



[www.invisible-dog.com](http://www.invisible-dog.com)

[invisibledog@email.com](mailto:invisibledog@email.com)

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## **ISLAMIC TERROR AND THE ITALIAN QUESTION**

Many analysts and experts of Islamic terror are asking themselves the following question: why, out of all the terror attacks that occurred of late across Europe, was Italy never a target? Why is it that, since the 2001 attack against the World Trade Center, there hasn't been any terrorist attack against the boot-shaped peninsula?

It is a good question, seen that, on paper, Italy is a country at risk, more-so than many other nations: it is geographically closer to unstable areas where terrorism exists, it is the destination of thousands of illegal immigrants coming from Africa and the Middle East, it has the Vatican (a highly symbolic target for whoever fuels religious terror) and has borders and coasts that are difficult to control. Finally, Italy has soldiers that are employed in many Middle Eastern countries with either training or military cooperation duties and has participated with its own contingents in the Gulf wars and in the ousting of Gheddafi in Libya.

### **The Muslim community**

There are roughly 2.5 million Muslims in Italy, about 4% of the total population. It is a low-ball estimate based on official data and doesn't account for all the illegal immigrants – many of them Islamic – that are present in the country without being formally registered.

Of these 2.5 million, roughly 1 million are Italian citizens that have been naturalized through regular procedures. These people are, of course, widely integrated in the social context. The same is true of the Italian individuals that have converted to Islam, about 100,000 total.

The remaining 1.5 million Muslims living in Italy are foreign nationals. Of these, considering the most 'dangerous' nationalities as far as terror is concerned, there are: 400,000 Moroccans, 100,000 Egyptians and 110,000 Tunisians. Again, these are registered people with a valid permit to stay in Italy. Most of the above individuals are economic migrants and are therefore concentrated in the Italian regions where jobs are easier to find, namely Lombardia and Veneto.

But the most significant figure with regards to security is that there are another 4 to 5 hundred thousand Muslims that live in Italy illegally.

However, it must be noted that the Islamic presence in Italy is more scarce than in many other European countries:

- France has 4.5 million Muslims (about 8% of the population), 1.5 million of whom come from Algeria, 1 million from Morocco and 350 thousand from Tunisia (plus another 100 thousand converted Frenchmen). France has an estimated 400 thousand illegal immigrants.

- In Belgium there are between 7 and 9 hundred thousand Muslims of whom 270 thousand are from Morocco. Altogether, they account for roughly 7% of the total population.

- In Germany, Muslims account for 6% of the population, in Great Britain 6.3%. There is the Netherlands with 7.1%, Austria with 6.9%, Denmark 5.4% and Greece with 5.7%.

Only Spain (2.6%) and Portugal (0.4%) have a lower concentration of Muslims than Italy, while Cyprus, seen its geographical location, has about a fourth of its population that is Muslim.

Altogether, there are roughly 19 million Muslims living in the European Union, accounting for roughly 4% of the overall population.

### **The social situation**

Statistics are not thoroughly descriptive of the terrorist phenomena because there is no proven, direct correlation between Muslim communities and Islamic combatants. Also, terrorism should not be measured with numerical factors but rather with sociological ones.

Here is a fact: in Italy there aren't any ghettos where the Muslim population lives secluded and auto-marginalizes itself from the country's social context. The same cannot be said of France, Belgium and Great Britain. The isolation and social marginalization facilitate the individual's identification with objective elements that distinguish the social context in which that individual lives, namely religion. In such circumstances, the religious factor becomes an element of juxtaposition with the rest of the world surrounding the ghetto, producing frustration and hate. It is social marginalization that gives origin to the spiral that brings about the radicalization of an individual. Terrorists grow and hide in the culture of being 'different'. This is especially true for second generation youths.

There are – officially, at least – about 1,200 mosques in Italy, a dozen of which are proper mosques, while the rest are based inside run-down structures (garages, warehouses, depots, basements). The latter are where radicalization most often occurs, so the Italian Interior Ministry has reached agreements with the majority of Islamic associations in the country to cooperate in monitoring those mosques.

Consequently, there exists a dialogue between the local Islamic communities and the Italian government. Both parties strive to achieve dialogue, integration and to prevent the contagion of radical Islam.

### **The Italian Islamic volunteers**

There are 125 cases of Italian and/or foreign citizens that have left Italy as volunteers to fight alongside Islamic extremists in the Middle East.

Altogether, there have been roughly 42,000 volunteers coming from 120 different nations. 5,000 of them were from Europe (17% were women). Of these, 8 to 9 hundred came from the UK, over 1,700 from France, about 950 from Germany, 5 hundred from Belgium and 3 hundred from Sweden and from Austria. Again, figures in Italy are limited (compared to the number of Muslims living in Italy and to their incidence on the overall population).

According to statistics, 30% of these volunteers are thought to have died in combat and another 30% are expected to return to their countries of origin.

But back to the Italian case: of the 125 volunteers who left from Italy, 37 have died, 22 have returned to Europe, 10 of which to Italy. The rest settled in the countries where they fought or moved to other battlefields. Out of the 125, 10 were women, mainly between 18 and 30 of age. On the whole, they represent a mix between first and second generation immigrants. Most of the 125 came from small towns outside the main metropolitan areas of the country. Most of them were also previous offenders or afflicted by mental illnesses.

Islamic terrorism can strike anywhere, at any time, making it nearly impossible to fully eradicate the phenomenon; after all, it is a scourge that is rooted in many nations and that follows the logic of an aimless campaign of violence without limitations. All things considered, Italy has managed to save its territory from this violence, this far.

Surely luck has an incidence, but it is no parameter to measure success.

For one, the Italian security forces have met the phenomenon of terrorism with an important baggage of experience from past events: namely left, right wing terrorism and the fight against the mafia and organized crime. Having fought such organizations in the past, security forces were able to apply their know-how to the fight against terror. The experience in fighting local criminal organizations (Sicilian mafia, Camorra, Ndrangheta) was especially valuable in driving security forces to perfect their use of electronic instruments, wire-tapping, monitoring inside prison structures, video surveillance, tailing, use of privileged sources, infiltrators, undercover operations, sociological studies and the correct psychological approach. All of these experiences were transferred into the fight against terror.

Italy's security forces are peculiar in that they are divided into several different structures: Police, Carabinieri (military police), AISI, AISE (both intelligence agencies) and the Guardia di Finanza (financial police). This would seem like a useless waste of resources, yet in this case the goals of the various structures are convergent. A 2015 law gave the preexisting DNA (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia / National Antimafia Direction) jurisdiction over terrorism. Although there is an overlapping of operative apparatuses, their coordination is centralized and administered by the DNA, which can sum up its anti-mafia experience with the experience in fighting terror.

Another specific trait of the Italian system is the possibility to expel foreign citizens from the country for national security reasons. If there are founded suspicions that a foreigner is grazed by terrorism, that individual is sent back to his country of origin. It is called an 'administrative expulsion'.

The new 2015 legislation increased the number of possible crimes in the field of terrorism and consequently widened the spectrum of possible applications of the administrative expulsion. The frequent use of this instrument from 2015 on has allowed Italy to prevent and repress the threat of terrorism before it could land in court. This is both a deterrent (the potential terrorist will be faced with a treatment in his/her home country that is less respectful of that person's rights) and a means of preventing the spread of radicalism, which often occurs while in prison.

Another initiative that still needs to be properly evaluated is that of creating an 'Italian' Islam through the formation of Imams by more moderate Koranic schools and through the

introduction of sermons in Italian, a closer dialog between national Islamic institutions and State authorities, further integration of the Islamic community and a preferential lane between local exponents of Islam and the Vatican. All of this is aimed at creating a closer collaboration which, apart from easing integration, will also embrace elements of security, because it is in the interest of both communities to strive to repress radical Islam.

The recent designation of a Muslim Italian parliamentarian to the seat of director of the Islamic Cultural Center of the Rome mosque is a concrete step in this direction. By giving way to a 'national' Islam, outside 'sources' of radical Islam, like the Muslim Brothers or the Saudi Wahabism, can be reined in. It is not by hazard that the designated Italian-Moroccan parliamentarian, who came from a more moderate Maliki background was chosen over the other candidate, the Saudi ambassador.

On the whole, although all of the above elements might have contributed to halt the diffusion of Islamic radicalism throughout Italy, the so-called "zero risk" scenario doesn't exist in the fight against terror. One can prevent, repress and enact all due devices in the field of security, but randomly targeted terror can still strike anywhere at any given time.

In 2017 we witnessed attacks in Barcelona, Paris, London, Manchester, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Saint Petersburg. Overall, there were roughly 70 victims. These individuals died without a reason; they were useless killings. Italy has so far managed to stay out of the black list, perhaps also thanks to the right approach to this social phenomenon that is striking Europe of late.

In fact, the last terrorist attack in Italy, which caused 23 deaths, dates back to December 27, 1985, and was carried out by a group of terrorists led by Abu Nidal.

## **DONALD TRUMP AND JERUSALEM**

Jerusalem isn't only a key issue in a lengthy and often fruitless negotiation. When dealing with the partition of Palestine, Jerusalem is a symbol and, as such, cannot be treated as any other territorial compromise. The United States's initiative to recognize the city as the capital of the Jewish State will have unpredictable consequences. The assumption that recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel will take the issue off the negotiating table does not take into account the political and religious repercussions of a such a choice. A typical imposed compromise in front of a fait accompli, a typical Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's strategy in the Occupied Territories, which Donald Trump seems to support. And by supporting the Israeli stance so clearly, Trump has wrecked any potential US role in future talks.

### **Imbalanced negotiations**

Donald Trump's election was supported, among others, by the powerful AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and the US Jewish community. The financing of his electoral campaign was accompanied by the Israeli government's open support. After being at odds with Barack Obama, Netanyahu now has a friend at the White House. And, in return, Trump has broken with the tradition of (apparent) impartiality and is not a legitimate and super partes broker anymore. It is like asking the Palestinians what they want with a gun pointed at their head. It is hard to believe their expectations, whether legitimate or not, will ever be met. And without a just peace, there is only resentment and terrorism.

The key role played by Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who comes from a family of Orthodox Jews, will not help find a fair balance in the negotiations. And if we come to terms with the fact that Israel's military dominance is indisputable, it is not hard to imagine how prone the Israelis will be to concessions during future talks.

### **Neglected ambitions**

The diverse Palestinian community, either in the diaspora, in the Occupied Territories or in Gaza, has always struggled to find a balance between two differing approaches: the search for a political deal that would lead to the creation of a Palestinian State or war and attacks against Israel. A peaceful negotiated solution means that the expectations of the Palestinians, whether large or small, will be satisfied. At the other end of the spectrum is the "military" or "armed struggle" option. These are two alternative approaches, but every time talks don't yield any results, more and more Palestinians are open to fighting Israel.

For years the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) now led by Mahmoud Abbas has sought a negotiated solution, while bellicose factions such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad wanted war. Donald Trump's move has forced the PNA to shift onto more radical positions. Abbas' policies have not yielded any results, if not the recent deal with Hamas' leader, Ismail Haniyeh, to allow the return of the PNA to Gaza and to hold elections. But by designating, on January 31, 2018, Haniyeh as a "terrorist", the US has dealt yet another

blow to Palestinian efforts to unify their front. And, as in the recent past, the end result will be that of weakening an already weak Abbas, while boosting the radicals.

Recently there were news of an alleged “coordination committee” between Hamas, Hezbollah and al Hashad al Shaabi, respectively Sunni, Shia and Iraqi Shia militias. Although very unlikely, the US policy move is adding fuel to the fire. After all, Jerusalem is a holy city for all the main branches of Islam.

### **A golden opportunity**

The outcome of Trump’s move is the removal of the United States from negotiating the Palestinian stand off. The loss of credibility favors other regional and international actors. It is the case of Russia that, with the Astana talks on the Syrian crisis, has become the strongest broker in the Middle East. It is the case of Turkey that, by exploiting the outrage caused by Trump’s move, passed a resolution at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that defined East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. It was a rare unanimous vote. Recep Tayyip Erdogan wants to lead the Sunnis with his neo-Ottoman policies. Ultimately, also Iran benefited from the move given its historical anti-US and anti-Israeli stances.

Donald Trump’s loss of credibility has reached the entire globe. In December 2017 the UN General Assembly voted against the US decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem. Despite the threats from US ambassador at the UN, 125 countries voted in favor, while only 9 voted against a non-binding motion filed by Turkey and Yemen that preserves Jerusalem’s current status quo.

### **Never ending talks**

The fate of Jerusalem and that of a future Palestinian State have been on the table for decades. A myriad of proposals, suspended and resumed negotiations, wars, Intifadas and varying mediation attempts all share a unique outcome: failure of any negotiated solution. The Palestinians want a state of their own. Israel wants them confined within one or more *bantustans*. The Israelis seek a reassurance about peace that its counterpart is not capable or, in some cases, willing to concede.

During the talks about a two-state solution, Jerusalem has always been a crucial talking point. And it has been one as far back as 1948 when Israel was founded. During a speech at the UN, then Israeli PM Ben Gurion immediately declared that Jerusalem was Israel’s “eternal” capital. And since the 1967 Six Days War and the occupation of East Jerusalem, the Israelis have had full control over the city.

With a 1980 basic law, a constitutional amendment, Israel has unilaterally declared that Jerusalem is its “unique and indivisible capital”. A de facto annexation rejected by UN Security Council Resolutions 476/1980 and 478/1980 that declared the measure “null and void” and asked “those States that have established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City”. Despite its control over the city, the Israelis have always longed for international recognition and legitimacy for its occupation.

Altering the demographics of the Holy City is just another step in that direction. Likud's Central Committee, the right-wing party is run by PM Netanyahu, approved a document asking for the annexation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank in January 2018. It was a unanimous decision.

### **Is there a solution?**

Jerusalem is at the heart of three monotheistic religions. It is a holy city. This is because Jews pray before the Wailing wall, Christians worship the Holy Sepulchre while Muslims look to the al-Aqsa mosque where Mohamed ascended to heaven. Rather than belonging to a single country or religion, Jerusalem belongs to humanity. UN Resolution 181 of 1947, that was meant to pave the way for a two-state solution and which instead was taken aback by the 1948 Israeli-Arab war after Ben Gurion unilaterally declared Israeli independence, treated Jerusalem as "a corpus separatum under a special international regime and shall be administered by the United Nations". In hindsight, if respected Resolution 181 would have avoided a 70 year old conflict.

## **KUWAIT'S SECURITY STRUCTURE**

Kuwait is a small country that has always faced two major threats. The first one being its neighbors – Iraq and Saudi Arabia – that have often looked to conquer the tiny emirate. Saddam Hussein's invasion on August 2, 1990 is the latest example of the latter. But in a remote past, the Saudis had tried to do the same. Not having the armed forces capable of facing such a threat, Kuwait has to rely on the strength and collaboration of more powerful partners, in this case the US, France and the UK. By collaboration we mean a partnership in the intelligence sector. The second threat is domestic and has to do with demographics: out of a population of 4.4 million inhabitants, 70% are immigrants, mainly from Egypt or India.

These two menaces – domestic and external – have forced the emirate to equip itself with an adequate security apparatus capable of granting its survival. The chain of command is led by the Emir himself, he is the ultimate and sole person responsible for the security of the State. Any decision in this field requires his approval.

Under the Emir sits the Prime Minister, who is also a member of the Supreme Defense Council. Under him branch out three major structures responsible for the State's security:

- the National Guard, with its own intelligence agency;
- the Ministry of Defense, with a military intelligence agency;
- the Ministry of Interior, that includes within its ranks the Kuwait Security Service, the country's most important intelligence agency.

Kuwait's armed forces can count on around 17 thousand men.

### **The Supreme Defense Council**

It is usually headed by the Crown Prince, alongside the Prime Minister. The council also includes the Ministers of Defense, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Budget and Finance, the head of the National Guard, the chiefs of the intelligence agencies, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and the President and the deputy of the National Security Apparatus. If need be, other Ministers and/or State officials are included. Kuwait's national security is discussed by this organism.

### **Structure and functions of the Kuwait Security Service**

Also known as the Directorate of State Security, this intelligence agency is run by the Ministry of Interior. The chief of the agency is an undersecretary, with political rather than operative functions. The actual head of the agency is the Director General.

The KSS is divided into Departments. Some of them deal with the activities of the agency itself (Personnel and Logistics), while others are tasked with domestic and international activities (Operations, Investigative, International, Domestic). The Kuwait Security Service is also the agency that deals with the relationship with foreign intelligence agencies through its Exterior Relations bureau.

In its activities abroad, the KSS focuses on the espionage on those regional neighbors that could pose a potential threat, namely Iran and Iraq. On the domestic front, the agency is tasked with counterespionage and, mainly, with the monitoring of immigrant communities. Its stations are located across the country, including at borders and airports. The Investigations Department of the KSS works alongside the police in security controls.

### **The control over the country**

Kuwait is run by the Sabah royal family. Its members have direct control over national security. Although there is frequent infighting between the different branches of the family over who should ascend to the throne, mainly between the Jaber and the Salem, domestic and external threats to the survival of the kingdom keep the Royal Court together.

The Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir Al Sabah is also the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Crown Prince Nawaf al-Ahmad Al Sabah, Prime Minister Jabir al-Mubarak Al Sabah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sabah al-Khalid al-Hamad Al Sabah, the Minister of Interior Khalid al-Jarrah Al Sabah, the Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah (the Emir's eldest son) all participate in defending Kuwait's national security. The head of the National Security Apparatus, Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, is also a member of the royal family.

### **US protection**

Following the first Gulf War, the US have signed with Kuwait a formal Defense Cooperation Agreement that includes joint military exercises (that usually see the participation of other countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council), training of the armed forces, weapons sales, US troops on Kuwaiti soil, the access and use of Kuwaiti military infrastructures by US personnel that, if need be, are immune from prosecution.

About 13 thousand US troops station in the Emirate, this is roughly a third of the US contingent in the Gulf (a total of 35 thousand units) scattered across terrestrial, aerial and naval bases. The HQ of the operation "Inherent Resolve" against the Islamic State was based in Kuwait.

In 2004, US President George W. Bush designated Kuwait as a "major non-NATO ally", which grants the emirate the possibility to access and purchase sophisticated weapons systems and to develop military cooperation. NATO also opened one of its regional centers in the country in 2017, while in November 2017 Kuwait signed a military cooperation protocol with France.

The cooperation with the United States is not limited to the military sector, but also to the assistance in anti-terrorism and border control activities through the National Guard and the Ministry of Interior. The last terrorist attack in Kuwait was in June 2015, when a Shia mosque was attacked and there were 27 people were killed, while 227 were wounded.

### **The Kuwaiti Shia**

Around 30% of the population in Kuwait is Shia. A lot of them come from Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. The ongoing struggle between the Iranians and the Saudis and a Shia-led government in Iraq could pose a risk for Kuwait. However, local laws ban all forms of sectarian discrimination, but despite this the Kuwaiti Shia community claims to be marginalized.

To date, a conflict has been avoided because local authorities have enacted a series of measures, one of the latest includes the construction of a mosque for the Shia. Another factor that prevents a violent outcome is the presence of several Shia in the ranks of the military, the security and in Parliament.

### **A moderate policy**

According to international standards, Kuwait is not a democracy. However, when compared to other countries in the region, it is a nation with sufficient room for the people's participation to politics. Opposition groups are represented in the National Assembly, including Islamists and secularists, tribal leaders that support the regime, Shia, Sunnis and liberals. This is one of the reasons why the Arab Spring has had a very limited impact in Kuwait.

A moderate domestic approach is mirrored by a similar tenure on the international scene, where Kuwait avoids contrasts and tensions. The emirate tried to act as a mediator in the recent quarrel between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. During the current regional military deployment in Yemen, Kuwait deployed a symbolic naval presence. Its relationship with Iran is pretty good, as is with Russia.