

Islamic terrorism is the major terrorist threat to European security.

This is so since ETA, the leading secessionist and political/ideological terrorist group gave its farewell to the arms in 2011. ETA unilaterally disarmed with the delivery of weapons and hidden weapons deposits to the French and Spanish police in April 2017.

There are some anarchist groups at local level, even in Italy, who can engage in small terrorist actions. There could be "lone wolves" of extremist political terrorism, such as Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian right-wing extremist, who in July 2011 killed 77 people in Norway, including participants at the Norwegian Labor Party's seminar on the island of Utoya.

Since Paris "Charlie Hebdo" attack in January 2015 - although in fact the first act of major wave of attacks on Europe in the "new wave" was the Jewish Museum shooting in Brussels in May 2014 - there are countless attacks in Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and eventually Spain:

The terrorist attacks of November 2015 in Paris were carried out by specific groups of terrorists with firearms and by suicide bombers with explosive belts that exploded out of the stadium without casualties. Brussels attacks in March 2016 were retaliation for the capture of one of Paris's terrorists; they were carried out with suicide bombers and bombs exploded at Zaventem International Airport and a metro stop. The attack in Nice on the Day of the Bastille 2016 was carried out by an armed terrorist, who drove a truck to the crowd in the evening at the fireworks. The Berlin attack in December 2016 followed a plot similar to that of Nice, with a truck launched against the crowd at the Christmas Market. Manchester attack in May 2016 resulted into a suicide terrorist bursting into the arena at the end of a pop concert. London Bridge attack in June 2017 was carried out with a van launched against passers-by and once the van was destroyed, the terrorists stabbed some passers-by. Eventually, the Barcelona attack in August, with a truck launched against the crowd on the Rambla. In the summer of 2016, there have also been some failed attacks in Germany and the decapitation of a priest in Normandy. Regarding other accidents occurred in Germany, it was never made clear by German authorities whether they were terrorist attacks or just criminal acts.

The terrorist attacks took place in countries where there are large second or third generation Muslim communities. In fact, more than "foreign fighters", most of the terrorists who have acted in Europe have been trained "do-it-yourself" indoctrinated neophytes who learned their terrorist skills via internet and blogs. Most are terrorists born in Europe and often linked each other by family ties.

The methods of attack of Islamic terrorists have been successfully tested against Israel before being exported to Europe. This regards the use of heavy vehicles launched against the crowd, a technique known as "Car Intifada" now successfully inaugurated by the attacks in Nice, in London, in Berlin and in Barcelona, as well as in the use of knives to hurt or kill according to the technique of "knife intifada".

These methods are typically asymmetrical because they use commonly utilised items such as transport vehicles or knives that are available to anyone.

The use of objects that cannot be attributed to hostile intentions creates more "terrorist" effect because these kinds of "weapons" are difficult to detect by police and make it very difficult to prevent attacks. In this way, it would be useful for the European security forces to draw lessons from Israel's strategy and model of security that is confronted daily with the most advanced experimental techniques of Islamic terrorism.

Regarding the latest attack in Barcelona, according to some analysts, Andalusia would fall into what IS is supposed to be a traditional territory of the Islamic state, having been part of the Caliphate until recapture.

Also, according to some analysts, there would be a sort of "Sahara" IS strategy, so that the Barcelona attack was preceded by an attack in Burkina Faso, to symbolize the north and south of the Islamic Caliphate.¹

Such analysis might be suggestive, but at the same time it could be exaggerated as it leaves Europe as a single objective (especially the major countries).

The day after the attack in Barcelona there were knife attacks in Turku in Finland and Wuppertal in Germany with casualties and injuries.

Spain is also particularly active on the frontline of north - south tensions, given that in just a few weeks the Ceuta and Melilla route has returned to be a major route for immigration. This was due to the termination of the Balkan route, last year with the EU-Turkey agreements, and a reduction of activities in the Central Mediterranean route in the channel of Sicily after the agreements with the Libyan Coast Guard and the NGO Code of Conduct drafted by Italian Minister of Interior, Marco Minniti.

On the other hand, European co-operation on anti-terrorism dates back to the formation of the Trevi Committee. Trevi was conceived following the Munich attacks in 1972, as an informal network for consultation between the interior ministries of the former European Community and it was set up in a European Council Rome in 1975. Trevi recalled both the fountain of Rome on the Gianicolo hill, and both the acronym "Terrorisme, Radicalisme, Extrémisme Violence et Internationale". With the Treaty of Maastricht and the adoption of the so-called Third pillar on co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), the Trevi Committee has been dissolved and its results and its procedures have been incorporated into the new structures of the third pillar. Since 1999, co-operation in the exchange of information on terrorism is the responsibility of the European Police Agency "Europol", based in The Hague, in the Netherlands. Europol also has jurisdiction over cyber terrorism.

Interpol, headquartered in Paris, may conduct investigations into the fight against transnational terrorism.

The alliance between terrorism and organized crime, especially in transnational threats and cross-border activities, is particularly dangerous for Europe. In some countries, especially in the Western Balkans, organized crime has played a role as a provider of services or logistics, or better that of a middle-man for terrorism and illegal immigration, including people trafficking.

Fighting terrorism, however, remains responsibility of the ministries and national agencies responsible for this role in single European countries.

¹ Maurizio Molinari "La Jihad che arriva dal Sahel" La Stampa, 18 agosto 2017