The rise of insurrectionary anarchist terrorism in Italy

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Abstract: Since the mid-1980s. Italian insurrectionary anarchists have been responsible for dozens of attacks both within Italy and abroad. For more than a decade, the prevailing tactics were small-scale acts of vandalism, sabotage and arson. However, since the late 1990s. insurrectionary anarchist militants have increasingly used more dangerous methods such as bombings and assaults. Today, insurrectionary anarchist violence is generally regarded as the most dangerous form of domestic non-jihadist terrorism in Italy. Furthermore, in many respects, Italy represents the birthplace of a threat that has spread in many countries. The paper aims to examine the rise of insurrectionary anarchist terrorism in Italy, a neglected topic in the literature. The text focuses on four aspects. First, it traces the ideological roots of this extremist tendency. Second, it examines the escalation of violence in the twenty-first century, paying particular attention to the most important entity, the Informal Anarchist Federation, FAI, a loose network that emerged in 2003. The discussion is based on an original data set of 50 acts of violence claimed by the Italian FAI from 2003 to 2014. Third, it explores the peculiar organisational structure of the FAI. Finally, it analyses the repertoire of action and the strategies of target selection.

Keywords: terrorism; insurrectionary anarchism; Italy; Informal Anarchist Federation; letter bombs

Since the mid-1980s, Italian insurrectionary anarchist groups and individuals have been responsible for dozens of attacks in Italy and abroad. For more than a decade, the prevailing tactics were small-scale acts of vandalism, sabotage and arson. However, since the late 1990s, insurrectionary anarchist militants have increasingly used more dangerous methods, such as bombings and assaults.

This escalation of violence was underestimated by Italian authorities and analysts for a long time, partly because the attacks did not cause casualties (Boschi, 2005, pp. 9, 15 and *passim;* see also Camera dei Deputati, 2012, p. 4). Nevertheless, today, insurrectionary anarchism is recognized as a significant security threat to Italy. In particular, after the substantial dismantling of the left-wing terrorist group *Brigate Rosse — Partito Comunista Combattente* (Red Brigades — Communist Combatant Party), BR-PCC, in 2003,[1] insurrectionary anarchist violence is generally regarded as the most dangerous form of domestic non-jihadist terrorism in the country (e.g. Ministero dell'Interno, 2013, p. 10). Furthermore, in many respects, Italy represents the birthplace of a threat that has spread in many countries.

Thus far, no scientific work has examined the rise of insurrectionary anarchist terrorism in Italy.[2] This article attempts to fill the gap that exists in the literature. The paper focuses on the evolution of clandestine political violence perpetrated in secret by underground groups, with an emphasis on the most dangerous brand name, the *Federazione Anarchica Informale* (Informal Anarchist Federation), FAI, a loosely connected network founded in 2003. The article does not investigate public forms of spontaneous violence such as riots, street conflicts with police, or Black Bloc tactics (cf. Zúquete, 2014a).

[1] The Red Brigades — Communist Combatant Party, often called "New Red Brigades", emerged in the 1990s and were responsible for the murders of Massimo D'Antona, an advisor to the leftwing Minister of Labour Antonio Bassolino, on 20 May 1999 and Marco Biagi, an advisor to the right-wing Minister of Labour Roberto Maroni, on 19 March 2002. Both D'Antona and Biagi were renowned professors of labour law. Emanuele Petri, a policeman, was also killed during a shootout on a train, on 2 March 2003. See Sundquist (2010).

[2] A partial exception is Marone (2014) on the Informal Anarchist Federation.

The analysis draws on both primary source material (communiqués, claims of responsibility, political manifestos and pamphlets, court transcripts, primarily in Italian) and secondary sources (scientific works, official reports, journalistic pieces).

The text is divided into five sections. The first traces the ideological roots of contemporary insurrectionary anarchism. The second examines the escalation of Italian insurrectionary anarchist terrorism in the twenty-first century, paying particular attention to the FAI network. The discussion is based on an original data set of the acts of violence claimed by the FAI from 2003 to 2014, compiled by the author. The third analyses the peculiar organizational structure of the FAI. The fourth section focuses on the repertoire of action and the strategies of target selection. The conclusions recapitulate the most important findings presented in the paper.

Ideology

Italy is a stronghold of contemporary insurrectionary anarchism *(anarco-insurreziona- lismo)*. The country has an important anarchist tradition (Levy, 1989), at times involving violent methods. Prominent anarchist figures, such as Errico Malatesta (1853–1932) and Carlo Cafiero (1846–1892), tried to organize armed insurrections in Italy, without success. Moreover, several anarchist *attentati* (attempted assassinations) were carried out from the 1870s to 1930s (Levy, 2007). In particular, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Italian individualist anarchists were responsible for some of the most notorious assassinations, killing the French President, Sadi Carnot, in 1894, the Spanish Prime Minister, Antonio Cánovas, in 1897, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria in 1898, and King Umberto I of Italy in 1900. Anarchists engaged in strikes and occupations until the rise of Fascism in 1922. A few anarchist militants repeatedly tried to kill Mussolini. After the Second World War, many anarchists joined the synthesist[3] Italian Anarchist Federation, founded in Carrara, Tuscany, in 1945. Moreover, historically, the Italian anarchist movement had a relevant transnational dimension (among others, see Turcato, 2007).

Actually the questions of whether, when, and to what extent violence is a legitimate strategy of struggle has been a matter for broad debate within the anarchist movement. As Borum and Tilby (2005, p. 204) summarize, there are at least three schools of thought on this subject. Some take the position advocated by Tolstoy that anarchism must be a movement of nonviolent resistance (anarchist pacifism). In the middle are those who strongly endorse and advocate the destruction of property, but not violence against the person. On the other extreme, there are those who argue that the current hierarchical structure is maintained by violence from the oppressors and, therefore, can only be defeated with violence against individuals (see also Miller, 1995; Jensen, 2004).

Contemporary insurrectionary anarchism has inherited some of the radical views and practices of modern anarchism (including the ideas of "insurrection", "propaganda of the deed", "direct action", militant "affinity group", etc.). In some regards, affinities can be drawn between this tendency and some significant figures in the anarchist tradition. These latter include the German philosopher Max Stirner (1806–1856), author of *The Ego and Its Own* (1845) and a forerunner of individualist anarchism (see Leopold, 2006); and the illegalists, a current of European anarchists

[3] Synthesist anarchism refers to a pluralist inclusive organizing approach which tries to bring together anarchists of different tendencies and perspectives within a single group, project or federation, under the principles of "anarchism without adjectives".

that glorified criminality as a lifestyle, at the turn of the twentieth century (Freedom, 2009, December 5). However, contemporary insurrectionary anarchists are usually not very interested in intellectual and historical debates.

In fact, insurrectionary anarchism represents an extremist tendency within the anarchist movement which emphasizes the practice of revolutionary "insurrection" through illegal and violent actions. In general terms, anarchism emphasizes practice over theory. However, insurrectionary anarchism has taken this position to an extreme (Williams & Thomson, 2011). Self-organized "attack" here and now is considered essential. Some groups do not hesitate to target human beings.

Insurrectionary anarchists have been very critical of other anarchists. On one hand, they have rejected the struggle for reforms and mass organizations and opposed issue-based activism, expressing a profound critique of any other movements that fail to take immediate action. On the other hand, insurrectionary anarchists direct their critique to "formal organizations" (such as traditional anarchist federations or trade unions) in the light of the "rejection in practice of any type of organisation with some projection in time" (Gutiérrez, 2006).[4] In this sense, insurrectionary anarchism is akin to the tendency of "post-left anarchy" because it rejects traditional leftism (see Robinson & Tormey, 2009).

Contemporary insurrectionary anarchism emerged in Italy in the 1980s. The most influential ideologue of this uncompromising current of thought is arguably Alfredo Maria Bonanno (born in 1937 in Sicily). Bonanno has always been more of an agitator than a theorist. He has been repeatedly convicted for various crimes, including armed robberies. Despite his ideological ascendency, he has not held any leadership role or official position in the insurrectionary anarchist movement (Amorós 2007), even less in today's terrorist groups.[5]

Bonanno is most well-known for his *La gioia armata (Armed Joy),* an incendiary pamphlet written in Italy in 1977, during the so-called "Years of Lead" *(anni di piombo)* marked by left-wing and right-wing terrorism. This short book invoked joy and glorified play opposed to work and the work ethic, but at the same it explicitly incited violence.[6] In his view, the two aspects are connected, because "joy" is considered "as the profound significance of the revolutionary struggle" (Bonanno, 1977, chapters IX and X). Bonanno was sentenced to 18 months in prison for writing and publishing this pamphlet and the destruction of the book was ordered in Italy (see Bonanno, 1977, English introduction added in 1993).

Bonanno is the author of many other writings. Generally, he peculiarly combines an analysis of ideas and facts, sometimes quite elusive and repetitive, with truculent observations and sarcastic remarks. In the early 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, Bonanno recommended coordination between insurrectionists in the Mediterranean region. For this purpose, he proposed the creation of an "Anti-Authoritarian Insurrectionist International" based on an "informal organisation", that is "a whole made up of individuals, groups, structures, movements and other more

[4] Among others, see Black (2006) and Gutiérrez (2006) for a response to these criticisms within the anarchist movement.

[5] However. Bonanno was recognized as the ideologue of the *Organizzazione Rivoluzionaria Anarchica Insurrezionalista* (Insurrectionary Anarchist Revolutionary Organixation), ORAI, an armed gang responsible for bloody bank robberies, kidnappings and other acts of violence from 1985 to 1996. For this reason, in 2004, Bonanno was sentenced by final judgement to six years in prison (Boschi, 2005, pp. 25–27; see also Gnosis, 2004). The ORAI was disbanded and is not linked to today's terrorist groups.

[6] See, for example, this passage: "Hurry comrade, shoot the policeman, the judge, the boss. Now, before a new police prevent you. […] Hurry to play. Hurry to arm yourself" (Bonanno, 1977, chapter VII).

or less stable forms of relationship between people who attempt to enter into contact in order to deepen their reciprocal knowledge" (Bonanno, 1993). These militants should have worked freely on a "minimalprogramme" (Bonanno, 1993). Here, the word *insurrezionalista* (insurrectionary or insurrectionist) is probably used for the first time to identify this radical tendency (Amorós, 2007). However, the project of an "Anti-Authoritarian Insurrectionist International" soon withered (see Cavalleri, 2012).

According to Bonanno, the transition to immediate action requires a specific type of organization, one defined as "informal" and impermanent, and he found such an organization in the affinity groups *(gruppi di affinità)* (Amorós 2007). In the history of the anarchist movement, affinity groups are autonomous units, generally made up of between 5 and 20 individuals who share a common political vision and the types of action they want to engage in. The groups are usually based on personal relationships. The decision-making process within these groups should be egalitarian, participatory and consensual.[7] According to Bonanno, affinity groups have to elaborate a "project", based on their analyses and discussions, that should provide a stimulus for action (Amorós, 2007). They have to be willing to carry out small-scale immediate attacks against the structures of Capital and the State. These actions do not require a formal organizational structure or particular skills: in Bonanno's words, "it's easy. You can do it yourself. Alone or with a few trusted comrades. Complicated means are not necessary. Not even great technical knowledge. Capital is vulnerable. All you need is to be decided" (Bonanno, 1977, chapter XI). Bonanno's perspective is not interested in the role of mass movements. On the contrary, this view opens the door to "lone wolf' attacks (among others, cf. Spaaij, 2012).

Bonanno's proposals have been embraced by other anarchist ideologues and thinkers. Among these, an influential name is Costantino Cavalleri (born in 1956 in Sardinia). Cavalleri is an anarchist activist, author and publisher who has combined the political cause of Sardinian separatism with the ideology of insurrectionary anarchism (see Gnosis, 2004, 2005). He explicitly supported Bonanno's project of an "Anti-Authoritarian Insurrectionist International" (Cavalleri, 2012; see also Boschi, 2005, pp. 42–43, 67). However, Cavalleri has not disdained the role of social struggles.[8]

Insurrectionary anarchism inspired by Bonanno and other ideologues has spread from Italy and, thanks to translations of writings in several countries, has been developing in the transnational anarchist movement since the 1980s. This ideological orientation has been adopted by radical anarchist sectors within the transnational "anti-globalization" (or "alter-globalization") protest movement (cf. Zúquete, 2014a), against the background of a re-emergence of anarchism on a global scale (see Gordon, 2007; Williams, 2007). The activities of these militants are typically characterized by "voluntarism, maximalism, a primarily emotional approach to politics, a certain sense of urgency, impatience and immediatism", as an anarchist critic put it (Gutiérrez, 2006).

[7] The origins of affinity groups in the anarchist movement date back to the Spain of the 1870s and 1880s where small circles of friends known as *grupos de afinidad* or *tertulias* gathered together to share news, to debate ideas, and to prepare future actions (Dupuis-Déri, 2010).

[8] In a recent interview, Cavalleri (2012) made clear: "the use of weapons and violence in general […] is an essential part of anarchist action. However I don't consider it a privileged aspect in itself, in respect to the other aspects that constitute anarchist intervention as a whole". Moreover, he expressed serious reservations about "clandestine" armed struggle and criticised the Informal Anarchist Federation, FAI, for its "uniforming claim of standardising the way of understanding and putting insurrectionalist struggle into practice" (2012).

An important figure in the USA is Feral Faun/Wolfi Landstreicher, pseudonyms of a post-left anarchist theorist and activist. He has been inspired by Bonanno-influenced insurrectionary anarchism. Max Stirner's "egoism", and anti-civilization ideas (Landstreicher, 2005, 2007, 2013). In North America, insurrectionary anarchism has often combined with other radical tendencies and schools of thought (cf. Zúquete, 2014b).

Insurrectionary anarchist ideology also underpins the activities of a number of clandestine violent groups and cells in Italy. These groups claim to fight against "the State and Capital" or even the whole "Civilization". In general, they do not elaborate on specific goals of violence. On the contrary, their political objectives, lacking any public support, appear to be at least vague and doubtful.[9]

However, the reasons for their relative appeal could be of a psychological nature. For these militants, immediate action seems to be a kind of emotional discharge (Amorós, 2007).[10] The participation in violent "direct actions", alone or in small groups, is the source of a personal feeling of exhilaration and "joy".

Take, for example, a telling passage in the claim of responsibility for the assault on an Italian manager perpetrated in May 2012 by two militants under the banner of the FAI (see below):

Despite not liking violent-style rhetoric, it has been with a certain pleasantness that we armed ourselves, with pleasure that we loaded the magazine. Grasping the pistol, choosing and following the target, coordinating mind and hand were necessary steps, the logical consequence of an idea of justice, the risk of a choice and at the same time a confluence of enjoyable sensations. (FAI "Olga" Nucleus, 2012)

Alfredo Cospito, the gunman and leader of this tiny "Nucleus" of insurrectionary anarchists, added in court in October 2013: "In a wonderful morning in May I acted, and in the space of a few hours I fully enjoyed my life. For once I left fear and self-justification behind and defied the unknown" (Cospito, 2013; see also Marone, 2014).

In fact, anarchist violence is often justified in the light of a sort of "self-empowerment philosophy of action" (Zúquete, 2014a, p. 97). In Bonanno's words, "fully aware, they [insurrectionary anarchist militants] attack with cool determination. And in doing so they realise themselves as human beings. They realise themselves in joy" (Bonanno, 1977, chapter IX). Thus, violence acquires an existential dimension (see Cottee & Hayward, 2011): it turns into a means of individual transformation.

However, it is important to note that this phenomenon is not purely individualistic and self-centred. These militants are usually connected to a "radical milieu" (Malthaner & Waldmann, 2014), try to promote their actions and are interested in getting into contact with like-minded

[9] As Alfredo Cospito, an imprisoned FAI militant, emphasised, "anarchism of praxis [...] doesn't seek the unbearable consent (therefore rejects politics)"; in his view, "from the moment you impose limitations on yourself out of fear of not being understood, you are, de facto, already a political entity, therefore you become part of the problem, one of the many cancers that infect our existence. One should never measure his own words and actions just to become acceptable to people, to the crowd". (Cospito, 2014.)

[10] Bonanno (1996) emphasized that "anarchism is a tension, not a realisation". The key focus is "the way in which the person, the comrade who carries out these actions, succeeds in making them become an expressive moment of their lives, a specific characterisation, meaning, quality of life, joy, desire, beauty, not the practical realisation, not the sullen realisation of a deed that is mortally an end in itself and enables one to say: 'I have done something today' far from myself, at the periphery of my existence" (Bonanno, 1996).

individuals. In this view, violence is regarded as a "pleasure" in itself, but should have some sort of collective purpose,[11] however vague.

The escalation of violence

In Italy, the insurrectionary anarchist movement has combined different radical causes and interests: anti-authoritarianism, anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, anti-militarism, anticlericalism, the struggle against the judicial and prison system, radical environmentalism and Sardinian separatism. Since the mid-1980s, insurrectionary anarchist groups and individuals have been responsible for a series of low-profile attacks on various economic, political, military and religious targets (Boschi, 2005). This section examines the escalation of violence in the twenty-first century, paying particular attention to the role of the FAI network, founded in 2003. The discussion makes uses of an original data set of the acts of violence claimed by the FAI in the period from 2003 to 2014 (Table 1). This is the first complete public data set on this phenomenon. It includes 50 incidents.

In the 1980s and 1990s, insurrectionary anarchist acts of violence were typically represented by low-profile attacks on infrastructures and other, usually unguarded, "soft targets", such as high electric power pylons and phone or TV antenna towers (Boschi, 2005). Usually no responsibility was claimed for these incidents, but they were reported in clandestine and underground publications. Over time, radical anarchist groups emerged in northern Italy (including the areas of Milan, Turin, Genoa, Trento and Sondrio), in central Italy (especially in the areas of Rome, Viterbo, Florence, Pisa, Livorno, Bologna) (see Innocenti, 2006) and in the island of Sardinia. In most cases, these groups were small, based on personal bonds and often organized around an influential or charismatic leader. They were primarily interested in social conflicts at a local level (Boschi, 2005).

The Informal Anarchist Federation, FAI, officially appeared in December 2003.[12] In an Open Letter (FAI, 2003), the FAI presented itself as a federation of four already existing clandestine groups: *Solidarietà Internazionale* (International Solidarity), based in Milan; *Cooperativa Artigiana Fuoco e Affini — Occasionalmente Spettacolare* (Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items — Occasionally Spectacular), based in Bologna, in north-central Italy; *Brigata 20 Luglio* (20 July Brigade), based in the northwestern port city of Genoa; *Cellule contro il Capitale, il Carcere, i suoi Carcerieri e le sue Celle* (Cells against Capital, Jails, Prisoners, and Cells; also known as Five C's), based in Rome. These four groups emerged at the turn of the century and, on the whole, they

[11] For example, a recent FAI document reads: "To increase the reproducibility of an action, in our opinion, this action must be motivated, claimed. […] A destructive action will always remain a beautiful thing, even if it is not claimed. It can be done for the sheer pleasure of doing it. To do something right is always good. But to us this is not enough, we want to make this system fall" (FAI, 2011). See also Cospito (2014).

[12] The Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI) is not to be confused with the historic *Federazione Anarchica Italiana* (Italian Anarchist Federation, also FAI), associated with the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF/IFA). At the end of the 2003 Open Letter in which the new militant network presented itself, the anonymous author/s added ironically: "PS: Any reference to […] the FAI — Federazione Anarchica Italiana is a pure coincidence. We apologise to the people concerned" (FAI, 2003). In its turn, the Italian Anarchist Federation promptly denounced "the serious and infamous nature of attributing this kind of facts [the first acts of violence] to initials alluding to the monogram of FAI" (FAI — Italian Anarchist Federation, 2003).

were responsible for at least 20 attacks (bombs and letter bombs) in the years 1999- 2003 (Boschi, 2005, pp. 33–40, 112–113; Marone, 2014, p. 22; cf. FAI, 2007).[13]

Table 1. Data set of acts of violence claimed under the banner of the Italian FAI (1 January 2003–31 December 2014).

[13] On 26–27 October 1999, in Milan a parcel bomb delivered to a police station and an explosive device placed outside the National Tourism Office of Greece were defused. These attacks were claimed by International Solidarity, protesting the jailing of an anarchist militant, Nikos Maziotis, leading figure of the Greek terrorist group Revolutionary Struggle (see Kassimeris, 2013, chapter 6). On 28 June and 18 December 2000, two explosive devices were found in the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio and in the Duomo of Milan, the most important Catholic churches in the city, respectively. International Solidarity took credit for both acts, on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of 2000 and in solidarity with arrested anarchists in Spain. In July 2001, six attacks (four letter bombs and two incendiary devices) were claimed by the Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items — Occasionally Spectacular in Genoa and other cities, on the occasion of the controversial G8 summit in Genoa (20–22 July 2001). Among these, a letter bomb sent to a police station in Genoa seriously injured a *carabiniere* (16 July). In 2002, one bomb exploded outside the Ministry of Interior office in Rome (26 February) and another two bombs detonated in Genoa police headquarters (9 December). The three attacks were signed by the 20 July Brigade. The name of this new group is a clear reference to 20 July 2001, the day when a young Italian "anti-globalisation" activist, Carlo Giuliani, was shot dead by a policeman during the protests against the Genoa G8. In December 2002, parcel bombs were delivered to the Barcelona offices of the Spanish daily newspaper *El Pat's* (defused on 12 December), the Rome headquarters of the Spanish airline Iberia (three parcels intercepted on 13, 14 and 16 December), and the office of RAI (Italy's national broadcasting company; detonated without damage on 16 December). Moreover, on the night of 17 June 2003, an improvised explosive device exploded outside the Cervantes Spanish School *(Liceo Cervantes)* in Rome. These actions were claimed by the Five C's, in solidarity with anarchist militants detained in Spanish special regime prisons. On 8 October 2003, an improvised explosive device placed outside the Rome headquarters of Iberia was discovered and defused. This action was claimed by the Armed Cells for International Solidarity.

No.	Date	Country	City	Description	FAI Unit	Kill.	Inj.	Tactic Type
1	21 Dec. 2003	Italy	Bologna	Two home-made bombs ex-ploded outside the private resi-dence of Ro-mani Prodi. Presi-dent of the Eu-ropean Com-mission	—	0	0	Explosive device
2	27 Dec. 2003	Italy	Bologna	A letter bomb ad-dressed to Ro-mano Prodi caught fire at his home	—	0	0	Letter bomb
3	29 Dec. 2003	Germany	Frankfurt	Letter bomb sent to Jean-Claude Trichet. Presi-dent of the Eu-ropean Central Bank (de-fused)	—	0	0	Letter bomb
4	29 Dec. 2003	Netherlands	The Hague	Letter bomb sent to the head-quar-ters	—	0	0	Letter bomb

No.	Date	Country	City	Description	FAI Unit	Kill.	Inj.	Tactic Type
13	8 Nov. 2004	Italy	Milan	A home-made bomb ex-ploded at night near the San Vittore prison	Metropolitan Cells	0	0	Explosive device
14	8 Nov. 2004	Italy	Milan	A home-made bomb ex-ploded at night inside a waste-crusher lorry near the San Vittore prison	Metropolitan Cells	0	0	Explosive device
15	10 Dec. 2004	Italy	Rome	Letter bomb sent to the of-fices of SAPPE. a trade union of the Pen-iten-tiary Police (de-fused)	Armed Cells for Interna-tional Solidar-ity	0	0	Letter bomb
16	11 Dec. 2004	Italy	Rome	Letter bomb sent to the offices of the Na-tional Associ-ation of Cara-	Armed Cells for Interna-tional Solidar-ity	0	0	Letter bomb

No.	Date	Country	City	Description	FAI Unit	Kill.	Inj.	Tactic Type
24	3 Nov. 2005	Italy	Parma	Explosive device found near the Carabinieri's RIS [Unit of Scientific Investigations] barracks (defused)	Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items	0	0	Explosive device
25	3 Nov. 2005	Italy	Bologna	Letter bomb sent to Sergio Cofferati, mayor of Bologna (defused)	Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire and Related Items	0	0	Letter bomb
26	2 Jun. 2006	Italy	Possano (province of Cuneo)	Two bombs exploded at night outside a training school of Carabinieri	Anonymous and Terrible Revolt	0	0	Explosive device
27	6 Mar. 2007	Italy	Twin	Three rudimentary devices placed in rubbish bins exploded at night in the	Anonymous and Terrible Revolt	0	0	Explosive device

No.	Date	Country	City	Description	FAI Unit	Kill.	Inj.	Tactic Type
34	23 Dec. 2010	Italy	Rome	Letter bomb sent to the Swiss Embassy in Rome. An employee at the Embassy was injured by the explosion	"Lambros Fountas" Revolutionary Cell	0	1	Letter bomb
35	23 Dec. 2010	Italy	Rome	Letter bomb sent to the Chilean Embassy in Rome. An employee at the Embassy was injured by the explosion	"Lambros Fountas" Revolutionary Cell	0	1	Letter bomb
36	27 Dec. 2010	Italy	Rome	Letter bomb sent to the Greek Embassy in Rome (defused)	"Lambros Fountas" Revolutionary Cell	0	0	Letter bomb
37	31 Mar. 2011	Italy	Livorno	Letter bomb sent to	—	0	1	Letter bomb

No.	Date	Country	City	Description	FAI Unit	Kill.	Inj.	Tactic Type
45	8 Mar. 2012	Italy	Rome	A rudimentary bomb exploded at night outside a bank branch	Antisocial Nucleus	0	0	Explosive device
46	15 Mar. 2012	Italy	Frascati (province of Rome)	Incendiary attack on a power company office	Anti-civilisation Subversive Individualities	0	0	Incendiary device
47	7 May 2012	Italy	Genoa	Assault on Roberto Adinolfi. chief executive of Ansaldo Nucleare. He was shot in the knee by two masked men	“Olga” Nucleus	0	1	Assault
48	19 Jul. 2012	Italy	Frascati (province of Rome)	Incendiary attacks on two bank branches	Anti-civilisation Subversive Individualities	0	0	Incendiary device
49	9 Apr. 2013	Italy	Turin	Letter bomb sent to 14 La Stampa newspaper office (not exploded)	“Damiano Bolano” Cell	0	0	Letter bomb
50	10 Apr.	Italy	Brescia	Parcel	“Damiano	0	0	Letter

Notes. This original data set integrates information coming from four types of sources: (1) claims of responsibility and communiqués released by the FAI; (2) press articles published by Italy's three most important daily newspapers: *Corriere della Sera, Repubblica* and *La Stampa;* (3) a chronology of domestic terrorism in Italy from January 2004 to May 2013 published on line by *Gnosis — Rivista Italiana di Intelligence* (official review of Italy's intelligence domestic agency, AIS I; http://gnosis.aisi.gov.it/); (4) the Global Terrorism Database maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland, from 2003 to 2013 (website:

The FAI soon engaged in terrorist violence. On 21 December 2003, it claimed responsibility for two home-made bombs placed outside the private residence in Bologna of Romani Prodi, who twice served as Prime Minister of Italy (1996–1998, 2006–2008). At the time he was President of the European Commission (1999–2004). In December 2003-January 2004 a letter bomb campaign, called "Operation Santa Claus", was carried out against several European Union representatives, senior officials and institutions (the President of the European Commission for the second time, the President of the European Central Bank, Europol, Eurojust, the President and the Vice-President of the Europe's People Party and a British Member of the European Parliament). These letter bombs did not cause casualties or injuries (see Table 1).

After the 2003–2004 "Operation Santa Claus" parcel bomb campaign, anarchist militants under the banner of the FAI were responsible for several home-made bombs and parcel bombs. Some of these attacks resulted in injuries. In particular, in March 2010, a parcel bomb sent to the Northern League (Lega Nord) party headquarters wounded a postman. In December 2010, parcel bombs exploded in the Swiss and Chilean Embassies in Rome and two people were hurt; a third parcel bomb sent to the Greek Embassy was defused. In March 2011, a mail bomb seriously injured an officer at the barracks of the Folgore parachute brigade in the Tuscan city of Livorno and another device exploded at the headquarters of Swissnuclear, the Swiss nuclear industry association, wounding two employees. In December 2011, a letter bomb seriously injured the director of Equitalia, the state tax-collection agency, in Rome. In general, the 2010–2011 letter bombs revealed an improvement in bomb-making skills, at least compared with the amateurish devices of the 2003–2004 campaign (Marone, 2014).

In 2012 there was a qualitative leap in this campaign of violence: for the first time militants under the aegis of the FAI shot at a person (Marone, 2014, pp. 23–24). On the morning of 7 May 2012, in Genoa two masked men kneecapped Roberto Adinolfi, 59, the chief executive of Ansaldo Nucleare, an Italian nuclear power company controlled by the aerospace and defence conglomerate Finmeccanica. Fortunately, his condition was not serious.

The attack sparked fears of terrorism in the country, especially in the climate of economic recession and social tension. Besides, "kneecappings" *(gambizzazioni)* were a trademark practice of the Red Brigades (Lutz & Lutz, 2011), the notorious left-wing terrorist group that carried out a campaign of violence aimed at destabilising Italy in the 1970s and the early 1980s (della Porta, 1990).

The assault was claimed by a new FAI unit, the "Olga" Nucleus (an explicit reference to Olga Ikonomidou, a Greek imprisoned militant) (FAI "Olga" Nucleus, 2012; Marone, 2014). Two radical anarchists — Alfredo Cospito, 45, and Nicola Gai, 35 — were convicted of this crime in November

2013. In the end, both claimed credit for the attack on Adinolfi, with two written declarations presented before the Court in Genoa (Marone, 2014).

In 2012–2013, several insurrectionary anarchists were arrested in Italy (Adnkronos, 2012, June 13; Ansa 2013, September 19). In particular, according to Italian intelligence services, the 2012 wave of arrests put the FAI in "operational stasis" (Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica, 2013, p. 34). Nevertheless, the threat posed by this network remains "potentially extended and multiform" (Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica, 2013, p. 34). The FAI is probably able to "replenish its ranks" (Europol, 2013, p. 31). In fact, in April 2013, militants affiliated to the FAI claimed responsibility for two parcel bombs sent to the *La Stampa* newspaper in Turin and a private investigation agency in Brescia, near Milan (FAI "Damiano Bolano" Cell, 2013). By chance, neither device exploded. According to Italian investigators, the bomb delivered to *La Stampa's* premises was quite sophisticated (Sola, 2013, April 9).[14] Such attacks demonstrate that the network is no longer suffering from "operational stasis" (Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica, 2014, p. 43; Marone, 2014). FAI militants could still act. For example, according to recent press reports, Italy's authorities fear possible actions at Milan Expo 2015 (Berizzi, 2015, January 22).

According to our data, on the whole, 50 acts of violence were claimed under the banner of the FAI by 14 different units (see Table 1). Many attacks were clustered in campaigns of violence. The evolution of attacks by year shows two main peaks, in 2004 (11 incidents) and in 2011 (8 incidents). Overall, the "comings and goings" of this phenomenon do not reflect the dynamics of the economic crisis in Italy, that emerged around 2008. This fact is in line with the general interpretation, endorsed by many scholars, that the impact of economic conditions on terrorism is usually indirect, complicated and quite weak (see, among others, Krueger, 2007).

As for location, 40 attacks took place in northern and central Italy, often in major cities such as Rome (9 incidents), Milan (7), Turin (6), Genoa (4) and Bologna (3). On the other hand, 10 attacks (all letter bombs) took place abroad, in Belgium (2), Germany (2), the Netherlands (2), Switzerland (1), Britain (1), France (1) and Greece (1).

The acts of violence claimed in the name of the FAI caused 10 injuries. Fortunately, they did not result in casualties (cf. Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008). However, according to Italy's authorities, some of these attacks were potentially lethal.[15] Moreover, we know that within the FAI network there was a debate on the use of violence and some militants supported the idea of killing people.[16]

The FAI has fostered contacts and relationships with foreign groups. In particular, the network has strong ideological and solidarity ties with Greek anarchist groups (Europol, 2014, p. 35; Marone, 2014), especially with the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (CCF), a revolutionary anarcho-individualist armed group that emerged in 2008 (Kassimeris, 2013). Around 2010–2011, the FAI

[14] Instead of the more common parcel bomb, the package contained a typewritten text, an external memory hard disk and a USB cable. The hard disk contained an improvised explosive device designed to detonate when plugging the USB cable into a computer. The text invited journalist Massimo Numa to carefully watch some videos supposedly stored on the har'd disk (Europol, 2014, p. 25; Sola, 2013; see FAI "Damiano Bolano" Cell, 2013).

[15] For example, during a hearing at Italy's Chamber of Deputies on 22 February 2012, the chief of police, Antonio Manganelli, stated: "it is a coincidence that Italian [insurrectionary] anarchists have not killed anyone up to now" (Camera dei Deputati, 2012, p. 4).

[16] In February 2007 the FAI released the "transcription" of a clandestine meeting held among eight anonymous members of the network in December 2006. This discussion presented different opinions on the degree and extent of violence. However, some of these militants were in favour of killing "the guilty", while sparing the life of "innocent people" (FAI, 2007).

also promoted the development of the *Fronte Rivoluzionario Internazionale* (International Revolutionary Front, IRF), FRI, apparently an effort to coordinate like-minded action groups. In recent years, several groups around the world have used the FAI brand name to claim responsibility for their own attacks (usually acts of sabotage or arson) in Spain, Greece, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Turkey, Russia, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Indonesia and other countries (see Europol, 2013, pp. 32–33; Europol, 2014, pp. 35–36; Marone, 2014).[17] Moreover, in late 2011, the CCF and the FAI launched the project of a "Black International" of anarchists (CCF, 2011a; CCF, 2011b; see also CCF Imprisoned Members Cell, 2013).

Organizational structure

As Williams and Thomson (2001, p. 285) have emphasized, insurrectionists share the traditional anarchist opposition to hierarchy, but they go further in challenging any organizational principle. They opt for an ad-hoc "informal" organizational model that lacks a clear planning.

The insurrectionary anarchist movement share some similarities with the "Leaderless resistance" model, launched by the American far right (Kaplan, 1997) and later adopted by radical environmentalist groups, such as the Earth Liberation Front (Joosse, 2007), and other extremist groups. Leaderless resistance is a strategy of opposition that encourages single individuals and small groups to engage independently in actions, violent or not violent, without any hierarchy or central control. Clearly, this model reduces the risks for infiltration and informing. In addition, it can foster ideological inclusiveness and reduce opportunities for internal debates that could divert the movement's focus away from the goal of instigating and performing "direct actions": to some degree, adherents can "believe what they will" (Joosse, 2007, p. 364).

Unfortunately, to this day there is very little public information on the organizational structure of insurrectionary anarchist groups in Italy. The most important entity is the FAI, a loose network of individuals and small temporary "affinity groups", presumably based on personal relationships such as bonds of friendship (Marone, 2014). FAI units are autonomous. However, at times, some units revealed a minimum of coordination. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the FAI emerged as a federation among four groups. Moreover, according to an FAI communique (FAI, 2007), in December 2006 eight militants, representing the four founding groups, personally met to talk about the future of the Federation.

In December 2003, the FAI released an important Open Letter in which the new group introduced itself (FAI, 2003; see also Marone, 2014). The FAI aimed to be "a center-less, chaotic and horizontal organisation", in this way "reflecting the view of the anarchist society [they] struggle for". According to these militants, "to conciliate organisation and theoretical/practical debate with the anonymity of groups/individuals is possible through a widespread dialogue based on actions" (FAI, 2003). The network is "Informal" because it intends to adopt a kind of organization that is "capable of preventing the creation of authoritarian and bureaucratising mechanisms" (FAI, 2003). In their view, this kind of structure cannot be infiltrated easily because "the informal organisation is formed of groups and individuals that do not know one another" (FAI, 2003).

[17] The claims of responsibility for many of these acts of violence can be consulted online at: http://325.nostate.net/?tag=informal-anarchist-federation-fai. In October 2014 a FAI/IRF poster mapping the various cells of the network around the world was released in the Internet (retrieved from

Moreover, "whoever takes part in the FAI is a militant only when preparing and carrying out an action" (FAI, 2003).

As noted before, in its early years, the FAI was composed by four local groups. Over time, other Italian groups and cells have joined the network. In our data set we recorded 14 signatures. They often take their names from anarchist comrades, such as Horst Fantazzini from Italy (died in prison in 2001), Mauricio Morales from Chile (died in 2009), Lambros Fountas from Greece (killed in 2010), "Eat" (Reyhard Rumbayan) and "Billy" (Billy Augustan) from Indonesia (in prison), and Olga Ikonomidou from Greece (in prison). While it is possible that a single group had used more than one signature to claim its attacks, a few of the waves of arrests have confirmed that the Federation includes various groups, active in different cities (see Adnkronos, 2012, June 13; Ansa 2013, September 19). Individuals and groups are free to carry out acts of violence autonomously and claim them in the name of the FAI. At present, the actual number of FAI militants and supporters in Italy is unknown, but recent estimates range from 50 to 250 people (Marone, 2014, p. 22).

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to reconstruct the real organizational structure of the Italian FAI, behind the veil of secrecy. Furthermore, the structure might change frequently. As a recent FAI communique restated, "everything about the 'FAI/International Revolutionary Front' is in chaotic and continual evolution, beginning with its many names and definitions" (FAI, 2011).

On the basis of the information currently available, it is possible to suppose that the Italian FAI includes at least two levels. The first is represented by the four founding groups and perhaps other historic units, which are in contact with each other and try to coordinate themselves (see FAI, 2007). The second level consists of different individuals and cells that decide to carry out acts of violence autonomously under the banner of the FAI. For example, the "Anti-civilisation Subversive Individualities" (see Iacovacci, 2014) took credit for four crimes against property in the area of Frascati, near Rome, in 2011 -2012, in the name of the FAI (see Table 1). According to the Italian authorities, this cell was made up of two friends, Gianluca Iacovacci and Adriano Antonacci. They were apprehended in September 2013 and convicted in July 2014 (Ansa, 2013, September 19; *Il Tempo,* 2014, July 19). There is no proof of connections with other FAI units or militants. Furthermore, several cells have used the FAI brand name to claim responsibility for their own attacks in different countries.

The FAI displays some typical features of a terrorist network. In general, networks have important structural benefits, emphasized by many experts. In fact, a consensus emerged that networked groups are typically more flexible, adaptable and resilient (see, for example, Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001). However, illicit "dark networks" (Raab & Milward, 2003) are also prone to important inefficiencies (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Jones, 2008). Gathering, sharing, and processing information may be difficult in clandestine decentralized structures that are characterized by a compartmentalization of nodes and absence of central directories. Dispersed authority makes it difficult to control activities. Organizational learning and adaptation may be problematic. Moreover, the high premium on personal trust tends to limit the feasible size of the group and to restrict recruitment (see Jones, 2006).

The poor quality of many acts of violence perpetrated by Italy's insurrectionary anarchists might be due, at least partially, to problems in managing stable and coherent processes of learning and adaptation. Clandestine loose networks may be good at exploring new ideas, tactics and strategies, but they are often not able to absorb and exploit these new opportunities professionally (Jones, 2006). Moreover, the FAI itself encountered problems in recruiting new militants and

expand. Tellingly, in a 2007 communique, militants of this network admitted: "During these four years [since the formation of the FAI in 2003] we didn't manage to grow up nor did we manage (but we hope we are wrong) to find our way in the heart of young people who have just joined the anarchist idea" (FAI, 2007).

Repertoire of action and target selection

The repertoire of action by Italian insurrectionary anarchists is fairly limited. It is possible to identify two main types of tactics. The first type is represented by low-profile crimes against property such as acts of vandalism, arson and sabotage. Targets include antenna towers, vehicles, petrol stations, high-speed rail connections, farms, police stations, structures of multinational corporations, banks, and so forth (Boschi, 2005). Often these illegal acts share similarities with "direct actions" carried out by radical environmentalists (cf. Loadenthal, 2014).

The second type of tactics, adopted since 1998–1999, is represented by letter bombs and home-made bombs against human beings. The use of letter bombs, a trademark of the FAI (30 out of 50 attacks), represents a relatively simple, cheap, secure tactic in the terrorists' repertoire of action. With regard to the material function of violence (concerning the imposition of immediate physical damage), the impact is rarely devastating; however, some letter bombs sent by FAI units provoked serious injuries and were potentially lethal. As for the symbolic function of violence (regarding the communication or representation of messages), they can have a deep disturbing value because they threaten a predictable, comfortable aspect of everyday life, letters and the postal service. In a sense, death is masquerading in ordinary objects (Greisman, 1977, p. 310). Some FAI letter bombs presented false return addresses that alluded to facts regarding the history of anarchism or insurrectionary anarchism, in the guise of wry signatures.

FAI units also resorted to home-made bombs in 15 attacks out of 50. In general, these explosive devices were not very sophisticated, but some were potentially lethal. Acts of vandalism and arson and other rudimentary tactics were also used occasionally. As mentioned earlier, in May 2012 the FAI "Olga" Nucleus kneecapped a manager in Genoa: it is the only assault recorded to date. The gun would have been bought on the black market specifically for this attack.[18]

The FAI hit different economic, political and military targets. The variety of physical targets reflects the network's numerous enemies: political representatives and institutions at local, national and international level, diplomatic offices, military bases, law enforcement agencies and police stations, corporations, temp agencies, banks, tax collection agencies, newspaper offices, universities, immigration detention centres, and so forth.

The historical evolution of insurrectionary anarchist violence in Italy shows a clear escalation of violence, from the destruction of property to attacks against people. In particular, only a minority of the acts of violence claimed by the FAI were clearly directed toward things and inanimate objects, such as infrastructures or buildings that are empty at night (e.g. banks or universities).

Finally, with regard to victim selection, the FAI acts of violence against individuals are usually quite selective: to adopt de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca (2006)'s terminology, "selective" attacks (motivated by the specific behaviour of the victim) are less frequent than "generic" at-

[18] Alfredo Cospito, the gunman and leader of the "Olga Nucleus", wrote in a court declaration: "I bought the gun on the black market for 300 Euros" and he immediately added: "There's no need for clandestine infrastructures or huge amounts of money to arm oneself" (Cospito, 2013; see also Cospito, 2014).

tacks (based on the occupational role that the victim plays: e.g. politician, policeman, etc.), but random "indiscriminate" attacks are largely absent (see also Goodwin, 2006).

Conclusions

This paper has examined the rise of insurrectionary terrorism in Italy, a neglected topic in the literature. It has provided original evidence of the escalation of violence in the twenty- first century. In fact, in recent years, a number of clandestine groups emerged in the country, inspired in part by the thought of insurrectionary anarchist ideologues such as Alfredo Maria Bonanno. In general, this kind of violence seems to imply a deep existential dimension.

These militants have a proven record of using home-made bombs against civilian, political-diplomatic and military targets. Their tactics are relatively simple and inexpensive, involve less risk, and can cause significant damage. Insurrectionary anarchist groups have also encouraged their followers to conduct decentralized attacks, which can limit law enforcement's effectiveness (Marone, 2014, p. 25).

The most dangerous terrorist entity is the FAI, a loose network of individuals and small groups, founded in 2003. According to our original data set, this network claimed responsibility for 50 acts of violence in the 2003–2014 period. Most attacks took the form of letter bombs. These incidents provoked 10 injuries but no casualties. However, it is just a matter of coincidence that all of these acts of violence have not caused fatalities thus far. In many respects, a low level of effectiveness has been balanced by a significant level of secrecy: in other terms, these militants have not been very destructive, but at the same time they have not run great risks.[19]

The FAI has fostered contacts and relationships with foreign groups, especially in Greece. In addition, in recent years, several groups have used the FAI brand name to claim responsibility for their own attacks, in Europe and in other continents. Actually, this threat is spreading around the globe. For this reason as well, it deserves more attention.

Furthermore, these acts of violence seem to challenge some usual theories of terrorism. In particular, on one hand, the use of violence does not represent a clear political strategy, based on a cost-benefit analysis, as an "instrumental approach" to terrorism would suggest (Crenshaw, 1990). On the other hand, an "organisational approach", focused on the "internal politics" of (traditional) terrorist organisations and their self-sustaining dynamics (Crenshaw, 1988), is not very helpful to study a loosely connected network, such as the FAI, an "informal organisation" where "whoever takes part in the [network] is a militant only when preparing and carrying out an action" (FAI, 2003), unlike full-time terrorists. In this sense, the study of insurrectionary anarchist terrorism can suggest to reexamine some of the general assumptions present in the literature.

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[19] On the tradeoff between operational capacity and operational security in terrorism see, among others, Bell (1990) and McCormick and Owen (2000).

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