sup>637</sup>.

Professionals and experts' perspectives on the existing Italian strategies to prevent and counter radicalisation and terrorism highlight that fact that little is actually in place to address the phenomenon<sup>638</sup>, "there are very few things and they are limited and absolutely spontaneous and uncoordinated: [...] in prison [...] a series of initiatives for both monitoring and [providing] potential assistance have already begun. [...] For the rest, there are some NGOs that, using strictly psychological and socio-welfare methodologies, approach the radicalisation processes that have to do with sects, religious sects, they try"<sup>639</sup>.

Although these shortcomings are also partially due to the fact that the extent of the phenomenon in Italy is quite narrow, there are aspects and factors on which further efforts could be implemented, such as an improved monitoring of online platforms<sup>640</sup> as well as an enhanced cooperation among all the concerned actors, starting from the civil society and the law enforcement agencies<sup>641</sup>. On this last element, emphasis was put on the fact that radicalisation requires an active role of multiple actors, as the intelligence and the police do not have the resources nor, in certain case, the mandate to monitor all critical situations:

There is a gray area [when] an individual is becoming radicalized but has not yet committed terrorist acts. At some point the police cannot continue to intercept and monitor a person [...]. But this person is in a delicate situation, if s/he is supported she can re-enter, if s/he is left alone s/he can instead undertake a very dangerous path. There you have to find a way for the police to [establish partnership with] someone who tries to do a job of education, of counter-narration, of an alternative narrative<sup>642</sup>.

Establishing synergies among different sectors and various stakeholders might also lead to the development a more comprehensive approach including both immediate security measures as well as long-lasting interventions. This could help address the current lacunae, especially due to the fact that the "political debate separates short-term security policies and long-term situational change policies affecting security, [while] the two policies must be developed simultaneously"<sup>643</sup>. In a long-term perspective, advantage could be taken from the cultural similarities that Italy shares with "the other side of the Mediterranean" in terms of life style and customs<sup>644</sup>.

### *Other countries experience*

When describing the Italian experience, often comparison is made with other countries either to demonstrate the advantages of the Italian approach or to underline its short-comings. Three codes have been

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<sup>637</sup> Interview n. 8 – Vicenza, February 2018, lawyer

<sup>638</sup> Interview n. 9 – online, September 2018, parliamentarian

<sup>639</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>640</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>641</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>642</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>643</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>644</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

identified within such a framework, namely EU approach to the phenomenon; radicalisation in France; and failure of de-radicalisation initiatives in France. They have been regrouped under the category “other countries experience” to provide a general overview of the experiences mentioned by the interviewees on the Islamist radicalisation process and forms of terrorism.

Although the interview did not include any reference to the radicalisation process occurring in other countries, often participants resorted to such a comparison to further clarify their standpoints. Interesting enough, the French experience represents the main point of reference for many experts and professionals. Radicalisation in France is explained through the cultural lens of marginalization and exclusion: in a scenario of severe “structural institutional violence”<sup>645</sup>, all the people committing attacks are “French by ID but not by culture”<sup>646</sup>. Such cultural and identity cleavages, also partially due to the historical legacy of the colonial period<sup>647</sup>, are exacerbated in a public space emptied of contents, “symbols, and religious identities”<sup>648</sup>. In line with the criticism expressed by the press<sup>649</sup>, the attempt put forward by France to establish a dedicated deradicalisation center has been criticized in light of the tensions generated in the hosting community<sup>650</sup>. Finally, also the lack of a harmonized approach at European level to address the phenomenon is reported as a significant gap in preventing and countering radicalisation<sup>651</sup>, which could be further exploited by terrorist network to strengthen their presence and activities<sup>652</sup>.

## Conclusions

Radicalisation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, whose study could be approached from vary different perspectives and through diverse research tools. Experts and professionals’ standpoints collected confirm that, despite the lack of a uniformed definition, there is a substantial agreement on what radicalisation means: all interviewees referred to the adoption of a set of a mindset that is contrary to the society’s mainstream values. In line with the existing theoretical explanations, a distinction can be observed among those who consider radicalisation to be violent by definition and those who claim that radicalisation does not necessarily imply the use of violence. In addition, an overall consensus can be observed about the fact that radicalisation manifests itself as a process, as also commonly suggested by various authors dealing with the topic and defining radicalisation as “a process characterized by increasing commitment to and use of violent means and strategies in political conflicts”<sup>653</sup>. The focus on the evolving nature of the phenomenon

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<sup>645</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>646</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>647</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>648</sup> Interview n. 3 – Milan, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>649</sup> Stéphane Kovacs, ‘À Pontourny, le fiasco de la déradicalisation’, *Le Figaro*, 28 July 2017, [internet] available at : <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2017/07/28/01016-20170728ARTFIG00296--pontourny-le-fiasco-de-la-deradicalisation.php> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>650</sup> Interview n. 1 – online, January 2017, journalist and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>651</sup> Interview n. 4 – Rome, May 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

<sup>652</sup> Interview n. 6 – Turin, May 2017, law enforcement officer

<sup>653</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Gary LaFree, ‘Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation, Guest Editorial’, *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 6:1 (2012), p. 6

can be retrieved in different disciplinary sectors, from psychological analyses<sup>654</sup> to socio-political studies<sup>655</sup>, including the social movement theory<sup>656</sup>. Scholars and practitioners have been struggling to identify and describe the key phases of the radicalisation process<sup>657</sup> and some of the interviewees have referred to steps that imply a search for identity filled in by a radical narrative and a progressive disconnection towards the surrounding context. In contrast with such a standpoint, some respondents have claimed that efforts in defining the phases of a radicalisation pathway are meaningless. The almost universally recognized and accepted nature of radicalization as a process also entails methodological implications in the sense that, according to such a perspective, it appears useful to avoid considering radicalization as a dependent variable but rather as a complex phenomenon to be analysed from various and complementary standpoints.

When describing the elements that increase vulnerability and exposure to radicalisation, different inputs have been collected, reflecting the findings put forward by available literature stating that multiple factors contribute to the phenomenon. Grievances and frustrations, marginalization, a sense of alienation and disconnection from mainstream values have been reported as the main reasons behind a radicalisation pathway. Clashes with the dominant system of thought and challenges in finding a meaning in life are particularly common among young people transiting from adolescence to adulthood: various authors have stressed that teenagers' quest for significance is further exacerbated by the surrounding context of a globalized and contradictory world often deprived of meaning(s)<sup>658</sup>. This difficult condition can be further aggravated by additional elements, such as economic fragility. The opinions presented by the experts and professionals interviewed partially reflect the main findings on the topic, according to which radicalisation, especially among juveniles, is related to individual sources of fragility, as well as aspects linked to family and friendship and broader societal threats often linked to group dynamics<sup>659</sup>. The issue of societal disconnection has been found to be a stronger risk factor in relation to radicalisation in ethnic minority groups<sup>660</sup>, in line with the idea that failed integration can contribute to radicalisation. However, contrary to the idea that poor economic conditions may increase exposure to radicalisation, research in this regard confirms that low socio-economic status has a little impact on the process<sup>661</sup>.

Several concepts have been mentioned throughout the interviews in connection to the notion of radicalisation, starting from the expression terrorism, often reported as the end result of a violent

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<sup>654</sup> John Horgan, 'From profiles to pathways and roots to routes: Perspectives from psychology on radicalisation into terrorism', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618:1 (2008), pp. 80-94

<sup>655</sup> Peter R. Neumann, 'The trouble with radicalisation', *International affairs*, 89:4 (2003), p. 874

<sup>656</sup> Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou and Stefan Malthaner, 'A contentious politics approach to the explanation of radicalisation', in Chares Demetriou, Stefan Malthaner and Lorenzo Bosi, eds., *Dynamics of political violence: a process-oriented perspective on radicalisation and the escalation of political conflict* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), p. 3

<sup>657</sup> See, for example, Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 67; Marc Sageman, *Leaderless jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 72-73; Randy Borum, 'Radicalisation into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4 (2011), pp. 38-39; Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, US Federal Bureau of Investigation, 'The Radicalisation Process: From Conversion to Jihad', prepared by FBI Counterterrorism Division' (10 May 2006) [internet] available at: [cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf](http://cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>658</sup> See, for example, Olivier Roy, *Generazione ISIS: Chi sono i giovani che scelgono il califfato e perché combattono l'occidente* [Le djihad et la mort] (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017); Scott Atran, *L'Etat islamique est une révolution* (Paris: Les Liens Qui Libèrent Editions, 2016)

<sup>659</sup> Nicolas Campelo et al., 'Who are the European youths willing to engage in radicalisation? A multidisciplinary review of their psychological and social profiles', *European psychiatry*, 52 (2018), pp. 1-14

<sup>660</sup> Julie Emmelkamp et al., 'Risk Factors for (Violent) Radicalisation in Juveniles: A Multilevel Meta-Analysis', *Aggression and Violent Behavior* (2020), 55, p. 12

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

radicalisation pathway. The words Islamism and jihadism have also been used to make reference to a specifically religiously motivated type of radicalisation process which put forward a fundamentalist political interpretation of Islam. The terms chosen by the interviewees reflect those used by the academia to refer to the phenomenon of new waves of terrorism: these expressions allow for a quick reference to the attempt to impose extremist Islamic views through the use of violence<sup>662</sup>, without engaging into all the implicit and sometimes controversial aspects arising from a definition of the concepts involved. As a matter of fact, while Islamism can be seen as a religious ideology<sup>663</sup>, it can also be understood as a contemporary socio-political movement<sup>664</sup> aimed at advancing a societal identity within the framework of an anti-colonial struggle<sup>665</sup>.

The notion of foreign terrorist fighters has also been mentioned during the interviews, although few considerations have been presented in this regard, probably as a result of the fact that Italian experts and professions have to deal with a very limited number of foreign fighters<sup>666</sup>. Finally, the nexus between organized crime and terrorism has also been reported, especially along with the concerns that a vicious form of collaboration could develop between the two organizations in light of the strong presence of organized criminal groups on the Italian soil.

The concept of radicalisation leading to terrorism implies also the notion of engagement into violence. According to the data collected it is almost impossible to define how and why a person switch from radical ideas to violent acts while it is easier to identify the contexts in which such a swift occurs. The web is recurrently reported as a conducive environment, also in light of its significant pervasiveness, especially among young people. A similar role is played by radios in societies where Internet connection is still limited. Despite the opportunities offered by virtual platforms, respondents underlined the importance of social ties and group dynamics behind engagement into violence, as suggested also by Sageman<sup>667</sup> and Kruglanski<sup>668</sup>. Mosques and prisons, because of the opportunities for aggregation they offer, are described as the riskiest environments.

Several initiatives and avenues for action have been discussed as tools for preventing radicalisation or countering its initial forms of manifestation. Social integration appears to be key to reduce inter-communities' tensions, as supported also by the policies promoted by various practitioners and government representatives at European level<sup>669</sup>, especially for what concerns teenagers experiencing troubles in defining their own identity, values and ideas, although this may pose some concerns arising from portraying minorities as potential security troublemakers<sup>670</sup>. In addition, according to the data collected prevention shall envisage also the elaboration of alternative narratives, although research shows contradictory evidence with regards to the impact of such a strategy<sup>671</sup>. Prevention can also be accompanied by counter radicalisation measures,

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<sup>662</sup> Jarret M. Brachman, *Global jihadism: Theory and practice* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 4-5

<sup>663</sup> Mehdi Mozaffari, 'What is Islamism? History and definition of a concept', *Totalitarian movements and political religions*, 8:1 (2007), p. 21

<sup>664</sup> Renzo Guolo, *Il fondamentalismo islamico* (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 2014)

<sup>665</sup> Francois Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movements in North Africa* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993)

<sup>666</sup> Interviews n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess short-comings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus and n. 7 – online, September 2018, parliamentary

<sup>667</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding terror networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 130

<sup>668</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski et al., 'The psychology of radicalisation and deradicalisation: How significance quest impacts violent extremism', *Political Psychology*, 35:S1 (2014), p. 77

<sup>669</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, *The new Muslim brotherhood in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 220

<sup>670</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Methodological practices in social movement research*, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 217

<sup>671</sup> See, for example, Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen and Karin Ingrid Castro, 'The trouble with counter-narratives', *DIIS Report*, 2017, [internet] available at: <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/197640> (last accessed on 28 February 2021); Jan-Jaap van Eerten et al. 'Developing a social media response to radicalisation' p. 113

aimed at intervening when the radicalisation process has already started to promote a profound change in mindset thanks to which the individual is no longer interested in using violence for imposing his/her own ideas<sup>672</sup>. A broad spectrum of actors has a say in the development of preventive and countering strategies, from families to teachers, law enforcement agencies and religious leaders.

On top of long-term actions aimed at preventing radicalisation or countering its initial forms of manifestation, in the short-term measures to halt terrorist attacks have also been discussed, among which, above all, the practice of deportation, generally seen as an effective tool to prevent attacks.

Finally, given their familiarity with the Italian situation, experts and professionals have provided several inputs on the Italian experience on Islamist radicalisation, its forms of manifestation and possible preventive strategies. Interviewees agreed on the fact that the limited extent of the phenomenon is mainly a result of the recent and slight nature of the migratory flows towards Italy. The radicalisation process in Italy does not seem to be characterized by particular elements: respondents claim that among the factors increasing vulnerability to radicalisation there is marginalization and limited socio-economic opportunities and that juveniles are the most at-risk category. The country has taken advantage of its previous anti-terrorism experience both in carrying out investigations as well as for what concerns the legal apparatus, including a heavy implementation of foreigners' expulsions for suspected terrorism. However, emphasis has been put on the lack of a comprehensive set of preventive norms, in line with the lacunae denounced by literature on this aspect<sup>673</sup>. The few existing projects in this field are usually resulting from the initiative of civil society actors without a solid multi-stakeholders' coordination and an overarching framework of action. Notwithstanding, the general perception is that the experience of other European countries and, in particular, of France, is by no means more successful than the Italian one.

The data collected through in-depth interviews confirm that the phenomenon of radicalisation remains difficult to be described and explained. Various and sometimes conflictual perspectives have been gathered, shedding light on the fact that little empirical evidence is available on the topic and that analyses are very much linked to the sectorial experience of each individual, in line with the serious lack of inter-disciplinary and inter-agency coordination observed in the related relevant literature. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that often experts and professionals' standpoints differ from the main findings and theories put forward by the academia. This applies, for example, to the terminology used and, in particular, the easy and uncritical use of the terms Islamism and jihadism as well as to the reference to social integration and alternative narratives as effective tools to prevent radicalisation. These perspectives are consistent with the idea of terrorism analysis being predominantly anecdotal and based on sensational claims, as it was found also for academic publications on the issue<sup>674</sup>. The Italian experience with the phenomenon of radicalisation and the attempt to prevent and counter it seems in line with such an approach, with the anti-terrorism legislation being strongly repressive rather than focused on long-term prevention measures.

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<sup>672</sup> John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*, Routledge: London, 2009, p. 153

<sup>673</sup> See, for example, Lorenzo Vidino and Francesco Marone, 'The Jihadist Threat in Italy: A Primer', *ISPI report*, Analysis No. 318, November 2017, p. 7, [internet] available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/jihadist-threat-italy-primer-18541> (last accessed on 28 February 2021); Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, 'Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants' Expulsions for Security Reasons', *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), pp. 253-280

<sup>674</sup> Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy and Alison Sherley, 'Are Counter-terrorism Strategies Effective? The Results of the Campbell Systematic Review on Counter-terrorism Evaluation Research', *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 2:4, November, p. 496

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## Chapter 6 - The Islamist terrorist threat in Italy: an analysis of the media coverage of the deportations occurred between 2015 and 2017

### *Legal aspects and political implications of foreigners' deportations*

Although the definition of deportation can be retrieved in the Consolidated Law No. 286/1998 on migration policy and aliens' status, stating that a foreigner can be expelled "for reasons of public order or State security"<sup>675</sup>, this measure has been further strengthened and increasingly applied after the Madrid and London attacks as a tool to prevent and repress terrorism. As a matter of fact, Law 155 of 31st July 2005 on urgent measures to contrast terrorism allows for a foreigner to be expelled from Italy if his/her stay can "in any way facilitate terrorist organizations or activities, including international ones"<sup>676</sup>. Furthermore, Law 43 of 17 April 2015<sup>677</sup>, adopted after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, includes "social dangerousness" among the reasons justifying the deportation of a foreign citizen. According to some scholars and experts, the combination of deportations with a restrictive law on citizenship is a key element to understand and explain how Italy has been able to prevent attacks on its soil<sup>678</sup>: as a matter of fact, the criteria establishing eligibility for the Italian citizenship are so stringent than even among second-generation migrants many do hold the Italian citizenship and can, thus, be subject to expulsion in case they constitute a threat for the public order and security<sup>679</sup>.

Although reference is usually made to administrative deportations, such measures can have both a judicial as well as an administrative nature: in the first case, they are issued by a judge, following a crime, for security reasons or as "an alternative to prison detention during the last two years of imprisonment or for sentences of less than two years"; in the second case, they are mandated by the Ministry of Interior or by the Prefect to safeguard public order and security as well as to prevent terrorism and punish irregular presence on the

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<sup>675</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 286 of 25 July 1998, 'Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 191 (18 August 1998), Suppl. Ord. 139, art. 13

<sup>676</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 144 of 27 July 2005, 'Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 173 (27 July 2005) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 155 of 31 July 2005, 'Conversione in Legge, con Modificazioni, del Decreto-Legge 27 luglio 2005, n. 144, Recante Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 177 (1 August 2005), pp. 27-30

<sup>677</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 7 of 18 February 2015, 'Misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 41 (19 February 2015) converted with amendments by the Italian Parliament into Law 43 of 17 April 2015, 'Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 18 febbraio 2015, n. 7, recante misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 91 (20 April 2015), pp. 1-7

<sup>678</sup> Francesco Marone, 'The Use of Deportation in Counter-Terrorism: Insights from the Italian Case', *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT)*, 13 March 2017, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/the-use-of-deportation-in-counter-terrorism-insights-from-the-italian-case/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>679</sup> Francesco Marone, 'The Italian Way of Counterterrorism: From a Consolidated Experience to an Integrated Approach', in Romaniuk, S. N. et al., eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Policy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 491-492

Italian soil<sup>680</sup>. While judicial deportations can concern both EU and non-EU citizens, administrative ones only apply to non-EU citizens. Furthermore, while the former follows a conviction, the latter is executed as a preventive measure<sup>681</sup>. Finally, administrative deportations can be appealed only for lack of legitimacy before an administrative court and can entail different durations resulting from a case-by-case assessment<sup>682</sup>, although the minimum duration is of five years usually extended to ten years. Information about the expulsions are also communicated to the Schengen Information System, a governmental database maintained by the European Commission, as the re-entry ban concerns the entire EU territory.

Administrative expulsions have become one of the most recurrently enforced tools used by Italy to prevent terrorist attacks on its soil<sup>683</sup>, especially after the attacks occurred in France in 2015. While the average number of people expelled each year between 2005 and 2014 was 14, after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, in January 2015, deportations increased significantly, with a total number of 237 individuals deported to their country of citizenship between 2015 and 2017<sup>684</sup>. In particular, according to the information shared by the Ministry of Interior, 66 deportations occurred in 2015 and in 2016, while the measure concerned 105 individuals in 2017. These data are particularly impressive if compared with the number of people involved in legal proceedings for terrorism related offences: in 2016, the Italian penitentiary system housed only 36 detainees accused of or convicted for crimes related to “international terrorism of Islamic origin”, while the number reached 62 inmates in 2017<sup>685</sup> and 66 in 2018<sup>686</sup>. Although the statistics for 2015 could not be retrieved, these trends shed light on the fact that deportations represent a preferred tool by the Italian anti-terrorism apparatus, compared to the traditional investigative and judicial process, in the fight against terrorism.

Many scholars and experts have highlighted some critical aspects related to the recurrent use of deportations as a measure to counter the terrorism threat. According to a recent study commissioned by the European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Italy has been progressively abandoning “the idea of a criminal trial as the place of assessment of an offence”, with measures being applied on the basis of an assessment carried out by the intelligence and law enforcement agencies without

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<sup>680</sup> Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, ‘Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants’ Expulsions for Security Reasons’, *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), p. 264

<sup>681</sup> Luca Masera, ‘Il terrorismo e le politiche migratorie: sulle espulsioni dello straniero sospettato di terrorismo’, *Gli speciali di Questione Giustizia: Terrorismo Internazionale, Politiche della Sicurezza, Diritti Fondamentali* (September 2016), pp. 76-90

<sup>682</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘The Use of Deportation in Counter-Terrorism: Insights from the Italian Case’, *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT)*, 13 March 2017, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/publication/the-use-of-deportation-in-counter-terrorism-insights-from-the-italian-case/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>683</sup> Edoardo Mazzanti, ‘L’adesione ideologica al terrorismo islamista tra giustizia penale e diritto dell’immigrazione’, *Diritto Penale Contemporaneo*, 1 (2017), pp. 26-44

<sup>684</sup> Marco Olimpio, ‘La misura delle espulsioni per estremismo’, *ISPI Commentary*, 14 Dicembre 2018, [internet] available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/la-misura-delle-espulsioni-estremismo-21803> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>685</sup> Italian Ministry of Justice, Department of Penitentiary Administration, ‘Relazione del Ministero sull’amministrazione della giustizia anno 2017’, January 2018, p. 20 [internet] available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno\\_giudiziario\\_2018\\_dap.pdf](https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno_giudiziario_2018_dap.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>686</sup> Italian Ministry of Justice, Department of Penitentiary Administration, ‘Relazione del Ministero sull’amministrazione della giustizia anno 2018’, January 2019, p. 13 [internet] available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno\\_giudiziario\\_2019\\_dap.pdf](https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno_giudiziario_2019_dap.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

the opportunity to question it<sup>687</sup>. Furthermore, the massive use of expulsions towards allegedly dangerous foreigners might reinforce the idea of an underlying nexus between migration and the terrorist threat: an analysis of the deportations occurred in 2017 has recently highlighted a hazardous overlapping between the anti-refugee rhetoric and the criminalization of terrorism, leading to “a series of security and exclusionary policies towards migrants in general and Muslims in particular”<sup>688</sup>.

The analysis of deportations as a measure to prevent and counter terrorism is of interest not only from a security perspective, to assess the long-term impact and effectiveness of such a measure, but also for the socio-political and cultural implications that this approach nurtures. Foreigners expulsions have been portrayed and referred to as one of the main assets and strengths of the Italian anti-terrorism strategy. The way deportations are narrated by relevant institutions as well as by the media sheds light on how individual radicalisation pathways are understood and depicted by relevant political actors and the society at large. An analysis of the language used to report this phenomenon provides an insight on how terrorism is narrated in Italy and, thus, how it is co-constructed through the choices of specific discursive practices. The following paragraphs are based on the analysis of press articles reporting the news of deportation of suspected terrorists published either on national or local newspapers between 2015 and 2017.

### *An analysis of media articles*

The Italian authorities do not publicly communicate the list of foreigners expelled in name of public order and security. However, news about deportations are occasionally reported by the media, both by local and national newspapers as well as on the institutional website of the Ministry of Interior in the form of official press releases. The latter were used as a first source of information to elaborate a comprehensive list of individuals expelled for their suspected engagement into terrorist activities, further integrated with additional information retrieved on media in the form of publicly available data. Such an analysis led to the elaboration of a table, indicating, whenever possible, name, nationality, city of residence in Italy, deportation date, defence lawyer, and additional notes for each deportation. This data served as a basis for some descriptive statical analyses presented in this chapter to provide an overview of the socio-demographic profiles of the individuals concerned by the expulsion provisions. Furthermore, starting from the triangulated list of deportations, selected press articles were collected and studied in a more analytical manner. Different considerations guided the definition of articles to be included in the analysis, including the attempt to take into consideration different reporting strategies, journalistic styles and target audiences. Consequently, it was decided to take into consideration articles published in any local newspaper and/or in one or more of the following three nationwide newspapers: La Repubblica, Il Giornale, and La Stampa. This led to the selection of 346 media articles and ministerial press releases, whose text has been analysed through a summative content analysis to explore what and how words were used to narrate and report the phenomenon<sup>689</sup>.

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<sup>687</sup> European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, ‘EU and Member States’ policies and laws on persons suspected of terrorism related crimes’, December 2017, p. 110 [internet] available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596832/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)596832\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596832/IPOL_STU(2017)596832_EN.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>688</sup> Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, ‘Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants’ Expulsions for Security Reasons’, *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), p. 276

<sup>689</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, ‘Three approaches to qualitative content analysis’, *Qualitative health research*, 15:9 (2005), pp. 1283-1284

### Socio-demographic profiles

Through the analysis of relevant articles published on local and national newspapers as well as press releases issued by the Ministry of Interior, data on the main socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals affected by the measure could be identified.

It is worthy to underline that a remarkable change in the communication style of the phenomenon under consideration occurred at the end of 2015. As a matter of fact, numerous press articles were published on 2015 expulsions, with detailed information on socio-demographic factors and aspects of the individual pathways of radicalisation. On the contrary, only two deportations were reported on the website of the Ministry of Interior in 2015, both referring to cases occurred at the very end of the year. Starting from 2016, a more active role has been played by the Minister of Interior in communicating cases of expelled individuals, while a decreased number of press articles have been published on the topic. The limited information retrievable in newspapers after the beginning of 2016 might be explained in relationship to the increased number of institutional communications on the subject, as if the journalistic interest in expulsions had decreased due to the large amount of information shared by the Ministry. However, as highlighted in the following paragraphs, the contents shared in newspapers are much richer in terms of socio-demographic details and aspects connected to the individual radicalisation pathway, while official press releases tend to only share essential data, such as nationality, age of the expelled individual and, on average, one paragraph on the motivations behind the deportation.

In terms of gender distribution, deportations have mainly concerned male citizens, with only seven cases of women reported to have been subjected to deportation, respectively two in 2015, two in 2016, and three in 2017. In four cases a clear family connection can be observed as the woman was deported along with a family member subjected to the same measure: in three cases, deportation concerned a couple, while in one case the deportation concerned a brother and a sister trying to embark with false papers on a flight to London. Individuals expelled from Italy between 2015 and 2017 were mainly young adults aged between 18 and 40 years old, with an average of 33 years old in 2015, 37 years old in 2016 and 34 in 2017 (Figure 1).

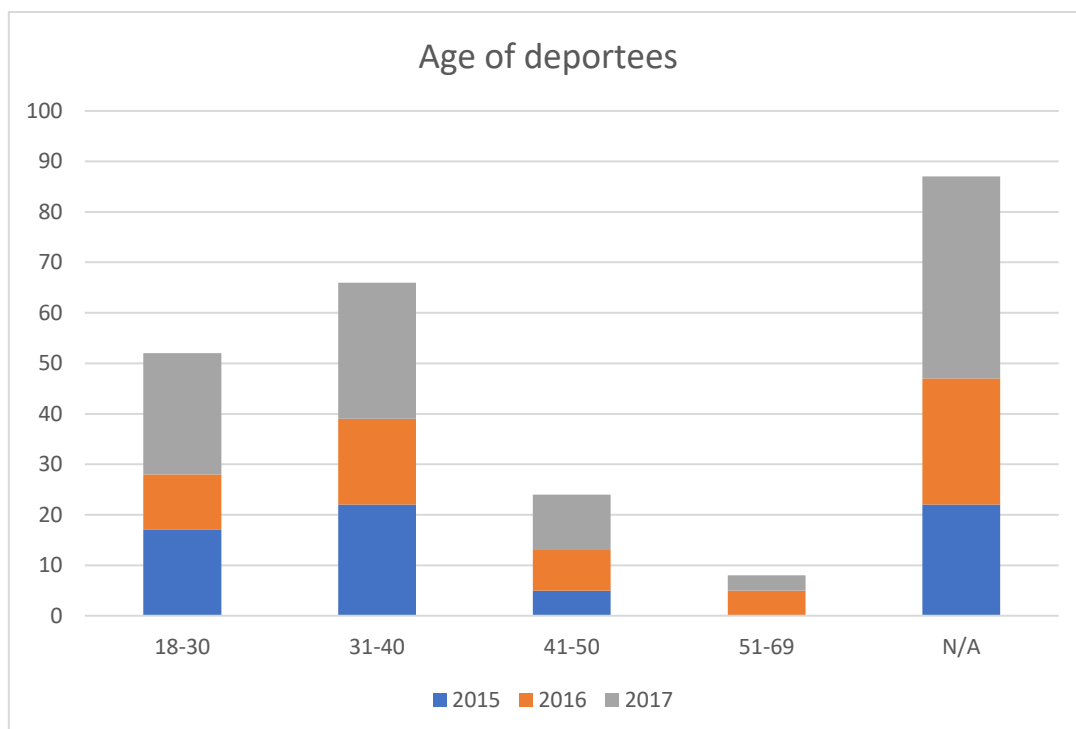
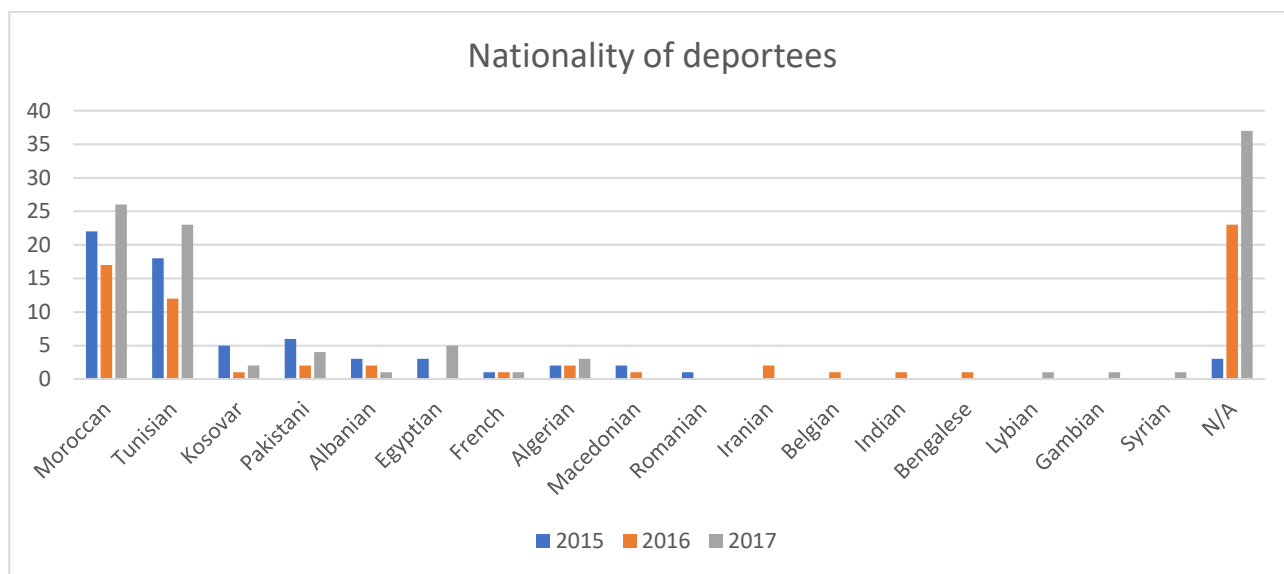


Figure 1 - Age of deportees (author's elaboration based on publicly available data)

Data analysed show similar trends over the three years under consideration in terms of nationality of the deportees. As portrayed in Figure 2, expelled individuals are mainly from north Africa and the Balkans. In particular, according to the information collected in newspapers and Ministry's communications, among the individuals expelled between 2015 and 2017, 65 were Moroccans, 53 Tunisian, 8 Egyptians, 7 Algerians, 8 Kosovars and 6 Albanians. This finding is confirmed by a ISPI commentary elaborated on confidential data shared by the Ministry of Interior and reporting a total of 110 Moroccans and 99 Tunisians deported between January 2015 and November 2018<sup>690</sup>. It is worthy to note that data on the citizenship of the deportees could not be retrieved in press articles and official press releases for a total of 63 individuals, with only 3 cases missing data on nationality in 2015, 23 in 2016 and 37 in 2017.



**Figure 2 - Deportees nationality (author's elaboration based on publicly available data)**

Individuals expelled between 2015 and 2017 were mainly living in the North of Italy, as reported in Figure 3. Data on the region of stay and residence was retrieved for only 161 cases out of a total of 237 deportations. Among these 161 deportees, 60% were living in northern regions and, in particular, in Lombardia (35), Piemonte (17), Veneto (16), Emilia Romagna (15), Trentino Alto Adige (5), Friuli Venezia Giulia (4), Liguria (4). This finding is in line with the general trends in the geographical distribution of terrorist activities throughout the country, as identified in the analysis of the DNA reports, and of radicalized individuals, including the region of origin of foreign terrorist fighters. As a matter of fact, a recent study on the phenomenon of Italian FTFs confirms that, among the 125 profiles analysed, approximately 30% were residing or living in Lombardia, followed by Emilia Romagna and Veneto<sup>691</sup>. In addition, the report highlights that, unlike other European countries, the foreign fighters who left Italy do not come mainly from large urban centers: when considering

<sup>690</sup> Marco Olimpo, 'La misura delle espulsioni per estremismo', *ISPI commentary*, 14 December 2018, [internet] available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/la-misura-delle-espulsioni-estremismo-21803> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>691</sup> Francesco Marone and Lorenzo Vidino, 'Destinazione Jihad: I Foreign Fighters d'Italia', *ISPI*, June 2018, pp. 35-36, [internet] available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/foreignfighter.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

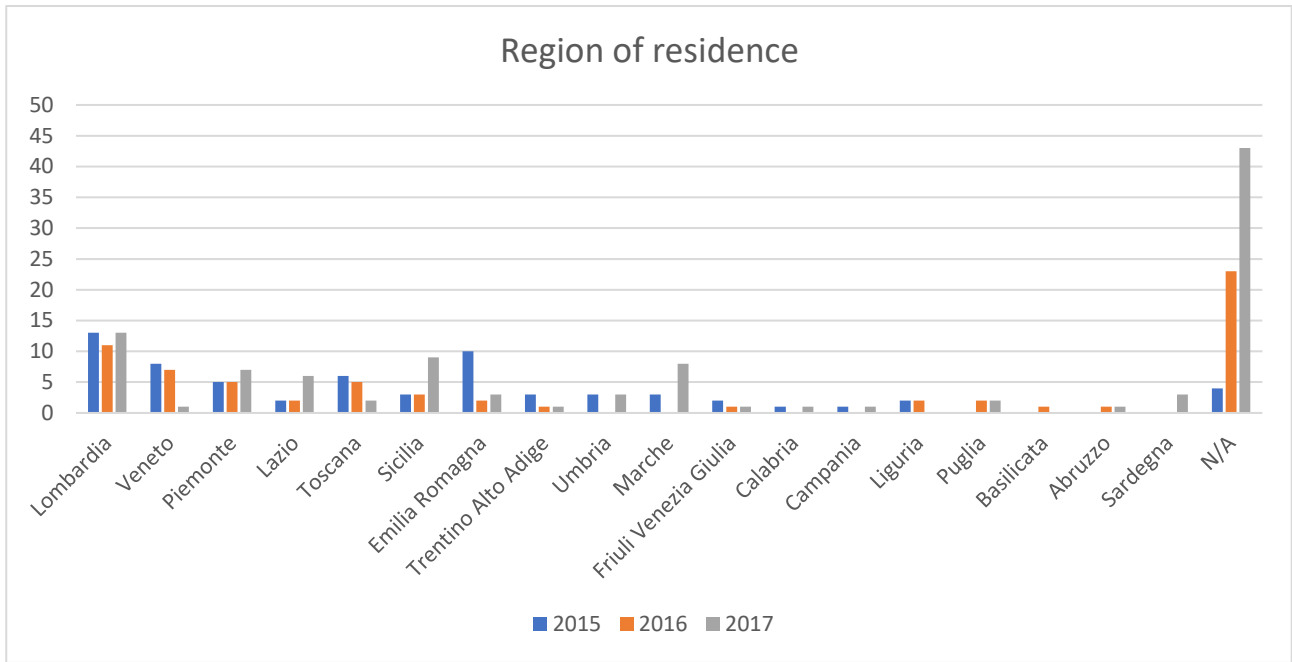
residences, only 12 out of 84 subjects lived in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants<sup>692</sup>. This figure is consistent with the information collected on the areas of origin of deportees. Although it was particularly challenging to gather details on the exact place of residence, some insight was retrieved on press articles: in 2015, out of 66 deportations, in 31 cases minor towns or rural areas within provincial settings were reported as the place of usual residence. The ratio is lower for 2016 and 2017 deportations, with respectively 21 and 26 individuals reported living in provincial areas. Notwithstanding, this discrepancy can be explained by the fact that information on the phenomenon has been mainly channeled by the Ministry of Interior from 2016 onwards, with limited details on each specific cases. As a matter of fact, while for 2015 data on residence was retrieved for almost all of the cases, with only 4 missing, it was not possible to identify similar information for respectively 23 deportations occurred in 2016 and for 49 enforced in 2017. A final aspect to be underlined for what concerns the geographical distribution of deportees is related to the fact that in several cases the measure has been executed at the completion of a detention period, in virtue of the strong collaboration and information sharing among all relevant institutions within the Antiterrorism Strategic Analysis Committee (CASA). The stay in a detention facility affects the findings on residence as articles and press releases sometimes report the city where the inmate is imprisoned without specifying the detention condition. Data from the Ministry of Justice are helpful, in this regard, to shed light on the extent of the phenomenon: in 2016, 34 inmates for “whom adherence to jihadist ideologies had been ascertained” were subjected to administrative deportation at the end of their sentence<sup>693</sup>, while in 2017 “expulsion orders were issued against 50 individuals [at] the end of their sentence for whom adherence to jihadist ideologies was ascertained”<sup>694</sup>.

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<sup>692</sup> Ibid, pp. 39

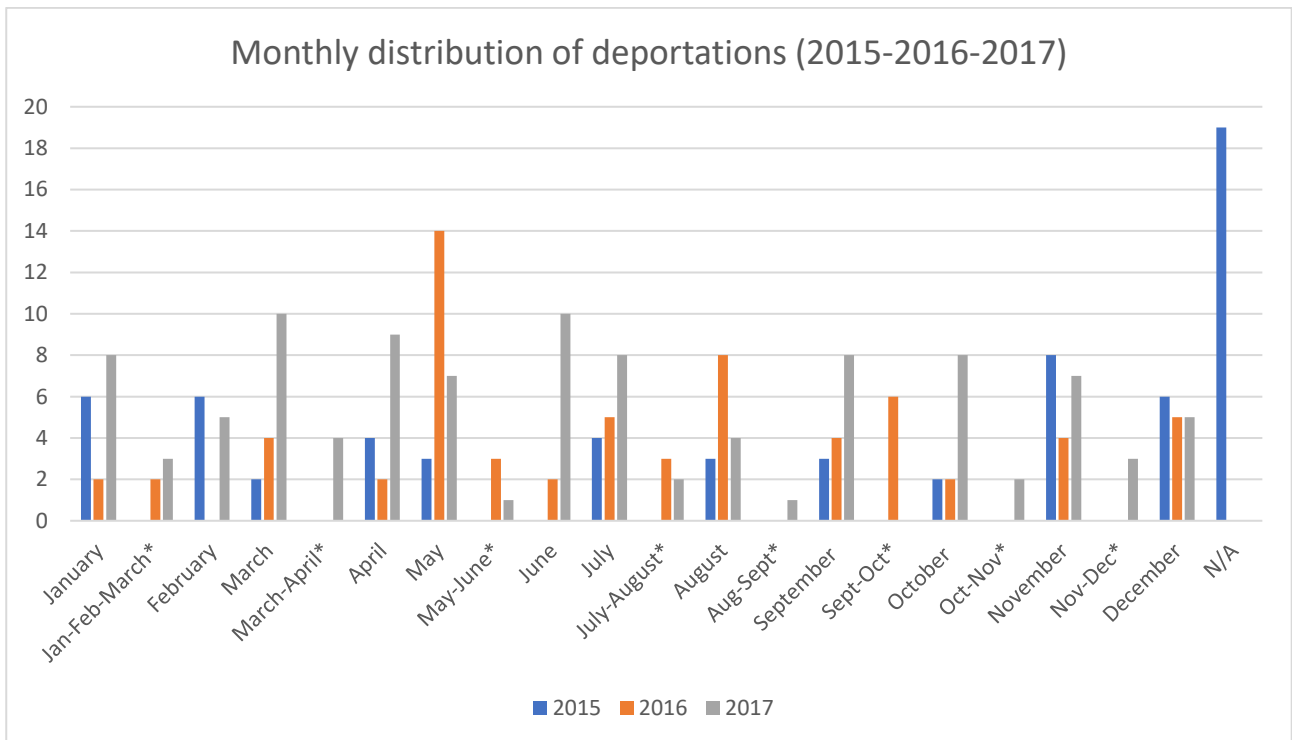
<sup>693</sup> Italian Ministry of Justice, Department of Penitentiary Administration, ‘Relazione del Ministero sull’amministrazione della giustizia anno 2016’, January 2017, p. 564 [internet] available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/Relazione\\_sullAmministrazione\\_della\\_Giustizia\\_2016.pdf](https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/Relazione_sullAmministrazione_della_Giustizia_2016.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>694</sup> Italian Ministry of Justice, Department of Penitentiary Administration, ‘Relazione del Ministero sull’amministrazione della giustizia anno 2017’, January 2018, p. 26 [internet] available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno\\_giudiziario\\_2018\\_dap.pdf](https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno_giudiziario_2018_dap.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)



**Figure 3 - Region of residence/stay (author's elaboration based on publicly available data)**

With reference to the period in which individuals have been expelled, no recurrent trend could be identified through the analysis of the monthly distribution of deportations, as represented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4 - Monthly distribution of deportations (author's elaboration based on publicly available data)**

**\*indicates that, although some data on the deportation period was retrieved, it was not possible to identify the exact month in which the measure occurred**

### *An analysis of the language used by the media to narrate the phenomenon*

In contemporary society, communication plays a key role and analysing media content contributes to assess media impact and helps identifying the various dynamics, power structures, cultural values that shape communication<sup>695</sup>. Language serves as a tool for both the actor to define actions as well as for the others to interpret them. The terminology used by media to describe terrorist events and other related aspects plays a role in co-constructing the reality of the phenomenon and has an impact on how terrorism is perceived by the public opinion. Numerous studies, especially after 9/11, have researched how terrorism and counter-terrorism are narrated by the media and the effects generated among the audience. A study analysing reporters' roles in the first five hours of news coverage of the Twin Towers attacks found that "journalists acted as experts and social commentators only 10% of the time", with numerous reports enriched with rumours, personal references and non-professional inputs<sup>696</sup>. A research focusing on language adopted in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11 identifies the emergence of a narrative of the "war on terrorism" leading to the normalisation of particularly severe and restrictive measures as well as to the polarization of the society around irrational impulses justified by fears and hatred<sup>697</sup>. The use of pejorative terms, the choice of reporting violent images or the adoption of sensationalism as a stylistic style contribute to increase fear among the public and might reinforce the good and evil dichotomy as well as the stigmatization of "the others, as evildoers or as «the axis of evilness», by focusing on cultural values without talking about the real causes of that evilness"<sup>698</sup>. In the case of Islamist motivated terrorist events, the reporting style can be associated with emphasizing the distance between Western and Islamic culture, portraying the latter as a carrier of violence and hostility: a study on US media coverage of terrorism found that religious differences are usually referred to and contribute to an increased fear towards Muslims and Islam<sup>699</sup>; similarly, a research on the 105 individuals deported from Italy in 2017 emphasized "how security policies are often used as a rhetoric tool to sustain political discourses of migrants' exclusion"<sup>700</sup>.

For the purpose of this study, 346 media articles and ministerial press releases were analysed with a research technique consisting of three subsequent steps: a first initial assessment was conducted to identify the words most frequently used in the articles; second, a list of keywords was elaborated and the frequency of such terms was analysed; finally, the last part of the analysis focused on latent meanings and inferred contents. The combination of these three analytical phases was motivated by the ultimate purpose of developing an assessment of the coverage of the topic under consideration as well as an analysis of the explicit, latent and missing elements in the media reports of deportations. A total of 346 press releases by the Ministry of Interior and articles published on three national newspapers, selected on the basis of their diverse journalistic style and target audience, and local and online newspapers were selected for the analysis. Figure 5 provides an overview of the different sources per each year of publication: figures in the table clearly demonstrate that a more significant attention has been paid by local and online newspapers in reporting cases of expelled

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<sup>695</sup> Denis McQuail, *McQuail's mass communication theory*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Sage publications, 2010), p. 341

<sup>696</sup> Amy Reynolds and Brooke Barnett, 'This just in... How national TV news handled the breaking "live" coverage of September 11', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80:3 (2003), pp. 697-699

<sup>697</sup> Richard Jackson, *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 181-182

<sup>698</sup> Maria Constantinou, 'Mediating terror through narratives A corpus-based approach to media translation', *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 13:1 (2017), p. 28

<sup>699</sup> Kimberly A. Powell, 'Framing Islam: An analysis of US media coverage of terrorism since 9/11', *Communication Studies*, 62:1 (2011), pp. 90-112

<sup>700</sup> Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, 'Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants' Expulsions for Security Reasons', *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), pp. 253-280

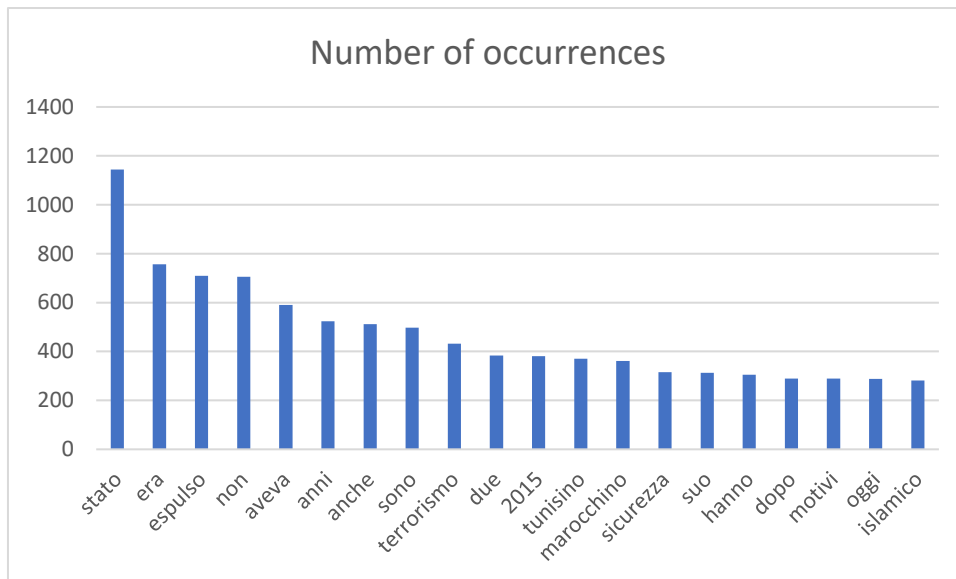
individuals, while nationwide coverage remained limited throughout the years. This discrepancy could be explained by the fact that deportations create a sense of destabilization within the societal group of belonging, often accompanied by the desire to investigate the causes behind the disappearance of a member of the community. Furthermore, a trend can be identified in the role played by the Ministry of Interior in communicating deportation measures: while almost no information could be retrieved at ministerial level in 2015, a significant increase in the number of press releases can be observed in 2016 and, in particular, in 2017. In 2017, the Ministry of Interior issued an ad-hoc communication to inform the public audience of approximately half of the case of expelled individuals, reporting the nationality of the deportee, providing a short overview of the reasons for the deportation and indicating the progressive number of individuals concerned by the provision. Media articles usually included more details regarding the expelled person, especially regarding his/her private life, the professional background and the path to radicalisation.

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Repubblica	17	14	14
Il Giornale	8	2	1
La Stampa	6	3	3
Local/online newspaper	59	41	38
Local/online newspaper	29	28	17
Ministry of Interior	2	10	54
	121	98	127

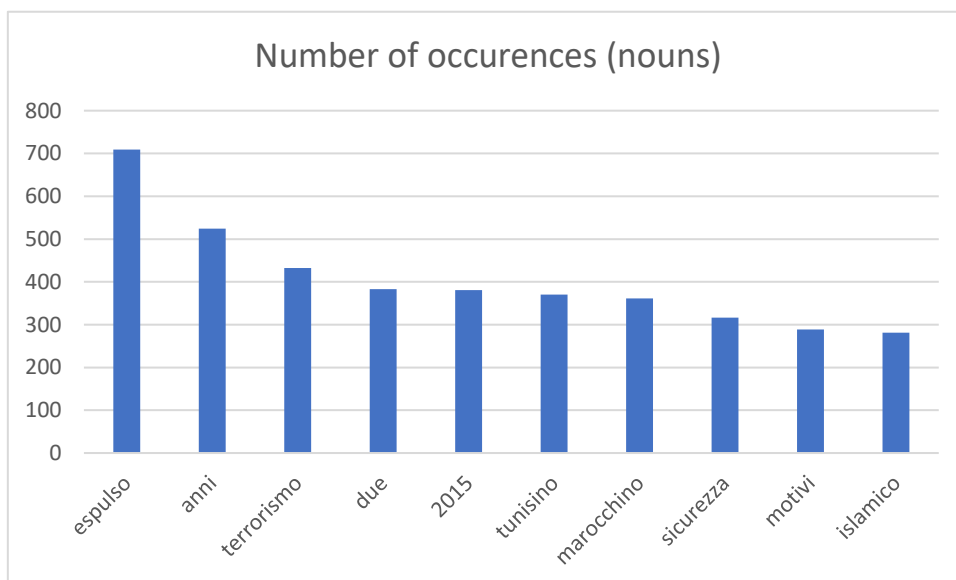
*Figure 5 - Breakdown of the sources of the 346 analysed articles (author's elaboration)*

The analysis of the text was performed through the adoption of a summative content analysis approach. Consequently, the first step consisted in assessing word frequency. The analysis was made through the use of the software NVivo and was performed by excluding all prepositions, definite and indefinite articles and words with less than 3 letters. An overview of the results is reported in the word cloud of Figure 6, elaborated on the 200 most frequently used terms.





**Figure 7 - Occurrences of the 20 most frequent words (author' elaboration)**



**Figure 7 bis - Occurrences of the 10 most frequent words excluding verbs, adverbs and adjectives (author's elaboration)**

A second level of analysis consisted in assessing the frequency of some selected words (keywords) with the purpose of enhancing the understanding of how certain terms and notions are used in specific contexts<sup>708</sup>. The list of keywords has been developed in a deductive manner and the selection of relevant terms has been guided by the literature review and the previous research phases with the purpose of establishing a validation process in which existing knowledge on the topic informed the summative phase. A total of 28 keywords have been selected and clustered in three main categories referring to the type and nature of the threat; the actors involved in the investigative process and in the deportation; and how and where the signs of radicalisation have been detected. Table 10 reports the selected 28 terms, with some being researched with

<sup>708</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, 'Three approaches to qualitative content analysis', *Qualitative health research*, 15:9 (2005), pp. 1283-1284

the use of an asterisk (\*) to allow for the inclusion of different characters at the end of a term, leading to counting all the terms starting with the word roots indicated in the list.

Type and nature of the threat	Actors involved in the investigative process and in the deportation	How and where the signs of radicalisation have been detected
Keyword	Keyword	Keyword
Attentat*	Alfano	Carcere
Estremis*	Digos	Deten*
Foreign Fighter	Giudic*	Facebook
Guerra Santa	Ministro	Messaggi*
Islam*	Minniti	Post
Jihad*	Polizia	Propagand*
Minaccia*	Procura*	Social
Radical*		Twitter
Salafis*		Video
Sicurezza		Web
Strag*		
Terroris*		

*Table 10 - List of keywords searched in the text for the summative content analysis clustered per thematic category (author's elaboration)*

The number of occurrences (references) of each keyword has been counted throughout all the 346 selected articles and press releases. The results of the word frequency clustered under the category covering the type and nature of the threat are represented in Table 11: although the highest occurrence refers to the generic word root “terroris\*”, including terms such as terrorism and terrorist(s), the second and third more frequent terms are “Islam\*” and “Jihad\*”, revealing a significant attention being paid by the media on the connection of the expelled individuals with a fundamentalist religious interpretation. Notwithstanding, other words usually employed by media to report the religious nature of the phenomenon, such as “holy war” (“guerra santa”) or Salafism-related terms (“salafis\*”) ranked much lower in the number of references. Among the most recurrent types of threat that the deportee allegedly posed to the national security, the highest focus is on the risk of “attacks” (“attentat\*”), with fewer occurrences of most sensational but less accurate terms, such as “massacre” (“strag\*”). Finally, a relatively significant frequency is connected to the word root “radical\*”, thus referring to all the notions and concepts related to the process of radicalisation.

KEYWORD	REFERENCES
TERRORIS*	709
ISLAM*	528
JIHAD*	408
SICUREZZA	316
RADICAL*	289
ATTENTAT*	125
FOREIGN FIGHTER	124
ESTREMIS*	104
GUERRA SANTA	114
MINACCIA*	74

<b>STRAG*</b>	66
<b>SALAFIS*</b>	2

*Table 11 – Keywords’ occurrence for type and nature of the threat (author’s elaboration)*

With reference to the actors involved in the investigative process and in the deportation, the frequency of six keywords has been assessed, as portrayed in Table 12. A central role in this regard is attributed to the Minister of Interior (“ministro”), which, summed up with the surnames of the two Ministers in charge during the considered period of analysis (2015-2017), namely “Alfano” and “Minniti”, leads to a total number of 483 references. Other actors have the power to issue the deportation provisions, namely the Prefect in case of social dangerousness or to prevent terrorism and the judge as a security measure or as a substitute sanction<sup>709</sup>. Notwithstanding, very few occurrences have been detected for these actors, with a total of 80 references. In addition, the role of investigative entities has been explored through the word search: the mostly recurrent reference has been observed for the term police (“polizia”), with a total of 225 occurrences. However, the word police refer to a broad apparatus of law enforcement forces in charge of maintaining the national public security through investigative efforts and law enforcement duties. Among the vast spectrum of actors belonging to the Italian State Police, reference to one particular law enforcement agency was retrieved as predominant throughout the text, namely the occurrence of the word “Digos”, used 192 times, and referring to the General Investigations and Special Operations Division responsible for investigating terrorism, organized crime and other serious offences. A significant lower use of the terms connected to the root “procura\*” and concerning the work of the prosecutors has been detected, with a total of 78 occurrences.

<b>KEYWORD</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>
<b>MINISTRO</b>	245
<b>POLIZIA</b>	225
<b>DIGOS</b>	192
<b>ALFANO</b>	173
<b>PROCURA*</b>	78
<b>MINNITI</b>	65
<b>GIUDIC*</b>	61
<b>PREFETT*</b>	19

*Table 12 - Keywords’ occurrence for the actors involved in the investigative process and in the deportations (author’s elaboration)*

In order to understand how and where the signs of radicalisation have been detected for the individuals expelled from Italy from 2015 to 2017, a set of ten keywords has been identified, comprising physical and virtual places where radicalisation occurs and manifests itself according to both literature on the topic as well as the results of the qualitative analysis conducted on the DNA reports and the interviews with experts and professionals. The results reported by the media in this regard and represented in Table 13 show a considerable importance being attributed to the prison settings and the imprisonment conditions: the term prison (“carcere”) and the word root “deten\*”, comprising terms such as detention, detained and detainee(s), have been used altogether 300 times. The frequency of the other terms searched reveals a

<sup>709</sup> Polizia di Stato, ‘La normativa antiterrorismo: Nuove figure di reato e armonizzazione della legislazione’, *Inserto Di Polizia Moderna*, October 2016, [internet] available at: [https://poliziamoderna.poliziadistato.it/statics/36/inserto\\_10-16.pdf](https://poliziamoderna.poliziadistato.it/statics/36/inserto_10-16.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

significant role being played by the online world as a virtual arena where radicalisation can occur as well as a space where signs of radicalisation can be identified at the investigative level: a total of 568 references have been observed for the terms “Facebook”, “video”, “propagand\*”, “social”, “web”, messag\* (“messaggi\*”), “post”, and “Twitter”. Among all the platforms and communications tools and techniques mentioned in the selected articles, Facebook seems to dominate the scene, with 146 occurrences.

KEYWORD	REFERENCES
CARCERE	180
FACEBOOK	146
DETEN*	120
VIDEO	84
PROPAGAND*	84
SOCIAL	77
WEB	77
MESSAGGI*	48
POST	45
TWITTER	7

*Table 13 - Keywords' occurrence for how and where the signs of radicalisation have been detected (author's elaboration)*

The word frequently count and the summative analysis of mostly recurrent keywords have provided the framework for the last analytical phase, focused on latent meanings and inferred contents with the final purpose of developing an understanding of how terms are used by the media to narrate the phenomenon of deportations. Although detecting latent meaning represents a more challenging objective, such an approach allows for a deeper understanding of the explicit and implicit aspects inherent in the texts analysed<sup>710</sup>, including “the presence or absence of particular ideas, theories, or biases; the extent of coverage of specified topics; contradictions; or myths”<sup>711</sup>. Looking for latent meanings requires for interpretation<sup>712</sup> and attributes a central role to the researcher, who is deeply involved in the analysis, understanding and interpretation of the data<sup>713</sup> and can emphasize either the identification of latent patterns emerging from the text as well his/her own projective interpretation of the meanings<sup>714</sup>. For the purpose of this study, both aspects have been taken into consideration to both interpret inferred meanings as well as to let the data speak with the author’s theoretical and practical knowledge on the topic. In the mediatic representation of the type and nature of the threat posed by expelled individuals, the connection with a fundamentalist religious interpretation has been severely underlined, with Islam-related terms being recurrently employed throughout the text. The cultural context in which the phenomenon is reported concerns a society, the Italian one, historically linked to the Christian religion and with little familiarity with the migratory flows that have affected its neighbouring countries. Reference to a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam might, thus, serve

<sup>710</sup> Nancy L. Kondracki, Nancy S. Wellman and Daniel R. Amundson, ‘Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education’, *Journal of nutrition education and behavior*, 34:4 (2002), p. 225

<sup>711</sup> Nancy L. Kondracki, Nancy S. Wellman and Daniel R. Amundson, ‘Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education’, *Journal of nutrition education and behavior*, 34:4 (2002), p. 224

<sup>712</sup> Ulla H. Graneheim, Britt-Marie Lindgren, and Berit Lundman, ‘Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper’, *Nurse education today*, 56 (2017), p. 31

<sup>713</sup> A. J. Kleinheksel et al., ‘Demystifying Content Analysis’, *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, 84:1 (2020), p. 129

<sup>714</sup> W. James Potter and Deborah Levine-Donnerstein, ‘Rethinking validity and reliability in content analysis’, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27:3 (1999), pp. 258-284

as a strategy to mark the distance between the deportees and the Italian culture and customs. Despite the heavy reference to religious terms, interesting enough the word “Salafism” is almost absent in the selected articles: in recent years media<sup>715</sup>, scholars<sup>716</sup> and practitioners<sup>717</sup> have often resorted to the expression Salafism or Salafi movement to indicate a radical and strict interpretation of the sacred texts<sup>718</sup> connected with an integralist political and religious ideology motivating terrorist behaviours. Notwithstanding, Italian media seem not to adhere to this perspective. Motivations might include a certain caution in approaching religious aspects as well as, most probably, a stylistic choice motivated by the little knowledge of the Salafist movement in the country. With reference to the actors involved in the investigative process and in the deportation, the central role played by the Minister of Interior overshadows all the other entities involved in the management of the phenomenon, throughout the investigative and judiciary spectrum. The emphasis placed on the ministerial nature of the measures adopted results to be in line with the choice of the Italian anti-terrorism apparatus to privilege the removal of presumed terrorists from the national territory instead of strengthening investigative and legal efforts to address the phenomenon. Concerning the places and ways in which radicalisation occurs and is detected, the mediatic coverage is extremely coherent with the experts and professionals’ narrative on this aspect: from the articles analysed, the internet and prisons result to be conducive environments facilitating radicalisation to happen. At the same time, it seems that it is exactly in these settings that law enforcement agencies collect the most relevant evidence on the basis of which the deportation is enforced. A final element that is worthy to underline is that a massive reference has been observed regarding the country of origin of some of the expelled people: although the number of individuals deported between 2015 and 2017 whose nationality is known to be either Moroccan or Tunisian leads to a total of 118 people, the terms “Moroccan” and “Tunisian” have been used 731 times in the selected texts. The strong emphasis on the citizenship of the deportees might be functioning as a strategy to underline the non-belonging of these individuals to the Italian community. In addition, the citizenship of those individuals coming from North African countries is particularly stressed: in Italy the term “<sup>719</sup>Moroccan” is often used indiscriminately to indicate migrants, including those who are not of Moroccan nationality but come from other parts of Africa, thus assuming a derogatory connotation. The choice of highlighting the Moroccan and Tunisian origins of the deportees might thus arise from an ill-concealed intent to underline, in a pejorative way, the nationality of several deportees, as a sort of aggravating circumstance.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the expulsions enforced between 2015 and 2017 by Italy to prevent and counter terrorism provides a rich insight on the individual pathways of radicalisation undertaken in the Italian context by 237

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<sup>715</sup> See, for example, Jenny Cuffe, ‘Salafism: Why ultra-conservative Islam is finding support in post-revolution Egypt’, BBC, 16 October 2012, [internet] available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19914763> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>716</sup> See, for example, Assaf Moghadam, ‘Motives for martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the spread of suicide attacks’, *International Security*, 33:3 (2009), pp. 46-78; Jialun Qin et al., ‘Analyzing terrorist networks: A case study of the global salafi jihad network’, *International Conference on Intelligence and Security Informatics*, Berlin, 2005

<sup>717</sup> See, for example, European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, ‘The involvement of Salafism/ Wahhabism in the support and supply of arms to rebel groups around the world’, June 2013, [internet] available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/457137/EXPO-AFET\\_ET\(2013\)457137\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/457137/EXPO-AFET_ET(2013)457137_EN.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>718</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 220

<sup>719</sup> Enrico Caniglia, ‘I codici deontologici alla prova. La regola di rilevanza nella rappresentazione giornalistica delle minoranze’, *Problemi dell'informazione*, 44:2 (2019), p. 324

individuals. In addition, the choice of conducting such an assessment through the lenses and voices of the media, including institutional ones, has served as a unique opportunity to understand how the phenomenon of terrorism is narrated and, thus, co-constructed in the Italian context.

The socio-demographic profiles of the expelled people, when disclosed, reveal that deportees are mainly young male adults aged between 18 and 40 years old. This data is in line with the overall trends observed across Europe.: a study conducted by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) on approximately 4000 foreign fighters, for example, reports FTFs being primarily male and aged between eighteen and mid-to-late twenties<sup>720</sup>. From data gathered, the number of female deportees is limited to seven cases, with four implying a direct family relationship with another individual, either the husband or the brother, expelled simultaneously. The impact of family ties on engagement into terrorist activities is not new and has been already observed playing a significant influence on “the dynamics of group radicalisation of ‘Italian’ jihadists who recently decided to join IS in Syria and Iraq”<sup>721</sup>. The information retrieved regarding the place of residence or stay reveals that individuals were mainly living in the north of the country when the deportation occurred. This finding is coherent with the conclusions drawn by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate regarding the extent of terrorist activities in northern Italy and might be explained by several factors. First, northern regions have historically been hosting networks and groups affiliated to Islamist terrorist movements: in the 90s, the Islamic Cultural Institute (ICI) in Milan, for example, commonly known as the mosque of Viale Jenner mosque, functioned as a reference point for many combatants willing to travel to Bosnia, providing logistical and financial support<sup>722</sup>. In addition to a long-lasting presence of terrorist actors, northern regions might also have attracted foreigners in search for a professional career and better economic opportunities: migrants might have been confronted with a different reality characterized by poor living and working conditions, which could have fueled frustration and grievances, commonly considered as a strong push factor in the process of radicalisation<sup>723</sup>. Finally, it is worthy to note that in several cases expelled individuals were living in small towns or rural areas within provincial settings: this housing choice could be linked to the attempt to pass unnoticed while carrying out illegal activities or could, on the contrary, have contributed to the radicalisation process resulting from the difficulty of integrating into small rural communities.

The analysis of media articles and ministerial press releases served not only as a tool to better understand and identify socio-demographic trends and patterns among individuals suspected of having engaged into terrorist activities but also as a lens to assess how terrorism and radicalisation are presented and narrated in Italy. The examination and interpretation of 346 selected texts shed light on some interesting dynamics, starting from an underlying narrative referred to the deportees as a distant category characterized by different religious beliefs and diverse nationalities. The representation that emerges is that of a group that has nothing to share with the Italian community and culture. Such an approach can, potentially, have an impact on indirectly providing justification for discriminatory behaviours towards the “others” and, especially, towards certain categories perceived as more dangerous, such as Muslims or North Africans. When deciding which identity categories to report while describing an offence, media and institutions play a

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<sup>720</sup> Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, eds., *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2016, p. 51, [internet] available at: [https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>721</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Ties that Bind: Dynamics of Group Radicalisation in Italy’s Jihadists Headed for Syria and Iraq’, *The International Spectator*, 52:3 (2017), p. 60

<sup>722</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, pp. 31-32

<sup>723</sup> Randy Borum, ‘Radicalisation into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research’, *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4 (2011), pp. 38-39

remarkable influential role on the public opinion as the readers, consciously and unconsciously, tend to think that those categories have been used because of their relevance in explaining the facts<sup>724</sup>. Several studies have demonstrated that news contribute to stereotypical thinking<sup>725</sup> and in the aftermath of 9/11 Western media have promoted a remarkable increased focus on Muslim, Islam and the Arab word<sup>726</sup>. The terrorist attacks occurred in the US and in Europe have been accompanied by media reports that tend to decontextualizes faith, mis-represent religion and portray Muslims as a separate and distinguished community<sup>727</sup>. This results to be true also for the coverage of expulsions enforced in Italy after 2015, for which emphasis is attributed to the religious nature of the phenomenon as well as its connection with certain nationalities. The use of ethnic or religious categories to describe the phenomenon might not only be dangerous in terms of further polarization of the society and overlapping between anti-migrant rhetoric and terrorism criminalization<sup>728</sup> but could also diverge from a deeper analysis of the root causes of radicalisation. As a matter of fact, not much information is reported in the examined articles with reference to the process of radicalisation, besides two main recurrent spaces mentioned as environment in which signs of radicalisation have manifested, namely the internet and the penitentiary settings. The online world is often exploited by extremist groups to spread propaganda and to attract the attention and support of individuals who, for diverse reasons, find themselves vulnerable to the attraction exercised by the proposed messages. In turn, online platforms are easily accessible for radicalized individuals to connect with like-minded others, to collect material that might further increase engagement into violence as well as to spread their perspectives. Similarly, the prison environment as well can be a conducive environment in the sense that inmates are in a vulnerable position, deprived of their socio-economic status and with little access to social relationships. In such a condition, establishing contacts with certain networks and embracing an ideological standpoint could provide an answer to personal grievances and a strategy to cope with the challenging surrounding situation. Unfortunately, the texts scrutinized do not provide rich details on the impact of the internet or the detention on the radicalisation paths of the concerned individuals: the lack of information in this regard can be justified by several reasons, including the difficulties for journalists to access this type of data as well as the sensitivity of the topic under consideration. The most recurrent references concern the use of social media by deportees to exchange photos, videos and other material with other extremists<sup>729</sup> as well as to express enthusiasm following terrorist attacks, such as the Charlie Hebdo massacre.

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<sup>724</sup> Enrico Caniglia, 'I codici deontologici alla prova. La regola di rilevanza nella rappresentazione giornalistica delle minoranze', *Problemi dell'informazione*, 44:2 (2019), p. 329

<sup>725</sup> Travis L. Dixon, 'Good guys are still always in white? Positive change and continued misrepresentation of race and crime on local television news', *Communication Research*, 44:6 (2017), p. 777

<sup>726</sup> Brigitte Lebens Nacos, *Mass-mediated terrorism: The central role of the media in terrorism and counterterrorism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 55

<sup>727</sup> Hilary E. Kahn, 'The vision behind Muslim voices', p. 3 in Rosemary Pennington and Hilary E. Kahn, eds.. *On Islam: Muslims and the Media* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018)

<sup>728</sup> Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, 'Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants' Expulsions for Security Reasons', *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), p. 276

<sup>729</sup> The expressions most frequently retrieved in the analysed articles are "Islamic extremists" ("estremisti islamici") or "anti-Western extremists". See, for example, Alan Conti e Massimiliano Bona, 'Diana spinta verso l'Islam dal marito', *Alto Adige*, 21 August 2015, [internet] available at: <http://www.altoadige.it/cronaca/bolzano/diana-spinta-verso-l-islam-dal-marito-1.86587> (last accessed on 28 February 2021); 'Terrorismo espulso foreign fighter con contatti nella Bassa', *Prima Brescia*, 29 Dicembre 2017, [internet] available at: <https://brescia7settegiorni.it/cronaca/terrorismo-espulso-foreign-fighter-con-contatti-nella-bassa/> (last accessed on 28 February 2021); 'Brescia, operazione antiterrorismo dei Ros: fermato un pakistano di trent'anni', *La Repubblica*, 18 March 2015, [internet] available at: [https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/03/18/news/brescia\\_fermato\\_per\\_terrorismo\\_un\\_30enne\\_pakistano\\_l\\_operazione\\_dei\\_ros-109849169/?ref=search](https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/03/18/news/brescia_fermato_per_terrorismo_un_30enne_pakistano_l_operazione_dei_ros-109849169/?ref=search) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

The analysis and interpretation of the texts, combined with the incremental use of deportation measures in the past years, allow for a final consideration on the representation of the phenomenon as an emerging and emergency threat. The Minister of Interior, Angelino Alfano first and Marco Minniti as of December 2016, is represented as the undisputed protagonist in dealing with the issuance of the provisions of expulsion. The role of other actors, especially in the investigative efforts aimed at collecting evidence on the suspected involvement into terrorism, does not emerge as crucial as the decision-making power exercised by the Minister. In addition, a significant lower use of the terms connected to the activities carried out by the prosecutors has been observed, supporting the idea put forward by relevant literature as well as practitioners that Italy has been approaching the threats posed by terrorism through a short-term emergency approach. The choice of adopting emergency provisions, common in many countries following 9/11, the Madrid and London bombings, and the multiple attacks occurred in France, has deep historical roots in the Italian experience in dealing with terrorism: Italy has managed the issue of terrorism in the 70s and 80s by empowering the role of the secret services, by adopting emergency legislation and by prioritizing repressive measures<sup>730</sup>. The experience of Italy in dealing with the years of lead has shown that it is key to have a deep understanding of the work and structure of terrorist organizations to counter them and that it is important to also devote attention and resources to social reintegration of former terrorists<sup>731</sup>: a massive use of deportations might thus entail counterproductive consequences as such provisions move, in time and space, a problem that will still need to be addressed in the long-term. Deportations are usually enforced when “there is evidence that an individual is a threat to national security but the evidence is considered insufficient for prosecution”<sup>732</sup>: after having strengthened the repressive nature of its anti-terrorism apparatus, Italy needs to expand its policies and provisions to prevent and counter radicalisation as a strategy to combat terrorism.

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<sup>730</sup> Donatella Della Porta, ‘Institutional responses to terrorism: The Italian case’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 4:4 (1992), pp. 151-170

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid*, p. 168

<sup>732</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘The Italian Way of Counterterrorism: From a Consolidated Experience to an Integrated Approach’, in Romaniuk, S. N. et al., eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Policy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 491-492

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*Ufficiale*, 41 (19 February 2015) converted with amendments by the Italian Parliament into Law 43 of 17 April 2015, 'Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 18 febbraio 2015, n. 7, recante misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonché proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 91 (20 April 2015), 1-7

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## Chapter 7 – Findings and conclusions on the Islamist radicalisation process: a critical analysis of how it occurs and how it is narrated and acted upon in Italy

### *Terrorism popularity in the international debate: reasons and reasoning behind the current research project*

The collapse of the Twin Towers in September 2001, the bombings in Madrid (2004) and in London (2005), the coordinated attacks in Paris in November 2015, the bombings in Brussels in 2016 and many other episodes of violence and death have revealed Western vulnerability to terrorism. Europe has been hit by a series of attacks perpetrated either by coordinated cells or isolated individuals and has been witnessing the departure of thousands of civilians to join the Syrian and Iraqi battlefields as foreign terrorist fighters. Contrary to the continent's previous experience of terrorist organizations and movements, often linked to socio-political and national-specific demands, most recent manifestations of terrorism have shed light on a cross-cutting phenomenon which shows similar features despite the different geographical contexts in which individuals and groups operate. Rapoport refers to it as the fourth wave of terrorism, initiated in the 1990s and mainly characterized by the contrast between Islam and Western<sup>733</sup>. According to Neumann, the clash between Islam, the colonial era and Western modernity has led to Islamism and the Islamic State has been able to build on al-Qaeda experience to initiate the fifth wave of terrorism<sup>734</sup>. The different attempts to elaborate a definition of, to develop an understanding on and to efficiently manage the current terrorist threat have generated a broad set of theoretical perspectives accompanied by the implementation of several and, sometimes, diverse practical approaches to address the situation.

The renovated interest on terrorism has gone hand in hand with numerous efforts to understand its underlying reasons and root causes. However, given the scope and the brutal nature of the events, some resistances, defensive behaviors and forms of reticence emerged and prevented, somehow, to directly mention and talk about certain aspects: in particular, the concept of roots of terrorism has become a taboo as, for some, such an understanding implied an attempt to justify the violent actions carried out by terrorists<sup>735</sup>. New expressions have been coined within the international debate, among which the term radicalisation has achieved incredible popularity in the press as well as in the academia<sup>736</sup> and has served as a proxy to address the reasons for engagement into terrorism. Despite the existence of different interpretations and definitions<sup>737</sup>, it is commonly recognized that radicalisation refers to the process by which an individual develops extremist ideologies and beliefs<sup>738</sup>. After 9/11, practitioners and scholars' efforts have

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<sup>733</sup> David Rapoport, 'The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism', in A. Cronin and J. Ludes, eds., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), p. 47

<sup>734</sup> Peter R. Neumann, *Radicalized: New Jihadists and the threat to the West*, Kindle version (London: IB Tauris, 2016), Chapter 8, para. 3

<sup>735</sup> Peter R. Neumann, 'Perspectives on Radicalisation and Political Violence: Papers from the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence', *International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, 17–18 January 2008, p. 4, [internet] available at: <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/Perspectives-on-Radicalisation-Political-Violence.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>736</sup> Mark Sedgwick, 'The concept of radicalisation as a source of confusion', *Terrorism and political violence*, 22:4 (2010), p. 480

<sup>737</sup> Peter R. Neumann, 'The trouble with radicalisation', *International affairs*, 89:4 (2003), pp. 873-893

<sup>738</sup> Randy Borum, 'Radicalisation into violent extremism I: A review of social science theories', *Journal of strategic security*, 4:4 (2011), p. 9

focused on understanding and describing these dynamics as a way to disclose why and how people adopt extremist ideas and how such a behavioral and cognitive process is connected to engagement into violence. This research project contributes to enrich the current debate in this regard by drawing some considerations regarding the process of radicalisation within the framework of the Italian case-study. The study focused on a set of phenomena, episodes, and trajectories related to a single frame of analysis ascribable, in general terms, to Islamism<sup>739</sup>, in the attempt to analyse how radicalisation is seen, understood and narrated by institutions, experts, professionals and the media and to provide an answer to the following research questions: what are the relevant institutions, experts and professionals' conceptual interpretations of terrorism and radicalisation?; How does - according to the relevant institutions, experts and professionals - the Islamist radicalisation process occur in Italy?; How can the phenomenon of radicalisation be prevented and countered according to the relevant institutions, experts and professionals? The data collected and the conclusions drawn have allowed for the elaboration of original inputs on the meaning(s) of Islamist radicalisation in the Italian context, on the pathways to radicalisation according to relevant stakeholders and on the institutional and professional responses to the phenomenon.

Developing and promoting radical ideas shall not be classified in a cursory manner as an attitude to be deplored. As a matter of fact, although radicalisation entails a negative connotation, ideas that are extreme to the dominant system of beliefs can also be at the basis of remarkable and positive changes in society. Drawing a distinction between positive and negative impacts related to radical pathways is very controversial: some scholars have tried to differentiate between radicalism and activism, defining the former as engagement into violent and illegal actions and the latter as engagement into legal and non-violent actions<sup>740</sup>. For the purpose of this study no preconceived definition was adopted in terms of lawfulness of the acts nor with regards to the degree of violence occurring as a result of the process with the aim of letting the description of the phenomenon emerging from the data collected. However, it is worthy to underline that the research has been inspired by the overall idea that terrorism, conceived as one of the end results of radicalisation, cannot be merely reduced to the occurrence of violent episodes objectively knowable. On the contrary, the underpinning epistemological and ontological perspectives which guided this project frame terrorism as a complex phenomenon, which can be understood only by taking into consideration both the facts occurred, the individual pathways of radicalisation as well as the surrounding discourse that narrate terrorism and has an impact on how it is portrayed, perceived and, consequently, co-constructed within society<sup>741</sup>. Within this framework, individual radicalisation patterns have been analysed through the understanding and representations elaborated by relevant institutions, experts and professional categories, including the media sector: the examination of these multiple and complementary perspectives has

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<sup>739</sup> The author is aware of the limitations and implications arising from the terminology chosen for the current project. The term Islamism is not neutral and has experienced an increased popularity after 9/11 in association with a political interpretation of Islam. Defining Islamism as the political movement of the advocates of contemporary political Islam has some impact in terms of depoliticization and disempowerment of some of the instances brought forward by Islam in the political arena. Aware of these risks, the author does not engage into a comprehensive assessment of the differences between Islam and Islamism as this would be out of the scope of the current project. However, the author does embrace the idea that these two concepts are different and uses the term Islamism in line with the use that it is commonly retrieved among terrorist scholars such as Roy and Kepel, thus referring to a totalitarian *weltanschauung* linked to the world political order and structure.

<sup>740</sup> Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, 'Measuring political mobilization: The distinction between activism and radicalism', *Terrorism and political violence*, 21:2 (2009), p. 257

<sup>741</sup> Rainer Hülse and Alexander Spencer, 'The metaphor of terror: Terrorism studies and the constructivist turn', *Security Dialogue*, 39:6 (2008), pp. 571-592

functioned as a proxy for the elaboration of an overall description of the reasons for, phases of and consequences of Islamist radicalisation in the Italian context while also providing an insight of how the phenomenon is experienced and narrated by relevant actors.

### *From theory to practice*

The concepts of radicalisation and its relationship with engagement into violence and terrorism are undoubtedly complex to unpack and can be approached from very different perspectives, both in terms of theoretical analysis as well as concrete measures to handle these phenomena.

Within the academia, the topics under consideration can and have been studied from multiple disciplinary viewpoints, ranging from the broader perspective of the international relations to the individual focus of psychology. Although each angle of analysis has contributed to enriching the debate by highlighting specific and peculiar aspects, a comprehensive perspective that takes into account the main theories and findings of the different disciplines involved is often missing. The current project has begun with an attempt to address this gap by developing a multidisciplinary framework of analysis based on the connections and synergies identified among the main existing theories approaching the topic both from an individual behavioural as well as a systemic perspective. Three recurrent levels of analysis have emerged from the literature review, namely the micro, related to the individual sphere, the meso, linked to the group and organizational dynamics, and the macro, strictly connected to environmental and contextual explanations. Because of the nature of the topic under consideration, research on the root causes of radicalisation and terrorism encompasses all these three levels of analysis and requires a focus on both push and pull factors, with the former concerning the elements that drive individuals towards engagement into violence and the latter comprising the “aspects that make extremist groups and lifestyles appealing to some people”<sup>742</sup>.

Practical measures aimed at managing radicalisation and terrorism have been sharing challenges similar to the ones identified at theoretical level, starting with the lack of a comprehensive approach and the limited availability of primary data to inform and guide actions and operations. Furthermore, as witnessed in the academia<sup>743</sup>, a renewed interest in the subject can be observed in the aftermath of 9/11, with a significant attention of international actors such as the United Nations and the European Union on repressive strategies to halt the threat posed by terrorism. Italy does not differ from the general trends and has been prioritizing repressive measures with limited investments aimed at developing tailored preventing policies and at further expanding knowledge on the topic to better shape and inform the national counter-terrorism response. The current project partially contributes to address this gap through the collection and analysis of primary data on Islamist radicalisation occurring in Italy, including the narration that is promoted of it by relevant stakeholders. Italy represents an interesting case-study in the field of terrorism as the country has been severely hit by terrorism during the years of lead while, recently, it has experienced only minor episodes of

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<sup>742</sup> Matteo Vergani et al., ‘The three Ps of radicalisation: Push, pull and personal. A systematic scoping review of the scientific evidence about radicalisation into violent extremism, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43.10 (2020), p. 856

<sup>743</sup> Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy and Alison Sherley, ‘Are Counter-terrorism Strategies Effective? The Results of the Campbell Systematic Review on Counter-terrorism Evaluation Research’, *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 2:4 (November 2006), pp. 489–516

Islamist-driven violence<sup>744</sup> and has registered limited numbers of foreign terrorist fighters joining the Syrian and Iraqi battlefield<sup>745</sup>.

### *The Italian case-study*

The terrorism threat in Italy is dealt by various actors affiliated to diverse sectors. The concerned institutions comprise different ministries, from the Ministry of Interior, to the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Economics and Finance and other departments and agencies under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister, while investigations on terrorism related offences are primarily coordinated by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate. Other professional categories are also involved in managing, assessing and addressing the challenges posed by radicalisation leading to terrorism in Italy, including prison staff, psychologists, lawyers dealing, scholars, journalists, teachers, religious leaders and members of civil society organizations.

A combination of diverse data has been examined in the attempt to understand how the Islamist radicalisation process occurs and is conceptualized by these actors. In particular, the analysis of the reports by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate has allowed for an assessment of how the threat is portrayed and dealt by national institutions, while interviews with experts and professionals have shed light on multisectoral perspectives on radicalisation and the examination of media articles has provided inputs to understand how the phenomenon is narrated. Main considerations and findings are presented and discussed in the following paragraphs. Although the current research has a limited focus on a unique case-study and presents a prominent descriptive nature, it nevertheless represents a valuable contribution to address the gaps and lacunae in the existing literature and research on the “new waves of terrorism” in the Italian context<sup>746</sup>.

### *Institutional perspectives*

Despite an already advanced anti-terrorism apparatus inherited from the years of lead, Italy has promoted the adoption of a new legislative framework in the aftermath of 9/11, mainly characterized by emergency measures and guided by an underlying repressive spirit. New provisions included a stricter regulation of migration flows<sup>747</sup>, the possible use of preventive and judicial interceptions<sup>748</sup>, increased possibilities of

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<sup>744</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 31

<sup>745</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ICCT-Marone-Italys-Jihadists-in-the-Syrian-Civil-War-August2016-1.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>746</sup> See Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014; Lorenzo Vidino, ‘The Buccinasco pentiti: a unique case study of radicalization’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:3 (2011), pp. 398-418; Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Radicalization, Linkage and Diversity: Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe’, Occasional Paper, *RAND Corporation*, July 2011; Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016; Francesco Marone, ‘Italian Jihadists in Syria and Iraq’, *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 7:1 (2016), pp. 20-35; Andrea Beccaro and Stefano Bonino, ‘Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Italian Exceptionalism and Its Limits’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2019), pp. 1-18

<sup>747</sup> Elena Dal Santo, ‘How the War on Terrorism Affected Migration Policies in Europe in the Aftermath of 9/11: EU Reaction in Comparison with Italian Response’, *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights*, 3 (September-December 2012), pp. 86-87

<sup>748</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 374 of 18 October 2001, ‘Disposizioni Urgenti per Contrastare il Terrorismo Internazionale’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 244 (19 October 2001) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 438 of 15 December 2001, ‘Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 18 ottobre 2001, n. 374, recante disposizioni urgenti per contrastare il terrorismo internazionale’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 293 (18 December 2001), pp. 7-12

enforcing deportations for national security reasons<sup>749</sup> and further regulations to handle the issue of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>750</sup>, including the criminalization of preparatory acts for the participation in conflicts abroad in support of terrorist organizations. While several efforts have been put forward to strengthen the repressive apparatus and despite the attempt to also establish a coordinated policy to prevent radicalisation<sup>751</sup>, the Italian context still lacks a national preventive strategy.

Investigations on terrorism related offences, coordinated at national level by the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, provide a valuable source of data to shed light on the different aspects of the phenomenon and their interpretation according to the institutional standpoint. According to the DNA, in Italy terrorism activities mainly comprise recruitment and transfer of new recruits to war zones, fundraising, and collecting arms and weapons, also in synergy with organized criminal groups. Propaganda is predominantly spread through online platforms, although some other contexts, such as reception centres for asylum seekers and migrants, are also exploited as potential pools for recruitment. Investigative findings confirm that there is no one unique profile among radicalized individuals. Notwithstanding, some factors increase vulnerability, such as economic fragility, social or emotional distress, and a sense of neglect and alienation towards the surrounding context. All these elements are seen, by the Directorate, as particularly common among second-generation migrants.

#### *Experts and professionals' perspectives*

Data collected from interviews with experts and professionals confirm that radicalisation is commonly understood as a process that leads to the adoption of a set of values that are extreme compared to those prevailing in the reference society, with a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam being often referred to in religiously motivated radicalisation pathways. While for some radicalisation is characterized by a violent nature, for others it does not necessarily imply the use of violence. Although identity troubles and alienation from the surrounding context are commonly referred to among the typical phases of a radicalisation pathway, no agreement can be observed in the attempt to define the key steps of radicalisation. Many elements are identified as increasing vulnerability and exposure to radicalisation: grievances and frustrations, marginalization, a sense of alienation and disconnection from mainstream values, clashes with the dominant system of thought, challenges in finding a meaning in life, economic fragility and conducive group dynamics related to family and friends. While these aspects apply to theoretical reflections on the phenomenon, they have also been identified as the most recurrent factors playing a role on radicalisation occurring within the Italian context. Radicalisation pathways can ultimately terminate with engagement into terrorist violence.

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<sup>749</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 144 of 27 July 2005, 'Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 173 (27 July 2005) converted by the Italian Parliament into Law 155 of 31 July 2005, 'Conversione in Legge, con Modificazioni, del Decreto-Legge 27 luglio 2005, n. 144, Recante Misure Urgenti per il Contrasto del Terrorismo Internazionale', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 177 (1 August 2005), pp. 27-30

<sup>750</sup> Italian Council of Ministers, Decree Law 7 of 18 February 2015, 'Misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 41 (19 February 2015) converted with amendments by the Italian Parliament into Law 43 of 17 April 2015, 'Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 18 febbraio 2015, n. 7, recante misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo, anche di matrice internazionale, nonche' proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia, iniziative di cooperazione allo sviluppo e sostegno ai processi di ricostruzione e partecipazione alle iniziative delle Organizzazioni internazionali per il consolidamento dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 91 (20 April 2015), pp. 1-7

<sup>751</sup> Italian Parliament, Draft Law S2883 approved by the Lower House on 18 July 2017, 'Misure per la prevenzione della radicalizzazione e dell'estremismo violento di matrice jihadista'

Some environments seem to favor the switch to violence mainly because of the opportunities of aggregation they offer: internet, mosques and prisons are perceived as the most prominent ones in this regard. Preventing and countering radicalisation require, according to experts and professionals, enhanced social integration, tailored alternative narratives, and the involvement of many different stakeholders, including families, teachers, law enforcement agencies and religious leaders. These measures shall also be coupled with short-term provisions to prevent attacks, among which deportations seem to be particularly effective. While Italy can count on a solid anti-terrorism experience gained during the years of lead, the limited extent of the phenomenon in the peninsula is mainly explained as the result of the recent and slight nature of the migratory flows towards Italy and the lack of a preventive strategy might negatively affect the situation in the long-term, especially considering that the benefits of prevention are greater if adopted as early as possible.

### *Media narrative*

In the past years, Italy has often resorted to deportations to remove potential and perceived terrorist threats from its territory. This approach has become particularly popular after the Charlie Hebdo shooting of January 2015, with a total number of 237 foreigners expelled from Italy between 2015 and 2017. Deportees were mainly young male adults living in the north of the country, where the majority of terrorist activities take place according to investigative findings.

The way in which life-histories and trajectories of violence of the expelled individuals have been reported by the media and ministerial communication tools provides an interpretative window on how terrorism and radicalisation are perceived, presented and narrated in Italy. The underlying narrative is built around the conceptualization of the expelled individuals as a diverse group distinguished from Italian culture, customs and traditions by different religious beliefs and diverse nationalities. This narrative process highlights some specific characteristics when describing deportees, mainly referring to them as Muslims and North Africans, which might increase overlapping between anti-migrant rhetoric and terrorism criminalization<sup>752</sup> while overshadowing a deeper analysis of the root causes of radicalisation. Internet and prisons are referred to as environments in which radicalisation is recurrent. Online platforms are exploited to both spread and consume propaganda material and to establish contacts with others. Social media, in particular, are often used to exchange photos, videos and other materials as well as to express enthusiasm following terrorist attacks. Prisons serve as a favorable environment to both spread as well as to adopt an ideological discourse in virtue of the vulnerabilities experienced by inmates in detention. Another aspect emerging from the language and narrative employed by the media in reporting deportations is related to the fact that the threat under consideration is commonly portrayed as an emergency requiring a strong involvement by the executive power to be efficiently and effectively address in the short-term.

### *How does Islamist radicalisation occur in Italy according to the interpretations and conceptualizations put forward by relevant stakeholders?*

Through the analysis of the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate reports, the interviews with representatives belonging to different institutional and professional sectors and the examination of media articles and ministerial press releases on deportations some key findings have been identified regarding the main research question guiding this project, namely how does Islamist radicalisation occur in Italy. The Italian

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<sup>752</sup> Anna Elia and Valentina Fedele, 'Immigration, Islamic Radicalisation and Security Policies in Italy: Reflections around Migrants' Expulsions for Security Reasons', *Polis*, 35:2 (2020), p. 276

panorama, in line with the international one<sup>753</sup>, struggles with the identification of a unique and agreed upon definition of the term radicalisation. Although the concept is not related a priori to a specific ideology, the expression is commonly referred to in connection with a radical interpretation of Islamist political demands, in line with the international debate developed after 9/11 and predominantly focused on the threat posed by Al-Qaeda, ISIS and other affiliated groups. Within such a framework, it is often used in connection to the notion of terrorism. Despite the availability of primary data pertaining to the phenomenon and resulting from investigative activities as well as direct professional experience with radicalized individuals, knowledge of the phenomenon in Italy seems to suffer from the lack of systematic data collection and analysis coordinated at national level. Consequently, insight on how radicalisation occurs remains anchored to a sectorial and mainly anecdotal vision.

#### *Who are the radicalized individuals in Italy?*

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned limitations, some aspects and elements emerge from the research as key characteristics of the Islamist radicalisation process occurring in Italy. First of all, it unsurprisingly concerns mainly young male adults, in line with the trends observed at European<sup>754</sup> and national<sup>755</sup> level with regards to the demographics of foreign terrorist fighters as well as, more broadly, with rates of engagement in crimes at international level, revealing a significant preponderance of criminal acts being perpetrated by young people primarily under 25 years old and male<sup>756</sup>. However, cases of radicalisation pathways concerning also other profiles have been observed, including episodes in which entire families have ultimately engaged into terrorist activities such as joining ISIS in Syria and Iraq. This is the case, for example, of Mohamed Koraichi and his family, who travelled to Syria in 2015; of Sergio Maria Giulia, one of the most famous Italian foreign fighters, who convinced her parents and sister to leave for Syria; of Ahmed Taskour, his wife and two children who travelled to ISIS-controlled territories at the end of 2014; of Berisha Valbona, who joined ISIS in Syria with her 6 years old son<sup>757</sup>.

Investigations on terrorist activities as well as data on expelled individuals show that the phenomenon is more common in the northern regions of the country. The economic and financial opportunities available in the north of Italy and, in particular, in the region of Lombardia attract terrorist networks for funding purposes<sup>758</sup>. Furthermore, groups affiliated to Islamist terrorist movements have been operating from

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<sup>753</sup> Alex P. Schmid, 'Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review', *ICCT Research Paper*, 97:1 (2013), pp. 1-22

<sup>754</sup> Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, eds., *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2016, p. 51, [internet] available at: [https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>755</sup> Francesco Marone and Lorenzo Vidino, 'Destinazione Jihad: I Foreign Fighters d'Italia', *ISPI*, June 2018, pp. 35-36, [internet] available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/foreignfighter.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021); Alessandro Boncio, 'Italian Foreign terrorist fighters: a quantitative analysis of radicalisation risk factors', in Alessandro Niglia, Amer Al Sabaileh, and Amani Hammad, eds. *Countering Terrorism, Preventing Radicalisation and Protecting Cultural Heritage: The Role of Human Factors and Technology* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2017), p. 47

<sup>756</sup> Kevin M. Beaver, James Christopher Barnes and Brian B. Boutwell, *The nurture versus biosocial debate in criminology: On the origins of criminal behavior and criminality*, eds. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014)

<sup>757</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016', Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>758</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, 'Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2008 – 30 giugno 2009', Rome, December 2009

Lombardia, and from Milan in particular, since the 90s<sup>759</sup>, with a renewed presence affiliated to Al-Qaida detected in the aftermath on the attack to the Twin Tower<sup>760</sup>. The trend is confirmed by the number of people expelled between 2015 and 2017: out of 161 deportees for which information on the place of residence was retrieved, 60% were living in northern regions and, in particular, in Lombardia (35), Piemonte (17), Veneto (16), Emilia Romagna (15), Trentino Alto Adige (5), Friuli Venezia Giulia (4), Liguria (4). The presence of funding opportunities increases avenues of collaboration between terrorist organizations and organized criminal groups: while terrorist groups and organized crime pursue different ends, they exploit similar methods to operate<sup>761</sup> and investigations confirm that forms of cooperation can be traced in Italy as well when it comes to illicit trafficking, money laundry and narco-trafficking<sup>762</sup>.

### *Vulnerability factors in the Italian context*

The current research has identified some vulnerability factors that expose individuals to the risk of radicalisation in the Italian context. Many authors have discussed elements that increase possible engagement into radicalisation pathways. Horgan, for example, includes among the “predisposing risk factors” emotional vulnerability; dissatisfaction with current activity; identification with the victims; conceptualization of violence as not immoral; sense of reward arising from the engagement; family/social ties to people sharing similar feelings and experiences<sup>763</sup>. Neumann claims that involvement into terrorist acts requires grievances, ideology and recruitment<sup>764</sup>. Orsini has elaborated the DRIA model, in which the first phase is represented by the disintegration of the social identity (D), followed by the reconstruction of the social identity through a radical ideology (R), the integration in a revolutionary sect (I), and the alienation from the surrounding environment (A)<sup>765</sup>. All these theories and explanations put forward valuable perspectives and interpretative tools to understand radicalisation, while most probably none of them is truer than the others given the very complex, context-dependent and individual nature of the phenomenon. The data analysed through this project contribute to expand the discussion with reference to the predisposing aspects relevant for the Italian context. Elements described below have been clustered into three main categories based on the level on which they produce an impact, namely individual risk factors pertaining to the micro level of analysis, social ties exercising an effect on radicalisation at meso level, and broader contextual aspects connected to the macro level of analysis. Although categorization is useful to structure the discussion, it is worthy to underline that the items described below are strictly interconnected and produce impacts at different stages. At micro level, radicalisation in Italy is related to emotional vulnerability and identity troubles, alienation and disillusion, direct and indirect frustration, and feeling of reward from participation. Challenges connected to emotional distress and identity troubles are reported both by the

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<sup>759</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, pp. 31-32

<sup>760</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Discorso inaugurale anno giudiziario 2003’, Rome, 18 October 2002

<sup>761</sup> Louise I. Shelley and John T. Picarelli. ‘Methods not motives: Implications of the convergence of international organized crime and terrorism’, *Police Practice and Research*, 3:4 (2002), p. 306

<sup>762</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2009 – 30 giugno 2010’, Rome, December 2010

<sup>763</sup> John Horgan, ‘From profiles to pathways and roots to routes: Perspectives from psychology on radicalisation into terrorism’, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618:1 (2008), pp. 84-85

<sup>764</sup> Peter R. Neumann, *Joining al-Qaeda: jihadist recruitment in Europe* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 7

<sup>765</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The religious mind-set of modern terrorists* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 67

investigative findings of the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate as well as by experts working on terrorism and counter-terrorism in the national setting. Identity issues are generally quite common among adolescents and young adults, who also represent the most recurrent profile among detected radicalized individuals. In a period of existential fragility and at the beginning of their quest for meaning, teenagers and young adults might turn to violence to seek purpose<sup>766</sup>, self-esteem and a meaning in their life trajectory<sup>767</sup>. Furthermore, psychological suffering, general feelings of malaise, frustrations and disillusion are particularly common among migrants, as a result of a lack of effective integration and as an effect of direct and indirect discriminatory experiences. Because of the inherent fragility of their status, the DNA identifies second-generation migrants as an at-risk group<sup>768</sup>, whose radicalisation might be facilitated by online propaganda and by the links with extremist compatriots and fellow migrants<sup>769</sup>. Emotional distress is closely related to alienation and disillusion, that frequently occur in many of the settings in which radicalisation is observed, ranging from prisons to rural areas in the north of the country from where many individuals have been expelled in light of the (alleged) threat posed to national security. While the alienative effects of incarceration are generally recognized<sup>770</sup>, feelings of disaffection and disillusionment might be an interesting aspect to further study among individuals deported from northern Italy and rural areas. Although the data collected do not provide an insight on the psychological situation of these people, their residential contexts suggest that forms of dissatisfaction might result from disappointed expectations linked to poor living and working conditions or unwelcoming social contexts. Frustration might also derive from a process of identification with victims of injustice and unfair treatment. Such a feeling is reported, for example, in the messages by Mohamed Koraichi, who travelled to Syria with his entire family in 2015: “Abderrahim, you must know, how the current situation of Muslims [is], [they have been] humiliated [...]. You have to take revenge on them, revenge on Muslims. You have to spit in their face, take out your knives, you must never show pity on them, I swear they don't deserve it, they are enemies of God and his Prophet [...]”<sup>771</sup>. Taking the sides of and defending victims is also very much connected to the feeling of reward resulting from active participation and action in halting injustices. Koraichi claims “I swear, there is happiness when you are there fighting ... you feel happy, you feel calm and even more when you kill those enemies”<sup>772</sup>. Similar feelings of satisfaction and well-being have been detected in the messages sent by Giuliano Delnevo, an Italian citizen converted to

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<sup>766</sup> Jeff Victoroff, ‘The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49: 1 (February 2005), pp. 22-23

<sup>767</sup> Saul Levine, ‘Youth in terroristic groups, gangs, and cults: The allure, the animus, and the alienation’, *Psychiatric Annals* 29.6 (1999), pp. 342-343

<sup>768</sup> The vulnerability of second-generation migrants is confirmed also by the socio-demographic features of the Italian foreign fighters. See Alessandro Boncio, ‘Italian Foreign terrorist fighters: a quantitative analysis of radicalisation risk factors’, in Alessandro Niglia, Amer Al Sabaileh, and Amani Hammad, eds. *Countering Terrorism, Preventing Radicalisation and Protecting Cultural Heritage: The Role of Human Factors and Technology* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2017), p. 47

<sup>769</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016’, Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>770</sup> Charles W. Thomas, ‘Theoretical perspectives on alienation in the prison society: An empirical test’, *Pacific Sociological Review*, 18:4 (1975), pp. 483-499

<sup>771</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016’, Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>772</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016’, Rome, 12 April 2017

Islam in 2008, very active on the Internet, who travelled to Syria where he died in 2013: in his communication to the father he states that he is happier than ever and in a message to a friend that miracles happen in Syria, where “airplanes fall down with prayers”<sup>773</sup>. While the factors described above have an impact on the individual and his/her process of radicalisation, the broader set of social ties also exercise an effect at meso level. In this regard, two environments result to be particularly favourable for spreading and consuming terrorist propaganda as well as for engaging into terrorist activities in Italy, namely the internet and the prison settings. Although the nature of the two contexts is very different, the dynamics observed are very similar: both prisons and the internet provide for a space in which establishment of relationship with like-minded individuals is facilitated and favoured by the surrounding circumstances. This is particularly true for individuals who find themselves in a vulnerable situation: although for different reasons, both the web as well as prisons are populated by people who can be experiencing personal challenges of different nature. Inmates, during the time spent in detention, are exposed to social marginalization, different forms of violence, alienation and, in certain occasions, affiliation with established groups within the penitentiary system may serve as a self-protection mechanism against the many threats present in prison<sup>774</sup>. Similarly, in contemporary society online platforms are pervasive, easy and cheap to access, entail some forms of protection towards their users, such as anonymity, and allow for targeted messages to be spread to a wide audience<sup>775</sup>. Although in 2019 the number of inmates accused of or convicted for “crimes related to international terrorism of Islamic origin” was limited to 52 detainees and the number of individuals being monitored by the Central Investigative Unit of the Penitentiary Police (NIC) for their serious connection with international terrorism and engagement in forms of proselytism, radicalisation and or recruitment (high level of threat), for their attitudes suggesting proximity to jihadist ideologies and involvement in proselytizing and recruiting activities (medium level of threat) or for initial signs of potential radicalisation (low level of threat) amounted to 104 detainees<sup>776</sup>, the data collected consistently confirm that numerous episodes of radicalisation occur in prison through the diffusion of propaganda material and the establishment of contacts facilitating engagement into terrorist networks. In a very close dynamic, the web provides for a unique environment to disseminate propaganda, recruit new members, collect funds, and coordinate communication among group affiliates. ISIS, in particular, is well known for its communication capacities and strategy, including not only the use of social media and online platforms for the diffusion of videos, messages, magazines and games but also the development of video clips, following the TV series format, applauding beheadings with sensationalism<sup>777</sup>. The findings gathered from multiple sources and stakeholders confirm that in Italy as well the internet play a central role when it comes to radicalisation: online platforms, and social media in particular, are used for the publication of photos and videos aimed at spreading extreme messages and, at the same time, they are exploited to connect with relevant members of terrorist groups and fighters operating in ISIS controlled territories to either join the organization abroad, collect further information on the group or to gather information on how to plan and perform attacks on the national

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<sup>773</sup> Matteo Vergani, ‘Neo-jihadist prosumers and Al Qaeda single narrative: The case study of Giuliano Delnevo’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37:7 (2014), p. 609

<sup>774</sup> Frank J. Cilluffo, Sharon L. Cardash and Andrew J. Whitehead, ‘Radicalisation: Behind bars and beyond borders’, *Brown J. World Aff.*, 13 (2006), p.114

<sup>775</sup> Ibid, pp.115-116

<sup>776</sup> Italian Ministry of Justice, Department of Penitentiary Administration, ‘Relazione del Ministero sull’amministrazione della giustizia anno 2019’, January 2020, pp. 587-590, [internet] available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno\\_giudiziario\\_2020\\_relazione.pdf](https://www.giustizia.it/resources/cms/documents/anno_giudiziario_2020_relazione.pdf) (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>777</sup> Marco Lombardi, ‘IS 2.0 e molto altro: il progetto di comunicazione del califfato’, in Monica Maggioni and Paolo Magri, eds. *Twitter e jihad: la comunicazione dell’Isis*, Novi Ligure: Epoké, 2015, pp. 91-132

territory<sup>778</sup>. Investigations also shed light on the role played by converts in translating these materials to further diffuse the contents. The significant importance played by the Internet cannot be decoupled from the findings presented above in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and trends: young male adults are among the most recurrent profiles of radicalized individuals and youths are the largest consumers of digital technologies, with people born since 1980 frequently referred to as “digital natives”<sup>779</sup>. As highlighted by the experts interviewed, the influence exercised by new technologies and online platforms in facilitating radicalisation is, thus, not merely inherent in the tool itself but is also deriving from the popularity of this instrument in contemporary society. Research on Italian foreign fighters confirms the familiarity and fluency of the sample with new technologies, instant messaging applications and social media<sup>780</sup>. The role of the Internet has become so crucial in the Italian context that online behaviour is considered “a proxy for potential terrorist conduct”<sup>781</sup>. Finally, available studies and research on the topic confirm that the broader environmental, socio-political, and cultural context also plays an important role<sup>782</sup>. Although this level of analysis has not been taken into consideration in the current project, some inputs have been collected by through interviews as well as the analysis of the DNA reports: while experts make reference to the side-effects of globalization, ranging from disappointed expectations to a general lack of values and reference points in contemporary society, the National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate refers to the outbreaks of civil wars and episodes of tension worldwide as favourable and conducive conditions<sup>783</sup>.

### *How is Islamist radicalisation conceptualized and addressed in Italy?*

Radicalisation, and the broader framework of terrorism in which the concept has been analysed, represent social phenomena and, as such, are constantly co-constructed by social agents through their interactions. They are social facts which do not comprise only the mere acts of violence they lead to but also a broader set of meanings deriving from “symbolic labelling, social agreement and a range of inter-subjective practices”<sup>784</sup> and through which the phenomenon is conceptualized and narrated within and by the society. In the Italian context, two main considerations can be drawn from the analysis of media coverage of the issue, also including official institutional communication, namely the fact that, despite a long-lasting presence of the threat, the phenomenon is still debated as an emergency and that terrorists and radicalized individuals are represented as the “others”.

The language and style used in the articles examined, consistently with the type of anti-terrorist measures promoted by the government, report the issues of terrorism and radicalisation as an emergency that shall be

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<sup>778</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2015 – 30 giugno 2016’, Rome, 12 April 2017

<sup>779</sup> Neil Selwyn, ‘The digital native—myth and reality’, *Aslib Proceedings: New Information Perspectives*, 61:4 (2009), p. 365

<sup>780</sup> Alessandro Boncio, ‘Italian Foreign terrorist fighters: a quantitative analysis of radicalisation risk factors’, in Alessandro Niglia, Amer Al Sabaileh, and Amani Hammad, eds. *Countering Terrorism, Preventing Radicalisation and Protecting Cultural Heritage: The Role of Human Factors and Technology* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2017), p. 47

<sup>781</sup> Silvia D'Amato, *Cultures of counterterrorism: French and Italian responses to terrorism after 9/11* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p. 205

<sup>782</sup> Nicolas Campelo et al., ‘Who are the European youths willing to engage in radicalisation? A multidisciplinary review of their psychological and social profiles’, *European psychiatry* 52 (2018), p.2

<sup>783</sup> National Anti-mafia and Anti-terrorism Directorate, ‘Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore nazionale antimafia e dalla Direzione nazionale antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso nel periodo 1° luglio 2011 – 30 giugno 2012’, Rome, December 2012

<sup>784</sup> Richard Jackson, ‘An argument for terrorism’, *Perspectives on terrorism*, 2:2 (2008), p. 28

managed and addressed by a strong executive power. The decision-making role of the Minister of Interior is invoked and applauded in issuing deportation provisions that remove the individuals labelled as sources of insecurity from the Italian territory, with the investigative efforts of the law enforcement agencies often recognized in connection to such an end result rather than within the judiciary framework. In Italy, similarly to other European countries, the concepts of terrorism and radicalisation have been incorporated into a broader security governance and a related security narrative that has penetrated the institutional domain, the public opinion as well as mainstream communication media, although the present level of vulnerability does not result to be exceptional<sup>785</sup>. On the societal level, in the past years the sense of insecurity has made citizens much more inclined to accept exceptionally severe rules<sup>786</sup>. Human beings are characterized by a deep-rooted need “to [...] believe that [...] will continue to be free of physical and psychological harm”<sup>787</sup> and that they will be able to protect their life, family and identity values. Consequently, when physical and psychological integrity is threatened, citizens, influenced by governments and mass media alarmism, tend to accept more easily the implementation of restrictive policies. The alleged “imminence of the threat”<sup>788</sup> has constructed a “quasi-permanent state of exception”<sup>789</sup>, in which justification is provided for the adoption of emergency measures that can affect civil rights and might exacerbate life-conditions of particularly vulnerable categories<sup>790</sup>.

This dynamic is further reinforced by the fact that individuals connected to terrorism, and deportees in particular, are portrayed as a separate category, as a distinguished group that does not hold the Italian citizenship and nor does it share the same values, cultural references and religious beliefs of the majority of the population. As a matter of fact, expelled individuals are defined, first of all, by their nationality, mainly linked to North African countries, and by their religion, Islam. Using ethnic or religious categories to describe the phenomenon results from and further strengthens an underlying dichotomous narrative based on the binary opposition of the “us versus them”. This perspective favours stereotypical thinking<sup>791</sup> in which the “in-group” feels as a different entity from the “out-group”, that is consequently devalued, depreciated and downgraded<sup>792</sup>. The tendency of overshadowing the «homegrown» origins of the enemy is functional in relieving the state of its responsibility in managing the issue, as the threat is perceived and narrated as an external enemy on which limited control, if any, can be exercised by decision and policy makers<sup>793</sup>.

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<sup>785</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Ellen Bal and Oscar Salemink, eds., *A World of Insecurity: Anthropological Perspectives of Human Security* (London: Pluto, 2010), p. 4

<sup>786</sup> Michael A. Hogg and Danielle L. Blaylock, eds., *Extremism and the Psychology of Uncertainty* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. xvi

<sup>787</sup> Ervin Staub, *The Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults, and Groups Help and Harm Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 56

<sup>788</sup> Didier Bigo, ‘The Emergence of a Consensus: Global Terrorism, Global Insecurity, and Global Security’, in d'Appollonia and Reich, eds., *Immigration, Integration, and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), p. 74

<sup>789</sup> Anastassia Tsoukala, ‘Security, Risk and Human Rights: A Vanishing Relationship?’, *CEPS Special Report*, (September 2008)

<sup>790</sup> Elena Dal Santo, ‘How the War on Terrorism Affected Migration Policies in Europe in the Aftermath of 9/11: EU Reaction in Comparison with Italian Response’, *Pace Diritti Umani - Peace Human Rights*, 3 (2012), pp. 75-94

<sup>791</sup> Travis L. Dixon, ‘Good guys are still always in white? Positive change and continued misrepresentation of race and crime on local television news’, *Communication Research*, 44:6 (2017), p. 777

<sup>792</sup> Ervin Staub, *The Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults, and Groups Help and Harm Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 15

<sup>793</sup> Silvia D'Amato, *Cultures of counterterrorism: French and Italian responses to terrorism after 9/11* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p. 200

In the process of social co-construction of the phenomenon, relevant institutions, experts and professionals also contribute to guide and shape measures and policies meant to prevent and counter it. Stakeholders agree in acknowledging the uniqueness of the Italian case, which has experienced only minor episodes of violent extremism on its own soil<sup>794</sup> and few cases of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>795</sup>. This single and exclusive situation is almost evenly explained by the combination of two elements that characterise the history and socio-political settings of the country. First, Italy can count on a strong and efficient anti-terrorism apparatus inherited from the years of lead, whose effectiveness has been reinforced following the long-lasting experience of the country in dealing with organized crime: the threats posed by mafia-style groups have been successfully addressed through an enhanced coordination between various law enforcement and intelligence agencies, which has also helped in dealing with investigative and law enforcement problems posed by the fight against terrorism. Second, the phenomenon of radicalisation, as described above, entails some connections, either real or perceived, with the topic of migration: because of a series of vulnerability factors, migrants are more exposed to being involved into radicalisation processes. Consequently, the limited numbers of radicalized people in Italy is also explained by the migratory history of the country, where the number of migrants is limited and the group quite heterogeneously composed in terms of countries of origins. In the aftermath of 9/11, Italy has promoted a series of revisions of its counter-terrorism legislation with a strong focus on prosecution and punishment, which might serve as deterrents for engagement into violence but may also produce side-effects such as further sentiments of alienation, frustration and reluctance in sharing information regarding early signs of radicalisation<sup>796</sup>. A general consensus is present among the stakeholders involved in the research that additional attention shall be paid on the preventive side: while it is generally acknowledged that repression is essential to handle threats in the short-term, prevention is key to “neutralize the good reasons [...] to be a terrorist” in the long-run<sup>797</sup>. A preventive framework should envisage initiatives to improve integration, enhance the sense of belonging and reduce cultural and social cleavages to address the identity troubles acting as a vulnerability factor. This could include inter-religious dialogue, the development of alternative and counter-narratives to contrast the influence of terrorist propaganda and mentoring programmes to halt the process at its early stages. Furthermore, given the demographic characteristics of the detected radicalized individuals, special attention shall be paid to youth and social media.

## Conclusions

The data collected and analysed show that the Italian case-study has similar characteristics to neighboring European countries: radicalization mainly concerns young male adults; emotional fragility and distress, including identity troubles, frustrations and alienation, are identified as the primary vulnerability factors; internet and prisons represent favourable environments where terrorist propaganda material is widely shared and consumed. However, some of the aspects identified through the research process confirm that the

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<sup>794</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalisation Dynamics’, *ISPI*, Milano 2014, p. 31

<sup>795</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ICCT-Marone-Italys-Jihadists-in-the-Syrian-Civil-War-August2016-1.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>796</sup> Francesco Marone, ‘Italy’s Jihadists in the Syrian Civil War’, *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2016, [internet] available at: <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ICCT-Marone-Italys-Jihadists-in-the-Syrian-Civil-War-August2016-1.pdf> (last accessed on 28 February 2021)

<sup>797</sup> Interview n. 2 – Milan, January 2017, scholar and member of the Italian Commission mandated to study the jihadist threat and to assess shortcomings in the Italian legislation and counter-terrorism apparatus

complexity of radicalisation is far to be fully understood and described in the Italian context, where knowledge is often anecdotal and mainly anchored to specific sectorial visions and experiences: definitions and key characteristics of the radicalisation process echo the findings and theories available at international level, the proposed actions for preventing and countering the phenomenon reflect general and generic recommendations discussed in various international fora and the narrative used to address the topic mirrors the nature and style of discourse developed in various countries in the aftermath of 9/11.

The diverse actors involved in the management of terrorism from different sectorial perspectives, including institutions, experts, professionals and the media, tend to portray the process of radicalisation as an emergency threat in which terrorists and radicalized individuals are represented as the “others”. This approach contributes to undermine efforts to develop a more thorough and in-depth knowledge and reduces the possibilities of elaborating a critical analysis of these concepts, their nature and evolution at national level. Recent research on the Italian culture of counter-terrorism shows that the national scenario is dominated by a “«victimisation» approach that prioritises the human dimension of the threat”<sup>798</sup>: this leverages on emotional dynamics and overshadows the importance of understanding to favour repressive measures. In line with this study as well as with the findings outlined above, future research on the Italian case-study shall take into account the role, impact and influence of the relevant stakeholders in co-constructing the concept of radicalisation and in co-defining its meanings and manifestations. In addition, the limitations described above could benefit from an increased attention towards empirical data. This would allow to address one of the main problems of the terrorism studies: because of the sensitivity of the subject, the influence exerted by governmental actors and the multidisciplinary nature of the phenomenon, publications in this field are often methodologically or empirically poor and future studies on the radicalisation process in Italy should develop with the purpose to fulfil these gaps.

A revised approach to the phenomenon also implies admitting the importance of acknowledging its profound meanings and reasons: as long as radicalisation and terrorism are approached as an emergency referred to and experienced through binary categories pertaining to the good and evil an implicit delegitimizing process will be applied to these concepts preventing any form of deep understanding and devaluing any form of agency brought forward through radicalisation. Engagement into radicalisation pathways, which could lead up to life-sacrifice, entails the attempt to act upon the power dynamics on which individuals depend within what is perceived as the available space and tools of action. Admitting the importance of recognizing the in-depth motivations of the phenomenon, being them political demands, social cleavages, cultural tensions or personal conditions of sufferance does not justify violence but to allow for a space of dialogue with “the others”. Furthermore, this opens doors for multiple voices to be heard and taken into account, with a potential positive effect on Italian preventive strategy: although coordination for anti-terrorism purposes is very robust at institutional level, little attention is devoted to the influence exercised by the broader societal spectrum and to the role that different actors play and could play in dealing with the phenomenon. Radicalisation and its prevention are choral events immersed in a social context and, as such, they must be treated.

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<sup>798</sup> Silvia D'Amato, *Cultures of counterterrorism: French and Italian responses to terrorism after 9/11* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p. 220

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