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Victimhood and Acknowledgement: The Other Side of Terrorism

In the summer of 2016 the *New York Times* recorded the results of a remarkable project.¹ With the help of 34 assistants worldwide, five authors had collected evidence on 247 victims of terrorism killed within two months in the spring of that year by attacks on “soft targets:” on two occasions each in Pakistan and Turkey, and one apiece in Nigeria, Iraq, Ivory Coast and Belgium. Relatives of all the victims were interviewed to find out more about the lives of the deceased. Photographs were collected and stories about the last family meetings recorded – “to reveal the humanity lost.” The authors thereby wanted to respond to concerns of their readers “that not all victims of terror are treated equally.” The NYT team had selected a number of portraits – including three large-scale color photos of killed couples of distinctly different backgrounds – as well as the most intriguing testimonies of sorrow of the 1168 direct relatives who could be identified. This personal evidence comprised almost the entire article. There were more than 100 victims – 44 of whom were under 18 years of age – who left behind bereaved parents “whose language of mourning translates across borders.” The 247 cases were sorted into groups according to nationality, religion, age, profession and family status. The routes from 26 countries of origin to the scenes of the attacks were plotted on maps. The authors also distinguished between those killed in “high-profile attacks” which made newspaper headlines and those killed in environments where violence had become an almost routine feature of life. The authors refrained from any explicit judgement. Instead, they used the material to paint a broad picture of the senseless destruction of human life and options. “What emerges is a tapestry of lives interrupted,” they concluded in bitterness, “[lives] splayed out gradually in those photographs, in anecdotal shards or bits of memory shared by those left behind, in the details of their dreams and the things left undone.” A number of victims were named, but all were counted as individuals. The perpetrators appeared only under the name of

¹ Tim Arango et al.: The Human Toll of Terror, in: *The New York Times* (26 July 2016). URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/07/27/world/human-toll-of-terror-attacks.htm> (18 Nov. 2016). I owe thanks to Florian Jessensky for calling my attention to this article.

the respective organization claiming responsibility for the atrocities. All of them were Muslims, the authors added, but so were more than half of their victims.²

It is doubtless no coincidence that the article on “The Human Toll of Terror” appeared in the most prominent print medium of enlightened, left-leaning liberalism in the United States. The politically alert classes in the global West which had increasingly become a target for the world-wide operations of Islamist terrorism needed some reassurances about their value system and its universal scope. This is what this article stands for: It calls upon the concept of “global humanity” for journalists and readers alike, which is highlighted all the more clearly by the blind brutality of terrorism. Empathy with the victims as well as the bereaved serves as proof of the humanity of the living.³ This new phenomenon could also be observed during memorials following the Paris attacks in November 2015, when the symbolic presence of survivors and mourners confined the politicians almost completely to the sidelines.⁴

In the history of terrorism this is something of a novelty. Most of the time, the victims of terrorism have stayed strangely in the background in public perception as well as in scholarly debates.⁵ The German example is an excellent case in point: It shows the extreme divergence between perpetrators and victims in terms of public attention. The rising tide of literature on left-wing terrorism in West Germany focused almost exclusively on the personalities of the founding members of the Red Army Faction (RAF). As Walter Laqueur ironically noted already in 1987 when taking stock of the history of the RAF: “Hardly ever has so much been written about so few.” In fact, as the most militant and enduring anti-systemic group in the old Federal Republic they

² This last remark was corrected a few days later: those responsible for one of the attacks in Turkey had not been Islamists, but rather Kurdish Marxists.

³ For the antonymic character and the general ambivalence of the concept of “humanity” in different historical contexts see: Johannes Paulmann: *Humanity – Humanitarian Reason – Imperial Humanitarianism. European Concepts in Practice*, in: Fabian Klose and Mirjam Thulin (eds.): *Humanity. A History of European Concepts in Practice from the Sixteenth Century to the Present*. Göttingen 2017, 287–312.

⁴ As an example: “Stille Gedenkfeier für 130 Anschlagsoffer”. URL: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2016-11/paris-anschlaege-jahrestag-gedenktafel-francois-hollande> (18 Nov. 2016).

⁵ See: Orla Lynch and Javier Argomaniz: *Victims of terrorism: an introduction*, in: iid. (eds.): *Victims of Terrorism: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Study*. New York 2015, 1–9. “Victims of terrorism, while increasingly visible on the international stage, remain a peripheral topic in the broader debates on terrorism and a fundamentally under-researched subject in the academic sphere” (1).

killed a total of 34 people between 1971 and 1993, a death toll far outnumbered by other terrorist excesses in Europe at the time.⁶ Yet fascination with the perpetrators seems as strong as ever, as the most recent example shows: The voluminous edition of the scholarship records of Horst Mahler, Gudrun Ensslin and Ulrike Meinhof, all erstwhile recipients of prestigious stipends from the *Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes*, seems to offer nothing new with respect to the ominous riddle shared by bourgeois observers at the time as to why and how their privileged sons and daughters with bright prospects for the future could thus be led astray.⁷ In recent times, however, a new interest in the history of terrorism has emerged, as seen from the victims' perspective.⁸ But so far little has been achieved in the way of an updated and more nuanced picture of terrorism in the Federal Republic.⁹ On the contrary, researchers still seem to follow in the logic of the perpetrators when questioning prominent survivors or portraying the dead as if they needed some post-mortem rehabilitation.¹⁰ There is still little interest in the suffering of those whose family and friends were not targeted directly, but whose deaths were registered by the terrorists as "collateral damage" of a just cause and today seem to be taken more lightly. The same distortion can be observed in the most recent killing spree, this time of the right-wing *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU)*: In view of current refugee crises in which Muslims are generally stigmatized as dangerous and alien, it is more than likely that the names of the mostly Muslim victims of the NSU will go unremembered. It took years before the bereaved were actually acknowledged as victims.¹¹ They were re-victimized in the course of the prosecution by suggestions of aiding and abetting in murder and by a press bent on

6 Walter Laqueur: *Terrorismus. Die globale Herausforderung*. Frankfurt a. M. 1987, 300.

7 Alexander Gallus (ed.): *Meinhof, Mahler, Ensslin: Die Akten der Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes, herausgegeben, eingeleitet und kommentiert von Alexander Gallus*. Göttingen 2016.

8 Anne Siemens: *Für die RAF war er das System für mich der Vater. Die andere Geschichte des deutschen Terrorismus*. Munich 2007.

9 For a positive exception see: Martin Rupps: *Die Überlebenden von Mogadischu*. Berlin 2012; also the important contribution by Wolfgang Kraushaar: *Die RAF und ihre Opfer. Zwischen Selbsttheroisierung und Fremdtabusierung*, in: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (20 Aug. 2007). URL: <http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/deutsche-geschichte/geschichte-der-raf/49306/raf-und-ihre-opfer> (18 Nov. 2016). See also the disappointing volume edited by Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg: *Die Opfer der RAF*, Karlsruhe 2009.

10 Critical discussion of Anne Siemens' approach in: Nicole Colin: *Täter- versus Opferdiskurs. Eine andere Geschichte des deutschen Terrorismus?*, in: id. et al. (eds.): *Der Deutsche Herbst und die RAF in Politik, Medien und Kunst. Nationale und internationale Perspektiven*. Bielefeld 2008, 187–194.

11 Barbara John (ed.): *Unsere Wunden kann die Zeit nicht heilen. Was der NSU-Terror für die Opfer und Angehörigen bedeutet*. Freiburg 2014.

labeling the crimes as “*Döner-Morde*” without any respect for the bereaved families.¹²

Obviously, it is still normal to follow social reflexes of in- and exclusion when the degree and importance of the suffering endured by victims of terrorism and their families are concerned, even though, as argued in the NYT article, all victims of terrorism should at least in theory have an equal right to moral acknowledgement according to the standards of globalized humanity. But as Klaus Weinbauer pointed out already in 2004, victims of terrorism are far from simply self-evident – they are “being made.”¹³ They are being defined in a complex and collective process in which degrees of belonging are also negotiated: “Defining who is a ‘victim’ of terrorism is acutely competitive and politicized.”¹⁴ As a rule, victims of terrorism are targeted as representatives of a larger group, and “acknowledgement of their victimization entails recognizing this fact.”¹⁵ No wonder that the journalist Carolin Emcke used her newspaper column in spring 2016 to encourage her readers to learn the names of the NSU victims by heart, unfamiliar as they were compared to the names of RAF victims, in order to publicly make amends for the disrespect which their families, of mostly Turkish background, had suffered at the hands of German society.¹⁶ As the recipient of this year’s German Peace Prize she spoke out as a victim of terrorism herself, since approximately a decade earlier she had publicly acknowledged that she was the god-daughter of Alfred Herrhausen, the banker murdered by the RAF in 1989.¹⁷ In her public effort to personally come to terms with this crime some 18 years after the fact, she entreated the perpetrators to finally tell their own story and break the silence in which both perpetrators

¹² See Christian Fuchs: Wie der Begriff “Döner-Morde” entstand, in: <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/doener-mord-wie-das-unwort-des-jahres-entstand-a-841734.html>, 4 July 2012 (18 Nov. 2016).

¹³ Klaus Weinbauer: Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik der Siebziger Jahre. Aspekte einer Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der Inneren Sicherheit, in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 44 (2004), 219–242; see especially 223.

¹⁴ Cheryl Lawther: The construction and politicization of victimhood, in: Lynch and Argomaniz, *Victims*, 10–30; see quote on 16.

¹⁵ Rianne Letschert et al.: The Need of Victims of Terrorism Compared to Victims of Crime, in: iid. (eds.): *Assisting Victims of Terrorism. Towards a European Standard of Justice*. Heidelberg 2010, xi.

¹⁶ “It is awful to believe that these people were not worth the little effort [...] In that respect my own inability to memorize the names of these victims was only part of the sad story of disregard they suffered at the hand of this society.” (My translation), Carolin Emcke: *Namen*, in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (9/10 April 2016).

¹⁷ Reprint of the 2007 essay, originally published in *Die Zeit*, in: Carolin Emcke: *Stumme Gewalt. Nachdenken über die RAF*. Frankfurt a. M. 2008.

and victims had been trapped ever since. She even encouraged the authorities to offer “amnesty for an end to silence,” even if it meant forgoing the public confession of guilt and remorse which was repeatedly demanded of the perpetrators. “They should be allowed to go. To be free. To be released from prison. But they should speak out beforehand. Please.”¹⁸

It is this need to come to a conclusive explanation of terrorist acts, ultimately even with the help of the perpetrators themselves, which unites not only Emcke with the families of NSU victims.¹⁹ It seems to be the most essential common ground for each and every kind of injured party, be it as survivors of or as family bereaved by a terrorist attack. A variety of self-help organizations have formed since the 1980s to increasing public acclaim in places with more victims to deplore than in Germany. They are demanding “truth” as well as “justice.”²⁰ They may be made up of different political strands, but they carry all the signs of a social movement which in recent years has been “discovered” and investigated by social and political scientists alike.²¹ Most of their works provide advice and best-practice proposals for present-day dealing with victims: they cannot replace, but can still be useful for historical research. They deal predominantly with the role of victim organizations in the ex-post clarification of terrorist attacks – as in the case of Northern Ireland or Spain. Rarely do they consider the role of individual victimhood as a prominent aspect of the terrorist logic of communication. But the close connection between “before” and “after” the event is widely acknowledged and partially integrated into the argument. As Rogelio Alonso summarizes his investigation into the bargaining role of Basque victim organizations in Spanish politics: “The political and social context in which ETA’s terrorism took place determined the mobilization and constitution of victims’ associations in the first place.”²²

The aim of the 2018 European History Yearbook is to critically reflect on the above-mentioned historical and discursive transformations of terrorism and to integrate the causes and consequences of the new focus on victimhood into the discussion. The “figure” of the victim will have to be reconstructed within the

18 “Sie sollen gehen dürfen. Frei sein. Aus dem Gefängnis entlassen. Aber reden sollen sie vorher. Bitte.”. *ibid.*, 61.

19 See the repeated declarations in: John, Wunden.

20 See more generally: Lynch and Argomaniz, Victims; *ibid.*, *International Perspectives on Terrorist Victimisation. An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Hampshire 2015; Rogelio Alonso: Victims of ETA’s terrorism as an interest group: Evolution, influence, and impact on the political agenda of Spain, in: *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2016), 1–21, especially 9.

21 Besides the works cited above, see the best overview by Stéphane Latté: Victim movements, in: *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*. Malden 2013, 1371–1377.

22 Alonso, Victims, 2.

manifold contexts of terrorism, especially with regard to the binary logic of terrorist activity which aims to evoke awe and sympathy at the same time. It will be a new departure for the Yearbook to look into these aspects of terrorist communication. What can be said about the specificity, if any, of victims of terrorism and as such of political violence more generally? What is it that sets them apart from other forms of victimhood – such as victims of war or criminality, in accidents or natural disasters?²³ It seems more than likely that victims of terrorism became increasingly visible with the growing public sensitivity to the consequences of injury and injustice in all social fields beginning in the late 1970s. They may have profited from “the charisma of the victim,” without, however, having been considered yet as part of this complex transformation, or at least as an independent strand in its discursive practices.²⁴ The attacks of 9/11 mark another caesura which sent shock waves well beyond the US. They left a great number of well-defined victim groups behind, the majority of which were well placed to make their complaints and sorrows heard in the public sphere.²⁵ But the new perspective on victimhood should be traced back to an earlier setting, since contemporary history should not just be tied to the problems of its time; its timeframe should instead be defined by the problem under consideration.²⁶ It comes as no surprise that terrorism is regarded as a typical phenomenon of High Modernity, globalized and

23 For the broader context see: Winfried Hassemer and Jan Philip Reemtsma: *Verbrechensopfer, Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit*. Munich 2002. For victims of international crime see: Thorsten Boacker and Christoph Safferling: *Victims of International Crime: An Interdisciplinary Discourse*. The Hague 2013.

24 Thorsten Bonacker: Globale Opferschaft. Zum Charisma des Opfers in Transitional Justice Prozessen, in: *Zeitschrift für internationale Beziehungen* 19 (2012), 5–36; for changes in “knowledge” about war victims see: Svenja Goltermann: Der Markt der Leiden, das Menschenrecht auf Entschädigung und die Kategorie des Opfers. Ein Problemaufriss, in: *Historische Anthropologie* 23 (2015), 70–92, and by the same author: *Opfer. Die Wahrnehmung von Krieg und Gewalt in der Moderne*. Frankfurt a. M. 2017.

25 Bruce Hoffman and Anna-Britt Kasupski: *The Victims of Terrorism. An Assessment of Their Influence and Growing Role in Policy, Legislation, and the Private Sector*. Santa Monica 2007. This contribution deals, apart from some more general considerations, mostly with the situation in the USA. See also the memorial publication for the victims of 9/11 by Diane Schoemperlen: *Names of the Dead. An Elegy for the Victims of September 11*. New York 2004. Still, there is little reason for taking too much pride in the after-care for survivors and bereaved, as the case of the “dust woman” Marcy Borders shows, who died of cancer at age 42 after a “life full of drugs and fears” in 2015. See: <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/9-11-ueberlebende-staub-frau-marcy-borders-ist-tot-a-1049891.html>. (21 July 2018).

26 Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael: Nach dem Boom. Neue Einsichten und Erklärungsversuche, in: iid. and Thomas Schlemmer (eds.), *Vorgeschichte der Gegenwart. Dimensionen des Strukturbruchs nach dem Boom*. Göttingen 2016, 9–37, especially 10.

intensified since the 19th century, but basically unchanged in its tactics and logic.²⁷ In fact, when considering the voluntaristic foundation of any terrorist act, it becomes less difficult to draw the line from the early and highly selective violence against monarchs or other “punishable” targets as representatives of political, social or ethnic groups to the ubiquitous targeting in today’s terrorism. This is what defines terrorist activity: It is in principle “arbitrary” inasmuch as it selects and victimizes its targets by violence. As the Spanish writer Sánchez Ferlosio concludes: “It would be less evil if they were killing people they personally hate; the inhumanity is in their readiness to kill anybody without any personal animosity.”²⁸ This is how fear is spread among members of the targeted group who might be in the wrong place at the wrong time for whatever reason; it is also why it is extremely painful for the bereaved to come to terms with their personal loss. All the same, terrorist violence is never wholly “blind” or completely haphazard. What matters is the symbolic force of the act itself which may send uplifting messages to potential sympathizers and, at the same time, a provocative warning to the forces of order in asymmetrical conflicts.²⁹ This is why it is of utmost importance to choose the “right” target and to maintain control of both the amount of violence applied in any particular case and its visual representation. As Herfried Münkler notes, terrorism is a sort of imaginative warfare “in which the battle with arms is only the driver for the real battle with images.”³⁰

Peter Waldmann’s terminology has increasingly become the standard definition in terrorism studies, particularly in historiography. According to Waldmann, terrorism should be understood as a violent communication strategy directed at a political system by underground groups.³¹ This definition allows for differentiating the concept from much more destructive forms of state terror. It stands in the tradition of definitions which tried to avoid the political, legal, and especially the moral trappings of any normative usage of the concept by focusing on the

27 Most recently: Carola Dietze: *Die Erfindung des Terrorismus in Europa, Russland und den USA 1858–1866*. Hamburg 2016.

28 My translation. Quoted in: Peter Waldmann: *Terrorismus. Provokation der Macht*. Munich 1998, 14.

29 Ibid., 15.

30 Herfried Münkler: *Die neuen Kriege*. Reinbek b. Hamburg 2003, 197. See also Petra Terhoeven: Opferbilder – Täterbilder. Die Fotografie als Medium linksterroristischer Selbstermächtigung in Deutschland und Italien während der 70er Jahre, in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 7/8 (2007), 380–399.

31 “Terrorism is defined by well-planned and awe-inspiring violent attacks on the political order from the underground. They are meant to spread feelings of insecurity and shock, but also to generate a sense of sympathy and support.” (My translation), Waldmann, *Terrorismus*, 12.

pragmatic dimension in order to allow for a value-neutral judgment. This trend toward a more scientific definition may also have been responsible for the crowding out of the “victim,” a central category in some earlier definitions of terrorism. When Alex P. Schmid collected 109 definitions in common use in 1983, 15% still regarded the “innocence” of the victim as a defining criterion for terrorist violence.³² This definition is clearly questionable in scientific as well as moral terms. But it is equally obvious that to reduce the terrorist act to some communicative effect on third parties also implies losing sight of the relevance and visibility of victims as such. It also tends to underplay the effect of violence acts on perpetrators themselves. Wolfgang Kraushaar is correct in emphasizing the irreducible core of terrorist acts, i.e. the practical application of violence against an individual person, whereas threatening the public *with* violence in media reinforcements of terrorist messages is inevitably of a secondary order.³³ Accordingly, while retaining Waldmann’s well-tried definition – “Terrorism is *primarily* a communication strategy” – we need to make some adjustments with regard to the role of victims.³⁴ It bears repeating that as an analytical tool, the concept of terrorism is indispensable for a systematic understanding of the problem under review, but it is always tainted by the practical uses it is put to in the wars of interpretation sparked by the terrorist act itself. As a ubiquitous rhetorical weapon, the accusation of terrorism should be analyzed not just as part of the language of the original sources but also as a powerful discursive product in the making. In many ways the same is true for the concept of victimhood, which is closely linked to the politically exclusive label of terrorism. In particular, societies divided by antagonistic “cultures of victimhood” tend to insist on the exclusive right to victimhood while seeing terrorists only on the other side of the divide. In cases where terrorism as a label has been questioned, introducing concepts like ‘civil war’ or ‘armed conflict’ in order to pacify the warring parties for example in Northern Ireland, in the Basque country and sometimes even in Italy, many survivors and bereaved protest against the built-in rehabilitation of perpetrators and the insult to victims whose special status is upheld by their exclusive claim to “innocent” victimhood – in contrast to the dead of the other side.³⁵ Especially in the memory battles in

32 Alex P. Schmid: *Political Terrorism. A Research Guide*. New Brunswick 1983, 76–80. See more generally Victor T. Le Vine: On the Victims of Terrorism and their Innocence, in: *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9 (1997), 55–62.

33 Wolfgang Kraushaar: Zur Topologie des RAF-Terrorismus, in: id. (ed.): *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, vol. 1. Hamburg 2006, 13–63, especially 42.

34 Waldmann, *Terrorismus*, 15.

35 See Alonso, *Victims*; Anna Cento Bull and Philip Cooke: *Ending Terrorism in Italy*. London 2013, especially 153–193; Marie Breen-Smyth: *Lost lives: victims and the construction of*

Northern Ireland, it is still being contested whether dead members of the paramilitary groups should be included in the different material and immaterial efforts at reconciliation. Concepts play a decisive role in these battles: “It is nearly impossible to use inclusive language that does not offend at least someone.”³⁶

The “Troubles” may be a special case – but even in cases with less clear-cut dividing lines rival narratives of victimhood is typical of terrorism since the use of violence is usually dressed up as a response to previous or ongoing violence by the opposite side, thereby reversing the roles of perpetrator and victim. The strategy of active self-victimization is equally typical for terrorist groups which hope to confer a higher status on their actions by putting their own lives on the line against the Leviathan of the state. This is not just true for suicide attacks, by now the almost “normal” form of attack. “Martyrs” are made in confrontation with the police, in hunger strikes, and in attempted assassinations, and they are usually remembered as heroes in sympathetic milieus and invoked to help close the ranks within the terrorist group itself.³⁷ There is obviously a subliminal logic of sanctification in terrorist practices: Voluntary “self-sacrifice” for a just cause seems even more justified when – as is often the case – more people are being killed by counter-terrorist measures than by terrorist attacks, not to mention the potentially detrimental effect of counter-terrorism on basic civil rights which the rule of law depends on for legitimacy.³⁸ Since state overreaction is a key component of the terrorist logic, it is essential to integrate the effects of anti-terrorism performance into the communication process set in motion by the terrorist act itself.³⁹ This is particularly evident in the case of present-day Islamist terrorism: Even mild criticism of the US “war on terror” in countries such as Pakistan,

‘victimhood’ in Northern Ireland, in: Michael Cox et al. (eds.): *A Farewell to Arms?: Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*. Manchester 2006, 6–23. The problem is already evident in the naming of victim organizations such as: Families Acting for Innocent Relatives (FAIR); Homes United by Republican Terror (HURT). The letter “R” in the acronym was later re-interpreted as “Recurring,” *ibid.*, 18.

36 Karola Dillenburger et al.: Victims or Survivors? The Debate on Victimhood in Northern Ireland, in: *The International Journal of Humanities* 3 (2005/2006), vol. 4, 1447–9559 (online).

37 See as one of many examples the staging of the funeral of a Basque Eterra in his hometown: Constanze Stelzenmüller: Er war einer von uns, 31 Aug. 2000. URL: http://www.zeit.de/2000/36/200036_eta.xml (18 Nov. 2016). See also: Stephan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann (eds.): *Radikale Milieus. Das soziale Umfeld terroristischer Gruppen*. Frankfurt a. M. 2012.

38 Martha Crenshaw: Introduction, in: *id.* (ed.): *The Consequences of Counterterrorism*. New York 2010, 7–31. For a typology of victimhood and the differentiation between “victim” and “sacrifice” see: Herfried Münkler and Karsten Fischer: “Nothing to kill or die for...” – Überlegungen zu einer politischen Theorie des Opfers, in: *Leviathan* 28 (2000), 343–362.

39 Beatrice De Graaf: *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance. A Comparative Study*. London 2011.

Yemen, Libya and Somalia would have to include at least the civilian death toll due to US air strikes or drone attacks in the “human toll of terror” enumerated in the aforementioned NYT article. Only shortly before this article appeared did Barack Obama give reliable data in this respect for the first time.⁴⁰ In the mass media of the West this evidence is hardly to be found as a sort of counter-narrative, but other audiences are paying more attention – not to mention the actual experience of loss and distress bound up with the “war on terror” on the ground.⁴¹ In the following pages, however, only those “victims of terrorism” will be addressed who according to Waldmann’s definition have suffered and still suffer the consequences of terrorist violence, i.e. first and foremost the deceased, the injured and the survivors as well as their families and friends.⁴² This is a pragmatic working definition which narrows the focus so as to avoid counting each and every personally or emotionally aggrieved party as a victim. In fact, the violent toll of the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland – 3,700 dead and over 40,000 injured in a total population of 1.5 million – was so high that almost every Irish citizen was suffering in some way due to terrorism, at least indirectly. After 9/11 some psychological experts even went so far as to contend that not just eyewitnesses but also virtually everyone who watched the events on TV could have been “traumatized.”⁴³ This may be extending the categories too far to still be

40 In the summer of 2016 a report by US secret services gave the number of 116 civilians killed in Pakistan, Yemen, Libya and Somalia between 2011 and 2016. Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria were not counted. The report acknowledges that NGOs put the number at between 200 and 900. In all, 2581 enemy combatants were killed from the air. See: *Die Zeit*, 1 July 2016. URL: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2016-07/drohnen-usa-barack-obama-zivilisten> (18 Nov. 2016)

41 See Muqarrab Akbar: Drone Attacks and Suicide Bombings: Reflections on Pakistan’s Victims, in: Lynch and Argomaniz, *International Perspectives*, 225–246.

42 It goes without saying that categories such as distress or victimhood should in no way be discussed in terms of essentialism. See Caroline Arni and Marian Füssel: Editorial zum Themenheft “Leiden”, in: *Historische Anthropologie* 23 (2015), 5–10. There are still no internationally codified concepts of terrorism or victimhood. Sometimes victims are simply categorized as primary, secondary or even tertiary victims: “Primary victims are those who directly suffered harm from the terrorist attack, including those who experience property damage (economic loss) due to violent acts. The group of secondary victims consists of dependents or relatives of the deceased and first responders to acts of terrorism.” People who are open to terrorist threats and live in fear could be labeled as “tertiary or vicarious victims.” For an overview of the international debate see: Rianne Letschert and Ines Staiger: Introduction and Definitions, in: iid.: *Assisting Victims*, 1–30; the summing up quote above can be found in the same volume, ix.

43 On Northern Ireland see: Dillenburger, *Victims*; on the USA: José Brunner: *Die Politik des Traumas. Gewalterfahrungen und psychisches Leid in den USA, in Deutschland und im Israel/Palästina-Konflikt*. Berlin 2014, 239–246. In Israel scientific usage is characterized by a similarly broad definition of trauma: *ibid.*, 247–276. For the ambivalent use of the concept of victimhood

useful for historical analysis, but it should be possible to ask how many people might have closely identified for whatever reason with the ‘real’ victims. In general, the concept of “trauma” will not figure in our definition of victimhood, nor will the traumatizing effects of the “critical event” (Bourdieu). We would prefer to use Waldmann’s term and call it “shocking.”⁴⁴ This is not to question the “transfer power” (José Brunner) of a concept originally used in the medical field which after moving into other social arenas also gave victims of terrorism an easy-to-understand and graphic language in which to express their individual psychological suffering. Not least, this diagnosis was instrumental in achieving legal and social acknowledgement, and in this case also eventually material compensation.⁴⁵ Arguing against an all-too-prominent role for trauma does of course not mean underestimating very real psychological stress as distinct from physical pain, yet it must be said that the strong emphasis on emotional wounds sometimes tends to disregard the mutilated body of the victim.⁴⁶ Generally speaking, the concept of trauma seems to be too rigid to take full account of the varied experiences of terror-related victimhood and the equally varied modes of personal coping with these experiences. In addition, the concept of trauma may be misleading insofar as it tends to suggest a sleight-of-hand equalization of different categories of victimhood which – in this case – may obscure rather than isolate the features unique to victims of terrorism. Finally, the ubiquity of trauma does not seem to prevent widespread discrimination against victims as bearers of an alleged “negative privilege.”⁴⁷

Clearly, the concept of trauma is of recent origin and couched in very modern scientific terms, whereas the concept of victimhood carries almost archaic connotations which lend themselves to epic narratives and can never fully shed the signs of their religious origins. When designating yourself or another person as a

in the USA after 9/11 see Alyson Cole: *The Cult of True Victimhood: From the War on Welfare to the War on Terror*. Stanford 2007.

44 Contrary to the definitions in: Lynch and Argomaniz: “Victims of terrorism are first and foremost the victims of a traumatic personal experience;” “Being a victim of terrorism is the sum of many complex interactions including the personal experience of trauma and a politically and religiously motivated ideology;” [they] “have experienced very different but equally traumatic events,” 1, 3.

45 Brunner, Politik.

46 See the reports on physical ailments as a consequence of a gunshot to the knee (*gambizzazione*), which was regarded as a “lesser punishment” by the Red Brigades: Cento Bull and Cooke, *Ending Terrorism*, 169. The prison term served by the perpetrators was often bitterly compared with the lifelong pain and physical disability of the victims.

47 Robert Spaemann: Bemerkungen zum Opferbegriff, in: Richard Schenk (ed.): *Zur Theorie des Opfers. Ein interdisziplinäres Gespräch*. Stuttgart 1995, 11–26, especially 12.

victim, narration matters, not just information. The sacred sphere of irretrievable loss and grief is touched upon while reminding modern societies of the ultimate vulnerability and finality of human existence. The concept speaks of passivity rather than agency, helplessness rather than antagonism; this explains why some affected people actually refuse to be called victims: they fear it will weaken their claim to social recognition and legal rights.⁴⁸ On the other hand, it has become almost a prerequisite for collective action to identify objects of injustice or inequality as victims.⁴⁹ Yet, discarding the concept out of hand would be just as ideological as using it in an inflationary way. Karl-Heinz Höhn argues that the concept of victimhood is still indispensable for delegitimizing violence and aggression. He warns: “Wherever the concept is renounced, the phenomenon itself will soon be ignored. Cultural amnesia abounds and exculpatory arrangements will be in high demand.” The language of victimhood may thus be regarded as a “human code of conduct for dealing with the unredeemable.”⁵⁰

In almost all countries afflicted with terrorism, the character of the numerous victims’ first-person accounts – whether autobiographies or interviews – suggests that a purely instrumental approach is inappropriate, for example with regard to particular forms of victimization encountered or recorded at different times. While a variety of political and economic factors do come into play, the frame of reference for public discourse on victimhood, however recently defined, still carries the intrinsic weight of religious traditions, themes and motives. This is true even when legal or criminological issues are concerned, or when material claims are upheld against the state, which is often charged with having failed to protect its citizens and therefore pressed by victims’ relatives to pursue investigations or even fully prosecute the perpetrators.⁵¹ Some relatives even refuse to accept compensation as an insult to the memory of the deceased. It is also no coincidence that churches or individual clergy members play a defining role in

48 Lawther, Construction, here 12.

49 Latté, Victim Movements, 1372.

50 Hans-Joachim Höhn: Spuren der Gewalt. Kultursoziologische Annäherungen an die Kategorie des Opfers, in: Albert Gerhards and Klemens Richter (eds.): *Das Opfer. Biblischer Anspruch und liturgische Gestalt*. Freiburg 2000, 11–29, my translations from 15, 27.

51 This is particularly relevant in the Italian case where the results of the prosecution are often rather meager and degenerate departments of state are sometimes even directly implicated. This is why such interpretations abound among victims of right-wing terrorism as part of a general strategy of mistrust and escalation. See: Cento Bull and Cooke, Ending Terrorism. In Germany, the most prominent case is Michal Buback’s media and legal campaign to force the authorities to end the alleged cover-up of the presumptive murderer of his father. See: id., *Der zweite Tod meines Vaters. Erweiterte Ausgabe mit neuen Fakten*, Munich 2009. The title of the book carries the full weight of this accusation.

the process by offering spiritual support to victims and perpetrators alike, even where – unlike in Northern Ireland – they are not part of the conflict themselves. Sanctification may, however, not just be due to specific speech acts, but also to a particular form of “silencing” which Jay Winter categorizes as “sacred” or “liturgical silence.”⁵² Other forms of public silence in Winter’s typology are equally relevant for our topic: “strategic silence” in cases of deliberately unresolved political conflict, and “essentialist silence” in cases of denial of unwelcome truths, for example in bystanders impacted by violence. In any case, the healing effects of the talking cure are not necessarily self-evident. As Winter argues, silence is not to be confused with either forgetting or with disrespect: “Speech is morally neutral, and so is silence.”⁵³ What apparently matters most to those afflicted is the ability to decide when and how to speak. Many victims tend to fall silent when asked about their experience by the media. Ismael El Iraki, a survivor of the November 2015 Bathaqlan massacre in Paris, only agrees to meet the press on the condition that no mention is made of the events themselves.⁵⁴ Similarly, many relatives of the victims of NSU terror have just one thing in mind: to be left in peace.⁵⁵

But it would be wrong to assume that differences in victims’ readiness and ability to speak about their experience can be solely ascribed to subjective factors. Rather, numerous reports have shown that it is of utmost importance whether an audience is ready to listen and to respond sympathetically to what the victims have to say. This finding is borne out most clearly in the case of Holocaust survivors. In many ways, their singular experience and its aftermath in the ensuing legal, scientific, psychological and political wrangling prefigures the way in which today’s victims of violence may articulate their suffering.⁵⁶ For example, the idea of trans-generational transfer of emotional strain found in the literature on Holocaust survivors is also relevant for victims of terrorism. The same is true of the so-called “survivor syndrome.”⁵⁷ It would be fascinating to investigate the degree to which such trans- and supranational trends may be

52 Jay Winter: Thinking about Silence, in: id., Ruth Genio and Efrat Ben-Ze’ ev (eds.): *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge 2010, 3–31.

53 Winter, Thinking, 10.

54 Nadia Pantel.: Nicht normal, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (12/13 Nov. 2016).

55 See the evidence in: John, Wunden.

56 For the agency of survivors see: Katharina Stengel (ed.): *Opfer als Akteure: Interventionen ehemaliger NS-Verfolgter in der Nachkriegszeit*. Frankfurt a. M. 2008.

57 William G. Niederland: *Folgen der Verfolgung: Das Überlebenden-Syndrom, Seelenmord*. Frankfurt a. M. 1980. See also the contributions in José Brunner and Nathalie Zajde (eds.): *Holocaust und Trauma. Kritische Perspektiven zur Entstehung und Wirkung eines Paradigmas*. Göttingen 2011 (*Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 39).

linked to the still strongly national discourse on political victimization in the 20th century, and analyze how this discourse may have informed the register of communication by and about terrorism itself.⁵⁸ Even regional and local conditions matter for the victims' sense of self and their perception as victims by others. At the same time, different time layers interact in many ways. For example, German and Italian left-wing terrorists were acutely aware of the concomitant renegotiation of their respective fascist pasts, and in Spain the victims of Basque separatist violence received greater public recognition than the victims of the civil war. In some milieus, victims of Palestinian terrorism in the Middle East conflict are sometimes even declared "victims of a new Shoah."⁵⁹

In short, the visibility or invisibility of victims as terrorism "sufferers" should be regarded as the result of a complex interaction between different actors and social subsystems in the plurality of public spheres in modern societies.⁶⁰ Not only those directly affected are involved, but also politicians, the authorities (especially security and police departments), intellectuals, artists and experts in different professions, especially psychology and its sub-branch victimology.⁶¹ The media plays a special role, as academic research has rightly pointed out, one which is now even scrutinized and criticized by journalists themselves.⁶² In particular, they are much more circumspect today in using images and videos of perpetrators or victims after some controversial past experiences in this regard.⁶³ Yet while there may be a new sense of responsibility for victim's

58 For the German case see: Martin Sabrow: Heroismus und Viktimismus. Überlegungen zum deutschen Opferdiskurs in historischer Perspektive, in: *Potsdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien* 33/34 (2008), 7–20.

59 Giulio Meotti and Matthew Sherry: *A New Shoah. The Untold Story of Israel's Victims of Terrorism*. New York 2010.

60 Jörg Requate: Medien und Öffentlichkeit als Gegenstände historischer Analyse, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25 (1999), 5–32.

61 On special knowledge with regard to victims of terrorism see: Yael Danieli et al. (eds.): *The Trauma of Terrorism: Sharing Knowledge and Shared Care. An International Handbook*. London 2012; Andrew Silke (ed.): *Terrorists, Victims and Society. Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and its Consequences*. Chichester 2003; for legal aspects see also: Letschert et al., *Assisting Victims*. As an early example see: Frank Ochberg: The Victim of Terrorism: Psychiatric Considerations, in: *Terrorism* 1 (1978), 147–168.

62 See the still recommended volume by Alex P. Schmid and Janny De Graaf: *Violence as Communication. Insurgent Terrorism and Western News Media*. London 1982. On the most recent process of reflection within the media see for instance Bruce Shapiro: Mit Fakten gegen Panik, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (13/14/15 Aug. 2016).

63 For the effects of visual representations of victims on their families see: Terhoeven, *Opferbilder*, 395. After the attacks of summer 2016 the use of pictures of violence was hotly debated among the editorial staff of Italian newspapers: Mario Calabresi: *Oscurare l'orrore*, in: la

families in respected print media, this new sensitivity tends to be undercut by social media. We see an exponential increase in both the direct and indirect potential threat of terrorist messages when most dramatic pictures of violence can be published without going through the more serious filters of established media. In any case, the visual and media representation of violence and its physical and emotional effects, often directed at different audiences, should play a central role in each of the historical constellations under investigation.

But a broader question also needs to be asked: How does our view of the history of terrorism change if the focus is shifted to its victims? If we look at their suffering, their agency, their helplessness, the hierarchies among them, and how they are acknowledged and/or exploited by society and politics? If we consider their central role in the propaganda of terrorism and its emotional shock effect on the public? If we examine the role of survivors in the social process of resolving conflicts conducted by terrorist means? The yearbook contributions address these questions in five historical case studies involving different types of terrorism and a variety of political and social approaches to confronting it. The range of victim types and forms of victimization they endured are equally broad. In terms of methodology, the authors display different aspects of the new cultural history of politics: discourse analysis, praxeology, and approaches used in cultural memory studies and visual history.

The first case study takes us to czarist Russia in the early 20th century. Anke Hilbrenner describes an episode from the last of a number of terrorist waves that shook the czarist regime starting in the mid-19th century. As the number of willing “terrorists” (their own designation) grew and as their actions became increasingly professional the spectrum of victims also broadened. At the end of the 1860s, Mikhail Bakunin’s *Revolutionary Catechism* had already divided power elites into different categories of victim according to their importance, the first being “those immediately sentenced to death.”⁶⁴ The aim at the heart of this strategy – a model that would be repeated by many later terrorisms – was to provoke the most brutal counterattacks possible so that the population would recognize the “true” nature of the regime and cast off the hated master. The violent campaign of 1905 that included the assassination of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich analyzed in the essay was actually part of a larger political coup

Repubblica (28 July 2016). Mario Calabresi also wrote an autobiography which tells the story of his family after the assassination of his father Luigi, one of the first victims of left-wing terrorism in Italy in the 1970s: Mario Calabresi: *Spingendo la notte più in là. Storia della mia famiglia e di altre vittime del terrorismo*. Milan 2007 (*Der blaue Cinquecento. Die Geschichte meiner Familie im Schatten des Terrorismus*. Munich 2003).

64 Quoted in Waldmann, *Terrorismus*, 54.

initiative that would serve as a prelude to the Revolution of 1917. But was the identity of the victim therefore arbitrary? And what part did the media's framing of the deed play in generating contrary emotions on the part of "presumably interested third parties"?⁶⁵ Hilbrenner explores the rules underlying the formation of "emotional communities" (Barbara Rosenwein) around both the murdered duke and his widow as well as the perpetrator and his comrades, communities defined by grief and sympathy respectively. Since the 19th and early 20th century are considered the laboratory where terrorist operating methods were born, the relevance of her conclusions extends far beyond the individual case.⁶⁶

Marie Breen-Smyth's look at the aftermath of the conflict in Northern Ireland also has paradigmatic significance. The particularly murderous dynamic of the Troubles with their heavy toll of victims was due to the existence of two closely entwined cultures of violence that a partisan state agent who repeatedly violated principles of the rule of law was notably unable to appease. Instead, the events bore some resemblance to a colonial conflict in which terrorist tactics were used by paramilitary groups on both sides. Was it possible given this situation to find a form of "transnational justice" that might ease the pain of those who had suffered and acknowledge their legitimate demands for compensation? Or were the claims of the opposing side simply denied? Breen-Smyth interprets the loyalist and republican efforts to make victimhood politically charged as "war by other means." In so doing she also highlights the dangers in renewed instances of victimization by discursively reviving old images of the enemy time and again even after the cease-fire has taken effect.

Many observers of Italian society have noticed similarly divided and highly politicized recollections of the "years of lead."

It was not separatist tendencies, but instead the antagonism between entrepreneurs of violence on both the right and the left that claimed 378 victims in cold-war Italy between 1969 and 1984.⁶⁷ Anna Cento Bull looks at an example of how the resultant deep rifts were bridged outside the framework of the frequently criticized criminal justice system. A mediated dialogue brought together individual surviving relatives and former terrorists with the aim of having each side at least listen to the other and take its experiences seriously.

⁶⁵ Herfried Münkler: *Guerillakrieg und Terrorismus*, in: *Neue Politische Literatur* 25 (1980), 299–326.

⁶⁶ Waldmann, *Terrorismus*, 60; Dietze, *Erfindung*.

⁶⁷ Right-wing terrorism claimed 199 lives, and left-wing terrorism 179. See Christian Jansen: *Italien seit 1945*. Göttingen 2007, 162–165.

The essay discusses the significance of such initiatives both for the individuals involved and for the theory of democracy.

The essay by Florian Jessensky and Martin Rupps focuses not on surviving relatives but on victims who survived. The authors examine the fate of passengers aboard the Lufthansa airliner “Landshut” when it was hijacked en route from Mallorca to Frankfurt by Palestinian allies of the RAF at the height of the “German Autumn” in October 1977. Only after five tortuous days of extreme emotional and physical strain could the 86 passengers and three crewmembers be freed; the hijackers had executed the pilot shortly before. In a state that devoted enormous resources to the capture, prosecution, and long-term neutralization of – by European standards very few – terrorists, how were the needs of people directly affected by terrorism now to be addressed? The “Landshut” case is also particularly important in the German context because it involved an unusually large group of victims. Jessensky and Rupps look at not only the stance of the federal government and individual state agencies, but also Lufthansa’s crisis management, the interventions of psychiatric experts, and the role of the media.

Art historian and media scholar Charlotte Klonk addresses the question of what the – at least in part politically motivated – call to pay more attention to terrorist attack victims’ suffering in order to blunt the continued glorification of the perpetrators means or can mean on a visual level. She explores the artistic use of victim photographs in the aftermath of RAF terrorism, public reactions to the omnipresent victim icons of September 11, and the use of photographs at terrorist crime scenes that have been made into commemorative sites in New York, Warrington, and Berlin. Klonk’s questions are not only useful in relation to the various historical contexts treated in the essays of this volume. The answers she provides also lead directly into questions posed by the contemporary “turn to the victim” – issues that scholars and media representatives alike must face.