Chapter 7
From the "Classic" Terrorism of the 1970s to Contemporary "Global" Terrorism

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Terrorism was long considered a rather marginal area of research in the humanities and social sciences and perhaps not quite appropriate for study, being less noble and prestigious than others. Apparently, the subject did not conform to the canons of academic life and the disciplines in this vast domain. As from the 1960s, what was known about it was mainly developed by experts associated with intelligence services.

Terrorism might well have been a serious problem, but it was part of a political rationale which could be understood, such as nationalism, independence struggles or Marxism-Leninism for example. It was not so much a threat, as a social and political issue involving order, the State and the social fabric. Rather than being a cause for concern, with undertones of hostility, a virtuality that had to be guarded against, it was a practice of political violence causing material damage. The phenomenon, however, underwent a transformation, which raised widespread concerns, potentially affecting unlikely or unforeseeable places in a thousand and one ways. In France, for example, these ranged from a poorly attended church in the suburbs of Rouen to the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. Furthermore, the phenomenon was expressed by individuals and groups with no advance warning of whether they would come from within the society or from without, in an organised fashion or the act of 'lone wolf' operators. The threat of terrorism is ever present and now haunts our countries.

It is true that it is difficult to propose a concept of terrorism. In the first instance, the term belongs to the vocabulary of the media and everyday life. Above all, if it has taken time for research in the humanities and social sciences to develop on this theme, it is primarily because the phenomenon itself appeared to be an epi-phenomenon, one element in much wider-ranging questions and, ultimately, a minor aspect in

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relation to the major events in the history of our times. For example, how important is an analysis of those responsible for the terrorist attack in Sarajevo, in which the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated on 28th June 1914, an event which led to World War One, alongside an understanding of Clark's (2013) reconstitution of the complex interplay and plurality of the multilateral interactions culminating in this war? Closer to us, the Palestinian terrorism at the end of the 1960s and up until the 1980s was of real relevance, true, but it has to be considered in terms of a wider setting of which it was only one aspect. We have to bear in mind, for example, its changing links with the Palestinian movement and its conflict with Israel, or with the hidden politics and diplomacy of certain "sponsor" States (in particular, Libya, Syria and Iraq); or see it in the context of the Cold War.

If research on terrorism is now necessary in the humanities and social sciences this is initially because it seems to constitute a problem in its own right and, therefore, to belong to categories which do not encapsulate it in broader questions, or not necessarily. This observation is linked to the fact that the main workings of present day terrorism are associated with certain currents in Islam. Radical Islamism, when it assumes a terrorist nature, is a phenomenon to which religious dimensions are central. These religious dimensions may be integral to political or geopolitical aims beyond its control or they may be instrumentalised. Nonetheless, it is also, and primarily, a phenomenon *sui generis*, a threat and a reality that have imposed themselves in their own right; and with a planet-wide, global intensity fully justifying a considerable number of researchers devoting their time thereto.

This does not, in any way, mean that radical Islamism has the monopoly of terrorist violence. When religious, violence may equally well be Buddhist, Jewish or Christian; but it is not only religious and may, for example, come from the extreme right.

These introductory remarks invite us to make a clear distinction between two phases of terrorism in recent years from, let's say, the beginning of the 1960s. The first will be described here as 'classical'. It did not mobilise a great deal of research. The second period, which dates from the beginning of the 1980s, was very different; we shall refer to it as 'global'.

'Classical' Terrorism

Brief Historical Review

Seen from Europe, terrorism in the 1960s and 1970s was structured around two main issues.

On one hand, it was international and then, in the main, focussed on the issue of Palestine. The perpetrators of the most important attacks were, in most cases, dissident groups from the PLO whose aim was to undermine any policy that appeared to be likely to culminate in negotiations with Israel. The others were heteronomous

and, in fact, acted on behalf of the sponsor States who entrusted them with their 'dirty work' in return for means of existence including money, passports, and a safe fallback base. There were occasions when Fath, the most central organisation of Yasser Arafat's PLO, was involved in the organisation of an attack. This was the case with the massacre in Munich (5th–6th September 1972), when 11 Israeli athletes and a German policeman were killed by a Palestinian commando group during the Olympic Games. At the time, international terrorism, in the shape of ASALA (the Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia), an organisation claiming to act on behalf of the Armenian cause, was responsible for the attack at Orly on 15th July 1983, in which 8 people died and some sixty were injured. This operation backfired and became a total disaster for the ASALA, as Armenian communities throughout the world distanced themselves from the terrorism which, in their name, had struck people whose only wrong was to have happened to be in Orly on that day.

There was also internal, 'home-grown' terrorism associated with internal issues specific to the countries in which it occurred. It could be from the extreme-right with fascist tendencies, aimed at creating a climate of fear conducive to a coup d'Etat. This was the case with the 'strategy of tension' in Italy, which culminated in the attack at the station in Bologna (85 dead, over 200 wounded) on 2nd August 1980. It could also be from the extreme-left, borne along by organisations originating in the rise and fall of Leftism after the loss of the hopes raised by May '68. There was a powerful wave, once again in Italy, dominated by the Red Brigades but also, in a more restricted manner, by the Red Army Faction in Germany.

Finally, this 'internal' terrorism could be associated with a national cause, with demands for territorial independence, for example the ETA movement in the Basque country in Spain; the IRA in Northern Ireland; or in France with the FNLC (Front National de Liberation de la Corse) in Corsica. In certain cases, or at certain points in their history, these armed struggle movements may have associated a social theme and an extreme-left ideology, in particular Leninist, with what was the central theme, the reference to a nation which had to be liberated.

In all cases, this terrorism was political; even if there were instances when it was also, or occasionally, somewhat sordid or recalled the Mafia.

Conceptualization

As we have pointed out, this 'classical' terrorism is a common sense category. The question is, can it be conceptualised? At first sight, this would seem to be an intractable issue, quite simply because we are repeatedly reminded that one person's terrorist is another person's resistant or freedom fighter. However, it is possible to propose a tentative conceptualisation on the basis of a two-fold observation.

In the first instance, the terrorist actors were capable of calculation and strategic development. They knew how to prepare an operation, mobilise the resources required, including arms, money, hiding places, etc., obtain information, arrange

their escape after an attack, disguise themselves, etc. They were, in short, rational and their actions presented instrumental dimensions that included a costs and benefits analysis.

Secondly, they were violent, capable of killing indiscriminately, blindly, if it was a question of their targets; all the more so, since they had lost contact with the populations they claimed to represent, in particular a nation or a class. The more they acted, in the last resort without reference to any other group than their own, the more the population they claimed to represent shifted away from their actions and the more those actions gained a momentum whose image suggested loss of direction. As I wrote at the time, they became the anti-movement of the movement they endeavoured to represent (Wieviorka, 1988). Nobody could ultimately understand and evaluate their acts, which had become meaningless and could be described as drifting aimlessly.

'Classical' terrorism pursued these processes to their ultimate limit on many occasions at the time. They eventually ended in self-destruction, the settling of internal differences, denunciation, incomprehensible tirades, and actions targeting the population which it was intended to defend. The process sometimes lasted a long time, as with ETA or the IRA, both of which succeeded in maintaining a degree of public empathy even when they resorted to terrorism. Nationalism is a rather more robust ideology than Marxism-Leninism. It was more rapid with extreme-left organisations. While I in no way wish to minimise the merits of the General of the Italian Carabinieri, Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa, often presented as the person who put an end to the *Brigate Rosse*, I must stress that the actions of the movement had already declined considerably in meaning, and any link with the Italian proletariat was tenuous. Their actions had no connection to the lives of those they aimed to represent. From this perspective, 'pure' terrorism is terrorism that no longer has any relation at all to the population of reference.

If we combine these two observations, it is possible to define terrorism as an instrumental, rational action, close to a 'pure' concept, particularly when the actors speak in the name of a population which in no way recognises its demands, or no longer does so, in these acts of violence. The concept of anti-movement, as I have already said, can account for the action, and also for the inversion of the process, whereby the actors go from the movement, to the anti-movement, from meaning to loss of meaning. This is what I suggested as conceptualisation at the conclusion of my work in the 1980s (Wieviorka, 1988).

Global Terrorism

The Origin of Jihadism

The first important events marking a change in the terrorist phenomenon date from the beginning of the 1980s and took place in Lebanon. In Beirut, on the 23rd October 1983, an attack involving a bomb-laden lorry caused the death of more than 250

people (of which 248 were soldiers) at the headquarters of the American Marines near the airport and, on the same day, a second attack, which may also have been caused by a truck bomb, but this is not certain, caused over 60 deaths (including 58 French paratroopers) in the Drakkar building. In both cases, the most plausible hypotheses involve two actors: Iran, a revolutionary state at war, and the Lebanese Hezbollah, a rapidly-evolving Shi'a political force, who both denied any participation. In both cases, it would appear that the attack involved martyrdom: the truck drivers gave their lives to ensure the success of their actions. This is an example of the suicidal approach adopted by the tens of thousands of young Bassiji, who requested to fight in the front line during the war between Iran and Iraq (1980–1988). Such was their desperation at the idea that the Khomeini revolution might fail, they were ready to meet an almost certain death.

Thereafter, other terrorist attacks confirmed that a new phase had opened up in the history of the phenomenon. In France alone, there were 13 attacks in 1985–1986. These included the rue de Rennes in Paris, 13th September 1986, (7 dead, 55 injured) and for the majority, the most plausible hypotheses pointed to Hezbollah, perhaps to obtain the liberation of those held in prison in France and in Iran. What is clear is that the religious dimension, that of Islam, cannot be ignored.

In the 1990s, the conjunction of a militarised Islam and the occult and violent para-diplomacy of certain countries, Iran in particular, was becoming increasingly frequent.

At the same time, and as from the end of the 1980s, people started to talk about al-Qaeda, the organisation headed by Osama bin Laden, whose orientations are of a quite different nature. The Afghanistan of the Taliban became a major training ground for Jihadists from all over the world. Radical Islam was to constitute the core of a form of global and religious terrorism, whose first target was the United States (attacks aimed at American Embassies in Nairobi and Daar-es-Salam in 1998, the destroyer USS Cole in October 2000, etc.).

A particularly important episode occurred in France. It was significant because it indicated what Jihadi terrorism was to become later in many instances: namely the synthesis, depending on the circumstances, of worldwide or international rationales and rationales internal to a society. In 1995, the assassination of the Sahraoui imam in Paris, the attacks in the RER B (underground urban transport system) at the Saint Michel Station in Paris (8 dead and 117 wounded), at the Place Charles-de-Gaulle (16 wounded); as well as several failed attacks, indicated that France had become the stage on which tensions specific to the Arab-Muslim world—in this instance in Algeria—were being acted out. Some of the participant networks and actors were of immigrant origin, resident in France. The primary perpetrator of the attacks was Khaled Kelkal, killed by the police (*gendarmes)* on 29th September 1995, and whose itinerary was to become emblematic. He was born in Mostaganem and grew up in the suburbs in Lyon, where he was known as a petty delinquent from an early age. He then became radicalised, served a prison sentence, and then spent time in Algeria on several occasions. There he was in contact with the 'Afghans', the militant Algerian Islamists who had been trained and formed in Afghanistan. He himself became an ardent Islamic activist. Terrorism, in his case, was at the crossroads of French issues

concerning the 'suburbs' and integration on one hand, and issues from elsewhere, including violence in Algeria and the constitution of Islamic networks at world level.

Four Types of Jihadism

The Global Climax

A peak was reached with the 9/11 attacks on 9th September 2001, at the World Trade Center in New York, and in Washington (nearly 3000 dead and twice as many wounded). The coordinated and simultaneous hijacking of four aeroplanes had been prepared and implemented by actors under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden. They came from another country, had little knowledge of the United States and were driven by a visceral hatred of the West, as well as by virulent anti-Semitism, which is a constant factor in Jihadism, established at an early date by Sageman (2004). The action was metapolitical, not intending to take State power. The aim was martyrdom: all those who intended to hijack a plane had decided to commit suicide. This had nothing to do with discussions and tensions internal to the United States, with the work of the United States in itself. What happened was only possible because of the existence of al-Qaeda, its bases in Afghanistan, accepted by the Taliban, its financial capacity and its pyramidal organisation. From this point on, Islamic terrorism was to follow several paths.

At the Crossroads of Issues Within a Society and Issues External to It

With the first path, the attacks are the outcome of the synthesis of two types of rationale: those which are external in origin and those internal to the society and are expressed by actors who are themselves, like Khaled Kelkal, at the crossroads of these rationales. Jihadism is heavily loaded with resentment towards certain States, mainly Western but not uniquely, with the desire to harm them; but it is also the bearer of geo-political issues and political interests which are located elsewhere. The perpetrators of attacks may be associated with distant organisations, while living in the country where the damage is to occur. Thus, on 11th March 2004, several bombs exploded simultaneously on trains arriving in Madrid, causing 191 deaths and almost 2000 wounded. Similarly, on 7th July 2005, three explosions on the London Underground and in a bus resulted in 56 deaths and some 700 wounded. In both cases, the attacks were the work of networks. Several members were resident in the country thus ravaged and the demands made suggest that what is at stake is the international policies of these countries, involved in a war in Iraq alongside the United States of George W. Bush. We were to learn later that, at least in the case of Spain, preparation for the attacks had begun before the outbreak of this war. Those involved in the country were of immigrant origin. All over the world, other attacks of the same type show that it was not only Western countries that were targeted: November 2003 saw,

in Istanbul, synagogues, the British Consulate and the HSBC bank targeted—58 people died. Other attacks followed: in March 2007 in Casablanca, and Marrakech on 28th April 2011; in Bali, to merely give a few examples. In a first wave, these attacks seemed to have been sponsored by al-Qaeda. This was still the case in January 2015, when an attack in Paris on 7th January targeted the journalists of the satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, which had published highly controversial caricatures of the Prophet Mohamed. Twelve people died and 11 were wounded. In another attack on 9th January, at the *hyperkasher* supermarket at the Porte de Vincennes, 4 people died. These attacks on selected targets were therefore aimed at the media on one hand and Jewish people on the other.

Daech and the Caliphate

More recently, a so-called State, Daech, has been set up in Iraq and Syria, which describes itself as a 'Caliphate' and which functions in terrorist mode. Once again, in the attacks in numerous countries for which it claims responsibility, we find the interplay of internal rationales. These are specific to each country targeted, usually, but not exclusively, expressed by people of Arab-Muslim immigrant origin and military-type rationales, in particular toward the countries participating in the coalition which opposes this so-called State. An innovation here is that Daech has attracted thousands of young people, who have come there not only to be trained, to practice and to be educated but also to live in a Muslim country, even if it means being prepared to return to their country of origin to carry out attacks. These young people include an appreciable percentage of converts to Islam and women. The word used to describe this process is 'radicalisation' and, on occasion, they have been compared to the International Brigades who went to join the Republicans in Spain in the civil war against Franco.

The Jihadi attacks as from 2014 or 2015 were frequently committed by Daech and differed from those of al-Qaeda in their specifically political and geo-political dimension. In these cases, religion was associated with a project for the construction and defence of a State.

Already in the context still dominated by al-Qaeda, Marc Sageman advanced the hypothesis that this type of action was "leader less" Jihadism and, therefore, was actors organising themselves without having to refer to any centre whatsoever and knowing full well what was expected of them. This thesis gave rise to considerable public debate, in which Sageman was criticised by another expert, Bruce Hoffman. He rejected the idea of 'homegrown terrorists' who had become radicalised all on their own and whose *modus operandi* was almost entirely owed to the Internet.[1]

[1] The book by Marc Sageman which led to the controversy is Leaderless Jihad, Terror Networks in the -First Century (https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere-2008-4-page-912.htm#s1n2). Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. Bruce Hoffman's reply was published under the title, "The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism; Why Osama bin Laden Still Matters" (Hoffman, 2008).

Lone Wolves? Pathological Characteristics?

Several attacks, for example in Boston (at the city's marathon on 15th April 2013) or, in France in Toulouse (Mohamed Merah killing three soldiers, then three children and a Jewish teacher in March 2012), then in Nice (14th July 2016), when a truck driven into the crowd killed 86 people and wounded almost 500 people on the Promenade des Anglais) were, at the time, presented as the work of 'lone wolves', isolated individuals (two brothers in the case of Boston). People who did not have the slightest link to an organisation like Daech—which is even more in line with the 'leaderless Jihad' hypothesis. In fact, experience shows that as the inquiry gradually advances, and then the judicial processing of the files, this presentation does not stand up to scrutiny in most instances. Anders Behring Breivik, this extreme right terrorist who killed 77 people in Norway on 22nd July 2012, was also described as a 'lone wolf'. With time, however, this statement was also qualified.

In fact, until recently, completely isolated Jihadis were rare. But today, Internet provides all the information required to commit a terrorist attack, and it is possible to take action single-handed. There are people who really do act entirely on their own. Proportionately there are more, particularly as the police information and prevention services are now more developed. It is now easier to locate action organised by several people than the lone maturation of a terrorist project. Confronted with increasingly efficient repression, collective actors have difficulty in organising and acting but, on the other hand, determined, isolated individuals have more facility. Actors of this sort are, however, also increasingly frequently unbalanced people, whose involvement falls under psychiatry rather than politics or religion.

On the whole, the social sciences are reluctant to accept any attempt to naturalise social problems, to criminalise political action or to treat political commitment as a psychiatric problem. But how can we avoid thinking that many of the most recent cases are indeed functions of this type of orientation?

We can therefore distinguish at least four types of Jihadism. These range from the most global, metapolitical, martyr, with no roots in the society targeted by their attacks; to the most individual, in varying degrees of isolation, for whom religion seems to be subsequent to some form of mental imbalance. Others combine internal social and cultural sources, and religious and geopolitical rationales with the variant constituted by association with a so-called State, like the Caliphate of Daech. Let us once again make it clear that there are other forms of terrorism, which may, or may not, be religious.

This terrorism is 'global' and not only international, in so far as, to be understood, it has to be grasped in its global meanings, which are themselves then articulated with all sorts of regional, national or local issues. The actors, even the most modest, acting in their own country, even at local level, assign a general, global, metapolitical meaning to their gestures. To use the words of Ulrich Beck, they correspond to the "cosmopolitisation of the world", which lists the terrorist threat amongst the major risks, just like global warming or the dangers of nuclear war (Beck, 2017).

A New Conceptualisation

This leads us to new theoretical approaches and new discussions. On the whole, the analyses of 'classical' terrorism were not renowned for the quality of their theorization. If the issue was one of extreme-left terrorism or Palestinian terrorism, the analysis was restricted to endeavouring to show the existence of a common 'left-wing' theme linking many of the most outstanding experiences to centres in the Soviet Union. More frequently, the accumulation of empirical knowledge and the historical narrative replaced conceptualisation-hence the importance of "experts", in most instances linked to state institutions, *think tanks* close to those in power, possibly even to Intelligence Services. Both Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman, whom we have just quoted, started their careers at the end of the 'classical period' of terrorism: Hoffman in the Rand Corporation and Sageman in the CIA.

As mentioned above, I proposed articulating the instrumental register with that of loss of meaning. I was, at the time, part of the endeavour to combine, rather than oppose, a sociology along the lines of the resource mobilisation theory associated with Charles Tilly with one prolonging that of action and social movements, as developed by Alain Touraine (e.g., Tilly, 1978; Touraine, 1978).On these two registers, however, 'global terrorism' forces us to go much further.

The approaches insisting on the instrumental dimensions of terrorism lead to an image of rational actors, making calculations, working out strategies and weighing up the costs and benefits of an action in preparation. It is true that today, as in the past, terrorists are often good strategists, capable of inventing clever scenarios, and imagining new modes of action. They have not all decided to die along with their victims. But many firmly decide to do so. In these instances, their motives are varied: some hope to go to a paradise where dozens of virgins await them; others have abandoned hope and feel trapped; others yet have faith in someone who takes command, or in a religious leader, etc. Nevertheless, in all these cases, one question remains: what can the cost-benefit analysis of a suicide operation possibly be?

The question of *the loss of meaning* is also more complicated. At global level, the terrorists do have numerous supporters and a real audience. It is not possible to speak of 'pure' terrorism, in which nobody identifies with the rhetoric of the actors. On the contrary, their communication is often carefully prepared with the aim of frightening enemies but also of arousing sympathy and generating recruitment.

This is why research in the social sciences has produced questions and proposals that maintain a close link with the issue of loss of meaning.

Research on terrorism is now part of the general evolution of the social sciences which, in the main, have now exited the structuralism of the 1960s, 70s and 80s and assigned an increasing importance to approaches focusing on the subjectivity of the actors. Thus ground-breaking work, like that of Khosrokhavar (2018) deals with the terrorist subject and, more specifically, to avoid any essentialism, the processes of subjectivation and de-subjectivation which shape their trajectory. The terrorist actor is the person who, at one and the same time, is involved in the processes of loss of

meaning, which can be referred to as de-subjectivation and the restoration of meaning, by means of religion, which can be referred to as subjectivation or re-subjectivation.

As religion constitutes the principal resource of subjectivation, questions have arisen as to its exact role and place. In this respect, a controversy involving both personal issues and fundamental questions set two excellent political scientists, Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy, in opposition. They disagreed as to whether in Jihadism, as it emerged in the West, the predominant question was one of religion or a social nature: the consequences of the *banlieues* or declining urban areas, or the difficulties of immigration (Daumas, 2016). Farhad Khosrokhavar intervened to point out that, in Europe, there was not one single version of the truth but a broad range of experiences (Khosrokhavar, 2018): some terrorists had had a Muslim upbringing, with a long practice of going to the mosque; others had discovered religion a few months previously, even a few weeks before taking action and, on the whole, their knowledge of the sacred texts was very limited. The fact remains that it is difficult to conceive of taking action as a martyr and committing suicide, without religion, even if this is only a very recent discovery on the part of the Jihadi and if, in most cases, they are not very knowledgeable about Islam.

The greater the interest in subjectivation and de-subjectivation, the greater the temptation to reduce these to the central theme that has come to dominate recently, and which is that of radicalisation. Seen from this perspective, Islamic terrorism is the outcome of a process during which an individual becomes 'radicalized', by which is meant that they both adopt an extremist ideology and prepare to implement it violently. The concept of radicalisation now prevails in the discourse of journalists and experts. At the same time, endeavours are taking place to consider its contrary, 'deradicalisation' and to develop appropriate public policies on this basis. This presents the advantage of enabling a sociological type of analysis by inviting us to consider trajectories, submission to ordeals and actors' work on meaning.

However, the concept also has its limits and, in particular, a blind spot: it tells us nothing about the decision to take action, given that only a very restricted number of individuals will effectively act violently within a large population sharing the same values, the same hopes, the same despair, but who will remain passive. The *sociologising* explaining terrorism by social causes, with no consideration for the individual subjectivity of the actors; and the *psychologising* reducing the actor to questions of personality, constitute two pitfalls which the analyst has to avoid.

Today, Islamic terrorism is the subject of major research programmes[2] mobilising large numbers of researchers. This affords a privileged opportunity to consider the articulation of research, and public action, taking care to avoid any merging of the two roles. A researcher is a researcher, while a top civil servant, a judge or a politician is not. The production of terrorism, but also its impact, has become a significant domain in the humanities and social sciences; and the study of the actors, institutions or even of the State in their endeavours to confront these issues is becoming a new field in these areas (Wieviorka, 2018).

[2] We would like to flag the work undertaken in the context of the platform 'Violence et sortie de la violence' at the FMSH, which includes the *Observatoire des radicalisations*.

The move from 'classical' terrorism to 'global terrorism' is also an opportunity for new and wider-ranging efforts to consider the phenomenon, in all its dimensions. This phenomenon is now experienced as a threat from without and from within our societies. It may occur at any time, possibly operated from a great distance, in an organised form, or simply carried out almost individually, with the assistance of the Internet and some fragments of religious knowledge. This threat, in any event with Islamism, takes on a metasocial and metapolitical character giving it considerable strength. It expresses an anthropological and cultural novelty that is difficult to understand and all the more paradoxical, as it is very largely produced by our own societies.

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