Introduction

Gli ultimi rivoluzionari del XX secolo. Era l'ultima occasione. Poi le cose sono cámbiate. Il mito rivoluzionario è crollato.

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0.1 A LONG-TERM APPROACH

Viewed from today's perspective, the decision made by so many radical activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s to take up arms against the "system" in the context of advanced democracies looks incomprehensible. These revolutionaries believed that by going underground and killing security forces, state officials and businesspeople, the masses would turn against capitalism.

The belief in revolution in affluent countries may sound hopeless today, but at the time a considerable number of Leftists held it. Many of the would-be revolutionary terrorists were middle-class students with higher education who might have had a successful personal and professional career. However, they opted for the cause of revolution. They were no fools. Think of Renato Curcio and Margherita Cagol, two sociology students at Trento University in 1966–69, who married and a few years later created the Red Brigades. Or think of unlikely people who became fascinated, and ultimately involved, with urban guerrilla: Ulrike Meinhoff, a well-regarded bourgeois German left-wing intellectual and journalist, who met young extremists and helped organize the Red Army Faction

[1] Morucci (2003: 45).

(and committed suicide in jail in 1976) (Bauer 2008); or the famous editor and millionaire, Giangacomo Feltrinelli, who created one of the first Italian revolutionary terrorist groups of the 1970s, the GAP (*Gruppi d'Azione Partigiana*, Groups of Partisan Action), and would die, at the age of forty-six, by a bomb that accidentally exploded while he was planting it on a power line (Feltrinelli 2002); or Lieutenant Colonel Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, one of the protagonists of the 1974 Carnation Revolution, who was disenchanted with the development of democracy in Portugal and later played a significant role in the formation of an underground group, *Forças Populares 25 Abril* (April 25 Popular Forces); after his arrest, he was condemned to fifteen years in jail (Barra da Costa 2004: 57–58). These are just a few of the standout names among the thousands of people who became engaged in the "urban guerrilla" movement that spread throughout affluent countries in the 1970s.

The extent to which countries experienced this type of terrorism varied greatly. In Italy, Spain, Japan, and Germany it was a serious concern that dramatically altered domestic political life; in many other countries, revolutionary terrorism was absent or had a minor presence. The analysis to follow of the cross-national variation in revolutionary terrorism sheds new light on the determinants of conflict, one the most vexed questions in the field of political violence. The academic literature tends to assume that the emergence of political violence can be explained through the prevailing political, economic and social conditions at the moment in which violence erupts. Thus, most of the explanatory factors that have been considered in the empirical research are contemporary to the violence itself: variables such as level of economic development, economic growth, inequality, population size, natural resources, political regime, institutional design, and many other similar factors, are measured at the moment of, or immediately before, the occurrence of the violence.

History is rarely taken into account. If the past trajectory of a country is deemed to be relevant, it is usually absorbed in the contemporary value of the explanatory variable (for example, political stability is captured by the number of previous regime transitions at the moment of violence onset). But the past may matter in far more complex ways (Pierson 2004). This book argues that the occurrence of political violence is influenced by macro-processes of political and economic change that may have occurred long before the emergence of violence. It therefore provides a historical explanation of conflict, related to the burgeoning literature on historical legacies and long-term factors.

I offer a historical comparative analysis of revolutionary terrorism in twenty-three affluent countries (pre-1994 OECD countries).[2] The phenomenon of revolutionary terrorism has a number of advantages for comparative research. Firstly, this kind of violence displays high internal homogeneity: the "quality" of violence (targets and tactics), the goals of violence, the motivations of the terrorists and the organizational structure of the groups were very similar in all the countries, making the cross-national comparison particularly meaningful. Secondly, as suggested earlier, the levels of violence varied considerably, with some countries experiencing large numbers of fatalities while others remained untouched. Thirdly, the cycle of violence was synchronized: Armed groups were created around the same time during the 1970s, in the aftermath of the 1968 mobilizations; they are all part of the same cycle of violence.

Revolutionary terrorism, therefore, is a well-delimited phenomenon that lends itself to a cross-national comparison. Given the low number of observations (twenty-three affluent countries), the working sample is ideal for an intermediate-N design (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013: 20–21), in which statistical analysis is combined with qualitative comparisons and in-depth knowledge of the cases. Statistics is essential to discipline the arguments and hypotheses, as well as to identify exceptions and anomalies. On the other hand, the interpretation of statistical results is much richer in this kind of design, since the findings can be embedded in a broader historical and political context. Perhaps the most brilliant example of how far an intermediate-N design can go is Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* (1993), where he develops his theory of social capital by analyzing a cross-section of twenty Italian regions. Putnam makes sense of the statistical correlations between social trust and institutional performance by bringing remote history into the explanation.

Putnam's book is not only relevant as an outstanding intermediate-N design; it is also a seminal work about historical legacies and persistence, showing that the roots of the North-South divide in Italy go back to the civic traditions that were created in medieval city-states in the North. Following Wittenberg (2015), two different approaches can be distinguished in the analysis of persistence. On the one hand, persistence in the dependent variable, as in the persistence of the cross-regional differences of social capital in Italy (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2008;

[2] Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Putnam 1993), the persistence of anti-Semitism in Germany (Voigtländer and Voth 2012) or the persistence of voting patterns in Hungary before and after the Communist period (Wittenberg 2006). On the other, persistence is observed in the effect exerted by the independent variable (after the independent variable has ceased to work): Many examples can be given, including the long-term effects of the slave trade on human capital and economic development in African countries (Nunn 2008), the long-term effects of institutions on growth (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001; Dell 2010), the long-term effects of state repression on political values (Lupu and Peisakhin 2017), or the long-term consequences of Protestant missionaries on democracy in developing countries (Woodberry 2012).

My study corresponds to the latter approach: I focus on the long-term effects that the processes of economic and political transformation taking place in the interwar period had on revolutionary terrorism some decades later. The enfranchisement of the working class after the human sacrifice of World War I was the main challenge to the polities of affluent countries, generating the modern structure of cleavages that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) analyzed in their classic study. In some countries, labor was repressed and an authoritarian (sometimes fascist) regime was instated; in some others, labor was integrated and democracy prevailed. Economic conditions and economic policies varied enormously, sometimes adding great stress to the capital-labor conflict. In those places where a repressive solution was sought, revolutionary terrorism was more intense in the 1970s; in others in which some sort of class compromise was reached, terrorism did not emerge. Revolutionary terrorism was particularly acute where the process of interwar economic and political development was more conflictual.

In order to substantiate the argument about the relationship between interwar events and revolutionary terrorism, I have borrowed, in an openly opportunistic way, ideas and findings from very different fields, including comparative politics, political economy, history, historical sociology, economic history, international relations, anthropology, and cultural psychology. The crossing of disciplinary boundaries pays off: The main findings of this book have been made possible because I have sought to introduce explanatory variables that have usually been overlooked in the literature on political violence. By connecting underground revolutionary violence with the routes navigated by the countries during the interwar years, we can understand the historical conditions that made the emergence of violence more likely.

Thanks to this cross-disciplinary approach, I have been able to quantify the development paths that countries followed in the interwar period, allowing me to statistically analyze the strength of the association between revolutionary terrorism and the interwar paths. Drawing on a number of indicators (past anarchist violence, democratic breakdowns, civil wars, levels of land inequality, type of capitalism, and levels of industrialization), I can characterize how close each country was to the model of a liberal society between the two World Wars. The statistical analysis shows in different ways that the association between interwar development paths and revolutionary terrorism is extremely robust. Nothing really changes when contemporary or historical controls are introduced, the kind of modernization process that occurred in the interwar years shows a strikingly strong association with the intensity of political violence some decades later. It is as if the cross-national variation with regard to revolutionary terrorism in 1970–2000 mimicked the cross-national variation with regard to political and economic liberalism in 1918–39.

The link between interwar development paths and revolutionary terrorism is hard to pin down, if only because these are two phenomena that are situated at different layers of the social reality. While development paths are macro phenomena, revolutionary terrorism is confined to the micro level. This heterogeneity complicates the identification of the mechanisms. Nevertheless, I explore a mechanism based on the constraints imposed on the terrorists by their communities of support. The argument establishes that in countries with a non-liberal path, the Left was more radicalized (as attested, for instance, by the electoral strength of communist parties in the postwar period) and, therefore, there existed (minority) groups that endorsed armed struggle. Confirmatory evidence can be found by analyzing the negative cases of armed groups that had the capacity to kill but refrained from doing so. These groups are heavily concentrated in countries with a liberal path in the interwar period. An in-depth examination of these groups reveals that the main reason why they showed restraint is precisely because of the disapproval of lethal attacks in the community of support.

In the countries that adopted the non-liberal path during the 1920s and 1930s, the legitimacy of the state was low within the Left. The authoritarian experience left long-lasting wounds and traumatic memories. Moreover, these countries were more repressive in response to the protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s. When security forces killed protestors in demonstrations, the Left interpreted this as a sign that

authoritarianism had not really dissipated, and that democracy was only a farce, a facade. This reading was absent in the countries with a liberal past, even in cases where the police also killed activists. Thus, repression had differential consequences depending on previous political history. This is the most specific mechanism I provide and can be confirmed with qualitative evidence on how the terrorists (and the radical Left more generally), reacted to state repression.

The relationship between interwar development paths and revolutionary terrorism should not be understood in a deterministic way. I am not assuming that interwar developments were a "treatment" whose (delayed) consequence was revolutionary terrorism. Revolutionary terrorism was not bound to happen given the events of 1918–39 (as the interpretation in terms of a "treatment" would imply); actually, without the mobilizations of the late 1960s, revolutionary terrorism would not have emerged, regardless of the historical precedents.

I want to make clear that my aim is not to interpret particular historical events as a causal treatment that determines the outcome (revolutionary terrorism). I am not looking for this type of narrow causality that is at the core of the "causal identification" approach. Unfortunately, history rarely lends itself to the methodological niceties of causal identification. We need to employ more fine-grained categories to capture the subtleties of historical change, such as path dependence (Pierson 2000), critical junctures (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007), critical antecedents (Simmons and Slater 2010), or historical legacies (Wittenberg 2015). I have tried to minimize the conceptual apparatus used in the book. In this sense, it is sufficient for my purposes to distinguish between causal conditions and causal forces. In the classic example from analytic philosophy, a short circuit's spark provokes a fire (Hart and Honoré 1959: 25; Mackie 1974: 34). A necessary condition for the short circuit to cause the fire is the presence of oxygen. As we take oxygen for granted, we conclude that the short circuit is the causal force or triggering event that produces the fire, even though it would not have been produced without oxygen. In the present context, my main interest lies in the oxygen. The wave of ideological radicalism and anti-system protest that spread through most developed countries in the late sixties and early seventies may be conceived as the spark. The effects of this new radicalism varied depending on the causal historical conditions in each country.

This framing, minimalist as it is, goes a long way. Using Sewell's (2005) terms, causal forces or triggering events capture the importance and transformative nature of events: The explosion of mobilization of the late

1960s was indeed eventful and generated new possibilities that altered the political space of affluent countries. One of these possibilities, lethal revolutionary violence, only materialized in some countries, in those that had the proper causal conditions, determined by a non-liberal past. Despite the general convergence of the postwar period, countries differed after the 1968 mobilizations according to long-term causal conditions. Historical causal conditions unfold slowly and have strong structural power. Whereas triggering events capture the contingency of history, the historical causal conditions limit and constrain the consequences of events.

Three situations can be distinguished in the sample. In several countries, there was neither a short circuit nor oxygen (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Switzerland). In some others, the short circuit occurred in the form of protest and mobilization, but the liberal interwar path had emptied all the oxygen (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). Finally, in the third group, there was both a short circuit and oxygen, giving rise to revolutionary violence (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Spain, and the United States). In France and the United States, the oxygen was entirely consumed in the early stages, but in the other six the fire spread and terrorism became a serious concern. Curiously, we do not observe countries with oxygen but no spark: Every country that had favorable conditions for revolutionary terrorism, eventually experienced it.

There is a second analogy that may shed light on the kind of empirical claim I make. The combination of contingency and long-term causal conditions can also be understood in biological terms, following the celebre formula of Jaques Monod (1970) on chance and necessity: Genetic mutations occur randomly, but their reproductive capacity is determined by their adaptation to the environment. The "armed temptation" might be understood as a political mutation caused by the 1968 protests. The mutation appeared in many of the affluent countries, but it only found a favorable niche in Italy, Spain, Japan, and Germany. In countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States, the mutation extinguished quickly. The mutation, needless to say, refers to chance; the adaption to the environment, by contrast, is determined by objective conditions. Hence the mix of chance and necessity.

Of course, the reader is entitled to ask why the critical antecedent was the interwar period and not some earlier one. The peril of an infinite regress in the chain of causation is well known. Rather than delving into

history, I present, in a rather exploratory way, a bold conjecture about the common roots of development paths in the interwar period and revolutionary terrorism from 1970 to 2000. According to this conjecture, the strength of individualism in the modernization process is a key variable. In societies in which the individual enjoyed greater autonomy with regard to the family and other social groups, the development path during the interwar years was liberal, and lethal revolutionary terrorism was avoided in the 1970s. By contrast, in more "familist" societies, the interwar path was typically non-liberal and lethal groups were created in the 1970s. In a nutshell the gist of the argument is that in more individualistic societies, the economic and political change that came with the spread of industry and capitalism faced less resistance. These societies were better prepared for the transformations brought about by modernization than those in which individualism was weaker. Where individualism was insufficiently extended, the modernization process generated protest, resistance, and conflict. Revolutionary terrorism, from this perspective, would be a late and mild manifestation of the conflict-ridden nature of less liberal societies.

The "endogeneity" objection lies in wait: Individualism may be the outcome of the very development path I am trying to explain. For the skeptic, cultural arguments are irremediably circular. To avoid these problems, I "instrument" culture by employing proxies from the distant past (grammar rules and family structure). Some linguists have argued that grammar rules (such as those that establish the use of personal pronouns) reflect, in an indirect way, the autonomy of the individual in society: Thus, when the pronoun has to be respected, individualism is stronger. Regarding family structure, I focus on the theories that examine the influence of inheritance rules on individualism: The argument establishes that when most of an inheritance goes to the firstborn, the other siblings have to look after themselves, which generates more individualistic social relations. These two features (pronoun and inheritance rules) capture individualism and are not influenced by later developments such as capitalism, industrialization, and liberal democracy. The empirical findings are surprisingly strong. Much of the cross-national variation in both interwar paths and terrorist violence can be explained by bringing individualism into the picture. I hope that these findings open new roads for the analysis of the cultural basis of political violence.

The structure of this book is organized around the general argument I have presented to date. Chapter 1 offers, in a summarized way, the historical-comparative thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the nature,

antecedents, and main characteristics of revolutionary terrorism and its cross-national variation, providing brief case studies of the countries in which this type of terrorism was more intense. Chapters 4–7 comprise the explanatory section. Specifically, Chapter 4 offers an analysis of terrorist violence that only draws on contemporary and background conditions (those of the late 1960s). Next, Chapter 5 moves onto the long-term perspective by introducing variables from the interwar period and merging them into a latent variable that summarizes the path of development; this latent variable is strongly associated with the occurrence of terrorism. Chapter 6 contains a qualitative discussion of the previous findings, including an analysis of negative cases, and a search for mechanisms that connect the interwar period to the 1970s. The final chapter is more exploratory and adventurous, and deals with individualism, modernization paths, and revolutionary terrorism.

0.2 REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM

Crenshaw (1972: 384) defined the concept of revolutionary terrorism as "a part of insurgent strategy in the context of internal warfare or revolution: the attempt to seize political power from the established regime of a state, if successful causing fundamental political and social change." Here, I interpret revolutionary terrorism as Leftist armed struggle carried out by underground organizations with the aim of triggering a revolution. This kind of revolutionary terrorism was an adaptation of Marxist guerrilla tactics in the context of affluent countries. Radicals were intoxicated by the triumphant voluntarism of the Cuban revolutionaries in 1959. The "foco" theory, as developed by "Che" Guevara, established that a small bunch of revolutionaries acting in the countryside had the capacity to expand territorially and eventually produce a regime change. In the urbanized countries of the First World, radicals thought they might achieve something similar by employing urban underground violence. Violence was instrumental in order to mobilize the masses in the fight against capitalism and bourgeois democracy.

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of armed struggle featured in underground groups of a Leftist or anarchist persuasion in many affluent countries. Young revolutionaries, many of them socialized in the protest cycle of the late 1960s, took up arms with the aim of triggering an uprising. The Red Brigades (*Brigate Rosse*) and Front Line (*Prima Linea*) in Italy, the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*) in Germany, the GRAPO (October First Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups) in Spain, the

United Red Army (*Rengo Sekigun*) in Japan, the November 17 Revolutionary Organization in Greece, the April 25 Popular Forces (*Forças Populares 25 de Abril*) in Portugal, and Direct Action (*Action Directe*) in France, are some of the better known groups. They all made the momentous decision to kill people. In other developed countries, however, either armed groups were not formed or, if they were, they did not seek to kill. For instance, in Australia, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, the Nordic countries, and the United Kingdom, there were no fatalities due to revolutionary terrorism.

This particular cycle of violence lasted in some affluent countries until the end of the twentieth century; it became part of the political landscape. In fact, the politics of the 1970s are indelibly associated with a number of dramatic events provoked by Leftist armed groups and the ensuing national crises that they generated. It is worth recalling three well-known kidnapping cases at this point. In Italy, the Red Brigades abducted Aldo Moro, the general secretary of the Christian Democracy party and former Prime Minister, on March 16, 1978, the very same day in which the Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti, faced a parliamentary vote of confidence in which the Italian Communist Party (the Pci) was going to vote in favor of the Christian Democratic party for the first time, as part of the "historical compromise" strategy that Enrico Berlinguer had designed. The kidnapping lasted almost two months. During that time, Italian political life was fully absorbed by the Moro drama. He was eventually killed, the historical compromise was abandoned, and the Pci suffered a significant loss in the 1979 elections.

In Spain, the Maoist GRAPO kidnapped two leading figures who formed part of Franco's dictatorship in the midst of the transition to democracy. Specifically, on December 11, 1976, four days before the popular referendum on political reform was to be held, the terrorists kidnapped Antonio M. Oriol y Urquijo, a former Franco minister and a wealthy businessman. With Oriol still retained, the GRAPO then abducted an army general, Emilio Villaescusa. The political tension created by these two acts was immense, and the whole transition process was brought to the verge of collapse. The police deactivated the crisis by liberating the two hostages.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the Red Army Faction (RAF) caused the worst political crisis in the country since its creation in 1949, commonly referred to as "the events of Autumn '77." In September of that year, the terrorists kidnapped Hans Martin Schleyer, the president of the German employers association. Next, a Palestinian commando group,