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## **The State's Phoenix Effect: how the Years of Lead shaped the Italian security and legal apparatus**

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**The State's Phoenix Effect: how the Years of Lead shaped the Italian security  
and legal apparatus**



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## *Introduction*

Since the end of the Second World War social movements appeared all around the world in many shapes and sizes, and as a consequence, a vast amount of research has been conducted regarding most of their aspects. These vary from their composition, life cycle, level of success, their relations with other movements and the effects they have on the state and its citizens. Social movements contribute to the development of a state by challenging it and by bringing forward specific requests such as the introduction and implementation of policies regarding political, social, economical and other aspects of their society (Tilly, 1999). As a response to such challenges the state decides whether to accommodate the movements' requests or not. If not, sometimes the protests intensify and provoke an aggressive repression by the state, radicalising the movement (Della Porta, 2014). Radical movements sometimes are considered threats for the state. Sovereign states have the responsibility to protect their populations and provide them with security and safety from all kinds of threats (United Nations, 2005). Threats can be both external and internal. This research will focus on internal threats, in particular, on domestic political terrorism. States deal with it by repressing domestic political terrorist movements and by doing so, they can develop certain abilities.

Previous researchers looking at social movements only focused on the effects of peaceful movements on the state institutions while the ones that focused on violent social movements only analysed the effects of state repression on the movements and not on the state itself. Therefore the question arises: why and how does the repression of political terrorism develops a state's security and legal apparatus? In order to answer this question, a theory-building process tracing analysis will be conducted and causal mechanisms connecting political terrorism and the development of the security and legal apparatus of a state will be built. For the sake of testing such mechanisms, they will be applied to the case of Italy in the period between 1969 and 1982, known as the Years of Lead (YoL). It was a historical period in which far-right and far-left terrorist movements terrified the civil population daily with attacks, bombing, kneecappings and targeted or indiscriminate massacres. The Italian population however, managed to respond to this terror and came out of this period stronger and more unified than before. This research could yield useful policy recommendations for the states that are beginning to make institutional changes as a response to rising domestic terrorist threats. Finally, it will be argued that, by repressing the terrorist threat, problems inside the legal and security institutions will be highlighted and reforms will be undertaken in order to solve such malfunctions. As a result, the security and legal apparatus of the country will develop.

## *Literature Review*

Scholars of social movements vastly focused on the effects the state's responses have on the movements but substantially less on the effects these actions have on the state itself. In this section, the previous literature on the effects of social movement and state repression will be reviewed showing that there is a gap on the implications that the first have on the evolution of state's institutional structures. Subsequently, particular attention will be given to the literature regarding state repression on terrorism as an extreme case of social movement. Finally, it will explore the previous literature on the case of Italy, which will be the subject of the following analysis.

### *State repression on social movements*

Overall, previous literature has pointed to the con-causation of the social movement to state repression and reported similar findings. Davenport (2007), argues that it is commonly thought that the state replies to behaviours that challenge the political system with repression calling this the law of coercive responsiveness (p. 7). The interactions between the movement and the state shape the development of the movements and, as a consequence, how they interact with the state. A major contributor to the research on the topic is Della Porta, who has analysed the dynamics between the state and the movement, the effects of repression leading to violence and the cycles of protest leading to radicalisation (2006; 2014). She argues that indiscriminate state repression leads to the radicalisation of a movement (Della Porta, 2006). In another paper focusing on the competitive escalation of protest, she highlighted that during the development of a movement, the competition between subgroups and the state repression lead to cells of the movement to become violent (Della Porta, 2014, p. 94). Altogether, Della Porta's research focus on violent social movements and the effects of the state's action on the movements but she does not focus on the effects of such repression on the state.

Similarly, Eugeny Finkel (2015) focuses as well on the interactions between resistance movements and the state and how repeated repression develops a "resistance toolkit" inside the movement (p. 339). However, there is not emphasis on how the state develops a toolkit in dealing with violent social movements in time such as resistance movements or political terrorist groups. Overall, the previously mentioned literature focuses on state repression and how it influences the development, the radicalisation of social movements and on how them and the state interact with each other but no focus has been put on how the perpetration of repression by the state develops its ability to deal with violent and non-violent movements. In order to fully understand the effects of violence on the state, a focus on literature researching terrorism is needed.

## *Terrorism*

The previous research on terrorism has focused on the effects of terrorism on the state, why states decide to legislate as a response to terrorism, the political consequences of it and what role the military has when creating counter-terrorism legislation. Moreover, previous literature cover certain aspects revolving around terrorism but not directly the effects domestic terrorism has on the state's security and legal institutions. Pokalova (2015) looks at the institutional response to terrorism and what drives the state to make legislation regarding terrorism. She argues that terrorist groups undermine the state's authority and monopoly of violence, resulting in jeopardising the state's ability to "provide security and protect lives" (p. 480). The fear of terrorism both inside and outside the interested nation have devastating economic and political effects such as decrease of trade and tourism or the trust of the population towards their own state in providing safety (p. 481). The author adds that, before 9/11, the state's decision to adopt counter-terrorism legislation was driven by the presence of several terrorist organisations inside the state. After 9/11 states adopted such resolutions even without the presence of terrorist organisations inside the state (p. 492). Pokalova's research explains how terrorism influences the economic and social situation but avoids the explanation of how the presence of terrorism affects the institutions that deal with it. Therefore, more focus on the institutional implications is needed.

In addition, authors such as Bean (2008), Williams, Koch and Smith (2013) and Davenport (2019) have focused on other effects terrorism has on the state and what drives the state to undertake certain actions in dealing with terrorism and not others; varying from the role of the military inside the state, the political consequences of terrorism as well as the economical ones. All of these sources properly explain their arguments but fail to group together all of the consequences of terrorism. For example, Bean (2008) studied the relation between the state and the military in dealing with terrorism and how it differs between democratic and non-democratic states (p. 319). This study does not explain why terrorism develops the security and legal institutions of a state but explains why a democratic state chooses not to give the complete authority to the military to deal with terrorist groups. Thus, it illustrates why in such cases there has been need of a security and legal reform, because the state had to deal with terrorism as well, not only the military.

## *Years of Lead in Italy*

There has been substantial research on the YoL in Italy but most of it is a reproduction of the historical facts and not much focus has been dedicated on the analysis of the reasons leading to the institutional reforms at the beginning of the 1980s.

Njølstad (2002) has analysed the role of the Carter administration in Italy between 1977 and 1979. The author finds that the cabinet acted with the aim of preventing the Italian Communist Party (PCI) from participating in government (p. 59). These actions have influenced Italian Politics and how Italy approached communism and, as a consequence, the way the Italian security and legal forces approached the case of political terrorism. Second, Dimitrakopoulou (2018) analysed the way in which the US and the CIA have manipulated Italian terrorism during the YoL following the strategy of tension, consisting in the manipulation and support of terrorism to switch the popular political opinion towards the conservative Cristian Democrats party (p. 49). Both the previously mentioned pieces approach the topic from an international point of view therefore avoiding the emotional bias that usually distinguishes Italian research on the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. However, these two sources only have a limited explanatory power regarding the effect of terrorism on the state's institutions since they only focus on the role of the US in Italy.

Additionally, Stortoni (1992) researched the effects of political terrorism in Italy and the state repression of the terrorist movements. The author argues that the effects of terrorism have been a development of the legal sphere and the differentiation and structural specialisation of the repressive agencies (p. 29). Furthermore, Zanelli (2018) looks at various aspects of the case including the institutional response to terrorism and the reasons behind it. She argues that such reform of the legal and security institutions was possible thanks to the “compromesso storico” in English, historical compromise. It was the only period in which right and left-wing parties cooperated with each other in order to be able to pass legislation for the fight to terrorism (pp. 75-79). These two articles build a reconstruction of the historical happenings up until the mid 1980s from an internal Italian point of view, filling the gap found in the international research but still remain mostly descriptive therefore a need for an analytical and objective research on the reasons leading to the institutional reform of 1981 emerges.

To wrap up, previous literature has focused on how repression affects the social movements but less focus has been put on how the state changes in order to deal with such threats. Therefore, a research gap emerges on the effects of the state's actions in dealing with terrorism have on itself. Regarding the literature on terrorism, more focus on the implications on the state is necessary. Finally, in the case of Italy, there is need of a more objective approach which includes both internal and external factors.

### *Theoretical Framework*

A gap emerged from the previously analysed literature surrounding the effects of repression on the state and of terrorism on the state's institutions. In particular, how the state repression of violent movements forces it to develop its security and legal apparatus in order to deal with such movements more effectively. The case of Italy during the YoL can be used to see the effects of the state repression on its institutions. This section will explain the theories and concepts that this study will use to explain the effects of political terrorism and state repression on the state itself. It will start first, from the concepts of political terrorism, state repression, security and legal apparatus and how these can be applied to the case-study. Second, it will review the arguments from various authors that analysed the topics of social movements, and terrorism from which this research will build on. Third, based on these theories hypothesised causal mechanisms will be built and operationalised.

### *Conceptualisation*

First of all, terrorism has been defined in many ways and there is not a generally accepted definition. It is a really politicised concept which has been used as a label to (de-)legitimise violent acts and the term has undergone changes in meaning with the passing of time (Bakker, 2015, p. 31). The two Italian terrorist movements that this research considers can be defined in two ways. On the one hand, far-left or Red terrorism, such as the Red Brigades (BR), can be defined as revolutionary domestic political terrorism following Wardlaw's definition which describes it as "the use of systematic tactics of terroristic violence with the objective of bringing about political revolution" (Wardlaw, 1989, p. 14). Far-left Italian terrorism had as its objective the demise of the Italian capitalist system for it to be replaced by a communist regime (Dimitrakopoulou, 2018, p. 35).

On the other hand, far-right or Black terrorism in Italy was really different in actions and aims from the far-left one. Fortna's definition of terrorism is more adapt for this movement as she defines it as the use of indiscriminate violence against civilian targets in order to influence the wider population and consequently to achieve political, financial, or religious goals (p. 522). Far-right terrorism in Italy did not have the same aim as far-left terrorism, they aimed at scaring the population in order for the popular political opinion to switch towards the conservatives that were not associated with the terrorists, they often falsely claimed to be far-left activists when conducting terrorism (Dimitrakopoulou, 2018, pp. 34-36).

Second, state repression has been defined in various ways depending on the target of the repression. In the case of repression towards domestic political terrorism, Stortoni (1992) defined

mobilising repression as the fulcrum of the state's response in the terrorist emergency phase which culminates in the interaction between political and administrative solutions. These interactions include the military, judicial and social solutions to terrorism (p. 20). The state can repress both non-violent and violent movements. However, the previously given definition of repression refers only to the actions undertaken towards terrorist movements.

Third, this research will have a focus on Italy's legal and security apparatus, therefore a definition of the two and what they mean in the specific case is needed. As described in the International Encyclopaedia of Political Science by Badie et.al, (2011), a security apparatus is "considered as a complex structure, usually a segment of a larger organisation, as well as the equipment required for a particular purpose. The structures responsible for providing security to a society and its population reflect the contemporary values held by a country or any other human organisation" (p. 2378).

In the case of Italy, the security apparatus is composed of a series of institutions. In this research, the institutions representing the Italian security apparatus are the Interior Ministry, responsible over the State Police (Polizia di Stato) through the Public Security Department; the Ministry of Defence, responsible over the military police (Carabinieri), empowered to gather intelligence and investigate terrorist and organised crime organisations; the Ministry of Economy and Finance, responsible over the third police force known as Guardia di Finanza which takes care of the prevention, investigation, and disruption of money laundering, fraud, tax evasion, and illicit financing (p. 2379).

The legal apparatus, also known as judiciary, is defined by Tate (2018) in the Encyclopaedia Britannica as the "branch of government whose task is the authoritative adjudication of controversies over the application of laws in specific situations". In Italy, the legal apparatus (sistema giudiziario) is composed of two main bodies, the Magistratura and the Ministry of Justice (Ministero della Giustizia). The first is responsible for the judges and public ministries and the second for the administrative part (European Justice, 2022).

### *Theoretical Base*

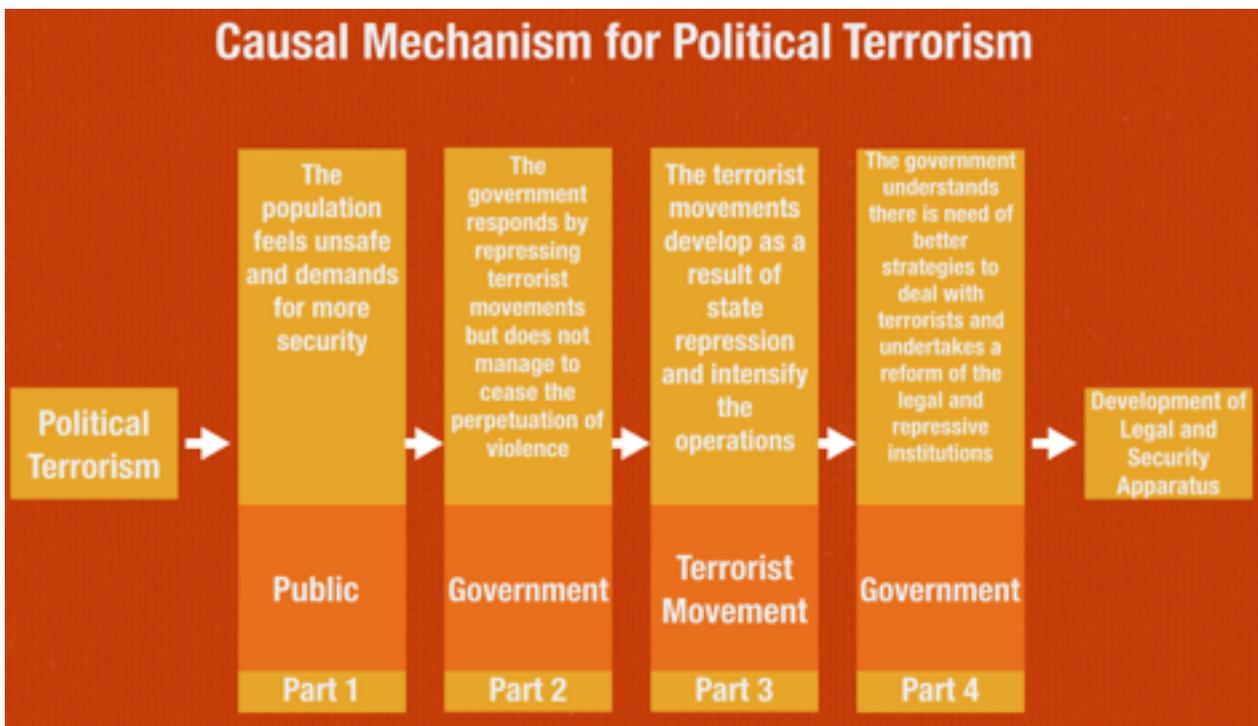
Several authors have previously researched the topics of social movements, state repression and terrorism which can contribute in explaining the mechanisms that connect political terrorism and the development of a state's legal and security apparatus. Charles Tilly, in his book "How social movements matter" (1999) examines the conditions under which institutions change as a result of challenges from protest movements (p. 97). He finds that institutions change if there is the existence

of disruptive challenges that make the “day-to-day reproduction of institutional action impossible” and the institutional vulnerability to challenge the movement itself (p. 98).

Additionally, Pokalova (2015) looks at the institutional response to terrorism and what drives the state to make legislation regarding terrorism. She argues that terrorist groups undermine the state’s authority and monopoly of violence, resulting in jeopardising the state’s ability to “provide security and protect lives” (p. 480). The fear of terrorism both inside and outside the interested nation have devastating economic and political effects such as decrease of trade and tourism or the trust of the population towards their own state in providing safety. For these reasons, the state is pushed to reform both to deal with terrorism and also to appeal the population and show them that actions have been undertaken to improve the situation (p. 481). These two pieces have power in explaining why Italy has decided to adopt substantial legislation regarding terrorism during the YoL as a consequence of the influence terrorism has on public opinion which forces the government to take action.

Furthermore, Della Porta (2014) has seen the effects of state repression on social movements and gives useful insights on how the continued repression of a social movement brings to its radicalisation. In the case of violent social movements, state repression favours further radicalisation and increased perpetuation of violence. It also creates internal divisions inside the movements based on the ways they should respond to the repression and some intensify their activities while others decide to undertake more peaceful paths (pp. 93-105).

Based on the previously analysed concepts, four hypothesised causal mechanisms connecting political terrorism and the development of the security and legal apparatus of a state will be built. Subsequently, the mechanisms will be operationalised by identifying the necessary evidence or observable manifestations needed to determine whether each mechanism was present or not.



**Figure 1:** *Causal Mechanisms for Political Terrorism*

*Hypothesised Causal Mechanisms*

The perpetuation of violence by political terrorist groups will lead to the daily action of institutions impossible (Tilly, 1999, p. 97). In this case, the security and legal institutions such as police forces and tribunal courts cannot keep the population safe and legally process the terrorists. As a consequence, the population will demand more order and security in their daily lives.

Subsequently, the population’s request for more safety will push the government to respond and repress the terrorist movements. However, if the government’s repressive agencies are not effective enough, the repression will not be successful and the terrorist activities will not cease, will further radicalise and intensify (Della Porta, 2014, pp. 93-105)

Furthermore, the increased perpetuation of violence will challenge the state’s monopoly of violence (Pokalova, 2015). Additionally, according the phoenix effect, the repeated inconclusive repression of the movement will develop the terrorist’s ability to resist (Finkel, 2015, p. 339). This will lead to more effective terrorist operations which will further highlight the state security and legal institution’s inability in providing justice and safety to the population. A need for more effective institutions will emerge and reforms to achieve that aim will be undertaken.

Based on the weaknesses highlighted by the initial ineffective responses to terrorism, new reforms in the institutions of the legal and security apparatus will take place. This will lead to modified governmental organisations which will undertake different repressive operations against the terrorist movements. These operations will have different effects on the violent movements and,

eventually, such groups will disappear. This will show a development of the legal and security apparatus which, by repressing and dealing with the terrorists, developed better counter-terrorism strategies and institutions.

### *Operationalisation*

As a consequence of domestic political terrorism, the population, through social organisations such as social movements and student organisations, will demand for more security and for the government to act against terrorism through public demonstrations such as protests.

Evidence for a government response to the terrorist movements can be the actions undertaken by the government directly connected to terrorism such as the presence of operations dedicated to the fight of the terrorist groups, the creation of specialised repressive agencies or legislation dedicated to the terrorist threat. The evidence for all of these responses to be ineffective is the survival of the terrorist groups and the continuation of terrorist activities. If the operations would have been successful, the terrorist actions would have ceased.

As the government fails to repress the terrorist movements, they will continue to conduct their violent operations and such activities might intensify. Evidence for the continued perpetuation of violence can be assassinations, kidnappings, kneecappings and bomb explosions. Evidence for more effective terrorist actions can be the killing of more protected and influential people, higher number of victims or higher number of operations.

Evidence for institutional reform in the security and legal apparatus can be official reforms themselves which group the police, military police, secret services and the judiciary. Additionally, also legislations approved regarding the theme of domestic terrorism work as evidence for the presence of an institutional reform. The ultimate proof of the effectiveness of these reforms and the development of the legal and security apparatus would be the diminishment of the terrorist organisations and the cessation of their activities such as attacks or killings.

### *Methods and Methodology*

In order to study the circumstances and factors connecting the presence of political terrorism and the development of the security and legal apparatus, a theory-testing process tracing on the case of Italy during the YoL will be conducted. The aim is to give an explanation of the causal mechanisms leading to the institutional reforms up to 1982 in Italy. As explained by Beach and Pedersen (2013), theory-testing process tracing aims at building a theory about causal mechanisms based on a case that can be generalised to a population of a given phenomenon (p. 11).

The advantage of this type of process tracing is that it enables the deep explanation of the causes of an outcome when we know the correlation between the two variables but there is less knowledge connected to the mechanisms linking such variables (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p. 16). The main differences with the other two types of process tracing is that it is building a theory instead of testing it. Theory-building process tracing has some elements overlapping with explaining-outcome process tracing but the main difference is that the first can be generalisable to other cases while the second is strictly connected to its case (p. 17). Theory-building process tracing does not claim that its causal mechanism is sufficient to explain the outcome.

This type of analysis has been selected because first, in each historical case of terrorism, there are so many factors that lead to the analysed outcome that it is not possible to have a complete explanation of why and how political terrorism leads to the development of the security and legal apparatus. Second, theory-building aims at detecting a relatively simple mechanism that contributes to producing an outcome (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p. 60).

In addition, terrorism is an emotionally sensible topic especially for the people directly involved in it, therefore there are emotional factors behind the interested actors leading to certain actions and outcomes that are not generalisable to other cases. For this reason, this type of process tracing is the most fit because it does not imply there are no other factors influencing the outcome apart from the identified causal mechanism (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p. 61).

### *Research Design*

A single case-study allows for a detailed analysis of the case and of the temporal patterns of normative change making it the most suitable research design for the study of the factors leading to the Italian institutional reform. A multiple case-study would not allow to properly explain the phenomenon as there are many situational factors that deserve attention. As suggested by Halper & Health (2017), the investigation of a single case will increase internal validity of the research because of its deep analysis which allows to take into account situational factors. In particular, this single case study is a retrospective case study which is the collection of data relating to a past phenomenon of any kind (Mohajan, 2018). In this case, the YoL in Italy and the reforms it provoked.

The analysis will build on the hypothesised causal mechanisms discussed and operationalised in the theoretical framework. Moreover, there is the possibility that the analysed factors determining the causal mechanisms leading to the studied outcome are not the only ones. Therefore, in order to test the collected evidence, empirical data will be used and two interviews

focused on the reasons leading to the institutional reforms between 1977 and 1981 have been conducted with two experts, Gianni Calesini and Rodolfo Poli. They lived the YoL and worked as directors of the Torino DIGOS, one of the major civil State Police organisations responsible for the fight of terrorism. The organisation is still active today. The two officers worked in close contact with Red and Black terrorist organisations and have directly seen the consequences of the institutional reforms on their working activities.

### *Case Selection*

The criteria behind the choice of Italy as the focus of this research is not its representativeness but the level of success the country had in dealing with the terrorist movements and its availability and accessibility of data being the research conducted by an Italian. Italy has been chosen being a liberal democracy where the institutional changes need to pass through a democratic process to a certain extent controlled by the population, not through a small group of elites owning the executive authority of a country. The fact that these developments are public facilitates the research of the specific legislations adopted and, as a consequence, its analysis on the causal mechanisms bringing to such reforms.

In addition, the analysed historical period has been tragic but not significantly more than other cases of political terrorism in liberal democracies. After the YoL, the Italian counter-terrorism legal and security agencies have been known worldwide for their efficacy in fighting terrorism and violent movements. This development has been seen in the recent fight of transnational terrorism. It is an example for every country that wishes to develop their apparatuses for the fight of terrorism (Fruganti, 2021). Although this study can be helpful in explaining causal mechanisms in other liberal democracies, it would help less in studying the ways in which authoritarian regimes deal with domestic terrorism.

### *Data Selection*

In order to see the effect of political terrorism on Italy's legal and security institutions it was first necessary to see how the topics of social movements, state's repression and terrorism have been previously researched. Therefore, secondary sources such as academic papers analysing the effects were necessary. On the one hand, in order to avoid the emotional bias that distinguish the Italian literature on the YoL, international sources have been selected which research both Italy in the specific and the chosen topics. This allows the research to be more objective on the topic. On the other hand, Italian authors have more knowledge about the case and accessibility to data regarding

the selected historical period. Henceforth, the research includes both Italian and international secondary sources with the aim to both avoid a bias and misinformation on the Italian terrorist groups and state institutions.

Furthermore, for the purpose of building causal mechanisms leading to the development of the legal and security apparatus of Italy, two historical reconstructions by Stortoni (1992) and Zanelli (2018) have been selected. These doctoral theses analyse the facts and reforms happened during the YoL. Analysing the primary sources such as newspaper articles of the period would have given validity to the research but the aforementioned reconstructions include two analyses and explanations behind the happening which help the construction of causal mechanisms leading to the known outcome.

### *Background information and The Years of Lead*

At the end of the 1960s, Italy was facing a season of big political, economical and social change. Social movements emerged all over the country asking for social and political changes and, in some cases, they were anti-systemic revolutionary groups. These organisations rapidly became radical leading to the creation of political terrorist groups. The period of political turmoil culminated to the attack of the Agricultural Bank of Milan on the 12 of December 1969 where 16 people were killed and 88 injured. The attack was believed by some to be a reaction of the right-wing to the recent reforms and student protests. Therefore, the left-wing radicals quickly replied with the organisation of armed militias (Zanelli, 2018, pp. 40-42). These happenings signed the beginning of a period of widespread terror and violence which saw a big part of the Italian population engaging in violence from students and professors at school to workers and organised militias killing people from the opposite ideologies (Della Porta, 2014, pp. 99-100). The widespread violence ended at the beginning of the 1980s and that came to be known to history as the YoL.

During this historical period, two major terrorist strands were present: the far-left Marxist-Leninist terrorism, commonly known as red terrorism and the far-right terrorism known as black terrorism. The two movements had really different aims. The red terrorists aimed at provoking a popular revolution to change the Italian political system towards a less democratic and communist system through the execution of targeted attacks on symbolic figures such as political characters or public officers (Zanelli, 2018, p. 61). The black terrorists had the aim of conditioning the entire Italian society against the communists and towards a more conservative system through the instrumentalisation of terror and the execution of indiscriminate attacks on the population

(Dimitrakopoulou, 2018, p. 9). This technique came to be called the strategy of tension (Zanelli, 2018, p. 42).

Additionally, the YoL happened in the middle of the Cold War when the world was split in two between the Western and Eastern blocks. As a result of the policy of containment, the US foreign policy focused on expanding its sphere of influence and limiting the communist one. As a consequence, between 1977 and 1979 Jimmy Carter's cabinet acted with the aim of preventing the Italian Communist Party (PCI) from participating in government (Njølstad, 2002, p. 59). The whole Western block feared the Italian transition towards communism, England, France, Germany and the US frequently met to discuss this problem and to decide which strategies would have been adopted in order to avoid their most feared outcome (Fanella, 2021, p. 48). They came to the conclusion that something had to be done to put Italy back in line but an open intervention such a coup d'état would have not been accepted by the international community, therefore, they opted for the hidden financing of the Black terrorist movements involved in the strategy of tension (p. 50).

Between 1974 and 1978 the Italian government passed several legislations to improve and adapt the ways security institutions managed terrorist movements (Zanelli, 2018, pp. 75-78). This period of terror challenged the country's repressive agencies (Stortoni, 1992, p. 29). The continued terrorist activities highlighted the inability of the legal and security apparatus in dealing with security threats, such as domestic terrorism (p. 29). The inefficient modifications of the repressive agencies continued up to 1978, when Aldo Moro, the president of the Christian Democrats was kidnapped and found dead in the back of a car the 9th of May 1978. After the president's assassination, the repressive operations intensified even further leading to the ending of the YoL in the beginning of the 1980s (p. 236).

### *Analysis*

In order to research the question of how and why the presence of political terrorism develops a country's legal and security apparatus, a theory-building process tracing analysis is conducted. The following section will include, based on the operationalised causal mechanisms in the theoretical framework, a collection of evidence, which will be evaluated and applied to the case of Italy. The collected evidence will also be tested through the two expert interviews and empirical data. Finally, the findings and the implications of the analysis will be discussed.

### *Collection of Evidence: Italy and the Years of Lead*

#### *Public Demand for Security*

The end of the 1960s in Italy was the biggest period of protest from the unification of the Republic (Zanelli, 2018, p. 22). 1968 represented the apex of the student protests but in the following decade the social movements' activities remained substantial (p. 26). One of the main values proposed by the student organisations was the promotion of democracy and anti-authoritarianism. Red terrorist groups such as the BR advocated for a less democratic and more authoritarian communist system in Italy. Differently from the ideals of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) which wanted a democratic communist system (Dimitrakopoulou, 2018, p. 35).

The majority of the left-wing student protests were against the perpetuation of violence and the killings executed by both Red and Black terrorists. This showed the young population's willingness to stop the terrorists and be able to peacefully conduct their daily lives and protests. However, the student protests often ended up with violent episodes due to the harsh police repression. Therefore, in time, some of the student movements adopted violent protest techniques as a response to the police actions while others remained peaceful in order not to be associated with the terrorist groups (Zanelli, 2018, p. 27).

Additionally, the rest of the population reacted with fear and reject to the student movements' violent evolution and labelled certain students as irrational supporters of terrorists (Zanelli, 2018, p. 27). However, they did not actively protest with public demonstrations until 1977 when the intensiveness of violence was at its peak (Stortoni, 1992, p. 56).

In the interview with the former director of the Torino DIGOS Gianni Calesini, he emphasised the importance of the separation between violent and non-violent student movements. He argued that many peaceful student movements cooperated with the State Police against the terrorists as they believed the association of the left-wing movements with violence was detrimental for the success of the communist movement in Italian politics (G. Calesini, interview, 17 May 2022).

### *Ineffective Government Response*

The biggest wave of violence started in 1974 with the massacre of Della Loggia Square and the kidnapping of the politician and magistrate Mario Sossi (Zanelli, 2018, p. 76). After the initial response of the original security apparatus which highlighted the agencies' inadequateness in dealing with the terrorists, a first reform was undertaken. As it will be seen later, most of the modifications provoked by the reforms will be ulteriorly changed before the end of the YoL showing their ineffectiveness (pp. 76-86).

On the 2nd of June 1974, the general Inspectorate for the fight of terrorism was created. Its original task was to coordinate the operation of the Polizia di Stato, Guardia di Finanza and Carabinieri. In practice, the body only managed the activities of the Polizia di Stato and could not coordinate the other organisations because it was limited by bureaucratic barriers that prevented them from operating through different regions. The body was dissolved in 1977 due to the low effectiveness of its missions (Zanelli, 2018, p. 76). In addition, in 1974 in Torino, the special counterterrorism Nucleus was created with the general Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa as chief. It was one of the most successful specialised repressive agencies that were created and managed to arrest several important persons in the BR leadership such as Curcio and Franceschini. Even though the Nucleus was so effective, it was first dissolved in 1976 and then, the year after it was incorporated in the various provincial police leaderships. The reason behind this decision was the mistaken perception that the threat of political terrorism had decreased. This showed the security agencies' inability in threat assessment (pp. 76-77).

There have been many other failed operations that also highlighted different problems in the coordination of organisation and operations which negatively influenced the efficiency of the repressive actions (Stortoni, 1992, p. 204-205). As mentioned before, regional bureaucratic barriers impeded the coordination of the operations throughout the whole territory. These barriers slowed down the police forces who had to ask permission to the regional police bodies before being able to put the repressive operations in action (p. 206).

Another factor which influenced negatively the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism is the manipulation of it (Stortoni, 1992, p. 217). In particular, it is believed that Black terrorism was manipulated by the Italian Secret Service, the CIA and by a part of the political elite (p.218). This manipulation consisted in the coverage of evidence incriminating Black terrorists to blame the Red groups and in the secret financing of the far-right operations. The aim of such manipulation was to influence domestic politics by pushing the population to believe the indiscriminate attacks were conducted by Red terrorists, while in reality the Black ones were the perpetrators. The right-wing political elites and the Western world wanted the Italian popular opinion to be against the left-wing and communist parties in order to avoid the expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence. These actions came to be known as the strategy of tension (Dimitrakopoulou, 2018, pp. 3-5).

In addition, Fanella (2021), studying the British declassified documents in London on the YoL, found that also their intelligence agencies contributed to the strategy of tension coordinating with the CIA. Altogether, the foreign intervention during the YoL favouring the proliferation of the

terrorist movements ulteriorly impeded the Police operations in repressing such movements which were already problematic for the previously mentioned reasons.

In his interview, Rodolfo Poli declared of not being sure of the foreign involvement in domestic terrorism, he heard rumours about it but they were never proven (R. Poli, interview, 1 May 2022). While Gianni Calesini stated of being aware of the international intervention only at the end of the YoL and Fasanella's studies of the British archives proved such involvement (G. Calesini, interview, 17 May 2022; Fasanella, 2021).

### *Continued Perpetration of Violence*

These ineffective repressive operations together with the strategy of tension favoured the development of the terrorist groups and their ability to resist and, as a consequence, to an intensification of the terrorist activities which ulteriorly challenged the security apparatus (Stortoni, 1992, p. 220). For this reason, a second wave of terror began. The development of the terrorist cells can be seen by the number and effectiveness of their operations. Between the end 1975 and 1976, when the government believed the terrorist threat had decreased, the violent groups grew and reorganised starting a series of attacks which intensified the season of terror culminating up to 1978 with the massacre of via Fani and the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro, president of the DC (Zanelli, 2018, p. 69). The death of the president was the ultimate proof that the way the security apparatus was structured, was not adequate in dealing with the threat at hand.

The attacks continued even further and their targets widened. Tribunals, prisons, political party houses, police stations and municipalities were regularly attacked. The BR proposed themselves as an alternative authority to the state and began to unify and coordinate all the Red terrorist groups (Zanelli, 2018, p. 70). In this same period, the terrorists adopted kneecapping as a regular method of physical aggression and targeted public influential figures such as politicians, journalists, factory managers and workers of the security and legal apparatus. An example is Massimo de Carolis, DC leader of the municipality of Milan who was kneecapped in front of his workplace (p. 70).

Between 1977 and 1978, the level of daily violence grew up to a point in which the state feared a revolution would soon occur. It was evident that more effective actions were needed in order to prevent the terrorist aim from being achieved. Therefore, as the threat increased, the repressive operations started to change as well and a reorganisation of the legal and security apparatus began (Stortoni, 1992, p. 228). Reforms were already undertaken even before 1977 and 1978 but their effects started to be visible only in the following years. During and after those years

however, the number of reforms and changes in the legal and security institutions substantially increased (Zanelli, 2018, p. 75). The government could not afford a lenient reaction to the assassination of its former president. Due to the intensification of attacks, the PCI began to cooperate with the DC in order to rapidly pass more legislation in parliament to counter the terrorist movements (p.76).

### *Institutional Reform*

The institutional reforms radically changed the Italian legal and security apparatus and it can be seen in several aspects. First, regarding the State Police and the Carabinieri, new offices were created with the task of conducting investigations on terrorist offences. In 1977, the Central Security Operative Nucleus of the police and the Special Intervention Group of the Carabinieri were formed (Stortoni, 1992, p. 236).

In 1978, the Central Office for the General Investigations of Special Operations was formed and in the same year the general Dalla Chiesa was appointed coordinator of the police forces and of the informative agents for the fight against terrorism. He had special powers for the direct governmental determination (Zanelli, 2018, p. 77). It was a new improved version of the special counter-terrorism Nucleus dissolved in 1977 with the difference that Dalla Chiesa had the executive powers to overcome the regional bureaucratic barriers that previously slowed down the operations. His body was later revealed as the most effective and essential group for the fight against terrorism. His team developed investigation and infiltration techniques that made the demise of Italian terrorism possible (p. 79).

Second, the secret services faced the most radical reform because they were discovered to have cooperated with the Black terrorists by covering evidence that could incriminate them, refusing to cooperate with the police and the judiciary or giving them false information, favouring the escape of important witnesses for legal processes or forced others to silence (Zanelli, 2018, p. 81). These actions were part of the strategy of tension where the secret services assured the survival of terrorist groups with a fascist ideology (Dimitrakopoulou, 2018, p. 40). Therefore, the secret services acted almost independently from the government and, in this case, they directly acted against it.

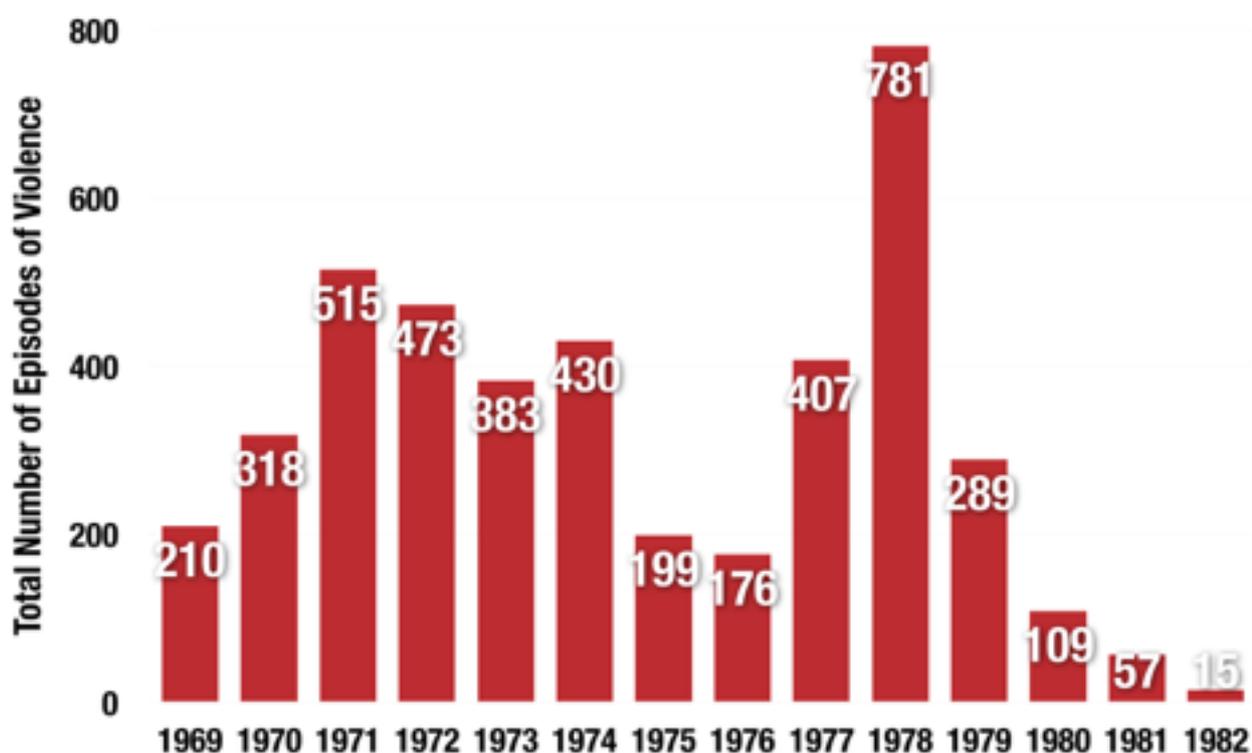
A radical change in the secret services' system was essential for an effective fight to terrorism and the original system was completely dismantled (Stortoni 1992, p. 105). At the end of 1977, the Servizio Informazioni Difesa (SID), the original and only body of the secret services was dissolved and two new ones were formed, the SISMI and the SISDE, respectively, the services for

the internal and external security (Zanelli, 2018, p. 83). Two other dedicated committees, the Ciis and the Cesis were created with the task of legal oversight of the intelligence agencies. Before then, there had never been an oversight system of the secret services. Additionally, these two bodies had the duty of reporting to parliament every six months on services' activities (p. 84). The deep reform of the secret services favoured the discovery of many corrupted agents inside of it and it resulted in more democratic and efficient services which collaborated in the last phases of the fight against terrorism, speeding up the process (Stortoni, 1992, p. 110).

On the 21 of March 1978, the state emitted a law which structured national cooperation with regional judiciary bodies that before did not possess any guideline of cooperation and, as a consequence, most of the times no cooperation occurred (Zanelli, 2018, p. 85). Few weeks later, a law was introduced forcing the judiciary to share the information gathered during the processes with the government which previously was reluctant to give politicians the information they requested (p. 86). Another legislation of the utmost importance was the law of the 6 of February 1980 also known as "decreto Cossiga". This law consisted in the possibility of decreasing the sentence given to the terrorists for the ones who demonstrated they ceased their relations with the terrorist groups and shared information with the police (p. 89). These people were known as "pentiti", repented, and after the emanation of the law many of them left the terrorist groups and started cooperating with the police. It was a determinant factor in the fight to terrorism (Stortoni, 1992, p. 237).

As it can be seen in figure 2 below, the total episodes of violence drastically decreased after 1978 where they were 781, in 1982 they were only 15 (Della Porta & Rossi, 1984, p. 30). This shows the effectiveness of the reforms undertaken between 1977 and 1981.

## Episodes of Violence 1969-1982



**Figure 2:** *Episodes of Violence 1969-1982*

Source: (Della Porta & Rossi, 1984, p. 30).

In a nutshell, between 1977 and 1981 the Italian system drastically changed and adapted in order to overcome the terrorist threat. Changes in the legal and security apparatus were implemented and allowed the effective repression of the terrorist groups. The YoL came to an end in 1982 due to the proper adaptation of these apparatuses which developed as a result of state repression in order to stop the terrorist attacks. As Gianni Calesini said in his interview, the Italian political, legal and security system as we know it today, is mainly the result of the reforms which brought to the end of the age of terror of the YoL (G. Calesini, interview, 17 May 2022). It is not possible to state that they were the only causal mechanisms that led to the development of the legal and security apparatus. However, thanks to the collection of evidence, interviews and empirical data it is possible to state with confidence that the hypothesised mechanisms were present. The presence of domestic political terrorism brought to the population requesting for safety and security. As a consequence, the state's repressive agencies responded by repressing the violent movements but due to its weaknesses, the attempt to stop the terrorists failed. This provoked the groups' evolution, radicalisation and intensification of their activities. The fact that the perpetuation of violence did not stop, convinced the government there was a need for a substantial change in the legal and security institutions and drastic reforms were undertaken. Another wave of repression followed the

institutional transformation. This time it was more effective and finally achieved the demise of the terrorist groups. After 1982 there were no more terrorist attacks showing the Italian legal and security apparatus had developed.

### *Conclusion*

To wrap up, the purpose of this research was to build and test causal mechanisms that would connect the presence of domestic political mechanism to the development of a state's legal and security apparatus. It is possible to confidently state the mechanisms were present as the terrorist presence challenged the state's authority and its monopoly of violence. By repressing the groups, the problems of the security and legal institutions arose and highlighted where, in order to effectively fight terrorism, the reforms were needed. Their implementation brought to the development the security and legal apparatus which effectively ceased the attacks. This study contributes to the research on violent social movements by attempting to explain the effects of state repression on the state itself. The case of Italy is a good example of how a heavily challenged state can evolve and successfully develop by continuously repressing a domestic threat. Similarly to Finkel's (2015) phoenix effect, a state that is repeatedly challenged will develop an ability to resist to such threats.

Even though this paper sufficiently explains the studied outcome, theory-building process tracing does not imply the identified mechanism is the only one that brought to the development of the interested institutions. As Poli suggested, the YoL was a shocking period for all the Italian population, independently from the political orientation and who lived such period struggles to look at it in an objective way. The role of emotion was a determinant factor behind the choices taken by terrorists, police officers or political elite (R. Poli, interview, 1 May 2022). Therefore, a future research on the psychological factors behind people's choices during this historical period would enrich this research adding to the social causal mechanisms this paper has built.

Moreover, the main limitation of this research design is that the case selected could be an outlier due to situational factors influencing the outcome. The testing of the causal mechanisms through a comparative analysis with another case study of a liberal democracy would alleviate this limitation. It would be useful to choose a more recent case to see if political terrorism would still lead to the identified outcome. Furthermore, the mechanisms could also be tested through a case of an authoritarian regime in order to see whether the democratic process of reforms is a determinant factor or not.

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