In its very long history, the Mediterranean region has witnessed a remarkable share of cruelties and bloodshed, ranging from warfare to slave trafficking. In its recent history, jihadist terrorism has been adding its own gruesome contribution to this sorry record of human misery and misfortune. The book hereby reviewed, published under the aegis of the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), comprises nine chapters dealing with the responses taken by State authorities on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as in the Middle Eastern region at large, in order to pursue effective counter-terrorist prevention and retaliation, i.e. "[c]ountering violent extremism (CVE)" (7).

The first chapter, penned by the book's editor, tackles the paradoxical case of Italy. Despite being an active NATO member involved in foreign military actions alongside the US and a centrally situated Mediterranean country—indeed a veritable hub for migratory fluxes and an "iconic" location of Western Christendom—Italy has experienced hardly any jihadist terrorism on its soil and has contributed far less than the other major European countries in terms of radical fighters leaving its soil in order to join rebel groups in Syria or elsewhere (13). This paradox is explained by highlighting the long experience and well-tested expertise of Italian legislators, governments, courts and security bodies with regard to both internal terrorist groups and powerful organised crime, as well as the thorough use of "lengthy surveillance operations and pre-emptive raids" in conjunction with speedy "deportations" of persons that are deemed "a threat to national security" even when the courts lack damning evidence that could warrant judicial "prosecution" (15). Vidino concludes that, despite its success, Italy's CVE approach is not designed to deal with homegrown jihadist terrorism, which might well grow in the future as the Italian Muslim community grows in numbers, and to deploy preventive measures in schools, prisons and communities where radicalisation could occur.

Vidino's concerns sound most reasonable as soon as the reader starts considering the content of the second chapter, which deals with the long history of "international religious extremism" inside Italy's western neighbour, France (24). Between the 1980s and the 2010s, the Gallic nation has suffered a remarkable number of violent attacks and contributed thousands of foreign fighters to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). For a long time, the prevalent approach by the French authorities was forcefully retaliatory, but as of the mid 2010s 'soft-power' prevention and de-radicalisation

programmes started emerging as well. Prisons, online communities, professional bodies, public administrators, civic associations, select neighbourhoods and Islamic worship centres have been targeted by a number of initiatives, both at the national and departmental levels, aimed at fostering the appreciation for the secular founding values of the French Republic, the identification of potential contexts of radicalisation, and the de-radicalisation of individuals and groups gone astray. As to "the legitimacy and effectiveness of these initiatives", it is too soon to pass judgment (31).

The third chapter offers a perplexing picture of a country that, like Italy, had an extensive counter-terrorist know-how built in its institutional history and organisations but that, like France, has suffered much more carnage and exportation of volunteer fighters to conflict zones in MENA: Spain. After the shock of the 3/11 attacks in Madrid, existing procedures were thoroughly reviewed at all levels: legislative, governmental, judiciary, of policing and intelligence. Above all, more resources were poured in, which translated into more trained individuals dealing with CVE. Also, uniquely in the international context, the shifting of public investments meant that Spain adopted "an advanced model to acknowledge the moral and political significance of the victims of terrorism and effectively protect their rights and the rights of their families in the case of dead victims, including material compensation." (46) Finally, 'soft-power' preventive measures started being implemented too as of 2012, analogously to the French case.

The fourth chapter outlines the CVE policies developed in MENA. The experiences of many countries are thus sketched very briefly and only in connection with specific issues (e.g. anti-radicalism online platforms, big-data screening, religious policies, foreign fighting, etc.). Some significant results of this comparative study are: Algeria's being the country contributing the fewest foreign fighters to the Islamic State in Syria (probably the result of Algeria's hard-nosed repression of fundamentalism during its "Black Decade", 1991—2002; 65); Tunisia's being the one contributing the most (possibly because of the relocation of Algerian extremists into that neighbouring country during the Algerian civil war); the widespread use of uncompromising, direct State intervention in the interpreting, teaching, preaching, publishing, broadcasting and financing of the Islamic religion (e.g. Saudi Arabia's proposed "reform" of the "religious curriculum" by 2030; 66); and the intentionally "ambiguous" and open-ended wording of new counter-terrorism legislation, which can help the governments of these countries target potential terrorists as well as "silence critics and

imprison activists." (67)

The following and concluding five chapters examine in finer detail the CVE measures and approaches developed in five specific countries in MENA: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. While the policies pursued in all these countries but Jordan present considerable overlaps—Jordan's uniqueness being its focus on creating a buffer zone along its border with Syria and preventing radicalism to cross it in either direction—the tone and the character of the contributions are anything but alike. The chapters about Morocco and Egypt offer an invariably dispassionate, comprehensive account of the many hard- and soft-power strategies implemented over the years, the former stressing interestingly how individual "psychological vulnerabilities" explain chiefly the radicals' "captivat[ion] by violent extremism" (89). On the contrary, the chapter about Tunisia discusses at length the social and sociological premises of this captivation, and it suggests that without concrete progress in the State's good-governance levels (e.g. reducing unemployment, improving the rule of law, transparency and accountability), radicalisation is bound to persist. Any critical spirit is, instead, absent in the chapters about Jordan and, above all, Saudi Arabia, both of which read somewhat like ministerial communiques reporting, respectively, Jordan's "foreign policy priorities" (133) and Saudi Arabia's supreme role in "upholding Islam and Islamic law, which makes it the archenemy of all radical and terrorist groups claiming to hold a monopoly over the understanding and application of Islamic law and faith." (139)

Together, all these nine chapters grant the reader an exhaustive account of the tools instituted and utilised by public authorities all over MENA and much of Southern Europe over the past two-and-a-half decades. Scholars in police and security studies, international politics and relations, and counter-terrorism are bound to find the volume of interest. The overall focus, it must be noted, is on nitty-gritty hard- and soft-power approaches implemented in each country or group of countries. Although references to colonial experiences, U.S. military interventions, and strategic interests or conflicts are sketchily present here and there in the volume, no serious geopolitical or historical aetiology of fundamentalist terrorism is to be found.