



THE EVOLUTION OF RADICALISATION IN THE MAGHREB IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DEFEAT OF DAESH

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CENTRO STUDI
INTERNAZIONALI



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Introduction

Nearly five years after the speech delivered at the al-Nuri mosque in Mosul, in which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the birth of a new "Caliphate" between Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State (IS or Daesh) is close to defeat in its territorialized and conventional military dimensions. Entrenched in the last redoubt of Baghouz, on the Syrian Euphrates, the last diehards of Daesh preside over an area of less than a square kilometer.

For some time now there has been an almost unanimous consensus about the meaning of this territorial contraction which, incidentally, in no way coincides with a possible final defeat of Daesh. First of all, because the idea survives. An overwhelming idea, which has been conveyed by the powerful propaganda apparatus of the group and eventually has been able to expand its reach far beyond the Middle East. Thus, it has assumed the contours of an actual ideology that has soon resulted in a global call.

Tens of thousands of foreign fighters have chosen to leave everything behind, their previous lives and their land, in order to join Daesh. For sure, this is not a completely new phenomenon. But it still looks surprising when compared with previous waves of mobilization, that coincided with the war in the Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, the conflict in Bosnia in the 1990s, the 2001 war in Afghanistan and the 2003 Iraqi war. Indeed, the foreign fighters mobilized by Daesh have been many more and in a shorter time frame.

Such a hefty contingent of militants, combined with an ideology presented in a more appealing fashion, allowed the group led by al-Baghdadi to dispute al-Qaeda's primacy in international jihadism. Daesh quickly rooted itself also outside Syria and Iraq, or, in other cases, it became a center of gravity so powerful that it attracted some of the fighters once linked to the organization led by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. The North African context has not remained detached from these dynamics. On the contrary, it has become one of the most important areas of expansion of IS, especially with its branches in the Egyptian Sinai and an explicit presence in Libya, northern Nigeria and Somalia.

Ideology, foreign fighters, consolidated presence outside the Middle East: these are the fundamental coordinates along which should be read the new threat emerging in the aftermath of Daesh's "defeat". Against this background, the North African countries now have to manage a great amount of returning foreign fighters, with many security-related problems. The most reliable estimates set the number of foreign fighters that left the Maghreb in the past few years at around 6,000 units, while a number between 1,300 and 3,400 foreign fighters have chosen to travel to Libya from 2011 to the present. Thus, the phenomenon of reducism, combined with the attraction of the radicalizing message of Daesh and other extremist groups, represents one of the main threats to North Africa.

Therefore, it cannot be ignored that in these countries, despite many distinctions, proselytizing can find fertile ground and trigger radicalization processes. A risk that is exacerbated by the persistence of serious economic and social criticalities, by the absence of real prospects for improvement of one's own conditions, and by a growing and often widespread distrust of institutions.

For these same reasons, monitoring the phenomena of returnees and jihadist radicalization emerge as some of the highest priorities for European security. This not only in a purely internal perspective, but also with regard to the evolution of the phenomenon and its repercussions in a context such as the North African one. In fact, the Maghreb is linked to European countries by shared challenges and common interests, which are amplified by geographical proximity, by the traditional presence of relevant communities from the Maghreb in European territories and of consistent migration flows.

This report aims to provide a solid framework for interpreting these emerging challenges, starting with an overall analysis of the situation in the North African region. The work is divided into two sections.

The first part deals with the specificities of the varied and complex context of the Maghreb and of its natural hinterland, the vast Sahel region. A specific chapter is dedicated to each country, where indirect and direct threats and the most pressing vulnerabilities from the phenomenon of radicalization are identified.

The second section deals with the possible repercussions of this threats on the European context. While a first chapter aims to outline the contours of the threat that broadly insists on our continent, the second chapter is dedicated to a specific study of the situation in Italy and on the dynamics linked to the radicalization processes that may concern the Peninsula more directly.

SECTION 1

THE CHALLENGES OF RADICALISATION IN THE MAGHREB

Morocco between the threat of returnees and the risk of unequal growth

By Lorenzo Marinone (Ce.S.I.)

Together with Algeria, Morocco is the only country in the Maghreb to have developed a strategy of prevention and countering of radicalisation (P-CVE)¹. Launched in the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca attacks, it is based on a multidimensional approach that rests on three pillars: strengthening security measures; greater control of the religious sphere; reduction of socio-economic inequalities. Although it is generally considered to be among the most structured and effective, this strategy has shown some serious limitations as early as 2011. Morocco has been largely spared by terrorist attacks², and unlike other Maghreb countries it does not have portions of territory occupied by jihadist organizations. Nonetheless, the contingent of Moroccan foreign fighters mobilized in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings is one of the largest globally (more than 1,660 fighters)³. Therefore, the reasons behind such a large-scale mobilization, and its impact on the country, constitute a valid point of observation on the phenomenon of radicalization in Morocco and its future prospects.

Indirect threat: the growth of regional socio-economic inequalities

The existence of profound socio-economic inequalities at the regional level remains one of the main push factors with regard to radicalization in Morocco. More than half of the Moroccan foreign fighters who left for Syria and Iraq from 2011 to date come from the northern regions (Tangier-Tétouan-al-Hoceima, Fez-Meknès, Orientale), despite these areas host just a quarter of the national population. With the partial exception of the conurbation of Tangier, these areas are poorer and less integrated into the Moroccan social and economic fabric than the coastal strip. Since the 1990s the main jihadist networks active in the country have proliferated in these regions

¹ Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism.

² The last complex attack carried out inside the country dates back to April 28, 2011, when a bomb placed in a Marrakesh establishment caused 17 deaths to more than 20 wounded.

³ According to the Moroccan Bureau Central d'Investigation Judiciaire (BCIJ), by October 2017 the number of foreign fighters that had left the country stood at 1,660. Among these, 929 joined the Islamic State, 100 joined Sham al-Andalous and 50 joined to al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra (now Hayat Tahrir al-Sham). S. Kasraoui, *Despite Morocco's Success Fighting Terrorism, Tindouf Camps Remain Al-Qaida 'Breeding Ground': El Kham, Morocco World News*, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/10/231744/despite-moroccos-success-fighting-terrorism-tindouf-camps-remain-al-qaida-breeding-ground-el-kham/>.

(Moroccan Fighting Islamic Group, GICM; Salafiya Jihadiya). On the contrary, in recent years Moroccan authorities have dismantled the largest number of jihadist cells, in almost all cases affiliated to the Islamic State (IS or Daesh), in the southern region of Souss-Massa (Agadir) and in the eastern, desert and mountainous provinces, near the border with Algeria. Thus, Daesh seems to have succeeded in expanding its support area and to have rooted itself even in areas where there were no pre-existing logistic networks or particular levels of mobilization.

One of the most probable reasons for this phenomenon lies in the extent of the social, economic and political marginalization that is gripping these regions. The map of the presence of IS in the country, that is the areas in which radicalization processes are carried out, is largely overlapping with the geography of the most underdeveloped areas.

Several factors contribute to explaining this fact. Although the Kingdom launched a National Human Development Initiative (NHDI) in 2005, the socio-economic pillar of its P-CVE strategy, the amount of money (over 4 billion dollars) allocated in the social protection and employment support program have not reached the poorest groups, going largely to the benefit of the middle class⁴.

Although the national macroeconomic framework is positive⁵, growth continues to be unequal and to weigh mainly on young people (one third of Moroccans, about 11 million people, are less than 34 years old), which is the age segment most exposed to the risk of radicalisation. Early school leaving concerns two out of three young people, while at the end of 2017 the unemployed aged between 15 and 24 reached 28% (an increase of 8 percentage points compared to 3 years before). Among youngsters under 24 who live in rural areas and are highly educated, unemployment rate is more than 30%⁶. In addition, half of workers under the age of 30 have a low wage level and 75% do not enjoy any social protection⁷. If the northern regions can find in the specific

⁴ Taking into account the amount of resources allocated per capita and per province, and the social development index of each province, the NHDI focused more on less disadvantaged areas such as Rabat, Boujdour and Smara, leaving out poorer areas like Guercif, Taounate, Fqih Ben Salah, Youssoufia and Al Haouz. See *Performance Assessment of the National Initiative for Human Development 2005-2014*, Observatoire National du Développement Humain, http://www.ondh.ma/sites/default/files/documents/synthese_initiative_nat_eng.pdf.

⁵ In 2018, GDP is expected to grow by 4%, in continuity with a positive trend that has improved in recent years (growth was 1.2% in 2016).

⁶ Official data from Haut Commissariat au Plan, https://www.hcp.ma/Taux-de-chomage-au-milieu-rural-selon-le-diplome_a264.html.

⁷ Official data from Conseil économique, social et environnemental du Maroc (CESE), August 2018. See *La jeunesse, grande oubliée de la croissance marocaine*, Le Monde, 10 agosto 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/08/10/la-jeunesse-grande-oubliee-de-la-croissance-marocaine_5341269_3212.html.

local identity of the Rif, and in the autonomist pushes, a historical reason for resentment towards the central authorities and a push for mobilization, on which the radicalizing message can pivot, the eastern and southern provinces in the last two years witnessed thousands of protest demonstrations, triggered by the Hirak Rif movement that originated in al-Hoceima at the end of 2016 and spread swiftly throughout the Moroccan hinterland⁸. Finally, it is particularly telling the figure on perceived poverty, namely the percentage of families who consider themselves poor. At national level, the figure was 45.1% in 2014, a slight increase compared to 2007 (41.8%), but the most evident increases are those among the rural population (+ 15%, reaching 54.3%) and young people under 25 (57.6%)⁹. All this in contrast to the real data, for the same period, on the monetary poverty, which is falling, and the parallel growth of the share of GDP driven by agricultural activities, the main occupation in the central-northern regions. It should be emphasized that such a perception of inequalities, when gestated in an objectively unfavorable context, can increase the propensity to accept the radicalizing message of jihadism.

Direct threat: the role of returnees from the battleground of the Middle East

Since 2003, the Moroccan strategy of P-CVE has largely privileged the security side. This approach has brought some undeniable positive results, including the low number of attacks and the maintenance of full control over the territory by central authorities, even in the most peripheral regions. In the weeks following the Casablanca attacks, the government adopted harsher terrorism legislation, which expanded the powers and prerogatives of the security forces, even at the expense of certain civil rights. In October 2014, the Kingdom launched Operation Hadar which intensified patrols at the main tourist locations¹⁰, while in 2015 it created the Bureau Central d'Investigation Judiciaire (BCIJ), a liaison body among the various security agencies which is responsible for coordinating the entire national counter-terrorism

⁸ Unlike the wave of protests in 2011 (the February 20 Movement), those of 2016 were from the very beginning a rural phenomenon, and focused on requests for greater integration, social mobility and reduction of socio-economic inequalities with respect to the coastal strip. Only in 2017, about 17,000 protest events were recorded (there were 19,000 such events in 2011). See A. Essatte, *Protests of Morocco's Margins: The Credibility Gap*, Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis, August 2, 2018, <https://mipa.institute/5845>.

⁹ *Pauvreté et prospérité partagée au Maroc du troisième millénaire, 2001 – 2014*, Haut-Commissariat au Plan and World Bank, November 2017, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/806431523250621639/pdf/125040-WP-FRENCH-PUBLIC-Pauvret%C3%A9-et-prosp%C3%A9rit%C3%A9-partag%C3%A9e-FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁰ H. Hamdani, *Terrorisme: le Maroc déploie Hadar, son nouveau dispositif anti-attentats*, Huffington Post Maghreb, October 28, 2014, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2014/10/28/terrorisme-maroc-hadar_n_6061740.html.

activity. From 2003 to 2017, the security squeeze led to the dismantling of over 160 terrorist cells and to foil more than 340 plans for attacks in the Kingdom¹¹.

However, as far as the phenomenon of radicalization is concerned, the impact of the strategy is more nuanced. This is particularly evident when considering the effects of de-radicalization programs. It should be noted that the mobilization wave of foreign fighters that began in 2011 could benefit from the role of returned fighters that mobilized in the previous waves, in particular the first generation of *mujaheddin* that fought in Afghanistan, the Caucasus and the Balkans in late 1980s and early 1990s. The number of fighters that left the Kingdom in the last 7 years is greater than that of the total contingent mobilized between 1980 and 2011. Furthermore, as many as 220 of over 1,600 Moroccan latest foreign fighters had a militant past in jihadist organizations and had spent a period of detention in Moroccan prisons. If, as mentioned above, one of the reasons for the mobilization is the absence of prospects for social improvement at home, a not less important role has been played by the collateral effects of the various anti-terrorism measures implemented by the Kingdom. In fact, oftentimes the ex-jihadists have not been able to find a new job after release, due to social stigma and the lack of support measures for reintegration. Moreover, a second factor is represented by forms of surveillance, conducted by Kingdom security, which due to their invasiveness may have contributed to triggering the decision to leave for the war theaters in the Middle East¹². This did not only concern the so-called returnees, but also the approximately 3,000 citizens arrested and tried for proximity or support to terrorism between 2003 and 2017, mostly of Salafist orientation, that have been perceived as a potential homegrown threat.

Against these negative repercussions of the P-CVE strategy, the high number of returnees (about 200 up until October 2017) returned to Morocco from Syria and Iraq in recent years represents a considerable threat, already in the short to medium term. In fact, even though jailed or monitored, returning fighters can constitute an important vector of radicalization. The current programs of de-radicalization conducted in the prisons have little or no attractiveness¹³, while the prestige acquired

¹¹ Y. Igrouane, *Morocco Dismantled 168 Terrorist Cells Since September 11, 2001*, Morocco World News, February 10, 2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/02/207868/morocco-dismantled-168-terrorist-cells-since-september-2011/>.

¹² Moroccan activist, *embittered by government, leaves family to help Islamic State*, Associated Press, May 20, 2015, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/moroccan-activist-embittered-by-government-leaves-family-to-help-islamic-state>.

¹³ Launched in 2016, the Moussalaha (Reconciliation) program is jointly managed by the Délégation Générale à l'Administration Pénitentiaire et à la Réinsertion (DGAPR) and by Al-Rabita al-Mohammadia lil-Ulama, a state religious organization created to specifically address the extremist narrative and the dynamics of jihadist radicalization. However, in the first two and a half years of activity, the Moussalaha program managed to involve only 35 of the approximately 1,000 jihadists present in the prisons of the Kingdom. See M. Masbah, *The Limits of Morocco's Attempt to Comprehensively Counter Violent*

by the returnees on the Middle Eastern battlefields can facilitate their role as recruiters or activators, especially within the variegated Moroccan Salafist world.

Vulnerability: the weakening of traditional processes of social and institutional legitimation

As seen extensively in the preceding paragraphs, the P-CVE strategy of the Kingdom seems calibrated too strongly on the security side. Therefore, from the point of view of radicalization phenomena, the main vulnerabilities for Morocco fall within the perimeter of the social dimension that the strategy tends to marginalize, and that at the same time can compound the intensification of popular socio-economic claims.

Overall, the radicalizing jihadist message can find more fertile ground if there is a further weakening of the processes of legitimation that, so far, have regulated the degree of social cohesion and, at least partially, the participation in the political arena. In this sense, the main threats come from the evolution of protest movements and from the relationship between the political sphere and the national Salafist scene.

As for the first point, the traditional strategy of the Moroccan monarchy in managing the waves of protest consists in positing itself as an element of mediation between the demonstrators and the political class. In this way, the King can renew those mechanisms of popular legitimacy that go beyond the normal political-electoral game. However, especially in rural areas, this process is based on the role of local mediators, usually notables or members of prestigious families, who exert influence on demonstrators because of their social status. The wave of protests that began in 2016 has partially spoiled this way of intermediation. If in al-Hoceima and Jerada, in the north and north-east of the country, the protesters have refused any mediation of politics, both local and national, in the eastern provinces protests have often continued despite the local notability trying to ease tensions¹⁴. At the same time, these protest movements remain largely disorganized and spontaneous, without internal hierarchical structure or prominent leaders, not even at the local level. The combination of the absence of new referents and the declining authority of the traditional ones leaves the most vulnerable sections of the population exposed to the radicalizing jihadist message.

A similar dynamic has already affected the Moroccan Salafi scene recently. In fact, in response to the protests of 2011, the Kingdom pursued a strategy of co-optation of

Extremism, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, May 2018, <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/meb118.html>.

¹⁴ A. Essatte, *Protests of Morocco's Margins*, op. cit.

prominent elements of the Salafist landscape, then resulting in the attempt to favor political participation. The objective was to impose a moderate turn on the main referents of the Salafist world (in particular the imams), seen as a possible driving force for moderation of the Salafist movement as a whole. Given an amnesty in 2011 by royal decree, one of the main Moroccan Salafist-Jihadist preachers, Sheikh Mohammed al-Fizazi, founded the following year the political party *Ilm wal-Amal* (Science and Labor), modeled after the Egyptian party *al-Nour*. In parallel, Salafist imams Mohammed Rafki Abu Hafs and Hassan al-Kettani had founded in 2012 the NGO *Dar al-Hikma* (that later evolved into *al-Basira*), focused on preaching and helping the needy. Other Salafist leaders have instead merged into existing parties, such as *al-Nahda wal-Fadila* (Rebirth and Virtue), *New Democrats* or the *Social Democratic movement*.

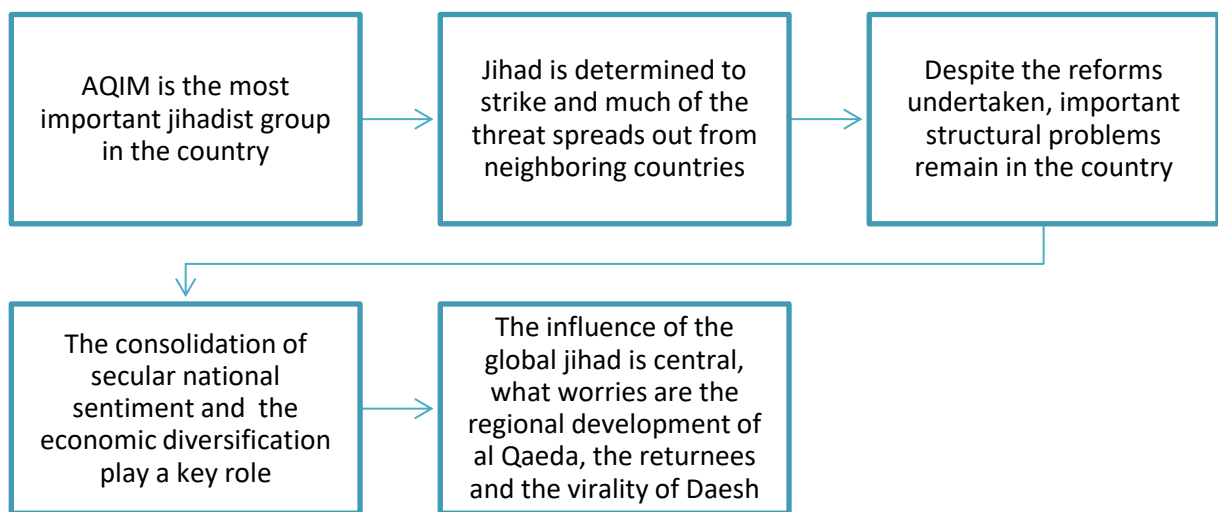
However, all these attempts did not result in the desired outcome in terms of consensus. If the role of these prominent Salafist imams remained confined to a politically isolated niche, the operation contributed to clearly erode their legitimacy in the eyes of many Moroccan Salafists. In fact, most of them have not only refused to follow the example of imams and open up to political participation, but have continued to adopt more rigid and sometimes extreme religious positions¹⁵. Therefore, the lack of valid referents for the Moroccan Salafist scene may allow an easier infiltration and establishment of the radicalizing message in this context.

¹⁵ M. Masbah, *Morocco's Salafi Ex-Jihadis: Co-optation, Engagement, and the Limits of Inclusion*, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, April 2017, <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/meb108.html>.

Algeria's structural weaknesses

By Marco Maiolino (ITSTIME)

With the aim of providing picture as much comprehensive as possible, it is necessary to deal with the Algerian context in a cross-cutting way, so as to highlight today's active jihadist groups, its social, political and economic conditions, and finally focus on a specific vulnerability.



Direct threat: jihadist organizations active in Algeria

The Islamist militancy active in Algeria appears to be mainly composed of formations loyal to Al Qaeda and, to a lesser extent, to Daesh¹⁶.

As for the groups loyal to al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)¹⁷ would represent the most important group.

Since March 2017, with the formation of the transnational conglomeration Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin '(JNIM)¹⁸, AQIM¹⁹ would have been considerably strengthened, increasing its influence. However, its ambitions are more regional than national²⁰.

¹⁶ The United States Department of State Country Report on Terrorism 2016, Middle East and North Africa Overview: Algeria, July 2017

¹⁷ Founded in 1998 by a splinter of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), named until 2007 Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and currently led by Abdelmalek Droukdel
Stanford University, Mapping militant organizations, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, July 2016

¹⁸ <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/03/analysis-al-qaeda-groups-reorganize-in-west-africa.php>

¹⁹ AQIM would have the leadership of JNIM today, especially in terms of managing relations with the central Qaedist command

²⁰ In fact the Algerian jihadist organization would play the most dangerous and broad strategic role attributed to it by the central leadership of al Qaeda in its global project, acting as the center of gravity

This reinforcement process was already in place in 2016, with the return to AQIM ranks of the Murabitun militia²¹ that would have favored the Maghreb branch of al Qaeda in terms of both logistical and operational support²².

In relation to Daesh, its presence and activities in Algeria would remain at least limited. In September 2014, Jund al Khalifa-Algeria (JaK-A)²³ swore allegiance to the self-styled Caliphate²⁴ and although it remains operational in the country today²⁵, the Algerian security forces would have been able to largely reduce its offensive capacity²⁶. In 2015 other 3 minor Islamist groups, mostly harmless, would have revealed their affiliation to Daesh: Katibat Ansar El Khilafa, Katibat Sahara and Seriat El Ghoraba²⁷.

Overall, the terrorist organizations operating in the Algerian territory would remain determined to hit government and security objectives of the country, as well as foreign targets located in Algeria²⁸.

Jihad continues to threaten Algerian security, especially in several northeastern and northwestern provinces²⁹, but it is from the porous Tunisian, Libyan, Nigerian and Malian borders, that most of the direct threat appears to spread out³⁰.

Indirect threat: structural problems as possible drivers of radicalization

The Fragile States Index of the Fund For Peace (FFP) classifies Algeria as a high-alert country³¹.

In terms of trend, however, the North African country³² has improved its general solidity over the past 10 years³³.

of the jihadist galaxy in the region and at the same time attenuating its historic and strong concentration on Algeria

²¹ Founded in 2013 through the fusion of Malian and Algerian Islamist groups Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) and Al Mulathamine Battalion

²² Thanks to his lively terrorist action, to the transnational operational concern and to the well-established activity in the flourishing regional smuggling business, favored by the experienced jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar

²³ Small jihadist group formed by Al Qaeda splinter units

²⁴ Home Office, Proscribed Terrorist Organisations, Jund al Khalifa-Algeria (JaK-A), March 2017

²⁵ United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Algeria 2018 Crime & Safety report, February 2018

²⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Algeria, Security – Terrorism hotspots, November 2016

²⁷ United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Algeria 2017 Crime & Safety report, April 2017

²⁸ In fact, in 2017 the Algerian authorities were the preferred target of the jihad that hit them primarily through improvised explosive devices, suicide attacks and ambushes United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Algeria 2018 Crime & Safety report, February 2018

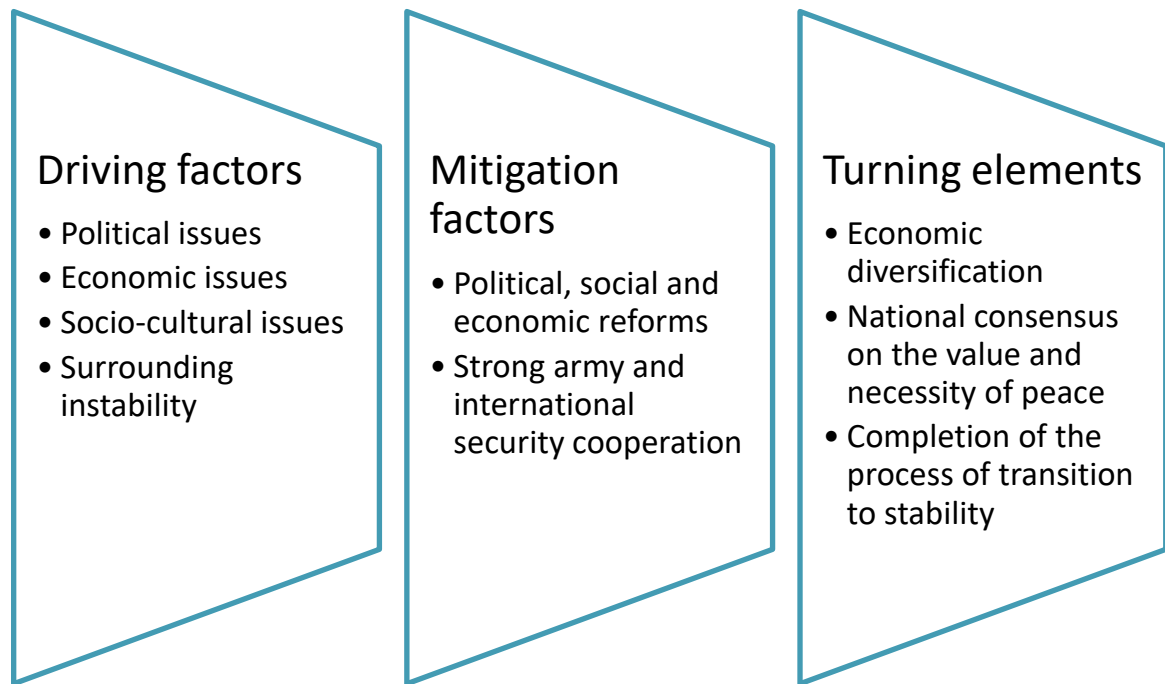
²⁹ In particular, Boumerdès, Bouïra, Béjaïa, Skikda, Tébessa, Tizi Ouzoue, Aïn Defla, Chlef e Tipaza

³⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Algeria, Security – Terrorism hotspots, November 2016

³¹ It places it in 73rd place in its global ranking, which evaluates a total of 178 countries according to their level of stability

J. J. Messner et. Al, Fragile State Index, Fund For Peace, 2018

Having said this, it is useful to proceed with the analysis of the interdependence between factors driving risks (radicalization), mitigation factors and turning elements.



At the political level, the country is completing the process of transition to democracy³⁴.

In Algeria power would still be given into the hands of the presidency and the army, with a parliament with limited influence³⁵.

The broad authority of Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the low level of transparency regarding his health conditions have fostered feelings of frustration and disillusionment, especially among young Algerians. In addition, the army³⁶ is perceived negatively by civil society as a sort of "deep state".

The central administration would be accused of inefficiency and cronyism, the country would suffer from endemic corruption, infrastructural deficiencies³⁷ are a source of dispute, state control is felt both in the media and on free association and amnesty³⁸ *de facto* guaranteed to war criminals remains reason for widespread dissatisfaction³⁹.

³² Which represents a crucial geo-strategical player with a view to regional stabilization

³³ From 2008 to 2018, the score of Algeria in the Fragile State Index decreased by 2.0 points.

³⁴ After independence from France obtained in July 1962 and a civil war lasting more than a decade (1991-2002)

³⁵ In fact, 1/3 of the Senate is appointed by the President who generally governs through the instrument of presidential decrees.

³⁶ Very present on the political scene since the 1992 coup

³⁷ Especially in healthcare

³⁸ Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, 2006

³⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2018 Country Report – Algeria, 2018

Islam is the religion of the state, used for political purposes, but Islamist tendencies would be kept under strict control by the authorities and generally rejected by the population.

From an economic point of view, the dependence on hydrocarbons makes the country vulnerable to the fluctuation of crude oil prices, leading to harsh austerity policies that foster protests⁴⁰. Furthermore, strong social inequality remains, inflation remains high as well as youth unemployment and foreign investment (FDI) remain limited⁴¹.

In sociocultural terms, the Berber ethnic component continues to claim more autonomy⁴² and the clashes between the Mozabite community⁴³ and the Arabic-speaking populations⁴⁴ continue sporadically.

Moreover, the surrounding instability⁴⁵ fosters the jihadist threat.

Although the road to stability would still be long, the executive has launched a series of promising reforms.

From a political point of view, legislative power was strengthened as well as political participation, and the presidential mandate was restructured. Economically, infrastructural improvements have been undertaken and, although palliative, Algerian foreign reserves continue to limit popular unrest⁴⁶.

In relation to the Berber question, tamazight was elevated to national language in 2002 and security was guaranteed through the deployment of the army and cooperation in combating terrorism.

Finally, if well exploited, some key factors could act as strong barriers against radicalization⁴⁷:

⁴⁰ The strong lowering of oil prices in 1986 was already a catalyst for the popular unrest that led to the civil war a few years later

⁴¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2018 Country Report – Algeria, 2018

⁴² Especially in the Kabylia region

⁴³ Tamazight speaking Idabis

⁴⁴ In the Ghardaia region

⁴⁵ With the collapse of Libyan, Tunisian, Malian and Nigerian security, as well as through the flowering of regional illicit trafficking

⁴⁶ Also eased by the interruption of projects to exploit the shale gas in the south of the country

⁴⁷ According to a 2013 Afrobarometer survey, 87% of the population would feel proud of being Algerian <http://afrobarometer.org>; The brutality of the civil war ended in 2002 turns out to be still fresh in the minds of the Algerians who would give priority to stability and security than to the (though necessary) political and economic reforms

A developed patriotic feeling, followed by a shared consensus at national level on the value and need for peace and stability;

An economic diversification would make the country less vulnerable to the fluctuation of oil prices and therefore more resilient to the resulting social tensions.

Vulnerability: Influence of global jihad on the local threat

The Salafi ideology - already present in Algeria since 1931⁴⁸ - merged into the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) and the first armed Islamist militancy⁴⁹ appeared only in 1982.

In any case, it was the outbreak of the Afghan conflict in 1979 that represented a turning point for the development of the jihadist phenomenon in Algeria: Afghanistan attracted a huge international flow of foreign fighters (FFs), among which there were numerous Algerians. Between 1987 and 1993 about 1000-1500 veterans returned to Algeria, galvanizing the discontented Muslim youth of the country, with tragic consequences⁵⁰.

With the cancellation of the 1992 general elections a series of schisms within the Algerian Islamist militancy gave rise, first, to ultraradical formations⁵¹ and, then, to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA)⁵², beginning a bloody uprising.

The GIA reached the peak of its expansion under the guidance of Cherif Gousmi, but it also became biased and ideologically heterogeneous. With the rise to power of Djamel Zitouni and later Antar Zouabri, strong internal conflicts emerged which decreed the progressive debacle of the Islamist group⁵³.

⁴⁸ With the influential cleric Abdelhamid ibn Badis and his association Ulama, in opposition to the French occupation

A.Merad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940*, Mouton, Paris, 1967, 398-39

⁴⁹ The Mouvement Islamique Algerie (MIA), under the leadership of the pioneer and symbol of the national jihad Mustapha Bouali

E. F. Kohlmann, *Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: the GIA, the GSPC and Al-QAEDA*, The NEFA Foundation, May 2007

⁵⁰ Compass Media, "Arab veterans of Afghanistan war lead new Islamic Holy War", October 28, 1994; in Dahlburg, John-Thor, "Algerian Veterans the Nucleus for Mayhem", Los Angeles Times, August 5, 1996

⁵¹ Like al-Muwahhidin Al-Masri, Abu Hamza, Khawaarij and Jihad, Maktabah al-Ansar, Birmingham, UK, 2000

⁵² Under the leadership of Abdelhaqq Layada

⁵³ Due to the adoption of increasingly repressive, brutal and fanatical attitudes

Ibidem

Later, some survivors of the GIA, directly encouraged by foreign Arab and Afghan militants⁵⁴, gathered under a new purified effigy and in 1999 the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC) was born⁵⁵.

However, it was again a foreign conflict that revitalized the Algerian jihadist phenomenon.

The attack on the World Trade Center and the subsequent Iraqi invasion determined both a renewed global flow of FFs⁵⁶, and a boost to the recruitment and internal support of the GSPC.

Abdelmalik Droukda⁵⁷ was then able to strategically ride the global jihadist recovery by securing al Qaeda's support with the September 2006 loyalty oath⁵⁸. In January of the following year the GSPC became known as Al-Qaida in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb⁵⁹.

With the advance of the "War on Terror", however, the Qaedist network weakened⁶⁰ and it was still a Middle Eastern conflict to revive the weakened jihadist flame. Within the Syrian civil war, the rapid rise of the self-styled Caliphate caused a flow of foreign fighters of geographical intensity and diffusion never seen before⁶¹, as well as the proliferation of branches of Daesh in various areas of the globe⁶².

In particular, with regard to the repercussions for Algeria, at least 300 fighters joined the Daesh⁶³ and the Jund al Khalifa-Algeria (JaK-A), Katibat Ansar El Khilafa, Katibat Sahara and Seriat El Ghoraba formations arose, swearing allegiance to Abu Bakr to Baghdadi.

As can be seen from the historical developments of Islamist militancy in Algeria,

⁵⁴ Among the direct supporters of the GSPC formation there was Osama bin Laden. "Bin Laden held to be behind an armed Algerian Islamic movement", Agence France Press (AFP), February 1999

⁵⁵ Which in just two years grew from around 700 to at least 3000 active resources "An Interview with the Chief of the Media Wing from the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat", Al-Faath Magazine, Vol.1, No. 1, December 2004; in Tazaghart, Atmane, "Meet Algeria's Salafi Group", Al-Majalla, June 1999

⁵⁶ The Algerians were estimated at around 1200 units.

Obaid, Nawaf, "Fractured Iraq: Implications for Saudi National Security", June 2006

⁵⁷ Intelligent and educated, he graduated in mathematics in 1989 and subsequently studied technology at Blida University for another 3 years.

⁵⁸ "Statement Regarding the Merger [with Al-Qaida] and the Salafist Group Swearing Allegiance to Shaykh Usama Bin Laden, may Allah protect him", September 2006

⁵⁹ "The Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat: Notice of a Change in our Name", January 2007

⁶⁰ After the elimination of Osama bin Laden in the Abbottabad raid and the effective counter-terrorism effort at the global level

<https://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/counter-terror-officials-envison-demise-al-qaeda/story?id=13962012>

⁶¹ Estimated to at least 40,000 fighters from around 110 different countries

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41734069>

⁶² <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2017/02/208045/global-expansion-plan-isis-affiliates/>

⁶³ A.Y.Zelin, The Others: Foreign Fighters in Libya, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, policy notes 45, January 2018 ; in R.Barret, Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat from Returnees, the Soufan Center, October 2017

external conflicts⁶⁴ would have been crucial in sharpening the jihadist threat within the country's borders⁶⁵.

As a result, the influence of global jihad would still present a specific danger to Algerian security. In addition, the uncertain period of the post-Caliphate would constitute a chaotic moment of accentuated vulnerability: on the one hand Al Qaeda already seems to have seized the opportunity to expand within the North African quadrant⁶⁶; on the other hand, fighters returning from the battlefields of the "Caliphate" remain a source of grave concern and the morphogenetic change⁶⁷ experienced today by the terrorist phenomenon and triggered by the experience of Daesh risks virally translating into social violence the social frustration caused by the structural problems that characterize today's Algeria.

⁶⁴ First in Afghanistan, then in Iraq and Syria

⁶⁵ By leveraging on various factors such as: the influence of fighters returning from the aforementioned war theaters, the radicalization of the unsatisfied youth population and the ideological / operational support provided by international terrorist organizations

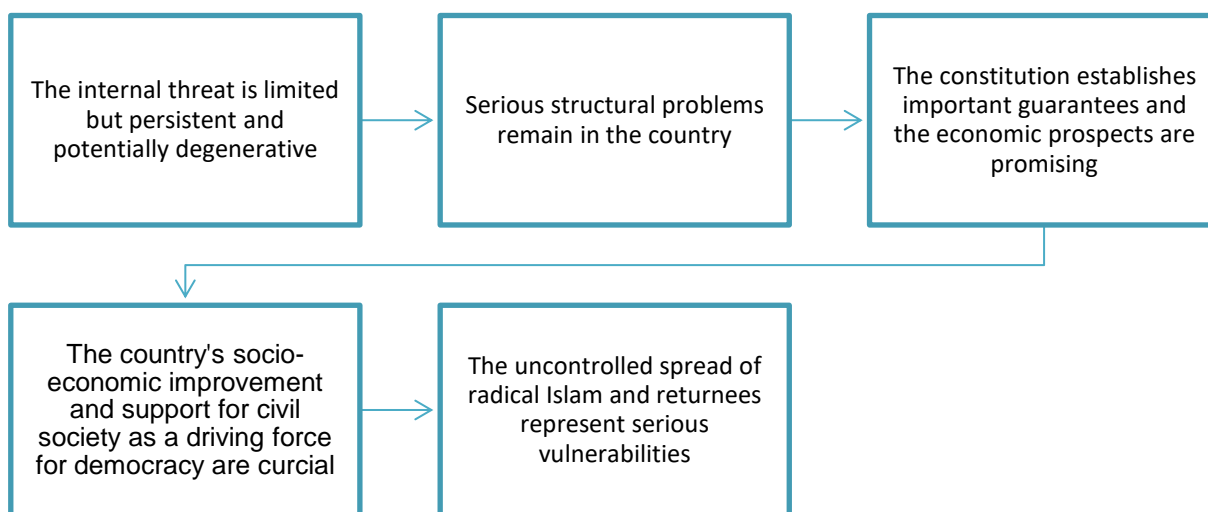
⁶⁶ Through the Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' conglomeration (JNIM) and the skilful exploitation of regional instability

⁶⁷ A simplified, viral terrorism within reach of anyone. An instrument made capable of attracting, translating and venting a plurality of frustrations, hardships, resentments and pathologies. Like a sort of common denominator, a universal remedy for the problems of the post-industrial world
<http://www.itstime.it/w/>

The Tunisian transition to the test of radicalisation

By Marco Maiolino (ITSTIME)

The transversal analysis model used to deal with the evolution of the phenomenon of radicalisation in the Algerian context in the post-Caliphate will also be used in the examination of the Tunisian situation, with the aim of highlighting: today's active jihadist realities, the social, political and economic critical points, and finally focus on two serious vulnerabilities.



Direct threat: jihadist organizations active in Tunisia

Terrorism of Islamist matrix in Tunisia appears to have been a marginal problem until 2011. Since the revolution that led to the fall of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's⁶⁸ regime, the jihadist phenomenon, also fostered by the Libyan collapse, has grown to become a constant danger to the security of the country⁶⁹.

To date, although relatively stable, the young republic is facing a contained but persistent⁷⁰ (even though potentially degenerative⁷¹) internal threat.

⁶⁸ Period of strong control of the religious sphere, following which Islamist preachers would have been left more free to proselytize https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/22/world/africa/new-freedoms-in-tunisia-drive-support-for-isis.html?_r=0

⁶⁹ In Tunisia at least 45 jihadist terrorist incidents have been recorded, primarily against local civilian, political and military targets, as well as foreign tourists from 2011 to present <https://tunisianjihadism.com/2018/06/06/islamic-state-attacks-in-tunisia/>; <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/tunisia> ;

⁷⁰ <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/al-qaeda-wing-ambushes-police-officers-in-northern-tunisia.php>

⁷¹ The strong regional instability would indeed heavily influence the Tunisian context and the management of the numerous returnee from the battlefields of the Syro-Iraqi and Libyan jihadists would remain a source of grave concern

The jihadist phenomenon would manifest itself primarily in an insurrectional form⁷² along the Algerian border, in the Jebel Chaambi / Kasserine area, with the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade and Jund al-Khilafah-Tunisia⁷³, and along the Libyan border (Ben Gardane area), through a militancy linked to the so-called Caliphate. Despite the fluidity of the militant galaxy⁷⁴, other terrorist networks would also be present in the territory, both Qaedaist, such as Ansar al Dine and the Tunisian Combat Group (TCG)⁷⁵, and linked to Daesh, such as Ansar al-Sharia⁷⁶ and Mujahidin of Kairouan⁷⁷.

In addition, the dangerously transnational dimension of the Tunisian jihad, connected with both the Libyan and Algerian jihad⁷⁸, is a worrying risk factor.

*Indirect threat: structural problems as possible drivers of radicalization*⁷⁹

The Fragile State Index of the Fund for Peace classifies Tunisia as a high-alert environment⁸⁰, but in terms of trends, the country would be progressively improving since 2014⁸¹.

Regarding the driving factor of the risk of radicalisation, at the political level, despite the advent of democracy after more than 50 years of authoritarianism, the government of the young republic remains fragmented and socially perceived as in continuity with the dictatorship⁸². Moreover, the disappointment of the youth towards the government is growing, the Islamist cause has gained support in the post-authoritarian period⁸³ and the leaders Essebsi and Gannouchi⁸⁴ tend to accumulate power outside the normal constitutional processes⁸⁵.

⁷² Which although limited in terms of presence and operational capacity, is persistent and characterized by: attacks against local security forces; territorial control; local support; and a network of fighters consisting mainly of Tunisians <http://carnegieendowment.org/2018/06/28/insurgency-in-tunisia-s-western-borderlands-pub-76712>

⁷³ Respectively loyal to al-Qaeda and Daesh

⁷⁴ Since the alliances would not be rigidly defined, but subject to change

⁷⁵ The Okna Ibn Nafaa brigade would represent the most active formation, Ansar al-Dine would also operate in Mali, Algeria and count at least 600 Tunisian fighters, and the TCG, formed in 2000, would represent the historical branch of al-Qaeda in Tunisia <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/tunisia>

⁷⁶ Which would now be formally defunct <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/tunisias-fragile-democratic-transition>

⁷⁷ Who would have sworn loyalty to the so-called Caliphate in May 2015 <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/05/tunisia-10.php>

⁷⁸ For example, through al-Qaeda networks in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and of Ansar al-Sharia (AS)

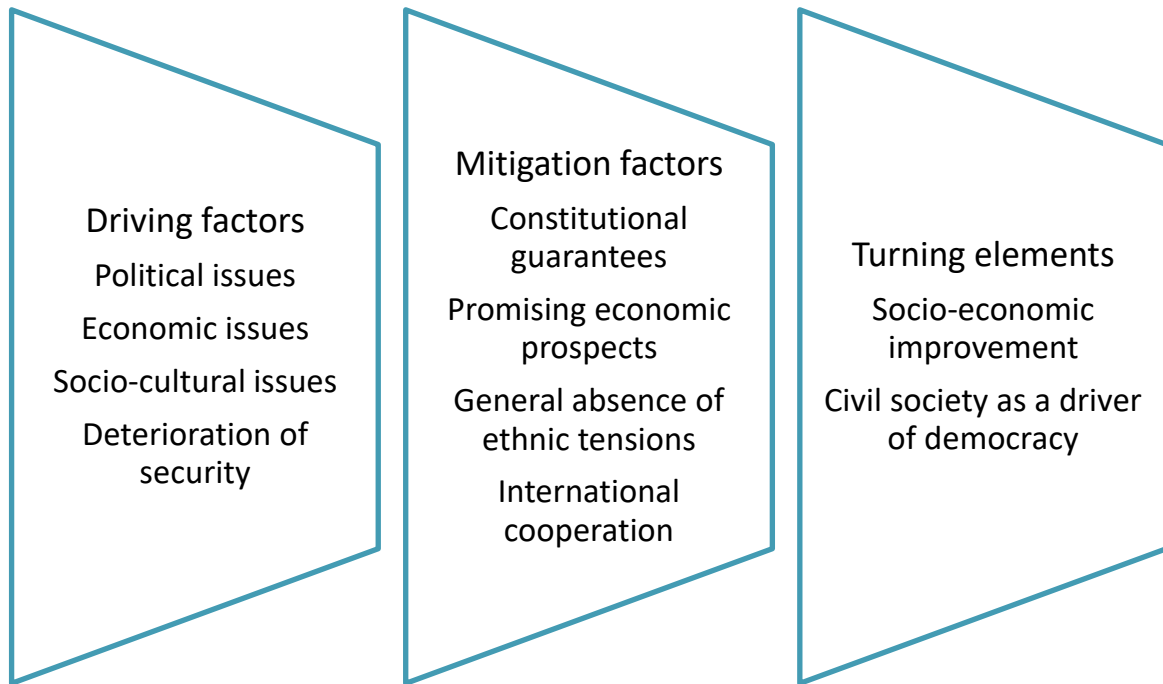
⁷⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2018 Country Report – Tunisia*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018 <http://www.bti-project.org>

⁸⁰ Placing it at the 92nd place in its global ranking, in J. J. Messner et. al, *Fragile State Index*, Fund For Peace, 2018

⁸¹ Having gained 14 positions - from 78th to 92nd - over 5 years

⁸² Due to widespread corruption, regulatory backwardness, privilege and institutional irresponsibility

⁸³ From 1959 to 2011, the country was led by the dictatorships of Bourguiba and Ben Ali, which severely limited religious influence in politics, except for that scriptural Salafi fringe (al-salafiyya al-'ilmiyya),



The economy remains largely unreformed and underdeveloped, unemployment is high especially among young graduates⁸⁶, state control limits competition, facilitating corruption and nepotism, and strong regional inequality in terms of development represents a crucial structural gap, as well as a source of continuous and heated disputes. On a socio-cultural level, black Tunisians would be subjected to discrimination, Islam is the state religion and its role in politics remains ambiguous⁸⁷.

Moreover, deteriorating internal and external security conditions⁸⁸ inflames the general widespread instability, fostering the jihadist threat.

As factors of mitigation of the risk of radicalization, the constitution gives important guarantees and from 2014 to date progress has been made towards its complete

generally apolitical, useful consolidating the religious legitimacy of the regime and responding to the popular demand for a greater role of religion in the public sphere. Since 2014, Tunisia has been governed by a national unity government headed by Beji Caid Essebsi, of Nidaa Tounes, which includes the Islamist party Ennahda, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and the liberal and anti-Islamist Free Patriotic Union (UPL)<https://www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/1b476ca4/cme-pub-carnegie-tunisia-050118.pdf>

⁸⁴ Respectively by Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda

⁸⁵ As shown by the Chartage Agreement

⁸⁶ 15% at national level and in some regions 28%

⁸⁷ Religious dogmas influence legal order and political institutions, and the presidency remains an exclusively Muslim office

⁸⁸ Especially in terms of terrorism and organized crime, phenomena that would be particularly acute along the volatile border areas

implementation. The *Tunisia 2020 vision*⁸⁹, launched in 2016, also represents an ambitious and promising reformist framework.

The economic prospects would be encouraging, the country has undertaken major improvements⁹⁰ in healthcare, education and per capita income and has resisted the shock of domestic terrorism. It also underlines a substantial lack of tension between the Arab, Berber and Mediterranean ethnicities of the nation and Tunisia is well supported by the regional and international cooperation circuits⁹¹.

So, the phenomenon of radicalization could be effectively contained through⁹²:

The socio-economic improvement of the country, through the necessary requalification of marginalized rural areas, so as to favor the social, political and economic inclusion of the disenchanting and angry Tunisian youth. Strategic measure that would also be able to mitigate riots and migrations;

Support for civil society as an engine of peace and democracy, a role already supported by the Tunisian people during the political transition and also consecrated by the Nobel Peace Prize awarded in 2015 to the so-called "Quartet" for the Tunisian national dialogue.

*Vulnerability: uncontrolled propagation of radical Islamist ideology and the returnees*⁹³

Contrary to the long dictatorial period during which the religious sphere was subject to strict surveillance, from 2011 Tunisia witnessed a wide diffusion of Salafism, mainly pushed:

⁸⁹ A detailed five-year development plan based on the efficiency of public institutions, economic diversification, human development, social inclusion, regional development and the green economy

⁹⁰ In 2016 the UN Human Development report placed Tunisia 97th in its ranking of 188 countries, placing it in the lower quarter of countries with "high development", painting an economy above the average of Arab countries <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TUN>

⁹¹ Through multilateral cooperation with United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), African Union (AU), Arab League and Agadir Agreement (Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan, 2004). Furthermore, bilateral cooperation underlines security in Libya and Algeria

⁹² In relation to point 1, 50 years of authoritarian rule would have concentrated resources and the production system in coastal areas, leaving the rest of the country underdeveloped and causing a strong regional inequality; Concerning point 2, the "Quartet" (Al-wiwār al-Waṭanī al-Tūnusī) is formed by non-governmental organizations Tunisian General Union of Labor (UGTT), Tunisian Confederation of Industry (UTICA), Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights. 'Man (LTDH) and National Order of Lawyers of Tunisia (ONAT)

⁹³ G.Fahmi, H.Maddeb, *Market for Jihad: Radicalization in Tunisia*, Carnegie Middle East Center, October 2015 in A.K.Yildirim et al., *Islam and politics in post-2011 Tunisia*, Centre for the Middle East, Rise University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, Carnegie Corporation of New York, April 2018

- By the persistent political exclusion and socio-economic marginalization of Tunisian youth by a new leadership burdened by political-constitutional issues;⁹⁴;
- By the particular weakness of the religious sphere⁹⁵ in the post-regime era.

The Salafist representation has been capable of strategically exploiting the problems outlined above, strengthening proselytizing and charity activities⁹⁶, so as to expand its influence across the public sphere, and to date:

- Many Tunisians would like a greater role of religion in politics⁹⁷, a demand not met by current governance⁹⁸;
- The Salafi movement would represent a large part of the disillusioned Tunisian youth.

Despite the Salafist ideology does not necessarily translate into violence and although after the revolution Tunisia would have generally been conceived by Islamists as a land of prayer and no longer of combat, Salafism has been an expression of the socioeconomic malaise of the country. It has represented a tool of social mobilization and its ideology has already turned into action during the civil war, for example through the experience of Ansar al-Sharia⁹⁹.

This pattern risks to repeat itself due to:

- The persistence of the structural problems that are at the basis of social unease;¹⁰⁰
- The potential influence of the surrounding instability which has allowed the jihadist phenomenon to become more acute at the regional level;
- The chaotic post-Caliphate period, in which fighters returning from jihad war theaters in the Middle East and North Africa would be a serious danger.

The so-called returnees¹⁰¹ could indeed benefit from the fertile ground prepared by Salafism to attract, translate and vent the dangerous climate of radicalization

⁹⁴ Transversal phenomenon that has involved all social classes, from the least to the most affluent

⁹⁵ Caused by the weakness of state religious institutions, by Ennahdah's pragmatism in giving priority to political identity over religious identity and the general lack of control over the sacred sphere

⁹⁶ Providing help to refugees, security, social mediation and using the media to spread their ideology

⁹⁷ According to a survey by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in November 2017, 60% of Tunisians would favor a greater role of religion in politics. Given that although down compared to 2014 (70%), it would still remain high

⁹⁸ That would favor the political identity with respect to the religious one, which would have kept Salafist representation out of the management of the public sphere and which would have repressed the Islamist instance with an iron fist, fomenting social radicalisation

⁹⁹ Founded in April 2011, considered the most organized Tunisian Salafi jihadist group and created by the confluence of 3 different generations of militants: the veterans of the Afghan conflict of the 90s; those of the Iraq conflict of the early 2000s; and the young generations of insurgents against Ben Ali

¹⁰⁰ And especially the high youth unemployment rate, the lack of opportunities and the socio-economic marginalization of the country's hinterland

described. in Tunisia, data are particularly alarming: at least 2,926 Tunisian nationals went to fight the jihad in Iraq and Syria, of which at least 800 have already returned¹⁰², while another 1500 went to neighboring Libya¹⁰³.

¹⁰¹ As well as jihadist organizations active both locally and globally, through for example the viral and simplified terrorism of Daesh

¹⁰² <http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v3.pdf>

¹⁰³ A.Y.Zelin, *The others foreign fighters in Libya*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, policy note 45, 2018

Libya: towards a convergence between extremism and organised crime?

By Lorenzo Marinone (Ce.S.I.)

Like the Sahel region, Libya has the potential to become one of the leading laboratories of jihadism globally. At this moment, jihadism is rapidly evolving and the traditional ideological-doctrinal purism allows significant hybridizations, deriving from the necessity of greater organizational and operative flexibility¹⁰⁴. The breakdown of the Caliphate of the Islamic State (IS or Daesh) at the end of 2017, in the Syro-Iraqi quadrant, imposes an organizational rethinking on its local branches, including those in North Africa. At the same time, the global reach and transversality of Daesh's radicalizing message have innovated the language and the capacity to read the context of contemporary jihadism, dragging al-Qaeda too into a competition for hegemony. Against this background, the specific dimension of the local contexts acquires an unprecedented pre-eminence. The present Libyan scenario, characterized by a worrying institutional void, by the proliferation of armed groups of various orientations, and by the presence of Jihadist organizations tied to transnational networks, constitutes one of the theatres in which contemporary Jihadism can expand also along innovative paths.

Indirect threat: political and economic marginalisation of some Libyan actors in the future structure of the country

Traditionally, jihadist radicalization has taken root laboriously in Libya, except in some limited contexts, such as the city of Derna¹⁰⁵. The main reasons are the religious

¹⁰⁴ G. Iacovino, *The Future of International Jihadi Terrorism*, in G. Iacovino, F. Manenti (edited by), *The Evolution of Jihadist Radicalization in Asia*, Ce.S.I. – Centro Studi Internazionali and European Foundation for Democracy (EFD), April 2018, <https://www.cesi-italia.org/en/articoli/831/the-evolution-of-jihadist-radicalization-in-asia>.

¹⁰⁵ Derna has a long tradition of jihadism since the war in Afghanistan in 1979-1989. The largest share of foreign fighters who joined al-Qaeda in Iraq since 2003 came from Derna. In absolute terms, the Libyan contingent came second after the Saudi contingent and provided about 20% of the *mujaheddin*. In terms of the number of fighters in relation to the population, Derna is the city which, in the North African context, provided the most fighters in the last wave of 2011, directed both towards the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, and towards Daesh.

There are several reasons for this phenomenon: the historical marginalization suffered by the city because of Gaddafi's policies and the consequent lack of economic prospects; the emergence of "generational" connections in Dernawi jihadism, like a "job" passed from father to son, facilitated recruitment in the waves of 2003 and 2011; the scarce relevance inside Derna of tribal and clanic ties, whose internal dynamics constitute a sort of network of protection and social control.

See J. Felter - B. Fishman, *Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, New York, <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2010/06/aqs-foreign-fighters-in-iraq.pdf>; D. Sterman - N.

homogeneity of the population (97% of Libyans adhere to the Sunni Maliki doctrine), and the pre-eminence in Libyan Islam of Sufi orders, starting from the Senussia, that have a quietist orientation¹⁰⁶. The integralist and most extremist currents, which are autochthonous and can be placed in the spectrum of Islamism and Salafism, are numerically smaller. Therefore, unlike other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, in Libya the radicalizing message of jihadism has never been able to exacerbate pre-existing sectarian tensions or to spread to large sections of the population, thus remaining confined to those who advocate a more rigid and intransigent vision of Islam.

However, if the classic religious vector is weakened and marginal, in the Libyan context the phenomena of radicalization can be promoted by socio-economic and political motivations. In fact, 7 years after the fall of Gaddafi, the revolutionary aspirations have yet to find a coherent and definitive arrangement in the future structure of the country. The set-up of the country is made uncertain both by the persistence of the institutional fracture between East and West, and by the proliferation of hybrid actors, who combine a military component with the tendency to perform locally functions that are typical of political and administrative institutions.

As for the first point, the breakdown of Libya's institutional unity in 2014 and the emergence of two rival Parliaments and Governments in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica¹⁰⁷, has laid the foundations for a deeper fragmentation of the Libyan social, tribal and economic framework. In the economic-financial field, the impact of institutional rivalry is visible in the duplication of authorities such as the Central Bank of Libya (CBL)¹⁰⁸, the National Oil Company (NOC) and the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA). These factors continue to hamper the implementation of reforms and the action of governments¹⁰⁹, depriving local municipalities of concrete support in terms of wealth redistribution and investments. As a result, the majority of the population still has no alternative apart from turning to the informal economy (smuggling of subsidised products, especially oil) and relying on the revenues of illicit trafficking (arms, drugs, human beings). Although there are no reliable estimates available about the volume of these activities, at the end of 2016, the CBL ascertained that, on a national scale, more

Rosenblatt, *All Jihad is Local*, vol. II, New America, April 2018, <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/policy-papers/all-jihad-local-volume-ii/>.

¹⁰⁶ P. L. Kakar – Z. Langhi, *Libya's Religious Sector And Peacebuilding Efforts*, USIP, March 2017, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/pw124-libya-religious-sector-and-peacebuilding-efforts.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ U. Laessing, *Libya's runaway parliament seeks refuge in Tobruk bubble*, Reuters, 2 October 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-insight/libyas-runaway-parliament-seeks-refuge-in-tobruk-bubble-idUSKCN0HRIGO20141002?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>.

¹⁰⁸ As of November 2018, the Tripoli branch is led by Sadiq al-Kebir, while the eastern branch based in al-Bayda is led by Ali Al-Hibri. R. Donaghi, *Libya's civil war focuses on control of central bank assets*, Middle East Eye, 17 September 2014, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/libyas-civil-war-focuses-control-central-bank-assets-219810124>.

¹⁰⁹ T. Eaton, *Libya's New Economic Measures Must Be Wedded to Deeper Reform*, Chatham House, 8 October 2018, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/libya-s-new-economic-measures-must-be-wedded-deeper-reform>.

than half of the liquidity in local currency (approximately 26.5 billion Libyan dinars) circulated totally outside the banking system¹¹⁰.

In addition, the struggle for access to national resources, deriving from oil revenues, exacerbated the rivalry between East and West. This conflict had two consequences. On the one hand, the political stalemate and the failure to overcome the revolutionary phase have prevented the modification of the Law of Political Isolation, promulgated in 2013, that prevents political participation to anyone who had a public role, even minor, during the Gaddafi era¹¹¹. For decades, the Rais had based its power on favouring some tribes at the expense of others. The risk of this policy is the marginalization of entire groups such as the Qadhafa and Warfalla, the most influential in Tripolitania, as well as the Tuareg population in the southwest of the country. On the other hand, the conflict has developed according to a rigid pro/anti-Islamism dichotomy, fomented by the forces of the East. They tried to assimilate even actors who are ideologically distant, such as the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm, the Justice and Construction Party¹¹², to terrorist groups with a jihadist matrix. This has exacerbated political polarisation, and it is now more difficult to find a cross-cutting and acceptable formula for settling the differences between the parties. In addition, the possibility of some components being excluded from normalisation of relations due to cross vetoes is increasing.

This wide split is grafted into an extremely fragmented local reality, whose protagonists are hundreds of armed groups, often small-sized, characterized by a hybrid profile. There is a lack of strong central power and political authorities capable of exercising real control over the territory, so Libya has gradually become a country with multiple sovereignties. This has led to the establishment of militias, heirs of the revolutionary season of 2011. They combine the military component with a tendency to become institutions at a local level, that is, to provide essential services and guarantee a minimum welfare network¹¹³. In this sense, militias often constitute the most valuable, or the only, point of reference for the local population. At the same time, these armed groups have a purely local agenda, based on precise priorities: to maintain the privileges obtained in the aftermath of the fall of Gaddafi and to guarantee access to a share of the oil revenue, which remains the main source of income for the national economy. If the future structure of the country does not give them adequate guarantees or access to the desired resources, these actors could

¹¹⁰ Libyan Central Bank, *Assets & Liabilities Of Central Bank Of Libya*, <https://cbl.gov.ly/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/03/AssetsLiabilities-of-cbl-oct2016.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Political Isolation Law: the full text, Libya Herald, <https://www.libyaherald.com/2013/05/14/political-isolation-law-the-full-text/>.

¹¹² General Khalifa Haftar has shaped his public figure on this rhetoric. In 2014, leading a heterogeneous group of armed groups in Cyrenaica, Haftar launched Operation Dignity, with the aim of occupying Tripoli. This act was presented as a necessary step to eradicate all forms of Islamism from the country. In reality, far from reflecting a secular or secularist reality, Haftar's forces are largely composed of Salafist militias, in particular those belonging to the Madhkali current. See F. Wehrey, *Quiet No More?*, Carnegie, 13 October 2016, <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/64846>.

¹¹³ F. El Kamouni-Janssen, K. de Bruijne, *Entering the Lion's Den : Local Militias and Governance in Libya*, Clingendael, October 2017, <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2017/crisisalerts-libya/crisisalert-3-militia-coalition-building-and-governance/>.

increasingly rely on revenues from the informal economy and on illicit trafficking, in which they are already involved¹¹⁴.

Direct threat: the operational fluidity of armed organisations

The Libyan jihadist scenario has changed profoundly since 2011. When Gaddafi governed, the presence of Jihadist groups was substantially limited to the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), afferent to the orbit of al-Qaeda¹¹⁵. Active between the 1990s and the early 2000s, the LIFG remained a limited threat in terms of number of militiamen and capacity, mainly due to the hard work of the Libyan security apparatus to counter it. After the fall of the Rais, the political crisis and the security vacuum have favoured the proliferation of autochthonous extremist groups, such as Ansar al-Sharia - Libya (ASL), and the penetration of non-Libyan Jihadist organizations, first of all al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Daesh. The latter formalized the creation of its own local branch in 2015.

These groups outline a varied and composite landscape, characterized by a remarkable degree of fluidity, since in many cases groups have a hybrid shape. From an operational point of view, they form variable geometry alliances. As far as the evaluation of the degree of adhesion to the jihadist ideology and the evolution of the phenomenon of radicalism are concerned, for analytical needs, the Libyan extremist scene can be subdivided into three typologies: properly jihadist groups; Salafist groups; groups not characterized by precise ideological-religious connotations.

The first category includes the Libyan branch of Daesh and the al-Qaeda network. The Libyan branch of the Caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi imposed itself as main referent in the Libyan jihadist panorama between 2015 and 2016¹¹⁶, due to its ability to co-opt local, Salafist-leaning armed organizations (in particular those belonging to the Ansar al-Sharia umbrella), to its ability to act as a means of revenge for former Gaddafist officers, and to the global attractiveness of its specific brand. The low ideological infiltration in the Libyan social framework is visible in the small number of local recruits. The most represented rates are those of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. Daesh's legitimacy has been eroded, because for the Libyans it has become like an exogenous reality. Therefore, it is understandable that, even at the time of maximum expansion, in the first semester of 2015, Daesh did not exceed 3,000 people¹¹⁷. Furthermore, in mid-2018, expelled from the stronghold of Sirte and active in the

¹¹⁴ L. Marinone, *Il ruolo delle milizie libiche nel traffico di esseri umani*, Ce.S.I. – Centro Studi Internazionali, 14 June 2018, <https://cesi-italia.org/articoli/865/il-ruolo-delle-milizie-libiche-nel-traffico-di-esseri-umani>.

¹¹⁵ G. Gambill, *The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group*, in *Terrorism Monitor* 3:6 (2005), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-libyan-islamic-fighting-group-lifg-2/>.

¹¹⁶ F. Wehrey, *When the Islamic State Came to Libya*, *The Atlantic*, 10 February 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/isis-libya-hiftar-al-qaeda-syria/552419/>.

¹¹⁷ I. El Amrani, *How much of Libya does the Islamic State control?*, *Foreign Policy*, 18 February 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/18/how-much-of-libya-does-the-islamic-state-control/>.

central-eastern desert areas in the provinces of Jufra, Wahat and Kufra, it is estimated to be around a maximum of only 800 units¹¹⁸.

On the contrary, the penetration of al-Qaeda in Libya took place in more discreet way and with a more flexible strategy. The expansion of the Qaedist network in the coastal area was based on the recognition of the local specificities and agendas of the local Salafi-jihadi organizations. In this sense, despite the fact that a group like ASL could show an ideological affinity with the historical nucleus of al-Qaeda, matured through the participation in the conflict in Afghanistan, it has, however, maintained a very ample operative autonomy and has privileged a local or, at maximum, national agenda. The link with al-Qaeda didn't pass from the insertion into a rigid chain of command, but from a more nebulous and capillary network of contacts with AQIM, with which ASL has shared training camps and logistic structures¹¹⁹. The same strategy has been used by AQIM in the south-west of the country, where it maintains a presence mainly in the areas of Ghat and Ubari. Here, AQMI offered services to the local population, particularly the Tuaregs. Instead of proselytism, AQIM preferred a deepening of personal ties, facilitated by a shrewd policy of marriages with local clans and their militiamen¹²⁰.

As far as Salafist groups are concerned, they include a wide range of organisations. They are present mainly in Tripolitania and in the area of the Gulf of Sirte. These groups developed a paramilitary nature in 2011 and, in some cases, have also expanded their influence on the institutional apparatus while maintaining an ideological proximity with the Jihadist factions. For these groups, the distinction between giving their support to the institutions and the choice of not being part of any of the political ranks responds to mere criteria of contingent convenience. The choice of the alliances is determined by the pragmatic evaluation of the best way to preserve the interests and privileges acquired.

An emblematic case concerns the RADA Force of Abdelraouf Kara. Since 2016, this militia has been one of the pillars of the security architecture deployed to defend the capital. The support given to the Government of National Unity of Fayeaz al-Serraj responds to the need to maintain control of a strategic infrastructure such as the Mitiga airport, to the benefits deriving from a form of greater legitimacy in the eyes of the International Community and the population (the RADA Force has been formally included in the organizational chart of the Ministry of the Interior in Tripoli), and to the economic advantages deriving from a predatory attitude towards institutions¹²¹. However, the Kara militia is led by former LIFG fighters, linked to the historical leader

¹¹⁸ B. Daragahi, *ISIS Resurrection: Libya Attacks Foreshadow Terror to Come*, The Daily Beast, 29 May 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/isis-resurrection-libya-attacks-foreshadow-terror-to-come>

¹¹⁹ R. Smith, J. Pack, *Al-Qaida's Strategy in Libya: Keep It Local, Stupid*, in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 11:6 (2017), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/667>

¹²⁰ A. McGregor, *Europe's True Southern Frontier: The General, the Jihadis, and the High-Stakes Contest for Libya's Fezzan Region*, in *CTC Sentinel*, 10:10 (November 2017), p.19-26, https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2017/11/CTC-Sentinel_Vol10Iss10-18.pdf.

¹²¹ W. Lacher, *Tripoli's Militia Cartel*, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, April 2018, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/libya-tripolis-militia-cartel/>.

Abdelhakim Belhaj. Relationships with many other Tripolitanian militias, and with the forces led by Haftar, are not good. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the possible ousting of the RADA Force from the future set-up of Libya will induce the group to open up to forms of cooperation with Jihadist organizations.

A similar dynamic can arise from the marginalization of the militias belonging to the third category. Although they have no ideological-religious connotations similar to Jihadism, many Libyan armed groups have not hesitated to form alliances of convenience and participate in joint operations with extremist formations. In the spring of 2017, the Third Force from Misrata launched an offensive against the Brak al-Shati base, on the northern edge of the Fezzan, to repel the militias of the Libyan National Army of Haftar¹²². The operation was conducted together with an ambiguous group: the Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB). Of radical Islamist extraction, the BDB had emerged the previous year, after the split in the Benghazi Revolutionary Shura Council (BRSC), which also brought together Salafi-jihadi groups, including ASL. In June 2018, BDB formed the backbone of the forces led by Ibrahim Jadhran in an offensive against Haftar in the Oil Crescent¹²³. Former head of the Petroleum Facilities Guards, Jadhran was trying to regain control of the oil infrastructure, thanks to which for years he had been able to remain the balance of power between East and West, before being defeated by Haftar's advance in September 2016.

Vulnerability: expansion of the contiguity area with jihadism

On the basis of what has been said, the Libyan scenario does not seem to sustain and feed "pure" dynamics of jihadist radicalization, that is, motivated by religious or ideological reasons. On the contrary, in Libya there are possibilities for a sort of "functional radicalization". According to this kind of radicalization, many Libyan actors are induced to base their choice to cooperate with Jihadist organizations on opportunistic reasons, and not on purely ideological motivations. In this sense, the prospects of radicalization in Libya present a greater inclination towards the use of violence for political ends. The will to preserve or expand its share of power remains a priority, while the adoption of a typically jihadist international agenda is residual.

In other words, in the medium term, the Libyan theatre may be affected by an expansion of the contiguity area with jihadist organizations. This expansion can be determined by a tactical *rapprochement* between Jihadist organizations, Salafist groups and non-ideologically connoted militias, facilitated by the combination of an eventual political marginalization and a limitation in the access to resources.

¹²² Libya: 141 people killed in Brak al-Shat airbase attack, Al-Jazeera, 20 May 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/libya-141-people-killed-brak-al-shat-airbase-attack-170520082052419.html>.

¹²³ Haftar forces in 'major' operation to reclaim Libyan oil fields from rivals, Middle East Eye, 17 June 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/haftar-oil-libya-ras-lanuf-sidra-jadhran-1511343473>

Such a development would represent an effective synthesis of the respective needs. In fact, the Libyan militias have no real interest in officially merging with jihadist networks of al-Qaeda and Daesh, since they could not propose themselves as legitimate actors at the national and international levels. At the same time, an organization such as al-Qaeda can maximize the benefits deriving from an expansion of its network, maintaining a low level of exposure and concealing the real affiliations of the groups that re-enter its orbit, according to a model already widely used on a large scale in other contexts, such as Yemen. Therefore, on the whole, this dynamic is governed not by the recourse to proselytism and indoctrination, but by a markedly businesslike approach. In this sense, the main vectors of functional radicalization may be the illicit trafficking routes through the Sahel and Libya to Europe and the Middle East, involving both jihadist organizations (Sahel) and numerous Libyan armed groups, albeit in geographically distinct areas.

Egypt between the insurgency in Sinai and the future trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood

By Lorenzo Marinone (Ce.S.I.)

Indirect threat: aggravation of socio-economic factors underlying social discontent

An assessment of the indirect threat of the risk of radicalization in Egypt cannot ignore the profound impact of the al-Sisi presidency on the country's economy and political scene, following the dismissal of Mubarak and the chaotic phase characterized by the arrival in power of the Muslim Brotherhood (2012-2013).

From an economic point of view, the profound reforms promoted by the President have brought mixed results. The package of policies agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) back in November 2016¹²⁴ has effectively conferred more stability to the macroeconomic framework, at least in the short term. The liberalization of the exchange rate of the Egyptian pound has decreased the current account deficit and allowed to quintuple the foreign exchange reserves over two years¹²⁵. The numerous cuts in subsidies (especially on fuels and energy) and the targeted increase in some indirect taxes have brought the budget deficit below 10% for the first time in fiscal year 2017/2018. These measures have given Egypt export a breath back and have allowed the country to refinance on the capital market.

However, the reform action has also led to a steady increase in public debt, which reached 108% of GDP in 2017¹²⁶, with negative consequences on the state's ability to make investments, create jobs and a more structural economic growth. In addition, the austerity phase of the last two years has had a profound impact on the less wealthy sections of the population and, at least partially, also on the middle class. High prices have brought about 35% of Egyptians below the poverty line¹²⁷, while inflation continues to reach peaks of 30%.

In light of the tendencies of the national demographic pyramid, clearly unbalanced on the under-34 age group, and of an annual increase of young people entering the labor

¹²⁴ The IMF has agreed with Cairo a three-year financing plan, for a total of 12 billion dollars divided into 6 tranches, the release of which is bound to the adoption of precise monetary and fiscal policies. *IMF Executive Board Approves US \$ 12 billion Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility for Egypt*, IMF press release 16/501, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/11/11/PR16501-Egypt-Executive-Board-approves-12-billion-Extended-Arrangement>.

¹²⁵ The current account deficit stood at 0.8% of GDP in the last quarter of 2017, while foreign currency reserves rose from 17.5 billion dollars in July 2016 to over 44 billion dollars in June 2017, up to 92.5 in June 2018.

¹²⁶ Egyptian public debt stood at 73.3% of GDP in 2009. In September 2018, the Government announced that it plans to reduce it to 92% of GDP by 2019 and to 70% in 2022. *Egypt aims to reduce public debt to 70 pct of GDP in 4 years: minister*, Xinhuanet, 27 September 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/27/c_137494803.htm.

¹²⁷ The Egyptian parameters set this threshold at \$ 45 a month.

market estimated at least at 700,000 units for the near future¹²⁸, it appears evident the risk that unequal growth, an increase in unemployment and the disappearance of traditional social safety nets expand the already existing pockets of discontent.

This discontent, originated by social marginalization and the failure to achieve many of the objectives of the 2011 revolt, may represent a first trigger towards radicalization processes, here understood not specifically as adherence to a precise jihadist ideology, but in more general terms as the propensity to change, even with violence, a political and social status quo perceived as distant from the aspirations and desires of the radicalized subject.

In the current Egyptian context, the probability that social discontent may assume more extreme connotations and lead to the adoption of subversive attitudes is made more likely by a liberalization of the political scene still partial. This is evident from the substantial absence of candidates in opposition to al-Sisi during the presidential elections in March 2018¹²⁹, and from the restrictions imposed by the authorities on civil society¹³⁰. Furthermore, the possible repercussions of the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood, included in the list of terrorist organizations in December 2013, should not be underestimated.

In fact, the Brotherhood is in effect a mass movement, deeply rooted in Egypt, where it can count on some hundreds of thousands of affiliates (estimates range from 100,000 to 600,000) and on an even wider audience of sympathizers¹³¹. The Egyptian government has not hesitated to consider as various expressions of the Brotherhood, or even its direct armies, several insurgent groups that since the end of 2013 have carried out attacks especially in the Delta area (such as the Hasm Movement, Liwa al-Thawra, and Resistance Movement of the Allied People). However, the existence of deep connections between these groups and the organization founded by Hassan al-Banna remains, at present, rather uncertain. In particular, the involvement of the Brotherhood in such armed organizations does not seem to have acquired a mass dimension, nor to respond to a precise political will of the group's leaders¹³².

¹²⁸ International Monetary Fund, *Arab Republic of Egypt: Selected Issues*, 11 December 2017, <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/CR/2018/cr1815.ashx>.

¹²⁹ *The Guardian view on elections in Egypt: two candidates, no real choice*, The Guardian, 25 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/25/the-guardian-view-on-elections-in-egypt-two-candidates-no-real-choice>.

¹³⁰ S. Brechenmacher, *Institutionalized Repression in Egypt*, in Id., *Civil society under assault. Repression and responses in Russia, Egypt and Ethiopia*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Civil_Society_Under_Assault_Final.pdf. See also U.N. rights boss says Egypt crackdown 'facilitates radicalisation', Reuters, 1 May 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-rights-un/u-n-rights-boss-says-egypt-crackdown-facilitates-radicalisation-idUSKBN17X1MI>.

¹³¹ K. Fahim, *The Muslim Brotherhood, Back in a Fight to Survive*, The New York Times, 5 January 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/06/world/middleeast/the-muslim-brotherhood-back-in-a-fight-to-survive.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0&hp&pagewanted=all.

¹³² M. Awad, *The Rise of the Violent Muslim Brotherhood*, Hudson Institute, November 2017, <https://www.hudson.org/research/13787-the-rise-of-the-violent-muslim-brotherhood>.

Direct threat: the Sinai as a hub of jihadism and infiltrations into the security apparatus and the Armed Forces

The Egyptian jihadist landscape can be divided into two major poles: groups belonging to the Islamic State (IS or Daesh) and organizations linked to al-Qaeda¹³³.

The distinction between the two types is quite recent since it dates back to 2013-2014, when the global appeal of IS led to a clear split within the Egyptian jihadist landscape based in the Sinai¹³⁴. While a faction of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), the main Egyptian group in al-Qaeda's orbit, preferred to keep the oath of allegiance to the organization led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, another faction pledged bayat (allegiance) to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and took the name of Wilayat Sinai (WS), becoming the local branch of the IS¹³⁵. In a short time, WS succeeded in establishing itself as a hegemonic formation in the Peninsula, inheriting the traditional local support base, composed mainly of the Bedouin population¹³⁶, and profoundly influencing its radicalization dynamics.

Radicalization processes involving Sinai Bedouins, in fact, have been underway since the 1970s, following the Yom Kippur War and Egypt's reconquest of the Peninsula. The social, economic and political marginalization imposed by Cairo for decades constituted the main trigger to make the Bedouin tribes permeable to radicalizing messages of Salafist and strictly jihadist origin. Indeed, the Egyptian authorities have always considered the Bedouins as a potential "fifth column" of Israel¹³⁷, thus

¹³³ In the broader insurrectionist panorama there are also several groups that emerged mostly after the dismissal of the former President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013. These insurrectional groups are generally devoid of a clear ideological-religious connotation and are united by a generic opposition to the Egyptian authorities. These formations are excluded from the discussion in this paragraph due to the almost complete cessation of their activities between 2016 and 2017, which removes them from the category of direct threats. These formations include the already mentioned Hasm Movement, Liwa al-Thawra and the Allied People Resistance Movement.

However, these organizations will be taken into consideration in the last paragraph of this chapter, since their organizational and logistic structures, presumably not completely dismantled, can represent a non-secondary asset in the event of a more marked and vast process of radicalization of some fringes of the Muslim Brotherhood.

¹³⁴ The Egyptian Salafi-jihadist scene has been quite active since the 1970s. Among the most important groups of the last 30 years of the twentieth century are Egyptian Islamic Jihad (led by al-Zawahiri and later merged into al-Qaeda), Gamaa al-Islamiyya (whose historical leader is Omar Abdel-Rahman, nicknamed the "Blind Sheikh") and Takfir wal-Hijra (also known as Jamaat al-Muslimin) founded by Shukri Mustafa. Following the 2011 uprisings, Egyptian security apparatuses have almost completely lost control of the Sinai territory, which has thus become an extremely favorable environment and a natural repository for jihadist groups active in the country. These include Ansar al-Jihad, al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, Afnan Misr, Ansar al-Sharia - Egypt, Jund al-Islam, Mohamed Jamal Network (MJN).

¹³⁵ T. Joscelyn, *Sinai-based jihadists pledge allegiance to Islamic State in audio recording*, Long War Journal, 10 November 2014, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/11/egyptian_jihadists_p.php.

¹³⁶ The Sinai Bedouin population amounts to about 300,000 units (divided into about twenty tribes) and represents 70% of the population that inhabits the entire Peninsula. The most relevant and represented tribal groups are the Sawarka (northern coastal area) and the Tarabin (scattered over the entire territory, especially near the border with Israel and in large areas of central Sinai).

¹³⁷ Especially because of the deep ties maintained with the Bedouin populations across the border, in most cases belonging to the same tribes and confederations as those of Sinai.

developing markedly assimilationist policies and, at the same time, excluding them from the benefits of the country's development. The Bedouins could not exploit the only valid social lift, represented by the enrollment in the Armed Forces, nor did they benefit from the policy of liberalization of the economy (the Infitah launched in the mid-1970s by the then President Anwar Sadat) as they were also discriminated as manpower. The recourse to the informal economy (especially smuggling and trafficking to the Gaza Strip and Israel) has been severely repressed, thus restricting revenues from what, in effect, constitutes the main source of income for an important share of the local population. This has fueled a deep resentment towards the central authorities and, consequently, has fostered the establishment of Salafism, arrived in the Peninsula both with numerous Palestinian preachers, and with the influx of ex-combatants from the theaters of global jihad (Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia).

Against this background, the transition from ABM to WS was characterized by a profound questioning of the same tribal structures that, up to that moment, had allowed the Qaedist groups to operate in the area and to find a solid base of support above all between the Sawarka, Tarabin and Masaid tribes. By replicating the same strategy used also in other contexts, such as in the Syrian-Iraqi one, the local branch of Daesh has systematically tried to disarticulate tribal hierarchies, leveraging the ambitions of the youngest and triggering a veritable generational conflict. In this way, WS was also able to accelerate already existing trends, such as replacing customary Bedouin law ('urf) with Islamic law (shari'a) declined according to the rigid Salafi-jihadist interpretation¹³⁸, the growing sectarian conflict between Salafist components and Sufi communities¹³⁹, and the mixture of purely religious reasons and the attractiveness of the economic and status advantages deriving from the acquisition of leading roles in the management of illicit traffics.

Despite the fact that WS has started from the very beginning a tough campaign of targeted killings against tribal leaders less inclined to support the organization¹⁴⁰, also sparking condemnation from some tribal councils, the level of cooperation between the Sinai tribes and the Egyptian security forces has not really improved. Even with the most massive counter-terrorism operation in the Peninsula, called Sinai 2018 and launched in February that year¹⁴¹, authorities in Cairo failed to regain effective control of the territory, especially in the desert and mountainous areas of central Sinai. This suggests that the support of many tribes to WS has remained substantially intact,

¹³⁸ See M. R. Revkin, *Triadic Legal Pluralism in North Sinai: A Case Study of State, Shari'a, and 'Urf Courts in Conflict and Cooperation*, *Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law*, 13 (2014), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3dk1k686>.

¹³⁹ The most striking example of the sectarian inclination displayed by WS is the attack on the al-Rawda mosque on 24 November 2017, when a Daesh commando caused over 300 deaths with an ambush in the holy place during Friday prayers. The mosque was frequented by affiliates of the Jaririya, one of the most widespread Sufi orders in northern Sinai. *Egypt attack: Gunmen kill 235 in Sinai mosque*, BBC, 24 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42110223>.

¹⁴⁰ A. Z. Shallata, *Conflict Flares Between Sinai Tribes and the Islamic State*, Atlantic Council, 3 May 2017, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/conflict-flares-between-sinai-tribes-and-islamic-state>.

¹⁴¹ *Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018*, State Information Service, 11 February 2018, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/124521?lang=en-us>.

guaranteeing the group room for maneuver, logistical support, recruitment and funding deriving from the exploitation of illicit trafficking. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that, even after the territorial collapse of Daesh in Syria and Iraq, WS might manage to keep its capacitive level intact, and consequently the degree of attractiveness both to the local population and to a part of the IS fighters that could flow into the Sinai, transforming such an ungoverned space into a regional hub of jihadism.

Unlike WS, after having been substantially expelled from the Sinai, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis had to reshape its recruitment basin to balance lessened contacts with the Bedouin tribes of the Peninsula. Its relocation in peripheral areas near the border with Libya, in the western Egyptian desert, and in Upper Egypt, allowed the Qaedist organization to benefit from the support of similar jihadist groups, starting from the network of Ansar al-Sharia - Libya and from the jihadist scene in Derna, Libya¹⁴². In addition, the polarization of global jihadism along the al-Qaeda / Daesh dichotomy has brought several minor Sinai jihadist groups, including the al-Furqan Brigades, closer to ABM.

In consolidating its redeployment, ABM has been able to count on several cells already operating for some time in the Nile Valley and in the Delta area. As regards the dynamics of radicalization more closely, the presence inside these groups of several former members of the Egyptian security forces and armed forces must be underlined. In fact, it is thanks to the ability to recruit policemen, officers and even members of the Special Forces that ABM has succeeded in carrying out sophisticated actions such as the attack against Lieutenant Colonel Mohamed Mabruk, a high-level official at the Ministry of the Interior, the explosive attacks against the headquarters of the Directorate for Security of Mansura and Cairo, and the assault on a unit of the Egyptian Navy patrol near the port of Damietta, all prior to the split with WS¹⁴³. However, this ability has also been preserved later on, as demonstrated by the ambush against an Egyptian police convoy at the Bahariya oasis in October 2017, in which played a leading role the jihadist militants Hisham Ashmawi, a former member of the Egyptian Special Forces, and Said Abu Hatem Emad al-Din Abd al-Hamid, an officer from the ranks of the Armed Forces¹⁴⁴. In 2017 alone, a few dozen former police

¹⁴² The level of cooperation between ABM and the jihadist groups of eastern Libya has clearly emerged with the attack at the Bahariya oasis, in the western Egyptian desert, which took place in October 2017. In fact, the porosity of the border has allowed ABM, initially, to obtain a logistical background in Libya from which to launch attacks in Egypt, and secondly to install advanced training camps and bases in Egyptian territory. In addition, the mastermind of the Bahariya attack, Hisham Hashmawi, was captured in October 2018 in Derna, during an operation conducted by the forces of General Khalifa Haftar. *Libyan forces capture Egyptian jihadist Hisham Ashmawi*, BBC, 8 October 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45789449>.

¹⁴³ ABM can count on both former military personnel who defected, and a network of informants made up of radicalized officers still in service. See M. Awad, S. Tadros, *Bay'a Remorse? Wilayat Sinai and the Nile Valley*, CTC Sentinel 8: 8 (August 2015), <https://ctc.usma.edu/baya-remorse-wilayat-sinai-and-the-nile-valley/>.

¹⁴⁴ Although indicated as the leader of Ansar al-Islam, an obscure group that appeared in the chronicles only after the Bahariya bombing, both Ashmawi and Abd al-Hamid had been militants in ABM in Sinai and have probably maintained these contacts even after leaving the Peninsula. O. Said, *The fall of*

and military officers, including officers and staff with specific training for counter-terrorism activities, would have defected to ABM and related groups¹⁴⁵. A similar level of infiltration in the security apparatus and in the Armed Forces can favor the radicalization of Egyptian officers on a larger scale, in addition to weakening the counter-and anti-terrorism activities of the central authorities.

Vulnerability: the future trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood

On the basis of what has been said so far, as regards the dynamics of radicalization, the main vulnerability in the Egyptian context is represented by the possible repercussions of the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood by the central authorities, with a more massive and systematic passage of its affiliates from the simple clandestine state to actual subversive and violent activities.

Although in the last 5 years the number of Muslim Brothers who have been among the ranks of insurgent or jihadist organizations has been all in all limited¹⁴⁶, it cannot be ruled out that the intertwining of the closure of every political space, state repression, and worsening of the living conditions for broad sections of the population, may contribute to favoring the use of armed struggle, considered as the only alternative solution left, and to broaden the area of contiguity and popular support of insurgent groups. In particular, the risk of this occurring appears rather concrete in the region of Upper Egypt, traditionally a stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood and among the most disadvantaged areas of the country from a social and economic point of view.

In this context, the variables that can most influence the level of risk are the widening of the internal fracture of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership and the increase in cases of radicalization in prison of its affiliates.

As regards the first point, it must be emphasized that the dismissal of the former President Morsi and the subsequent repression carried out by the state led to the emergence of profound disagreements within the Brotherhood about the strategy to follow in such a complex phase for the organization. Specifically, its leadership split along generational lines. The old levers of the Brotherhood, represented by the members of the Guidance Office such as Mahmoud Ezzat, Mahmoud Ghozlan, Ibrahim Mounir and Mahmoud Hussein, preferred to opt for a non-violent attitude. This faction judged the political cost of an open confrontation as excessive, taking into account the most relevant historical precedents (the struggle against Nasser in Egypt

Hesham Ashmawy: *A journey that began in Egypt and ended in Libya*, Mada Masr, 9 October 2018, <https://madamasr.com/en/2018/10/09/feature/politics/the-fall-of-hesham-Ashmawy-a-journey-that-began-in-egypt-and-ended-in-libya/>.

¹⁴⁵ *Egypt's ex-army officers pose growing security threat*, Reuters, 30 January 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-security-military-insight/egypts-ex-army-officers-pose-growing-security-threat-idUSKBN1FJ1V8>.

¹⁴⁶ G. Fahmi, *Why Aren't More Muslim Brothers Turning to Violence?*, Chatham House, 27 April 2017, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/why-aren-t-more-muslim-brothers-turning-violence>.

in the mid-1950s, but also the repression suffered by the Syrian branch of the Brotherhood between the late 1970s and the early 80s). On the contrary, many members of the new generations of affiliates, led among others by Mohamed Kamal, have advocated the choice of a strategy of friction that relies on the limited use of violence. This latter faction in 2016 managed to take control of the executive bodies of the Egyptian Brotherhood, while the older leaders tried to contain it by taking away resources thanks to the selective management of funding flows.

It cannot be excluded that a further repressive push by the authorities, as well as exemplary punishments imposed in processes of high symbolic value, such as the proceedings against Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie, may trigger a new and wider wave of violence, and definitively shift the internal balance to the organization in favor of the most intransigent wing. Likewise, the possibility that such an outcome will occur even in the absence of precise leadership provisions, or more spontaneously and anarchically, should not be underestimated. In fact, the new generations of affiliates can be influenced more by an increase in social unease, by the feeling of disillusionment with political participation in light of the post-2011 parable of the country, and by the time spent in prisons.

With respect to this last point, it should be emphasized that, in many cases, the circumstances of detention seem to consistently favor the triggering of a path of radicalization¹⁴⁷. This depends above all on the exposure of the Brotherhood affiliates to the Salafist and jihadist preaching, since the prison environment allows frequent and prolonged contacts with prisoners belonging to Daesh, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and other jihadist groups¹⁴⁸. Although reliable data on the phenomenon are not available, according to some direct testimonies the share of prisoners showing signs of radicalization during the period in prison would be around 20%¹⁴⁹. In light of the high number of arrests carried out since the summer of 2013 (about 60,000 until September 2017)¹⁵⁰, it cannot be excluded that a new generation of extremist militants, variously close to jihadism, may emerge from the prisons in the near future, which may pose a formidable threat to the country in the decades to come.

¹⁴⁷ L. Fadel, *As Egypt's Jails Fill, Growing Fears Of A Rise In Radicalization*, 24 August 2016, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/08/24/491170122/as-egypts-jails-fill-growing-fears-of-a-rise-in-radicalization?t=1544549983785>

¹⁴⁸ M. Abduh, *Egypt's Hotbeds of Radicalisation: From Inmate To Jihadist*, Qantara, 8 February 2017, [https://en.qantara.de/content/egypts-hotbeds-of-radicalisation-from-inmate-to-jihadist?nopaging=1;Regime Repression and Youth Radicalization in Egypt](https://en.qantara.de/content/egypts-hotbeds-of-radicalisation-from-inmate-to-jihadist?nopaging=1;Regime%20Repression%20and%20Youth%20Radicalization%20in%20Egypt), Heinrich Boell Stiftung, March 2017, <https://tn.boell.org/en/2017/03/01/regime-repression-and-youth-radicalization-egypt>.

¹⁴⁹ B. Dooley, *How ISIS Recruits in Egypt's Prisons*, Huffington Post, 23 December 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-isis-recruits-in-egypts-prisons_us_5a3e315be4b0d86c803c71db

¹⁵⁰ J. Hammer, *How Egypt's Activists Became 'Generation Jail'*, The New York Times, 14 March 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/14/magazine/how-egypts-activists-became-generation-jail.html>.

The instability in the Sahel

By Marco Di Liddo (Ce.S.I.)

Unlike the cases dealt with in the previous chapters, the Sahel¹⁵¹ has some peculiar characteristics that distinguish it clearly from the Maghreb region and from the single countries that are part of it. First of all, it is not a single state but a geographical region that extends from one part of the African continent to the other, along the east-west line of the northern hemisphere, close to the Sahara desert, and which includes 12 countries (Libya, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Nigeria, Algeria, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Central African Republic). Secondly, the Sahelian band presents an ethnic-tribal variety superior to that of the Maghreb countries¹⁵², with peoples struggling for self-determination, and conducting for over 50 years armed revolts against central governments for gaining independence. Lastly, the conformation of the territory makes the Sahel a necessary crossroads for commercial routes, both legal and illegal, as well as for transhumance. The presence of two large semi-nomadic ethnic groups, such as the Tuareg and the Fulani, continually looking for new pastures and water sources for their caravans and for their herds in a context of scarce resources due to climate change, feeds conflict with the settled agricultural communities.

All these elements necessarily influence both the mechanisms of radicalisation, which develop through different forms and processes with respect to the Maghreb, and the structure, activities and operative methodologies of jihadist movements, whose main features are fluidity¹⁵³, pragmatism¹⁵⁴ and territorialization¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵¹ The term Sahel derives from the Arabic "Sahil", literally "coast", "edge". In fact, the Sahelian belt represents the natural boundary between the Sahara desert and the Sudanese savannah, as well as the area of climatic transition between the Palearctic and the Afrotropical ecozone, ie the point of passage from the arid desert steppe area to the fertile area of the savannah.

¹⁵² It is worth citing at least the most numerous ethnic and tribal groups, and those with the most dynamic and most relevant political or military agendas for the purposes of this work: the Tuareg (3 million people divided into 7 tribal confederations), the Fulani (40 million people), the Tebu (2.5 million people), the Berbers (35 million people), the Azawagh Arabs (1 million), the Kanuri (12 million). See also C. Leuprecht, P. Roseberry, *Political Demography of conflict in Mali*, Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix, June 2018 https://dandurand.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/05/2018_06_Demographie-politique-Mali_Leuprecht_Roseberry_EN.pdf

¹⁵³ As there is no clear line of demarcation that separates *strictu sensu* jihadist militia from ethnic-based armed gangs and traffickers of weapons, drugs and human beings. This mixture of roles is directly proportional to the mixture of interests between the different groups which, for mutual benefit, need mutual support. See D. Lounnas, *The Transmutation of Jihad Organization in the Sahel and the Regional Security Architecture*, MENARA, April 2018 <https://www.iai.it/en/publicazioni/transmutation-jihadi-organizations-sahel-and-regional-Security-architecture>

¹⁵⁴ Both under the ideological / religious profile and under the operational profile. The path to radicalisation is not characterized by excessive rigidity and must necessarily adapt to the particular geographical and anthropological context of the Sahel. See D. Lounnas, *The Transmutation of Jihad Organization in the Sahel and the Regional Security Architecture*, cited.

Direct threat: jihadist organizations active in the Sahel

Started in the early 2000s thanks to the missions of the Algerian commander of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)¹⁵⁶ Amari Saifi (Abderrazak el-Para), the jihadist penetration in the Sahara-Sahel area was rapid, pragmatic and widespread, until it reached the current level of massive geographical spread and profound influence at political, social and economic levels.

The growth and strength of terrorist movements in the Sahara-Sahel region derives from the intermingling of interconnected economic, political and social factors. From an economic point of view, extremist groups have demonstrated the ability to create a financing system based on the control of illicit traffics¹⁵⁷ (drugs, weapons, archaeological artifacts, ivory, precious materials, human beings) both towards Europe and between different African countries; on the direct taxation of certain activities (breeding, agriculture, fishing, trade); and on the control of natural resources or mechanism for accessing them¹⁵⁸. From the political point of view, the jihadist organizations of the Sahara-Sahel, well before the Islamic State (IS or Daesh), have developed a strongly territorialized model of power, based on the direct administration of the rural areas and the villages placed under their control, thus creating *de facto* emirates in the desert.

At the moment, in the Sahel-Sahara region are active two main terrorist groups, one close to the network of al-Qaeda and the other close to the Islamic State. Both groups are strong and rooted in the rural areas and in minor villages in the Sahelian countries, while maintaining also operational cells and hideouts in the most populous capitals and urban centers across the region.

As for the former, it is the Group for the Support to Islam and the Muslims (GSIM)¹⁵⁹, a genuine jihadist "cartel"¹⁶⁰ that brings together and coordinates the activities of

¹⁵⁵ Taking advantage of the difficulties of controlling the territory by the legitimate governments of the region, the difficult economic conditions of the local populations and the gaps in governance, the jihadist movements have replaced the states, building parallel bureaucracies and alternative welfare services and imposing their authority in the areas of allocation. See D. Lounnas, *Jihadist groups in North Africa and the Sahel: between disintegration, reconfiguration and resilience*, MENARA, October 2018 <https://www.iai.it/it/publicazioni/jihadist-groups-north-africa-and-sahel-between-disintegration-and-reconfiguration>

¹⁵⁶ C. Gyves, C. Wyckoff, *Algerian Groupe Salafiste de la Predication et le Combat (Salafi Group for Call and Combat, GSPC): An Operational Analysis*, Strategic Insights, Volume V, Issue 8 (November 2006), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=467435>

¹⁵⁷ S. B.Gaye, *Connections between Jihadist groups and smuggling and illegal trafficking rings in the Sahel*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Peace and Security Centre of Competence Sub-Saharan Africa 2018 <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/14176.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ International Crisis Group, Africa Report N°254 (2017), *The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North*, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/254-the-social-roots-of-jihadist-violence-in-burkina-faso-s-north.pdf>

¹⁵⁹ *Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM)*, TNT Terrorism Backgrounder, CSIS 2018, <https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/terrorism-backgrounders/jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin>

various organizations and militias. These include the Saharan brigade of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI - BS), the Liberation of Macina Front (FLM), Ansar al-Din (The Protectors of the Faith) and al-Mourabitun (the Sentinels). The leader of the GSIM is Iyad Ag-Ghaly, who also is the commander of Ansar al-Din and has a track record as Osama Bin Laden's historic lieutenant in the region.

AQIM-BS¹⁶¹, commanded by Djamel Okacha (Yahya Abu Hammam), is composed mainly of Algerian militiamen and is active above all in the southern regions of Algeria and Libya, and in northern Mali. It has both operational and logistic tasks, in particular to maintain contacts between the Qaedist leadership of Kabilia and providing assistance to non-Algerian groups part of the regional network.

Ansar al-Din¹⁶² represents the reference group for the Tuaregs of the whole region, especially those of the Kel Adrar tribal confederation of Kidal (Mali) and, partially, for both the Kel Ayr confederation (north of Niger) and the Kel Ajjer confederation (Ghat and Ubari in Libya). The tribal affiliation is Ansar al-Din's point of strength, a group whose control stretches from southeastern Mali (Gao, Kidal) to the Libyan oases of Ghat and Ubari, and Arlit and Agadez in Niger. Moreover, thanks to family ties and tribal identity, Ansar al-Din has extensive contacts with the *passeurs* (migrant smugglers) and with the political and military leaders of non-strictly jihadist insurgent organizations such as Aghali Lambo, Amoumoune Kalakouwa of the Nigerien Movement for Justice (MNG), Achafghi Ag Bohada, Alghabass Ag Intalla and Mohamed Ag Intalla of the High Council for the Unit of the Malian Azawad and Mustafa Salem of the Union of the Libyan militias of Ghat.

The FLM¹⁶³, a formation founded in 2015 between Mali and Burkina Faso, brings under its flag the Fulani ethnic militants from the western and central part of the Sahel. It was led by its spiritual leader Amadou Kouffa (killed in a French raid in November 2018) and by its military commander Abou Yehiya. Just like Ansar al-Din, the FLM also uses tribal networks and parental affiliations to control a large portion of territory between south-western Niger (Tillaberi and Tahoua regions), northern Burkina Faso and the Malian districts south of Gao.

Al-Mourabitun¹⁶⁴ does not have a strong ethnic connotation, but instead gathers militiamen of Tuareg, Hausa, Fulani, Berber and Arab ethnicity. In the context of the groups that are part of GSIM, al-Mourabitun is certainly the most active and dangerous by virtue of its transversal presence in the Sahelian territory, and due to its

¹⁶⁰ H. Cherbib, *Jihadism in the Sahel: Exploiting Local Disorders*, Strategic Sectors | Security & Politics 2018

https://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxius-adjunts/anuari/med.2018/Jihadism_Sahel_Hamza_Cherbib_Medyearbook2018.pdf

¹⁶¹ *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*, Council on Foreign Relations, 27 /3/ 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb>

¹⁶² *Ansar Dine*, Mapping militant organisations, Stanford University, 11/8/2016, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/437>

¹⁶³ *Macina Liberation Movement / Macina Liberation Front (MLF)*, TRAC, 2018, <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/macina-liberation-movement>

¹⁶⁴ *Al-Mourabitoun*, Counter extremism project, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-mourabitoun>

involvement both in illicit traffics and in activities with political goals (attacks, kidnappings). It must not be underestimated his leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar's contribution to structuring the group and spreading its influence. Better known as Mr. Marlboro or the Inafferrabile or the One-eyed Sheikh, Belmokhtar is emir, a trafficker and the founder of the narco-jihadist model in its own right¹⁶⁵.

Overall, the GSIM relies on a hard core pool of around 1,000/1,200 fighters. However, this figure should not be misleading, since it does not include traffickers and their armed gangs and, above all, because it does not consider the ability to enlarge the organization's ranks in times of need thanks to the ability to mobilize ethnic or local militias.

As for the network close to the Islamic State, it is composed of two main ramifications: the Province of the Greater Sahara (Wilayat Sahara, or Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, ISGS) and the Province of West Africa (Wilayat Sudan, or Islamic State in West Africa, ISWA, better known as Boko Haram)¹⁶⁶. It should be emphasized that, at the present moment, Daesh network is inferior in terms of numbers, capabilities and resources (be it human, material or financial) to the one close to al-Qaeda.

The ISGS was originated in 2015 as a splinter group of the then Movement for the Uniqueness of God and the Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO, which later became al-Mourabitun). It gathers those rebel militiamen not absorbed by other organizations, regardless of their ethnicity. The element that distinguishes ISGS from its regional competitors is the presence of a high number of Saharawi fighters, among which its leader Abu Walid al-Sahraoui stands out. ISGS is active throughout the Sahel, particularly in southern Mali, Burkina Faso and the Nigerien regions of Tillaberi and Tahoua¹⁶⁷.

The placement of the ISWA / Boko Haram¹⁶⁸, which recruits mainly Fulani and Kanuri militants and is active in southern Niger, north-eastern Nigeria, northern Cameroon and in the Lake Chad region, appears to be more complex. In fact, at the moment the leadership of the jihadist movement is split between the loyalists of the Emir Abubakar

¹⁶⁵ This refers to the overlap of operations and interests between jihadist militants and traffickers. This mixture has become so profound that these groups have become indistinguishable from one another. In short, thanks to interpretations of the Koran and *fatwas* that allow practices otherwise forbidden (such as trafficking, handling of drugs) for political purposes (ie, weakening the enemies), the jihadist militiamen have been authorized to undertake such illegal activities. See W. Lacher, *Organized crime and conflict in the Sahel-Sahara region*, Carnegie Endowment, September 2012, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf

¹⁶⁶ J. Warner, *Sub-Saharan Africa's Three "New" Islamic State Affiliates*, CTC Sentinel, January 2017, Volume 10, <https://ctc.usma.edu/sub-saharan-africas-three-new-islamic-state-affiliates/>

¹⁶⁷ In these regions the group perpetrated its most sensational attack, namely the ambush on the joint Niger-US patrol in Tongo Tongo, occurred on 4 October 2017, which caused the death of 4 US Green Berets.

¹⁶⁸ F. C. Onuoha, S. Oyewole, *Anatomy of Boko Haram: "The Rise and Decline of a Violent Group in Nigeria"*, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2018, http://studies.aljazeera.net/mritems/Documents/2018/4/23/4f179351e3244e1882a6033e0bf43d89_100.pdf

Shekau, married to one of the 4 daughters of the founder Mohamed Yussuf, and the loyalists of Abu Musab al-Barnawi, himself Yussuf's son.

As in the case of the GSIM, also for the organizations affiliated to the Islamic State it is difficult to draw up an estimate of the number of militiamen, which is subjected to sudden increases. The ISGS has about 400/500 men, while Boko Haram appears to be able to mobilize between 2,000 and 8,000 militiamen.

Under the operational profile, the GSIM, the ISGS and the ISWA share the same tactics. These jihadist organizations can take advantage of popular support and territorial control in rural areas, obtain military and logistical support from non-extremist ethnic militias, conduct complex attacks in rural areas, in small villages, as well as in large cities. Their targets are multifaceted and range from the symbols of state power (institutions, Armed Forces, prominent personalities) to those of foreign power, especially from the West (institutional, citizens, economic infrastructure).

Indirect threat: structural problems and ethnic-tribal nationalisms as potential drivers of radicalisation

The mechanisms of radicalisation in the Sahel belt are inevitably influenced by the social structure of the region, centered on ethnic-tribal belonging, by economic problems, such as underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment, and by the inefficiency of the states of the region, whose institutions are too fragile to control the entirety of their territory, too lacking in resources to be able to provide adequate humanitarian assistance programs, and too corrupt and self-referential to guarantee adequate mechanisms of democratic, free and transparent participation to national political life.

In this context, two further long-standing political and identity dynamics overlap, specifically the struggles for the self-determination of those ethnic minorities that aim to create independent states (the Tuaregs) or to obtain greater autonomy within the existing governmental structures (the Kanuri), or to achieve better protection of one's economic rights (the Fulani).

The Sahel is among the poorest regions in the world. Over 78% of people in Niger, Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso live in poverty and the number of poor people in Niger and Mali is likely to increase over the next 20 years. As evidence of these critical points, there are numerous indicators, starting with the United Nations Human Development Index, which ranks some of the Sahel countries among the lowest ones at global level (Nigeria is 157th out of 189 countries, Senegal 164th, Mali 182nd, Burkina Faso 183rd, Chad 186th, Niger 189th)¹⁶⁹. Likewise, Freedom House's Freedom Index lists these countries as "partially free"¹⁷⁰, while Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2017 defines them as "strongly corrupt"¹⁷¹. Finally, according to the

¹⁶⁹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

¹⁷⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>

¹⁷¹ https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017#table

World Food Program, over 11 million people in the region suffer from food insecurity and malnutrition¹⁷². This situation is destined to worsen due to the devastating impact of climate change which, starting in the 1970s, has significantly reduced water resources and fertile lands, aggravating the problems related to their exploitation, conflicts between different communities (farmers and semi-nomads shepherds) and the level of humanitarian emergency.

In such a context, jihadist organizations were able to make up for the shortcomings of central governments and the difficulties of intervention of international organizations both in security (stabilization missions) and humanitarian matters. The jihadist movements, both belonging to the network of the Islamic State and to that of al-Qaeda, have presented themselves to the local population and ethnic minorities as the only interlocutors able to listen to their requests, solve their problems and support their political agendas. In fact, the GSIM, the ISGS and the ISWA have built alternative and more efficient welfare systems than those of the legitimate states, distributing basic necessities, guaranteeing employment opportunities (through recruitment in the militias), offering free and accessible education to all (through the networks of radical imams and ulemas), and defended the economic rights of the most vulnerable communities, starting with Fulani semi-nomadic shepherds.

In parallel with this humanitarian action, supported by the proceeds derived from illicit trafficking and collaboration with traffickers, the jihadist organizations absorbed, manipulated and rekindled the old nationalist narratives of marginalized minorities, offering political and logistical support to the political claims of some minorities, starting with the Kanuri and the Tuareg. Posing as legitimate heirs of the emirates and Islamic kingdoms that existed before the second wave of European colonization (19th century), the terrorist movements have advocated the cause of "peoples without a nation", launching a new wave of struggles for liberation against sovereign states and their Western allies (Europe and the United States above all), and turning the traditional anti-colonial pushes into local fronts of the global jihad. In this dynamics, their activities in proselytizing and radicalizing national political agendas was favored by the everlasting anti-Western sentiment that still permeates African societies.

Therefore, on the basis of these considerations, it is clear that, in the Sahel, jihadist radicalization processes follow a logic devoid of religious fanaticism or ideological extremism *per se*. On the contrary, these processes are the ultimate manifestation of a decades-long socio-economic hardship. In fact, in this context a Sufi brand of Islam, or an Islam deeply influenced by local beliefs and practices, is followed by the majority of the population, thus presenting characteristics very far from the orthodoxy of Salafism and Wahhabism¹⁷³. Ultimately, one can speak of a mechanism of "functional radicalisation" or "pragmatist radicalisation", in the sense that most members of

¹⁷² <http://www1.wfp.org/emergencies/sahel-emergency>

¹⁷³ Two conservative schools of Islamic thought that support the need to return to the Islam of the origins and to the literal interpretation of the sacred Book. Both Salafism and Wahhabism are considered the ideological / theological bases of jihadism.

jihadist organizations decide to join these groups not for religious or ideological reasons, but as a matter of survival or for material benefits. In this sense, in the Sahel, jihadism is nourished by the advantages that terrorist organizations are able to guarantee to members in terms of food supplies, work, access to natural resources and support for political demands. Thus, around a nucleus of ideologically mature radicalized people there is a huge network of facilitators, guerrillas, militia leaders, criminals and various types of adherents who initially adhere to the jihadist cause exclusively because it defends their interests. The ideological maturation and the completion of the path of radicalisation can take place at a later stage and for the most predisposed subjects, thus saturating the cultural context of belonging with the jihadist propaganda or inculcating in the young generations the seeds of fanaticism.

Therefore, based on these considerations, it is possible to identify the mechanisms of radicalization of the individual ethnic-tribal groups mentioned previously. For example, the radicalisation of the Tuaregs is particularly evident in the tribal confederation of Kidal, the Kel Ifoghas, since the latter sought the support of jihadist movements in the independence struggle against the Bamako authorities¹⁷⁴. As a result, Ansar al-Din is nothing more than a Tuareg nationalist movement that aims at creating a Tuareg emirate in the Sahara desert. Likewise, Boko Haram has achieved so many proselytes because it has built an effective welfare network among the Kanuri population of the Borno State (northern Nigeria)¹⁷⁵. Finally, the FLM and the ISGS gained the favor of the Fulani semi-nomadic shepherds because they were able to support their claims against the agricultural communities regarding the exploitation of the fertile lands and of the disputed water basins¹⁷⁶.

Vulnerability: the persistence of radicalisation factors, the influx of militants from the Maghreb and the difficulties in policies to counter the phenomenon

Although the number of jihadist militants who are maturely radicalised is fairly small in the Sahel (around 1,200 men), the social, political and economic characteristics of the region, the enduring factors of radicalisation and the operational flexibility of terrorist movements, are likely to increase the number of subjects which, following different paths, could embrace this subversive ideology.

In fact, if "functional radicalization" is nothing but a concrete response to the political, economic and social discontent of minorities (both ethnic and non-ethnic), subordinated and marginalized, the resilience of these vulnerabilities is inevitably

¹⁷⁴ O. Ba, *Tuareg Nationalism and Cyclical Pattern of Rebellions: How the past and present explain each other*, Sahel Research Group, Working Paper No. 007, March 2014, https://sites.clas.ufl.edu/sahelresearch/files/Ba_Tuareg-Nationalism_final.pdf

¹⁷⁵ U. Salifu, M.Ewi, *Boko Haram and violent extremism*, ISS, Policy Brief 97, February 2017 https://www.africaportal.org/documents/16817/policybrief97_1.pdf

¹⁷⁶ *If victims become perpetrators. Factors contributing to vulnerability and resilience to violent extremism in the central Sahel*, International Alert 2018, https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Sahel_VulnerabilityResilienceViolentExtremism_EN_2018.pdf

destined to increase the spectrum and the potential of the mechanisms of adherence to jihadism.

SECTION 2

POTENTIAL RISKS FOR EUROPE AND ITALY

Italy and the long wave of North African radicalism

By Gabriele Iacovino (Ce.S.I.)

Since 2011, thousands of people have left their country of origin to travel to Syria or Iraq and join the Islamic State (IS or Daesh). The group has attracted about 40,000 so-called foreign fighters, a much higher number than the other "great" mobilizations of international jihadism, that is those during the war in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989, the war in Bosnia in the 90s, the war in Afghanistan since 2001 and the one in Iraq in 2003. One of the largest recruitment basins was certainly North Africa, where, not only were there departures of fighters towards the "Levant", but also of movements "internal" to the region, with a large number of jihadists who went to Libya after the creation of various *enclaves* controlled by IS.

With the territorial defeat of Daesh, the countries of North Africa are now having to manage the mass of returning foreign fighters among many security-related problems. Moreover, given the difficult situation of stability and control by central authorities, Libya could become one of the favorite places of destination for Daesh fighters fleeing from Syria and Iraq. The attacks at the Christmas markets in Berlin in 2016 and at the concert in Manchester in 2017 have already showed some ties between European and North African jihadism, and especially Libyan. The territorial contiguity with Europe and, above all, with Italy, makes the threat coming from the conspicuous number of returnees of primary importance for the security of the Old Continent and of our country.

Foreign fighters can be briefly defined as individuals who freely choose to travel to a country, different from that of their nationality, to join a non-state group of insurgents in a conflict situation. To date, despite all the difficulties associated with finding official information, there are more or less reliable estimates regarding the numbers of North African foreign fighters. From Tunisia about 3,000 people left for Iraq and Syria, from Morocco 1,600 and at least 600 from Egypt. For the abovementioned reasons, the most difficult contingent to identify is that of the Libyans, that should be around 600 units. A very small number, instead, is that of the Algerians, around 200 individuals¹⁷⁷.

The North African foreign fighters did not travel exclusively to Iraq and Syria, but they also chose Libya as destination from 2014 onwards. Indeed, from the very beginning of this latest wave of mobilization, Libya has become one of the main regional hubs for convey the flows of jihadists towards the territories of the Islamic State. Easy to reach and haunted by a profound lack of territorial control by national authorities along the borders, especially the Tunisian one, Libya has become exponentially more attractive given the increasing difficulties to travel to Syria and Iraq. Between 1,300 and 3,400

¹⁷⁷ Richard Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*, The Soufan Center, October 2017, <https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v3.pdf>

foreign fighters have reached Libya from 2011 to the present, with the Tunisians being the biggest component (around 1,000 / 1,500). A much smaller number of foreign fighters joined the "Sinai Province" of the Islamic State.

As for the returnees, the most reliable sources estimate the Tunisians at 800, the Moroccans at 220 and the Algerians at 87 at least, that is around 25, 13 and 33 per cent of the total contingents headed to Syria and Iraq¹⁷⁸. As for Libya, given the strategic importance of the country in the current international jihadist context and the relative ease of entry and exit from its territory, it is assumed that a large number of Libyan and not Libyan foreign fighters have returned. However, in this case estimates cannot be considered reliable due to the extreme difficulty in obtaining solid intels. Moreover, regardless of the numbers that can be obtained from the data provided by the various national authorities, in Libya as in the other North African countries, there is a high probability that many foreign fighters have returned through clandestine channels, following the same routes used to reach the battlefields of Daesh (the Tunisians through Libya, or the Egyptians through Libya or Sudan).

The returnees disillusioned with the Islamic State or monitored by security services do not pose a serious security risk, of course. On the contrary, those who have returned home to make available their experience and their network acquired on the battlefield. Moreover, ties between various local jihadi groups will most likely benefit from these presences, as well as from the experience gained within IS. An example of this can be the region along the border between Libya and Tunisia, where the vast majority of Tunisian foreign fighters have moved through the Libyan territory, both for a mere "logistical" reason and for a real training period, before arriving in Syria. If we add to this the porosity of the border, we can imagine what the future implications might be for the development of a network between the different jihadist groups that are active inside these two countries. Furthermore, there is the possibility that many jihadists, unable to return to their country of origin, chose to redirect to the strongholds of Daesh in North Africa, Sinai and Libya.

The presence of such a high number of returning foreign fighters and the emerging contiguity of the groups between Libya and Tunisia is one of the main risks for Italian security that originate from North Africa. This is because, in a North African jihadist universe in evident reorganization under the dual guideline al-Qaeda / Daesh, entry into European territory to hit potential targets represents a possible priority objective. In this strategy, an affordable entry point, for geographical proximity, is certainly Italy, also in light of the increasingly frequent and documented episodes in our country regarding the so-called "phantom disembarkations". This term refers to the phenomenon of migrant arrivals on Italian coasts through small private boats that illegally transport foreign citizens, then supported by an "informal" network for entry into Italy.

The main routes are two: one from Tunisia, mainly directed toward Sicily, which connects the promontory of Capo Bon and the coastal area near Trapani and

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Agrigento. The other route starts from the southern coast of Turkey to reach the area near Syracuse, the Ionian Calabria or the Salento. As for the case we will be examining here, the route coming from the Tunisian coasts, the means of transportation are wooden boats or fast inflatable boats with very powerful outboard engines, or merchant ships that arrive in the proximity of the coast, transfer migrants to smaller boats, and then disappear again on the high seas. According to some estimates provided by the Italian police forces, there would have been about 240 disembarkments in 2017-2018, for a total of at least 7,700 migrants, almost all Tunisians. The main problem, however, is linked to the fact that, according to the statements from the Public Prosecutor's office of Palermo, just as many disembarkments might not have been actually intercepted, thus resulting in a large number of irregular arrivals on the Italian territory that are totally out of control of the authorities¹⁷⁹.

According to the information available so far, these traffic should not have a criminal support network in Italy to rely on, except for organizations that exploit these maritime routes not for illegal immigration, but for the international trafficking of drugs and illicit tobacco. In fact, it would seem that the illegal arrivals are mostly managed independently by Tunisian maritime workers who exploit their knowledge and means to organize these trades, also thanks to the help of their personal connections within the Tunisian communities, for example in Trapani or Mazzara¹⁸⁰. According to one of the latest investigations by the Palermo district attorney, called ABIAD, which led to the arrest of 15 suspects (12 Tunisians, one Moroccan and two Italians), some connections were found between these illicit trade routes and the jihadist world¹⁸¹. Indeed, Khaled Ounich succeeded in avoiding arrest. Ounich is a Tunisian accused of aiding and abetting illegal immigration and smuggling tobacco, and even for instigating acts of terrorism. On his Facebook profile the investigators found numerous posts praising martyrdom in the name of Allah and several videos from Daesh propaganda. The ABIAD investigation started with statements from a "repentant", Arbi Ben Said, himself a Tunisian, arrested in 2016 for drug trafficking. Speaking with the investigators in the prison of Genoa where he is detained, Ben Said declared that he wanted to take over the information in his possession for the risk that, in the illegal trafficking of tobacco, drugs and illegal immigration in which he was involved, some subjects with links to the world of jihadism could have been transported to Italy¹⁸². In his words, in fact, the illegal immigrants transported could

¹⁷⁹ F. Patané, *Sbarchi fantasma di migranti: in Sicilia in 16 mesi almeno 7.700 arrivi*, Repubblica, 17 December 2018,

https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/12/17/news/sbarchi_fantasma_di_migranti_in_sicilia_in_16_mesi_almeno_7_700_arrivi-214446003/

¹⁸⁰ Ce.S.I. discussion with Europol officials, July 2018.

¹⁸¹ *Operazione "Abiad" contro terrorismo, clandestini e contrabbando*, La Stampa, 9 January 2019, <https://www.lastampa.it/2019/01/09/italia/operazione-abiad-contro-terrorismo-clandestini-e-contrabbando-yVz0RtOBz2vBoWgK8Me7pN/pagina.html>

¹⁸² *"Così funzionano gli sbarchi fantasma di migranti", parla il pentito della Jihad. "Tra i migranti anche potenziali terroristi", il pentito della Jihad spiega gli "sbarchi fantasma"*, Palermo Today, 9 January 2019, <https://www.palermotoday.it/cronaca/immigrazione-clandestina-terrorismo-arresti-9-gennaio-2019-pentito.html>

be either with a clean or not clean criminal record. This would be verified by the network that manages the departures from the coasts of Tunisia when illegal immigrants present documents to organize the trip. The information would be useful to the traffickers to establish the price of the trip: 5,000 dinars for the uncensored, 10,000 for those who had problems with justice. Ben Said allegedly said that on one occasion he listened to some conversations with the traffickers who spoke of a flight of a rubber boat carrying "tramps", a term that would indicate affiliates of jihadist groups.

In light of the increasingly numerous return of foreign fighters to North Africa and the reorganization of networks in the region, there could be a risk that these routes could be used to infiltrate individuals in Italy and Europe with the objective of creating or reviving an operating network, or a network devoted to radicalization acts. Obviously, from this point of view, the entry on the Italian territory of individuals with previous experience on the Syrian-Iraqi battlefield would lead to a further increase of the threat. In fact, these individuals, if still sticking by the cause and convinced of the "mission" of radicalization, would become a pole of attraction for an underworld where the jihadist message finds fertile ground to take root and to enhance the radicalization process. In addition, in the case of operational experiences, there would also be an additional risk for a transfer of skills to Italy and Europe, that have the potential of leading to more complex attacks.

The potential entry of these subjects from North Africa would increase the threat from "Italian" foreign fighters who have returned or would like to return to our country. Of the 138 individuals that left our country for Syria and Iraq, 10 have returned to Italy¹⁸³. Among these, there are elements considered at risk, such as the case of the Algerian Mourad Sadaoui, who left Italy in 2013 and returned between the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018. Since then, investigators had started to search for him because Sadaoui was wanted for terrorism by the Algerian judicial authority (Constantine court), and he was included in the list of 200 Algerian foreign fighters¹⁸⁴. The search ended at the beginning of March 2019 with the capture of Sadaoui in Campania, in the province of Naples.

Therefore, in addition to the returnees who left Italy and then returned, or would like to return to our country since they still have family or friendship ties, the attention is focused on those who want to return to Europe and could use the Italian territory as an entry point toward other countries in the Old Continent. Regardless of the movements, the question of monitoring returnees is of primary importance to counteract an increase in the terrorist threat on European soil. Against this background, in light of the elements discussed above, we should also consider that the dangers coming from North Africa may result in a typology of operations no longer linked solely and exclusively to networks based on bonds of personal

¹⁸³ G. Longo, "Giusto giudicare i terroristi nei tribunali dei Paesi d'origine", *La Stampa*, 19 February 2019, p.8.

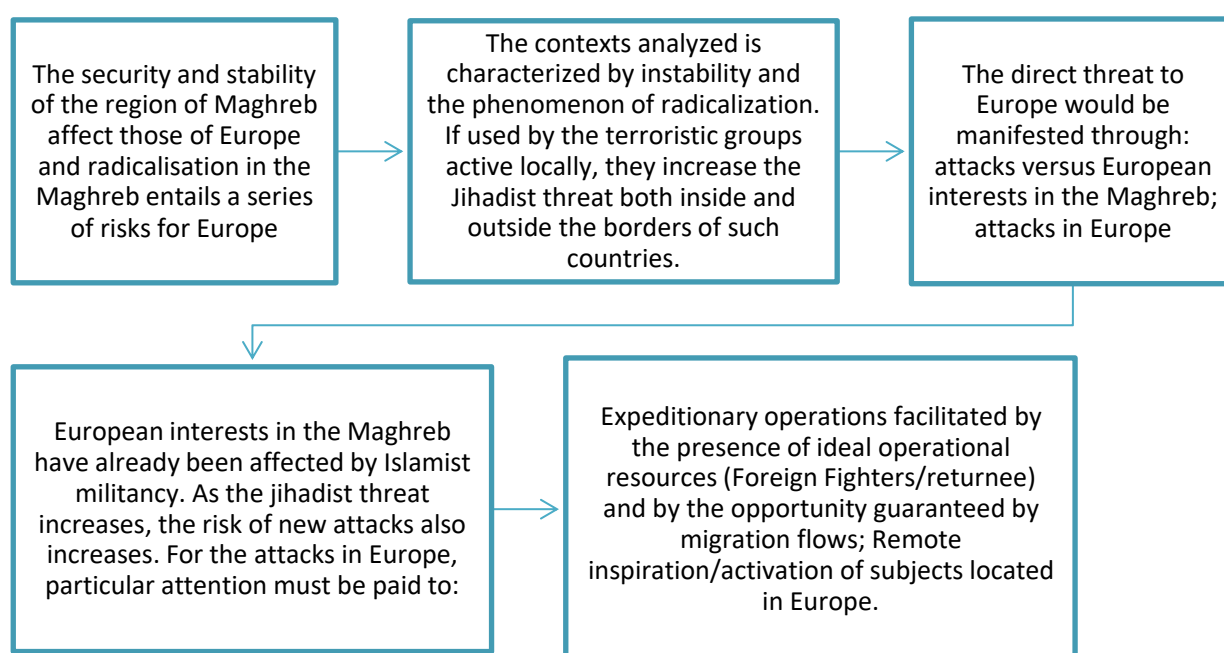
¹⁸⁴ *Terrorista arrestato ad Acerra: ha combattuto in Siria con l'Isis*, *Repubblica*, 1 March 2019, https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/03/01/news/terrorismo_algerino_arrestato_dalla_polizia-220441573/

connections and kinship within the communities of second or third generation migrants, but also a new typology, characterised by a strengthening or even the creation of new networks. In fact, this would result from the arrival in Italy and on the European soil of individuals with a past experience as foreign fighters and able to transfer these experiences and radicalizing messages in our country.

Radicalisation in the Maghreb and potential risks for Europe

By Marco Maiolino (ITSTIME)

The revolutionary phenomenon of globalization, sparked off at the end of the Second World War, transformed the world into a complex system of interdependencies¹⁸⁵ capable of connecting the entire international reality and generating the so-called Global Systemic Risk¹⁸⁶. The latter's underlying logic is as follow: although an event occurs within a defined context¹⁸⁷, the effects it produces have repercussions far beyond the mere borders of that context.



On this basis, it is appropriate to start by considering that the Maghreb region is only 14 kilometres from the European coasts. This geographical proximity makes it a strategic gateway to Europe. Moreover, the European Union (EU), through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and more precisely the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), is bilaterally engaged with the Maghreb states at a political, economic, social and cultural level "to create an area of peace, stability, security and

¹⁸⁵ A. Iriye, *Global interdependence: the world after 1945*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014

¹⁸⁶ M.A. Centeno, M.Nag, T.S. Patterson, A. Shaver, A.J. Windawi, *The Emergence of Global Systemic Risk*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 41:65-85, April 2015

¹⁸⁷ In spatio-temporal, social, economic, political, cultural terms, etc.

shared economic prosperity"¹⁸⁸, because the stability and security of the Maghreb can have a major impact on Europe¹⁸⁹.

Following the ratio mentioned above, and for the scope of this report, it is clear that the phenomenon of radicalisation in the Maghreb entails a series of possible risks for Europe.

Radicalisation and jihadist threat

Study of the radicalisation - Milestones

- The fundamental mechanisms of radicalisation are the subject of a scientific dispute;
- Radicalisation can be behavioural (individual commitment to violent actions) and cognitive (adoption and internalisation of violent extremist beliefs). Generally, these two typologies would be associated, but many people manifest behavioural radicalisation without a correspondingly significant degree of cognitive radicalisation and viceversa.;
- The phenomenon of radicalization involves a series of so-called "predictive factors", grouped into 3 main categories: push factors; pull factors; and personal factors. The causal relationship between radicalisation (behavioural/cognitive) and "predictive factors" remains to be clarified;
- "Push factors" are structural problems acting at the level of the context (macro level) such as the state of deprivation of a social group, repression by the state, poverty, unemployment, level and type of education, etc.;
- "Pull factors" are dynamics that act at the group level (meso level) and that make attractive extremist organizations and lifestyles, such as propaganda, peer pressure, the influence of friendship and family ties, forms of emotional and material compensation, etc.;
- "Personal factors" are individual problems (micro level) such as mental health, personality, cognitive structure, demographic characteristics, etc.;
- "Push factors", "pull factors" and "personal factors" would be closely interlinked;

(continued)

¹⁸⁸

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/fiches_techniques/2013/060504/04A_FT\(2013\)060504_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/fiches_techniques/2013/060504/04A_FT(2013)060504_EN.pdf) ; <http://bruegel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/PC-10-2017.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/europes-maghreb-headache>

(continued)

- Radicalisation process takes place mostly within social contexts;
- In its essential mechanisms, radicalisation would emerge as a cross-ideological and global process involving these categories of fundamental ("predictive") factors, in different combinations. Also, these factors and their combinations may differ within different contexts.

In the chapters dedicated to the countries analysed, some structural criticalities have emerged. In addition to promoting widespread instability at both local and regional level, this criticalities would act as possible drivers of Islamist radicalisation. Instability and radicalization which, if adequately exploited and polarized by the jihadist groups active locally, would increase the danger both within their specific operative contexts and – in light of their current affiliation to so-called global terrorist organizations, such as al- Qaeda and Daesh – outside these contexts. This represents a direct threat for Europe, that materializes itself in specific risk scenarios.

Attack against European interests in Maghreb

Infrastructure and facilities for energy, mineral resources and the logistics sector;

Diplomatic, commercial, military and humanitarian structures and missions;

Soft target and european citizens.

Attacks in Europe

- Establishment of hubs for the support and design of terror offshore;
- Implementation of the *expeditionary* model;
- Inspiration/remote activation of subjects located in European territory.

Attack against European interests in Maghreb

On 8 May 2018, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) issued a statement in which it threatens terrorist attacks against Western companies operating in North Africa and the Sahel, identifying them as "*legitimate targets for the mujahideen*"¹⁹⁰.

In addition to these Western companies, in the Maghreb region there are also numerous Western/European interests, which are vulnerable to jihadist activity and can be summarised in 3 main categories:

- Infrastructure and facilities for energy, mineral resources and the logistics sector, including related European personnel employed (in ports, airports, infrastructures for the extraction and processing of natural gas and oil, mines, etc.)
- Diplomatic, commercial, military and humanitarian organizations and missions, both governmental and non-governmental, with their operational staff (embassies, consulates, military bases, NGOs, companies, etc.);
- *Soft target* and European citizens (tourist facilities, hotels, commercial areas, tourists, expats, etc.).

Targets like these have often been hit by the Islamist militancy active in the region and, as the local jihadist threat increases, the risk of new attacks would also reasonably increase.

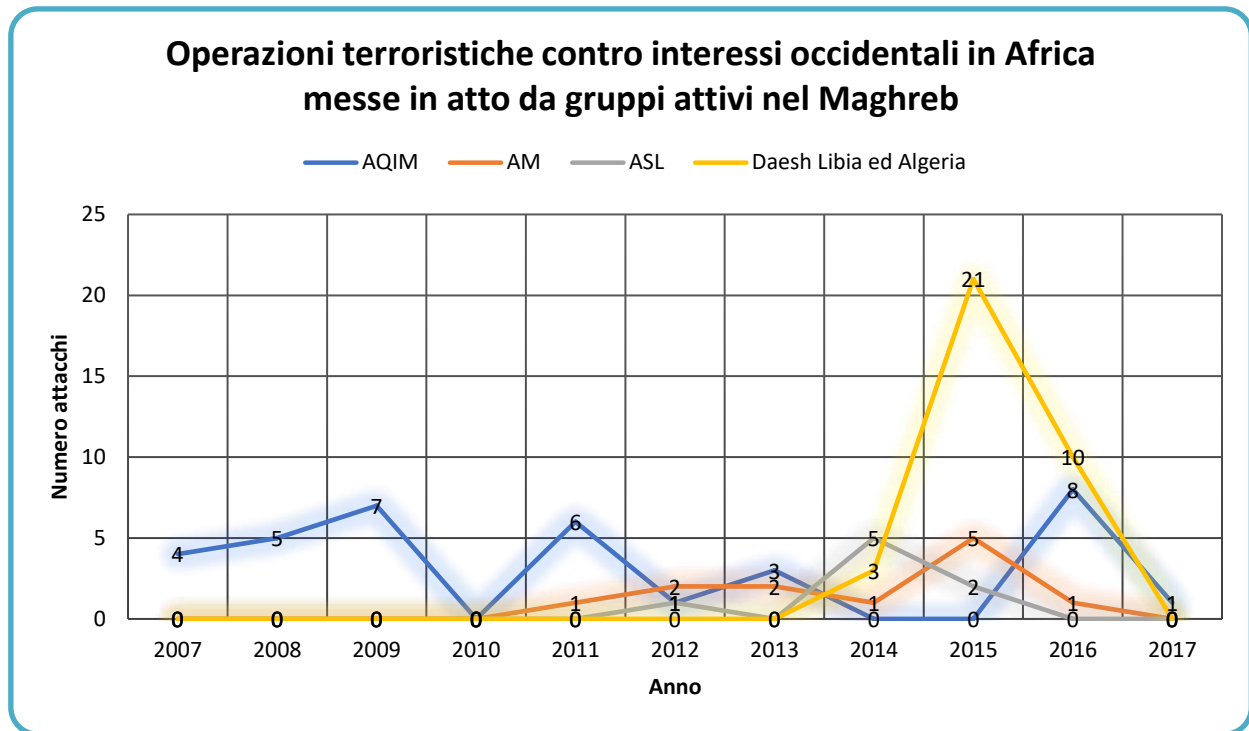
If one considers, for example, only the only terrorist operations - carried out successfully, foiled or failed - perpetrated by organizations active in the Maghreb, such as AQIM, al-Mourabitoun, Ansar al-Sharia - Libya and the Libyan and Algerian branches of the "Caliphate", from 2007 to 2017, the Western interests (belonging to the 3 categories summarized above) located in the areas of operation of these groups have been targeted at least 89 times¹⁹¹ (see graph below).

Moreover, and more generally, from 2007 to 2012 a total of at least 132 attacks against Western interests in Africa were recorded. The number of terrorist attacks in the

¹⁹⁰ "Statement to Reject French and Western Companies and Institutions and to Warn Muslims Working for Them in the Countries of the Islamic Maghreb and the Sahel", al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb, May 8, 2018; see also <https://ctc.usma.edu/renewed-jihadi-terror-threat-mauritania/> ; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-al-qaeda/al-qaeda-branch-threatens-attacks-on-western-companies-in-africa-idUSKBN1I93ES>

¹⁹¹ The figure was obtained from a table representing the total number of terrorist attacks against Western targets located in Africa and divided by responsible jihadist group, published in the report *Evolving Terror The Development of Jihadist Operations Targeting Western Interests in Africa*, authored by Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Jacob Zenn, Sarah Sheaffer, and Sandro Bejdi for the Foundation for Defence of Democracies, February 2018

following 5 years (2012 – 2017) would have almost tripled, reaching 358 incidents and becoming even more sophisticated¹⁹².



Attacks in Europe

The instability created by the various structural problems identified in the different countries analysed in the report reduces the state's ability to adequately control its sovereign territory. This condition, if accompanied by an increase in radicalization¹⁹³, would create the ideal fertile ground for the propagation of Jihadist organizations. In this way, they could benefit from the opportunity to establish bases from which operating at both national and transnational levels. Jihadist organizations would be facilitated, moreover, both by the geographical component, and therefore by the vast rural and desert areas characterizing the Maghreb region, and by the profit of local smuggling¹⁹⁴.

In support of what has just been said, the Libyan example is emblematic: after the fall of Muammar al-Qaddafi in 2011, and the political and security vacuum that ensued, as well as the proliferation of Islamist militias, Daesh has taken advantage of the opportunity to establish a strategic position in the country - using both local and

¹⁹² D. Gartenstein-Ross, J. Zenn, S. Sheaffer, S. Bejdi, *Evolving Terror The Development of Jihadist Operations Targeting Western Interests in Africa*, Foundation for Defence of Democracies, February 2018

¹⁹³ The structural criticalities mentioned have in fact also been identified as possible drivers of radicalisation

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.itstime.it/w/al-qaeda-e-daesh-alleati-in-libia-by-marco-maiolino/>

foreign resources - first in Derna, then in Sirte¹⁹⁵, and finally folding in insurrection and clandestine form in desert areas.

The Libyan base has allowed the terrorist organization to advance its agenda, to finance itself¹⁹⁶ and to plan terrorist actions both inside and outside the country.

In relation to this latter point, the training camps set up by Daesh in the areas of Tripoli and Sabratha have been connected to a series of terrorist operations carried out both in North Africa and in Europe, including¹⁹⁷:

- The attack by Yassine Labidi and Saber Khachnaouial¹⁹⁸ on the Bardo National Museum in Tunis in March 2015;
- Seifiddine Rezgui's attack on the tourist resort of Port El Kantaoui, Sousse, in June 2015;
- Anis Amri's attack on the Breitscheidplatz Christmas markets in Berlin in December 2016;
- Salman Abedi's attack on the Manchester Arena in May 2017

The planning of terror abroad - from Libya - would not have been completed at all in the current post-Caliphate period. In fact, last June, a Gambian citizen, accused of being linked to the Daesh, Sillah Ousman, was arrested in Naples during a joint operation of the Italian police and Carabinieri. Ousman, who was radicalised in North Africa, would have received hard training in mobile jihadist structures located in the Libyan desert and would have arrived in Europe with the objective of carrying out attacks, together with other accomplices including his compatriot Alagie Touray¹⁹⁹, presumably in France or Spain²⁰⁰.

In relation to the possibility of attacks on European soil planned in the Maghreb region, the current threat seems to manifest itself primarily through the implementation of the expeditionary model and the inspiration / remote activation of subjects located on European territory.

¹⁹⁵ J. Pack, R. Smith, K. Mezran, *The Origins and Evolution of ISIS in Libya*, Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council, 2017

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, for example by hijacking a Libyan Central Bank van in Sirte in October 2013, containing approximately 55 million US dollars and local currency, or by taxing private and commercial property

¹⁹⁷ J.Saal, *The Islamic State's Libyan External Operations Hub: The Picture So Far*, Sentinel, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Issue 11, Volume 10, December 2017

¹⁹⁸ A third bomber would still be unknown

¹⁹⁹ https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_aprile_28/touray-prove-fedelta-all-isisil-segno-fronte-l-indice-alzato-5e426018-4ab2-11e8-a20b-2428d6d2b4b0.shtml

²⁰⁰ http://www.ansa.it/campania/notizie/2018/06/25/preso-a-napoli-gambiano-legato-a-isis_60310445-d6a9-4c6c-8c4e-4c2c699fe0d6.html ;
https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/06/25/news/scatta_un_altra_arresto_per_terrorismo_a_due_mesi_dal_fermo_del_cittadino_gambiano-199988664/

Expeditionary model

The so-called expeditionary model means sending trained operational resources within a context to carry out a terrorist attack; this operative template would be one of the trademarks of militant Jihadism in the Middle East and North Africa²⁰¹, and it was recently implemented in exemplary manner, against Europe, in the attack in Paris on 13 November 2015²⁰².

Evaluating the current capacity of Islamist terrorist organizations active in the Maghreb to implement a similar *modus operandi*, in addition to the persistent presence of training facilities in the region - such as the Libyan ones highlighted above - two factors would appear to be decisive: foreign fighters/returnees and migration flows.

The Syrian and Libyan theatres of war attracted an extraordinary global flow of fighters: only Libya, between 2011 and 2017, would have received from 2,584 to 3,437 fighters from at least 36 different nations of the world²⁰³, while the phenomenon of foreign fighters (FFs) has affected the Maghreb region in an extremely significant manner, with at least 5,356 subjects who went to fight for the *jihad* in Iraq and Syria²⁰⁴.

Number of Foreign Fighters who went to fight for jihad in Iraq, Syria and Libya and number of returnees

Countries	FFs who went to Siraq	FFs who went to Libya	Returnees
Libya	600		-
Tunisia	2926	1500	800
Algeria	170	130	87
Morocco	1660	58-300	236
Mauritania	-	10-50	-

Sources: Soufan Group (2017); Washington Institute for Near East Policy (2018)

These trained operational resources would constitute an ideal asset to be used for expeditionary terrorist operations on European soil.

²⁰¹ <http://www.itstime.it/w/spotrep-attaco-a-parigi-by-emilio-palmieri/>

²⁰² Gartenstein-Ross, D, and Nathaniel Barr, *Recent Attacks Illuminate Islamic State's Europe Attack Network*, The Jamestown Foundation, April 2016

²⁰³ Estimates extracted from data provided by A. Y. Zelin, *The others foreign fighters in Libya*, Policy Notes, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2018; with regard to the provenance countries: Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Senegal, Mali, Somalia, Ghana, Chad, Eritrea, Gambia, Niger, France, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Yemen, Mauritania, Syria, Great Britain, Belgium, Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda, United States, Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, Nepal, Burundi, Canada, India, Spain, Ethiopia, Philippines, Bosnia, United Kingdom

²⁰⁴ R. Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat from Returnees*, the Soufan Center, 2017

At the same time, the constant and large number of migrants trying to reach Europe from the coast of North Africa would represent an invaluable window of opportunity for a number of reasons:

- Migrants themselves form a large recruitment pool²⁰⁵;
- Although lower than the peaks recorded in 2015 and 2016²⁰⁶, migratory pressure in Europe remains high and puts a strain on the monitoring system. In 2017, 142,105 illegal crossings of European borders were detected, the main transit routes being the central and western Mediterranean routes²⁰⁷;
- A jihadist infiltration within these routes would represent a real threat, with the possibility that they would be used to launch expeditionary attacks in Europe.

In support of what has been said, in addition to the case of Sillah Ousman discussed earlier, last August the Tunisian authorities arrested 9 jihadist suspects in Bizerte. They were part of a larger group of 15 people who were boarding a boat bound for Italy²⁰⁸. Last October, a 25-year-old Tunisian who arrived in Lampedusa in July 2018 and was a guest at a local reception centre, was expelled from Italian territory because he was recognised as a jihadist fighter operating in Syria.

It is worth noting that following the increased monitoring of the central Mediterranean route, concentrated in Libya, the criticality of Algeria and Tunisia as alternative departure ports from which to reach the Sardinian and Sicilian coasts has increased. Moreover, the western Mediterranean route, which connects Morocco to Spain, in 2017 recorded a number of illegal entries more than doubled compared to 2016²⁰⁹.

Inspiration/remote activation of subjects located in European territory

In general, when the threat of Islamist terrorism increases, the risk of suffering terrorist actions carried out by disadvantaged subjects, particularly sensitive to jihadist influence and perpetrated through violent imitative behaviour, would also increase. From this point of view, the jihad has proved intelligent in trying to exacerbate the phenomenon through the so-called propaganda of the lone jihad, spreading operative instruments within products such as Inspire, Rumiya or Knights

²⁰⁵ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/islamic-state-libya-regroup-lawless-desert-GNA-oil-battle-sirte-1812019376>

²⁰⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/15/what-current-scale-migration-crisis-europe-future-outlook>

²⁰⁷ Risk Analysis for 2018, Risk Analysis Unit, Frontex, February 2018

²⁰⁸ http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/presi-nove-terroristi-islamici-su-barcone-diretto-italia-1564641.html?mobile_detect=false

²⁰⁹ Risk Analysis for 2018, Risk Analysis Unit, Frontex, February 2018

of lone jihad²¹⁰; similar incidents have frequently followed one another on European soil from 2015 to the present day.

At a more specific level, the terrorist organizations operating in the Maghreb could also "activate"²¹¹ remotely resources located in Europe to carry out attacks, through the work of the so-called virtual planners or enablers²¹². This danger would have arisen recently. On 12 June 2018, the German authorities arrested in Cologne the Tunisian Seif Allah H., who was accused of planning a terrorist plot through the use of ricin. According to the authorities Seif - who in Tunisia would have followed the Salafist ideology²¹³ - was in contact via Telegram with two subjects associated with Daesh (based in North Africa or Syria), who provided him with information on the production of poison and improvised devices²¹⁴.

In August 2018, the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior arrested two people suspected of being linked both to the Cologne plot and to Seif Allah H²¹⁵.

In relation to the threat posed by the inspiration/remote activation of subjects located in Europe, it is necessary to conclude by stressing that the Maghreb diaspora is particularly vulnerable.

To give the only Italian example, in relation to the expulsions and arrests for the security of the Republic of subjects gravitating in environments of religious extremism carried out from January 1, 2015 to July 24, 2018, among the 275 cases - that include 21 different countries of origin - that have been possible to record²¹⁶ (49 in 2015, 82 in 2016, 115 in 2017 and 56 in 2018), 196 are originating in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya (see graph below).

²¹⁰ <http://www.itstime.it/w/attacco-a-melbourne-daesh-rivendica-m-maiolino-e-d-plebani/>

²¹¹ The term "activation" refers to a broad spectrum of operational management ranging from authorization to strike, support, up to the full direction of the conspiracy

²¹² <https://warontherocks.com/2017/04/lone-actor-vs-remote-controlled-jihadi-terrorism-rethinking-the-threat-to-the-west/>

²¹³ F. Flade, *The June 2018 Cologne Ricin Plot: A New Threshold in Jihadi Bio Terror*, Sentinel, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, August 2018

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*

²¹⁵ It is not yet clear if the two arrested Tunisians are the same who would have guided Seif Allah H. in the planning of the attack

²¹⁶ Through the information retrieved on open sources conducted by the researcher of ITSTIME Nicolò Spagna for a research that will be published shortly

Expulsions and arrests for the security of the Republic of persons operating in environments of religious extremism from 01/01/2015 to 24/07/2018 - divided by provenance country

