Terrorism and Modernity. Global Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Political Violence

Veranstalter: Carola Dietze, GHI Washington; Claudia Verhoeven, George Mason University; Mareike König, GHI Paris; Benedikt Stuchtey, GHI London
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Co-sponsored by the GHIs, the Department of History at Tulane University, Murphy Institute of Political Economy at Tulane University, and Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland (Foundation of the German Humanities Institutes Abroad).

This conference brought together leading scholars from Canada, Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and Asia to explore the links between terrorism and modernity as they articulate different forms of political violence on the global and local scales. Posing a critical alternative to Eurocentric historiography as well as to the contemporary reification of the phenomenon of terrorism, the participants employed sophisticated theoretical perspectives that drew on a wealth of empirical evidence. Revitalizing key conceptual and methodological debates, the conference illuminated the problem of terrorism's historicity and provided a historically grounded definition of the subject.

Framing the foundational question of terrorism's „modernity," the introductory comments launched a lively debate. CAROLA DIETZE and CLAUDIA VERHOEVEN started with a series of questions and guiding problems that set the terms for the following discussion. Both terrorism and modernity, they argued, present us with profound problems of definition and periodization regarding their respective historical itineraries in different locations and their linkage to state apparatuses, collective consciousness, and constructions of past, present, and future. In his keynote address entitled „Terrorism – A Timeless Topic," ALEXANDER DEMANDT surveyed more than two millennia of political violence to support the argument that terrorism has always been a part of contentious politics. From Spartan random killings through the zealot rebels in Judea, the Assassins, the Saint Bartolomeo massacres, the French Revolution, and the Red Brigades, terror has been deployed as both a „bottom up" and a „top down" strategy of mobilization, intimidation, and political bargaining. The second keynote speech put forth the opposing view, namely that rebel terrorism is a specifically „modern" phenomenon. To support this thesis, DAVID RAPOPORT's exposé „The Distinctive Features of Modern Terrorism" followed the unfolding of acts of terror since the 1880s and dissected different modalities of political violence. The subsequent emergence of four historical waves (Anarchist, Anti-Colonial, New Left, Religious) attest to the unique characteristics of terrorism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which are markedly distinct from previous forms of violence and therefore call for a critical interrogation of modern technology and culture.

Panel I, „Premodern Comparisons," was dedicated to terrorism's prehistory and its nineteenth-century interpretations. JOHANNES DILLINGER, in his talk „Forerunners of Terrorism and Nineteenth Century Historians" analyzed how nineteenth-century historians conceived the history of political crimes. In the historiography of the nineteenth century, political criminals of the premodern era were considered to be lacking any political agenda. Therefore, they were not regarded as terrorists, although treason came close to the phenomenon of terrorism. In his talk „The World Church of Terror: The Papacy after Lord Acton," PATRICK BAHNERS drew on Acton's work (1867) about the Lucca law, which permitted the liquidation of former citizens who converted to Protestantism. Bahners argued that by isolating events from their context, Acton's account of the Catholic Church led him to develop a moral absolutism that did not differentiate between past actions and present judgments. Thus engaged in an intellectual war on terror, liberal universalism may breed its own fanaticism. Concluding the first panel, DAN EDELSTEIN's paper on „Law and Terror: Toward a Theory of Totalitarian Justice" argued that the Ter-

ror of the French Revolution was rooted in the Enlightenment tradition of natural rights. He further exposed the dual system of justice as an essential feature linking Jacobin Terror laws to the subsequent totalitarian justice of the Nazi and Soviet regimes.

Panel II, „Intellectual History," unpacked some of the conceptual questions raised in the opening session. In their paper „What is so Terrible about the Terror? Hegel, the French Revolution, and Contemporary Terrorism as Reenactment of Modernity," JOSHUA GOLDSTEIN and GAVIN CAMERON turned to philosophy to reposition the logic of terrorism. Hegel's analysis of the Terror reveals a twofold logic of terrorism that constitutes a uniquely modern process of simultaneous identity construction and destruction. This dynamic of violence exposes contemporary terrorism as a logical articulation of modern identity. KLAUS RIES's paper on „Fichte's Philosophy of the Act" described how Fichte's thought constituted a theoretical basis of „Modern Terrorism." He developed the figure of the „Modern Intellectual" who preached a political radicalism and constituted an important foundation of the terrorist „act of conviction". LYNN PATYK concluded the session with a paper on „Modern Terrorism and the Sensitive Heart," which highlighted the emotional public discourse of „covert sympathy" for the victims of state oppression in the nineteenth century. One of the predominant types was the sensitive terrorist, a „wounded soul" whose violence was motivated by identification with the victims of state cruelty.

Panel III, „Wars and the Technology of the Bomb," interrogated the transformations in styles of warfare in the nineteenth century. ANDREW ZIMMERMAN's paper „Barricade Warfare and the Origins of Revolutionary and Military Modernity" analyzed the increase in barricade warfare during the 1848-49 revolutions as a new battlefield for regular and revolutionary militants. He showed how the prevailing view of historical optimism made way for a new form of military realism after 1848. Marx and Engels for example closely followed the American Civil War, during which the strategies of revolutionary and conventional war merged further, continuing a transatlantic dynamic that lasted into the era of decolonization. ANN LARABEE's paper „The History and Subversive Rhetoric of Bomb-Making Manuals in the United States" examined how radical groups gained expertise through the circulation of bomb-making instructions. Analyzing bomb-making as a form of cultural and technical production, Larabee showed how bomb-making had many of the same functions recently ascribed to cultural forms like protest songs, murals, and poetry. Bombs, she concluded, are meaning-generating machines. In the same vein, NIALL WHELEHAN's presentation dealt with Fenian violence in the late nineteenth century and the way its changing definitions of uprising and new repertoires of violence – new technologies, assassinations, and bombs – borrowed elements from several jurisdictions. According to Whelehan, processes of modernization enabled exchanges between Irish nationalists from inside and outside Ireland, thereby challenging routines of violence.

Panel IV, „Big Developments." explored the transformations in material infrastructure and social organization that served as conditions for the rise of modern terrorism. In his paper „Urban Space and Populist Terror in Russia, 1878-1881," CHRISTOPHER ELY proposed to read the emergence of radical groups, e.g., the „Will of the People," as a product of urbanization. While populists idealized the countryside, their ideas and organizations remained firmly embedded in the cityscape of urban Russia. The effective manipulation of urban space offered them a remarkable source of power and influence. In „Attacking the Empire's Achilles' Heels: Railroads and Terrorism in Tsarist Russia," BENJAMIN FRITHJOF SCHENK identified modern transportation systems as vehicles of mobility and mobilization. While railroads served mainly to increase state control, they also became an effective device in the hands of political forces dedicated to destabilizing state control. MAREIKE KÖNIG's paper „Terrorism, Migration and the Fear of an International Complot" used the example of Germans in Paris in 1871-1895 to examine the impact of migration in constructing a transnational landscape of fear. She called into question the „international complot" thesis and concluded that migration cannot be used as an analytical category to

explain the emergence of terrorism. The session concluded with RICHARD JENSEN's analysis of anarchist terrorism, often cited at the turn of the century as the greatest single threat to civilization. Between 1880 and 1914, Jensen showed, the efforts to combat anarchist terrorism took place globally. The anarchist threat proved a powerful stimulus to police centralization, professionalization, and technical modernization in many European nations.

Panel V, „Colonial and Anti-Colonial Assassinations," began with MICHAŁ TARGOWSKI's paper „Against Colonialism or Social Iniquities? Polish Terrorists in the Long Nineteenth Century," which presented Polish terrorism as a reaction to two main forces: capitalism and the tsarist autocracy. Nationalist accounts were deliberately disguised by socialist programs so as to attract and mobilize youth. The rise of Polish terrorism, he concluded, was tightly connected to Russian terrorism. Moving the debate to the African colonial context, TIMOTHY PARSONS described the October 1905 assassination of Koitalel Arap Samoei, leader of central Kenya's Nandi, by Captain Meinertzhagen, military representative of the East African Protectorate (EAP). Parsons investigated the debate surrounding the question „Who is the terrorist?" by examining two colonizer and colonized cultures. Since the British framed their African imperial project as a „civilizing mission," the question of colonial modernity came to the fore, leading Parsons to challenge Eurocentric conception of „modernity" in the colonial context. In „Gandhian 'Satyagraha' as Terrorism: The Limits to Non-Violence in Late Colonial India," NEETI NAIR analyzed Ghandi's repudiation of Bhagat Singh – a popular „terrorist" who fought against colonialism and was consequently condemned to death. She argued that Ghandi's refusal to support political actors who threatened his position as the nation's most prominent advocate actually amplified Singh's legacy and popularity.

Panel VI, „Comparisons," set forth two case studies that shed new light on European terrorism. In her paper „China and the 'Anarchist Wave of Assassinations,'" GOTELIND MÜLLER-SAINI revisited the emergence of the so-called anarchist terrorism (termed „assassination-ism") in China. Critically engaging Rapoport's wave concept, Müller-Saini argued that this wave of violence should not be called „anarchist," because what was circulated around the globe was a strategy. In China, for example, the strategy of assassinations was taken up by Chinese nationalists. Further elaborating the comparative framework, PETER WALDMANN addressed the „lack" of terrorism in Argentina in the late nineteenth century. Contrasting the upsurge of urban guerrilla movements in the 1960s and 1970s with the lack of terrorist groups 80 years before, Waldmann argued that the conditions for waging urban guerilla wars in the twentieth century help us to understand why the situation in the late nineteenth century was not yet „ripe" for the birth of a terrorist movement in Argentina.

Panel VII, „Nineteenth-century Interpretations and Reactions," addressed different narratives and responses to terrorism. In „Narrating the Origins of Political Violence," GEORGE WILLIAMSON analyzed German reports on „revolutionary machinations" in the 1820s. Following the 1819 assassination of conservative publicist and playwright August von Kotzebue, a secret „report" sought to explain the origins of „revolutionary machinations" in Germany by relying on a „history of ideas" approach to German nationalism, which located these origins in the writings of Fichte, Arndt, Jahn, and Schleiermacher and traced the influence of these ideas among German nationalist and liberal associations. The „Increasing Importance of Values" was addressed by ULRICH SIEG, who studied the reactions in German philosophy after the assassination attempts against Wilhelm I. After the assassination attempts in 1878, Bismarck launched an attack against intellectuals and leftist liberals who were blamed for „paving the way for socialism" by „systematically undermining all pillars of the monarchical state." German philosophers reacted with a theory of values. In „Terrorism and the American Left, 1877-1920," BEVERLY GAGE traced the evolution of American left-wing terrorism from the Molly Maguires and Haymarket episodes of the late nineteenth century through the Wall Street explosion of 1920, arguing that ideological and tactical disputes over the use

of violence formed a key point of factionalization within the American left. The session concluded with MELANIE BAILEY's paper „Civilization or Barbarism? Violence and Terror in the French Revolutionary Tradition." Analyzing the work of Domenico Sarmiento, Bailey reflected on the limits of modernity's civilizing mission in Latin American political culture. Mid-nineteenth thinkers such as Sarmiento and Blanc rejected political violence not only as ineffective but also as uncivilized and inhumane.

Panel VIII, „Legacies," explored novel approaches to historical and contemporary terrorism. MARK DRISCOLL's paper „Tokyo, 1923: Terror, Spectacle and the Origins of Modern Japan" analyzed the links between the 1923 Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, the emergence of Japan's military police (*kempeitai*), and the institutionalization of a „state of exception". Targeting proletarian and syndicalist thought as the main threat to „public security," the military police planned to assassinate several of Japan's leftists during the earthquake crisis. The ensuing trial was the first mass spectacle that legitimized terrorism as a violent means to protect the Japanese emperor and national body. PAUL MILLER's paper „Compromising Memory: The Site of the Sarajevo Assassination" examined a potent symbol of Serb nationalism, the footprints marking the spot where Gavrilo Princip stood when he shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Addressing the shifting memorial landscape at the murder site, Miller argued that the memorialization process rarely broke free from outside influences. The session concluded with JAMES GELVIN's paper „Nationalism, Anarchism, Reform: Understanding Political Islam from the Inside Out." Gelvin provocatively proposed to view Al-Qaeda actions as a form of Islamo-anarchist violence. He recast the history of the state in the Middle East as a forced colonial imposition rooted in nineteenth- century reformism, nationalism, and anarchism. Diametrically opposed to „ameliorist" movements and analytically distinct from „Islamo-nationalists," Al-Qaeda exemplifies a global project of Islamo-anarchist liberation that puts the bond of religion over the bond of nationalism and ethno-territorialism.

The conference came to a close with FRIEDRICH LENGER's comments, which reframed the problem of modern terrorism. Lenger suggested a narrow definition of terrorism as the violence of non-state actors targeting a strong state structure. Terrorism, this implied, emerges when partisan warfare (including its urban manifestations, e.g., barricade fighting) is impossible. He argued for a restricted chronological framework, reaffirming terrorism's traditional date of birth in the 1870s and 1880s, and stressing the importance of „high modernity" for the historical emergence of this new form of political violence. Finally, he proposed to view modern terrorism as a European phenomenon, which has been made global by the exchange of people, goods, and ideas.

Conference Overview:

Welcome: Sam Ramer (Tulane University)
Introduction: Carola Dietze and Claudia Verhoeven:
Terrorism and Modernity: Global Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Political Violence.

Keynote-Lecture:
Alexander Demandt (Freie Universität Berlin)
Terrorism: A Timeless Topic

David Rapoport (UCLA)
The Distinctive Features of Modern Terrorism from the 1880s to the 2020s(?)

Panel I.: PREMODERN COMPARISONS
Chair: Barbara B. Diefendorf (Boston University)

Johannes Dillinger (Oxford Brookes University)
Forerunners of Terrorism and Nineteenth-Century Historians

Patrick Bahners (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)
The World Church of Terror: The Papacy after Lord Acton

Dan Edelstein (Stanford University)
Law and Terror: Toward a Theory of Totalitarian Justice

Panel II: INTELLECTUAL HISTORY
Chair: Oleg Budnitzkii (Academy of Science, Moscow)

Joshua D. Goldstein and Gavin Cameron (University of Calgary)
What is so Terrible about the Terror? Hegel, the French Revolution, and Contemporary Terrorism as Reenactment of Modernity

Klaus Ries (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena)
Philosophy of the Act

Lynn Patyk (University of Florida)
Modern Terrorism and the Sensitive Heart

Panel III.: WARS & THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE BOMB
Chair: Martin A. Miller (Duke University)

Andrew Zimmerman (George Washington University)
Barricade Warfare and the Origins of Revolutionary and Military Modernity

Ann Larabee (Michigan State University)
The History and Subversive Rhetoric of Bomb-Making Manuals in the United States

Niall Whelehan (European University Institute)
End to Insurrection? Fenian Violence in the Late 19th Century

Panel IV: BIG DEVELOPMENTS
Chair: David Blackbourn (Harvard University)

Christopher Ely (Florida Atlantic University)
Urban Space and Populist Terror in Russia, 1878-1881

Frithjof Benjamin Schenk (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität)
Attacking the Empire's Achilles Heels: Railroads and Terrorism in Czarist Russia

Mareike König (GHI Paris)
Terrorism, Migration and the fear of an International Complot: The Example of Germans in Paris, 1871-1895

Richard Bach Jensen (Louisiana Scholar's College)
Worldwide Anarchist Terrorism and its Repression, 1881-1914

Panel V: COLONIAL & ANTI-COLONIAL ASSASSINATIONS
Chair: Benedikt Stuchtey (GHI London)

Michał Targowski (Nicolaus Copernicus University)
Against Colonialism or Social Inequities? Polish Terrorists in the Long Nineteenth Century

Timothy H. Parsons (Washington University)
Pacification or Terrorism? The Assassination of Koitalel arap Samoei

Neeti Nair (University of Virginia)
Gandhian „satyagraha" as Terrorism: The Limits to Non-Violence in Late Colonial India

Panel VI: COMPARISONS
Chair: Adrian Guelke (Queen's University of Belfast))

Gotelind Müller-Saini (Universität Heidelberg)
China and the „Anarchist Wave of Assassinations": Politics, Violence and Modernity in East Asia Around the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Peter Waldmann (Universität Augsburg)
Lack of Terrorism in Argentina in the late Nineteenth Century

Panel VII: 19th c. INTERPRETATIONS & REACTIONS
Chair: Isaac Land (Indiana State University)

George Williamson (University of Alabama)
Narrating the Origins of Political Violence

Ulrich Sieg (Universität Marburg)
The Increasing Importance of Values: Reactions in German Philosophy after the Assassination Attempts Against Wilhelm I

Beverly Gage (Yale University)
Terrorism and the American Left, 1877-1920

Melanie Bailey (Centenary College of Louisiana)
Civilization or Barbarism? Violence and Terror in the French Revolutionary Tradition

Panel VIII: LEGACIES
Chair: Jeffrey Kaplan (University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh)

Mark Driscoll (University of North Carolina)
Tokyo, 1923: Terror, Spectacle and the Origins of Modern Japan

Paul Miller (McDaniel College)
Compromising Memory: The Site of the Sarajevo Assassination

James L. Gelvin (UCLA)
Nationalism, Anarchism, Reform: Understanding Political Islam from the Inside-Out

Panel IX: Final Discussion
Chair: Roni Dorot (European University Institute)

Friedrich Lenger (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen)
Opening Commentary

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