Volume 7, Issue 2, June 2024

Global Issues and Binary Visions of Contemporaneity. Media and Security, Migration and Political Violence: What Holds them Together?

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Research Articles*

Article first published online

June 2023

Global Issues and Binary Visions of Contemporaneity. Media and Security, Migration and Political Violence: What Holds them Together?

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Abstract: Undoubtedly, the attack on the Twin Towers can still be considered the first global shock, which brought into focus the question of the relationship between different cultures in a fluid and interconnected world, placing everyone under a constant and generalized veil of suspicion. The fear of the different, of the foreigner, soon became a mass phenomenon, a newsworthy topic in the media space, a kind of collective trauma, a public monster continuously narrated and re-imagined. The following socio-political reflection will attempt to critically and interdisciplinarity analyze two 'big questions' of contemporary society (often resolved through holistic and binary communication): is there a link between terrorism and migration? What is the role of the media in the knowledge of these phenomena and the level of security perception around them? The effort made by the author was to go beyond the current 'communicationism' which tends to reduce the question of migrants to the sphere of communication, isolating the latter from other fundamental dimensions and at the same time to offer new perspectives for investigating and understand the complex issue of human mobility, without forgetting the role played by the new information technologies and the tortuous nature of the path for the protection of the freedom and dignity of the person.

Keywords: security, migration, terrorism, media, mobility, borders, human rights

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Introduction: Starting from Italy

New York, Madrid and London.

In the early 2000s, three major cities in the world fell victim to multiple attacks. A terrorist violence with a decisive impact on negative attitudes towards certain communities in the United States and Europe.

Three dreadful attacks that will remain in the history and memory of Western nations. Three global shocks that, according definitively communicated to American and European institutions that terrorism no longer only struck on the other side of the Atlantic.

Jihadist propaganda then made it very easy to demonize Islam and (economic)immigrants as well as the tendency at the political level to treat foreigners, especially those of the Muslim faith, primarily as a security problem (Battistelli 2016).

Media coverage of migrants and Muslims has also played, and still plays, a decisive role.

According to a recent report published by Agcom - Italian Communication Agency (2019), the relationship 'terrorism and immigration' is among the topics that host the most elements of misinformation, especially in digital spaces. Socially present aspects in our country, for example, such as social marginality, cultural differences and the recent economic crisis have favored the creation of distorted narratives on the topic and the emergence of linguistic forms and images that describe the profile of the migrant mainly as a criminal, leaving little space for positive news and creating dangerous juxtapositions of such news with political issues.

The tendency to simplify and disseminate general concepts focuses exclusively on the central phase of migratory flows, i.e., the moment when migrants arrive on Italian shores, and all those reflections that would help to understand and critically analyze the landings, such as the motivation and causes of the journey, conflicts, and international crises, are left out.

Recent European studies (Barbagli 2008; Dal Lago 2010; Morcellini 2010; Melotti 2011; Binotto, Bruno, Lai 2016; Buoncompagni, 2022) have shown how all this happens mainly through techniques and narrative tools such as articles (264 news items out of 556), the 'short news' (150 out of 556), reportages and enquiries (13 out of 556) where in a few minutes a prominent event is presented and commented on, giving up an accurate description of the facts.

The 'short news' is the narrative standard often used for this type of news and is characterized by very short sentences, little punctuation, and the absence of subordinates, considering the qualitative point of view of the news, the small news concern not by chance petty crime facts such as thefts,

robberies or problems concerning public order. From a communicative point of view, the interesting element, which can be noticed, is that the small news mainly concerns crime events: 'a drunken Romanian crashed into a motorcyclist in the Turin area, killing him' 'an Egyptian worker was shot dead by the 19-year-old son of the owner of a construction company' 'the Rome Public Prosecutor's Office has sealed the records of the Romanian arrested on charges of sexual assault'.

1. Migration between Deviance and Public Information

Year after year, the image of (economic) immigration in public discourse portrays the phenomenon of flows as a 'plague', using headlines and stylistic choices that are all too often responsible for creating an implicit equation of immigration - disorder: the existential fear of the unknown is fed by the media, creating alarms, adding fears and fueling concerns.

A type of narration, that offered by the media, which reveals a 'tautological mechanism' of media production of fear, 'the simple enunciation of the alarm (…) demonstrates the reality that it denounces' (Dal Lago 2004, 73).

What we find are continuous distorted discursive and visual productions, more oriented to build boundaries in the social imaginary and to legitimize the distinction between 'them' and 'us', than to provide useful indications to develop integration and citizenship policies (Musarò, Parmiggiani 2014). In this way, the identity of the migrant man is configured solely and exclusively through the eyes of the country of immigration, appearing as a 'non-national', as something else compared to the whole, a non-social subject (Dal Lago 2004).

The constant dramatization, the spectacularizing through strong and emotional languages, shows us how the linguistic style of information has progressively lost the 'literary' style that used to give it authority and has been transformed into a direct language, full of phrases typical of the spoken word, catchphrases and rhetorical figures trivialized, thus creating linguistic stereotypes. The narration (and then the perception) of immigrants as adventurers or poor, invaders, social enemies is linked to the alteration of the quantitative dimension of the phenomenon by the media and some political parties.

In this way, the so-called 'siege syndrome' is nurtured in public opinion, ethnicity, legal status, nationality are all elements that are 'showcased' in the short news headlines and, as if that were not enough, to aggravate the background of the journalistic information, there is the improper use of sources, police reports, all elements that do not become tools to integrate

the news, but vehicles for the diffusion of distortions and reproduction of prejudices and racial stereotypes (Gallisot, Kilani, Rivera 2001).

The 'logics of the media' are rather 'simple' to recognize when analyzing the media-immigration relationship: format, entertainment, linguistic distortions and packaging of the medium create a parallel reality that is far removed from everyday experience. Migrations are constantly evolving processes and their social representation within the host society becomes a relevant factor in terms of perception; it is according to the type of narration that immigration appears as a threatening and uncontrollable phenomenon or as a physiological and governable one (Dal Lago 2004; Zanfrini 2007).

We must certainly consider that messages conveyed by different mediums are not at all equivalent from the point of view of their decoding: the medium changes, the message changes.

The famous phrase 'the medium is the message' perfectly sums up this theory: according to McLuhan, (1968) mass media are not neutral, their very structure produces an influence on the recipients of the message, which goes beyond the specific content they convey. Every form of communication, every medium possesses a bias (influence, prejudice), which circumscribes the specific property of a medium. Reading a newspaper, for example, favors responses that are mainly cognitive in nature, stable over time, always consistent with pre-existing attitudes; dramatic images broadcast on television arouses a more strongly emotional reading of the facts.

As argued by Postman (2021) first, and then by Chul Han (2023), initially with the (print) press, the offspring of book culture, public discourse tended to be largely characterised by a coherent and orderly arrangement of facts and opinions and a participating and interested audience. In contrast, the entry of electronic (and digital) media into the public sphere has produced 'mediocracy and theatrocracy'. News is assimilated into a spectacular narrative. Fiction and reality are merged, emotion and compassion prevail. There are no longer arguments, but performances, in front of an audience overwhelmed by content unable to speak and debate.

Sympathy, envy, disgust, empathy are all 'emotional impressions' (Graber 2002) that can influence the reading of important political issues with a wide persistence in time and while in newspapers the places dedicated to the acquisition and understanding of the news are limited and well defined (therefore it is possible to 'control' its content), the space and time of the paper medium, the paratactic structure, the fast pace and the predominance of emotionality over rational argumentation in television do not allow the audience to critically elaborate the content.

The media's prioritization of the various topics proposed to the public and the insistent use of alarmist and morally condemning tones tend to 'scar' the viewer and foster feelings of fear and indignation towards immigrants:

> 'The basic theoretical assumption is that the elements that are most important in the representations offered by the media assume the same importance in the representations elaborated by the public' (McCombs 1996, 30).

According to Scheufele the relevance attributed to a given topic is first and foremost a function of its accessibility and ease of memorization and, applied to the media, this concept coincides with the emphasis (by the latter) of a topic through specific visibility attributes such as title, launch, presence on the front page.

This defines 'interpretative frames' through which the media convey the point of view to the recipient of the information. Despite the possibility of audiences today to search and verify content, the logics of television and the web (somehow (converging) fragment the public discourse, polarise the issues addressed, filter them and look for the right actors with different positions to create verbal-ideological conflict in the information space.

The discourse thus degenerates into show and advertising; every institution, every audience is thus eroded, democracy degenerates into infocracy (Chul-Han 2023).

By describing and defining external reality, the media present their audiences with a list around which they can discuss and have an opinion, which is why it would be wrong to say that the media distribute news, as they directly provide knowledge and interpretative keys to reality, individuals gain non-direct experience of some aspects of the real world through the symbolic mediation of the media (Bentivegna, Boccia Artieri 2019). It appears evident how in the media space the great absent is paradoxically precisely the immigrant; Sibhatu (2004, 26), in his critical reading of the media-immigration relationship in Italy, observes how on the one hand there are very few interviews that, for example, give voice to foreign citizens, on the other:

> 'Most of the media, indirectly contribute to fomenting fear of the unknown, through the content of the messages they convey through the language and method chosen to give the news'.

The topics dealt with mainly concern the problematic elements of migrants and their behavior or possible involvement in criminal actions, but there is very little about their everyday life, their motivations for travelling, their culture of origin, their expectations; yet:

> 'The moment one highlights above all the worst aspect of a complex phenomenon such as immigration, one runs the risk of distorting the present and ruining the future, preventing the peaceful exchange between cultures that each individual brings with him or her as a treasure of their past' (Sibathu 2004, 27).

The figure of the immigrant emerges in a positive way only when he is a subject who responds to the needs of the Italian economy, 'a subject functional to the interests of the natives'; furthermore, citizens' reactions to immigration, seen as a problem or a resource, are rare.

However, the image that constantly recurs in the newspapers and on television is that of the single irregular, clandestine immigrant, the cause of precariousness and social conflict, a narration that 'comes out of the normality of things': in these cases we are faced with a extra communication, as the language with which the protagonists of the narrated phenomenon are represented brings with it the 'lexicon of extraneousness' (Dal Lago 2004, Binotto, Bruno, Lai 2016).

'Albanian', 'Romanian', 'Moroccan', 'nomadic', 'non-EU' are all linguistic labels that define the person who 'comes from outside' and continues to remain outside the community, and so it is that automatically foreignness is associated with aggression, criminality, irregularity.

The immigrant in the media appears as:

> 'an 'aphonic' subject, without a voice, absent in the informative media space (...) he is never interviewed, listened to; he almost never has the right to speak or write, even in the presence of a journalism that increasingly resorts to narration and to statements, put in inverted commas, of the protagonists of the facts' (Corte 2014, 66).

In contrast to the enquiry, another genre, which developed in Italian newspapers and is still widely used, was the interview, a technical tool that presupposes a fiduciary relationship between interviewer and interviewee, where the result will be all the more valid the more the interviewer knows he can count on the journalist's honesty in faithfully reporting the words said for publication and not reporting those said with a prayer of using them only for greater knowledge (Lepri 1991).

This is an increasingly widespread journalistic practice, but one that still seems to want to exclude the topic of 'immigration', as if listening to the voice of the foreign citizen could not 'make the news' as if there were no fiduciary relationship between journalists and immigrants. Evidently more than the technique itself, what seems to be lacking in intercultural information is a 'journalistic method' and a 'journalistic will'.

These forms of 'exclusion' can all be read as forms of 'de-responsibility of the journalist' insofar as they attribute to other statements that the less attentive reader, accustomed to inverted commas, may believe to be the expression of a fact (a true news item in itself) or a position taken by the newspaper he is reading. Cases that are considered 'curious' are automatically excluded, just as stories about different cultural practices (e.g., the slaughter of animals by Muslims) are viewed with suspicion or denounced as being outside the norm.

Lepri (1991, 32), in this regard, warns:

> 'A system of pluralistic democracy fortunately possesses mechanisms capable (albeit not always quickly) of revealing omissions and unmasking fabrications and manipulations. The search, therefore, for the most complete, impartial and truthful information possible is not just a matter of principle, but a way of safeguarding one's professional image and the authority and prestige of the newspaper where one works. Sooner or later, one realizes who is a serious journalist and who is not; who is a militant, divisive, bullshit-telling journalist and who is, instead, a journalist who values professionalism and practices it with rigor and scrupulousness. Here is a definition of professionalism: the prevalence of serious analysis over pre-established positions, of hypotheses over theses, of the critical spirit over the logic of taking sides. And another definition of journalism: a humble service to the citizen'.

2. Narrative/perception of Insecurity

The securitization of immigrants and the tendency to portray them as victims or criminals are two elements common to the political and media narrative in many transits or arrival countries. The process of criminalizing immigrants is closely linked to the scale of migration flows that the globalization of the economy and globalization have fueled over the years (Benson 2009; Navarro 2010; Palidda 2011).

The centrality of the news about immigrant crimes appears as an attempt to move away from the laborious 'conflict-integration' debate to give space to a more reassuring discussion, in many ways, about the Other as a 'threat'. According to Palidda (2011) the criminalization of the foreigner, understood as a set of discourses, facts and practices produced by the police, the judicial authorities, but also by local administrations and the media, is an aspect common to many European countries. However, there is no arithmetical relationship between the increase in resident immigrants and changes in crime rates: the link between collective anxiety, crime and media narratives

thus tends to be homogeneous in countries with different cultures and histories.

In particular, after 11 September 2001, a process of radicalization of conflict cultures began, which generated a close link between the presence of immigrants, multicultural coexistence and illegal activities, from petty crime to terrorism (Freilich, Guerette 2006). One could say that these 'cultures of conflict' date back even before 9/11, as the work of Edward Said has also demonstrated, leading us to limit this ontological division between seemingly monolithic Eastern and Western identities to the Age of Enlightenment.

This look at the past could only appear to be an error in our analysis.

As well suggested by Minakov and Rabkin (2018) we are today faced with inverse cultural and geopolitical processes, which are not evolving but rather seem to be retreating. The correct term to frame this condition is 'de-modernization'. A concept that does not so much indicate a reaction to modernity as a real inverse process, an adaptation of modern societies to external forces or other factors.

We have before us an ever-growing world, in which technological and scientific development is reaching unprecedented levels. However, every problem we face, and the case of distorted narratives, incorrect correlations between crime and flows of human beings, is not addressed through the achievements of an ever more advanced modernity, but through a pernicious and obsessive return to the past (old categories, stereotypes and prejudices forced into the new social context).

In every field, when the fear of the unknown assails and questions our certainties and reassuring everyday life, we turn more and more often to the superstition and soporific sweetness of the tradition established not by the scientific method but by hearsay.

And so we are constantly jeopardizing and questioning every achievement of the political form of democracy and of our very survival; it's not so much about the exercise of free dissent and the possibility of proposing alternative solutions.

According to the two scholars, it is a matter of settling for positions that have nothing real and appeal more to the emotional part of us. The impression is therefore that also in this case de-modernity manifests itself as a strenuous opposition to the very concept of evolution (of the public discourse on migration), which presupposes and must presuppose a constant modification of ourselves and of our relationship with the world, with information and with otherness.

The regular emergence, within the public debate, of an 'ethnicization' of crime indicates a cultural reaction to otherness, a sort of conditioned reflex, which tends to replicate itself in a very similar way in distant cultural

contexts. This has made it very difficult over time for social scientists, institutions and citizens to have a (constructive) debate on the subject.

What we are still witnessing today, quoting Walter Lippman, is a 'reduction of complexity', a process of simplification and activation of mechanisms on which the dominant public discourse on, in our specific case, the phenomenon of international migration as the root of violent extremism relies.

Moreover, according to Alessandro Orsini (2019), there is an error of understanding at the basis of the 'friends' and 'enemies' of migrants (of those who are pro-immigration or not) from which all subsequent errors of interpretation of anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant behavior arise.

What we need to know, first, is the logic of reasoning adopted, which is a 'holistic' type of logic where attention is not paid to the cognitive mediations of individuals, but to terms such as 'structure', 'system', 'historical processes':

> 'The reasoning of the 'friends' of migrants against anti-immigrant movements is always on a global scale and never on an individual level. At the basis of their speeches (…) they put statistics and not the reality of everyday life. (…) it is not important to know whether a migrant has taken the job of a pizza chef. What matters are the macroeconomic data, which say that, on the whole, the Italian economy has been benefited by migrants' (Orsini 2019, 80).

Holistic reasoning on a global scale, in this case of the 'friends of migrants', prevents us from understanding the root causes that have fostered the rise of anti-migrant movements, and dwelling again on the relationship between immigration and crime helps us to better explore this aspect.

If we take the case of Italy as an example, Istat and Ministry of Justice data suggest that there is a massive presence of immigrants in Italian prisons. Foreigners represent one third of the Italian population, a considerable weight if we consider that foreigners, in Italy, represent only 10% of the population and the crimes in which they are most involved, such as drugs, rape, theft, robbery, are 'particularly odious for the common man because they have a negative impact on the quality of his daily life' (Orsini 2019, 88).

At this point, before proceeding with the analysis, it becomes necessary to refer to Berger and Luckmann's lesson about the existence of multiple levels of reality, one distant from one's own body and one closer, which manifests itself in face-to-face interactions. The latter is the reality of everyday life, the 'dominant reality'. While the 'friends of migrants' reason on a global scale, the 'enemies' of migrant's reason on a local scale, i.e., based on the discomforts that immigration brings to their daily lives and, precisely for this reason, the 'enemies' appear more irrational or violent.

Sociologist Raymond Boudon explains how, depending on the situation in which they find themselves, it seems entirely rational for anti-immigrants to call people terrorists or to drive away anything that endangers their daily lives; and if they feel that the high number of landings or immigrants in their country are seriously endangering their health or jobs, it is rational for them to call for the foreigner's expulsion. The human being puts the reality of direct encounter first and, not too forcibly, one could liken the situation described above to an attitude defined as the 'lamppost effect', a type of communicative-behavioural distortion linked to the human tendency to conduct the search for truth through simple ways, avoiding complexity.

In other words, it is difficult to find an object in the dark so let's look for it where the light is and, on this point, also the media obviously provide an important contribution by following their media logic based on a spectacular, dynamic and strongly emotional narration, which each user tends to make their own and personalize on the basis of their own experience, whether they are 'friends' or 'enemies' of migrants.

3. Global Terrorism and International Migration

Considering the cognitive, cultural and journalistic biases and the 'pathological' relationship between media, migration and terrorism and public narration, the existence of a close link between these three elements is nevertheless a much-discussed aspect in socio-political and criminological research.

According to a recent report published by the U.S Institute of Peace (USIP), the number of terrorist attacks in the world has increased by 500% since 11th September 2001.

In the Covid-19-obsessed news cycle and political agendas around the world, similar stories about terrorism and terrorist attacks seemed to have largely disappeared. But paradoxically long before the current pandemic, the language of epidemiology had proved useful in understanding by analogy how terrorism functions as a phenomenon that depends on social contact and exchange and expands rapidly in an opportunistic manner when defences are lowered.

In these pandemic months, there has certainly been one piece of good news (useful to emphasise here): the curve of international terrorist attacks has indeed been flattened, as having lost its 'physical Caliphate', the Islamic State seems to have lost its ability (and perhaps willingness) to launch attacks worldwide well beyond conflict zones.

But despite the historical moment of health and economic crisis that has affected the whole of humanity, in which the attacks seemed to have been culturally and cognitively 'removed' because of the Covid-19, the jihadist front has nonetheless appealed to strike the West, taking advantage of the pandemic period and the political-economic chaos present in most European countries, where what was at issue was not by chance human mobility and the fragility of some territories that were not very capable of guaranteeing health protection (UN 2021).

In view of this, it should be noted, first of all, that there is no causal link between the status of 'immigrant' and that of 'criminal-terrorist'; an absence due to the lack of data and specific scientific studies between the two phenomena.

The only recent statistical analysis available to us reports a negative correlation between terrorist actions and the migration phenomenon (Bove, Bohmelt 2016). This finding is followed by further studies that focus on the possibility that economic migrants or asylum seekers may become foreign fighters and use data on terrorists with immigration status, rather than relying on systematic time-series data on migration flows and terrorist attacks (Kephart 2005; Schmid 2016; Bertolotti 2020).

Focusing on the figure of the foreign-born terrorist (as a media myth), we find a close link between immigration and terrorism, but leaving aside the study of overall immigration flows, and considering only those cases in which immigrants have been involved in terrorist activities, it is very complex to draw correct conclusions about this.

If we consider the terrorist attacks that have taken place in Europe in recent years, most of the perpetrators have acted individually or within organized groups, belong to the category of first-generation immigrants and homegrowns, have little knowledge of the principles of the Islamic religion and have become radicalised in their country of residence, without ever really taking part in conflicts in Syria or Iraq (Lombardi 2016; Matusitz 2013).

The space in which irregular migration, terrorism and organized crime move remains the Mediterranean, perhaps the only common point between the three elements. From a historical point of view, it has been and continues to be a transit area for transcontinental migratory flows.

But with one difference.

In the past, migrant populations came mainly from the Mediterranean states, whereas today there is a significant presence of people from the Middle East and Asia, due to the social, political (and partly environmental) transformations of their territories of origin. Irregular immigration has thus evolved and is now part of a dimension that is more exclusively concerned with social or humanitarian aspects, and which has numerous repercussions

in terms of border security in Mediterranean countries and Europe as a whole.

According to Europol (2017), the complex operation of moving numerous groups of people from different countries requires a level of organization and sophistication that only crime can achieve. Trafficking in human beings is an example, in fact, of an illicit activity resulting from the strong presence of criminal organizations within the migratory flows, protagonists of illegal operations facilitated by corruption and violent actions.

It may come as a surprise to learn that the business of organized crime and the fight against migrant smuggling networks are actually quite recent activities.

The disappearance of the borders of the countries involved in the Cold War and the pressing economic and multicultural impetus of globalization generated the beginning of major mobility flows by culturally diverse groups of people. Many of these flows concerned, and still concern, irregular migrants, and over the years this condition has become a breeding ground for many criminal networks, including those of a terrorist nature (Lombardi 2016; Bertolotti 2020; Buoncompagni 2021).

Already in a report published in 1997 by the British Secret Service, the statistics on criminal acts related to irregular immigration to the European Union showed an increase of 91% compared to 1991 (Raufer, Queré 2001). The steady increase in irregular flows over the years has thus become a national security problem today. This statement has nothing to do with party ideologies or the stance of some traditional Italian and other media; it is not a question of being racist, for or against immigration.

The lack of control and the irregularity of migration constitutes a serious and real danger, not only for the citizens of the host country, but first of all for migrants who decide to leave their country, as they might unknowingly get involved in the networks/channels of cross-border organized crime or be unable to assess the various levels of risk.

When talking about national security, states generally consider five aspects (Bertolotti 2020):

- possible infiltration of terrorist and criminal elements among the masses of migrants.
- potential links between migrants and organised criminal groups.
- potential risk of transmission of serious diseases and epidemics to local populations.
- alterations in the domestic labour market and threats to the national economy.
- financial burdens caused by unexpected and irregular arrivals in host communities.

It is important to mention at this point a recent investigation conducted by the Italian and Dutch State Police, coordinated by the Prosecutor's Office of Palermo and directed by the magistrate Francesco Lo Voi, which has shed light on the existence of an organization responsible for trafficking related to illegal immigration, from Libya to Italy, with operational headquarters in Udine and Milan.

The financial network of such trafficking was based on the traditional system of Islamic credit called hawala, through which money paid by migrants for crossing the Mediterranean transits and is managed by trusted intermediaries in Italy, on the availability of Banks in the Arab Emirates. Very often it is quite complex to shed light on these crimes because the criminal association, formed in this specific case by Eritrean citizens, foresees the existence of 'cells' distributed in neighboring places, as hawaladar, intermediaries in charge of transferring the money to the other referents of the organization.

The proceeds deriving from the traffic of migrant's transit, as ascertained in several investigations by the investigators, in the respective countries where the Banks that have made themselves available to the criminal operation are based (Arab Emirates, Dubai, etc.), sometimes without responding to letters rogatory. The area of North Africa, which extends to the Mediterranean, as well as that of the Middle East, are still, today, the principal hotspots of domestic and international terrorism, whose objective is not only to destabilize a State or a government, but to impose itself as a functional actor for the ideal removal of the entire complex of institutions, countries, and State borders (Horgan 2014).

The threat presented by contemporary terrorism, according to Bertolotti (2020), is placed, by its mutable nature, as a separate category, defining itself as 'New Insurrectional Terrorism' - NIT. This definition does not replace that of terrorism but underlines the conceptual approach to a terrorism (Islamic-radical) implemented by ethnic, political, ideological, sectarian movements intent on imposing a revolutionary and alternative model through the use of violence, in a rational, calculated and self-justified manner.

A social terrorism that uses the logics/techniques of public media communication typical of the West; they exploit the public digital dimension to expose themselves and impose themselves in order to create insecurity, recruit new followers, infiltrate irregular migratory flows.

The web is used in this ambit for various purposes, such as:

- secure international and intercontinental communication.
- sharing of objectives, plans, remote training.
- proselytizing and spreading the terrorist message.

In recent years, the use of the new means of communication has favored and permitted the construction of strategies and a 'valid' propaganda which are based on new behavioral codes of reference for the militant subjects, pre-established targets (young people *in primis*), medium-long term objectives and the use of the web. It should not be overlooked that information has acquired an increasingly central role by implementing the capacity for live reporting and streaming of events, the spectacularizing of violence and suicide bombing, in the relentless pursuit of an audience, but with a strong risk of learning and emulation of violent behavior by the spectator (Buoncompagni 2020).

From a sociological and criminological point of view, the most interesting and particular aspect is how the new contemporary jihadist terrorism is structured, organized and operates on the web, in particular, the aspect concerning the construction of criminal social networks and the recruitment and attack strategies adopted through the use of the web.

From the analysis of the recent attacks claimed by the Isis terrorist group in Paris, Brussels and elsewhere, it can be seen how this phenomenon is characterized by asymmetry, operational flexibility and the capacity for communicative interconnection between groups and individual subjects, as well as great skill and knowledge of digital communication systems.

The neo-terrorists identify their target mainly based on its symbolic value and thanks to the Internet platform, the groups aggregate by organizing attacks and exchanging information in virtualized networks, disseminating video-attestations of their deeds and above all persuading young people to enroll and embrace their ideology through forums, chats, and social media.

The globalization of terrorist violence is now favored by the widespread dissemination and sharing of digital information, media technology development and political and economic interconnections (White 2013).

According to Alberto Fernandez, coordinator of the Center for Strategic Counter-Terrorism Communications for the US Department of State, Isis represents the benchmark in terms of quality and quantity of political and ideological propaganda. The distance learning system is an undeniable strategic resource with which the Jihadist message reaches fellow soldiers and sympathizers, reinforcing ties and creating international collective activities.

Among the most widely used tools are forums, magazines and online courses, audiovisual learning materials on various topics (from the construction of biological weapons to kidnapping techniques), updates and news on the organization and publications.

The Caliphate's Social Media Strategy has proven to be complex and well-articulated over time. In addition to the traditional social networks

such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, the organization also refers to other social networks (such as Diaspora, after the closure of ISIS accounts on the social networks).

Another novelty introduced by the organization are certainly forms of participatory terrorism. In addition to the communication and marketing capabilities, Isis distinguishes itself for the culture, preparation, and technological resourcefulness of its fighters.

Not only ground, digital and hacker attacks, the Caliphate has created apps and software specific to its strategic needs, promoted and used by thousands of followers. The operational trends of the new terrorism seem to have determined an interesting social, political, cultural, and also criminological change represented by:

- polarization of security: a concept increasingly connected on a criminal level, almost exclusively to the perception of the constant presence of the latent terrorist threat
- digital warfare: construction and attestation on a digital
- media level of a new environment of terrorist communication and promotion.

The strategic objective that the institutions should set themselves today, first of all, concerns the knowledge, identification and better understanding of the construction of new social networks and the new target of reference, principally juvenile, of the terrorist criminals, or better still, to investigate the connection between criminality and the web society, a connection which today is inevitable as it is strongly present in the contemporary criminal organizations (Buoncompagni 2020, 2022).

Neo-terrorism is configured as a mediatized and digitalized phenomenon that exploits the power and success of the Web to display any form of violence, with a strong risk of contagion and an exponential increase in violent mass spontaneity.

4. Jihad and 'Mobile Crime'

With reference to jihadist terrorism, after the attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, two issues emerged in the public debate as inextricably linked factors, due to an information asymmetry and baseless speculations: migration issue and terrorist phenomenon.

As partly mentioned, the reading of historical data suggests the prevailing tendency of first-generation adult immigrants to devote little time and attention to political issues or religious extremism, as they are more interested in building a family and their children's future; however, there are cases of adhesion to terrorist ideology by young, unmarried males.On

the other hand, children and grandchildren, born and raised in Europe, have joined the 'new insurrectional terrorism' (Bertolotti, 2020), supported by the Islamic State, in order to emigrate to the territories of jihad and strike the 'infidels' in Europe.

Studies focusing on terrorists of foreign origin find a close link between immigration and terrorism. Considering, however, that overall immigration flows are not examined there, but only those cases in which immigrants were directly involved in terrorist activities, such studies do not allow conclusions to be drawn on the benefits or drawbacks of migration and its links to terrorism (Dreher et al. 2017).

The highest intensity of jihadist violence, reached in the years 2016-2017 in Europe (around 30 attacks), involved young, first-generation immigrants. As indicated in the Italian Intelligence report 2017-2018, it has been possible in recent years to recognize a direct collaboration between transnational crime in the Middle East and North Africa area with Italian terrorism and local crime.

Since 2014 there have been 44, refugees or asylum seekers, involved in the 32 jihadist plots registered on European soil. Many of these, are naturalized immigrants linked to the Islamic State and radicalized themselves before entering Europe, while since 2016 there has been a reversal of the trend. The latency period between arrival in Europe and violent action is generally 26 months.

In the five-year period 2015/2019, data on terrorists who have struck European cities confirmed that almost all of them are foreigners or of foreign origin (74 % confirmed). Seven out of ten terrorists (65%) have a passport and are first-generation immigrants, either legal or regularized, or second- or third generation (35%).

According to a recent ISPI study (Marone 2017), two out of ten are irregular immigrants, asylum seekers, and converts to Islam. This information shows how easy it currently is for jihadist organizations and others to engage young migrants, who are permeable to the captivating narrative of Islamic propaganda and the 'soldier of the caliphate', distributed through online channels or through interpersonal dialogue.

According to Europol (2017), around 300 radicalization attempts were made by Daesh in the period 2015-2016, targeting migrants and asylum seekers.

The geographical, ethnic, cultural origin of terrorists is an important element of analysis to monitor criminal networks and their 'cells', so knowing how the profiles of migrants and the socio-political condition of their countries of origin, can give an indication of the start of new flows and the possibility of infiltration attempts by criminals. The irregular condition

of migrants, radicalization processes and the existence of terrorist cells are interconnected factors that expose European countries to specific risks.

And now, each state relies on its own army, its own internal policy.

The project of a European FBI, seems very far away, as well as an absence of coordination and collaboration between countries in the management of the large structural phenomenon of massive immigration from Africa and Asia. After the emergence of the Islamic State and the attacks of 2015, the questioning of the Dublin and Schengen treaties on free movement have polarized public debate even more and tribalized the national policies of each individual European country, which has tried, in vain, to solve a global crisis, that of migration, as if it were a national emergency.

Reception and integration policies have shown structural limits.

All this has also led to the emergence of populist phenomena or the occurrence of episodes of violent extremism, which have undoubtedly contributed to the expansion of criminal networks and the increase in cases of radicalization, euroscepticism, and hatred of the Other.

Conclusions (and Open Issues)

To conclude, to the question of whether there is a connection between migration and terrorism, the answer should be: 'it depends'.

It depends on the historical-cultural context, on the communicative-journalistic bias, on the typologies of migrant and of migration, on the history of the extremist groups and of the terrorist ideologies, on the actions of counteraction to radicalization, introduced so far by the institutions, and their effectiveness over time. To consider this link as true and indissoluble, would be a mistake, just as it would be inaccurate to identify the immigration problem exclusively with that of national and personal security, subordinating the first to the second and finally merging them in practice as in political language, would mean 'helping terrorists to achieve their objectives', taking up Bauman's words (2015).

According to the logic of self-fulfilling prophecy, inflaming anti-Islamic/anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe would lead Europeans themselves to convince themselves and young migrant-Muslims of the existence of an insurmountable distance between them. This would make it much easier to channel the conflicts inherent in social relations into the idea of a 'holy war' between two irreconcilable ways of life, between the one true faith and a set of false beliefs.

In France, for example, although there are no more than a thousand young Muslims suspected of links to terrorism, for public opinion all

Muslims, and in particular young people, have become 'accomplices' since the assault on Paris in 2015. Thus a community becomes a convenient outlet for societal resentment, regardless of the values of the individuals, how much commitment and honesty they put into becoming 'new' citizens.

Maintaining a vital and collaborative connection between the local host community and immigrants is increasingly difficult in this climate of mutual suspicion. In countries that are finding themselves helpless, such as Belgium today, the social pact on which the hope of integration was based has broken down.

According to the ideology of the terrorists, the worse the conditions of the young Muslims, for example, in our societies, the stronger the possibilities of recruitment.

Bauman argues (2015):

> If the prospect of cross-cultural communication and genuine interaction between ethnic groups and religions is completely lost, the possibility of a direct encounter, of 'face-to-face' with the other, of mutual understanding, is also minimized.

Added to this is the stigmatization of entire groups based on characteristics deemed unremovable that make them different from 'us-normal'. The result is the enforced alienation of people branded as abnormal, banished from the assembly to which, openly or in the depths of their hearts, they would like to belong but from which they have been ostracized with no right of return, after having been moreover forced to accept the common verdict on their inferiority (Buoncompagni, 2020)

Those thus stigmatized suffer a painful blow to their self-respect, which brings guilt and humiliation. Stigma can also be perceived as an undeserved outrage, requiring, and justifying revenge so strong that it overturns society's judgement and re-appropriates the stolen respect. Governments seem to have no interest in allaying citizens' fears, but rather in fueling the anxiety arising from the uncertainty of the future by shifting the source of anxiety from problems they cannot solve to those with more 'media-friendly' solutions.

These include reference to the fight against terror.

There is no doubt about the role that the foreign community, in a host country, must play in combating radicalization. We must understand, however, that only society as a whole can eradicate the common threat.

The first weapons of the West in the fight against terrorism are social inclusion and integration, which are not yet a 'real (responsible) common policy', an 'inclusive (rational) policy', but slogans, empty terms, meaningless, filled only with emotionalism and superficiality.

In this sense, prevention and international cooperation between European institutions and security bodies remain fundamental issues. Preventing and monitoring, with the help of ICT and big data, the great migratory flows, managing in a correct and responsible way the exchange of information between intelligence and developing inclusive intercultural policies and active participation from below (according to the so-called going local approach, i.e. starting from the involvement of individual local communities, both native and migrant), represent three crucial strategic steps to understand/face increasingly complex phenomena and their possible connections, such as that between migration and terrorism, within an entropic society, i.e. one that is able to create the factors of its own crisis.

And fear and insecurity are a clear example of this today.

Paradoxically, insecurity, the stubborn companion of the human condition, has never been so widespread and so evoked as in the society in which it has the least reason to exist: contemporary western society.

In this historical-social context, it is increasingly necessary to keep the debate on current political, social and cultural issues related to the issue of migrants critical and rational within a public sphere increasingly tending towards polarization and platformization. Issues that cannot be addressed by absolutizing the relevance of communication processes in an uncritical way, thus adhering to a 'mythologized vision of communication' (Sorrentino 2015), but knowing the specific contexts and contributing to the construction and defense of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a vision of the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms.

The search for integration and citizenship cannot be detached from the responsibility of the individual and the institutions or simplified into a spectacular 'crime and safety' debate.

All this requires the attribution of greater centrality to what Gili and Maddalena (2017) limited a 'rich realism', based on a conception of communication 'as a 'total' social phenomenon which requires the integration of the various points of view', i.e. the contextualization necessary for 'a type of habit of action that the human being hardly succeeds in to conquer and maintain if it is not continually called upon and supported by vital community relationships [...] that stimulate 'openness to the world and a non-skeptical education in critical thinking'.

It is therefore necessary to see beyond the representation of the world, to go beyond the story, to know the Other, to explore and respect its space.

The focus must and must always be the dignity of the human person.

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