

1 Chapter 6 1
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3 Radicalization and Terrorism in History: 2
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5 Lessons from the Radical Left Terrorist 4
6 Campaigns in Europe and the United States¹ 5
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9 Lena Malkki 9
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14 Studies in terrorism has never been strong at looking at past terrorism ‘as a means 14
15 for understanding the present and expecting the future’ (Risen 2006: 3). Rather, 15
16 it has been known for concentrating on those movements that pose a threat (to 16
17 Western states) at that moment (see e.g. Silke 2004, Gunning 2007). 17

18 In this chapter, I wish to challenge this state of affairs and show that looking 18
19 at the history of terrorism can help us better understand current developments and 19
20 what to expect in the future. I focus on the previous major case of transnational 20
21 terrorism in Western states, the radical left terrorist campaigns, and attempt to 21
22 show that while there are numerous obvious differences, there are also significant 22
23 continuities that make them particularly relevant to the current debate. 23

24 The chapter is based on the view that terrorism is a social phenomenon which 24
25 is dependent on and a product of the social environment. This means that the 25
26 development of terrorism is likely to involve both changes and continuities 26
27 (Duyvesteyn and Malkki, forthcoming). While the changes may give reason to 27
28 review established wisdom on terrorism in some respects, at the same time it is 28
29 unlikely that such changes would ever quickly render ‘much previous analysis of 29
30 terrorism based on established groups obsolete’ (Lesser 1999: 2). Besides, those 30
31 involved in terrorism do seem to think that something can be learnt from the 31
32 history of terrorism (Cronin 2008: 25). 32

33 A second important starting point for the discussion is the observation 33
34 that interpretations of social phenomena tend to change over time. This may 34
35 happen because new information on past events is disclosed. Furthermore, the 35
36 interpretations about past – as well as contemporary – events are always influenced 36
37 by what kinds of questions are asked and what kinds of phenomena are considered 37
38 worthy of attention. When assessing change and continuity in terrorism, it is 38
39 important to be sensitive to these dynamics and critically examine to what degree 39
40 the apparent changes may be due to changes in perceptions and interpretations, 40
41 rather than changes in terrorist movements and campaigns per se. 41

42 42
43 43
44 1 The author thanks Toby Archer for his help with the language check. 44

1 The chapter starts with a discussion on why radical left terrorist campaigns 1
2 have largely been ignored in the current debate and how the common stereotypes 2
3 about radical left terrorism (and jihadi terrorism) may have hidden their similarities 3
4 from sight. After that, I will highlight some observations about potential parallels 4
5 and common themes in radical left and jihadi terrorism in Western countries. To 5
6 be sure, the chapter does *not* aim to present any systematic comparison, but should 6
7 rather be read as a reflection that hopes to open up new avenues to explore in 7
8 future research. 8

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11 **Why Radical Left Terrorism has been Ignored** 11

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13 The term ‘radical left terrorist campaigns’ refers to a number of campaigns 13
14 committed in Western countries by revolutionary groups drawing their ideas and 14
15 inspiration from larger protest movements and Marxist-Leninist ideology. These 15
16 include most notably the campaigns of the Red Army Faction (RAF) in West 16
17 Germany and the Red Brigades (BR) in Italy. Such campaigns have commonly 17
18 been perceived as typical cases of ‘old’ terrorism and therefore, in the argument 18
19 about ‘old’ and ‘new’ terrorism, seen as not relevant to understanding the current 19
20 threat. 20

21 The radical left terrorist campaigns, however, seem to have been deemed even 21
22 less relevant than some other ‘old’ campaigns. It is much more common to come 22
23 across references to the IRA, the ETA, the Palestinian organisations of the 1970s, 23
24 or even the anarchist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. 24
25 This stands in contrast with the place that radical left terrorism has traditionally 25
26 occupied within the research field. The emergence of radical left terrorism was 26
27 one of those developments that led to the ‘rise of modern terrorism’ and the birth 27
28 of terrorism studies as we know it and was part of the standard case selection for 28
29 two decades. 29

30 One plausible explanation for this development is that the events of 9/11 30
31 changed views on what kind of terrorism is ‘serious’ enough to warrant attention. 31
32 The preferred tactics of the radical left terrorist campaigns were symbolic bombings 32
33 and kidnappings that targeted carefully selected individuals or companies deemed 33
34 as representatives of capitalism and imperialism. In contrast, today’s jihadi 34
35 terrorist campaigns seem to be of a different level of violence with their objective 35
36 to cause extensive and (at least apparently) indiscriminate damage. This difference 36
37 seems insurmountable, because it is exactly the increased lethality and danger that 37
38 is in many ways at the heart of the whole argument about the changing nature of 38
39 terrorism. There are indeed very clear differences in *modus operandi* between the 39
40 radical left and jihadi terrorist campaigns. However, one should be careful not to 40
41 assume outright that the differences in methods mean that they would be different 41
42 in all other respects too. 42

43 What may have made drawing parallels difficult is the fact that the history of 43
44 the 1960s and 1970s is still living history and therefore drawing links between 44

1 those past events and current terrorism can be a politically sensitive issue. Many 1
2 of those who played a significant role in the radical wing of the '1968' movement 2
3 are actively participating in society and the political life of various countries. 3
4 Sometimes, the label 'terrorist' is attached to political competitors with the apparent 4
5 purpose of vilification (e.g. bringing up Barack Obama's contacts with former 5
6 Weather Underground member Bill Ayers during the presidential campaign, see 6
7 e.g. Shane 2008). Moreover, especially in the US discussion, the radical left has 7
8 sometimes been accused of not understanding the jihadi terrorist threat and having 8
9 misplaced sympathy with the terrorists (see e.g. Bendle 2006/2007, Cottee 2005). 9
10 All this is linked with the ongoing re-evaluation of the sixties legacy, a discussion 10
11 that invokes political passions just as readily as the terrorism debate. 11

12 Finally, radical left terrorism may have been ignored because the general 12
13 stereotype about what it was about is arguably one-sided. It ignores the varieties 13
14 in organisational design and downplays the importance of the transnational 14
15 dimensions. 15

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18 **Organisation**

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20 A common way to describe radical left terrorist groups is summarised well in 20
21 the characterisation by Dennis A. Pluchinsky. A fighting communist organisation 21
22 (FCO), as he calls them, is 'generally a small, lethal, urban terrorist group which 22
23 is guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology. The ultimate objective of European FCOs 23
24 is to overthrow the democratic government in their country of origin and replace 24
25 it with a vaguely defined "proletarian dictatorship"' (Pluchinsky 1992: 16). The 25
26 structure of such groups is often described as hierarchical and divided into cells, 26
27 and the members living underground, isolated from their surrounding society. 27

28 This ideal type image stands in stark contrast with the organisational images 28
29 of jihadi terrorist groups as flat, non-hierarchical networks involving various 29
30 kinds of actors. Looking at the ideal type only, it is easy to conclude that there are 30
31 significant organisational differences. 31

32 While the RAF and the BR, the major inspirations for the traditional 32
33 characterisation, are notable cases for terrorism studies in many ways, they are 33
34 not all there is to radical left terrorism. There is a host of other such campaigns 34
35 that have never attracted the attention of researchers or policymakers to a similar 35
36 degree. The literature on the French Action Directe, the Angry Brigade in the UK, 36
37 the GRAPO in Spain and the CCC in Belgium is much more limited. Even the 37
38 Weather Underground, which once was the biggest such movement in the United 38
39 States and a major concern for the authorities, has not been comprehensively 39
40 studied before the 2000s. A range of smaller and lesser known campaigns had 40
41 never been studied at all. Not only have the smaller campaigns in other European 41
42 countries and the United States remained outside the limelight, but so have the 42
43 smaller groups in West Germany and Italy. 43

44

1 To be sure, many of the less well known groups are not that far from the 1
2 ideal type. But there are also a number of groups that were not nearly so strictly 2
3 hierarchical. This collection of groups could, in fact, include the RAF of later 3
4 years. As Peter Merkl notes, ‘the once hierarchically organised Baader-Meinhof 4
5 group of military covert-action commandos [was] replaced by several autonomous 5
6 groups’ in the 1980s (Merkl 1995: 164). 6

7 To give a few examples of less well known loosely organised groups: the 7
8 Tupamaros West Berlin, one of the first German groups to plan terrorist attacks, 8
9 consisted of autonomous cells. Nuclei Armati Proletari (NAP), another Italian 9
10 left-wing group, for example, was much more loosely organised (Hauser 2008: 10
11 272). Rode Jeugd, a small Dutch group which took the first steps towards 11
12 starting its own terrorist campaign and provided support for other terrorist and 12
13 resistance movements, had an organisational structure complete with leading 13
14 troikas, but in reality, it worked as a network of activists in different towns who 14
15 acted autonomously with their own associates. The terrorist attacks were largely 15
16 planned and executed by a very small clique of core members from different 16
17 towns. The successor groupings of the Rode Jeugd were even more loosely 17
18 organised (Malkki 2010a). 18

19 Even forms of leadership by inspiration were experimented with in the 1970s. 19
20 A little-known terrorist network called the New World Liberation Front (NWLF) 20
21 operated from 1974 to 1978 primarily in California. During its history, several 21
22 dozen bomb attacks were claimed under its name. Most of them were small-scale 22
23 bombings and the most typical target was the Pacific Gas and Electric. These 23
24 attacks were claimed by 21 different units of the NWLF. The NWLF communiqués 24
25 included repeatedly an open invitation for anyone sharing its ideology to establish 25
26 their own unit of the NWLF and commit attacks under its name. Tactical 26
27 instructions, including how to make bombs, as well as strategic guidelines, were 27
28 published in the ‘revolutionary press’ (e.g. *Dragon*). The NWLF has been very 28
29 little studied, so it is not known who exactly were behind these bombings and how 29
30 they were organised, but the NWLF’s communications do imply that not all units 30
31 were in direct contact with the Central Command.² 31

32 It is also helpful to note in this context that the tendency to view traditional 32
33 terrorist groups in hierarchical terms may have been influenced by the way the 33
34 groups have preferred to present themselves. Most radical left terrorist groups 34
35 aspired to expand and become an army and/or a party of revolutionaries. Their 35
36 rhetoric, starting from the choice of the name, reflects this aspiration, but not 36
37 necessarily the reality. An extreme example of the contrast between the documents 37
38 38

39 _____ 39
40 2 In any case, the NWLF was not the continuation of the SLA as is often believed. 40
41 The remaining SLA members and their new associates, at least, did start acting in its name 41
42 after most of the SLA’s members died in a police shootout. According to their own words, 42
43 they had no idea who the NWLF was. For more on the SLA, see Malkki 2010a and Malkki 43
44 2010b. The only study on the NWLF that this author is aware of is the Master’s thesis of 44
44 Baron Lee Buck (1978). 44

1 and reality is the case of the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), a tiny radical 1
2 left terrorist group that operated in California in 1973–1974. The group had plans 2
3 for a full federation of revolutionary forces, complete with military ranks and 3
4 codes of war. In reality, the army consisted of a handful of people living together 4
5 (Malkki 2010a, Malkki 2010b). 5

6 Weak organisational structures and arrangements bordering on leaderless 6
7 resistance were, thus, typical also of radical left terrorism. Current jihadi terrorism 7
8 is not, by any means, the first time that small groups have been inspired by a larger 8
9 struggle and have on their own initiative joined the battle using their minimal 9
10 resources and without any significant contact with the (perceived) leaders of 10
11 the struggle. Such groups have engaged in terrorism for decades. We just have 11
12 not taken them seriously, because they have been considered too marginal and 12
13 irrelevant to pose a real threat. 13

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16 **Transnational Dimension** 16

17 17

18 One distinctive feature of al-Qaeda is arguably that it is truly a transnational 18
19 network (or movement) and in this respect without historical precedents. Al- 19
20 Qaeda is described as a movement operating at three levels, those being: the hard 20
21 core (al-Qaeda Central); the network, including Afghan veterans; and ‘the idea, 21
22 worldview and ideology of “al-Qaeda” and those who subscribe to it’ (Burke 22
23 2003: 16). This structure exceeds state boundaries and the struggle is essentially 23
24 de-territorialised and has no single centre of gravity (Neumann 2009: 29). Those 24
25 who have tried to put claims about the uniqueness of al-Qaeda into perspective 25
26 have sometimes referred to the anarchist terrorist wave in the late nineteenth to 26
27 early twentieth century as an example of a previous case of transnational networks 27
28 and loose organisational structures (e.g. Hoffman 2001: 426, Duyvesteyn 2004: 28
29 444, Coolsaet 2005: 19–32, *The Economist* 2005; see also Coolsaet, Chapter 7 in 29
30 this volume). 30

31 Terrorism in previous decades, although international to some extent, is 31
32 commonly viewed as less international and more focused on a certain territory, and 32
33 was most typically linked with some kind of nationalist–separatist struggle. The 33
34 radical left terrorist campaigns have been thought of as revolutionary movements 34
35 aiming at a communist revolution in their own country. The emergence of terrorist 35
36 campaigns has quite commonly been linked with a legacy of the fascist past, with 36
37 the most radical manifestations in the former axis powers (for the most famous 37
38 example, see Becker 1978). These explanations are not without their merits (e.g. 38
39 Sánchez-Cuenca 2009, Della Porta 1995: especially 193–4), but then again, they 39
40 capture only one part of the story. 40

41 When one is looking for previous examples of transnational terrorism, the 41
42 radical left terrorist campaigns are just as good an example as the anarchist 42
43 movement. This is not readily apparent from the research literature because 43
44 transnational analyses of the radical left terrorist campaigns – and the larger ‘1968’ 44

1 phenomenon for that matter – have been few. The global nature of ‘1968’ as an 1
 2 event and the long sixties in general has been acknowledged, but the studies have 2
 3 traditionally concentrated on a single country.³ 3

4 Those involved in the radical left terrorist campaigns in Europe and the United 4
 5 States thought they were part of a larger transnational movement, probably not 5
 6 totally unlike those involved in jihadi terrorism nowadays do. Everyone did not 6
 7 necessarily perceive it in the same way, but what was common to most radical 7
 8 left terrorist campaigns in Europe and the United States was that they were 8
 9 fundamentally based on the perception that their own small campaigns were 9
 10 part of a much wider global revolutionary movement against imperialism and 10
 11 capitalism. The Vietnam War, the major radicalising event and agitation point for 11
 12 the whole generation of activists, was one manifestation of this struggle. Besides 12
 13 the Vietnam War, other liberation struggles in the Third World formed the front 13
 14 line of this struggle. This world view was shared by many more activists than just 14
 15 those involved in the terrorist campaigns. As is well known, the 1960s and 1970s 15
 16 were characterised by anti-authoritarian and anti-imperialist protests that emerged 16
 17 in practically every Western country (and beyond, see reflections in Gassert and 17
 18 Klimke 2009). 18

19 While the radical left terrorist campaigns strived for revolution in their 19
 20 own country as their long-term goal, and the Italian campaigns, for instance, 20
 21 concentrated quite exclusively on that, the short-term strategies of many campaigns 21
 22 were much less focused on their own country. In these cases, the idea of starting 22
 23 armed struggle in Western countries was based on the theory that attacking the 23
 24 imperialist enemy at home weakens it and thereby makes the struggles of the 24
 25 Third World movements easier to win. The activists in the United States and 25
 26 Europe were inspired by the apparent success of small vanguard movements in 26
 27 Latin America, in Cuba and Uruguay in particular. These examples suggested that 27
 28 a small vanguard can accomplish big things, even in urban environments (e.g. 28
 29 Pekelder 2007). 29

30 The transnational dimension of the radical left movement and the terrorist 30
 31 campaigns went well beyond the feeling of belonging to the same imagined 31
 32 community. There was also a whole network of transnational connections that the 32
 33 researchers are only starting to uncover (e.g. Klimke 2010). As Rapoport points 33
 34 out while writing about the New Left wave: 34

35 35
 36 For good reason, the abandoned term ‘international terrorism’ was revived. 36
 37 Again the revolutionary ethos created significant bonds between separate 37
 38 national groups – bonds that intensified when first Cuban and then PLO training 38
 39 facilities were made available. The targets chosen reflected international 39
 40 dimensions as well. Some groups conducted more assaults abroad than in their 40
 41 home territories. (Rapoport 2004: 58) 41

42 42
 43 ³ For a list of the 1968 literature with a transnational element, see Klimke 2010: 43
 44 247–8. 44

1 More research is needed about networking among the radical left communities 1
2 (Waldmann et al. 2010) in Western countries and beyond, but already existing 2
3 evidence suggests that the transnational networks of interaction were considerable, 3
4 including everything from inspiration to joint actions (see e.g. Karmon 2005). 4
5 It would definitely be misleading to describe the groups as a united entity, but 5
6 there were networks. The cooperation efforts culminated in the attempt to combine 6
7 forces in the 'Euroterrorism' campaign in the mid-1980s. 7

8 The contacts extended beyond the radical left milieu. The most famous example 8
9 of such connections is the cooperation between the German terrorist groups 9
10 and the Palestinians. The activities of the Japanese Red Army were thoroughly 10
11 international. Even the Red Brigades, which was one of the less internationally 11
12 oriented groups, had a cooperation agreement with PLO/Fatah in the late 1970s 12
13 (Karmon 2001). 13

14 The numerous contacts of the members of the Rode Jeugd in The Netherlands, 14
15 mentioned above, serve as a good illustration of the networks of interaction 15
16 established by radical communities in European countries. Beginning in 1968, 16
17 the Rode Jeugd established logistical cooperation with German radicals to help 17
18 American military personnel defect from their bases in West Germany and travel 18
19 to Scandinavian countries, and this cooperation continued for years. When they 19
20 started preparing for their own urban guerrilla struggle in The Netherlands in the 20
21 early 1970s, their contacts with German activists started to intensify. Documents 21
22 of the Dutch Security Service (BVD, the precursor of today's AIVD) suggest that 22
23 a Rode Jeugd member was likely to have travelled to West Germany to receive 23
24 instructions in bomb-making. In the mid-1970s, when they were involved in 24
25 helping RAF members residing in The Netherlands. One of its former members 25
26 even allegedly became one of the more trusted comrades in RAF's *Umfeld*. Rode 26
27 Jeugd members also provided logistical assistance to resistance movements 27
28 opposing the military juntas in Greece and Portugal, and helped the IRA obtain 28
29 weapons (Malkki 2010a). 29

30 From the preceding discussion it is evident that the preconditions for more 30
31 unstructured forms of organisation, the formation of imagined transnational 31
32 communities and active cooperation across state borders already existed in the 32
33 1970s – or even as far back as the late nineteenth century. This puts the role of 33
34 the Internet in facilitating networks, structures and transnational contacts into 34
35 perspective. It is true that innovations have certainly created new possibilities 35
36 for communication and networking for terrorist movements – as they have for 36
37 all kinds of actors. The Internet, however, is only one innovation in the chain of 37
38 several advances in technology that have had this effect. 38

39 A story of how technological innovations provided terrorists with new 39
40 possibilities could also be told about radical left terrorism and the global '1968' 40
41 phenomenon (see e.g. Schmid and de Graaf 1982: 137; see also Gitlin 1980). 41
42 The development of the wave of protests has been linked with the advances in 42
43 communications technology and air travel. The introduction of satellite television 43
44 and portable transmission equipment also made broadcasting easier and quicker 44

1 from more remote places. Around the same time, international air travel became 1
 2 cheaper and the number of destinations increased. All these developments in 2
 3 possibilities for communication ‘created a qualitatively new level of socio-cultural 3
 4 networking across national borders’ (Klimke 2010: 3). 4

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7 **Motivations for Joining Terrorism** 7

8 8

9 The process that precedes the decision to join (and continue involvement 9
 10 in) a terrorist campaign is a highly complex issue that cannot be discussed in 10
 11 a comprehensive way in this chapter. Assessing the relevance of insights into 11
 12 terrorism – from radical left terrorism to jihadi terrorism – requires comprehensive, 12
 13 empirically based comparative studies to be conducted (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010). 13
 14 The number of potential parallels suggests that such studies would be worth the 14
 15 effort. 15

16 First, the ‘bunches of guys’ argument introduced by Marc Sageman in his 16
 17 much-cited study *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) appears to find parallels 17
 18 also with the radical left terrorist campaigns. Sageman argues that social bonds 18
 19 and friendship are very important in the process of joining the jihad. The bonds, he 19
 20 found, existed first and radicalisation was essentially a group phenomenon. 20

21 Sageman himself refers to research on the Red Army Faction and the Red 21
 22 Brigades as support for his argument. He draws from the large study commissioned 22
 23 by the German Federal Ministry of Domestic Affairs conducted at the end of the 23
 24 1970s and Della Porta’s empirically based investigation of the Red Brigades 24
 25 (Sageman 2004, 130–33). The argument finds support in other cases as well. The 25
 26 power of the group in drawing individuals towards more radical action, in some 26
 27 cases despite those individuals’ hesitation or even opposition, comes up clearly 27
 28 from the memoirs of former Weather Underground members (most notably 28
 29 Rudd 2009, Wilkerson 2007). The strong role of pre-existing social (kinship and 29
 30 friendship) bonds is also very evident in the case of the Symbionese Liberation 30
 31 Army. On the other hand, parallels between radical left and jihadi terrorism in 31
 32 this respect are hardly surprising, given that the importance of pre-existing social 32
 33 bonds is a common feature in social movements. 33

34 The second issue where parallels seem to exist concerns the diversity in 34
 35 individual stories. Peter Nesser (2010) found in his study that while there are 35
 36 indeed a lot of differences between individuals’ motivations for joining jihad, it 36
 37 was possible to create a (tentative) typology of ‘types of terrorists’. He calls these 37
 38 types entrepreneurs, protégés, misfits and drifters. Entrepreneurs are the motors 38
 39 in establishing and managing terrorist networks. They are the most ideologically 39
 40 minded and have come to ‘embrace jihadism gradually through intellectual 40
 41 processes, activism, idealism and a call for social and political justice’ (2010: 93). 41
 42 The protégés are similar to the entrepreneurs, but more junior. Their commitment 42
 43 to jihad is a ‘combination of loyalty to the leader and intellectually justified 43
 44 activism’ (93). The misfits are less motivated by ideology and more driven by 44

1 coping with their own problems and loyalty to their friends. They often have 1
2 trouble backgrounds. Drifters end up taking part in jihad by going with the flows 2
3 of their social networks and commitments. 3

4 A similar diversity appears also to have existed within the radical left terrorist 4
5 campaigns. Whether this same typology would suit those campaigns as well needs 5
6 to be more carefully scrutinised. In any case, I can easily find examples of each 6
7 type from those campaigns I have studied empirically, for example, from the 7
8 Symbionese Liberation Army, even though it was a tiny group. The leader of the 8
9 group was an African–American prison inmate who had radicalised while in jail. 9
10 After his escape, he established the SLA together with white radicals who had 10
11 been involved in the inmate study group. These radicals, representing largely the 11
12 protégé type, were joined by some of their less ideologically motivated friends who 12
13 could essentially be seen as drifters or dropouts. The drifters were a particularly 13
14 prominent phenomenon among the network that mobilised to help those two SLA 14
15 members and Patricia Hearst, a kidnap victim turned SLA member, who survived 15
16 the shootout with the police that killed all other members. These new associates 16
17 got involved mostly or in many cases exclusively out of their loyalty to each other, 17
18 some of them despite their explicit opposition to terrorism. All of them, however, 18
19 ended up taking part in bomb attacks aimed at killing bystanders (Malkki 2010b). 19

20 But what about ideology? Besides the striking difference in lethality of the 20
21 attacks, another evident difference between radical left and jihadi terrorism lies 21
22 in the nature of the ideology and goals. Whereas the jihadi terrorist groups are 22
23 religiously motivated, the radical left terrorist campaigns drew their ideological 23
24 framework from Marxism–Leninism, an ideology known for its hostility towards 24
25 religion. For many, this constitutes a fundamental difference. 25

26 Still, some researchers, most famously Olivier Roy, have gone as far as to 26
27 argue that al-Qaeda is ‘an avatar of the ultra-leftist radicalism’ (2008: 6). This 27
28 is not all there is to it, but according to him, it is ‘at a crossroads between such a 28
29 tradition and Islamic radicalisation’ (2004: 47). The most obvious continuity is 29
30 that both target the United States and imperialism. But there is more to it than that: 30
31 Roy’s argument has less to do with ideology, rather more with the foundations of 31
32 Al Qaeda’s violent strategy. He argues that ‘the real genesis of Al-Qaeda violence 32
33 has more to do with a Western tradition of individual and pessimistic revolt for 33
34 an elusive ideal world than with the Koranic conception of martyrdom’ (2004: 34
35 43). In strategic terms, both radical left terrorism and jihadi terrorism as armed 35
36 revolutionary struggles do seem to draw from the theories of and learnings from 36
37 classical authors and previous struggles (e.g. Burke 2003: 48–49, Chipman 2003). 37
38 The differences in their views about the justification and utility of violence may 38
39 not be that great (see e.g. Hoffman 2008). 39

40 A recurring theme in the jihadi terrorism literature is also that hunger for 40
41 action may be one significant attraction for joining. This does not mean that the 41
42 religious motivation would not be important, but that the orientation towards 42
43 action is the major thing that attracts people to join violent jihadi movements and 43
44 not their competitors. It is also quite clear that involvement in radical left terrorist 44

1 campaigns cannot be explained by mere attraction to Marxist-Leninist thought. 1
 2 Those involved were in many cases just as much admirers of Che Guevara and 2
 3 Carlos Marighella. Being involved in armed struggle was an important part of 3
 4 their self-image – they were not just talking about revolution, they were among 4
 5 those who actually stood up and did something about it. 5

6 Olivier Roy has also claimed that there are striking parallels in mobilisations, 6
 7 feelings of being socially excluded and alienated playing a central role in both cases. 7
 8 More generally, like the ‘Euro-Islam’ described by Roy, the ‘1968’ movement was 8
 9 about identity. Many of its political manifestations were not only about changing 9
 10 the social and economic system but also about personal transformation. As the 10
 11 capitalist system would not be destroyed unless the value systems that supported 11
 12 it are abolished, one should also get rid of his/her bourgeois values and habits. 12
 13 Furthermore, one could claim that the broader 1968 movement was also about a 13
 14 search for authenticity (Suri 2009: 47), not unlike the search for ‘true Islam’. 14
 15 15
 16 16

17 **Violence and the Fuzzy Borderline between the Political and the Religious** 17

18 18
 19 Interestingly enough, the radical left terrorist campaigns occasionally developed 19
 20 some features that have been linked to religious terrorism. One of them is suicide 20
 21 and self-sacrifice. It is well established by now that unlike what is sometimes 21
 22 claimed, suicide terrorism does not necessarily go together with religious motive. 22
 23 Today’s jihadi terrorists are by far not the only ones who have been ready to take 23
 24 their own life as part of the struggle. Self-sacrifice and suicide have not, by any 24
 25 means, been fundamentally alien to Western politics (Silke 2006). 25

26 The Red Army Faction brings further evidence of this. As Bruce Hoffman 26
 27 (2008: 63) points out, ‘the RAF provided us with the world’s first modern 27
 28 suicide terrorists’. The suicides of the imprisoned RAF leaders are among the 28
 29 most important terrorism-related incidents in Europe in the 1970s. They are not, 29
 30 however, the only manifestation of self-sacrifice in the organisation’s campaign. 30
 31 Hunger strikes of imprisoned RAF members played an important role in the 31
 32 campaign during the 1970s (and 1980s). From the correspondence between 32
 33 imprisoned RAF members, it is also clear that the hunger strikes were intended to 33
 34 lead to the death of some prisoners. Externally, they served as a public relations 34
 35 instrument that was used strategically to draw attention to the group and contest 35
 36 the narratives presented about it in the public media. Internally, ‘hunger was part 36
 37 of the psychological discipline exercised by RAF leaders on the rest of the group, 37
 38 and helped foster the martyrdom necessary for people to put their lives on the line’ 38
 39 (Passmore 2009: 43). 39

40 The second element often associated with religion is the ‘cosmic war’ 40
 41 (Juergensmeyer 2001). It has often been claimed that the religious motive makes 41
 42 the terrorist movement behave and think along different lines. Religious terrorists 42
 43 would arguably be engaged in a struggle that extends beyond their own lives and 43
 44 the limits of this world. 44

1 As Martha Crenshaw notes in her chapter in this volume, unobtainable ends 1
 2 are not unique to religion. To this, I would like to add that neither do religious 2
 3 movements have a monopoly on apocalyptic and utopian thinking. Jeremy Varon, 3
 4 for example, explicitly invokes Juergensmeyer's concept of cosmic war when he 4
 5 describes the RAF and the Weather Underground. According to him, violence 5
 6 had not only political and ethical but also existential and apocalyptic dimensions. 6
 7 The apocalyptic dimension included, according to him, 'the following premises: 7
 8 that the existing society is corrupt; that its corruption is so great that it cannot 8
 9 be reformed and must therefore be destroyed; and that its destruction creates the 9
 10 possibility for emergence of something radically new, different, and better' (Varon 10
 11 2008: 35). This thought, in turn, made it possible for these groups to 'take their 11
 12 violence out of the realm of political calculation' and see it as a struggle between 12
 13 good and evil. 13

14 14

15 15

16 Conclusion 16

17 17

18 The above discussion has concentrated largely on pointing out the (possible) 18
 19 similarities between radical left and jihadi terrorism. This is by no means to deny 19
 20 that there are significant differences too. The point here has been rather to show 20
 21 that there might be more continuity between the two in Western countries than is 21
 22 commonly thought. While it cannot be assumed without further scrutiny that the 22
 23 processes would be similar, it is still certainly an avenue that is worth pursuing, not 23
 24 only for the current efforts to develop policies for countering jihadi radicalisation, 24
 25 but even more so for the academic community. 25

26 If the academic community is interested in developing theories of radicalisation 26
 27 and engagement with terrorism and how this engagement may end, it also has to 27
 28 study other types of terrorism. This includes historical cases, not least because 28
 29 overlooking historical cases would mean ignoring a major opportunity for empirical 29
 30 data, as they can be accessed better (although there are evident methodological 30
 31 problems). 31

32 The discussion above shows that the sense of transnational imagined 32
 33 community and fluid organisation forms, often used to describe jihadi terrorism, 33
 34 existed within the radical left terrorist campaigns as well. This has not been 34
 35 readily evident because there has been a tendency to explain radical left terrorist 35
 36 campaigns exclusively in their national contexts and ignore those groups, which 36
 37 were more loosely organised as less relevant. 37

38 Generally, the debate about change and continuity in terrorism suffers from a 38
 39 lack of *retrospective* studies on terrorist movements. If the terrorist campaigns are 39
 40 not studied in the field after they cease to pose a threat, our understanding of the 40
 41 groups remains based on the information available at that time. In the worst case, 41
 42 what remains as the general understanding is the first information reported in the 42
 43 media after incidents, which afterwards often turn out to be inaccurate or at least 43
 44 partial. 44

1 This retrospective look puts our prevailing understanding of jihadi terrorism 1
2 in perspective. It has been presented as a truly transnational phenomenon, 2
3 transnational almost to the point that there is no national context of relevance. Is 3
4 this really so? Or is it possible that we view jihadi terrorism in Western countries 4
5 in excessively global terms? The idea that despite evident transnational influences 5
6 and networks, jihadi terrorism in Europe and the United States may indeed be 6
7 largely a home-grown phenomenon has not been very popular. Aidan Kirby, 7
8 writing about the London attacks in 2005, notes that the idea seems troubling and 8
9 this may be one reason why the security community has so actively searched for 9
10 any kinds of international links behind the bomb attacks (Kirby 2007: 419, also 10
11 Husband 2010). 11

12 The reluctance to 'own' the terrorist campaigns by acknowledging that 12
13 they might be products of the political and social context has been a prevailing 13
14 phenomenon. Terrorists have always been described as ruthless killers and foreign 14
15 to the society and the values that the groups emerge from. The 1970s equivalent 15
16 to the tendency to blame the 'transnational influences' for terrorism was to 16
17 'medical's' terrorism as a mental disturbance or as an unfortunate product of dark 17
18 socio-psychological dynamics. 18

19 The relationship between global and national elements has recently become 19
20 a prevailing theme in the '1968' studies. Within the studies on terrorism, Jeremy 20
21 Varo's comparative study of the Weather Underground and the Red Army Faction 21
22 (Varon 2004) is the prime representation of this new line of enquiry. The common 22
23 understanding that emerges from these studies is that it is not possible to understand 23
24 the developments in any particular country without reference to the transnational 24
25 'big' 1968. Equally importantly, national contexts strongly shaped the form that the 25
26 national 'small' 1968s took (see e.g. Brown 2009: 71). This is also the conclusion 26
27 of Jeremy Varo's study. In his view, 'the very different trajectories of Weatherman 27
28 and the RAF reveal how each group was shaped by and responded to its national 28
29 context'. Furthermore, this national context became 'all the more important in 29
30 defining the destinies of individual radical left movements' when the radical left 30
31 as a global phenomenon started to fade away (Varon 2004: 11). If the dynamics of 31
32 jihadi terrorism are at all similar to the '1968' phenomenon, the role of the national 32
33 context is likely to become more pronounced over time. 33

34 It appears to me that the strong interest in transnational dimensions has 34
35 also changed the way we think about organisations and the way 'the dots 35
36 are connected'. How we interpret the international element in the campaigns 36
37 influences unavoidably how we interpret the organisational structures. Individual 37
38 terrorist groups with a jihadi orientation seem to be perceived as part of the same 38
39 entity more readily than has been the case before. It will be interesting to see how 39
40 we view 'al-Qaeda the movement' 30 years from now. 40

41 Finally, in the context of the radical left terrorist campaigns, many 'new' traits 41
42 of terrorism appear as signs of weakness rather than significant innovation. Looser 42
43 organisational models were adopted when more structured organisations did not 43
44 work; and the transnational dimensions became more important the weaker the 44

1 group's situation was on its home front. Suicide, self-sacrifice and cosmic war 1
2 surfaced often in moments of despair. Recent developments undeniably pose new 2
3 and serious challenges to authorities tasked with countering terrorism. However, 3
4 what should be critically evaluated is whether the situation has changed so much 4
5 that these traits have become real advantages. 5

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