

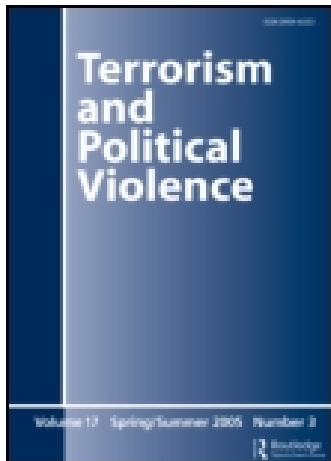
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### Right-wing terrorism in a comparative perspective: The case of split delegitimization

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# Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegitimization

EHUD SPRINZAK

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The purpose of this article is to identify the distinctive features of right-wing terrorism and to develop an analytical typology of particularistic terrorist organizations. The article is based on the conceptual framework of the process of delegitimization developed earlier by this author. It argues that right-wing radicals usually reach terrorism through a trajectory of *split delegitimization*, which implies a primary conflict with an 'inferior' community and a secondary conflict with the government. Six sub-types of right-wing terrorism are identified: *revolutionary* terrorism, *reactive* terrorism, *vigilante* terrorism, *racist* terrorism, *millenarian* terrorism and *youth counterculture* terrorism.

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## The Case of Particularistic Terrorism

Insurgent terrorism usually evokes the association of an anti-regime terror and claims for a universal message. The atrocities involved are committed against an established regime that is charged with a flagrant violation of the fundamental human rights of either its citizens or subject nations. There is, however, one common form of insurgent terrorism which is not directed primarily against governments and is not committed in the name of universal values. The terror organizations involved, usually right wing collectivities, vigilante groups or racist organizations, do not speak in the name of humanity. They are particularistic by their very nature and respond often to perceptions of insecurity and threats. They fight private wars against hostile ethnic communities, 'illegitimate' religious denominations, classes of undesired people or 'inferior races'. The enemies they feel threaten them are, variably, Jews, Arabs, Catholics, Blacks, Communists, homosexuals, foreign workers or other classes of 'inferior' human beings 'who want to get more than they deserve'.

The most significant political difference between 'universalistic' terror organizations and 'particularistic' ones lies in their relationship to the prevailing authority. While left wing and nationalist radical movements are usually involved in a *direct* conflict with the ruling government and their terror campaign is directed against its emissaries, the conflict of many right wing, religious or vigilante groups with the regime is secondary. The government is

rarely considered an opponent and in many cases is expected to cooperate or remain uninvolved. Conflict with the authorities or occasional anti-regimist violence, while likely to develop in such cases, emerges, and often greatly intensifies, only after these radicals do not obtain official help, political understanding or favorable silence.

The purpose of this essay is to develop an analytical typology of right-wing terrorist groups and to demonstrate its usefulness for the organization of the large amount of historical and current information already gathered about these movements. The study is based on the conceptual framework of the process of delegitimization developed earlier by this author.<sup>1</sup>

### **Terrorism and the Process of Delegitimization**

The analytical affinity between terrorism and the process of delegitimization is based on the understanding of insurgent terrorism as a product of a lengthy political process of group radicalization *vis-à-vis* the regime. The essence of this process is a slowly evolving legitimacy crisis between an insurgent movement and the government. Terrorism is the peak of the process of delegitimization. The movement involved is so vehemently opposed to the regime's legitimacy that it is ready to challenge it by the use of unconventional violence. What terrorists do – and other radicals do not – is to bring their rejection of the regime's legitimacy to the utmost and express it by extranormal violence.

The importance of the understanding of terrorism in terms of a process of delegitimization is that terrorism is identified as a behavioral stage in the life history of an extremist movement, a phase in which the organization is ready and willing to use unconventional violence against government's agents. The idea of the process of delegitimization implies, therefore, the presence of *pre-terrorist* and less radical stages in the evolution of the movement involved. It also recognizes the possibility of *post-terrorist* stages in which the group involved is no longer ready or able to use terrorism. This approach allows us to talk about terrorism as the peak of a historical cycle – the rise and decline of a militant political opposition. Terrorism, according to this approach, is not a detached state of mind of crazy misfits but a type of political behavior which evolves (and declines) gradually under certain identifiable psycho-political conditions.

While processes of delegitimization vary greatly, the typical process implies a struggle of a challenge group against the government, and is made up of three consecutive stages: *Crisis of Confidence*, *Conflict of Legitimacy*, and *Crisis of Legitimacy*.<sup>2</sup> Each of these stages pertains to a political protest group composed of activists and followers who interact with the regime as well as among themselves and who obtain in the process a collective psycho-

political identity. The group identity, which often changes rapidly as radicalization proceeds, contains a combination of political behavioral components, ideological and symbolic tenets and psychological traits. A short examination of the three ideal-typical stages of the delegitimization trajectory reveals the following features.

*Crisis of Confidence* is the earliest and most moderate stage of group radicalization and involves no violence. It is experienced by a movement, or a challenge group, whose confidence in the existing political government is greatly eroded. Crisis of confidence implies a conflict with specific rulers or policies. It does not presume a structural delegitimization because the foundations of the established political system are not questioned or challenged.

Crisis of confidence is marked by the rise of a distinct ideological challenge group, movement, or counterculture which refuses to play according to the established rules of the game. The group articulates its critique of the establishment in loaded ideological terms, dissents from mainstream politics and opts for protests, demonstrations, symbolic resistance and other forms of direct action. While not illegal, its behavior, group mentality and language are likely to be provocative. Early confrontations with the authorities and the police, including small scale and unplanned events of violence, may occur.<sup>3</sup>

*Conflict of Legitimacy* is the radicalized continuation of the crisis of confidence. It is the behavioral stage that evolves when a challenge group, previously confined to criticizing the government, is ready to question the very legitimacy of the regime. Conflict of legitimacy implies the emergence of an *alternative ideological and cultural system*, one that delegitimizes the prevailing regime and its code of social norms in the name of a better normative political order.

Conflict of legitimacy usually begins when the challenge group is greatly disappointed with its previous stage of radicalization. The former 'moderate' radicals become enraged and frustrated either by the government's hostile (sometimes excessively violent) response to their passionate critique, or by their own failure to reform the system. Mentally they now develop the need to channel their outrage into a more extreme form of protest. A proper course to follow seems to be the development of an *ideology of delegitimation* which communicates a complete chasm with the prevailing political order.

The evolution of the conflict of legitimacy is manifested by intense political action that ranges between angry protest (demonstrations, confrontations and vandalism) and the application of *intended low scale violence* against the regime. The challenge group now experiences considerable radicalization. The movement begins to solidify and closes rank. The individuals involved become revolutionary. Their jargon is slanderous and berates a totally discredited social order.<sup>4</sup>

*Crisis of Legitimacy* is the behavioral and symbolic culmination of the two preceding stages. Its essence lies in the extension of the previous delegitimation of the system to *every individual* person associated with it. Individuals who are identified with the 'rotten' and 'soon to be destroyed' social and political order are depersonalized and dehumanized. They are derogated into the ranks of the worst enemies or subhuman species. *Dehumanization* makes it possible for the radicals to disengage morally and to commit atrocities without remorse.<sup>5</sup>

The operational manifestation of the crisis of legitimacy is systematic terrorism. It usually amounts to the formation of a small terror underground, which is engaged in unconventional attacks on the regime and its affiliates, and which is capable of committing a wide range of atrocities. As a social unit, the terrorist underground is often isolated from the outside world. It constructs a reality of its own and a whole new set of behavioral and moral standards that are enforced in an authoritarian manner. The members of the group are so involved and entangled with each other that every individual act has a collective meaning of utmost importance. The psychodynamics of the whole unit, including its acts of terrorism against the outside society, assume a logic of its own and is, at many times, unrelated to any external factors.<sup>6</sup>

The three-stage process of delegitimization described above is the purest and most exhaustive form of insurgent terrorism. *It conveys the essence of the idea of terrorism, that is, the complete transformation of sane human beings into brutal and indiscriminate killers.* This is why I suggest calling it *transformational delegitimization*.<sup>7</sup> Terrorism reached through transformational delegitimization may represent the *ideal type* of terrorism, but is, of course, just one form of terrorism.

### The Case of Split Delegitimization

The fact that particularistic terror organizations usually avoid confrontation with the authorities and start their career by directing the majority of their operations at non-ruling groups suggests a different pattern of delegitimization than the typical transformational model presented above. It indicates the possible presence of a *dual process of delegitimization*: an intense delegitimization *vis-à-vis* the unaccepted non-governmental collectivity and a *diluted* delegitimization towards the regime. Thus, while the Crisis of Confidence, Conflict of Legitimacy and Crisis of Legitimacy are all present, their sequential order and direction are not the same. The issue at stake is one of *split delegitimization*, namely, *a case where an uneven radicalization of a group of extremists develops against two separate entities.*

The distinguishing feature of the radicalization of most particularistic terror organizations is that it *begins* with a Conflict of Legitimacy. The majority

of right-wing movements are organized around the belief that the object of their intense opposition is *a priori* illegitimate. It does not belong to the same humanity that they see themselves part of, and should either be kept in an inferior legal status, expelled or even be eliminated. Such a belief, which is usually the product of a long held tradition or cultural heritage, does not require immediate violent action. As long as the particularistic movement involved does not monopolize political power, is systematically delegitimized by the established culture or feels an immediate existential threat, it will not resort to violence. Instead, it will do its best to strengthen and perpetuate the existing social and cultural mechanisms of discrimination. Violence, and gradually terrorism, only emerge when the group involved feels increasingly insecure or threatened. For instance, the Jews may suddenly appear too strong, the Blacks too influential, the Arabs too treacherous and the Communists too close to a Marxist revolution. Severe measures must be taken to restrict their movement. These measures are likely to begin with campaigns of intimidation and escalate (under specific conditions) to terrorism. A comparative examination of occasional terrorist eruptions by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, other white supremacist groups in America, neo-Fascists in Italy, neo-Nazis in Germany, vigilantes of Gush Emunim, and the followers of the late Rabbi Kahane in Israel, the AWB paramilitary formations in South Africa and others, shows the same pattern of radicalization: a constant – but largely non-violent – sense of delegitimation regarding the ‘inferior’ groups, a growing anxiety, efforts of low level intimidation and finally, outbursts of terrorism.

While much of the violence of particularistic terrorists is expected to involve non-ruling populations, at some point their violence may turn towards the political authorities. When vigilante movements, neo-fascists or neo-Nazis feel threatened by other groups, they often convince themselves that the government in charge is doing very little to protect their ‘legitimate’ community. The rulers, or the most unfriendly elements among them, are then portrayed as ‘soft’, ‘internationalist’ or ‘leftist’. Such projection implies a sense of betrayal and a *Crisis of Confidence* with the regime. While the government itself may not be declared illegitimate, and be an object of their rejection, the group’s respect for its authority is dramatically eroded. With this comes flagrant disobedience of the law. This atmosphere often produces splinter groups which break from the mainstream because they feel that the leaders of their movement are not doing enough.

The presence of *split delegitimization* may not, necessarily, be permanent. There are increasing indications that very extreme right-wing organizations tend to close the legitimacy gap between their different hate targets. This happens when the radical group in question perceives the government to be iden-

tical with the illegitimate minority group, and when both are accorded the same level of illegitimacy. The theory behind the 'disappearance of the split' is that the government has literally been taken over by the hated minority group and is no longer capable of reforming itself. It should therefore be destroyed with the same intensity as the original target group. The most significant example for the disappearance of split delegitimization is the recent rise of the imagery of ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government) in racist, neo-Nazi and millenarian circles, and the association of several Western governments with a Jewish-Zionist take over.<sup>8</sup> The ZOG imagery and its meaning will be discussed below in greater detail.

Unlike left-wing liberals, many particularistic terrorists, Fascists, Nazis, reactive vigilantes, racists and white supremacists do not feel remorse about their violence and the atrocities they cause. There is, in this case, no need to undergo a profound psycho-political transformation to become brutal killers. The desired world of most right-wing terrorists, with the notable exception of millenarian radicals, is not a reality of a non-violent universal humanity that is transformed temporarily – and for just reasons – into a bloody existence. Rather, it is a *Weltanschauung* which is predicated on conflict and dehumanization of specific classes of the population. From this perspective certain people just do not belong to the relevant community; they are outsiders and should be treated accordingly. Terrorism against these 'inferiors' is a control mechanism, a means of assuring that they do not multiply and prevail. This attitude is perhaps the reason why most particularistic terrorists never attempt to apologize for their brutal actions and why so few explanatory ideologies of terrorism exist in this cultural milieu.<sup>9</sup> Acts that are reasonable and natural do not require justification.

### Right-Wing Terrorism: A Typology

The number of particularistic organizations which have resorted in the past century to terrorism is large, as are the variations among the respective organizations. Cultural and ethnic differences among nations increase this plurality significantly. This is why it appears useful to group them, for comparative purposes, into six general types: *revolutionary terrorism*, *reactive terrorism*, *vigilante terrorism*, *racist terrorism*, *millenarian terrorism* and *youth counterculture terrorism*. It is important to maintain that these six types of particularistic terrorism are not mutually exclusive. In reality we may find that reactive terrorism involves racism and that many racist and reactive terrorists see themselves as vigilantes, defenders of the normative order of society. Racist and reactive groups are often attracted to some type of fascist ideology as are youth countercultures. They are attracted not necessarily because of their fascination with fascist revolution. It may also be due to an emotional need to

reject the normative order of liberal democracy and justify their violence. The following typology is based on the identification of the *dominant principle* around which the rightist group is organized and on its relation to the dynamics of split delegitimation.

### A. *Revolutionary Terrorism*

The most influential particularistic terrorism in modern time has been produced by right-wing revolutionary movements belonging to the Fascist and Nazi schools. Fascist insurgent movements were intensely active across Europe between the 1920s and 1940s, and produced an enormous amount of *violence and terrorism*. Two movements in particular, the Italian Fascists and the German Nazis, even succeeded in taking power in their respective countries. Their insurgent violence was converted into massive state terrorism with horrendous consequences.

The historical process of delegitimization undergone by the fascist and Nazi movements was not short. Nor did it develop as a response to specific blunders of liberal democracy. It involved, instead, a lengthy trajectory of rejection of late nineteenth century bourgeois society and parliamentary democracy.<sup>10</sup> Part of the process was an early fascination with revolutionary socialism, which later developed into intense opposition. The Nazi variant of Fascism involved, in addition, rigid racist principles which added great impetus to the delegitimation of democratic culture. The radicalization of the European extreme right was enormously intensified by the violent experience of World War I and the post-1918 'culture of war'.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to stress that the violence of both Italian Fascists and German Nazis was neither a behavioral product of their war experience nor of their increasing conflict of legitimation with their rivals. Violence was an essential part of their original philosophy of government. Fascist and Nazi ideologues glorified the use of violence. They saw it as an essential ingredient to virtuous politics.<sup>12</sup> Very few Fascists worried about justifying their use of force.<sup>13</sup> Violence and terrorism were perceived as essential parts of the Fascist *Weltanschauung* and, consequently, did not require explanation or justification.

While the Fascist road to power in both Italy and Germany involved *split delegitimization*, a primary conflict with the socialists and communists and a secondary conflict with their respective governments, the distinction between the two was tactical. The Fascists despised parliamentary democracy just as they rejected socialism and communism and all three were considered equally illegitimate. Fascist leaders believed, however, that it was too risky for them to confront the government directly. Instead, they assumed that they could rise to power through the flawed mechanisms of democratic politics.

The overhaul of the system should come later. While postwar Italy was entangled in a virtual socio-political civil war, which allowed the *squadristi* to resort to terror and to the brutal killing of their direct enemies, the socialists and communists,<sup>14</sup> the Nazis were cautious not to alienate middle and higher class conservatives through the use of excessive terrorism. This required a 'legalistic' strategy to get to power and implied violent but non-terroristic types of action.<sup>15</sup> Although post-World War I right-wing radicalism evolved in an intensely violent atmosphere, thereby producing much terror, terrorism was, with few exceptions, an unintended by-product of violent intimidation, brutal street hooliganism and aggressive propaganda.<sup>16</sup> For tactical reasons, then, the Fascist and Nazi delegitimation of their respective regimes rarely crossed the threshold of *conflict of legitimacy*.

The most significant difference between revolutionary right-wing terrorism of pre- and post-World War II is the socio-political marginality of the latter and their relative lack of confidence. Prewar European Fascists and Nazis were part of the main struggle for the future of Western civilization. Along with the socialists, the communists and the liberal democrats, they attracted millions of supporters, including highly educated and wealthy elites. Even their rivals considered the Fascists serious contenders for the hegemony of Western world. Its defeat in World War II, as well as the horrors of the Holocaust, gave Fascism an enormous blow. Most Fascist organizations were either totally eliminated or remained at the very illegitimate fringes of Western society. Many of their leaders who survived the war were executed as war criminals, put in jail for life or went into hidden exile.

Fascism survived, however, and small movements and parties of neo-fascists and neo-Nazis resurfaced in Europe, maintaining a low profile and a considerable sense of inferiority.<sup>17</sup> At the extreme margins they also created, since the late 1940s, small and unstable violent groups such as the Italian *Fasci Azione Rivolutionaria*, *Ordine Nuovo*, *Squadre Azuione Mussolini*, *Avanguardia Nazionale*, *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* and *Ordine Nero*, the French *Occident*, *Omega*, *Odessa*, *Charles Martel Club*, *French National Liberation Front*, *Ordre Nouveau*, the German *Deutsche Aktionsgruppe*, *Wehrsportgruppe Hoffman*, *Deutsche Alternative*, and *Nationale Offensive*, the Swedish *Nordiska Rikspartiet*, *Vitt Ariskt Motstand (VAM)*, *Riksfronten*, the Dutch *Jongeren Front Nederland* and many others. While committed to the old dreams of creating a fascist civilization, most of these minuscule groups have been unable to bring to full use the old strategies of street violence, bloody intimidation and armed propaganda. They certainly were in a no position to directly challenge their respective governments. Their repertoire of violence and terrorism, which seems to have come in unsystematic waves, has included desecration of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues, vandalism

and arson, violent attacks on foreign workers in Europe, fire bombing of shelters housing foreign asylum seekers, rare assassinations and occasional spectacular bombings of public places such as the 1980 Munich Oktoberfest, the Italicus Express in Bologna and a Jewish synagogue in Rue Copernic, Paris. Italian, French and German neo-fascists appeared in the streets in the late 1960s and 1970s, violently confronting new left demonstrators. Since the mid-1980s, however, there has been a dramatic increase in European neo-Nazi and radical rightist violent attacks on foreign workers and asylum seekers, especially in Germany.<sup>18</sup> There has also been a significant development of an international neo-Nazi and racist communication network. It appears that the growing resentment in Western Europe of Third World immigrants and anxiety regarding the job market have played a considerable role in the increasing appeal and confidence of the European radical right.<sup>19</sup>

Careful not to confront the governments in their respective countries directly, many neo-fascists and neo-Nazis have also been involved in *tactical* Split Delegitimization. While hostile to and critical of liberal democracy, they have reserved their sporadic violence and terrorism almost exclusively for political movements or communities they believed to be weak and vulnerable. Rarely have they attacked agents of the governments or symbols of authority. In Italy, which never really rid itself of Fascism, many neo-fascists have come to believe since the 1950s that the communist threat – which was taken seriously by many respectable and established politicians – would slowly lead to the erosion of the nation's chaotic democracy, thereby facilitating a return of Italy to Fascism. Tactical terrorism was consequently recommended in order to further destabilize the political system and produce calls for strong national power.<sup>20</sup> Part of the neo-fascist effort involved attempts to attract military and police officers worried about a communist takeover.

A significant development in recent times has been the intensification of the 'secondary' delegitimization processes of several European neo-Nazi organizations, that is, their radical confrontation with their respective governments. There are signs that the delegitimization of these organizations is not split any more. They are as negative about their respective governments as they are about the Jews, homosexuals, foreign workers and other 'inferior' groups. Some of them may even be ready to conduct terror operations against government agents and agencies. A case in point is the Swedish VAM (White Aryan Resistance). In the spring of 1991 leading members of the VAM network went underground. After stealing arms from a police station and conducting a bank robbery, they vowed to prepare for the 'Great Racial War', and made clear that their main target is none other than the government itself.<sup>21</sup> However, most were soon arrested and their declared war against ZOG has so far not got off the ground.

Why this development has taken place is not fully clear to me, but the rhetorical device that seems to have made it possible is identifiable. What is at stake is the rise to prominence of the ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government) language and imagery, and the increasing conviction among several European neo-Nazis that their governments have irreversibly been taken over by the Jews and their collaborators. If, in the past, there could be some hope of applying pressure on the respective governments to change their liberal policies towards the non-Aryan races, this is no longer the case. Governments that have been taken over by the Jews and their agents cannot be reformed. They must be brought down by force; and sabotage and terrorism are proper ways of starting the great struggle.<sup>22</sup>

One possible explanation for the radicalization of VAM and similar European neo-Nazis is the unprecedented growth of international neo-Nazi communication networks and the consequent feeling that the Nazi school is no longer small or isolated.<sup>23</sup> The very spread of the ZOG imagery is a good example. The discourse that the neo-Nazis have taken over was not invented in its present form in Europe. It was imported from the United States, where it had been developed and disseminated in the late 1970s and 1980s by several racist and Christian Identity organizations. For European right-wingers, just as for their American colleagues, it was an appealing post-communist answer to their quest for demons. The communist 'evil empire', which had long haunted the extreme right and served as its great Satanic enemy, may be gone, but the real demonic people, the Jews, are still around. Better organized than ever around their Zionist center in Israel and heavily represented in government, business, the media, and the dominant liberal culture, the Jews are again considered the real threat for the Aryan race. And as in past European history, an unmasked Jewish threat may make it possible to get wide public support. Another potential explanation for the rising neo-Nazi confidence is the dramatic increase in the public concern over East European immigrants, third world workers and asylum seekers. There is now, so it appears to the neo-Nazis, a much greater appeal for their racist interpretation of reality and for the ZOG conspiracy theory.

### *B. Reactive Terrorism*

Particularistic terrorism is occasionally produced by status quo and conservative movements which react to real or perceived threats. This reactive terrorism is resorted to by organizations which have either lost their positions of power and social status or are fearful of such a development. The movements involved undergo an intense process of delegitimization *vis-à-vis* the forces that are out to take over. Terrorism is grasped as a means of last resort in order to restore the *status quo ante*, and is usually applied against organizations

which themselves have reached power through the use of violence. The rightist orientation of most reactive groups is normally a response to two circumstances, the first being left-wing terrorism which earlier on was in some way responsible for their expropriation. It may also be a response to a universalistic (i.e., 'leftist') frame of mind which threatens them by removing their privileged positions. While most reactive terrorists are not at first intensely preoccupied with right-wing ideology, they are often joined by old time fascists who hope to capitalize on their misery and recreate the glorious fascist past.

Reactive terrorists may be divided into two types: those who have already lost political power and are fighting an uphill battle to regain it, and those who have not yet been stripped of their power and privileges but are worried about such a development. Organizations which have lost political hegemony are usually weak and desperate. Their terrorism takes the form of sporadic revenge attacks and assassination attempts of government officials. This terrorism *does not involve split delegitimation* because the losers fight only the newly created government. In addition to the historical loss of power, which leaves them with few resources, they are vigorously pursued by the state's security apparatus. Members live either underground or in exile, and are usually ill-prepared for an effective campaign against the regime.

A historical example of an organization that seeks to regain lost power is provided by post-World War II Croat insurgents, who for years fought the communist regime of Yugoslavia. The Croats have a long history of right-wing violence and terrorism. In 1934 Croat assassins murdered Yugoslavia's King Alexander, together with French Minister of Foreign Affairs Louis Barthou. Throughout 1941–45 the Croat *Ustasha* collaborated with the Nazis, controlling Croatia and other Yugoslav areas. Ardently Roman Catholic with a fascist inclination, they hated the Orthodox Christian Serbs, accusing them of unduly dominating the other peoples of Yugoslavia.<sup>24</sup> Hitler's defeat and Yugoslavia's takeover by the Communists ended Croatia's independence. Members of the old regime, who managed to escape Tito's retribution, resurfaced in several remote countries, most notably in Australia and Latin America. They vowed to return, retake Croatia from Tito and use all means necessary. The international rise of modern terrorism in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the reinstatement of the myth of terrorism as an effective revolutionary strategy had a great impact on the Croat diaspora. They believed terrorism could be used to publicize their cause among Croats to such an extent that it would make an invasion of Yugoslavia possible. Beginning in March 1971, when they blew up the Yugoslav consulate in Milan, the organization conducted several spectacular operations, including the successful hijacking of a Swedish airplane, of a TWA aircraft bound to Chicago and the planting of a bomb in Grand Central Station in New York.<sup>25</sup> In June 1972 the

*Ustasha* attempted and failed at a raid into Yugoslavia.<sup>26</sup>

The desperate terrorism exercised by former *Ustasha* and several other groups of Croat emigres did not help them politically. The Croat reactive struggle greatly declined in the 1980s. However, it did help reinvigorate Serb hatred which appeared in full force following the 1989 dissolution of Yugoslavia. The Civil War in that troubled country, launched in June 1991 among the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo, was not waged over the legacy of the emigres, many of whom came back to retake Croatia. However, the historical memories of their reactive violence contributed to the easy passage to violence, terrorism and ethnic cleansing that continue to plague the region.

An example of reactive terrorism which started before the final loss of power is provided by the *Organization Armée Secret* (OAS), the terror organization established in 1961 by the French *Colons* in Algeria, in a last minute effort to stop the French retreat from the colony. In spite of their large concentration, the former French fascists in Algeria felt no desire to conduct a fascist revolution: the privileged French *pieds noirs* led a good colonial life in Algeria, and wanted to keep it that way. Full of contempt for the local population, they were consistently opposed to equal rights for the 'natives'.<sup>27</sup> An intense conflict of legitimation between these two populations was long in the making. The civil war which began in 1954 in Algeria triggered an intense radicalization between the *colons* and the local population. It also started a secondary process of delegitimization between the *colons* and the French government, which was seen as 'too soft' on the Algerians.<sup>28</sup> In that context, the *ultras*, the most extreme among the settlers, even established small terror hit teams which 'helped' the French Army launch counter strikes against the Algerians.<sup>29</sup> The situation deteriorated significantly between 1959 and 1960 when the *colons* found out that President Charles de Gaulle was ready to compromise with the FLN. Their process of delegitimization with the French government intensified dramatically.

The subtler sense of betrayal by France's historical hero was shared by several of the nation's most decorated generals, who vowed to keep Algeria French. By 1961, when de Gaulle's intentions to leave Algeria became a fact, the recently started process of delegitimization reached its peak. The disgruntled *pieds noirs* and the embittered generals established the OAS. Moving fast from conflict to crisis of legitimation with the French government, they launched a dual terror campaign. While applying vengeance terrorism against the Algerians in an effort to destroy the peace talks and accentuate the situation,<sup>30</sup> they also engaged in a massive terror campaign against the government. This they did in Algeria, in France and in Europe. OAS terrorism tragically backfired, however. In addition to its failure to stop the 1962 French retreat

from Algeria, it destroyed the conditions for any kind of European-Algerian co-existence in the newly created Algerian republic. A massive exodus took place, which in a short time brought to France over one million former Algerian settlers.

Reactive terrorism, to conclude, usually starts with the terrorization of many non-governmental groups and communities. However, it is almost always transformed into an intense process of delegitimization with the government and anti-regimist terrorism.

### C. *Vigilante Terrorism*

A special variant of reactive terrorism is *vigilante terrorism*. Vigilante terror is used by individuals and groups who believe that the government does not adequately protect them from violent groups or individuals and that they must protect themselves. Vigilante movements rarely perceive themselves involved in conflict with the government and the prevailing concept of law. They are neither revolutionary nor interested in the destruction of authority. Rather, what characterizes the vigilante mind is the profound conviction that the government and its agencies have failed to enforce the law or establish order in a particular area.<sup>31</sup> Backed by the fundamental norm of self-defense and speaking in the name of the law of the land, vigilantes see themselves as enforcing the law and executing justice. Vigilantes are, therefore, particularistic supporters of the status quo and have no alternative political system in mind. They believe that they are acting legally against criminal elements because the authorities are either too weak to enforce the law or negligent in their duties.<sup>32</sup>

Vigilantism, it should be stressed, is by no means synonymous with terrorism. In reality, the majority of vigilantes rarely resort to atrocities in order to uphold the law. However, under circumstances of serious pressure, often involving violence against them, vigilantes undergo a process of delegitimization which pushes them toward the use of terror. Like most other particularistic terrorists, the primary process of delegitimization of the vigilante movement involves a non-governmental group or individuals who are believed to have broken the law. But vigilante terrorism, unless tacitly supported by the regime, is likely to trigger conflict with the government's agents. Most effective governments cannot tolerate systematic vigilantism and try to curtail its activity. If the stakes and the level of vigilante terror are high, this could lead to intense radicalization and serious conflict with the government. Two situations are particularly prone to the evolution of vigilante terrorism:

- lawlessness in border areas where the military and police are unable to fully protect the pioneering settlers;
- the presence of intense insurgent terrorism which cannot be effectively contained by the authorities.

Vigilante terrorism has developed, for example, in the occupied territories of Israel as a direct result of the rise of Palestinian violence and the inability of the Israeli Army to provide the settlers with complete protection. A group that was called the Jewish Underground by the Israeli press conducted several terror operations in the early 1980s in an attempt to restrain the Palestinians and maintain a system of control through terrorism. The most spectacular operation of the Jewish Underground was the blowing up of the cars of two Arab mayors believed by the group to be the major coordinators of PLO operations in the area. The vigilantes of Gush Emunim, a religious and messianic Israeli movement, believed they were upholding the law. They obtained rabbinical approval of the act based on the Jewish Halachic rule that, 'he who comes to kill you, you kill him first', and argued in court that this was also the spirit of Israel's positive law.<sup>33</sup> Members of the Jewish Underground also convinced themselves that the military government of the area was tacitly behind them, and that several of the military officers involved, who knew the political constraints of the government, secretly encouraged them to carry out their plans. The decision of the Jewish underground to attack the mayors was exceptional and unprecedented in Jewish and Israeli contexts. It implied a serious secondary process of delegitimization with the government of Israel which was previously considered holy. However, the underground's conflict with the Israeli government never reached the point of a crisis of legitimacy and anti-Jewish terrorism.

Since the 1960s, vigilante killing of 'subversive' elements has played an unprecedented role in Latin America, where the practice is long known and associated with the military and the police.<sup>34</sup> Following a wave of left-wing insurgent terror in the 1960s, a period which greatly destabilized countries such as Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador and Guatemala, a counterstrike was launched, with even worse human and political consequences. Unable to suppress terrorism through the ordinary legal system, police and military officers decided to take the law into their hands and to eliminate the leftist threat privately. They did this through the establishment of death squads which swept through the respective countries killing scores of suspected terrorists or alleged collaborators. What was unique about these vigilantes is that many of them were military officers acting in their free time. There is, in fact, a large body of information which shows that these operations were conducted with the full cooperation of the armies and governments involved, and that the whole idea was to free the officers from the legal constraints of due process.<sup>35</sup>

An early case in Argentina is that of President Isabella Peron's Minister of Social Welfare, José Lopez Rega, who established the Anti-Communist Alliance (Triple A). Rega recruited for the job federal and provincial policemen and armed them with weapons bought by state funds. Responding to the terror campaign of the *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* and the *Montoneros* – organizations which had destabilized Argentina since the late 1960s – the Triple A assassinated over 200 people and intimidated many more in 1974–75. In August 1976 Triple A killed 46 suspected terrorists.<sup>36</sup> Similar quasi-official vigilante groups operated in the 1960s and 1970s in Mexico, Brazil and El Salvador. In Guatemala, which between the mid-1950s and the mid-1980s witnessed a virtual civil war with three waves of intense terrorism, the right was represented by nearly 20 vigilante groups. These paramilitary organizations with such names as the New Anti-Communist Organization, the Purple Rose, and the White Hand, comprised supporters of the status quo such as landowners, police and military officers.<sup>37</sup> What marks the Guatemalan as well as many other Latin American vigilantes, is the nearly automatic support they receive from the government and the security forces. What is really occurring is state terrorism in disguise. Vigilantism in Guatemala, just as leftist insurgent terrorism, has become a way of life, a part of a 'culture and counterculture of terror', which in the last 40 years took the lives of over 150,000 people.<sup>38</sup>

Vigilante terrorism often involves split delegitimization, but the secondary process of delegitimization rarely reaches terroristic maturation. People who believe they uphold the law of the land may get angry at the small support they receive from the authorities, but rarely, if ever, confront the government. Unless intensely abused and mistreated by government agents in jail, they are likely to restrict their occasional terrorism to the 'law breakers'.

#### *D. Racist Terrorism*

Most particularistic terror organizations display some kind of racism, that is, a belief that race is an important organizing principle in society and that certain groups of 'colored' people are inherently inferior. Several organizations, however, see race as the *main* organizational principle that counts, and devote all their energy to the struggle for racist supremacy. In contrast to revolutionary terrorists who dream about a total transformation of the social, cultural and political system and the creation of a fascist civilization, racist terrorists are usually political conservatives. Their sole desire is a social system which will either recognize their racial superiority officially or informally guarantee its perpetuation. Racist movements go into conflict with the prevailing government, namely, *engage in split delegitimization*, only after the regime involved has failed to support their platforms or has been actively engaged in

their containment. Terrorism is often resorted to by these racists as a *control mechanism*, an effort to restore the previous caste structure of society in which the inferior race must remain, permanently, an underprivileged second class. In extreme cases racist terrorism is also utilized against government agencies or agents who are especially involved in law enforcement against the perpetrators of terror.

Racist terrorism has been almost synonymous with the American Ku Klux Klan, an umbrella secret society established in 1865, following the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War. The Klan underwent several historical transformations, and recently has been in a steady decline. Over the years, it has added to its original anti-Black platform new ideological concerns such as anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Communism and the idea of '100 per cent Americanism'. Rarely as monolithic and centralized as its public image wants the average person to believe, the Klan has existed locally under a variety of names and titles. Since its foundation, however, the Ku Klux Klan *as an idea* has been the inspiration for many similar organizations.<sup>39</sup>

The 'classic' KKK terror operation, a pattern developed in the late 1860s and maintained for generations, involved a small group of masked and hooded night raiders. A typical target was a black individual suspected of violating some 'white man's values'. Klansmen had all the advantages – darkness, disguise, superior numbers and armaments. Victims had an ingrained fear of the Klan and little or no military skills. In one given night, the Klan group might visit several black cabins to inflict 'lessons' and punishment. Black suspects were often taken to a wooden area for a mock trial. Their homes were usually set on fire. Many trials were concluded by lynching the suspects, shooting them, or severely injuring them. An individual allowed to live was warned that there would be no second chance, and was sent to transmit the message to his peers and colleagues.<sup>40</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan and Klan-like organizations rarely attacked the Federal government or its agents directly, but have almost always been involved in a secondary process of *delegitimization* with Washington. In that respect, the Klan is a direct descendent of the influential American traditions of *populism* and *nativism*.<sup>41</sup> The role of the Federal government in the Civil War and the First Reconstruction, and its increasing involvement in public affairs in the post-1929 Franklin Roosevelt era, had constantly haunted the organization. KKK-like organizations argued persistently that the movement had been loyal to the Constitution of the United States, and that the original Constitution never intended to give the Federal government and Congress the degree of authority they came to possess. KKK's America grew up from individual settlers and independent local communities and was intended to remain that way.

The increased isolation of the Ku Klux Klan in America during the 1960s,

the greater commitment of the Federal government to take anti-Klan action and the successful penetration of the organization by federal agents led to the organization's significant decline. The KKK lost its hold on the deep South and its followers became increasingly marginal. A resurgence attempt in the 1970s did not last long.<sup>42</sup>

Racist and white supremacist groups have not vanished from the American landscape, however, and several anti-communist paramilitary and survivalist groups gained some public notoriety between the 1960s and 1970s. The traumatic experience of the Vietnam War and the perception of an imminent communist threat were responsible for the rise of several paramilitary organizations and for the occasional resort of some of their members to violence.<sup>43</sup> Since the 1970s there has, furthermore, been a dramatic increase in the number and interaction of white supremacist groups with strong religious and millenarian inclinations. While marginalized and delegitimized by mainstream American culture, these groups and organizations seem to have been successful in the creation of a rather wide and self-supporting racist counter-culture.

#### *E. Millenarian Terrorism<sup>44</sup>*

The fifth type of particularistic terrorism is millenarian terrorism, terrorism resorted to by religious groups which believe that the end of the world is imminent and that if spiritually prepared, they will be saved.<sup>45</sup> Terrorism and millenarianism, it must be stated at the outset, are by no means synonymous or even behaviorally interconnected. The majority of the millenarian sects are not terroristic. A typical feature of millenarianism is a peaceful withdrawal from the world.<sup>46</sup> The spiritual leaders of the group believe that only in a state of isolation and seclusion can they properly prepare themselves for the demise of the sinning world and for their own salvation. The millenarian separation from the rest of society implies either a simple conviction that God will punish the sinning people and that the group should mind its own spiritual business, or an admission of weakness and inability to struggle against the evil forces of society.

Millenarian sects that commit terrorist acts usually do so for reasons which are not directly related to their spiritual and chiliastic dreams. They resort to terrorism either because of the presence of individual leaders who are violence-prone, or because the external society or some of its agencies push them aggressively into a corner. So much hate, alienation and desperation are experienced by the group that on occasions, and after specific incentives have been created, it will resort to terrorism.<sup>47</sup> The occasional shift to terrorism implies the group's inability to fully seclude itself and sever all contacts with organized society.

Millenarian terrorists differ from most particularistic terrorists in their vision of the future. It was mentioned earlier that unlike left-wing terrorists, whose desired society is non-violent, many particularistic terrorists are convinced that violence and conflict are essential ingredients of the good society or are at least necessary for the preservation of their desired world. This is, however, not the case with millenarian terrorists. The ideal society of the millenarians is peaceful, harmonious and non-violent.<sup>48</sup> It is peaceful because the post-apocalyptic vision of the group leaves no room for conflict. The sinning world is expected to be destroyed and the future community will consist only of loyal believers. The terrorism committed by most millenarian groups is, thus, a necessary evil. It is often projected by the organization leaders as an act of self-defense against an aggressive and merciless external society. Bank robbery is not virtuous but may be justified by the legitimate financial needs of the group. An attack on a representative of the 'Zionist controlled government' may, in the same spirit, be legitimate if that individual is perceived as an immediate threat to the organization. Terrorism may also help group members obtain the military experience that will be needed at the time of Armageddon.

Millenarian terrorism has occasionally been produced in the 1980s by several Christian Identity groups, an American umbrella subculture espousing a variety of racist, anti-Semitic, Christian-fundamentalist and anti-Federalist beliefs. The Christian Identity Movement seems to have grown up from the racist periphery of American fundamentalism and the extreme right, which in the last two decades has undergone a noteworthy revival. More radical and revolutionary than the Ku Klux Klan ever was, this plethora of millenarian sects, churches and small paramilitary organizations views the American political and cultural system as entirely illegitimate.<sup>49</sup> It is a decadent society hopelessly polluted by racially or ideologically inferior people such as Jews, Blacks, communists, homosexuals and liberals of all sorts. While many followers of the Identity schools are not full-time political revolutionaries, and may just be interested in a peaceful withdrawal from the world, their ideology indicates a profound Crisis of Legitimacy with the American system. It further implies considerable violent potential. The American government, according to the new movement, as well as the nation's most important institutions, have been totally taken over by the Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG) and are beyond repair. The Jews and their collaborators are all over the place. Not only are they in control of the nation's many established institutions such as government and mass media, but their organizations have intensely marginalized and delegitimized the entire patriotic American radical right.<sup>50</sup>

Much of the Christian Identity Movement's hopes for a better future relies

on their messianic belief in the imminent Second Coming of a White Aryan Christ. This will occur after a seven year period of tribulation, a modern-day Armageddon, when the entire world will change dramatically. Jews and other 'mud people' will be eliminated and genuine Anglo-Saxons will finally take over. For this reason, many Identity preachers recommend that their followers live in isolated encampments, mostly in the racially homogenous North-West, and arm themselves in preparation for the great moment.<sup>51</sup> While most of the arms are kept for the final struggle, it is legitimate also to use them, occasionally, against representatives and symbols of ZOG, which is presently in control of Washington. Bank robberies and other crimes aimed at strengthening the movements are also fully legitimate.<sup>52</sup>

Their ideo-theological rejection of the American system at nearly all levels, which is no longer different from their rejection of the original target communities such as Jews or Blacks, puts many Christian Identity groups at a very advanced position on both wings of the split delegitimization. While some of them express it by self-seclusion and withdrawal, others resort occasionally to terrorism, including direct attacks on government installations and symbols of authority. It appears, in fact, that if not for the persistent pressure and crack-downs of the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation on white supremacist groups, several of them would have very likely resorted to intense anti-establishment terrorism in the 1980s.

#### *F. Youth Counterculture Terrorism*

A special type of particularistic terrorism which has grown since the mid-1970s, attracting increasing public attention, is right-wing terrorism conducted by alienated and isolated youth gangs. Many of these are shaven-headed and have come to be known as Skinheads or 'Skins'. Others are soccer rowdies involved in 'spontaneous violence'. The majority of them are very young and are more involved in a cultural than political crisis of legitimation with the democratic culture. Music is a key element in the Skinhead counterculture and serves as a recruiting tool, a propaganda weapon, a celebration of the gang ethic and a call for violence. The Skinhead 'white power' music is aggressive, loud, and radiates a message of violent cultural revolt.<sup>53</sup> Just as their music expresses a rebellion against middle-class pop music, Skinhead behavior implies a rejection of the entire normative order of bourgeois society. The political essence of Skinheadism focuses on the glorification and perpetration of brute violence against racial and ethnic minorities, homosexuals, leftists, and Jews. The adoption and glorification of racist and anti-Semitic violence seems to be less a logical conclusion of a certain political thinking and more of an emotional consequence of a youthful cultural rebellion and a denial of the normative status quo.<sup>54</sup>

The Skinheads, just as many other right-wing extremists, are by no means systematic terrorists and terrorism is only a small part of what a few of them do. Skinhead terrorism seems to be an unintended extension of non-political glorification of brutal physical force and symbolic excitement about violence. Many Skins come to their concerts armed with knives, axes, baseball bats and material for manufacturing firebombs. After several hours of listening to the throbbing beat of their wild bands and augmented by a flood of alcohol, they strike and occasionally kill. In the last decade Skinheads have been involved in fire bombings and murderous assaults which took the life of numerous innocent civilians in several Western countries. Moreover, these assaults left many more members of the targeted communities terrorized. The most notorious youth counterculture assault took place on 23 November 1992, in the German town of Mölln, where three Turkish women and girls were killed in a fire-bomb attack.

The Skinhead subculture, whose German annex has recently attracted much attention, originated in the 1970s in Great Britain and spread to several Western countries, including the United States. The shaven-headed Skinheads began to be seen in the streets in the early 1970s. Tattooed and wearing Doc Martens boots, they were reminiscent of the young thugs portrayed in the famous movie, *A Clockwork Orange*. Their style was aimed to stand in symbolic contrast to the liberal, pacifist, middle class values of the long hairs, and to stress patriotic, bellicose, anti-immigrant, working class attitudes. Skinheads can now be found in Germany, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and the USA. The dislocation created by the unification of Germany and the demise of the GDR has led among other things to significant growth of a rather large Skinhead subculture in East Germany. In parts of East Berlin and in several border towns close to Poland, Skinhead gangs have virtually taken over, terrorizing both the opposition and local authorities into silence. Youth centers established by the government to provide housing and social care have been taken over by the Skins and turned into aggressive counterculture centers with strong neo-Nazi overtones. The nearby neighborhoods as well as bars have been terrorized into silence and acceptance of the Skinhead lifestyle. Much of the aggression of the gangs is directed against the huge number of immigrants, guest workers and asylum seekers in Germany, who are believed to have taken away jobs and opportunities.

As alarming as the rise of the violent right-wing youth counterculture may be, it appears that its real danger involves the interaction between these youngsters, other youth gangs and older and more experienced neo-Nazis. Even though Skins are not easy to organize, there are increasing indications that inexperienced Skins are occasionally mobilized for radical action and

being used by several more experienced right-wing extremists.<sup>55</sup> The social marginality of the Skinheads and other youth gangs, their young age and their socio-economic detachment from organized society make some of them potential front-line 'soldiers' for neo-fascist and neo-Nazi movements whose elderly members either cannot afford to get directly involved in extralegal activities or constantly suffer from manpower shortage. Most of the American Skinheads, for example, are affiliated with neo-Nazi organizations or the Aryan Nation and go by such names as Northern Hammerskins, SS of America and Aryan Resistance League. According to the American ADL, which has been carefully monitoring these groups, they have been put into destructive action by more experienced neo-Nazis. From 1987 to June 1990 there was a total of six cases of killing; but in the three years since, 22 murders were committed by Skinheads.<sup>56</sup> Most of the victims have been members of minority groups: Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, homosexuals and homeless persons. In addition, Skinheads had been involved in thousands of lesser crimes: stabbings, shootings, beatings, thefts and synagogue desecrations. The ADL has concluded that 'Skinheads are today the most violent of all white supremacy groups. Not even the Ku Klux Klan, so notorious for their use of the rope and the gun, come close to the Skinheads in the number and severity of crimes committed in recent years.'<sup>57</sup>

It appears that the conceptual framework of the process of delegitimization has almost no explanatory power for the terror produced by the youth counter-culture of the Skinheads, the soccer hooligans and other musical punks and youth gangs. What is involved is not a lengthy process of political delegitimization but a cultural rebellion of marginal youth groups who are in conflict with the demanding post-industrial society as well as with their parents, and who wish to provoke both. They are relevant to the present study because much of their cultural and experiential world is shaped by neo-fascist and neo-Nazi symbols and because their outrage is directed at enemies of the racist right. While much of this violence remains symbolic, criminal and non-political,<sup>58</sup> there is in the United States and certain European countries a feeling that a racist and neo-Nazi subculture has slowly been evolving at the margins of society since the 1980s, and that its effects are likely to be felt for a long time.

### **The Modus Operandi of Right-Wing Terrorism: A Part-Time Job**

The huge political, historical and cultural variation among right-wing extremist groups makes it difficult to generalize about their behavioral dynamics. And yet it appears that there is a major difference in the *modus operandi* of universalistic and particularistic terror-producing organizations. While the former – usually extreme left, nationalist or anti-authoritarian terrorists – often operate in secret undergrounds, which presuppose full-time revolution-

aries pursued by the law, the majority of right-wing terrorists do not devote their entire lives to the terrorist cause and rarely go underground. Many of them live almost a normal life, sustain families and perceive of themselves as distinguished members of the community. Their terrorism is, in most cases, a side function carried out after 'working hours'. As we shall see below, however, there are several exceptions to this rule.

The explanation for the part-time character of right-wing terrorism involves the nature of the delegitimization process undergone by particularistic terrorists and the target of their atrocities. Unlike universalistic terrorists who mostly fight repressive rulers and governments, the majority of particularistic terrorists do not directly challenge the structure of authority. The target of their outrage is a specific 'inferior' community or individuals whom they wish to discriminate against and intimidate. In most cases they expect the government to fulfill this task and react only when government leaders are unwilling to cooperate or follow 'their advice'. This rule also applies, as was mentioned earlier, to revolutionary right-wing terrorists, whose ultimate goal is a structural change but who opt, for tactical reasons, for legalistic strategy. It goes without saying that legality does not preclude secrecy, and that most organizations involved in violence are extremely secretive about their terror plans. But in the majority of right-wing cases, the proponents of terrorism do not hide and are usually registered in the local telephone directory.

There are three exceptions to the part-time nature of right-wing terrorism: religious millenarian sects, youth counterculture groups and very extreme neo-Nazi organizations. Membership in these collectivities usually presupposes alienation from the community and rejection of its cultural and political norms. It further implies many fewer commitments to bourgeois society, including orderly family life and property ownership. The American millenarian organization of Robert Mathews, the Order, or the Swedish VAM network, as well as several Skinhead groups can serve as examples for groups whose alienation and separation from organized society are almost total. But as we have seen, terrorism is not the main concern of these collectivities. Most millenarian groups withdraw from ordinary life and peacefully prepare themselves for the Second Coming of Christ. And the neo-Nazis and Skinhead counterculture is very much into noisy music, racist camaraderie, hostility to organized society and a culturally provocative lifestyle.

The legal status of most particularistic organizations involved in terrorism is also responsible for the low frequency of their terror operations. An organization which fulfills other social functions and is likely to be suspected of extremist operations is probably under constant surveillance by the security services of the regime. It must, therefore, keep a low profile. Its leaders, who are often much older than most active warriors in universalistic insurgency,

wish to maintain their respectable community status, and simply cannot afford to be caught. One may also add that the kind of terrorism applied against 'inferior' communities does not require great military skill or a highly sophisticated underground. Bruce Hoffman noticed back in 1984 that the favorite right-wing weapon is the bomb, the use of which does not require a sophisticated and well-organized conspiracy.<sup>59</sup>

Since the majority of present day right-wingers do not fundamentally challenge the structure of authority, their unsystematic terrorism is merely an additional method of coping with the socio-cultural anxieties they face. Four sets of circumstances seem to increase the likelihood that right-wing true believers will move from conflict to crisis of legitimation and resort to terrorism: (a) a sudden and intense sense of insecurity which produces emotional extremist action; (b) a conviction of right-wing leaders that they can rationally benefit from terrorism; (c) a sense of increasing public support for radical action against 'undesirable people'; (d) the imposing presence of violent personalities whose resort to terrorism is made for purely personal-psychological reasons.

Small, isolated and poorly organized particularistic extremist groups are likely to respond to perceived threats without much calculation. A sudden anxiety, a decline in the group's sense of political control, a socio-economic recession, a fear of imminent leftist aggression or a profound outrage with certain acts of the authorities may drive members of such groups to occasional atrocities. Terrorism is resorted to emotionally in a desperate effort to restore the *status quo ante*. Many Ku Klux Klan and white supremacy organizations, small European neo-fascist cells in the 1970s and some Israeli right-wing extremists have acted in this fashion. Their terrorism has been an unplanned and unsystematic mechanism for the temporary release of group anxiety and tension.

More sophisticated and well-organized right-wing movements try not to act emotionally. Aware of their weakness and of the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies, their leaders order strikes only when convenient and when the government is seen to be in disarray. The presence of intense extralegal left-wing activity, which can be blamed for much of the violence, may be helpful, as was the case in Italy and France in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A special case in point is the 'strategy of tension' of Italian neo-fascists since the 1950s. Responding to significant socio-economic strains, the rise in left-wing radicalism and a perception of potential support by the armed forces and police, group leaders like Pino Rauti recommended violent confrontation with the left and even terrorism.<sup>60</sup> Prudent leaders of reactive and vigilante groups may also use terrorism to attract public attention and place issues that trouble them on the public agenda.

### Concluding Remarks

Students of political violence have long been familiar with the positive correlation between the radical group's sense of public support and the likelihood that it will resort to violence.<sup>61</sup> This correlation appears to be holding for right-wing terror groups. A case in point is the enormous rise in the aggression and violence of Israel's Kach movement in the early 1980s. A strong anti-Arab sentiment which swept the country made Rabbi Meir Kahane, who for years was the isolated leader of the movement, a legitimate actor in Israeli politics.<sup>62</sup> The unexpected 1984 election of the rabbi to parliament, surprisingly did not reduce the level of Kach's violence. On the contrary, their attacks on Arabs increased. In the same fashion it appears that the steady decline in violent operations of the Ku Klux Klan since the 1960s has had to do with, among other things, the dramatic decrease of public support. The rule seems to be holding currently in Germany where neo-Nazi violence has reached crisis proportions in the 1990s. The increasing confidence of the neo-Nazis in the rising anti-alien sentiment in Germany and several other European countries seems to have contributed to their daring activities.<sup>63</sup>

Psychologists and students of political violence have so far failed to fully explain the violent personality. We just know that the evolution and activity of certain violent groups, especially those that are small and poorly organized, cannot be reduced to socio-political factors. The heads of such groups just happen to be more violent than others, more excited with weapons, angrier at society or at its established leaders, or more moved by romantic dreams of virility and glorious violence. Such groups are almost always products of a single man. The leader's personality, more than the group's ideology or socio-political conditions, determines the level, repertoire and timing of violence. Unless developed into a larger and more broadly appealing movement, the death or arrest of the leader is often the end of the group. This seems to have been the case with neo-Nazi activists such as the German Karl Heinz Hoffman and his *Wehrsportgruppe Hoffman*, Robert Mathews of the American Order and to some extent even with Israel's Rabbi Kahane and several of his successors.<sup>64</sup>

### NOTES

1. Ehud Sprinzak, 'The Process of Delegitimization: Towards a Linkage Theory of Political Terrorism', *Terrorism and Political Violence* [hereafter *TPV*] 3/1 (Spring 1991) pp.50-68. To clarify any possible confusion: I use the term 'delegitimization' whenever I am talking about a behavioral process over time. The term 'delegitimation' I use to denote an attitude. However, this distinction is of linguistic rather than theoretical significance, and I do not expect others to follow my usage.

2. Ehud Sprinzak, 'The Psycho-political Formation of Extreme Left Terrorism in a Democracy: The Case of the Weathermen', in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism* (NY: CUP, 1990), p.79.
3. Sprinzak (note 1), pp.54–5.
4. *Ibid.*, pp.55–6.
5. Albert Bandura, 'Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement', in Reich, *Origins of Terrorism* (note 2), pp.180–2.
6. Jeanne N. Knutson, 'Social and Psychodynamic Pressures Towards a Negative Identity: The Case of an American Revolutionary Terrorist', in Yonah Alexander and John M. Glison (eds.), *Behavioral and Quantitative Perspectives on Terrorism* (NY: Pergamon Press, 1981), pp.211–15; Jerold M. Post, 'Notes on a Psychodynamic Theory of Terrorist Behavior', *Terrorism: An International Journal* 7/3 (1984), pp.250–3.
7. Sprinzak (note 1), p.53. In addition to 'transformational delegitimization', the article also identifies as a type 'extensional delegitimization', which is more suitable for terrorism of national liberation movements. Extensional delegitimization implies a process which starts with long held cultural hostility towards a foreign ruler. The terrorism that develops does not represent a psycho-political transformation from early agreement to a bitter disagreement, but a rather radicalized and bloody extension of an already existing hostility and conflict.
8. This tendency within the ZOG discourse and related ideologies towards a complete identification of the hated minority with the government has been pointed out to me by Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørgo, cf. their chapters in this volume.
9. Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (London: Weidenfeld, 1987) p.67.
10. Zeev Sternhell, 'Fascist Ideology', in Walter Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1976), pp.320–37.
11. Adrian Lyttelton, 'Fascism and Violence in Post-War Italy: Political Strategy and Social Conflict', in W.J. Mommsen and Gerhard Hirshfeld (eds.), *Social Protest, Violence, and Terror in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Europe* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1982); Peter Merkl, *The Making of a Stormtrooper* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp.15–18; Jens Petersen, 'Violence in Italian Fascism', in Mommsen and Hirshfeld cited above.
12. Merkl (note 11), pp.299–305; Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (NY: Mentor Books, 1965), pp.260–3.
13. James A. Gregor, 'Fascism: Philosophy of Violence and the Concept of Terror', in David C. Rapoport and Yona Alexander (eds.), *The Morality of Terrorism* (NY: Pergamon Press, 1982).
14. Petersen (note 11).
15. Jeremy Noakes, 'The Origins, Structure and Functions of Nazi Terror', in Noel O'Sullivan (ed.), *Terrorism, Ideology and Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1986).
16. Laqueur (note 9), pp.76–7.
17. Paul Wilkinson, *The New Fascists* (London: Grant McIntyre, 1981), Ch.3.
18. Anti-Defamation League, *The German Neo-Nazis: An ADL Investigative Report* (NY: ADL, 1993).
19. Tore Bjørgo and Robb Witte, *Racist Violence in Europe* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993).
20. Leonard Weinberg, 'Italian Neo-Fascist Terrorism: A Comparative Perspective', in this volume.
21. Tore Bjørgo, 'Militant Neo-Nazism in Sweden', *TVP* 5/3 (Autumn 1993).
22. Heléne Lööw, 'The Cult of Violence: The Swedish Racist Counterculture', in Bjørgo and Witte (note 19), pp.67–70.
23. Erik Jensen, 'International Nazi Cooperation: A Terrorist Oriented Network', in Bjørgo and Witte (note 19).
24. Albert Parry, *Terrorism: From Robespierre to Arafat* (NY: The Vanguard Press, 1976), p. 496.
25. Knutson (note 6), p. 116.
26. Parry (note 24), p.498.
27. Alistaire Horne, *A Savage War Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp.36–7.

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