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## Soft Counterterrorism Strategies: The Italian Case

Perez- Bouzada Baravelli, Carlota

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**Soft Counterterrorism Strategies: The Italian Case**

Supervisor: Dr Maxine David

Student: Carlota Pérez- Bouzada Baravelli  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*“La paura è umana, ma combattetela con il coraggio”*

*“Fear is human, but you have to fight it with braveness”*

Paolo Borsellino (Unknown)

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Everyday for three years I went to the train station in Bologna to catch my train to go to University in Modena. To go and come from the train station I had to cross a small square in the centre called “Piazzetta Marco Biagi”. I was entirely unaware at the time that Marco Biagi, a university professor in Modena, was doing the same route, coming back from the train station to his house in that same square, when he was killed by the Red Brigades in 2002 (Aiviter, 2022). Unfortunately, this was not the only part of my route that reminded me, and probably professor Biagi too, of political terrorism, since in 1980 a bomb exploded in Bologna’s train station killing 85 people. To this day, one of the deadliest attacks in Europe (Armstrong 2020). Twenty years divide us from the ‘loud’ attacks of political terrorism in Italy. However, the growing unease due to worsening economic conditions and the increase of social inequalities aggravated by the global pandemic contributes to feelings of marginalisation and exclusion. Together, this increases the need for the government to protect vulnerable individuals and prevent the risk of radicalisation.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and especially with the arrival of religious terrorism to Europe, countries such as Denmark and the UK realised the need to study the phenomenon of radicalisation. Quickly the debate developed around methods of countering radicalisation. In particular, the idea of 'soft power' in counterterrorism began to be discussed. The term was introduced by Nye in 1990 as a diplomacy tool in contrast with the hard power option of military actions. He described soft power as the capacity to alter others' desires or conduct without using coercion or force; in other words, it is the capacity to alter what other people do (Nye, 2004. p 7-8). The discussion of the approach in counterterrorism started to arise especially around the United States and its tactics in its missions to other countries to “fight terrorism”. Thus, this approach particularly developed around threats that did not come from

within but in relation to threats that were fought in other countries. With the worsening of the jihadist threat, the so-called new terrorism, the debate regarding homegrown threats became more pressing. In Europe, countries such as the United Kingdom, France, and Norway understood the need to develop strategies other than the classic hard approach to contain the new threat. Thus, soft power started to be applied in homeland security. This new method of approaching counter-terrorism, however, entails numerous criticisms, especially, due to problems in measuring the results obtained. The academic world is extremely divided on the utility and the benefits of the approach (see van Dongen, 2018). Italy has been dealing with homegrown terrorism since the birth of its first republic. However, contrary to its European neighbours, there seems to be a lack of debate surrounding the state of its counterterrorism approach and its prevention tactics. This gap represents the scenario that this thesis aims to fill.

## 1.2 RESEARCH RATIONALE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

When I came across soft counterterrorism reading Nye's book on soft power (2004) I decided to research this topic. The choice of the Italian case study is due to different aspects apart from my personal connection: Italy as a possible 'target' of terrorism and Italy as a counterterrorism 'model'. As said previously, after 9/11 an increasing number of European countries were hit by Islamic terrorism, initiating a heated debate on the causes and how to deal with them. Italy not only is a western European country, but it is a NATO member and has played a role in crucial missions in the middle east against Al-Qaeda and Daesh. Moreover, Italy has a close relationship and economic interests in Libya, which has recorded a high number of terrorist activities (Ludovico, 2016). Furthermore, Italy is home to the Vatican City, the Holy City and the symbol of Christianity around the world. Therefore, in addition to Italy's geographical position, these elements make Italy a possible target for religious terrorism. On the other hand, Italy has had a long experience dealing with political terrorism since the 70s and is considered a 'model' in counterterrorism at a European level (see Luttwak, 2015; Peric, 2018; Salvi, 2017). These elements may lead one to think that Italy must be a thoroughly analysed case study in the academic debate, however, most studies focus on other European countries like the UK, France, Norway or Spain. The studies that concern Italy either analyse its strategies in the past (Di Fabio, 2018) or focus on its hard counterterrorism policies especially from a legal perspective (Viganò, 2018; Pelissero, 2016; Pulitanò, 2020). Since Italy is cited as a model in

counterterrorism, it was surprising to not find any research addressing whether Italy was taking a soft power approach.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to answer the following question: **“Does Italy have in place soft counterterrorism measures to respond to homegrown threats?”**.

This research not only aims to fill in the gaps of the Italian case, it also seeks to contribute to the growing debate of the employment of soft power strategies for homegrown threats. The threats that will be analysed are Islamic terrorism, political terrorism and the mafia organised crime. The rationale behind this choice is due to multiple aspects. Firstly, the choice relies on the Italian security report (2021) that addresses these three threats. Islamic terrorism is perceived as the most ‘dangerous’ due to its attacks in Europe in the last ten years (Coolsaet and De Swielande 2008: 158 in El Said& Harrigan, 2013). Moreover, the debate concerning soft counterterrorism mostly addresses only Islamic radicalisation as we will see in the literature review. Secondly, political terrorism is a crucial part of Italian counterterrorism history and even if the groups activity today is not even comparable to the past, the policies that were adopted to counter it are still relevant. Political terrorism in Italy has changed, however, is still active and often connected to organised crime. The choice to address the mafia under counterterrorism requires a detailed explanation. In 2007 at a conference, the then antimafia prosecutor Pietro Grasso, illustrated how the New Red Brigades have possible links with the Calabrian Mafia. Despite being traditionally different due to its motivations, aims and objectives, terrorism and organised crime are extremely linked to each other. The commonalities emerge in the black-market of arms, drugs, human trafficking etc. Terrorist groups need to commit actions typical of organised crime to finance their activity. On the other hand, organised crime also uses terrorism methods to pursue its interests such as bombings or kidnappings. Therefore, both organisations benefit from each other and often respond to the same logics and thus the same counter-methods (Grasso, 2007). Hence, the events that occurred in the 80s-90s in Italy have framed the mafia as terrorism. During that decade the mafia adopted the same ‘strategy of tension’ adopted by political terrorist in the 70s causing hundreds of deaths. From 1961 to today, the mafia has killed 890 innocent people, among them 115 minors and 133 women (Libera, 2022). Moreover, the fear induced on the population as well as the attack of the democratic institutions contributed to the choice of framing the organisations under counterterrorism. Thereby, the thesis when referring to ‘counterterrorism’ it also addresses mafia organisations.



### 1.3 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The following chapter (2) presents the literature review of the academic debate around soft power and counterterrorism. Chapter 2 will establish what will be understood as soft counterterrorism as well as give crucial definitions for the analysis. The methodology used for the research will be described in chapter 3. The chapter presents the chosen sources and gives the guidelines to understand the analysis as well as explains the reasoning for the chosen methods: content analysis and case study. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will address the three threats outlined in the previous paragraph. The chapters will not be presented in chronological order. The first analytical chapter, chapter 4, focuses on Islamic terrorism since the reader might be more familiar with its counter-narratives and therefore set the tone for the following chapters. Chapter 5 will delve into political terrorism and will be analysed before the Mafia since the legislation is strictly connected. Chapter 6 will focus on the Mafia. Finally, the conclusions following the analysis will be addressed in chapter 7. Each analytical chapter will start with a background of the threat and its counterterrorism history. The second part of the chapter concerns the analysis and will be divided into two sections: prevention and rehabilitation.

The following chapter will review the literature concerning soft counterterrorism to introduce the topic of research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will be divided into two main parts: Firstly, it will explore the notion of soft power and counterterrorism studies. Within this aspect, it will be defined what is meant by a soft power strategy for the present research and other relevant definitions. Secondly, it will focus on the academic debate of different policies and strategies in counterterrorism that have a soft power approach for each threat envisaged for the analysis.

#### 2.1 TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM

There is still disagreement throughout the academic community regarding what constitutes terrorism. The absence of this definition makes it even more complicated to have a common counterterrorism definition. Firstly, the definition of terrorism causes dispute since the labelling of actors as terrorist entails a 'sentencing' of the offender and thus, it carries political or ideological influence (Gibbs, 1989). Secondly, there is a disagreement whether terrorism is only directed at civilians and not at military targets (Sinai, 2008). Therefore Schmid's definition: "Terrorism refers, on the one hand, to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties" (Schmid, 2012, p 158). It is not clear if this definition includes military and institutional bodies as targets of terrorism. Therefore, this definition would not be a good fit for the purpose of this research also due to the Italian's government definition that envisages terrorism as "the subversion of the democratic order" (art. 280 and 289 bis). Moreover, the definition is problematic due to the "moral" connotation which is a subjective sentiment. To address this issue Sinai's definition represents a better fit: "Terrorism is a tactic of warfare involving premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated by subnational groups or clandestine agents against any citizen of a state, whether civilian or military, to influence, coerce, and, if possible, cause mass casualties and physical destruction upon their targets. Unlike guerrilla forces, terrorist groups are less capable of overthrowing their adversaries' governments than

on inflicting discriminate or indiscriminate destruction that they hope will coerce them to change policy.” (Sinai, 2008, p 11). However, this definition is also problematic because it does not include the intended ‘audience’ aspect of an attack meaning the common purpose of generating fear and disorder into the population. In this case, the definition by the EU seems more in line with the purpose of the research. The EU defines terrorists offences as “acts committed with the aim of intimidating the population, unduly compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act and seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation” (European Council, 2022). Even if this definition does not state the motivation of terrorism, it could be appropriate for this research. In addition, the last part of Sinai’s definition opens a debate about the cases and classifications of terrorism. The levels of violence and the objectives are also different. However, the length of this research does not allow an analysis of the different forms and objectives of terrorism. Specific information of the threats that will be analysed will be given in the following paragraphs and chapters to understand the counterterrorism strategy adopted. Moving on with the definition of counterterrorism, as said previously, it also encounters disagreements in the academic community. Generally, the term “counterterrorism” as opposed to “antiterrorism” is used in a broader sense and it covers both “hard and soft power” approaches that we will analyse in the following paragraph (Schmid, 2021). For example, this differentiation is given by the US Department of Defence (2003) which frames antiterrorism as “defensive measures” and counterterrorism as “offensive measures” to prevent, deter and respond to terrorism. The problems that arise around counterterrorism definition are often due to the actions that counterterrorism entails. Definitions that do not address prevention and only envisaged ‘hard’ ‘oppressive’ measures do not fit the purpose of this research. Following this reasoning Renard (in Schmid, 2021, p 168) and Schmid (2011 in Schmid 2021) both take into account the preventive aspect of counterterrorism. Renard’s defines it as a strategy that contains both coercive and noncoercive instruments across a large range of policy areas, developed and implemented with the specific intent to prevent and respond to terrorism. Schmid's definition provides a more detailed explanation, giving a small definition of terrorism inside the counterterrorism one: “A proactive effort to prevent, deter and combat politically motivated violence directed at civilians and non-combatant targets by the use of a broad spectrum of response measures – law enforcement, political, psychological, social, economic and paramilitary” (2011 p 168). This definition also explains the possible nature of the responses and thus, represents the best option to base this research. However, we would have to include

military targets. In the next paragraph, an explanation of soft power measures will be given and thus the choice of counterterrorism definition will appear more clear. Another relevant aspect is the point made by Fiocca and Jean (2007) that counterterrorism measures should be in line with the values and ideals of the society they are supposed to protect. As a result, it is vital to proceed with prudence while implementing not just punitive, but also preventive and security measures. It will be interesting to see whether the Italian scenario does propose measures that are in line with the values and ideals of its society. Moreover, the preventive and educational aspect in contrast with the “punitive” input that Fiocca and Jean propose, will be explored in section 2.2.

### *2.1.1 TERM CLARIFICATIONS*

As stated in the previous paragraph, the term counterterrorism includes both preventive and offensive measures to combat terrorism. However, preventing radicalisation means also to intervene before the individual becomes a terrorist and thus, the individual is often described as a “violent extremist” rather than a terrorist. The threats will often be regarded as “violent extremism” instead of terrorist, depending on the status of the group/individual. Subsequently, the term follows the “radicalisation process” meaning that violent extremists will be regarded as a prior phase to terrorism. Moreover, in this research, given the chosen definition of counterterrorism, the following terms will all be considered under the ‘umbrella’ of counterterrorism: disengagement, deradicalisation, prevention and rehabilitation.

## 2.2 SOFT POWER

The idea of “soft power” is attributed to Nye. Thus, we will first explore Nye’s concept and in the following paragraph, it will be presented a review of other authors. According to Nye (2004, p X) the theory of soft power is “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, or policies”. Nye continues by describing the importance of agenda-setting to “attract others in world politics” (2004). The author argues that in international politics soft power resources lie in the values organisations or countries voice in their culture, internal practices and in their relations with others. Nye wants to express the set of values and principles on which a country’s

culture is based, which should lead to increasing its credibility and popularity in the international arena. This side of power is seen as an attractive force capable of inspiring affinity with other state actors, thus serving to gain control in the global theatre without incurring the huge costs that hard power entails. This definition contrasts with the traditional definition of 'hard power': political, economic and military power for geopolitical dominance by a state. Soft power is opposed to hard power but at the same time, it is possible to find a relationship between these two types of power, as they can influence each other. To underline the importance of soft power, Nye defines power in world politics as a three-dimensional structure. At the top is the military power, secondly the economic relations among states and thirdly, the other transnational issues that elude the sphere of hard power: climate change, global pandemics or violent extremism. To deal with these issues Nye argues that it is necessary to use a combination of hard and soft power: smart power. This argument can be transferred to counterterrorism studies since as history has demonstrated, hard power alone cannot fight terrorism. The relationship between soft power and counterterrorism will be introduced in the following paragraph.

### 2.3 SOFT POWER IN COUNTERTERRORISM

According to Nye (2004), terrorism depends deeply on soft power for its ultimate victory. The roots of terrorism rely on the attraction and support of the crowd to commit to the cause. As a consequence, if terrorist groups exercise soft power, wouldn't it be a serious limitation to only have a hard power response? Nye's views on power are not new to counterterrorism studies. What Nye characterises as soft power has been described by other academics as 'direct' and 'indirect' approaches or 'soft and hard' skills (Nagls, 1999; La Spina 2005, Hoffman, 2010). The indirect approach also appears in government strategies like in the US as a method for the military to work with the locals, establishing a relationship building partner capacity rather than establishing their military force (Department of Defence USA, 2006 in Burton 2011). This approach has also been labelled as the 'human rights approach' (Kielsingard, 2006) or 'countering violent extremism as opposed to 'countering terrorism' (Bourekba, 2021). However, the idea remains the same: direct counterterrorism concerns military force and indirect 'a battle for hearts and minds' (Nagls, 1999). This research will be framing this type of strategy as 'soft' since the 'human rights approach would be too limited and 'indirect' would be confusing with the methodology framework that will be applied. Moreover, as explained

previously, ‘countering violent extremism’ would not refer to policies concerning condemned terrorists. The ‘tools’ of this approach usually can involve negotiation, psychology, social and cultural anthropology (Hoffman, 2010). This type of strategy does not mean the abandonment of the force but its balance with coalition building, influence campaigns and involvement of the population, the communities and the connections of violent extremists and terrorist (London, 2020). Soft counterterrorism however relies on the study of the root causes of terrorism to approach it with tools for preventing it: analysing its motivations, ideology, relationships, and supporters (Hoffman, 2010; London 2011). If the goal of hard power is to lower the enemy’s chances to start a physical attack. Soft power applied in counterterrorism aims to reduce the recruitment of terrorists and promote their rehabilitation. Both strategies alone are unlikely to succeed. However, if exercised together, the chances of reducing the threat are higher (Tella, 2018). Concerning the state of the art of the case studies of soft approaches in national and foreign security, most studies mainly analyse the strategies of a country in relation to another one (Aysha, 2005; Hoffman, 2021). At the same time, the evolution of Islamist terrorism as homegrown, accelerated the debate on soft power related to homegrown threats. The debate, however, focuses mostly on Islamist terrorism for present strategies (Alshehri, 2010; Shah et al, 2016; Tella, 2016). The studies concerning other threats are usually an analysis of past counterterrorism policies such as the IRA (Dingley, 2009; Cecinini, 2018). As explained in the introduction, there appears to be no research concerning explicitly Italy’s soft power in counterterrorism while most studies on soft counterterrorism in Europe focus on other countries (Taylor, 2020; Mucha 2017)

### *2.3.1 CRITICISM*

This part will present the criticism facing a soft power approach in counterterrorism and not of the theory in general. The main criticisms identified by scholars (Lum et al, 2006; Gielen, 2017) are the measurement of effectiveness and accountability of results. How do we measure a successful soft counterterrorism strategy? If an attack is carried out despite a soft strategy in place does it mean the strategy is unsuccessful? Would the susceptible individuals have turned to terrorism in the first place? Certain studies have tried to propose methods for assessing the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies in general (Enders & Sandler, 1993) and for soft ones (Sinai et al, 2019). However, it can be stated that the amount of literature evaluating counterterrorism results is not comparable to the literature that theorises it (Lum at al, 2006).

We can argue that the results are more concrete when programmes focus on disengagement and reintegration of terrorists since you can analyse if the individual turns into terrorism again. However, disengagement and deradicalization programmes have faced criticism in terms of results achieved since there have been recorded episodes of recidivism of ‘deradicalised’ subjects (IPI, 2010). Another aspect that faces criticism is the ethics surrounding these strategies (Hoeft, 2015) for example concerning the Islamic community (Huq, 2016). In addition, there has been criticism of the transferability of the model from one country to another (IPI, 2010). However, if the threat presents similarities and the strategy is tailored to the case, transferability issues can be overcome since countries facing the same threat have benefited from each other (Ibid). Moreover, research has shown that methods concerning one threat can become relevant to counter a different one (Fussey, 2007). As explained in the introduction, this thesis does not aim to prove the efficacy of the programmes but as Rineheart (2010) proposes, soft counterterrorism will provide a framework to analyse the strategy in opposition to the hard measures in place that have been already researched as previously demonstrated.

## 2.4 SOFT COUNTERTERRORISM DEBATE

The following paragraph delves into examples to present the state of art of the literature concerning the soft programmes in place. The paragraphs are divided by threat following the ones that will be analysed in the next chapters. Before delving into the literature, it is important to state that the programmes aim to counter the root causes of terrorism. However, there is a heated debate on what are the root causes of terrorism (Von Hippel, 2002; Kivimaki, 2007). During the UN General Assembly in 2001 (cited in Schmid 2013) multiple factors were indicated as root causes such as social inequality, marginalisation, misery, rejection of the west, extreme poverty, and alienation of the young. However, these alleged root causes experience the same criticism of soft counterterrorism in terms of measurement (Bjorgo, Sike, 2018). Research identified more than 50 alleged causes of terrorism (Schmid, 2011) that can be grouped using Schmid’s (2013) categorisation in three levels: macro, micro and meso. Firstly, the macro level addresses causes related to the role of government at home and abroad. Secondly, the meso level addresses the causes at the social surrounding level or radical milieu like the reference group or the youth cohort. Lastly, the micro level relates to the individual level meaning all the problems like feelings of alienation and failed integration (Ibid). This

framework will be further explained in the next chapter since it is the chosen method for the analysis. In the aftermath of 9/11, policies that could tackle the root causes of terrorism emerged. CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) and PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) strategies have gained popularity in the past decade. However, both strategies suffer from the lack of an official definition of terrorism and violent extremism. As a result, there is no coherent and shared debate on their definition. CVE differs from traditional counterterrorism since it recognises the social roots of the problem and encourages non-coercive solutions. The CVE strategy counts on policies, strategies and programmes that aim to act on the causes behind the emergence of violent extremism (Bourekba, 2021). The main difference with traditional counterterrorism strategies is that CVE focuses on different actors. While traditional counterterrorism relies on the security sector actors, CVE involves civil society organisations, educational institutions, religious leaders, prisons...PVE gained popularity with the rise of home-grown Islamic terrorism. The PVE strategy aims to put prevention as a priority. CVE and PVE may seem synonymous. However, in practice, CVE aims to counter the existing threat and PVE acts to prevent the emergence of the threat (Ibid). Having stated what CVE and PVE are, we will now focus on the academic debate of each threat.

#### *2.4.1 ISLAMIST EXTREMIST THREAT: CVE & PVE*

In 2016, the UN adopted the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism which was joined by several countries. The activities cover different fields from education to gender equality and discrimination. Moreover, several EU member states incorporated a dedicated CVE pillar in their counterterrorism strategies. Due to the Islamist/ jihadist nature of the terrorist attacks in the past twenty years, especially in Europe, most CVE and PVE strategies are shaped to be directed at this type of terrorism (see the UK CONTEST and Spain's PEN- LCRV). Since most governments that embraced this type of approach target Islamist terrorism, the literature has reflected this trend (Bourekba, 2021; Casptack, 2015; Sulaiman, 2018). The literature around European states mostly covers countries that have taken a clear stand in preventive strategies like the UK. CVE constituted a framework also for the 2011 strategic British programme CONTEST. One of the pillars of the strategy is represented by the programme "Prevent". This plan is implemented in schools (secondary and higher education), the health sector, prisons and probation centres, police and other local authorities (HM Government, 2015). Communities should actively participate in the prevention programme and give positive alternatives to the



most vulnerable. Building trust at a local level is the most important objective of Prevent. This programme spans almost all sectors of public services and civil society (Box, 2018). Multiple academics have analysed and criticised Prevent's measures in the context of Islamist terrorism (Awan, 2012; Qurashi, 2018; Thomas, 2020). Another active debate is the one concerning Spain's PEN- LCRV (Strategic National Plan of The Fight Against Violent Radicalisation), adopted in Spain from 2010 (EICTIR before 2015). The strategy addresses in the prevention pillar three areas like the CVE: internal (meso), external (macro) and internet (micro). The main points of the strategy are the adoption of new legislative measures, institutional coordination and the development of Muslim communities' relations in Spain (Bourekba, 2021). The programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social Equality and the Ministry of Justice. These ministries are the one envisaged to conduct the analysis on Italy. The strategy combines PVE and CVE measures, however, the priority remains the tracking of radicalisation. The plan suggests three types of action in the prevention process to achieve social integration: firstly, measures to recognise diversity, i.e., actions to acknowledge the different identities, cultures and traditions that make up the population. Secondly, confidence-building measures, such as the creation of communication mechanisms between citizens and the authorities to channel the complaints or requirements of certain groups. Thirdly, commitment measures, which encourage citizen participation in institutions. Compared to the actions of Prevent PEN- LCRV sees a less active participation of the civil society especially concerning schools. However, this strategy has also faced criticism (Aguerri, 2018; Cobano- Delgado & Navarros, 2018). These two strategies show different levels of commitment in terms of how far soft counterterrorism policies can go. We will see where Italy stands with its strategy. Academic literature about soft counterterrorism focused on jihadism terrorism in Italy presents a gap that this thesis aims to fill.

#### *2.4.2 POLITICAL TERRORISM*

CVE and PVE strategies are meant to address all types of threats. However, there is a tendency to associate them only with Islamic extremism (Argomaniz 2009 in Bourekba, 2021; Bourekba 2021). In the previous paragraph, it is mentioned the UK Prevent programme. The 2011 Prevent report, identified two primary targets for needed counterterrorism efforts: Northern Ireland-related terrorism (NIRT) and radical Islamist terrorism. However, as Islamist terrorism grew in strength and posed a greater threat to UK territory, the academic debate surrounding Prevent

mostly focused on the Islamist threat implications (O' Toole et al, 2016; Ragazzi, 2016). As stated in the introduction, this trend is not reflected in the academic literature concerning the Italian case since most literature analyses counterterrorism strategies of the past, thus, political terrorism. However, the literature concerning Italian political terrorism only focuses on hard power approaches especially from a legal perspective (Di Fabio, 2018; Viganò, 2018, Pulitanò, 2020). On the contrary, there are current studies that address CVE and PVE applied to political terrorism in other countries, for example in the northern- Irish conflict (Clubb & Tapley, 2019; Cecinini, 2018). CVE literature concerning political terrorism especially focus on rehabilitation and disengagement programmes. The role of former perpetrators in preventing future acts of terrorism and political terrorism is quietly underway in many communities (Clubb& Tapley, 2019). Numerous people in the UK are engaged in conducting research and developing preventative measures (e.g., Quilliam Foundation). Similar to this, ex-violent right-wing extremists often interact with people at risk of becoming involved in gang and political violence in Norway, Sweden, and Germany (Joyce & Lynch, 2017). We can state that there is an active academic debate concerning soft counterterrorism for this threat but not in the Italian case.

#### *2.4.3 ORGANISED CRIME TERRORISM: THE MAFIA*

In the case of the Mafia, there is a heated academic debate around the measures in place to defeat it. Despite that, there is no research on what these soft antimafia measures are. La Spina (2005) establishes a distinction between direct and indirect policies. The first category includes all those law enforcement instruments that aim to disarticulate the mafia organisation, to identify and punish members of the criminal association like the introduction of ad hoc incriminatory rules or the repressive activity carried out by the police and the judiciary. Through indirect anti-mafia policies, the state intends to intervene in the underlying conditions of society, in order to make it more difficult to commit mafia-type crimes. Interventions that fall into this second category are aimed at draining the mafia bond, strengthening civic spirit and generalised aversion to mafias. Indirect policies are thus preventive interventions, through which the state aims to discourage behaviours of mafia rooted among citizens, especially the youngest. In the analysis, we will verify what these indirect policies are and verify to which level of soft counterterrorism respond. The academic debate on the mafia touches on all aspects: from its history (Lupo & Mangiameli, 1989), group organisation (Catino, 1997), root causes (Mosca, 2015) to its countermeasures (La Spina, 2016; Romanò, 2016). This thesis aims

to frame the measures in place under 'soft' and give an insight on what are the programmes and policies in place according to the levels that will be identified in the methodology. The following chapter will be dedicated to the methodology.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH DESIGN

The previous section outlined how literature shows the emergence of a soft counterterrorism approach. This research aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on soft power in counterterrorism strategies, shedding light on the Italian case. As described in the introduction, this study will focus on the following research question: “Does Italy have in place soft counterterrorism measures to respond to homegrown threats?”. This research intends to examine Italian government sources to verify if there is a soft counterterrorism strategy in place. This chapter will outline the methodology and the research design chosen to answer the research question.

#### 3.1 METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

##### *3.1.1 SOURCES*

To answer the research question, this research will be based only on government sources since it is based on the official national strategy. All the government sources analysed are easily accessible to everyone. There is no single official report analysing the Italian National Strategy. However, there are three main reports on security that will be analysed: the Administration of Justice Report (Ministry of Justice, 2021), the Annual Information on Security Report (Council of Ministers, 2021) and the Report to Parliament on the state of the Police Force, Security and Organised Crime (Ministry of Interior, 2020). The chosen reports represent the most updated version available. Since not all the security reports describe the measures for prevention and rehabilitation, the measures will be researched on government websites focusing on the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Policies due to the ‘homegrown’ nature of the research question. Moreover, the research will be conducted in specific counterterrorism institutions. The sources that will be excluded from the analysis are the policies, measures or initiatives that have only been implemented at a regional or local level. The research will not delve into each region’s database due to the length and scope of this thesis.

### *3.1.2 CASE STUDY AND QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS*

A case study is a research design that helps the exploration of a phenomenon within some specific context through various data sources and it undertakes the exploration through a variety of lenses in order to reveal multiple facets of a phenomenon. It is not a method but a research design where you can use various methods (Hornát, 2022). The case study will allow us to see whether the soft power approach is employed in the three cases: Islamist terrorism, political terrorism and the mafia. The methodology employed within this case study is qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is based on reading (textual or visual) as an instrument for gathering information, a reading which, unlike ordinary reading, must be carried out according to the scientific method, i.e. it must be systematic, objective, replicable and valid. Krippendorff (1990, p 18) defines content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use". The element that this definition adds is the "context" as a frame of reference where messages and meanings are developed. Thus, any content analysis must be conducted in relation to the context of the data and justified in terms of this context. The procedure for a qualitative content analysis entails de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation (Lindgren et al, 2020). De- contextualisation meaning breaking down the data and dividing the texts into units, themes or levels. This process begins with putting the sources together by their similarities or separating them by differences. De- contextualisation will provide a new perspective of the studied topic to the participants (Friberg et al, 2013 in Lindgren et al, 2020). Re- contextualisation is the process of combining the isolated data into new patterns and placing them back in their original context, which enables a deeper knowledge of the topic of interest (Ibid). Re- contextualisation continues the work by debating the results in the light of de-contextualisation (Lindgren et al, 2020). Other research methods were also considered such as critical discourse analysis (CDA). However, although CDA is also a method that can be applied to analyse texts, discourse analysis entails the impossibility to strip discourse from its broader context (Hardy et al, 2004). Thus, the analysis conducted needs a first de-contextualisation to proceed with its re-contextualisation so CDA would not be appropriate. In order to analyse the sources, the measures will be categorised through the analysis proposed by the Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness (Schmid, 2020) which offers a framework to conduct this analysis. The analysis will focus on two aspects of soft counterterrorism: Prevention (of the emergence of a threat) and Rehabilitation (of the existing threat). The policies, measures or initiatives found will be categorised following three levels

that correspond to the three categories of root causes: macro, meso, micro. We have introduced these three levels in the previous chapter. The ‘levels’ of root causes correspond to the levels of a soft counterterrorism strategy identified in the Danish pyramid of prevention (Schmid, 2020 p 54): Early (addressing macro roots), anticipatory (addressing meso roots) and direct (addressing micro roots). The pyramid dissects prevention in the three levels, however, rehabilitation also concerns the last level micro/direct. There is a lack of consensus where the separation between each level should be. Despite the lack of fixed boundaries (Ibid), this partition still constitutes an acceptable framework for the analysis.

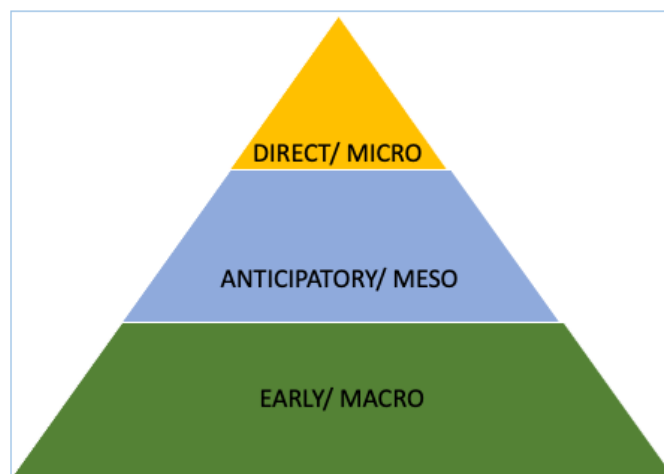


Figure 1: Levels of Prevention

The following table summarises the aspects that correspond to each level in order to give a structure to the analysis:

<b>MACRO EARLY</b>	Addressing the whole population
	Good governance, rule of law, human rights, infrastructures
	Examples: activities aimed at wellbeing, active citizenship, education

<b>MESO ANTICIPATORY</b>	Addressing the environment at risk: specific communities
	Community dialogue, family and relatives' engagement
	Examples: Activities that aimed to open a dialogue with the community and give assistance to vulnerable milieux
<b>MICRO DIRECT</b>	Addressing the individual already radicalised, radicalised environment
	Prevention of future crimes and prisoners' rehabilitation
	Examples: Individual assistance, mentoring plans, activities to promoted disengagement

The process will start from the macro level to the micro. The search will look for policies or initiatives that correspond to the level and verify the absence or presence of strategies that can be framed as soft. One aspect that is worth stating prior to the analysis is that there are no rigid, fixed rules when it comes to soft power. The main point to evaluate a possible policy is the appeal that generates as opposed to its alienation for the individuals or the community. Thus, it is a subjective parameter. To answer the research question the results of the analysis of each threat will be compared.

### 3.2 STRUCTURE OF THE ANALYSIS

The analytical chapters will be divided in two parts. The first part will give a background of the threat and of the counterterrorism methods used in the past. This first part will be based on secondary sources since the content has been thoroughly analysed. This part is relevant to the research since it allows us to understand the rationale behind the measures employed today. Moreover, certain policies and laws might still be in place. The timeframe of the past measures depends on each threat's history. The second part constitutes the analysis of the primary sources. As stated previously this second part will be divided between prevention and rehabilitation. The next chapter will be focused on the Islamic terrorism threat as explained on the introduction.

## CHAPTER 4

### SOFT COUNTERTERRORISM AND ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

The present chapter will be divided into two main parts: Firstly, it will explore the background of the Islamic extremism threat in Italy. Secondly, it will delve into the main analysis to study whether the government is employing soft measures to counter Islamic terrorism.

#### 4.1 BACKGROUND OF THE THREAT

##### *4.1.1 ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN ITALY*

Italy, since the 1980s, along with other European countries, has become one of the main destinations for economic migrants and political refugees coming, in particular, from the African continent. These continuous migratory flows, which gradually intensified from the 1990s onwards, lead to the fast emergence of Islam, both as a culture and as the religion of part of the population (Morucci, 2018). Compared to European partners, such as France, Germany, the Netherlands and Great Britain, this important migration flow was twenty to forty years “late” (Vidino, 2014). This “delay” also occurs in the appearance of Islamic extremists. Between the late 1990s and early 2000s, the vast majority of jihadist hubs dismantled by the Italian authorities possessed similar characteristics. The cells were part of structured networks run by charismatic leaders subordinated to groups operating in north Africa. Some of them planned attacks in Italy, but most of their activities were logistical in nature. Their main task was to raise funds through activities ranging from petty crimes to legitimate business activities. In the introduction, we mentioned how these aspects establish connections between terrorism and organised crime. Their demographics mirrored those of Islamic immigration in Italy, and most of those involved in them were first-generation immigrants from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya and Egypt. Many of them were in the country illegally and lived in severe socio-economic conditions. However, in those years, certain episodes mimic the dynamics of what happened years later in Europe. In those early years of the year 2000, in fact, Italy witnessed a number of attacks perpetrated by so-called lone actors who possessed many of the characteristics of the actions then seen around Europe in recent years. These attacks caused no



victims other than the attackers themselves. The first symptom of this phenomenon occurred in Sicily in the months immediately following the 11 September attacks. Domenico Quaranta, a 29-year-old Sicilian painter with mental health issues, attempted two gas explosions. He had been introduced to more fundamentalist Islam by fellow inmates in the Trapani prison. The episodes in those years, concerned first-generation immigrants, who had arrived in Italy as adults and were poorly integrated into Italian society. Moreover, in all cases (al-Khatib 2003, Chaouki 2004) the mosque, even if they were more like small, improvised prayer rooms, played a fundamental role. The episode that marks a significant change in the dynamics of jihadism in Italy occurred on the morning of 12 October 2009 at the Santa Barbara Police Station. Mohamed Game caused an explosion (without casualties). Since then, other cases have occurred without casualties or stopped in time by the authorities. As in every other European country, jihadist-inspired radicalisation in Italy concerns only a statistically insignificant fraction of the Muslim population. However, the phenomenon in Italy seems to be small even when compared with other European countries. Numbers are significantly lower not only in countries similar in size, such as France or Great Britain, but also compared to smaller ones, for example, Denmark or the Netherlands. In addition, the numbers are lower also when comparing foreign fighters joining the Syrian conflict. It was estimated that in the autumn 2013, 200-400 jihadists travelled to Syria from France, 100 from Belgium and 80 from Denmark. On the contrary, authorities estimated that only 10-15 Italian residents travelled to Syria to fight (Vidino, 2014). It is difficult to explain why there are such significant differences between Italy and the rest of Europe and how the threat will evolve. However, it is crucial to establish a functioning counterterrorism strategy to keep limiting the threat. The experience of other European countries can provide useful indications despite the background differences that exist from country to country. The following paragraph will focus on the counterterrorism measures adopted by the Italian government.

#### *4.1.2 HISTORY OF THE COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES*

The fight against Islamic terrorism in the European context was only strengthened organically after the 2001 Twin Towers attack in New York. Shortly after the tragic event, the European Council decided that the fight against terrorism was a priority objective of the European Union. To this end, the European Council proceeded to adopt an Action Plan with which it intended

to tackle the threat of international terrorism. This plan consisted of five points: strengthening police and judicial cooperation, implementing the measures established at the Tampere Council, setting up joint investigation teams and closer cooperation with US institutions, developing international legal instruments, and coordinating overall EU action (Sipione, 2017). The change of priorities also translated at the Italian level. The European Directives transferred to Italy with many gaps. The most important changes arrived after the attacks of New York (2001), London-Madrid (2004-5) and Paris (2015). In 2001, the government issued three "Decreto Legge" (law decrees). The most significant one was certainly Law Decree n. 374 of 18.10.2001, converted into Law no. 438 of 15.12.2001, which remodelled the already existing rules to tackle domestic terrorism. In particular, by introducing the crime of "association with the purpose of international terrorism" (Article 270-bis of the Criminal Code), and providing, on the procedural side, district jurisdiction for crimes with terrorist purposes, as well as other innovations aimed at strengthening investigative possibilities (Spataro, 2016). In addition, 2001 also saw the strengthening of cooperation with the United Nations, NATO and the G8 (WODC, 2007). In 2005, Law Decree No. 144 was approved, following the 2004 Madrid bombing and the 2005 London bombing. The decree especially provided for a better definition of 'conduct with the purpose of terrorism' (Art. 270-sexies cp). The conduct was defined by the notion of international terrorism and the wording adopted by Art. 1 of the Framework Decision of the Council of the European Union (13 June 2002) . In 2015, following the Paris massacre of 7 January 2015 at the Charlie Hebdo magazine, some regulatory interventions were put in place: Firstly, a clampdown on web-based propaganda, a key tool of IS and other terrorist formations. Therefore, a package of targeted provisions was established, to inhibit access to websites used for terrorist propaganda or (in the presence of the conditions of law) to remove them. An updated list of the suspected websites is kept at the Ministry of the Interior. The regulatory interventions of 2001, 2005 and 2015 had a common feature: they were passed in the form of the decree-law, and the emergency measure, all being converted into law with a large parliamentary majority (Spataro, 2016). Furthermore, there is another year to mention in terms of legislative changes: 2007. It was then that Law 127 was introduced, which changed the world of agencies. The military was effectively displaced from intelligence, which has been in civilian hands ever since. Now the National Security Agency is in charge, with the President of the Council of Ministers at the operational summit. The body that coordinates the whole operational aspect of intelligence is the DIS (Security Intelligence Department) (Sipione, 2017).

### *4.1.3 THE FIRST SOFT APPROACHES*

Most measures of this timeframe 2001-2007 related to a hard power approach rather than focusing on soft counter measures. A policy analysis of the period by WODC (2007) suggests that most changes focused on the following policy areas: special competences for government bodies, institutional developments, international cooperation, financing of terrorism, crisis management and security of infrastructures. The measures concerning prevention of radicalisation and recruitment only concerned two initiatives. On one hand, one initiative concerned the expulsion of two Imams in 2003 and 2005, to prevent them from breaching the peace and being a risk to the security of the state. The expulsion, regulated by law 40/1998, is a preventive measure that is still in place and often used by the Italian government. While the expulsion is framed as a preventive measure, it is questionable whether this measure can be identified as a soft power approach. This policy will be analysed in the second part of this chapter since it is still in place. On the other hand, the second initiative was the establishment of the Islamic Council at the Ministry of the Interior with a consultative purpose. The Council was established by a ministerial decree in 2005 as an advisory organ to open an inter-religious dialogue (Morucci, 2018). This initiative had the aim of promoting a harmonious integration of the Islamic community. This first step opened the way to more approaches in cooperation with the Muslim community (Ibid). However, their relationship encounters significant issues. A characteristic of Italian Islam that prevents the establishment of a good relationship with the state is its heterogeneity. This aspect which not only concerns the traditional internal divisions within Islam (Sunnis, Shiites, Sufis, Salafis), but also the variety of the countries from which immigrants in Italy come from. In each country of which Islam has taken on different connotations. In fact, many of these countries have maintained relations with their citizens, creating associations, contributing even more to the fragmentation and creating further obstacles to the integration of these communities (Mancuso, 2012). Returning to the 2005 Islamic Council, the choice of the Council members turned out to be a controversial issue despite the efforts of Minister Pisanu that tried to take into account the different cultural orientations and sensitivities (Morucci, 2018). After 2005 other committees and councils were set up. In February 2010, Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, taking up the work he had done in previous years with the various Muslim representatives, formed a body similar to the 2005 Council, the Committee for Italian Islam. The Committee, a heterogeneous group selected by the Minister gathered around it not only religious exponents of moderate Islam, but also sociologists, journalists and Islamic law professors. The choice of members was mostly

determined by a practical and functional aspect: to provide opinions and proposals on specific issues raised by the Minister. In fact, in the course of its work and by virtue of its consultative functions, the Committee has both drawn up important assessments in relation to bills presented to Parliament and formulated a series of opinions on: burqa and niqab (July 2010), Islamic places of worship (March 2011), imams and training (July 2011). The latest advisory body, established by Interior Minister Angelino Alfano, was the Council for Relations with Islam in January 2016. It was composed of professors with expertise in Islamic culture and religion with 'the task of providing opinions and formulating proposals on integration issues' (Morucci, 2018). Nevertheless, the Muslim communities did not feel represented by the delegation gathered around the Consultation Table and denounced its excessive presence of imams, the lack of Shia representatives and the unbalancing of the group towards the most radical and conservative wing of Italian Islam, the Ucoii (Ibid). Moreover, in the same year, a commission with the purpose to examine the state of radicalisation and jihadist extremism in Italy was established by the government. The results of the Commission were summarised in a report that examined the soft measures that the Italian strategy was missing. The document stated as follows:

*"In recent months, a debate has been raised among experts on the need to introduce measures in Italy, already present in various European countries for more than a decade, aimed at countering radicalisation (measures often known by the English term Countering Violent Extremism-CVE). These are both soft power measures, i.e. characterised by the effort to influence behaviour and prevent radicalisation, not through coercion and repression, but rather with instruments belonging to other spheres of action and counter-narrative media campaigns, as well as targeted deradicalisation interventions on specific subjects, which flank those of a repressive nature traditionally used in counter-terrorism and which seek to reduce the number of radicalised subjects" (Commissione Vidino, 2016, p 6)*

The report offers concrete guidelines for the development of a strategy to prevent radicalisation and de-radicalisation in Italy. It recommends a strategy to counter violent extremism that operates on three levels: macro, meso and micro level. These levels coincide with the ones identified by Schmid and previously mentioned. They respectively address the Italian Muslim population in general, segments of it, and specific individuals. At each of these levels, a set of initiatives operates that together constitute a complete and comprehensive approach. The strategy also identifies the individuals who have to carry out these activities: not only the

traditional actors of counterterrorism (law enforcement, intelligence, investigative judiciary) but also social and health services, schools, local police and potentially others. Civil society plays an equally important role, whether represented by the world of volunteering and associations, Islamic communities or families. In addition, the web and prisons are highlighted as radicalisation environments (Commissione Vidino, 2016). In the next section, the analysis will see if the Italian strategy has changed and now integrates the soft power measures recommended.

#### *4.1.4 THE LAW PROPOSAL ON PREVENTION*

In 2018 a group of parliament members proposed a law concerning prevention of Islamic extremism. In March 2022 the law proposal (Proposta di legge 243/2018) was approved by the Assembly at the Chamber of Deputies and is currently continuing the law iter to be approved. The bill is titled "Measures for the Prevention of Jihadist Radicalisation and Violent Extremism". The text proposes a number of measures that touch all the three levels identified in the 2018 report: early (macro), anticipatory (meso) and direct (micro). However, the measures not only concern soft power. The first article of the bill, states the purposes of the law and in order to do so, proposes a definition of "Radicalisation" and of "Islamic Radicalisation". The 2nd to the 6th articles concern law enforcement and the "macro" dimension. The articles describe the new institutions that will be established as well as their tasks, members and responsibilities. The main body is the National Centre of Radicalisation (CRAD). The CRAD will prepare annually the National Strategic Plan for the prevention of radicalisation processes and adherence to violent extremism and the rehabilitation of radicalised individuals. The centre will define the projects, actions and initiatives to be implemented. The European funds of the "Radicalisation Awareness Network" will be available for the financing of the activities. The other measures can be framed in the "meso" level and concern articles from 7th to 10th. Article 7th introduces training activities for different actors: from the police force to school teachers. The training concerns programmes and courses aimed at improving the intercultural and inter-religious dialogue useful for preventing subversive phenomena of violent radicalisation. The next articles envision preventive interventions in schools, university education and communication and awareness campaigns on multiple multimedia channels. These actions are similar to the ones discussed for PEN- LCRV in Spain (Paragraph 2.4.1). However, from the bill it seems that the programmes do not envisage the high active involvement of civil society like for UK 'Channel'.

Article 11 focuses on the “micro” dimension. It establishes a national plan for the treatment of prisoners to promote deradicalisation. Article 12 introduces a new law for possession of material related to terrorism. This new bill still needs approval and thus, measures are not yet implemented. However, there are soft initiatives that are already in place. In the next part, the active measures will be analysed. It should be stated that there is no academic debate concerning this new law proposal.

## 4.2 SOFT COUNTERTERRORISM TODAY

As stated in chapter 3, Italy does not have a singular National Security Strategy (NSS), meaning a single medium- to long-term government document that identifies the response guidelines for national threats at the political-strategic level. Alternatively, there are several texts that refer to the institutional heads of the external and internal dimensions of security of the different ministries. Italy has not yet put in place one strategy despite the current international scenario that sees a trend in several European and Western countries (see France, Germany, UK mentioned in chapter 2) that merges together the two dimensions of national security, external and internal. This analysis will focus on the “Interior” security aspects given the nature of RQ that focuses on 'homegrown' threats. As stated in the previous chapter, the reports analysed mostly refer to the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education. Particularly, in the context of Internal security, the Committee for Strategic Counterterrorism Analysis, set up by the Ministry of Interior, generally carries out the tasks of analysing and assessing relevant reports relating to domestic and international terrorism (Cascini, 2012).

### 4.2.1 PREVENTION

The following part will focus on the analysis of the soft measures employed by the Italian government. As said in the previous paragraph there is not a document that states the soft measures. However, even if not framed as counterterrorism or terrorism prevention there are measures already in place that address prevention. The analysis will follow the “levels” described in the methodology. The first part explores the three levels concerning prevention. The second part will focus on rehabilitation.

### *Macro/Early Level*

The first analysed documents concern the first level: “Early” or “Macro”. This first level is the most general, addressing the whole population with a focus on the youth. The foundations of this level of counterterrorism are good governance, rule of law and social justice. The length of this thesis does not allow an in-depth analysis to measure Italy’s levels. However, being Italy a democratic European state that promotes the EU values of democracy, rule of law, equality and human rights, we can agree that it reaches a fair level. Moreover, it has not been documented that Italy fosters or enables terrorist activity. This level can also entail activities that promote well-being, prevent the development of problematic behaviours and strengthen social skills among the youth. The government is involved in a substantial number of activities, projects and campaigns that address these issues. A complete analysis would count infinite sources so it is not feasible for this research. However, in order to understand the “early” prevention, this research will present three examples of measures that especially target the youth. Firstly, Italy has launched the National Recovery and Resilience plan (PNRR) thanks to the Recovery Funds allocated by the EU, due to the effects of the pandemic on the Italian economy. The six missions of the plan focus on digitisation, innovation, green transition and infrastructure for sustainable mobility; education and research; inclusion and cohesion; and health. The plan is strongly oriented to gender inclusion and support for the education, training and employment of young people (PNRR, 2021). Secondly, another measure worth mentioning as an example is the approval of article 1-quater under law 15/2022. This article establishes the allocation of a “psychologist bonus” that institutes a voucher up to €600 for therapy for people with an annual income lower than €50000. The psychologist bonus is a measure designed to reduce the psychological effects that the pandemic has had on a broad spectrum of the public and especially on the youngest. This bonus constitutes an important step for the acknowledgement of mental health issues and indirectly serves the purpose of countering sentiments of anger, alienation or other root causes of terrorism. Moreover, as stated in the “annual information on security report” (Ministry of Interior, 2021) the pandemic has affected multiple dimensions, starting from mental health to increasing competitive dynamics of international relations, and social tensions and thus it has created opportunities for hostile actors. Therefore, this bonus constitutes an important resource for low-income families and can incentivise taking care of our mental well-being. Another example of government initiative targeting the youth that prevents problematic behaviours is the SIA project (Ministry of Education, 2022). The project arises from the need that emerged among the teachers to have support at a local level for bullying and cyberbullying. The support infrastructure coordinates

universal preventive actions and manages the emergencies in the area. The most serious cases require external support with experts that can collaborate with the teachers. Therefore, the project offers support through the activation of Integrated Working Groups at a regional level. The action starts with the involvement of the regional contact person for bullying and cyberbullying. The Integrated Working Groups will be a point of reference for the management of emergency situations and a control room for activities to raise awareness, training and prevention of the phenomenon (Ibid) .

### *Meso/Anticipatory*

This second level addresses actions directed at the social surrounding as stated in the previous chapter. The measures at this level can involve the families, specific communities or professionals (like teachers and social workers) in non-violent environments that could be at risk. The Islamic community represents an important actor for prevention. In a government report about Islamic radicalisation, it is highlighted how Islam can be a resource to counter forms of fanaticism and extremism. A correct approach to Islam can help generate a sense of belonging, identity and, at the same time, help combat the Khawarij narratives of jihadism (Spanpanato, 2012). As mentioned in the previous paragraph the relationship between the Italian Government and the Islamic Community has encountered certain difficulties. However, the dialogue with this religious community finally reached an important step in 2017 with the “National pact for an Italian Islam, the expression of a community that is open, integrated and adheres to the values and principles of the state order”. This is the most recent collaboration with the government that is still maintained. The pact was redacted with the collaboration of the Ministry of Interior and involves 10 different Islamic associations. The pact promotes a series of initiatives in terms of prevention. Firstly, the representatives of the associations commit to continue their action to counter religious radicalism, through cooperation with the authorities and institutions, providing the ‘tools’ for the government to interpret this threat. Moreover, the pact promotes a process of legal organisation of Islamic associations in harmony with current legislation on religious freedom and the state legal system principles’. It envisages the training of imams and religious guides who, in view of the specific and delicate role they play in their communities, may be called to give guidance in places such as hospitals, reception centres, penal institutions. They can also act as mediators of the Islamic faith to ensure the full implementation of the civil principles of coexistence, the secularity of the State, legality and equal rights between men and women. The associations will continue to organise public events that demonstrate the effectiveness of intercultural dialogue, both by enhancing the contribution



of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Islamic tradition to the life of Italian society, and by building pathways for the integration of Muslim immigrants and combating radicalism and religious fanaticism, acting in synergy with Italian institutions. The pact includes other efforts that promote inter-religious dialogue with the Islamic community, integration into Italian society and an open exchange with the local civil community. The pact is a good example of a soft counterterrorism at the meso level since it clearly identifies the rightful actors that the government needs to collaborate with. Today, the signatories' associations are continuing their commitments stated in the pact with many initiatives available in their websites like the UCOII one (2022). Another community environment that can be addressed at the meso level is the immigrant community since in Italy most of the attacks involved first generation immigrants. Moreover, there have been critical episodes in detention centres for repatriation and in reception centres for immigrants, related to uneasy situations linked to the difficult conditions faced on the journey to Italy and to other contingent factors (such as quarantine obligation due to Covid-19) which have occasionally rise into feelings of revenge against the West (Council of Ministers, 2021). The Ministry of Interior as well as the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies address in two reports actions for integration and inclusion of migrants. While the Ministry of Interior hasn't updated the 2017 report of "Good practices of reception and integration of migrants in Italy", the Ministry of labour has presented a plan (2021-2027) on employment, integration and inclusion of immigrants. The plan establishes 5 actions:

1) Supporting cooperation between actors in immigrant integration policies
2) Prevention and fight against undeclared work and the phenomenon of 'caporalato', promotion of decent work and the culture of legality
3) Socio-occupational integration of vulnerable immigrants
4) Enhancing the full potential of young school-aged foreigners and immigrant citizens in accessing the labour market
5) Promoting the participation of immigrant women in the social and labour market

These actions aim to integrate the immigrant community and try to avoid the isolation in difficult socio-economic environments that can promote poverty, criminalisation and radicalisation. The previous documents analysed all focused in the community environment

where individuals could become radicalised. At this level actions should also address the families and professionals that deal with vulnerable or radicalised individuals. However, I could not find any initiative that addresses this dynamic directly or indirectly. The 2018 prevention law does envisage strategies for these targets so it is likely that these strategies will develop in the future.

#### *Micro/Direct*

This level targets directly radicalised individuals who may have already engaged in criminal acts to prevent them from further radicalisation and promote disengagement. This level mainly focuses on exit programmes and prison rehabilitation. However, there is one measure mentioned earlier that the Italian government uses as prevention. This measure concerns article 2 of law 40/1998. It concerns the expulsion of non-Italian citizens for suspected terrorism or security threats. The law is described in the annual information on security report (2021, pg 86) as “a pivotal instrument of the national prevention model, which aims to create synergies between intelligence and police institutions”. The report states that 59 individuals have been expelled in the year under review (2021). It is debatable whether this measure can be considered an “attractive” (soft) method rather than a “coercive” (hard) one. On one hand this tool enables the correct exercise of rehabilitation programmes in prisons. The Italian prisons suffer from overcrowding and in order to establish effective deradicalization programmes a functioning infrastructure is needed. Moreover, this strategy can persuade individuals to avoid radicalised and violent environments to elude the expulsion and thus be appealing. On the other hand, this tool not only faces criticism in terms of human rights but it can have counterproductive consequences. This measure could intensify frustration, anger and a sense of revenge for the individual. It is worth reporting that the prevention 2018 law that is being approved states that: “ the purposes pursued by this law shall not prejudice or hinder the measures..... of expulsion or removal orders from the national territory”. Thus, preventive measures should not obstruct the expulsion procedure. Moreover this measure could tackle the macro level since there has been criticism in terms of procedural rightfulness (Marone, 2017).

#### *4.2.2 REHABILITATION*

Rehabilitation is still part of the micro level. However, this part concerns prisons, after-care programmes and reintegration programmes. The Italian government has thoroughly analysed

the situation in Italian prisons with research and acknowledges the importance of rehabilitation programmes and strategies focused on Islamic extremism. The “annual Information on Security” report (2021) highlights the fact that in prisons there is an indoctrination and recruitment process operated by 'veterans'. The Ministry of Justice is in charge of reporting the activities and prison programmes. This part will focus only on programmes exclusively directed at Islamic extremists based on the Administration of Justice Report (Ministry of Justice, 2021). Other prison initiatives will be analysed in the following chapters. The prison approach in the Italian system concerns both the prison’s staff and the inmates. The programmes aimed at training staff are based on awareness, understanding and recognition of radicalisation in all relevant forms of extremism. In addition, there is support training on information sharing regarding risk and needs, security, protocols and procedures. Moreover, training involves education on religion, intercultural sensitivity, and human rights: attitudes and skills to engage in knowing, understanding and defending religious and cultural minorities, addressing hate crime, discrimination and preventing racial or ethnic profiling. The Ministry also establishes in-depth and specialised training for specific personnel (imams, security personnel). The use of figures such as Imams and/or cultural mediators are identified in agreement with the Ministry of the Interior and the UCOI. In addition, to foster interaction with Islamic prisoners, the re-edition of basic Arabic language courses for Prison Police personnel will be considered, especially for those working in penitentiary institutions where Islamic terrorists are detained. These measures also applied for detainees in the High Security Facility 2 (AS2) where prisoners of terrorist organisations are held. The Ministry foresees the need to identify new detention spaces in order to allow adequate separation between subjects belonging to the same or opposing terrorist organisations, avoiding damaging concentrations of subjects in the same institution, also in order to allow better and more effective observation and targeted treatment activities. As of 18.11.2021, there were 43 subjects ascribed to the "AS2" circuit. The Department took part in events organised by the European Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) which is a centre of excellence on preventing radicalisation. They also took part in other meetings such as PBC (Project Based Collaboration), Ran Prisons and “Exit Continuum”. As a risk assessment tool used, it was highlighted that the European Project TRaIn TRAINING (Transfer Radicalisation Approaches in Training), funded by the European Commission, has strengthened frontline staff's ability to understand and recognise the signs that may indicate violent radicalisation. Finally, the report highlights the attention of the Italian Prison Administration towards the ideological dimension. It pays particular attention to prisoner rehabilitation, disengagement measures and deradicalisation programmes leading to

the abandonment of the ideology and practice of terrorism in favour of a moderate, democratic, pluralist or in any case less conflictual visions (Ibid). The Italian soft strategy directed at prisons seems to be in sync with other European countries and touches most of the elements envisaged. The government has identified a tailored strategy to prevent recidivism and promote disengagement involving not only measures for the prisoners but also the staff and religious figures.

#### 4.3 EARLY CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aimed to analyse the soft power measures in place in regards to the Islamic extremism threat. The Italian government does not have a structured strategy that addresses all the studied levels. In particular, the meso level lacks many aspects. However, there are initiatives that could be framed as soft for prevention since they address environments at risk promoting integration and engagement. The micro level does envisage policies directly addressing prevention. The 2018 Prevention law will give the structure and the new measures that the Italian strategy is currently lacking. The next chapters will analyse two other main threats to have a more complete picture of the Italian strategy soft levels. At the end of the analysis, the conclusion will address all aspects more in detail.

## CHAPTER 5

### SOFT COUNTERTERRORISM AND POLITICAL TERRORISM

The present chapter will be divided into two main parts: Firstly, it will explore the background of political terrorism in Italy. This group comprehends the threats identified in the “Annual Information on Security Report” (2021): Marxist- Leninist circuit, anarchists and the extreme/ radical right. Secondly, the chapter will delve into the main analysis to study whether the government is employing soft measures.

#### 5.1 BACKGROUND OF THE THREAT

##### *5.1.1 THE YEARS OF LEAD (ANNI DI PIOMBO)*

In the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, Italy was hit by a series of terrorist attacks from left-wing and right-wing extremist factions. The need for reforms and frustration resulted in street violence, armed struggle and acts of terrorism (Sipione, 2017). Italy seems to be the only major European country where political terrorism had such a long-standing history, with the exception of Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. The period in question is better known as the 'years of lead' and 'strategy of tension'. Between 1968 and 1974, 140 attacks were carried out. The beginning of the years of lead overlapped with the student revolts that developed in Italy and Europe in 1968-69. After the student protests, the workers' struggles arrived. The first attack that symbolises the beginning of those years is the Piazza Fontana massacre in Milan on 12 December 1969 (Ibid). During the 'strategy of tension', society seemed divided and politicised groups appeared and did not reject violence. A climate of insecurity and danger increased in society, also because not only 'loud' attacks were carried out, but there was a continuous stream of attacks against small targets, individual citizens, the police force and bank tellers. However, terrorism in Italy failed in its objectives: the extreme left-wing groups, generally of Marxist-Leninist matrix, vanished their desire of subverting the state order through armed conflict. In addition, the extreme right-wing groups failed to change the governing political force and to demonstrate the inability of democracy to govern public order (Ibid). Despite the 'win', the years of lead changed profoundly Italian politics and cost hundreds of

lives. Between 1969 and 1982, the victims were 351 (Ibid). The tension of those years built up the Italian government's experience to deal with terrorism and allowed the government to have a prompt reply after the 9/11 attacks. In the next paragraph, we will see in detail the strategy used.

### *5.1.2 HISTORY OF THE COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES: A SOFT-HARD COMBINATION*

The Italian approach to counter the threats of those years was a mix of 'stick and carrot', hard and soft power. The 'strategy of tension' has been thoroughly analysed by Italian and foreign academics (Weinberg & Eubank 201; Blando & Maggio, 2020) that describe this double approach. Firstly, one element that emerges, that we will see in each threat, is the commitment of the state to maintain the rule of law and the legal path of penal law. After 9/11 Italy refused the 'war on terror' approach and chose to follow the respect of ordinary guarantees and the use of preventive measures used in the past as we saw in the previous chapter. Despite the exceptional situation of the years of lead, democracy had to demonstrate its values (Salvi, 2017). Respecting human rights and the rule of law was important also to establish a counter-narrative to both the extreme right and left. The judiciary should not have gotten involved in such a battle if upholding the rights of the people and the standard procedural rules was not possible (Ibid). There was a heated political debate especially among the left-wing whether the measures should be more attentive to repressions or focused on the maintenance of liberal guarantees. This aspect is a pillar of the first level of soft counterterrorism, the macro level. Other important 'soft' laws and measures were established with the 'reward law' (*legge premiale*) and the 'repented' (*pentiti*). These aspects gave the government the 'carrot' to their 'stick' strategy. The aggravating principle to the penalties was combined with the promise of mitigation for those who cooperated with the authorities. This regulatory model to combat terrorism has fundamental analogies with the antimafia strategy that we will analyse in the next chapter. The so-called 'reward legislation' was launched as "Cossiga law" (law 15/1980) in a crucial moment of the 'Anni di Piombo' (Ibid). A special aggravating circumstance was introduced for terrorist and subversive crimes, leading to an increase in the penalty by up to half. However, a considerable reduction was provided for "a participant who, by dissociating himself from the others, endeavours to prevent the criminal activity from having further consequences, or concretely assists the police and judicial authorities in the collection of

decisive evidence for the identification or capture of the competitors" (Article 4). The reduction in penalties is very substantial (for example life imprisonment is replaced by imprisonment for 12 to 20 years). The temporary law from 1982 provided even greater reductions for remorseful terrorists who had offered helpful cooperation within a specific time period; a particularly significant reduction in punishment and additional benefits were provided in the event that the cooperation was of exceptional importance. This law, that can be framed in the micro level, and responds to a soft power logic since it not only was useful to get crucial information but it contribute to the moral and ideological disintegration of the terrorist groups. However, it is important to consider that the rewarding legislation also allowed the authors of felonies and extremely serious criminal offences to benefit from it (Putlitanò, 2020). After the end of the 'strategy of tension' the reward law was completed by law 18/1987. This law contained provisions in favour of those who separated themselves from terrorism without collaboration. Individuals that had rethought their past experience and repudiated their collective, once again a law that was based on deradicalisation of the ideology. This law was a difficult choice that shows openness and humanity. Moreover, also in the micro sphere, a number of measures were put in place concerning prison and rehabilitation. First of all, stricter prison treatment (Article 41-bis) was envisaged for terrorists. Prison 'differentiation' made prison sentences particularly harsh and in 1977 the government established special maximum security prisons. On the other hand, 'homogeneous areas' were also set up in 1983. In these areas political prisoners who had separated from the armed struggle were together (Licciardi, 2020). These spaces gave support to the prisoners that had initiated this path and facilitated their separation from the extremist groups. The creation of homogeneous areas, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is an important part of rehabilitation strategies.

Another actor that played a part in those years is the Catholic Church. The 'repente' law in fact is seen as an influence of the catholic culture. Concerning the terrorist prisoners, The Catholic Church acted as a guide for those who, from inside prisons and beyond, try to leave behind their leaden past. The Ambrosian Church of Cardinal Martini, traced a path of exit from violence and dissociation with collaboration and repentance, which allowed the ex-terrorists to continue their path of closure of their failed attack (Licciardi, 2020). The Church was deeply committed to the role of supporter of the institutions. However, it perhaps thought that those same institutions were unable to succeed as it engaged in secret negotiations for the infamous kidnap of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro, linked to Paul VI by ancient friendship. This attempt accentuated the separation between the religious institution and civil society. The role of the Church was often an alternative to the secular role of institutions, taking up arguments

and positions, fuelling the diatribe between secularists and Catholics on reconciliation and repentance. The Church, in its articulated complexity, took on a need that concerned the whole of society, posing the theme of reconciliation as an instrument of pressure against the parliamentary arena, refreshing the rhetoric of the defeated state (Ibid). We can see that the Church was an important actor but the lack of communication with the state and the demonstration of the secularity of the Italian republic made the dialogue unsuccessful.

The success of the Italian strategy was determined by various factors. Firstly, criminal repression and cohesion of political forces that were divided. Secondly, the refusal of the institutions to consider any requests made by the groups even in the release of hostages, refusing to recognise any legitimacy of the armed party. Moreover, focusing on the individuality of terrorists, enabling them to start a new life outside prison and archiving the past constituted a powerful tool to strengthen the repressive action of the police and the judiciary (Pulitanò, 2020). As we can see, the Italian strategy already envisaged many aspects of soft counterterrorism that helped make the government action successful.

## 5.2 THE EVOLUTION OF THE THREATS

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the threats identified today are the Marxist-Leninist circuit, anarchists and the radical right. These three groups still correspond to the ones in the years of lead but there has been an evolution and a shift on their objectives and ideology. Once the Cold War conflict was over, both extreme left and right had a transformation, while the anarchists remained of the same ideology. The glue of the radical right became ethnic-national identity. In particular, the extreme right follows the experience of white supremacy and American super-nationalism (Caciagli, 2018). This ideology also spread to Italy, particularly with the 2015 migration crisis and the diffusion of populism. The new political culture is punctuated by buzzwords about sovereignty, border security, and the defence of the Italian family. It is punctuated in the statements of defenders of Christianity against Islamists, blacks and the LGBTQ+ community (Ibid). Today's extreme right is characterised by xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and racism. On the other hand, the extreme left had to undergo a more heterogeneous evolution. The length of this research does not allow an in-depth analysis of its new forms. However, for this analysis, it would be just useful to know that the 'Marxists- Leninist circuit' can be categorised as "conservative communists" meaning a group that maintains the past positions towards the Soviet experience and traditional views



(Boldrini, 2018). The anarchist ideology remains attached to the past ideology of abolition of all government over the individual (Rosi, 2018). While Marxist-inspired groups continue to be organised in hierarchical lines, anarchist groups favour an individualistic philosophy, which manifests itself through numerous violent actions, however often responding to a unified logic (Pisanu, 2003).

### 5.3 SOFT COUNTERTERRORISM TODAY

This part, like in the previous chapter, will analyse the measures that can be framed as soft employed today by the government. The first part concerns prevention and the second rehabilitation.

#### 5.3.1 PREVENTION

Prevention for political terrorism is not structured in a National Plan as mentioned in chapter 4. The threats are identified and described in the reports by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice. However, the reports do not give guidelines for prevention in the macro and meso levels. The following analysis aims to see if there are measures that address the actors and environments of soft prevention.

##### *Macro/ Early level*

As said in the previous chapter this level addresses the whole population and the principles of rule of law, social justice and good governance. As explained in the previous paragraph (5.1.2), Italy represented a good example during the ‘strategy of tension’ for its capability of maintaining the rule of law and the rights of the accused. This defence of civil rights (*garantismo*) is still a crucial characteristic of the Italian strategy. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the pandemic restrictions caused a heated debate in terms of citizens freedom and rights. Was the balance between the fundamental right to health (Constitution art. 32) and personal freedom (Constitution, art 13) fair and proportional? The crisis gave the extremists groups from all sides the opportunity to stigmatise the government’s handling of the emergency. The Marxist- Leninist group especially originated protests against the vaccination certificate in the workplace seen as a divisive and repressive tool for workers. There were episodes of violence during the protests against the lockdown and the vaccine. (Council of

Ministers, 2021). Despite the protests, the government gave priority to the constitutional right over the right to freedom until the emergency was under control. Moreover, in addition to the initiatives described in chapter 4 at this level, it is worth mentioning the government initiatives to promote well-being during the pandemic. According to an ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) in a report published in April 2020 (reference period 2018-2019), the share of households without a computer or tablet in the home was around 14.3% among households with at least one child, while it was higher among households composed of elderly people. Although 85.7 per cent had access to a computer, only 6.1 per cent had access to a personal, non-shared computer. The government moved on several fronts, in particular with the 'School Plan' where around 400 million euros have been allocated, financed from the resources of the Development and Cohesion Fund (FSC) for the 2014-2020 programming period (Ministry of Education, 2021). The 'School Plan' envisages the connection of all public secondary and high school buildings throughout Italy and the connection of all public primary and nursery school buildings. In addition, the 'Family Voucher Plan', also known as the 'PC and Internet Bonus', allocates around 200 million euro (also covered by FSC Fund resources) for the Internet connection of less affluent families (Ministry of Economic Development, 2022).

#### *Meso/Anticipatory level*

The social surrounding that needs to be addressed for the three threats is more broad and more ambiguous than for Islamic extremism. The three groups are heterogeneous and characterised by strong spontaneity and fragmentation at a local level (Council of Ministers, 2021) Analysing the root causes of each threat, we can identify certain social milieus and actors to target. Apart from the web where most extremists exchange their ideas also on an international level (Council of Ministers, 2021), a social environment at risk that could foster all three of these groups is represented by self-managed social centres (CSA or CSOA). These centres are gathering spaces where activities of political, social and cultural nature take place. In Italy this phenomenon is often established in illegal ways, squatting in abandoned private or public spaces (Azzimonti et al, 2015). The government initiatives identified are only at a municipal level (Confronti, 2021). In the government and ministry database there is no record of research or programmes focused on the CSA or CSOA. These might be due to the refusal by most squatting centres to initiate a dialogue with the institutions. According to a study, mostly politicised centres, believe that a collaboration would entail the inability to continue certain activities and would compromise the identity and credibility of what a social centre represents (Arizzimont et al, 2015). These characteristics make social centres environments at risk of

radicalization in need of a government intervention. On the other hand, another important space where the extreme right is active is the sports 'ultras' community, especially in football. Since the 80s episodes of violence in this community have been registered with sentiments of racism. In 1999 the Ministry of Interior created the "National Observatory of Sports Events" (NOSE). The Observatory monitors and studies the phenomenon of violence and the weakness of sports facilities. The institute also promotes campaigns and initiatives to counter violence in sports. Since 2001 there has been a "Strategy to combat violence at sports events" and a "Multi-year Anti-Violence Project" (National Observatory of Sports Events, 2022). An example of an initiative is the "Keep Racism Out" project. This anti-discrimination campaign is promoted in collaboration with UNAR (National Office Anti-Racial Discriminations) to keep racism out of Italian stadiums (NOSE, 2022). Moreover, another actor that should be envisaged is the university community. As mentioned earlier, the history of the years of lead sees a massive adherence of university students to the extreme movements (18% of students in one of the extreme left groups) (Bianconi, Gabanelli, 2018). Thus, it would be legitimate to think that programmes and policies should involve the university environment. The research conducted resulted in no records of government activities to prevent violent extremism in universities. There is a programme promoted by the Ministry of Education, however, it only involves secondary schools (*Educazione alla legalità* programme). Moreover, there is a regional project in Lombardy to educate students about 'differences' in order to counter all forms of violent extremism but also only at a school level (Regional School Office Lombardy, 2021). The Catholic Church is no longer an actor of mediation and there is no dialogue on this threat with the government.

#### *Micro/Direct*

The research did not find results concerning this level apart from the already in place laws for *pentiti* law and the *legge premiale* discussed previously. As stated earlier, we can consider these two instruments as soft since they promote disengagement and abandonment of the ideology through the appeal of a new life.

### 5.3.2 PRISON REHABILITATION & EXIT PROGRAMMES

#### *Micro/Direct*

Prisoners under art. 41-bis treatments (stricter prison treatment, see paragraphs 5.1.2) are directed to the AS (High Security) circuit. 7 terrorist of extreme right, 16 anarchists terrorists and 31 terrorist of extreme left are in the AS2 circuit in Italian prisons . In the Administration of Justice report (Ministry of Justice, 201) the measures anti radicalisation either concern Islamic terrorist or give general guidelines. In the analysed document there is no specific approach envisaged for political terrorist. Thus, the following measures concern all prisoners of AS2 circuit. The assignment to this circuit does not entail any reduction in the rights of the prisoner. The new high-security circuit has been divided into different sub-circuits. The one relevant to this study is the AS2, as mentioned before, dedicated to prisoners for crimes committed for the purposes of terrorism, including international terrorism, or subversion of the democratic order by committing acts of violence. The differentiated detention, as explained earlier, aims at avoiding harmful influences as well as abuse of power due to different criminal roles. Criminals of mafia type organisations are divided from terrorist groups in the AS2 circuit. Moreover, law 94/2009 introduced additional special regimes for preventive purposes. Using a study conducted by the Central Investigative Nucleus on the phenomenon of radicalisation in prisons, we can distinguish the following categories to divide the prisoners:

<i>Terrorists:</i> Prisoners for terrorist offences of a political-religious nature
<i>Leaders:</i> Prisoners for other offences, but who share an extremist ideology and are charismatic towards the inmate population
<i>Followers:</i> Prisoners for other offences, who are easily influenced by the extremist ideology
<i>Criminal Opportunists:</i> Prisoners for other offences who adhere to the ideology for reasons of opportunity

This study allows the separation of inmates following precise criteria. This choice reduces the risks of proselytism. However, it does not exclude the presence of ‘leaders’ surrounded by fragile ‘followers’ in medium security circuits different from the AS. Italian prisons policy establishes that the treatment of all prisoners must meet the need of the prisoner’s individual personality to enable the formulation of appropriate programmes for re-education and reintegration into society (Ministry of Justice, 2021). A ‘problem’ that arose from prisoners of

the years of lead concerns a group of 11 terrorist called the '*irriducibili*' (immovable, inflexible). The rehabilitation and deradicalisation of this group has been unsuccessful. The *irriducibili* are a group that after more than 30 years of prison still refuse to cooperate with the state and consider themselves political prisoners (Bianconi, Gabanelli, 2018). Italian law 176 (penal code) establishes that a life sentenced prisoner can be released in semi- freedom after 26 years in prison and good conduct. However, most of the *irriducibili* could be released but remain in prison because they refuse to engage with the Italian government. The vast majority of the 'lead terrorist' are now free thanks to the repentance, dissociation and pardon and have started new lives. The Ministry of Interior reports the *irriducibili* as an extremely dangerous phenomenon because they are considered ideological reference points and receive support and solidarity by militants, especially on the web (Ministry of Interior, 2020). Despite the *irriducibili* having access to all the cultural, recreational and sports activities offered in the circuit, as well as university programmes, they have not been involved. The women of the *irriducibili* started participating in a yoga course, however, they gave up the activity since it entailed accepting the institutions that they refused (Lugli & Pistilli, 2017). There are no further measures envisaged to disengage this group.

#### 5.4 EARLY CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the soft counterterrorism measures of the political terrorist group is barely present compared to the one for Islamic terrorism. Lessons from the past have remained in place, however, there are almost no specific policies and measures in place at the meso and micro level. It can be concluded that the most closely monitored radicalisation phenomena are those involving religiously-motivated terrorism, despite the fact that the current legal framework can be applied to all forms of terrorism, there are no specific policies.

## CHAPTER 6

### SOFT COUNTERTERRORISM AND MAFIA

This chapter will focus on the soft strategies to counter mafia organisations. For the purpose of this research the term ‘mafia’ addresses all the organisations operating in Italy identified in the “Report to Parliament on the state of Police Force, Security and Organised Crime” (Ministry of Interior, 2020): ‘Ndrangheta, Cosa Nostra, Camorra and mafia pugliese. Firstly, the chapter will briefly explore the background of mafia terrorism in Italy. Secondly, the chapter will delve into the main analysis to study the soft counterterrorism strategies.

#### 6.1 BACKGROUND OF THE THREAT

As anticipated in the literature review, the actions carried out by the mafia in the 80s-90s frame the organisations under ‘terrorism’, spreading fear in the population. The following paragraph briefly goes through the crucial events of those years.

From the early 1960s onwards, the mafia war stained Sicily with blood and drew attention. However, it was only in the 1980s that the focus of the state switched from political terrorism to the mafia (Mete, 2015). The 1982 massacres in Palermo, in which government officials Pio La Torre and Dalla Chiesa died along with their wives and security, marked the birth of the current phase of the fight against the mafias. In the 1980s, entire southern regions were dominated politically, socially and economically by the mafias. In particular, kidnappings, like with the Red Brigades, became an often-used tool to spread terror. Finally, in the 1980s, the Christian Democrats decided to take action against the mafia. Another crucial step that shaped antimafia policies and collective action was the beginning of the strategy of tension that 'Cosa Nostra' carried out between 1992-1993. The bombs that killed judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, the faces that represented the antimafia war, shocked Italy. The bombs were followed by the bombs of Rome, Florence and Milan, bombings that cost the lives of judges on the front line in the fight against the mafias and caused numerous other innocent victims. Moreover, these bombings brought for the first time the aggressions outside Sicily (Ibid). The 1990s marked the fight against corruption and led to the arrest of the political élite. On the civil society side, the murders of high-ranking representatives of the state provoked the reaction of associations and citizens who took autonomous initiatives. When in 1982 the mafia ceased to

be a southern problem becoming a national issue, the attitude of centre and northern citizens changed. Their attitude went from general solidarity to a serious concern for the advance of the mafia (Ibid). These years deeply link the history of the mafia to Italian history, initiating the antimafia response.

### *6.1.1 HISTORY OF COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES: THE ANTIMAFIA*

As we demonstrated in the literature review (La Spina, 2005), the measures that took place from the 80s were a mix of “indirect” and “direct”, hard and soft like we discussed in chapter 5. The line between the two can often be blurred. This paragraph briefly sums up the most important hard aspects that were established in the antimafia legislation. We will delve into the soft measures in the second part since most of them are still the tools used today.

As we have seen in international terrorism, the first reaction of the institutions was an emergency legislation. This legislation was defined as the 'mafia emergency'. The most important innovation was the introduction of Law n.13/1982 in the aftermath of the assassination of General Dalla Chiesa. The law introduced the crime for “mafia-type association”, marking the first appearance of the term ‘mafia’ in the criminal code (Minna 2007, p. 149 as cited in Mete 2015). Since this moment we can properly speak of the birth of ‘antimafia legislation’. After forty years, the crime of mafia-type association is considered indispensable for an effective fight against the mafia. After the events of 1992, the antimafia legislation became more stringent, generating concrete and relevant effects against Cosa Nostra (the group responsible for the massacres) (Mete, 2015). An emergency provision was adopted amending art. 41 bis of 1975. We’ve seen this article in the previous chapters for prison regulations. Just like concerning political terrorism, this rule aimed to restrict contact with the outside world. The limitation of communication, inside and outside prison, constitutes till this day a serious obstacle for mafia top members since the group finds itself without a guide. Another example of the antimafia ‘borrowing’ from the years of lead was the collaboration with justice approach with the *pentiti*, repentant. Despite the common approach there were some significant differences between terrorists and mafiosi (Ibid). The former generally matured a true repentance for the actions committed which entailed a dissociation that did not imply a collaboration with the judiciary. In the case of mafiosi, repentance was not as common; more opportunistic considerations prevailed: self-protection, family protection, sentence discount, softer detention regime, revenge against enemies. The first *pentito* that allowed the

detentions to begin was Tommaso Buscetta in the 1980s. Since his case, for the first time the mafiosi started to speak in court. The interventions of the 90s helped the state regain credibility and lead to a significant increase of collaborations with the judiciary (Ibid). The collaboration created a domino effect, bringing more and more mafiosi to light new facts. In addition, the Antimafia Investigative Directorate (DIA) was established as a tool to conduct a decisive fight against the mafias. The early 1990s were completed on the judicial and investigative level with the creation of the National Antimafia Directorate (DNA) and the 26 District Antimafia Directorates (DDA). On a political level, the most prestigious body was the Antimafia Parliamentary Commission. The primary tasks specifically assigned to this commission were (and are) to study and learn about the mafia phenomenon and verify the application of antimafia legislation. Moreover, antimafia commissions were set up locally by municipalities and regions particularly attacked. Although they did not have powers envisaged by the constitution like the parliamentary one, they aimed to monitor mafia phenomena in their territories (Ibid). Other law enforcements were envisaged at the time, such as seizure and confiscation of assets and laws against racketeering and usury. We will delve into some of them still used today in the second part of the chapter. Finally, in 2010 the “Code of antimafia laws, preventive measures and antimafia certifications” was created (law 136/2010). The code brings together and coordinates all the antimafia legislation. The Code consists of 132 articles in four books. The first book consists of penal laws (it does not introduce any new ones, it only gathers the ones already in force). The second book focuses on personal prevention and assets confiscation. The third one includes informative activities and investigations against the mafia. The fourth one concerns the norms for all the Antimafia bodies like DIA and DNA (Ministry of Interior, 2011).

## 6.2 THE MAFIA TODAY

In addition, to highlight what was addressed in the literature, the mafia today is a phenomenon that not only manifests itself in all of Italy but also internationally. However, their capacity of developing abroad does not entail a reduction of power over their original territories. Their economic strength still influences political relations, especially at a local and regional level. As in the past, they still satisfy the primary needs of the population offering work, money and services as well as attractive business possibilities in the legal market. After the 90s the mafiosi have chosen a less loud battle with the government but are still provoking innocent deaths (Ministry of Justice, 2017).



## 6.3 SOFT COUNTERTERRORISM TODAY

### 6.3.1 PREVENTION

The strategy concerning mafia prevention and soft measures is more structured and complete compared to all the other threats. The experience built for 60 years makes the mafia a thoroughly analysed enemy, the government knows its structure, roots and *modus operandi*. In the next paragraphs the research will verify if this knowledge led to a complete soft counter strategy. The Antimafia Code mostly addresses hard power initiatives, however, certain laws can find a new interpretation under soft power. Despite that, most initiatives that will be analysed are not found in the Code.

#### *Macro/ Early level*

"Fighting the mafias is nothing other than reaffirming on a daily basis the values of freedom that underpin our Constitution, drawing on the very high moral, civil and cultural resources available to our country" (Lamorgese, 2022). The macro level for the mafia becomes more central. As we demonstrated in the literature review the mafia often becomes an alternative to the institutions for the population, offering primary needs, protection or 'quick' money. When the state does not provide, the mafia is able to take the opportunity. An example is the 'garbage business' where the state did not provide good infrastructure and the mafia established an extraordinarily profitable business (Parliamentary Commission, 2012). In 2014 Italy was sanctioned by the European Court of Justice since it was not complying with its waste management obligations (Court of Justice of the EU, 2014). Therefore, good governance and the rule of law become crucial in the battle against the mafias. Multiple institutions have often fallen under the influence of the mafia like in 1992 with *Tangentopoli*, the largest government investigation for corruption. The length of this research does not allow an in-depth analysis of the measures taken to prevent corruption and mafia influence. However, two examples will be analysed that constituted a pivotal tool. The first is the PNRR that was mentioned in other chapters as an instrument to help the Italian economy in different areas offering opportunities especially for the youth. It is worth mentioning that the PNRR becomes even more relevant in

this chapter since 40% of the funds will go to the South. Prime Minister Draghi underlined the importance of protecting the PNRR from the mafia since it constitutes a remarkable injection of funds in the Italian economy (Maugeri, 2022). Hard power measures were put in place to prevent any mafia influence from this precious soft power tool (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2021). Another soft tool to prevent mafia infiltrations on the political sphere are article 143 and 146 of law decree 267/2000. These articles allow the dissolution of elected municipalities councils due to suspected infiltrations. In the last report, 52 municipalities underwent this procedure (Ministry of Interior, 2020). This tool might seem like a hard power tool, however, this procedure is not under penal law or constitutes any sanctions. This tool can be framed as soft since it is only a measure based on political trust that sends a clear message to the population and the mafia. This instrument has been criticised since a significant number of municipalities have been re-elected after the dissolution. However, this research, as stated previously, does not aim to address effectiveness but only shows the measures in place.

#### *Meso/ Anticipatory*

All mafia organisations operate in multiple environments and engage with different actors. The commissions organised by the Ministry of Justice identified 16 thematic round tables going from mafia and the environment to sports, the youth and minors, education, religion and agriculture (Ministry of Justice, 2017). This study shows that the government has identified multiple actors and environments that require a government intervention. Due to the length of this research, three main actors/ environments were selected: The Catholic Church, schools and civil society. This choice is due to the role they play in addressing the root causes of the mafia. As we have seen in chapter 4, the Islamic community plays a relevant role in the fight against terrorism. In this case, also the relationship with the Catholic Church has a relevant role. The Catholic Church has a complicated history in the fight against the mafia due to both its closeness to the phenomenon and its community role. On one hand, it has tried to counter the mafia narrative and many bishops and priests have taken a strong stand even facing death (see Don Pino Puglisi and Don Peppe Diana cases ). On the other hand, it has stayed silent, showing indifference or even having close relationships with certain ‘bosses’ and groups (Mario Frittitta case). In addition, there is a belief that sermons in certain communities lead to criminal recruitment (Ministry of Justice, 2017). In 2017 the roundtables of the ministry proposed several initiatives and measures to collaborate with the *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* (CEI) (Italian bishops assembly). All the proposed measures to adopt in collaboration with the CEI were refused by it. However, Pope Francis has spoken out against the mafia and showed his

support to the DIA on its 30th anniversary. The DIA was invited by the Pope to once again show his commitment to the cause (DIA, 2022). Following Pope Francis' initiative a number of projects arose from catholic associations. An example is "Liberiamo Maria Dalle Mafie " (Liberating Mary from the mafias) established by Pontifica Accademia Mariana Internationalis (PAMI) with the support of the DNA. This project aims to build paths of collaboration with ecclesiastic and public institutions to engage the civil society in the fight against the mafia (PAMI, 2022). On the education and youth level, antimafia education in schools emerged in 1992 where the first testimonies shared their experience; from judges to victims went into schools to tell their story (Ministry of Justice, 2017). The Ministry of Education today carries out multiple initiatives to bring antimafia into schools in collaboration with different associations. The cultural centre Pio La Torre in collaboration with the MIUR launched a project aimed at deepening the knowledge of the mafia phenomena in new generations with a series of videoconferences (MIUR, 2022). Another project launched by the MIUR is the 'competition' for schools "Le Memorie di Tutti" (The memories of everyone). The 'game' invites the students to actively participate in the making of a personalised banner in memory of those who died in the fight against the mafia (MIUR, 2022). Moreover, the MIUR Plan "PON Scuola" specifically focuses on disadvantaged areas to strengthen digital skills and global citizenship (MIUR, 2017). The DIA also chose the youth to promote its message "IO SONO NO MAFIA" (I am no mafia). In an institutional spot the message is delivered through the young generation, in a sign of antimafia culture (DIA, 2022). Concerning civil society, the first measure that we are going to address is law 109/96 since it was brought about by popular demand. This law envisages public and social re-use of assets confiscated from the mafias (enforcements established in the Antimafia Code). This measure envisages a hard direct measure for the mafiosi (micro) but benefits and addresses the community (meso). Thus, this provision could be framed in both levels. In 2020, 10441 assets for an amount of 1,599,637,422 were confiscated (Ministry of Interior, 2020). Often the properties confiscated remained abandoned, contributing to a sentiment in the communities that it was better when the mafia was there. Law 109, shows the community the benefits that can be gained in a territory without mafias. During the first lockdown in 2020, the national agency for the assets confiscated from organised crime (Anbcs) started analysing what buildings could be donated to school to restart in person classes respecting social distancing. The properties were not only envisaged for school but to all public institutions, like an hotel donated to the national public health association (Ministry of Interior, 2021). Other examples are the former Villa Lanza in Foggia that will be used as a housing community for the integration of people with disabilities in the

job market (Ministry of Interior, 2022). In Locri summer camps for 1000 girls and boys will be held in confiscated properties. These symbolic places aim to raise awareness among students who will experience first hand how a new life can be given to these places (Miur, 2022).

#### *Micro/ Direct*

In addition to the *pentiti* and the justice collaborations that were described in the previous chapter, a relevant project that can be mentioned is the “*liberi di scegliere*” (free to choose) project. The project targets already radicalised individuals in order to prevent them from further radicalisation and disengagement. The aim is to give a concrete opportunity to minors and women from families involved in mafia organisations. The project will offer educational and psychological support as well as logistical, economic and work support to both minors and women who wish to free themselves from the phenomena. The project was born in Reggio Calabria and can be adopted in any region (MIUR, 2019). *Liberi di scegliere* is a collaboration of multiple organisations: The government institutions, the civil society association Libera and is supported by the CEI. Thus, the project becomes an example of collaboration between different actors in the fight against the mafia, the Catholic Church, civil society and the government.

### *6.3.2 PRISON REHABILITATION & EXIT PROGRAMMES*

In 2021, 745 individuals were sentenced to the 41-bis regime. Moreover, out of the 9212 people in the AS circuit, 9014 are members of mafia organisations and are detained in the AS3 circuit. In the report analysed for the previous threats there were no specific programmes envisaged for mafia prisoners apart from the differentiation from other criminals in terms of prison circuit. The mafia prisoners have access to all the programmes and activities for all inmates: sports, education and job opportunities. An example of a reintegration programme through future work possibilities is the programme “*Mi riscatto per il futuro*” (Redeeming myself for the future). This project aims to employ prisoners in community services with a salary through the stipulation of agreements with public and private companies (Ministry of Justice, 2021). One targeted programme is the one analysed in the previous paragraph, *Liberi di scegliere*, that is also envisaged for minors in the penitentiary circuit. Despite thorough research there are no reports that describe projects or programmes for ex-mafiosi. The Italian state gives protection

and a small ‘salary’ to pentiti and collaborators of justice, however there is no record of state programmes to promote rehabilitation into society. The ex- mafiosi can be part of work projects like “*Mi riscatto per il futuro*” addresses to all prisoners, while they are in prison. However, there are no specific guidelines for after-prison or exit programmes.

#### 6.4 EARLY CONCLUSIONS

As expected, this threat has a more structured strategy, especially on the macro and meso level. There is a high number of policies in the preventive level that are based on principles of soft counterterrorism. However, the micro level is surprisingly lacking in exit programmes despite the high amount of pentiti and collaborators. The research on all the ministries that could be involved in rehabilitation programmes targeting the mafia (Justice, Labour and Social Policies, Interior) as well as the Council of Ministers and Antimafia bodies was inconclusive. In the next chapter, a final conclusion will be presented.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will firstly summarise the key findings analysed, starting from chapter 4 to chapter 6. Secondly, it will focus on the limitations of the research. Lastly, it will give suggestions for further research and conclude with a personal consideration.

#### 7.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The first chapter that will be addressed is chapter 4, on Islamic counterterrorism. The first point to be considered is the law bill 243/2018. The law represents the first concrete step for the government on direct measures concerning prevention of radicalisation. However, the measures envisaged are not part of the main analysis since after four years of its proposal, it still needs to finish the approval process. It was surprising to not find in the proposal the integration of the measures already in place, especially concerning rehabilitation. The macro level of Islamic counterterrorism was sufficiently covered. Good governance and rule of law are adequate to a western European state. However, certain law procedures like the expulsion of immigrants accused of terrorism can entail the erosion of the guarantees and rightful procedure of the accused that characterise the Italian legislation. In general, the macro level did address three measures with a focus on the youth: the PNRR, the psychological bonus and the SIA project. On the meso level there were attempts to establish a dialogue with the most important actors, the Muslim community, and the migrant community. The interreligious dialogue still has difficulties to overcome due to the fragmented reality of the Italian muslim community. “The good practices for reception and integration of immigrants” represents an indirect soft counterterrorism initiative. However, the plan does not directly address prevention, despite addressing the preconditions to prevent radicalisation. The micro preventive level had no measures in place apart from expulsion. The most ‘satisfying’ level was the micro rehabilitative one. The report on penitentiary administration directly addresses deradicalisation and exit programmes, providing targeted solutions for Islamic prisoners.

The political counterterrorism measures in chapter 5 were the least substantial. The macro level counted on the legislation of the past, making the Italian government an example of rights defence and guarantees. However, on the meso level, only one environment at risk for one of

the groups was addressed, the sports community. The micro level did not envisage any policies or initiatives. Prison rehabilitation also did not address specific programmes for political terrorists apart from the specific prison circuit. The measures show that despite the authorities having carefully monitored the situation for all the three groups, the risk is perceived low and the government only relies on the experience acquired in the past. The political situation in Italy is extremely worrying at the moment, with a rise of the extreme right that could bring terrible consequences, not only for Italy but for Europe. It can be expected that there will be an increase in the extremist groups' activity and Italy has not updated its strategy since the 1980s. A difficult time for Italy comes ahead, elections will be held in autumn for the first time, a time when usually the budget needs to be approved. This means that until then, one of the primary tools discussed, the PNRR funds will not get to the Italian citizens. Moreover, Italy heavily relied on Russian gas and thus, winter 2022 will face high difficulties to handle the demand (Bremmer, 2022). There is already a growing unease in the Italian population and the situation is about to get worse.

The strategies to counter mafia organisations are more direct and structured in specific reports. The macro level already establishes guidelines to prevent the influence of mafia in the public institutions. Two measures were analysed: PNRR and the dissolution of elected municipalities. The meso level counted on multiple actors and environments. The chapter reported three: the Catholic Church, antimafia education in schools and law 109/96 for social re-use of assets confiscated from the mafia. The micro level in both prevention and rehabilitation presented the *Liberi di Scegliere* programme. However, it was expected to find more programmes targeted at the social integration of the pentiti or of former prisoners. Perhaps due to the new identity that is given to the pentiti and their protection the initiatives remain confidential. However, a growing number of pentiti have reported the failure of the government to provide a valid reintegration plan (Mancinelli, 2021).

To conclude, this thesis effectively answered the research question: “Does Italy have in place soft counterterrorism measures to respond to homegrown threats?”. Italy has in place certain policies and initiatives that correspond to a soft power logic. However, the strategy is fragmented in each threat and does not count on guidelines or reports that specifically frame the initiatives as soft counterterrorism. It is expected that the Italian government will approve the law concerning prevention for Islamic terrorism and thus have a soft strategy for that threat. However, the two other threats analysed remain as described. Hopefully this research fulfilled

the aim to contribute to the ongoing debate on soft counterterrorism strategy by illustrating the uniqueness of the Italian case.

## 7.2 LIMITATIONS

The first chapter introduced the fragmented reality of the Italian government documentation. The three main reports analysed, “The Annual Information On Security Report” (Council of Ministers, 2021), the “Report to Parliament on the state of Police Force, Security and Organised Crime” (Ministry of Interior, 2020) only focused on investigative actions taken against the threat. The absence of any guidelines on soft counterterrorism or prevention appeared at first as a total absence of a strategy envisaging this approach. However, once the actors and environments were identified, research in the specific government website allowed me to find initiatives that could be framed as soft. This working method made the analysis very subjective to personal judgement. The aftermath of the analysis underlined the importance of defining the roots of each threat to understand the choices of actors and environments. Unfortunately, though, the scope and length of the research did not allow a thorough analysis of the threat in parallel with the counter-strategies. Thus, this limitation made the research seem more subjective than it actually was. Moreover, often the Italian documentation does not indicate whether the plans or policies are still in place or will be renewed. Another limitation of the research is represented by the exclusion of regional initiatives. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, it was not possible to consider all the different regional initiatives. This limit excluded multiple programmes that were present when national policies were not envisaged. Lastly, another limitation of more personal nature was the inability to comment on the effectiveness of the measure in place and try to only expose the measure without commenting on the validity of the programmes.

## 7.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND FINAL COMMENTS

Having analysed the Italian strategy multiple questions beyond this research arose. As stated previously this thesis did not aim to address the efficacy of the measures. However, this contribution can inspire the debate as to whether the measures in place are effective. There have been numerous theories on why Italy has not suffered from a successful Islamist terrorist



attack (Beccaro and Bonino, 2019; Groppi 2017). This research made me elaborate that a strategy that does not intervene as strongly into the individual's life (see the UK Prevent) but does offer community support is the key to a successful approach. Research concerning the effectiveness of Italian measures can contribute to shedding light on the Italian case. To conclude, the Italian government still has to strongly improve the situation in prisons as well as integration of immigrants to avoid phenomena of radicalisation and organised crime.

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