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## THE MULTIFACTORIAL PROCESS OF RADICALISATION TO “JIHADI” FUNDAMENTALISM

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**Abstract.** The paper analyses the main factors that trigger radicalisation to “jihadi” fundamentalism from a socio-criminological and geopolitical perspective. The concept of radicalisation and its causes in its potential progression towards terrorist violence will be examined. The conclusion of the paper will pinpoint the flaws of the current strategies of counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism and will outline some possible preventive ways forward.

SUMMARY: 1. The concept of radicalisation. – 2. The multiple roots of radicalisation and international terrorism. – 3. The ideological factor. – 4. The political factor. – 4.1. The government of the Middle East territories. – 4.2. The escalation of international conflict: the interventionism of the United States and Europe. – 5. The social factor. – 6. The cultural factor. – 7. The economic factor. – 8. Conclusion.

### 1. The concept of radicalisation to “Islamic” fundamentalism.

The goal of this paper is to analyse the salient features of radicalisation to fundamentalism (hereinafter, radicalisation) and international terrorism.<sup>1</sup> First of all, the concept of radicalisation (§ 1) and its causes will be examined, along with its potential progression towards terrorist violence (§ 2-

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<sup>1</sup> Today, “international terrorism” is used to refer to jihadism or “Islamic” fundamentalism, characterised by a transnational dimension. Some scholars argue that the adjective “jihadist” cannot qualify such terrorism, given that the term “*jihad*” does not allude in itself to the “holy war” conducted by the Islamic State and its affiliates, but rather to the spiritual effort of the individual to improve himself. See C. DEL PRADO HIGUERA, E. SÁNCHEZ DE ROJAS DÍAZ, *Terrorismo Islamista: El caso de Al Gama'a al Islamiya*, Valencia, 2018, pp. 91 ff. (in particular p. 92); N. SANZ MULAS, *Las sociedades paralelas como cantera del yihadismo*, in A.I. PÉREZ CEPEDA (dir.), M. RUIZ ARIAS (coord.), *El terrorismo en la actualidad: un nuevo enfoque político criminal*, Valencia, 2018, pp. 252 ff.; A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del yihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, in R. RAZZANTE (ed.), *Comprendere il terrorismo. Spunti interpretativi di analisi e metodologie di contrasto del fenomeno*, Pisa, 2019, p. 83; R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli yihadisti europei*, Milan, 2015, p. 14, nt. 1, and p. 21. “Islamic” extremists consider the spiritual effort to remain on God’s path (*jihad al-nafs*) inseparable from the armed fight to assert divine rights (*jihad bi-lsaiif*). In this paper, reference will be made to this type of radicalisation and terrorism using the adjectives “fundamentalist”, “extremist” and “international”.



7). The conclusion will include brief remarks regarding the flaws of the current counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism strategies and suggest a possible way forward (§ 8).

As a result of the terrorist emergency, national and supranational institutions have placed the issue of radicalisation and related counter-terrorist strategies at the top of their priorities. Protecting public security represents a pivotal goal for the legislator and law enforcement authorities. In this paper, radicalisation refers to the *multifactorial and multiform process*<sup>2</sup> of *psychological adhesion to the violent ideology of fundamentalism*<sup>3</sup> as a result of factors external and/or internal to the individual.<sup>4</sup> One can in fact speak of radicalisation only when a violent action is based on a precise ideology.<sup>5</sup> As will be seen below, regardless of the depth of the knowledge of extremist dogmas, the radicalised subject adheres to a conception of the world and to forms of action that postulate violence as a means to establish a new social and institutional order.<sup>6</sup>

The process of radicalisation is *preceded by moments of denial of (and emotional opposition to) the system*,<sup>7</sup> and is often a *prelude to terrorist attacks* or to a *series of preparatory acts*.<sup>8</sup> These activities especially include, in an order of growing dangerousness culminating in recourse to terrorist violence: i) the autonomous collection of information useful for terrorist purposes or the possession of fundamentalist propaganda; ii) the public glorification of terrorism as a model to imitate, increasingly spread by means of social networks; iii) direct incitement to terrorism; iii) aiding members of terrorist groups by providing them with shelter, food, hospitality, transport and other forms of external support; iv) travel to territories under the influence of the Islamic State to do military or para-military service, or with other terrorist purposes pursued in close contact with a militarised environment; v)

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<sup>2</sup> A. SPENA, "Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!" *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, in V. MILITELLO, A. SPENA (eds.), *Mobilità, sicurezza e nuove frontiere tecnologiche*, Turin, 2018, p. 253, nt. 10, defines radicalisation as a *process*. See also R. CRUPI, *Al di là del diritto penale: exit strategy dalla radicalizzazione*, *ivi*, pp. 275 ff.

<sup>3</sup> That is, according to one of the most widespread classifications, "cognitive radicalisation" (F. DEMANT, M. SLOOTMAN, F. BUIJS, J. TILLIE, *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalisation*, IMES Reports Series, Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 12 ff.) "of an idea or an opinion": A.M. COSSIGA, *Il terrorismo jihadista: uno sguardo antropologico*, in *Comprendere il terrorismo. Spunti interpretativi di analisi e metodologie di contrasto del fenomeno*, *cit.*, p. 33 (emphasis added). On the fundamentalist ideology as a form of "emotional violence", A. SPERINI, *The Systemic Models of Jihadism: evolutionary aspects in an anti-system key*, *cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> A. SPENA, "Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!" *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, *cit.*, pp. 255-256, uses the terms "internal"/"external" to distinguish respectively those individuals who already belonged to the Muslim community before the degeneration of their ideology from those who, on the contrary, embraced violent extremism following conversion. See also K.M. SARMA, *Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence Into Terrorism*, in *American Psychologist*, Vol. 72, No. 3, p. 279.

<sup>5</sup> R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, *cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> See J.M. PAREDES CASTAÑON, *Terrorismo y antiterrorismo como estrategias político militar*, in *El terrorismo en la actualidad: un nuevo enfoque político criminal*, *cit.*, pp. 183 ff.

<sup>7</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, *cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> I.e., "violent radicalisation": see DEMANT, M. SLOOTMAN, F. BUIJS, J. TILLIE, *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalisation*, *cit.*, pp. 12 ff.; A.M. COSSIGA, *Il terrorismo jihadista: uno sguardo antropologico*, *cit.*, p. 33. The latter author argues that actions and behaviours are the only useful means available to detect those individuals who pose a risk to public security (while their personality, in itself, would not assume any distinctive importance). For a notion of radicalisation focused on the "use, support, or facilitation of violence, as a method to bring about social change", C.E. ALLEN, *Threat of Islamic Radicalization to the Homeland*, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, March 14, 2007, p. 4.



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recruitment for the same purpose; *vi*) the financing of terrorism; *vii*) the autonomous collection of information (see above, *i*) followed by the initial preparation of possible attacks;<sup>9</sup> *viii*) direct or remote training for terrorist purposes; *ix*) active participation in a terrorist group; *ix*) management of the latter.

Sometimes radicalisation takes on borderline anti-state aspects. What happened in the United Kingdom between 2013 and 2014 is emblematic in this respect: a group of Muslims forming “a sort of Islamic moral police corps and extremist groups” used to patrol the streets of East London and make religiously inspired demands to behave morally in public, sometimes committing violence against passers-by.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The multiple roots of radicalisation and international terrorism.

The factors underlying radicalisation and international terrorism have long been at the core of debate in the various branches of the humanities.<sup>11</sup> However, each theoretical model elaborated to illustrate the genesis of radicalisation and terrorism risks being incomplete, since it cannot shed light on the degree of causality between the psycho-social conditions experienced by the individual and the decision to join in a terrorist organisation.<sup>12</sup>

Only apparently inspired in an exclusive or predominant way by extreme forms of religious fanaticism<sup>13</sup> historically ascribable, according to some, to the aftermath of the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, which ended in 1988,<sup>14</sup> various scholars recognise the presence of other causes behind radicalisation and terrorism. On the one hand, religious rhetoric still appears to have a strong influence (especially in segments of society still under the influence of the Taliban).<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the description of radicalisation and terrorism as deriving only from the transfiguration of the Muslim religion – aimed at establishing a global caliphate ruled through the unconditional application of *Sharia*<sup>16</sup> – would in fact be improper. Such a description would risk giving rise to a conceptual misunderstanding and confusion between the authentic

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<sup>9</sup> Such cases range from self-training, a paradigmatic manifestation of autonomous radicalisation, to other signs of a preparation still in an embryonic phase, such as the collection of information on places or persons that facilitate surveillance in view of the possible staging of a terrorist attack.

<sup>10</sup> M. PAPA, *Il fiqh al-aqalliyat e il proselitismo islamico*, in *Quad. dir. pol. eccl.*, No. 1/2020, pp. 180-181. The A. also reports a similar case in Wuppertal.

<sup>11</sup> See W. REICH (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, Washington, 1998, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> S. MENDOZA CALDERÓN, *Medidas contra la radicalización terrorista en la Unión Europea y su persecución penal en España*, in *El terrorismo en la actualidad: un nuevo enfoque político criminal*, cit.

<sup>13</sup> See J. KAPLAN, *Terrorism's Fifth Wave: A Theory, a Conundrum and a Dilemma*, in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2008, p. 13. The ideological background of fundamentalist dogmatists is historically characterised by a debate on the interpretation of the Koran and Sunna and on the principles that should be drawn from them at a political level: R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> C. DEL PRADO HIGUERA, E. SÁNCHEZ DE ROJAS DÍAZ, *Terrorismo Islamista: El caso de Al Gama'a al Islamiya*, cit., p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> M.L. PORGES, *Radicalization Processes in Afghanistan*, in *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 5, Iss. 1, January 2012, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Absolutized fundamental sacred law as the substantive constitution of an anti-Western political-religious order.



Muslim religion and extremist manifestations that subvert nearly every fundamental principle of Islam. The majority of violent extremists misinterpret religious theology, often with the complicity of terrorist recruiters who insist on the necessity of violence to profess their faith.<sup>17</sup>

The origin of radicalisation and its expansion must rather be considered as multifactorial: so much so that, according to some scholars, the reasons for violent extremism appear to be as varied as the many people involved.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the *religious* component, which is twisted and absolutized into a superordinate divine law that the “true believer” must impose on “heretics” in every part of the world,<sup>19</sup> there are factors of an *ideological* (para. 4), *political* (para. 5), *social* (para. 6), *cultural* (para. 7)<sup>20</sup> and even *economic* (para. 8) type.<sup>21</sup> These factors combine with the above mentioned religious component, giving life to varied, evolving forms of radicalisation and terrorism in which religious faith reveal not to be the overriding factor.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. The ideological factor.

According to some scholars, the real glue of fundamentalism and international terrorism is to be found in the *ideology* to which the radicalised subjects adhere, in every aspect of their existence.<sup>23</sup> Already at the dawning of international terrorism, it was pointed out that the actions of radicalised individuals and terrorists are based on a subjective interpretation of the world rather than on objective reality.<sup>24</sup> This interpretation filters political and social reality through beliefs and attitudes which reflect the aforementioned denial of the system of which the individuals themselves are a part.

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<sup>17</sup> L. VAN DER HEIDE, J. GEENENEN, *Children of the Caliphate: Young IS Returnees and the Reintegration Challenge*, in *Security and Global Affairs, Special Issue “Jihadists in Syria and Iraq: Recalibrating Concepts, Threat Radar, and Reintegration Policies”*, September 2017, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2017/09/sga-special-issue>, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> The fundamentalist extremists consider *jihad* to be a personal duty (*blush al-ayn*): R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ivi*, p. 7 and 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> For a different, threefold distinction between “Background Factors” (which include personal struggles for religious identity, the perception of discriminatory behaviour and a lack of integration), “Trigger Factors” (such as an encounter with charismatic leaders or the experiencing of decisive dramatic events) and “Opportunity Factors” (which identify all the situations that favour a more constant, stronger exposure to extremist ideas and dynamics, for example group experiences and collective dimensions), see G. TRAVAINI, E. REGONDI, S. CAMISASCA, P. CARUSO, I. MERZAGORA, *I meccanismi di radicalizzazione. Giudici e criminologi a confronto*, in *Rass. it. crim.*, No. 4/2017, p. 298.

<sup>22</sup> See M. BARBERIS, *Non c'è sicurezza senza libertà. Il fallimento delle politiche antiterrorismo*, Bologna, 2017, p. 57: “the new terrorism is a phenomenon fuelled by socio-economic, geopolitical and even media imbalances [...] such that even its religious justifications can be dispensed with”. A. SILKE, *Risk assessment of terrorist and extremist prisoners*, in A. SILKE (ed.), *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform*, London, 2014, pp. 116-117, identifies the “capability” of an individual to adhere to a particular terrorist group or movement. The author uses a relational meaning of capability, while emphasising the willingness of the same group or movement to recruit sympathisers.

<sup>23</sup> See J. BURKE, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, London, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> M. CRENSHAW, *The subjective reality of the terrorist*, in R.O. SLATER, M. STOHL (eds.), *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism*, London, 1988, p. 12.

The fundamentalist ideology is the result of a reinterpretation of the concept of *jihād*, which has led to the formulation of a further, complex doctrine, based first of all on the deviation of Islamic countries from the Western world and, subsequently, on a clear conflict of values serving as basis for pursuing a policy designed to implement the strictest Islamic tradition.<sup>25</sup> It combines violence as a “twice offensive” weapon – because of the damage done or threatened and the mass spread of fear – to be deployed against those who have not embraced fundamentalism, and in order to occupy territories to be incorporated into the Islamic State. In the context of international terrorism, violence takes on a symbolic and political value,<sup>26</sup> in that it is aimed at provoking the established power that the terrorists have identified as an enemy.<sup>27</sup>

In the view of some authors, fundamentalist ideology may even be a constant feature of the Europe of the future. This ideology, which is capable of taking root where the policies of the States of the Old Continent have failed, is in fact forming a shared, alternative ideological space that might represent a new model of internal terrorism on a European scale in the future, based on mutual recognition of anti-system actions.<sup>28</sup> The evolution of this “terrorism 2.0” risks being nested in the radicalisation – which tends to be more rapid, much less mature and ideologically aware, but particularly widespread among young Europeans – of individuals whose devotion is dubious and who adhere to fundamentalism because of sheer conformism,<sup>29</sup> as they see a new set of relationships capable of giving deeper meaning to their lives.

On the other hand, from an ideological standpoint, the fundamentalist generation of the present is already different from the one formed under the aegis of al-Qaeda. The Islamic State is organised in a prevalently pragmatic and corporatist way, and has renounced the ideological purity of its anti-system project in order to strengthen itself inside and outside the territories under its influence, thanks to the contribution of individuals, irrespective of their perception of *jihād*.<sup>30</sup> The practices of conditioning, indoctrination and recruitment used by radicalised actors often exploit the rudimentary and fragmentary knowledge of Islam of aspiring terrorists,<sup>31</sup> as well as the illusory promise of a cultural environment where redemption is possible and where everyone will profitably carry out

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<sup>25</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 83. See also G. TRAVAINI, E. REGONDI, S. CAMISASCA, P. CARUSO, I. MERZAGORA, *I meccanismi di radicalizzazione. Giudici e criminologi a confronto*, cit., p. 299.

<sup>26</sup> Or, as some scholars argue, “metapolitical and infra-political”: A. GARAPON, M. ROSENFELD, *Démocraties sous stress. Les défis du terrorisme global*, Paris, 2016, p. 90. See also A. SPENA, “Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!” *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, cit., pp. 251 ff.

<sup>27</sup> M. CANCIO MELIÁ, *Los delitos de terrorismo: estructura típica e injusto*, Madrid, 2010, p. 61; ID., *Terrorismo y Derecho penal: sueño de prevención, pesadilla del Estado de Derecho*, in M. Cancio Meliá (ed.), *Política criminal en vanguardia: inmigración clandestina, terrorismo, criminalidad organizada*, Cizur Menor (Navarra), 2008, pp. 316 ff. See also C. WALKER, *Terrorism and the Law*, cit., p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 97.

<sup>29</sup> A. SPENA, “Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!” *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, cit., p. 259.

<sup>30</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., pp. 85-86.

<sup>31</sup> A. GARAPON, M. ROSENFELD, *Démocraties sous stress. Les défis du terrorisme global*, cit., p. 97. The authors speak of a *pre-religious* recruitment of jihadists.



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useful tasks on behalf of the fundamentalist cause.<sup>32</sup> Through their experience in the Islamic State, these individuals will see their thirst for revenge satisfied in exchange for their total adherence and submission to the terrorist plan.

#### 4. The political factor.

The political nature of radicalisation and international terrorism is not manifested only in the essence of ideological violence, based on the radical opposition of two antagonist entities<sup>33</sup> which evokes war.<sup>34</sup> Radicalisation and terrorism also have political roots: the choice made by extremists and terrorists is often the result of the rejection of both the domestic and foreign politics of the country they live in.<sup>35</sup> Their genesis and proliferation is anchored, in particular, in the local government of the Middle East territories (§ 4.1) and in the international relations of the countries of the Middle East itself with the United States and their allies (§ 4.2).

##### 4.1. *The government of the Middle East territories.*

The aspiration of terrorism to establish a new political order is particularly evident in the clashes between the Islamic State and the countries and communities established so as to widen sovereignty in the Middle East area and strengthen a State that makes radically alternative values its own.<sup>36</sup> In fact, international terrorism not only presupposes the idea of sovereignty and State, but is in fact a struggle for sovereignty over a territory and for government of a closed space.<sup>37</sup>

The impact of political factors on the development of radicalisation and terrorism is manifested precisely in the aforementioned fight for territorial sovereignty. At the level of the internal

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<sup>32</sup> Once in the territories controlled by (or under the influence of) the Islamic State, the new recruits are questioned and sometimes even asked to show signs of repentance, in the event that they belonged to other extremist groups in the past. Such preliminary activity aims to identify the role which best suits their characteristics and aspirations: see R. DE BONT, D. WEGGEMANS, R. PETERS, E. BAKKER, *Life at ISIS: The Roles of Western Men, Women and Children*, in *Security and Global Affairs, Special Issue "Jihadists in Syria and Iraq: Recalibrating Concepts, Threat Radar, and Reintegration Policies"*, cit., pp. 10-11.

<sup>33</sup> R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 22 and pp. 18-19, on the "westoxification" at the basis of extremist ideology. Actually, the idea (exploited by the promoters of the Islamic State) of "intoxication from the West" has deeper and even non-violent roots in the late nineteenth and twentieth century Arab philosophy: on the subject, M. CAMPANINI, *Dall'ammirazione al rifiuto. L'idea di Europa (e di Occidente) nel mondo arabo-islamico dall'Ottocento a oggi*, in *Quad. dir. pol. eccl.* No. 1/2020, pp. 152 ff. Similarly, A. SPENA, "Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!" *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, cit., pp. 252-253, argues that the clash at hand is to be understood as both political and cultural (i.e. it implies an alternative choice between conflicting systems of beliefs and values).

<sup>34</sup> J. ARÓSTEGUI SÁNCHEZ, *Una reflexión sobre la violencia política y el terrorismo*, in E. GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA (ed.), *Políticas del miedo. Un balance del terrorismo en Europa*, Madrid, 2002, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., pp. 17-18.

<sup>36</sup> See para. 6.

<sup>37</sup> R. BARTOLI, *Il contrasto al terrorismo e alla pirateria. Analogie e differenze tra due paradigmi di "nemicizzazione" del diritto penale*, in *Jura Gentium*, XV, 2018, 1, pp. 102-103.



government of the Middle East area, the strong and prolonged instability and insecurity of countries such as Afghanistan,<sup>38</sup> Iraq and Syria paves the way for the infiltration of terrorist organizations, which have exploited the fragility of these countries to expand and consolidate their authoritarian presence on the territory.<sup>39</sup>

As far as Syria is concerned, for example, the Islamic State has been able to take advantage of the aftermath of the long-running civil war which has greatly influenced the political scenario of the entire Middle East area in order to increase its influence, forge opportunistic compromises with insurgent factions which would otherwise have remained its enemies – thus impeding their expansion<sup>40</sup> – and prepare a habitat for a “third political generation” subsequent to the Afghans and the Qaedists.<sup>41</sup> Again by way of example, also in a politically more solid State like Turkey, the riots surrounding the Erdogan regime – which remained substantially inert against the looming threat of international terrorism for utilitarian reasons – have facilitated the above mentioned fundamentalist infiltration within the national territory.<sup>42</sup>

In all the contexts of political insecurity and its repercussions at a social level, the Islamic State has been able to guarantee prerogatives and points of reference typical of a sovereign State, promoting itself as a viable alternative to what are perceived as repressive, sectarian governments influenced by foreign countries;<sup>43</sup> or to what the most radical see, on the contrary, as incapable, moderate oppositions.<sup>44</sup> For example, the Islamic State has taken care of education, defined the roles of men and women and the rules of dress, imposed taxation and enforced the law meting out exemplary punishments, carried out daily and in public, also forcing the local population to witness them.<sup>45</sup> In this regard, the Islamic State has established special Sharia Courts, religious police and even an army estimated to have tens of thousands of members,<sup>46</sup> as well as a bureaucratic apparatus which manages all the basic aspects of daily life and which is sometimes perceived by the members of the occupied communities as more effective than the deposed ones.<sup>47</sup> So much so that the combination of hard law and repression with the provision of essential services and assistance has sometimes led to a certain tacit acceptance at local level,<sup>48</sup> which hinders spontaneous forms of rebellion against the terror regime.

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<sup>38</sup> See M.L. PORGES, *Radicalization Processes in Afghanistan*, cit., pp. 12 ff.

<sup>39</sup> C. LISTER, *Profiling the Islamic State*, Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, Washington, No. 13, November 2014, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> C. LISTER, *Profiling the Islamic State*, cit., p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ivi*, p. 93

<sup>43</sup> C. LISTER, *Profiling the Islamic State*, cit., p. 29

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> R. DE BONT, D. WEGGEMANS, R. PETERS, E. BAKKER, *Life at ISIS: The Roles of Western Men, Women and Children*, cit., p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> *Ivi*, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> For further details, see C. LISTER, *Profiling the Islamic State*, cit., pp. 25 ff.

<sup>48</sup> *Ivi*, p. 2.

In short, the Islamic State has established itself territorially at the expense of countries with a very serious internal crisis: both in Libya and in Syria and Iraq, it is creeping into the chaotic and dramatic Middle Eastern geopolitics in an attempt to impose itself as an alternative to the central states.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.2. *The escalation of international conflict: the interventionism of the United States and Europe.*

In terms of international relations, on the other hand, the *war on terror* launched by the United States after 11 September has inaugurated a season of armed pro-democracy missions (“militant democracy”) which are<sup>50</sup> increasingly controversial and criticised by many parties for their atypical nature in the framework of international law<sup>51</sup> and for the chaotic geopolitical framework that has followed.

Justified by the need to prevent acts of terrorism, in particular considering how transnational terrorism also endangers peace and international security, these missions have actually ended up punishing terrorism. Furthermore, as several scholars have highlighted, the war on terrorism might pursue the even broader objective of imposing a new global order against those countries which do not welcome the global leadership of the United States.<sup>52</sup>

In this regard, there is a widely shared line of thought that US military intervention in the Middle East area affected by civil conflict and fundamentalist terrorism is a contributory cause of the resurgence of radicalisation and terrorism itself.<sup>53</sup> On the one hand, since 2014 the Islamic State has suffered defeats on the ground which have deprived it of some of its leaders and of control over most of the invaded territories.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, according to some scholars, it would be simplistic to label the military invasions in question as an expression of a merely imperialistic attitude: from a precautionary point of view, the latter would prove rather to be instrumental in – or in any case, aimed at – reducing the risk of a further escalation of terrorist violence.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, however, other scholars have reported emblematic testimony of terrorists who have dissociated

<sup>49</sup> A. RICCI, *Geografia, globalizzazione e potere del terrorismo jihadista. L'autorappresentazione globale del Califfato*, in *Comprendere il terrorismo. Spunti interpretativi di analisi e metodologie di contrasto del fenomeno*, cit., p. 42.

<sup>50</sup> K. ROACH, *Sources and Trends in Post-9/11 Anti-terrorism Laws*, in B. GOOLD, L. LAZARUS (eds.), *Security and Human Rights*, Oxford, 2007, p. 245; C. WALKER, *Terrorism and the Law*, cit., p. 386; S. MULLINS, *'Home-Grown' Jihad. Understanding Islamist Terrorism in the US and UK*, London, 2016, pp. 36 ff.

<sup>51</sup> See F. PALACE, *Countering Terrorism, Criminal Law of the Enemy and Fundamental Principles*, in *Quest. giusta.*, n. 4/2006, pp. 669 ff.; R. BARBERINI, *Il giudice e il terrorismo. Il diritto e le sfide del terrorismo globale*, Turin, 2008, p. XIII; I.B. GÓMEZ DE LA TORRE, *El terrorismo en el siglo XXI: del terrorismo nacional al terrorismo global*, cit., pp. 36 ff. See also *The Chilcot Report shows that the war in Iraq was a mistake*, in *Internazionale*, 6 July 2016, <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2016/07/06/iraq-rapporto-chilcot>.

<sup>52</sup> T. DEGENHARDT, *The use of war as punishment in the international sphere*, in *Jura gentium*, Vol. IV, *War, Law, and Global Order*, edited by S. Benjamin, E. Orrù, 2007, p. 15; L. FERRY, *L'innovation destructrice*, Paris, 2014, p. 118.

<sup>53</sup> See I.B. GÓMEZ DE LA TORRE, *El terrorismo en el siglo XXI: del terrorismo nacional al terrorismo global*, cit.

<sup>54</sup> A. SPECKHARD, A.S. YAYLA, A. SHAJKOVCI, *Defeating ISIS on the Battle Ground as well as in the Online Battle Space: Considerations of the “New Normal” and Available Online Weapons in the Struggle Ahead*, in *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 9, N. 4, 2016, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> C. ARADAU, R. VAN MUNSTER, *Taming the future. The dispositif of risk in the war on terror*, in *Risk and the War on Terror*, cit., p. 32. Contra, M. BARBERIS, *Non c'è sicurezza senza libertà. Il fallimento delle politiche antiterrorismo*, cit., p. 58.



themselves from the fundamentalist network to which they belonged and who warn of the intention of foreign fighters<sup>56</sup> to resume the activities of the Islamic State in civilised societies in the event of its full military defeat, by getting more returnees to infiltrate them and unleashing terrorist attacks so as to create an atmosphere of urban guerrilla warfare.<sup>57</sup> The same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of homegrown terrorism and lone wolves, whose threat has become even greater since the Islamic State began to suffer military defeat.<sup>58</sup>

The warnings about the shortcomings and negative side effects of the foreign policy undertaken by the United States almost twenty years ago have certainly not remained isolated. In a recent survey, scholars and legal practitioners, also at a governmental level, were asked to analyse the formidable survival capacity of terrorist cells, which has hindered progress towards the weakening of the Islamic State.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the present concentration of fears and the European and international political debate around the security risks posed by returnees ends up diverting the attention of public opinion from the unjust killing of innocent civilians as a form of capital punishment and the brutality shown by the allied forces towards entire populations.<sup>60</sup> All this has been exploited with extreme effectiveness by the fundamentalist narrative, which highlights the experience of suffering, “perceived as resulting from international damage”.<sup>61</sup>

Today, even Europe is not safe from criminal side effects. While in the recent past the European countries that provided the greatest support to the United States played an almost ancillary role on the ground, now the geopolitical chessboard has seen the US army partially retreat and that of Italy and above all France<sup>62</sup> almost symmetrically advance. In the years to come, these two countries will be more exposed not only in the Middle East, but also in the African territories (in Libya, Mali and

<sup>56</sup> That is, foreign fighters travelling to territories controlled by (or under the influence of) terrorist groups.

<sup>57</sup> A. SPECKHARD, A.S. YAYLA, A. SHAJKOVCI, *Defeating ISIS on the Battle Ground as well as in the Online Battle Space: Considerations of the “New Normal” and Available Online Weapons in the Struggle Ahead*, cit., p. 4. Moreover, the category of returnees is made up of different types of individuals: combatants, non-combatants, women who arrived with their husbands or to marry a jihadi combatant, children brought by their parents or born in the areas of Syria and Iraq controlled by terrorists (H. VAN MIERT, *The Right Target in Sight? Returnees and the Current Jihadist Threat*, in *Security and Global Affairs, Special Issue “Jihadists in Syria and Iraq: Recalibrating Concepts, Threat Radar, and Reintegration Policies”*, cit., p. 37).

<sup>58</sup> That is, terrorists who tend to be isolated in adhering to fundamentalist ideology and in moving towards violent action, and who often have never even directly approached the reality of the Islamic State. Some scholars distinguish lone wolves (who act completely alone and draw inspiration only from political movements) from “lone terrorists” (who operate alone, but are connected to and can receive support from an organized terrorist group): see also for further bibliographical references, P. NESSER, A. STENERSEN, *The Modus Operandi of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 8, Iss. 6, December 2014, p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> J. STERN, A. MODI, *Producing terror: organizational dynamics of survival*, in D.M. JONES, A. LANE, P. SCHULTE (eds.), *Terrorism, Security and the Power of Informal Networks*, Cheltenham, 2010, p. 282. See also F. FASANI, *Terrorismo islamico e diritto penale*, Milan, 2016, pp. 45 ff.; L. MARINI, *Foreign terrorist fighters: verso la revisione della risoluzione 2178 (2014)*, in *Dir. pen. cont.*, 20 December 2017, pp. 3-4; M. KOWALSKI, *Editor’s Note*, in *Security and Global Affairs, Special Issue “Jihadists in Syria and Iraq: Recalibrating Concepts, Threat Radar, and Reintegration Policies”*, cit., p. 4, where the author summarises the article, published in the same issue of the journal, by H. VAN MIERT, *The Right Target in Sight? Returnees and the Current Jihadist Threat*, cit., p. 30 ff.

<sup>60</sup> T. DEGENHARDT, *The use of war as punishment in the international sphere*, cit., p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> R. CRUPI, *Al di là del diritto penale: exit strategy dalla radicalizzazione*, cit., p. 277.

<sup>62</sup> See M. CAMPANINI, *Dall’ammirazione al rifiuto. L’idea di Europa (e di Occidente) nel mondo arabo-islamico dall’Ottocento a oggi*, cit., p. 158.



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Niger) currently under attack by terrorist groups. On the other hand, in the heated political and philosophical debate in the Islamic world in the 1990s, the Old Continent ended up in the dock following the intervention of the Algerian army – “applauded and supported, if not even suggested, by Europe and France in particular” – which in 1992 blocked the rise of the moderate Islamist Party FIS (*Front Islamique du Salut*).<sup>63</sup>

Finally, even targeted military interventions that were claimed to be strategic – above all the aforementioned killing of leading exponents of the Islamic State – see their effectiveness diminished in reality due to the persistent geopolitical conflicts that afflict the Middle East. As some scholars have observed, such killings – usually committed within the very communities which support, or which in any case do not hinder, the Islamic State – and the various atrocities committed by the enemies the enemies of the Islamic State actually risk putting Western military interventions in a worse light, something that will be exploited by the Islamic State itself to recruit other members of the local communities afflicted by the losses and rubble of war to the terrorist cause.<sup>64</sup>

In short, the conduct of military operations considered “manifestly illegitimate”<sup>65</sup> can end up playing into the hands of the Islamic State, which can cultivate its own “geopolitical doctrine capable of redefining the spaces for action and modifying the pre-established power structures”,<sup>66</sup> thereby enhancing indoctrination and recruitment into their ranks.<sup>67</sup> Although a wide circle of members of Islamic communities (both Western and Eastern) repudiate the Islamic State and its actions, there are others who are victimised by war and are for this reason more inclined to internalise the narrative of the Islamic State itself,<sup>68</sup> as well as still others who deny that it even exists, claiming that military forces are fighting a global war that has nothing to do with terrorism.<sup>69</sup>

Far from remaining isolated within confined territories and communities, this latter almost apocalyptic reading of the development of international relations in the troubled Middle East could spread like wildfire with the recent escalation of tensions between the United States and Iran and the

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<sup>63</sup> *Ivi*, p. 157. The author also refers to the further controversial positions of the West with regard to the Gaza Strip, the Tunisian dictatorship of Ben Ali and the regime of Hosni Mubarak.

<sup>64</sup> A. SPECKHARD, A.S. YAYLA, A. SHAJKOVCI, *Defeating ISIS on the Battle Ground as well as in the Online Battle Space: Considerations of the “New Normal” and Available Online Weapons in the Struggle Ahead*, cit., p. 7. See also A. SCHLESINGER JR., *La grande scommessa di Bush*, in *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 23 September 2001: “[it is] likely that the loss of civilian life would only increase hatred, confirming in the eyes of his current and potential followers the thesis of Bin Laden who sees America as the devil”; with particular reference to France, R. GUOLO, *L’ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 95: “[the] governments of Paris [...] have always participated, since 2001, in missions that were aimed at countering radical Islamist movements. Choices that the latter attribute to the ‘will to destroy Islam’”.

<sup>65</sup> T. DEGENHARDT, *The use of war as punishment in the international sphere*, cit., p. 15. See M. BARBERIS, *Non c’è sicurezza senza libertà. Il fallimento delle politiche antiterrorismo*, cit., *passim*.

<sup>66</sup> A. SPERINI, *I Modelli Sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 84.

<sup>67</sup> As occurred during the previous invasion in the case of al-Qaeda in Iraq, A. SPECKHARD, A.S. YAYLA, A. SHAJKOVCI, *Defeating ISIS on the Battle Ground as well as in the Online Battle Space: Considerations of the “New Normal” and Available Online Weapons in the Struggle Ahead*, cit., p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> I. AWAN, *Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media*, in *Society*, Vol. 54, Iss. 2, 2017, p. 147. See also M. BARBERIS, *Non c’è sicurezza senza libertà. Il fallimento delle politiche antiterrorismo*, cit., p. 57: “the resentment of the Islamic masses towards the West has only increased, from the Israeli-Palestinian question to the Gulf War and the senseless invasion of Iraq”; P. NESSER, A. STENERSEN, *The Modus Operandi of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, cit., p. 21.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*.

mutual reprisals that followed the killing of General Soleimani. This intervention of the United States, characterized by multiple and in some ways ambiguous purposes,<sup>70</sup> also risks exacerbating a state of asymmetrical war with Iran. Some forces in this country, both economically and militarily incapable of facing a real armed conflict with the United States, could in fact react by availing themselves of the violent, anti-system contribution of local terrorist factions as a weapon for keeping the tension between the two States alive and threaten (or, worse, carry out) bloody actions of revenge.

## 5. The social factor.

Considered in general as a constant in the context of radicalisation and terrorism, *the social reasons* that favour the advancement of the latter, even where the values it promotes are completely alien to those commonly shared by the community, have been particularly highlighted with regard to fundamentalism.<sup>71</sup> Various questions (repercussions of the economic, migratory and security crisis and so on) have been raised and reiterated with ever greater urgency. The lack of an effective response ends up exacerbating frictions between the community and that State that have never been overcome.

Only apparently irrelevant to the degree of vitality of the phenomena analysed here, the distance between the State and citizens/communities and the inability of the former to provide adequate answers to crucial social issues can leave room for forms of anti-system crime such as terrorism. The fundamentalist ideology to which individuals from all parts of the world cling and the earthly and otherworldly, individual and relational existence that this ideology postulates offers a solution that appeals to those desperately seeking a way out.<sup>72</sup> Radicalisation becomes the way to elevate one's own existence in a battle between justice and injustice.<sup>73</sup>

In Europe, in particular, the advancement of fundamentalist ideology seems to be fuelled by the limited success of the social policies adopted to date. The latter have proved not to be sufficiently effective in translating the promises of greater integration into reality and have rather left a legacy of resentment and distrust. The marginalisation in which many Islamic communities find themselves in various EU countries,<sup>74</sup> and the consequent greater exposure to the absurd appeal of an illusion that

<sup>70</sup> The labelling of the General himself is ambiguous: he was viewed by some as an important figure in the fight against ISIS, a dangerous terrorist by others.

<sup>71</sup> See A. SILKE, *Becoming a terrorist*, in A. SILKE (ed.), *Terrorists, Victims, and Society: Psychological Perspective on Terrorism and Its Consequences*, 2003, pp. 29 ff.; ID., *Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalisation*, in *European Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 5, Iss. 1, 2008, pp. 99 ff.

<sup>72</sup> The existence of "parallel societies" is discussed by M.A. CANO PAÑOS, *Las sociedades paralelas en Europa en el contexto de la inmigración y su eventual influencia en la radicalización islamista de sus miembros*, in J. BERNAL DEL CASTILLO (ed.), L. ROCA DE AGAPITO, M.M. GONZÁLEZ TASCÓN (coords.), *Delito y minorías en países multiculturales. Estudios jurídicos y criminológicos comparados*, Barcelona, 2014, pp. 207 ff.; N. SANZ MULAS, *Las sociedades paralelas como cantera del jihadismo*, in *El terrorismo en la actualidad: un nuevo enfoque político criminal*, cit.

<sup>73</sup> M. HAFEZ, C. MULLINS, *The radicalization puzzle: a theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to homegrown extremism*, in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, n. 38/2015, p. 967.

<sup>74</sup> Sometimes such marginalisation is even "double": "the immigrant [...] is simultaneously outside the community of origin but not fully part of the society in which he lives" (R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 29). What



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is radically antagonistic to the established democracies, paves the way for physical and, above all, virtual activities of indoctrination and recruitment by terrorist networks.<sup>75</sup>

The lack of integration of Islamic communities makes terrorist recruiters increasingly successful in attracting even minors. Indeed, extremism can also spread within families and social contexts in which young people seek to express their personality and determine their own future. Minors are particularly likely to be influenced by subversive individuals or groups exploiting their charisma to emphasise the superiority of their convictions.<sup>76</sup>

Regarding the sensitive issue of the integration of Islamic communities in Europe, however, there is an aspect that has so far remained largely unaddressed by the debate among scholars in the fields of criminal law, criminology and sociology. Though on the one hand the present author considers it by now to be evident that the society shares a certain degree of responsibility for the phenomena of radicalisation and terrorism,<sup>77</sup> it is nonetheless true that even the most progressive Muslim doctrines instruct the faithful to “create a society within society, a real Muslim ghetto” (“no-go zones) where the latter can stick together and keep their Muslim identity intact.<sup>78</sup> If such areas are the product of assimilationist policies rather than the undesirable result of a multicultural (in the strict sense of the word) approach to integration, identifying appropriate incentives to discourage such a tendency towards the self-protectionist and partly self-referential ghettoisation of Islamic communities in the European social fabric is a rather difficult task.

## 6. The cultural factor.

The Islamic State – which gained prominence following the partial loss of appeal and internal reorganisation of al-Qaeda – is organised as the core of a State *in fieri*, or in other words, a substantially state or para-state entity that is not recognised internationally, but is nonetheless capable of authoritatively exercising sovereignty over a set of territories and communities. Before the latest

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has been said also applies for those individuals coming from territories of predominantly Islamic faith and culture but who have been settled in EU states for more than a generation: *ivi*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>75</sup> “The individual who has experienced exclusion, racism, internalised unworthiness, finds the instrument for fulfilling the desire for revenge in radical Islam”: R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 66, where the author quotes F. KHOSROKHAVAR, *Radicalisation*, Paris, 2014. See also G. TRAVAINI, E. REGONDI, S. CAMISASCA, P. CARUSO, I. MERZAGORA, *I meccanismi di radicalizzazione. Giudici e criminologi a confronto*, cit., p. 299; A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 87; YUSOUFZAI, F. EMMERLING, *How identity crisis, relative deprivation, personal characteristics, and empathy contribute to the engagement of Western individuals in Islamist terrorist behavior*, in *Contemporary Voices*, Vol. 8, Iss. 1, 2017, pp. 68 ff.

<sup>76</sup> See G.M. NANNA, *Minori, radicalizzazione e terrorismo*, Bari, 2018, p. 55; A. SPENA, “Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!” *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, cit., p. 256.

<sup>77</sup> With specific reference to terrorism, R. COOLSAET, T. STRUYE DE SWIELANDE, *Epilogue: Zeitgeist and (De-)Radicalisation*, in R. COOLSAET (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalization Challenge in Europe: European and American experiences*, Aldershot, 2008, p. 159.

<sup>78</sup> M. PAPA, *The fiqh al-aqalliyat and Islamic proselytism*, cit., p. 178. In criminal law literature, A. PROVERA, *Tra frontiere e confini. Il diritto penale dell'età multiculturale*, Naples, 2018, pp. 89 ff.

military defeats, these included vast areas of Iraq, Syria and Libya and they also extended their sphere of control to other groupings such as *Jabhat al-Nusra*, *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* and the *Islamic Front coalition*.

In any case, the recent weakening of the Islamic State from a military point of view does not seem sufficient to reassure the international community about the terrorism emergency. According to some scholars, in fact, the radicalisation to fundamentalism and international terrorism are also the result of a precise and deeply rooted *cultural structure* (or in other words, identity. Some recent anthropological investigations have highlighted the existence of a real fundamentalist culture<sup>79</sup> which “has not been destroyed together with the Islamic State, which survives and which can give life to other similar societies”.<sup>80</sup> So much so that according to some authors “there is the possibility that an Islamic State exists even (...) in the absence of its own geography of reference”.<sup>81</sup>

According other scholars, moreover, Europe could be a fertile ground for the development and spread of the seed of radicalisation such as to foreshadow the formation of a substantially autonomous anti-system movement, increasingly emancipated from the diktats of the Islamic State.<sup>82</sup> The latter could reshuffle to flow into a generic desire – driven almost more by emotion than by a real mature, conscious ideology<sup>83</sup> – to retaliate against all those who manifest discriminatory opinions (or other signs of hatred or repulsion) towards Islam and its forming identity.

This cultural structure is built upon the values assimilated by members of terrorist groups as guiding principles of their existence.<sup>84</sup> Radicalisation and terrorism are phenomena supported by “a typical ‘expressive’ community, capable of forging precise values”<sup>85</sup> emancipated from the erosion resulting from the various forms of victimising colonisation by the West.<sup>86</sup> This cultural structure has “re-proposed the idea of an Islamic society based on coherent adherence to the historical principles of Islam, to be set necessarily in contrast with the western social and cultural models”<sup>87</sup> denying globalisation as forming the identity of the fundamentalist Islamic community<sup>88</sup> and overturning every goal of freedom and equality consecrated by democracy.

<sup>79</sup> See T. HEGGAMMER, *Jihadi Culture*, Cambridge, 2017.

<sup>80</sup> A.M. COSSIGA, *Il terrorismo jihadista: uno sguardo antropologico*, cit., p. 25.

<sup>81</sup> A. RICCI, *Geografia, globalizzazione e potere del terrorismo jihadista. L'autorappresentazione globale del Califfato*, cit., p. 43. The ultimate terrorist objective of imposing the predominance of a totalitarian *Umma* on a global scale embraces “all worshippers of the Muslim faith, regardless of where they live or are”: A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 84, nt. 7.

<sup>82</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 101.

<sup>83</sup> See, *supra*, sub para. 3.

<sup>84</sup> C. DEL PRADO HIGUERA, E. SÁNCHEZ DE ROJAS DÍAZ, *Terrorismo Islamista: El caso de Al Gama'a al Islamiya*, cit., p. 49.

<sup>85</sup> R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., p. 26.

<sup>86</sup> A. CHRISTIEN, *The Representation of Youth in the Islamic State's Propaganda Magazine Dabiq*, in *Journal of Terrorism Research*, Vol. 7, Iss. 3, 2016, p. 3. On the subject of self-victimisation as a basis of fundamentalist culture, see A. SPENA, “Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!” *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, cit., p. 255.

<sup>87</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 84.

<sup>88</sup> For an interpretation of radicalisation and fundamentalist terrorism as a rigid identity reaction to the multiple instabilities resulting from the unbridled globalisation of Western society and the related “liquefaction of values”, see R. GUOLO, *L'ultima utopia. Gli jihadisti europei*, cit., in particular pp. 31 ff.; J. RAFLIK, *Terrorisme et mondialisation. Approches historiques*, Paris, 2011.



Behind the false promise of an egalitarian State which proclaims to guarantee equality between individuals, the fundamentalist value system rejects pluralism.<sup>89</sup> The tendency to paint others as enemies is not limited to Western infidels<sup>90</sup> – demons par excellence devoted to other religions, members of a society tainted by US imperialism and inspired by impure values in contrast to the dictates of ‘hard’ Islam – but also Zionists, pagans and even other Muslims held responsible for the mistreatment and humiliation of Muslims in the world.<sup>91</sup> The totalitarian dystopia propagandised by the Islamic State is erected in particular on the puritanism of customs, moral rigour, generalized violence, supposed principles of pure and incorruptible divine law,<sup>92</sup> the absolutisation of religious homogeneity, rigid hierarchies between roles and sexes opposed to any egalitarian ideology and a marked communitarianism and cohesion around the sacredness of the fundamentalist project and the duty to react against anyone who opposes it.<sup>93</sup>

The cultural/identity factor underlying the fundamentalist vision of the world reinforces the *alleged religious substratum* and above all the aforementioned *political projection* of radicalisation. The former manifests itself in the motivation that induces radicalised subjects to plan or carry out terrorist attacks. Especially in the majority of cases in which such attacks have targeted public or popular figures (artists, opinion leaders, politicians and so on), the plots “seem to have been motivated by revenge, especially against people who have insulted the Prophet Mohammed or Islam in general”.<sup>94</sup> The latter is focused on direct, immutable opposition to the Western system in the name of a mission, which is to impose a new ideal (dystopian) society through violence.<sup>95</sup> The spirit of antagonism which distinguishes the fundamentalist habitat and which aims, as previously said, at the establishment of a new model of religious totalitarianism imposed from above, underlines how “the precept of *jihad* can also assume the characteristics of a socio-cultural system to be managed with a veritable logic of government”.<sup>96</sup>

## 7. The economic factor.

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<sup>89</sup> See D. KOEHLER, *Understanding deradicalization. Methods, tools and programs for countering violent extremism*, London-New York, 2017, *passim*.

<sup>90</sup> W. MWENDA KAILEMIA, *The Spectacle of Terrorism: Exploring the Impact of ‘Blind Acting Out’ and ‘Phatic Communication’*, in *Journal of Terrorism Research*, Vol. 7, Iss. 2, 2016, p. 98.

<sup>91</sup> A.M. COSSIGA, *Il terrorismo jihadista: uno sguardo antropologico*, cit., p. 24.

<sup>92</sup> A. BEUTEL, S.M. WEINE, A. SAEED, A. SPAHIC MIHAJLOVIC, A. STONE, J. OAKLEY BEAHRS, S.B. SHANFIELD, *Field Principles for Countering and Displacing Extremist Narratives*, in *Journal of Terrorism Research*, Vol. 7, Iss. 3, 2016, p. 37.

<sup>93</sup> A. GARAPON, M. ROSENFELD, *Démocraties sous stress. Les défis du terrorisme global*, cit, pp. 109-110.

<sup>94</sup> P. NESSER, A. STENERSEN, *The Modus Operandi of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, cit., p. 9.

<sup>95</sup> A. GARAPON, M. ROSENFELD, *Démocraties sous stress. Les défis du terrorisme global*, cit., pp. 109-110. See also K. YUSOUFZAI, F. EMMERLING, *How identity crisis, relative deprivation, personal characteristics, and empathy contribute to the engagement of Western individuals in Islamist terrorist behavior*, in *Contemporary Voices*, Vol. 8, Iss. 1, 2017, pp. 68 ff.; A. SPENA, “Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!” *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, in *Mobilità, sicurezza e nuove frontiere tecnologiche*, cit., p. 254.

<sup>96</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 89.

A number of scholars have also highlighted a further cause of radicalisation and terrorism that has so far received less attention in the debate. In short, an *economic*<sup>97</sup> factor also appears to lie behind the phenomena analysed in this paper, as seems to be the case today with regard to a large part of social conflicts.

The influence of the latter factor on the process of radicalisation to fundamentalism is particularly evident in the troubled Middle Eastern area. It is true, in fact, that even Europe still seems to betray, among the various problems of an economic nature involving Islamic communities, an insufficient reconciliation between the welfare of citizens of European origin and members of the latter (even where they have settled in the Old Continent for one or more generations). However, due to the above-mentioned dramatic political and war-ridden environment characterising a large part of the Middle East, it is above all the widespread condition of poverty in the respective populations that offers terrorist recruiters operating in the area another powerful weapon of persuasion.<sup>98</sup> In fact, the Islamic State has at its disposal huge resources coming from financing channels which are increasingly differentiated: from transnational ones, which are highly evolved and very difficult to decipher, to more traditional ones (“oil, gas, agriculture, taxation”)<sup>99</sup> and also proceeds from criminal activities (“extortion, kidnapping for ransom, black market antique selling, and other illicit trades”).<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, in the above-mentioned context dominated by civil and international wars and by a myriad of insurgent groups, the potential ideological counterthrust represented by the repudiation of the violence perpetrated by the Islamic State and of the totalitarian micro-society which the latter has instituted seems to weaken more and more as a result of the confused perception of the dynamics of the conflicts in progress and the (false) promise of justice and good governance offered by the Islamic State itself.

Some scholars place emphasis on the possible influence of economic reasons in the context of radicalisation to fundamentalism in the West as well.<sup>101</sup> The tendency towards a “disconnection between the individual and ideology,<sup>102</sup> at times opportunistically tolerated by Islamic State recruiters in order to fill its ranks with people who are religiously crude but radicalised and highly reliable,

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<sup>97</sup> Instead, the analysis of the direct and indirect costs caused by terrorist violence to the economies of the affected countries is excluded from the object of this work. In this regard, see C. DEL PRADO HIGUERA, E. SÁNCHEZ DE ROJAS DÍAZ, *Terrorismo Islamista: El caso de Al Gama'a al Islamiya*, cit., pp. 74 ff.

<sup>98</sup> With specific reference to the dramatic Syrian reality, for an overview that places the conditions of poverty in which the recruits of the Islamic State find themselves at the heart of the radicalisation process, see C. LISTER, *Profiling the Islamic State*, cit., p. 24. The possible impact of the economic factor on radicalisation to fundamentalism lies also in the words of E. GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, *Las oleadas históricas de la violencia terrorista*, in *Revista de Psicología Social*, Vol. 24, Iss. 2, 2009, pp. 119 ff. For a criminal law perspective, see L. RISICATO, *Diritto alla sicurezza o sicurezza dei diritti: un ossimoro invincibile?*, Turin, 2019, p. 61.

<sup>99</sup> C. LISTER, *Profiling the Islamic State*, cit., p. 2.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>101</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 87.

<sup>102</sup> See, *supra*, sub para. 3.



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exploits the egoistic-individualistic meaning that radicalisation itself takes on for some of them<sup>103</sup> and the potential of the latter to serve interests that are not only doctrinal or emotional/impulsive but also, precisely, economic.<sup>104</sup>

In the future, the impact of these interests on radicalisation and terrorism could also increase in the state that until a few months ago appeared to be among the least unstable in the Middle East: Iran. Destabilised not only by the relations with the United States, the two countries now being on the verge of conflict, but also by the Covid-19 pandemic and an economic crisis accentuated by the recent fall in the price of oil and the severe financial sanctions imposed by Donald Trump, the social divide, the current unease and popular protests – as well as the difficulty of governing the territory – could grow further, creating conditions of internal instability such as to favour the infiltration and recruitment capabilities of terrorist groups.

## 8. Conclusion.

The problems connected to radicalisation, fundamentalism and international terrorism are numerous and of a different magnitude and origin; they develop and are combated in extremely heterogeneous social, cultural, political and economic contexts. A similar heterogeneity may be seen with regard to the predictive capacity of empirical findings on the phenomenon of radicalisation in relation to the concrete dangerousness of an individual and his or her possible future passage to action.<sup>105</sup> In Europe (and in the West in general), the efforts to combat radicalisation and terrorism rely on exceptional legal regimes supported, above all in certain States, by recourse to armed forces with a “license to kill”.<sup>106</sup> In the Middle East area, by contrast, the fight against radicalisation and terrorism transcends law (even humanitarian law) and takes the form of military conflict.

Irrespective of their geographical location, the phenomena in question proliferate where the failures of states – in terms of central government and the local administration of their territories, as well as the conduct of international relations – can be exploited. Radicalisation and terrorism have developed “in the dialectical framework of the socio-economic contradictions of modernity, of the universal return of the religious, but above all, of colonisation/decolonisation”.<sup>107</sup> Over time, the

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<sup>103</sup> For a contrasting perspective regarding the various facets of the “collectivist” doctrinal theses aimed at affirming the “priority of the group over the individual” in the field of fundamentalist terrorism, see C. DEL PRADO HIGUERA, E. SÁNCHEZ DE ROJAS DÍAZ, *Terrorismo Islamista: El caso de Al Gama’a al Islamiya*, cit., pp. 50 ff.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>105</sup> C. SULMONI, *Radicalizzazione e deradicalizzazione. Piste d’indagine*, in *Start Insight*, 24 February 2020, <http://www.startinsight.eu/react2020-sulmoni/>.

<sup>106</sup> On the repercussions of militarisation in the area of counter-terrorism, see L.R. BLANK, *What’s in a word? War, law and counter-terrorism*, in G. LENNON, C. WALKER (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Law and Terrorism*, London-New York, 2015, pp. 53 ff.

<sup>107</sup> M. CAMPANINI, *Dall’ammirazione al rifiuto. L’idea di Europa (e di Occidente) nel mondo arabo-islamico dall’Ottocento a oggi*, cit., p. 154.





increasingly unfulfilled promise of the enjoyment of rights only fuels the frustration of Islamic communities and a “distrust or even hostility that will be very difficult to defuse in a short time”.<sup>108</sup>

The current trend on a global scale risks reinforcing the social and political contradictions on which radicalisation and terrorism are based. The phenomena in question remain unresolved first and foremost on a *political* level, in all its various facets.<sup>109</sup> National policies are still unsuccessful from the standpoint of welfare and integration<sup>110</sup>. Moreover, the controversial military interventionism of the United States remain overshadowed by uncertainties regarding their pretexts and their effectiveness with respect to the objectives of establishing peace and democracy and eradicating radicalisation and terrorism.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly, possible strategies for combating the phenomena in question more effectively are elaborated at an international and national level. At the international level, all the players in the international community will have to reassess the foreign policy choices made so far and to exercise greater restraint. At the national level, on the other hand, states must once again take the lead in addressing the social issues affecting the communities most at risk of radicalisation.

A starting point in this respect could be a greater, more targeted investment in socio-cultural policies<sup>112</sup> to be implemented at the European, national, regional and local levels. By intervening in troubled social contexts, such policies may prove capable of providing essential support and protection (“*welfare* or [...] services that promote social skills in the multicultural context of growing migration flows”).<sup>113</sup>) to the most vulnerable subjects taking into account their personal and environmental condition<sup>114</sup> and to produce beneficial effects “where the critical features that are structuring the system of terror based on cultural antagonism originate”.<sup>115</sup>

In particular, in addition to improved de-radicalisation programmes within prisons (where there is an urgent need for widespread implementation of multidisciplinary “mentoring” programmes,

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<sup>108</sup> Ivi, p. 159.

<sup>109</sup> See O. BURES, *EU Counterterrorism Policy. A Paper Tiger?*, London-New York, 2011, p. 254.

<sup>110</sup> See M. DEN BOER, *Fusing the Fragments: Challenges for EU Internal Security Governance on Terrorism*, in D. MAHNCKE, J. MONAR (eds.), *International Terrorism. A European Response to a Global Threat?*, Brussels, 2006, p. 110. A number of scholars also underline the lack of willingness of some Muslim minorities to be effectively integrated: also for further bibliographical references, see O. BURES, *EU Counterterrorism Policy. A Paper Tiger?*, cit., pp. 25-26.

<sup>111</sup> See *The Chilcot report shows that the war in Iraq was a mistake*, in *Internazionale*, July 6, 2016, <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2016/07/06/iraq-rapporto-chilcot>. For a reconstruction of the debate around the policy of combating terrorism through military intervention, see O. BURES, *EU Counterterrorism Policy. A Paper Tiger?*, cit., pp. 56 ff.; S. MULLINS, *'Home-Grown' Jihad. Understanding Islamist Terrorism in the US and UK*, cit., pp. 36 ff.

<sup>112</sup> J. JORDAN, *Políticas de prevención de radicalización violenta en Europa: elementos de interés para España*, in RECPC, 11-05 (2009), pp. 12 ff.; A. SPENA, “Io ho ragione; tu sei morto!” *Su terrorismo e radicalizzazione*, cit.

<sup>113</sup> R. CRUPI, *Al di là del diritto penale: exit strategy dalla radicalizzazione*, cit., p. 277; J.M. PAREDES CASTAÑÓN, *Terrorismo y antiterrorismo como estrategias politico militares*, cit., pp. 192-193 and in particular 202 ff.

<sup>114</sup> Especially children, young people and women when they are “victims of particular customs and traditions of the group to which they belong” (R. CRUPI, *Al di là del diritto penale: exit strategy dalla radicalizzazione*, cit., pp. 279 ff.). For example, for some ideas on combating youth radicalisation through work, see D. GIANNAKI, *Youth Radicalization and the Role of Youth Work in Times of (In)security*, in H. SCHILD, N. CONNOLLY, F. LABADIE, J. VANHEE, H. WILLIAMSON *Thinking Seriously About Youth Work - And how to prepare people to do it*, *Youth Knowledge #20*, Strasbourg, 2017, pp. 315 ff.

<sup>115</sup> A. SPERINI, *I modelli sistemici del jihadismo: aspetti evolutivi in chiave anti-sistema*, cit., p. 101. See also L. VIDINO, J. BRANDON, *Countering radicalization in Europe*, London, 2012.



[www.criminaljusticenetwork.eu](http://www.criminaljusticenetwork.eu)

where individuals are guided step by step from a psychological and theological point of view towards reintegration into society).<sup>116</sup> The prevention of fundamentalist extremism and terrorism must be based on programmes such as job placement and the provision of financial aid to support households (and, where necessary, to prevent their break-up). Only with such programmes can the state and civil society send out a credible signal of its presence and desire to promote inclusion, such as to overcome the distrust of Islamic communities and prevent their marginalisation.

However, the persisting dissimilar (and sometimes conflicting) views of the many participants in the debate – academics and intellectuals, politicians, opinion makers, professionals, civil society – greatly complicates the experimentation of best practices. In this regard, the greatest obstacles to the full development of non-criminalising de-radicalisation policies and strategies are the spread of populism, simplistic and “demonising”<sup>117</sup> media reprisals and the related risk of other repercussions ensuing from discrimination – on the basis of nationality, religion, culture or any other source of identity – in the non-radicalised fringes of Islamic communities.

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<sup>116</sup> C. SULMONI, *Radicalizzazione e deradicalizzazione. Piste d'indagine*, cit.

<sup>117</sup> M. CANCIO MELIÁ, *Los delitos de terrorismo: estructura típica e injusto*, Madrid, 2010, in particular p. 49.