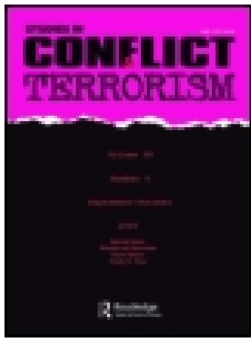

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Introduction

Bernhard Blumenau Dr & Jussi M. Hanhimäki Professor

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Introduction

Dr Bernhard Blumenau

Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV), University of St Andrews, UK

bb57@st-andrews.ac.uk

Professor Jussi M. Hanhimäki

International History, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland

jussi.hanhimaki@graduateinstitute.ch

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Throughout history, states and terrorists[1] have had an ambiguous relationship. Terrorist groups challenge states and yet often require the support from other governments to survive, retreat, train, or resupply. Then again, the modern notion of 'terror', and in fact the term itself, derive from the historical case of Maximilien de Robespierre using political violence to allegedly secure the achievements of the French Revolution during 'La Terreur' in the early 1790s. Such use of terror as a tool of nation building in the aftermath of a revolution is hardly limited to the late eighteenth century: the first decade of the Soviet Union being but one more modern example.

In other cases, states were born from situations were terror was used widely by – often self-proclaimed – freedom fighters and national liberation movements to great effect. In Algeria and Israel, for example, groups that used terrorist methods would later assume leading positions in the state that emerged from these struggles. Not all such groups were successful. Yet, the idea that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' is a notion with plenty of historical resonance with a clear linkage to the ambiguous relationship between the creation of modern nation states and the use of politically motivated (and often indiscriminate) violence as a tool for undermining or shoring up political authority and control.[2]

Then there is the loaded concept of state-sponsored terrorism. Few modern states engaged in competition and conflict with other states have shied away from using (and often disguising the use

of) strategies that meet the broad definition of terrorism. The logic is simple: by sponsoring terrorists states can counteract the interests of their enemies without resorting to the use of direct violence themselves. Such sponsorship – especially if combined with limited political oversight at home – offers the state a possibility to credibly deny any involvement in, say, assassinations or other acts of violence committed by non-state actors or armed groups. Of course, sometimes these acts either fail to produce the desired outcome or backfire.

It will be the task of this special issue to scrutinise this ambiguous relationship of terrorism and the state by looking at four case studies across Europe and the 'West' and within a period that can well be described as the Long 20th Century of Terrorism. In different ways, the contributions investigate some of the fundamental questions that overshadow the state-terrorism relationship. What happens when a terrorist (or freedom fighter) is successful and tries his hand at being a statesman? In other words: is a successful 'transition' of this sort possible or will the legacy of (successful use of) violence affect governance? In what conditions do 'sub-states' of terror emerge? Can a state co-operate with terrorists in the name of public safety (i.e. to gain information to thwart potential terrorist attacks)? How do the concerns about terrorism (and various counterterrorism measures) easily lead to the proliferation of conspiracy theories that aggravate the general public's perceptions of threat far beyond the actual existence of such threats?

The first article, by Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal, looks at late 19th and early 20th century Poland and the country's struggle for independence. The author explains the radicalism and authoritarianism of Józef Piłsudski's 'moral dictatorship' in inter-war Poland as a legacy of the terrorist pasts of important members of this regime. She argues that the individual decision makers' experiences of committing terrorist acts before assuming political office (and gaining legitimacy) is an oft-overlooked factor that contributed to the political developments in interwar Poland. The article hence demonstrates the trajectory of 'terrorists-turned-statesmen' and the ways in which a 'successful' personal history impacts to the individuals' behaviour as statesmen.

While Fischer von Weikersthal looks at how terrorism against the state influenced later episodes of the use of political violence by the state, the next article addresses the origins of sub-state Italian terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s. Andrea Chiampan investigates the role of the 'transitional space' between the political protests of the 1960s and terrorism of the 1970s. He is particularly concerned with the apparent legitimisation of political violence that, Chiampan maintains, took place on different levels - personal, local, and transnational. The process started before the Piazza Fontana bombing of December 1969, was shaped by the everyday perception of societal violence by workers and students, and was embedded in the legacy of the Italian *Resistenza* as well as the backdrop of the Cold War. Chiampan's contribution therefore offers a case study of how terrorism against the state can emerge as part of an interplay between specific national and international developments.

The next article, by Bernhard Blumenau, focuses on the relationship between the right-wing neo-Nazi Odfried Hepp and the East German Ministry for State Security (commonly known as 'Stasi') in the 1980s. Beyond the fascinating history of a specific individual, however, Blumenau is concerned with the issues pertaining to state sponsorship of terrorism. He argues that East Germany supported

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Hepp – a right-wing extremist and hence an unlikely ally for a Socialist state at first glance -- not as a Cold War tool against West Germany but mainly a source of information to help in the East German regime's counterterrorism efforts. The article shows the dynamics and stages of the relationship, the limited means of control that the Stasi eventually had to influence Hepp, and the centrality of personal relationships in this potentially very embarrassing unholy alliance. With this empirical case study based on East German documents, Blumenau thereby challenges Claire Sterling's claim of an alleged Cold War *Terror Network* controlled by Moscow.[3]

The last article, authored by Adrian Hänni, further challenges the wide-spread conspiracy theories on states and terrorism that proliferated in the last decade of the Cold War. By looking at the case of Carlos the Jackal as an alleged agent of the KGB in its quest to use terrorism as a weapon in the Cold War, Hänni argues that this myth was in fact an invention of Western intelligence agencies, used in their psychological warfare against the Soviet Union. In the Cold War context, the rumours linking Carlos to the Kremlin were eagerly seized upon by politicians, the media, and – for reasons that were probably mainly psychological – eventually Carlos himself. Hänni analyses the case of Carlos as part of a broader set of Cold War conspiracy theories, offering insights that are of relevance today, a time when conspiracy theories continue to proliferate rapidly with the help of the internet.

While the four articles are historical in nature they offer findings and insights that are useful for the study of terrorism today. The lack of historical research in Terrorism Studies has often and rightfully been lamented.[4] As Richard Jackson put it very aptly:

> Clearly, understanding any social phenomenon –[…] [such as] indeed terrorism– requires deep historical and contextual knowledge. Trying to understand terrorism without detailed knowledge of the history and context in which it emerges, or the way in which terrorism as a strategy has evolved and developed over previous centuries, can only result in surface-level forms of knowledge […].[5]

And indeed, evidence-based historical assessments are needed not only as a means in themselves, to further a better understanding of the opaque phenomenon that is terrorism and how it has changed throughout the Long 20th Century. Certainly, there is tremendous scholarly value in that alone.[6]

But these case studies presented here, and historical research on terrorism more broadly, can also serve as a resource from which further studies – empirical and theoretical – can draw. In light of the continuing use or sponsorship of terrorism *by* states and against the backdrop of the persistent challenges that terrorism poses *to* states and societies today, historical research has valuable lessons to offer for a better understanding of contemporary terrorism. Terrorism is a tactic used to gain or solidify power and as such is a phenomenon that will remain a feature of politics also in the future. The relationship between states and terrorism remains ambiguous and the fact that one of the biggest current terrorist groups calls itself a state – an Islamic State – is a case in point.

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However, a word of caution is in order. As Mark Twain supposedly said: 'History doesn't repeat itself. But it rhymes.' No historical case studies offer perfect analogies – models or warnings – to be used in designing present policy. Yet, with adequate attention to history, it is possible to discern patterns of behaviour and the outcomes such patterns have produced. As long as terrorism remains one of the foremost security challenges of *our* time, it seems to make a great deal of sense to try and understand how the phenomenon has evolved *over* time and space. By shedding some light on four episodes of terrorism and the role which the state played in them, the intention of this special issue is to make a modest contribution towards this broader goal.

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[1] This special issue will certainly not presume to be able to provide a definite answer to the ongoing debate on the ideal definition of 'terrorism'. For the purpose of this Introduction, 'terrorism' is understood to be the politically motivated use or threat of violence that is directed not just against the immediate targets but is meant to communicate with an audience beyond the primary victims of these acts. It is a tactic used to gain or solidify power. Where individual authors have alternative definitions, those will be given in the articles.

[2] For more information on these cases see for instance Martin Evans, Algeria: France's Undeclared War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Alistair Horne, A Savage War Of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962, (New York: NYRB Classics, 2006), Bruce Hoffman, Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917-1947 (New York: Knopf Publishing Group, 2015).

[3] Sterling, Claire. The Terror Network. New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1981.

[4] See for instance Duyvesteyn, Isabelle. 'How New Is the New Terrorism?' Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 27, no. 5 (September 2004): 439–54, Duyvesteyn, Isabelle. 'The Role of History and Continuity in Terrorism Research'. In Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction, edited by Ranstorp, Magnus, 51–75. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007, Ranstorp, Magnus. 'Mapping Terrorism Studies after 9/11'. In Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda, edited by Jackson, Richard, Breen Smith, Marie, and Gunning, Jeroen, 13–33. London, UK ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2009, Silke, Andrew. 'Contemporary Terrorism Studies: Issues in Research'. In Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda, edited by Jackson, Richard, Breen Smith, Marie, and Gunning, Jeroen, 34–48. London, UK ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

[5] Jackson, Richard 'The Study of Terrorism 10 Years After 9/11: Successes, Issues, Challenges', Uluslararası İlişkiler 8, no. 32 (2012), 8-9.

[6] For a selection of essays that 'historicize' terrorism in time and space see: Jussi M. Hanhimäki and Bernhard Blumenau (eds.), An International History of Terrorism; Western and Non-Western Experiences (London: Routledge, 2013).

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