



Department of Political Science
Master's Degree in International Relations

Course of Sociology of Terrorism and Political Violence

What is state terrorism? Critical terrorism studies and how they study state terrorism

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Terror becomes total when it becomes independent of all opposition; it rules supreme when nobody any longer stands in its way. If lawfulness is the essence of non-tyrannical government and lawlessness is the essence of tyranny, then terror is the essence of totalitarian domination.”

Hannah Arendt

What are critical studies?

Introduction

The metaphor of the black swan originates when Europeans, arriving in Australia, had the opportunity to sight them for the first time, after having always believed that all swans were white. A single event was enough to invalidate a belief born of a centuries-old experience. Black swans are infrequent events, of enormous impact and hypothesized only in hindsight. Although rare, the black swans of covid, climate change, war and terrorism appeared more or less simultaneously and began to deeply affect the existing relationship between politics and morality.

Politics, compared to other languages, has simultaneously strengthened and weakened. The balance of power between political power and economic power has been reversed, in favor of the former. Restrictive budget policies have been replaced by expansionary ones, in order to stimulate growth¹.

Defense spending has also increased over the last three years. The winds of war and the resurgence of the terrorist threat have pushed 23 NATO member countries to spend more than 2% of their gross domestic product on defense, bringing the average military spending of European members and Canada above the fateful 2% of gross domestic product for the first time².

This thesis has the aim to re-discuss studies on terrorism and analyse how these are conditioned by external actors with the intention of creating a "useful" discipline rather than a discipline dedicated to the search for truth.

The question that arises spontaneously is, how can terrorism, which by definition is a negative act, be useful?

¹ R. CELENTANO e T. DI NARDO *Il debito pubblico italiano e il covid-19*, Fondazione Nazionale dei Commercialisti available at the following link
https://www.fondazionenazionalecommercialisti.it/filemanager/active/01493/2021_02_05_Debito_Pubblico-a.pdf?fid=1493

² https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_226465.htm?selectedLocale=en

Terrorism has been defined as "a growth industry"³ because since 11 September 2001, conferences, courses, books but also public debate has been invaded by the topic of terrorism. Terrorism is in fact exploited by politicians in elections, and even after the elections in order to command the public opinion of the masses, it is well known that "most countries in the world have introduced new laws whilst strengthen their military and security capacity for dealing with terrorism"⁴

Terrorism is also used to create international collaborations for aid and counter-terrorism strategies, private companies sell products to defend against terrorism such as "parachutes for high-rise office workers, home chemical weapon decontamination kits, personal protection for executives, bio- terrorism vaccines"⁵.

The cultural production of media with terrorists as antagonists and protagonists grows every year, and now terrorism is also a topic to talk about with friends in non-institutional contexts. Terrorism is a transversal theme that includes all parts of society from governments to individual citizens and therefore being able to "use" studies of such a powerful topic is sought after by governments, and in fact the second aim of this thesis will be to clarify which governments have interest in directing studies on terrorism and why.

In order to understand whether the events after October 7, 2023 in the first chapter we will explain and see what the critical studies on terrorism are, in order to be able to create new bases from which to reanalyze non-state terrorists. I will review the critical literature on the subject, focusing on the author of *Leviathan*, since the state of nature hypothesized by the English philosopher Hobbes is functional to resolve our debate. I will then shift my attention to three passages in which the rights of minorities were first tolerated with the Albertine Statute of 1848, then denied with the racial laws of 1838 and finally admitted with the Constitution of 1948.

This brief digression into the Italian events of the last two centuries will favor the search for those logical-historical operators who have already demonstrated their ability to produce absolutist and despotic models. If the Great Depression stimulated isolationism, nationalism, fascism and caused the Second World War, can current terrorism, combined

³ Breen Smyth, M., Gunning, J., Jackson, R., Kassimeris, G., & Robinson, P. (2008). *Critical terrorism studies—an introduction*. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 1(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539150701868538>

⁴ Note one

⁵ Note one

with the loss of jobs, recession and the increase in public debt, trigger an antidemocratic process?

In the second chapter I will analyse non-state actors of terrorism in order to learn how to recognize their characteristics , subsequently in the third chapter we will analyse a "new", at least in the conception of terrorism by most, category of state actors of terrorism.

In the fourth chapter, on the other hand, we will deal with the case study of Israel in which a conflict involving both state actors of terrorism and non-state actors is unfolding finally instead we will draw conclusions about the situation of terrorism in the West and terrorism studies, trying to understand what are the consequences of information asymmetry that we will discover within this thesis

Chapter 1

The methods of the scientific analysis

To analyze a political phenomenon correctly and scientifically we must make use of some fundamental techniques that allow us to analyze the phenomena through the right lenses. Without these analysis techniques our analysis would be biased or incorrect, furthermore not following a methodology would empty any analysis of meaning, taking away its legitimacy.

1.1 The Aristotelian model

The claim for minority rights is a topic that has entered the public and academic debate with force, also thanks to the attention of the media. The discussion on the issues of discrimination, however, has always been the crossroads of numerous disciplines, among which the philosophical field stands out, for its millenary tradition of reflection on ethical and political issues. In classical Greece, two models fought a strenuous battle for hegemony: the democratic one, exemplarily represented by Athens, and the oligarchic one, embodied by the rival Sparta.

Yet, in democratic Athens, equality of rights was limited to citizens (*politai*) — males, natives, of free condition, excluding women, slaves and metics. Aristotle himself does not offer adequate justifications in the *Politics* to motivate the exclusion of women from public life, limiting himself apodictically to maintaining that "the male is by nature better, the female worse, the one suited to command, the other to obedience"⁶. We can deduce that the submissive condition of Athenian women was so widespread that the seriousness of the discriminatory behavior was not perceptible, to the point of passing almost unnoticed. Paradoxically, Spartan women were infinitely freer⁷.

⁶ ARISTOTELE, *Pol. I, 5, 1254b, 13-14*

⁷ CANTARELLA E. "*Libere ma non liberate, la vita delle donne a Sparta*" di Simona Maggiorelli su *Left* n. 23 del 11/06/2021 available at the following link <https://left.it/2021/06/12/eva-cantarella-libere-si-ma-non-liberate-la-vita-delle-donne-a-sparta/>

In the case of slaves, the problem is more complex. In the absence of evident physiological differences, the Aristotelian manifestation of the existence of slaves by nature⁸ encounters many difficulties.

The argument proposed by Aristotle, therefore, focuses on the diversity of value that war elevates and testifies. Defeat would be nothing other than the proof of the natural ineptitude of the vanquished, who thus reveals his nature as a potential slave. In this perspective, Aristotle evaluates as naturally just the war against men who born to obey, do not submit⁹.

But it is above all the figure of the *meteci* that raises problems. Excluded from the political community, foreign residents are not simply part of the “private” sphere of the *politai*, like women and slaves.

In the Athenian world they move together with the citizens and interact with them as equals. It was certainly not possible to theorize their natural inferiority. Thus, during the fifth century, the myths of autochthony flourish, which depict the Athenians as the only legitimate sons of the Attic land. Aristotle, however, is not satisfied with these narratives and explicitly criticizes the criterion of attributing citizenship based on descent. In his eyes, there are not enough arguments to support one model over another and the disparities between *politai* e *meteci* are attributable exclusively to the art of government, the reasons for which are contingent and convenient¹⁰.

The Nicomachean Ethics reveals Aristotle's philosophical point of view¹¹ which inextricably links the concepts of justice and equality¹², but it does not resolve the relationship between power and slavery of which the Greek philosopher was the most fervent supporter.¹³

⁸ *Slaves by nature are all men who differ from their fellow men as much as the soul differs from the body and man from the beast (and those whose task involves the use of the body are in this condition, and this is the best that can be derived from it)* ARISTOTELE, Pol. I, 5, 1254b, 16-20

⁹ ARISTOTELE, Pol. I, 8, 1256a, 24-26.

¹⁰ ARISTOTELE, Pol. III, 5, 1275b, 32-34

¹¹ “Se dunque ciò che è ingiusto è iniquo, ciò che è giusto è equo: e ciò appare a tutti anche senza ragionamento” ARISTOTELE, *Etica Nicomachea* (IV sec. a.C.), trad. it. di A. Plebe. Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1988, pp. 113-114.

¹² SCHLAVELLO A., *Principio di eguaglianza. Breve analisi a livello concettuale e filosofico - politico*, in *Ragion pratica* 14, 2000, pp. 65-79 disponibile al seguente link <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwFOoJp1x5DdHYzGvNDQxNjMtZmU1Ny00ZDg4LTbjNTgtYTA3ZDdjMjM4ZDFl/view?resourcekey=0-MTWzyu3Q3VLqf5iBV8-5Bw>

¹³ CESARANO A.I., “Call me master” chiamami padrone, pubblicato il 02/04/2021 in *Rivista di Scienze Sociali*, disponibile al seguente link

<https://www.rivistadisocietalsociali.it/call-me-master-chiamami-padrone/>

1.2 The Old Nick

Plato's utopian idealism, which identified the ideal Republic as the goal to overcome the civil war between Sparta and Athens, contrasts with Machiavelli's absolute realism, for which the State is the regulatory idea to be achieved in order to counteract the disunity of the Italian peninsula and free it from foreign domination¹⁴.

The Florentine Secretary played a fundamental role in breaking down not only the dividing wall between ethics and politics, but the very foundations of Western ethics, so much so that even today in some English universities the name of the devil is “The Old Nick”, the old Niccolò (Machiavelli).

His secular conception of politics marked a clear break with the prevailing vision of the time. But, more than anything, Machiavelli resolved the relationship between political action and moral action in these terms: "in the actions of all men, and especially of Princes, where there is no judgment to whom to appeal, one looks to the purpose.

Betraying and treacherously killing one's adversaries is not an ethical question, but a political one; and it depends on nothing other than the criterion of what is useful for acquiring and maintaining power: the aim, in fact, justifies the means¹⁵.

But if politics justifies itself only through the power it manages to justify, it is evident that the ethics of the aims cannot support and sustain the ethics of the means¹⁶.

¹⁴ DALLERI E., *Il Conflitto costituente, Da Platone a Machiavelli*. Mimesis Edizioni, Milano, 2021, pag. 11

¹⁵ LAMENDOLA F., *La « Realpolitik » di Machiavelli è il frutto dell'incertezza e della disperazione? Pubblicato su Nuova Italia Accademia Adriatica di Filosofia 8/8/2017 disponibile al seguente link <http://www.accademianuovaitalia.it/index.php/storia-e-identita/storia-militare-e-le-grandi-battaglie-navali/334-realpolitik-di-machiavelli>*

¹⁶ CASTAGNETTI P. (prefazione), *Gli occhiali di Machiavelli*, di Ezio Cartotto pag. 9

1.3 Homo Homini Lupus

Thomas Hobbes' investigation into the origin of the political structures of societies constitutes a philosophical point of reference of great importance because it brings our study closer to contemporary political science reflection. The starting point is the state of nature, that is, a condition without political superstructures, in which everyone has the freedom to use their own strength and abilities as they wish, for the protection of their own existence and therefore to do any action necessary for this purpose, without any limits whatsoever. This condition, however, leads men to compete with each other for access to resources that are extremely scarce since the absence of political superstructures does not allow the development of agriculture, industry, trade, etc.

The conflict, therefore, would be perennial and no victory could be lasting, since men have quite similar physical and intellectual characteristics and even if there are natural differences between individuals, they do not guarantee in the long term the complete and lasting hegemony of one individual over another.

This undesirable existence, characterized by the constant fear of a violent death, is well expressed by the Latin phrase *Homo Homini Lupus*.

Man, therefore, cannot help but yearn for peace and, because of this desire for harmony, decide to abandon the state of nature to found societies equipped with an administrative, legal and political structure that has the precise purpose of protecting its members, their rights and their possessions¹⁷.

1.4 All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others¹⁸

George Orwell's ferocious satire on Stalinist totalitarianism provides us with the most suitable aphorism to summarize this paragraph.

¹⁷ La politica e gli stati, a cura di Raffaella Ghirardi, Ed. 2 Carocci editore, Roma 2011, pagg. 165-174

¹⁸ ORWELL G., La fattoria degli animali, traduzione di B. Tasso, Mondadori, Milano 1995, p. 100

The idea of tolerance takes on such mobility in the modern age that it does not allow us to attribute a neutral and stable value to the concept; depending on the historical and geographical context of reference, the definitions and uses of tolerance diverge, sometimes even significantly¹⁹. I have therefore chosen to address the historical itinerary of this idea, highlighting the points of contact and rupture between the Italian constitutional texts from the pre-unification period to the present.

Before that long sequence of political and military events, culminating in the law of 17 March 1861, n. 4671, that established that “King Victor Emmanuel II assumes for himself and his successors the title of King of Italy”, the Italian territory was separated into a plurality of independent states that already included the principle of equality in their constitutional charters, although governed by absolutist regimes.

Moreover, the Napoleonic invasion had opened many constitutional laboratories in our peninsula, which lasted “not the space of a morning but twenty years”²⁰ even if the references to the principles of freedom and equality²¹ expressed in the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 were rather heterogeneous, demonstrating the indeterminacy that then prevailed on the foundation of the new political values.

The reactionary revenge marked a rapid non-application of the new constitutions or their formal abrogation, but that of the Roman Republic²² proclaimed on 3 July 1849 had the merit of being so advanced for the time, as to leave multiple legacies to the subsequent constitutional history, both Italian and European²³.

It, even going beyond the French revolutionary model, did not stop at formal equality, but, anticipating that recognition of the principle of substantial equality which constitutes

¹⁹ Il cammino della tolleranza. Storia e critica di un concetto politico dall’epoca moderna al dibattito contemporaneo Padova, 26-27 Maggio 2015. Convegno organizzato dall’Associazione Alunni della Scuola Galileiana con la collaborazione dell’Università di Padova e della Scuola Galileiana di Studi Superiori disponibile al link http://www.efmr.it/sites/default/files/call_for_papers_italiano.pdf

²⁰ FIMIANI, E.: “Le Costituzioni italiane, 1796-1984. Una sintesi storica”, in FIMIANI, E. e TOGNA, M.: *Le Costituzioni italiane, 1796-1948*, L’Aquila, Textus, 2015, 36.

²¹ *Gli uomini nascono e rimangono liberi e uguali nei diritti. Le distinzioni sociali non possono essere fondate che sull’utilità comune*” <http://www.dircost.unito.it/cs/docs/francia1789.htm>

²² <http://www.dircost.unito.it/cs/docs/romana1849.htm>

²³ BASCHERI G. “Le eredità dell’esperienza costituzionale romana del 1849” in *Rivista Associazione Italiana dei Costituzionalisti* n. 1/2020 disponibile al link <https://www.rivistaaic.it/it/rivista/ultimi-contributi-pubblicati/gianluca-bascherini/le-eredita-dell-esperienza-costituzionale-romana-del-1849>

the foundation of the current Italian Constitution, established that *"The Republic, through laws and institutions, promotes the improvement of the moral and material conditions of all citizens"*

No sign of the progressive development of equality promoted by the Roman Republic and no recognition of social rights in support of the most disadvantaged classes is present in the Albertine Statute²⁴ initially promulgated for the Kingdom of Sardinia on 4 March 1848 and extended to the whole of Italy, with the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy.

Article 24 of what remained the fundamental law of the State until 1948 affirms the equality of subjects before the law, except for the following paragraph that the laws may derogate in matters of civil and political rights and access to civil and military offices. Although equality between citizens was merely formal and suffrage significantly limited, these principles could also be modified by ordinary legislation.

1.5 The imaginary in politics

During the twenty years in which the Kingdom experienced fascism, as feared in the previous paragraph, the liberal openings that could be found in the Albertine Statute were easily erased. The *Giornale d'Italia* of July 14, 1938 published a document on Fascism and the Problems of Race, commonly known as the *"Manifesto of Race"*²⁵. Written by an anthropology assistant (Guido Landra) "on the precise instructions of Benito Mussolini", it bore the signatures of several scientists who declared, in the following years, that they were unaware of the document and totally in disagreement with its contents²⁶. The manifesto is a set of apodictic statements, such as that "The population of today's Italy is mostly of Aryan origin and its civilization is Aryan," which were in clear rupture with the cultural tradition of the country where the idea of race, as the glue of the nation, had no precedent. The

²⁴ https://www.quirinale.it/allegati_statici/costituzione/Statutoalbertino.pdf

²⁵ <http://www.osservatoriosulfascismoaroma.org/il-manifesto-della-razza-1938/>

²⁶ STRINATI V., *Gli allegri e distratti "scienziati" del razzismo italiano su Patria Indipendente n. 106 del 17 maggio 2022* <https://www.patriaindipendente.it/terza-pagina/gli-allegri-e-distratti-scientiati-del-razzismo-italiano/>

dominant cultural trends, indeed, still looked to that Roman heritage, so universalistic, that in 212 AD it had conferred Roman citizenship to all the subjects of the Empire. The historian and politician Federico Chabod helps to unravel the tangle, identifying two opposing representations of the nation - the "naturalistic" one and the "voluntarist" or "cultural" one, recognizing in the latter, the Italian one.²⁷.

The naturalistic conception has always been Germanic and has manifested its most atrocious and maximum characteristics during National Socialism, elevating to an indissoluble triad "race, community, eternity".

The sudden elevation of the race to an archetype was a sign of weakness paid by fascism to Nazism, directly proportional to the Teutonic military power compared to the Italian one. The geopolitical context characterized by the alliance with Nazi Germany, combined with a certain political and cultural weakness towards the cumbersome ally, triggered an absolutely immoral and discriminatory path culminating with the adoption of the anti-Jewish laws²⁸ that marked Italy's co-responsibility in the Holocaust, opening up an absolutely current philosophical and political debate.

The greatest Italian philosopher of the twentieth century, Benedetto Croce, tried to close the fascist experience by affirming that Italy, despite everything, had to be "respected and listened to", because, if it was certain that it had "had twenty years of a sad, shameful history", it was equally certain that it had had "centuries and millennia in which [it had] brought a great contribution to the civilization of the world, and the years in which, with the other sister nations, it flourished with an industrious and tirelessly progressive life in a perfect liberal regime, and, united with them, it sustained a long and victorious war" were not far away. And he concluded: "What is a parenthesis of twenty years in our history?".

This vision of fascism as a "parenthesis" has been the subject of numerous criticisms, also because it is in stark contrast with Croce's own conception of history, as a universal spirit capable of weaving its own webs and growing.

Leaving aside this problem, which concerns the internal coherence philosopher's thought, let's try to reread the events that brought an armed party (formed by action squads) to power, also resorting to the imagination in politics, since the violence of an abuse legitimized by political powers requires an analysis that investigates all fields of knowledge.

²⁷ CHABOD, F. *L'idea di nazione*, Bari-Roma, Laterza, 1961, spec. 58 ss.

²⁸ http://old.cdec.it/home2_2.asp?idtesto=185&idtesto1=558&son=1&figlio=877&level=2

According to anthropologist Benedict Anderson, if individuals lose their points of reference, the most frequent response is to fall back on the group they belong to, using the resources they have had since birth (language, religion, culture, nationality) to react to the crisis²⁹.

Well, the circumstances were certainly exceptional: socialist subversion threatened to respond to the Russian Revolution; continuous strikes made life impossible for the small and medium bourgeoisie; in the countryside, small and medium-sized landowners succumbed to the demands of cooperatives and unions; the *Avanti*, daily newspaper of the socialist party, conducted an anti-military campaign that primarily targeted veterans of the Great War.

For Benedict Anderson the idea of nation proceeds from a mere construction. The English historian Ernest Gellner adds that nations do not exist as such, but that it is nationalism that creates the idea of nation³⁰.

The gaze, therefore, must be shifted from individual political doctrines to what men believe to be true. When a significant number of individuals believe or want to believe that they belong to the same race, the same ethnicity, the same nation, they imagine an identity criterion that protects them to get through a particularly troubled social time.

They essentialize what they are or what they believe they are to make it the very substance of the struggle. The construction of this community will happen at the price of rejection towards the other, indeed the identity of a group is affirmed in contrast with "the marking of the otherness of another group".³¹

²⁹ ANDERSON B., *Imagined Communities. Reflecons on the Origin and Spread of Natinalism*, Verso, London 1983 trad. It. *Comunità immaginate. Origini e fortuna dei nazionalismi*, Manifestolibri, Roma 1996 pag. 27

³⁰ GELLNER E., *Nation and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1983 (trad. It. *Nazioni e nazionalismo*, Editori Riuniti 1985) pag. 8

³¹ SÉMELIN J. *Purificare e distruggere* traduzione a cura di Valeria Zini, Giulio Einaudi editore, Torino pag. 28

The methods of the scientific analysis

To analyze a political phenomenon correctly and scientifically we must make use of some fundamental techniques that allow us to see the phenomena through the right lenses. Without these analysis techniques our analysis would be biased or incorrect, furthermore not following a methodology would empty any analysis of meaning, taking away its legitimacy.

2.1 Pareto Residues Theory

Vilfredo Pareto's Theory of Residues is a theory of knowledge that distinguishes between subjective and objective phenomena, according to Pareto, objective reality exists, but humans often misinterpret it due to their biases, emotions, and ignorance.

While objective reality exists, people often misunderstand it, this misunderstanding happens because they confuse subjective beliefs or interpretations with the actual cause-effect relationships.

In scientific research, it is crucial to distinguish between actual causes (objective phenomena) and perceived or imagined causes (subjective phenomena). Researchers must critically assess whether their conclusions are based on objective reality or influenced by subjective biases.³²

Pareto's theory suggests that much of human behaviour is influenced by psychic states and emotions, even when people believe they are acting rationally but when studying social phenomena, researchers should look beyond surface explanations (like moral or religious justifications) and explore the deeper emotional or psychological motivations.

Pareto's focus on the interdependence of social phenomena means researchers should avoid simplistic cause-effect explanations, social actions and beliefs often influence each other in complex ways, and researchers should study how changes in one area (like beliefs) impact actions and vice versa.

³² Orsini, Alessandro. *Sociological Theory : From Comte to Postcolonialism* /. Cham : Springer Nature Switzerland :, 2024. Web.

Many beliefs and ideologies, while seeming logical, are based on misunderstandings of reality, scientific research, especially in sociology and psychology, must investigate these mistaken beliefs and trace how they shape real actions.

Pareto's Theory of Residues is a framework for understanding how humans misinterpret reality due to emotional, psychological, or ideological biases.

In scientific research, this theory encourages a critical analysis of subjective beliefs and their influence on human actions, highlighting the importance of focusing on objective reality while acknowledging the power of sentiments and psychic states in shaping social phenomena.

2.2 Sandra Harding

Sandra Harding examines the impact of feminist inquiry on social science, focusing on method, methodology, and epistemology, she argues against the notion of a distinct feminist method, suggesting that feminist research's strength lies in challenging traditional methodologies and transforming the analysis of gender and power, rather than simply "adding women" to existing frameworks. Harding contends that defining a feminist method is complex due to intertwined debates on method, methodology, and epistemology.

She differentiates between:

- Method, techniques for evidence gathering
- Methodology, theory on how research should proceed
- Epistemology, theory of knowledge

While feminist researchers use traditional methods, they apply them in ways that emphasize women's perspectives and critique male-dominated interpretations, feminist research, Harding argues, should not be seen as merely integrating women's experiences into existing analyses, instead, it requires a fundamental transformation in how social science is conducted.

True feminist inquiry involves reinterpreting traditional methods to address issues of gender and power highlighting that early feminist research, which focused on integrating women's contributions, often fell short by reinforcing traditional narratives.

The value of feminist research lies in its ability to challenge the assumptions of conventional social science, rather than developing new methods, she critiques the tendency to view

feminist research as focused solely on women's victimization or contributions, and stresses the importance of addressing gender as a socially constructed concept and examining power dynamics more broadly.

Feminists have also pointed the way to possible solutions to controversies about relations between knowledge and power. They have insisted on the adoption of research principles and practices that are both intellectually alert to and sensitive about what disadvantaged groups want to know. These feminist proposals are also politically and ethically more accountable to such disadvantaged groups. Feminist methodology and epistemology are thus part of the postpositivist moment. Important tendencies in this work are also part of the field of critical studies, which prioritizes “studying up”—studying the powerful, their institutions, policies, and practices instead of focusing only on those whom the powerful govern. By studying up, researchers can identify the conceptual practices of power and how they shape daily social relations. Understanding how our lives are governed not primarily by individuals but more powerfully by institutions, conceptual schemes, and their “texts,” which are seemingly far removed from our everyday lives, is crucial for designing effective projects of social transformation. Feminist researchers have insisted that their research projects have practical implications for the improvement of women’s lives. Thus they have developed the controversial notions that research itself can contribute to producing a liberatory, transformative subjectivity in an oppressed or marginalized group and that this kind of engaged research can produce knowledge that such a group desires.³³

Harding emphasizes the significance of reflexivity in feminist research, where researchers acknowledge how their identities and biases influence their work which enhances the transparency and objectivity of research, making it more rigorous and insightful.

The problem is that there are misconceptions about feminist research, including the ideas that it promotes relativism or excludes men, but that feminist research values women's perspectives not by claiming they are universally valid, but by recognizing them as essential for challenging traditional biases and also asserts that men can contribute meaningfully to feminist research.

³³ Harding, S., & Norberg, K. (2005). *New Feminist Approaches to Social Science Methodologies: An Introduction*. *Signs*, 30(4), 2009–2015. <https://doi.org/10.1086/428420>.

Harding concludes her theory by advocating for a more inclusive view of who can contribute to feminist research, emphasizing that the focus should be on the quality of research and its alignment with feminist principles, rather than solely on the gender of the researcher.

In this thesis, following Harding's teachings, we will include the point of view of a female sociologist in order to broaden our point of view

Short story of critical terrorism studies

Critical perspectives have a rich lineage through philosophy, sociology, economics, and cultural studies, showing a spectrum of epistemological considerations. Understanding the critical examination of terrorism requires acknowledging the multiplicity of critical approaches: critical inquiry isn't confined to a single methodology; instead, it encompasses various research methods and inquiries international relations, critical legal theory, sociology, criminology, humanities, feminism, Marxism, and continental philosophy. It's more accurate to refer to a "critical stance" rather than a singular "approach," given the extensive range of research conducted within the critical framework.

Critical inquiry doesn't passively accept the status quo, instead, it investigates the social and historical factors shaping the world, it acknowledges that knowledge isn't objective; rather, truth is shaped by existing power dynamics.

The critical inquiry is needed since the terrorism discourse is shaped by “taboos” that prevent serious analysis of terrorism³⁴ and these “taboos” are the result of years of building the culture of terrorism precisely, a significant step occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s, marked by the emergence of a novel style of political-theatrical violence. This era saw the advent of media-focused hijackings and hostage situations also carried out by Palestinian nationalists following the 1967 war.

We can define this period as the beginning of the terrorism idea indeed “the first American conference on terrorism was held in 1972; by 1978, twenty-nine such conferences had been held, with presentations from over 400 distinct individuals”³⁵

³⁴ Zulaika, J., and Douglass, W. A., 1996. *Terror and taboo: The follies, fables and faces of terrorism*. New York: Routledge

³⁵ Stampnitzky, L., 2013a. *Disciplining terror: How experts invented terrorism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

The first problems were about the definition of terrorists and the differences with “freedom fighters,” while now criticisms are about the tendency to reduce terrorism to a very narrow and specific set of violences, namely those conducted by non-state actors against civilians. This is because to date researchers often do not distance themselves from the interests of the governments with which they have professional and economic relationships, and so do not delve into theories that are dangerous for the government itself such as that of terrorist state actors.

For this reason, the Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) doctrine born from the original pioneers – Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth and Jeroen Gunning (citazione) - between 2005 and 2007³⁶, and has rapidly developed through numerous books, articles, conferences, research projects, and established a dedicated journal, Critical Studies on Terrorism.

This particular type of studies have been particularly productive on the analysis of the role of state terrorism within national, regional and global politics creating an alternative framework explaining where traditional terrorism doctrine failed.

The necessity of a new doctrine

A primary critique of terrorism studies is their tendency to view terrorism as an easily graspable phenomenon, amenable to clear-cut definitions. Early literature in Counter-Terrorism Studies (CTS) is particularly focused on dismantling the established norms within terrorism studies and the knowledge they produce.

Moreover, researchers in the traditional paradigm often lack the critical distance necessary to scrutinize governmental or think tank agendas objectively.

Additionally, methodological limitations plague much of the research associated with terrorism studies. This is exacerbated by the prioritization of policy-relevant knowledge as the predominant measure of academic legitimacy in the field.

Today various theories added new points of view to the orthodox doctrine of studies on terrorism, creating various line of thinking even if researchers such as Gordon wrote that

³⁶ Jackson, R., 2007. “The Core Commitments of Critical Terrorism Studies”, *European Political Science*, 6(3): 244–251

early fragmentation of research on terrorism has prevented – and will most likely continue to prevent – the development of a truly scientific discipline³⁷

Post-structuralism and constructivism added to critical terrorism studies their rejection of the notion that "terrorist" and "terrorism" are objective categories inherent to the world, giving the capacity to explain the paradox whereby terrorism kills less people per year than "accident-causing deer"³⁸, and yet simultaneously generates a global war on terror and the expenditure of trillions of dollars.

Another important theory used in the study of terrorism is historical materialism that is one of the earliest approaches to critical terrorism studies (CTS)³⁹ this methodology works as if history is shaped not solely by impersonal structures and forces, but by individual people/tangible actors, and these individuals act in ways that extend beyond mere discourse. They engage in tangible actions such as hijacking planes and operating assassin drones, actions that are not merely forms of speech. Human agents exhibit creativity and novelty in all their endeavours, making their actions resistant to capture by abstract laws or predictable outcomes based solely on social positions.

The key feature of the historical materialist approach lies in the differentiation between how actors articulate themselves, their circumstances and the perspective.

Hülse and Spencer, sustain that "if terrorism is a social construction, the terrorist itself can no longer be the primary source for terrorism scholars. The terrorist is a consequence of discourse rather than vice versa"⁴⁰

Also, Wight wrote that "the terrorism of non-state actors is intimately bound up with the modern nation state and the reason for the existence of hundred or so different definitions of terrorism, is the reflection of the strong interests' governments have to define terrorism"⁴¹.

³⁷ Gordon, A., 2010. "Can terrorism become a scientific discipline? A diagnostic study." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3:437–458

³⁸ Mueller, J., 2006. *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them*, New York: Free Press

³⁹ Jackson, R. L. (2016). Introduction: a decade of critical terrorism studies. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 17–30). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315813462-7>

⁴⁰ Hülse, R., and Spencer, A., 2008. "The Metaphor of Terror: Terrorism Studies and the Constructivist Turn", *Security Dialogue*, 39(6): 571–592

⁴¹ Wight, C., 2015. *Rethinking Terrorism: Terrorism, Violence and the State*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan

This last sentence is relevant since points out an interest from government in certain definition of terrorism, that couldn't be discovered without moving over the orthodox discipline.

The methodological stance a researcher takes, along with the methods they employ, holds political significance, because methodology is “applied philosophy”⁴² supporting certain projects while undermining others. Researchers must genuinely consider the value commitments they adopt, as there's no inherent basis for recommending one stance over another. Each choice and its resulting methodological stance carries political implications, which should be explicitly addressed in the research but today the most developed methodologies in critical studies on terrorism are: neo-positivism, critical realism, relationalism, and reflexivity.

3.1 Neo-positivist methodology

There is a great number of articles published in the journal for CTS work from a neo-positivist methodological perspective⁴³ demonstrating how relevant it is.

In this methodology the social “scientific” political knowledge is “immune from politics, values, and subjective bias”⁴⁴ because has its foundations on the scientific method intended as statistics, surveys and data.

From a neo-positivist perspective, methods of data analysis focus on clearly defining and measuring variables, testing hypothetical relations of correlation and linear causation between variables for an objective analysis but these studies are nonetheless noteworthy for their lack of reflexivity. They overlook the researcher's context and how unique circumstances, histories, and personal backgrounds may have influenced both the research process and its findings.

⁴² Schwartz-Shea, P., and Yanow, D., 2012. *Interpretive Research Design*, New York: Routledge

⁴³ Herring, E., and Stokes, D., 2011. “Critical Realism and Historical Materialism as Resources for Critical Terrorism Studies,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 4: 5–21

⁴⁴ Hawkesworth, M., 2006. “Contending Conceptions of Science and Politics: Methodology and the Constitution of the Political,” in Yanow, D., and Schwartz-Shea, P., eds., *Interpretation and Method*, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe

3.2 Critical realist methodology

Critical realism (CR) as neo-positivism tries to claim reality, but with a different methodology. The differences are about the different assumptions that neo-positivists and Critical Realism make in regard to how knowledge can be generated: for CR “there is more to reality than direct causal relations between events – there are unrealized causal powers... [and] realized causal powers” that are operating “even if we are not aware of [their] patterns of operation or why those patterns exist”⁴⁵.

In the Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) field this entails that, a Critical Realist (CR) analysis should critique the discourse surrounding terrorism, including that which emanates from state security agencies and the media. Furthermore, it necessitates researchers to disclose the "extra-discursive structures" that both produce and engage with this discourse on terrorism, such as the exclusions and marginalized identities engendered by the implementation of counterterrorist policies⁴⁶.

This disclosing is fulfilled largely through a “dialectical oscillation”⁴⁷ between empirical observations and transcendental arguments.

CR arguments about terrorism exhibit oscillation in two ways. Firstly, an observation is made regarding individuals engaging in violent behavior towards each other. Secondly, a claim is posited regarding specific types of violence possessing distinct material characteristics, which are historically contingent yet relatively stable.

One of the most used method in the CTS is the Critical discourse analysis (CDA), which start from 2 assumption:

- Words make war possible: Threats and crises are products of social construction, rather than objective truths. The execution of the War on Terror would have been

⁴⁵ Herring, E., and Stokes, D., 2011. “Critical Realism and Historical Materialism as Resources for Critical Terrorism Studies,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*

⁴⁶ Joseph, J., 2009. “Critical of What? Terrorism and its Study,” *International Relations*, 23: 93–98

⁴⁷ Jackson, R., 2011. “In Defence of ‘Terrorism’: Finding a Way Through a Forest of Misconceptions,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 3: 116–130

unattainable without the discursive framing of terrorism as the predominant and dire global menace.

- War in turn makes meanings: The actions carried out by the coalition during the War on Terror have served a purpose, solidifying the identities of "Western" states as righteous and lawful in contrast to the perceived threat posed by the uncivilized other.

Joseph J, a famous critical realist researcher, used CDA to analyse the "UK anti-terrorism policy document CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism" and its implementation.

He observed that this document constructed "subjectivity in a certain way and its material implementation had negative consequences on Muslims in the UK, such as limiting the availability of public subjectivities for Muslims and framing Muslims as instrumentally valuable to government security operations"⁴⁸

Another relevant method is process tracing, especially when combined with a theoretical resource like historical materialism (HM) : researchers who integrate a Critical Realism (CR) perspective with Historical Materialism (HM) and employ methods such as process tracing may, for instance, conceptualize terrorism as a tool of state control aimed at marginalized populations (Maher and Thomson, 2015), or as a collection of "coercive tools" wielded by liberal democracies (Blakeley, 2009)⁴⁹. In this interpretation, terrorism is perceived less as an entity with independent existence (as viewed in neo-positivism), and more as a deliberate tactic utilized by the influential to exert power over the vulnerable.

This viewpoint could, for instance, centre on terrorism as a tool of capitalist class dominance, as demonstrated by Maher and Thomson⁵⁰. Their approach involves a thorough examination of a specific case study within Colombia, employing detailed process-tracing to offer a class-oriented interpretation of violent efforts to challenge and uphold political

⁴⁸ Joseph, J., 2015. "Reading Documents in their Wider Context: Foucauldian and Realist Approaches to Terrorism Discourse," in Dixit, P., and Stump, J., eds., *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, New York: Routledge

⁴⁹ Blakeley, R., 2009. *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism*, New York: Routledge.

⁵⁰ Maher, D., and Thomson, A., 2015. "Applying Marxism to Critical Terrorism Studies: Analysis through a Historical Materialist Lens," in Dixit, P., and Stump, J., eds., *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, New York: Routledge

and economic systems. By elucidating the connections between terrorism and capitalism, they illustrate how state-sponsored terrorism aimed at impoverished and working-class populations has facilitated opportunities for both domestic and international capital to flourish.

In short, a CR methodology approaches data in a variety of ways, from existing a priori to being politically and situationally created.⁵¹

3.3 Relational methodology

While neo-positivists and critical realists subscribe to a dualist ontology, which begins with a clear subject-object differentiation, a relational methodology challenges or disregards this dualism entirely. Opting for a relational methodology allows researchers to perceive individuals in action (rather than agency) and their inherent social connections (as opposed to structure) as two facets of a unified process of mutual interdependence.

In essence, a relational methodology contends that an act categorized as "terrorism" gains validation not through a predefined set of consistently occurring and historically contingent material traits interpreted by researchers, instead, its validation stems from the practical and effective designation of the act as "terrorism" and the subsequent response justified by that designation.

In this methodology discursive processes are conceptualized as constitutive of objects, subjects, states, the economy, terrorists, citizens, and all data gathered by researchers to produce terrorism knowledge are historically situated and informed by cultural values and power relations: data are not given in certain circumstances, in other words, but "created"⁵². From a relational standpoint, terrorists and terrorism are perceived as ideal-typical interpretive practices. These practices serve as sensitizing tools utilized by researchers to render specific experiences or observable occurrences comprehensible, as well as by various actors in different contexts deemed significant by researchers.

Viewing terrorists and terrorism as interpretive practices implies that researchers must reflexively recognize these practices as instruments employed to generate knowledge

⁵¹ Jackson, R. 2016. *The emergence of terrorism studies as a field* Lisa Stampnitzky. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 33–43). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315813462-9>

⁵² Schwartz-Shea, P., and Yanow, D., 2012. *Interpretive Research Design*, New York: Routledge

concerning discourses on terrorism and security, while the researchers should study “how articulations of terrorism are concretely used by interpretive communities to produce some effect, especially in terms of boundary-making,” identity formation, and policy legitimization⁵³

In this manner, both the state and the terrorist are not merely predetermined entities existing and operating relatively independently in the world. Instead, they are perceived as ongoing processes continually shaped and maintained through actively sustained relations of mutual interdependence without the possibility to escape the circle.

3.4 Reflexivism

A reflexivist perspective is committed to a monistic ontology that transcends both objectivism and subjectivism⁵⁴

Knowledge is seen as transcending experience, both experiential and empirical and also a political “device for increasing awareness”⁵⁵

Data emerge through the formulation of a research question and the actions taken within the particular context that influence this framing. These actions encompass not only the broader scholarly discourse but also historical trends that intertwine with the researcher and their study.

The research process, including writing, serves as a tool to heighten the awareness of a given audience regarding the political, economic, and social dominance affecting either themselves or others.

A reflexive methodology that could be aimed to make visible the gendered and nationalistic inequalities was used by Ryan⁵⁶ by locating the silenced voices and experiences of Palestinian women who were caught up in the conflict with Israel. The aim was to shed light

⁵³ Stump, J., and Dixit, P., 2011. “Toward a Completely Constructivist Critical Terrorism Studies,” *International Relations*, 26: 199–217

⁵⁴ Hamati-Ataya, I., 2014. “Transcending Objectivism, Subjectivism, and the Knowledge In-Between: The Subject In/Of ‘Strong Reflexivity’,” *Review of International Studies*, 40: 153–175

⁵⁵ Jackson, R., 2011. “In Defence of ‘Terrorism’: Finding a Way Through a Forest of Misconceptions,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 3: 116–130.

⁵⁶ Ryan, C., 2015. “‘Why Does the World Think We Are The Terrorists? We Are Not the Terrorists!’ Using a Reflexive Postcolonial

on these disparities, for a potential international audience to reassess and possibly redefine these distinctions in the future.

The difficulties of a “scientific” theory

Studying terrorism, whether critically or otherwise, does not offer an Archimedean point, thus relinquishing the pursuit of unchallengeable foundations can prove beneficial.

Neo-positivist methodology for example overlooks critical aspects of the political landscape inherent in terrorism studies, such as state centrism, national distinctions, the absence of human perspective, and still have a significant presence in the Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) journal which may raise concerns about perpetuating status quo patterns of thinking. Critical Realism (CR) methodologies on the other hand, have played a central role in shaping the evolution of CTS and refining CR's clarity can enhance the methodological position, while supplying an alternative to the neo-positivist methodology

Relational and reflexivist approaches have been relatively underrepresented in the critical examination of terrorism. Due to their philosophical underpinnings and the type of insights they offer, relational and reflexivist methodologies present potentially the most radical perspectives within CTS. Therefore, further exploration of these methodologies is warranted.

Chapter 2

Non-state actors of terrorism

*Terrorism: the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act.*⁵⁷

- Oxford Dictionary

In the second chapter of this thesis, we will proceed to investigate the definition of non-state terrorism, that is, the type of terrorism carried out by actors independent of states as organizations.

This type of terrorists is the most familiar to the public because it is marked by planned and unplanned violent attacks directed at masses with the goal of achieving a political outcome and triggering panic.

To do this, we will divide the figure of the terrorist into three parts, the pragmatic, legal and spiritual. In the first we will strive to distinguish the terrorist from individuals who carry out similar forms of violence by listing the differences, in the second we will see how over time the figure of the terrorist has been seen in the legal context, becoming in a very short time one of the categories most subject to legal debate, and finally we will analyse how the terrorist sees himself from the most human and ideological side through the DRIA model

The political definition of non-state terrorism

Bruce Hoffman has a role at Georgetown University, CIA, CFR, has studied for decades in terrorism and insurgency, is the co-founder of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism, wrote

⁵⁷ *Terrorism Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced American Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com, n.d*

"Inside Terrorism" and other seminal works, and for many is the father of the definition of terrorism.

He observed that the term terrorism changed through years, in the 18th Century has its origin, and it was the state-sponsored terror during the French Revolution, then in the 19th-20th Century, because of the rise of non-state actors, focused on political change and independence while in the mid-20th Century it was associated to decolonization movements and nationalist groups labelled as terrorists. In the late 20th Century, it became what is known today so the globalization of terrorism related with the emergence of religious and ideological motivations, but the definition of terrorism is ever changing, indeed now thanks to the rise of cyber-terrorism and digital radicalization, is getting a broader definition.

Bruce Hoffman tries to describe what terrorism means, not without difficulty, in an act that implies the notion of power and the notion of violence aimed at obtaining a political result:

*"Terrorism is ineluctably about power: the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power, and the use of power to achieve political change. Terrorism is thus violence—or, equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim. With this vital point clearly illuminated, one can appreciate the significance of the additional definition of "terrorist" provided by the OED: "Any one who attempts to further his views by a system of coercive intimidation." This point is especially noteworthy since it underscores clearly the other fundamental characteristic of terrorism: that it is a planned, calculated, and indeed systematic act. Finally, implicit in the OED's definition is the long-standing, normative understanding of terrorism as a phenomenon of political violence perpetrated by individuals (e.g., "any one who attempts ..." rather than "any government" or "any state that attempts ...") belonging to an organization or ideological movement dedicated to revolutionary change—change that they fervently believed can only be effected through violence or the threat of violence (e.g., coercive intimidation). Given this relatively straightforward elucidation, why, then, is terrorism so difficult to define? The most compelling reason perhaps is because the meaning of the term has changed so frequently over the past two hundred-plus years."*⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism (REV-Revised, 2)*. Columbia University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hoff12698>

Non-state actor terrorism is in its classic definition, are very similar to guerrillas and insurgents, ordinary criminals, and lunatic assassins, so Hoffman analysed the differences in the aim of defining the real meaning of no state actors of terrorism.

1.1 Guerrillas and Insurgents

Guerrillas and Insurgents share the same tactics with terrorism i.e., assassination, kidnapping, bombing of public gathering places, hostage-taking and even the same targets, intimidating, coercing, influencing behavior through instilling fear, finally, terrorists as well as guerrillas and insurgents do not wear uniforms or identify insignia and are indistinguishable from noncombatants.⁵⁹

The real differences are in the number of fighters and in the fact that although they share the same objectives, often those of guerrillas or insurgents are broader, such as conquering territory.

For Bruce Hoffman, the definition of guerrillas and insurgents is:

“Guerrilla,” for example, in its most widely accepted usage, is taken to refer to a numerically larger group of armed individuals who operate as a military unit, attack enemy military forces, and seize and hold territory (even if only ephemerally during daylight hours), while also exercising some form of sovereignty or control over a defined geographical area and its population. As Laqueur noted, “The distinction is of more than academic importance; there have been guerrilla units of ten thousand men and women but an urban terrorist unit seldom, if ever, comprises more than a few people and urban terrorist ‘movements’ rarely consist of more than a few hundred members.”

“Insurgents” share these same characteristics; however, their strategy and operations transcend hit-and-run attacks to embrace what in the past has variously been called “revolutionary guerrilla warfare,” “modern revolutionary warfare,” or “people’s war” but is today commonly termed “insurgency.” Thus, in addition to the irregular military tactics that characterize guerrilla operations, insurgencies typically involve coordinated informational (e.g., propaganda) and psychological warfare efforts designed to mobilize popular support in a struggle against an established national government, imperialist power, or foreign occupying force. Terrorists, however, do not function in the open as armed units, generally do not attempt to seize or hold territory, deliberately avoid engaging enemy military forces in combat, are constrained both

⁵⁹ Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism (REV-Revised, 2)*. Columbia University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hoff12698>

*numerically and logistically from undertaking concerted mass political mobilization efforts, and exercise no direct control or governance over a populace at either the local or the national level.*⁶⁰

The real differences are in their strategy and operations, which transcend hit-and-run, and are labelled as “insurgency”, but also in the irregular military tactics typical of guerrilla, coordinated informational warfare known as propaganda and psychological warfare.

1.2 Criminals

In his analysis, Hoffman also compares terrorists to criminals, but the differences are broader because criminals don’t convey messages, nor do they mean to have any effect beyond the incident itself or the immediate victim. The main point is that the criminal doesn’t concern about public opinion, which is the focus of terrorism, indeed, the terrorist wants to change the system for a political goal. The terrorist is basically an altruist in his point of view, wanting to “help” society reach a utopian society.

1.3 Lunatic Assassins

There is also a distinction between lunatic assassins and terrorists, starting with the motivations, Lunatic assassins act on deeply personal, idiosyncratic motivations. Their actions are egocentric, driven by personal obsessions or mental illness. They seek personal recognition or fulfilment, as seen in Mark David Chapman’s assassination of John Lennon, motivated by a personal obsession, while terrorists are driven by ideological convictions and collective goals. Their motivations are rooted in a desire to effect systemic change, addressing perceived injustices. For example, al-Qaeda’s 9/11 attacks aimed to alter U.S. foreign policy.

Lunatic assassins’ objectives are personal, seeking recognition or psychological fulfillment rather than systemic change. Targets are chosen based on personal fixations, like Charles J. Guiteau’s assassination of President Garfield due to personal grievances.

⁶⁰ Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism (REV-Revised, 2)*. Columbia University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hoff12698>

On the other hand, terrorists aim to disrupt or overthrow existing systems, seeking political, social, or religious change. Their actions are strategic, aiming to influence policies or garner attention for their cause, such as the IRA's bombings for Irish independence.

In the end, Lunatic Assassins are isolated individuals with self-centered worldviews, disconnected from a broader context; their unpredictable behavior comes from personal psychological issues or delusions.

Terrorists operate within a collective framework, driven by shared ideologies. Their actions are organized and systematic, rooted in a collective justification for their violence. government policies.

1.4 The characteristics of terrorism:

Bruce Hoffman list the characteristic that are needed to define a terrorist:

"By distinguishing terrorists from other types of criminals and irregular fighters and terrorism from other forms of crime and irregular warfare, we come to appreciate that terrorism is:

- *ineluctably political in aims and motives;*
- *violent—or, equally important, threatens violence;*
- *designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target;*

conducted either by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia) or by individuals or a small collection of individuals influenced, motivated, or inspired by the ideological aims or example of some existent terrorist movement or its leaders, or both;

*perpetrated by a subnational group or nonstate entity."*⁶¹

Terrorism is in the end the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change, designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little.

Martha Crenshaw's psychological analyses

⁶¹ Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism (REV-Revised, 2)*. Columbia University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hoff12698>

Martha Crenshaw is a Professor Emerita at Stanford University and a senior fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation, her work primarily focuses on the political, social, and psychological aspects of terrorism and insurgency.

She is a prominent scholar in the field of political science, specializing in terrorism and political violence significantly shaping our understanding of the causes and dynamics of terrorism.

Martha Crenshaw is famous for her publications like, "Terrorism in Context" (1995), co-edited with James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, offering a collection of essays on various aspects of terrorism, including case studies and theoretical analyses, "Theories of Terrorism: An Introduction" (2007): This work provides an overview of the major theoretical approaches to understanding terrorism, including psychological, sociological, and "Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes, and Consequences" (2011): In which synthesizes various theories and empirical studies to offer a comprehensive overview of what drives individuals and groups to engage in terrorism.

2.1 Major Findings and Theories

1. **Contextual Analysis:** One of Crenshaw's major contributions is her emphasis on the importance of context in understanding terrorism. She finds that terrorism cannot be understood in isolation but must be analyzed within the specific political and social environments in which it occurs.
2. **Psychological and Social Factors:** Crenshaw highlights the psychological and social dimensions of terrorism, suggesting that personal grievances, social alienation, and identity issues play a crucial role in motivating individuals to join terrorist groups.
3. **Political Grievances:** She has explored how political grievances and the perceived lack of legitimate avenues for political expression can drive individuals or groups toward terrorism. Crenshaw's research often focuses on how political repression, conflicts, and the absence of effective political institutions contribute to the emergence of terrorist movements.
4. **Organizational Dynamics:** Crenshaw also examines the internal dynamics of terrorist organizations, including their structures, strategies, and the role of

leadership. She argues that understanding these organizational aspects is key to comprehending how terrorist groups operate and evolve.

5. **Counterterrorism Implications:** Her work has significant implications for counterterrorism strategies, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches that address the underlying grievances and conditions that foster terrorism rather than relying solely on punitive measures.

Martha Crenshaw's research has had a profound impact on the field of terrorism studies, providing valuable insights into the causes, processes, and consequences of terrorism. Her work continues to influence both academic scholarship and practical policy approaches in the realm of counterterrorism.

2.2 The psychological terrorism

“What is it like to be a terrorist and why should anyone want to be one? It is easy to dismiss terrorists as mad fanatics, but in fact they need to be level headed to cope with long periods of meticulous planning in between bouts of violent activity. It is fascinating to gain some insight into the mindset of terrorists, especially those so completely convinced of their cause to act as suicide bombers. And what about those unfortunate enough to be victims of terrorism? Being bombed or held hostage by terrorists is the stuff of nightmares, but the legacy of dread after the ordeal can be even worse”⁶²

Constructing blanket psychological explanations for terrorists is challenging due to the diversity of terrorist motivations and campaigns, but certain psychological aspects can be examined, such as reasons for joining, group dynamics, belief strength, operational psychology, and justifications for violence.

Contrary to popular belief, terrorists often have normal psychological profiles and are not typically mentally ill or predisposed to violence, indeed terrorist groups usually avoid recruiting unstable individuals, as they could jeopardize the group's security, the majority of terrorists are committed individuals driven by strong beliefs, not cowardice or abnormality.

⁶² Crenshaw, M. and Pimlott, J. (2019) *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*. 1st edn. Routledge. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1493272> (Accessed: 25 August 2024).

“Nationalism as a motive is often reinforced by religion. In Sri Lanka, Hindu Tamils fight against the majority Buddhist Sinhalese; in Northern Ireland, the IRA represents a Catholic nationalism fighting against Protestant loyalists; and in Bosnia, Catholic Croats, Muslim Bosnians, and Orthodox Serbs are the three competing parties.”⁶³

The reasons for joining a terrorist group, often rooted in a desire for belonging, can shape a terrorist's effectiveness and behaviour, nationalism is a powerful motivator for terrorism, as seen in groups like the Tamil Tigers⁶⁴ or Palestinian militants, where the fight for a homeland is intensified by political or social repression. Nationalism can also be intertwined with religion, particularly in the Middle East, leading to extreme acts like suicide bombings. In particular Martha finds three different aspects of the psychology of a terrorist, the reasons behind joining a terrorist group, the creation of a subculture and the dehumanization of the enemy:

- **The reasons:** Not all terrorists are driven by nationalism or religion; some are motivated by political causes or a need to belong, finding purpose and identity within the group, terrorist organizations are complex, with various roles beyond just those who commit violence indeed justification of violence within terrorist groups often occurs gradually. Emotional dependency on the group and intellectual agreement with its aims can lead individuals to accept violence, replacing feelings of futility with a sense of purpose and control and factors like excitement, stress, and aggression can become significant motivations, particularly after joining the group.
- **The subculture:** Terrorist groups create a counterculture with their own norms, demanding total obedience and isolating members from society fostering uniformity and a deep sense of belonging, often leaving members with no alternatives and a fear of abandonment. However, this strong group identity can lead to problems: authorities can exploit the individual's fear of isolation by offering an escape route, causing loyalty to waver; the group may become self-perpetuating, prioritizing its

⁶³ *Ibidem*

⁶⁴ *Country Reports on Terrorism 2017 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.* (2024, February 12). Refworld. <https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/usdos/2018/en/121953>

survival over its original political aims, and rejecting compromise to maintain purity and may become increasingly authoritarian, suppressing dissent and causing violent internal feuds when members try to leave.

- **The dehumanization of the enemy:** Terrorists justify their actions by dehumanizing victims and associating them with the enemy, thus reducing personal guilt. The group dynamic removes individual responsibility, transforming terrorists into mere "foot soldiers" of a larger cause. Ultimately, two key factors define a terrorist's mindset: strong motivation, reinforced by the group's support, and the ability to detach from the guilt of their violent actions.

"But this very cohesion and obedience of the group can cause its own problems. The first is that authorities trying to break up terrorist groups can offer the individual a positive route of escape. Once an alternative is shown to the attraction of belonging to a terrorist group, the terrorist may lose all loyalty. A second problem is that groups tend to be self-perpetuating. The group and its survival become paramount; its aims become less so. Ultimately, violence may become an end in itself. Ironically, the achievement of political aims may actually be unpopular, because their achievement will result in the destruction of the group. The tendency is to reject any "compromise," and for the group to become ever more purist, and to use more absolutist rhetoric.

A third problem is that terrorist groups tend to become very authoritarian, even when their political aims ostensibly may be libertarian, and they clamp down hard on dissent. When members wish to leave, there can be furious internal feuds. If the individuals who leave set up similar but rival organizations, they may compete furiously and violently with the established group, claiming a greater degree of ideological purity for themselves.

The final problem is the way terrorists justify the horror that they inflict on others, especially on those who seem innocent. The sense of exclusiveness explains much of this.

The group filters all news of external events that reaches its members, putting an interpretation on such events that emphasizes the evils of the enemy”⁶⁵

Martha detects four main problems with cohesion and obedience within terrorist groups can create significant problems:

- When authorities offer a positive alternative, individuals may abandon the group, undermining loyalty
- These groups often prioritize their survival over their original goals, leading to a cycle of violence that becomes an end in itself. They may reject compromise and adopt more extreme rhetoric as achieving their political aims could threaten the group's existence.
- Despite libertarian ideals, terrorist groups often become authoritarian, harshly punishing dissent and leading to internal conflicts when members try to leave. These disputes can result in the formation of rival factions, each claiming greater ideological purity and often resorting to violence against one another.
- Terrorists justify their actions by dehumanizing victims and filtering information to reinforce the group's narrative. This detachment from personal responsibility is heightened by group dynamics, which diminish individual guilt and bolster a sense of collective purpose.

Terrorists are typically driven by strong motivations, reinforced by their close-knit groups that help them rationalize their actions. They often see themselves as part of a historical process, inspired by figures like Nelson Mandela or Fidel Castro, who were once labeled criminals but later celebrated as national heroes. This belief in eventual vindication fuels their willingness to commit violence.

⁶⁵ Crenshaw, M. and Pimlott, J. (2019) *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*. 1st edn. Routledge. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/1493272> (Accessed: 25 August 2024)

The European terrorism

Before 2000, Europe saw two major forms of terrorism: Red Terrorism and Black Terrorism. Red Terrorism, led by groups like the Red Brigades and Prima Linea, aimed to overthrow capitalist governments and establish communist regimes. They targeted politicians, law enforcement, and intellectuals to ignite insurrection. The 1978 kidnapping and murder of Italian politician Aldo Moro marked their peak and decline as state crackdowns intensified. Black Terrorism, driven by neo-fascist groups like Ordine Nuovo, used indiscriminate violence, such as the 1980 Bologna bombing that killed 85. Their strategy of tension sought to destabilize democracies and provoke authoritarian responses. Both forms failed to achieve their goals, as European democracies resisted these violent movements.

The red terrorism

The main organizations of red terrorism were the BR and Prima Linea. By striking symbolic targets, in addition to intimidating or eliminating those they see as their "enemies" (law enforcement, magistrates, intellectuals, politicians, industrialists), red terrorism wanted to undermine the foundations of the state and present itself as the "armed vanguard" of the proletariat, creating the conditions for an armed insurrection and the establishment of a communist regime. The kidnapping of Aldo Moro marked the highest moment and, at the same time, the beginning of the process of decline of the Red Brigades: the effective reaction of the State, the first internal divisions within the organization, the arrests and trials but, above all, the new phenomenon of repentance, were among the factors that contributed to the dissolution of the organization. The President of the Christian Democrats, Aldo Moro, was killed following the refusal of the State to negotiate with the brigades who had kidnapped him. Moro at that time was the protagonist, together with Enrico Berlinguer – leader of the largest communist party in the West – of the historic compromise, the solution that should have put an end to the continuous attacks by creating an agreement, a sort of political truce, between the two largest parties. In such a climate of

tension, the Italian Parliament responded to the terrorist attack with a series of measures. The first⁶⁶ was the establishment of special prisons for "the most dangerous prisoners". The assignment and transfer took place at the total discretion of the prison administration and depended on the conduct of the prisoner and the nature of the crime committed. Moreover, there was no control by the surveillance judge. The second measure was the so-called Law of Denunciation of Lease⁶⁷: approved a few days after Moro's kidnapping, which required anyone who sold the property of a property, or rented it for a period of more than a month, to notify the public security authority. In this way, an attempt was made to counter the use of rented apartments as dens for terrorism. The third disruptive legislative provision was the Cossiga Law, named after the then Minister of the Interior. With this legislation, among other things, the maximum period of preventive detention was extended by a third at each stage of the trial, the search was allowed in cases of emergency even without the mandate of the competent magistrate and repentance was encouraged with significant sentence reductions for those who collaborated with justice.

Meanwhile, a more serene political climate did not reign in Europe. In 1981 the extreme left-wing terrorist Cesare Battisti found refuge in France. During the Council of Ministers of November 10, 1982, the French socialist president approved a law according to which France would reserve the right to evaluate the possibility of not extraditing citizens who are the authors of unacceptable crimes in the case of requests made by countries "whose judicial system does not correspond to Paris' idea of freedoms." The body of this legislation has gone down in history as the Mitterrand doctrine. For almost twenty years, French governments have not understood, or have pretended not to understand, the dynamics of the years of lead in Italy, acting with shrewdness and little transparency. Battisti's was the most striking case, but not the only one, of a former terrorist who fled abroad. There are still about 50 former terrorists around the world⁶⁸. The President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella, in welcoming the news of the arrest of Cesare Battisti, in addition to the satisfaction for the capture of a convict, added that he hopes that the bill with justice will also be paid by all the fugitives who have fled abroad⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ Ministerial Decree 450 of 12 May 1977

⁶⁷ DL 59 converted by Law No. 191 of 18 May 1978

⁶⁸ https://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/mondo/ancora-70-latitanti-italiani-nel-mondo-tra-loro-50-sono-ex-terroristi_3185424-201902a.shtml

⁶⁹ https://www.repubblica.it/editoriali/2021/05/08/news/mattarella_terrorismo_latitanti-301710339/

The black terrorism

The main organizations of black terrorism were Ordine Nuovo and Nar. The strategy of black terrorism has been, predominantly, that of mass murder, that is, the violent killing of a large number of ordinary citizens. The strategy of tension does not hit the enemy, real or presumed, but those who find themselves by pure chance on that train, in that waiting room, in a square. The massacre of the innocent is only a means of indirectly striking an enemy that only the terrorist knows who he is and where he is.⁷⁰

The strategy of tension reached its peak in Italy with the very high potential bomb exploded in the Bologna station on August 2, 1980, which caused eighty-five deaths and two hundred wounded.

The sentence, confirming the neo-fascist matrix, also identified the objectives underlying the strategy of tension: to conduct an attack on democratic institutions and the conquests obtained by popular forces to favor a subversive, authoritarian, anti-democratic design.

The destabilizing effect of both black and red political-ideological terrorism, however, was nil. Alberto Moravia, two days after the Bologna massacre, wrote that political education, almost sentimental, has taken root. Italians, like many other peoples, at least in Europe, see, reflect, and no longer allow themselves to be destabilized either individually or collectively.⁷¹

Yet, the risk of falling into misunderstandings, when we talk about the terrorist massacre in Italy, remains high. According to Ferarresi⁷², two possible definitions and uses of the phrase strategy of tension can be identified:

- the maximalist interpretation that has belonged to certain strands of the left and that sees a sort of universal conspiracy managed by the "grand old man", which passes through different possible scans that are the plan of capital, the imperialist state of the multinationals;
- the "minimalist" interpretation according to which the strategy of tension has never existed and is the invention of some left-wing magistrates who have tried to see, in

⁷⁰ N. Bobbio, *La democrazia violentata*, in «Nuova Antologia», 129, 1994, pp. 253–254

⁷¹ A. Moravia, *Ma il popolo non si destabilia*, *Corriere della sera*, 4 August 1980

⁷² F. Ferraresi, *A historical framework in the reconstruction of the strategy of tension*, in «Anpi oggi», », *Democracy needs truth. The memory of Milan massacre of Piazza Fontana*, year VIII, 2/3, March 1997, p. 19

a certain number of tragic events in our history, a unified conspiracy. In reality, the institutions have remained firm and the state bodies have always reacted correctly.

In Italy, this bipolar vision has led to the assignment of institutional positions to former terrorists⁷³ as if there were good terrorism and bad terrorism. I would like to say that this is the worst possible approach because it justifies terrorism. Manifestations of terrorism are incompatible with fundamental ethical values and involve acts of equal or opposite emulation in a spiral of hatred, fear, destruction and death. In rereading the events relating to the years of lead, however, I agree with those authors who believe that a cold, low-intensity and creeping civil war was fought⁷⁴. A war that the state won when the terrorists understood that the objectives were not achievable and that democratic institutions would not raise the white flag.

The necessity of a multifaceted approach

Understanding non-state terrorism requires a multifaceted approach that includes pragmatic, legal, and psychological perspectives. Pragmatically, terrorism is recognized for its evolving yet consistent core purpose: using violence to achieve political power and systemic change. Legally, defining terrorism is complex due to historical and contextual variations, but it generally encompasses acts intended to provoke fear, intimidate populations, or compel government actions. Psychologically, models like the DRIA (Disintegration, Reconstruction, Integration, Alienation) framework illustrate how personal crises and ideological adoption drive individuals to terrorism.

Distinguishing terrorists from guerrillas, insurgents, criminals, and lunatic assassins is crucial also to create a right code able to prevent terrorism. Terrorists are also characterized by their ideological motives, organized violence aimed at political change, and psychological impact on broader audiences. This comprehensive understanding is essential for effectively addressing and countering the nuanced threat posed by non-state terrorism,

⁷³ <https://leg15.camera.it/dati/leg15/lavori/stenografici/sed133/bt01.htm>

⁷⁴ M. Grisigni, 1977, *Manifestolibri*, Rome, 2006, pp. 99-100

and for this reason classical approaches that only utilize one aspect of terrorism to contrast it are criticized in the CTS, which propose to change the approach.

Chapter 3

State actors of terrorism

I remain convinced that for those who are in the classroom, are ten years old and want to study, receiving a rocket in the head means being the victim of an act of terrorism, whoever is behind it.

- Gino Strada

This chapter will analyse state terrorism, trying to find a definition of it, subsequently we will undertake to study the history of state terrorism and how it has evolved, in order to recognize today, states that use terrorism as a method to obtain political and military advantages.

In the conclusion of the chapter, we will show the importance of talking about state terrorism at a time when there is an interest in not talking about it, to create a framework that helps us understand deliberately hidden dynamics

The possibility of a different terrorism

Our main goal is to demonstrate that there is another often-ignored type of terrorism, which this thesis will focus on; in fact, as written in the title of this paragraph, the objective is to put in the reader's thoughts the possibility that state terrorism exists, i.e. carried out by states and not by non-state organisations.

It is important for me to write "possibility" even though the doctrine of state terrorism is highly developed today, even if almost exclusively in the United States, because it is easy to reject this hypothesis in a context in which the notion of state terrorism is ostracized. Indeed, in this first paragraph we will demonstrate by contradiction as in the non-social sciences, that is, we will start from an "absurd" assumption, at least for the reader who is unlikely to approach advanced terrorism studies such as critical terrorism studies.

If, paradoxically, state terrorism is a method of indirect coercion that all Western and non-Western states have used and use throughout their history, we can logically hypothesize that the latter do not want this morally questionable method to be discovered, and this it would justify the little information there is on the matter. In a world in which we accept the existence of state terrorism we must therefore question ourselves, which is very difficult for an anthropological problem that in our vision makes us always on the side of the "good". If we agreed to live in a terrorist state, how could we justify our demands on other civilizations that we deem morally inferior? This syndrome of presupposed superiority is necessary for the correct functioning of a state, because a state that only thinks about recriminating its sins could not evolve but would always be in pursuit of an impossible atonement for sins.

*State terrorism is thus potentially dangerous to regime legitimacy because it unmasks the ugly potential for organized violence that always lies at the heart of modern state building. Those states and societies that have benefited the most over the long run from such terror are often the most inclined to forget it*⁷⁵

This is why the interest in hiding certain dynamics, including that of state terrorism, serves a functional purpose for society, but "academics" who in the study of terrorism must seek the truth should not take part in this discussion, and therefore even if they are against this theory, I believe it is necessary that they at least take into consideration the possibility of a different type of terrorism, that of the State

The definition of state terrorism

*What is state terrorism? It is similar to non-state terrorism in that it involves politically or ideologically or religiously inspired acts of violence against individuals or groups outside of an armed conflict. The key difference is that agents of the state are carrying out the violence.*⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992. (1992).<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315813462-7>

⁷⁶ Terrorism by the State is still Terrorism. (n.d.). University of Birmingham.
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/terrorism-by-the-state-is-still-terrorism#:~:text=discourses%3A%20state%20terrorism.-,What%20is%20state%20terrorism%3F,are%20carrying%20out%20the%20violence.>

Defining what non-state terrorism is complex for two reasons: 1. There is no agreed standard of the term which is not recognized 2. it is an extremely recent concept and therefore constantly evolving; despite this we can use studies on the latter to create a framework in which to find the definition of the term.

Throughout history, state violence has often been used to intimidate populations and suppress political dissent, a practice known as state terrorism, this type of terrorism is intended to achieve political objectives and is largely overlooked in academic literature, despite causing far more deaths than non-state terrorism. Historically, state terrorism has been employed by totalitarian regimes and liberal democratic states like: European colonial powers, WWII Allies, and Cold War-era Latin American national security states, supported by the US. Scholars like Chomsky, Herman, Curtis, and Cobain have documented US and UK state-sponsored terrorism, particularly in relation to the Cold War and neoliberal policies. This chapter aims to highlight the nature and purposes of state terrorism, in particular Western state terrorism, demonstrating that it serves to secure access to resources and markets, often under the guise of maintaining order and suppressing dissent.

State terrorism shares the same features as non-state terrorism: violence directed at protected victims to induce terror in an audience, leading them to change their behavior. The key difference is that state terrorism is perpetrated by or in conjunction with the state, often using paramilitaries and private security forces to conceal state involvement and maximize fear.

State terrorism can be small-scale, targeting specific groups, or large-scale, aimed at entire populations, such as during wartime aerial bombings or mass detentions. These acts, prohibited under international law, are used by states to control populations and secure political and economic interests, often within imperial and neoliberal projects.

It has been used by both repressive regimes and democratic states to achieve foreign policy objectives, particularly to control resources and maintain dominance, this practice, rooted in European colonialism, involved coercion and terror to exploit indigenous populations and secure resources some examples include the genocide in Brazil, violent suppression in African colonies, and aerial bombings in Iraq by the British. In the post-war era, European

powers like Britain in Kenya and France in Algeria used state terrorism to resist independence movements.

1.1 Techniques

The U.S. also employed state terrorism to secure its interests, notably in the Philippines and later in various Cold War interventions. The CIA-backed coups in Guatemala⁷⁷ and Chile exemplify the use of state terrorism to support repressive regimes aligned with U.S. economic interests. U.S. counterinsurgency campaigns, such as Operation Phoenix in Vietnam, used torture and killings to instill fear.

These practices continued in Latin America, where U.S.-backed regimes employed state terror to implement neoliberal policies. In Colombia, massive U.S. military support has been used to suppress resistance and secure neoliberal economic reforms, particularly in the oil sector. This historical and ongoing use of state terrorism underscores the coercive underpinnings of foreign policies aimed at maintaining economic and strategic dominance. The traditional association of terrorism with non-state actors or "rogue states" like Iran and Syria overlooks the historical use of state terrorism by Western nations to further foreign policy objectives including security of colonial territories, defending colonial interests, and promoting neoliberal globalization. Despite abundant empirical data, this history is often neglected in terrorism studies, which tend to focus on anti-Western terrorism and ignore uncomfortable historical truths, critical terrorism studies, emphasizes the discourses surrounding state violence and counterterrorism strategies, overshadowing empirical studies of state terrorism and the materialist agendas driving such practices. but there are still areas which needs further investigation includes the use of terror to enforce neoliberal economic models in the global south, and the extent of US and ally involvement in terrorism under the guise of counterterrorism and also the global system for rendition, detention, and interrogation, which often involves human rights abuses intended to terrorize.

⁷⁷Streeter, S. M. (2000). *Interpreting the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: Realist, Revisionist, and Postrevisionist Perspectives*. *The History Teacher*, 34(1), 61–74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3054375>

In the end State terrorism is defined as the systematic use of violence by government agents or state-affiliated groups with the intent to instil fear and achieve specific political aims. The key characteristics of state terrorism are:

Perpetrators: Conducted by state actors or those acting on behalf of the state, including government officials, military forces, paramilitaries, and private security forces.

Targets: Directed at individuals or populations outside the context of armed conflict, often including political opponents, dissenters, marginalized groups, or entire communities.

Objectives: Aimed at achieving political control, suppressing dissent, securing economic resources, maintaining dominance, or promoting ideological agendas.

Methods: Involves acts such as torture, assassination, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and other severe human rights abuses.

Context: Can occur both within the state's own borders and internationally, often linked to efforts to control strategic regions or resources.

Scale: Ranges from targeted attacks on specific individuals or groups to widespread campaigns affecting large segments of the population, such as during wartime or under repressive regimes.

Legality: Violates international law and human rights norms, despite being carried out under the guise of state authority or national security.

In summary, state terrorism is a deliberate strategy employed by governments to intimidate and control populations, securing political and economic interests through fear and coercion.

The history of state terrorism from tyrannicide to dictatorship

This chapter explores the doctrine of terrorism from ancient times to today, focusing on the link between theoretical debates and political violence.

Terms like "tyrant" and "tyrannicide" are used to study the concept of legitimately killing an unjust ruler and is relevant to terrorism, defined as state actors using violence for political change because often the state or its officials had the moral responsibility, depending on the historical period, to kill an unjust ruler

2.1 Plato and Aristotle's tyrannicide

Plato viewed tyrannicide as preemptive, necessary to stop a tyrant before they solidified power. He described tyrants as inherently fearful of assassination, structuring their rule around this fear. Aristotle saw tyranny as a violation of the common good and discussed the motives and justifications for tyrannicide, acknowledging that severe abuse of power could warrant such actions. Both philosophers emphasized the role of elites in resisting tyranny. Aristotle and Plato were truly relevant because their writings on tyrannicide, as we will see, have been used to legitimize terrorism throughout history.

2.2 The Ceasar killing as the first terroristic act

Cicero, influenced by Caesar's rise, strongly advocated for tyrannicide, viewing tyranny as the end of law and freedom. He believed killing a tyrant was a noble, necessary act, equating it to self-defense and aligning with natural law, praised tyrannicides as liberators and asserted that even personal obligations shouldn't prevent citizens from killing tyrants.

On the Ides of March, Caesar was scheduled to attend a Senate meeting at the Theatre of Pompey, and despite warnings from soothsayers and ominous dreams reported by his wife, Calpurnia, Caesar went to the meeting. The conspirators, members of the senate including his son Brutus, surrounded him under the guise of presenting a petition, stabbing Caesar 23 times.

This is an example of a primordial-state terrorism, because the state or its agents, in this case the members of the senate, have obtained political aim through violent action. This action was not considered very wrong so many that Brutus, who influenced by Cicero led the conspiracy to kill Caesar, wasn't celebrated as a tyrannicide but pardoned as a murderer, eventually fleeing Rome due to Caesar's supporters. The ancient focus on tyrants as disruptors of constitutional order suggests they are more akin to modern terrorists, while tyrannicides defended the existing political structure.

2.3 Petit and Gerson, defence of political violence

In 1407, John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, killed his cousin, Louis, Duke of Orléans, sparking a debate on tyrannicide. John commissioned Jean Petit to defend him, who declared Louis a tyrant and justified his killing, leading to John's acquittal and exoneration by the assembly of nobles and the king's patents.

Petit revised his defense multiple times, portraying John's act as a noble tyrannicide, drawing on Cicero and John of Salisbury, argued that any subject, especially a high-ranking aristocrat like John, could kill a tyrant without an official mandate. In the end Jean Gerson opposed Petit, and in 1415, the Council of Constance condemned Petit's arguments, stressing that tyrants should be dealt with by legitimate authorities and given a chance to repent.

The concept of tyrannicide shifted from antiquity's pre-emptive strike to a medieval view of liberating oppressed people, medieval laws against treason served as equivalents to ancient protections against tyranny. Both eras saw tyrannicide as a privilege of the political elite, or the state, reflecting the structured, hierarchical society of the time and a state terror culture building up

2.4 Church supporting terrorism in medieval Europe

After the decline of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, Europe entered a period characterized by decaying infrastructure, the collapse of central authority, and the near disappearance of literacy and education. Feudalism took hold, with power concentrated at the local level under the control of Germanic tribes, leading to a blurred distinction between private violence and political assassination, in this context, the Church emerged as the only remaining universal authority, seeking to impose stability and provide moral guidance. While Christ's teachings advocated for passive submission to authority, early Church leaders like Augustine and John Chrysostom suggested that resistance to tyrants who violated divine law could be justified. Over time, Church leaders increasingly asserted that rulers must govern justly, with popes like Nicholas I emphasizing the need to resist tyrannical leaders. The church was in fact an authority sponsoring terrorism, and although it cannot be considered a case of 100% state terrorism, it demonstrates an acceptance of the use of terrorism by a higher authority well rooted in society and supported by Western religions

2.5 The theory of tyrannicide in the late Middle Ages

When Europeans conquered Muslim lands during the Crusades, they rediscovered the works of Aristotle, whose writings on tyranny had been lost to the West since the fall of Rome. Medieval intellectuals embraced these new translations and adapted Aristotle's ideas to contemporary contexts, reinforcing the belief that tyranny violated both divine and natural law. However, despite widespread condemnation of tyranny, tyrannicide was rare due to fears that political violence could lead to social unrest, scholars like Tommaso D'Aquino grappled with the moral and practical implications of tyrannicide. Early in his career, D'Aquino praised the killing of tyrants in certain circumstances but later expressed concerns about the potential for greater harm, such as civil war or increased cruelty from the tyrant. He ultimately believed that only legitimate authorities had the right to depose or kill a tyrant, advocating prayer and patience for others. Aquinas's later works, including *Summa Theologica*, continued to support tyrannicide, provided it served the common good and improved society.

Also, in this case tyrannicide is considered acceptable but always if committed by legitimate or superior authorities. This is yet another demonstration of how terrorism is implicitly accepted if it is carried out by states that are given the role of regulator through political violence. This path that we are outlining will insert into society the perception of a state that can have access to political violence if necessary, and as we will see later this violence will stop being only against the tyrant but will also be expressed towards the people

2.6 State terror in medieval Europe

Medieval violence by ruling authorities against rivals and subjects was brutal and public, blurring the line between private and state violence since a true bureaucratic state did not exist at the time, such acts were intended as public spectacles to teach harsh lessons. For instance, Queen Brunhilda of Austrasia was executed in 613 by being dragged through the streets by wild horses, reflecting the brutal methods used in power struggles. The Norman kings of England also practiced state terror, William the Conqueror engineered a famine in Northern England to suppress resistance, while his son, Henry I, ordered the public

castration of officials for debasing currency. Henry's nephew, Stephen, hanged entire garrisons during a civil war, and King John used disappearances to instill fear, though this tactic ultimately contributed to his downfall and the signing of the Magna Carta. These acts of violence served as precursors to modern state terror, although the medieval context was different. The use of terror by the "state" in this period is also evident because the power was absolute and undeniable, and these acts helped to consolidate it and scare the people from organizing revolts and coups d'état

2.7 The Renaissance and tyrannicide

During the Italian Renaissance, the political, economic, and cultural leaders of Northern Italy's great cities were driven by new values, emphasizing the individual, education, and commerce over the medieval focus on community, inheritance, and land. Inspired by ancient Greek and Roman ideals, Renaissance elites embraced humanism and pragmatism, which competed with the influence of Christianity, the fragmented political landscape of Italy, marked by papal and foreign interventions, led to the rise of tyrants and mercenary warlords, like the notorious Cesare Borgia. The era's admiration for classical republicanism and its endorsement of tyrannicide contributed to several high-profile assassinations of rulers, such as Giovanni Maria Visconti and Alessandro de Medici. The failed anti-Medici conspiracy of 1513 also reflected this sentiment, with conspirators drawing inspiration from classical figures like Brutus. Renaissance art and symbolism further reinforced this theme, as seen in Donatello's statue of Judith slaying Holofernes, which became a symbol of Florentine liberty after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494. A common saying of the time, "he who gives his own life can take a tyrant's," encapsulated the period's acceptance of tyrannicide as a means of defending freedom.

Targeted assassination was not just a tool for those seeking power during the Renaissance but also for those already in power: Venice's ruling body, the Council of Ten, reportedly relied so heavily on assassination that it developed a bureaucratic system specifically for this purpose, although much of their work remains shrouded in myth, the list of its rumored targets includes prominent figures from Renaissance Europe, the Council's reputation for using assassination as state policy attracted numerous applicants, including Brother John of Ragusa, who offered to assassinate the King of Spain for 150 ducats. Thomas More, a

humanist scholar, explicitly endorsed assassination as a moral and effective alternative to war, arguing that it resulted in fewer deaths and held leaders accountable for their policies. During the mid-sixteenth century, an anonymous Italian text titled *Of the Right that Princes Have to Compass the Lives of Their Enemies' Allies* justified assassination by claiming that political expediency allowed great princes to engage in actions that were otherwise forbidden.

Machiavelli introduced a new concept: the "science of terror." He analyzed historical and contemporary events to show how rulers could use calculated public acts of violence to maintain control. A prime example was Cesare Borgia, who used the brutal execution of his lieutenant Remirro de Orco to quell potential dissent in Romagna. Machiavelli admired this as a piece of political theatre that effectively kept the populace subdued. What made Machiavelli's perspective unique was not just his endorsement of such tactics, but his appreciation of their psychological impact as a form of governance.

2.8 The French Wars of Religion

Historian Franklin Ford's extensive list of assassinations and political murders from 1535 to 1649 highlights the prevalence of such acts in France and England, despite the most brutal conflict of the era, the Thirty Years War, occurring in Germany and central Europe. In sixteenth-century France, the tension between the Catholic majority and the Huguenots (French Calvinists) led to significant violence. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, orchestrated by King Charles IX and his mother, resulted in the assassination of prominent Huguenots in Paris, sparking a widespread and deadly anti-Protestant backlash. In this period of intense religious conflict, many assassinations motivated by sectarian strife were also driven by political motives. For instance, the 1584 murder of William of Orange, a key leader of the Dutch revolt against Spain, was more a case of state-sponsored assassination than purely religiously motivated killing. The assassin, Balthasar Gérard, received a bounty from Spanish King Philip II and faced a particularly brutal execution by the Dutch, who subjected him to extreme torture and dismemberment.

François Hotman, a Huguenot, argued in 1574 that a king's right to rule came from the people and could be rescinded if he became a tyrant. Philippe de Mornay, in his 1577 book *A Defense of Liberty against Tyrants*, echoed these sentiments, emphasizing that resistance

and even tyrannicide were justified against rulers who violated divine laws. Mornay's argument, influenced by the recent massacre, asserted that such actions should be carried out by nobles and clerics rather than private individuals.

From this point on we begin to doubt the power of sovereigns and how this once absolute power can cease if one becomes a Tyrant and therefore more specifically if one carries out acts of political violence. Gradually, from a period of acceptance, state terrorism begins to be recognized and despised

2.9 Review of Tyrannicide in medieval and early modern Europe

Throughout history, tyrannicide—killing a tyrant to restore order—focused on removing a single individual seen as responsible for national crises aimed to return the state to its previous condition and was not merely symbolic or revolutionary. While tyrannicide and terrorism differ, with the latter often aiming to create new norms and lacking historical continuity, both share similarities in their justifications and rhetoric. Medieval and early modern justifications for tyrannicide often mirrored modern justifications for terrorism, featuring uncompromising and fanatical rhetoric. Both eras involved efforts to define legitimate political violence, with pre-modern authorities often excusing tyrannicide while condemning other forms of popular violence, and modern authorities similarly condemning certain acts as terrorism based on perceived legitimacy.

Imperialism and state terror

Imperialistic terrorism was prevalent to varying degrees in European ventures in Asia and Africa during the 19th century. This reached its peak around the turn of the century along the Congo River, where Belgian King Leopold II's regime caused immense suffering, exploiting up to eight million Africans for profit, the native population endured horrific abuses, including rape, hostage-taking, and brutal violence, imposed to enforce submission. In other regions like British India and French Indochina, the violence was less severe but still present, despite justifications of imperialism as a civilizing mission, its primary aim was economic exploitation, leading to significant disparities in wealth, landownership, education, and political power between colonizers and the colonized, as well as among the colonized themselves.

This violence, rooted in Social Darwinism, racism, and 19th-century state mechanisms, persisted in European colonial rule through the mid-20th century, with counterterrorism and counterinsurgency tactics evident in places like Kenya and Algeria.

State terror era

The perception of terrorism changed dramatically in the early 20th century, while individual and small-group terrorism was seen as significant around the turn of the century, the events following 1914, including two world wars, Nazi genocide, and the rise of totalitarian regimes, shifted the focus to state-sponsored terror as the primary source of organized violence and death. The Soviet Union, in particular, saw immense loss of life through political purges, famines, and war, leaving deep psychological and geographical impacts on Europe. In this period states learned two important lessons on state terrorism : the tactics used by subversive groups can be adopted by repressive regimes, and that labeling opponents as terrorists can help regimes manufacture support and consensus.

2.10 The Red Terror in the Soviet State

The Red Terror was characterized by extreme brutality, with violence being both proactive and symbolic, designed to eliminate active resistance and intimidate the broader population. The use of terror did not end with the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War, the Cheka operated with significant autonomy, executing tens of thousands of people.; it became ingrained in Soviet governance, leaving a lasting impact on Soviet leadership and society, where violence was seen as a necessary tool for achieving and maintaining power. Even during the relatively peaceful New Economic Policy of the 1920s, the legacy of terror continued to shape the Soviet state's approach to governance and control.

After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin five years later had already begun transforming the USSR into a modern industrial society through a series of brutal measures, which included the use of state terror to enforce obedience.

One of Stalin's key strategies was to exploit and exaggerate threats against the state. The assassination of Sergei Kirov in 1934, possibly orchestrated by Stalin himself or at least heavily exploited by him, marked a significant turning point. Stalin used Kirov's murder as a pretext to initiate a series of purges, targeting not only real and imagined enemies of the state but also members of his own Communist Party. This period of intense repression,

known as the Great Terror (1936-1938), involved widespread arrests, coerced confessions, and executions following show trials. The purges aimed to eliminate Stalin's rivals and consolidate his power, while also mobilizing the public through fear and propaganda.

The terror was systematic and far-reaching, with millions of people arrested and hundreds of thousands executed or sent to labor camps (the Gulag). The terror also served practical purposes for Stalin: it removed old managers and experts, made room for new loyal Party members, and provided slave labor for the state's industrial projects. Additionally, it created scapegoats for the failures of Soviet policies, attributing economic and social problems to "terrorists" and "saboteurs" allegedly working against the state.

The Great Terror finally subsided in 1938, but Stalin continued to use terror as a tool of control throughout his rule. According to Soviet archives, from 1934 to 1953, approximately 786,098 people were executed for counter-revolutionary crimes, with the majority of these executions occurring during the height of the Great Terror. The total number of people arrested and sent to the Gulag is estimated to be in the millions, with some estimates suggesting as many as 28.7 million forced laborers passed through the Soviet penal system during Stalin's era, this was the perfect example of a terrorist state.

2.11 Italian fascist

After World War I, Italy, despite being on the victorious side, faced deep dissatisfaction, similar to post-war Germany. The Treaty of Versailles did not meet Italian expectations, leading to a sense of national humiliation, particularly among nationalists and war veterans. This discontent fueled the rise of paramilitary groups, similar to Germany's Freikorps, who were disillusioned by the weak post-war government.

Amidst this turmoil, socialism was gaining ground, alarming the middle and upper classes and the government's inability to address widespread strikes in 1919-1920 heightened fears of a socialist revolution, setting the stage for Benito Mussolini's rise. In 1919, Mussolini formed the Italian Combat League (Fascio Italiani di Combattimento) and organized armed squads known as the *squadristi* or Blackshirts. These groups, more drawn to the allure of violence than to fascist ideology, carried out violent campaigns against socialists and leftists, including arson, beatings, and murder.

Mussolini cynically portrayed himself as the candidate who could restore law and order, even as his Blackshirts escalated violence. The Blackshirts' violent actions, especially during the anti-fascist general strike in August 1922, won the support of the bourgeoisie who feared socialism more than fascism, in this environment of fear and violence culminated the "March on Rome" in October 1922, where the Blackshirts, in a largely theatrical display, converged on the capital.

Contrary to popular belief, this was not a coup or civil war, but rather a strategic move that convinced King Victor Emmanuel III to appoint Mussolini as Prime Minister, believing he could control the fascists. Mussolini's rise marked a shift in the use of terrorism in political strategy, unlike Russian revolutionary terrorists who targeted the state, Italian fascists primarily attacked political and social rivals: their goal was not to overthrow the state but to co-opt and control it.

2.12 Nazis

The rise of the Nazi Party in Germany during the late 1920s and early 1930s was fueled by a combination of economic desperation, societal instability, and strategic political violence. Initially dismissed as a fringe group, the Nazis, led by Adolf Hitler, used the economic chaos of the Great Depression to gain influence. The severe economic downturn, which began in 1929, saw a drastic drop in economic output and a surge in unemployment, leading many Germans to lose faith in the democratic Weimar Republic.

The Nazis capitalized on this disillusionment, with Hitler and his paramilitary wing, the Brownshirts (SA), escalating street violence and terrorism to destabilize society further. This violence was often directed against political opponents, especially Communists (KPD) and Socialists (SPD), to provoke retaliation and create an atmosphere of chaos, the Nazi strategy aimed to exploit this chaos to undermine the democratic system and ultimately seize power. The Brownshirts played a crucial role in this process, engaging in violent confrontations with leftist groups and using propaganda to portray themselves as victims of Communist aggression, resonating with a public increasingly fearful of a left-wing revolution and weary of political instability. The violence also pushed the government to adopt authoritarian measures, which the Nazis used to further erode democratic institutions.

As the Weimar government faltered, conservative leaders, seeking to stabilize the country, made the fateful decision to appoint Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933. This move quickly led to the dismantling of the democratic system and the establishment of a totalitarian regime, with the Brownshirts and other Nazi paramilitary forces enforcing their brutal vision of a "new Germany."

The rise of the Nazi Party thus illustrates the dangerous interplay of economic crisis, political violence, and the strategic exploitation of societal fears, leading to the collapse of democracy and the onset of a totalitarian regime.

The Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933, was a pivotal event that Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party exploited to consolidate power in Germany. Although the fire was started by Marinus van der Lubbe, a lone Dutch anarchist, the Nazis used it as a pretext to claim that a vast Communist conspiracy was underway allowing them to instil fear and panic in the public, ultimately leading to the suspension of civil liberties and the mass arrest of Communists, Socialists, and other perceived enemies of the state.

The emergency decree issued by Hitler following the fire allowed the Nazis to suppress political opposition effectively and laid the groundwork for the Enabling Act, passed in March 1933, which gave Hitler dictatorial powers by allowing him to enact laws without the Reichstag's consent. This marked the end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of Hitler's totalitarian regime.

The subsequent purge of rivals within the Nazi Party during the Night of the Long Knives in June 1934 solidified even more Hitler's control, as many Brownshirt leaders and other opponents were executed. The Nazi regime then transitioned from street violence to state-sponsored terror, systematically targeting Jews, Communists, and other groups through legislation, propaganda, and violent actions, such as Kristallnacht in 1938.

This systemic terror expanded with the onset of World War II, culminating in the Holocaust, where the Nazi state sought the complete eradication of entire populations. The use of the term "terrorism" by the Nazis, especially in labelling resistance movements and other opposition, was a tool to justify their brutal and genocidal policies. The legacy of Nazi terror was thoroughly documented in the Nuremberg Trials, where it was recognized as an integral aspect of their criminal regime, from the rise of the Nazis to the end of the Third Reich.

The importance of studying state terrorism in an hostile environment

As repeated several times within this thesis, I maintain that there is a hostile environment with respect to the study of state terrorism, obviously created by the states that use its methods, and therefore my work can superficially be defined as useless and counterproductive because it has not an audience to which it refers or a force that can change the system. I wrote superficially because works of this type do not have the aim of creating a change but have the objective of providing the lenses through which we can lucidly analyse even very current international situations that we will see in the next chapter.

We see real value in exploring the ways in which studies on state terrorism can add a value to the study of non-state terrorism. It seems clear that state and non-state terrorism are linked, and in some real-world cases, they feed on each other in violent cycles. However, a stronger case needs to be made that studying state and non-state forms of the phenomenon together is a useful way forward⁷⁸

- Jackson

The importance of this thesis is to put the reader in difficulty, or broaden his point of view, with the aim of providing a complete and not partial reading that also embraces points of view that there is usually an interest in ignoring. International politics and even more specifically diplomacy is based on agreements between states that cannot be reached except with an understanding between the parties, so in this hostile environment that pushes us towards conflict the importance of this thesis is the reconciliation between the parties, with an openness to new possibilities for dialogue deemed uncomfortable. At the end of this thesis the reader will have to question their own beliefs to create an openness that does not censor research but embraces it as dedicated to the search for truth, however uncomfortable it may seem. In fact, in the next chapter we will analyze a state, the Israeli one, which has often been subject to animated and controversial discussions, with the aim of demonstrating how a less biased analysis of its history could have generated better outcomes.

⁷⁸ Jackson, Richard, Eamon Murphy, and Scott Poynting, eds (2010) *Contemporary State Terrorism: Theory and Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge

The reasons for Islamic terrorism

In Western political culture, the idea has taken hold that "global terrorism" expresses the will of non-Western countries - especially the Islamic world - to annihilate Western civilization together with its fundamental values: freedom, democracy, the rule of law, the market economy. And it is argued that terrorism expresses a profoundly irrational desire to achieve this result in the most ruthless, destructive and violent way, without the slightest respect for life. The figure of the suicide terrorist, which has established itself in Palestine in particular, would be the emblematic expression of terrorist irrationality, fanaticism and nihilism, because the life of the suicide bomber loses all value in his own eyes. At the root of Palestinian and Islamic terrorism - the generating nucleus of all other terrorism - there would be the theological hatred against the West spread by fundamentalist Koranic schools. According to this point of view, no other "cause" would be at the root of the phenomenon, and it would even be wrong to go in search of the political, economic or social reasons for terrorism.

These are obviously unfounded and risky theses. Islamic terrorism is a much less irrational phenomenon than one thinks or wants to believe. It is a revolt against the overwhelming power of the Western world and its instruments of mass destruction and against the extensive military control it exercises over the territories of countries that have historically been the cradle of Islam⁷⁹. And it is also, in the background, a protest against the growing disparities in power and wealth that oppose the directorate of the great industrial powers to the great majority of weak and poor countries, to which the countries with a predominantly Islamic confession largely belong.

The American analyst Robert Pape has argued that the determining variable in the genesis of the terrorist phenomenon, in particular suicide terrorism, is not religious fundamentalism, nor even poverty or underdevelopment: it is in reality, in the vast majority of cases, an organized response to what is perceived as a state of military occupation of one's own country (5). By "military occupation" we must mean not only and not so much the conquest of territory, but the invasive presence and ideological pressure of a foreign power that proposes to radically transform the social, economic and political structures of the occupied

⁷⁹ F. Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy. Fear of the Modern World*, Cambridge (Mass.), Perseus, 1992, trad. it. Firenze, Giunti, 2002.

country. In the case of the Arab-Islamic countries, it is a question of the project of "democratization" of the entire Middle East, developed by the US strategy of the Broader Middle East. The goal of Islamic terrorist organizations, according to Pape, is "secular and strategic": it is essentially a matter of freeing the Islamic world from foreign oppression. The rational nature of the use of suicide terrorism is justified by arguing that the human costs it requires are more limited than conventional guerrilla warfare, and its effectiveness is considerably greater⁸⁰. This is the "last resort" available to weak actors operating in conditions of total asymmetry of forces in the field: "a realistic option", as al-Shaqaqi, the secretary general of Islamic Jihad, defined it in 1995.

How to defeat terrorism?

According to Alan Dershowitz, one of the most famous liberal lawyers in the United States, the investigation into the "deep motives" of terrorism is completely irrelevant⁸¹. Indeed, this investigation could be dangerous. The most serious mistake that the opponents of terrorism can make is to linger and reflect on its "causes". An opposite strategy must be adopted with regard to terrorism: it is necessary "never to try to understand and eliminate its supposed root causes" and instead to oppose an intransigent rejection, which does not admit dialogue or negotiation. The message to be sent to terrorists must not be about their reasons or their aims: even if the reasons were very good and the purposes legitimate, they should still be denied and dismissed as irrelevant. Failure to do so means instigating all those who consider themselves victims of injustice, oppression or exploitation to use terrorism to make their case.

There would be only one strategy to stop terrorists: to prevent them from benefiting from their actions and to make them understand in advance that they will not gain any benefit from their bloody exploits. But to break the short-circuit of causes and effects that feeds international terrorism, it would be necessary to intervene with much more energetic measures than those that have been used so far.

⁸⁰ R. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, New York, Random House, 2005.

⁸¹ A.M. Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002, trad. it. Roma, Carocci, 2003.

But terrorism works better and better because the strategic responses that have been opposed to it - the repression of the second Intifada, the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq - are exactly those that Dershowitz thinks he is proposing as something new and decisive. They are in fact bloody replicas as are the terrorist attacks - and morally just as despicable - and moreover motivated not by the desperate will of a people to resist oppression, but by the ruthless will of a great power (or of one of its militarily very efficient and nuclear-armed allies) to impose a logic of power on the world.

In this way, all that is done is theorizing and rationalizing ex post an anti-terrorist strategy that has already been underway for years: that of Ariel Sharon in the Middle East and that of George Bush on a global scale. It is a strategy that in Palestine has prevented both the United Nations and European diplomacy from attempting political mediation between the contenders by resorting to peacekeeping forces. And it has also failed in Afghanistan and Iraq, where it drags the contenders into a spiral of hatred, fear, destruction and death that threatens to lead us to a global and endless terrorist war.

Chapter 4

Form of terrorism in the Israel-Palestine conflict

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, examining its historical roots and recent developments, it delves into the origins and evolution of the conflict, followed by an exploration of recent events that have shaped the ongoing tensions. Furthermore, investigates whether Hamas, a key actor in the conflict, can be classified as a terrorist organization, based on both legal frameworks and its activities. It also includes an analysis of the concept of "terrorist democracies," discussing how democratic states might engage in practices typically associated with terrorism. Finally, the chapter assesses whether Israel itself, in its actions and policies, can be considered a terrorist state, offering a critical perspective on state behaviour in conflict zones.

Short History of the Israel state

Jerusalem was a territory that experienced 7 eras of domination: Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Crusader, Mamluk, Ottoman Turk and English. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, anti-Semitic waves produced violence against Jews who fled to America, but also to Jerusalem, where after the First World War the defeated Turks were deposed by the English. In 1933⁸² Hitler took power in Germany and increased the persecution of the Jews, who fled to the tune of 400,000, with the English not allowing them to reach Palestine. In 1947 the British left Palestine, and the UN divided the territory now known as Israel and that of the never-born Palestinian state, also called the West Bank because it is located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, into two states:

- the Jewish state had had 55% of the territory, made up of half a million Jews and half a million Arabs
- the Palestinian Arab state had the remaining 45%, made up of 730,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews
- Jerusalem would have been a free zone under the aegis of the UN

⁸² Travaglio, M. (2023). *Israele e i palestinesi in poche parole*.

The Israeli state organizes its side, while the Palestinians, not recognizing the UN resolution, begin to fight to oust the Jews from their side, causing deaths among both factions.

On May 14, 1948⁸³, David Ben Gurion, provisional president of Israel, proclaimed the birth of the Jewish state, and the armies of the Arab League of Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia attacked Israel, which had a poorly armed army, but, despite this resists for a few days, goes on the counteroffensive and even manages to conquer territories: Gaza, the western Galilee and the Negev desert. Subsequently, the Palestinians face the Nakba (catastrophe), that is, the exodus caused by the winds of war with 700,000 Palestinians taking refuge in Arab countries, creating the plague of Palestinian refugee camps in Arab countries and mirroring 700,000 Jews leaving the Arab states to flee to Israel. Israel stipulates armistices, unable to conclude peace treaties because it is not recognized as a state, abandons the occupied territories which instead of returning to the Palestinians are occupied for twenty years, Gaza by Egypt and Transjordan occupies the West Bank becoming the kingdom of Jordan. The tension develop with 3 more conflicts:

- In 1956⁸⁴ Nasser, the dictator of Egypt, nationalized the Suez Canal to commercially strangle Israel which with its European allies attacked and defeated Nasser's army, freeing the canal
- In 1967⁸⁵, the Arab states make a second attack, but Israel with a preemptive attack neutralizes the air force of the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies and in less than six days routs all the Arab armies, conquering East Jerusalem, Gaza, the Golan Heights, West Bank and Sinai up to Suez, trying to use them as a bargaining chip to obtain peace and recognition.
- In 1973⁸⁶, while Israel was celebrating Yom Kippur, it was taken by surprise by the armies of Syria and Egypt with the support of the Arab world, causing eight days of

⁸³ Kershner, Isabel. "Ben-Gurion on Israel, Peace and the Prophets." *The New York times*. (2016): n. pag. Print.

⁸⁴ "EGYPT'S NASSER SEIZES SUEZ CANAL, SPARKING CRISIS." *The globe and mail*. (2023): n. pag. Print.

⁸⁵ "Israel Kills More Palestinians in 2014 than in Any Other Year since 1967; More than 2,300 Palestinians Killed and More than 17,000 Injured, According to Annual Report by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs." *The Guardian*. (2015): n. pag. Print

⁸⁶ Schiff, Zeev. *October Earthquake : Yom Kippur 1973* /. London, [England] ; New York : Routledge, 2017. Web

terror in Israel: it suffered attacks for a week, then Golda Meir's government reorganized the army and manages to go on the counter-offensive, thanks above all to Ariel Sharon, who arrives 100 km from Cairo where he is stopped by the armistice, while another part of the army stops 30 km from Damascus.

Once again, the Arab countries, after losing the war, refuse to negotiate with Israel and exchange territories, however, Israel, unilaterally, decides to withdraw from the recently occupied territories, while maintaining those conquered in 1967, waiting for Egypt and Jordan make peace. In 1978 Egypt signed peace thanks to Sadat, who took over from Nasser, with the Camp David agreement under the eyes of American president Jimmy Carter, Israel returned the occupied territories to Egypt, including Sinai, but not Gaza, since the Egyptians do not want it, preferring to leave it to Israel, given the presence of many angry Palestinians. In 1982⁸⁷ the Palestinians of the PLO, expelled from Jordan and transferred to Lebanon, began to take control and insinuate themselves into the civil war between the Shiite, Sunni, Druze, Christian-Maronite, pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian militias. Syria invades Lebanon in 1976 to expel the Palestinians, and Israel, attacked from the south by the Palestinians, in turn invades Lebanon in 1982.

During the invasion, the Lebanese Christian Gemayel is elected president, but a pro-Syrian commando kills him, unleashing a massacre, the Maronite Christians entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, carrying out a massacre without distinction between terrorists and civilians, with at least 700-1000 Palestinian deaths, Ariel Sharon, who commanded operations in Lebanon, was tried in Israel because his army did not prevent the massacre from being carried out and must leave the Ministry of defence.

In 1987 it was 20 years since the occupation of the West Bank and the intifada broke out, the Palestinian uprising against Israel with strikes, protests, boycotts, violence and repression, causing 2000 Palestinian deaths in 5 years and 160 among the Israelis: thus, Hamas was born, a Sunni political and military organization based in Gaza, financed by the Emirates and Sunni Arab monarchies.

⁸⁷ Herf, Jeffrey. *An Alliance Deepens: East Germany, the Arab States, and the PLO: 1978-1982*. New York : Cambridge University Press, 2016. Web.

Hamas has a public political-social face, which condemns Israel and provides healthcare, schools and universities in the occupied territories, and a secret military and terrorist face, which claims responsibility for and carries out suicide bombings against Israeli targets.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall collapsed, the East-West blocs thawed, and in 1993⁸⁸ a surprise occurred: Rabin and Arafat signed peace in Oslo, with the PLO renouncing terrorism and recognizing Israel, and Israel recognizing PLO and the right of Palestinians to their own state in much of the West Bank and all of Gaza, taking up what the UN had established in 1947 and which the Arabs had always rejected. Jordan signs a peace agreement with Israel, and the intifada ends: a path to peace seems to begin, but in 1995 a Jewish fanatic kills Prime Minister Rabin.

In 1996, the elections were won by an enemy of peace, the young leader of the Likud, Benjamin Netanyahu, who however lasted only 3 years before being indicted for corruption. In 1999⁸⁹ the elections were won by Labor's Barak, who resumed negotiations with Arafat, and in 2000, at Camp David, he made the most advantageous offer ever seen for the Palestinians: a state with East Jerusalem as the capital and 73% of the West Bank and Gaza, but Arafat refuses without making any counter-proposals and condemns himself to decline, subsequently dying and being replaced by Abu Mazen. The halt to peace leads to an escalation of extremism: Sharon takes a provocative walk on the esplanade of the mosques, triggering the second intifada.

In 2001⁹⁰ Sharon wins the elections as the new leader of the Likud, but surprisingly accepts the principle of two peoples, two states: in 2005, he withdraws troops from Gaza and accepts the Oslo agreements, founding a new party, Kadima, together with Shimon Peres.

However, at the end of 2005, Sharon suffered a stroke that left him in a coma for 8 years, dying in 2014.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu returned to power in 2009 and sabotaged the peace agreements, favouring the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and maintaining tension with the Palestinians.

In 2006, Palestinians vote for Hamas, sparking an internecine war with the PLO, Netanyahu faces three trials for corruption, abuse and fraud, and initiates a counter-justice reform to

⁸⁸ Neriyah, Z'ak. *Between Rabin and Arafat : A Political Diary behind the Oslo Deal, 1993-1994* /. Cham, Switzerland : Springer, 2022. Web.

⁸⁹ Travaglio, M. (2023). *Israele e i palestinesi in poche parole*.

⁹⁰ Singh, Subhash. *The Political Landscape of Palestine. Vol. 1*. Routledge, 2022. Web.

avoid conviction, and establishes separate agreements with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates United, ignoring the Palestinians.

Netanyahu aimed to exclude the Palestinians from decisions concerning their future by negotiating directly with Arab countries through the Abraham Accords. Netanyahu's declared goal was to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state, by bypassing Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, Netanyahu hoped to resolve the Palestinian issue with the backing of Arab leaders, supported by the United States, which holds significant leverage over these regimes.

It's also important to note that the Abraham Accords were conceived by Trump, who favoured Israel without offering anything to the Palestinians, for instance, Trump moved the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognizing it as Israel's capital. Previous presidents had viewed this move as a bargaining chip to secure concessions for the Palestinians.

In simple terms, Trump's predecessors reasoned thinking Jerusalem as a trading pawn, but by disregarding this approach, Trump gave everything to Israel and nothing to the Palestinians without any compensatory measures, leaving them feeling crushed and deprived, especially given that Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem is considered illegal by the UN, which sees it as the future capital of a Palestinian state.

The Abraham Accords were seen as a means of making the Palestinians realize that the time had come to accept their complete defeat and subjugation, Trump's decision increased the number of Palestinians convinced that only force could secure their rights understanding that Israel and the United States were deciding their future over their heads.

Israel, divided, with protests against Netanyahu and an army committed to protecting settlers, on October 7⁹¹, 2024, get attacked from southern Gaza by Hamas, carrying out the worst massacre of civilians in the history of Israel, with 1,400 deaths. Israel initially gains international support, but after 15 days of indiscriminate bombing of Gaza, resulting in 4,300 deaths, including 1,700 children, it loses international support.

⁹¹ Franceschini, E. (2024, May 2). "Sei mesi dopo il 7 ottobre: le vittime, che cosa ha ottenuto Israele e che cosa succede ora". *La Repubblica*.
https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2024/04/06/news/gaza_sei_mesi_guerra_israele_hamas_vittime_obiettivi-422435136/

Is Hamas a terroristic organization?

As we saw, the perception of Hamas status as a terrorist organization can change depending on the political position, indeed Erdogan, current president of Turkey, declared on Hamas, “Hamas is not a terrorist organisation, it is a liberation group, 'mujahideen' waging a battle to protect its lands and people”⁹² claiming that Hamas is a national liberation movement, not a terrorist organization.

Supporters of Erdogan's view argue that, by October 7, 2023, Hamas had been governing Gaza for years after winning the 2006 elections against the moderate Fatah and also argue that terrorist organizations don't govern cities, run for elections, provide essential services to the population, or maintain an army of around 40,000 men.

As previously mentioned, Hamas has evolved into many things, the fact that Hamas pursues national liberation doesn't negate its terrorist nature, as terrorism is defined not by an organization's goals or ideology but by its use of violence to instil fear and extract concessions from a government, distinguishing primary from secondary objectives. Whether Hamas seeks to liberate Palestinian territories, overthrow capitalism, or its method of struggle is terrorism.

Hamas has been defined in two ways: as a terrorist organization that pursues national liberation or as a national liberation movement that uses terrorism, terrorism is a common element in both definitions, so let's now delve into it

1.1 Hoffman parameters to outline Hamas nature

To determine whether Hamas is a terrorist organization, and subsequently to do the same with Israel we will base our analysis on the definition provided by Bruce Hoffman:

⁹² Gumrukcu, T., & Hayatsever, H. (2023). Turkey's Erdogan says Hamas is not terrorist organisation, cancels trip to Israel. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-erdogan-says-hamas-is-not-terrorist-organisation-2023-10-25/>

“By distinguishing terrorists from other types of criminals and irregular fighters and terrorism from other forms of crime and irregular warfare, we come to appreciate that terrorism is:

ineluctably political in aims and motives;

violent—or, equally important, threatens violence;

designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target;

conducted either by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia) or by individuals or a small collection of individuals influenced, motivated, or inspired by the ideological aims or example of some existent terrorist movement or its leaders, or both perpetrated by a subnational group or nonstate entity.”⁹³

There are four elements of this definition:

- Ineluctably political in aims and motives
- Violent—or, equally important,
- Designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target
- perpetrated by a subnational group or nonstate entity

1.2 Ineluctably political in aims and motives

A key aspect of terrorism is its aim to influence government decisions usually by using terror as a psychological weapon, terrorism is not an end but a means to provoke or prevent social change. Hamas exemplifies terrorism aimed at achieving social and political change by using violence seeking to instil fear in the Israeli population and pressure the Israeli government to withdraw from occupied territories.

On October 7, Hamas employed what is known as a "provocation strategy." The attack was carried out to provoke an Israeli response, hoping to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

⁹³ Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism (REV-Revised, 2)*. Columbia University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hoff12698>

- The outbreak of a war between Israel and an Islamic country,
- The collapse of the Abraham Accords
- Increased international awareness of the Palestinian cause, or
- Hamas's consolidation as the sole defender of Palestinians, thereby overshadowing its rivals, the Palestinian Authority, with whom it had a fratricidal conflict for control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007.

This type of terrorism is strategically designed to force a government to alter its policies or actions, for example, Hamas's rocket attacks on Israeli cities are intended not only to cause immediate harm but also to create a climate of fear that compels the Israeli government to reconsider its position on the Palestinian territories: the primary target of these attacks is the Israeli government, while the civilian population serves as the instrumental target, whose suffering is meant to influence governmental decisions.

In an interview, in 2007 Khaled Mesh'al, an influent Hamas member declared their clearly political objective to not recognize Israel as a legitimate state:

<< Q: Are you saying you will drive a harder bargain than other negotiators in past?

A: The method used by Israel in its negotiations with the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and in its attempts to take free compromises in return for limited small offers will not work with the Hamas movement. Hamas today has the confidence of the people and won the ballot. Hamas cannot accept the logic of bargains with Israel. Israel has to respect Palestinian rights. We are demanding a Palestinian state on the 1967 border including Jerusalem and the right of return. Israel has to say yes I agree and withdraw. But for Israel to suck us into bargains in stages and in packages, this road constitutes an attempt to weaken the Palestinian position, to lure the Palestinians into lowering the ceiling of their demands and to use the time factor and pressure which will not work with us.

Q: What does Hamas want?

A: We in Hamas are with the general Palestinian and Arab position and we are with the consensus of the necessity of establishing a Palestinian state on the June 4 borders, including (East) Jerusalem, the right of return and the withdrawal of Israel to these borders.

Q: Does that mean you accept Israel exists?

A: We do not want to go into issues that complicate the struggle. We are offering a real chance that the Arabs and Palestinians believe in. There will remain a state called Israel, this is an issue of fact but the Palestinians should not be required to recognize Israel. Not all

international relations are based on the basis of recognition. Who will be the one to grab this chance?>>⁹⁴

In summary, Hamas uses fear to influence government actions, with the primary target often being the government itself, and the immediate victims serving to that end.

1.3 Violent—or, equally important, threatens violence

Hamas, with its attacks on civilians, such as rocket strikes on Israeli towns, have led to its designation as a terrorist organization by many countries, these actions are intended to coerce political change through violence, which is a hallmark of terrorism.

Terrorism is often described as "the weapon of the weak"⁹⁵ a tactic used by those who lack the military power to confront their enemies directly, terrorists target civilians not because they can overpower armies, but because they aim to instil fear and destabilize societies. This is a critical point in understanding how Hamas operates: as a militant organization, Hamas lacks the conventional military strength to directly challenge Israel's armed forces, instead, it resorts to attacks on civilians, such as rocket fire and suicide bombings, to create widespread fear and insecurity, these acts of terror serve to disrupt daily life, sow panic, and exert psychological pressure on the Israeli population.

To investigate the violent nature of Hamas we will use five cases in which the use of violence was evident:

- Gilad Shalit Attack (June 2006)⁹⁶: Hamas demonstrated its violent tactics by infiltrating Israel, killing two soldiers, and kidnapping Gilad Shalit. He was held in captivity for over five years, showcasing Hamas' willingness to use hostage-taking as a political tool.
- Gaza War (2008-2009)⁹⁷: Hamas launched hundreds of rockets indiscriminately at Israeli civilian areas, causing deaths and injuries. The attacks targeted densely

⁹⁴ *The Avalon Project : Hamas Covenant 1988. (n.d.).* https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

⁹⁵ *Politicalviolenceataglace. (2022, August 26). Is terrorism a "Weapon of the weak"? The evidence says no - political violence at a glance. Political Violence at a Glance.* <https://politicalviolenceataglace.org/2022/08/29/is-terrorism-a-weapon-of-the-weak-the-evidence-says-no/>

⁹⁶ "2009 Video of Gilad Shalit in Captivity." *The New York times. (2011): n. pag. Print.*

⁹⁷ Byman, Daniel. "Why Gaza Hasn't Erupted into All-out War." *The Washington post. (2019): n. pag. Print.*

populated regions, showing a disregard for civilian lives and contributing to escalating violence.

- Rocket Fire from Gaza (2012)⁹⁸ : In November 2012, Hamas intensified its violent campaign by firing long-range rockets at Israeli cities, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, aiming at civilian targets and triggering a large-scale military response.
- Gaza War (2014)⁹⁹: Hamas fired thousands of rockets into Israel, again targeting civilians, while also attempting attacks through underground tunnels. The scale of the attacks reflected the group's growing military capabilities and its commitment to violent resistance.
- May 2021 Attack¹⁰⁰: Hamas launched over 4,000 rockets at Israeli cities in just eleven days, aiming directly at civilian populations. This escalation of violence caused widespread destruction and civilian casualties, further intensifying the conflict.

Hamas's actions exemplify the complexities of modern terrorism, where the line between political violence and terrorism is often blurred, and perceptions of legitimacy depend heavily on one's viewpoint

A critical aspect of terrorism is that it is not defined solely by the type of target that receive the violence, but while many scholars argue that terrorism primarily targets civilians, it can also include attacks on military personnel if the intent is to create fear and achieve a political objective

In the case of Hamas, this perspective is crucial, the organization's use of violence, whether against civilians or military targets, is designed to instil terror and further its political aims. By creating a climate of fear, Hamas seeks to undermine the sense of security within Israel and pressure the government into making political concessions.

The relationship between Hamas and the terror it generates is deeply rooted in the use of psychological warfare by targeting both civilians and military personnel, Hamas employs

⁹⁸ Brulliard, Karin, Abigail Hauslohner, and Debbi Wilgoren. "Air Assaults and Rocket Fire Continue in Gaza." *The Washington post*. (2012): n. pag. Print.

⁹⁹ "Dozens Killed in Mideast Conflict That Recalls 2014 Gaza War." *St. Louis post-dispatch*. (2021): n. pag. Print.

¹⁰⁰ Bergman, Ronen, Mark Mazzetti, and Maria Abi-Habib. "Hubris and Missed Signals As Hamas Readied Attack." *The New York times*. (2023): n. pag. Print.

violence as a strategic tool, blurring the lines between conventional military action and terrorism. This approach allows Hamas to compensate for its lack of military strength while still pursuing its broader political objectives through the creation of fear and instability.

1.4 Designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions

The third key element in defining terrorism is the far-reaching psychological repercussion, without them, violent acts do not qualify as terrorism. Far-reaching psychological repercussion is what distinguishes terrorists from common criminals, mafiosi, or individuals with psychiatric issues.

Terrorists, unlike mafiosi or paranoid killers, operate with a strategy driven by ideology, while both may use violence, their purposes differ: Mafiosi may commit murder for money or revenge, but they do not aim to change society. The assassination of Giovanni Falcone by the mafia in 1992 was not intended to alter Italian society, whereas terrorist acts are designed to bring about or resist social change.

Ideology also guides terrorists in choosing their targets, terrorist leaders consider whether an attack aligns with their ideological goals, and if a terrorist organization violates its ideological principles, it risks losing support and facing internal divisions: the use of a precise ideology allows us to maintain consistency in the choice of victims which creates psychological repercussions. In fact, the killings carried out by terrorist organizations are full of meaning and therefore affect the population in a profound way

Hamas's actions, such as the 2001 Sbarro restaurant bombing in Jerusalem,¹⁰¹ are like those of other terrorist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda, targeting civilians to further their ideological cause.

The 2001 Sbarro bombing occurred on August 9, in Jerusalem when a Palestinian suicide bomber, part of Hamas, detonated an explosive device inside a crowded Sbarro pizzeria and killed 15 people, including 7 children, and injured over 130 others. This incident remains one of the deadliest during the Second Intifada, and had repercussion for several years later. Hamas's ideological framework shapes its strategy, target selection, and justification for violence, fitting the definition of a terrorist organization both sociologically and historically

¹⁰¹ Hsu, Spencer S. "US Unseals Charge against Jordanian Woman in 2001 Jerusalem Sbarro Bombing." *The Washington post*. (2017): n. pag. Print.

Another example is the "Knife Intifada"¹⁰²: a wave of violence in which Palestinians, often young individuals, carried out stabbings, car-ramming's, and shootings against Israeli civilians and soldiers. Hamas played a significant role in encouraging these attacks, although many were carried out by individuals acting independently, the attacks were frequent and unpredictable, often occurring in public spaces like bus stops, streets, and markets.

The random nature of the knife attacks created a pervasive sense of fear and anxiety in Israeli society, unlike more conventional attacks, which might target specific locations or institutions, these assaults occurred in everyday environments, civilians felt vulnerable because attacks could happen anywhere, at any time, by anyone. This constant state of alert deeply impacted mental health, increasing stress and paranoia in daily life.

The fact that many of these attackers were "lone wolves" made it difficult for security forces to predict or prevent the attacks. Traditional security measures like intelligence gathering or border control were less effective, as many attackers were ordinary people who decided, often without prior warning, to commit violence amplifying the sense of helplessness among the Israeli public.

The exposure to random violence significantly shaped psychological development. Growing up in an environment where terror could strike at any moment led to increased cases of trauma, anxiety disorders, and emotional detachment, the long-term effects on the younger generation included a harder stance toward the other side of the conflict and a more ingrained sense of fear.

The "Knife Intifada" had profound psychological consequences due to its randomness, the involvement of everyday people, and the public nature of the attacks. It reinforced feelings of vulnerability, fear, and mistrust, which had far-reaching effects on both individuals and society as a whole, demonstrating the use by Hamas of techniques, guided by an ideology, which have consequences far beyond the act itself

1.5 Perpetrated by a subnational group or nonstate entity

In order to discover if Hamas is a terroristic organization, we have to determine if Hamas have a structure of a national movement or the structure of a terroristic group:

¹⁰² Booth, William, and Ruth Eglash. "Knife Attacks on Israelis Add to Unease; 2 Killed in Separate Assaults (Posted 2014-11-11 02:10:44)." *The Washington post*. (2014): n. pag. Print.

<< Hamas's Qassam Brigades had developed their tactics, training, recruitment and strategic planning in the four decades since they were founded. What had begun as a poorly equipped militant group had grown into a modern armed force commanding up to 35,000 troops. Equipment was smuggled in, manufactured locally or derived from the PA armouries that survived previous Israeli attempts to destroy them. Intelligence gathering was innate to the organization, and the funds for arms reportedly included profits from crypto-currency trading. Some Hamas commanders and cadres were also organized into elite commando and cyber-ops units, including the Nukhba Force. Hamas had developed its force capacity to inflict violence on a technically and numerically superior enemy force. Hamas commanders were tacticians and students of modern warfare – particularly urban guerrilla and insurgent tactics. They prided themselves on their planning abilities. They learned from many military encounters with Israel and combined this experience with unrivalled knowledge of the terrain in which they operated, including their network of tunnels beneath Gaza. And where some perceive the conflict to be a complex contemporary affair encumbered with the paraphernalia of modern warfare, Hamas kept it simple.¹⁰³>>

Terrorist Organizations often have a decentralized structure with cells operating independently to avoid detection, their focus is usually on creating disruption rather than long-term control of territory while guerrilla groups typically have a more centralized structure with clear command and control: They aim to govern and influence territory, often seeking to build popular support.

Hamas Structure has a well-developed organizational structure with distinct military and political wings. They operate elite units like the Nukhba Force and use advanced strategies for intelligence and deception.

Moreover, Hamas exercises control over Gaza, implementing local governance and social services while engaging in armed conflict with Israel.

Hamas's structured military and political organization and control over Gaza suggest characteristics of a guerrilla group, their ability to govern and provide services also supports

¹⁰³ Milton-Edwards, B. and Farrell, S. (2024) HAMAS. 1st edn. Polity. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/4462720>

this classification, doesn't align totally with Hoffman definition of terroristic organizations also for the use of the violence

Hamas's dual approach of using terror tactics and engaging in guerrilla warfare blurs the lines between Hoffman's categories, their actions combine elements of both terrorism and guerrilla warfare, reflecting their complex nature.

Hamas's resistance to superior military power through innovative tactics and deception aligns with guerrilla strategies, the structure of Hamas isn't the typical structure of a terroristic group leading the perception of whether Hamas is a terrorist organization or a legitimate resistance movement often depending on political perspectives. This uncommon structure let some believe Hamas is fighting against occupation; for others, referring to the other Hoffman parameters its tactics of targeting civilians are unjustifiable acts of terrorism, but just as we learnt earlier the definition of terrorism is more a matter of perspective than objective subject.

Terrorism in western democracies

Western democracies, despite their apparent commitment to human rights and international norms, can engage in forms of state terrorism.

Ruch Blakeley, argue that state terrorism is not limited to authoritarian regimes like Stalin's or Hitler's, even liberal and democratic regimes have employed similar strategies, fso to recognize them she developed the **Duo Framework**¹⁰⁴:

- State violence and coercion:

This aspect of the framework focuses on acts of physical and psychological violence perpetrated by the state or state-linked actors, such as military forces, police, or paramilitary groups. These acts are directed against civilians or specific populations, with the goal of spreading fear and maintaining political, social, or economic control over certain areas.

¹⁰⁴ Blakeley, R. (2009). *State terrorism and neoliberalism: The North in the South*. Routledge Critical Terrorism S.

According to Blakeley, this violence is deliberate and systematic, not random, and is used to intimidate or punish social, political, or ethnic groups.

- Political or economic objectives:

The second part of the framework examines the motivations behind state violence. The goal is almost always to maintain political power or defend economic interests, often tied to a neoliberal agenda. Blakeley argues that state terrorism is often connected to economic policies that benefit the local or global elite, at the expense of the poor or marginalized populations.

In this sense, state terrorism becomes a tool to protect an unjust economic system that promotes privatization, deregulation, and free-market policies, exploiting and oppressing the most vulnerable populations.

Terrorism indeed is a combat technique to gain or retain power, states use it to maintain power, while social movements, use it to conquer it.¹⁰⁵

State terrorism is also defined as the systematic use of violence by a state to instil fear among the population and to achieve political or social control¹⁰⁶. This form of terrorism is often directed towards civilians, and the distinctive feature is that the violence is perpetrated by or with the support of the state itself, rather than by non-state actors.

Western democracies, such as Israel and the United States, may resort to terrorist practices under certain circumstances, like support for violent regimes and paramilitary groups during the Cold War and military operations that have caused civilian suffering, such as the bombing of German cities during World War II or actions by colonial powers.

History of the possibility of a terroristic state

Jacobin government of Robespierre is an early example of state terrorism, where terror was seen as a necessary means to defend the revolution and democracy too. This example illustrates that the practice of state terrorism and democracies has deep historical roots and

¹⁰⁵ Orsini, A. (2024). *Ucraina-Palestina. Il terrorismo di Stato nelle relazioni internazionali*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*

can be adopted even in contexts that are portrayed as justifiable or necessary for the greater good.

The central idea is that the concept of state terrorism needs to be critically examined even in democratic contexts, the violence perpetrated by democratic states, whether directly or through intermediaries, challenges the common perception that such states cannot resort to terrorism. Academic literature has extensively documented and recognized this possibility on how Western democracies, through their foreign and domestic security policies, might engage in forms of state terrorism, despite their claims of upholding human rights and international norms, these states may adopt systematic violence strategies that create fear and suffering among civilians. Understanding this phenomenon requires critical analysis and a reassessment of the assumptions regarding the role and morality of democratic states in the context of global security, noted that it's important for us to ask ourselves, is Israel a terroristic state?

Is Israel a terroristic state?

In evaluating whether Israel can be considered a terroristic state, it's essential to repeat what state terrorism entails: excessive use of political violence against a defenseless civilian population to instil fear and coerce them into following the government's agenda.

This definition aligns with those provided by scholars such as Ruth Blakeley and Sam Raphael¹⁰⁷, who view state terrorism as the application of violence by political and economic elites to force populations into compliance through fear.

To understand this concept, we must consider classic political theories on power and legitimacy: a government is seen as legitimate when it has the consent of its people, which leads to voluntary compliance with its laws and policies, however, when a government loses this consent, it often resorts to coercion and violence to maintain control.

In the case of Israel, the government's control over the Palestinian population in the occupied territories is not based on their consent but rather on force.

¹⁰⁷ Jackson, R. (2016). *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*.

In order to begin our analysis on the Israeli state I will take inspiration from the ten facts gathered by Alessandro Orsini in his book “Ucraina-Palestina. Il terrorismo di Stato nelle relazioni internazionali” that illustrate the argument that Israel uses terroristic methods to maintain its dominance over the Palestinians:

- **Arbitrary Killings:** Israeli soldiers are reported to kill Palestinian civilians with impunity. For instance, incidents like the shooting of a three-year-old Palestinian boy in June 2023 highlight a pattern where soldiers act without fear of repercussions, creating widespread terror among the population.
- **Torture:** Arbitrary arrests of Palestinians by Israeli forces often lead to torture. Reports from organizations like B’Tselem and HaMoked reveal systematic abuse¹⁰⁸, with detainees subjected to severe mistreatment and torture, often without proper legal processes or oversight.
- **Sexual Violence:** There are documented cases of Israeli soldiers committing or threatening sexual violence against Palestinian women¹⁰⁹. This abuse is part of a broader pattern of violence and intimidation.
- **Intercommunal Violence:** Israeli settlers are allowed to perpetrate violence against Palestinians, often with state support. The Israeli government has been accused of arming and backing settlers, who then attack Palestinian communities with little to no legal consequences.
- **Externalized Terrorism:** Israel has been accused of employing a form of "parastatal" terrorism through settlers and other groups who carry out violent acts against Palestinians. This method involves indirect violence where the state allows or supports acts of terror by non-state actors.
- **Guilt by Association:** The Israeli state employs collective punishment by holding family members of alleged militants responsible for their relatives' actions. This policy, which includes demolishing homes and revoking residency rights, is used to instill fear and punish entire families for the actions of individuals.

¹⁰⁸ Khalel, S., & Khalel, S. (n.d.). New report details Israel’s ‘broad systemic abuse’ of East Jerusalem minors. Mondoweiss. <https://mondoweiss.net/2017/10/details-systemic-jerusalem/>

¹⁰⁹ Borger, J. (2024, February 22). Claims of Israeli sexual assault of Palestinian women are credible, UN panel says. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/22/claims-of-israeli-sexual-assault-of-palestinian-women-are-credible-un-panel-says>

- **Genocidal Threats:** There have been alarming statements from Israeli officials about the potential for extreme violence¹¹⁰, including the use of nuclear weapons against Gaza. These threats serve to create an atmosphere of existential fear among the Palestinian population.
- **Strategic Use of Starvation:** Israel has been accused of using starvation as a weapon. Reports indicate that restrictions on food and aid are deliberately implemented to weaken Palestinian resistance and increase their vulnerability, contributing to a climate of terror.
- **Infrastructure Destruction:** The deliberate destruction of essential infrastructure, such as hospitals and schools, has been used as a means of collective punishment. This strategy exacerbates the suffering of the civilian population and serves as a tool of repression.
- **Displacement and Home Demolitions:** Systematic demolitions of Palestinian homes and displacement of communities further exemplify the use of terroristic methods. These actions are aimed at forcibly removing Palestinians from their land, instilling fear, and disrupting their lives.

In summary, these ten facts suggest that Israel's policies and actions in the occupied territories exhibit characteristics of state terrorism. The use of violence, torture, and collective punishment, combined with threats and strategic measures to inflict suffering, align with the elements of state terrorism as described by scholars and critics.

Not only has Alessandro Orsini collected facts about Israel that demonstrate that it is a terrorist state, but Sandra Nasr has also collected five facts about Israel that can demonstrate its true nature:

- **Asymmetric Focus on Terrorism:** While Palestinian attacks, particularly rocket fire from Gaza, are framed as terrorism, little attention is given to the widespread Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians, especially in Gaza and the Occupied

¹¹⁰ Ghanem, N. (2024, January 5). Database exposes 500 instances of Israeli incitement to genocide in Gaza. Database Exposes 500 Instances of Israeli Incitement to Genocide in Gaza. <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/database-exposes-500-instances-of-israeli-incitement-to-genocide-in-gaza-16537146>

Territories. Israeli actions, including airstrikes and military raids, often lead to high civilian casualties and are justified as self-defense, despite their disproportionate impact.

- **Violence and Humanitarian Crisis:** Gaza suffers from a devastating blockade imposed by Israel, resulting in severe shortages of food, water, medicine, and other essentials. Israeli military operations frequently target densely populated areas, causing extensive civilian deaths, including children. This siege is viewed as collective punishment, intensifying the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- **Mass Arrests and Detentions:** Israel regularly arrests Palestinians, including minors, often without formal charges or trial. This tactic, part of a broader strategy to suppress Palestinian resistance, has led to widespread suffering and trauma, further entrenching the conflict.
- **Destruction of Homes and Ethnic Cleansing:** The demolition of Palestinian homes and infrastructure is a long-term strategy by Israel to displace Palestinians and expand Israeli settlements are seen as an attempt to ethnically cleanse certain areas, further complicating any potential for peace.
- **International Law Violations and Lack of Accountability:** Despite numerous violations of international law, such as collective punishment and the targeting of civilians, Israel faces little accountability due to the protection of powerful allies, particularly the United States.

The narrative of Palestinian terrorism often obscures the larger context of Israeli state terror and the systematic oppression of Palestinians, this imbalance in the portrayal of violence contributes to the perpetuation of the conflict and the suffering of civilians, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank.

Finally, to determine if Israeli actions are legitimate responses to threats or if they are aimed at terrorizing a population for political purposes, we will also use the framework of Sandra

Nasr, in which state terrorism occurs when key factors are present: proportionality, specificity, justifiability, and strategic value

- **Proportionality:** Israel's responses are often disproportionate, punishing entire populations for the actions of a few, bypassing legal processes, and using excessive force.
- **Specificity:** The concept of "collateral damage" is critiqued, especially when foreseeable harm to civilians is ignored, turning military actions into collective punishment.
- **Justifiability:** Israel's failure to uphold international human rights standards leads to fear and insecurity among Palestinians. The state's disregard for legal obligations in its treatment of civilians is seen as a means of political control.
- **Strategicality:** Many Israeli actions lack clear strategic value, such as bombing civilian areas, which serves more to intimidate and subjugate than to achieve legitimate military goals.¹¹¹

Now that we understand the methodology, we will analyse two case studies in particular that can shed light on the nature of the Israeli state

Plan Dalet

The adoption of Plan D (Plan Dalet) in 1948¹¹², led by General Yigael Yadin, marks a critical moment in the history of the use of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The plan was developed as a strategic military operation in the context of the looming declaration of the State of Israel and the ongoing conflict with Arab forces. Its official aim was to protect

¹¹¹ Jackson, R., Murphy, E., & Poynting, S. (2010b). *Contemporary state terrorism: Theory and Practice*.

¹¹² Khalidi, W. (1988). *Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine*. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 18(1), 4–33. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2537591>

Jewish settlements and consolidate territorial control for the nascent Israeli state by countering perceived hostile threats from Arab forces and villages.

However, the methods outlined in Plan D went beyond mere defensive actions, the plan explicitly called for the destruction of Arab villages through burning, explosives, and mining, particularly in cases where the villages could not be permanently controlled by Israeli forces. The goal was to neutralize any resistance and, crucially, to expel the Arab population beyond the new state's boundaries.

Historian Ilan Pappé argues that the principal objective of the plan was the destruction of Arab villages and the eviction of their inhabitants, rendering them a liability for Arab forces in the broader conflict,

<< the creation in Palestine of a purely Jewish state, both as a safe haven for Jews and as the cradle of a new Jewish nationalism. And this state had to be exclusively Jewish not only in its sociopolitical structure but also in its ethnic composition.>> ¹¹³

In execution, Plan D resulted in the conquest of significant territory—approximately 20,000 square kilometres—that was almost entirely cleared of its Arab population, the operation was particularly successful in and around Haifa, where 15 towns and villages were depopulated in quick succession, despite the presence of British soldiers, foreign journalists, and UN personnel, as noted by Baruch Kimmerling¹¹⁴. This widespread displacement contributed to what is now known as the Nakba, or "catastrophe," in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes during the 1948 Arab Israeli War.

The state's culpability extends to the present day, with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) often complicit in or indifferent to violence committed by settlers against Palestinians: home demolitions, used as collective punishment for suspected terrorist activities, further reinforce a climate of fear and intimidation, impacting entire communities. These actions, while framed as security measures, are viewed as disproportionate, unlawful, and aimed at maintaining dominance over the Palestinian population rather than achieving peace or reducing terrorism.

¹¹³ Journals. (n.d.). Institute for Palestine Studies. <http://www.palestine-studies.org/en/journals/abstract.php?%20id=7175>

¹¹⁴ Kimmerling, B., & Migdal, J. S. (2003). *The Palestinian people: A History*.

Israel's policies in the Occupied Territories constitute state terrorism, perpetuating cycles of fear and violence without providing legitimate security or strategic benefits while western narrative surrounding terrorism in relation to Israel and Palestine, disproportionately focus on Palestinian attacks while overlooking Israel's systemic violence and repression against Palestinians. Western media often highlights Palestinian militants, such as those in Gaza firing rockets into Israel, while neglecting the extensive state terror carried out by Israel, which includes military assaults, mass arrests, and the destruction of Palestinian homes and infrastructure.

Key factors in Plan D

Following our methodological approach as we did before for Hamas, comparing it to Hoffman's notions we will now compare, Plan D it with Sandra Nasr's key factors:

- **Proportionality:** Plan Dalet's actions, like the destruction of entire villages, were often disproportionate. Civilians were broadly targeted, punishing entire populations for the actions of a few, similar to Nasr's critique of Israel's use of excessive force.
- **Specificity:** The plan blurred the line between combatants and civilians, leading to collective punishment. The widespread "clearing" of Palestinian areas ignored foreseeable civilian harm, fitting Nasr's critique of collateral damage.
- **Justifiability:** Plan Dalet failed to uphold international standards for civilian protection, creating fear and insecurity. This aligns with Nasr's argument that Israel's actions often serve political control rather than justifiable military needs.
- **Strategic Value:** While Plan Dalet had military goals, its large-scale displacement of civilians often seemed more about subjugation than military necessity, resonating with Nasr's view that such actions aim to intimidate populations rather than achieve legitimate objectives.

From these considerations we can draw that the Dalet plan was a real example of the use of state terrorism by the Israeli state, but our aim is to understand whether it was an isolated case or there is a type of systematic state terrorism to be part of Israel

Sabra and Shatila massacre

The Sabra and Shatila massacre is often used as an example of state terrorism, where paramilitary groups allied with Israel killed Palestinian civilians.

It took place from September 16 to 18, 1982, during the Lebanese Civil War, in Beirut, Lebanon and involved the killing of between 80 to 3,500 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians by a Lebanese Christian militia known as the Phalange (Kataeb Party), with the indirect involvement of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

The massacre occurred in two refugee camps: Sabra and Shatila, which were primarily home to Palestinian refugees.

The events occurred against the backdrop of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), a conflict with multiple factions, including Christian, Muslim, and Druze militias, as well as Palestinian groups.

By September 1982, the PLO leadership had agreed to leave Beirut under a U.S.-brokered deal, and the majority of PLO fighters were evacuated. This left Palestinian civilians, including women, children, and elderly people, in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps largely unprotected.

On September 14, 1982, Lebanon's newly elected Christian president, Bashir Gemayel, who was also the leader of the Phalange militia, was assassinated, so, the Phalangists sought to take revenge, blaming Palestinians for the assassination.

After the assassination, the Israeli army, surrounded the camps but did not enter them, and allowed Phalangist militiamen to enter Sabra and Shatila on September 16, ostensibly to root out any remaining "terrorists" (armed PLO fighters). Over the next 36 hours, the militia members carried out the massacre, systematically killing hundreds of civilians, including women, children, and the elderly, in a brutal manner, including executions, rapes, and torture.

International outrage followed once the full extent of the massacre became known. Photographs and reports by journalists, such as Robert Fisk, shocked the global community. In Israel, public outcry led to the establishment of the Kahan Commission to investigate Israel's role, which concluded in 1983 that Israel bore "indirect responsibility" for the massacre because it allowed the Phalangists into the camps and failed to act once the killings became evident. The Commission found Defense Minister Ariel Sharon personally responsible for ignoring the dangers of allowing the Phalangists into the camps, recommending his resignation. Sharon stepped down from his post as defense minister but remained a significant figure in Israeli politics

Although Israeli forces did not directly participate in the killings, they were widely condemned for their role in facilitating the massacre. The Israeli army controlled the area, including surrounding the camps, manning checkpoints, and providing logistical support to the Phalangists, Israeli forces even fired flares to illuminate the camps at night, allowing the militia to carry out the killings.

Duo Framework in Sabra and Shatila

The Sabra and Shatila massacre remain a profound symbol of the suffering of Palestinian refugees and a dark chapter in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it intensified the ongoing resentment and grievances of Palestinians and their supporters, as the refugee situation in Lebanon persisted.

To compare this massacre with Ruth Blakeley's **Duo Framework** for identifying state terrorism, we can analyze the situation based on the two key elements of her model: state violence and coercion and political or economic objectives.

State Violence and Coercion:

- According to Blakeley's framework, state terrorism involves the **use of violence** by state actors or state-linked groups against civilians. In the Sabra and Shatila

massacre, although the direct perpetrators were the Phalangist militia, **Israel's role** as a state actor overseeing and facilitating the conditions for the massacre is critical.

- The **IDF controlled the area** around the camps and permitted the militia to enter, knowing that violence was likely to occur. Despite receiving reports of atrocities, the Israeli forces did not intervene to stop the killings, which lasted for over two days. This suggests a form of **coercion or complicity**, even if indirect, as the state (Israel) could be seen as allowing or enabling the violence for strategic purposes.
- From the perspective of the Duo Framework, this constitutes **systematic and deliberate violence**, as the IDF's actions (or lack thereof) enabled the killings of civilians, potentially falling under Blakeley's definition of state terrorism.

Political or Economic Objectives:

- Blakeley argues that state terrorism often serves **political or economic interests**, typically those of an elite or ruling class. In the case of Sabra and Shatila, Israel's involvement in Lebanon was driven by its broader **strategic and political objectives**, including weakening the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which had a significant presence in Lebanon, and influencing the outcome of the Lebanese Civil War.
- The **massacre indirectly supported Israeli goals** of diminishing Palestinian resistance and asserting control over Lebanon through their Christian allies, the Phalangists. By allowing the massacre, Israel could have been furthering its interest in consolidating power in the region and reducing the influence of Palestinian factions.
- This aligns with Blakeley's framework, as the violence can be seen as serving the **geopolitical and security interests** of the Israeli state, even if it was carried out by a proxy militia. The **political intent** behind the violence was clear: to assert dominance in Lebanon and crush Palestinian influence, fulfilling the second criterion of the Duo Framework

The massacre also stained Israel's international reputation and contributed to a further questioning of its military conduct in Lebanon.

Despite numerous calls for justice, few, if any, of the perpetrators of the massacre have been held accountable in Lebanon. The event continues to be a major point of contention in discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader Middle East.

Despite direct and indirect responsibilities of Israel in coordinating the operation, the act is considered an example of how a state can allow or facilitate violence against populations under its protection.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict serves as a crucial case study in understanding the complexities of modern warfare, statehood, and the use of violence. This conflict not only highlights the deep historical and geopolitical tensions but also raises important questions about the nature of terrorism and state behaviour. By examining whether groups like Hamas and states like Israel engage in terrorist tactics, the chapter opens the door to a broader reflection on the role of democracies in conflict, it challenges us to consider whether democratic nations, traditionally seen as upholding human rights and the rule of law, may also resort to methods that resemble terrorism. This case serves as a valuable example for the future, urging us to critically examine the actions of states and question whether any democracy is immune to such practices when facing internal or external threats.

Chapter 5

General reflection on state terrorism

" State terrorism is the organized and deliberate use of violence against innocent civilians to achieve political, social or economic objectives" ¹¹⁵. This definition suggests that terrorist violence is not exclusive to external actors but can be an institutionalized practice within state apparatuses.

In recent chapters we have explored the various forms in which terrorism manifests itself, including repressive mechanisms of internal security forces, clandestine operations, and policies aimed at suppressing political dissent. One of the key aspects of these forms of violence is their legitimization through national security discourse. Indeed, the state often justifies the use of violence in the name of protection against internal or external threats. As Noam Chomsky argues, "states can commit horrific crimes under the veil of national security defines, justifying systematic acts of violence against their own citizens." ¹¹⁶, this implies a critical review of the way state violence is normalized through the legal and institutional apparatus.

The role of the state as a violent actor thus emerges as central to the discussion of state terrorism, as Ruth Blakeley points out, "[state terrorism] not only represents a violation of basic human rights, but also undermines the very foundations of democracy, as the state uses violent coercion to suppress dissent and maintain power."¹¹⁷. This highlights how state violence is not simply a response to threats but can be a deliberate tool of political and social control. States, because of their monopoly of force, can use violence in ways that are difficult for non-state actors to challenge, and they often do so with a degree of impunity that is rare for other forms of terrorism.

Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) has provided an important theoretical framework for analyzing these dynamics, as it shifts the focus away from traditional narratives about

¹¹⁵ Stohl, M. (2006). "The State as Terrorist: Insights and Implications". *Democracy and Security*, 2(1), 1-25.

¹¹⁶ Chomsky, N. (2001). 9-11. *Seven Stories Press*.

¹¹⁷ Blakeley, R. (2009). *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*. *Routledge*

terrorism as an exclusively non-state phenomenon. As Richard Jackson, a leading proponent of CTS, argues, “conventional definitions of terrorism tend to exclude the state as perpetrator, reducing the phenomenon to the violence of marginalized groups. However, CTS challenges this limited view, arguing that the state itself can be a terrorist actor”¹¹⁸ From this perspective, state terrorism is a form of violence that is inscribed in power structures, often invisibilized or justified by official narratives.

State terrorism is a reality that must be approached with a critical and informed gaze. As CTS emerges, the analysis of terrorism cannot ignore the role of states in perpetuating political violence through legitimized means. The actions of states, while clothed in legality, can have devastating consequences, not only for the direct victims, but also for the democratic structure of a country. As Jenny Hocking argues, “State terrorism represents one of the most insidious forms of political violence because it operates from within power structures and is often normalized or ignored by international communities.”¹¹⁹. Understanding state terrorism, therefore, requires ongoing deconstruction of official narratives and critical reflection on the violent practices of states in the contemporary global context.

Global and Regional Consequences of State Terrorism.

The consequences of state terrorism are profoundly devastating, both globally and regionally, as violence exercised by governments against their own citizens or other populations can have a lasting impact on political stability, human rights and international security. While state terrorism often occurs under the cover of national security or the suppression of political dissent, its effects extend far beyond state borders, affecting entire regions and generating dynamics of instability that are reflected globally.

¹¹⁸ Jackson, R. (2008). *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics, and Counter-terrorism*. Manchester University Press.

¹¹⁹ Hocking, J. (2005). *Terror Laws: ASIO, Counter-terrorism and the Threat to Democracy*. UNSW Press.

Human rights impact

One of the main consequences of state terrorism is the systematic violation of human rights. States that resort to terrorist practices often do so with the aim of crushing political dissent, repressing ethnic or religious minorities, and consolidating centralized power. As Blakeley points out, “State terrorism, by its very nature, is a direct threat to basic human rights, since its main objective is intimidation and coercion through the use of violence, fear and repression.”¹²⁰. This results in widespread abuses such as arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, and persecution of political opponents.

A significant historical example is the military dictatorships in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in countries such as Argentina and Chile, where military juntas systematically used terror to eliminate opposition movements. Argentina's “dirty war,” for example, saw tens of thousands of people disappear in the hands of state intelligence services, often with the tacit or explicit support of international powers. This kind of state violence has left deep scars in society, with entire generations scarred by trauma and loss. The impunity of perpetrators, who often enjoyed the support of other nations for geopolitical reasons, further aggravated the situation, undermining trust in democratic institutions.

Regional dynamics of instability

State terrorism is not limited to effects within the borders of a single state, but often generates regional instability. A current example is that of the Syrian civil war, where the government of Bashar al-Assad has been accused of using terrorist tactics against the civilian population, including indiscriminate bombing campaigns, use of chemical weapons, and humanitarian blockades. This systematic violence has not only devastated Syria, but also contributed to the destabilization of the entire Middle East region, causing a humanitarian crisis of global proportions and fueling migration flows to Europe and other continents.

State terrorism creates an environment of fear and distrust, where entire populations are forced to flee or live under the constant threat of repression, “State terrorism not only produces devastating effects domestically, but also has the capacity to trigger regional

¹²⁰ Blakeley, R. (2009). *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*. Routledge

dynamics of conflict and mass displacement, contributing to geopolitical destabilization"¹²¹. The instability generated expands like wildfire, with consequences that can last for decades.

Consequences on the international level

At the international level, state terrorism practices further complicate the already fragile diplomatic and security balances. States accused of such practices risk becoming international pariahs, resulting in economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, but these mechanisms rarely succeed in stopping state violence. For example, the North Korean government has been repeatedly accused of terrorist practices against its own citizens, including abductions and executions, as well as of sponsoring international terrorism. However, despite sanctions imposed by the international community, the regime has managed to maintain its internal control through the violent suppression of dissent and militarization of society.

International complicity in some cases further exacerbates the problem. Powerful countries, especially those with geopolitical interests, often turn a blind eye to the practices of state terrorism, or even provide direct or indirect support to the governments involved. During the Cold War, for example, the United States supported various authoritarian regimes in Latin America and other parts of the world that used state terror to suppress socialist or communist movements. As Blakeley points out, "international powers often play a central role in facilitating state terrorism, justifying it as a necessity in the context of global security or fighting " ¹²²

Impacts on democratic institutions

State terrorism not only threatens human rights and international security, but also erodes democratic institutions. When governments use violence to consolidate their power, they destroy the democratic fabric that guarantees political participation and representation. In some cases, democratic governments that adopt practices of state terrorism end up turning into authoritarian regimes, as has happened in various military dictatorships and repressive governments.

¹²¹ Stohl, M. (2006). "The State as Terrorist: Insights and Implications." *Democracy and Security*, 2(1), 1-25.

¹²² Blakeley, R. (2009). *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*. Routledge

The consequences of this erosion are reflected in the impoverishment of public trust in institutions, the militarization of society, and the increase in political polarization, in fact according to George Lopez, “State terrorism, while often acting under the guise of protecting the nation, actually undermines democracy and fosters the formation of authoritarian regimes.”¹²³ Violent repression leads to a political culture of fear and submission, which drastically reduces the space for criticism, civic participation, and peaceful resistance.

The Contribution of Critical Terrorism Studies to the Understanding of State Terrorism

While the study of state terrorism faces significant challenges, it also offers opportunities for a broader and deeper understanding of the role of states in perpetuating political violence. Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) has already opened new avenues of research, challenging traditional narratives about terrorism and emphasizing violence wielded by governments. However, future perspectives in the study of state terrorism require continued academic efforts to overcome conceptual and political barriers to a critical and comprehensive treatment of the phenomenon.

Expanding the Theoretical Framework

One of the first steps to advance the study of state terrorism involves the need to broaden the theoretical framework used by scholars to analyze violent practices by governments. As Richard Jackson points out, “CTS have highlighted how traditional definitions of terrorism are limited and inadequate in capturing the complexity of state violence” (Jackson, 2008). In the future, scholars must continue working to redefine terrorism not only as a phenomenon associated with non-state groups but as a political control strategy legitimized by state apparatuses.

This will require greater interdisciplinary engagement, drawing from fields such as political science, sociology, security studies, and human rights. Researchers need to explore how state terrorism intersects with other forms of political violence, such as war, repression, and covert

¹²³ Lopez, G. (1987). “The Effectiveness of International Sanctions.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 24(4), 293-304.

operations, to better understand how governments use violent tools to maintain power. Integrating **historical and comparative perspectives** will be crucial to analyzing similarities and differences between various forms of state terrorism, in order to identify common patterns and specific dynamics across different geopolitical contexts.

Role of Digital Technologies and New Media

Another promising area for future research concerns the use of digital technologies and new media by states to perpetuate more subtle and pervasive forms of terrorism. States no longer rely solely on direct physical violence to suppress dissent or exert control; with the advent of mass surveillance and disinformation operations, forms of state violence have become more sophisticated and less visible. As Zuboff notes, “digital surveillance has opened new avenues for state control, enabling the creation of security regimes that do not depend on direct physical coercion, but on the manipulation of information and behavior”¹²⁴

In the future, the study of state terrorism will need to include analyses of how digital technologies are used to spread fear and control among the population, through tools such as online censorship, social media manipulation, intrusive surveillance, and targeted disinformation campaigns. These tools can profoundly affect public perception, creating atmospheres of suspicion and intimidation that, without resorting to physical violence, generate similar consequences in terms of political repression and social control.

Challenges Related to Decolonizing Terrorism Studies

Another critical future perspective involves the decolonization of the study of state terrorism. Currently, much of the research on terrorism and security focuses on a Eurocentric or Western perspective, which tends to ignore or minimize the role of Western powers in perpetuating state terrorism, especially in postcolonial contexts. As Blakeley points out, “the violence exercised by colonial and neo-colonial powers against subjugated populations is often excluded from mainstream definitions of terrorism, perpetuating a distorted view of the phenomenon” (Blakeley, 2009).

¹²⁴ Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs.

In the future, it will be essential to develop decolonial approaches that recognize state terrorism as a tool of colonial and neo-colonial oppression. This will involve critically revising historical and contemporary narratives to include cases where colonial powers used violence to maintain control over indigenous populations or suppress national liberation movements. For example, the brutal repression of independence movements in Algeria during the independence war against France (1954-1962) is a clear case of state terrorism, often obscured in official narratives.

In this context, the study of resistance to state terrorism will become an important part of future research, as many violent state responses stem from the fear of losing control over colonized or marginalized populations. The rediscovery of victims' voices and resistance movements will enable the reconstruction of a more balanced and inclusive narrative.

Implications for Global Governance and Human Rights

Finally, a future perspective in the study of state terrorism concerns its implications for global governance and human rights. International governance mechanisms, including the United Nations and international courts, are often ineffective in preventing or prosecuting acts of state terrorism, partly because of their reliance on the very powers often responsible for such violence. As Hocking notes, “the international system tends to be oriented in favor of more powerful states, which can use their political and economic clout to avoid the legal and political consequences of their actions”.¹²⁵

In the future, it will be necessary to explore ways to strengthen international accountability and ensure that governments committing acts of terrorism are held responsible for their actions. This could include strengthening international human rights protection mechanisms, providing more support to the International Criminal Court, and tightening sanctions against regimes that practice state terrorism. However, it will also be essential to develop transitional justice mechanisms that allow for the reconciliation of societies affected by state violence through truth and reconciliation processes, victim reparations, and the rebuilding of democratic institutions.

¹²⁵ Hocking, J. (2005). *Terror Laws: ASIO, Counter-terrorism and the Threat to Democracy*. UNSW Press.

Who will save the West?

"We are all anxious about the future of Europe. My concern is not that we will suddenly find ourselves poor and submissive to others, we still have many strengths in Europe, but it is that over time we will inexorably become a less prosperous, less fair, less safe place and that, as a result, we will be less free to choose our own destiny": these are the words of former Prime Minister Mario Draghi presenting his report on EU competitiveness today at the plenary of the European Parliament in Strasbourg¹²⁶.

This situation leads us to the last theme of this thesis: the recruitment of human beings willing to work to protect us from enemy aggression. The issue concerns the whole Western world and in particular old Europe. It is no longer a question of money, which sooner or later will be allocated. The main critical issue is the search for reliable human resources in a continent that marks a constant aging of the population¹²⁷. On 1 January 2023, the median age of the EU's population reached 44.5 years. This means that half of the EU's population was older than 44.5 years, while the other half was younger. Once the funds have arrived, who can guarantee the thousands of new recruits we would need?

Despite new investments and the recent recruitment push, Germany announced that the number of its troops decreased slightly last year. The country's defense ministry said earlier this month that its army - the Bundeswehr - had shrunk by about 1,500 units in 2023, totaling about 181,500 men and women. The Bundeswehr's plan is to increase its ranks to 203,000 men by 2031.

Even the United Kingdom has recently admitted that it is having difficulty finding recruits: the Ministry of Defense said that in 2023 there were 5,800 more military personnel who left the armed forces than those who enlisted. The UK Defence Journal writes that since 2010 the British Army has not achieved its recruitment targets in any year.

¹²⁶ <https://tg24.sky.it/economia/2024/09/17/draghi-parlamento-europeo-report-competitivita>

¹²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing

"The problem is common to all European countries, including France, Italy and Spain"
Vincenzo Bove, a professor of political science at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, told to Euronews.¹²⁸

The pacifist rhetoric

The Western world is completely immersed in pacifist rhetoric. The idea of risking one's life to defend an abstract entity like "the nation" has lost all appeal, particularly among the new generations. After all, even behind the marches in favor of Hamas, behind the systematic indoctrination that pushes young people to cheer for any enemy of the West, the refusal to fight unconsciously emerges: if our civilization is taken by storm, unconditional surrender is the only option. We might as well legitimize this state of mind by deciding that other people's civilizations are superior to our own. The United States has a similar problem, which it manages to hide because it has a larger recruitment pool than Europe.

Digging into the soul of today's young people means going to the heart of the West's crisis of self-esteem. Far from thanking the fortunate fate that gave them birth into the most advanced civilization and into a historical era marked by fantastic advances in health and education, more and more girls and boys are demonstrating against their own society. At least those who in the two-year period 2023-2024 parade in marches and occupy universities in America and Europe. They see only the crimes of the West: horrible violence against other peoples, against nature, against oppressed minorities. The wealth of the West, or that of Israel, has become the overwhelming proof of a fault; it is accompanied by the certainty that this well-being exists only insofar as it is the result of crimes against humanity¹²⁹.

The opulence of the Western world, for this generation, is inextricably linked to the misery of others, abject exploitation, suffering, colonial wars, the plundering of natural resources and global warming.

Among the various consequences of this narrative, according to which the West has created third world poverty and global pollution, we have the ethical illegitimacy of anti-migration

¹²⁸ <https://it.euronews.com/2024/02/16/perche-gli-eserciti-europei-faticano-a-reclutare-soldati>

¹²⁹ <https://bdsitalia.org/index.php/ultime-notizie-sulbds/1839-barrows-friedman>

policies and the urgency of blocking economic development heralding an environmental apocalypse.

It is these convictions that animate young people from all over the world who take to the streets under the radical banners of the new terrorists, indoctrinated by Western teachers themselves.

Just as China, Russia and Turkey are rewriting their textbooks to make them even more imbued with nationalist pride, 1,376 Western professors and educators have sent the following petition to the President of the United States to stop sending weapons to Israel¹³⁰:

We, the undersigned academics and supporters, call on the United States to immediately halt the transfer of all offensive weapons and related funds to Israel. The International Court of Justice ruled by an overwhelming majority (15 out of 17 judges) that South Africa's allegations – that Israel is involved in genocide – are plausible. Despite the court ordering interim measures, the killings and starvation of Gazans have worsened exponentially.

The crime of genocide is defined as "any of the following acts [when] committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group": killing, causing serious physical or mental harm, inflicting conditions to cause physical destruction, imposing measures aimed at preventing births.

Israel's assault on Gaza appears to include both the acts and intentions stated in the definition of genocide. Over the past five months, Israel's attacks on civilians in Gaza have left more than 30,000 people dead, 70 percent of them children and women, with thousands more under the rubble. There are documented cases of executions, torture, sexual violence and persistent policies leading to starvation and dehydration. Public health experts predict that by the end of the year, hundreds of thousands of people will die as a result of Israel's actions. Israeli leaders have called for punishment and the abandonment of restraint, assigned collective responsibility to an entire nation for Hamas' heinous crimes of October 7, and called for making the Gaza Strip uninhabitable.

The United States is a party to the Genocide Convention and has an obligation to the international community to prevent this heinous crime. When the United States continues to

¹³⁰ <https://www.academicsforpeace.org/petitions/march-24-stop-arms-to-israel>

send weapons to Israel, especially after the interim measures of the International Court of Justice, it violates these obligations.

President Biden, do not let the United States go down in history as the facilitator of genocide. Comply with the obligations of the United States under international law and basic morality. The only way to stop the hunger of two million people, including 100+ Israeli hostages, is to end this war.

We repeat, genocide is plausible.

The turbulence within the universities is a thermometer of potential subversive phenomena. During the years of lead, real war bulletins arrived on the tables of the Italian academic senates. *"There are aggressions and kidnappings against teachers and staff, while the damage to university facilities is countless: from writings on the walls, often with threatening messages, to the apparently more folkloric proletarian expropriations".*¹³¹

Mutual demonization and political instability

For many years in America there has been discussion about the growing polarization of politics. A phenomenon that involves many countries to a greater or lesser extent. In Italy too, we are witnessing a polarization of the conflict. In the 1960s, our party system was characterized by the presence of many parties, with one large party in the center – the Christian Democrats – which always remained in government thanks to the support of several small allies. Stability depended on the fact that, on the right and left of the government coalitions, the oppositions were bearers of values and ideologies incompatible with the political system. In the parties of the extreme left and extreme right, the will to delegitimize the system was high.

The vision of a large center where most voters take refuge reflected the Anglo-Saxon democracies of the fifties. The major parties converged towards the center because they shared most of their respective policies. In Britain, when the Conservatives returned to

¹³¹ Alba Lazzaretto, professor of contemporary history at the University of Padua.

power in 1951, they did not dismantle the welfare system of Clement Attlee's Labour government and did not even touch nationalisations. The same in the United States: Roosevelt's legacy of the New Deal was partly accepted by Republicans.

The rupture of centrism in the Anglo-Saxon democracies came from the right, from neo-conservatism. The American neo-conservatives launched the attack on the foundations of the New Deal by identifying the state and its social functions as the enemy to be overthrown: "The government is the problem", Ronald Reagan said. The same happened in Great Britain with the conquest of the leadership of the party and then of the government by Margaret Thatcher, who quickly marginalized the *wets* of the One Nation social current. Progressively, in all Western countries, polarization has soared to values never seen before¹³². When the market became the new intangible totem, the left found another competing ground in the libertarian civil rights agenda. Initially launched by the Greens, *primarily* by the *German Grünen*, in the eighties, it was then adopted by the socialist parties. Precisely on many libertarian aspects and on the terrain of rights on the ethical-moral level, the left-wing parties have conquered new metropolitan, cultured, middle and upper-middle class social classes. This shift from the economic axis to the value axis has kept the socialist parties afloat, but at a cost: the loss of part of the popular electorate, variously dispersed, partly to the extreme right, largely to abstention¹³³.

On the other hand, however, the neoconservatives, by radicalizing their positions, have paved the way for the irruption of even more extreme formations, of which the French Front National (now Rassemblement national) of the Le Pen family represents the archetype.

The political gap has therefore widened throughout Europe and the electoral efficiency of the parties no longer depends on the chase of a mythical median voter, vestige of a politics that was, but on emphasizing their own positions by clearly distinguishing them from those of other political actors.

In the United States, the banks of political correctness have not supported this further polarization, and the new game consists in the demonization of the political opponent. I can't even say whether the repeated attacks against Trump can be considered terrorist acts, or the crazy action of mavericks.

¹³² Ezra Klein *Why We Are Polarized*, Profile Books, 2020

¹³³ D. Tuorto, *Disadvantaged voters and electoral exclusion in contemporary Europe*, Palgrave, 2022

I am convinced, however, that the possible killing of Trump would have triggered a violent and uncontrolled reaction in the United States and, probably, accentuated the political instability of the world's leading power and its allies who, from 2006 to today, have recorded a constant deterioration of the Democracy Index¹³⁴.

Conclusion

We began this thesis by talking about the black swans that have characterized the last five years. We have catalogued the different categories of terrorism, dedicating ample space to the Palestinian issue that has brought religiously motivated terrorism back to Europe¹³⁵, polarizing the political debate on migration policies.

We found the presence of almost all the components that triggered the years of lead: university riots; polarization of political alignments; demonization of the political opponent and retreat of the Democracy Index. Yet the risk of a return of political terrorism is minimal, not only are antagonistic factions absent, but the attitude of the new generations towards politics has also changed.

In the seventies, television began to enter homes, the first free radios were born and young people took to the streets to demonstrate for feminism, freedom and different political ideas. The voter turnout in Italy was more than 20 percentage points higher¹³⁶ than it is today. Public political debates frequently ended in physical confrontations between opposing factions. Terrorism caused 350 deaths and more than 1000 wounded.

Today, according to polls, young Italians appear to be divided not in an opposing way: undecided and wavering, willing to vote, on an equal footing, between right-wing or left-wing parties without grasping a traumatic difference¹³⁷. The debates are confined to the

¹³⁴ <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>

¹³⁵ <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/germania-sotto-shock-l-ennesima-strage-coltelli-AFxdjRWD>

¹³⁶ <https://pagellapolitica.it/articoli/storia-affluenza-elezioni-italia>

¹³⁷ <https://www.chiesadimilano.it/news/attualita/i-giovani-e-il-voto-europeo-piu-indecisi-che-disinteressati-2807210.html>

virtual squares of social media where, however, political issues are outclassed by the crisis between **Ferragni and Fedez**, football and the exploit of **Jannick Sinner**.¹³⁸

If on the one hand it is possible to conclude that today there are no elements that had set fire to the Italian squares, causing 350 deaths and over 1000 injured in our country, on the other hand we must not forget that the squares, today, have become virtual and that the possibility of generating hatred, fear and violence is even simpler, thanks to the simplicity with which anyone can create fake news.

¹³⁸ <https://notizie.tiscali.it/cronaca/articoli/social-temi-piu-discussi-2023/>

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Summary

The thesis primarily addresses the topic of terrorism through critical and historical lenses.

Here's a summary of the main sections:

1. **Introduction:** The thesis begins with a reflection on the metaphor of the "black swan" to discuss rare and impactful events like terrorism, war, climate change, and the pandemic. It introduces the idea that terrorism has been used politically, especially post-9/11, to manipulate public opinion, create new laws, and establish international cooperation. The author argues that terrorism studies have been influenced by governments to create a "useful" discipline rather than seeking truth.
2. **Critical Studies on Terrorism:** The thesis critiques conventional terrorism studies, proposing an approach based on critical studies. This includes a review of philosophers like Hobbes and how their theories relate to the discussion of non-state terrorism. The thesis looks at how minority rights have been addressed in various political frameworks, like the Albertine Statute, and discusses the evolution of rights in Italy.
3. **Scientific Methods of Analysis:** The author argues for the need for proper scientific methods to study political phenomena, critiquing simplistic or biased approaches. The thesis uses various theoretical frameworks like the Aristotelian model, feminist methodologies (e.g., Sandra Harding's work), and other philosophical approaches to analyze power, politics, and terrorism.
4. **Non-State Actors of Terrorism:** It delves into the nature of non-state terrorism, focusing on figures like Bruce Hoffman, and distinguishes terrorism from guerrillas, criminals, and lunatic assassins. Martha Crenshaw's psychological analysis of terrorists is also explored, examining the psychological and social reasons behind terrorism, such as group dynamics and the dehumanization of enemies.
5. **State Terrorism:** A significant portion of the thesis is dedicated to the idea of state terrorism, often overlooked in traditional studies. It argues that state terrorism, carried out by governments, has historically been used to maintain political control, suppress dissent, and secure economic resources. The thesis traces state terrorism

from ancient practices like tyrannicide to modern-day examples like the U.S. involvement in Latin America and European colonial practices.

6. **Historical Context:** The thesis provides a historical overview of state terrorism, starting from ancient times, including Plato and Aristotle's justifications for tyrannicide, to medieval Europe and the Renaissance. It examines how violence was used by states to consolidate power and suppress opposition, often through public spectacles and brutal punishment.

The work calls for a broader, multifaceted approach to understanding terrorism, acknowledging both non-state and state actors, while critiquing the ways in which traditional terrorism studies have been shaped by political and governmental interests.