

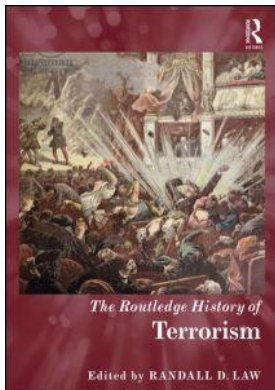
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COUNTER-TERRORISM AND CONSPIRACY

Historicizing the struggle against terrorism

Beatrice de Graaf

To write a history of *counter*-terrorism pushes the limits of possibility even beyond the plausibility of producing a comprehensive history of terrorism. Terrorism is an “essentially contested concept.”¹ The term is almost always used as an attributed pejorative within a specific political and historical context and seldom provides a neutral description of the phenomenon as it lives and moves “out there.” Counter-terrorism, all the more so, reflects an explicit political strategy: that of defining and identifying (in that order) a type of violence in order to invoke special legal and administrative measures to neutralize and combat it.² Hence, counter-terrorism is not an easy category to work with. Even in scholarly work it is easy to unwittingly reinforce the existing political paradigm or lend a hand to oppressive counter-terrorist strategies intended to quell democratic opposition.³

To study terrorism from a perspective of non-state actors alone (and not including the possibility of state terrorism) runs the risk of affirming the status quo and of academically buttressing the defense of the existing order against potential revolutionaries. The linguistic turn in history combined with a myriad of studies from the social constructivist corner, most notably works from the “Copenhagen school” of securitization and *Critical Studies in Terrorism*, have taught us important lessons about the danger of running into positivist pitfalls and adhering to an overly governmental interpretation of history.⁴

Given these observations, this chapter adopts a historicizing approach, i.e., we will try to stick to definitions and interpretations that were in use by the contemporaries themselves. This means that we have to admit that our perspective is inevitably tainted by a Western bias and directed towards non-state terrorism; and that all modern discourse on terrorism originates within this Western, transatlantic world and has been developed by states and communities of states (e.g., the League of Nations, the United Nations, the European Union, etc.) to deal with their contenders. As a result, when turning to the development of this concept over time, we explicitly leave out forms of pre-modern political violence, projections of terrorist activity in Asia in pre-colonial times, or other post hoc interpretations of thug violence and the like. The only justification for this immense academic caveat is the fact that a *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history, or history of semantics, as founded by Reinhart Koselleck)⁵ and genealogies necessarily follow the line of history.⁶ By historicizing counter-terrorism we can at least be sure that we are not imposing our normative biases and post hoc amendments onto the past.

As is the case with so many novel political concepts, a history of (counter-)terrorism will always be written from the author's historical point of view and more often than not clearly evidence the signs of one's times. No one in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, or even in the 1960s, had an inkling about writing a book on terrorism. Doing so is, with a few exceptions, a distinctively post-1960s sport. David Rapoport's four-waves theory is a case in point.⁷ This illustrative and helpful tool for teaching and understanding terrorism is a socially constructed and highly teleological approach. It is presentist in perspective, because the prequels to current contractions of violence can only be viewed in time and space from the vantage point of surfing on the fourth wave. However, from a *begriffsgeschichtliche* perspective it falls short. An ideal, value-free, theoretical framework for the interpretation of terrorism does not derive from top-down political or power structures, or as post hoc interpretations by researchers, but should also include how contemporary actors perceived the issue: the terrorists themselves (some explicitly called themselves "terrorists" and directly challenged authorities to counter them), the society surrounding them, the media, foreign nations, international institutions, private companies, or the petty despots or bureaucrats that executed their power at the local level.

This chapter, therefore, modestly aims to combine an overview of existing secondary literature with some primary research about a few Western countries in order to develop an initial, grounded, conceptual history of counter-terrorism. To limit our survey, we take as our cues any mention of *international* terrorism⁸ (as an indicator for a widely perceived problem), parallel developments in *national* counter-terrorism efforts, and the manifest political transfer of these efforts across countries and continents. Of course, many individual national counter-terrorism campaigns were quite different from international efforts, such as the approach taken by the French in Algeria. However, the decision to restrict this overview to international terrorism enables us here to concentrate on a very essential, specific, and recurrent feature of the struggle against terrorism: namely, the attempt to legitimate and stylize counter-terrorism efforts by framing the purported terrorist enemy as part of a wider conspiracy, preferably by pointing to a transnational menace behind the single incident, and by soliciting international solidarity in combating this purported plot.

In each chronologically defined section, we will describe how a wave of terrorism was defined and mediated by contemporaries and how terrorism "stories" spread through media and society. Subsequently, we will map the parallel national or joint transnational efforts in combating this wave, and we will assess whether this led to a formalized, international framework of legal and administrative initiatives, e.g., to an institutionalized and widely accepted form of counter-terrorism.

Entering the conspiracy

The pivotal point on which this very brief overview of counter-terrorism history hinges is thus the concept of *conspiracy* as it was restyled in the nineteenth century.⁹ By introducing the concept of conspiracy we can secure the conceptual side of terrorism, both empirically and conceptually. The assumption is that eras with a high circulation of conspiracy theories are often also eras with a higher frequency of actual assassination attempts, plots, and attacks, although it remains difficult to discern which tends to precipitate the other. Authorities and societies use and even concoct these conspiracy theories in order to make sense of shocking incidents and disparate attacks – as Randall D. Law already explicitly mentioned in his introduction to this volume. For security institutions, conspiracy theories are an essential

rhetorical, practical, and philosophical means to justify their regime and expansion. Naming alleged conspiracy threats offers a framework within which to identify enemies that have not yet manifested themselves. Though spread over countries and continents, disconnected in time and place, they are jolted together by the lens of the alleged conspiracy. By expanding the geographical and temporal scope of the projected threat, security operations receive a boost as well.¹⁰ The alleged risk of the global terrorist threat posed – e.g., recently by the purported global al-Qaeda network – dictated a new security logic: not just a reactive one, but a proactive, preventative, and even pre-emptive one. This was demonstrated in the years after 9/11 when the US government’s pre-emptive attacks against Iraq were justified by the stated risk that Iraq’s dictator Saddam Hussein might give weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups.¹¹

On the other hand, conspiracy theories are also used as political mechanisms for oppressed or disadvantaged groups seeking redress for their conditions, or they can be used as a political weapon by political entrepreneurs claiming to speak for a threatened majority. Conspiracy thinking is an integral part of almost every extremist ideology in which the legitimacy of the existing political and societal order is condemned.¹² In jihadist texts – e.g., from Sayyid Qutb, Osama bin Laden, or Anwar al-Awlaki – a recurrent theme is the purported “War against Islam” that is being waged by the Western world, that is, by *kuffars* (infidels), against the *ummah* (the world Islamic community).¹³ That said, social conflicts can be simplified by both sides, by the government and the opponents thereof, by attributing all kinds of malicious intent to demonized populations.¹⁴

Pairing the concept “conspiracy” with the study of (counter-)terrorism is crucial because the challenge to defining something as a threat or even as a legal offense before it has empirically manifested itself is not dissimilar to the challenges of definition faced by scholars in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism. Moreover, counter-terrorism efforts are almost without exception legitimated and executed by projecting an overarching threat and connecting incidents into one large-scale conspiracy that is intended to mobilize a population, constituency, parliament, or other factions to rally behind the flag – as Adam Curtis claims, for example, was the case with the War on Terror after 9/11.¹⁵

However, rather than attempting to discern between “real” conspiracies and purported ones, or trying to assess the historical truth behind the conspiracists’ grievances, the focus here is on the functional character of conspiracy thinking at a given moment in time. On an epistemological plane, distinguishing between imagination and reality is impossible because a conspiracy theory is preconceived to rationalize and integrate all cognitive dissonances into its master narrative, leaving no room for alternative explanations. Therefore, in what follows we will focus on the empirical occurrence and frequency of conspiracy thinking as a function bearer and sanctioning tool for counter-terrorism politics.

The first global counter-terrorism debate: the Black conspiracy, 1880–1930

The anarchist wave

In Europe between 1880 and 1914, more than 500 people were wounded by anarchists and around 160 persons, mostly prominent officials and state representatives, fell victim to anarchist attacks. Some of the most significant were King Umberto of Italy (1900), US President William McKinley (1901), three prime ministers, as well as a host of cabinet

ministers, police officials, and politicians. The popular empress Elisabeth of Austria (“Sissi”) was stabbed to death by the Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni in 1898.¹⁶ In Chapters 8 and 9 in this volume, Richard Bach Jensen and Thai Jones, respectively, elaborate extensively on this first wave of modern terrorism, and Jensen convincingly describes how “anarchism,” “terrorism,” “assassins,” and “revolutionaries” became synonymous.

“Worldwide conspiracy” was first of all the specter invoked by the anarchists themselves to describe their millenarian and apocalyptic utopia (or dystopia), on the one hand, and to boost their small number, on the other. Anarchists operated new, very visible, and fearsome technologies of destruction, using, for example, the automobile as both a means of transport and, when augmented with dynamite (another new technology), as vehicle-borne improvised explosive device *avant la lettre*. Anarchist associations gratefully exploited new technologies to communicate and to travel around the world much more quickly than before. A Polish anarchist took his cue to attack the tsar from a newspaper report on the impending state visit of the Russian head of state to France. Russian nihilist Sergei Nechaev turned to cheaper printing techniques to help disseminate his *Catechism of a Revolutionist* abroad in translation. His anarchist colleague Mikhail Bakunin issued his handful of disciples four-digit membership cards to suggest a constituency of thousands of adherents to his World Revolutionary Alliance. And the French League of Nihilists disseminated a leaflet in 1881, which bragged that it would poison hundreds of bourgeois families by adding toxins to the potable water supply of Paris.¹⁷ Anarchists published their threats in newspapers, traveled by steamships, and contacted each other by telegraph.¹⁸

The anarchists’ self-stylization as a global conspiracy was adopted and aggravated by the newspapers. Newspapers connected strikes, worker riots, and communist meetings to attacks by Russian nihilists and French anarchists. Incidents in Europe, Australia, and the United States were linked to attacks in Egypt, China, and Japan. Fear soared high in 1898 when the German emperor Wilhelm II cancelled a state visit to Egypt because of rumors about Italian anarchists conspiring to attack him there.¹⁹ Thus, the global threat of the so-called “Black International” (the global anarchist conspiracy) played into the vignette of the “new political era, experimental, positive, scientific.”²⁰

Emerging counter-terrorism practices

From the 1880s onwards, the struggle against the Black International rose on the political agenda of most nations of Europe and beyond. “Technologies of imagination” transformed the faraway, imagined threat of anarchist violence into a vivid and material danger. Around 1890, police commissioners in Europe assembled and disseminated “wanted” posters and pictures of fugitive anarchists within the country and abroad and assisted their foreign police colleagues when possible. Newspapers, telegraph, telephone, and café rumors contributed to this process of public dissemination and securitization of these global anarchist threats.

In all these efforts, the specter of the anarchist threat served to frame these disparate incidents and attacks as a real international and homogeneous threat. Conspiracy was a fruit of modernism: it combined reactionary fear for chaos and socialism with a new reliance on and faith in modern technological innovations and in managerial progress and engineering. In the Hamidian era (1878–1908), even the Ottoman Empire used the global anarchist threat as a pretext to impose and implement all kinds of new technologies of surveillance and population control (such as registration techniques and new extradition and administrative procedures). Sultan Abdülhamid II justified the harsh repression of the

Armenian rebellion, the prosecution of vagrants, and the deportation of Italian immigrants by pointing to the “trouble of anarchism” – which was only partially causing his troubles.²¹ The specter of the Black International provided operational clues to the nascent police and security centers throughout Europe. Even seemingly harmless meetings, such as completely legal gatherings of social–democratic parties and associations, could be framed as a decoy to conceal deceitful activities and illegal conspiracies to overthrow the government, as police officials in Germany and the Netherlands pointed out to their ministers, partly in order to convince their ministers to invest more in new anti-terrorist techniques.

For example, police forces in Europe and the Ottoman Empire joined forces and implemented the system of Bertillonage, developed around 1882 by the French police prefect Alphonse Bertillon. So-called *portraits parlés* registered a series of bioanthropological facial and bodily traits and measures based on a system of numbers and codes. This “scientific” method was informed by the notion that a deviational, criminal nature manifested itself in facial features and other anthropometric characteristics. These data could be transmitted on short notice to fellow police forces abroad in order to identify and arrest fugitive criminals or suspects, which was something of a revolution, since most suspects up to that time often managed to keep their identity hidden or were able to escape with forged identity cards. So, too, new shipping lines and railroad connections helped expedite the dispatch of photographs.²²

These novel anti-terrorist techniques served to identify suspects and to improve prosecution, but they also symbolized the state of modernity to which security forces aspired. Within the context of increasing bilateral and transnational cooperation, these modern methods were thought to offer a fast track to the elite circle of the – supposedly – most advanced and professionalized forces. Hence, police forces in the Netherlands also pressed their minister to tune in to these new scientific insights and international developments. The Bertillonage system had already been adopted in France, and Germany and the United Kingdom were quick to follow suit.²³ Due to the ambitious police commissioner of Rotterdam, Willem Voormolen, the system also got a foothold in the Netherlands as well. In February 1896, Bertillon was invited to the Netherlands and received a royal decoration, together with Voormolen, from the Dutch queen regent Emma.²⁴ Per royal decree, the Bertillon system was now available to the Dutch police and judicial forces.²⁵ Although nary a single anarchist attack took place in the Netherlands, the global conspiracy discourse, the securitization of terrorism, and the desire to modernize the forces helped Voormolen and his officers to implement new techniques and professionalize their capacities.²⁶

In this way the departments of justice in almost every European country, seeking to professionalize and centralize their respective police systems, embraced “modern” scientific insights from the young discipline of criminology. Even the Dutch police were elevated to the status of an international player. Dutch police and their newly constituted criminal investigators joined in collecting material on suspected anarchists, exchanging details and photographs with colleagues over the world, including colleagues from authoritarian police forces, such as Russia’s Okhrana.²⁷ These international counter-terrorism practices and standards emerged quite clearly in response to an alleged global threat.

International transfer and cooperation of police organizations

International collaboration between European police forces, including the Dutch, profited from these trends in bureaucratization and professionalization. This supports Mathieu

Deflem's hypothesis on the close connection between more autonomy in terms of bureaucratization and professionalization and more international contacts.²⁸ This internationalization was cemented when the first international anti-anarchist conference was organized in 1898, three weeks after the murder of Empress Elisabeth.²⁹ Participating states agreed on a definition of anarchist crimes. The signatories also adopted a central system of registration and, in the years that followed, created central investigative forces and trained new detectives. The system of Bertillonage was accepted as the international standard. The signatories likewise promised to assist each other with rendition and information requests and resolved to implement the death penalty. In the end, not all of the countries ratified the treaty. No further international conventions were held, but the meeting did herald the beginning of organized international police cooperation and can be seen as the forerunner of Interpol.³⁰

In short, the nexus between terrorism and counter-terrorism through the mutual use of the conspiracy debate could not be better illustrated than G. K. Chesterton did in his 1908 novel *The Man Who Was Thursday*. In this brilliant story, the menacing and secretive high council of international anarchists turns out to be set up and staffed without exception by police officials. In the end, the protagonist (a police inspector who writes poetry) laments that good and evil overlapped: "[E]ach man fighting for order may be as brave and good a man as the dynamiter. . . . We have descended into hell."³¹ Indeed, as Jensen describes in Chapter 8 in this volume, this "cultural construction" tied all kinds of actions together, from mere socialist gatherings to nihilist propaganda, but also inspired numerous agents provocateurs to play a shadowy role in instigating real acts of terrorism.

A second wave of anarchism: national confinement of conspiracy theories in the 1930s

Although anarchist attacks took place from the 1880s on, and a first international language on countering terrorism emerged from the international conferences in 1898 and again in 1904, (international) counter-terrorism efforts were mainly executed at the sub-state police level. It was not until the 1930s that actual inter-state cooperation in the struggle against terrorism took shape, enabled and mediated by the League of Nations, which was founded in 1919.

It was the assassination of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia while on a state visit to Marseille on October 9, 1934, by a Bulgarian marksman of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, that precipitated the first international political debate on terrorism.³² This regicide proved that the anarchist wave of assassinations prior to World War I was experiencing an upsurge again.

A Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of the War had tried earlier to define the "systematic terrorism" that occurred during World War I.³³ But public indignation and shock after "Marseille," and the collective fear that "Sarajevo" (i.e., the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which triggered World War I) might happen all over again, convinced the League of Nations to put "terrorism" on the international agenda. A Committee of Experts was set up to study the question and to draw "a preliminary draft of an international convention to assure the repression of conspiracies or crimes committed with a political or terrorist purpose."³⁴ The final Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism, consisting of twenty-nine articles, defined acts of terrorism "as criminal acts which are directed against a State and which are intended or calculated to

create a state of terror among individuals, groups of persons, or the general public” and committed states to cooperate “for the prevention and punishment of such acts when they are of an international character.” States were further encouraged to refrain from supporting or enabling terrorist activity directed against other states.³⁵

The novelty of this convention was not the attempt to come to a definition; the 1898 conference had already tried that much. The intention was to create binding international law that would compel states to adhere to the principle of *aut dedere aut judicare* (extradite or prosecute). Terrorists should no longer be able to flee to another country; the principle of “no impunity” should be upheld. This was the first attempt at an internationally binding judicial definition of terrorism as a crime – a milestone in the history of counter-terrorism.³⁶

However, establishing this global conspiracy plot of worldwide anarchist violence was thwarted by national political sentiments. Many countries, priding themselves on having exceptions for political crime in their constitution, were not immediately willing to accept another country’s definition of a terrorist as theirs. Conceptual and semantic difficulties arose. For example, to the Belgians, a terrorist was someone who committed crimes against a head of state. For the Bulgarians, any Bolshevik was considered a terrorist. For the Soviets, “revisionism” was already considered an act of terrorism; but for the British, political crimes were excluded. As the British Home Office deputy legal adviser L. S. Brass wrote:

If all states were at all times decently governed, presumably anyone who attempted by force to overthrow an existing government should be a *hostis humanae generis* [enemy of the human race]; but when the government is itself a terrorist government, I think the person who endeavours to overthrow it by the only means available is not necessarily to be so regarded.³⁷

In July 1938, twenty-three of the thirty-five plenipotentiaries signed the terrorism convention (including the Soviet Union, but not the UK) and twelve countries ratified the convention establishing the International Criminal Court. However, at that time, both the Convention and the League of Nations were heading towards a dead end.

Contrary to the international threat discourse on anarchism, which was more or less consistent throughout Russia, Europe, North America, and Latin America and did inspire at least some solidarity among the regimes of the late nineteenth century, conspiracy theories did not transcend borders easily in the 1920s and 1930s. With the rise of regimes in the Soviet Union and Germany that embraced tactics of terror as core elements to their rule, the generally accepted threat of global anarchism and revolution seemed to give way to national caveats and even sincere doubts about politicizing terrorism.

The global wave of “revolutionary violence”: 1940s–80s

Anti-colonial uprisings in the 1940s–60s

Counter-terrorism, both in its conceptual and tactical sense, further developed during the years of de-colonization after World War II. European powers fought in Malaya, Kenya, Palestine, Indochina, and Algeria to defend their colonial empires. Successes and failures in those conflicts have been studied ad infinitum for clues as to how to counter terrorism today.³⁸ In this case, the idea of fighting a conspiracy of rebels or “savages” was

inspired by notions of a racial struggle and justified at home by relating stories of purported indigenous savagery in Kenya and Algeria that should be put to an end. At the same time, counter-terrorist tactics – including the use of concentration camps, torture, and other extrajudicial counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency strategies – were honed to perfection. The incipient Cold War served to disseminate the fabrication of conspiratorial communist plots. The rebellion of Mau Mau insurgents in Kenya was depicted as a communist conspiracy,³⁹ although even the British Colonial Office could find no evidence for that allegation. The Mau Mau were moreover portrayed as coming straight out of the heart of darkness, as savages “who indulged in cannibalism, witchcraft, devil worship and sexual orgies and who terrorised white settlers and mutilated women and children.”⁴⁰ The Battle of Algiers, the Dutch campaigns in Indonesia, and the British counter-insurgency campaigns also developed along such lines.⁴¹ In this volume, Chapters 25, 15, and 12 and 13 by Geraint Hughes, Martin C. Thomas, and Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, respectively, describe counter-insurgency campaigns and instances of counter-terrorism approaches that were justified and defended by appealing to purported plots.

A radical decade

A new “global conspiracy plot” emerged in the 1970s, a decade that stands out for Western Europe and the US as another moment of global (counter-)terrorism activity. Student protesters, trade unions, and extra-parliamentary demonstrators clashed with police forces. Actually or seemingly spontaneous acts of sabotage, arson, and explosions were common in almost every Western European or American country, as Chapters 19, 20, and 21 by Jennifer S. Holmes, Hanno Balz, and Carolyn Gallaher, respectively, in this volume aptly illustrate. Domestic, imported, and international terrorism were recurring threats. The various terrorist statements and manifestos suggested an immediate revolutionary takeover, starting with the revolutionary hotbeds in the Third World, spreading from the student and factory workers’ movement into the “imperialist” headquarters of the world. “New Left” or “revolutionary terrorism” accounts for the sharp uptick in terrorist incidents in Europe, the Americas, and even in Iran in the period from 1978 onwards.⁴²

A “terror network” engineered by Moscow?

New Left terrorism spread internationally, but the groups, cells, and organizations as such were much less connected and interwoven than was often presumed. Nevertheless, already early in the 1970s a “terror network” theory developed, assuming an “all roads lead to Moscow” framework. This theory of “Cold War by proxy” still runs deep and has credentials dating back to the shock of the 1968 revolts in capitals all over the world.⁴³ With the May revolt of 1968 in Paris, which even saw French president Charles de Gaulle temporarily fleeing the country, the perceived threat of a “global” revolution was born. Left-wing activists exploited the public’s fear of a revolution, quoting and distributing Chinese Maoist, Cuban, and South American strategies for stirring up a revolution as we saw above.

In April 1969, US president Richard Nixon gained international notoriety when interpreting demonstrations, occupations, and arson attacks on university campuses as traits of one global communist terror plot. In his “Campus Unrest Speech,” for example, he branded simple student demonstrations as the “next to last step along the road to terrorism.”⁴⁴ A year later, on June 5, 1970, he took his verdict a step further: “We have moved from the

‘student activism’ which characterized the civil rights movements in the early ’60s through the ‘protest movements’ which rallied behind the anti-war banner beginning with the March on the Pentagon in 1967 to the ‘revolutionary terrorism’ being perpetrated today by determined professionals.” He likewise told US intelligence chiefs, “We are now confronted with a new and grave crisis in our country – one which we know too little about. Certainly hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Americans – mostly under 30 – are determined to destroy our society.”⁴⁵

Nixon repeatedly voiced his perception that student and anti-war protests were being funded and initiated by Moscow or Havana, a perception that kept returning to the political and public scene, culminating in the 1981 study by publicist Claire Sterling in the guise of a solid academic monograph on the communist “terror network.”⁴⁶ In the book of the same name, Sterling introduces the idea of a communist-backed network of terrorists in order to make sense of a wave of seemingly interconnected terrorist attacks, starting with the Munich hostage-taking in September 1972 and climaxing in the German Autumn and the Italian Moro kidnapping in 1977/78 that swept through Western countries. Although the Central Intelligence Agency’s Soviet analysts dismissed the gist of the book in 1981,⁴⁷ the dispositive of an international terror network directed by the communist world was a common feature in Western media throughout the 1970s. This schema was taken over by many more security agencies in the Western world.

To be sure, communist world capitals did try to meddle with the disparate groups of revolutionary students. The East German secret service and other East Bloc agencies offered Red Army Faction terrorists, Palestinian freedom fighters, and conspirators like Carlos the Jackal safe haven and weapons. However, these “contacts” were often motivated more by a defensive wish to keep an eye on these loose cannons for security reasons than by proactive ambitions of sabotage.⁴⁸ Archival research has refuted the idea that Moscow, East Berlin, or Havana were puppeteers manipulating revolutionary violence. On the contrary, communist agencies for their part suspected the CIA of aiding and abetting left wing terrorism in order to discredit the communist world.⁴⁹ Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Rudi Dutschke, and Bernardine Dohrn were certainly not activists that could be kept on a leash by some murky communist agency, although Western agencies were prone to identify them as Moscow’s cronies. Moscow’s arm simply wasn’t that long or powerful – as many intelligence officials knew all too well at that time. Intelligence services and politicians alike nevertheless did find merit in keeping the menace of a global communist terrorist conspiracy alive – for budgetary, electoral, or political reasons. The United States’ Federal Bureau of Investigation did so in the 1960s with the creation of their counter-intelligence programs and the Nixon administration revived the menace in the 1970s, as have the Italian security services since the 1980s.⁵⁰ A number of Latin America regimes in the 1980s stirred the pot as well to justify their gruesome campaigns of state terror.

International cooperation: intelligence and UN efforts

Given these claims, it is no wonder that premonitions of a “terror network” menace grew within governmental agencies and political centers. In 1971, the “Club de Berne” and NATO’s Special Committee were established to enable heads of intelligence and security services, police forces, and high ranking civil servants to exchange information, assist each other with specific counter-terrorist operations, and join hands in countering international terrorism.⁵¹

The trigger for moving the series of disparate attacks taking place all over the world higher on the international *political* agenda was the attack by the Palestinian group Black September on the dormitories of the Israeli Team at the Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, on September 5, 1972. At the UN General Assembly, the terrorist acts sparked heated debates. Its Resolution 3034 defined three committees that had to deal with (1) finding a common definition of terrorism, (2) examining the causes of terrorism, and (3) proposing measures to prevent terrorism. Again, interpretations of the terrorist threat went in opposite directions, dictating competing and conflicting approaches. Whereas the so-called First World (the Western world) saw the terrorist attacks as a more or less global wave inspired by leftist revolutionary sentiments or even steered by Moscow, East Berlin, Beijing, or Havana to overthrow the existing (capitalist) order, the Second World (the communist states) did not know quite what to make of them and tried to influence the course of terrorist action, but perceived them equally as a problem and threat to the political status quo.⁵² The countries of the so-called Third World, which had joined the UN after the wave of independence in the former colonies during the 1950s and 1960s, had a totally different view. To them, attempts by organizations such as the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the People's Liberation Army of Namibia, and other liberation movements within the Organization of African Unity to liberate oppressed minorities or to fight back against oppressive "state terrorism" was a legitimate goal.⁵³ Yasser Arafat's speech before the UN Assembly in 1974 is a case in point. "International terrorism," however defined, may not be used to criminalize national liberation movements; for the "desperate, colonized, persecuted and underprivileged," political violence comes as their last resort and such terrorism is legitimate, as the country of Guinea acknowledged in its statements.⁵⁴

Consequently, as before, police cooperation and intelligence sharing increased, but a political definition was stalemated. A binding definition of the nature of terrorist crime, its intentions, or consequences was not to be had. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, only certain well-described concrete *acts* of terrorism came to be described and penalized by binding law. This was facilitated by a number of developments. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) officially renounced terrorism in 1974; the struggles for national liberation petered out; and Third World countries were faced with acts of terrorism themselves, such as the raid on a meeting of oil ministers of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna in 1975.⁵⁵ As a result, their collective resistance to the international codification of terrorist violence eroded. The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft was concluded in 1970 and expanded upon in 1971. Other conventions dealt with nuclear material (1979), airports (1988), maritime navigation (1988), and fixed platforms on the continental shelf (1988). In 1977, a European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism was ratified; a similar Organization of American States convention had already been drafted in 1971. On a practical level, airport security, gates, and tighter controls were introduced by aviation and transport companies.

In sum, competing definitions were launched and defended by larger country "blocs" within the UN, each of which advocated its own interpretive framework or conspiracy theory regarding the origins, causes, nature, and intention of the global terrorist wave. A shared discourse, let alone a generic solution, regarding the terrorist problem never materialized. Progress was made, however, in a convergence of national and international *practices* for countering terrorism.

Epilogue: al-Qaeda and the War against Terror, 2001–present

The 9/11 al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center returned terrorism to the top of the political agenda. The nature of the event and its death toll marked a spectacle that in its impact and consequences could perhaps only be compared to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 22, 1914, an incident that helped trigger World War I. But owing to the new media, the impact of 9/11 was distinctly larger.⁵⁶ The intensity of video footage had the veritable “power of nightmares,”⁵⁷ which immediately after 9/11 translated into an equally dazzling cascade of academic and expert interpretations, on the one hand, and corresponding counter-terrorism measures, practices, legislation, and even military operations, on the other.

To be sure, Middle Eastern terrorism had never dropped off the threat lists of security agencies in the United States and Europe.⁵⁸ In the Arab and North African world, combating jihadist movements had been an ongoing struggle over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, as David Cook and Daveed Gartenstein-Ross describe in Chapters 18 and 22, respectively, in this volume. Even Dutch intelligence (BVD-AIVD) commented already in 1992 about the mounting threat of radicalized youths among second-generation immigrants with a Muslim–Moroccan background.⁵⁹ In 1994, the UN passed a resolution defining terrorism as “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes.”⁶⁰ And in 1996, a new UN ad hoc committee was created to negotiate sectoral conventions on the elimination of terrorist acts. Other resolutions in 1998–2000 by the UN Security Council prescribed sanctions against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.⁶¹

However, al-Qaeda assumed its leading role within the specter of global terrorism only after the attacks on New York and Washington. In his statements, Osama bin Laden repeatedly argued the legitimacy of waging “global jihad” against the “infidel regimes,” “apostate rulers,” and the “Crusaders alliance.”⁶² Similarly, the interpretation of 9/11 and the compelling and ongoing supply of media “evidence” regarding a global terror plot heralded a new security age. Directly after the attacks, US President George W. Bush condemned the 9/11 attacks as an assault on the whole of the civilized world. He immediately received congressional approval for the use of military force and ordered the invasion of Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban as the sponsors of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. In the state of the union address of January 2002, Bush drew a menacing picture of an “axis of evil,” comprising North Korea, Iran, and Iraq that was “arming to threaten the peace of the world” and “posed a grave and growing danger.”⁶³ The Bush doctrine of pre-emptive war and a “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) was born.⁶⁴ Underpinning this counter-terrorism dispositive was the threat description of a global terrorist plot of jihadists – a “leader-led jihad” in the words of Bruce Hoffman – that connected pockets of resistance all over the globe to the mastermind of Tora Bora.⁶⁵

Domestically, organizational changes fundamentally altered the security infrastructure of the US. On both the national and international level, the intelligence community – which endured widespread criticism reminiscent of the Pearl Harbor debacle – underwent a total overhaul.⁶⁶ The Patriot Act of 2002 enabled the US government to engage in military activities and covert operations around the world in order to capture, detain, and interrogate terrorism suspects using a new range of extra-legal practices.⁶⁷ By locating the terrorist enemy outside the international community of states and citizens, the Bush presidency and its allies blurred the lines between war and peace and even designed a new category of “unlawful combatants.”

Globally, the American call to arms was followed by NATO and the UN, first through the United States' Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, then through the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission that was established by the UN Security Council in December 2001. More UN Resolutions were adopted, legitimized by the "dialectic of unprecedented threat and the need for dramatic action."⁶⁸ The terrorist threat was addressed militarily but also through criminal law and administrative and financial procedures. Banking secrecy acts, money laundering control acts, a European arrest warrant, new immigration procedures, and shared "black lists" and no-fly lists made sure that every legal and administrative loophole for international terrorists was closed.⁶⁹

Only after US Special Forces killed Osama bin Laden in his compound in Pakistan in 2011 did the leader-led jihad specter start to fade. However, newly perceived threats, such as "foreign fighters" and "homegrown terrorists," are still being caught in the frame of a worldwide terror plot, albeit a plot without clearly identifiable "puppeteers." At the same time, the waning power of the alarmist global terrorist conspiracy did not go hand in glove with a decrease of counter-terrorism measures. On the contrary, vast intelligence competencies crept into other policy areas (e.g., cybersecurity) and were appropriated for classical espionage or commercial gain. It took the Manning and Snowden revelations from 2011 to 2013 to (temporarily?) stem the tide.

In short, counter-terrorism measures may well have enhanced the "Theater of Terror" caused by the terrorists. Governments cannot dictate what attacks take place and how footage and images of these attacks are spread, but they do have some impact on the public's imagination. They can affect the social impact of terrorist attacks with their response.⁷⁰ Governments still have a monopoly on the use of violence, and they are the ones citizens turn to in times of national crises. Moreover, they often fuel these crises and use them to further their own political and military agendas.⁷¹ With vast conspiracy theories or highly unsubstantiated interpretive frameworks in the air, they can easily amplify the "moral panic" in society with military metaphors ("we are at war"). That said, they might also be equally able to exert a moderating influence by providing more realistic threat descriptions and by appealing to the social resilience in a society.⁷²

The need for historicizing counter-terrorism

Conspiracy is a tool that is employed by both the defenders and the opponents of the existing order in their battle. They wield it to mobilize resources, to make sense of the tactics of brute violence, and to justify a limitless approach in fighting the enemy. Counter-terrorism is always occasioned by a political crisis of some sort; the crisis is the question and most often conspiracy theories are crafted to provide an answer.

Counter-terrorism is not the simple consequence of physical or political circumstances and incidents. People and organizations have to attribute meaning to circumstances and incidents. When these incidents are seen as elements of a conspiracy, the perceived threat of terror increases. These perceptions are then incorporated into political, administrative, and bureaucratic decision-making processes and procedures. This may seem obvious, but the history of (counter-)terrorism is usually not described in these terms.

This chapter suggests a new approach to the history of counter-terrorism, one that takes into account (a) a shift from a fixed, ahistorical take on (counter-)terrorism to a more dynamic understanding of the constructivist nature and volatility of security considerations, and (b) a historicizing of the dominant presentist-oriented theoretical underpinnings to terrorism

research as provided by the social sciences. This very brief overview has first of all made the case that the contested character of terrorism becomes manifest in the framing of terrorist practices and discourses as conflicting *conspiracy* theories; second, that these conflicting conspiracy theories are interpretive frameworks that dictate equally competing “solutions” to the perceived crisis; and third, that inflating these frameworks and conspiracies through the use of the media and the invasive techniques of counter-terrorism (and upheld by the “invisible college of terrorism researchers themselves”⁷³) increasingly erodes the remaining checks and balances when it comes to the use of counter-terrorism measures. Legal safeguards wither when the threat of a perceived limitless terrorist plot looms. By deconstructing terrorist conspiracies as cultural scripts and by historicizing the threat of terrorism and the corresponding counter-terrorism measures, we will be in a position to track down and unpack the different interlocking and interwoven notions of terrorism and counter-terrorism as they emerged in discourse, rule, and praxis. Doing so will allow us to avoid absolutist applications of the notion of security and afford us insight into the ways we perceive and sometimes inflate security threats and, one may hope, into possible alternative courses of counter-terrorist action.

Notes

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- 2 See Beatrice de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 2011), chapter 1.
- 3 See Richard Jackson, “Knowledge, Power and Politics in the Study of Terrorism,” in *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*, ed. Richard Jackson et al., 66–83 (London: Routledge, 2009).
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- 6 The best example of such a conceptual genealogy of security is still Werner Conze, “Sicherheit, Schutz,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck, 5:831–62 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984).
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- 12 Bartlett and Miller, *The Power of Unreason*, 21; Jonathon R. White, "Political Eschatology: A Theology of Antigovernment Extremism," *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 6 (2001): 940.
- 13 A few examples of such remarks by the late American–Yemeni Islamist militant Anwar al-Awlaki can be found here: "The Evolution of a Radical Cleric: Quotes from Anwar al-Awlaki," *New York Times*, May 8, 2010.
- 14 Bartlett and Miller, *The Power of Unreason*, 54.
- 15 Adam Curtis, *The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear*. Documentary, 2005. www.archive.org/details/ThePowerOfNightmares (accessed on November 11, 2012).
- 16 Alex Butterworth, *The World That Never Was: A True Story of Dreamers, Schemers, Anarchists, and Secret Agents* (London: Random House, 2010).
- 17 *Ibid.*, 181–2.
- 18 For more on the relationship between technology and terrorism, see Chapter 29 by Ann Larabee in this volume.
- 19 See Carola Dietze, "Terrorismus im 19. Jahrhundert: Politische Attentate, rechtliche Reaktionen, Polizeistrategien und öffentlicher Diskurs in Europa und den Vereinigten Staaten 1878–1901," in *Vom Majestätsverbrechen zum Terrorismus*, ed. Karl Härter and Beatrice de Graaf, 179–96 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2012).
- 20 Butterworth, *The World That Never Was*, 46.
- 21 See Noémi Levy-Aksu, *Ordre et désordres dans l'Istanbul ottomane (1879–1909)* (Paris: Karthala, 2013).
- 22 Cyrille Fijnaut, *De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Politie. Een staatsinstelling in de maalstroom van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Boom Uitgevers, 2007), 283; and J. Jäger, *Verfolgung durch Verwaltung. Internationales Verbrechen und internationale Polizeikooperation 1880–1933* (Konstanz: UVK, 2006), 196–221.
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- 24 "Het Bertillonage-stelsel," *De Nederlandsche Politiegids* 10, no. 113 (May 1895) and National Archive, The Hague/Netherlands, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6488, exchange between the minister of justice, the minister of foreign affairs, and the Cabinet of the Queen-Regentess, January 22, 1896, no. 12; February 12, no. 5; February 15, no. 7; and February 19, no. 11.
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- 27 Beatrice de Graaf, "The Black International as Security Dispositive in the Netherlands, 1880–1900," *Historical Social Research* 38, no. 1 (2013): 142–65.
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- 30 See Richard Bach Jensen, "The International Anti-Anarchist Conference of 1898 and the Origins of Interpol," *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 2 (1981): 323–47. Also see Chapter 8 by Jensen in this volume.
- 31 G. K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (London: [1908] 2008), 172–3. For more on Chesterton's novel as well as the broader pattern of literary reactions to terrorism, see Chapter 31 by Lynn Patyk in this volume.
- 32 *New York Times*, October 10, 1934. See also Ondrej Ditrych, "From Discourse to Dispositif: States and Terrorism between Marseille and 9/11," *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 3 (June 2013): 223–40.
- 33 Ditrych, "From Discourse to Dispositif," 225.
- 34 League of Nations Council resolution, December 10, 1934. Proceedings of the International Conference on the Repression of Terrorism (C.94.M.47.1938.V), League of Nations, Geneva, June 1, 1938. Annex 1, p. 183. Quoted in Charles Townshend, "'Methods Which All Civilized Opinion Must Condemn': The League of Nations and International Action against Terrorism," in *An International History of Terrorism: Western and Non-Western Experiences*, ed. J. M. Hanhimäki and B. Blumenau (London: Routledge, 2013), 35.

- 35 Ibid., 36–7.
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- 51 Ursula C. Schroeder, *The Organization of European Security Governance: Internal and External Security in Transition* (London: Routledge, 2013), 118.
- 52 Based on my research in the MfS/KGB Archives, this chapter does disagree with Thomas Riegler’s interpretation of the findings of connections between the secret services of the Soviet satellite states and revolutionary terrorist groups. These links did exist, but they have to be carefully

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- 53 See Shaloma Gauthier, "SWAPO, the United Nations, and the Struggle for National Liberation," in *An International History of Terrorism*, ed. Hanhimäki and Blumenau, 169–88.
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- 55 Bernhard Blumenau, "The UN and West Germany's Efforts against International Terrorism in the '70s," in *An International History of Terrorism*, ed. Hanhimäki and Blumenau, 79.
- 56 David Altheide, *Creating Fear: News and the Construction of Crisis* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002), ix–x; and Brigitte L. Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna, *Fueling Our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 101.
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