Abstract: The rise of international left-wing, revolutionary terrorism confronted western democracies with a new challenge in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In particular, the relationship between security and human rights was contentious and changeable, and differences between European states are notable. Terrorism and reactions to it varied, not least according to the prevailing political, legal, and cultural traditions. Memories of the recent past played a particularly prominent role, especially with respect to the states that had been occupying powers during the Second World War. The counter-terrorist policies pursued by West Germany’s government met particularly intense suspicion in neighboring counties and even in the framework of alliances such as NATO and the EC. The specter of a Nazi-like police state haunted opponents of excessive police and intelligence operations within Germany and Italy, as well. They forged political alliances of like-minded foreign critics. All in all, strategies of historically legitimizing terrorism and counterterrorist proved multi-pronged and ambiguous. Texts such as laws and pamphlets represented this dimension of political and cultural history.

Keywords: terrorism; counter-terrorism; resistance; occupation; security; liberty

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 claimed a total of 2752 victims (Wachtel 2005, 132). Many observers and commentators perceived the assaults as an unprecedented political event. Fear and insecurity abounded, as the new threat was difficult to assess. The shock and insecurity created by the attacks made it challenging to arrive at clear interpretations...
and assessments in the immediate aftermath of “9/11”. Undoubtedly, the catastrophic suicide bombings caused losses of many lives, substantial destruction, and large-scale alarm far beyond the borders of the United States of America. The attacks eroded trust in the safety of air travel, resulting in a substantial decrease in passenger flights by four percent and a decrease in aerial freight transport by even eight percent. In addition, the financial losses of the 274 member companies of the International Air Transport Organization amounted to $ 15 billion (Wachtel 2005, 133).

But is the international scope of terrorism a new phenomenon? This question has received scant attention in scholarship that has largely concentrated on the attacks of the last two decades. By contrast, this contribution seeks to highlight the proliferation (not emergence) of terrorism in the 1970s. Moreover, it will highlight its international dimension, which has been overlooked by much of the research that has focused primarily on the nation-state framework. Not least, the article is to enrich scholarship by accentuating the role of the past in the emergence and evolution of left-wing terrorism. It will be argued that terrorist attacks gained a global dimension in the 1970s. At the same time, security policies and measures also started to transcend national borders. In particular, intensified cooperation between governments and professional organizations characterized this process, which raised concerns about civil liberties. Not least, it will be demonstrated that experiences, interpretations, and memories of the decades before 1945 shaped the internationalization of both left-wing terrorism and state counter-terrorism (Hanshew 2016, 394, 398).

This article starts with a definition of “terrorism” and “counter-terrorism” in the first section, to be followed by a reconstruction of the internationalization of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The role of the recent past (especially Nazism, fascism, and the German occupation during the Second World War) will receive particular attention. More particularly, memories of recent history influenced the emergence and transformation of terrorist violence as well as counter-terrorism in Western Europe from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. The conclusion provides an overview of the most important findings and an outlook on the Shi’ite and salafi-jihadist terrorists who have committed terrorist attacks since the 1980s. Overall, texts as actions reflected and shaped historical experiences and memories as integral components of culture.

The account will concentrate on left-wing terrorism in Western Europe. Compared to Northern and Latin America, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, West European states – especially Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Britain and France – have experienced the highest number of international terrorist incidents (Chalk 1996, 173, 176). However, the contribution will place terrorist groups and counter-terrorism into a global perspective. Although

Yet terrorism has not been static. In fact, David Rapoport has identified four waves of modern terrorism. Facilitated by new means of communication and transportation as well as the invention and development of dynamite, anarchists mostly attacked high-ranking heads of states condemned as oppressive from the mid-nineteenth century to 1914. Based on the principle of self-determination, terrorist resistance to colonial rule began after the end of the First World War and the Paris Peace Treaties. The principal targets of those assaults were police and military units. This wave peaked in the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1960s, a new type of left-wing revolutionary terrorism emerged from the large-scale social movements. This third wave aimed at a more equal society by empowering the underprivileged classes, abolishing authoritarian structures and mentalities as well as a state that was largely perceived as repressive. Whereas the vast majority of the “New Left” favoured reforms, radicalized groups of protesters aimed at a fundamental upheaval of the existing order in order to overturn “repressive” state authorities as well as “capitalist” and “imperialist” exploitation in their home countries and throughout the world. The Vietnam War and the Six-Days War of June 1967, in particular, led to a radicalization of left-wing protest movements in Western states. Fiercely rejecting the “oppressive” policies of the United States of America and Israel, revolutionary terrorists began to cooperate with Palestinian organizations in the Middle East and expressed their solidarity with liberation movements in Latin America (Herf 2016, 2020, 763). This wave, which petered out in the 1980s, was characterized by large-scale hostage-taking and kidnapping incidents that shook liberal societies and disrupted social life and transport, especially civil aviation. Assassinations no longer targeted persons who held a public office, but they were usually justified as punishments. The fourth wave of terrorism started in 1979 after the Iranian Revolution had replaced the Shah’s secular regime, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin had signed the Camp David Accords (17 September 1978) and the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan (in late December 1979). As a result, religiously-motivated terrorism proliferated. Radical Muslims, such as members of Osama Bin Laden’s Al Qaeda, sought to create an Islamic state based on the Sharia. Pronounced hostility to western lifestyles and freedoms, too, was an important driving-force of this type of terrorism. It was less hierarchically organized than the previous waves and comprised suicide attacks (Rapoport 2006, 2013; Riegler 2009).

“Counter-terrorism” has been almost as controversial as “terrorism”. The concept has been used “to include a broad variety of responses to terrorism, both
proactive/offensive and reactive/defensive”. Most scholars have conceptualised “counter-terrorism” as more proactive and pre-emotive than “anti-terrorism”, which has a strong emphasis on reacting to incidents (Marsden and Schmid 2011, 190; Milde 2008, 244). Like terrorist assaults, state power has to be projected into societies in order to gain support and legitimacy. Moreover, it is only effective if it is publicly displayed. Like terrorism, the concept of “counter-terrorism” therefore encompasses a strong performative and communicative dimension (Crelinsten and Schmid 1993, 314; Weinhauer 2007, 215–216).

Efforts to protect states and societies usually affect a broad range of fields, spanning from domestic and foreign policies to social and economic activities such as trade, tourism and migration. Counterterrorist measures have included laws and conventions, but also police and physical protection through screening and searching passengers and baggage in civil aviation (Reinares 2000, X). Nevertheless, not all instances of terrorism have been addressed by governments, state authorities and security agencies. Vice versa, not all threats and attacks that have been the focus of counter-terrorism efforts can be classified as “terrorism” (rather than robbery and harassment). All in all, the concept of “counter-terrorism” has been selective and an ensemble of both measures and constructions. While it emphasizes state authority, it also highlights its limitations (Winter 2018, 617; Weinhauer 2006, 245, 2007, 215).

In general, scholars have distinguished between two types of counter-terrorism responses. First, politicians have conceived their fight against terrorism as a war, most prominently in the case of the “war on terror” that US President George W. Bush declared against Osama bin-Laden’s al-Qaida in 2001. While this conceptualization has lent urgency to counter-terrorism and enabled governments to impose a state of exception and pass emergency legislation, it has also given terrorist attacks a higher profile and greater significance. Rather than defeating or at least weakening al-Qaida, for instance, this strategy has provided the organisation with new recruits.

Second, a criminal justice model has been applied to many instances of terrorism. According to this approach, terrorist acts are crimes that should be countered by harmonising jurisdiction, reinforcing international cooperation, and defending human rights within the framework of the rule of law. However, some states, such as France and the FRG, declared a state of emergency in the late 1970s and thereafter, for instance after the attacks in Paris in November 2015 when French President François Hollande took action. Many European governments have also enacted repressive laws as a response to terrorism. Some scholars have even argued that the attacks of 11 September 2001 have triggered a comprehensive shift from a legal to a military approach to counter-terrorism (Crelinsten 2009, 9–12; Crelinsten and Schmid 1993, 332–336; Duyvesteyn and Schuurman 2018, 418).
Similarly, experts have distinguished between coercive, proactive, persuasive, and defensive counter-terrorism (Crelinsten 2018, 363–364). States usually have five options in dealing with terrorism: they can refrain from any action, or attempt to reconcile assaulters and their supporters by initiating of reinforcing socioeconomic reforms. Alternatively, governments and state authorities can enact new legislation in order to prosecute terrorists, utilize police and intelligence agencies, or resort to outright violence (Duyvesteyn and Schuurman 2018, 418).

In most countries, three major institutions are in charge of counter-terrorism. Whereas national intelligence agencies and the military are responsible for the security of the state, the police are tasked with ensuring the safety of citizens and society. Beyond responding to terrorist attacks, polices forces also have to investigate them or deter terrorists and detect their plots before their assaults. Scholars who engage in advising politicians on counter-terrorism have stressed the need for a coherent policy comprising an effective overall command, confidence-building measures to gain popular support, the coordination of intelligence-gathering, and international collaboration among governments and security agencies (Clutterbuck 2018, 375, 382; Hoffman and Morrison-Taw 2000, 8, 19).

Like terrorism, counter-terrorism started to take on an international dimension in the late 19th century. Experts began to exchange data on “international criminals” in order to protect their citizens from terrorist attacks. At the International Anti-Anarchist Conference in Rome in 1898, delegates decided to initiate communication between national police forces in Europe. They also agreed on specific techniques of criminal identification and police detection, particularly the use of portrait parlé. In addition, representatives from 21 countries adopted a resolution on extra-dition practices, although they did not agree to surrender foreign anarchists on demand. Even though the conference paved the way to an anti-anarchist protocol which was signed at a follow-up meeting in St. Petersburg in 1904, liberals still opposed both terrorism and the expansion of state power, which they perceived as a danger to basic human rights and civil liberties. Moreover, even the cautious police cooperation that was initiated around 1900 infringed on the long-standing principle of national sovereignty over the use of state power. It was only under the impact of social-revolutionary terrorism in the 1970s that police cooperation gradually strengthened. For example, the European Council founded Terrorisme, Radicalisme, Extrémisme et Violence Internationale (TREVI) in December 1975. Nevertheless, counterterrorist collaboration has remained loose and largely restricted to intergovernmental organizations until the present (Jensen 1981, 2009, 2013; Oberloskamp 2016).²

2 The Emergence of Global Terrorism in the Late 1960s and in the 1970s

On 22 July 1968, members of the militant organization Popular for the Liberation of Palestine seized control over an Israeli plane in order to exchange the innocent passengers from a large number of nations for terrorists who had been jailed in Israel. Many experts have regarded this highly symbolic attack as the starting-point of global terrorism. Although terrorist attacks had assumed a cross-border dimension in the late nineteenth century, continuous transnational emulation and cooperation between terrorists emerged in the 1970s. With the operation of wide-bodied long-range aircraft and the rise of mass tourism, civilian aviation became an easy target of terrorists. Moreover, new media like the television lent left-wing terrorism a strong impact across borders in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Images of terrorist attacks were intended to spread fear and anxiety. In fact, a “mass-mediated terrorism” emerged in the 1970s (Bernhardt 2016, 3, 9; Nacos 2002, 19).

The new attacks were primarily due to the frustration of Palestinian activists. Major Arab states (Egypt, Syria, and Jordan) had been defeated by Israel in the Six-Days-War, dashing all hopes of the Palestinians to return to their homes that they had been forced to leave in the preceding war of 1948. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and a radical splinter group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), therefore hijacked airplanes in order to blackmail Israel and western governments in the late 1960s. At the same time, the new left-wing terrorism rose from the protest movements that shook many western democracies, questioning established values and the existing political and social order. In states such as Italy, the Netherlands, the FRG and France, radical fractions of the protest groups rejected gradual reforms, opposed the American war in Vietnam and turned to terrorism in the course of the 1960s (Serr 2016, 41–46).

Decolonization had created new conflicts, as well. For example, South Moluccans had been forcibly exiled to the Netherlands in the early 1950s. The Dutch government promised that they would eventually get their own independent state, the Republic of South Maluku. When they felt that the Netherlands had failed to fulfill its promise, the South Moluccans turned to violent action in 1970s, taking hostages and hijacking trains (one close to Groningen in May 1977). As another important dimension of internationalization, terrorists crisscrossed national borders. West German militants of the terrorist Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, RAF) for instance, shot dead several Dutch citizens in 1977–78. One RAF terrorist, Ronald Augustin, was even a Dutchman (Hanshew 2016; Hellema 2012; Pekelder 2012a).

Terrorists also extended their transnational collaboration. Yet the extent and forms of cooperation varied markedly. The West-German *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF)
for example, justified their attacks in Germany by claiming to support liberation movements in the Global South. As early as 1971, the West German terrorists sought to initiate a global revolution in their position paper on the “Urban Guerilla Concept”. Likewise, the Brigade Rosse (BR) and the Dutch Rode Jeugh (“Red Youth”) took up concepts and ideas that have emanated in the non-European world, even though the Italian left-wing terrorists, in particular, simultaneously relied on a strong national tradition against state. Fidel Castro’s and Che Guevara’s rebel troops in Latin America, in particular, served as models for many left-wing terrorists in Europe. The South American Tupamaros who fought the pro-American military dictators in Uruguay, were glorified by left-wing terrorist groups such as the RAF, the BR and the French Action directe (AD). Infused by these radical liberation movements of the Global South, West European terrorists (including those of the Irish Republic Army, IRA) established urban guerilla groups that were to promote the radical revolutionary fight against “imperialism”, “capitalism”, and “bourgeois” rule. Th strategies according to Che Guevara’s and Régis Debray’s concept of the “focus”, which accentuated the snowballing effect of the initiative of a select number of committed revolutionaries, kindled the enthusiasm among left-wing extremists in western Europe. Yet revolutionary terrorists ultimately perceived the liberation movements of the Global South in the framework on the worldwide competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War (Hanshew 2012, 112; Kraushaar 2006a; Nolan 2012, 116, 124).3

However, statements of support and declarations of solidarity were not equivalent to collaborating in terrorist attacks. Thus, most West European terrorists adopted the concept of urban guerilla groups espoused by the Tupamoros in Uruguay without cooperating with them in action. Similarly, the Italian Red Brigades and the West German Red Army Faction collaborated with the West European terrorists of the AD, the IRA and the Belgian Cellules Communistes Combattantes (“Fighting Communist Cells”) in various attacks without sharing their ideology. Similarly, the PFLP supported the West European terrorists by training them, offering them a safe haven and thereby shielding them from police persecution. In October 1977, they even hijacked a plane in order to pressurize Helmut Schmidt’s government to set free imprisoned terrorists of the RAF. Yet protracted political disputes between them and the activists of the PFLP in the training camps in the Middle East reflected profound ideological conflicts as well as a cultural clash (Daase 2006, 1284; Fischer 2006; Kraushaar 2006b; Lütnant 2014, 53–85, 161–174; Pekelder 2008; Sturm 2008;

Terhoeven 2014, 150–168, 222–240, 620–670; Wunschik 2007a, 23–29). Not least, the communist regime of the GDR took up members of the West German Red Army Faction to the East German state from 1980 onward, even though the rulers of the Socialist Unity Party harbored considerable reservations against the revolutionary activism of the terrorists. Moreover, they were concerned about their political reputation in international politics and therefore concealed their aid. By contrast, the Bulgarian state security agency, the Komitet za dǎržavna sigurnost, allowed the West German Federal Agency against Crime (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA) to arrest a terrorist in the Communist state in June 1978 (Nehring 2015, 411–424; Wunschik 1995, 2007b, 1014–1024).

These examples clearly demonstrate that scholars have to analytically distinguish between symbolic support and actual cooperation in their studies of global terrorism. Counter-terrorist policies need to be placed within their historical contexts, just as much as the phenomenon of terrorism itself. This approach highlights both the scope and the limits of cross-border collaboration between left-wing terrorists. Differences in their traditions, aims, agendas and styles separated them from each other. The BR, for instance, was characterized by its reliance on a tradition of rebellion by the political left, its strong political base in the industrial plants of northern Italy, and its social heterogeneity. In contrast, the more homogeneous RAF simultaneously rejected and exploited the authoritarian and militaristic attitudes that were prevalent in Germany. It is not surprising, therefore, that the two organizations only began collaborating in the 1980s (Jansen 2004, 484, 488, 491, 497, 499–500).

### 3 Concerns About Counter-Terrorism and the Roles of the Recent Past

In the 1970s and early 1980s, international left-wing terrorism sparked hot debates about security, leading to concerns about the states’ capacity to defuse the terrorist threat and ultimately seemed to endanger the political legitimacy of governments. In response to the international terrorism, governments reinforced their counter-terrorist measures, in their respective states as well as on an international scale. Reforms of criminal law and the penal system that had been initiated by governments to prevent crime increasingly became repressive. In the FRG, for instance, the criminal code was amended in order to sanction “support for violence” (§88a) and “incitement to violence” (§130a) (Hanshew 2012, 116, 148). While state security gained importance in the face of left-wing terrorism, civil liberties and human rights also became increasingly significant issues (Eckel 2009, 437–484, 2012, 603–635;
When left-wing terrorism emerged on an unprecedented scale in the 1970s, police and judicial measures against the new threat therefore met considerable objections and opposition. References to the recent past continuously shaped these debates.

Faced with the threat of revolutionary left-wing terrorism, governments in European democracies had to cope with the challenge to balance security demands with the protection of civil liberties and human rights. The assassination and murder of influential representatives of elites, such as West German Federal Attorney General Siegfried Buback and the president of the Employers’ Federation, Hanns-Martin Schleyer in 1977, Italian Christian Democrat politician Aldo Moro in 1978, and Lord Louis Mountbatten in the following year, reflected the radicalization of left-wing terrorism. In countries such as Italy, France and West-Germany, major politicians portrayed left-wing terrorism as a major threat to the security and human rights of the majority of citizens. Governments therefore adopted stringent counter-terrorist policies. In particular, they justified extraordinary legislation as a temporary emergency measure. For instance, defendant rights were seriously curtailed in the FRG and in Italy. The authorities also restricted access to jailed terrorists and expanded surveillance measures to broad sections of the population. Not least, mere membership in organizations defined as “terrorist” became punishable. The principle of guilt by association discredited suspected persons. This gave rise to heated controversies about the lessons of the past, the limits of state power in democracies, and more generally the relationship between security and liberty. These conflicts and anxieties about the political and social order in western democracies ultimately became more important that terrorism itself (Nolan 2012, 110, 120–121, 126, 133).

State authorities usually justified the security policies and defended the ensuing restriction of basic human rights and civil liberties. In the FRG, Helmut Schmidt’s coalition government emphasized its capacity to defend democracy. A new law (Kontaktsperrengesetz), for instance, banned contacts between terrorists and their

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defendants after Schleyer had been abducted in West Germany in September 1977. Executive power was also strengthened in order to combat the left-wing terrorists of the RAF. State authorities regarded them as internal enemies of the state and democracy, demanding an extension of security forces. The West German police, for instance, expanded by 25 percent in the 1970s, and the Federal police budget tripled (Hanshew 2012, 194, 222–223; Nolan 2012, 128–129).

The new security legislation and counter-terrorism policies reinforced surveillance and control in the name of fighting terrorism and protecting human rights. For example, telephone tapping was implemented in Germany to track Schleyer’s hijackers in 1977. Governments repeatedly harnessed newspapers, as well as radio and TV channels, to further their political ends. At the same time, politicians supported political education programs aimed at defending the state and democracy by weaning off “sympathizers” from the left-wing terrorists and mobilizing the population against them. Convinced by the success of preceding democratization in the FRG, for example, the ruling Social Democrats identified democracy with the West German state during the crisis of 1977. By contrast, left-wing Social Democrats and the extra-parliamentary opposition warned of a “security state” that would violate human rights (Hanshew 2010, 119, 128–143, 2012, 124–133, 193–207).

New surveillance technologies employed by security agencies to combat terrorism heightened these concerns. Digital data collection and processing were introduced as early as the 1960s against the backdrop of belief in progress, modernization, and planning. It was terrorism, however, that induced the security services of many West European countries to employ the new techniques that were initially seen as “rational”, impersonal tools of social engineering. State authorities sought to extend security or at least create the semblance of stability. The President of the West German BKA, Horst Herold, for instance, strongly believed in the efficacy of new techniques of policing that promised to detect criminals and prevent terrorist attacks. Under the impact of the hijacking of Christian Democratic politician Peter Lorenz on 27 February 1975, the police collected, processed, and linked an ever-increasing amount of personal data. In a similar vein, central police authorities were established in France in the 1970s. Digitalization increasingly shaped information technologies as well as techniques of tracing terrorists. For example, Rasterfahndung (dragnet) seemed to pave the way to a comprehensive population management in the Federal Republic of Germany. In France, state authorities established a central agency to collect relevant data on citizens in the mid-1970s. Digitalization increasingly promoted the development of new, ever more comprehensive information technologies as well as techniques of tracing terrorists. Once institutionalized, security agencies partially exploited the terrorist menace and followed their vested interests, for instance enhancing their power. By 1979, for instance, the BKA had collected data on 4.7 million people and 31,000 organizations. It also held 2.1 million

All these measures were aimed at preserving, restoring, or enhancing the political legitimacy of governments and state authorities by providing security. Politicians posed as strong guardians of the state and its citizens. Yet counter-terrorist policies and measures differed between European states, not least because they were shaped by specific experiences and memories of the recent past. In the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, references to the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the related notion of a “militant democracy” induced politicians to pursue a strategy of repressing terrorists, reinforcing the determination of governments to defend democracy by all legal means. The Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, BfV) as well as the federal and state police forces are meant to protect the constitutional order of the FRG. The Federal Prosecutor’s office referred to “Weimar” in order to justify its traditional fixation on the protection of the state against increasing demands to rebalance the relationship between security and liberty in favour of the latter. Similarly, left-wing terrorism reminded the chairman of the Christian Democrats (CDU), Helmut Kohl, and some other politicians of “Weimar” instability. Reliance on executive power also resulted from traditional trust in the state’s capacity to solve problems, West Germany’s proximity to the GDR and fears of communist subversion. Conservatives, in particular, demanded a strong state that was to protect democracy against “extremism”, i.e. neo-Nazism and communism. They also called for a popular mobilization of citizens in defense of the state. At the same time, anti-terrorist campaigns reminded West Germany’s leading police officials of their fight against insurgents in occupied Europe during the Second World War. They tended to associate their strenuous efforts to combat left-wing terrorism with warfare against partisans, especially in the Balkans and in the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1944. Against the backdrop of these (highly selective and apologetic) memories, refugees and immigrant workers in big cities were perceived as particularly dangerous. In this way, misperceptions and myths shaped representations of the RAF from its inception. They have left a lasting imprint on understandings of left-wing terrorism in Germany up to the present (Balz 2008, 171, 173, 178–180, 183; Baumann 2012, 110, 116, 240–242, 300–301, 397, 392; Frohman 2015, 324–325; Hanshew 2012, 141–148, 151; Kießling and Safferling 2021, 467, 499–501; Nolan 2012,110; Terhoeven 2015, 67–68, 71, 86, 90; Weinhauer 2006, 250–251, 256). 6

By contrast, left-wing critics in Germany and neighboring countries raised concerns about vigilant violence, decried denunciations, and warned of new dictatorship as a result of excessive surveillance and policing by a strong state. Due to the experience of the Nazi dictatorship, these reservations were explicitly expressed in the Federal Republic of Germany, where critics pointed to the roles of leading politicians as soldiers in the Second World War. Against the backdrop of haunting memories of the Second World War in general and Nazi occupation in particular, these reservations quickly assumed an international dimension. The third Russell Tribunal of 1974, for example, showed themselves concerned about civil liberties and criticized human rights violations in the West German state (Diewald-Kerkmann 2009, p. 147; de Graaf 2011, 67, 232–233; Jessen 2011, 189–210).

Foreign supporters of terrorists jailed in the FRG, such as Dutchman Pieter Herman Bakker Schut, established or joined committees and created cross-border networks. In their view, human rights had to be shielded from an omniscient and omnipresent West German “police state”. These critics stigmatized force feeding of imprisoned terrorists as a result of their hunger strikes as “torture” and asked Amnesty International to investigate conditions in jails. In fact, the German word Folter (torture) was introduced into the Dutch language (Passmore 2009, 34, 43, 58; Passmore, Ulrike Meinhof, pp. 122–124; van Bennekom 2008, 233; Pekelder 2012a, 95–96, 101–102, 108). References to “Weimar” and the Nazi past clearly served as codes that were to justify different and even opposing policies vis-à-vis terrorists (de Graaf 2011, 67, 232–233).

Likewise, the Italian Brigade Rosse positioned themselves within the tradition of wartime resistance (resistenza), especially from 1968 to 1972 when the organisation was still anchored in the workers’ protests of the late 1960s. For example, the publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli gave his left-wing organisation the name “Gruppi di Azione Partigiana” (Partisan Action Group). The founders of the BR, Renato Curcio and Alberto Franceschini, had ties to the resistenza in their family histories. The Italian terrorists also took up guns that the resistance fighters had used in their fights against German troops and Italian Fascists during the Second World War. They uncompromisingly rejected the Italian state and equated it with the Nazi dictatorship. This radicalised the Italian terrorists, but alienated supporters. The latter tended to highlight Italian resistance rather than Italians’ collaboration with Germany in the Second World War, especially during the years from 1943 to 1945. As the memory politics of the BR contrasted with the narratives of the moderate left, it ultimately contributed to the demise of the organisation in the late 1970s. In addition, ‘antifascism’ proved ambiguous, as the political and police authorities referred

to the glorified the *resistenza* in the Second World War, as well. This specific appropriation of recent history was to legitimise their fight against terrorism (Jansen 2004, 491; Locher 2012, 248, 256; Weinberg 1986, 148, 161–163).

Yet the Italian government legitimized its policy by historical reference, as well. In this way, the emergence of strong terrorist organizations was related to the discontinuity of political systems in the states which had experienced Nazi, Fascist or authoritarian rule from the 1920s to the 1940s (Engene 1998, 191–192, 290). Italy’s leading politicians officially rejected the German “model” of stringent anti-terrorism policies as a “Germanization” (*germanizzazione*), which alluded to Nazi rule over their country during the last two years of the war. By contrast, the political and police authorities positioned themselves within the tradition of the (overrated and glorified) resistance to the Germans in the Second World War. Under the impact of left-wing violence and neo-fascist terrorist attacks in the 1970s, however, the government devised repressive laws like the *Legge Reale* of 1975. It allowed police forces to shoot dead suspects as a measure of last resort. Not least in order to quell doubts about the country’s reliability in international politics during the years of the “historical compromise” (*Compromesso storico*) between the Christian Democrats and the Communists from 1976 to 1979, the government enacted even more stringent anti-terrorist laws. In particular, *Legge Moro* of March 1978 gave the police ample leeway to tap telephones. After Moro had been murdered, the *Legge Cossiga* of 1979 allowed the judiciary to impose preventive arrest on terrorist suspects without specifying charges and granting any hearing. Italy’s Minister of the Interior, Francesco Cossiga maintained that his government protected human rights and secured liberty by enacting laws and taking stringent measures against terrorism. Yet the attitudes of leading Italian politicians towards left-wing terrorism were ambivalent. At least some of them even pursued a “strategy of tension” that sought to provoke attacks by the Red Brigades in order to justify counter-measures to be taken by radical conservatives or even by the neo-fascist far right. All in all, the attacks of the BR have left a lasting impact on Italy’s memory culture. The threat of left-wing terrorism has been inflated to a trauma, not least due to excessive and sensational media coverage (Hof 2010, 21–29; Hürter 2012, 383–404, 2015, 75; Jansen 2004, 491; Weinberg 2007, 27, 35–37, 41, 45, 62–63; Wunderle 2006, 782–808).

By contrast, the fight against terrorism remained largely the domain of experts in the Netherlands, where bombings, hijackings and other terrorist attacks left 16 victims dead from 1969 to 1978. Although Dutch Prime Ministers Joop den Uyl and especially Dries van Agt did employ special police to combat terrorist attacks by Moluccans, den Uyl, in particular, emphasized human rights and political liberty in order to contrast the “Dutch approach” to counter-terrorism with the supposed excessive reliance on the state in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Dutch governments and public authorities preferred low-profile anti-terrorist policies, giving
leeway to local police forces avoiding politicization and shying away from large-scale public mobilization. At the same time, the secret intelligence activities of the Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst (BVD) aroused suspicions and fears of an emerging “police state”. Moreover, the governments of den Uyl and van Agt showed themselves prepared to resort to rigorous anti-terrorist measures. Although the “Dutch approach” was not necessarily “soft”, the political elites of the Netherlands rejected the German “model” of tight security measures, not least due to the experiences and memories of Nazi occupation during the Second World War. Experiences of German oppression from 1940 to 1944 also shaped French counter-terrorist policies (de Graaf 2011, 23, 28, 31, 35, 39–44, 168; Pekelder 2012b, 193–212).

Clearly, different national security cultures framed the perceptions and construction of terrorism and thus shaped policies and measures in west European states in the 1970s and early 1980s. Memories of the recent past in general and suspicions of Germany in particular played a prominent role in counter-terrorism. As demonstrated, the rhetoric of state policies differed from concrete counter-terrorist measures, because the governments of countries such as Italy, France and the Netherlands attempted to avoid the semblance of emulating policies pursued in the Federal Republic. Occasionally, memories of occupation by the Third Reich even impeded collaboration against left-wing terrorists. After Herbert Kappler had been freed from a prison in Rome by his wife in August 1977, for instance, relations between Italy and Germany underwent a serious crisis. Kappler was a German war criminal who had ordered his SS troops to murder 335 Italians in the Ardentine Caves (close to Rome) as a reprisal for an attack on German soldiers by Italian resistance on 24 March 1944. An Italian military court had sentenced Kappler to life imprisonment in 1948. After he had escaped in the summer of 1977, Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti cancelled Chancellor Schmidt’s visit to Italy. The FRG refused to extradite Kappler to the Italian authorities or to put him on trial in West Germany. In turn, Italy’s government chose to ignore West German requests to prevent the Lufthansa plane from Fiumicino Airport (Rome) on 13 October. A rescue operation by German anti-terrorist squads that Schmidt’s cabinet temporarily considered would have been outrightly rejected by Italy’s government. It was only during Schmidt’s visit to Italy in December 1977 that collaboration on counter-terrorism between the two countries was officially revived (Bauerkämper 2012 1650–1666).

4 Conclusions

This article has demonstrated that international terrorism proliferated as early as the 1970s. This process was closely intertwined with a notable acceleration of counter-terrorist cooperation between police forces and security issues, which raised concerns about civil liberties. The experiences, interpretations and memories of the decades before 1945 played a crucial role in these processes and the ensuing debates. All these issues have been related to each other for the first time in this contribution. The interplay of these dimensions should receive more attention in future studies of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

By and large, advocates of human rights and individual civil liberties succeeded in preventing large-scale security measures in the 1970s. In fact, the governments of these states resisted calls for restricting basic human rights in the name of combating terrorism. However, national traditions of civil liberties, state power, as well as the timing and nature of the terrorist threat were factors that strongly impacted counterterrorist responses, as demonstrated by the security policies of the French government. Although the separatist movements like the Basques and the Bretons, as well as the left-wing terrorists like the Action Directe, spread insecurity in France in the 1970s and early 1980s, the “sanctuary doctrine” cordoned the country off against attacks by the PFLP. In 1981–82, the newly-appointed French Justice Minister Robert Badinter warned against an overreaction to terrorism by state authorities. It was only after spectacular terrorist attacks in the first few months of 1982 that President François Mitterrand turned to an unrelenting anti-terrorist policy. Like in Germany 10 years earlier, the government shifted from flexible and lenient political solutions to a rigid security management, especially by employing the judiciary. The conservative Republicans, who won the elections of 1986, defined security as a foundation of liberty rather than as a contrast to it Lammert (2017, 48–58, 84, 92, 103–106).

In a similar vein, Italy’s Minister of the Interior, Francesco Cossiga, insisted that his government in fact protected human rights and secured liberty by enacting laws and taking stringent measures against terrorism. This stance was influenced by the murder of Aldo Moro, but also by the proliferation of right-wing violence on the Italian peninsula in the 1970s. In the late 1970s in early 1980s, however, the government provided incentives for terrorists to defect from their organizations, especially the BR. Under the “penditi” legislation, they received punishment discounts if they cooperated with state authorities in investigations. Policies changed in the FRG, as well. The ruling Social Democrats and Liberals had introduced a bill for parliamentary control of the country’s intelligence service as early as late 1977. Four years later, they repealed paragraphs that had amended the penal code and criminalized the “support of violence” as well as “instruction to violence”. Moreover,
new legislation restricted intelligence gathering and processing, allowing these measures only for specific objectives and balancing them with basic human rights such as self-control over personal information (Hanshew 2010, 138, 145–146; Terhoeven 2015, 68).

Clearly, counter-terrorism led to controversies about the relationship between security and civil liberties. Yet differences between European states are notable from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Left-wing revolutionary terrorism and reactions to it varied according to the specific terrorist challenges and political, legal and cultural traditions. Memories of the recent past played a particularly prominent role, especially in and vis-à-vis those states that had been occupying powers during the Second World War. The counter-terrorist policies that they pursued met suspicion in neighboring counties and even in the framework of alliances such as NATO and the EC. The specter of a Nazi-like police state haunted opponents of excessive police and intelligence operations in Germany, Italy and Japan, as well. They forged political alliances with like-minded foreign critics. The left-wing revolutionary terrorists even referred to the resistance fighters in the Second World War in order to justify their attacks. Strategies of historically legitimizing terrorism and counterterrorist proved multi-pronged and ambiguous. This long-term sense of defeat fueled the “imagination of self-liberation through violence”, the “adulation of personal and bodily engagement in battle, the cult of the will in the confrontation of friend and foe, and the relentless belief in the transformative power of the violent performance …”8

These issues, as well as the balance between security and civil liberties, remained contested when another form of transnational terrorism emerged in the 1980s, especially in France. As the country became embroiled in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the civil war in Lebanon, it became the target of terrorists from these regions. Moreover, the Islamist terrorism that emanated from Iran after Ayatollah Khomeini had returned to Tehran on 1 February 1979, signaled a new trend and foreshadowed radical jihadism. In France, terrorists from the Middle East started to attack cultural institutions, shops, dance floors cathedrals, and buildings of public authorities with support from Iran and Hezbollah. This religiously-motivated terrorism reached its peak in 1986 when bomb explosions shook Paris. Insecurity became linked to immigration and growing destitution in the French suburbs, especially the banlieue of the towns surrounding Paris. Faced with

the new terrorist attacks, the French government was prepared to partially and temporarily abandon some human rights in order to restore security. Yet this international terrorism of the 1980s and 1990s has not yet been investigated in transnational perspective by historians. Moreover, detailed studies are required to unveil continuities and ruptures between the terrorisms of the 1970s and the new millennium. Nevertheless, some investigations have indicated that the 1980s and 1990s were decades of transition in the development of international terrorism and state counter-measures (Lammert 2015, 209–212, 2017, 89–107).

References


