Clandestine Political Violence

This volume compares four types of clandestine political violence: left-wing (in Italy and Germany), right-wing (in Italy), ethnonationalist (in Spain), and religious fundamentalist (in Islamist clandestine organizations). Donatella della Porta develops her own definition of clandestine political violence that is oriented toward theory building. Building on the most recent developments in social movement studies, della Porta proposes an original interpretative model. Using a unique research design, she singles out some common causal mechanisms at the onset, during the persistence, and at the demise of clandestine political violence. The development of the phenomenon is located within the interactions among social movements, countermovements, and the state. She pays particular attention to the ways in which the different actors cognitively construct the reality they act on. The internal dynamics of the clandestine political organizations are given special attention. Based on original empirical research as well as existing research in many languages, this book is rich in empirical evidence on some of the most crucial cases of clandestine political violence.

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Clandestine Political Violence

DONATELLA DELLA PORTA

European University Institute
To Herbert
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Acknowledgments

If every book is a journey, this voyage started a long, long time ago. I first became interested in political violence before starting my PhD, back in the early 1980s. That interest was driven by social and scientific concerns. As regards the social domain, in the 1970s in Italy and other countries of the world, very high levels of political violence had challenged not only the state but also social movements’ capacity to mobilize. In the scientific domain, although much had been written on terrorism, it had been mainly treated as an isolated pathology, whereas political violence had rarely been addressed within social movement studies. My work on Italy, carried out during my PhD studies at the European University Institute, indicated that left-wing political violence could instead be better understood if located within the escalation of social conflicts, during long-lasting interactions among movements, countermovements, and the state. If that case study provided “thick” knowledge and theoretical suggestions, it also challenged me to consult further works to assess my analyses’ capacity to travel beyond the Italian case.

A first step in this process was a binary comparison of Italy and Germany, two cases similar in several respects. The Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für soziale Forschung, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, and the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung offered me material and intellectual support during this period. My work continued in the same direction through a broader comparison of the same type of political violence in the form of a coauthored work (with Pat Steinhoff and Gilda Zwerman) comparing left-wing violence in Italy, Germany, Japan, and the United States.

As social movements became more peaceful, I shifted attention away from radical forms of collective action, until, especially after the events of September 11, 2001, I was stimulated again to look at political violence by a social concern that soon brought about a scientific puzzle. In the beginning of this new wave of attention to radical politics, I tended to decline invitations to comment on
religiously inspired violence, which I considered very different from the left-wing phenomenon I had studied in the past. I am grateful, however, to the colleagues who insisted on calling on me, as it was particularly other scholars’ references to my work on social movements, in attempts to understand its most recent forms, that convinced me of the potential comparability of these different cases.

Over the last decade, I had several welcome occasions to explore broader comparisons. First, at EUI, in 2007–8, the Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies asked my historian colleague Gerhard Haupt and me to lead a yearlong European forum, hosting postdoctoral Fellows from various disciplines. Many highly stimulating debates have thereby nurtured my work. For those, I am grateful to Gerhard and our fellow researchers, Giulia Albanese, Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou, Julia Eckert, Daniel Monterescu, Mate Tokic, and Claudia Verhoven, as well as to the dozens of PhD students who have participated in seminars and conferences. So successful was that year’s experience that we continued to offer cross-disciplinary courses on political violence for several years thereafter.

Another occasion to reflect on cross-type comparison came from a research project on the radical Right (VETO, or violent, extremist, terrorist organizations) that I directed within the START consortium at the University of Maryland. For this opportunity, I am grateful to Gary Lafree and Clark McCauley, who trusted my work, and to Manuela Caiani and Claudius Wagemann, who collaborated on it.

Other stimuli came from opportunities to organize conferences, edit special journal issues, and cooperate on various writing projects. In 2011, the ZIF-Center for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld University asked me to collaborate on the organization of a large international conference on radicalization and de-radicalization, based on which I coedited a special issue of the International Journal of Conflict and Violence. At the same time, with Lasse Lindekleide, I coedited a special issue on de-radicalization policies for the European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research. I also continued to learn from the several articles I wrote with Lorenzo Bosi on political violence, with Bernard Gbikpi on riots, and with Herbert Reiter on the policing of protest. Although the list of colleagues who offered comments during conferences, seminars, and lectures is too long to be recorded here, I want to express my gratitude to three friends and colleagues – Lorenzo Bosi, Stefan Malthaner, and Sidney Tarrow – who had the loyalty to read and comment on the penultimate draft of this work. Even though the responsibility for errors or omissions remains mine, the final result was much improved by their suggestions.

The same can be said for the constructive comments I have received from the anonymous referees for Cambridge University Press. At the Press, I am also grateful to Lew Bateman, who has supported this project since its very early stages. For this volume, as for many others, Sarah Tarrow has been much more than an editor-in-chief, contributing her high level of commitment and her skills to make my English more readable.
For the last ten years, the Department of Sociology and Political Science at the European University Institute has been a most wonderful place to be. I have enjoyed innumerable stimuli and much support from colleagues, PhD students, and postdoctoral mentees. In the last year of preparation of this manuscript, I had the privilege to be given by the European Research Council (ERC) an advanced grant, entitled “Mobilizing for Democracy,” that has helped me in reflecting on the interaction among violence, social movements, and quality of democracy. I also worked on part of the research while a visiting scholar at the Wissenschaftszentrum fuer soziale Forschung in Berlin and at Humboldt University. I thank my colleagues Dieter Rucht, Michael Zürn, and Klaus Eder for their support there. Although neither the ERC nor the European Commission of the European Union is responsible for what I report in this volume, their contribution to the research is gratefully acknowledged.

Some ideas presented here have been developed from my previous work, which is reported in the following publications: “Unwanted Children: Political Violence and the Cycle of Protest in Italy, 1966–1973” (coauthored with Sidney Tarrow), in European Journal of Political Research 14 (1986); Il terrorismo di sinistra (Il Mulino, 1990); Social Movements, Political Violence and the State (Cambridge University Press, 1995); Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies (edited with Herbert Reiter; University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Social Movements: An Introduction (coauthored with Mario Diani; Blackwell, 2006); “Research on Social Movements and Political Violence,” in Qualitative Sociology 31 (2008); “Leaving Left-Wing Terrorism in Italy: A Sociological Analysis,” in Tore Bjorgo and John Horgan, eds., Leaving Terrorism Behind (Routledge, 2008); and “Micro-Mobilization into Armed Groups: The Ideological, Instrumental and Solidaristic Paths” (coauthored with Lorenzo Bosi), in Qualitative Sociology 35 (2012).

To Herbert Reiter, who has patiently sopportato and supportato me for more than twenty-five years now, I dedicate what he has humorously called my “opus magnum.”
Acronyms

AI    Amnesty International
AN    Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard)
AQ    al-Qaeda
AQAP  al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
B2J   Bewegung 2 Juni (June 2nd Movement)
BR    Brigate Rosse
CCOOs comisiones obreras
CPO   Collettivo Politico Operaio
EE    Euskadiko Ezkerra (Patriotic Left)
EIA   Euskal Iraultzarako Alderia (Basque Revolutionary Party)
ETA   Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque-land and Freedom)
ETA-M ETA military
ETA-PM ETA politico-military
FCC   Formazioni Comuniste Combattenti (Fighting Communist Formations)
FGCI  Federazione Giovani Comunisti Italiani (Italian Communist Youth Federation)
FIS   Front Islamic de Salut
FLNQ  Front de Libération National du Quebec
GAL   Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberacion
GIA   Groupe Islamique Armé
HB    Herri Batasuna
KAS   Koordinadora Abertzale Socializta (Socialist Patriotic Coordinator Committee)
LAB   Langile Abertzale Batzordeak (Patriotic Workers’ Committee)
LC    Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle)
MB(s)  Muslim Brotherhood, or Muslim Brothers
MNLV  Movimento de Liberacion Nationale Vasco (Basque Movement of National Liberation)
MSI   Movimento Sociale Italiano
MWL   Muslim World League
NAP   Nuclei Armati Proletari
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**Acronyms**

- NAR: Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari (Revolutionary Armed Nuclei)
- ON: Ordine Nuovo (New Order)
- P2: Masonic Lodge Propaganda 2
- PAC: Proletari Armati per il Comunismo
- PCI: Partito Comunista Italiano (Communist Italian Party)
- PCIml: Partito Comunista Italiano Marxista Leninista
- PL: Prima Linea (Front Line)
- PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization
- PNV: National Basque Party
- PO: Potere Operaio (Worker’s Power)
- PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party)
- RAF: Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Fraction)
- RZ: Rote Zellen (Red Cells)
- SDS: Social Democratic Students
- SID: Servizio Informazioni Difesa (secret services)
- SIFAR: Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate (military intelligence)
- SMOs: social movement organizations
- SPD: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
- UCC: Unità Comuniste Combattenti (Communist Fighting Units)
- UGT: Union General de Trabajadores (General Workers’ Union)