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ISLAMIC RADICALISATION IN THE WEST
A FOCUS ON THE PROCESS OF RADICALISATION IN PRISON

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of society has not always experienced periods of peace and stability, during which populations could flourish and get along with various cultures and ethnicities without raising issues of any kind. On the contrary, progress often entails a struggle for conquering a bigger land, achieving political and social rights, or affirming one's own religion.

Since the attack at the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, I have always been interested in understanding the reasons and motivations behind terrorist organizations that commit extremist acts against civilians and innocent victims. What are the factors that drive them to kill other people, either of the same nationality and religion, or of different one?

Governments, security agencies and think tanks over the years have focused their efforts on studying and examining the process that leads to terrorism, and thus the consequences that society undergoes. In particular, it lately emerged the terrorist organization named ISIS, which has spread fear worldwide, in light of its frequent and sudden attacks during important events or random occasions, regularly involving public places and therefore civilians.

Everyday news now include the description of how a strike was committed, usually screaming the words "Allah Akbar", a sentence that means "Allah is the greatest", which is often employed by ISIS militants as a way of justifying their attacks based on a strict adherence to Islam.

It is therefore important to study these circumstances within a religious approach, examining whether ISIS claims of fighting jihad are justified in the name of Islam, considering also the historical developments of the religion, and how the theoretical principles and practices have been applied in various movements over the centuries and until our days.

The present thesis aims at providing an overview of the current international scenario, in a way of understanding the phenomenon of radicalisation, a debated term for which it is hard to find an established definition on which every scholar could agree, but generally recognizing that it entails a process, in which several factors are involved, that could eventually lead to violence, but not necessarily (Silber & Bhatt 2007). A good awareness of these mechanism is necessary to develop a reaction strategy and countering the problem at its earliest, or preferably prevent its emergence.

In particular, the objective is to focus on recent developments, such as the religious radicalisation that occurs in prison, an event that might be generated by psychological factors, such as vulnerability and frustration, and also by the context in which detainees live, for instance considering the issue of overcrowding and understaffing.

The hope of this dissertation is that of providing precise information on a topic that it is still not adequately advanced, in that it was born recently and data are not yet abundant. Moreover, perhaps

for security reasons, various contents are not released by authorities, especially when these regard inmates that are deemed to be particularly dangerous for the society. In fact, many scholars encounter a range of complexities in gathering data for academic papers, even though their studies could be useful in developing strategies that could be employed afterwards by law enforcement forces.

Furthermore, during a conversation with Professor Rhazzali, he explained that given that it would be impossible to find individuals who explicitly declare to be undergoing radicalisation, researchers should rely on the specific indicators on which security services base their identification. In the particular case of conducting an analysis of the process of radicalisation in prison, Rhazzali suggests – as he did for the development of his doctoral dissertation – that it would be best to work in direct collaboration with the security agencies, by also requesting to penitentiary institutes, whenever possible, a privileged access to the sections where detainees charged or convicted for terrorism are located, or otherwise their biographical files (which however require long waiting periods).

This would be possible only by promoting a thorough knowledge of all the elements involved, starting from an analysis of Islam and its history, the people who have influenced the Islamic thought, and how the religion is perceived today, especially through the media lenses. With these premises, radicalisation could then be conceptualised and applied to the specific context of prisons in the West.

In order to offer a clear understanding of the phenomenon, various types of document are applied, such as encyclopaedias or history manuals, that could provide an overview in the definition of important terms, and the explanation of evolutionary phases within the Islamic religion. Official evidence is also being used, such as the texts of United Nations Resolutions, Italian laws or statistics gathered from the Pew Research Center and the Department of Penitentiary Administration in Italy. Finally, most of the notions are collected from papers elaborated by think tanks or other organizations, and primarily from the research of numerous scholars, that studied the phenomenon of radicalisation either in Europe or in the United States.

The work will then be structured in three chapters, that follow a linear formulation of the topic, in order to reach the final description of radicalisation by concentrating the attention of the situation that arises during detention.

The first chapter provides a general introduction to the topic, hence explaining what Islam is, beginning from a description of its history, since the year 610, when Muhammad received the revelation on the mount Hira. It is important to understand the basic principles of this religion, which defines many aspects of life, from dietary prescriptions to family matters, which are enunciated in the Quran, the Holy Book (Corrao 2015).

One of the most known elements that characterises Islam, is the fact that every Muslim, in order to be considered a practising believer and good adherent to this faith, must follow the five pillars of Islam, *Shahadah*, *Salat*, *Zakat*, *Sawm*, and *Hajj*: an explanation of what each of them entails, is provided based on the manual of Professor Esposito (1999), who describes them in details.

The chapter will analyse different interpretations regarding the concept of *jihad* and the application of the *Sharia*, the Islamic law; in fact, since the origin of Islam, many scholars and religious leaders have confronted their approaches towards religion, by exchanging their ideas. Thus, four major schools of thought have been created, to which many scholars refer while promoting their opinions on religious matters. It will be described the major split within Islam, that between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and several streams, going from Sufism, to different Salafi trends and Wahabbism, stressing the importance that their founders had on modern Islam, in light of the articles and papers of scholars such as Hassan Hanafi and Tariq Ramadan.

This would allow us to approach the latest events since the Eighties, that inevitably had a profound impact on the emergence of extremist groups such as ISIS. Personalities like Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb have shaped the environment in which radical groups first, and extremist ones later on, developed in the international scenario that, since the Afghanistan War, has involved many actors, including Middle Eastern countries and Western coalitions, until recent years, with the emergence of ISIS.

In light of these historical developments, and the awareness of many people to be under threat by the Islamic state, it has by now spread a new reality, that of Islamophobia, which has been described by a Runnymede Trust report of 2017 as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”.

Hatred and prejudice nowadays pervade television broadcasts and social media, in which millions of people daily interact and exchange opinions and contents, within few seconds, therefore reaching a worldwide audience. This can generate different reactions among people of various nationalities, religions and ages.

However, common feelings not only include fear of Muslims, often associated with terrorism, but also anger, that could turn itself into violence and hate crimes against whoever shows to be a Muslim, such as women wearing the veil. In order to tackle this issue, and counter the problem at its roots, many campaigns have been launched, by both Muslim and non-Muslim associations, in order to send a positive message, by demonstrating that Islam is a peaceful religion.

Fundamental to this purpose is the approach proposed worldwide by radio and television channels that promote the teaching of the Islamic religion, therefore discussing with the audience matters regarding faith rules and values, and supporting the idea that a thorough knowledge of the topic will prevent discrimination based on fear and ignorance.

Having determined the fundamental concepts that characterise Islam, modern trends regarding the religion and its interpretation, and acceptance worldwide, the second chapter will then define specific terms that are deemed important in the debate regarding recent terrorist groups. However, among international scholars and organizations there is no unanimous agreement for terms such as terrorism, radicalism and radicalisation, and this might result in a misunderstanding and an improper use by media or other individuals.

This section will provide various descriptions, emphasizing the focus on religious radicalisation, a particular process for which many individuals who undergo the different phases, may at the end commit terrorist acts with the intent of conducting a global jihad. The process is characterised by four stages indicated by a report of the New York Police Department, which however shows that not necessarily all phases might occur, and the radicalised individual might not become a terrorist in the end, believing in the cause but without committing any strikes or turning into a jihadi militant (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

This process is nowadays considered very dangerous especially for its effects on the young population, either born-Muslims or converts, that in their admiration for radical movements, find in Islamic radicalism the perfect solution to their problems. Moreover, they gain the motivation to commit terrorist acts also thanks to the collaboration of other members of a group, which inevitably creates a particular “group-think” where the person feels safe.

We have to carefully consider the issue of integration, which is generated especially in those countries where the presence of another religion, such as Christianity in Italy, is still strong, notwithstanding the concept of secularism. Here, high influxes of Muslim immigrants could provoke anger in the citizens of the recipient country, hindering the process of acceptance of the newcomers into society. It should be a mutual effort of institutions, civil society and immigrants, in order to reach a common ground, and develop the opportunity of a reciprocal dialogue. If Muslims are given the chance to express their feelings and concerns, they might be prone to collaborate, and criminal activity could be avoided.

We will see how the category of second-generation Muslims is the most targeted by recruiters, as representing vulnerable individuals, who do not recognise their identity neither in their parents’ culture, nor in the society of their own age. They are looking for a middle ground between an outdated Islam – too fragile for the oppression of secular systems – and an immoral set of values,

proper of the society where they currently live, and they usually find this compromise in the Jihadi-Salafi ideology (Roy 2017).

Beside mosques – which operated as radicalising hubs especially in the Nineties – new locations are being used as meeting places between the recruiters and the candidates, who could have a first encounter in cafes, book stores or sport clubs, where information are exchanged without raising suspicions (Silber & Bhatt 2007). In this way the recruiter could see the individual in person, with the aim of determining if he/she will be suitable for the job, by taking into account the personality, past experiences and motivation (Hegghammer 2013). This applies at the same time to the virtual space, increasingly adopted to conduct propaganda by terrorist groups, which could also recruit members through chat rooms, having them indoctrinated with the dissemination of pamphlets and videotapes, and inciting their audience to join the fight against jihad (Votel et al 2017).

In anticipation of examining what causes radicalisation in prison, we must understand why people radicalise, if there are triggering factors or psychological elements that influence the process. Indeed, there might be grievances that generate high levels of malaise and particular vulnerabilities that are often exploited by recruiters (Sageman 2004; Loza 2006).

Finally, the last chapter, taken into account the arguments previously examined, refers to the case of radicalisation in prison, a circumstance that is increasingly occurring in the West; in Italy in particular, the Antigone report (2018) has showed that there has been an increment of 41%, with respect to the previous year, in the number of detainees sentenced for terrorism related offences.

What characterises the detainees' approach to religion – and possibly radicalisation – is the feeling of frustration and vulnerability, mostly derived by the surrounding environment, with the consequent deprivation of freedom and the strict compliance to the rules (Rhazzali 2010).

One of the biggest issues that prison administrations should tackle is the overcrowding phenomenon that permeates penitentiaries in the West, to which is connected the problem of understaffing. Moreover, many authors report the lack of authorised imams that could enter the prison to support the inmates, and this is often regarded as a factor contributing to prisoners' resentment, increasing the probability of radicalisation as a way of fighting a perceived discrimination towards them (Khosrokhavar 2013).

Throughout the chapter, it will be discussed the role that religion plays in inmates' lives, not only by helping them to spiritually survive in the harsh conditions of prisons, but also by regulating the schedule and therefore contributing to the stability and order of the institution (Rhazzali & Schiavinato 2016). The attention will hence focus on the Italian case, offering statistics and describing the scenario of penitentiary institutes, also in accordance to Italian legislation and agreements with Muslim communities.

Finally, a broad range of prevention strategies and counter-radicalisation measures will be provided, according to mechanisms already implemented by single countries or promoted by the European Union. These involve disengagement and rehabilitation programs for convicted terrorists, in order for them to abandon their beliefs in the use of violence as an effective mean, promoting their integration in the society after release.

The goal of this work is that of delivering to the reader a satisfactory knowledge of the phenomena that surround us, by briefly describing historical facts that have led to the emergence of terrorist movements, and analysing them within a current framework of interpretations. By explaining what radicalisation is, which individuals are most at risk, and therefore which are the triggering factors, one could be better prepared to apply this study to the context of penitentiary institutes.

Those who work towards resolving these matters, either governments, security agencies or experts in terrorism and criminology, should be able to quickly understand the evolving process of radicalisation, with the aim of implementing effective solutions, either in the case of countering measures or, ideally, preventive strategies that could definitively stop the path towards violence.

CAPITOLO I

Islam today: modern trends and media

In light of the many terrorist attacks that the world has lately experienced, fear has spread in the entire globe, and especially in Western countries, which are seen as the main objective of a war of ideas, “us against them”. However, this concept needs a thorough knowledge of many elements involved, first of all, an analysis of what Islam is, with reference to the latest events and terrorist networks, that often declare their ideology to be founded on Allah’s religion.

Nevertheless, this entails a good understanding of the religion per se, by examining its values and the fundamental rules and precepts. This is a hard task, on which many scholars have worked, but this often leads to multiple interpretations, that might also differ considerably from one another. Indeed, there is not one single Islam or Islamic civilisation, because this religion developed during many centuries through the encounter of various cultures and people (Ramadan 2012).

It is therefore necessary to examine the multitude of interpretations about Islam, either regarding the discussion on the Sacred texts and the practices of religion, or a more contemporary approach that studies the evolution from moderate scholars to fundamentalist ones, therefore taking into account the emergence of current terrorist networks, such as ISIS.

1.1. What is Islam

Understanding the world that we live in, implies a good knowledge of politics, sociology and religions. In this matter, security studies are concentrated on the concept of Islam, not only as a historic religion, but mostly as a cultural phenomenon.

In fact, Islam has now become something to fear, to keep out of our lives. Many people, in seeing a woman wearing *hijab*, might think she a terrorist. It is important, therefore, to understand the meaning of Islam, what it is and what it entails.

It is a monotheistic religion, but it comprehends many more meanings: it can be considered as a way of living, a system of norms and standards that indicates the best actions to be taken by the believer, who follows these rules in every aspect of life, from good manners, to hygiene, family and diet (Corrao 2015).

The word “Islam” means “submission, abandonment to the will of God”, therefore the term “Muslim” indicates the adherent of the religion, whose sacred book is the Quran, which is believed to be a revelation from God, Allah. The Holy book is composed of 114 chapters, each called *Sura*,

that are then classified according to the period in which they were revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad, either when he was living in Mecca (from 610 to 622) or in Medina (the period between 622 and 632). The other important scriptural source is the *Sunna*, the Prophetic tradition, which contributes to the Islamic knowledge of principles and beliefs. Finally, the *hadiths* are reports of Muhammad's sayings and actions, which the majority of Muslims think they should complement the Quran, in the way that they provide guidance and inspiration, by promoting certain behaviours or prohibiting others (Corrao 2015).

As mentioned above, this faith includes a set of rules and practices that every Muslim has to follow, among which the most significant are the five pillars of Islam (*arkan al-Islam*): *Shahadah*, *Salat*, *Zakat*, *Sawm*, and *Hajj* (Esposito 1999).

The first one is regarded as having a paramount importance, because it represents the beginning of the path to become a Muslim. *Shahadah* is the proclamation of faith: it entails a declaration, in front of two witnesses, of the belief in the oneness of God, expressed in the concept of *tawhid*. The believer is then recognized as taking part of the *Umma*, the Islamic community. In the Quran the declaration is expressed differently with respect to the two parts that *Shahadah* is composed of: "There is no God but Allah" and "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah". These embody the teaching of Islam, that is the power and uniqueness of Allah, following whom – overcoming pagan polytheism – men can hope for eternal salvation. The Holy book, however, indicates God alone¹ in the *Shahadah*, while many Muslims add Muhammad's name to the second witnessing in order to reaffirm the complementarity of faith and practice, even though this could imply a sanctification of humans as co-authorities with God. Therefore, in order to be a good Muslim, one has to believe in the revealed books, the prophets, the angels and the judgment day, always respecting the other pillars.

Salat comprehends the five ritual prayers to be performed during the day, in the direction of the Great Mosque in Mecca; each believer has to properly wash him/herself (ablution) before prayer, in order to become purified. This act represents the *Shahadah* in practice, giving profound meaning to the idea of submission to God, because the prayer has to be done by placing a mat underneath the body, in order to separate the individual from Allah.

Zakat refers to the alms, a tax the every year Muslims have to pay to the State based on their accumulated wealth, which is about 2.5% of their annual income. It differs from the individual donation or charity, which is called *Sadaqah*. This pillar allows the individual to achieve balance and encourages new growth, leading to purification.

¹ Quran, 3:18, "There is no god but He: That is the witness of Allah . His angels, and those endued With knowledge, standing firm On justice. There is no god but He The Exalted in Power, The Wise."

Sawm means fasting and it must be followed during *Ramadan*, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar; it consists of abstaining from eating, drinking and sexual activity – from sunrise to sunset – in order to remind Muslims of the needy, through experiencing their pain and suffering.

Finally, *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, must be done at least once in a lifetime, for those who are physically and financially able. There are nine rituals to accomplish, among which doing seven turns counter clockwise around the Ka‘bah, the place hosting the Black Stone – which must be kissed – throwing stones at the places symbol of Satan and sacrificing an animal.

A sixth pillar must be added according to Shiites and some Sunnis: the *Jihad*. This concept can be found both in the Quran and in the hadiths; its meaning refers to the Arab root “jhd”, literally to strive or to struggle, a constant effort towards the path of Allah, denoting an internal fight to be a perfect Muslim, both spiritually and at the societal level (Marranci 2006).

Jihad can have different interpretations: the most relevant opposes the idea of defensive jihad to that of the offensive one. In particular, the latter has been discussed by many to support their radical intentions, in which the primary battle is against an external enemy. In this case, violence is accepted and strongly encouraged in order to spread Islam in the world and, in case of death, receive an award in the afterlife. The Sura of Repentance is often taken as an example to justify the offensive jihad, in that, verse 29 refers to the fight against the People of the Book. However, the other type of jihad, explicitly declared to defend the religion as a moral obligation, is mentioned several times in the Quran, also professing tolerance and peace, keeping in mind that Allah is almighty and He is the only one able to decide about the faith of the nonbelievers (Marranci 2006).

The problem in analyzing this broad term, regards the fact that the various interpretations have to follow historical paths, taking into account the tradition (Sunna) and the hadiths, respecting the *Ulemas*’ opinions – accredited because they represent the scholars who possess a great knowledge on Islamic law and theology – in a way of creating harmony and compatibility among different Suras, which sometimes may seem to be in contradiction.

The issue rests in the fact that Islam does not have an institution that could impose certain rules or define what is sacred. Although Islam was founded as a unified community, the *Umma*, whose concept was developed by the Prophet to gather all the tribes, the religion of Allah is characterized by several divergences. That is the reason why Muslims are classified into different branches, according to their thinking on martyrdom, prayers, or historical facts, that are often interpreted otherwise. The main subdivision is that between Shia and Sunni Islam, that shows the many aspects in contrast, which originated at the time of Muhammad’s death, in 632. At that moment, it was necessary to proclaim his successor, having no indication from the Prophet; therefore, the original schism was not over religious doctrine, but rather over political leadership (Esposito 1999).

Indeed, the Alids, descendants of Ali ibn-abi-Talib, believed that Muhammad appointed Ali – his cousin and son-in-law – as his successor, that is the first caliph and imam. The Alids are now referred to as Shiites, from the phrase *Shiat Ali*, which means “the party of Ali”; in their minds, each caliph had to be related directly to the Prophet in order to best guide the community in accordance to his teachings, therefore considering illegitimate all the caliphs that followed after Ali, the fourth caliph (Moore 2015).

However, another solution prevailed, the one proposed by the Sunnis, who were advocating for Abu Bakr, a man of great values considered as one of the closest companions of the Prophet. In order to maintain stability in the community, a pact of alliance was reached, also with the consensus of the Shiites, who agreed to proclaim Abu Bakr as Muhammad’s successor, and the first of the “rightly guided caliphs” (Esposito 1999).

Theological differences among these two major sectarian movements, were developed later with the course of history, and many of them regard the interpretation of the Quran and the hadiths. First of all, Sunni Islam is a traditionalist movement, which strongly relies on the Sunna, the exemplary behaviour of the Prophet, and this is why they are identified as the “People of the Tradition”. They represent the majority of Muslims in the world – approximately 85% – with an estimated 1.4 billion in 2010², and they are expected to reach the number of almost 2 billion by 2030; their presence is particularly strong in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

About 10-13% of all Muslim population is Shia and they live predominantly in Iran, Azerbaijan and Iraq³. This minority has often been the target of religious violence from Sunni groups, who consider them unholy, if not heretics (*shirk*), starting from the end of the 7th century. In 680, Hussein – third imam and relative of Fatima, the Prophet’s daughter – died in a battle that he was fighting against the Umayyad dynasty, with the aim of eliminating the corruption of that time and bringing Islam back to its true values. In reference to that historical event, Muslims now celebrate the month of *Muharram*, in which – on the 10th day, *Ashura* – Shiites conduct pilgrimages to holy shrines to commemorate Hussein, by pouring true tears in order to alleviate the pain of terrestrial life (Khosrokhavar 2003). These acts are not permissible from the point of view of the Sunnis, who do not contemplate going to saints’ tombs as an accepted practice, as it implies an act of innovation. The episode of the martyrdom of Hussein – from which he will be nominated the Prince of Martyrs – is particularly important for the Twelve-Imam Shiism, which recognizes the existence of twelve imams, the last of whom, the hidden imam Mahdi, is believed to be the messianic redeemer, who will return at the end of times to restore justice. The other two important sects of Shiism are the

² *Sunni and Shia Muslims*, Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life, Updated on: 27 January 2011, Accessed: 13 January 2018. Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-sunni-and-shia/>

³ *Ibidem*.

Ismaili, who consider Ismail the seventh and last of the imams, and the Zaydis, who reject the idea of the messianic Mahdi (Esposito 1999).

Even though they share the fundamental belief in God and his Prophet Muhammad, the biggest difference among the groups, rests in the fact that Shia Muslims consider the imams and the Prophet on the same level, conferring them a different nature from that of mere mortals, regarded as unacceptable from Sunnis. In fact, Shiites are devoted not only to Allah and Muhammad, but also to his descendants, who are known as the People of the House⁴, while Sunnis confer more importance to the Prophet per se and not his family too. This can be perceived by the way in which Sunnis prefer a direct relationship between God and the believer; on the other hand, Shia Islam has a clear hierarchical structure, where the imams can be seen as living intermediaries and guides for the believers.

A matter of concern is thus the Imamate, the religious leadership in the Muslim world; an Imam is a guide, someone to imitate, who can lead the prayer. According to Shiites, the Imam should be a descendant of the Prophet, in particular, a relative of Fatima, because of their divinely inspired knowledge and infallible judgment, rather than chosen by human election, as Sunnis prefer, based on consensus, selecting the imam for his qualities (Moore 2015).

The concept of the afterlife is agreed upon by both Shia and Sunni Muslims, but the latter argue that each believer has to rely on the mercy of Allah. Indeed, as it happened in the case of Muhammad's succession, Sunnis sustain that there are no basis for the intercession of saints, therefore, the leader of the community must earn the followers' trust (Khosrokhavar 2003). Moreover, the two sects differ in other aspects, especially regarding the interpretation of the Quran and the hadiths, many of whom have been narrated by the Prophet's companions – such as Abu Bakr – and hence not accepted by Shiites, who rather focus on those written by imams, close associates of the Prophet or his family.

In addition to this major divide within the Islamic religion, it is important to analyze other branches, that may differ from one another for their reasoning about various faith matters, and therefore are distinguished by softer or stronger identification with some elements of Islam; it is thus necessary to locate them within a time framework, because their evolution over the centuries is what characterizes Islam, in its pluralism of opinions. Indeed, various Islamic doctrines developed over the course of history, following the political line implemented by the Caliphs or opposing to it, originating different religio-political orientations.

As we have seen, Sunni and Shia Muslims were the first denominations of Islam to rise, following Muhammad's death, that caused the emergence of diverging views on how to interpret

⁴ *Ahl al-Bayt*, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Updated: 3 September 2014, Accessed: 14 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ahl-al-Bayt>

different aspects of Allah's religion, which continued their evolution until our days. Islam should be considered universal, regarding its principles and norms; however, it consists of various branches which apply different theories, in light of their explanation and understanding of the sacred texts. Indeed, the main discrepancies come from the way each trend reads the Quran and the Sunna, if it allows them to be interpreted (and therefore modernized) or if it studies them literally.

One of the biggest issues after the Prophet's death was the interpretation of Sharia, which was not always clear from the simple reading of the sacred texts, therefore it needed the knowledge and experience of scholars and jurists. For this purpose during the first centuries after Muhammad was gone, an Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*, literally "understanding") was developed, in which certain actions and behaviours were codified and declared permissible or not, based on a scale of relevance (Esposito 1999).

In fact, Sharia represents God's law and commandments, but it requires interpretation and implementation into everyday life, in order for Muslims to behave in society. It indeed involves human understanding; this task is up to some Ulama, jurists who become experts in *fiqh* – thus they are called *faqih* – and who use a certain degree of *ijtihad*, the independent reasoning necessary to get a complete picture of the situation. It is important to notice how the Sharia and the *fiqh* underwent a constant evolution during the fourteen centuries of Islamic history, by also adapting to the increasing expansion of the empire (Papa 2018).

Over the centuries *faqih* analyzed the sources, providing different opinions, and we can now identify four schools of thought – called *madhhab* – within Sunni Islam: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali. Each of them is accepted by specific states or authorities and taught at Islamic colleges (*madradas*) also according to their interpretation of the Sharia. Indeed, the founder of the Shafii school, Al-Shafii, recognized four roots of *fiqh*, to which every school refers to, and they can be subdivided into two categories, whether they accept the literal meaning of the Quran and the Sunna, or they may allow for the analysis of the revelation through *ijmaa*, the practice of consensus, and *qiyas*, the analogical reasoning (Papa 2018).

Esposito (1999) provides a good description of the schools, explaining the principles that define them and offering an overview of the current presence worldwide.

The Hanafi school originated in Iraq, from the teaching of Abu Hanifah, in the eighth century. Its followers soon took the name of "People of Opinion" because of the conscious use of reason and *ray*, the personal opinion, rather than rigorous dependence on the hadiths. The school always had governmental support, starting from the Abbasid caliphate, until the Ottoman Empire and continuing with the following dynasties. The school's fame was already known since its creation, when one of its prominent authors, Abu Yusuf, became the legal advisor of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid, who recognized his knowledge on fiscal matters. Nowadays, it is widely spread in

Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, and many civil codes take account of its teachings, especially in the field of family law; the reason is that its doctrines are still evaluated as one of the most liberal among the Islamic schools, regarding individual rights and freedoms, private life and criminal law.

The Maliki school was developed in the eighth century in Medina by Malik ibn Anas, who looked at the past life of the Prophet and his community, therefore promoting the study of the texts over reason. However, the legal doctrine was developed only in the following two centuries, thanks to the contributions of Malik's students, as Muhammad ibn Rushd, better known with the Latinized name of Averroes. Throughout history, Maliki doctrines reached Spain and Sicily, and today they are widespread in North and West Africa, where for their success have now become the first madhhab.

The Quran and the hadiths are considered primary sources of jurisprudence, together with *amal*, the normative practice of the people of Medina; this approach was recommended whenever the first two sources were not clear on a specific matter. Malikis did not favour the use of *qiyas*, counting instead on the *ijma* of Medina, the consensus of the Companions of Muhammad, to whom some of the school's teachings were associated. A peculiarity of the Maliki method is the use of *istislah*, juristic discretion employed in order to find the right solution of an issue by giving priority to the interest and welfare of Muslims, rather than applying analogical reasoning.

In the ninth century, Muhammad ibn Idris Al-Shafii established the Shafi school, which founds its approach on the teaching of the Quran and the Sunna, resting also on the hadiths. As mentioned above, Al-Shafii created the notion of the roots of jurisprudence, and he referred in particular to the importance of Quran regarding revelation, therefore rejecting local practices and human reason, which would have been used only during the process of analogical reasoning. In those cases in which the sacred texts did not provide an appropriate explanation for an argument, then the jurists would have explored the consensus of the Sahabah; if this was not reached, *ijtihad* would have been employed, otherwise, if the individual opinion of the Companions would have not been conclusive, the solution would have been found in similar cases previously regulated.

The school was born in Fustat, Egypt, but after the founder's death, thanks to many students and followers, it reached Baghdad, where it became a proper school. During the Ottoman Empire, the Hanafi school was the main madhhab and the Shafiis were forced to leave the borders of the Islamdom, reaching East Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, countries where today the Shafii school prevails.

The Hanbali school, born in the ninth century – the last one to develop and the most fundamentalist of all – strongly opposes the concepts of analogy (*qiyas*) and personal opinion (*ray*), by stating that human reason is subject to failures and sins, therefore cannot be trusted when discussing religious matters; this implies that legal decisions are to be taken according to a literal

interpretation of the Quran and the hadiths, which were collected in great numbers by the creator of the school, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who particularly relied on the stories of the Companions to found Islamic law, believing that a return to the original faith was needed at that moment.

For their strong traditionalist method, the Hanbalis were followed and promoted in Arabia in the eighteenth century, matching the development of the Wahhabi movement, and now the school is the only jurisprudence accepted in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The discussion on the schools of thought, developed in the eighth and ninth centuries, leads to the understanding of how many scholars nowadays disagree on many aspects of Islam, regarding women's rights, politics, and private life. The resulting problem creates the debate on whether Islam can be considered a moderate religion, or needs to be labelled as extremist, in light of the frequent terrorist attacks that have occurred in recent years in the name of Islam. This however, cannot be solely circumscribed to a religious analysis, but it also needs to take into account historical developments (Papa 2018).

It will be later examined how, especially in modern times, there has been an increase in the number of extremist groups, who often employ violence as a mean to achieve their goal. Contemporary debates have then focused on identifying the causes for the rise of these groups, and what differentiate them from other revolutionary movements. One of the main points of confrontation among the Islamic scholars, but also Western one interested in these matters, is the true meaning of the word "Jihad". The concept is understood as *fard kifaya*, a collective duty that can be demanded by the religious authority for those who respect the requirements, which comprehend a free status, maturity and moral qualities, financial stability and primarily submission to Islam (Marranci 2006).

Nevertheless, the concepts of jihad and extremism, need to be preceded by a thorough understanding of how Islam developed in the centuries following its emergence; we have previously seen how, after the Prophet's death, a religio-political divide was originated, perpetrating the difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims until our days. Islam is indeed constituted by many ramifications, that derive by the historical developments of the religion, therefore new proposals to interpret it, either regarding its practical rituals, or a more theoretical approach with reference to the schools of thought.

For instance, Sufism was born in the second half of the seventh century, during the Umayyad period, to confront the rulers' way of conducting life, made of frivolity and materialism, to which they oppose an ascetic movement. In the following two centuries, Sufis begun to be viewed as the mystical part of Islam, peaceful and tolerant with respect to others, while they concentrated on highlighting personal experiences of the divine. Sufism is based on the Arab word

*tasawwuf*⁵, which literally means “to dress on wool”, which comprises indeed the word *suf* (wool), indicating the garment often wore by early Islamic ascetics. Their aim is to combat the corruption of the society, by emphasizing the moral qualities of the individuals, in an everlasting inner struggle against unbelief and sins, through a rejection of the simplistic pleasures of life, therefore often requiring the condition of poverty. They refer to Muhammad as their spiritual example of moral excellence but also to pious members of the Umma, who were able to approach God by renouncing to material habits (Saeed 2006).

Over the course of the centuries they were attacked several times by political leaders and other Muslims because of their teachings, starting in particular with a confrontation with the Sunni orthodoxy at the beginning of the tenth century; the conflict begun especially when a famous mystic scholar, al-Hallaj was killed for stating to have reached the union with God. Sufis were able to unite many cultures and tribes, by providing a relief from the wars of expansion, while Sunnis retained an intrinsic Arab culture, without giving the opportunity to new converts of being included (Corrao 2015).

Even though Sufis were usually not accepted by the Ulama, they still tried to achieve the aim of harmonizing their theories with the orthodox theology, by spreading Sufi orders from the 12th century as far as non-Arabic regions, like central Asia and northern Africa, and reaching also Europe and America in the present times (Saeed 2006). This can be seen also as a consequence of their repression in the historical Muslim regions, where the innovations (*bida*) brought by Sufism were not appreciated, and instead viewed as a distortion of Islam.

In particular, Sufis were opposed by the Salafi movement, whose origins can be traced within the 14th century in the writings of Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), a scholar belonged to the Hanbali school, who professed a return to the Islam of the ninth century, following a dissatisfaction of the conduct of the Abbasid caliphate, which led to the invasion of the Mongols. The name Salafi comes from the Arabic word *salaf*, the pious ancestors of the Umma, referring in particular to the first three generations after Muhammad, who, thanks to their closeness to the Prophet, knew the exact meaning of Islam (Escobar Stemmann 2006). In affirming the *tawhid*, the uniqueness of God, Salafis opposed every form of idolatry, such as tombs and saints, regarding as apostates those Muslims who honoured these elements, as it could be Shiites and Sufis (Bunzel 2015).

In their purpose of bringing back individuals to the true Islam, in order to improve the society's behaviour, they emphasized the idea of a supranational political religious community, by relying

⁵ Schimmel, A., *Sufism*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Updated: 22 November 2017, Accessed: 16 January 2018. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism>

only on God's authority; therefore, they believed in the creation of a global Umma. At this point, they cannot be considered as representing a revolutionary movement.

In the following centuries, Islamic reformist movements proliferated, especially from the 18th century, when the Muslim world witnessed the birth of Wahhabism – originated in the Arabian Peninsula – that draws its name from its founder Muhammed bin 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791). The preacher wanted to react against the corruption of the Ottoman empire, which was seen as an authoritarian presence, with weak and decadent traits, that could not get along with the values of Islam (Corrao 2015). For this reason, he proposed an austere and conservative way to interpret the Quran in its literal meaning, with the aim of eliminating *jahiliyyahh* (the pre-Islamic ignorance) from the society, based on the *tawhid*, and on the application of strict moral and legal rules of Islam. This implied the rejection of idolatry, with the negative consequences that destructions of shrines were common, in order to prevent their visitation; Wahhabis did not hesitate to damage early Islamic monuments in Iraq and Saudi Arabia – whose royal family controlled Islam's holiest shrines, Mecca and Medina, since 1805 – to show their opposition against the religious practices of that time, and in particular to Sufi orders (Esposito 1999). The link between the Wahhabi movement and the Saudi royalty derives from an alliance between al-Wahhab and Mohamed ibn Saud – the chief of an Arabian tribe – that by creating a campaign in favour of a return to the pure Islam, allowed the emergence of the Saudi Arabian state, officially created in 1932 as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Sageman 2004).

It is clear the Wahhabis were inspired by the Salafism movement, and especially by the teachings of the scholar ibn Taymiyyah who provided a justification for the murder of other Muslims, referring in particular to the Mongols, because they did not behave in a manner prescribed by Islam, but only in order to economically and politically expand (Sageman 2004); this will subsequently give rise to the practice of *takfir*, which is declaring someone to be apostate. The Wahhabi resumed this concept in the name of a revival of Islamic values, in order to legitimate their attacks against the Shiites and Sufi shrines, in that they represented a separation from the authority of God (Esposito 1999). An example of their repression of infidels can be found in the Wahhabi attack of 1802 against the city of Karbal, in Iraq, where Shiites conducted their pilgrimage in honour of the martyr Hussein, whose tomb was located there, killing thousands of people. This was done in accordance to a set of elements on which it was possible to call for *takfir*, whether someone was a polytheist, criticised Islam or the Prophet, or as in the previous case, referred to mediators of God (Springer, Regens & Edger 2009).

It is important not to confuse the Salafism to which Wahhabi referred, with the Salafi revivalist movement theorized by al-Afghani and Abduh in the 19th and 20th centuries, which can then be regarded as modernist Salafism. It developed as a reaction against autocratic regimes that allowed

the interference of European powers in Muslim countries; their mentioning of the Salafis is aimed at promoting a modernization of Muslim countries based on the conduct of the Prophet's companions.

Jamal Al-Din Afghani (1838-1897) is regarded as the founding father of Islamic modernism: he was a political activist who wanted to revitalize the Islamic civilization, through the use of true reason and therefore the liberation of the Muslim world from Western hegemony, which he experienced in 1882, with the invasion of Egypt from the British Empire (Hanafi 2010).

Indeed, his opposition comes from the feeling of oppression generated by colonialism, which brought him to become the leader of pan-Islam, relying on values of unity, cooperation, self-strengthening, and, of course, independence. In order to succeed, what needed to be accomplished was national cohesion, which was possible only through technology and modern science, but always respecting the principles set out in the Quran. He links the Western domination to the problems of his world, including poverty and the distress felt by his fellow citizens, believing that the colonial powers brought corruption and political weakness to the Muslim world (Malik 2011).

Modernists, who provide a renewed interpretation of Islam, want to demonstrate that it does not necessarily need to be tied to a historical period, but can be applied to all times. However, they do believe that everything must be subordinated to God, thus they disagree on the separation of the spiritual and the temporal characters, pillar of secularism. Moderate Muslims can be recognized for their positive attitudes towards democracy and human rights. They support the Western idea of democracy, meaning that the people have the power to decide, and thus political legitimacy does not rest in the hands of God, as instead happens with the application of Sharia. Some moderate Muslims might agree on grounding their ideals on the sacred sources of Islam, supporting anyhow the values of Western societies, such as pluralism, acceptance, and the acknowledgment of human rights, especially those of women, to whom these are often denied in Muslim countries. Dialogue, therefore, represents the basis and the beginning of a process of openness towards equal citizenship, including political and civil rights (Hanafi 2010).

What was important to Afghani, was the reformulation of the Islamic doctrines, by looking at the way Europe evolved through the centuries; the same needed to be accomplished by Muslims, through an accurate analysis of modern scientific thought, because it had to be adapted to the values of today's world (Malik 2011).

Ijtihad refers to the independent reasoning and it represents the hallmark of Islamic modernism, in that it is related to dynamism, and this is why it is in contrast with *taqlid*, meaning the simple imitation and conformity to a legal precedent, without interpretation. It should be used from the Ulama to guide the believers not only at the local level, but also globally, by reinforcing the community to confer it strength and ability to resist foreign oppression, by means of defensive strategy and cooperation among Muslims; this approach constitutes Afghani's political plan to

achieve pan-Islamic civilization, through unity, thus avoiding the internal divides in the religion. He developed the basis of the modernists movement, by attributing an unprecedented importance to the concepts of democracy and rule of law; he proposed the idea of a compromise, through a process of reform, by taking inspiration from the modern Western world, and applying the innovations to the Quran (Malik 2011).

The opposition to Western penetration was strongly felt also by one of Afghani's student, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), who wanted to reform the Islamic religion, thus setting up the stage for the development of a modern Muslim humanism. The approach involved a constant evaluation of Islamic life, considering its people and the relation with the rest of the world, therefore implying a rational analysis of the tradition. It was necessary to recognize the importance of the masses and to focus on the social aspect in order to take the best decisions at the political level, respecting the concept that Islam is a social religion (Vatikiotis 1957).

However, the two intellectuals differed on the final outcome: for Abduh, a political revolution – which would have led to pan-Islam for Afghani – was unrealistic and, for that purpose, he advocated a process of education, because the political approach would have been difficult for the Muslim people, already suffering from their leaders' decisions. It was necessary to urge the masses to change for a better life, always respecting the notion of God as a supreme being, therefore conducting a religious-oriented humanism. He agrees with Afghani that taqlid causes stagnation and with its intrinsic rigor does not allow the evolvement of the social system (Vatikiotis 1957).

Abduh and the other modernists emphasized the importance of religion to reform the system, and in this matter they clashed with secularists regarding the separation of the spiritual from the temporal. For Abduh in particular, religion is the primary force that could sustain a revolution, in that it promotes justice, good values and unity among Muslims, also by provoking an inner reflection (Vatikiotis 1957).

In the debate regarding the concept of jihad, modernists have always aligned with the defensive nature of jihad, claiming that the employment of violence should only be applied to specific circumstances, such as to protect Muslims from external aggression, or as a way of ensuring their safety when the believers live in foreign territories, or again to defend the Muslim population whenever the enemy broke a pact with them. It is important to stress that defensive jihad has to be proclaimed only by the Ulama and jurists, inasmuch having religious foundation, therefore involving the whole Muslim community; moreover, modernists did not rely on defensive jihad to justify enrichments or territorial expansions (DeLong-Bas 2004). Indeed, moderate Muslims consider jihad as a constant struggle towards a self-improvement, and this is why it should be better to translate it in English as “exertion” and not “holy war”; it entails the spreading of the true Islam all over the world, therefore an effort towards peace.

Modernism has also been expressed through the lenses of liberal Muslims, who support the ideals theorized and developed by the West, such as democracy and pluralism, freedom of the individual and human rights. In this regard, Al-Afghani and Abduh, in their purpose of reforming Islam, by reacting to the hegemony of European powers, believed that they needed to learn the positive values that these countries were bringing. One of the main pillars of liberal Islam is *Shura*, which became a symbol of democracy, consisting of a consultation among people and their rulers, in order to reach a mutual decision. The democratic character emphasized the fact that for liberalists, a dynastic government would be in opposition with the Islamic teachings; moreover, the Sharia should also be adapted to present times, because the society's conditions have changed. It is further relevant to discuss the pluralistic aspect of liberal Islam, in virtue of the many interpretations of the religion, resulting from different classes, historical phases or education of the believers (Hanafi 2010).

Modernist and liberal scholars looked at the West as an example to copy, by promoting the implementation of the same rights in order to follow an equal path towards progress. This historically corresponded to the end of colonial powers from the second half of the 19th century, which saw the emergence of nationalistic states and of annexed reforms to modernize the countries (Corrao 2015).

Another voice of discontent for the pressures imposed by Western powers, is represented by the Syrian scholar Rashid Rida (1865-1935). He aimed at the establishment of an Arab caliphate, the only one capable of revitalizing Islam, by countering colonialism, and reviving the values of Islam. This included a process of education (addressed to the rulers and the population), to be implemented in parallel with reformist solutions towards a stricter view of religion, in order to allow the individuals to react and develop critical reasoning (Ramadan 2012). His Salafi teaching was concerned with recovering the religious values and practices that operated within the first generations of Muslims; later in his life he referred to the promotion of an Arab structured state. For this purpose, he created the Society for Arab Association, which in showing the opposition to the Ottoman Empire, gathered Arab rulers and organizations, by supporting the unity of the Muslim community. He sought the development of a caliphate based on the divine revelation, whose leaders would have directly depended on God's law, avoiding Western materialism (Willis 2010).

With the end of the Ottoman Empire, and a failure to realize Rida's plan for an Islamic caliphate, opposite trends arose, especially in countries such as Turkey and Tunisia, which started a process of secularization during the 20th century, however showing different traits from that emerged in European countries. Secularism was brought to Arab countries by the Western colonial powers, that inspired some local leaders to consider the separation of politics from religion, by claiming that the Quran, the hadiths, and ijma reflected only the spiritual character of Islam; they relied on reason – not only on faith – to guide their lives, and most important, the political affairs. Nevertheless, these

theorized concepts were not usually applied in a way of providing freedom and human rights, as it happened in Europe; instead, these regimes, that often turned to oppression of religion expression, went hand-in-hand with increasing corruption, economic crises and social alienation (Ramadan 2012).

The first example is to be found in the figure of Mustafa Kemal, who introduced many reforms in the newly-created Republic of Turkey in 1924 (which followed the collapse of the Ottoman empire), such as universal suffrage, gender parity and the abolition of the veil for women, thus beginning a high secularisation campaign (both of moral and legal principles), even though Islam remained the official religion of the state (Corrao 2015).

Nevertheless, the two spheres were not actually separated, but religion was under strict control of the state, and this did not bring about religious freedom or the sought-after democratisation; instead, the state promoted anti-religious campaigns, with the support of the military that eliminated any form of pluralism. Tunisia took inspiration from the Turkish secularisation, when its president Habib Bourguiba, which at the beginning made use of religious symbols to gain legitimacy, later on rejected every expression of Islam, starting from an opposition to the Ulama and the religious courts (Ramadan 2012).

This type of secularism survived until our days, with a particular emphasis on this divide, and in some countries public manifestation of religion, such as in schools, are prohibited, as it happened in Turkey since the foundation of the Republic and until 2017, when another ban on the wearing of headscarves was removed from the constitution, regarding universities, government buildings and the military.⁶

1.2. Islam in contemporary society

The emergence of nationalist movements, while claiming new freedoms and modernisation, nevertheless, brought about a decline in pluralism in the Islamic debate, decreasing the presence of several opinions. Moreover, during the post-colonial period after the First World War, authoritarian regimes emerged, and so did radical movements that wanted to oppose to their rulers, considered in allegiance with the Western powers; for this purpose, they often had to operate under repression, while offering the basic social services that the state could not provide.

Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) wanted to provide education to the people, by referring to the original values of Islam and supporting socio-economic reforms, that could later lead to the establishment of an Islamic state. In his mind, the best way to achieve progress in the society was

⁶ *Turkey reverses female army officers' headscarf ban*, BBC News, Updated: 22 February 2017, Accessed: 05 April 2018. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39053064>

through the use of *Shura*, the consultation between the rulers and the citizens, that allows to reach an agreement between the parties (Ramadan 2012).

We may consider the case of the Muslim Brothers, created in 1928 in Egypt by al-Banna, as a reaction against Western leaders, who, with their imperialism, pushed inevitably away the Islamic values from the public life (Bunzel 2015). At the beginning, the association was created to take care of the mass, born to combine the social change, with a more active approach that could have had a significant impact, without being represented by a political party. Indeed, its approach in tackling social issues, was a non-violent one, that respected the legal context and acted accordingly in the struggle against the colonial powers (Ramadan 2012).

Around ten years later its conception, the Muslim Brotherhood begun to acquire the form of a political Islamist organization. Its rhetoric is based on religious sentiment and it takes into consideration historical example and hadiths, although its main objective remains political; their fundamentalist approach is based on the fact that they look at the past as a source of inspiration for their actions, by searching those figures or texts that could support a particular thesis, especially with respect to modern challenges. By promoting the project of an Islamic state and the recognition of Sharia, they seek to implement an economic system independent from Western powers, reducing the gap between poor and rich people, and providing social services for those in need (Bunzel 2015).

The violent turn occurred during the 1960s, when the organization started to implement a more radical approach, by arguing of jihad as a matter of resistance in the anti-colonial struggle, claiming that the Quran represented the organization's constitution. This happened when Nasser conquered power in Egypt, in 1954, and started a politics of repression against his opponents, among whom he inserted the Brotherhood. This created a split within the organization, between the first generation and the younger members, who were angry about the way they were treated by someone who declared himself a Muslim; the first brothers did not agree on the practice of takfir, which they believed was only entitled to God, while the new-comers appealed to a more radical view professed by Sayyid Qutb (Ramadan 2012).

Therefore we can see how Islamism, at its origins represented a movement that used a bottom up approach, in their way of collaborating with the masses, with the aim of modifying the rulers' behaviour and the overall society, but did not wish to employ violence. This changed only with the advent of repression and the lack of success in reorganizing the system, which brought Islamist movements to rethink their strategy.

Islamists tend to literally interpret some specific Quranic verses to ground their discourses, always referring to the religious texts. In their projects, Sharia would replace secular law, in order to respect a divinely inspired political system; it represents "the Way" – in its literal meaning of "the

path leading to the watering place”⁷ – the code of conduct that guides the believers through principles, always holding constant the concept of the oneness of God and His commandments. This set of rules comprises not only religious practices, but it embroils all spheres of life, including marriage, dress code or eating habits; for those who respect the Sharia, the salvation in the afterlife is guaranteed.

Sharia, as well as the concept of jihad, has been contributing to intensify the debate over fundamentalist movements. Muslim believers defend the Islamic law as being the only one capable of creating solid governments, while modernists and non-Muslims, fear its concrete application in light of its rigidity and rules too strict for contemporary societies.

It must be underlined that a major point of contrast with modernists, is that Islamists do not take into account the human intellect, because the required rituals of religion, were already enlisted in the sacred texts, therefore are fixed and do not necessitate reason and rationality.

Its line of thought – a conservative approach – is based on the concept that Islam must return to its origins and pure ideals, rejecting all types of innovations and the corruption of modern society, influenced by Sufism, Western colonialism and secularism, focusing instead on the significance of the Sunna and the Quran and supporting the implementation of *Sharia*, the Islamic law. They therefore tend to deny the practice of *taqlid* (imitation) of the schools of thought with multiple opinions and claim that it would be possible to find the religious truth – the one revealed by the Prophet – only through a literal review of the sources and not by interpretation of the jurists; in their mind, there is only one proper interpretation of Islam (Escobar Stemmann 2006).

Islamists see their approach as a reaction against Westernization, in a way of protecting the social claims of the oppressed population, which at the time was also experiencing widespread poverty. They strongly defend the principle of divine unity (tawhid), which in their opinion has been disregarded by the West, by being substituted with their values of democracy and secularism. In doing so, radicals promote the idea of jihad, by using it against corrupted and materialists governments.

A significant figure in the dimension of the fundamentalist movement is Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who became one of the most influential ideologues of the Muslim Brotherhood, and member from the 1951. With his rhetoric, he has contributed to the spreading of ideas such as the enslavement of Muslims by the West, becoming the founding father of the Islamist movement. Having studied in the United States, he had the opportunity to see firsthand the materialism of the West, caused by a lack of religion, and this led him to become a member of the Muslim Brothers, and accepting the leadership after its founder’s death in 1949 (Springer, Regens & Edger 2009).

⁷ Coulson, N. J., *Sharia*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Updated: 13 April 2018, Accessed: 17 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shariah>

It is at this moment that the radical turning point of the group took place: by attempting at the life of Egyptian leaders, Qutb wanted to send the message that democracy and secular governments in the Muslim world were in opposition to God's law, thus it was crucial to wage jihad to form the Islamic State, capable of providing those principles of the traditional Muslim community.

In his famous book, *Milestones* – crucial for the Muslim Brotherhood and other fundamentalist movements – Qutb states that Islam is the only religion able to bring to light the values that the world has lost, as a consequence of *jahiliyyahh*, which is the ignorance rooted in the Western societies and propagated also by the Arab nationalism. It has been caused by the absence of principles and their implementation through a complete form of action, which in the author's mind is represented by jihad: he rejects the concept of defensive action, announcing instead that jihad is a permanent state, which has to always be kept in motion and applied to all times and places. The vanguard that he wants to establish in order to complete the revolution, needs to adapt to the evolving stages of history, so that jihad will not be focused on specific conditions but will change accordingly; jihad is decisive to bring peace on earth, through the only guidance of Allah, by giving freedom to the people (Qutb 2006).

Therefore, his revitalization of Islam consisted in transforming a mere abstract theory into practice, by demolishing the tyranny of men over his fellow men; the only authority capable of governing over the world is that of Allah. In support of his plan, he presented to the readers many Quranic verses, where Islam is depicted as the only religion that can unite people, because it goes beyond races, geographic boundaries, age, thus requesting a global jihad, which eventually will bring peace worldwide together with God's law, by including everyone in its community. He emphasized the concept of social justice, according to which no one should envy the others for their wealth, and a system of law based on the Sharia would be helpful in regulating the relationships among citizens, who will rely entirely on faith to remove the bad habits of *jahili* societies (Qutb 2006).

From Qutb's teachings more radical groups developed, such as Gamaa Islamiyya, who strongly favours violent jihad in order to conquer the creation of an Islamic state and for that purpose adopted *Milestones* as its constitution. We can also add to this classification the category of Salafi jihadists, who reject the moderate approach – therefore disagreeing with the method of the Muslim Brothers – preferring instead a practical training in order to be ready to start a warfare with the enemies.

Radicals have the opportunity to gain more popularity and influence among the Muslim world, because of their funding and organizations. Their networks indeed, receive money from the Saudi family, with the consequence of promoting also terrorist organizations and therefore improving their connections with international groups.

Fundamentalists can count on imams and Islamic schools disseminated worldwide, through which they can promote extremist ideas and attract attention, with the intent to carry on their revolution, considered as an ethical obligation. The Islamic state is their main objective, with which all man-based authorities will be banned and the Sharia will prevail; everything has to rotate around God, to whom governance belongs to. Fundamentalists reject the notion of reason, linked to the human intellect and focus instead on the morality prescribed by the Quran, with the aim of avoiding any type of submission to human systems (Moussalli 1999).

Hence, the discussion on jihad seems to have no resolution for the moment: on one side, it is described as a necessary tool to conquer and establish an Islamic state – the only one capable of bringing peace to the world – on the other side instead, jihad is understood as the internal struggle of every believer, which does not imply offensive war and terrorist attacks.

In the battle against extremism, the West should be able to support and finance the networks of moderate, liberal and secular Muslims, who oppose violent ideologies. What is at stake here is human dignity, which allows everyone to feel safe when professing one's own religion; it is necessary to support those organizations that carry on the true Islam. Mobilization becomes crucial for the aim, mostly through media communication, by opposing the tolerant and peaceful approach to that of extremists (Rabasa et al 2007).

However, one of the problems in this context, is that the governments do not have the certainty that those who receive the help are actually moderate. As Ariel Cohen states “a moderate is one who is searching for a dialogue and a compromise with people who adhere to other interpretations of the Qur'an, and with those who are not Muslim”⁸; therefore, we should look for cooperation with those Muslims, whom we may believe to be against jihad and terrorist attacks, and can contribute to the fight against ISIS.

Between the 1960s and 1990s, the Salafi movement was revitalized, thanks to the support of Saudi Arabia and the Wahhabi teachings, therefore promoting a strict literal interpretations of the Sacred texts, preventing any possibility of reasoning; during this time, it had however an apolitical trait, which did not aspire to any revolution or fighting, but claimed a simple change in society (Escobar Stemmann 2006).

This movement had the opportunity to grow thanks to the oil export revenues, that offered global publicity, fundamental for the recruitment of young Arabs to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Indeed, one of the main representatives of contemporary Wahhabism was Abdallah Azzam, who contributed to the delineation of the doctrine of jihad, a moral obligation for all Muslims, against those who offended and humiliated the Umma. From the experience of the Afghan

⁸ Cohen, A., Esposito, J. L., Graham E. et al (2005), *Debating Moderate Islam*, American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Vol. 22 (3).

war, the concept of global jihad begun to be developed, through the militant Salafism, and from the teaching of Azzam, jihad – understood as a personal obligation – was to be declared in order to free the Muslim lands (Palestine and Afghanistan), with the resulting justification of killing the enemies for achieving their goal (Corrao 2015).

The mobilisation that occurred in Afghanistan, with the financial support of Saudi Arabia, saw the arrival of militants from Egypt, Pakistan, South East Asia, “Freedom Fighter” that wanted to remove atheist enemies from their lands, thus leaving their countries, where radical Islamists were never appreciated. Given the thousands of Islamists that took part in the conflict and trained in the near camps, a famous militant, Osama bin Laden, created an organization aimed at gathering all these individuals in order to constitute solid networks: created at the end of the 1980s, Al Qaeda – whose name was probably attributed by US intelligence – that in Arab means “the base”, indicates indeed a type of database where to keep the contacts of those who participated in the war (Kepel 2003).

Salafism begun to acquire an even more militant character only with the Gulf War started in 1990, when the United States troops came to counter the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, led by Saddam Hussein, but the American presence provoked the emergence of terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia, that brought the US troops to transfer to Qatar. At this moment, various scholars begun to justify the practice of *takfir*, therefore promoting the fight with non-believers (*kafir*), and often their killings (Escobar Stemmann 2006). In the following years, Bin Laden condemned the presence of US troops in the Holy Lands, provoking terrorist attacks to their bases in the Middle East, while claiming a change in the ruling system of Saudi Arabia (Kepel 2003).

The most infamous event that followed was the terrorist attacks of 9/11; what came next, in 2003, was a US declaration of war against Saddam Hussein (who was believed to have weapons of mass destruction), who was then welcomed by Bin Laden in joining forces against the invaders. Saddam was arrested and sentenced to death, but after ten years, when the US troops left the country, the situation was not improved, and internal conflicts among different religious sects prevailed, considering the fact the Iraq’s new president, al-Maliki, belonged to Shia Islam, therefore it was not welcomed from the Sunni population (Corrao 2015).

Moreover, the contrast between Shia and Sunni Muslims started to be experienced also in Syria, whose government is guided by the Shiite President Bashar al-Assad, while the majority of its population is represented by the Sunnis.

Through these religious differences, in the recent years a movement has emerged, taking advantage of the sectarianism and terrifying the entire globe: we are now witnessing the birth and development of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Many authors and intellectuals argue that the group draws inspiration from the Wahhabi movement and its extremist and violent ideas; it emerged

then from the position of neo-Salafism, but it soon developed an even more strict and intolerant view (Corrao 2015).

The Iraqi insurgency, together with the influences on the Middle East by Al Qaeda, brought to the emergence of the Islamic State, whose leader Abu Mushab al-Zarqawi previously guided the Al Qaeda group in Iraq, sharing the idea of creation of a caliphate, but differing with it regarding the fight against Shiites. Indeed, Al Qaeda considered its jihad in light of a defensive nature, to resist the occupation of Western powers and fight against the apostate authorities of the Middle East. ISIS instead, promotes also the idea of offensive jihad, as a way of rejecting any kind of idolatry from their lands – rooted in the Wahhabi tradition – pushing further to outside terrorists, to establish God's authority. This includes the fight against Shia Muslims who occupied some regions in the Middle East (who were believed to have expansionist ambitions), aim that was not contemplated by Osama bin Laden at his time (Bunzel 2015).

The Islamic State exists since 2002 and it is strongly linked to the group Tawhid wa al-Jihad, guided by Abu Mushab al-Zarqawi, who will be replaced in 2006 by Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, leader of ISI – Islamic State of Iraq – constituted by several tribes. He was killed in 2010 by the American soldiers and his successor is now known for having created the caliphate under his name: Abu Bakr al-Husseini al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi. ISIS was formed when he thought of expanding the area under his control all the way through Syria, widening the official name to ISIS in June 2014, with the intention of restoring the magnificence of the caliphate during the Ottoman Empire, while bringing back the historical and true Islam (Bunzel 2015).

Its support from Sunni Muslims comes from the malaise of the Syrian population, emanating from the economic crisis under the government of Bassar al-Assad. ISIS took advantage of this situation of poverty and political tensions, gathering many Muslims through propaganda, demanding justice for the citizens. The same resentment has taken hold in Iraq, where the Sunni minority, oppressed by the Shiites in power, began to rely on the Salafist movement, thus giving their support to the newly proclaimed State, accepting its harsh system of justice and violent actions (Bunzel 2015).

In September 2014, the objective of ISIS's project has been outlined by its spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who explained that the targeting of Europe was a consequence of the many aggressions perpetrated in Muslim countries, thus inviting the followers in the West to take part in the actions, as a way of revenge. Since that declaration and until February 2017, there have been

143 terrorist attacks in 29 countries – both inspired or conducted by ISIS – with the consequent killing of 2,043 people and many more injured⁹.

Their actions include two types of terrorism, jointly used to bring down the enemy; physical terrorism causes pain through torture, rape or murder, and mental terrorism, in order to inculcate the fear of next attacks. The most prominent feature of ISIS attacks, is the targeting of random crowds of people – considered a soft target – for example, in public areas or transportation, sometimes with the involvement of police officers, making use of firearms, knives, as well as bombs (Nesser, Stenersen & Oftedal 2016). In recent times, we have experienced aggressions from single persons, acting alone after stealing trucks and driving them through wide roads, where the presence of pedestrians walking there was high, as it happened many times in the last two years, last of which was the terrorist attack in Barcelona, on the afternoon of 17 August 2017.

ISIS takes advantage of its decentralized structure to conduct attacks, sometimes more than one at the same time, in different parts of one city. The effectiveness of this strategy, relies on the fact that the organization is present in many territories; even though this does not allow them to control everything, however, it makes it possible for them to have regional commanders and foot soldiers in the most important areas of the world. ISIS leaders suggest their militants when to attack, who the targets might be and how to conduct the assault; nevertheless, we have been witnesses of terrorist attacks implemented by the so called “lone wolves”, who act on behalf of ISIS without its authorization (Nesser, Stenersen & Oftedal 2016).

Having no clearly-defined leadership, a great cellular structure has been formed especially in Europe, where the small groups might be conducted by religious leaders, who prepare the fighters without the necessity to find a training camp, most of the time located in the Middle East (Escobar Stemmann 2006). Therefore, ISIS ability to hide and not being blocked before an attack, rests in the fact that they implement a bottom-up approach, relying on local initiatives that guarantee large margins of flexibility. In fact, the opportunity of capturing its most prominent leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, will not represent a solution, in that we are not aware of his possible successors.

Detecting their sources of funding is a very hard task for the intelligence agencies, in that their attacks are constituted mostly of low-tech use of resources and are therefore quite inexpensive (they also spend very little money on travel, because most terrorists are already living in the targeted countries)¹⁰; moreover, ISIS networks are often financed by foreign fighters in Europe, which are estimated to be around 5,000-6,000 (out of the 42,000 foreign fighters from more than 120

⁹ Lister, T. et al, *ISIS goes global: 143 attacks in 29 countries have killed 2,043*, CNN, Updated: 16 February 2017, Accessed: 21 January 2018. Available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/index.html>

¹⁰ Nesser, P., Stenersen, A., & Oftedal, E. (2016), *Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect*, Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol. 10 (6): pp 3-24.

countries¹¹). Their finances are also drawn from the management and control of oil reserves, the kidnapping for ransom, extortion and other illicit actions; these revenues – derived either from natural resources or smuggling – amount to USD 2 billion by late 2015, 38% of which comes from criminal activity¹².

1.3. The image of Islam in Western media

Social media and new technologies can be very useful in our quest to distinguish between moderate and extremist Muslims, through an accurate analysis of different accounts, and a careful reading of newspapers' articles or an examination of interviews and videos posted online. However, through new media, the negative traits of society also emerge, with respect to modern threats such as terrorism, with the fear that many terrorists might live next to us.

The concept of Islamophobia, existing since the 1990s, has gradually developed after the 9/11 attacks in the United States, and in recent years it has spread in European countries, becoming a serious issue at the social and political levels. Runnymede, a British think tank, has coined the term in its first report on the conditions of European Muslims in 1997, analyzing the degree of equality or discrimination that they experienced. In November 2017, after two decades have passed, leading thinkers have updated the report, by providing their opinion on this matter and giving a longer definition of Islamophobia, which in 1997 was described as the “dread or hatred of Islam”¹³, therefore indicating acts of discrimination towards Muslims in general, including their rejection from social activities. Hence, the report presents a longer version of that definition, through the United Nation description of racism:

*Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.*¹⁴

Indeed, the many terrorist attacks that have occurred in the Western countries have contributed to the growing fear of the “outsider”, in particular of Muslim people, immediately linked to the attacks. The society has suffered what is called a cultural trauma, which “occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon

¹¹ Meines, M. et al (2017), *RAN Manual on Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families*, Radicalisation Awareness Network.

¹² *Le Financement de l'Etat Islamique: Annèe 2015* (2016), Centre d'Analyse du Terrorisme.

¹³ *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All* (1997), The Runnymede Trust, Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia.

¹⁴ Elahi, F. & Khan, O. (2017), *Islamophobia: Still A Challenge For Us All*, The Runnymede Trust.

their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways”¹⁵.

Years of Islamophobia have caused many negative consequences that we are experiencing today, in particular the problem of hate crimes towards individuals considered to be of Islamic faith, thus wrongly associated with terrorism. Anti-Muslims racism is shown not only with brutal crimes – such as homicides, aggression on the streets or the targeting of districts and shops where Muslims live and work – but also with less physical violence, implying a psychological attack, that can equally hurt, not only the individuals assaulted but the entire community. Instances, occurred many times, include protests against the construction of mosques in European cities, or the denial of entrance in public spaces for women wearing the *niqab* – and aggression against them through the pulling off of the veil – with the justification that Western countries are secularized and religion constitutes a private matter, even though the same opposition rarely was shown for other religious buildings (Esposito & Kalin 2011).

Hate crimes are now manifesting also through the cyber space, where internet users can enjoy anonymity, by creating fake accounts in order to offend and denigrate someone, only because of their skin, ethnicity or religion. It is not just a problem of prejudice, but also of reliability of what we read on internet, where bloggers may write about their hate for Muslims, framing actions committed by them as terrorism, creating in this way fake news that the audience might not accurately refute.

However, the grievance against Muslims’ identity, might come from the general debate that often animates the public scene when acts of terrorism are perpetrated in secular countries. After every attack that we have experienced, regardless of the number of victims, Western media – newspapers, TV news or radios – of various political orientation, have always described the events with strong words, often emphasizing the cultural differences between “us and them”, sometimes making the mistake of generalizing, thus accusing Islam and its followers. In fact, we should distinguish terrorists from those Muslims who profess Islam in its moderate sense, by following the values that are compatible with democracy and dialogue (Esposito & Kalin 2011).

Most of them, are usually the first ones to manifest their disapproval and anger with respect to the situation of terror created by ISIS, by stating that Islam is not what the jihadist group carries forward, but it is instead a religion of peace and unity. The campaign “Not in my name” has been launched in September 2014 by the Active Change Foundation¹⁶, a British association that took a

¹⁵ Alexander, J. C., et al. (2004), *Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma*, Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity, 1st ed., University of California Press, Berkeley; Los Angeles; London, pp. 1–30. *JSTOR*. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pp9nb.4

¹⁶ *Active Change Foundation*, Vision, mission and values. Available at: <https://www.activechangefoundation.org/vision-mission-and-values>

stand against extremism and violence, and it is aimed at helping young people and the communities they live in.

They have been operative in the streets, by protesting next to their fellow citizens and politicians, but also on social networks, where images of Muslim people holding the sign “Not in my name” were soon spread and reached millions of Facebook and Twitter users, thanks to the hashtag which quotes the same slogan, followed by an explanation of why the Islamic State does not represent them.



Figura 1. A young Muslim takes part in the #Notinmyname campaign. Available at: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/notinmyname-young-british-muslims-stand-4274392>

Those who declare themselves real Muslims, in opposition to terrorists, advocate that killings and violence are inhumane, and do not belong to the teaching of the Quran. They want to send the message that true Islam is a good and peaceful religion, thus they cannot be compared to ISIS combatants.

However, it is not unusual nowadays to see people walking on the street or entering a public place, being assaulted and accused of being a terrorist, only because of their long beards or headscarves. It has then become a matter of social security, as everyone is now afraid of conducting their lives as they used to do before the escalation of terrorism, which is actually the main purpose of ISIS: spreading fear and the uncertainty on when the next attack will be carried forward.

The topic is often promoted by the right-wing parties, especially during the election campaigns, in order to provoke the anger of the citizens, by attributing to the immigrants – most of whom are Muslims – the faults of one’s own country, such as the lack of job opportunities or the dangerousness of the cities. Many of them feel almost obliged to carry on the campaign against terrorism, and often Muslims in general, as if they were conducting a counter-jihad; they are not afraid to express their feelings of hatred and, unfortunately, most of the time racism, by making comparison of lifestyles, which in their minds are a consequence of an oppressive religion, which does not leave any space for judgement.

Nevertheless, many Muslims who live in the European countries, were born there, and may belong to second or third generations of immigrants, especially in countries such as France and Belgium that experienced immigration waves decades ago. What they wish to clarify is their attachment to the countries they have been raised in, that have delivered to them the values of democracy, civil rights, the principles of dialogue and inclusion; Islam is their religion, and they possess the freedom of professing whatever faith they prefer, without being discriminated for that. Being European Muslims does not mean they deny and repudiate the customs of the country that

hosts them: most of them don't know other habits or ways of life, because religion is a different matter from personal behaviour.

Security issues are one of the biggest concerns of governments, because they not only involve the killing of citizens, but also – and above all – they regard the credibility of those in power, to whom the safety of our lives is entrusted. This is the reason why, after incidents with high negative consequences, government representatives take to the streets, alongside with the citizens, to protest against the massive assassinations and to show the world that it is essential to stick together and not get beat down, otherwise panic and anxiety will prevail and we won't be able to respond with an effective plan. Demonstrations of courage and strength have been shown through marches and parades, where everyone could participate and manifest their support for the cause, hence uniting Christians, Jews, Muslims, men, women and children, and anybody else who wanted to publicly fight against terrorism (Romania & Tozzo 2017).

The western press aims precisely at this: to portray the West in all its strength and ability to respond to sudden attacks, by depicting the countries involved as being united against the common enemy, creating cohesion among their citizens, sometimes allowing and justifying the use of force and the freezing of civil rights and freedoms for those who are believed to be possible suspects.

Moreover, the high usage of the social networks has allowed the spreading of images recalling the attacks or the victims, in a way of showing the unity of all and increasing the hope for change. Exemplary is the case of the mobilization following the Charlie Hebdo shooting of January 2015, which killed twelve people who worked at the offices of the satirical French newspaper.



Figura 2. "Je Suis Charlie", Charlie Hebdo Website, 8 January 2015. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150108110708/http://www.charliehebdo.fr/index.htm>

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Soon after the attack, the slogan "Je Suis Charlie" was diffused online, with the intention of displaying solidarity for the journalists, in order to defend the freedom of expression, even though this might mean making fun of a political party, social class, nationality or in this case religion. The hashtag #JeSuisCharlie was shared on Twitter hours later and it immediately became one of the most circulated hashtags of all times, reaching 1.5 million shares¹⁷ on the day of the attack, and 6 million overall in the following week, thanks to many Twitter, Facebook and Instagram users worldwide who wanted to be a part of the movement that had taken a position against terrorists.

The image above was first shown on the Charlie Hebdo website on 8 January 2015 – the day after the shooting – and it was designed by Joachim Roncin, an art director who instantly felt that

¹⁷ Devichand, M., *How the world was changed by the slogan 'Je Suis Charlie'*, BBC News, Updated: 3 January 2016, Accessed: 7 May 2018. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-35108339>

the magazine was to become a symbol of the fight against ISIS. The black and white picture was also reported in the website with a PDF that translated the expression in other seven languages; it remained visible for a week, until the following 14 January, when the weekly magazine came out again in print. The slogan, which means “I am Charlie”, wanted to join together people from every religion and every nationality, with the aim of supporting the freedom of speech no matter what; the hashtag #JeSuis, followed by the names of cities attacked was used again in future cases to show that, in these occasions, the world becomes a single community, ready to fight to defend its rights and freedoms.

Social media become then a new way of expressing anger, rebellion and the will to stay strong and not give up, especially for new generations who, in this way can demonstrate their active participation in the cause, seizing the opportunity to investigate and learn about the issue, analyzing the history, culture and society behind those attacks.



Figura 3. Jean Jullien, 14 November 2015. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/-CvRmhhFJP/?utm_source=ig_embed

Many pictures have been distributed on social networks, in which, in a few seconds, they can be spread all over the world, reaching millions of people. Then, they are usually published in newspapers and shown in television programs, to extend the knowledge to those people who don't possess an account on social networks. Such pictures become the symbol of the battle against terrorism, especially hours after the attack, but again on the anniversaries, which represent good opportunities to keep alive the memory of the victims and of the community involved (Romania & Tozzo 2017). For instance, the 9/11 is remembered each year through the

posting of images along with the number of dead people (either civilians, fire-fighters or policemen) so that such a tragic event would be avoided in the future.

Moreover, Facebook – after the Paris attack of 13 November 2015 – created a tool to upload one's own profile pictures that included a background of the French flag, but other symbolic illustrations went soon viral, such as the one designed by Jean Jullien and posted on his Instagram page, with the aim of spreading the value of unity and peace.

Hence, we can see how social media become an excellent opportunity to share feelings and finding comfort in the words or images posted by anyone who is going through the same tragedy, with the possibility of offering concrete help by giving donations or opening the house for those in need after a deadly event. Finally, monuments all over the world were lit up with the colours of the French flag, reaffirming the concept of a single community, ready to fight and isolate ISIS.

These manifestations of strength and tenacity have, however, two sides to be considered. The first one – and more obvious – is a way to show terrorist organizations, and those affiliated with them, that the free and democratized world would not give up and allow this violence and continuous fear to happen. Indeed, in contrast to the terrorist use of social media, which they use to transmit videos where they praise Allah, showing ISIS flag and often killing hostages in order to threaten, the West employs them in a way of reducing the concerns and reassure the populations that governments and security agencies are working their best to provide a safe environment. The many posts shared, together with the articles written by Western newspapers, have actually succeeded in their goal, by sending warnings whenever necessary, but at the same time, calming people and keeping them informed of the security measures taken (Romania & Tozzo 2017).

However, a second point of view must be analyzed, that of Muslims using social networks, or those who call the attention to the atrocities committed in the Middle East. They claim that the West does not take into consideration those countries, in which war has become an everyday issue, where children and other civilians die and do not get mentioned in social media, as instead happens with a “Western victim”.

Many Muslims, but non-Muslims alike, used the slogan “Je ne suis pas Charlie”, after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, not because they agree with terrorists or they justify the attacks; they still condemn them but they do not support the way cartoonists of the magazine made fun of Islam and the Prophet, with their satiric illustrations. Sometimes, it also happens that instead of sharing images of peace, invoking unity, people from different countries post gruesome images of children dying in Syria, cities destroyed by bombings and men and women with bleeding faces; their aim is uniquely that of recalling the attention of governments towards these conflict areas, that have been abandoned to their destiny, with only NGOs or other associations taking care of the wounded and the victims’ families.

Furthermore, many Muslim associations and other believers explicitly condemn terrorism, by expressing their bitterness and outrage on social media or public statements, released especially by religious leaders in interviews on television. It is worth mentioning the Amman message, issued at the beginning of the month of Ramadan, in November 2004, by King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein in Amman, Jordan.¹⁸ In this declaration the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, wanted to clarify the true meaning of Islam, in strong opposition of terrorist actions, by stating that it is a religion of peace and tolerance, created to unite people and not divide them through wars. In order to confer great meaning to his announcement, he mentioned many verses of the Quran, in a way of affirming that terrorists do not represent the religion of Allah and the messages sent by Muhammad. Indeed, the killings of non-combatants, the destruction of buildings and other types of aggression,

¹⁸ The Amman Message, Accessed: 8 May 2018. Available at: <http://ammanmessage.com/>

were not prescribed by the Prophet, therefore these people should not be associated with Islam, which instead is practiced by those who follow the sacred texts. The King clearly states his opposition, and that of true believers, against every form of extremism and radicalism, which involve hostile behaviour against human life, therefore contrary to the will of God.

The message – concluded by some suggestions for policy makers, such as an adequate formation of religious leaders, to guide the community through the teaching of good values and moral norms – was succeeded the following year by *fatwas* issued by 200 Islamic scholars during an international conference in Amman, where they delivered a three-points message, last of which reaffirms the concept of separation with terrorists, by stating that fatwas are accepted only if based on the legal schools of thought, thus those founded by ignorance would not be allowed on the name on Islam.

These series of conferences were published and endorsed by Islamic organizations all over the world, and also praised by the then UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair; still today, the Amman message is mentioned in many books regarding Islam and quoted when talking about Muslims' position regarding terrorism.

However, it is hard to find any acknowledgment of it in newspapers or television programs, which tend to line up against ISIS, incurring in the error of sending the wrong idea, that Islam is a violent religion, hence ignoring the public statements of religious leaders and Islamic organizations.

At this point, it is natural to ask us a question: the threat posed by Islamic community is real or only perceived? We know ISIS and terrorism constitute a serious danger, nonetheless we should not make the mistake of stereotyping Muslims, blaming them for the attacks, only because of their religion, which can be described by Western media as incompatible with the values of democracy, human rights and freedoms. Indeed, not only the press, but personal opinions expressed through social networks and private blogs, together with public statements by far-right parties' leaders, contribute to the spread of ignorance around Islam and its norms and morals. Muslims are often described as sexist, oppressive, violent, and the position of women in Muslim societies is repeatedly mentioned and compared to women's rights in Western countries (Bin Haji Ishak & Solihin 2012).

The last point in particular is usually recalled during campaigns, with the hope of winning the vote of feminists. Muslim women are seen as victims of a patriarchal system that imposes rules and dress codes upon them, without the possibility of choosing on their own, for example, when it comes to the wearing of the veil. This unfortunately, is the result of Western ignorance regarding other religions, which are of course different from our standards of life, but that does not mean that they don't grant rights for everyone. We are convinced that Muslim men have certain features that are inherited from the teachings of Islam, wrongly referring to oppression and violence – also domestic one – without even taking into consideration the fact that the majority of women choose to wear any type of veil, because they identify with what it represents. It does not mean they do not

want to integrate in Western societies; on the contrary, they strongly believe in the values emanated from Western democracy, such as the basic freedoms, which allow people to profess their religion as they wish, with the only shrewdness of not causing damage to the other individuals. Therefore, they rely on their right to wear the veil, because it is part of their religion, or go, as all Muslims do, to pray in the Mosque, whenever they are lucky to find one in their cities.

It is important to understand that religion denotes a personal aspect of one's life, therefore does not constitute the totality of an individual; many Muslims live in Western countries, especially Europe, and most of them were born there and respect their values, such as that of secularism. Nevertheless, they are requesting the acceptance of multiculturalism by their fellow citizens and governments, who should only respect religious differences.

1.4. Modern influences of Islamic radio and television broadcasters in the West

The problem of eliminating the veil of ignorance around Islam is particularly strong nowadays, in light of the terrorist attacks and often common cases of Islamophobia that follow. The issue might derive from a bias against Muslims perceived through the Western press, which as we have previously discussed, tends to argue about terrorists as being Islamic extremists, therefore creating the doubt that Islam is a violent religion.

This prevents Western societies from a complete acceptance of Muslims, which can feel as strangers in their own homes. Hence, media should just objectively report the events as they happen, telling the truth by also narrating the pure values of Islam, so that real Muslims will be accepted and appreciated as good people. They are integrated in European societies, but they cannot be assimilated to our identities and culture, because of the fear of being compared to terrorist; acceptance and multiculturalism should be the basis on which the West is found (Tan 2016).

Muslims believe in the importance of implementing the *daawa*, which represents a call to Islam, an invitation to convert and join the pure religion. Unlike the first centuries of Islam's life, where *daawa* was up to the Prophet and through means of oral communication – by spreading the word face to face – religious leaders and organizations can now take advantage of the new methods of communication. Media – such as television broadcasts, radio or newspapers – together with social networks, make excellent use of the internet to inform the audience about the latest events, but they can be also useful to educate the masses on specific topics. *Daawa* is necessary in today's world not only to spread the word of Allah, but to distinguish between Sharia and man-made laws, with the intention of letting individuals understand the importance of the divine legislation, which can guide believers through their daily life, by discovering the truth (Bin Haji Ishak & Solihin 2012).

In particular, the adoption of new media could be significant to teach the core values of Islam, with the intent of break off the ignorance around it. Indeed, one of the best aspects about digital

communication, is the response speed to information; when someone has a doubt or wants to ask a question, can do so in very little time, consulting millions of sources from all over the world.

However, there is a negative side effect in this issue: not all sources of information are valid, and they might also constitute fake news. Most newspapers, books, or radio, have political orientations that affect the narration, and can therefore influence the reader towards a specific formation.

From the point of view of Muslim organizations, which try to popularize the divine message to as many people as possible, it is fundamental to create accessible means of communication, by adapting each channel to its main audience, whether it deals with children, women, low educated adults and so on (Bin Haji Ishak & Solihin 2012).

At the base of the discussion, rests the idea that whoever is in charge of writing the stories and diffuse the news, must have adequate knowledge about everything that regards Islam, in its objective meaning: history, culture, norms regarding personal life, and the latest developments in politics, without being influenced from governments or other Western institutions.

At the end, a good journalist is not only the one who writes well, but is the one capable of drawing attention to hot topics without discriminating or sending negative messages about one of the parts involved in the story. The reporter, as the name says, needs to report the facts as they happened, he/her has to tell the truth, then it will be up to the public to decide which side to take.

Moreover, in order to spread knowledge and important information regarding Islam and its pure values, many Muslim organizations agree to support radio stations that, through their daily and hourly broadcasts, could disseminate messages of peace and inform people – Muslims and non-Muslims alike – of what their religion really stands for (Bin Haji Ishak & Solihin 2012).

Today there is an enormous number of radio stations worldwide that profess Islam and teach the audience the verses of the Quran, what the fundamental pillars entails, or what Sharia actually represents, describing therefore the rules that each believer should follow. Some of these channels target specific groups of people, such as women or the youth, in order for them to be included in debates and discussion of recent topics, by providing a wide range of programs throughout the day. Voice of Islam¹⁹ is a newly born radio in the United Kingdom whose purpose is that of educating the society about the messages of peace and justice inherent to Islam; in its schedule we can listen to important addresses by the head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community – to which the radio refers – and other scholars, who in programs such as “Faith Matters”, discuss about contemporary issues involving the religion or answer the questions directly posed by their audience.

¹⁹ Voice of Islam Radio. Available at: <http://voiceofislam.co.uk/about-us/>

Another relevant radio station is Radio Islam²⁰, created in 1999 in Chicago, United States, with the help and interest of the Sound Vision Foundation in order to propagate the true meaning of Islam to everyone curious and eager to learn more, through the teaching of the Quran, with the aim of uniting the community and all Muslims of America.

It is possible to make a comparison with Christian radio stations, such as Radio Maria²¹, whose registered office – in Rome – is the base of the World family of Radio Maria, which comprises 71 radio stations worldwide. Its programs include prayers, promotion of volunteering and evangelization, providing for this aim translation in various languages, so that their messages can reach many people. Television and newspapers represent a great way to include the community in everyday arguments, keeping it informed throughout the day. Avvenire²² is considered the Church's newspaper, precisely for its creation in 1968 from the will of Pope Paolo VI, who wanted to create a space for everyone and Catholic readers in particular, where specific topics could be discussed, in light of the contemporary society and the secularization it is experiencing.

In Italy we can find several television channels of Catholic matrix such as TV 2000²³, whose programs narrate the Church's events or the activities of the Pope, accompanied by daily prayers, which reach many Catholics and teach children the values of Catholicism. However, we can also watch programs in Italian, that explains other religions, in order to close the gap of ignorance that keeps us away from familiarizing with other communities. This was the intent of Gad Lerner, an Italian journalist that in 2016 developed, with the collaboration of RAI Television, a program named "Islam, Italia"²⁴ in which he analyzes our contemporary society, where Catholics and Muslims cohabit, and explains how a dialogue can be constructed, in a way of accepting the growing number of migrants arriving in Italy. Finally, Pars Today²⁵, an Iranian news website, provides its services in thirty different languages, to make sure that the other countries remain informed of Iran and its cultural heritage; they offer online and radio programs also in Italian, such as the popular one "Domande sull'Islam" (Questions about Islam), where they answer all doubts arose through the confrontation with the public, which in this way can improve the knowledge over this religion.

Therefore, the real goal of creating Islamic media or international programs that discuss matters involving Muslims and their culture, is that of marking the difference between the simple and pure religion of Islam, and terrorism. By knowing what Islam preaches and what it entails, we can be able to avoid the ignorance that leads us to assimilate different data without actually discriminating between true or false news, by simply relying on what we read or listen to.

²⁰ Radio Islam. Available at: https://www.radioislam.com/about_us

²¹ Radio Maria. Available at: <https://www.radiomaria.it/chi-siamo.aspx>

²² Avvenire. Available at: <https://www.avvenire.it/info/chisiamo>

²³ TV 2000. Available at: <https://www.tv2000.it/chi-siamo/>

²⁴ Islam Italia, 2016. Available at: <https://www.raisplay.it/programmi/islamitalia/>

²⁵ Pars Today. Available at: http://parstoday.com/it/about_us

Al Jazeera Arabic is one of the leading news website in the Middle East – part of the Al Jazeera Media Network that comprises more than 70 offices around the world – which started its TV broadcasts in 1996, being the first independent news channel in the Arab world, with its headquarters in the state of Qatar, from which it receive loans and grants, but without being editorially controlled by it. In 2006, Al Jazeera English was created in order to extend the scope of information to a wider public, by acknowledging areas of conflict sometimes not reported in Western media, claiming to represent “The Voice of the People”. Its goal, is that of providing reliable and objective information to its audience, regarding the Middle East but also news from around the world, relying on its many journalists living everywhere.²⁶

Before the creation of Al Jazeera, individuals in the Middle East depended mostly on news published by international media, because in most of their countries censorship prevented the free circulation of news and therefore the freedom of press, and news were solely controlled by governments, without the possibility of communicating what really happened in the Arab world. Its emergence can be considered a revolutionary phenomenon, in that it was capable of uniting Arab population, of different culture and origins, and raising awareness on international news, by giving a renewed meaning to the concept of pluralism of opinions in the press (Sibilio 2011).

Gerhards and Schafer conducted a study²⁷, analyzing TV broadcasts produced by four leading channels (Al Jazeera Arabic, the US edition of CNN, the British BBC and the German ARD), in order to discover similarities and differences among media coverage after terrorist attacks. Overall, reactions were similar among all channels, condemning the shootings or bombings with strong words, and emphasizing the innocence of the victims, even though Al Jazeera and CNN talk about death tolls only few minutes during the broadcasts, preferring the approach of describing the perpetrators of the attacks. Moreover, these channels refer to the events using a geopolitical analysis, as the global war on terror (thus the West against Islamist organizations), whereas BBC and ARD view terrorism as a crime against humanity, alluding accordingly to a clash of civilizations of the perpetrators against a civilized society.

Notwithstanding its condemnation of terrorism, and claims of impartiality expressed in its code of ethics, Al Jazeera has often been accused of bias, also in light of the broadcasting, for example, of the Bin Laden’s videos, and numerous requests to shut down the network have been presented from time to time. These allegations have always been rejected by its staff and directors, who affirm to represent the masses, therefore they implement the perspective of Arab people, for which the network was initially created. Moreover, their conscious employment of videos or statements, especially during a crisis context or following a terrorist attack, could be used as a way of promoting

²⁶ Al Jazeera website. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/aboutus/>

²⁷ Gerhards J. and Schafer M. (2014), *International terrorism, domestic coverage? How terrorist attacks are presented in the news of CNN, Al Jazeera, the BBC, and ARD*, the International Communication Gazette, Vol. 76(1), 3–26.

their channel and a good way of doing marketing, in that being the first show these contents, they could gain a of many and publicity (Sibilio 2011).

Al Jazeera staff asserts many times²⁸ that what they do is pure journalism, without promoting a specific party or changing the narration in favour of a particular event, for instance regarding the Arab Spring, having been suspected of accelerating the process of revolution. The network continues to pursue the road of denial of taking sides of extremists, claiming they want to respect the freedom of speech, by also – when necessary – interviewing Taliban or other extremists, or asking questions that the international press would not directly pose.

The declared purpose of the channel is thus providing objective information to the world, narrating stories that have never been told by other television programs or newspapers, and increasing the number of relevant areas for the reports, especially those in the global South: they simply want to spread that kind of knowledge that other media are not able to provide.

This past consideration of media with an Islamic foundation based in the West, international channels that discuss matters involving Muslims, or Middle-Eastern programs, leads us to the conclusion that their pure intent is differentiating Islam from terrorism and they do so through the teaching of Islamic values and norms, and by keeping the audience informed of their culture and habits, along with contemporary issues.

What they want us to understand is that terrorism does not have religion, in that shootings or killings do not target only atheists, Christians or Jews: Muslims are usually victims too.

Modern technologies and the new communication systems, together with the use of social networks, do not serve exclusively for good purposes, such as those mentioned above. They can be exploited by extremist and radical groups, that favour these media to spread their ideology and to win the consensus of other individuals, who in this way can easily and rapidly exchange information and communicate with the organization's leaders, in order to receive directives for the attacks.

We can see how ISIS uses the typical “clash of civilizations” justification to attract the largest number of people, in order to get involved in the organization; what is advocated is the lack of profound values in Western societies, which represent for them the evil, to be defeated at all costs. As analyzed in details in the following chapter, Dabiq is the magazine through which ISIS share articles regarding jihad against the West, promotes violence and killings of the non-Muslims, and praises the attacks conducted also by those people not instructed directly by ISIS.

²⁸ *An Open Letter from Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, Updated: 26 June 2017, Accessed: 8 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/open-letter-al-jazeera-170626125049180.html>

CAPITOLO II

Radicalism

The previous chapter had the objective of providing the reader with an overview of the Islamic religion, which consists of many branches and cultures, all developed through the centuries. The Islamic thought has been evolving since the religion was born, and various schools have studied the concepts of fiqh, ijihad, and so on.

This understanding, is useful to examine the issue of terrorism, that the world is experiencing every day, given the constantly rising number of attacks. This phenomenon has existed in all historical periods, but it has now become a very concerning problem following the emergence of ISIS in recent years.

It is therefore necessary to comprehend what causes the approach to terrorism in individuals, whether it is a sociological issue, or it start at a psychological level. This implies an understanding of terms such as radicalism and radicalisation, which are often confused, thus creating a misinterpretation of the various mechanisms involved.

2.1. Definition and classification

As a consequence of the many terrorist strikes occurred recently, the reference to extremist and radicalised individuals are becoming more common in our everyday vocabulary, sometimes without fully knowing their meanings or what they concern. It is then important to examine each term in deep, going through its history and different connotations.

First of all, “radicalism” indicates a wide range of definitions, that are either political, sociological or religious in their approach; in fact, it is difficult to provide one single interpretation that could comprise the various meanings. The word itself describes a process through which someone – named a radical – tries to achieve a specific aim, without any compromise or giving much importance to the means, hence using violence when necessary.

The term derives from the Latin word *radix* (root), in order to specify that radicals tend to search for the core of the issue that they want to solve, in a way of stimulating a systematic change. Indeed, the formal definition given by the International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences refers to the basis of a situation that people want to overturn, such as a form of government, the market or a religious belief, therefore providing the following explanation:

*“Radicalism is any stance, practical, intellectual or both, that goes to the root of existing practices, beliefs, or values.”*²⁹

It represents then a relationship among an individual or a group, and the environment they live in (hence it is always linked to a historical and social context), whose practices and customs are not accepted.

It is easy to see how radical, in their quest for a transformation, possess a propensity to action, which is always involved in the process of a political mobilization. However, because radicalism necessitates action to accomplish a goal, it is important to distinguish it from activism, which can be described as “readiness to engage in legal and non-violent political action” (McCauley & Moskalkenko 2009), whereas radicalism might implies illegal operations. It is indeed an escalation of violence, the last stage of which indicates the terrorist who is ready to strike against civilian targets.

In its political meaning, radicalism is associated with the desire of provoking a change, usually at the government level, for instance, requesting a political reform that might be considered radical for the innovations that wants to produce, that could also stimulate progress and improvement in the society. Indeed, the first use of the term dates back to the end of the 18th century in Great Britain, when, following the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment period, the bourgeois class begun to demand more from the state, starting from a true implementation of the citizens’ rights and a reform of the electoral system which included universal suffrage; it was precisely Charles James Fox who in 1797 created the movement by advocating many political and social reforms, that will later be carried on by the liberal and conservative parties, which will then be referred to as radicals.³⁰ The radicals of the 19th and 20th centuries were understood as driving forward progressive, liberal, and non-violent movements, usually with pro-democratic requests, such as that of the Suffragette, which claimed the right to vote for women, through marches and protests often considered illegal for that historical time.³¹

In politics, the meaning of radical has shifted over the course of the years: from the 1960s, when conservatives were identified as radicals for their opposition to the government’s plan and approach, until the end of the century when it begun to represent those with progressive ideas, who wished to improve the system, such as it was intended by the Labour Party in the United Kingdom.

In Italy, the Radical Party was founded in 1955 from the split with the Liberal Party, assuming the name of *Partito radicale dei liberali e democratici italiani*, and throughout its political history it affirmed the values of democracy, secularism, with a major focus on issues regarding civil rights

²⁹ Barker, R. (2001), *Radicalism*, in Smelser N. and Baltes P., International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Palo Alto and Berlin, pp 12723-12725.

³⁰ Arzheimer, K. (2011), *Radical Attitudes*, in Badie, B., Berg-Schlosser, D. & Morlino, L. (2011), International Encyclopedia of Political Science, SAGE Publications, Inc., pp 2200-2202.

³¹ Purvis, J. (2013), *Suffragettes, Political Thought of the*, Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought, Gregory Claeys ed., SAGE-CQ Press, pp 784-786.

and ethical decisions that divided the citizens.³² In 1963, as a result of internal conflicts, the *Partito Radicale* was constituted by Marco Pannella who appealed to the Gandhian principles of nonviolence, expressing his resistance through marches or hunger strikes; the new party's major achievements are represented by the legalization of divorce, abortion, and recently of the civil unions for people of the same sex. In 2001, following a negative result in the elections, it changed the name to Italian Radicals (Radicali Italiani), whose management was up to two historical leaders Marco Pannella and Emma Bonino, who wanted to provide a new design to the party, establishing modern patterns that could easily adapt to the contemporary challenges arising from the interaction between society and politics³³.

Conceptualized in this sense, radicalism takes the traits of a progressive movement, one that aspires to improve the society we live in, through reforms that other parties or groups may not be willing to request for their radical character, meaning stranger to normal procedures. For example, more recent forms of radicalism are those concerned with environmental protection or women's rights, with the creation of many associations that handle various demands and are then in charge of having them satisfied, through frequent negotiations and abundant appeals to governments.

However, this approach is not always the privileged one, and negative aspects are often tied to it, such as the association with extremism, which occurs when, in order to reach a goal, an individual or a group is willing to use violence or every other necessary means, therefore violating human rights and the values of democracy and freedoms, disrespecting the rule of law (Borum 2012). They naturally dislike any form of opposition to their sayings, and tend to marginalize minorities; they also implement a hard censorship to prevent any obstacles in the development of their ideal state (or other political aim), that would likely be anti-constitutional and unwilling to open up to discussions or any type of compromise. An essential cornerstone on which extremists base their campaigns is the ideology, to which every member of a movement or organization has to comply with; everything they do, and the way they think, depends on those beliefs.

We can see how radical and extremist are not synonyms, despite the fact that they are often used as interchangeable words during television programs or politicians' speeches; in fact, the concept of radicalism, does not necessarily involve violent actions, but rather the use of protests to show dissent. Violence and the use of force need to be considered in the specific context they are employed, to understand whether we are witnessing military force, violent extremist or terrorism; we have to contemplate who is committing the acts, against whom, in what circumstances, and whether they are recognized as legal by the international law.

³² *Partito Radicale* (2011), Dizionario di storia, Enciclopedia Treccani, Accessed: 16 May 2018, Available at: http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/partito-radicale_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/

³³ Radicali Italiani. Available at: <https://www.radicali.it/chi-siamo/>

We briefly discussed in the first chapter what terrorism is and what its main features are. First of all, it refers to the use of violence (mostly physical but sometimes psychological too) against civilians, who are not able to foresee when an attack could happen; this is indeed the means through which terrorist organizations – or single individuals – try to achieve their goals, which have usually a political basis, but they can also represent a personal act (Loza 2006). The first reason to commit terrorist attacks is the most common, and it might involve revenge from an organization that wants a payback for the killing of non-combatants during a military invasion, or a demand to governments to stop for instance the exploitation of another country's resources.

Terrorism has been existing since centuries, such as the one used by Robespierre in France at the end of the 18th century, or more recently, the one experienced in Italy with the creation of the Brigade Rosse (Red Brigades), a revolutionary leftist organization that during the Seventies conducted many assassinations towards politicians, policemen or journalists, in a way of targeting the Italian state for the position it had taken at the international level, linked to NATO.

A legal definition was first proposed by the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism of 1999, which in Art. 2 (1) (b) describes terrorism as:

*Any other act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.*³⁴

A more recent explanation of what terrorism entails, is provided by the Global Terrorism Database, which reiterates that what constitutes such acts is the will to commit them, by perpetrators other than the state, and that cause violence or the threat of it. The database evaluates incidents whose goals – either religious, political, social or economic ones – are aimed at targeting not only the victims of the moment, but primarily a bigger audience, such as that of an entire nation. From this, the following definition of a terrorist attack is derived:

*The threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.*³⁵

We might be able to say that terrorists are extremists who employ extremist acts – meaning out of ordinary life activity – to spread fear and a permanent state of alarm and uncertainty, in order to achieve a specific goal.

Before examining modern trends in terrorism development, it is important to remember that ISIS does not represent the first example of extremist organization. As mentioned before, during the

³⁴ Art. 2 (1) (b), Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, UNGA Res 54/109, 1999.

³⁵ *Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variable* (2017), Global Terrorism Database, START, University of Maryland.

1970s Italy has experienced the so-called "Years of Lead", during which the Red Brigades constituted a major security problem for the government, whose politicians were under constant threat, which manifested especially with the assassination of Aldo Moro in 1978.

Similar cases in Europe can be found in Ireland with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and in Spain with the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). IRA's objective, since its formation in 1919, was the reunification of Ireland under the Republic, which involved a departure of the British leadership; throughout their existence in the 20th century, they applied violence to their operations, such as raids and bombings.³⁶ Created in 1959, the ETA aimed at conquering independence for the Basque region and during the 1970s a separatist group begun using violent means, such as sabotages and assassinations.³⁷

Moreover, as seen in the first chapter, radical Islamist movements had a fundamental impact on the international security context starting from the mid-1980s, during which many terrorist groups formed, such as the Tanzim al-Jihad (translated as Jihad Organization), responsible for the assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. The group drew inspiration from the teachings of Sayyid Qutb, who particularly inspired Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj in the establishment of an Islamic State (Sageman 2004); for this reason, he believed it was necessary to stop the government of Sadat, which was undermining their plan by hiding the truth, and inspire the citizens to rebel against it, in the hope of implementing a state founded on the Sharia, which however did not succeed (Springer, Regens & Edger 2009).

As previously analyzed, radicalism has general ramifications and one of its products, terrorism, also presents many branches, but for the purpose of this thesis it will be discussed only terrorism related to extremist organizations, such as ISIS.

Their modus operandi has changed over the years, nevertheless random violent actions have always represented a constant; as the predominant aspect of terrorism recalls the propagation of widespread fear among non-combatants, terrorists seek to cause large number of victims, in order to reach public opinion and create a status quo based on panic and anxiety.

They accomplish this task through bombings and hijackings – predominantly years ago – or suicide bombings and the use of trucks to run over the crowds, often involving the employment of knives or guns. For this purposes, the most affected places are public areas, such as streets and squares, metros and restaurants, or concert arenas, where they know that at a certain date and time they will find thousands of people grouped together (Nesser, Stenersen & Oftedal 2016).

³⁶ Arthur, P & Cowell-Meyers, K., *Irish Republican Army*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Updated: 28 December 2017, Accessed: 12 June 2018, Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Irish-Republican-Army>

³⁷ *ETA*, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Updated: 2 May 2018, Accessed: 12 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ETA>

This type of terrorism, operated by groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS, might be referred to as a religious one, but it is necessary to be careful in circumscribing the causes only relating to faith, because other factors are involved, such as the social conditions of Muslims in their countries or political reasons relating to conflicts with the West coalition. A deeper analysis of the circumstances that generate terrorism will be examined further in the chapter.

These groups' success among people, especially young Muslims, derives also by their simplistic approach, in their use of clear and understandable words, usually opposing two sides (good and evil, Muslims and non-believers, rich and poor, and so on), to ensure that they will be comprehended by different age groups and by all social classes (Loza 2006).

After having distinguished the various terms that delineate the landscape of security issues nowadays, from the definition of radicalism, we can draw that of radicalisation, which can be interpreted as a process through which a person or a group develops certain extremist traits, with the aim of changing some aspects of society – either regarding its government's politics or a religious issue – through the use of violent means. It might involve people who act and think in a certain radical way, although have not yet committed any violent actions, but are willing to engage in these operations after dialogues with other radicalised individuals.³⁸

Indeed, it is a long mechanism composed of several phases – not always consequent or all present – that requires time, hence radicalisation does not happen in a moment or with a single decision. It certainly begins with a radical behaviour, for example the support for a particular cause, which not everyone else agrees with or it is not common for a type of society. In addition to the various stages that an individual could follow in the radicalisation process, we have to consider that not everyone becomes a terrorist at the end, and different degrees of radicalisation are also possible (Silber & Bhatt 2007; Borum 2012; Schmid 2013).

Despite the fact that this operation does not develop within a day, there might be some triggering factors that bring people to the realisation of their own ideals. For instance, cases of racial or religious discrimination might provoke a shift in someone's perception of the world, inducing that person to modify his/her identity and respond with violent actions. Indeed, an individual could manifest an extremist attitude as a result of personal grievances – derived from acts of hatred and prejudice – or as a way to avenge conflicts that involved the Muslim population, which, in their opinion, were unjustified or wrongly conducted (McCauley & Moskalkenko 2008). Later in the chapter, we will see through a deeper analysis what drives a person to modify thoughts and attitudes, in particular if there might be any psychological causes associated.

³⁸ Given the fact that there is no agreement on a single definition of radicalization, the present description of the term takes into account various interpretations. See for instance: Reinares et al (2008), Silber & Bhatt (2007), Al-Lami (2009), Borum (2012), Schmid (2013).

In fact, we know that radicalisation denotes a dynamic process, where different factors – such as religion, economic context, sociological aspects, and personal identity – become intertwined to form one's own behaviour, which will be different from that of anyone else. This implies that what changes first are the ideas and beliefs that are then showed in the individual conduct, through an extreme version of their previous actions or a complete change of their attitudes (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

Those who embark on a journey of radicalisation, usually start from the concept of being victimized, pointing out to the societies they live in, or more broadly referring to conflicts that involve the Muslim community as a whole. In a moderate way, they seek for a sort of repayment for their perceived inferior position or a reform that could prevent discrimination, otherwise they appeal to radical actions, not only including revolts, but notably violent strikes that are aimed to cause victims to draw attention on the topic (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008; Esposito 2011).

An important aspect of radicalisation, is that of religion, which, taken as an element of the private life of a person, itself experiences an evolution towards fundamentalism, often in exactly those individuals who were not really interested in carefully following the precepts of their religion. Thus, the reason for the success of religious radicalisation, is because people may seek an identity or a cause for which to fight, usually finding it in the extremist approach to Islam. Specific Quranic verses are often read to support the cause of jihad, within study groups or mosques, promoted by imams who incite to a global jihad against the West, considered the far enemy.

From a report of the New York Police Department (Silber & Bhatt 2007) we can discern four different stages that characterize the journey that a person undertakes to become radicalised, with a focus on the Islamic radicalisation: pre-radicalisation, self-identification, indoctrination, jihadization. They are listed in order, which means that normally an individual should gradually go from one phase to the following one, but this does not represent the rule, and many skip stages, going directly from a simple sympathizer to a violent terrorist. However, from the discussion on radicalism, we observe that those who at the end grow into terrorists, manifest the traits that are typical of a radical, but not necessarily those who think in a radical way, would lately show signs of a violent approach. Nevertheless, we have to take into account that some people become radicalised but they might not complete the last stage, that of committing terrorist acts: security forces should be extremely aware that these people constitute a great threat, in that they might become leaders themselves and spread the Jihadi ideology to as many people as possible.

The first stage, pre-radicalisation, identifies the situation or social status that an individual is experiencing before accepting any ideology that could shape his/her mind, therefore it could refer to any person conducting an apparently ordinary existence, but who is inevitably vulnerable to the surrounding environment, especially if it concerns immigrants, unemployed or frustrated students.

In the self-identification phase, the triggering factors come into play because they might push somebody to identify with a specific ideology, such as the Jihadi-Salafi one, which brings together many individuals who can therefore relate to one another. As it has already been mentioned before, the determinants can be related to politics or the social context, but they might also regard a personal crisis (like a divorce or the death of a relative) and the linked economic aspect, such as the loss of a long-time job. The person thus turns into a born-again Muslim, one that has reconsidered the values of Islam, in a more radical way, and demonstrates the renewal of faith also by increasing the frequencies at the mosque, probably rarely visited before.

While the previous stage mainly concerns the individual alone, during the indoctrination phase spiritual leaders may come in handy to encourage the prospect jihadist in fully accepting the ideology and becoming ready to engage in the militant jihad, intention that materialises quickly in the jihadization phase, where the affected people take up arms and start executing their leaders' orders. The members of an organization have to follow, in particular, two directors: the spiritual one – especially important to inspire the suicide terrorists – and the operational leader, who is in charge of planning and coordinating each movement of the militants. Sometimes they may be both present in the same person, who demonstrates to be an essential element for the success of the attack, in that not only manages every step, but it also helps to motivate future militants and possible suicide bombers.

The phase of indoctrination might be regarded as the one where the main objectives of an organization are clarified and fully internalised: therefore, the radicalised person, will not fight anymore for herself, but for the greater good, which, in the case of Islamic jihad, would be that of targeting non-Muslims to ensure the realisation of a just and transparent society. It is at this moment that we may understand the intentions of a future terrorist, because, in order not to become too visible and identifiable, the individual starts abandoning the personal routine, such as visiting the mosque or family members.

It is fundamental to consider that the whole process takes a long time and it presents itself gradually, again implying that it would be unusual to proceed from a quiet and uninvolved sympathizer to an accomplished terrorist who is not afraid of risking his/her life; even from the point of view of the recruiters, the militant should demonstrate them the will to fight, therefore he will have to prove his/her courage from easy tasks that might not implicate the use of violence. Once the individual has been fully radicalised – jihadization is the phase that develops faster, during a couple of weeks – and declared ready by the organization, the pathway should consequently end with the terrorist attack, in a way of fulfilling small steps to reach the final purpose (McCauley & Moskaleiko 2008).

Radicalisation usually affects individuals alone, who undergo this process by themselves – beside their connections which may have brought them to think about it. However, the same path

can be experienced also by a group – either with a political or religious base – to which various people feel tied for its main battle, carried on with pride and shared by all members, that can contribute by financing the association, conducting risky activities and supporting the group in every way required by the leaders (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

All the units that constitute an organization, are based on a circle of trust, where each member feels safe in dialoguing with the others: it is through these moments of intimacy that the “group-think” is formed, when everyone acts in the same way and the minds are shaped thanks to the activities proposed by the leaders. However, this implies that the individual gets isolated from the outside and his affections, for instance he might be separated from family members who don’t know about his intentions of committing to jihad or do not explicitly approve it, so they would in turn constitute a danger for the organization (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

These clusters represent the strength of the main organization, which can count on a decentralized structure, where the cells are distributed worldwide, and do not necessarily take orders from the leaders or spokesmen at the highest level, but can act accordingly to the judgement of their small group or the command of the spiritual guide. They indeed possess a lot of flexibility in the planning of the attack, respecting therefore a bottom-up approach; this allows a more safe environment for the whole organization, which in this way can also prepare multiple strikes simultaneously or few days apart. This arrangement ensures protection from security agencies and military groups, that find more difficulty in the search for jihadists, who on the contrary, take advantage of technology for their communications, which are quick and with low risks; in fact, the cells adopt the same ideology, which is that of the ISIS’s core, but each of them is able to choose its preferred method of action (Pace 2014).

Indeed, despite the loss of ground that ISIS has experienced during the last months of 2017³⁹ – after its failure to keep the training camps alive, the fall of Mosul in July and later of the last strongholds in Syria – its ideology is still stronger and every attack conducted recently, even if resulted in few victims, praised its allegiance to ISIS, hence fostering a permanent state of fear. The issue does not regard the removal of the organization’s leaders, because this won’t stop its existence or the occurrence of terrorist actions; its stability and strength lie precisely in the decentralized structure created over the last few years.

What needs to be done is the eradication of the ideology behind ISIS: by “killing their ideas” and not their human capital, which, as it will be discussed, is in constant evolution through the recruitment of young Muslims or recent converts.

³⁹ Burke, J., *Rise and fall of Isis: its dream of a caliphate is over, so what now?*, The Guardian, Updated: 21 October 2017, Accessed: 22 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/21/isis-caliphate-islamic-state-raqqqa-iraq-islamist>

2.2. Radicalism in Islam

After the discussion on radicalism, it is clear that not all forms through which it manifests imply the same conditions and some of them may result in extremism, as it is happening before our eyes with radical Islam and the radicalisation of young Muslims, who then declare themselves ready to fight a global jihad.

However, it is important to clarify that, just like the general meaning of radicalism does not always entail the deployment of force and violent acts – only used as a last resort to achieve the announced target – so does the reference to religious radicalism, that substitutes assaults and destructiveness with moderate requests for reform, which might incorporate social activism by the members of a community, encouraged by religious leaders (Reinares et al 2008).

Moreover, in the majority of cases regarding Islamic radicalisation the individuals were not great worshipers in the beginning of the process, on the other hand we cannot affirm that the lack of religious knowledge has led them to embark in this path, through a misinterpretation of the sacred text or by a manipulation by some experts. What these people are looking for, is the radical aspect of this mechanism, by fighting the system that oppresses Muslims: they are fascinated by the violence and heroic element of the militant jihad.

As we have seen, the combination of many factors determines the possible outcomes of radicalisation, that is, if the individual will complete all the stages, perhaps becoming a terrorist. For what regards radicalism in religion, and in the Islamic approach specifically, ideology constitutes a predominant component, that guides people in their actions; it has been defined as “a set of ideas, beliefs, and values that aim at defending, changing, or criticizing the social arrangements of a society and its public policy plans”⁴⁰. Therefore, it might be applied to a community or a group, whose members agree on the same decisions to make and act in accordance to these fundamentals. Through an ideology, the individuals might experience a revival of a glorious past, as it is happening for example with the Salafi ideology, that tries to bring back the true Islam, by promoting a precise meaning of religion.

It has been described earlier what the Salafi movement entails, and consequently the fact that it does not preach violent activity, unlike its extremist version of the Jihadi-Salafi approach. The latter, in its quest for the development of a pure society – in opposition to the corrupted ones of the Western countries – seeks the implementation of a worldwide Caliphate based on the rules of Sharia, which is to be accomplished through a global jihad. Therefore it represents an active movement, although a violent one, that raises the restlessness of Muslims, and provokes them to use

⁴⁰ Freedon, M. (2013), *Ideology*, Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought, Gregory Claeys ed., SAGE-CQ Press, pp 419-423.

all the anger and aggressiveness they have in their bodies; so unlike the Salafi movement, this ideology is not willing to employ patience or adopt any compromise (Sageman 2004).

The concept of jihad, main pillar of this ideology, is understood in two different ways. On one hand, it evokes the approach of the Salafists, by mentioning the role that the defensive jihad plays, especially against some authorities in the Middle East, who are considered apostates and traitors, by having accepted the help of Western countries. On the other hand, offensive jihad – whose interpretation is found in the Wahhabi teachings – is highly promoted and sponsored by the Islamic State, with the justification that the misbelievers, and everything linked to them (such as idolatry and the corruption of Western societies), need to be fought in their own lands, characterised by man-made law, thus contrary to the will of God (Bunzel 2015). The fighters are then assured of a better world as a result of their victory, because the power of God will be imposed on earth and individuals will experience a better organized world.

What needs to be accomplished then, is a state where human law will be substituted with Sharia, and in which the Umma (to be intended without geographical borders) will be able to live peacefully conforming to the Islamic principles, by eliminating any form of jahiliyyahh, the pre-Islamic ignorance.

The Jihadi ideology takes advantage of the grievances shown by Muslims usually living in Western countries, where they feel left aside. Their impression regards some governments' injustices or unfairness towards them or countries with Muslim majorities which are often exploited for the only benefit of the West. This malaise leads to the creation of networks, where the unanimous thought of many individuals can prevail, becoming one harmonious view, with the undesirable consequences that we have experienced such as strikes and bombings to show revenge. Ideology not only attracts many curious people – who are then encouraged to deepen their knowledge of Islam and its fundamentalist aspect – but it binds them to it and to the organizations that profess the extremist view (Reinares et al 2008).

From what the Jihadi-Salafi ideology teaches, the rules of behaviour and the moves to be taken are extrapolated, and so are the main targets and objectives. Those who embrace this approach, are then willing to do anything – not to mention the high usage of violence and risking their own lives – to achieve the main goal, often instilled to the mass by imams, who greatly contribute to the final cause. The militant element of this ideological indoctrination is specifically designed to avenge the death of Muslim victims and accomplish a structural change in the society; ideology is then needed to legitimize, in their eyes, the brutal actions and extreme methods that they use in order to protect their brothers, either in local conflicts in the Middle East, or referring to the global Umma. This is done in particular by the recent converts, who are strangers to those conflicts, but instead feel united with the Muslim community worldwide, therefore believing they are obliged to defend it against the enemies (Roy 2017; Silber & Bhatt 2007).

A new identity is created within the cells of a terrorist organizations and shaped by the ideology, with the contribution of Muslim veterans, who were once employed as *mujahideen* in war zones, and have experienced the atrocities of conflict, such as the often mentioned one in Afghanistan. They are thus able to provide the right words to persuade young Muslims in committing to violent jihad, not only by spreading theoretical messages, but also by supplementing it with their military background (Nesser, Stenersen & Oftedal 2016; Reinares et al 2008).

Therefore, having generally discussed the main reasons why some people join terrorist organizations, we can observe how ideology is always present, either during the radicalisation phase – in order to motivate individuals in following jihad – or during the actual fighting, to provide a legitimization to their cause and use of violent means.

Many ideologues have contributed to the increasing influence that the Jihadi-Salafi doctrine has today on many young Muslims, who are still inspired by personalities such as Sayyid Qutb, whose books are being adopted in the radicalisation process, to inform the believers or recent converts about the notion of jihad and the obligations that follow. Other radical preachers include the name of Abu Qatada, who established his presence in the United Kingdom and can be seen as the religious leader of Al Qaeda. He contributed to the radicalisation of many individuals by spreading the message that an Islamic state ought to be formed through a constant fighting, which should give prevalence to the battle against the regimes in the Middle East, and not the ones situated in the West (Escobar Stemmann 2006).

A fundamental guide that has motivated many people in committing to jihad, was the mentor of Osama bin Laden, Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian member of the Muslim Brotherhood who sponsored the offensive jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan as the initial phase that is required in order to recover the lands exploited by the infidels. For this purpose, he founded the Office of Services, that worked by following a four-step procedure, which will also be applied by Al Qaeda; first the *hijra* (by emigrating from other ideologies), then *tarbiyyah* (marked by the process of recruitment), followed by *qital* (the actual fighting against infidels), and finally the implementation of *sharia* (Springer 2009).

In his mind, Muslims ought to be concerned only with jihad, which was as important as the other pillars; it does not matter if Muslims are employed as shields or if the militant's parents do not approve of the fight. Jihad is understood as an obligation for individuals, essential to conquer new territories where the Muslim community would live freely, with the opportunity of creating a new type of Muslim believer, characterised by a global element (Roy 2017).

It was mentioned before the role that religious movements have played in Muslim countries, in their quest for reforms and social justice, that necessarily had to go through politics. They apply religion to their discourses because they know the impact that it has on the masses, which in this

way will be more favourable to listen and support the cause. When strictly related to a religion context, these associations – which often regard themselves as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – promote peaceful means for spreading their message, such as the acceptance of the true values of Islam.

The previously cited Muslim Brotherhood, worked specifically with that purpose: improving the society through a bottom-up approach, by means of acquiring again the value of religion, and fighting corruption by giving a renewed meaning to morality. The Brothers wanted to offer social services to poor people, whom were believed that state was not helping. They also built essential infrastructures, such as schools and mosques, as a way of detaching from the West imposition. Nevertheless, they concentrated their efforts only on the renovation of Egypt, and not the global community as modern jihadi organizations do.

However, it is necessary to differentiate between the above mentioned political groups and those who employ violence to obtain a political goal. Over the past few years, ISIS has grown to become a militant organization, independent from Al Qaeda, which uses illegal military power to achieve their political aims, often mistaken for religious ones.

Even though groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas have provided social services and financial assistance to their people – substituting themselves to the governments or other official agencies – they cannot be considered peaceful political movements, but need to be conceived as extremist Islamist groups who militarily fight against the Western presence in their lands, and the secularism they want to impose upon Muslim believers. The goal of Hamas recalls that of many Islamist organizations, namely the development of Islamic states founded on religious principles.

They can be considered extremist groups, who go beyond the general scope of global jihad, by materially helping their communities, both in Palestine and Lebanon, where they gain great support from the masses, also at the political level, such as in the case of the high influence that Hezbollah has on the country's government. In fact, even considering their contempt for the West, they did not seek for the development of a global war, which is the main interest of the ideology of ISIS; their primary objective is the protection of their lands and inhabitants, combined with a political leadership (Hutson, Long & Page 2009).

Nowadays it seems that the only concern of media is ISIS, which has conducted many attacks, also thanks to the complicity of many lone wolves, who declare allegiance to the Islamic State when completing the strikes.

However, security agencies should also worry about other extremist groups, like those that form the so called “Conveyor Belt”, which supplies resources to bigger organizations for the radicalisation process. Even though such groups do not implement violence in their daily actions, through their preaching they induce Muslims to radicalise and directly participate in terrorist

operations; they however openly run counter to the intrinsic principles of democracy, such as the fundamental value of secularism, which is in contrast to their idea of implementing the Sharia law also in Western countries (Schmid 2014).

The most known is the Hizb al-Tahrir, otherwise called the Liberation Party, that has grown in Great Britain, earning a great support by young Muslims, especially students, who were amazed by its campaign in favour of an Islamic Caliphate, promoting therefore the goal of ISIS. Its impact and reputation are due to powerful statements that confirm the famous hypothesis of a “clash of civilization” proposed by Samuel Huntington, in which it seems they target the West for its intrinsic corruption and disregard of moral values. As it will be later examine, even these groups make great use of internet and the tools related to it, as a way of quickly spreading their messages (Carpenter, Levitt & Jacobson).

Compared with the past years, when mosques were the preferred option for the first encounter with Islam and the subsequent socialising, the meetings now take place in all sorts of locations, ranging from cafes, book stores, universities, prisons, private apartments, but also sport clubs, especially those where martial arts are practiced (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

In particular, student associations, coffee shops or book stores are all places where individuals feel comfortable being in, because of their informal element that characterizes all the locations. Here they have the opportunity to meet likeminded people, with whom they can confront about different issues and release their resentment; these places will soon become like home, and the people will be considered family, those who can understand them.

Representing innocent places, where harmless individuals get together for a small talk or to enjoy a relaxing moment, they do not arouse suspicion, so that the members of an organization can meet there and approach the Salafi ideology, which might lead to a start of the radicalisation process.

Furthermore, in recent years we have witnessed the growth of Salafi NGOs, which promote the readings of the above mentioned ideologues, especially by partnering with Muslim Student Associations (MSAs), that will later launch events, forums, and courses where both adults and young people could learn about Islam, often with trained imams (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

Mosques and other religious associations however, remain venues where Muslims meet at least once a week for the collective prayer or other moments of gathering, where inevitably religious topics will be discussed, with the tendency of promoting only one view, often that of Islamic fundamentalists. The imam may own great skills through which he could influence the believers; a known case was that of the mosque in Finsbury Park, in London. Throughout the Nineties, this place of worship have hosted many Al Qaeda fighters, who were persuaded by the speeches of Abu-Hamza al-Mazri, an imam of radical views. The mosque did not serve uniquely as a place to meet

and learn more about Islam; it was used as a hideout for militants, who could find a safe escrow for weapons and passports, which were anyway discovered in 2003, leading to a change in the board and the imam, with a new moderate appeal (Springer 2009).

Despite the fact that mosques are not considered nowadays places where radicalisation easily occurs – because of their high visibility among the public – in the past they have also handed down this task to smaller Islamic centres, which could take advantage of their sponsorship by the Muslim World League (MWL)⁴¹, whose headquarters are in Makkah. The League – which is an NGO constituted in 1962 and funded by the Saudi Arabian family – promotes the messages of Islam and *dawa*, and provides assistance to Muslims worldwide, also through education projects. It has been discussed however its involvement with the international terrorism (especially after the 9/11 attacks) regarding the spreading of the Wahhabi teachings in its many cultural centres distributed across the globe. In 2002, indeed, the office of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) – part of the MWL – in Northern Virginia (United States), has been raided by a task force of the Treasury Department, by following an investigation for money laundering on behalf of Al Qaeda, resulting in the impossibility of using the funds by officials of these associations, who were also included in the terrorist financial list created by the U.S. Treasury Department.⁴²

Cultural centres and other associations, but also public places like cafes, easily convey young Muslims that are part of diaspora communities, in which they feel isolated from the rest of the Western societies; in this way, they increase the need to connect with their fellow brothers, who can understand their languages, thoughts, and most of all their beliefs.

Places like mosques or the virtual space offered by the internet are a great way to bring closer many believers, or provide information to those who are thinking of converting to Islam. Nevertheless, they prove to be useful only at the beginning of the process of radicalisation, and are instead quite dangerous when it comes to the recruitment phase, for the high probability of being under investigation by the counter-terrorism task forces; it is quite important in this context, to remind that radicalisation precedes recruitment, because this final procedure not necessarily occurs with every candidate.

Moreover, the recruitment phase does not consider only the locations in which to indoctrinate the individuals, so that could be later radicalised. The recruiter has to face many issues that entail risks, such as determining if a person is mentally stable and if he/she possess the qualities and skills required to accomplish the mission; not everyone is in fact accepted in the organization, and before becoming a member, the individual has to be examined in details.

⁴¹ Muslim World League. Available at: <http://en.themwl.org/about-mwl>

⁴² Levitt, M., *Combating Terrorist Financing, Despite the Saudis*, The Washington Institute, Updated: 1 November 2002, Accessed: 25 May 2018. Available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/combating-terrorist-financing-despite-the-saudis>

First of all, the recruiter needs to be sure of not having to deal with undercover policemen or spies, who – after receiving a long training from security forces – can be very appealing to the organization, which might appreciate their ability to use weapons, their physical power and their devotion in committing terrorist acts, thus risking to be tricked also by their clothing and way of dialoguing. This is also one of the reasons the recruitment process does not often concern the use of internet, in that it is hard to fully understand a person behind a computer (Hegghammer 2013).

Therefore, it is necessary to grasp the right signs emanating from the potential recruits, those which are impossible to be replicated by someone external to the ideology or some fanatics that cannot be trusted in conducting operations. The process of recruitment requires a lot of previous preparation and experience and is it always entrusted to experts, who can distinguish different contexts and figure out if the recruit will be useful in other circumstances, rather than the hard tasks. They look for specific traits of the personality that need to be recognized face to face with the candidate, who has to primarily demonstrate reliability and faithfulness to the entire organization, followed by caution, diligence and the desire for battle.

Two phases are fundamental to ensure the success of the operation: outreach, through which potential candidates are detected, and screening, that comprehends the various analysis to frame the subject and identify its qualities. Outreach is mainly done in private locations, such as homes or associations, where the first meetings take place, and radical messages are advocated to see the reactions of the candidates. One of the elements that recruiters appreciate the most during the screening phase, is whether the candidate has ever participate in jihad, because this assures of the willingness to complete tasks, while strongly believing in the cause. Undertaking jihad is in fact really costly for the militant, and the psychological effects of a war cannot be copied by someone who has not experienced it, including gestural and verbal signs; the recruiter questions the former militant about the jihad culture, the life in the training camps and particular events or people that he keeps in mind (Hegghammer 2013).

What is essential in carrying out the recruitment is to make individuals feel comfortable in reaching the organization, they need to trust someone as they were his/her family, by sharing their doubts and questions. It is at this precise moment that the recruiters have to frame the person in front of them, to ensure the organization of the reliability of the candidate, who will then be assigned to a specific task, based on the previous conversation with the recruiter. This phase of assessment comprise a set of questions addressed to the potential member, to understand if his/her intentions are true and sincere, and in the case of a positive outcome, proceed with the membership (Springer 2009).

It has been well documented⁴³ that the majority of terrorists in the West are males, below the age of thirty-five – usually within a range of 17-26 years old – that conduct ordinary lives, often without being very religious, and usually without any form of criminal record. Notwithstanding their integration – perhaps only apparent – in Western countries, good education (sometimes terrorists have a university degree) and knowledge of many languages, they experience a moment when they realise they need to find their own identity, usually different from that created by the society they live in. The leaders of terrorist organizations are older than the members, sometimes with an experienced past in the jihad of the countries of origin; for their personality and thorough knowledge of the precepts of Islam, they are considered as honourable guides, from whom to be inspired in the accomplishment of martyrdom, which however is never performed by the leaders themselves (Loza 2006).

We cannot trace a single profile for those who commit terrorist acts, because the reasons for such behaviours vary notably (Reinares et al 2008), therefore we may also find people conducting a normal life, with a satisfying job and a high education level, a loving family and friends from other cultures, no records of criminal activity and an apparently support for the government of the country they live in (Sageman 2004; Silber & Bhatt 2007).

Furthermore, taking into account the age of terrorists is also essential for our understanding of the recruitment process, which takes advantages of the various contexts in which the candidates grew up, such as the experience in local conflicts in the Middle East or a multicultural environment of European countries.

The first-generation Muslims arrived in Europe motivated by economic reasons, such as the search for a job or in order to study with the prospect of a better life, but also as refugees or asylum seekers as a consequence, for instance, civil wars in their countries of origin, especially Middle Eastern and North African immigrants. Once arrived in Europe, many of them became great activists to promote the acceptance of their religion and fellow Muslims in the new cultural landscape; however, besides some that integrated well, others did not have a positive experience and they ended up relying on criminality, not always without adverse effects. They also continued a political activism that was often initiated in their country of origin, usually against the same government, continuing the same agenda in the host country and against it, sometimes because of affiliations with their opposition. The terrorists who were linked to the 2004 bombings of the Madrid railway station, were mostly North Africans who came to Spain to study at university, which however gave them the opportunity to develop the skills to conduct the operation (Rabasa & Benard 2014).

⁴³ I refer here to the report of the New York Police Department “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat” of 2007, which analyses five terrorist plots between 2004 and 2006, comparing the dynamics and the actors involved.

What counter-terrorism strategies are more concerned with, especially nowadays, is the rising phenomenon of homegrown jihadists, those militants who have been raised in Western countries and are particularly inclined to undergo the process of radicalisation; in this category we both find the second or third-generation Muslims who were born in the European continent, by immigrant parents, and those people who decided to convert to Islam. They usually show good levels of integration in the society, and are seemingly Westernised; among them the second-generations make up the majority of terrorists, around 60%, and converts represent instead the 15% of them (Roy 2017).

Second-generation Muslims find themselves disconnected from the country of origin, its culture and often language too; unlike the first generations, these young Muslims rarely possess a past of extremist violence or any connections with other organizations, such as Al Qaeda, and are therefore very hard to identify by the police forces. The pressure to turn to the jihadi ideology comes from an identity crisis, at the moment when they do not recognize the religion profess by their parents, considered outdated, but at the same time they do not feel connected to the new culture, which instead is regarded as immoral. These individuals look for a better way, that could confer them a sense of respect and acceptance, promised by radical leaders who preach the extreme Salafi ideology (Al-Lami 2009).

They appreciate this kind of inclusion showed by their new Muslim community, better conceptualized as family, which understands their doubts and pushes further the idea of a fight between the good and the evil, comprising the infidels and everyone who has contributed to the rise of Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination.

For the group of converts the dynamics are similar, in that they do not approve of their parents' religion, with which they grew up in a secular society, that permitted too much, and drove them to turn to Islam, allowing them to reach a more private connection to God. Moreover, the approach to Islam represents for them a tool to contest the immoral actions perpetuated by the governments and their citizens; it was a way of bringing back to life the radical movements of the 1980s, in an effort of fighting for a common cause (Escobar Stemmann 2006).

The factor that facilitates the membership in extremist groups, and not only a simple compliance with the rules of Islam, is that prior to conversion most of them did not have any knowledge of the Quran, the prayers or the pillars and can thus easily absorb whatever interpretation of Islam is given to them (Al-Lami 2009); sometimes this process is also simplified by the use of internet, where the convert may find unreliable information that draws the attention by promising the establishment of a great community, based on the principles of Islam. As the present thesis wishes to focus on the radicalisation that occurs in prison, it will be later discussed as many people actually start their conversion in jail, often led by charismatic detainees.

Young Muslims and converts are often brought in a radical group through their bonds with previous members, either they regard family or emotional attachments. A cell will then be formed by brothers, their friends or relatives, which will be likely to plan together a terrorist attack, as it happened in the case of the Kouachi brothers, authors of the Charlie Hebdo shooting. This mechanism greatly contributes to the creation of equal partnerships, through which the members can feel more comfortable in sustaining their activities, especially if the individuals' ages are almost the same. This also allows the recruiter to develop reliable networks, because individuals will be more trustworthy if they are brought in the group by someone they love; in this case, the risk of treason is also reduced, because it is hard for the authorities to fake these kind of ties (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008).

This is a distinctive element of the second generations of Muslims, who find themselves in disagreement with the Islam professed by their adult relatives (Roy 2017), to which they oppose a more militant aspect of religion, which allows them to fight for their goals, without merely subjecting to systems of oppression. The occurring result is a parallel society, in which children are born, and grow to become future jihadists, necessarily often involving women too, that contribute to the development of a jihadi family, that cuts any communications with the external world.

This suggests that their families, who remain outside of this alternative space, are usually unaware of the inner change that is taking place, and might not know of their process of rapprochement to religion, which is the reason why they baffled at the news of a terrorist attack completed by their sons.

Moreover, what distinguishes these young Muslims from their parents, is especially their lifestyle: they do not care about moral rules or dress codes, and they are used to drinking and going to clubs. Nevertheless, they do not hesitate to publicly announce their religiosity, which symbolises a disruption with the past, in an attempt to justify the future use of violence in the name of Islam. It is precisely this differentiation with their parents, that allows them to receive the message of Islamic fundamentalists, that exploit the condition of break with culture of young people and promise them new roots in the secular societies.

The increase in the number of cells distributed in the West has occurred thanks to the decentralization system, that allows them to act autonomously, without the directives imposed by the main organization, like ISIS, by only respecting the Jihadi ideology and following more or less the instructions suggested by the leaders through blogs or videos (Pace 2014).

Moreover, as we have seen, not everyone who radicalised becomes a terrorist ready to blow himself up, but many homegrown jihadists have turned into foreign fighters, by leaving the West to engage directly in the fight in the Middle East, especially in the Syrian conflict.

Even though many of them, after having experienced the atrocities perpetrated by ISIS militants, come back to the West, however not everyone is willing to change their mind regarding the ideology, and they continue to be strong believers of the ultimate goal of the Caliphate. The issue of returnees has therefore become a great concern for governments, who fear the reappearance in the homeland could signify an alternate way of communicating with the organizations in Syria (Speckhard, Shajkovci & Yayla 2016).

2.3. The process of online propaganda and recruitment

As it was discussed in the first chapter, media can have a great influence on their audience, by promoting certain ideas over others, sometimes unintentionally generating behaviours that are hostile to their way of thinking, like that of terrorists.

Eventually, some Muslims – especially those living in Western countries – could become tired of hearing every day the news concerning major attacks involving dead people, where a subtle negative emphasis is placed upon the role of Muslims, seen – through generalization – as terrorists, or anyway supporting the values of Islamic fundamentalism.

In order to counteract this trend, in the last few years, many websites have been developed as a way of fighting against these beliefs, but not all of them in a peaceful approach. We are witnessing the creation of various blogs, specifically developed for the recruitment of militants that could be employed in terrorist attacks. In particular, social networks – like Facebook or Twitter – and YouTube channels target young Muslims, whose propensity for the use of internet, makes them easy to be embroiled in the terrorist organization (Awan 2017).

Internet allows individuals to virtually connect with like-minded people, without the necessity of leaving the house and meeting face-to-face, enabling also the interaction of shy personalities. This in turn, accelerates the process of radicalisation, through the exchange of online contents with thousands of users, that could help each other in advancing one's own knowledge of the religion, and acquiring adequate information regarding the terrorist network (Al-Lami 2009).

Through the internet, jihadist leaders can spread various messages, among which we find the attempts of killing as many infidels as possible, in whatever country they are, in particular considering how many militants they have in that location; therefore they are distancing themselves from the original purpose of defending jihad, by extending the range of strikes to the entire globe (Loza 2006).

ISIS ideas and major concepts were also expressed in English in the famous magazine Dabiq – now shut down – which was read by people worldwide, thanks to being easily understood by everyone. The spokesman of the organization, al-Adnani often communicated through the

magazine, by promoting his messages, in which the notion of the Islamic state was recurrent; the aim was that of pushing people to fight in European countries, if they were not able to reach the territories conquered by ISIS (Nesser, Stenersen & Oftedal 2016).

Moreover, an essential element of the jihadist propaganda is the legitimization of violence towards the enemies, by depicting them as non-human, making it easier for the militants to kill them. Leaders and propagandists employ various elements that have an impact on the human psyche, such as the use of historical examples – often by recalling Mohammed’s life – and the promise of becoming a future hero, which again allows to differentiate between good and evil actors (Reinares et al 2008).

This is also enhanced by the system of support which will be developed within a terrorist cell, where every member assists and protects the others, assuring in this way a mechanism of encouragement that allows the militant to engage in violent acts with great approval. This is directly linked to the familiar ties that are recreated in the group and which provide a rationale for future actions, which will then represent the only means to achieve the final goal.

Perhaps, what is most appealing to the young Muslims that operate in the virtual space, is the ability of ISIS of taking into account the importance of fighting for the greater good, which is the establishment of a Caliphate that goes beyond the geographical borders, in order to unite the entire Umma. It is, in their eyes, a more concrete approach for the achievement of this goal, and not mere words as the political plan of the Muslim Brotherhood (Roy 2017). It has developed a social jihad, which contributes to the end result by posting information of ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, and attracting many Muslims convincing them to either engage in militant actions or provide monetary donations to the organizations.

The strategy of ISIS does not seem to concern a confrontation between Muslims and non-Muslims – even though they often push for the conversion of infidels – and according to Olivier Roy (2017) ISIS has two goals: the first, goes along with Al Qaeda’s plan of fighting the West to prevent its armies of invading the Middle East, and secondly, develop the project of a global Caliphate in order to end secular societies.

Furthermore, despite the fact that ISIS has lately been subtracted most of its territories in Iraq and Syria – hence losing a great portion of solid base and military lands – the main problem today is how to fight ISIS in the online space. Notwithstanding the death of ISIS leaders – such as the spokesman and propagandist Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who was killed at the end of August 2016 by an American strike⁴⁴ – the presence of the Islamic state in the virtual space is increasing, and the

⁴⁴ Schmitt, E. & Barnard, A., *Senior ISIS Strategist and Spokesman Is Reported Killed in Syria*, The New York Times, Updated: 30 August 2016, Accessed: 28 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/31/world/middleeast/al-adnani-islamic-state-isis-syria.html>

propaganda exploits these facts in its narrative to show the entire world that the organization remains strong no matter what. This represents the core issue in counteracting this approach, because, thanks to the decentralised structure developed in the last few years, the clusters spread in Western countries do not refer directly to ISIS major leaders, therefore their deaths would not affect how these cells conduct their own jihad in the name of the Islamic state. In addition, even at the highest level of leadership, the heads of the organization are easily replaced when death or arrest might occur, in that they are prepared to any event and have successors ready to take over (Speckhard, Shajkovci & Yayla 2016).

It has indeed become a cyber-war, where ideas spread in a very fast way and reach millions of people worldwide. The messages sent contain a positive approach, always stimulating their audience in committing to jihad, for the sake of the Muslim community; young believers, who tend to dream about glorious actions, are fascinated by this rhetoric and enthusiastically follow news and updates. Among the general public however there is not only the youth ready to fight: we encounter a wide range of degrees, as it happens similarly with radicalisation, through which not everyone becomes a terrorist (Votel et al 2017).

Therefore there are harmless Muslims, who agree with the plan of a Caliphate, but do not support the means through which ISIS wants to achieve the goal. These people also represent a challenge for security agencies, because the simple belonging to these networks – even if only by reading blogs or watching videos – multiplies the number of accounts that operate within the virtual caliphate, thus rendering hard for the police to identify the potential terrorists (Speckhard, Shajkovci & Yayla 2016).

The problem of anonymity is one of the main concerns of governments and security agencies, that find it hard to discover the true identity through the virtual images and profiles that one person might create, often more the one in order not to be traced easily. Moreover, terrorists take advantage of its low cost and large distribution worldwide, which allows them to take credit for the attacks carried out by the members of a cluster. For this purpose, the organization necessitates computer experts who are familiar with software and know how to hack into the systems, by providing secret log in information to the members, preventing the sending of emails which could be detected by the postal police, or by exploiting legal websites by hiding their materials (Precht 2007).

A similar category to the non-supporters, is that of passive observers, the sceptical ones who would like to see the goal realised, but are not sure of its feasibility, thus representing a silent audience. Those who instead take an active part in the chat rooms and blog discussions, are the benign fans, who enjoy sharing their thoughts with like-minded people, and are then socially involved in the community, but are reluctant to take up arms. One of the most important tasks is carried out by the recruiter, who is in charge of promoting the online propaganda, and simultaneously search for potential candidates, by looking at what they post or ask, or discussing

with them how they would act in a specific situation. Finally, the most feared category includes the actual militants, who either receive the directives from official leaders or take the initiative and act by themselves, inspired by what they read on internet, with the hope of being in turn mentioned in websites or in online magazines, such as the most famous one, Dabiq (Votel et al 2017).

The role that internet plays in the life of a radicalised Muslim, should also be examined with reference to the four stages discussed above, recognizing even more so the way it interconnects people and let them feel almost as a family, where they can act and talk freely, knowing that the other users, think and reason exactly like them.

It does not work just as a meeting place, were people gather virtually and get to know each other; it represents a system where they can accumulate knowledge on Islam – even if it is a distorted one for their benefits – and face other fellow believers proposing ideas and new plans. Hence, they undergo a brainwashing that drives them to carry out terrible operations – also pushed by the fact that everyone is watching them – and it finally provides the necessary information useful to complete the actions, such as pamphlets that explain how to build a bomb or kill people in cold blood (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

Moreover, many people that have radicalised were not very religious before the process begun and they usually relied only on the basic principles; they did not have an extensive knowledge of Islam and even after the mechanism of radicalisation is completed, their information comes uniquely from Islamic scholars – who tend to provide only the data beneficial to them – or the internet, where militants search directly for the verses of the Quran they want to hear, disregarding those of peace and tolerance.

Before an individual can reach the phase of recruitment, he/she needs to be radicalised, and this can be facilitated by using social networks and other online tools, such as magazines or blogs, were to upload videos, pictures or articles. The element that is able to attract thousands of view is the approach to martyrdom, the willingness to die during the battle to honour God; this wish is demonstrated through videos and statements, produced before death, and transmitted by other members as a posthumous evidence of their devotion to the goal, by sacrificing themselves to defeat the enemy. The recruitment phase is then followed and supported by a period of training, both psychological and practical, where they teach the future militants how to handle weapons and survive in this environment. Because of the widespread of terrorist cells in Europe, this mechanism is now carried out in the continent, whereas before the 9/11, the required preparation was achieved in the camps based in Afghanistan or Pakistan (Escobar Stemmann 2006).

In order to attract large numbers of viewers, hence potential recruits, they put on display the violence perpetuated by the militants towards hostages or other victims. They upload videos in which the jihadist, who wants to appear as an hero, shows strength in the killing of the prisoner,

almost like a game, where the terrorists pose wearing uniforms, with weapons in their hands. On the other hand, a different type of video is often published, in which jihadi militants appear as benefactors that help a country's civilian population, such as in Syria, or in which are depicted while playing with children (Awan 2017).

The recruiters that operate in the virtual space possess high technological skills and know how to exploit that type of environment, adopted predominantly by young users. For instance, a valuable cyber-terrorist, administering the recruitment on behalf of Al Qaeda, was the 22 years old Younis Tsouli, who was in charge of conducting the online campaign. He managed various websites, by implementing original techniques and programs, but was resented of not being able to directly take part in the conflict in Iraq (Rabasa 2014).

Nevertheless, the fundamental role the internet plays is that of conducting a parallel task to the actual fighting; the militant jihad can be accomplished because of the funds provided through the internet, and many combatants become such after having being inspired by the stories of former jihadists shared on different blogs. Indeed, some users might donate different amounts of money to the cause, as a way of indirectly helping their brothers, as a voluntary act often recalled by the promotion of fund-raising campaigns.

A great way of contributing to the propaganda is the publication of *fatwas* (or a legal opinion) and the declaration of *takfir*, or the accusation of apostasy, in order to legitimize the murder of innocent people, which often includes other Muslims too. As said before, the training takes place in Europe, but previously starts with an online theoretical preparation that consists of pamphlets and manuals that provide all the necessary information regarding the planning of an attack, how to build explosives, or how to deal with police forces in case of arrest. These directives are made for different level of expertise, going from the simplest notion to the more complex ones regarding scientific knowledge; they also contain video clips to enforce a better teaching, as a substitute of training camps (Rabasa 2014).

However, without a meeting in person, or a planned discussion on the future operations, the individual risks to commit violent acts that do not comprehend a specific target, and are done without taking into account time or space, but only as a personal satisfaction. Therefore, acts of terrorism, needs to be prepared both by leaders and militants, who will have then to meet face-to-face, otherwise the rising phenomenon of lone wolves would likely occur.

The importance of a good propaganda relies on the fact that it is necessary to increase the number of individuals who are members of the organization, in order to substitute those who die during the battle or get arrested for terrorism.

The virtual Umma that is formed has the possibility of staying in touch through many social networks, where accounts are created and deleted quickly in order not to be traced, and the same happens for websites or blogs, where many encrypted information are often uploaded.

Telegram is now the most employed social network – having superseded Twitter in 2016, which mostly operated in the years following 2011 – sometimes used to comment live while an attack is taking place, to perpetrate the idea of the caliphate, reiterated many times through the various accounts conceived. One of the newest trends is also uploading pictures or short videos that portray the terrorist after the attack has occurred – usually selfie-style videos where the individual pledges allegiance to ISIS and its cause – and members of the organization or other sympathizers share them by praising these killers as martyrs (Prucha 2016).

Here they publish videos, in which they show jihadists during theatrical fight or the killings of prisoners, situations that are rehearsed many times before filming and for this reason, terrorists appear as amazing combatants, almost as a hero for their audience, which in this way is driven to commit violent actions. During the shooting, foreign fighters and converts are also interviewed, as a way to express their motivations and convince others to join ISIS, remembering how great the Islamic State is, and how Muslims need to defend it from corrupted societies (Prucha 2016).

In the last few years, ISIS has developed a great digital machine, in which it conducts a clever marketing campaign, by providing their viewers with material – images, video clips or documents – generated in many languages, properly designed to reach not only Arab Muslims, but the global community too.

The move from Twitter to Telegram was done to ensure that the transmitted content remained secret and not reachable by security forces, which on the previous platform, through the spam mechanism, were able to dismantle hundreds of accounts. Telegram instead, works with end-to-end encrypted files, which can be downloaded without the obligation to access to an external browser, therefore accelerating and simplifying the process.

Furthermore, the internet is a useful tool also for the broadcasting of radio programs, which in this way can be listened from every part of the world and during the entire day. We have previously examined the role that radio stations and television programs play in today's world regarding the spreading of information about Islam, with the intention of stopping discrimination against Muslims for a direct association with extremism. However, in such a scenario, new elements are inserted to provoke the system and encourage individuals to take actions against it.

An example is the creation in early 2015 of the radio al-Bayan, with its declared affiliation to the Islamic State. Its frequencies were reachable in Iraq, Syria, and even in Libya, and during the broadcasting it informed the audience of the evolution of the conflicts in the Middle East, while entertaining with *nasheed* – an a cappella typical singing, giving the prohibition by ISIS of playing

music – and news communicated in many languages, among which there were Arab, English, French and Russian.⁴⁵

The radio was previously shut down many times but the organization was successful in restoring it with new frequencies – that were communicated to the listeners through social media – and often changed its URL in order not to be tracked down. However, since 2015, various media channels and servers, including the above mentioned radio – have been closed by a concerted operation of police forces from various countries, in particular different European members, United States and Canada. The joint work was announced to be over on 27 April 2018, after ISIS news agency Amaq was taken down and the general propaganda machine took a hit, which was kept under Europol's control⁴⁶.

It can also be of a significant importance, the fact that both the Rumiya magazine – which replaced Dabiq in September 2016 – and al-Bayan radio disappeared from the virtual space after the raids in Raqqa, which might indicate that they have operated within the Syrian territories.⁴⁷

Law enforcement authorities have done an excellent job in countering the terrorist propaganda, especially in the last three years; however, many people have raised different questions regarding the respect of the fundamental principles of democracy, in particular the freedom of expression. The government of a country should be able to distinguish between members of a terrorist organization and sympathizers, which however might need to be watched carefully to avoid radicalisation. Therefore, recommendations for the police forces comprise a continuous work of dismantling websites promoting violent jihad, including the block on the uploading of materials, and promoting the spread of more positive messages as a way of disenchanting, by also showing the true reality of ISIS (Schmid 2013).

2.4. What are the causes: sociological and psychological approach

Despite the fact that in a common analysis “normal people” do not kill other human beings, psychologists usually agree with the fact the terrorists do not possess specific mental diseases,

⁴⁵ Daftari, L., *Islamic State's Al Bayan radio station back online*, The Foreign Desk, Updated: 13 February 2017, Accessed: 27 May 2018. Available at: <http://www.foreigndesknews.com/world/middle-east/islamic-states-al-bayan-radio-station-back-online/>

⁴⁶ *Islamic State Propaganda Machine Hit by Law Enforcement in Coordinated Takedown Action*, Europol, Press Release, Updated: 27 April 2018, Accessed: 28 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/islamic-state-propaganda-machine-hit-law-enforcement-in-coordinated-takedown-action>

⁴⁷ Shiloach, G., *ISIS's Defeat in Syria and Iraq Is Also the End of ISIS's Media as We Know It*, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Updated: 9 November 2017, Accessed: 28 May 2018. Available at: <https://dayan.org/content/isis%E2%80%99s-defeat-syria-and-iraq-also-end-isis%E2%80%99s-media-we-know-it>

nevertheless some subjects may be vulnerable to narcissistic injury, deriving from resentment and hard feelings; however scholars may differ a lot in their interpretation.

A radicalised person cannot be described by a single profile, in that many factors influence the person he/she becomes in the future, including age, culture, geographical location and degree of adherence to a religion. Thus, the process of radicalisation does not depend entirely on an individual's personality and psychological traits: we cannot say that someone has been radicalised because it was psychologically predisposed. On the contrary, radicalisation combines one's own temperament with the environmental characteristics that surround the individual and that distinguish one society from another (Reinares et al 2008).

An influential factor is also the context in which the individual lives, and how he manages his own life, whether he is not well integrated, finds it hard to get a satisfying job or feels morally excluded from the society; this can happen both in the Middle East, where citizens often have to deal with authoritarian regimes, and in Europe, where Muslims are usually recognized as different, even if they were born and raised in those democracies (Carpenter, Levitt and Jacobson 2009).

Hutson, Long & Page (2009) discuss in their study the correlation of different factors in causing the process of radicalisation, and the influence they pose combined with the individual's interaction with the surrounding environment, and how various people act when they are to be found in the same social context. The researchers applied a pathway model to examine not only the behavioural elements of a terrorist, but they also consider how the personality is affected by the social background; therefore, the analysis includes the intersection of the socio-economic dynamic, the religious dynamic and the personal dynamic. These factors form together the "triangle of identity formation", in which every element has a two-way relation with the others and this is the reason why terrorists do not present identical traits, in that countless combinations can be drawn through this model.

Many Muslims who radicalise, do so in the name of religion, because they discover their new identity through the lenses of Islam, even though a distorted Islam – which does not take into account the history and the culture at the time of Mohammed – where only some verses of the Quran are thought, those which incite hatred and legitimize violence against the infidels. These references are made to emphasize the importance of ideology, which pushes for a battle between the non-believers, in an attempt to convert them and live a peaceful live under a Muslim Caliphate (Loza 2006).

These arguments recall the one advocated by Sayyid Qutb in Milestones, from which many extremist groups take inspiration in the fight against secularism and democracy, in order not to stumble in their corruption and immoral values. It is precisely from the extremists' ideology that we

can infer terrorist organizations' goals and demands, for which they tend to justify terrorist acts; explaining their reasons will lead to the understanding of what are the causes for radicalisation.

As already mentioned, one of the most reiterated aims, is of a political nature, in that includes the realisation of an Islamic state, based on the Sharia, to be achieved by both fighting the undemocratic regimes of the Middle East, and the Western corrupted governments. Many extremists also use the justification that they did not encounter the so often promised freedoms praised by the West, opposing instead the argument of frequent incarceration of innocent men. Moreover, Muslims often claim the commitment to defend their lands, which has been exploited for years by Western countries, through invasions by their military forces (Loza 2006).

Connected to this motif, is the association of the conflicts occurring in the Middle East, such as in Palestine or Syria, or previously Afghanistan, that did not regard only Muslims, but also the involvement of Western armies, whose foreign policy was then seen as aggressive, rather than providing an actual help to the population in need (Al-Lami 2009).

Another source of grievance comes from the malaise generated by the society itself, in particular the condition of poverty that causes a gap between wealthy and poor, often produced by unemployment. This also provokes a sense of injustice especially among the youth, after having observed that the efforts made by their parents, by moving to the West, were swept away. Personal resentment can also derive by having experienced discrimination, followed by a sense of victimization, often promoted by politicians' speeches or by television programs (Loza 2006).

Furthermore, we have to be careful in not associating radicalisation with a failed integration, because most of the Muslims living in Western countries have good quality jobs, lots of friends and are active in the political and social life of the state. The problem of integration might occur when some of the issues examined above converge and add up to form a combination of factors that later causes an extremist development.

Some individuals might be more inclined in undergoing radicalisation because of a variety of factors, which Schmid (2013) divides in three levels: micro, meso and macro. The first one, regards the problems of identity experienced by the person, like those described before, for instance connected to islamophobia, or the sense of estrangement usually experienced by second-generations, who do not feel like they belong either to their parents' culture or the western environment in which they have been raised.

At the meso level, the environment plays a crucial role in forming a radical personality, in that Muslims often live in the same communities, or tend to aggregate in mosques, student associations or other gathering places, where they can meet with like-minded people that support each other. As we have seen, these are usually public locations, but the moments when radicalisation occurs,

namely the teachings of the jihadi ideology, often happen in underground places, difficult to be reached by the police, therefore isolating themselves from the rest of the society.

Finally, at the last position, we locate those considerations that deal mainly with politics, both at the local and foreign level, which in a way can constitute triggering factors, such as the involvement of a country in a particular conflict, the clash between the society and a racial minority, or a general restlessness of the Muslims community regarding their inclusion in political decisions.

From this analysis is it now possible to distinguish what happens at the psychological level, once grievances – either caused by political or religious elements – are exploited by extremist groups. Loza (2006) provides a range of explanations that have been proposed over the years by psychologists and terrorism experts, that have concentrated in studying the mechanisms that occur in a terrorist's mind that facilitate the process of radicalisation. Different hypothesis regard a problem of identity, as previously discussed within a societal context, that causes the individual a mix of emotions, that might be fatal if not identified on time. By framing the profile of a terrorist, the motif of humiliation is often cited, as a consequence of discrimination, probably ethnicity or religion-related, with the result of feeling inadequate for the society; this in turn can lead to issues of narcissism or paranoid tendencies. Lastly, those who commit terrorist acts, usually come from an educated background, but the idea of engaging in violent operations allows them to escape their ordinary lives, to live an unforgettable experience.

Marc Sageman (2004) offers a detailed review of data concerning ten known terrorists, among which we find Osama bin Laden, and Khaled Kelkal, considered the first homegrown terrorist (Roy 2017); the overall analysis states that the elements in examination were not affected by severe mental illness. Moreover, Sageman, also disagrees with the scholars that promote pathological narcissism as a cause of violence in adults, with the justification that they probably experienced a personal trauma during their childhood; he claims that they consider only the psychological aspect of the person, without having any expertise on terrorism per se. Consequently, he proposes his examination of sixty-nine jihadi militants, and after having analysed their past lives, comes to the conclusion that none of them experienced narcissism, and even Osama bin Laden, despite its wealth and charisma, remained humble and did not show off his assets; finally, Sageman makes also a comparison with other known mujahedin, without discovering any trace of childhood trauma in their lives (Sageman 2004).

It is important to take into account that many jihadists die while committing the attack or, even in the case of their arrest, they refuse to speak and discuss any topics with the police; they act in such way precisely in order to confuse the investigations, not only regarding the organization, but also about them, that are determined to identify their personalities. Therefore, as a result, data and information concerning this subject matter are not precise or sufficiently qualified to provide an explanation on why terrorist behave in this manner.

Notwithstanding this issue, from the different reports or various interviews with the jihadists – from whom their behaviours are inferred – conducting within three decades, it emerged that those who are classified with having a major mental disorder are only the exception and the majority of them is capable of rationally thinking, from the beginning of radicalisation to the final terrorist strike.

However, few terrorists, enjoy the goal of jihad and especially the means through which complete the tasks, namely gruesome conduct towards civilian and innocent people. Indeed, even though some of them possess similar traits and past issues with society, not everyone who becomes radicalised is willing at the end to commit terrorist actions. This might depend on the bond they have with family and friends, or if they ever experienced discrimination by other fellow citizens; we also have to consider the importance of religion, because as said before, not everyone possess a good knowledge of the true Islam, but those who do might not resort to violence. Therefore, the sense of frustration alone would not provoke terrorism, but has to be triggered by a particular event, in order to associate their feelings to a category of people to be targeted as the enemy, in a way of release one's own discomfort (Schmid 2013).

One more consideration regarding the reasons why some people turn to violence and terrorist organizations, is provided by the social psychologist Arie Kruglanski, that proposes the theory of “the quest for significance”, which represents a motivational factor (Kruglanski et al 2014). The individuals feel the urge to become important in the society where they live, they want to achieve the same consideration that other members have; what they are asking for is the simple human request for dignity and recognition. The psychological element here is fundamental, because the impression of being avoided and discriminated or, on the contrary, the prospect of receiving an award, drives the individual toward a group that would be able to support him/her. This is particularly true in the case of vulnerable people that went through hard times in their past (either a loss of a loved one, a divorce or the failure to fulfil their aspirations) and now seek moral redemption and revenge against those who are partially guilty.

Terrorist organizations thus provide a concrete help for satisfying one's own ideals, while promising a great reputation, similarly to a hero, and concrete benefits, supported by ideology. Furthermore, these people, are deeply devoted to the cause and the group that has accepted them, are ready to make any sacrifice to accommodate those who consider their family, even martyrdom if necessary to acquire a certain status and hence gain the sought-after significance (Kruglanski et al 2014).

Many radicalised individuals over time become fascinated with the idea of dying while fighting, depicted as martyrdom, in a way of completely dedicating their lives to God, with the expectation of receiving rewards in the after-life. In particular, the concept of martyr has been changing in the course of time, because its literal meaning represents the idea of testimony, the *shahada*, has it

written in the Quran (martyr indicates indeed the Arab word *shahid*). It has borrowed the meaning of holy death after the Islamic conquest of the territories in Palestine, indicating the militants that died during the battle in the seventh century (Khosrokhavar 2003).

As we have said, many of them are not concern with respecting all practices of religion, in the assumption that the death will serve as way of purification, washing away all their sins, and those of their parents (Roy 2017). Many Muslims consider death as a beautiful opportunity to pull away from the *haram* world, especially in the minds of detainees, who look forward to death (but different from suicide, caused by the devil, *Shaytan*), which is regarded as the decision of God, who saves the believers (Rhazzali 2010)

Moreover, they do not fear death, because religion imposes upon them the assumption of an imminent apocalypse, that will take the place of a bright future, impossible to realize in these kinds of society. Nonetheless, before apocalypse could materialize, it will certainly preceded by a time of conflict, to which ISIS is well prepared. This narrative is particularly displayed in the Dabiq magazine, while it was absent in Al Qaeda's rhetoric.

What jihadists are more fascinated with, is a voluntary death, either by suicide bombings or following a scuffle with the police. This act is compared to a honourable sacrifice for God, which ought not to be mistaken for suicide, condemned by Islam (Sageman 2004).

It is also necessary at this point the examination of another type of terrorists, represented by the "lone wolves". These people, in contrast to members of a terrorist organization, feel the need to act in their own isolation, perhaps because of certain personal traits that do not allow them to become part of a group, where decisions have to be made together, or at least accordingly to the leadership. Indeed, some of them may be described as antisocial people and do not possess the qualities required to work with more than one person, such as accountability and determination (Sageman 2004).

Indeed, as already mentioned, selecting this kind of people to become members is detrimental for the organization itself, which is why the recruiters have to be very careful in targeting the candidates, in a manner which excludes those who show psychological disorders and thus could only be hired as suicide bombers (Schmid 2013).

In conclusion, radicalisation is not the mere product of a brainwashing or the result of a mental illness: it is a conscious choice, consequent to a combination of factors. Because of the many aspects that characterize the process and make up the personality of a radicalised individual, the task of addressing this phenomenon is really hard, because a simple reform of Islam, perhaps toward a more moderate approach to be thought in religious classes, is not enough. The problem rests in the reason why radicalisation happens, namely anger and frustration, and not a simple misinterpretation of the Quran.

The institutions, and the society too – in the form of associations, student groups or simple relationships – have to emphasize the meaning of creating ties among the imams and the believers, in order for the latter to be fully understood, in a renovated cultural context.

CAPITOLO III

Radicalisation in prison

In the previous chapter it has been showed how radicalisation can occur in many places, where groups of people have a chance to meet and discuss about religious matters, offering their own points of view, and often accepting that of others, in particular of self-proclaimed spiritual guides.

Prisons, in particular, have nowadays assumed a specific character in the scenario that concerns international security against terrorism. We will see how many detainees are tied to Islam practices, and can be considered faithful practitioners, and this is one of the reasons why it is hard to discern the true believers from the radicalised ones.

The composition of the Muslim inmates varies considerably and it includes veterans of war, spiritual leaders or simple believers; the time of imprisonment is then seen as an alternate life, in which Muslims of different origins can meet and share their views on the world's issues and conflicts, also by spending their time praying together, guided by an imam when allowed (Rhazzali 2010).

What differentiate prisons from other locations where believers meet, as discussed before, is exactly the environmental space in which the inmates find themselves, one that is completely different from what they were used to; the drive towards the radicalisation process is also facilitated by a distinctive way of conducting everyday life, in which the individual usually cannot decide his schedule, the forms of entertainment or who to live with inside the cells (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

3.1. Muslim detainees in prisons

As previously analyzed, radicalisation has multiple ways of development, and it might occurs in various locations. Therefore, it is relevant for this thesis to understand the causes of the process taking place in penitentiary institutes, in order to identify the detainees that could potentially undergo radicalisation, and intervene to stop this mechanism, proceeding with disengagement and possibly with de-radicalisation, concepts later explained in details.

The peculiarity of prison is precisely the deprivation of freedom, which prevents the detainees to go outside, to see relatives and friends whenever they wish, or other choices that regard life before imprisonment. Relationships often change and require an adaptation to many restrictions, such as those imposed by a time schedule or by the prohibition in many countries to use internet, apart from

few exceptions where inmates can exchange emails with the outside, always after an accurate check by the authorities, or navigate in certain approved website for reasons linked to one's job or education.⁴⁸

Many detainees become vulnerable during imprisonment, depicted as social outcasts who have to be subject to the will and consequent pressure of the prison gangs; moreover, they are strictly compelled to respect the rules and the notion of bureaucracy, which can lead to high levels of frustration. This is particularly true for immigrants, Muslims above all, that find themselves in a condition of estrangement from the rest of prison population, who is already used to those rules and culture's reasoning (Rhazzali 2010).

Religion is one of the most important element for a detainee, especially Muslims, because the practice of praying and following the other rules of Islam, helps to get through the day, by setting a specific routine, and filling a void that could later cause a sense of isolation and abandonment from the rest of the community. Indeed, Rhazzali (2010) talks about the existence of an "Islamic Self", through which they become part of the Umma, the global community, often recreated inside the prison, through the request of Muslim wards (Rhazzali & Schiavinato 2016) and demands for collective prayers. These claims arise from the necessity and desire of praying within a big group of believers, which is often hard to be realised because of the lack of space and overcrowding; by living in the same cells and wards with other Muslims, they could organize themselves without asking other concessions.

The Islamic Self often manifests with the creation of an identity that could unite all individuals, especially in the prison environment, where they could experience material and moral losses; even though Muslim cannot be categorized in a single class, some of them find comfort in thinking of Islam as something unique, that "does not need explanations"⁴⁹. This applies also to the newly converts or the reborn Muslims, who encounter the Islamic faith as something that could potentially save them from their past experiences and failures, or as an awakening and the beginning of a path towards personal growth.

The concept of Islamic Self, seems to be undermined by both the condition of being a Muslim immigrant in highly secularised countries, and the idea of living in a total institution as described by Goffman (1961), which could also be applied to the prison environment. The sociologist provides a clear description of what it entails:

⁴⁸ Consolo Santi, *Circolare 2 novembre 2015 - Possibilità di accesso ad Internet da parte dei detenuti*, Dipartimento dell'amministrazione penitenziaria, Ministero della Giustizia. Available at: [https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_8_1.page?facetNode_1=1_1\(2015\)&facetNode_2=1_1\(201511\)&facetNode_3=1_1\(20151102\)&contentId=SDC1192008&previousPage=mg_1_8](https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_8_1.page?facetNode_1=1_1(2015)&facetNode_2=1_1(201511)&facetNode_3=1_1(20151102)&contentId=SDC1192008&previousPage=mg_1_8)

⁴⁹ Rhazzali, K. M. (2010), *L'Islam in carcere. L'esperienza religiosa dei giovani musulmani nelle prigioni italiane*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, pag 104.

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.⁵⁰

This explanation is perfectly suitable for prisons too, in which the inmates do not have contacts with the outside, and physical barriers are also constructed (such as locked doors or barred windows) as a way of preventing the escape of inmates, with the aim of protecting the external community. Moreover, the all-encompassing nature of penitentiaries, is strictly connected to the fact that every aspect of life is organized according to a precise schedule that must be respected by both wardens and inmates.

The practice of religion can also help detainees to avoid boredom and arrange the whole day, which has to be coordinated with the requirements of prison administration, in order to comply with the working time and visiting or inspection house, for example. The operators need to grant individuals the right to profess their religion and respect the prisoners for their beliefs; they usually also do so as a convenience for the prison organization, because – from their experience – Muslims who pray provide stability and avoid potential conflicts generated among inmates or with the guards (Rhazzali & Schiavinato 2016).

Many Muslims in prison, especially if immigrants of first generation, feel abandoned by an individualistic society, such as the Western one, in which they do not fit, being used to belonging in a community. The religious sphere provides an element of sociality (Rhazzali 2010), however, this could represent a risk factor for radicalisation, because extremists could exploit this sentiment, by creating a group where the individual could feel safe and welcomed. We should not underestimate the power of religion in the prison context, not only for the radical consequences that could emanate from it, but mostly for the positive effects that could bring on the inmates.

A factor that might further the process of radicalisation is the role that the imam plays inside the facilities; indeed, a common element among various European countries is the lack of certified chaplains of religions different from the Christian faith. The believers recognize that religion is part of an inner dimension, a time to reflect on one's own mistakes, however most of them consider necessary a location where to gather and pray together, as they would have done outside prisons (Rhazzali 2010).

Muslims detainees often request spiritual guidance while they are detained, but this is not always possible, especially depending on the country in which they get arrested. A prison imam does not only exercise religious duties, such that of the prayers, but he inevitably ends up symbolizing a

⁵⁰ Goffman, E. (1961), *Asylums: Essay on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York, pag xiii.

spiritual character, with whom the believers can talk, and confess their pain and frustration, implicitly requesting a representation of their community (Rhazzali 2010).

The imam is not present at all times, as it can be with a Christian chaplain; this is why we have witnessed over the years to the figure of the self-made imam, one that proclaimed himself so, without possessing an adequate knowledge to fulfil this role. However, in most cases, when the number of imams is not sufficient for all the prisons, this figure is embodied by an inmate, who decide by himself or with the approval of the Muslim sections, to assume the role of spiritual and religious guidance, without relying on actual skills (Cuciniello 2016).

It seems then necessary to have in each prison, a competent person that could fulfil the role of imam, being expert on the precepts of Islam, in order to educate the Muslim inmates with the true Islam, to prevent the self-proclaimed imams within the cells from convincing clueless believers in following a distorted interpretation of Islam, which might open the way to radicalisation to those who already possess a radical line of thought (Precht 2007).

Rhazzali (2015) identifies three categories of imam that could work inside the prison: the imam from the mosque, the detainee imam, and the accredited imam. The first one could represent a paid job, in that he offers his help to the community while supervising the place of worship and other cultural centres. Because in the Islamic faith there is no hierarchy or formal authority in religious positions, anyone could become an imam, case that often happens in prison, when someone judges himself – or is judge by his fellow section mates – suitable for the position of imam, because of his charisma and accountability, qualities appreciated by the other inmates, in that they ensure the respect of officers, hence contributing to the organization of prayers. Finally, the accredited imam, is included in a list usually set out by the Ministry of the Interior – such as in the case of Italy – that comprises various requirements that have to be respected.

Through the presence of an imam in prison, the administration can verify the status of the process of radicalisation; indeed, after a new imam takes the position, especially if recommended by the inmates themselves or by Islamic centres, it is important to observe whether a bigger group of people suddenly starts to attend prayers, or believers turn to complete isolation in the practice of religion.⁵¹

The risks remain with every internal or external religious guide that provides his/her services to the prison community of believers, with the potential spreading of radical views, that especially take roots on the vulnerable individuals; however, both prisoners and administrations, understand that the

⁵¹ *Radicalizzazione violenta: riconoscimento del fenomeno da parte di gruppi professionali coinvolti e risposte a tale fenomeno*, 2009, Commissione internazionale Austria - Francia - Germania, Ministero della Giustizia. Available at: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.page?facetNode_1=0_0&facetNode_2=4_95&contentId=SPS1143166&previousPage=mg_1_12

fulltime presence of imams, could ensure order and stability, by allowing the believers to confide in them, and follow the prayer led by someone suitable for that task (Rhazzali 2010).

Therefore, choosing to engage in the process of radicalisation depends on the combination of many push and pull factors. The individual becomes vulnerable due to the constraining environment of prison, which might cause the approaching towards a specific ideology which legitimises violence, often recurring to a justification provided by religion, in order to acquire reliability. It might also happen that individuals begin radicalising as a rational choice, by seeking protection from the extremist group in order to physically survive in these harsh conditions. Finally, the charismatic leader serves as a reassuring presence for vulnerable detainees, that claim to have been mistreated by the authorities, supporting therefore the thesis of discrimination against Muslims (Bryans 2016).

It has been observed by many studies and reports of international organizations⁵² that one of the principal originators of radicalisation is the condition of overcrowding, which is a recurring element in many prisons of Western Europe. It does not necessarily have to do with faith, in that overcrowded prison are a matter of concern for the entire country, therefore involving each inmate of every religion; as a result of this phenomenon, wardens usually do not adequately fulfil their duties, which comprehend listening to the demands of prisoners, which in turn cannot be satisfied because of numerous assignments. The negative consequences include a dissatisfaction of the detainees for the conduct of prison administrators, who are then often understaffed, and a major frustration for the inability of using showers or sport facilities due to the presence of so many people (Khosrokhavar 2013).

Even though it is hard for prison officers to identify potential individuals on the verge of radicalisation, they can look for signs of modification in the behaviour of detainees, which however are not easy to detect, because radicalised individuals are clever in hiding their exterior conduct, while changing their mindset. Nevertheless, an indicator could be the fact that the inmate refuses to answer questions raised by the guards; special attention needs to be paid also to those detainees that express their interest for terrorist leaders, by putting up pictures or posters, but this not necessarily means that they are undergoing the process of radicalisation, instead they might just want to challenge the authorities. Other indicators need to be taken into consideration, with the reminder that analysed individually, they do not automatically provide a justification for radicalisation, which is why wardens should always be watching simultaneously various signs, to understand if their grouping constitutes a reasonable evidence of the ongoing process.⁵³ The mechanism can be

⁵² See for example Khosrokhavar (2013), Bryans (2016), Rome Memorandum (2012).

⁵³ *Radicalizzazione violenta: riconoscimento del fenomeno da parte di gruppi professionali coinvolti e risposte a tale fenomeno*, 2009, Commissione internazionale Austria - Francia - Germania, Ministero della Giustizia. Available at: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.page?facetNode_1=0_0&facetNode_2=4_95&contentId=SPS1143166&previousPage=mg_1_12

signalled by the unusual unwillingness of a Muslim detainee to share the cell with believers of other faiths, the isolation from various group activities, a change in the dress code or in the way of acting with the guards. Reliable indicators refer to requests of switching the visit of a family member with that of religious leaders or other individuals suspected for their travels, a keen interest in learning more about terrorism, through various documents and television programs, or the development of radical political views, such as a resistance against the democratic values.⁵⁴

However, as Rhazzali shows through many interviews with Muslim detainees in Italy (2010), various individuals who stand with the Palestinians in their use of violence to defend their land, strongly declare their opposition to terrorists, in that they might also kill civilians and other Muslims.

This leads us to the understanding of how radicalised individuals could then be identified by prison officers, with respect to the factors that urged them to pursue the path of radicalisation. The literature on this matter, however, is still not properly developed, in that law enforcement forces and prison administrations find it hard to list specific criteria from which to derive a representation of the ideal type of radicalised inmate. One of the few testimonies on this topic, is provided by the sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar, who describes (Khosrokhavar 2013) the evolution of radicalisation patterns starting from two decades ago, until the time of his writing.

The scholar conducted a study based on the analysis of French prisons, where he had the chance to interview detainees, police officers, psychologists, imams and volunteers collaborating with the facilities, over a period of two years, beginning in 2011. He explains how two different waves of radicalisation concerning religion have developed, while also recognizing how the phenomenon takes distinct paths whether it occurs in a short-term or long-term prisons.

In fact, the latter, are more able to prevent radicalisation, because they are usually more equipped, also because fewer individuals are detained there, and can benefit from better infrastructure and activities, but also from a more relaxed staff, willing to listen to their requests. On the other hand, many inmates in short-term facilities, feel that their dignity has been undermined, because their needs are not respected, nor a relation with the guards is possible, as long as they have to supervise huge numbers of individuals.

It is during any moment of self-reflection, that the detainee becomes frustrated with the environment surrounding him, which he considers as a place that takes away his human dignity, causing tension and a lack of protection; as a consequence, some seek comfort and a sort of shelter in small groups that are created inside the prison, usually within a cell or a broader section. Nevertheless, as Khosrokhavar explains (2013), these clusters are difficult to detect in modern times, particularly since the beginning of the 21st century, when a new pattern has been developed.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

While during the 1990s the signs of Islamic radicalisation were evident and detainees could easily be recognized as fundamentalist in their approach to religion, nowadays the model has changed. Previously, radicals were identified as fundamentalist and they wanted other people – either non-Muslim inmates or police officers - to see that: they showed their long beards and dressed accordingly to the Prophet's times, organized collective Friday prayers without authorization, tried to convert other detainees or bring back to Islam the non-practising Muslims, often by creating groups of more than six people, where they could preach about jihad, and against Kufr and Jahiliyyahh. This demonstrates that in the first wave of radicalisation, the actions were intended to draw the attention of the wardens, by exacerbating every move, and promoting a charismatic leader that could guide and defend his followers inside the prison.

On the other hand, Khosrokhavar notes how, in order to attract new adherents to the radical group, it was necessary not to be identified by the administration, and therefore the clusters, as well as reducing the number of adepts, turned to a more silent and covert approach at the start of the new century. The leaders – renamed “radicalizers” by the author – launched a new way of recruiting followers in prison, not through religious practices, such as prayers, but rather normal activities that could not be linked to any faith, such as sports or cultural projects, where inmates are inevitably in close contact. The potential candidates are either individuals who need a particular attention and reassurance, due to their psychological weakness, or violent detainees who seek protection from other inmates – angry at them because of the crimes committed, such as rape – and find the right solution by converting to Islam, therefore gaining a sort of safeguard from the whole community. The current pattern often involves a change of look, starting from a shaved beard, a dress code suitable also for the society of non-Muslims, and avoidance of participation in major religious practice, such as Friday prayers or Ramadan rituals, in order not to raise any suspicion, by also lowering the level of aggressiveness towards the guards.

These few general rules identified by Khosrokhavar can be largely applied to all Western prisons in which the Muslim inmates constitute high percentages of the overall facility population.

3.2. Italian prisons dealing with radicalised Muslims

Muslims detained in Italy, are usually immigrants that recently moved to the country for economic reasons, or less often second-generations Muslims, who arrived in Italy when they were children and grew up within the Italian context, therefore for familiar reasons.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ In the study conducted by Rhazzali (2010), among the 54 Muslim detainees who accepted to be interviewed, only 5 belonged to the category of second-generations, and overall, they declared to have been in Italy from a minimum of 4 years to a maximum of 20.

They experience the frustration of every inmate, due to the prison environment which causes the isolation from the outside community, and in the best case, provokes a guilty conscience, especially for major crimes; moreover, the condition of getting arrested in another country, is seen as a failure of creating a better life as an immigrant, causing an internal defeat. In most cases, religion is perceived as the only remedy that can help the individual to walk through the period of detention without being discouraged, with the hope of improving him/herself and conduct a positive existence after release (Cuciniello 2016).

Freedom of expression and religion represents one of the founding principles of democracies, in which anyone must be able to communicate his/her thoughts and profess his/her own faith, without being discriminated for it. This applies also to the acceptance of radical ideas, because, as it has previously been examined, not everyone that thinks in a radical way will later become a terrorist.

This also applies to the Italian state, which reiterates this type of rights for detainees too, in particular the foreigners who often profess a different religion from the Catholic one; with the Presidential Degree No. 230 of 2000, a set of rules was established to coordinate the organisation of penitentiary facilities, with the annexed freedoms and restrictions.⁵⁶ The decree takes into account the respect for human dignity and the rehabilitative purpose of imprisonment, with a particular consideration to foreign detainees and those of various religion. This is important also to improve the relations among inmates and with the prison administration, which could provide linguistic assistance and the support of cultural mediators. Art. 58 reiterates the freedom of religion expressed in the Italian Constitution through Artt. 8 and 19, which state that every individual has the right to profess the faith of choice, and to practice it according to the law, without damaging others. The same applies in prison, in which inmates can participate to the rituals of their religion as long as they do not disrupt the security of the institute.

In Italy the only religion regulated by the government is the Catholic one, for which at least one or two chaplains have to be full-time present in prison, whereas for what concerns the other religions, they should sign an agreement with the State. In the case that this has not yet been developed, the detainee should make a request to the prison director, who should then authorize the various ministers after careful assessments.⁵⁷

The Department of Penitentiary Administration, included in the Justice Ministry, provided recent data regarding the number of detainees present in Italy, updated as of 31 May 2018⁵⁸. Within 190

⁵⁶ *Regolamento recante norme sull'ordinamento penitenziario e sulle misure privative e limitative della libertà*, Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica, 30 Giugno 2000, n. 230, Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, art. 116.

⁵⁸ *Detenuti presenti*, Statistiche, Dipartimento dell'amministrazione penitenziaria, Ministero della Giustizia, Updated: 31 May 2018, Accessed: 3 June 2018. Available at: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.page?facetNode_1=1_5_40&contentId=SST119037&previousPage=mg_1_14

penitentiaries spread from the North to the South of Italy, and in the major islands, among the overall 58.569 inmates, more than a third are foreigners (19.929), of which 927 are women.⁵⁹

It is interesting to note how the majority of foreigners comes from Albania (12,7%), Romania (12,9%) and North-African countries, among which the following represent the highest percentages of the entire foreign presence: Morocco (18,5%), Tunisia (10,8%), Nigeria (6,2%), and Egypt (3,3%).

The Maghreb area in particular, is notoriously constituted of Muslim countries, so Islam will be expected to represent the plurality of foreign believers in Italy; indeed, estimates are confirmed by the 2018 report of Antigone, which comprises a deep analysis regarding living conditions in prison, with a focus on the phenomenon of radicalisation.

Within the context of penitentiary institutions, the association “Antigone” plays a key role by ensuring that every norm is respected and that detainees live in appropriate situations, in respect of their rights. Antigone⁶⁰ is an Italian non-governmental organization that applies a cultural-political approach to its studies, in that help is given by magistrates, penitentiary operators, scholars and parliamentarians, who use their knowledge to facilitate research and develop reliable databases, which could be later proved useful to improve the prison system. The association, conceived at the end of the 1980s, is committed to numerous campaigns for the protection of rights and guarantees of inmates, in particular against their ill-treatment.

At the end of April 2018, during a conference, Antigone’s president, Patrizio Gonnella, presented a report for the year 2017 in which various statistics and analysis are provided regarding the conditions in which inmates live in Italian prisons.⁶¹ The data were formulated by the association with the support of the Department of Penitentiary Administration, part of the Justice Ministry – from which the statistics were retrieved – and through a direct observation in prisons, where the researchers went for a visit 86 times in the past year.

They validated the hypothesis of a Muslim majority among the foreign detainees, with data updated until October 2017, when the inmates that declared to follow the Islamic faith represented the 36,1% of foreigners and 12,4% of the total prison population. This statistics however can be misleading because many Muslims prefer not to declare their religion (Rhazzali 2010) in order not to be subjected to prejudice. Therefore, under the assumption that many foreigners came from Muslim majority countries, an assessment foresees that more than five thousand people that immigrated

⁵⁹ *Detenuti stranieri presenti*, Statistiche, Dipartimento dell’amministrazione penitenziaria, Ministero della Giustizia, Updated: 31 May 2018, Accessed: 3 June 2018. Available at:

https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.page?contentId=SST111146&previousPage=mg_1_14

⁶⁰ Associazione Antigone. Available at: <http://www.antigone.it/chi-siamo/la-storia>

⁶¹ *Un anno in carcere*, XIV Rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione, Antigone, Updated: 19 April 2018, Accessed: 03 June 2018. Available at: <http://www.antigone.it/quattordicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/>

from there did not belong to any faith, which is however an unlikely percentage (42,9%) for atheists, especially in those regions.

Given the high percentages of Muslims in Italian prisons, one major point of concern is the contrast between the treatment of Catholic believers, who can benefit from the presence of a chapel in every penitentiary institute, while among the prisons visited for the research, only the 23% was adapted to the needs of non-Catholics, even though in the case of Islam, not every space was a proper mosque, but more of an improvised location which could be used by the believers of various religions.⁶²

This problem is also linked to the above mentioned argument that prisons often lack the presence of a full time and competent imam, who could provide a constant support for Muslims, without having them compiling a formal request every time they wish to talk to him. On the contrary, ministers from the Catholic and the Jehovah's Witnesses confessions, retain the highest presence in Italian prisons, by exceeding the minimum required by the law, while Muslims may have contacts only with 25 imams across the country – authorised by the Ministry of the Interior – with the addition of 41 voluntary assistants, which however have many limitations, and 97 detainee imams.⁶³

Moreover, the issue in having an efficient outcome lies also in the imam himself, who often does not completely master the Italian language, risking either not be understood by prison officers – thus sending the wrong idea on what he preaches – or not achieving the desired result in the relation with the institutions; on the other hand, the detainees could complain about not receiving an adequate theological teaching in the case of an imam trained within Italian territories (Rhazzali 2015).

Therefore, the indignation that Muslims develop during the detainment in Italian institutions, is often attributed to the actual lack of opportunities for correctly practicing their faith. Another reason for the resentment of Muslim detainees, is the lack of *halal* meals, meaning every food that is allowed by Islam (*halal* refers in general to acceptable and legit conducts and behaviours), in opposition to *haram*, which represents everything that is condemned as a sinful. This is a concern that applies to every Muslim, even though they declare themselves non-practising, because it symbolises a fundamental element in order to be considered a Muslim (Rhazzali 2010).

In prison it becomes hard for believers to respect these norms, such as the prohibition to eat pork or in general meat that has not been slaughtered according to Islamic rules, because the food service, in the majority of instances, does not offer the opportunity of a diet based on religious precepts. In the Antigone report, it is shown how in six penitentiaries there are no possibilities for Muslims to

⁶² *Un anno in carcere*, XIV Rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione, Antigone, Updated: 19 April 2018, Accessed: 03 June 2018. Available at: <http://www.antigone.it/quattordicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/>

⁶³ Ibidem.

follow their dietary principles, and as in almost all other facilities, there are not even canteens where to buy halal food beyond that offered by the prison.⁶⁴

This condition deprives the individual of his/her liberties, by which he/her should be allowed to follow dietary plans according to the religion professed. Some, in the absence of halal food, may agree on respecting only the prohibition of pork, without giving much importance to the various bans; others, may decide to completely avoid meat, in order not to transgress; finally, the most devoted Muslims, could get very angry for the denied opportunity of respecting every rule imposed by Islam. In this case, authorities should be very careful in the treatment of these individuals, being particularly cautious in their approach with them, and being ready to catch any potential sign of radicalisation.

Nevertheless, when radicalisation has already taken place and the individuals have been identified by the prison officers, a step forward should be followed, to prevent other detainees from being recruited by terrorist organisations.

On 21 April 2009, the prevention strategy for Italy has been modified by the circular letter No. 3619/6069, which divided the high-security circuit (Alta Sicurezza – AS) in three different branches (AS1, AS2, AS3), which implies the division of inmates in various facilities according to their potential risk, therefore having detainees sentenced for terrorism-related offences separated from other criminals. Indeed, detainees that belonged to a mafia organization or a terrorist network, apart from their specific roles (either were they leaders or participants), are deemed as dangerous, therefore require appropriate facilities, that could prevent them from reaching other individuals and keeping the organizations alive, and at the same time avoiding escapes.

The Department of Penitentiary Administration has listed three categories of detainees, based on which it is possible to develop specific programs, aimed at countering radicalisation; the first group includes the followers, which could represent individuals arrested for various crimes, then the leaders, who might also be arrested for other crimes beyond terrorism but for their charisma can easily influence other inmates, and, finally, the terrorists, detained for specific offences related to extremism.⁶⁵ The latter category is the one considered the most dangerous, and for this reason, terrorists are located in one of the circuits of the high security facilities (AS2) and therefore separated from the rest of the prison population, in order to prevent a potential indoctrination of the followers.

The phenomenon of radicalisation is kept under control by the Nucleo Investigativo Centrale (N.I.C., Central Investigation Unit) which monitors individuals with the cooperation of the Comitato

⁶⁴ *Un anno in carcere*, XIV Rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione (Report on the conditions of detention), Antigone, Updated: 19 April 2018, Accessed: 03 June 2018. Available at: <http://www.antigone.it/quattordicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/>

⁶⁵ *Relazione del Ministero sull'amministrazione della giustizia – anno 2017*, Inaugurazione dell'Anno Giudiziario 2018, Dipartimento dell'Amministrazione Penitenziaria.

di Analisi Strategica Antiterrorismo (C.A.S.A., Strategic Antiterrorism Analysis Committee). The surveillance regards both people detained for terrorism-related crimes and those who might be able to recruit new followers; in doing so they receive private information from prison administrations, as well as knowledge relative to their outside contacts, formulating monthly data if the inmates are considered as belonging to the highest level of danger. Other individuals signalled for their interest in extremist ideology, therefore potentially vulnerable to recruitment, are also closely monitored in order to engage in de-radicalisation mechanism.

According to recent data (collected until October 2017)⁶⁶, 242 individuals belong to the first level of monitoring, among which 62 are detained for Islamic terrorism-related offences, representing a 41% increase with respect to the previous year⁶⁷. The latter criminals are serving their sentence in seven different institutes of high security (AS2) located all over Italy: Sassari (26), Rossano (19), Nuoro (11), Torino (2), Ferrara (2), Brescia (1) e Lecce (1).

The remaining degrees of monitoring comprehend 114 individuals at the second level (deemed particularly close to jihadist ideologies, thus prone to proselytism) and 150 at the last stage, the least dangerous (but necessitating careful observation for their potential upgrade to higher levels), with a total of 506 people.

Moreover, the N.I.C. regularly offers assessments regarding religious activities carried out in specific rooms of the prison or in one's own cell, detainees' communication with the external community, and detailed checks over converts, imams, and cultural mediators.

3.3. Prevention strategies and the role of civil society

The rising problem of radicalisation in prison, emphasises the issue of how authorities should stop this process for the security of all citizens, and places them in front of the question that concerns prevention, therefore what programs could be adopted so that individuals would express their concerns and grievances, or ask for help in case of vulnerabilities, instead of resorting to violence.

As Loza explains (2006), plans for countering radicalisation and the advance of terrorism should not only regard military efforts, or the work of security agencies, designed to disrupt extremist networks and capture their leaders and militants. Mechanisms of prevention should be implemented in parallel with the latter activities, in order to avoid the formation of terrorist clusters, and hamper the radicalisation of the young population, or those individuals that are deemed vulnerable for their

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁷ *Un anno in carcere*, XIV Rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione, Antigone, Updated: 19 April 2018, Accessed: 03 June 2018. Available at: <http://www.antigone.it/quattordicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/>

personality or past experiences. Therefore, civil society represents a paramount role in this scenario, in that the help of psychologists, social workers and religious leaders could provide an effective alternative to the reliance on extremist use and violent means of actions. Dialogue and confrontation should then be promoted by associations to understand what causes the process of radicalisation, because, by understanding its roots, it could be easier in the future to determine the potential factors able to eradicate it from society.

This includes a continuous work by activists in the spreading of positive messages, and the acceptance of democratic values, such as social justice and the rule of law, which could constitute the starting phase of distancing the individual from extremist ideas. It is true that the Western countries founded their constitutions on the freedom of expression, thus nobody should be prevented from sharing his/her thoughts, even if radicals. This behaviour, however, should be kept under monitoring before it could turn to the justification of violence in order to achieve a specific goal (Loza 2006).

Another point of concern regards what happens at the end of sentence period, indeed it is possible to notice how after the arrest of an individual, usually for petty crimes, he/she then might radicalise during detention, and after release, might be inspired to join a specific mosque or Islamic centres, where it would be possible to continue his path towards a radical approach to religion, with the risk of further radicalising down to the last step of committing terrorist actions. It is therefore necessary to prevent this mechanism, and ensure the rehabilitation in the community, by establishing a safe environment, including locations that do not advocate a radical approach to Islam.

After an accurate examination of the composition of Italian prisons, it is important to understand how the situation could be improved, in terms of preventing the radicalisation and the drift towards terrorism after the release of the detainees already under surveillance.

Because of the various nationalities that constitute this scenario, one of the tasks assigned to the internal operators is that of accommodating and helping those who have not yet learned the official language of the state in which they are arrested – for the reason that many of them are immigrants and get imprisoned right after arriving in the country. Integration could then be made more difficult and inmates may express their discomfort through violence, both against their cell mates and correctional officers.

Therefore, all prisons – either in Italy or in other countries that experience high percentages of immigrants – should recruit cultural mediators, to act as pacifiers and as a middle ground between the police forces and the detainees. They need to have diplomatic skills and to stay calm in front of them; inmates are usually angry and frustrated, which is why the mediators should be prone to listen, empathically connect, and be ready to accept their way of thinking, so that a common ground

could finally be reached (Cuciniello 2016). This implies a thorough understanding of the countries of origin, their cultures and their needs, that might differ from those of other inmates, and especially require a knowledge of their languages, so that they could feel comfortable in expressing their opinions without being judged or misunderstood.

For this purpose in Italy, on 5 November 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Department of Penitentiary Administration and the UCOII (Unione delle Comunità e Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia⁶⁸), which is an association that supports the Muslim community in Italy, and represents it at the institutional level, in order to ensure better relations with the State and guarantee adequate spaces for the building of mosques and religious centres. The association contributes to the integration of foreign Muslims through language and cultural courses, involving thousands of people. The Memorandum of Understanding⁶⁹ properly aims at this, by ensuring a collaboration of the association with the Ministry of Justice, in order to provide an increase in the attendance of imams and cultural mediators in prison, and ensure the existence in the facility of competent people who are able to reassure the detainees and offer them a relief valve; as for October 2017, cultural mediators in Italy reached the number of 34, which could still be considered very low with respect to the Muslim population in prison⁷⁰. The document lays down important requirements, such as the identification of the facilities with high percentages of Muslim detainees and the drawing of a list of voluntaries willing to accede to prison as imams or mediators.

Moreover, it is important to highlight the role of female mediators and imams in their confrontation with the society, in which they often help with the education and support for women, and provide one more connection of the community with the institutions. The Association of Muslim Women in Italy (ADMI) collaborated with the UCOII and the Ministry of Justice to sustain the project aimed at preventing radicalisation in prison, launched at the beginning of the year 2017; this allowed four women, together with eight men, to take direct action in eight different prisons in Italy, those with the highest Muslim population⁷¹. Within this group, two women stand out with their work in the prison of Bollate, near Milan; they are Soraya Houli and Yamina Salah, graduated respectively in Theology and Islamic law from the university of Algiers⁷². They constitute a point of reference especially for the most illiterate believers, who need guidance and assistance to read the

⁶⁸ Unione delle Comunità e Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia. Available at: <http://www.ucoii.org/about/>

⁶⁹ *Protocollo d'intesa per favorire l'accesso di Mediatori culturali e di Ministri di Culto negli istituti penitenziari*, Ministero della Giustizia, 5 November 2015, Accessed: 3 June 2018. Available at: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_7_1.page?contentId=SCA1196726&previousPage=mg_14_7

⁷⁰ *Relazione del Ministero sull'amministrazione della giustizia – anno 2017*, Inaugurazione dell'Anno Giudiziario 2018, Dipartimento dell'Amministrazione Penitenziaria.

⁷¹ *Prevenire la radicalizzazione nelle carceri*, UCOII, Updated: 2 October 2017, Accessed: 5 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.ucoii.org/3499/news-eventi/ucoii-agisce-prevenire-la-radicalizzazione-nelle-carceri/>

⁷² Buccini, G., *Le «imam» delle carceri*, Corriere della Sera, Updated: 30 September 2017, Accessed: 5 June 2018. Available at: https://www.corriere.it/cronache/17_ottobre_01/imam-carceri-0bd8dbb6-a61d-11e7-8477-789085dabc53.shtml

Quran and recite the prayers; in their approach, tolerance is promoted and accompanied by the teaching of Quranic verses that recall forgiveness and mercy.

The presence of a guide, religious in particular, might help in the avoidance of the phenomenon of victimisation that often influences detainees and provokes the building of an alternate identity, which might lead to the search of extremist views. In the research for his doctoral dissertation, Rhazzali (2010) has interviewed 54 Muslim inmates in Italy to understand the role that religion plays in their lives, sometimes taking into consideration a comparison between their previous background and their current prison experience. It emerged that most of them contemplate Islam as having an intrinsic element of peace, that allows the believers to remain calm and keep their lives in order. Through religion, inmates acquire the dignity that they believe to have lost at the moment of being incarcerated – also because of widespread prejudice towards Muslims – and thanks to the group formed by Muslims, in which everyone is supported and encouraged.

Many prison operators also attribute a paramount role to the religious practices and the opportunity to have the constant presence of an imam; fewer cases of fights or self-mutilation, as a way of protest, take place, and a general stability is implemented.

Furthermore, we can see the importance of a spiritual guide in prison, in one excerpt that has profoundly impressed me, where the detainee opens up with a Christian chaplain, in the absence of an imam.⁷³ Jamal, a Tunisian 27-years-old man, shares his doubts about the action of talking to a religious authority of another faith; he, however, feels the need of discussing religious matters, such as regarding God, with someone that could understand him. Conversing with cell mates, or reflecting by his own account, could help, but it is more of an alternative in the case of a lack of an imam, a point of reference regarded as someone that could teach and educate on difficult topics.

It has been previously stated that the lack of adequate places to pray represents a serious flaw in the prison system, which often generates a resentment that could later cause a rapprochement towards extremist groups. This emotion is shared by every Muslim in prison, that would like to recreate the Umma, in order not to feel alone and rebuild a collective identity; their wish is the establishment of a real mosque, where the believers could gather for Friday prayers.

Hence, prison administrations should work towards the goal of reducing overcrowding and, at the same time, making space for the building of mosques that could host the entire Muslim population, with respect to the right of professing their religion in prisons, with the rituals that it entails.

⁷³ Rhazzali, K. M. (2010), *L'Islam in carcere. L'esperienza religiosa dei giovani musulmani nelle prigioni italiane*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, pag 105.

The penitentiary systems differ from one another within the European continent, in that every state has the ability to decide which mechanism suits better, based on their experience, for instance, in countering terrorism, either of a political or religious kind.

Nevertheless, as Bryans (2016) reminds in the “Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners”, it is important to treat detainees as human beings, hence always respecting their dignity and fundamental rights. This includes providing appropriate living conditions, which implies the avoidance of overcrowded facilities – and the consequent elements that derive from this phenomenon – and a positive relation between the guards and the inmates.

Prison wardens and jailers have the opportunity to establish a certain interaction with the inmates, which could be beneficial to both categories, in that order and stability will prevail, contributing to the diminishing of harsh conditions. In order to do that, the guards need to respect each individual, besides his/her point of view or the crime for which they have been arrested; no discrimination is allowed, and a correct conduct by their part will also prevent aggression towards them (Bryans 2016).

Paramount is an adequate and thorough training of prison staff, which should understand how relevant it is to recognize in advance potential detainees undergoing a process of radicalisation. As we have examined, there are not precisely defined signs to identify these individuals, however particular instructions need to be provided to the guards, who in conjunction to their personal knowledge of the inmates, might be able to detect odd developments in prison. Having to deal with Muslim extremists, they not only have to distinguish innocent religious symbols by those elements invoking violence, but they might also need an accurate training on the major foreign languages spoken in the cells, and thus an understanding of the different cultures living together.⁷⁴

The process of radicalisation can often occur because of unnecessary detentions for minor crimes; indeed, we have seen how the prison environment, and the constraints and feelings of isolation and frustration that it provokes, could be the causes for turning to extremist groups for support. Alternative measures to imprisonment should then be implemented in those cases where the individual is not deemed as dangerous for the community, but could spend his/her sentence in other ways, such as parole, furlough or early release, in order to prevent the contacts with leaders or other radicalised individuals already imprisoned (Bryans 2016). Moreover, these measures could also represent a way of preventing overcrowding, therefore avoiding all the negative consequences linked to it, such as sentiments of resentment and anger for not retaining the necessities that are

⁷⁴ *Radicalizzazione violenta: riconoscimento del fenomeno da parte di gruppi professionali coinvolti e risposte a tale fenomeno*, 2009, Commissione internazionale Austria - Francia - Germania, Ministero della Giustizia. Available at: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.page?facetNode_1=0_0&facetNode_2=4_95&contentId=SPS1143166&previousPage=mg_1_12

⁷⁴ *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders* (2012), Good Practice Nos. 7 and 8, Global Counterterrorism Forum.

entitled to all inmates, and also allowing the prison staff to concentrate on the dangerous criminals.⁷⁵ Within the approach of preventing radicalisation, it is also important to take into account the future path towards rehabilitation, which, if started at the earliest stage of conviction, could offer better results.

In this sense, pre-trial detention, could be substituted with house arrest, the use of electronic bracelet, or other solutions to monitor the individual without incarcerating him/her, saving also on the economic aspect; this applies equally to post-conviction sentence, which could be served in the individual's home, through accurate monitoring by the authorities, in a way of accelerating integration in the society, also by collaborating in community services. Moreover, alternative measures need to be taken into consideration especially for particular categories at risk of radicalising, such as juveniles, first-time offenders or individuals with mental disorders, all representing people that could be notably vulnerable to manipulation by the recruiters in prison.⁷⁶

Maintaining family ties, with a prospect of reintegration in society after release, represents also a good way of giving hope to the inmates about their future life after detainment, in that they will have someone to welcome them, and supporting them in their path towards rehabilitation.

Another way of preventing radicalisation consists in the development of risk assessments and screening during the entire period of detainment, and beginning at the time of admission in the prison, in which the individual will be evaluated by a team of prison officers, psychologists, social workers, to understand his/her past experience, and whether these could be possible influencers of his/her future conduct, during imprisonment and after release.

In the previous chapter it has been examined the importance of internet in carrying out its functions, which are often exploited by terrorist networks to indoctrinate many people, who, thanks to various documents and media content that virtually circulate, can also act alone with the acquired knowledge.

Hence, authorities should develop an online warfare to block the spread of ideology through the web. This approach is stressed in the Prevent Strategy of the British Government⁷⁷, by expressing the concern of the use of internet by the civil society, whose activists should receive training courses to better fight the spread of extremist ideology. Thus, alternatives to the use of violence should be promoted, also in collaboration with major social media platforms such as Facebook, whose duty could be that of teaching young users and associations how to recognize jihadist propaganda, and therefore understanding how online influence works.

⁷⁵ *Prison Management Recommendations to Counter and Address Prison Radicalization* (2015), Recommendation 1 & 2, International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law.

⁷⁶ *Recommendations on the Effective Use of Appropriate Alternative Measures for Terrorism-Related Offenses* (2016), Global Counterterrorism Forum.

⁷⁷ *Prevent Strategy*, 2011, Secretary of State for the Home Department, HM Government.

It could represent the beginning of a counter-attack on the virtual space, by means of providing valid explanation for issues regarding faith, promoting positive messages and allowing scholars and religious leaders to debate on matters of ideology and the use of violence, in a way of suggesting credible counter-narratives to convince online users in discrediting extremist networks. Moreover, more practical measures could be implemented, such as restrictions on the access to materials considered potentially dangerous for vulnerable readers (especially in the context of public institutions like schools), and therefore their removals when proof is provided regarding their illicit content; the establishment of a blocking list should also prevent the upload of materials if the source is not verified.⁷⁸

An effective strategy has been shown by the EU Internet Referral Unit (IRU), who at the end of April 2018 successfully dismantled several websites, radio stations and media channels belonged to ISIS.⁷⁹ The IRU was established on July 2015 by the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the European Union, who gave Europol the mandate to manage it based on its resources. Its duties regarded the sharing of information with EU authorities through strategic analysis, by monitoring online content of presumed terrorist websites. In doing so, Europol has operated through a group of practitioners, not only experts on technology, but also on faith and terrorism issues. The main objective was the prevention of recruitment, through an online secret propaganda, by identifying crucial moments and thus target specific platforms.⁸⁰

The issue regarding prevention strategies, especially if emanated by the governments, is that Western countries, which are based on democracy, need to ensure freedom of expression and freedom of religion, so they find themselves in a confrontation between respecting these principles and protecting their citizens.

Another potential strategy might regard thinking outside of the national borders, by looking out to the countries where terrorism could potentially generate, for example in some Arab countries. Those regions might be characterized by poverty, dictatorships and civil wars, that induce the population to feeling frustrated, which might often lead to see extremists as providing the only suitable solution, by means of violent action. Therefore, an alliance of Western countries should try to reach the government and citizens of those states, by ways of fostering prosperity, and supporting the country with suggestions of reforms that could help to achieve good improvements (Carpenter, Levitt and Jacobson 2009).

⁷⁸ Ibidem.

⁷⁹ *Islamic State Propaganda Machine Hit by Law Enforcement in Coordinated Takedown Action*, Europol, Press Release, Updated: 27 April 2018, Accessed: 28 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/islamic-state-propaganda-machine-hit-law-enforcement-in-coordinated-takedown-action>

⁷⁹ *Year One Report- Highlights*, 2016, EU Internet Referral Unit, Europol.

This is done by gaining the trust of these populations, by making them rely on political alternatives that could be proved to have high chances of success, therefore eliminating the hypothesis of turning to terrorist networks for salvation.

Democracy cannot be imposed, neither Muslim populations have to be accused of representing the birthplace of Islamic terrorism. The objective is to communicate with them in order to approach a common ground where solutions could be established together, by eliminating corruption and authoritarian regimes, and citizens would have the opportunity to express their feelings and publicly manifest their grievances, with a peaceful approach, that could possibly have more chances of being heard and of achieving their aims.

Everyone should be entitled to have a voice, often representing the weakest sectors of a community, thus Western coalition would need to empower activists, business people, and religious leaders that preach the mainstream Islam (Carpenter, Levitt and Jacobson 2009).

At the European Union level, it is important to mention the creation of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) in 2011⁸¹, whose main objective is that of countering radicalisation through the cooperation of experts from the member countries. The sharing of information among practitioners is fundamental to keep every actor updated, in order to improve one's country's system of surveillance, through the exchange of best practices.

Cooperation is again deemed as a necessary factor in the mechanisms that are aimed to countering terrorism, because each country can provide new knowledge, which can then be adapted to other systems. Everyone is involved, from politicians, to civil society activists, religious authorities and prison administrations; this is why the RAN has established many working groups that are coordinated by the RAN Centre of Excellence (financed by the European Commission), among which we can find the one dedicated to Prison & Probation. The actors involved are offered training courses to easily identify signs of radicalisation in the individuals that they watch, and consequently implement the adequate interventions based on the local situation.

Moreover, in 2005 the European Union developed the Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment, lastly revised in 2014, implying the commitment of each Member State in the fight against terrorism.⁸² Prevention is listed as the first objective to be achieved, by impeding the formation of new terrorist network, composed by young militants, thus keeping under constant surveillance the risky factors and updating the acquired data, concurrently with the patterns of radicalisation.

⁸¹ *Charter of Principles Governing the Activities of the RAN Center of Excellence*, Accessed: 12 June 2018. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/ran_charter_en_0.pdf

⁸² *Revised EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism*, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 19 May 2014, 9956/14.

The States will receive the help of the EU in the development of national programs, in order to improve the efficacy of the measures implemented; it is necessary to keep in mind the civil society should always be involved in this process, because of the close contacts that it is able to establish with local communities and citizens. This needs to be pursued while respecting human dignity, and with the support of individuals through disengagement programs, by also advocating security.

For what regards Italy, the country has demonstrated its ability in the fight against terrorism, not only through the interconnections of its intelligence agencies, but also thanks to its collaboration at the European level. According to the Italian Law 438 of 2001, the intelligence services need to cooperate among each other to prevent acts of terrorism, and provide the collected information to the criminal police, including those regarding the financing of terrorist networks.

Among the European programs, Italy has taken part to the “Raising Awareness and Staff MObility on violent RADicalisation in Prison and Probation Services” (RASMORAD); it is a project with a duration of 24 months, begun in 2017, that aims at providing countries with recommendations and good practices for the prevention of radicalisation in the prison context.⁸³ Since its launch, many workshops have been organized with the various partners, among which the Italian presence manifests through the Ministry of Justice, the Psychoanalytic Institute of Social Reserach, the Department for Juvenile and Probation Services, the Siracusa International Institute, the Onlus Exit, and the University of Padova; other partners include the Ministry of Justice of countries such as France and Portugal, and penitentiary administrations of Bulgaria and Romania. Hence, it is clear how the project was conceived to group together various practitioners from leaders of religious communities, managers of penitentiary and probation services, research centres, and law enforcement agencies, in order to gain a full picture of the problem, by studying it from the point of view of each interested actor.

Therefore, the agenda includes risk assessments to identify potential causal factors, the development of cooperation among practitioners, as a way of supporting the individual when signs of radicalisation occur, and the creation of disengagement programs. Dialogue and confrontation are paramount to the final objective, by keeping everyone informed of progresses, through sharing data and knowledge acquired. Transnational workshops and national meetings are the privileged way of managing the evolution of the project, through the exchange of best practices and noticeable improvements in one country’s penitentiary system.

The cooperation should bring about an advanced knowledge of the radicalisation process itself, from which develop a better understanding of the tools that could be applied to prevent it, or counter

⁸³ *Raising Awareness and Staff MObility on violent RADicalisation in Prison and Probation Services*, 2017, RASMORAD Project, Accessed: 10 June 2018. Available at: <http://www.rasmorad.org/>

⁸³ *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders* (2012), Good Practice No. 3, Global Counterterrorism Forum.

it, once it takes place in the prison environment; these desired results include a progress in the living conditions of prisoners, in a way of anticipating their vulnerability and act pre-emptively before recruiters could reach them.

The United Kingdom has also demonstrated to be an active player in the fight against terrorism, whose famous strategy CONTEST, coordinated by the Home Office represents an important step towards counter-terrorism measures, and has served as an example for other countries.

Its most important element is constituted by Prevent, whose plan is that of collaborating with public sectors organizations in order to identify potential risk factors that cause vulnerable people to radicalise, especially targeting the institutions in which radicalisation occurs more often.⁸⁴

Tackling ideology is seen as a fundamental component in order to avoid the spread of extremist ideas among communities and support whoever shows signs of an ongoing process; this could be done with the help of other associations, that could provide courses regarding education, criminal justice and faith matters, involving therefore also Muslims NGOs, that could have a bigger impact on the young population (Rabasa 2014).

The UK Government felt the need to adapt to the evolving terrorism of every kind (not only with reference to the Islamic one but also to the far-right extremists and neo-Nazi groups), with a particular attention to the Al Qaeda network at the time Prevent was reorganized in 2011, following a series of attack also by regional groups, especially after the bombings occurred in London in 2005.

In order to prevent the spreading of extremist ideologies, the Government considered paramount the involvement of every group (either based on ethnic or faith association) within the civic society activities, avoiding the rejection of democratic values. It implemented then a more local decision-making, whose approach will be that of directly interacting with the communities to understand their point of view, by providing funding to local authorities and police forces to develop mentoring programs for the youth, but also providing training to Muslim leaders. In this way, they will gain the necessary knowledge to identify potential candidates for radicalisation, and signal them to the government.

Moreover, the project envisages the deportation of non-British citizens to avoid the establishment of a good propaganda: the exclusion of foreign citizens, or the deprivation of citizenships, are measures taken when someone poses a threat to the society, such as in the case of promoting violence and hatred, through speeches or material published online.

⁸⁴ *Prevent Strategy*, 2011, Secretary of State for the Home Department, HM Government.

3.4. Counter-radicalisation processes

Prevent strategies are very important, specifically considering the increasing presence of second-generation Muslims, which therefore need to be protected from the insisting propaganda of terrorist networks, avoiding their potential recruitment.

However, many cases of radicalisation have already occurred, therefore governments and security agencies should work towards the implementation of programs that allow an individual to be later rehabilitated in the society, without posing the threat that he/she will commit other terrorist attacks or other means of violence to achieve the prefixed goal.

Italy has implemented effective counter-measures against terrorism, by developing a plan for the prevention of international terrorism, based on the current Law No. 43 of 2015, that approved the previous Decree Law No. 7 of 18 February 2015. The country has witnessed an evolution of its counter-radicalisation approach, by modifying the laws of 2001 and 2005, adapting them to the constantly-evolving terrorism and the rise of potential new threats.

The last reform was implemented following the United Nations Resolution No. 2178, adopted on 24 September 2014, which addresses the increasing phenomenon of international terrorism, inviting countries worldwide to cooperate for its prevention. It urges States to share their information about potential violent extremists, to improve their border controls and other checks that regard the issuing of passports, and keeping under surveillance the funding of terrorist networks and recruitment carried out by them. The resolution then invites States to update their domestic legislation in order to collectively fight the rising number of terrorist and foreign fighters, through adequate punishments and preventive measures, such as restrictions on entrance and accurate travel checks.

As a consequence, new measures have been implemented in the Italian legislation, such as the possibility of convicting also the recruited individuals – in addition to the recruiters – based on art. 270 quater of the penal code, together with the practice of self-training (art. 270 quinquies of the penal code). The modifications show how Italy is adapting to the new challenges, especially after the rise of ISIS, which produced many militants and foreign fighters also in the Peninsula; they indeed indicate more serious sentences for those individuals who finance or organise travels for the purpose of committing terrorist acts.

The current law also points out an adjustment to present times, especially regarding the use of internet for conducting terrorism propaganda and recruitment, implementing a thorough monitoring of the websites used for this purpose, with the resulting shutting down of the latter; high consideration is also given to the figure of the foreign fighter, taking into account the temporal withdrawal of travel documents.

The regulation with respect to the deportation of terrorists to their countries of origin, was already strictly established by the Law No. 144 of 27 July 2005, which ruled that an individual could be expelled from the Italian territory in the case his/her presence would be of support for a terrorist organization.

Before making the decision of deporting someone, the government should carefully establish whether the individual could pose a serious threat also after detainment, in the case that rehabilitations programs did not provide the desired results.

As previously seen, risk assessments are important to understand what caused radicalisation and what is then necessary to prevent it from happening to other detainees; a correct approach will then include an evaluation at the admission in prison, and further checks along the detainment period, in order to detect any changes in behaviour or way of thinking. This proceeding enables the prison administration to acquire a good knowledge of the detainees, with the aim of rehabilitating them in the society, by leveraging their skills and past experiences to provide them the best possible outcome. Assessments directly involve also the guards, in their relation with the prisoners, being the people with whom they talk more besides their cell mates; it is important to establish a trustworthy relation on both sides, in order to easily detect an alteration in mindsets and actions.⁸⁵

Despite the fact that radicalised individuals differ from one another, due to their various radicalisation paths, it is possible however to follow a standard risk assessment, used particularly for the detainees that showed signs of radicalisation related to an ideology: it is the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment protocol of 2009, today used in its renovate version of the following year (abbreviated with VERA-2).

This approach notably differs from those based on a psychological review of the individuals, concentrating instead on detecting the risk factors listed by experts on terrorism and the staff the closely works with terrorists, who can then provide a reliable and transparent analysis; it follows several criteria that can refer to specific beliefs and attitudes (such as grievances and the feeling of being victimized), future plans of actions, past experiences and motivations (Pressman & Flockton 2014).

Today, one of the issues that mostly concerns the Ministry of Justice, prison administrations and law enforcement forces from every country, is whether radicalisation is reversible or not, and from this they act accordingly to resize the phenomenon, making non-threatening anymore.

First we have to differentiate between de-radicalisation and disengagement, to understand what is most achievable, either a change of mindsets and attitudes as in the former, or encourage the detainee in disengaging and abandoning violent actions, which is often the easiest objective, given

⁸⁵ *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders* (2012), Global Counterterrorism Forum, Good Practice No 3.

that rejecting radical thoughts could be achieved – if successful – only in the long-term (Bryans 2016).

As the process of radicalisation is not represented by a single way of proceeding, and is not internalized in the same manner by every individual, so does the procedure of disengagement, which varies according to the country's legislation and the prison population, examined based on specific factors, such as the presence of a main religion, especially among foreign detainees. Moreover, not necessarily de-radicalisation precedes disengagement, in fact it usually happens the opposite, because for a radicalised individual it is simpler to first renounce to violence, and later on – after many discussions with psychologists, religious volunteers or members of the community, including relatives and friends – reflect on abandoning radical values, often rooted in one's personality. Indeed, most radicalised people who returned to their normal lives after detainment, did not show any signs of change in their way of thinking and reasoning about radicalism (Schmid 2013).

When the process of disengagement proves to be successful, it is usually attributed to several factors, which are the result of the interventions derived from the cooperation among prison administration and volunteers from the community. For example social relations are paramount in making the individual feel tied to someone outside the prison, who could also help him/her to substitute violent means, with disciplined actions, promoting a more legal and peaceful approach to everyday issues. Disengagement implies the creation of a new identity, or better the recovery of the old one, that pre-existed before accepting the violent ideology (Bryans 2016).

These positive results do not usually occur naturally, except in few cases, when the individual gets disillusioned by the experience in the field or becomes vulnerable to aging or triggering events, that provoke in him/her the ambition to a new life. Disengagement, however, is often promoted by the authorities that provide a wide range of interventions, addressed to individuals according to their personalities and characteristics, and respecting their cultures. They can involve different activities, from counselling to sports, education or arts; they are tailored to particular individuals, based also on their preferences and skills, in order for them to acquire some knowledge of positive values that they could later apply to a potential job outside the prison. It is therefore paramount to teach them about tolerance, the acceptance of others' point of view, therefore breaking stereotypes; everything is done by pushing the detainees to realize other means beside violence, by making them understand also the risk they face in using this approach (Bryans 2016).

Civil society is recognized as fundamental during the mentoring programmes, because, having members outside the prison, they are able to accurately check on the individual also after the release, thanks to the training they previously underwent. Everything is aimed at supporting rehabilitation, in order for the violent detainee not to be labelled as a terrorist once outside; he/she needs to understand how to distance him/herself from extremist organizations, in order to start a better life. The courses specifically involve people who are illiterate or do not possess any skills;

they are fundamental for foreigners to learn about the country in which they get arrested and plan to live afterwards, by recognizing the concepts of democracy and rule of law, with the belief of living peacefully in the society.⁸⁶

Mechanisms of counter-radicalisation often consist in understanding the role that the detainee played within a terrorist organization, or otherwise include an examination of what has led an individual to take actions alone. It is relevant to these researches to identify whether we are dealing with one of the leaders of an extremist group or the militants, if they have already committed a terrorist crime or they were planning to do so, the type and the size of organization; in this assessment is then paramount to figure out their future intentions, in order to prevent them, with the aim of changing their minds (Bryans 2016).

In the instance of a verified radicalised detainee, it is necessary to act promptly and provide a new type of accommodation, either for the individual at stake, or for an entire group of inmates, who themselves might be at risk. The administration needs to take into account the size of the prison population, including the number of Muslims, the availability of cells and other facilities, and compare these considerations with the financial capital at its disposal; the possible housing solutions are separation, isolation, concentration, dispersal, and integration (Bryans 2016).

Each circumstance has however advantages and disadvantages, based on which the administration takes the decision regarding specific cases. Indeed separation allows the operators to precisely identify the radicalised individuals while preventing them from proselytising, but at the same time they risk making their figures appealing to others, or hindering their integration in the new prison, therefore impeding the finalisation of the counter-radicalisation; isolation further increases risks, in that the detainee has no contact with anyone, beside few interactions with the guards. On the other hand, concentration allows the administration to properly control the radicalised group, every member being under strict surveillance all at once, but this could also cause the establishment of the same norms and structures of the original organization, presenting themselves as a stronger entity, having the time to prepare future attacks. The dispersal and integration method might be useful because of their intent of uniting violent extremists with less dangerous detainees, with the aim of further the process of de-radicalisation; however, because of the interaction that takes place, many leaders could exploit this opportunity to recruit new adepts.

Therefore, an in-depth analysis is required in order to establish which solution suits best to the case at hand, often ending up choosing a mixed approach, where a subdivision is applied based on

⁸⁶ *Radicalizzazione violenta: riconoscimento del fenomeno da parte di gruppi professionali coinvolti e risposte a tale fenomeno*, 2009, Commissione internazionale Austria - Francia - Germania, Ministero della Giustizia. Available at: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.page?facetNode_1=0_0&facetNode_2=4_95&contentId=SPS1143166&previousPage=mg_1_12

the role of the individual: the possibility of integration is granted to the followers, while the leaders and ideologues, perceived as a more serious threat, are housed in separate facilities.

The creation of Muslim wards could provide stability in that, due to their prayers and respect of what is halal (either food or behaviour), many non-Muslims could be annoyed by their conduct, risking an increase of fights. As it is evident from the statements collected by Rhazzali (2010), Muslims themselves understand that the strict observance of religion by some practicing believers, could be hard to be accepted in an already harsh environment. However, the establishment of Muslims-only sections, could hinder the process of integration with the rest of the prison population; to overcome the issue, we should again consider the importance of an imam. Indeed, mixed sections should help in creating the unity and harmonization among different culture and languages, while an imam, could satisfy the need of gathering Muslims for prayers, accommodating their request for uniform groups.

A measure that could be applied when radicalisation occurs in prison, is the restrictions of communications with the outside society, whether they are face-to-face visits, or imply the use of telephone calls and emails. Indeed, among family or friends someone could be an undercover that aims at expanding the prison network on the outside, in order to later perpetrate terrorist attacks; they could also provide the detainee with illicit documents in order to plan the future actions from inside the prison.⁸⁷ For this reason, prison officers should also investigate in advance the background of visitors in those cases where they have doubts about a potential candidate for radicalisation; relevant factors could be a history of participation in Islamist movements, criminal records, or questioning the visitors prior to the meeting with the inmate.⁸⁸

The process of rehabilitation aims to prepare the detainees to their future lives outside prison, therefore making sure they have a safe place to stay – away from extremist ideologies – together with a verified understanding of democratic values, which will enables them to tolerate other cultures and opinions. The prison should provide education courses prior to the release date, in order for them to better fit in the outside world, become responsible for their own choices, in their quest for integration with the rest of the society. For this purpose, vocational training are offered during the period of detainment, and especially at the end of it, with the intent of providing the individual with new skills, or improving the ones already possessed; this will help the inmate in his/her search for a good job, that could keep him/her away from committing crimes. It is of paramount importance to concentrate on extremist prisoners, that could turn to terrorist networks with the hope

⁸⁷ *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders* (2012), Good Practice No. 6, Global Counterterrorism Forum.

⁸⁸ *Radicalizzazione violenta: riconoscimento del fenomeno da parte di gruppi professionali coinvolti e risposte a tale fenomeno*, 2009, Commissione internazionale Austria - Francia - Germania, Ministero della Giustizia. Available at: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.page?facetNode_1=0_0&facetNode_2=4_95&contentId=SPS1143166&previousPage=mg_1_12

of finding a safe place and a secure earning; the disengagement process, together with reintegration prospects, must keep occupied the individuals – by preventing boredom – and explain to them different alternatives to the use of violence, for example teaching them new careers, such as in the field of electronics, carpentry or pottery, by fostering a new enthusiasm for their forthcoming lives (Bryans 2016).

It is of course important to accompany these activities with the adequate psychological support; indeed, even if the inmates are not diagnosed with mental disorders, they are however vulnerable people. As we have seen at the beginning of the chapter, the total institution constantly surrounds them, and if it was hard at the initial time of detainment, it could be even more difficult to tackle the situation at the end of the sentence, when new opportunities lie ahead, and they often don't know how to act. Therefore psychologists and social workers should intervene, to allow prisoners to gain self-esteem, by promoting coping skills and decision-making (Bryans 2016).

It is necessary to point out once again, that when penitentiary institutes are overcrowded, there is unavoidably the issue of being understaffed, which leads to a more severe problem: one guard will inevitably have to monitor hundreds of inmates, hence an individualized attention – required by an effective risk assessment – won't be implemented, hindering the entire process.

Finally, in order not to feel catapulted in a new – often unrecognizable world – gradual steps should be taken to rehabilitate the individual to the society life, by granting furlough or work release, also with the support of community organizations, that could meet the prisoners before the release, in order to know him/her and propose suitable solutions, either in terms of housing or employment.

CONCLUSION

The issue of radicalisation is still contemporary to us and many scholars and experts are working very hard to formulate prevention strategies and counter-radicalisation plans, where instances of this process have already verified.

Throughout the dissertation it has been reiterated the difficulty in finding accessible data and contents regarding these subjects, due to the fact that most of them are collected by law enforcement forces and might contain information, essential for the security of citizens, thus not available to the public.

Within my capabilities, I searched the documents that could offer a good degree of understanding of the phenomenon of radicalisation, in order to study it by applying it to the context of detention. Indeed, security forces have experienced these developments throughout recent decades, dealing with ETA and IRA arrested members, for instance; on the other hand, the mechanism of Islamic radicalisation in prison, can be considered relatively new, especially with the emergence of the Islamic State in the 21st century.

By examining the accessible materials, the aim of the dissertation has been satisfied, within the limits – as specified before – of the availability of the resources, therefore relying on researches and studies of experts. A thorough knowledge of the mechanism of radicalisation, hence the several phases involved, has been proposed, through a gradual and linear explanation of the actors concerned, ranging from terrorist organizations' leaders and recruiters to potential candidates, such as second-generation Muslims or newly converts.

Mental disorders have always been excluded by the experts as having a fundamental impact on radicalisation, and are identified only in particular cases, such as that of the lone wolves, who, for their personalities, are often rejected by the terrorist organizations (Schmid 2013). On the contrary, more important are specific conditions that allow the individual to approach a radical ideology, which could likely turn into a strict belief in the use of violence as a mean to achieve a desired goal. Weakness, frustration, grievances and the feelings of being discriminated, all contribute to the reconsideration of one's life, which in the case of Islamic radicalisation, might signify a renewal of the faith, contemplated however in a radical way, with the prospect of favouring the Jihadi ideology (Loza 2006).

By focusing on prisons, it has been demonstrated that these sentiments are exacerbated in this particular context, where people are deprived of their freedoms, excluded from socialising with the outside world, and have to respect strict rules and follow a precise daily schedule. Inmates, especially in the first period after their admission to the institute, become very vulnerable and are

therefore an easy target for recruiters, which exploit the condition of overcrowding and the resulting understaffing, which allow them to act without raising immediate suspicions, due to the fact that surveillance is not adequately prepared for high numbers of detainees (Rhazzali 2010; Khosrokhavar 2013).

The examination of prevention strategies highlighted the importance of religion, in that imams, through their regular access to prison, could ensure a spiritual guidance to the believers, who in turn might receive a relief in discussing faith matters or sharing their concerns, thus providing stability to the whole institution.

The topic discussed here has several facets that should require a deeper analysis, for which this thesis did not represent the proper forum for its consideration. Indeed, an alarming issue regards the return of foreign fighters, who contribute to the increasing number of terrorists detained in the West. The worrying aspect that Western governments have to face, is how to reintegrate this type of individuals in the society, by always guaranteeing the safety of the citizens.

The problem is in fact linked to the disengagement mechanisms examined in the third chapter, because not all foreign fighters show remorse for their choices of leaving their countries to fight jihad in Syria or Iraq by joining the Islamic State, and their return might have been a consequence of arrest or the intention to conduct a terrorist attack in their country of origin. Among the 42 000 foreign terrorist fighters who became affiliated with terrorist organizations, around five thousands came from Europe, and are now returning for a variety of reasons (Meines et al 2017). Some of them were disenchanted by the horrible situation found in those territories, which did not correspond to the promises made before departure; others aspire to a better life, without the rejection of the ideology that brought them there.

An important aspect of this issue also regards the case of women returning with their children, who repented and became disillusioned after having experienced the atrocities perpetrated by ISIS, whose promises were broken; especially in this case, reintegration and rehabilitation are conceived as paramount for the benefit of the young children, who should acquire a different education than that provided by ISIS militants.

In light of these circumstances, the counter-radicalisation measures described in the final section of the thesis, would have an even more important role for the category of returnees, that not only acquired the Jihadi ideology, like other radicalised individuals, they also experienced life in training camps, encountering the Islamic State face-to-face. Therefore, depending on a case-by-case selection, an accurate plan should be established, whether it regards prosecution and placement in adequate penitentiary institutes, or a more rapid resocialisation, especially if it concerns children.

Given the loss of territories by ISIS, the number of returnees in Europe is constantly rising, reaching an average percentage of around 30% (Meines et al 2017). Until 2017, Italy has seen the

departure of 125 individuals from its soil (even though not all citizens), of whom 22 came back. In the analysis of counter-radicalisation measures, Italy has been effective in implementing deportation for those terrorists of non-EU citizenship to their countries of origin; since 2015, the number of individuals expatriated has risen to 221 people, of whom 89 only in the period from January to October 2017 (Vidino & Marone 2017).

This was made possible by a new legislation passed in February 2015, known as Decree Law 7, that takes into account the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 of 2014, in order to disrupt the flow of foreign fighters; more severe punishments are now imposed to foreign fighters that engaged in conflicts in other countries as members of a terrorist organization. As part of these innovations, the measures of deportation are considered a powerful tool in the prevention of radicalisation, by dismissing the individuals that could potentially influence and recruit new members.

In the case of foreign fighters, personal files should be written by the authorities as soon as the individual leaves the country, in order to be prepared in the case of his/her return. In general, in order to counteract the phenomenon of terrorism, the European Union should implement the use of centralized databases, in order to improve collaboration among member states, who should also consider the possibility of revising the Schengen agreement, that has allowed European citizens to cross the borders without any checks, thus permitting uncontrolled transit also to terrorists.

Prevention strategies have previously been discussed, especially at the level of governments and supranational organizations, through which it is possible to coordinate various countries' measures, exchanging good practices and know-how.

This however, should not only concentrate on criminology aspects, but should include an improvement in the human and social sciences, which could provide a great contribute in the identification of causal factors of radicalisation, focusing on behavioural changes and societal issues. This is directly connected to the need of discovering the root causes that generate the process, by contextualizing each situation, without standardising the analysis, and conforming the thought applied to different actors and environments.

The approach towards radical ideology is often provoked by feelings of victimization, that are the consequence of a failure to integrate in the community. Individuals and civil society should contribute to the process of integration of Muslims, especially if immigrants in those countries where the presence of another religion, such as Christianity in Italy, influences the administration of everyday life, and in particular the conduct of penitentiaries.

The acceptance of different cultures and religions needs to be taught to children already in their early years, so that they would not see the others as different people, but simply as human beings. This process should start within the context of school and at the level of sport teams, in which

children have the opportunity to meet new friends, whose relations will not depend on religion, language or skin tone, but it will be based on trust.

Ignorance greatly contributes to increasing episodes of Islamophobia; we should really ask ourselves, what is about Islam that makes it so frightful. In fact, we should emphasise the concept that even though religions have different names for their points of reference of worship (God, Allah, Jehovah), in the end they all profess peace and unity among human beings.

As it was clarified in the introduction, my work aimed at providing a clear understanding of recent phenomena, such as that of terrorism and radicalisation, in a way of offering to the reader a precise explanation of why these occur. The hope is that of promoting the knowledge, in order to avoid fear of “the other”, caused by ignorance and lack of information regarding these topics.

The wish is that of pushing people to become curious and eager of learning new facts; each one of us should reflect and consider what can be done to improve a system in which extremism and radicalisation are still alarming realities, after decades spent tackling them. No one should stop in front of the unknown, relying on appearances and fomenting prejudice and discrimination. Hatred brings violence and destruction; knowledge makes us strong.

During the time spent examining documents, books and papers, I investigated and studied more thoroughly topics that have always fascinated me, and for which I undertook this course of study. I am grateful to have had the opportunity of writing this thesis and I would like to thank Professor Corrao and Professor Guidi for the valuable support provided me during the drafting.

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SUMMARY

Over the centuries, and recent decades especially, the international context has witnessed the rise of many terrorist groups, which constitute a serious issue and threat for the society. Security agencies and law enforcement forces, have then a great responsibility in countering these movements, in order to protect the population. One of the most difficult tasks has been that of developing a strategy against ISIS, regarded as one of the most dangerous terrorist group nowadays, considering in particular its presence in the West.

This threat also derives by its abilities to recruit many young people, especially through the use of Internet, which allows ISIS leaders to reach thousands of users worldwide, convincing them to join the fight through an accurate propaganda. In this way, radicalisation is accelerated, by also exploiting particular events that had an impact on the individuals, or their vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

In order to understand how all the elements are interconnected, it is necessary to develop a clear understanding about religion, the elements involved, and how these are used by terrorists to attract potential militants. In doing so, history takes on an important role, because it allows us to recognize the various developments and interpretations of Islam that had a profound impact on the current terrorist organizations.

The drafting of this thesis has been realised through an accurate examination of a variety of contents, ranging from official documents, such as data and statistics gathered from the Pew Research Center and the Department of Penitentiary Administration in Italy or the use of encyclopaedias to define specific terms. Moreover, history manuals and books provided a fundamental contribution in clarifying several phases of the evolution of Islam and different trends within it; lastly, the texts of terrorism experts and the research of many scholars were paramount in offering an understanding of the process of radicalisation, especially in the context of prison.

Indeed, studies on this matter are still not particularly evolved from the point of view of human and social sciences, also due to the fact that data are not accessible to the public, and are instead restricted to the authorities for security reasons. Some researchers however – such as Khosrokhavar and Rhazzali – regarding the focus on religion and radicalisation in prison, had the opportunity to collaborate with penitentiary administrations, in order to study the phenomenon in close proximity to detainees and prison officers, therefore developing a more detailed research.

The goal of this dissertation is providing a clear understanding of the circumstances that cause the emergence of terrorism, related to the process of radicalisation. This study aims at promoting curiosity among the readers, especially those who do not possess a thorough knowledge of these

topics, in a way of spreading information that could be useful for each one of us, when facing different religions and cultures.

In a way of preventing prejudice and discrimination, that often causes episodes of Islamophobia and hate crimes, various terms are examined, with the purpose of applying these notions to everyday discussion, especially when listening to television or navigating in the web, in order to avoid ignorance and be prepared for debates about Islam and terrorism.

The dissertation is thus developed on three levels, aimed at providing a gradual understanding of the phenomenon of radicalisation, starting from a description of the foundations of Islam, its application to modern debate and the use made by media, until we reach the explanation of the process of radicalisation, its causal factors, and the way that it develops within various frameworks, like the one of prisons in the West.

Islam today: modern trends and media

Before analyzing radicalisation, a good description of the background is necessary, in order to discern the elements of religion, and its main streams, from the Islam professed by extremist organizations, which employ a distorted version of Allah's faith.

Islam, which means "submission, abandonment to the will of God", is a monotheistic religion, that was revealed to the prophet Muhammad in 610, on the mount Hira. The Holy book, the Quran, is composed of 114 chapters (each called Sura); together with the *Sunna* (the Prophetic tradition) and the *hadiths* (Muhammad's saying and actions), they constitute the scriptural sources on which the believers can derive the Islamic principles and beliefs (Corrao 2015).

Moreover, it is important to understand – also in view of a meeting with a Muslim – what the five pillars of Islam (*arkan al-Islam*) are, representing practices or rule that every believer should follow, in order to be considered a good adherent to this faith; these pillars are *Shahadah*, *Salat*, *Zakat*, *Sawm*, and *Hajj*.

An explanation of what each of them entails, is provided based on the manual of Professor Esposito (1999), who describes them in details; therefore *Shahadah* represents the proclamation of faith, which is regarded as the first step in becoming a Muslim. The following three pillars regard actions that the believers need to pursue in order to bring the faithful closer to Allah, and at the same time, being reminded of the poor, by helping them economically and experiencing their suffering: they include the five daily prayers, the yearly alms and Ramadan, which is ninth month of the Islamic calendar in which the believer fasts, and it also the most respected pillar among the non practising Muslims. Finally, the *Hajj*, indicates the pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims have to carry out at least once in their lifetime, given physical and financial ability.

A problematic term often used by media and individuals in public debate, is *jihad*, a concept the is often interpreted in many ways by scholars and religious leaders. It literally means to strive, and denotes an internal struggle that each Muslim has to undertake towards the path of Allah, in order to improve oneself both spiritually and at the societal level. Due to the fact the Islam does not have an authority or institution that could clarify certain view, the debate over jihad has always existed and it is still present in modern discussion. For some it refers to the defensive aspect of the struggle, in a way of protecting the religion as a moral obligation; for others, however, it needs to be understood as an offensive fight, against an external enemy, often implying infidels, which is why this interpretation is the prevailing one among jihadist groups (Marranci 2006).

Besides the different terminology and various concepts in this framework, we have to stress that Islam does not regard only one point of view, instead it is characterised by many streams, deriving also by an important split that occurred after the Prophet's death in 632. Here, the most known schism in Islam took place, that between Sunni and Shia Muslims (or Shiites), who were in disaccord about who should have succeeded Muhammad as the head of the community of believes, the *Umma*. Shiites believed that, given their relationship with the Prophet, they had the right to guide the Umma, while Sunnis advocated that the successor should have been appointed based on the skills offered; this solution prevailed, and Abu Bakr, considered a close companion of the Prophet, became the first caliph (Esposito 1999).

From the eighth century onwards, until our days, four schools of thought (*madhhab*) have developed within Sunni Islam, differing from each other in the interpretation of Sharia, the Islamic law. Therefore, the Hanafi school made great use of reason and *ray* (the personal opinion), rather than rigorous adherence to the hadiths. The Maliki school, on the contrary, promoted the study of the texts over reason, considering the Quran and the hadiths as primary sources of jurisprudence; important for its members was the use of *ijma*, the consensus of the Companions of Muhammad, and the practice of *istislah*, the juristic discretion employed in order to find the right solution of an issue, giving priority to the interest and welfare of Muslims. The Shafi school, in its reliance on the Quran, rejected the use of human reason, relying instead on the consensus of the companions, and employing *ijtihad* (the independent reasoning of the jurists) only if consensus was not reached. Finally, the Hanbali school, is deemed to be the most fundamentalist of all, strongly opposing *ray* and *qiyas* (analogy), implying that legal decisions were to be taken according to a literal interpretation of the Quran and the hadiths (Esposito 1999).

The history of Islam has also seen the rise of several branches, which require special consideration, in that they contributed to the evolution of the religion as we know it today. Sufism, born in the second half of the seventh century (during the Umayyad period), represented the mystical part of Islam, peaceful and tolerant towards others, that concentrated on emphasizing the moral qualities of the individuals and highlighting personal experiences with the divine (Saeed

2006). They brought innovation (*bida*) to this faith, such as the practice of visiting shrines, which were not appreciated by the Salafi movement of Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, who, in the 14th century, condemned these rituals and regarded as apostates the Muslims who honoured any form of idolatry. In the following centuries, a new trend of Salafism emerged, inspired by the teachings of ibn Taymiyyah, the Wahhabism, born in the 18th century, which proposed a conservative way to interpret the Quran in its literal meaning, applying the strict rules of Islam to society, and often employing the practice of *taqfir*, which is declaring someone to be apostate (Springer, Regens & Edger 2009).

In the following two centuries, modernist Salafism emerged, thanks to Jamal Al-Din Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, who wanted to reform the system, based on the precepts of religion, in a way of countering the interference of European powers in Muslim countries. They each aimed at the a revival of Islam, either through the movement of pan-Islam or an Islamic humanism, acquiring the Western notions of democracy and human rights (Hanafi 2010). Another important author in this framework was Rashid Rida, who in the 20th century aimed at the establishment of an Arab caliphate, the only one capable of reviving Islam (Ramadan 2012).

At the same time, radical movements have emerged in the first half on the 20th century, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, created by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, which only incorporated a violent approach after its leader's death, and with its new ideologue Sayyid Qutb. By promoting the implementation of Sharia (in replacement of secular law), in order to return to the origins of Islam, with its pure values, with the aim of implementing an Islamic State, eliminating the *jahiliyyah*, the pre-Islamic ignorance, rooted in Western societies and propagated also by the Arab nationalism (Qutb 2006).

Many fundamentalist ideologues followed, and since the Afghan War in the 1980s, and the Gulf War in the 1990s, Islamist terrorist organizations have emerged, and Jihadi-Salafism acquired an even more militant character, especially with the rise of Al Qaeda, which promoted a global jihad against the infidels, resuming the practice of takfir (Kepel 2003; Escobar Stemmann 2006).

Al Qaeda was the precursor of the Islamic State, that we know today as ISIS, which however has different traits and objectives. Officially born in 2014 with this name, ISIS has existed since the beginning of the 21st century, as an Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda (Bunzel 2015).

Since that year, it has conducted many terrorist attacks in Western countries, targeting public places and civilians, and acting randomly during events or other moments, therefore inculcating the widespread fear on when the next strike would occur.

This anxiety has turn into the concept of Islamophobia, followed by frequent episodes of hate crimes, in which Muslims are assaulted for the simple reason of being Muslims (Esposito & Kalin

2011). This phenomenon has also manifested in the virtual space, where everyone, being anonymity, offends the other based on religion or culture.

Many campaigns have been launched in recent years by both Muslim and non-Muslim associations, in order to send positive messages about Islam, with the aim of promoting its peaceful and tolerance approach. Radio and television broadcasts have spread the teaching of Islamic values, and its main elements, by promoting a dialogue with the audience, in order to avoid the ignorance that could cause Islamophobia.

Radicalism

As we have seen, Islam is composed of many branches, and the fundamentalist approach used by many movements, constitutes the first step towards the reaching of a Jihadi ideology.

The understanding of these issues often implies the use of terms like radical, terrorist and radicalisation. Radicalism is a concept often misunderstood in the public debate; it is “any stance, practical, intellectual or both, that goes to the root of existing practices, beliefs, or values” (Barker 2001). It refers to mobilization, often political, in which a group tries to achieve a change, usually at the government level, for instance, requesting a political reform that might be considered radical for the innovations that wants to produce. The first use of the term dates back to the end of the 18th century in Great Britain, when following the Industrial Revolution, the bourgeois class began to demand more from the state. Other radical movements are represented by the Suffragettes in the 20th century, or by the Radical Party in Italy, that has survived until our days, promoting progress and innovation.

However, radicalism is often understood as having negative consequences, for example, when violence is applied to effectively achieve one’s goal, implying a disruption of democracy and a disrespect for the rule of law, reaching a closer meaning to that of extremism, usually founded on a specific ideology.

In this context, terrorism might also be confused with other terms; moreover, experts and international organizations do not agree on a single definition, therefore many interpretations could be found. Relying on the Codebook of 2017, written by the Global Terrorism Database, terrorism is defined as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation”.

We do not have to think of ISIS as being the first important terrorist organization, because many others have preceded it, such as the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain, during the 1970s or the Red Brigades in Italy in the 1980s, which both aimed at political purposes.

ISIS however, founds its fight on religion, through accurate proselytism aimed at highlighting certain elements of Islam, in order to attract new members to the organizations. This may happen by following the process of radicalisation, which is composed of several phases, as explained by a report of 2007 of the New York Police Department. These stages (pre-radicalisation, self-identification, indoctrination, jihadization) happen within different framework, and do not necessary take the same amount of time. Moreover, it is not uncommon that some phases might be skipped, and people could quickly radicalise and subsequently commit terrorist attacks. On the other hand, the last phase, might not be reached, and the individual might approach the Jihadi ideology without turning into a terrorist.

The process could be initiated because of some triggering factors, like personal experiences, or as a consequence of discrimination, resulting in grievances, which are often exploited by terrorist groups, in order to convince a potential candidate in joining the organization, that could offer a sense of unity created by the new community; in this way, the concept of group-think is formed, allowing the main organization to create a decentralised structure (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

The concept of ideology is fundamental for radicalisation, and ISIS exploits this notion in a way of provoking the anger of its members, and pushing them towards a fight against the West, with the purpose of establishing a worldwide Caliphate, based on the rules of Sharia (Sageman 2004).

Radicalisation is promoted by the recruiters of an organization, who, based on their skills, are able to detect a potential candidate from the first encounter. Meetings not only occur in the mosque (as predominantly done in 1990s), but now take place in coffee shops, book stores, or sport clubs, in order not to raise any suspicion among the authorities (Silber & Bhatt 2007).

In these locations Muslims can meet with other believers and discuss religious matters, in a way of feeling connected to the global Umma, especially when they meet in cultural centres or places of worship. During the gathering, the recruiter needs to be able to frame the person in front of him, in order to understand if he/she could be a potential candidate. For instance, people with mental disorder or instability traits are usually rejected, favouring instead those with previous experience in jihad, which allows the candidate to be more motivated and trustworthy (Hegghammer 2013).

We cannot trace a single profile for those who commit terrorist acts, because the reasons for such behaviours vary notably. The majority of them, are however males, below the age of thirty-five, that conduct ordinary lives, often without being very religious or having a criminal record (Loza 2006).

Scholars such as Olivier Roy studied the phenomenon of homegrown jihadists, those militants who have been raised in Western countries and are particularly inclined to undergo the process of radicalisation; in this category we both find the second or third-generation Muslims who were born in the European continent, by immigrant parents, and those people who decided to convert to Islam.

They usually show good levels of integration in the society, and are seemingly Westernised; among them the second-generations make up the majority of terrorists, around 60%, and converts represent instead the 15% of them (Roy 2017).

For second-generations Muslims, the pressure to turn to the jihadi ideology comes from an identity crisis, at the moment when they do not recognize the religion profess by their parents, considered outdated, but at the same time they do not feel connected to the new culture, which instead is regarded as immoral. These individuals look for a better way, that could confer them a sense of respect and acceptance, promised by radical leaders who preach the extreme Salafi ideology (Al-Lami 2009). For the group of converts the dynamics are similar, in that they do not approve of their parents' religion, with which they grew up in a secular society, that permitted too much, and drove them to turn to Islam, allowing them to reach a more private connection to God. Moreover, the approach to Islam represents for them a tool to contest the immoral actions perpetuated by the governments and their citizens; it was a way of bringing back to life the radical movements of the 1980s, in an effort of fighting for a common cause (Escobar Stemmann 2006).

Given the young age of the above mentioned categories, it is not surprising how many of them become fascinated by ISIS propaganda conducted online; the use of internet allows individuals to connect with thousands of like-minded people worldwide, through the use of chat rooms.

Various messages are sent by the organization' leaders, such as that of taking up arms to fight the infidels around the globe, legitimizing their killings while dehumanizing the enemy, often resorting to historical examples (Reinares et al 2008).

ISIS has developed the concept of a cyber-war, which, by exploiting the virtual space, leads to the quick spread of the Jihadi ideology, by promoting the establishment of a Caliphate without geographical borders. By stimulating their audience in a positive way to commit jihad, young believers become fascinated by this rhetoric, and dreaming about glorious actions, they enthusiastically follow news and updates (Votel et al 2017). Perhaps, what is most appealing about the online network of ISIS, is the employment of documents and videos that show militants while fighting, or as martyrs, thus depicted as heroes.

The problem of anonymity is one of the main concerns of governments and security agencies, that find it hard to discover the true identity of individuals through the virtual images and profiles that one person might create, often more the one in order not be traced easily (Precht 2007).

Whether it might happen on internet, or through meetings in person, individuals begin the process of radicalisation for a variety of reasons, which could then be caused by triggering factors, such as the loss of one's job, the death of a relative or a divorce.

Most of the causal factors do not include mental disorders, which are instead a characteristics of lone wolves, people often rejected by terrorist organizations because of their instability or inability

to comply to group behaviour. On the contrary, the causes for radicalisation could be found within the individual social background, considering its integration in the community, its economic situation or the family's relations.

Therefore, discrimination, prejudice and frustration often push the individual to approaching a radical ideology, through which terrorist networks are able to exploit people's grievances and turn the individuals into militants devoted to the cause.

Radicalisation in prison

It has been mentioned how the first phase of radicalisation can take place in various locations and contexts, as a consequence of a meeting with leaders and recruiters. This process needs further consideration and analysis for what regards the environment of prisons, in which the reality changes with respect to the outside world.

What characterises detention, is the deprivation of freedoms experienced by the inmates, which prevent them from going outside, seeing family and friends whenever they wish, or other choices that referred to life before imprisonment.

Especially at the beginning of detention, the individuals become vulnerable, either because they are not used to follow strict rules, or because of pressure from prison gangs; this is particularly true for immigrants, Muslims above all, who find themselves in a condition of estrangement from the rest of the prison population (Rhazzali 2010).

Hence, religion acts like a relief valve, because the practice of praying and following the other rules of Islam, helps to get through the day, by setting a specific routine, and filling a void that could later cause a sense of isolation and abandonment from the rest of the community. Indeed, Rhazzali talks about the existence of an "Islamic Self", through which the believers become part of the Umma, often recreated inside the prison by requesting Muslim wards and demanding collective prayers (Rhazzali & Schiavinato 2016).

In this framework, the role of the imam is paramount in the examination of radicalisation in prison. Its presence can serve as a stability factor for the overall administration, because inmates, having a spiritual guide inside the institute, are more prone to respect the order and the officers.

However, it has been found that imams are usually absent, especially those authorised by the state, which instead are inevitably substituted by detainees who take the role of religious leaders within the prison community of believers. This might pose serious threats to the penitentiary administration, because the detainee imam often lacks the skills required to conduct this job, referring in particular to a good knowledge of the Sacred texts in their entirety, with the risk of promoting a distorted vision of Islam.

Within the harsh conditions of this environment, the imam's ideas might be perceived as a way of redeem oneself from the discrimination demonstrated by both outside society and the prison officers.

A way to prevent this issue, is the promotion of authorised imams that could freely enter the facilities without requiring a formal request from the prisoners. This solution has been implemented in Italy where in 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Department of Penitentiary Administration and the UCOII (Unione delle Comunità Islamiche in Italia), which ensures the existence in prison of competent people – either imams or cultural mediators – who are able to reassure the detainees and offer them spiritual guidance.

We have to take into account that a major problem that affects European prisons is the phenomenon of overcrowding, to which is directly connected that of understaffing; as a result, wardens usually do not adequately fulfil their duties, which comprehend listening to the demands of prisoners, which in turn cannot be satisfied because of the numerous assignments that they have to deal with.

The reduced number of prison officers, does not allow them to adequately supervise the inmates, thus prevention of radicalisation is hard to be realised, in that, having to watch over many prisoners, they might not be able to detect behavioural changes, also expressed through socialisation.

Muslims detained in Italy are usually first-generation immigrants that arrived in the country with hopes of a better future, with regards to their economic situation, but instead ended up in prison; this might be viewed as a personal failure, and this frustration could lead them to approach religion, with the potential drift to radical ideology (Cuciniello 2016).

Given the high percentages of Muslims in Italian prisons, one major point of concern is the contrast between the treatment of Catholic believers, who can benefit from the presence of a chapel in every penitentiary institute, while among the prisons visited for the research, only the 23% was adapted to the needs of non-Catholics, even though in the case of Islam, not every space was a proper mosque, but more of an improvised location which could be used by the believers of various religions (Antigone report of 2018).

Moreover, the practice of religion is usually made harder by the impossibility of praying together with other Muslims of Friday, or eating halal food, which is not always provided by the prison administrations.

For what concerns prevention strategies and counter-radicalisation measures, in recent years Western countries have improved their systems in order to react to this phenomenon. Italy in particular, in 2009, has modified the prison system organization, by dividing the already existing high-security circuit (Alta Sicurezza), in three different branches, in order to locate detainees sentenced for terrorism-related offences in a separate area from the other criminals.

As Loza explains (2006), plans for countering radicalisation and the advance of terrorism should not only regard military efforts, or the work of security agencies, designed to disrupt extremist networks and capture their leaders and militants. Mechanisms of prevention should be implemented in parallel with the latter activities, in order to avoid the formation of terrorist clusters, and hamper the radicalisation of the young population, or those individuals that are deemed vulnerable for their personality or past experiences. Therefore, civil society represents a paramount role in this scenario, in that the help of psychologists, social workers and religious leaders could provide an effective alternative to the reliance on extremist use and violent means of actions.

Prevention strategies should work towards providing religious guidance and support in prison, in order to spiritually assist the inmates, which in this way could avoid the sense of failure and a lost dignity that is easily experienced during detention.

As Bryans (2016) reminds in the “Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners”, it is important to treat detainees as human beings, hence always respecting their dignity and fundamental rights. This includes providing appropriate living conditions, which implies the avoidance of overcrowded facilities – and the consequent elements that derive from this phenomenon – and a positive relation between the guards and the inmates.

Prevention should also start by proposing alternative measures to imprisonment, especially in the case of minor crimes, where parole, furlough or early release could provide a good compromise; in this way, the individual would be removed from a dangerous environment causing frustration (hence potential radicalisation), and at the same time, the process of rehabilitation in the society will move at a faster pace, providing better results if initiated at the earliest stage of conviction.

For what regards the radicalisation in the outside world, an online warfare should be developed to block the spread of ideology through the web. This approach is stressed in the Prevent Strategy of the British Government, by expressing the concern of the use of internet by the civil society, whose activists should receive training courses, also in collaboration with major social media platforms such as Facebook, whose duty could be that of teaching young users and associations how to recognize jihadist propaganda, and therefore understanding how online influence works.

In 2005 the European Union developed the Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment, lastly revised in 2014, implying the commitment of each Member State in the fight against terrorism. Prevention is listed as the first objective to be achieved, by impeding the formation of new terrorist network, composed by young militants, thus keeping under constant surveillance the risky factors and updating the acquired data, concurrently with the patterns of radicalisation.

The sharing of information is particularly stressed in the application of counter-radicalisation measures, stressing the importance of the collaboration of countries in the fight against terrorism,

especially through the use of risk assessments, such as the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment protocol created in 2009 and renovated the following year.

Finally, we need to take into account the fact that disengagement practices are often more easy to achieve than de-radicalisation mechanisms, in that individuals would be more likely to abandon the use of violence as means of their mobilization, instead of completely renouncing to the radical ideology.

These procedures need to be tailored to different individuals, avoiding standardisation, because each one of them had diverse past experiences and come from various backgrounds. Moreover, civil society greatly contributes by developing programs that are aimed at the future rehabilitation of radicalised individuals, for example, by teaching detainees a specific job and supporting the acceptance of different cultures.

Conclusion

The analysis of radicalisation should not be confined to specific contexts or people, because every individual has a different experience, thus his/her path towards radicalisation could vary from that of other people.

The hope of this thesis was that of providing a clear framework for the examination of this complex phenomenon, that has threatened societies especially in the last decade. Having mentioned the various mechanisms of prevention and counter-radicalisation, the research should not stop here, and a fundamental role should be given to social sciences, which are able to discern the different elements involved, such as the social backgrounds and relations of terrorists.

As it has been demonstrated, Islamic radicalisation evolved from the 1990s until today, either regarding the places of encounter between recruiters and candidates, or the factors through which identify a potential individual undergoing radicalisation.

Given my passion and curiosity for these issues, I will certainly continue my research in order to improve the knowledge over religious matters and related phenomena, wishing to provide a contribute to the overall study of radicalisation, and inspiring others to do the same, in order to avoid ignorance and stop episodes of Islamophobia and prejudice, with the aim of countering, but mostly preventing, violent radicalisation.