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London knife attacks: a failure of deradicalisation and rehabilitation programs? *

di Maria Luisa Maniscalco **

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. – 2. The UK counter-terrorism legal system. – 3. The UK strategy for countering terrorism. – 4. Conclusion.
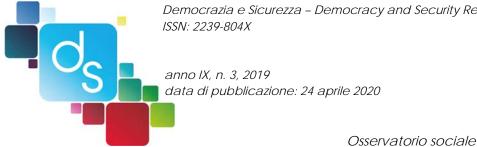
1. Introduction

Two years after the 2017 massacre, which saw eight people die at the hands of Islamic extremists, London Bridge was again the scene of a terrorist attack. Two people were killed and eight injured. The November 29, 2019 knifing attack was performed by Usman Khan, born in the United Kingdom to immigrant parents from the Pakistan controlled Kashmir province. Khan who wore a fake kamikaze belt was first blocked by bystanders and then killed by the police.

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In 2012 Khan – a follower of the Islamist extremist Anjem Choudary, who co-founded the now banned Al-Muhajiroun group – was sentenced to eight years in prison for plotting to blow up the London Stock Exchange, the Houses of Parliament, the US embassy, the home of then London Mayor Boris Johnson and the London Eye. In April 2013, a Court of Appeal gave him a sentence of 16 years. He was granted an early release in December 2018 on the agreement that he would wear an electronic monitoring tag.

The London Bridge terror attack unfolded during a conference organised by the Institute of Criminology of the University of Cambridge program called "Learning Together"**.** According to the University of Cambridge, the aim of this program is to break down prejudices and create new possibilities for all of those who took part. This program is consistent with a consideration of civil society as a key player in a whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (Khosrokhavar 2014). Furthermore the civil society participation is a fundamental part of building community resilience and contributing to the success of the United Kingdom's strategy in rehabilitating and disengaging former terrorists and offenders.

The fifth anniversary of "Learning Together" had been hosted at Fishmonger's Hall, near London Bridge, to celebrate how reintegration programs work. Khan had been present as a model of the recovery program. He had even written a poem and a note of thanks to the organisers. Paradoxically, the two people killed worked for the program "Learning Together": Jack Merrit as a course co-ordinator and Saskia Jones a volunteer.

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They both dreamed of working to deradicalise and rehabilitate jihadists[1]. So an event that should have celebrated the success of the initiative to deradicalise the jihadists marked its failure in a dramatic and exemplary way.
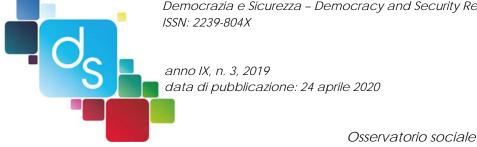
A further confirmation of the failure of the deradicalisation measures in the United Kingdom, is that one of five of Khan's accomplices in the 2010 plot, Mohibur Rahman, released early after he similarly applied to a deradicalisation program, was jailed again in August 2017 for plotting a mass casualty attack on a police or military target.

A new terrorist assault in London came more than three months after the London Bridge attack. The latter took place on February 2, 2020 around 2 pm in Streatham in the south of London where Sudesh Mamoor Faraz Amman stabbed two pedestrians. Amman who had been released from prison less than a fortnight ago and was under active surveillance when the bloodshed happened was shot dead by British police.

London and Great Britain have already been the scene of numerous jihadist attacks over time. London remains one of the places, in recent history, most involved and most relevant in the evolution of these new forms of European jihadist terrorism. Despite its long history and experience in the fight against terrorism and in the prevention of radicalisation, the UK has again tested its fragility and permeability in the face of potential sudden attacks.

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[1] The use of the term "jihadist" may generate controversy because the word *jihad* has various religious significances in Islam. Indeed, simplistically reducing the concept to the use of violence is incorrect and maybe offensive to many Muslims. At the same time, the term is widely used in the Arab and Muslim world by both supporters and critics to indicate groups that use religiously legitimated violence to achieve their political goals. In this essay the term is used to indicate the ideology inspiring the Islamic State, al Qaeda and other like-minded groups.

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These attacks show the attempts to rehabilitate prisoners are failing and the need of new ideas on deradicalisation.

What happened on November 19, 2019 and on February 2, 2020 made UK citizens fear a renewed major wave of jihadist terrorism. A heated debate has opened: the push for tougher laws and the government's possible response to recent terror attacks (for example the introduction of emergency legislation making retrospective provision in relation to those sentenced before the law was changed) are a cause of increasing concern for civil liberties.
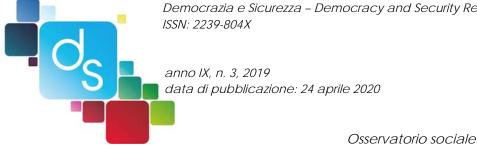
2. The UK counter-terrorism legal system

The UK has had a long history of counter-terrorism policy and legislation (Maniscalco 2019), at first relating to the separatist conflict in Northern Ireland in the last century. The recent terrorist conflict in Northern Ireland – which began in the late 1960s and is usually deemed to have ended with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 – lasted for three decades, during which a special legislation was developed.

The policy adopted to deal with this kind of terrorism was as far as possible based on a criminal justice – although somewhat modified – process in order to make it better respond to challenges posed by the nature of terrorist secret groups and their ability to intimidate the community, witnesses and jurors.

In the UK, long-standing laws and measures similar to an emergency regime, albeit adopted outside of a formally declared state of emergency, are operational. In this legislation terrorism is just one form of emergency
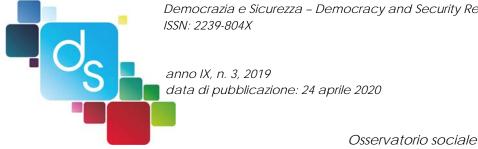
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where special powers may be invoked in order to provide the government with "enhanced" emergency powers. Counter terrorism is a reserved matter[2], but many of the local implementation mechanisms, such as policing and justice in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and health, education and local government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are devolved. It should also be noted that Scotland and Northern Ireland are separate legal jurisdictions from England and Wales, and Scotland operates a different system of law.

Just before the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11th, the awareness of having to deal with a changed landscape of terrorism and particularly with the rise of Islamist terrorism led to the adoption of the Terrorism Act 2000 (TA) that, unlike the previous laws on the fight against terrorism, appears as permanent legislation and is applicable throughout the territory of the United Kingdom and not only a part of it[3].The Terrorism Act 2000 completely reforms the law concerning the prevention of terrorism in the United Kingdom, albeit with some exceptions; furthermore, it applies to any terrorist activity in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Following a succession of disrupted or actual terror attacks in Britain and other locations across Europe, the UK government began drafting additional legislative action to meet the threat. Between 2001 and 2010, many additional pieces of "counter-terrorism" legislation were adopted

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[2] In the United Kingdom reserved matters and excepted matters are the areas of public policy where the UK Parliament has retained the exclusive power (jurisdiction) to make laws (legislate) in the devolved nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

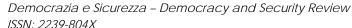[3] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/contents.

with tight control measures expanding the Terrorism Act 2000 definition of terrorism through the so-called "terrorism-related" activities.

After the 7/7 bombing in London, British authorities passed more security legislation while simultaneously coming to the realisation that securitisation was not enough. Indeed the attack marked a decisive change on the personal characteristics of the perpetrators, which anticipated one of the most significant innovations of the third generation of jihadism and its protagonists in Europe. This change occurred in the same period when Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi's bloody action in Iraq – both ideologically and practically through the beginning of the use of the web and social networks to advertise terrorist actions and executions – also had a strong impact on the evolution of jihadism and determined the basic conditions that then made the advent of Isis possible.

The Terrorism Act 2006 created new offences related to terrorism and amended existing ones[4]; some of its terms have proven to be highly controversial. The following are some of the new criminal offences: a) encouragement of terrorism (prohibits the publishing of "a statement that is likely to be understood … as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement … to the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism")[5]; b) disseminating terrorist publications (prohibits the dissemination of a publication which is likely to be understood as either directly

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[4] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/11/pdfs/ukpga_20060011_en.pdf.

[5] Indirect encouragement statements include every statement which glorifies the commission or preparation (whether in the past, in the future or generally) of such acts or offences; and is a statement from which those members of the public could reasonably be expected to infer that what is being glorified is being glorified as conduct that should be emulated by them in existing circumstances.

or indirectly encouraging terrorism, or includes information which is likely to be understood as being useful in the commission or preparation of an act of terrorism); c) preparation of terrorist acts (prohibits anyone from engaging in any conduct in preparation for an intended act of terrorism); d) training for terrorism (prohibits anyone from training others in terrorist activities, or from receiving training); e) attendance at a place used for terrorist training (prohibits anyone from being at a place where training is going on whether in the United Kingdom or abroad, provided the person knew or reasonably believed that it was happening).
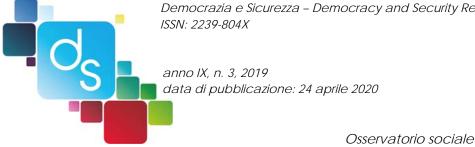
The government considered this Act a necessary response to an unprecedented terrorist threat; it met with opposition from those who believed it was an undue imposition on civil liberties.

On December 14, 2011, the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (TPIM)[6] came into force. The law provides the statutory framework for administrative restrictions on people suspected of posing a threat to national security and replaces the "control orders" with the "terrorism prevention and investigation measures" that have characteristics very similar to the previous measures. On the basis of these new measures, the Home Secretary may assign such a person to a particular residence, restrict with whom they may live, impose geographic and curfew restrictions, and limit association and communication with others.

The "terrorism prevention and investigation measures" can be applied to UK nationals and foreigners, are limited to two years and allow, among other things: a) assigned overnight residence; b) a ban on travel

[6] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/23/contents/enacted.
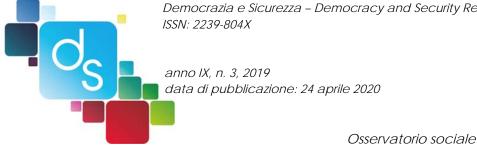
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outside the country or outside a specified area within the UK; c) exclu-
sion orders prohibiting a person from entering an area or specific types
of places (such as internet cafes); d) restrictions on access to financial
services and the use of mobile phones; e) restrictions on association with
other people.

In November 2016, Parliament passed the Investigatory Powers Act
2016[7] (nicknamed the Snoopers' Charter), the most significant update of
British surveillance laws in 15 years. The Act comprehensively sets out
and, in limited respects, expands the electronic surveillance powers of the
UK Intelligence Community and law enforcement agencies, mandating
broad powers for bulk interception, bulk acquisition and access to bulk
personal datasets. It also aims to improve the safeguards on the exercise
of those powers. The Act also creates a new criminal offence for unlaw-
fully accessing internet data.

The Snoopers' Charter allows intelligence services to hack phones and
computers and even use a suspect's camera or microphone in their
smartphones to eavesdrop remotely on conversations. These warranted
powers allow the security services and the law enforcement agencies to
monitor the content of emails, texts, phone calls and real-time conversa-
tions. It also contains wide-ranging powers to require web and phone
companies to retain records of everyone's web browsing histories and
communications data records for phone calls and texts for two years for
access by the intelligence and law enforcement services.

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[7] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/25/contents/enacted.
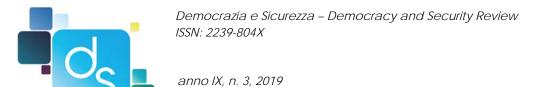
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On 12 February 2019, the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019[8] became law after passing UK parliament with less debate than many had hoped while Brexit dominated the political agenda. It received royal assent on 12 February 2019 and came into force on 12 April 2019. The law updates existing counter-terrorism legislation to reflect the digital age, including the way in which people view content online. It also reflects the speed at which terrorism plots develop.

The law also intends to address hostile activities that threaten the national security committed by individuals or that may be carried out for, or on behalf of, a state other than the UK, or otherwise in the interests of a state other than the UK.

In addition, the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019: a) amends certain terrorism offences for the digital age; b) reflects contemporary patterns of radicalisation, ensuring laws reflect modern use of the internet; c) intends to help meet the operational needs of intelligence services and police forces, strengthening their powers to prevent and investigate terrorist offences; d) increases the maximum penalty for certain offences, ensuring the punishment better reflects the crime and better prevents reoffending; e) manages offenders following their release from custody; f) intends to prevent and investigate terrorist offences; and g) creates extensive new border security powers, which include accessing information on electronic devices.

The new law has been criticised in several respects, including how it limits freedom of expression and access to information online and creates

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[8] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/3/contents/enacted.

extensive new border security powers, which include access to information on electronic devices.

Lastly the United Kingdom has over the years strengthened legislative tools to target and disrupt terrorist finance.

3. The UK strategy for countering terrorism

In addition to the powerful legal measures, the United Kingdom has developed a set of strategies and interventions to counter terrorism and radicalisation.

CONTEST is the name of the United Kingdom's counter-terrorism strategy. It was first developed by the Home Office in early 2003[9]. The aim of the strategy is "to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence". This strategy is based on the conviction that terrorism policies need to address not only the immediate threat of attacks but the longer term factors that enable terrorist groups to grow and flourish.

Updates on the strategy were published in 2006, 2009, 2011, and 2018[10]. The last one focuses on all types of terrorism and reflects the findings of a fundamental review of all aspects of counter terrorism, updating and

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[9] The government introduced Prevent in 2003 but it wasn't made public for some years. In practice, it is delivered differently in the different devolved nations of the UK as many of the organisations involved, for example, the police and councils, are under the control of devolved governments. The Prevent strategy is not applied in Northern Ireland.

[10] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf.
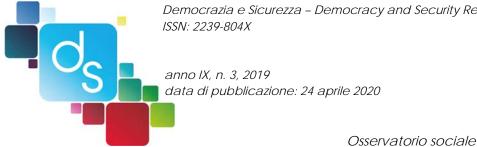
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strengthening this approach within the tried-and-tested strategic framework of the four work strands: a) Prevent: safeguard people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; b) Pursue: stop terrorist attacks happening in the UK and overseas; c) Protect: strengthen protection against a terrorist attack in the UK and overseas; d) Prepare: mitigate the impact of terrorist incidents if they occur. The primary outcome is to reduce: a) intent; b) capability; c) vulnerability; and d) impact.

The approach of 2018 strategy is similar to the previous one of 2011, but it implements new changes that increase and optimise capabilities in domestic investigations. It includes more prevention by disrupting terrorist threats earlier and faster by allowing authorities to intervene in the early stages (prosecution for terrorist offences, longer sentences and better supervision of individuals after prison). Information sharing is the key of the new strategy: Better communication channels on the local and national levels; integrated relationships with the private sector to ensure certain venues, detect faster alerts and detect suspicious purchases.

The current Prevent strategy addresses all forms of terrorism and radicalisation as the "process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism".

Prevent has distinct objectives: a) Challenging the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it. Prevent recognises that people who are engaged in terrorist activities are often initially drawn into extremist narratives and beliefs, and these narratives (violent and non-violent) should be challenged to stop people moving from extremism into terrorism. So a fundamental part of Prevent lies in challenging ideologies that lead to extremism and violence and disrupting the ability of terrorists to
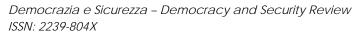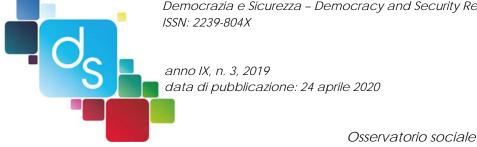
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promote them. To avoid the dissemination of terrorist material, Prevent focuses on building strong counter-terrorist narratives and on online activity in order to ensure there are no safe places for terrorists online. b) Protecting and supporting vulnerable people. Radicalisation is usually a process, not an event. During that process it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorist-related activity.

A wide range of sectors work to prevent people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; priority areas include education, faith, health, criminal justice and charities. More specifically, the Prevent program foresees government cooperation with many civil society organisations located in over forty priority areas spread across the country. The public sector organisations are subject to a duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The duty requires local authorities, schools, colleges, higher education institutions, health institutions, prisons and probation, and the police to consider the need to protect people from being attracted to terrorism. The duty is designed to help ensure that vulnerable people at risk of radicalisation are as supported as they would be if subjected to other processes protecting people from exploitation by a series of other damages such as drugs, gangs, and physical and sexual exploitation. Prevent and its Channel program were placed on a statutory footing by the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

The new element of the 2018 Prevent strategy is the inclusion of Desistance and Disengagement Program s (DDP) under its purview. DDP has been running in pilot through 2017, focusing on people subject to court-approved conditions, including all terrorism and terrorism-related offenders on probation licence, as well as those on TPIMs and those who have returned from conflict zones in Syria or Iraq (the so-called foreign

terrorist fighters) and are subject to Temporary Exclusion Orders (TEOs). The DDP reflects increasing collaboration across different elements of the counter-terrorism system, notably Prevent and Pursue. The offered support could include mentoring, psychological support, and theological and ideological advice.
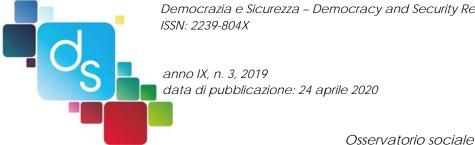
Prevent has been the subject of criticism, and the decision to impose a statutory duty on public sector organisations has been particularly controversial. In August 2016, the Home Affairs Select Committee published a report, "Radicalisation: The counter-narrative and identifying the tipping point" following an inquiry into the government's counter-extremism strategy[11]. The Committee sought views on the effectiveness of Prevent and the key problems with it. The report concluded that failure to address concerns about Prevent among the communities most affected by it would mean that it would continue to be viewed with suspicion. The new version of Prevent also sparked the same reactions from various sections of British society. More recently (2019) the Commission for Countering Extremism[12] published a new report highlighting some of Prevent's weaknesses (Fenwick 2019).

Another CONTEST work strand is Pursue; its purpose is to stop terrorist attacks happening in the country and against UK interests overseas.

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[11] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/135/135.pdf.

[12] The Commission for Countering Extremism is a British government independent agency created under Prime Minister Theresa May in response to the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing. The Commission for Countering Extremism supports society to fight all forms of extremism. It advises the government on new policies to deal with extremism, including the need for any new powers: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/commission-for-countering-extremism
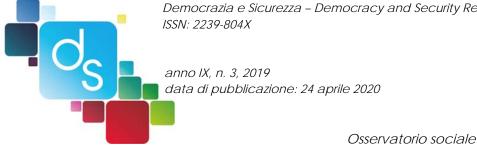
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To disrupt terrorist activity in addition to the capabilities of counter-terrorism policing and the security and intelligence agencies, including covert human intelligence sources, surveillance assets and the lawful intercept of communications, Pursue uses a wide range of tools; for example, working to proscribe organisations, freeze and seize their financial assets, and break up networks and associations in prison. Conviction in court and imprisonment are considered the most effective way to stop and deter terrorists and deliver justice to their victims. Its objectives are to: a) detect and understand terrorist activity; b) investigate terrorist activity; and c) disrupt terrorist activity, including through prosecutions.

Another one is Protect; its purpose is to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack in the UK or against its interests overseas and so reduce its vulnerability. The work focuses on border security, transport systems, national infrastructure, and crowded places. Protective security is principally achieved by identifying risks, assessing vulnerabilities and encouraging infrastructure owners and operators to implement proportionate mitigation measures.

The last work strand is Prepare that aims to mitigate the impact of a terrorist incident when it cannot be stopped. The UK approach to preparing for civil emergencies (including terrorist attacks) is to build and maintain generic capabilities applicable for use in any eventuality. For a terrorist attack, additional specialist capabilities are envisaged. The Home Office works with intelligence agencies and emergency services to stop a terrorist attack and recover from its consequences. The emergency services have trained specialists to deal with terrorist incidents – including armed officers supported by specialist fire and ambulance teams. They also have skills and equipment to deal with an attack using a chemical,

biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) device. The objectives of Pre-
pare are to: a) deliver a coordinated multi-agency response to all types of
terrorist attacks; b) ensure that the UK has a full range of capabilities to
respond to current and future threats; c) minimise the impact of terrorist
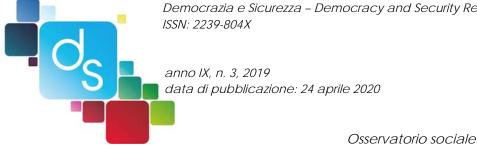attacks on people, services and communities.

4. Conclusion

The UK policy for combating terrorism and countering violent radical-
isation has become over the years a complex and articulated set of levels,
regulations and measures that permeate and involve the whole society,
its actors and stakeholders, in different roles and environs.

Despite such considerable commitment, the problems of integration of
the Muslim population remain[13], together with the threat from home-

[13] The UK has the third-largest Muslim population in the European Union, after France
and Germany, and, according to new figures, is home to more than 3 million Muslims for
the first time ever, with more than half born outside the UK. The number has doubled in
just over a decade as a result of soaring immigration and high birth rates. The United
Kingdom has a tradition of receiving people from different ethnic or religious groups and
taking a multicultural approach, allowing people to live in the UK whilst continuing to
practice their own traditions rather than expecting them to adapt to the so-called "British
way". However, despite its long history of relationships and mutual influence with
Muslim populations linked to its colonial past the segregation into ethnic enclaves, some
integration problems of the Muslim population and the threat from home-grown terro-
rism have thrown the multicultural policies into crisis. In 2016, on behalf of the British
government, Dame Louise Casey produced a report on integration in the UK, in which
she concluded that Muslims were the hardest ethnic and religious community to integrate.
See Casey (2016) and Maniscalco (2017).

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grown terrorism and the proliferation of "low-tech" attacks[14]. Moreover approximately 850 British citizens have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State and other jihadist groups since the beginning of the conflict[15]. Therefore, possible negative consequences and challenges posed by returnee foreign terrorist fighters from the Middle East are.
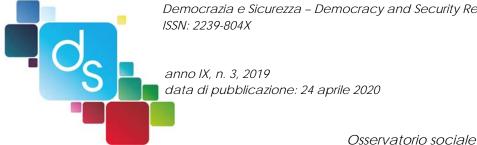
The UK is not the only country in Europe with a failing judicial and monitoring apparatus regarding terrorists. The last London Bridge Terror Attack is the second in recent memory where the jihadist was wearing an electronic tag. The first one took place in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray near Rouen (France) in July 2016 when Jacques Hamel an elderly Catholic priest was brutally murdered by two jihadists. One of the attackers, identified as Adel Kermiche, had tried several times to travel to Syria using the passports of family members. He was put under official investigation in May 2015, but released on 18 March 2016 on certain conditions including being fitted with an electronic tag allowing authorities to monitor his movements, to live at his parents' home and to only go out between 8.30am and 12.30pm.

Equally serious, the case of Larossi Abballa, sentenced in 2013 to three years in jail for recruiting jihadists, that carried out in 2016 the atrocious murder, in the name of the Islamic State, in Magnanville of a couple, that

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[14] In 2017 the UK witnessed four jihadist attacks: the Westminster Bridge attack on 22 March (6 people, including the perpetrator, were killed in the incident, and 49 people were injured), the Manchester Arena bombing on 22 May (22 people killed and 250 injured), the London Bridge attack on 3 June (8 people were killed and 48 injured), and the London tube train attack on 15 September (30 people were injured). On August 14, 2018, Salih Khater, the 29-year-old British citizen, originally from Sudan, injured 3 people by hitting cyclists and pedestrians with a car.

[15] https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-32026985.
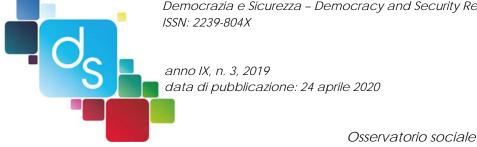
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were both police officers. Other terror attacks in the last few years have been conducted by jihadists who were already flagged in France's special counter-terrorism database as the attack at Christmas market in Strasburg (December 2018). Recently (October 2019), a jihadist attack took place inside Paris police headquarters. The terrorist, Mickaël Harpon, an IT specialist who worked in the intelligence unit of the police headquarters for the last 16 years and held a military clearance stabbed six colleagues. It was later revealed that Harpon had caused alarm among his colleagues as far back as 2015, when he defended the attack on the newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and that he adhered to a radical vision of Islam.

Belgium also has suffered through the failure of the monitoring mechanism: on 29 May 2018, Benjamin Herman, a prisoner on temporary leave from prison, stabbed two female police officers, took their guns, shot and killed them and a civilian in Liège. Local media report that he may have been radicalised while in jail. It was the 14th time since his detention that he was granted temporary leave despite being on the national terror watch list.

These failures are also attributable to the real complexity of the phenomenon and to the very nature of this type of terrorism. The terrorists, over the past few years, have almost always been people born or lived for a large part of their lives in the same countries where they carried out the attacks (Vidino et al. 2017). They are difficult to identify because they are apparently integrated into the social contexts in which they live; they are often young, with different stories of personal and family successes or failures, that, at some point and for reasons difficult to predict, have
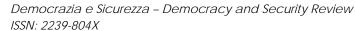
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turned into jihadist terrorists. Pathways into radicalisation are highly dissimilar, situational and not explicable through a single model (Maniscalco 2016; Antonelli 2019).
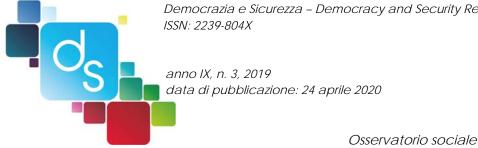
From the reconstruction of western jihadist biographies often emerges the rapidity of the transition to terrorist violence. After more or less lengthy periods of latency in which objective conditions and subjective situations predispose to the search for a new "sense" and a new way of life, they "find" almost suddenly their way and embrace without hesitation a doctrine that practices hatred, exalts cruelty and "martyrdom" (Benslama 2016).

Some of them, coming from the roots of common crime, already have a life of violence and are convinced that they have no future; so they seek through a glorious end a personal and collective ransom[16]. They share with others radicalized people, without a criminal past, the rejection of social injustices, the repulsion of Western costumes judged immoral and corrupt, the fear of contamination, the identification with all Muslims considered to be victims of the West and the desire of revenge[17]. Dealing with imprisoned terrorists and reopening communication channels after

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[16] In Europe there is an evident link between petty crime and terrorism, where individuals on the margins of society and the formal economy or in prison are most vulnerable to radicalisation. In other areas of the world, the relationship between organised crime and terrorism has transformed to one of symbiosis and convergence.

[17] The dynamic of so called "chosen trauma" inspires heroic aspirations in order to revenge Muslims killed or oppressed somewhere in the world. According to the psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan, the "chosen trauma" is the process put in place by a group that evokes the memory of a persecutory event and attributes to it an excessive emotional and historical significance (Volkan 2008).

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terrorist violence is an epochal challenge of European countries. We must not allow terrorists to normalise their hatred in our countries.
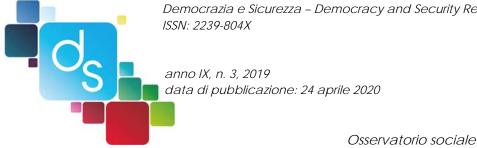
Now, after the Isis defeat and the loss of its territorial strongholds in Syria and Iraq, Europe is dealing with the return of Isis's foreign fighters. New problems emerged: How dealing with foreign fighters returnees and imprisoned terrorists? There is a possibility that, upon release, an imprisoned terrorist may carry out terrorist actions. Additionally, even when returnees personally do not carry out attacks back home, they make great tools for recruitment and for guiding public opinion. Terrorist organizations usually recruit new members from their established connections – often close friends or family[18].

The returnees are not monolithic, however. Three types of returnees will give different challenges: The first are the persistent true believers; the second are the defectors who left Isis for different reasons but who remained true believers of the jihadist ideology. The third are the defectors, who are in the process of dropping their former ideologies. While the first category comprises the most dangerous terrorists, the latter two might be dangerous as well.

The foreign fighters form a small group, but have a big impact on society in terms of anxiety, discomfort and polarisation. In Europe the subject

[18] For example, the brothers Khalid and Ibrahim el-Bakraoui (attack in Brussels, March 2016), Fabien and Jean-Michel Clain (the first claimed from Syria the attacks in Paris in November 2015 the latter voiced a nachid accompaniment song), Brahim and Salah Abdeslan (attack in Paris, November 2015), Said and Chérif Kouachi (attack in Paris, January 2015), Džochar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev (attack in Boston April 2013), Mohamed Merah (Toulouse and Montauban massacre, 2012) and Abdelkadar Merah (now in prison) and their sister Souad (in Syria with her children), Abdelhamid Abaaoud (mind of the attacks in Paris in November 2015) and his younger brother Younes, brought to Syria.

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of repatriation and prosecution of foreign terrorist fighters proved to be an extremely divisive issue. Complex legal and moral questions arise. Is the state responsible for its own war criminals? Does the state have the duty of care in these cases? Do foreign fighters still have a right to citizenship?
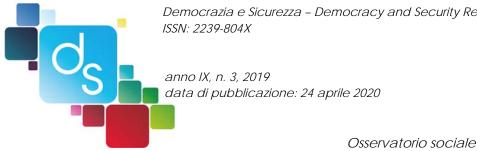
If for many years the policies of the European countries have mainly addressed prevention as an indispensable tool to try to block radicalisation phenomena in the bud, more recently growing interest in rehabilitating and disengaging former terrorists arose. Several European countries – Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom … – have organized deradicalisation programs; nevertheless, the matter is more complex than they had initially expected. In addition, all over in Europe, none of the deradicalisation programs seem to be had any proven effective.

Differentiating from criminal prisoners, radicalised individuals need other forms of rehabilitation programs which take into account their radical conviction. According to the majority of the experts, the jihadist ideology is the driver that motivates young women and men, born or living in the West, to engage in global jihad and fight against Western enemies, more precisely the enemies in their countries of residence.

This ideology provides a common system of beliefs and values, and suggests how to translate that narrative to action. Its basic precepts ask for the implementation of sharia law and the replacement of the system of nation states with a worldwide Caliphate as its ultimate political aims.

Due to the complexity that characterizes them, deradicalisation programs and other efforts to rehabilitate terrorists beyond incarceration presuppose a commitment that must involve not only the competent authorities, but also civil society and institutions in all their organizations.

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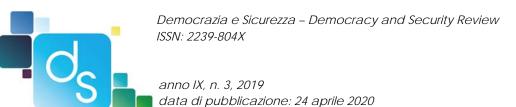
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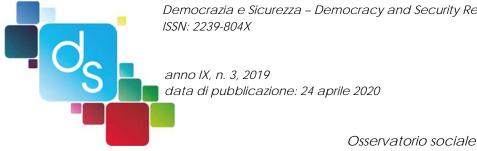
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Abstract

London Knife Attacks: a Failure of Deradicalisation and Rehabilitation programs?

In the next few years in Europe the problem of violent radicalisation could become more urgent and without adequate attention and long-term policies the risk of a polarisation of our societies increases with consequent responses dictated by contingencies.

This article starts from the case study of the UK that, despite its long history and experience in the fight against terrorism and in the prevention of radicalisation, has lately tested its fragility and permeability in the face of potential sudden attacks. The UK however is not the only country in Europe with a failing security and monitoring apparatus regarding terrorists.

The main aim is to pave the way to a growing interest in new policies and measures of rehabilitating and disengaging former terrorists.

Keywords: Terrorist attacks; deradicalisation; rehabilitation programs.