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DARK TRAJECTORIES: THE BOLOGNA MASSACRE AND THE POSSIBLE LIBYAN INVOLVEMENT

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Ai miei genitori per il loro amore e supporto incondizionato,
A me stessa per non aver mai mollato,
A chiunque stia ancora cercando il proprio posto nel mondo
e non ha mai perso la speranza.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

The dissertation, "Dark trajectories: the Bologna massacre and the possible Libyan involvement", provides a comprehensive examination of the Bologna massacre and its alleged perpetrators, with the goal of addressing the continuing lack of definitive convictions. Additionally, it delves into the Libyan connection, aiming to uncover the links between Libya and the Bologna massacre, shedding light on the potential involvement of external actors in this tragic event.

Beginning with a nuanced exploration of the definitions of political violence and terrorism, the first chapter navigates the complexities arising from the absence of a universally accepted definition of terrorism. It further examines the classification of terrorism into distinct waves proposed by Rapoport and delves into the historical and political landscape that fostered the emergence of right-wing terrorism in Europe and the United States. The chapter places particular emphasis on the tumultuous years of lead in Italy, providing an overview of left-wing and right-wing terrorism within this context. The second chapter contextualizes the Bologna massacre within the broader historical backdrop of Italy's years of lead. It examines the various right-wing terrorist organizations operating during this period, shedding light on their origins, ideologies, and methods of operation. Additionally, the chapter offers a detailed analysis of the Bologna massacre event and its consequences, while also investigating the suspected involvement of deviant secret services and clandestine organizations like the P2. The third chapter explores the complex web of foreign influences and the convergence of interests that shaped Italian political dynamics during the examined period. It uncovers the involvement of Libya and Muammar Gaddafi in Italian politics, highlighting potential connections between the Ustica massacre and the Bologna massacre, as well as examining the interplay between political, energy, and criminal dynamics. In the final chapter, the thesis summarizes key research findings and reflects on their historical and political implications. This thesis endeavors to meticulously analyze the Bologna massacre and its external connections, shedding light on the intricate web of international influences surrounding this tragic event.

INTRODUCTION

The research conducted for this thesis, titled "Dark trajectories: the Bologna massacre and the possible Libyan involvement," aims to offer a clear and in-depth perspective on the Bologna massacre and its alleged perpetrators, an event that, despite the years that have passed, continues to lack a definitive conviction.

The first chapter of the thesis delves into the nuanced definitions of political violence and terrorism, navigating the complexities arising from the absence of a universally accepted definition of "terrorism" among historians and academics. It proceeds to explore the classification of terrorism proposed by Rapoport, which categorizes it into distinct waves: "the Anarchist," "the Anticolonial," "the New Left," and "Religious". Subsequently, the focus shifts towards an in-depth examination of right-wing terrorism, contextualizing its emergence and proliferation within the historical and political landscape of Europe and the United States. Although it is less prominent than left-wing terrorism, right-wing terrorism has considerable influence, especially in light of recent events that highlight the importance and impact of right-wing terrorism and extremist ideologies in the current landscape. Furthermore, the chapter delves into the intricacies of left-wing and right-wing terrorism during Italy's tumultuous years of lead, providing a concise yet comprehensive historical overview of this period. Notably, it gives special attention to the historical context of the horrific Bologna massacre, which serves as the thesis' primary analytical focus.

The second chapter of this thesis looks at the historical background of the years of lead in Italy before getting into the specifics of the Bologna tragedy. It offers a thorough examination of the sociopolitical environment that facilitated the rise to prominence and spread of right-wing terrorism. A key component of the investigation is the analysis of the several right-wing terrorist groups that operated in Italy during the years of lead. The chapter sheds light on the complex dynamics of extremist movements in Italian culture by examining their origins, ideology, and methods of operation. Building on this knowledge, the chapter goes on to give an in-depth description of the Bologna massacre event and its significant ramifications, illuminating the wide-ranging effects it had on Italian politics and society.

Moreover, the chapter delves into the suspected involvement of deviant secret services offering a critical examination of their role in shaping and influencing the landscape of terrorism and political violence during this period. As part of this exploration, the chapter also examines the clandestine role of a secret organization, the P2 masonic lodge (Propaganda Due), and its influential presence within the Italian political context. By unraveling the covert operations and clandestine networks of this organization, the chapter elucidates its profound impact on shaping political agendas and power dynamics within Italy.

The third chapter delves into the complex network of foreign influences and the convergence of interests that shaped Italian political dynamics during the period under review. The chapter mainly analyzes the context of the Cold War and the influence of the two superpowers, the USA and USSR, on Italy. It also explores the connections of Italy's right-wing terrorist groups with various European and non-European countries, such as France, Spain, Lebanon, and Latin America, among others. These connections reveal an international terror network, characterized by logistical, financial, and ideological support provided to terrorist groups by international actors. Moreover, through a detailed exploration, the chapter uncovers the involvement of Libya and its leader, Muammar Gaddafi, in Italian politics, shedding light on the intricate relationship between the two countries by examining the interaction between political and energy relations. A theory put forward by Senator Giuseppe Zamberletti suggests a significant connection between the Ustica massacre on June 27, 1980, and the Bologna massacre on August 2, 1980, implicating Libya under Gaddafi's government as a key player in both incidents.

In the final chapter, the thesis presents a summary of the main research findings, offering a comprehensive overview of the insights gained during the course of the study. Reflecting on the historical and political implications of the analyses conducted, the chapter seeks to contextualize the significance of the research within a broader academic discourse. It also provides critical reflections on the implications of the findings regarding the Bologna massacre, underscoring the need to investigate some important aspects of the search for truth that have not received sufficient attention to date.

CHAPTER I

Political Violence and Terrorism: Theoretical concepts and definitions

1.1 Definition and typologies of political violence

Political violence represents a deep and often turbulent dimension of a nation's social and political dynamics. It takes the shape of an extreme form of participation in which individuals or groups use physical force or the threat of it to pursue political goals.

Political violence spans a wide range of contentious actions, events, and circumstances, that can be classified as terrorism, guerrilla warfare, insurgency, counterinsurgency, self-defense, and numerous other classifications. The specific categorization often depends on the context and perspective of the individuals or groups interpreting them[1]. According to Bosi and Malthaner:

political violence involves a heterogeneous repertoire of actions oriented at inflicting physical, psychological, and symbolic damage to individuals and/or property with the intention of influencing various audiences for affecting or resisting political, social, and/ or cultural change[2].

Political violence often emerges when individuals or groups believe that traditional political measures, controlled by the state's established rules and institutions, are insufficient to achieve their desired goals or effects. This sense of inadequacy can be caused by a variety of circumstances, including feelings of marginalization, exclusion, or oppression within the existing political system, as well as irritation with the perceived ineffectiveness or corruption of formal political institutions. As stated by Carbonelli, when individuals or groups believe that the legal and

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[1] Steinhoff, P. and Zwerman, G. (2008). *Introduction to the Special Issue on Political Violence*. Qual Sociol 31, pp. 213–220.
[2] Bosi, L. and Malthaner, S. (2015). *Political Violence*. *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, (Chapter 28). Edited by Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani. Oxford University Press, p. 439.

institutional avenues within the political system are ineffective or inaccessible in addressing their complaints or pursuing their goals, they may come to regard violence as not only justified but also necessary or indispensable for achieving their political objectives[3]. In another study of the contest of political violence conducted by Della Porta, it is highlighted that a significant advancement in understanding social movements and protests came with the realization that these movements don't necessarily arise in response to new grievances, but rather thrive when existing grievances find a conducive political environment. This environment, termed "political opportunities," encompasses factors such as regime shifts, periods of political turbulence, or alterations in elite compositions, all of which can create favorable conditions for social movements to emerge. In contrast, an initially receptive political climate for social movements can turn hostile as the state moves to quell protests or when new power dynamics emerge that are less sympathetic to the aims of these movements[4].

Political violence, which includes the phenomenon of terrorism, is immensely diverse and can take numerous forms depending on the environment and people involved[5]. It can be perpetrated by individuals or groups outside the state that target civilians or the state itself, or it can be used by the state itself to target either its own inhabitants or another nation. In fact, Kalyvas identifies eleven types of political violence and categorizes these types into two key dimensions: whether the perpetrator of violence is a state or non-state actor and whether the target is a state or non-state entity[6]. In other words, political violence can be perpetrated by a wide range of actors and for several purposes, ranging from intimidation and repression of civilian populations to the use of force against other nations or non-state groups.

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[3] Carbonelli, M. (2018). *Violenza politica, terrorismo ed eversione: è necessario un inquadramento sistemico?* Safety & Security. Retrieved from: https://www.safetysecuritymagazine.com/articoli/violenza-politica-terrorismo-ed-eversione-e-necessario-un-inquadramento-sistemico/ (Last access: March 20, 2024).

[4] Della Porta, D. (2008). *Research on Social Movements and Political Violence*. Qualitative Sociology, Springer Science, 31, 221-230.

[5] Carbonelli, M. (2018). *Op. cit.*

[6] Kalyvas, S. (2019). *The landscape of political violence*, in Chenoweth, E. et al. "The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism", (Chapter 2), Oxford University Press.

1.1.1 Political violence by individuals and groups against civilians

Political violence manifested between opposing individuals or groups, without the active involvement of police or state security forces, can take various forms, including Ethnic conflict, Racial conflict, and Religious conflict.

Ethnic conflict arises when opposing population groups organize their ideological perspectives based on ethnic group membership, which includes language, culture, traditions, and history associated with a given location. These conflicts may endure for decades and be passed down from generation to generation, distinguishing themselves from other struggles by their deep historical and cultural continuity. In contrast, *racial conflict* involves various demographic groups based on a supposed biological taxonomy of mankind, which is mostly focused on observable physical traits. Race and ethnicity are two different ideas, despite their apparent similarities. Ethnicity is established on historical and cultural continuity, while race has ideological and pseudo-scientific overtones that have fostered false theories of racial superiority and inferiority. Finally, *religious conflict* results from discrepancies in spiritual beliefs and religious practices across various groups[7].

1.1.2 Political violence by individuals and organized groups against the state

Another type of political violence is perpetrated by individuals or groups against the state, which plays an important role in political contexts and is usually orchestrated by rebel or revolutionary movements trying to promote change or maintain the status quo through threats or violent actions. In this specific form of political violence, the concept of terrorism takes center stage, which according to NATO can be defined as: "The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives"[8]. Another definition of terrorism comes from the European Parliament and the Council of the

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[7] Ibidem
[8] NATO (2016). *NATO's military concept for defence against terrorism*, Retrieved from:
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69482.htm (Last access: March 21, 2024).

European Union. According to the directive on combating terrorism, terrorist offenses are actions carried out with the purpose of:

seriously intimidate a population, to unduly compel a government or an international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, or to seriously destabilise or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation[9].

However, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. As we will see below, many scholars have attempted to formulate a comprehensive definition of the term, but without success.

As stated by Carbonelli, the category of violence against the state also includes other significant concepts such as:

- *Rebellion*, which is defined as violent disruptive actions usually carried out by groups of people in an effort to protest alleged social and political injustices by purposefully causing harm to private property and other assets.

- *Revolution*, is defined as an organized effort by a section of the population with the intent to overthrow existing institutions and take control of state power. A variety of strategies are used to achieve this goal, including targeted attacks, symbolic kidnappings, widespread protests, and public unrest. The ultimate goal of these actions is to mobilize a significant portion of the population to lead an uprising that will enable them to take control of the territory and the state's system of government.

- *Guerrilla warfare,* which is a form of armed conflict conducted by locally organized groups, often paramilitary, against the armed forces of the government that controls the territory. It is typically conducted by local individuals or groups often supported by foreign powers, to achieve

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[9] The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2017). *Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA*. Official Journal of the European Union, L 88-6. Retrieved from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017L0541. (Last Access: June 18, 2024).

significant political change in the context of the territory in which they operate.

- *Civil war*, which denotes a wide-ranging armed conflict involving conflicting parties belonging to the same population and state. The aim of civil war is to overcome the adversary and institute a new political order within the country.

- *The coup d'état*, indicates an independent action carried out by one of the same state's apparatuses, such as the Armed Forces, with the goal of overturning the current political order of the public powers.

- *The strategy of tension*, promoted by deviant state institutions, consists of secretly encouraging and backing terrorist groups' violent actions against people, public property, and state representatives. The purpose is to accuse political groups or extreme bangs unrelated to the events, causing tension and terror in the public. This climate of insecurity promotes widespread support for reactionary and authoritarian political change, often at odds with democratic principles and civil liberties[10]. According to Ganser the term "tension" involves emotional strain and mental anxiety, while "strategy" pertains to the methods employed to induce such feelings. Terrorist attacks in public places, like railway stations or marketplaces, are commonly used tactics in the strategy of tension. A pivotal aspect is that, following the attack, the agents responsible for the act deceive the public by placing the blame on a political adversary through the manipulation of evidence. Tension strategy is thus a component of "psychological warfare" (PSYWAR). It aims to induce fear, confusion, and distrust by altering people's perceptions and behaviors without physically destroying them[11].
The strategy of tension was particularly evident during the "years of lead" in Italy and involved deviated apparatuses within the state secretly supporting violent actions carried out by terrorist groups. As Dondi notes, the concept of "strategy of tension" in Italy, enters legal language and is used by magistrates during investigations of terrorist acts. Specifically, in

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[10] Carbonelli, M. (2018). *Op. cit.*
[11] Ganser, D. (2014). *The "Strategy of Tension" in the Cold War Period*. Journal of 9/11 Studies, 39, pp. 1-19.

the ruling on the Peteano events, it is defined as a "conditioning strategy" that influences the relationship between the political system and society. This type of strategy involves the manipulation of events, prompting decisions that otherwise would not have been made. In addition, the criminal act is designed to change public opinion as well. Dondi explains that this strategy has a dual purpose: to alter both political decisions and public opinion[12].

1.1.3 State political violence against civilians

The third typology of political violence is that of the state against civilians, which is carried out by the state itself against the governed population. According to Carbonelli it can take various forms such as:

- *Genocide*, which is the calculated and systematic eradication of an entire population or a segment, because of their ethnicity, race, or religious beliefs.
- *Torture*, which entails inflicting severe physical and/or psychological suffering with the aim of punishment, seeking retribution, and extracting information. Victims of torture are often individuals identified by political, ethnic, racial or religious characteristics.
- *Violent actions by law enforcement or security forces*, which involve deliberate breaches of internationally recognized civil rights by a state. The main objective is often to impose strict control over the behavior of the population, restricting freedom of movement, expression, and assembly. Law enforcement violence is often aimed at intimidating the population and promoting obedient compliance with state rules and policies.
- *Top-level strategy of tension*, in which violent acts by terrorist organizations against people, property, and rival institutional representatives are covertly encouraged and supported by high-ranking government officials. The intention is to incite tension and panic in order to place the blame on political

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[12] Dondi, M. (2023). *L'eco del boato: Storia della strategia della tensione 1965-1974.* Italia: Editori Laterza.

parties or radical elements that were not responsible for the incidents and increase the concentration of power at the state's highest levels[13].

1.1.4 Political violence between states

Finally, the last typology of political violence is interstate violence. Carbonelli categorizes it into four main concepts:

- *State-sponsored terrorism* is the term used to describe covert operations carried out by foreign intelligence services of one state inside the borders of another state that is ruled by a different political authority, for the purpose of influencing the decisions and actions of the local government of the foreign territory. State-sponsored terrorist operations often have a subversive objective, namely, they aim to destabilize the local government or weaken its ability to govern effectively.
- *Supporting guerrilla warfare*, which entails giving weapons, money, and official backing to paramilitary organizations in other states.
- *Support for the strategy of tension* involves giving weapons, money, and official backing to terrorist organizations operating in other states or to foreign state apparatuses.
- *Interstate warfare*, which is the use of military forces from competing states during a military conflict[14].

1.2 Defining Terrorism: navigating the complexities of a contested term

The term "terrorism" has long been a subject of debate and contention within academic, political, and legal circles. The complex nature of terrorism makes its precise definition difficult to pin down, leading to divergent interpretations and perspectives. Despite ongoing efforts, there remains a lack of international

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[13] Carbonelli, M. (2018). *Op. cit.*
[14] Ibidem

consensus on a universally accepted definition of terrorism. As noted by Hoffman, the term "terrorism" first gained popularity during the French Revolution, with a positive meaning, unlike its current usage. It referred to the system known as "régime de la terreur" from 1793 to 1794, which sought to restore order amid the upheaval following the uprisings of 1789. After the French Revolution, the term "terrorism" became associated with the abuse of office and power[15].

As highlighted by Panzera, the first international norm governing terrorism is found in the Geneva Convention of November 16, 1937, for the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism. The League of Nations initiated this Convention in response to the October 9, 1934, assassination attempt on French Foreign Minister Barthou and King Alexander of Yugoslavia, which was carried out by Croatian terrorist Gueroguiev[16]. Said Convention, which never entered into force, qualified as acts of terrorism those "faits criminels dirigés contre un Etat et dont le but ou la nature est de provoquer la terreur chez des personnalités déterminées, des groupes de personnes ou dans le public"[17]. However, the Convention covered the then-known criminal manifestations of terrorism, such as attacks on heads of state or government, attacks on public buildings, and other crimes of common danger[18].

Nonetheless, as Blanc notes, if in the past, acts of terrorism were mainly defined as attacks directed against a state or its representatives, over time, this view has changed. Today, the criteria for identifying terrorism are much more diverse and less tied to the direct presence of the state as a target. For example, according to Article 421-1 of the French Penal Code, "Acts of terrorism" constitute crimes or offenses "en relation avec une entreprise individuelle ou collective ayant pour but de troubler gravement l'ordre public par l'intimidation ou la terreur."[19] This means

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[15] Hoffman, B. (2017). *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 3-4.

[16] Panzera, F. A. (1990). *La disciplina normativa sul terrorismo internazionale.* IAI Istituto Affari Internazionali, p. 1. Retrieved from: https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai9003.pdf. (Last access: March 25, 2024).

[17] League of Nations-Official Journal. (1938). *Convention pour la prévention et la répression du terrorisme (Genève, le 16 novembre 1937),* Article premier. Retrieved from: https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ls/RM/LoN_Convention_on_Terrorism.pdf. (Last Access: March 25, 2024).

[18] Panzera, F. A. (1990). *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

[19] Légifrance. *Code pénal, "Chapitre Ier: Des actes de terrorisme (Articles 421-1 à 421-8)".* Retrieved from: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000006070719/LEGISCTA000006149845/#LEGISCTA000006149845. (Last Access: March 26, 2024).

that an act can be considered terrorism even if it is not directed against the state, as long as it has the intent to destabilize public order through fear. The state therefore leads the fight against terrorism[20].

In the 1960s and thereafter, the international community developed several international legal instruments aimed at preventing and countering terrorist acts. These instruments represent an important step forward in the global legal framework to address the threat of terrorism through international cooperation and compliance with shared legal norms. Among the significant agreements, to name a few: the 1963 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft marked one of the earliest attempts to legally regulate particularly dangerous criminal acts like aircraft hijackings. In 1973, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons focused on safeguarding heads of state, foreign ministers, representatives, or officials of a state or international organization. The International Convention against the Taking of Hostages followed in 1979, and in 1997, the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings established universal jurisdiction over the unlawful and intentional use of explosives in public places. Lastly, in 1999, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism aimed to disrupt financial flows to terrorist groups[21].

However, the events of September 11, 2001, represented a watershed moment that dramatically heightened global awareness and urgency regarding terrorism, the international community was faced with an urgent need to effectively define and address the phenomenon of terrorism. This has necessitated a critical reassessment of existing international legal frameworks to more accurately define terrorism and strengthen responses to this evolving threat. In response to this challenge, in 2001, the European Union issued Common Position 2001/931/CFSP, which redefined terrorist acts as intentional acts, under national laws as a crime, capable of seriously

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[20] Blanc, F. and Bourdon, P. (éds.). (2018). *L'État et le terrorisme* (1-). Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne.
[21] United Nations. *International Legal Instruments. Office of Counter terrorism*. Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/international-legal-instruments. (Last Access: March 27, 2024).

intimidating the population and capable of causing serious harm to a state or international organization[22].

This definition, along with UN Security Council Resolution 1373 adopted in the same year, marked an important step forward in international cooperation to counter terrorism in all its manifestations. Resolution 1373 strongly condemns terrorism in all of its forms, highlighting the harm that it causes to global security and peace. It requires every member state to implement policies meant to stop and impede the funding of terrorist endeavors. It also highlights the necessity of international collaboration in locating, detaining, and prosecuting terrorism suspects[23].

When taken as a whole, these programs represent a determined attempt to combat terrorism from all angles, emphasizing the need for states to cooperate to defend international peace and security.

Despite these resolutions which provide frameworks for addressing terrorist activities comprehensively, scholars and practitioners alike have struggled to define terrorism, frequently highlighting different parts of its multidimensional nature. While some definitions emphasize the use or threat of violence to generate terror and achieve political, religious, or ideological goals, others highlight the purposeful targeting of civilians or non-combatants as a distinguishing feature[24]. In this context, the U.S. State Department defines terrorism as, "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."[25] While Hoffman credits the State Department for expanding the definition of terrorist acts to encompass "noncombatant targets," including military personnel and installations, he criticizes this definition for its failure to account for the psychological aspect of terrorism. He argues that terrorism

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[22] The Council of the European Union. (2001). *Council common position of 27 December 2001 on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism*, (2001/931/CFSP). Official Journal of the European Communities. Retrieved from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001E0931. (Last access: March 27, 2024).

[23] UN Security Council. (2001). *Resolution 1373 (2001) adopted by the Security Council at its 4385th meeting, on 28 September 2001*. Retrieved from: https://files.studiperlapace.it/spp_zfiles/docs/20050122122811.pdf. (Last access: March 26, 2024).

[24] Hoffman, B. (2017). *Op. cit.*

[25] The U.S Department of State. *Archive. Glossary.* Definition of Terrorism. Retrieved from: https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/info/c16718.htm#:~:text=Terrorism%3A%20Premeditated%2C%20politically%20motivated%20violence,subnational%20groups%20or%20clandestine%20agents. (Last Access: March 27, 2024).

is not just about the physical act of violence but also about instilling fear and creating psychological impact. Terrorist acts are deliberately designed to affect a broader audience beyond the immediate target, creating a sense of vulnerability and insecurity among the general population. The U.S. Department of Defense describes terrorism as, "the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political." This definition, according to Hoffman seems to be the most complete. It underscores the significance of the terrorist threat alongside the physical act of violence and emphasizes how terrorism targets not only governments but entire societies. However, as Hoffman points out, the lack of consensus on a single definition of terrorism is not limited to individual government agencies. Even experts and longstanding scholars in the field struggle to come to an agreement[26].

Within the broader, problematic area of defining terrorism, which has always been a challenging issue for academics, Martha Crenshaw and Gary LaFree define terrorism as a method or strategy of violence that is not confined to any particular political actor or ideology. This form of violence can be utilized to pursue diverse political objectives and is not necessarily justified by its ends. Crenshaw's definition focuses on politically motivated violence or the threat of it, primarily by nonstate actors, while also recognizing that states can participate in such actions. Building on Crenshaw's framework, it becomes evident that identifying the conditions conducive to terrorism is exceedingly complex. Contrary to what one might expect, deadly terrorist attacks are rare in most parts of the world and throughout most historical periods, making statistical analysis and policy development challenging. The frequent uncertainty or anonymity surrounding attackers further complicates efforts to punish them and understand the threat. Moreover, the transient and rapidly evolving nature of many terrorist individuals or groups hinders consistent policy responses and presents unique challenges for prevention strategies. These characteristics underscore the difficulties governments

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[26] Hoffman, B. (2017). *Op. cit.*

face in effectively countering terrorism and highlight the necessity of developing policies that consider these constraints[27].

In an earlier study conducted by Crenshaw, she argues that the studies of terrorism should focus on three primary questions: the underlying reasons behind its occurrence, the operational mechanics of terrorist activities, and the resultant social and political ramifications. Crenshaw posits terrorism as a manifestation of political conduct, that results from the deliberate choices made by logical members of terrorist groups. However, a thorough comprehension requires looking at the broader political, social, and economic situations that may make some environments more vulnerable to increased terrorist activity, as well as the contextual backdrop in which terrorism takes place. When identifying potential terrorist settings, it is critical to distinguish between *preconditions* and *precipitating factors*. Preconditions denote the structural conditions conducive to terrorism over an extended period, while precipitant factors encompass specific events preceding the actual occurrence of terrorist acts. Preconditions can be further categorized into enabling or permissive factors, which furnish opportunities for terrorism to manifest, and situations that directly encourage terrorist attacks. Precipitant factors represent the immediate triggers or catalysts that directly lead to the commission of terrorist acts. These factors are often specific events, actions, or conditions that create a fertile ground for extremist ideologies to manifest in violent behavior. The process of modernization provides a number of variables that contribute greatly to an atmosphere conducive to terrorism. The complexities of social and economic modernity generate both opportunities and limitations, which are facilitated by enhanced transportation and communication networks that allow for mobility and the dissemination of extreme ideas. In examining the direct causes of terrorism, Crenshaw turns her attention to the presence of concrete grievances among marginalized subgroups within larger populations, often stemming from ethnic discrimination or systemic inequalities. While such complaints may spark social movements to address injustices, they do not always lead to terrorist activity. Similarly, restricting political involvement by authoritarian regimes creates unhappiness and may serve as a stimulus for terrorist mobilization. Furthermore, a

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[27] Crenshaw, M. and La Free, G. (2017). *Countering Terrorism*. Brookings Institution Press.

recurring pattern emerges in which government actions, characterized by excessive force and repression in response to dissent or reform efforts, act as catalysts for terrorist reprisals. This cycle of government crackdowns and subsequent extremist reactions highlights the intricate dynamics that shape the terrorism phenomena[28].

Schmid's perspective echoes Crenshaw's analysis, emphasizing the multifaceted motivations driving individuals and groups toward terrorism. These motivations include redress for supposed grievances, personal or vicarious revenge, societal punishment, uprising, national liberation, and the advancement of diverse ideological, political, social, national, or religious causes and objectives[29]. The core of terrorism is its power to instill fear, panic, or even anxiety. These emotions are triggered by different aspects or key modes of terrorist acts, including their shocking brutality, indiscriminate nature, dramatic or symbolic meaning, and explicit disrespect for traditional laws of war and punishment. This confluence of variables is what makes terrorism so effective in instilling fear in the population[30]. In his effort to discover a broadly acceptable definition of terrorism, Schmid published a research note that summarizes the responses to a survey and devoted more than a hundred pages to his quest. Through the survey, he found out that nearly all respondents concurred that the definition ought to encompass "violence" or "force," while a significant majority also supported the inclusion of "politics"[31]. Even though Schmid acknowledges that it's futile to try to create a fully comprehensive definition and Laqueur believes it is impossible to define terrorism, Hoffman argues that despite these challenges, we can still make valuable differentiations between it and other forms of violence, identifying the distinctive features that classify it as a separate phenomenon of political violence[32].

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[28] Crenshaw, M. (1981). *The causes of Terrorism*. Vol. 13, No. 4. Comparative Politics, City University of New York, pp. 379-399.

[29] Schmid, A. P. (2012). *The Revised Academic Consensus Definition of terrorism.* Perspectives on Terrorism. Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 158-159.

[30] Schmid, A. P. (2023). *Defining terrorism*. International Centre for Counter terrorism Report. March 2023, p. 27. Retrieved from: https://www.icct.nl/sites/default/files/2023-03/Schmidt%20-%20Defining%20Terrorism_1.pdf. (Last Access: March 30, 2024).

[31] Schmid, A. P., et al. (2021). Counter-*Terrorism Studies: A Glimpse at the Current State of Research (2020/2021)*. Results from a Questionnaire Sent to Scholars and (Former) CT Practitioners. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, *15*(4), pp. 142-152.

[32] Hoffman, B. (2017). *Op. cit*., p. 36.

1.2.1   The Four waves of terrorism

To better understand the history and evolution of terrorism, David Rapoport, introduced the concept of "Four waves of terrorism". These waves offer a framework for examining how terrorist movements have changed historically, ideologically, and tactically[33]. According to Rapoport, a wave is "a cycle of activity in a given time period" [34]. An important aspect is its international character, since similar events take place across borders and are motivated by a shared dominant energy that determines the traits and interpersonal dynamics of the participating groups.

The first wave theorized by Rapoport is the "Anarchist wave", emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the midst of political and social instability. Anarchism, as an ideology, rejected hierarchical authority and advocated for the abolition of the state and other forms of coercive power. Anarchist movements arose because of severe economic injustice, labor exploitation, and political repression. They aimed to overthrow established power structures and use revolutionary methods to bring about a profound change in society. Motivations for engaging in terrorism during this period were deeply rooted in anarchist principles and beliefs. Anarchist terrorists saw violence as a valid form of resistance to oppressive regimes and economic exploitation. Their acts were motivated by a desire to address perceived grievances resulting from social injustices and economic disparities. Anarchist terrorists aimed to destabilize the current status quo and spark popular revolution in order to construct a stateless, classless society by targeting symbols of state authority, capitalist institutions, and governing elites. The tactics employed by anarchist terrorists during the first wave were characterized by clandestine operations, assassinations, bombings, and propaganda of the deed. During this time, notable instances of anarchist terrorism included assassinating heads of state, political leaders, and important people perceived to symbolize

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[33] Rapoport, D. C. (2004). *The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism*, in Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes (eds.), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press), pp. 46-73.
[34] Ivi, p.47.

oppressive regimes or capitalist interests. These acts of violence were designed to instill fear, destabilize authority, and mobilize support for anarchist beliefs among dissatisfied members of society.

The growth of nationalist and anti-colonial movements marks the second wave of terrorism, indicating a fundamental shift in the nature and reasons for terrorist activities. The "Anticolonial wave", which emerged predominantly in colonial regions during the mid-twentieth century, was characterized by a rebirth of nationalism and an escalation of struggles for independence and self-determination. The motivations for engaging in terrorism during the second wave were strongly entrenched in the desire for national liberation, resistance to foreign domination, and the assertion of cultural and ethnic identities. Colonial powers had long dominated indigenous populations, plundering resources and subjugating local tribes. In response, nationalist movements formed, trying to recapture sovereignty, restore cultural heritage, and deconstruct oppressive colonial structures.

During this time, terrorists frequently targeted colonial authorities, military sites, and economic interests that were viewed as emblems of foreign dominance and exploitation. Nationalist groups frequently used guerrilla warfare, sabotage, and targeted killings to undermine colonial power and incite popular opposition.

The third wave of terrorism, characterized by leftist revolutionary movements, reflects a period of severe ideological conflict against capitalist structures and perceived social injustices. The "New Left wave", which emerged predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s, was distinguished by the emergence of militant leftist organizations aiming for fundamental societal reform through armed conflict and revolutionary means. Leftist terrorism aimed at a variety of intellectual, political, and social aims. In addition to overthrowing authoritarian regimes, leftist terrorists sought to oppose imperialism, deconstruct colonial legacies, and confront capitalist hegemony on domestic and international levels. They also aimed to build working-class solidarity, empower oppressed communities, and promote class-based revolution in order to achieve social justice and equality. During the third wave, leftist terrorist groups used armed revolt, urban guerilla warfare, and targeted assassinations of political and economic leaders identified as agents of capitalist oppression. However, as stated by Rapoport, first and third-wave assassinations had

different reasoning. Victims targeted during the first wave of terrorism were typically individuals assassinated due to their public office or prominent positions. In contrast, assassinations during the New Left wave more frequently served as punitive measures.

Groups like the "Weather Underground" in the United States, the "Red Army Faction" in Germany, and the "Red Brigades" in Italy are a few notable examples of leftist terrorism during this time. Along with the growth of transnational networks and alliances among leftist revolutionary groups, the third wave of terrorism also saw cooperation with other international liberation struggles and anti-imperialist movements. These relationships made it easier for strategies, materials, and ideological support to be shared, which increased the effect of leftist terrorism on a worldwide scale[35].

Finally, the emergence of religious extremism and transnational terrorism in the fourth wave of terrorism marks a dramatic change in the nature of terrorism, with the entry of new geopolitical and ideological forces. The "Religious wave" which began in the late 20th century, is characterized by the emergence of radical Islamist movements and their involvement in international acts of violence. Motivations for engaging in terrorism during the fourth wave are diverse and multifaceted, reflecting a wide range of ideological, political, and socio-economic factors. The defense and propagation of radical interpretations of Islam, which frequently advocate for the creation of Islamic states according to Sharia law, are at the center of this movement. The ultimate objective of many Islamist terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaeda and ISIS, is to establish a transnational Islamic caliphate that crosses national boundaries and establishes religious authority over areas with a majority of Muslims. The religious terrorism was motivated not only by religious goals but also by a sense of duty to oppose perceived Western imperialism and interference in Muslim-majority countries. Many Islamist terrorist organizations perceive Western powers, particularly the United States and its allies, as antagonists attempting to impose their political, economic, and cultural influence on Muslim nations. Acts of terrorism are viewed as a means of fighting and confronting Western hegemony, as well as exacting vengeance for perceived injustices and

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[35] Ivi, p. 57-60.

crimes against Muslims. The tactics employed by Islamist terrorist groups during the fourth wave are characterized by a combination of asymmetrical warfare, guerrilla tactics, and indiscriminate violence targeting civilians. Suicide bombings, mass shootings, and hostage-taking are common tactics used to instill fear, spread chaos, and advance the ideological objectives of extremist organizations. This wave also features a transnational component, with Islamist terrorist groups operating across borders and collaborating with like-minded organizations and individuals all across the world. The September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York City stands as one of the most significant and devastating acts of this kind of terrorism[36]. Moreover, the rise of the internet and social media has made it easier to spread extremist ideology, recruit adherents, and coordinate terrorist acts on a global scale, providing new obstacles to counterterrorism efforts. Indeed, one could argue that the emergence of social media and the Internet has had a greater influence on terrorism than the invention of new violent techniques. However, according to Schmid, violence and propaganda are the two core ideas that underpin both historical and modern terrorism[37]. As Schmid observed in 1980, in understanding terrorism, it's crucial to recognize that violence alone doesn't encompass its essence. Rather, terrorism is primarily a tool of propaganda. Both violence and propaganda share the objective of altering behavior, with violence seeking coercion and propaganda aiming for persuasion. Terrorism combines these elements, using violence against a single victim to influence and manipulate a broader audience. The immediate victim serves as a mere instrument, with the ultimate goal being to create a significant impact on society as a whole[38].

While David Rapoport's theory of four waves of terrorism is widely regarded as influential in the field of terrorism studies, Parker and Sitter offer a groundbreaking perspective by reconceptualizing terrorism as "strains," thereby offering a more nuanced depiction of its diverse manifestations. In the article "*The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains*", they argue that this innovative approach better captures the empirical reality of terrorism and facilitates a deeper

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[36] Ivi, pp. 61-65.
[37] Schmid, A. P. (2023). *Op. cit.,* p. 23.
[38] Schmid, A. P. and De Graaf, J. (1980). *Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media. An Exploratory Analysis with a Dutch Case Study.* Leiden: C.O.M.T., p. 7.

understanding of how terrorist tactics evolve and proliferate among various groups and regions. They identify four strains: Socialist, Nationalist, Religious and Exclusionist. According to Parker and Sitter, the concept of distinct "waves" in modern terrorism is an oversimplification. Instead, terrorism arises from various circumstances around the world where individuals or groups resort to violence to achieve political change. This phenomenon has persisted for over a century, coinciding with significant advancements in weaponry and mass communication during the 19th century, as well as the rise of extremist ideologies. These factors combined to create four primary strains of modern terrorism. Throughout the 20th century, further development in technology and ideology significantly impacted these four types. It is likely that future trends in terrorism will be shaped by continued advancements in these areas[39].

In response to this new theory, David Rapoport offers a critical analysis. While acknowledging the article's attempt to pose insightful questions about terrorism theory, Rapoport finds the critique of the Wave Theory to be lacking in depth and rigor. Moreover, he questions the utility of the proposed "*Strain Theory*". The author's critique centered on the perceived lack of engagement between the two theories and what he saw as a failure to account for the phases of expansion and contraction within terrorism. This omission, he argued, resulted in a disconnection between the trajectory of the Strain theory and its alignment with political contexts or temporal dynamics[40].

Kaplan defends Rapoport's wave theory by acknowledging Parker and Sitter's article's insight into history but noting that "it never really addresses terrorism at all"[41]. Instead, it approaches history from a cultural historian's perspective, which is appreciated, however, it overlooks the crucial fact that terrorism is inherently oppositional.

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[39] Parker, T. and Sitter, N. (2015). *The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains*. Routledge.
[40] Rapoport, D. C. (2015). *It Is Waves, Not Strains*. Routledge.
[41] Kaplan, J. (2016). *A Strained Criticism of Wave Theory*. Routledge, pp. 228-235.

1.3 Unraveling Right-Wing Terrorism: Ideology, impact, and evolution

In the context of terrorism, it is critical to recognize the importance of right-wing terrorism as an influential aspect. While the attention tends to focus on the various ideological movements indicated by Rapoport's waves, such as anarchist, nationalist, leftist, and religious extremism, right-wing terrorism occupies a significant place within this spectrum of ideological violence. According to the Institute for Economics & Peace, the term "far-right" encompasses a political ideology centered on elements such as strident nationalism, fascism, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-immigration sentiments, chauvinism, nativism, and xenophobia[42]. Another definition of right-wing terrorism is given by Europol, according to which individuals and groups of violent right-wing extremists utilize, encourage, threaten, legitimize, or advocate violence and hatred in order to achieve political or ideological aims. They aspire to transform the entire political, social, and economic system into an authoritarian model, rejecting the democratic order, values, and fundamental rights[43].

As noted by Dafinger and Florin, the emergence of modern right-wing terrorism was intricately linked to the surge of antisemitism and the proliferation of far-right political movements in the early 20th century. During this period, Europe witnessed a significant escalation in various forms of violence. Right-wing extremists amalgamated ultranationalist, antisemitic, and fascist ideologies with terrorist tactics pioneered by revolutionaries and anarchists around the 20th century. However, it is important to note that right-wing terrorism was not merely a product of left-wing political violence. Instead, it formed part of a broader spectrum of violence employed by ultranationalists, fascists, and National Socialists to undermine liberal democratic governments and conservative authoritarian regimes across both Eastern and Western Europe. These groups not only drew inspiration

[42] Institute for Economics & Peace. (2019). *Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*, Sydney, November, p. 45. Retrieved from: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2019-web.pdf. (Last access: March 27, 2024).

[43] Europol. (2023). *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg., p. 43. Retrieved from: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/European%20Union%20Terrorism%20Situation%20and%20Trend%20report%202023.pdf (Last access: March 27, 2024).

from their adversaries but also from the violent practices of the transnational far-right movement[44].

Some authors dive deeper into the historical backdrop of right-wing terrorism, citing key events in the United States that predicted its emergence. For example, Carola Dietze contends that President Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865 is an early example of what can be regarded as modern right-wing terrorism. In this interpretation, John Wilkes Booth's assassination attempt meant not only to murder Lincoln but also to block the advancement of the abolitionist movement, trying to uphold the current social and racial system[45]. Moreover, historians have studied the violent acts of the Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction Era, indicating that they represent another manifestation of right-wing terrorism[46]. Though these events took place in the United States, it is unclear if they had a direct impact on the eventual emergence of right-wing terrorism in Europe during the 20th century. During the course of the 20th century, right-wing radicalism took various forms across Europe, which were marked by authoritarianism, antisemitism, and ultranationalism. Later, these ideological currents would combine with different sociopolitical elements to influence the development of right-wing terrorism across the continent. Right-wing violence was influenced by both the First World War and the power dynamics of the time. Dealing with the increasingly assertive right-wing movements presented considerable issues for the authoritarian regimes that emerged in Eastern Europe. Initially, these movements directed their violence towards political adversaries across the liberal and left-wing spectrum, as well as towards Jewish communities. However, by the 1930s, they shifted their focus towards targeting representatives of the very authoritarian states they sought to undermine[47].

Connected to right-wing violence is undoubtedly the fascist ideology. In the past, historians held that fascism had developed in various European nation-states

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[44] Dafinger, J. and Florin, M. (2022). *A Transnational History of Right-Wing Terrorism, Political Violence and the Far Right in Eastern and Western Europe since 1900*. Routledge.
[45] Dietze, C. (2021). *The Invention of Terrorism in Europe, Russia, and the United States*. New York: Verso Books.
[46] Trelease, A. W. (1979). *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press.
[47] Dafinger, J. and Florin, M. (2022). *Op. cit*. p. 5.

as a response to the interwar crisis, addressing domestic national issues specific to each country. However, it is widely accepted now that fascism was a global phenomenon that spread throughout Europe and beyond as a worldwide movement[48].

Fascist violence found its origins in deeply ingrained anti-Semitic and white supremacist ideologies. An emblematic example of this organized violence is the fascist action squads, paramilitary groups composed of fascist militants that operated mainly in the 1920s. These groups used violence and intimidation against political opponents, such as socialists, communists, and trade unionists, to destabilize and subvert democratic institutions. As noted by Gentile, within a few months, fascist squads destroyed most of the workers' organizations in the Po Valley. In this region, the Socialist Party and the Red Leagues had gained almost total control over political and economic life, often using oppressive methods against the bourgeoisie and the workers themselves. For this reason, the offensive of the fascist squads was welcomed by all anti-socialist parties, who saw it as a defense of the nation and property. The action squads, also known as black shirts, were soon absorbed into fascism and acted with the tacit support of local authorities[49], contributing to Benito Mussolini's rise to power and thus to his establishment.

Fascist squads found wide support among World War I veterans, who felt betrayed by the government for lack of recognition and economic support. Their participation brought a high degree of militarization and discipline to the ranks of the Blackshirts. This link between fascism and the veterans of the war is exemplified by the Arditi, elite assault units who, after the war, joined the fascist movement en masse, bringing their skills and fighting sentiment[50]. Their transition from war heroes to instruments of political repression illustrates how fascism used former military personnel to consolidate its power through violence. As stated by Francescangeli, "apologeti del gesto audace e della mistica del sangue e della morte", they were known for their violent energy. At first, their political stance was

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[48] Alcalde, A. (2020). *The Transnational Consensus: Fascism and Nazism in Current Research*. Contemporary European History, 29(2), Cambridge University Press, 243-252.
[49] Gentile, E. (2013). *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione*. Italia: Editori Laterza.
[50] Grasso, A. (2014). *L'Arditismo dopo Fiume: Arditi d'Italia e Arditi del Popolo*. Humanities, Messina.

aligned with Sansepolcrist fascism. However, they opposed War Minister Caviglia's proposal to turn them into a special department in charge of public order. Although their involvement in Piazza San Sepolcro and the storming of the editorial office of «L'Avanti » has been confirmed, their role in the agitations of the Red Biennium is equally proven. In 1920, in fact, Arditi, futurists, and D'Annunzians began to move away from fascism. The captain of the Arditi, Vittorio Ambrosini, formed a communist-style organization called "Arditi Rossi". Later, in 1921, another organization, the "Arditi del Popolo", was born with the aim of countering the violence of the fascist squads. Persecuted by the regime throughout the 20-year fascist period, the Arditi del Popolo passed the baton to the militiamen of the International Brigades in Spain and, later, to the partisan formations of the Resistance[51].

As Francescangeli argues, it is important to note that a part of Arditism, albeit a minority, distanced itself from fascism and stood against it, "sperimentando sulla propria pelle (…) che per contrastare quella peste bruna che contagerà poi l'Europa le parole non sarebbero state sufficienti."[52]

In recent years, right-wing terrorism has gained prominence on the world scene, posing a substantial danger to regional security and stability. As stated by Görder and Chavannes, data collected by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) show that the number of far-right terrorist incidents in the United States and Europe has significantly grown over the last decade[53].

However, according to Koehler, there exists a discrepancy in the level of attention attributed to the threat posed by the extreme right compared to that of Islamist extremism within the public discourse. Nonetheless, actual evidence highlights the serious threat presented by violent right-wing extremists in Western countries. Following such external disasters, far-right parties frequently see surges in electoral support, as illustrated by the National Front's considerable gains in the

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[51] Francescangeli, E. (2011). *Tra reazione e rivoluzione. Arditi e dannunziani.* In "Dalla trincea alla piazza. L'irruzione dei giovani nel Novecento", a cura di Marco De Nicolò. Viella, pp. 171-184.
[52] Ibidem
[53] Görder, T. and Chavannes, E. (2020). *The Blind Eye Turned to the Far-right*. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, p. 2.

aftermath of the Paris terror attacks in 2015. Furthermore, the link between terrorist attacks and increases in hate crimes and right-wing violence emphasizes the complex interaction between extremism and public opinion. For example, in the United States, anti-Muslim hate crimes and right-wing terrorism occurrences skyrocketed following the 9/11 attacks, illustrating the interconnectivity of global events and domestic security issues[54].

The rise of nationalist and far-right parties in Europe in recent years highlights the complex relationship between foreign events and domestic political landscapes. The increasing electoral success of far-right populist parties is evident throughout Europe, with previously marginalized parties now gaining representation and influence in various parliaments across the continent. As stated by Azani et al., the policies, objectives, and methods used by these far-right political parties varied in each country, reflecting internal dynamics, social conventions, and cultural values specific to each constituency. Despite this variation, far-right populist groups share an ideological framework based on xenophobia, nativism, anti-elitism, and a predisposition for authoritarian rule. Furthermore, throughout the broader range of populist European political parties, Euroscepticism persists, reflected in increased opposition to European integration and EU engagement in member states' domestic affairs. For example, the electoral successes of parties such as the National Front in France, the Sweden Democrats in Sweden, the League in Italy, and Golden Dawn in Greece have been fueled by a combination of anti-immigrant sentiments and Euroscepticism, particularly in light of the ongoing refugee crisis and Islamist-motivated terrorist attacks[55].

The global rise of far-right populism poses a twofold threat to minority communities. First, radical perspectives are becoming more common in mainstream political discourse. Far-right groups strategically use current-affairs concerns like immigration, economic disparities, and unemployment to spread xenophobic and racist views, making them more acceptable to the public. By capitalizing on these issues, these parties radicalize public discourse and move the political landscape

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[54] Koehler, D. (2016). *Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in Europe: Current Developments and Issues for the Future*. *PRISM*, *6*(2), pp. 85-87.

[55] Azani, E., et al. (2020). Far Right — The Organizational Change. In *The Far Right — Ideology, Modus Operandi and Development Trends* (pp. 37–55). International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)., p. 41.

more to the right. Second, dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of tangible results from far-right policies may lead more radical adherents to resort to physical violence. As far-right and populist parties tone down their rhetoric and ideas to appeal to a wider audience, their more radical supporters feel excluded and deceived by the failure to deliver on promised solutions. As a result, many individuals lose faith in democratic processes and the political establishment, perceiving violence as the only legitimate option for resolving their complaints. This despair with democratic routes can justify physical violence and acts of terrorism as a final resort[56].

The potential collaboration between hidden far-right groups and established political parties is particularly concerning, as it could intensify the threat of right-wing terrorism. The surge of far-right violence against targeted communities, such as Muslims, or other oppressed groups, highlights the importance of vigilant surveillance and proactive actions to combat extremist narratives and prevent hate-based ideas from becoming normalized.

As noted by Koehler, in recent history, severe right-wing violence has had a long-term impact on Western communities. A few high-profile incidents serve as vivid reminders of the lethal repercussions of right-wing extremism. For example, in 1980, a breakaway cell of the Italian right-wing terrorist group New Order staged a blast at the Bologna train station, killing 85 people and injuring over 200 more. In one of the many deceptions about the Bologna massacre, on Jan. 13, 1981, documents traceable to terrorists involved in other bombings such as the Munich massacre were found on the Taranto-Milan train, which was once again stopping in Bologna[57]. The Munich massacre, where a neo-Nazi bombed the Munich Oktoberfest on September 26, 1980, was the biggest terrorist act in post-World War II Germany, killing 13 people and injuring over 2,000. In April 1995, Timothy McVeigh and his accomplices carried out a car bombing at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, which became one of the most notorious acts of right-wing terrorism. Inspired by the right-wing extremist novel "The Turner Diaries," the attack killed 168 people and injured over 600 more, making it one of

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[56] Ivi, p. 44.
[57] Sentenza della Corte di Assise di Bologna del 06 aprile 2022, R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, p. 465.

the bloodiest terrorist acts in US history, until the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Furthermore, in 2009, Ian Davison, a British neo-Nazi, and his son were arrested for planning chemical weapons attacks under the guise of the right-wing terrorist organization Aryan Strike Force[58]. Davison's arrest highlighted the growing threat faced by right-wing extremism, particularly in the context of domestic terrorism. Another perspective is provided by Auger, who examines whether the current transnational surge of right-wing violence could be considered a "fifth wave" within Rapoport's framework of waves and underscores the increasingly recognized transnational threat posed by violence perpetrated by individuals and groups influenced by far-right ideologies. This worldwide phenomenon is highlighted by the self-perception of many right-wing terrorists, who see themselves as part of an international conflict[59]. For example, Anders Breivik's terrible 2011 attack in Norway, which killed 77 people, continues to act as an inspiration for white nationalists worldwide[60]. Expanding upon this notion, Cai and Landon, highlight a troubling trend of emulation and tribute among subsequent attackers following multiple acts of mass murder committed by white nationalists. For example, the gunman responsible for the Christchurch tragedy in New Zealand paid tribute to a Canadian guy who opened fire in a mosque in Quebec City in 2017, symbolically inscribing his name on one of the guns used in the attack. Similarly, the Quebec City shooter was inspired by Dylann Roof, who infamously massacred nine people at a black church in South Carolina in 2015. Furthermore, Elliot Rodger, notorious for his misogynistic and racist intentions in a 2014 rampage, was revered by at least four white extremists who went on to commit their own acts of violence. These horrific acts occurred amid a larger backdrop of growing white supremacist and xenophobic terrorism across Western nations, often targeting Muslim communities, immigrants, and other oppressed groups[61].

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[58] Koehler, D. (2016). *Op. cit*. p. 88.

[59] Auger, V. A. (2020). *Right-Wing Terror: A Fifth Global Wave?* Perspectives on Terrorism, 14(3), 87–97.

[60] Cai, W., and Landon, S. (2019). *Attacks by White Extremists Are Growing. So Are Their Connections,* April 3, 2019, *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/03/world/white-extremist-terrorism-christchurch.html. (Last access: March 27, 2024).

[61] Ibidem

According to the Europol report on Terrorism situation and trend, the increase in convictions for right-wing terrorism-related acts continued in 2022, with 23 instances compared to 15 the year before. These cases were prosecuted in multiple European countries, including France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Slovakia. Notably, in Germany, a defendant was sentenced to five and a half years in jail for planning a major act of violence against the state, weapons violations, possessing explosive ingredients, and fraud. His intended targets were high-ranking German politicians, whom he saw as being overly supportive of refugee programs[62].

As stated by Europol, the ideologies of "SIEGE" and "accelerationism" have arisen as important and powerful beliefs within online extremist networks. "SIEGE," based on the ideas of neo-Nazi philosopher James Mason, argues for the use of violence and terror techniques to destabilize society and cause the breakdown of current social and political structures. Accelerationism, on the other hand, holds that society breakdown can be hastened by exacerbating current tensions and accelerating disruptive forces, eventually opening the way for the development of a new order founded on radical ideals[63].

According to Azani et al., the diffuse character of the far-right movement, along with its inclination towards lone-wolf attacks and 'leaderless resistance' strategies, presents considerable obstacles to detection, oversight, and mitigation. The modern far-right functions in a post-organizational form, make it harder to identify than centralized terrorist groups. Because of this decentralized structure and the vast online network of far-right, fascist, neo-Nazi, and white supremacist radicals, potential terrorists can avoid being discovered. Today, most radicalization, communication, and coordination take place online through a variety of unofficial message boards, discussion boards, and image boards. The scope of terrorist activities has increased due to this massive, ideologically unified, international digital network, which has also accelerated the radicalization process and the spread of ideological influence[64].

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[62] Europol. (2023). *Op. cit*. p. 49.
[63] Ivi, pp. 50-52.
[64] Azani, E., et al. (2020). *Op. cit*, p. 38.

Moreover, the Internet assumed new importance within the movement, embraced, as Duke states, as "the tool for the White revolution"[65].

The physical world gave way to the cybersphere as the main operating environment for extremist activities under this new organizational paradigm. It was used as a vector for community building, radicalization, mobilization, and coordination. This transition underscores the importance of addressing the digital dimensions of extremism and it brought international and European organizations to adapt to this new challenge. Moreover, there has been a concerted effort to strengthen international cooperation and information sharing among law enforcement agencies and intelligence services to effectively address transnational threats emanating from the internet. Despite these advancements, the dynamic nature of the online environment presents ongoing challenges.

This demonstrates the ongoing threat that right-wing extremism poses, emphasizing the necessity of ongoing surveillance and enforcement actions throughout Europe.

1.4 Right- and Left-wing terrorism in Italy

Modern right-wing terrorism emerged in Western Europe in the 1970s, with Italy standing out as one of the most affected countries by this phenomenon. The so-called "years of lead" (Italian: Anni di Piombo), refer to a period characterized by political turmoil and violent conflict that occurred in Italy during the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. This era was marked by an increase in terrorist attacks, political assassinations, and extensive civil unrest, which was generally blamed on numerous extremist groups working on both the far-left and far-right sides of the political spectrum. The term "years of lead" indicates the high degree of bullet-related violence during this period. Ideological disputes, societal tensions, and the presence of radical groups attempting to overthrow the current political order all contributed to the bloodshed. As stated by Ruberto: "quelli sono stati anni terribili in cui sono state messe a soqquadro intere città e uccise con sistematica ferocia persone

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[65] Duke, D. (1999). *The coming white revolution: Born on the Internet*, as cited in Azani, E. et al. (2020). Ivi. p. 40.

innocenti e indifese: semplici cittadini, uomini delle forze dell'ordine, giornalisti, avvocati, magistrati."[66]

As recounted by Oliva, Italy in the 1960s was a nation undergoing a profound transformation. On one front stood a conservative, entrenched Italy, steeped in traditional values and prejudices. Conversely, there emerged a progressive Italy, weary of entrenched right-wing ideologies and yearning for change. These tumultuous years witnessed fervent feminist movements advocating for women's rights, alongside significant economic advancements, a surge in migration from the southern regions to the industrialized north, and the struggles of the new working class[67].

In the backdrop of Italy's political turmoil of the 1960s, the Piazza Fontana bombing stands out as a pivotal event. This bombing, which occurred on December 12, 1969, in Milan, marked a critical turning point in Italy's post-war history.

The bombing at Piazza Fontana, which targeted the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura building, killed 17 people and injured more than 80. Initially, blame was placed on anarchist and left-wing extremist groups, resulting in a wave of arrests and crackdowns on political opposition. However, further investigations found indications of right-wing involvement, implying a larger conspiracy to destabilize the country and discredit leftist groups. The Piazza Fontana bombing uncovers an intricate pattern of deception, corruption, and involvement of secret services and various political figures.

During the 1970s and 1980s, right-wing terrorism continued with a series of attacks by groups such as Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale. These groups aimed to destabilize the government and counter the growing leftist movement in the country. Terrorist attacks, often targeting politicians, left-wing activists, and trade unionists, contributed to a climate of fear and uncertainty throughout Italy.

Mention should be made in this context of the tragic Bologna Massacre of 1980, which would have a profound and lasting impact on the country's history. This event marks a turning point in the political and social landscape of the time, highlighting

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[66] Ruberto, C. (2018). *Il ruolo del pubblico ministero e la legislazione dell'emergenza.* In "Il terrorismo di destra e di sinistra. In Italia e in Europa. Storici e magistrati a confronto", a cura di Carlo Fumian e Angelo Ventrone. Padova University Press, p. 299.
[67] Oliva, G. (2019). *Anni di piombo e di tritolo*. Italia: Mondadori.

the deep divisions and ideological tensions that characterized Italian society. The Bologna Massacre, which will be the subject of further analysis throughout this thesis, is set in a context of political violence and terrorism from both the right and the left, offering a significant glimpse of the complex Italian reality of that period. Panvini states that, during the years of lead, right-wing and left-wing terrorism never directly confronted each other. The Red Brigades, for instance, never issued any public statements condemning the neo-fascist massacres, not even the infamous Bologna bombing during the height of their own violent campaign. This lack of confrontation is particularly striking when compared to similar periods of political unrest around the world, where rival groups often engaged in open conflict. In Italy, however, the years of lead were characterized by a sharp contrast between extra-parliamentary left movements and neo-fascist groups. Violent clashes between the extreme right and the extreme left represented one of the most significant experiences in the initiation of organized violence. Often, these clashes constituted the first step for entry into terrorist organizations[68].

In the context of right-wing terrorism, it is interesting to highlight the concept of the international right-wing network analyzed by Picco in her book "Liaisons dangereuses: Les extrêmes droites en France et en Italie (1960-1984)". In her in-depth study of right-wing terrorism in Italy and France, Pauline Picco examines the connections between extremist movements in the two countries, revealing long-term bilateral ties that solidified the far right in Europe. Focusing on the financial, ideological, and operational ties between the Italian Social Movement (MSI) and the French Front National, Picco highlights the crucial role of the MSI in supporting the FN in the post-Secolo Nuovo period. She also analyzes the importance of periodicals in shaping far-right ideologies, showing how Italian publications helped elevate French thinkers as figures of reference[69]. In another publication, Picco, noting the constant interaction between the Italian subversive far-right and French militants during the 1960s-80s, explores how these bilateral exchanges were part of a broader anti-communist and counter-subversive network

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[68] Panvini, G. (2010). *Lo scontro mancato tra terrorismo nero e terrorismo rosso nell'Italia degli anni di piombo*. In "Il libro degli anni di piombo", a cura di Marc Lazar e Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci, Rizzoli, pp. 55-69.
[69] Picco, P. (2017). *Liaisons dangereuses: Les extrêmes droites en France et en Italie (1960-1984)*. Editor: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

extending across Europe, involving various Western intelligence services determined to combat communism at any cost. Despite generational changes within the European far-right during those years, figures like the former members of the Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS) and Stefano Delle Chiaie maintained a central role in the transnational right-wing subversion. In fact, during his time on the run, Stefano Delle Chiaie regularly stayed in France and benefited from the support of Jacques Bonomo, a former extremist and friend of far-right leaders in the Marseille region. Solidarity between right-wing extremists in France extended beyond the most extreme bangs to include the major parties that favored a legalist approach. This demonstrated the strong interconnectivity between the various far-right currents in France and Italy and demonstrated their substantial cooperation. Despite ideological and tactical differences, the various far-right groups were able to collaborate effectively, facilitating the exchange of resources and strengthening movements at the transnational level[70].

Within the framework of the years of lead, the term "strategia della tensione" (strategy of tension) was coined to characterize the hidden method used by certain individuals to foment conflict, induce fear, and justify harsh actions. This method entailed orchestrating acts of violence and terrorism, which were often attributed to extremist groups, in order to create an environment of fear and instability conducive to authoritarian forces consolidating control.

Amidst the social, political, and economic turbulence of the era, red terrorism emerged as a radical counterforce. Fueled by deep-seated grievances such as social inequality, disenchantment among the youth, and perceived capitalist exploitation, leftist terrorist organizations sought to upend the established order. Fumian emphasizes the complexity of the coexistence of right-wing and left-wing terrorism during the years of lead in Italy, a period that saw alternations and resurgences of both movements. In his opinion, this coexistence represents a significant historical problem that deserves more attention than it has received so far. Understanding how and why both types of terrorism emerged and developed in

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[70] Picco, P. (2018). *Sostegni e solidarietà d'Oltre Alpe: l'eversione di destra tra Italia e Francia tra gli anni sessanta e gli anni ottanta.* In "Il terrorismo di destra e di sinistra. In Italia e in Europa. Storici e magistrati a confronto", a cura di Carlo Fumian e Angelo Ventrone. Padova University Press, pp. 153-165.

parallel is crucial to a complete understanding of this period. Fumian also highlights the remarkable resilience of political violence to state repression. Despite the repressive efforts of the authorities, terrorism-related violence persisted for about fifteen years, deeply marking the history of the Italian Republic with acts of bloodshed and terror. This period of prolonged violence is particularly significant when compared with other European experiences of revolutionary political terrorism, which have not shown the same capacity of persistence[71].

As noted by Ventura, red terrorism in Italy aimed to counteract the growing power of trade unions and the "historic compromise," trends aimed at consolidating the Italian political and social system by profoundly altering it[72]. In Italy, several prominent leftist terrorist organizations emerged during this period, each with its own philosophy, methods, and goals. These groups functioned within a larger context of social upheaval and political instability, aiming to challenge existing power structures and effect revolutionary change. The Red Brigades, Nuclei Armati Proletari (NAP), and Prima Linea were Italy's most prominent leftist terrorist organizations. Their arsenal comprised armed violence and precision strikes, all orchestrated with the explicit aim of destabilizing the state and dismantling the capitalist structure. Their ultimate vision was nothing short of revolutionary: to supplant the prevailing system with a new social order rooted in Marxist or communist principles. The Red Brigades' attacks, in particular, represented some of the darkest and most shocking moments in Italian history. Known for the kidnappings of high-profile political figures, such as former Prime Minister Aldo Moro, and the murders of politicians, magistrates, policemen, and members of the armed forces, Red terrorism had a lasting impact on Italian society, leading to a climate of fear, suspicion, and political instability.

According to Oliva, these two opposing subversive phenomena arise from the same reality of Italy as a "failed country" and feed off each other[73]. This categorization implies that Italy experienced systemic failures in government and social cohesiveness, during the years of lead, providing fertile ground for

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[71] Fumian, C. (2018). *Il problema dello Stato tra verità storica e verità giudiziaria.* In "Il terrorismo di destra e di sinistra. In Italia e in Europa. Storici e magistrati a confronto", a cura di Carlo Fumian e Angelo Ventrone. Padova University Press, pp. 3-12.
[72] Ventura, A. (2010). *Per una storia del terrorismo italiano.* Italia: Donzelli.
[73] Oliva, G. (2019). *Op. cit.*

extreme ideology and violent deeds. Moreover, left-wing and right-wing terrorism in Italy were not isolated phenomena but were interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The actions of one group often served as a catalyst for the radicalization and mobilization of the other, leading to a cycle of violence and retaliation that further destabilized Italian society. According to Panvini's analysis, a defining element that united right-wing and left-wing terrorism during the years of lead was ideological extremism. This extremism was embodied in the conception of one's political identity as radically antithetical and inherently opposed to the democratic parliamentary system. In other words, both right-wing and left-wing terrorists saw themselves as opponents of the democratic system, rejecting the principles of gradualism, negotiation, and mediation that are its fundamental pillars. Political scientist Norberto Bobbio elaborated on this idea, arguing that although the ideologies of the left and right are inherently opposed, their extremist bangs can find points of convergence and harmony. This means that although they diverge widely in their ultimate goals and political agendas, extremists on both sides may share some common tactics and attitudes, such as violence and rejection of the democratic system.[74]

During the years of lead in Italy, violence and terrorism represented an extreme manifestation of political violence, connected to the search for a position in the space of social and political contestation fueled by a deep distrust of existing institutions and a desire to radically transform the social and political order.

Comparing left-wing and right-wing terrorism in Italy highlights the complexities of victory and loss in the fight against extremism. While both forms of terrorism have been officially addressed, the persistence of their ideologies suggests that the battle is ongoing. Despite efforts to dismantle terrorist networks and counter extremist violence, radical ideals, and extremist beliefs continue to persist in the fabric of society. This persistence poses a new and ever-present security threat, as such ideologies can serve as a catalyst for violent and destabilizing action. Moreover, right-wing and fascist ideology continues to be a significant incidence, not only in Italy but also around the world. Manifestations of xenophobia, racism, and ethnic nationalism remain widespread, fueled by extremist

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[74] Panvini, G. (2010). *Op. cit.*

groups and a polarized political climate. For example, the rise of anti-immigrant and anti-minority rhetoric in many countries indicates a lingering suspicion and hostility toward those considered 'other,' fueling social tensions and increasing the risk of intercommunal violence. It is clear, therefore, that the fight against terrorism cannot be limited simply to neutralizing existing terrorist organizations, but it must also address these radical ideologies, which can provide a breeding ground for extremism and threaten social cohesion and global security.

CHAPTER II

The Black subversion and the Bologna massacre

2.1 Historical context from postwar Italy to the years of lead

To fully understand the emergence of right-wing terrorism in Italy during the years of lead, it is essential to contextualize the period within the political and social framework of the time.

As Benedetta Tobagi notes, after World War II and with the onset of the Cold War, European countries found themselves operating within a system that Franco De Felice referred to in 1989 as "dual loyalty." This concept refers to the allegiance that European states had to maintain both to their own country and to the international alliance to which they belonged, such as NATO for Western countries. Italy, in particular, became part of the Atlantic system, marking its domestic politics with a dual tension. On the one hand, anti-fascism, which is one of the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution promulgated in 1948, constituting a bulwark against any return to dictatorial rule. On the other hand, anti-communism, which became a central guideline in Italian politics, influenced by the context of the Cold War and the need to align with the positions of the United States and other Western countries against the Soviet threat[75].

The establishment of the Italian Republic in 1946 was a watershed moment in Italian history, particularly following the conclusion of World War II. The institutional referendum on June 2, 1946, was a historic event since it determined the shift from monarchical to republican governance. By majority vote, the Italian people voted to remove the monarchy and establish a republic as their form of government. After the referendum, Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi temporarily assumed the functions of Head of State, guaranteeing a smooth transition to the republic. During this time, substantial attempts were made to rebuild the country's

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[75] Tobagi, B. (2023). *Segreti e lacune. Le stragi tra servizi segreti, magistratura e governo.* Giulio Einaudi editore, pp. 6-7.

economy and society, which had been devastated by the impacts of war. The elections for the first Republican parliament, held on April 18, 1948, represented a crucial moment for the stability and consolidation of democracy in Italy. The victory of the Christian Democratic Party, which obtained more than 48% of the votes and consequently the majority of seats, laid the foundation for this party's political dominance in the following decades. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), united in the Popular Front, which obtained 31% of the votes, were the other relevant political actors of this period[76]. This election result marked the beginning of so-called "centrism," a political system characterized by an attempt at reconciliation and collaboration among the country's different political forces and the centrality of the Christian Democrats in the Italian political landscape. This approach aimed to maintain a balance between the various ideologies present in Italian society, promoting political stability and social progress through inclusive and compromised government. The Christian Democrats (DC) positioned themselves as a centrist party, arising from the Catholic Church's imperative to maintain neutrality toward both liberal elites and socialists during the nineteenth century. The DC presented itself as an interclass entity, characterized by a moderate approach and a strong emphasis on social welfare[77]. Advocating an alternative way, the party blended elements of liberalism and socialism, seeking to uphold liberal traditions while endorsing an active role for the state in addressing social challenges.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Italy was undergoing a time of dramatic transformation characterized by the "economic boom" phenomenon, which propelled the nation's rapid industrial and economic growth. But this change was not uniform; industrial expansion brought prosperity to certain regions - like Milan, Turin, and Genoa - while depopulating and impoverishing others. Millions of Italians moved from rural to northern industrial centers as a result of the economic boom, causing a massive migration of Italians within the country. All this was

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[76] Cammarano, F. et al. (2015). *Storia contemporanea dal XIX al XXI secolo*. Mondadori Education.
[77] Pombeni P. (2001). *Centrismo*, in Rivista il Mulino, n.6, Bologna, Il Mulino.

accompanied by the new phenomenon of consumerism and the spread of U.S. cultural models in Italy, often referred to as the American way of life[78].

Despite the Christian Democrats (DC) maintaining a stronghold on Italian politics and forming single-party governments, by the late 1960s, they were compelled to engage in collaboration with other political entities. This shift was prompted by the party's declining electoral support and the escalating social unrest, particularly in the aftermath of the '68 movement. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of deep political and social tensions in Italy, characterized by ideological conflicts, protest movements, and political violence. But by the middle of the 1960s, the first indications of a societal downturn and economic recession were evident. Rising unemployment, job insecurity, and the permanence of low salaries created friction and resentment among the working class.

Social contestation expressed itself in two waves of protests: the first in 1968, led by the Student Movement, which wanted greater social justice and less authoritarianism, and the second in 1969, known as the "hot autumn," which focused on worker demands[79]. Demonstrations, strikes, and factory occupations grew more frequent, resulting in widespread social turmoil. The '68 movement was not a phenomenon exclusive to Italy but also spread to many other parts of the world. However, De Giorgi considers the Italian movement unique and probably also the most complex[80]. The growth of student and worker movements with revolutionary aspirations frightened the government and state apparatus, which used increasingly oppressive methods to quell growing social unrest. The riots and social unrest continued into the 1970s, a period marked by numerous terrorist acts that would forever mark Italian history until the 1980s.

Despite this turmoil, as Zampieri notes, the 1970s was not only a period marked by terrorism in Italy but also a time of significant social achievements. These advances, often overshadowed by the advent of terrorism, nevertheless had a lasting impact on Italian society. For example, the divorce law was passed in 1970, followed by a referendum in 1974. In the same year, the Workers' Statute was introduced, which

[78]De Giorgi, F. (2020). *La rivoluzione transpolitica: Il '68 e il post-'68 in Italia.* Italia: Viella Libreria Editrice.
[79] Cammarano, F. et al. (2015). *Op. cit.*, p. 314.
[80] De Giorgi, F. (2020). *Op. cit.,* p. 51.

enshrined fundamental rights for Italian workers. In 1974 the right to vote was extended to 18-year-olds, while in 1975 family law was reformed, recognizing equality between spouses. The year 1978 saw the introduction of the National Health Service, ensuring affordable medical care for all citizens, and the law legalizing abortion, a significant step forward for women's rights. These reforms represent important social milestones that helped shape modern Italy. The dominant theme of this decade, however, is political terrorism. Numerous scholars have pointed out that it represents a unique phenomenon in the European context, distinguished by its deep rootedness in society, its long duration over time, and its remarkable ability to conduct offensive actions[81]. This period of social and political conflict was a watershed moment in Italian history, with Italy appearing to tilt left and the government responding with conservative and oppressive methods to keep power.

Consequently, an organic center-left coalition emerged, encompassing four parties: the DC, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), the Italian Socialist Democratic Party (PSDI), and the Italian Republican Party (PRI). However, during the 1970s, the Italian political landscape witnessed increasing instability, marked by the gradual erosion of support for the governing parties and a lack of viable alternative political options. Gervasoni highlights the tensions and contradictions experienced by the Italian working class in the late 1970s and early 1980s. According to him, working-class ideology was clashing with the effects of recent socio-economic transformations. In the factories, very few workers recognized themselves any longer in the idealized image of the Stakhanovite (i.e., highly productive and dedicated worker) that had been promoted by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and trade unions. In the 1960s, the condition of workers, characterized by few rights, elicited much public sympathy and support. However, in the following years, it seemed that there had been a shift from a situation of a struggle for rights to one of prevarication, where union demands were perceived as excessive. Moreover, the unionists' watchwords were beginning to resemble those used by terrorists, creating a climate of tension and suspicion. In this context, few people had the courage to

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[81] Zampieri, C. (2013). *Socialisti e terroristi 1978-1982. La lotta armata e il Psi: indagini e testimoni*. L'Ornitorinco edizioni.

denounce these distortions. The Christian Democrats (DC), which was the main party in government, did not want to permanently break ties with the PCI, maintaining a certain level of cooperation. Moreover, the DC, as the central party in the Italian political system, was particularly careful to maintain a climate of national solidarity, especially in the face of attacks on democracy, such as that represented by the Bologna massacre[82].

To address this situation and protect Italian democracy from the risks of authoritarianism and the strategy of tension that had plagued the country since 1969, the idea of a historic compromise between the Christian Democracy (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) emerged. This compromise aimed to establish a partnership between the two leading political forces. While this proposal sought to bridge the gap between the Christian Democrats and the Communists, it was met with skepticism and opposition, particularly from the Italian Socialist Party and several of its members, such as Bettino Craxi and Riccardo Lombardi. However, the assassination of DC President Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades abruptly terminated this initiative, exacerbating the already precarious political climate in Italy.

This event marked the intensification of a clash between two divergent ideologies. On one side stood communism, championed by the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which, as stated by Lazar, was regarded as one of the most influential in Western Europe[83]. On the other side stood the capitalist and conservative ideology heir to the 20 years of fascism supported by the Italian Social Movement (MSI), which emerged amid the social and political changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As Ignazi observes, the recruitment process for the party was strategically focused on specific groups: those who had been purged and veterans of prison camps who had refused to cooperate with the Allied forces. These individuals had remained loyal to fascism even after September 8, 1943, the date of the Cassibile armistice, when Italy switched sides during World War II and allied with the Allies against the Axis powers. Their unwavering loyalty to fascism made them particularly suitable for recruitment into the MSI, as they shared the same ideologies and values as the party.

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[82] Gervasoni, M. (2010). Storia dell'Italia degli anni Ottanta. Quando eravamo moderni. Marsilio.
[83] Lazar, M. (2013). *Il Libro degli anni di piombo*. Rizzoli.

However, a large portion of the MSI was comprised of young people attracted to the nationalist spirit. From its inception, the MSI identified the youth demographic as a prime target for recruitment. This focus on youth manifested itself in two main ways: formally and operationally. Formally, the party outlined in its statutes a youth organization with wide margins of autonomy, recognizing the importance of giving space and voice to young people within the movement. Operationally, the MSI promoted the creation of specific structures for youth to actively involve them and train them politically. One of the main architects of this strategy was Roberto Mieville, who played a key role in the establishment of the Raggruppamento Giovanile Studenti e Lavoratori (RGSL). This group aimed to involve young students and workers, offering them a platform for political engagement within the MSI. In addition, Mieville founded the National Action University Fund (FUAN), another structure designed to further entrench the party's influence in universities and among students by promoting activities and initiatives that would strengthen political identity and adherence to MSI values[84]. The party capitalized on public anxieties of social instability and growing crime rates, portraying itself as a bulwark against left-wing radicalism and proposing a firm approach to law and order. This internal opposition reflects a deeper conflict that was influenced by the broader geopolitical context of the Cold War. The United States, a staunch anti-communist state, backed Italy's capitalist forces, fearing the rise of communism throughout Western Europe. In contrast, the Soviet Union and its allies supported communist movements, including the PCI, as part of their global ideological war against capitalism.

According to Giovanni Mario Ceci, Nicola Tranfaglia offers an explanation of terrorism emerging in Italy in the 1970s. Tranfaglia identifies several factors that define a political system as "stuck." These include the lack of renewal in authorities and political coalitions, the absence of structural reforms (indicating the failure of reformism), and major socio-economic changes. Tranfaglia identifies the origin of the crisis as the fragmentation of political centrism and, in particular, the failure of the center-left's reformist policies. It is in this specific context that he believes the emergence of terrorism should be understood. The economic crisis of the early

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[84] Ignazi, P. (1998). *Il polo escluso. Profilo storico del Movimento Sociale Italiano.* Il Mulino.

1970s, the development of a Marxism strongly influenced by individual experiences, cultural and ideological elements stemming from the '68 movements, the beginning of the implementation of the historic compromise, and the fear of an authoritarian turn are just some of the reasons explaining the rise of terrorism during the years of lead. Moreover, historian Ventura notes that no terrorist organization can operate so intensively and for such a long period without the support or protection of high-level authorities, both nationally and internationally. This was true for both neo-fascist (black) and communist (red) terrorism[85]. Chiara Zampieri, in her analysis, notes that during the initial phase of black terrorism, right-wing terrorist groups primarily targeted political parties, the democratic system, and parliamentarianism, which they blamed for the country's political and social degeneration, rather than state institutions. These groups initially had a certain respect for state authorities, an attitude probably influenced both by their ties to certain sectors of the state apparatus from their origins and by the tolerance shown by the police toward them. The activity of these groups changed throughout time. In the 1960s, their acts were mostly directed at attacking party and union buildings and physically assaulting leftist political opponents, particularly at universities and public protests. Only later did bombings and indiscriminate attacks occur, indicating an increase in the aggressiveness and strategy of right-wing terrorist groups. The second phase, from 1976, saw an exacerbation of violence and was the protagonist of some of the most tragic attacks in Italian history. it was at this stage that groups such as Terza posizione, Costruiamo l'azione e Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari. According to Zampieri, strategically, it is difficult to see clear political goals for these groups, other than the destruction of the "system," without a concrete plan for the future. Available documents show a criticism of both the Italian Social Movement (MSI) for disappointing revolutionaries and the historical neo-fascist groups and their coup strategy because they aimed to strengthen the system these groups wanted to destroy.

These groups rejected ideologies, considered deceptive, and favored direct action as an "existential duty." This view led to "armed spontaneism," that is, the creation of small autonomous but linked groups with often interchangeable militants.

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[85] Ceci, G. M. (2013). *Il terrorismo italiano. Storia di un dibattito*. Carocci editore, pp. 119-135.

Actions could be claimed by more than one group, or not claimed at all, to increase popular support[86].

2.2 The birth of the neo-fascist terrorism in Italy

In the 1960s, movements like Ordine Nuovo, Avanguardia Nazionale, Ordine Nero and Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari (NAR) emerged, each pursuing a subversive aim through deliberate compromise with the darker segments of state authority, but all united by a core of extremist ideology and a willingness to resort to violence.

2.2.1 Ordine Nuovo

The Political Movement Ordine Nuovo or New Order, was an extra-parliamentary far-right political movement and terrorist organization, founded in December 1969 by militants from the Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo, particularly Clemente Graziani, the movement was defined by its radical ideology and proclivity to utilize violence as a political tactic. Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo, from which the aforementioned terrorist organization was formed, was an extreme right-wing political-cultural association founded by Pino Rauti in 1956, after rifts created at the Missino congress in Viareggio in 1954 between the majority of the party and the "spiritualist" current of Ordine Nuovo. Although the group's activity was minimal in the years leading up to 1959, a significant development occurred with the New European Order convention in 1959, attended by Julius Evola, a philosopher and writer with fascist and anti-Semitic beliefs. The only possibility of action for the Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo was its relations with the European far right, particularly the New European Order (Noe) and June Europe led by Thiriart. Through its relations with international right-wingers, the Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo was able to achieve its first collaborations, especially with Nasser's Egypt,

[86] Zampieri, C. (2021). *Il terrorismo neofascista e la strage di Bologna fra storia, giustizia e memoria*. Retrieved from: https://www.giustiziainsieme.it/en/la-nostra-storia/1770-il-terrorismo-neofascista-e-la-strage-di-bologna-fra-storia-giustizia-e-memoria-di-chiara-zampieri?hitcount=0.
(Last Access: May 21, 2024).

and in the early years, grants from the intelligence of Francoist Spain (with which ON collaborated in intelligence gathering) and relations with the political police of the Portuguese Salazarist regime (PIDE) were crucial to its survival. In the mid-1960s, Ordine Nuovo intensified ties with the Italian intelligence services. Operationally, it was closely linked to ideologically related organizations such as Giancarlo Rognoni's La Fenice (the Milan branch), the Brescian Riscossa group, and Franco Freda's group in Padua[87].

With the arrival at the MSI secretariat in 1969 of Giorgio Almirante, Rauti dissolved the Centro Studi and with a group of leaders rejoined the party. However, a faction of militants opposed this move, accusing the MSI of enslaving itself to the bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism. As a result, they formed the Ordine Nuovo movement (MPON) on December 21, 1969, under the leadership of Clemente Graziani[88]. The national headquarters were in Rome, while outposts and headquarters were spread over at least 25 cities, with strongholds in Sicily, Lazio, and Veneto. Regarding the organization, groups were led by "inspectors" and "inspectorates" at the regional level, and "regents" at the province level.

At the organizational level, the movement initiated cadre training courses, following Evola's ideology. The ideological training courses lasted two months and were divided into eight sections: traditional revolution and subversion, the two races, the holy war, the Est-West contraposition, impetus of true culture, orientations, revolt against the modern world, plutocracy as a subversive force. As for political training, the courses also lasted two months and were divided into five sections: revolutionary warfare, techniques of revolutionary warfare, propaganda, organization, and choice of issues of struggle[89].

In 1971, Clemente Graziani and 39 other MPON officials and supporters were charged with reorganizing the fascist party. The tribunal in Rome validated the charges, and in November 1973, following the first-instance conviction, then

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[87] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Ordine nuovo (ON).* Retrieved from: https://www.memoria.san.beniculturali.it/organizzazioni/-/organization/detail/be3c59cc-71ff-4f64-a3e2-912d9595e559%233195faf8-6a92-4755-9e92-cf193d3d095c/Ordine+nuovo+%28ON%29. (Last Access: May 24,2024).

[88] Martino, A. (2019). *Movimenti neofascisti nelle carte della questura di Savona (1945-1983),* (n.p.): Lulu.com*, p. 293.

[89] Ferraresi, F. (1995). *Minacce alla democrazia. La destra radicale e la strategia della tensione in Italia nel dopoguerra*, Milano, Feltrinelli.

Interior Minister Paolo Emilio Taviani prohibited the group by decree, without waiting for formal confirmation of the sentence, giving the gesture apparent political meaning[90]. Even before the movement was officially disbanded by decree, a number of militants had already begun preparing for clandestine warfare. With the most prominent leaders fleeing abroad to avoid imprisonment due to the Ordine Nero investigation, Sicilian neo-fascist Pierluigi Concutelli assumed command of the clandestine group. With the assassination of Public Prosecutor Vittorio Occorsio in 1976, he brought the group into armed conflict (along with the Red Brigades). According to the vindication leaflet distributed following the murder, Occorsio was guilty of aiding the prosecution in the trial that resulted in the Ordinovists' outlawing. In reality, violent and subversive action predated MPON and was not limited to it. Rauti and its members always claimed that the Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo was nothing more than an intellectual organization, but the papers and testimonies revealed throughout the investigations and prosecutions into the main terrorist massacres proved otherwise[91]. This portrayal of the group was disproved by the membership form of the organization itself. As reported by Giannuli and Rosati, the form asked applicants to indicate, among other things, whether they were in possession of a permit to carry a gun, what rank or specialization they may have held while serving in the military, whether they had participated in the previous war and in which department, what sports they had participated in before and after 1943, and whether they "possessed knowledge in military fields." [92] In addition to its political-theoretical purpose and activity, ON begins to exhibit a distinct paramilitary inclination in the middle of the 1960s. It also equips itself with a highly hierarchical, "covert," territorially organized structure that employs a "stragist" tactic and has depots for weapons and explosives. This structure remains in place at least until 1974[93]. ON was among the main architects of the wave of terrorist attacks. The Piazza Fontana bombing trial (considered the mother of all massacres and "il primo e più dirompente atto terroristico compiuto in Italia nel dopoguerra"[94]) ended with the recognition of the Ordine Nuovo's involvement and

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[90] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Ordine nuovo (ON). Op.cit.*
[91] Ibidem
[92] Giannuli, A. and Rosati, E. (2017). *Storia di Ordine nuovo*, Mimesis edizioni.
[93] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Ordine nuovo (ON). Op. cit.*
[94] Fossati, M. (2003). *Terrorismo e terroristi*, Mondadori, p. 132.

the roles of the confessed perpetrator Digilio, Freda, and Ventura, despite extensive acquittals whose subversive cell functioned, according to the 2004 appellate ruling, within the framework of ON[95].

Instead, The ON leader Maggi and his associate Maurizio Tramonte were found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt for the Brescia massacre[96].

2.2.2 Avanguardia Nazionale

Avanguardia Nazionale (AN) or National Vanguard in English, was an Italian neo-fascist and coup organization, founded in 1960 by Stefano Delle Chiaie, formally disbanded in 1976 by the Scelba Law[97]. As stated by Giannuli, Avanguardia Nazionale represented, along with Ordine Nuovo, the major organization of the far right between the 1960s and early 1970s. The activities of this group, despite not receiving much historiographical attention, are an important piece of knowledge for comprehending many facets of the strategy of tension, starting with the interaction between the far right and the security apparatus[98].

In 1957, a group of young people, led by Stefano Delle Chiaie, separated from Ordine Nuovo to form the Gruppi di Azione Rivoluzionaria (Revolutionary Action Groups), which, in 1959, became Avanguardia Nazionale Giovanile (National Youth Vanguard). In 1965, Avanguardia Nazionale Giovanile, came under pressure and investigation from the authorities and made the decision to officially disband. However, its members continued to maintain links with each other and actively participate in far-right politics in Italy, albeit under different acronyms and organizations. One of the significant episodes of this period is "Operazione manifesti cinesi" or Operation Chinese Posters in February 1966, in which former

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[95] Sentenza della Corte d'Assise d'Appello di Milano, 12 marzo 2004.
[96] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Ordine nuovo (ON). Op. cit.*
[97] Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana. Legge 20 giugno 1952, n. 645. The 1952 Scelba Law, named after then Minister of the Interior Mario Scelba, is the legislation that prohibits the reconstitution of the fascist party in Italy. According to its original wording, it also punishes those who engage in apologia for fascism, meaning those who glorify or defend figures, principles, events, or methods of fascism, as well as those who disparage democracy and the values of the Resistance. Retrieved from: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1952/06/23/052U0645/sg. (Last Access: May 24, 2024).
[98] Giannuli, A. (2019). *Per una storia di Avanguardia Nazionale*, «Bibliomanie. Letterature, storiografie, semiotiche», 48, no. 4.

National Youth Vanguard militants were involved. This operation consisted of the illegal posting of posters that, despite the name, actually praised the Stalinist Soviet Union. The posters were attributed to Stalinist Italian communist groups, but in reality, they were promoted by the Office of Confidential Affairs of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, headed by Federico Umberto D'Amato with the collaboration of the editor of the periodical "*Il Borghese*", Mario Tedeschi. What is interesting to note is that, according to what was later revealed by far-right activist Stefano Delle Chiaie, Avanguardia Nazionale was involved in this operation without being fully aware of it. Delle Chiaie claimed that the operation had been orchestrated by an organization linked to the CIA and some Italian anti-communist circles. This revelation raised questions about the potential ties between far-right organizations in Italy and foreign intelligence services during that historical period[99]. In 1970, Avanguardia Nazionale Giovanile was reorganized, with Sandro Pisano leading the group at first, then Adriano Tilgher. But in the midst of this transition, the group changed its name to "Avanguardia Nazionale," signifying a substantial shift in the extreme right's political terrain in Italy. Stefano Delle Chiaie, a leading figure in the far-right movement, was involved during this period in the Borghese coup attempt, a watershed moment in Italian political history in which Junio Valerio Borghese, founder of the National Front, attempted a coup alongside Avanguardia Nazionale, only to call it off for reasons that have never been fully clarified. This period of upheaval and reorganization within Avanguardia Nazionale also saw many of its militants actively engaged in various events across Italy.

The events surrounding Avanguardia Nazionale between 1970 and 1973 reflect a period of significant activity and evolution within the extreme right-wing in Italy. The participation of Avanguardia Nazionale militants in the Reggio Riots and the subsequent involvement of vanguardists with the Revolutionary Action Movement in northern Italy highlight a diversification of affiliations and tactics within the far-right landscape during this time[100]. The demolition of the Italian Socialist Party offices in Brescia in 1973 further underscores the organization's militant approach

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[99] Rao, N. (2009). *La fiamma e la celtica*, Sperling & Kupfer, p. 57.
[100] Cfr. Rao, N. (2010). La fiamma e la celtica. Italia: Sperling & Kupfer.

and its impact on local politics. Moreover, the process of reunification between Avanguardia Nazionale and Ordine Nuovo represents a pivotal moment in the trajectory of the extreme right-wing movement.

Although this approach was not adequately evaluated in the judicial environment due to the complexity of legal proceedings and limits, it can be viewed as an important tactic in the history of both extremist organizations. This convergence of ideologies and strategies led to significant events such as the Occorsio murder, the Mariano kidnapping, and the Leighton bombing, which can be interpreted within the unified context of the two organizations.

Evidence of this merger was found in a large quantity of documentary material, including ideological documents from important figures like Concutelli and Delle Chiaie, as well as an organizational chart showing the unified structure, which was discovered following the arrest of representatives from both organizations in an apartment on the Sartorio in Rome in December 1975.

These events show how the reunification of Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale had a profound effect on the political environment and tactics of the extreme right-wing in Italy, indicating a change in these movements' tactics and approaches[101]. On June 5, 1976, the majority of Avanguardia Nazionale's leaders and activists were convicted by the Rome court for reorganizing the disbanded fascist organization. Just two days later, on June 7, 1976, during a press conference, Tilgher dissolved the movement, foreseeing the Ministry of the Interior's impending prohibition of Avanguardia Nazionale set for the following day.

2.2.3 Ordine Nero

Ordine Nero or Black Order, was a neo-fascist terrorist organization formed in 1974, following the disintegration of Ordine Nuovo and the crisis of Avanguardia Nazionale. Thanks to the investigative efforts of the Carabinieri ROS, a document has shed crucial and perhaps definitive light on the role and nature of Ordine Nero.

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[101] Senato della Repubblica – Camera dei Deputati. (2001). *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi,* Doc. XXIII n. 64, VOLUME PRIMO Tomo II, p. 133.

It is a 1974 SID memo[102] that offers a very thorough indication that Ordine Nero was founded by the Ministry of the Interior with the sole goal of aggravating political friction and fueling the climate of distrust required for the country to take a rightward swing. This passage represents a watershed moment in the tension strategy, indicating a shift from the longstanding, somewhat perverse relationship between institutional apparatuses and anti-communist groups, which dates back to the immediate postwar period, to the emergence of a clandestine movement that is overtly neo-fascist and subversive in nature. According to the text, the Ministry of the Interior's responsibility is no longer limited to just backing and covering for the radical fringes of the right, instead, it directly intervenes by forming an armed organization to carry out attacks[103]. This thesis, however, is sharply rejected by a leading member of the organization, Fabrizio Zani[104].

The formation of Ordine Nero marked the beginning of a clear and unequivocal terrorist agenda. From 1973 to 1975, the organization orchestrated approximately 45 attacks, strategically aimed at sowing chaos and precipitating a political and social crisis with the ultimate aim of laying the groundwork for a military coup.

Noteworthy, among these actions were a series of train bombings conducted between January and August 1974, narrowly avoiding mass casualties only due to fortuitous circumstances. Additionally, a string of demonstration attacks took place in various locations such as Milan, recognized as a stronghold of leftist ideology, as well as in Lecco, Moiano (in the province of Perugia), Bologna, Trieste, and Savona, spanning from mid-March to late April 1974[105].

In conclusion, the rise of Ordine Nero highlighted a terrible period in Italian history throughout the 1970s. It's unclear if it was the result of state management or a truly independent extremist movement. While some may dismiss the possibility of state involvement in Ordine Nero's development, the data revealed in the SID document

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[102] Carabinieri Special Operations Group, Subversion Department. Report of April 15, 1996, to the Brescia Public Prosecutor's Office as part of the Brescia massacre proceedings. In Senato della Repubblica – Camera dei Deputati. (2001). *Op. cit*. p. 127
[103] Ibidem.
[104] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Ordine nero*. Retrieved from:
https://www.memoria.san.beniculturali.it/organizzazioni/-/organization/detail/be3c59cc-71ff-4f64-a3e2-912d9595e559%23c836f512-f5a6-4960-9c16-8105f8ed8b31/Ordine+nero. (Last Access: May 26, 2024).
[105] Ibidem

raises serious concerns about the extent to which government agencies may have assisted or managed extremist movements for political gain. Regardless of its origins, Ordine Nero's actions left a lasting impact on Italian society, instilling fear and uncertainty through its terrorist activities.

2.2.4 Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari

A turning point in the field of black subversion was marked by the NAR, Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, a far-right, neo-fascist, neo-Nazi terrorist organization founded by Valerio Fioravanti, Cristiano Fioravanti, Francesca Mambro, Dario Pedretti, and Alessandro Alibrandi and active from 1978 to 1981/82. Thanks to the proposal of certain neo-fascist militants connected to the Roman headquarters of the Fronte Universitario di Azione Nazionale (FUAN) in the Nomentano area of Via Siena, the first core of the NAR was established in Rome during the Seventy-seven movement. With the large influx of militants from the Italian Social Movement Eur-Monteverde toward the end of 1978 - among them, the Fioravanti brothers, Francesca Mambro, Dario Pedretti, Alessandro Alibrandi, and others - the party's inertia started to be questioned, and the practicality of engaging in armed struggle actions was taken into consideration. Moreover, their testimonies indicate that what catalyzed and accelerated the armed drift of the group was the horrific Via Acca Larentia ambush and the ensuing commemoration at the FUAN headquarters, which was marked by guerrilla actions and destruction, including the police fatally shooting of a young Missino, Stefano Recchioni[106]. The episode also marked an increase in resentment toward the MSI (Italian Social Movement), since the party declined to seek charges against the officer who had shot Recchioni and instead failed to take a firm stance.

Regarding its organization, however, the NAR was never, at the behest of its own members, a rigidly hierarchical organization with a well-defined structure. Rather,

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[106] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Nuclei armati rivoluzionari*. Retrieved from: https://www.memoria.san.beniculturali.it/organizzazioni/-/organization/detail/be3c59cc-71ff-4f64-a3e2-912d9595e559%237fb16505-d842-41bf-9472-278dd39db22a/Nuclei+armati+rivoluzionari+%28NAR%29. (Last Access: May 30, 2024).

it functioned as an identity movement that attracted individuals from the far-right fascist spectrum. It was an open acronym that allowed for armed spontaneity. As Fioravanti himself stated:

> Lei mi chiede che cosa sono i Nar, se esiste una organizzazione dietro questa sigla. Rispondo: Nar è una sigla dietro la quale non esiste un'organizzazione unica, con organi dirigenti, con dei capi, con delle riunioni periodiche, con dei programmi. Non esiste un'organizzazione Nar simile alle Brigate Rosse o a Prima Linea. Non esiste neppure un livello minimo di organizzazione. Ogni gruppo fascista armato che si formi anche occasionalmente per una sola azione può usare la sigla Nar. D'altra parte non esisterebbe modo per impedirlo.[107]

Given the lack of a precise organizational structure, the NAR, beyond its founding members, attracted various individuals who, to varying degrees of consistency, participated in the organization's activities. Among these were Gilberto Cavallini, Luigi Ciavardini, Massimo Cardinati, and Giorgio Vale, all considered key figures within the organization[108].

NAR's history was unique in that it was far more political than that of any other subversive or terrorist organization of the 1970s, despite having an anarchic and self-destructive political philosophy. Unlike other far-right parties, the NAR quickly separated from its party of reference, the Italian Social Movement (MSI), to pursue a completely different route. Despite this, the transition away from the Missina dimension was slower than the approach to the armed fight itself. Until mid-1979, the NAR's activities followed the logic of violence typical of the neo-fascist milieu, albeit exaggeratedly, but they quickly recognized the importance of abandoning polarized ideologies and attempting to overcome the violent opposition between left and right that characterized that period. Anti-systemic tendencies emerged around the end of the winter of 1979 when the NAR claimed a robbery at Omnia Sport, an armory just a few meters from the central police headquarters. This

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[107] Valerio Fioravanti, from his interrogation to the Padua prosecutor's office on Feb. 19, 1981. In Bianconi, G. (2007). *A mano armata. Vita violenta di Giusva Fioravanti*, p. 44.
[108] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Nuclei armati rivoluzionari. Op. cit.*

event represented a watershed moment in the group's strategy, signaling a definite change toward more radical and anti-system actions[109].

The group's primary objective then became to engage in a genuine struggle against the established power, namely, the state, through armed spontaneism.

The NAR developed ties with criminal organizations such as the "Banda della Magliana" in Rome, known for its extremely violent criminal activities and its connections with the capital's political and business world. The NAR's ties with the Banda della Magliana, were many and varied. Young fascists were occasionally employed by this criminal organization for logistical support duties like drug delivery and usury loan collection. However, their involvement extended beyond these roles, sometimes even to commissioned executions[110]. Among the terrorist actions attributed to the NAR, the murder of Judge Mario Amato and the Bologna train station massacre undoubtedly stand out. These tragic events left an indelible mark on Italian history, highlighting the brutality and determination of this extremist group. The assassination of Judge Amato in 1980 represents a direct attack on justice and the rule of law, while the Bologna station massacre in 1980, which killed 85 people and injured more than 200, remains one of the most serious terrorist acts of violence that ever occurred in Italy.

2.3 The Bologna massacre

The description provided by Scardova paints a vivid picture of Italy on August 2, 1980, immersed in a climate of heightened tension amidst the backdrop of the escalating Cold War. Global tensions were palpable, with the imminent threat of a conflict that could have involved the entire Mediterranean. Against this backdrop, Italy found itself at the center of a possible clash between major world powers, with the presence of military bases and the perception of an imminent threat.

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[109] Costa, C. (2020). *I Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari. Un percorso di storicizzazione*, «Bibliomanie. Letterature, storiografie, semiotiche», 49, no. 5, p. 5.
[110] Cfr. Camera dei deputati-Senato della Repubblica. (2016). *Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul rapimento e sulla morte di Aldo Moro*, pp. 101-103. Retrieved from: https://www.gerograssi.it/cms2/file/casomoro/DVD41/0760_001.pdf. (Last Access: May 30).

Furthermore, the notion of an Italian government leaning towards leftist ideologies was deemed unacceptable by the United States and NATO, further intensifying the geopolitical dynamics at play. The tragic events that had preceded this moment, such as the assassination of Sicilian Regional President Piersanti Mattarella, the murder by the NAR of magistrate Amato who was investigating black subversion and the Ustica massacre, had already shaken the country deeply. The subsequent massacre of August 2, 1980, represented a further blow to Italy, exacerbating the prevailing sense of instability and insecurity gripping the nation[111].

On Saturday, August 2, 1980, around 10:25 a.m., a very high explosive device exploded at the Bologna train station's second-class waiting room. Thirty meters of the canopy and the structure above the waiting rooms collapsed as a result of the explosion. Moreover, it struck two rail cars that were parked on the first platform. The explosion killed 85 people and injured more than 200. Rescue operations began immediately, with many people joining to help victims and extract those trapped under the wreckage. The right lane of the boulevards that circle the ancient center of Bologna, where the station is located, was dedicated to ambulances and rescue vehicles. Given the enormous number of injured people and a lack of transportation to city hospitals, buses such as line 37, as well as private vehicles and taxis, were employed[112]. Bus 37 became, along with the stopped clock at 10:25 a.m., one of the symbols of the massacre.

The President of the Republic Sandro Pertini, who arrived in Bologna by helicopter at 5:30 p.m. on the day of the tragedy, declared visibly moved in front of reporters: "Signori non ho parole siamo di fronte all'impresa più criminale che sia avvenuta in Italia." [113]

On June 1, 1981, a group of family members of the victims of the August 2, 1980, Bologna massacre formed an organization with the statutory objective of getting justice. The association began with 44 members, but over time, 300 more joined.

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[111] Scardova, R. (2020). *L'Oro di Gelli: Strage di Bologna*. Castelvecchi.

[112]Associazione tra i Familiari delle Vittime della Strage della Stazione di Bologna del 2 Agosto 1980*. La strage*. Retrieved from. http://www.stragi.it/strage. (Last Access: May 30, 2024)

[113] Leuzzi, V. A. (2010). *La bomba che colpì vacanze e democrazia.* 1° agosto 2010, «La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno». Retrieved from: https://www.lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it/news/analisi/210456/la-bomba-che-colpi-vacanze-e-democrazia.html (Last update Feb. 2, 2016). (Last access: April 4, 2024).

Every four months, the association goes to court to meet with judges, followed by a press conference to update the public on the situation and give their thoughts. Moreover, the Union of the Families of Victims of Massacres in Milan was founded, on April 6, 1983, by the associations of the victims of the Piazza Fontana, Piazza della Loggia, and Italicus massacres[114].

Following an April 22, 2014, decree signed by Matteo Renzi, all files related to this, and other tragedies were no longer shielded by governmental secret, making them openly available for anyone to consult[115].

2.3.1 The investigations, the false leads, and the search for the instigators

Immediately following the bombing, the State Police initially speculated that the explosion might have been caused by an old boiler in the station's basement. However, as investigations progressed and testimonies were gathered from the scene, it became evident that the explosion was deliberate, signaling a clear terrorist motive. This steered the investigation toward the context of black terrorism.

As the investigation continued, there were deliberate attempts to mislead and divert attention from the true perpetrators of the attack. Various false leads were introduced, casting doubt on the initial suspicions of terrorism and pointing investigators toward alternative explanations. Indeed, there were quick allegations, first supposedly from the NAR via a call from a SISMI[116] office in Florence, and subsequently from the Red Brigades. These contradictory claims only added to the confusion and diversion, despite the Red Brigades' historically reliable communication with Radio Popolare, where they denied their involvement in the massacre[117].

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[114] Associazione tra i familiari delle vittime della strage alla stazione di Bologna del 2 agosto 1980. *L'Associazione.* Retrieved from: http://www.stragi.it/associazione. (Last access: April 4, 2024).

[115] Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. (2014). Directive of the President of the Council of Ministers, April 22, 2014. Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana. Retrieved from: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2014/05/02/14A03553/sg. (Last access: April 4, 2024).

[116] The Military Intelligence and Security Service (SISMI) was an Italian intelligence agency with a military orientation.

[117] Mappe di Memoria: I luoghi delle stragi, del terrorismo, della violenza politica. *Le prime notizie.* Retrieved from: http://mappedimemoria.it/stragi/stazione-di-bologna-2-agosto-1980/%EF%80%ADla-strage/le-prime-notizie-2-3-agosto-

On August 28, 1980, the Bologna Public Prosecutor's Office issued 28 arrest orders against far-right militants of the Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, Movimento Rivoluzionario Popolare and Terza Posizione. In the subsequent months, additional names were added to the list of suspects, facing charges of subversive association, participation in armed gangs, and subversion of the democratic order.

This expansion of the suspect list reflected the deepening complexity of the case and the ongoing efforts to uncover the full extent of the conspiracy behind the Bologna bombing. Investigations conducted by magistrates and initial tip-offs triggered the hypothesis of cross-border involvement, suggesting the presence of an international conspiracy that would have involved both foreign terrorists and Italian neo-fascists hiding abroad with alleged ties in Italy. However, this theory turned out to be the result of an intricate montage orchestrated by a deviant faction within SISMI, under the direction of General Giuseppe Santovito, who was affiliated with the P2 Masonic lodge and died in 1984. This montage was based on outdated information and completely fabricated news, with the aim of diverting attention away from the real perpetrators of the bombing.

Then, on January 13, 1981, a suitcase containing eight cans of explosives, identical to those used in the station bombing, was discovered inside the Taranto-Milan Espresso 514 train's second-class compartment. In addition to the explosives, an MAB submachine gun, an automatic shotgun, and two flight tickets from Milan to Munich and Milan to Paris were found. All of the equipment was accompanied by a fake dossier created by General Pietro Musumeci, SISMI's deputy chief and a P2 member, that detailed the two international terrorists' plans in conjunction with other members of the neo-fascist conspiracy. An intelligence tip helped lead to the finding. This operation, nicknamed "Terror on the Trains," was ultimately revealed to be a deception perpetrated by the deviant SISMI group with the goal of convincing people to believe in a foreign lead by alluding to a source that was supposed to be kept hidden, but instead, it did not exist at all[118]. In a ruling dated July 29, 1985, the Rome Court of Appeals commented on the matter, stating:

1980/#:~:text=Nel%20tardo%20pomeriggio%20Radio%20Popolare,quella%20organizzazione%20per%20la%20strage. (Last access: April 5, 2024).

[118] Morando, P. (2023). *La strage di Bologna: Bellini, i Nar, i mandanti e un perdono tradito*. Feltrinelli editore, Milano.

> Sgomenta che forze dell'apparato statale, sia pure deviate, abbiano potuto così agire, non solo in violazione della legge, ma con disprezzo della memoria di tante vittime innocenti, del dolore delle loro famiglie, e con il tradimento delle aspettative di tutti i cittadini che giustizia si facesse[119].

The Association of Relatives of the Victims of the Bologna Massacre of August 2, 1980, has always claimed that, as in other similar massacres, those who placed the bomb were merely executors of unknown principals. The association consistently dismissed foreign leads, whether they pertained to far-left ideologies, Arab connections, or involvement of NATO intelligence services. Instead, they asserted that the massacre was orchestrated by Italian figures seeking to consolidate power through authoritarian means[120]. Over the last decade, the association's consultants conducted rigorous research on digitalized trial records, yielding noteworthy conclusions.

Notably, within the trial dossier related to the collapse of Banco Ambrosiano overseen by the piduist Roberto Calvi, a document known as the "Bologna document" emerges, which serves as a catalyst for a new investigation launched by the General Prosecutor's Office in Bologna, following a previous request for case dismissal by the local Public Prosecutor's Office. This examination, known as the "investigation into the principals," seeks to reassess the positions of key members inside the P2 organization, including Licio Gelli, Umberto Ortolani, and Federico Umberto D'Amato. They have been investigated as suspected financiers and instigators of the massacre and subsequent cover-up operations. The probe also links deceased journalist Mario Tedeschi to these actions. In addition to the names mentioned, another key figure in the indictment is Paolo Bellini, affiliated with the right-wing Avanguardia Nazionale. He is alleged to have acted "in concert" with former NAR members already convicted for the massacre: Francesca Mambro,

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[119] Corte d'Assise di Roma (July 29, 1985). Sentenza della 5^ Corte D'Assise di Roma. Sentenza n. 45/85.
[120] Associazione tra i Familiari delle Vittime della Strage alla stazione di Bologna del 2 agosto 1980 (August 2, 2012). *Communication read by President Paolo Bolognesi on behalf of the association of family members of the victims of the massacre at bologna train station on August 2, 1980*. Retrieved from: http://www.stragi.it/associazione/discorso-2012. (Last Access: April, 7).

Giusva Fioravanti, Luigi Ciavardini, and Gilberto Cavallini. Bellini is accused of having played a coordinated role with these individuals in perpetrating the attack and in subsequent covert operations[121].

2.3.2 The trials

The complex judicial affair related to the Bologna massacre, which spans more than four decades and involves several trials that are still ongoing, represents an intricate knot within Italian judicial history. The Bologna massacre judicial process so far consists of five trials, which offer a glimpse of the complexity and depth of the investigations conducted into this terrible event.

2.3.2.1 The first trial from 1980 to 1995

The first trial, which focused on NAR terrorists and certain SISMI members, was an important starting point for determining direct responsibility and potential linkages to the intelligence services of the time. The involvement of Licio Gelli, a key figure in the P2 Masonic lodge, provided another layer of conspiracy and suspicion.

The first-degree trial resulted in life sentences for Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro, as well as convictions for armed group involvement for Gilberto Cavallini, Valerio Fioravanti, and Francesca Mambro. Giuseppe Belmonte, Stefano Delle Chiaie, Licio Gelli, Pietro Musumeci, and Francesco Pazienza were acquitted of the alleged crime of subversive association, while they were convicted of aggravated slander aimed at ensuring impunity for the perpetrators of the massacre[122].

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[121] Bianchi, N. (2021). *Strage di Bologna. Dopo 41 anni, ecco i mandanti*. «Il Resto del Carlino», August 2, 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/bologna/cronaca/strage-bologna-mandanti-f32646f3?live. (Last access: April 8, 2024).
[122] Sentenza della Corte d'Assise di Bologna, 11 luglio 1988. Sentenza n. 4/88

In 1990, the appeal trial ruling eliminated the charge of massacre, retaining only convictions for involvement in an armed group and reducing sentences for aggravated defamation. It also led to the acquittal of many defendants in the original trial[123]. In 1992, however, the Supreme Court overturned the verdict, finding it illogical and unfounded, with the presentation of far-fetched arguments not even advanced by the defense. The second appeal trial ended in 1994, with Mambro, Fioravanti, and Sergio Picciafuoco being sentenced to life in prison for the massacre (Picciafuoco was later acquitted by the Court of Cassation in 1997). Cavallini and Giuliani were convicted of participation in an armed gang, while the convictions of Belmonte, Gelli, Musumeci, and Pazienza for aggravated defamation were upheld[124].

The final verdict from the Supreme Court on November 23, 1995, confirmed the life sentences for Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro, who were identified as the perpetrators of the bombing. Despite consistently claiming innocence, they confessed to and took credit for numerous other murders. Additionally, in this ruling, Gelli, Musumeci, Belmonte, and Pazienza were found guilty of obstructing the investigation[125].

In June 2000, the Bologna Court of Assizes issued further convictions for obstruction, including a nine-year sentence for Massimo Carminati, a far-right extremist later implicated in the "Mafia Capitale" probe. However, a year later, the Court of Appeals acquitted Carminati, a decision subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court in 2003[126].

2.3.2.2 The second trial from 1986 to 2007

The second trial stems from the initial one: Luigi Ciavardini, affiliated with the NAR, had been formally notified in 1986 due to emerging indications of his

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[123] Sentenza della Corte d'Assise d'Appello di Bologna, 18 luglio 1990. Sentenza n. 16/90

[124] Sentenza della Corte di Assise d' Appello di Bologna, 16 maggio 1994. Sentenza n. 13/94

[125] Sentenza definitiva della Suprema Corte di Cassazione a Sezioni Unite Penali, 23 novembre 1995. Sentenza n. 21. R.G. 19840/95.

[126] Il Post. (2023). *Cosa dicono le sentenze sulla strage di Bologna*, August 7, 2023. Retrieved form: https://www.ilpost.it/2023/08/07/sentenze-strage-bologna/. (Last access: April 17, 2024).

potential involvement in the bombing. But in 1980, as a minor, he was under the purview of a special court. To prevent any interference with the ongoing proceedings and complications such as loss of the overall perspective or fragmentation of evidence across separate trials, the youthful NAR member (meanwhile convicted definitively in 1991 of the murder of Judge Mario Amato) was brought to trial only in 1997[127].

In the second trial, Luigi Ciavardini was initially acquitted in 2000 by the Bologna Juvenile Court[128], but later convicted on appeal in 2002[129]. Despite the annulment of this conviction by the Court of Cassation in 2003, the Bologna Juvenile Court of Appeal rejected the annulment the following year. It was not until 2007 that his conviction for massacre became final according to the Court of Cassation's April 11, 2007, ruling[130].

2.3.2.3 The third trial from 1988 to 2003

The third trial, which focused on the false leads, shed light on the role of the secret services and the involvement of figures such as Massimo Carminati, linked to the Banda della Magliana. This trial revealed the presence of an intricate web of manipulation and deception aimed at obfuscating the truth and confusing the investigation. Both Carminati and Mannucci Benincasa, who served as head of the counterintelligence center in Florence from 1971 to 1991, faced charges related to deceptive actions concerning the Bologna massacre. However, these actions were legally classified as "slander," as the crime of deception was not established until 2016. Mannucci Benincasa was accused of spreading false information about Gelli,

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[127] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Processo Ciavardini*. Retrieved from: https://www.memoria.san.beniculturali.it/la-storia/-/event/judicial/be3c59cc-71ff-4f64-a3e2-912d9595e559%23fad1baaa-1622-47cf-a93b-fdbc323e2937/Strage+di+Bologna+-+Processo+Ciavardini. (Last Access: April 17, 2024).

[128] Tribunale per i minorenni di Bologna, sentenza del 30 gennaio 2000. Sentenza n. 3/2000. R.G. 64/92.

[129] Corte d'Appello di Bologna, sezione per i minorenni, sentenza 9 marzo 2002. Sentenza n. 5/02.

[130] Tobagi, B. *Strage di Bologna, documenti processuali (Bologna, 2 agosto 1980)*. Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. Retrieved from: https://www.memoria.san.beniculturali.it/documenti-online/-/doc/detail/287/Strage+di+Bologna%2C+documenti+processuali+%28Bologna%2C+2+agosto+1980%29?keyword=. (Last access: April 17, 2024).

while Carminati's involvement began with a weapons cache under his control. This cache was linked to a rigged machine gun found in the *case of the false leads* discovered on the Taranto-Milan Espresso 514 train, according to statements made by Banda della Magliana repentant Maurizio Abbatino[131]. Although both were convicted in the initial trial in 2000, they were later acquitted on appeal (Bologna Court of Appeals, ruling on December 21, 2001)[132] and in the Supreme Court (Court of Cassation, judgment on January 30, 2003)[133].

In the trial's context, the Palestinian lead has emerged as a potential alternative probe since 2001, spurred by the Mitrokhin Commission's actions. The Bologna prosecutor's office started a dossier on this case in 2005, and two former German left-wing radicals, Christa Margot Frolich and Thomas Kram, who visited Bologna between August 1 and 2, 1980, were added to the suspect list in 2011. Kram was supposedly linked to terrorist and mercenary Carlos, who was affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and who allegedly formed a terrorist group (called separat), recruiting people from various terrorist groups, such as the R.A.F. and the FPLP. Members of this group must be mentioned, among others, Margot Christa Froelich known as Heidi and also Thomas Kram known as Malte. The Palestinian lead posited that the August 2 bombing was a retaliatory act for the alleged violation of the "lodo Moro," a covert agreement that supposedly allowed Palestinian organizations to transport weapons and personnel through Italy in exchange for a promise not to carry out attacks on Italian soil. The "breach" of the agreement is thought to have resulted from the arrest of a Palestinian insurgent in March 1979[134]. However, historical sources ate the time showed that the pact was still in force in 1980 (recent discoveries, however, show otherwise). Despite the intrigue surrounding this theory, the investigation into the "Kram trail" proved

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[131] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Processo dei depistaggi*. Retrieved from: https://www.memoria.san.beniculturali.it/la-storia/-/event/judicial/be3c59cc-71ff-4f64-a3e2-912d9595e559%239cbc8ff5-c41e-4e9f-b130-b6be910df4cb/Processo+dei+depistaggi. (Last access: April 26, 2024).
[132] Sentenza della Corte di Assise di Appello, 21 dicembre 2001, Sentenza n. 34/2001. R.G. 18/2001.
[133] Sentenza della Corte di Cassazione 30 gennaio 2003. Sentenza n. 102/03. R.G. 25187/02.
[134] Tobagi, B. *Op. cit.*

insufficient. In 2015, the Bologna court dismissed this line of inquiry due to lack of concrete evidence[135].

2.3.2.4 The fourth trial from 2017 – ongoing

The fourth trial features former NAR terrorist Gilberto Cavallini, who was indicted for massacre in 2017, despite playing a major logistical support role for the convicted NAR. The trial begins on March 21, 2018, and after two years of proceedings, Cavallini is found guilty in the first instance by the Bologna Court of Assizes, with a sentence of January 7, 2020[136]. The court's decision not only validates the reconstruction presented in the first and second trials, but it also strengthens the picture of culpability for the subversive right at the time.

The second-degree trial before the Court of Appeals of Assize was initiated in 2023, with the defense represented by lawyers Alessandro Pellegrini and Gabriele Bordoni raising the issue of the nullity of the first-degree verdict and requesting a retrial[137].

Attorney Andrea Speranzoni, one of the attorneys supporting family members of the victims of the August 2, 1980, massacre, stated that the Court of Appeals' verdict reclassifies the massacre as a political massacre or more accurately, a state massacre. As stated then, also by the Court of Assizes of Bologna in the sentence against Bellini on April 6, 2022, the massacre is:

> frutto non dell'esaltazione criminale di una banda di neofascisti disponibili per fanatismo agli atti più efferati, ma di un progetto politico criminale di ampia portata, radicato ai vertici dell'associazione piduista e sostenuta dai silenzi e dalle omissioni di chi aveva la possibilità

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[135] Tribunale di Bologna, ufficio del giudice per le indagini preliminari, ordinanza 9 febbraio 2015.
[136] Sentenza della Corte di Assise di Bologna, 09 gennaio 2020, R.G. 1-18, processo a Gilberto Cavallini.
[137] Persichella, B. (2023). *Strage di Bologna, la difesa di Cavallini chiede di annullare la sentenza di primo grado. La Corte rinvia*. «Bolognatoday». Retrieved from: https://www.bolognatoday.it/cronaca/strage-bologna-processo-cavallini-giudici-popolari.html.it. (Last access: April 27, 2024).

di sapere e di impedire, ma non lo fece perché di fatto era al servizio di chi la strage ebbe a sostenerla, finanziarla e promuoverla[138].

Furthermore, Gilberto Cavallini's life sentence was upheld, indicating a strong recognition of the charged indictment. The appeal trial saw two significant new developments: the collapse of the defense thesis of the so-called Palestinian track, as documented by the Prosecutor General's Office in court, and the confirmation of the links between the Nar and the neo-fascist group Ordine Nuovo Veneto, which, according to the lawyer, colluded with state apparatuses hostile to the Republic and Democracy[139].

The ruling on Cavallini, reports important information regarding the Bologna massacre. Among them we find the testimony of Luigi Vettore Presilio, who in July 1980, in the prison in Padua, spoke with the probation magistrate Giovanni Tamburino, foreshadowing the commission shortly thereafter, in early August, of an attack that all the newspapers would talk about. Later there would be another attempt on the life of Treviso judge Giancarlo Stiz. Persilio added that he had received the confidences from a cellmate, Roberto Rinani, a right-wing subversive. The latter, however, rejects every statement made by presilio, saying he never knew him, although Presilio was deputy secretary of the Arcella section of the Italian Social Movement in Padua, of which Rinani was secretary[140].

Another interesting aspect of this trial to underline is undoubtedly the statements by Cavallini and Valerio Fioravanti regarding Nazi ideology. During the seizure of Cavallini's documentation in 1983 at the time of his arrest, three diaries were found containing a list of texts and authors that constitute the subject of the defendant's examination, since according to the Court, "the inclinations and cultural orientations of the person, especially when they are extremely pronounced, are an indispensable element to explore the personality."[141] The rediscovered texts include works by Hitler, Nietszche, Saint Paulien, Goebbels and Evola, all of which

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[138] Sentenza, R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit*., p. 76.
[139] Rai News.it. (2023). *Strage di Bologna: confermato in appello l'ergastolo per l'ex Nar Cavallini*, September 27, 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2023/09/strage-di-bologna-confermato-lergastolo-per-lex-nar-cavallini-il-pg-fu-una-strage-politica-2b74d4d5-2354-44ac-b528-180cffb9f798.html. (Last access: April 27, 2024).
[140] Sentenza (2020), R.G. 1-18, processo a Gilberto Cavallini, *Op. cit*., pp. 132-150
[141] Ivi. p. 737.

hint at a strong leaning toward Nazi or otherwise far-right ideology. In addition, a great deal of interest seems to be directed toward themes of Romanism and Pangermanism. At the outcome of this inventory of his cultural interests, the defendant was then asked whether he is a deep connoisseur of German history and the Nazi period. To this question the defendant categorically answered "no". He also tried to credit himself as a super partes subject, interested in both sides of history, praising Ghandi, Che Guevara, and Mao TseTung, all of whom, however, are not pinned down in his papers. As the Court points out, this need to disprove its own notional foundations may seem inexplicable. Cavallini has sought to disavow the evidence on an issue, which as a cultural one, at first glance should be neutral. In all this there is something unusual, and there resides a strong circumstantial element. In addition to Cavallini's ideological thinking, the Court reports the psychiatric expert report on Valerio Fiorvanati, made by Professor Introna who transcribes some historical-political beliefs that should be evaluated in association with Cavallini's. Indeed, from Fioravanti's statements, one can see a strong sharing of ideas between the two. Both looked at the Third Reich as the expression of a new morality that led the individual to a kind of liberation from all limitations. The Court, therefore, does not rule out that this strong commonality between them at some point made "critical mass."[142]

Finally, another theme addressed by the court in this trial, is that of international links between Italian terrorists and services and South American dictatorships, posing as an example the attempted assassination of Bernardo Leighton, a Chilean dissident exile, in 1975. Various testimonies have been collected in various trials that point to the responsibility of Stefano Delle Chiaie as the instigator and Pierluigi Concutelli as the material executor. At the May 9, 2018, hearing, Walter Sordi confirmed that Cavallini told him that it was Concutelli who committed the attempted murder of Leighton, who acted on the commission of Delle Chiaie and thus ultimately Pinochet. Fioravanti, at the June 13, 2018, hearing, also expressed his belief that it was Concutelli who attempted to kill Leighton. Added to these two testimonies are those of Sergio Calore, Paolo Aleandri, and Sergio Latini who confirm this version. These testimonies reveal a great deal of

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[142] Ivi, pp. 737-754.

collaboration between the Chilean Intelligence Services and Avanguardia Nazionale[143].

In conclusion, the Bologna Assize Court states that, Gilberto Cavallini is not only accused of participating in criminal activities within spontaneous far-right formations but is also recognized for his significant role as a liaison in the subversive network formed in the late 1970s. The Court affirms that Gilberto Cavallini is guilty even in the "minimal" hypothesis alone of the logistical support and assistance provided through the hospitality given to Mambro and Fioravanti.

2.3.2.5 The fifth trial from 2020 – ongoing

The fifth and last trial, as stated in the judgment, stems from a series of complaints lodged by the Association among the families of the victims of the massacre of August 2, 1980, to the Prosecutor's Office of Bologna. This trial involves Domenico Catracchia, Piergiorgio Segatel, and Paolo Bellini, with the latter considered the primary defendant, sentenced in first instance to life imprisonment as one of the perpetrators of the massacre. Bellini, who was born and raised in Reggio Emilia and was affiliated with the right-wing Avanguardia Nazionale, spent a long time as a fugitive in Brazil under a false name. He then moved to Italy to obtain his pilot's licenses, while also devoting himself to the lucrative clandestine trafficking of antique furniture and artwork. He subsequently becomes a 'Ndrangheta murderer, imprisoned in Sciacca (Sicily) alongside a mafia boss, Antonino Gioè, he participates in a parallel thread of the State-mafia negotiation, and eventually becomes a collaborator with justice[144].

Of fundamental importance for this trial was certainly the "Polzer" video and the testimony of Maurizia Bonini, Bellini's wife, which led to the collapse of the accused's alibi. In the footage captured by a Swiss tourist, Harald Polzer, at Platform No. 1 of the Bologna train station on August 2, 1980, from 10:13 a.m. until shortly after the bomb detonated, a figure resembling Paolo Bellini can be

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[143] Ivi, pp. 1529-1533.
[144] Morando, P. (2023). *Op.cit.*

discerned walking on the first platform. During the initial investigation, Maurizia Bonini provided statements supporting Paolo Bellini's alibi for August 2, 1980. She asserted that she and her husband had departed Rimini around 9:00 to 9:15 a.m. for Passo del Tonale to begin a week-long vacation. These details conflicted with Bellini's alleged presence at Bologna station during the time of the massacre. Maurizia later confessed that she had provided a false account under pressure from her father-in-law, Aldo Bellini, whose authority went unquestioned, "sembrava il padre eterno in casa."[145] Additionally, Maurizia's brother, Michele, who was staying at the same hotel, corroborated Maurizia's claim of Bellini's delayed arrival in Rimini.

In the context of the ongoing judicial procedure, several new elements have been presented that merit attention. In fact, in addition to the Polzer video, in an attempt to undermine Bellini's case, there are recorded accounts involving Picciafuoco, who was undoubtedly at the station on August 2, as well as an environmental interception from January 18, 1996, in which Carlo Maria Maggi, the regent of the New Order in Veneto and convicted of the Brescia Massacre, claims that the Bologna Massacre was made by the NAR. He also refers to an "airman" and his father "who they say carried a bomb". The two profiles resemble Paolo Bellini because, on the one hand, the latter enjoyed flying and received a pilot's license, and, on the other, his father, a former Folgore paratrooper, was undoubtedly associated with subversive right-wing and service circles[146].

Piergiorgio Segatel, a former captain of the Genoa Carabinieri, is being held for trial as he is charged with the crime of deception and lying, since he denies having approached, in the vicinity of the massacre, Mirella Robbio, the wife of a member of Ordine nuovo, specifically to inquire about the massive bombing that was being discussed in far-right circles, as Presilio had reported.
As evident from the sentence, Segatel chose to remain silent about the source of his knowledge. He did so not only to defend himself from the accusation of withholding information of crucial importance, but evidently also to avoid implicating those who had provided him with confidential information about an impending attack.

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[145] Sentenza, R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit*., p. 1087.
[146] Ivi, p. 1180.

This behavior indicates a clear intention to obstruct the investigation by concealing from the investigators the origins of his information, thereby preventing further development in the investigation. Moreover, the crime committed by Segatel is considered serious, as it concerns the falsification of information about a serious act of violence that had significant consequences on Italian history. His persistent silence hinders further investigations aimed at gaining a complete understanding of the events, which is essential.

Despite the seriousness of the context and the variety of interests at stake in the trial, the judges observed that Segatel's attitude seemed, at times, imprudent and superficial. This is because he made statements in an apparently careless manner. Therefore, the defendant was sentenced to six years' imprisonment[147].

Domenico Catracchia is charged with providing false testimony to a public official. At the time of the events, he ran an agency that administered a building in Via Gradoli, Rome, which, according to the prosecution, was routinely used by the SISDE. The civil parties and the Prosecutor General's Office in Bologna confirmed that in 1981 the NAR had two hideouts in Via Gradoli, at numbers 65 and 96. Specifically, the housing unit at number 96 was in the same building where Mario Moretti, the head of the Red Brigates during the Moro kidnapping in 1978, had lived, and the apartment was connected to a company associated with the secret services. The court finds that Catracchia concealed important information, obstructing the investigation. This behavior is considered serious, leading to a significant increase in his sentence, from two years and eight months to four years in prison[148].

In conclusion, the judgment links the 1980 Bologna station bombing to the strategy of tension, which began with the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan in 1969 and refutes the idea that it was an isolated action by a group of neo-fascists. In this trial, as well as the one against Gilberto Cavallini, it became clear that the August 2, 1980, massacre could not be attributed to "spontaneity," therefore completely detached from instrumentalization and immune from any compromise with pieces

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[147] Ivi, p. 1610.
[148] Ivi, pp.1684-1687.

of the state,[149] but rather to a much more sophisticated and evolved level of organization involving occult powers and civilian and military intelligence figures. According to the judgment, it is reasonable to conclude that members of at least three different subversive right-wing formations were involved in the massacre: Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, Terza Posizione and Ordine Nuovo. This dynamic represents the so-called "archipelago strategy," definition coined by Sergio Calore, in which different groups retain their autonomy and identity but coordinate to pursue common political goals[150]. This created an opportunity for the leadership of the P2 Lodge and the rogue elements within the intelligence services, allowing them to recruit individuals, sometimes offering financial incentives, who were willing to undertake actions aimed at destabilizing the established order[151].

2.4 Role of the P2 and their influence on the Italian political context

Although the April 6, 2022, ruling recognized Paolo Bellini as the material perpetrator of the Bologna massacre, the court also investigated the role of the P2 Masonic lodge and specifically Licio Gelli's role in the August 2 massacre.

As reflected in the ruling, the Propaganda Due (P2) Masonic Lodge was a clandestine, covert lodge entrusted by Grand Master Salvini to the Worshipful Master Gelli.

It was attended by influential men from numerous institutions, including senior officers from the armed forces, intelligence services, police forces, politicians , and public leaders. The lodge's curriculum comprised standard Masonic lodge responsibilities such as ceremonies and ideals of solidarity and mutual help among affiliates. In contrast to the belief that Freemasonry was unrelated to direct politics, P2 actively participated in political direction, influencing crucial executive and legislative decisions. In essence, P2 played a covert political role, contradicting the

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[149] Caldiron, G. (2023). *Bologna, 2 agosto 1980: uno scenario nuovo per l'eccidio, i possibili esecutori e mandanti. L'inchiesta di Paolo Morando per Feltrinelli*. «Il Manifesto». Retrieved from: https://ilmanifesto.it/bologna-2-agosto-1980-uno-scenario-nuovo-per-leccidio-i-possibili-esecutori-e-mandanti. (Last Access: May 10, 2024).
[150] Sentenza, R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit*., p. 580.
[151] Ivi, p. 1562.

concept of political neutrality that Freemasonry was meant to uphold. In 1975 Lino Salvini, grand master of the Grand Orient of Italy, elevated Gelli to the dignity of "Venerable Master". The events leading to this appointment are described in the report of Tina Anselmi who chaired the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the P2 Masonic Lodge, established in 1981. Gelli restructured the lodge clandestinely and increased sectorial meetings to discuss politics and his agendas. Minutes from one of these meetings, available to the investigating commission, explicitly reveal these discussions were about subversive activities. The text cited in the report clearly outlines concerns regarding the political and economic state of Italy, the perceived threat from the Italian Communist Party aligned with clericalism, the weaknesses in law enforcement, rampant corruption and lawlessness, moral decline, and civic disengagement. Additionally, it discusses the lodge's strategy in the event of the ascent to power by cleric-communists and its relationship with the Italian state[152]. However, the Lodge's transformation into an overtly reactionary and interventionist force in national politics provoked internal reactions within Freemasonry. Despite the tilting of relations between Gelli and the leadership of the Grand Orient and the "demolition" of the P2 Lodge decreed by Grand Master Salvini, whose real goal was to keep the association secret but expel Gelli, the latter reacted and on May 12, 1975, the Lodge was reconstituted. Meanwhile, Gelli and the Propaganda 2 Lodge were the focus of intense media campaigns highlighting the lodge members' ties to organized crime and the extremist right. As a result, the Grand Maestranza of the Grand Orient decided to suspend Gelli from Masonic activity for three years (although it is thought that the suspension served as a form of cover). However, this suspension was effectively ignored and Gelli continued his activities under the cover of Official Freemasonry, as reported by the Parliamentary Commission. As shown in Tina Anselmi's Report, Gelli, who during the 1970s became a man of the highest rank in the intelligence services, enjoyed full protection both from the D department of the SID (the body for active protection of secrecy and internal security) and from General Santovito, who had become a piduist. However, at the same time, Gelli was blackmailable due to the presence in his personnel file of the 1950 Comintern or Cominfrom

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[152] Sentenza, R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.,* p. 952.

information, which described him as an agent in the service of Eastern countries. The report introduces the 1979 affair, when the Comintern briefing was passed to Mino Pecorelli from within the Services, announcing its publication in his magazine. According to the court, the Cominform report was a fabrication, but that doesn't change the fact that it was capable of harming Gelli. Nonetheless, Pecorelli was killed before the publication could take place. This event marks a critical moment, when the Comintern briefing, used as a blackmail tool against Gelli for nearly thirty years, was used for purposes involving his position and initiatives[153]. The State Legal Service, in its brief, reconstructs a causality that would have led Gelli to finance terrorism in response to threats and attacks on his power. The Commission, therefore, believes that the connection between Gelli and the events of August 2, 1980, transcends mere investigative speculation, as it is substantiated by concrete evidence. This evidence includes findings from the Anselmi Report, which highlights the P2 Lodge's involvement through its leadership or representatives with subversive entities. These connections were instrumental in fostering and facilitating criminal activities. Additionally, pivotal to this assertion is the Bologna Document, which offers a coherent narrative elucidating the motives and contextual backdrop of the massacre.

As stated by the sentence, the Democratic Revival Plan (Piano di rinascita democratica) initiated a new phase wherein the system was internally weakened to counter the left's rising influence, particularly among the middle class, during 1975-1976. This plan had two main goals: controlling influential media targeting this demographic and integrating prominent individuals, including military and civil servants, into the lodge. These tactics aimed to prepare for a potential authoritarian shift while concealing the apparent political openness of the era. This was achieved without overt conflict but through shaping public opinion and garnering support for reforms from genuine centers of power, establishing a subtle yet effective control mechanism around P2. As stated by Libero Mancuso, in this new phase, Gelli implements a strategy of penetrating institutions from within to carry out projects, subversive of the constitutional order. Occupying key political and information

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[153] Relazione della commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sula loggia massonica P2 sezione *IX Legislatura*. (1981). Presidente Tina Anselmi, pp. 62-77.

posts is crucial. Institutions must no longer be subverted; rather, they must be conditioned from within. The democratic revival plan is thus defined by Mancuso as "an authentic corrupting program of politics."[154]

The lodge's political prowess was demonstrated clandestinely, exerting anonymous and covert influence over government actions. Strategies involved both external subversive violence and internal manipulation, creating an aura of uncertainty through signals and actions orchestrated by the organization, leveraging influential assets like Corriere della Sera and control over terrorist operatives, all under Gelli's influence[155].

In order to delineate the role of Gelli and P2 and reconstruct their responsibility in the Bologna massacre, it is important to integrate the investigations that in recent years have enriched and confirmed the evidence that had been consolidated in previous trials. As the judgment shows, after the massacre, Gelli actively worked to divert the investigation into unclear and unverifiable leads, trying to avoid suspicion of himself and his connections. He ordered the SISDE to abandon the hypothesis of involvement of the Roman-Venetian neo-fascist subversion and to focus instead on an international lead. This, in addition to shifting investigators' attention away from the main suspects, aimed to protect his ties with that area by keeping his involvement hidden. After the directive given to SISDE, a similar instruction followed at SISMI, where journalist Barbieri was given false documents, created specifically to throw off the investigation. These documents were used to write articles to divert the public and investigators' attention away from the truth. One article, titled "La Grande Ragnatela" (The Great Spider Web), was published on September 15, 1980, and contained false information, but aimed at influencing public opinion and investigators. Even, journalists were paid to write articles that followed this narrative. The actions of Gelli, along with his partner Ortolani, are backed by large financial investments, as evidenced by the "Bologna Document." SISMI's efforts to spread misleading and fabricated news continued, as confirmed by the verdict, with the involvement of Colonel Giovannone,

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[154] Mancuso, L. (2018). *Dalla strage dell'Italicus alla strage di Bologna: la strategia eversiva interna e internazionale di apparati istituzionali, massoneria e destra neofascista*. In "Il terrorismo di destra e di sinistra. In Italia e in Europa. Storici e magistrati a confronto", a cura di Carlo Fumian e Angelo Ventrone. Padova University Press, pp. 291.
[155] Sentenza R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.,* p. 965.

alongside Giuseppe Santovito and Francesco Pazienza. According to General Grillandini's statement, Giovannone was an expert in creating false information and faking successes. Pazienza insisted with journalist Barbieri on the idea that the attack had a leftist matrix with international connections, again demonstrating a propensity for psychological warfare present in the service circles he referred to. This strategy may have been different from that of Gelli, whose goal was probably to strengthen the security and intelligence apparatuses through the logic of his Rebirth Plan.

In this context, the statements made by Nara Lazzerini, Licio Gelli's secretary and lover, on the relations between Gelli and Delle Chaie assume great importance. The presence among the perpetrators of the massacre of Paolo Bellini ends up giving precipitous meaning to Gelli's persistent contacts with Delle Chiaie, who played a pivotal role in managing far-right extremists "la cui vita, sopravvivenza, collocazione politica e sociale dipendevano solo da lui e dalle sue enormi relazioni in tutti i paesi dell'America Latina."[156]

In addition to his relations with Delle Chiaie, Gelli told Lazzerini that he often had contacts with the Honorable Andreotti. During some of the telephone conversations between Gelli and Andreotti, Lazzerini caught expressions of thanks for favors received or insertions of sums of money in deeds speculated to be acts of government.

What emerges from this trial is that P2 and right-wing terrorist groups were not very distant worlds. They were in close contact; they could talk and agree.

The Assize Court points out that starting in the mid-1970s, Licio Gelli orchestrated a strategy called "of control" with the aim of wresting power from the national community and emptying the contents of the Constitution through infiltration into key institutions. Using the P2 Lodge as a tool, Gelli exercised predominant power based on mutual blackmail, as indicated by the parliamentary commission report. His influence extended to the military and security services, with a gradual penetration that led him to be the occult dominus in the late 1970s, especially after the 1977 designations[157].

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[156] Sentenza R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 1000.
[157] Sentenza R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 1008.

The ruling concludes by stating that it has been established that Gelli, the P2, the secret services, and other centers of occult power, including former head of the Office of Confidential Affairs Federico Umberto D'Amato, managed significant sums of money to perpetrate what appears to be the Bologna massacre thanks to the discovery of the "Bologna document" that reveals the nearly $15 million round of money that Gelli began moving in offshore accounts and distributing in cash just days before the Bologna massacre. These flows went through the bank accounts of Licio Gelli's close associates, such as Marco Ceruti and Umberto Ortolani.

To be more accurate, as stated by Biondani, in a "memo" seized from Licio Gelli on March 17, 1981, in his Castiglion Fibocchi office, in the same search that uncovered the P2 list, Gelli summarizes a $5 million operation, run through M. C. (supposedly Mario Ceruti, Gelli's loyal aide and financial handler in Switzerland). Information on the origin and destination of the five million is provided by the so-called "Bologna document," which was kept secret for a long time. The document in question is a financial report seized from the P2 leader during his arrest in Switzerland. The arrest occurred on September 13, 1982, when Gelli showed up at the Ubs in Geneva, where he had accumulated 280 million Swiss francs embezzled from Banco Ambrosiano, asking to move the funds to avoid seizure. However, the bank warns the police. Among his papers, Gelli hides blackmailing documents such as counts of illegal deals. The incriminated accounting statement contains an account number, "525779 – X.S.," followed by the designation "Bologna." In it, Gelli lists figures, bank accounts, abbreviated names, and coded acronyms of beneficiaries, totaling $9.6 million, paid during the months of the massacre and depredations up to Feb. 12, 1981, linked to an operation associated with Bologna. The number on the document's title page relates to one of the Swiss accounts that Gelli used to hide Ambrosiano's money. Investigators discovered that a part of the "Bologna document" corresponds to an earlier notation on the five million. Four million of this money was entrusted to Ceruti in two Swiss accounts created in September 1980. Gelli personally recorded other transfers, citing one million dollars as cash "advanced" prior to the Bologna massacre. This is supported by

another document found in Gelli's possession, titled "advances."[158] In addition, according to what was revealed last April exclusively to Report by Carlo Calvi, son of former Banco Ambrosiano chairman Roberto Calvi, some of the money would then pass from Ceruti's hands to several Italian antiquarians active in London. "Il ruolo degli antiquari italiani a Londra era fondamentale per Gelli," explains Carlo Calvi, "i soldi che gli antiquari ricevevano dalla P2 sono serviti a finanziare e sostenere la latitanza dei neofascisti fuggiti a Londra subito dopo la strage di Bologna." [159]

Thus, the conclusion is that Gelli paid one million dollars in cash for Bologna and then redeemed it at the expense of Calvi's bank, which served as P2's hidden treasury. According to the Swiss records, the funds came from Banco Ambrosiano Andino and were distributed to Ortolani, who subsequently shared them with Gelli. This revelation, combined with other evidence, implies that the planning for the Bologna attack began in February 1979, a year before the tragedy[160].

Among the hypothesized motives for the massacre was the desire to hinder the left's rise to power in Italy at a time of particular political and international instability.
The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the deployment of Cruise missiles in Sicily were heightening the climate of tension, fueling fear of a possible conflict on a global scale. In this scenario, the Bologna bombing may have been instrumentalized to destabilize the Italian political system and foster a climate of terror that would push voters toward more moderate or conservative positions.
Moreover, the Democratic Revival Plan hypothesis suggests that the massacre was part of a larger subversive plan aimed at conditioning public opinion and preparing the ground for radical political reforms. The use of the bombing strategy, in this sense, would have served to create a climate of emergency such as to justify a

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[158] Biondani, P. (2020). *Esclusivo - Strage di Bologna, chi è stato*. «L'Espresso», July 23, 2020. Retrieved from: https://lespresso.it/c/archivio/2020/7/22/esclusivo-strage-di-bologna-chi-e-stato/45244. (Last access: May 11, 2024).

[159] Mottola, G., and Palladino, A. (2020). *Esclusivo: le carte inedite sulla Strage di Bologna. Gli agenti di influenza americani e l'alleanza tra Gelli, neofascisti e Sismi*. Report, Rai 3. Retrieved from:https://www.rai.it/programmi/report/news/2020/07/Esclusivo-le-carte-inedite-sulla-Strage-di-Bologna-Gli-agenti-di-influenza-americani-e-lalleanza-tra-Gelli-neofascisti-e-Sismi-c1ca2727-e696-472a-97cf-91063e95e397.html. (Last access: May 21, 2024).

[160] Biondani, P. (2020). *Op.cit.*

repressive crackdown and a strengthening of power by anti-communist forces. The judgment also mentions the hypothesis of a connection between the Bologna massacre of August 2, 1980, and the Ustica air tragedy of June 27 of the same year. The two massacres would appear to be linked by a common deception implemented by Marco Affatigato, a former ordinovist militant, but the absence of definitive evidence makes it difficult to establish with certainty a link between the two massacres. The judgment also mentions the relationship between Gelli and the American right wing, especially with regard to the Moro case, "fu anche grazie a Gelli e ai suoi uomini che si riuscì a realizzare l'obiettivo di impedire la liberazione di Moro, secondo quanto risulta dalle memorie di Steve Pieczenik."[161] The latter says that during the handling of the Moro case, ties were strengthened between the Italian intelligence services, U.S. intelligence, and, most importantly, the U.S. Republican Party. An important member of the latter was Philip Guarino, known for his close relationship with Richard Nixon and George Bush. But, the escalation of violence, its aftermath, and Licio Gelli's growing exposure, including on the judicial level, prompted the United States to distance itself from him. This would lead to the search of his Castiglion Fibocchi villa and the discovery of the famous, albeit partial, lists containing names of influential personalities belonging to P2. As stated by Giuliano Turone, a former magistrate and now writer, the complete lists comprised 2,500 names but were stored overseas, at Gelli's Montevideo mansion. After the CIA took them, Tina Anselmi's P2 Commission made valiant attempts to get them delivered but was unsuccessful[162].

On July 4, 1981, original documents were discovered and seized inside the false bottom of a suitcase belonging to Maria Grazia Gelli: The Democratic Rebirth Plan, the memorandum on the Italian political situation, and, most importantly, the Westmoreland Directive. The latter is a top-secret U.S. document drafted in the 1970s that served as a guide for conducting unconventional warfare operations and implementing tension strategies, designed to be used, if necessary, against allied countries as well. The Advocacy concludes by offering a plausible reconstruction

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[161] Sentenza, R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 1072-1073.
[162] Merlo, G. (2023). *L'intervista. Giuliano Turone: «Si indaghi ancora. A Bologna la mano della P2 di Gelli».* Domani. Retrieved from: https://www.editorialedomani.it/giustizia/giuliano-turone-si-indaghi-ancora-a-bologna-la-mano-della-p2-di-gelli-g8ufx3pp. (Last access: May 21, 2024).

that points to Gelli's interest in carrying out the Bologna massacre, an aspect also reiterated by an anonymous complaint received by the Bologna authorities after the attack. Although this aspect was not explored in depth in the trial, as Gelli was not a defendant, the prospect of his possible political interest in the destabilization is related to the other elements that emerged during the investigation. These include his alleged role as a financier, consistent with the accusations made against others involved in the massacre, which contributes to the credibility of the context in which the attack occurred and the involvement of the identified perpetrators[163].

As Mancuso states:

> dunque, in Italia ha agito, accanto al potere visibile, un potere invisibile, occulto, che si è servito di tentativi golpisti, stragi, corruzione, per assicurarsi la continuità del proprio potere. Per questo ha cavalcato con successo la strategia della tensione, la minaccia di colpi di Stato, il finanziamento di circoli eversivi neofascisti, la collusione con vertici del terrorismo nero e rosso, per stravolgere lo Stato di diritto come Stato normativo e agire come Stato discrezionale[164].

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[163] Sentenza, R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 1075.
[164] Mancuso, L. (2018). *Op. cit.*, p. 297

CHAPTER III

Foreign Influences and convergence of Interests: The Libyan lead

3.1 Foreign influences on Italian politics: The USA and the USSR

The first to use the term "cold war" was writer George Orwell, who in 1945 in his essay "You and the Atomic bomb" described the potential global tensions that could arise from the development and proliferation of nuclear weapons. Orwell envisioned a world where the threat of atomic warfare would create a state of perpetual hostility and fear, altering the balance of power and shaping the future trajectory of humanity[165]. Later, in 1947, journalist Walter Lippmann popularized the term in his book "The Cold War" to describe the scenario of international relations that developed after World War II[166]. This phase was characterized by high conflict and a constant state of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, marking the transition from a multipolar, Eurocentric world order to a new bipolar configuration dominated by the two superpowers. In this geopolitical context, the United States and the Soviet Union sought to gain supremacy by exerting influence over other countries.

As stated by Platt and Leonardi: "United States policy toward Italy in the post-World War II period has been influenced and, in many cases, determined by the nature of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union"[167].

According to Palma and Tosti Di Stefano, Italy's geographic location and its particular post-World War II political history made the country a key, albeit sometimes underestimated, player in the Cold War. Located on the southern border of the Atlantic Alliance, Italy experienced firsthand the complexity of bipolar

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[165] Orwell, G. (1945). *You and the Atomic bomb*. The Orwell foundation. Retrieved from: https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/you-and-the-atom-bomb/. (Last access: May 23, 2024).

[166] Lippmann, W. (1947). *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy*. Harper.

[167] Platt, A. A. and Leonardi, R. (1978). *American Foreign Policy and the Postwar Italian Left*. Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 93, No. 2, pp. 197-215.

dynamics, finding itself in a tumultuous "contact zone"[168]. This proximity to the Iron Curtain, a term coined by Winston Churchill, meant that internal Italian politics and foreign policy decisions became entangled with the broader global struggle for dominance.

As the confrontation with the Soviet Union became the top priority of US foreign policy, the growing influence of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) inevitably attracted significant attention from the Truman Administration.

However, documents from the Moscow archives reveal the USSR's desire to initiate a new phase of bilateral relations with Italy that would not focus only on PCI support but would be based on personal meetings with Italian leaders, with the aim of engaging in discussions on international issues and collaborating in various areas. Soviet documents show that Moscow understood that the PCI's mere support was not enough to condition the Italian government's decisions, partly because Soviet diplomats observed that opinions in favor of an "autonomous" party path, more in tune with Italian national interests, were multiplying within the PCI. Consequently, from 1959 to 1968, there were annual state visits between Italy and the USSR, some of which had a major impact on bilateral relations. These included Gronchi's visit to the USSR in 1960, Fanfani's visit to Moscow in 1961, and Gromyko's visit to Italy in 1966. These meetings marked the beginning of closer and more regular cooperation between the two countries. In addition, several important business transactions were initiated between 1958 and 1968: the 1960 agreement with ENI to import oil from the USSR (later renewed in subsequent years); the 1966 agreement with FIAT to produce cars in Togliatti, a Russian city near the Volga River; and the construction of the ENI gas pipeline to supply Italy with methane from Soviet fields, with negotiations beginning in the mid-1960s and concluded in 1969[169].

The specter of a communist takeover in Italy, strategically located at the crossroads of East and West, demanded a resolute American response. This concern

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[168] Palma, L. and Tosti Di Stefano, E. (2023). *L'Italia e la percezione della minaccia sovietica nel Mediterraneo.* Geopolitica. Info. Centro studi di geopolitica e relazioni internazionali. Retrieved from: https://www.geopolitica.info/italia-minaccia-sovietica-mediterraneo/. (Last Access: May 27, 2024).
[169] Salacone, A. (2013). *Le relazioni italo-sovietiche nel decennio 1958-1968. Uno sguardo da Mosca*, Storicamente, Art. No. 5.

led to a covert CIA intervention in the 1948 Italian elections, resulting in the victory of Christian Democracy. This marked the first instance of the US employing such tactics to influence a foreign election in its pursuit of Cold War containment strategies[170]. A declassified CIA document regarding the 1948 Italian elections indicated that a Communist Party victory would have led the CIA to prevent the PCI's access to power through falsification of election results or by force[171]. This shows how the U.S. would have in any way blocked a Communist advance in the country. The decisive victory of the Christian Democrats, led by Alcide De Gasperi, paved the way for closer ties between Italy and the United States, culminating in Italy's entry into NATO in 1949.

The Cold War relationship between Italy and the United States was characterized by a complex dynamic where Italy did not simply follow US directives. Instead, Italy actively sought to assert its autonomy, expand its strategic options, and influence US foreign policy to suit its own interests. This led to misunderstandings and tensions, particularly in the Mediterranean and Middle East, where Italy's economic ambitions sometimes clashed with US objectives. A major point of contention was the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Italy viewed as a humiliating constraint imposed by the great powers. In the 1980s, differing approaches to Middle Eastern issues culminated in a serious crisis involving a standoff between the Italian Carabinieri and the US Delta Force over Palestinian militants who had hijacked the Italian cruiser Achille Lauro. Despite this, both nations prioritized their bilateral relationship, ensuring that the dispute was resolved and that significant negative consequences were avoided.

During this period, the United States and Italy also frequently clashed over handling Italy's internal issues. Despite their shared aims in Italy – fostering economic growth and containing the Communist Party (PCI) – the US and Italy often disagreed on how to achieve them. The US, wielding significant influence, wasn't shy about using covert means, like funding political parties, to manipulate Italian

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[170] Nuti, L. (2022). *An Overview of US-Italian Relations: The Legacy of the Past*. IAI-Istituto Affari Internazionali, p. 5.

[171] CIA. (1948). *Consequences of communist accession to power in Italy by legal means*. Retrieved from:
https://web.archive.org/web/20190428205259/https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78-01617A003100010001-5.pdf. (Last Access: May 29, 2024).

politics. In fact, as described by Cominelli, according to the Pike Report, Ambassador Martin proceeded to pay approximately $800,000 to General Vito Miceli, who was appointed to lead the SID in 1970, as a grant for vague counter-information and political propaganda initiatives[172].

Public diplomacy and cultural initiatives were also deployed to steer Italy's political direction towards Western interests[173].

As Palma and Tosti Di Stefano stated, despite the apparent improvement in security conditions with the signing of the Osimo Treaty in 1975, the Mediterranean basin experienced serious upheavals. Italy gradually realized that NATO was not sufficient to guarantee its security, and Italian national interests extended beyond NATO's immediate concerns. This shift in perspective was evident as early as 1967. During a Supreme Defense Council meeting, General Giuseppe Aloia, then Chief of Defense Staff, voiced his concerns about Soviet strategy. Aloia noted that the USSR had succeeded in circumventing NATO's defense system in Central Europe by using an indirect strategy, focusing on the Atlantic Alliance's southern flank, with an emphasis on the Mediterranean area. This strategy consisted of strengthening Soviet presence and influence in the Mediterranean, which until 1961 was regarded as a Western-dominated area, comparable to a "Western lake." In other words, before 1961, the Mediterranean was seen to be primarily controlled by Western nations. The Soviet Union's growing involvement in the Mediterranean, however, marked a dramatic shift in the balance of power and provided new challenges for NATO security.

At its April 1971 meeting, the Supreme Defense Council noted that NATO had also recognized a renewed Soviet threat in the Mediterranean. This threat was seen as potentially capable of outflanking the Atlantic Alliance from the south.

In other words, NATO perceived the risk that the Soviet Union could use its influence and operations in the Mediterranean to undermine the security and stability of Alliance member countries by bypassing defenses and strategies

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[172] Cominelli, L. (2018). *La strategia americana nei confronti dell'Italia e le sue ricadute sull'eversione di destra.* In "Il terrorismo di destra e di sinistra. In Italia e in Europa. Storici e magistrati a confronto", a cura di Carlo Fumian e Angelo Ventrone. Padova University Press, pp. 136-137.
[173] Nuti, L. (2022). *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

traditionally focused in other areas. This recognition implied the need for increased NATO attention and preparation to counter this emerging threat.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the military balance in NATO's southern side increasingly worried Western political-military leaders, reflecting the debate in the United States about the Soviet threat. The bipolar paradigm, however, ended up forcibly including every problem within it. Italy, for example, used the Soviet threat to justify relations with Gaddafi's Libya, claiming it was necessary to prevent Libya from falling under Soviet influence. However, SISMI reports indicated that Gaddafi showed no clear signs of wanting to open his country to the Russians, beyond the sale of armaments[174].

In light of the political tensions of the time, Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti decided to disclose the existence of Gladio, a secret military organization operating in Italy since the 1950s, designed to resist a potential enemy invasion. Andreotti confirmed this organization's existence in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies on October 24, 1990, and subsequently provided a detailed report to the Parliamentary Commission on Massacres and Terrorism. This was not Andreotti's first time addressing the Commission on this issue; he had discussed it a few months earlier as well. In fact, right-wing terrorist Vincenzo Vinciguerra had admitted during a trial in 1984 that there was a parallel structure to the security services that operated under NATO's direction[175]. Gladio was not the only parallel security structure in Europe. It was part of a vast network of covert activities known as "Stay-Behind," which featured mechanisms identical to those found in other Western bloc countries. This network spread throughout practically all NATO countries, forming a kind of covert infrastructure for resistance to a potential communist invasion. Andreotti was induced to speak to the Stragi Commission after a meeting in July 1990 with Judge Felice Casson, who was investigating the Peteano massacre, which occurred on May 31, 1972[176]. As stated by Ganser, the evidence confirming the existence of these clandestine forces was uncovered by Casson in the archives of the SISMI in Rome. Casson's investigation revealed that the military secret service was

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[174] Palma, L. and Tosti Di Stefano, E. (2023). *Op. cit*.

[175] Il Post. (2020*). La storia di Gladio*. Sabato 24 ottobre 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.ilpost.it/2020/10/24/gladio-stay-behind/. (Last Access: June 17, 2024).

[176] Ibidem

responsible for directing the covert stay-behind army, which operated under the code name "Gladio" in Italy[177]. Moreover, in the 1970s, Gladio collaborated closely with the P2 Masonic lodge, which at that time worked to ensure that the top positions in the state were occupied by figures as conservative and right-wing as possible[178].

Andreotti delivered a ten-page dossier titled "The So-Called 'Parallel SID' - The Gladio Case" on October 24, 1990. Andreotti explained in this report that Gladio was the Italian division of a covert stay-behind army that the CIA and SIFAR created following World War II as a covert resistance network across NATO nations to fend off a possible Soviet invasion. These forces would function behind enemy lines to build a resistance movement in the case of an invasion[179]. We can certainly confirm that with the aim of defeating an alleged communist threat, American and Italian intelligence services were guilty of serious crimes and clandestine operations. In fact, as evidenced by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on terrorism in Italy and the causes of the failure to identify those responsible for the massacres, chaired by Senator Pellegrino, the NATO secrecy that protected Gladio was also used to cover up other illegal operations, such as the "Nuclei di Difesa dello Stato" (State Defense Nuclei), with the ultimate goal of fighting Italian leftist forces. Among the evidence confirming this hypothesis, we find the statements of General Serravalle reported to Judge Grassi as part of the 'Italicus bis' investigation who expressed the fear that Gladio might have been a kind of cover for something very different and not lawful, hypothesizing the existence of a more presentable structure, namely Gladio, and another unpresentable one with unlawful purposes. Other accounts also state that the recruitment of gladiators was done through a secret structure of the Italian intelligence services. Although they were theoretically intended for defense tasks in case of invasion, they were actually trained and indoctrinated to democratically prevent a national political force from gaining access to the government. The civilians recruited were predominantly right-wing elements, with the goal of

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[177] Ganser, D. (2006). *The ghost of Machiavelli: An approach to operation Gladio and terrorism in cold war Italy.* Crime, Law & Social Change.
[178] Il Post. (2020*). Op. cit.*
[179] Ganser, D. (2006). *Op. cit.*

creating clandestine structures around the Armed Forces to retain power. To achieve this end, organizations such as Gladio were used, as well as paramilitary, subversive, and terrorist formations activated in parallel. The ultimate goal was to delegitimize a political force that had full constitutional citizenship through the formation of secret structures with the decisive contribution of neo-fascist forces that the Italian Constitution outlawed. In addition to the Pellegrino Parliamentary Commission's assessment, the opinion of Senator Libero Gualtieri should be reiterated, who argued that the illegitimacy of Gladio emerges in three moments. The first point concerns SIFAR's "ability" to enter into international agreements without the approval of the government and parliament. It is clear that SIFAR did not have the authority to do so; an intelligence service cannot make commitments on behalf of the government or bind the government. The second problem concerns Gladio's alleged affiliation with NATO. If one accepts that Gladio's "institutional" legitimacy derives from its participation in NATO bodies, then the starting date should not be November 28, 1956 (sign of the agreement between SIFAR and CIA), but May 19, 1959, when Italy (SIFAR) was admitted to the Coordination and Planning Committee (CPC) established by the commander-in-chief of Allied forces in Europe, General Dwight Eisenhower. This raises the question: what legitimacy did Gladio have before 1959? Finally, the third problem of Gladio's illegitimacy emerged clearly in 1977, when a law reformed the Italian intelligence services. With SISDE responsible for internal security and SISMI for external security, another question then arises: to which of the two services was Gladio to be entrusted?[180]

3.2 Italian far-right networks beyond the borders

Giovanni Mario Ceci states that in the late 1970s and mid-1980s there was a widespread belief among terrorism scholars that there was close cooperation between terrorist groups of different nationalities.

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[180] Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi (2001). Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume primo Tomo II.

Simultaneously, there was widespread agreement that some prominent states had supplied critical support to these groups and were engaged in the planning and financing of multiple terrorist attacks. According to experts on the subject, between the 1970s and 1980s, the international dimension of terrorism, particularly state-sponsored terrorism, attained an unprecedented degree of significance.

In the international debate at the time, there was a general belief that Italian terrorist movements were heavily influenced by foreign powers and had connections to foreign organizations. Two key theories were discussed extensively during this discussion. The first, less convincing, suggested that certain foreign powers were only making use of Italian terrorism for their own purposes. The second, more widely accepted hypothesis saw Italian terrorism as part of an international conspiracy, a global terror network manipulated by a few powerful powers. These conspiracy theories argued that the cause and roots of contemporary political terrorism should be sought in the "diabolical" action of one or more "satanic actors." According to Ceci, during that period, there was a strong perception that the states involved not only facilitated terrorism but were also its main architects, orchestrating attacks to destabilize and manipulate international politics to their advantage[181]. This state support included weapons supplies, training, funding, and safe shelters, highlighting a direct and deep involvement. In addition, terrorism was seen as a strategic weapon in the Cold War, with the superpowers and their regional allies using terrorist groups to pursue indirect geopolitical goals. This complex intertwining of state support and transnational terrorist actions contributed to a climate of suspicion and fear, in which any attack could be interpreted as part of a larger international conspiracy.

3.2.1 Links with Spain

It is known from SISDE reports and various CIA documents that Italian far-right terrorist groups have had links with other extremist groups in other states[182]. Spain,

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[181] Ceci, G. M. (2013). *Op. cit*., pp. 55-56.

[182] CIA. (1983*). Terrorism review. 26 May 1983.* Retrieved from:
https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84-00893R000100170001-2.pdf. (Last Access: May 31, 2024)

in particular, has provided refuge to numerous Italian extreme right-wing fugitives, for example, Pietro Federico Benvenuto, Augusto Cauchi, and Clementi Graziani, to name a few. Other evidence confirming contacts between Spanish and Italian extreme right-wing circles arose from the arrests in Barcelona of four Spanish citizens linked to Spanish extreme right-wing organizations, who during their depositions admitted to having had contacts in Paris with the well-known extremist Stefano Delle Chiaie and in Spain with elements of Avanguardia Nazionale[183].

However, as Calleja stated, the linkages between Italian neo-fascism and the various radical elements of Francoism may be traced back even before the Spanish regime's last crisis. General Franco had received several neofascist diplomats, some of whom he had known since the Civil War, who persuaded the dictator to provide financial backing for the newly formed MSI. His goal was to strengthen the MSI in order to drive the DC to the right, allowing the more radical anti-communist current to dominate and, as a result, pushing the Italian government to take a more sympathetic stance toward Spain. A system of clandestine fundraising was then established, with the proceeds used to fund election campaigns and the publication of various party papers. Later, Spain began to strengthen its ties with more radical organizations such as Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale. Pino Rauti and Clemente Graziani visited Portugal and Spain in March 1963, according to Italian intelligence documents, with the goal of securing political backing for the creation of information centers in Rome and other Italian cities. Later, in 1970, Stefano Delle Chiaie returned to Spain using a false passport and secured the protection of SS officer Otto Skorzeny, who had ties to dictator Francisco Franco's close associate Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco. Numerous neo-fascists, according to Calleja, joined up with the Spanish security agencies as informants and collaborators. With the support of Prime Minister Navarro, both domestic and international far-right groups were used to orchestrate fake terrorist attacks, then attributing them to the left. This strategy aimed to destabilize the opposition and strengthen the regime, using violence and terror as political tools. The infiltration of neo-fascists into Spanish security services and politics highlights the

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[183] SISDE. (1982). *Rapporto sull'eversione e sul terrorismo di estrema destra. Ottobre 1982*, Vol. I, pp. 70-74.

collaboration between far-right elements and state apparatuses, forming an alliance designed to manipulate public opinion and delegitimize political opposition. This collaboration laid the groundwork for exporting the strategy of tension to Spain[184].

3.2.2 Connections with France

Italian and French right-wing terrorist groups also share significant connections. FANE (Fédération d'Action Nationale et Européenne), a French far-right group, maintained contact with Italian neo-fascist terrorists seeking refuge in France. FANE collaborated with right-wing groups in Spain, Austria, and Italy, aiming to coordinate efforts and provide unified leadership in the fight against the "democratic system" across various European countries. According to SISDE, articles by prominent Italian extremists like Mario Tuti, as well as notes on the situation of the Italian right-wing and the repression faced by its members, appeared in FANE's periodical "Notre Europe." This publication also seems to be linked to the Italian periodical "Quex," which is associated with Italian right-wing inmates belonging to the revolutionary wing of the neo-fascist movement[185]. Moreover, according to Italian authorities, there is proof of communications between French police officer Paul-Louis Durand, who is believed to have been in Bologna just before the explosion and is known to be involved in extremist circles, and Italian right-wing terrorist Marco Affatigato, though there is insufficient evidence to determine with certainty their involvement in the massacre.

The links between the French and Italian right are also reiterated by Pauline Picco, who states that in 1966 the Aginter Press was created in Lisbon by French militants who were former members of the OAS (Organisation armée secrete). This Lisbon-based press agency conceals an anti-communist workshop connected to the Portuguese PIDE and Spanish intelligence services. Far-rightists from France and

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[184] Calleja, E. G. (2018). *Le reti di protezione del terrorismo di destra in Europa e il ruolo di Stefano Delle Chiaie e Yves Guérin-Sérac.* In "Il terrorismo di destra e di sinistra. In Italia e in Europa. Storici e magistrati a confronto", a cura di Carlo Fumian e Angelo Ventrone. Padova University Press, p. 145.

[185] SISDE (1982). *Op. cit.*, pp. 67-69.

Italy play an important role in this scenario. The French Aginter Press, which was supported and funded by both Francoist Spain and Salazarist Portugal in the second half of the 1960s, was closely associated with the main extra-parliamentary and subversive groups of the Italian far right, such as Rauti and Graziani's Ordine Nuovo and Delle Chiaie's Avangaurdia Nazionale. Contacts between Ordine Nuovo leaders and Yves Guérin-Sérac (pseudonym of Yves Guillon), the leader and creator of Aginter Press, demonstrate this close relationship. Sérac aims to cooperate closely with the Italian organization, not only for intelligence purposes but also for potential armed activities. In order to prepare for possible counter-subversive actions in Italy or elsewhere, the former *ultra* planned to gather personnel, military, and logistical resources from the Rautian organization. Italian authorities, in fact, strongly suspect that members of Order et tradition (an extreme right-wing international terrorist organization active between the 1960s and 1970s, equipped with a military arm, the Organisation d'action contre le communisme international), were present in Italy during the period of the massacres, despite these suspicions, however, they have failed to obtain concrete evidence[186].

3.2.3 Middle Eastern and African connections

Other international ties that have been established, include those between Italy and Lebanon. According to SISDE, several Italian right-wing extremists traveled to Lebanon where they allegedly attended courses at training camps in the Christian-Maronite area. Some of them, especially with regard to possible implications in the Bologna massacre, were questioned, with negative results, by the competent judiciary[187]. The "Lebanese track", linked to the Bologna massacre, emerged following an interview conducted by journalist Rita Porena with Abu Ayad, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, published in "Il Corriere del Ticino" on September 18, 1980. In the interview, Ayad claimed that the Bologna train station massacre was carried out by Italian black extremists in collaboration

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[186] Picco, P. (2018). *Op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.
[187] Ivi, p. 74.

with German extremists from the Hoffman group, all of whom had received training at a terrorist camp in Lebanon. The thesis was supported by the fact that some Italian right-wing extremists, including NAR members such as Sordi, Carminati, and the Lai brothers, had actually traveled to Lebanon shortly before the massacre. There they had participated in military camps run by the Phalangists, a Maronite group of the extreme Christian right[188]. As it is also clear from the trial of Gilberto Cavallini, it is true that Italian neo-fascists and German neo-Nazis from the Hoffman group were training in Lebanon in two different camps, but there is no connection between this and the Bologna massacre. The Lebanese track that emerged was one of the many red herrings, where the figure of Giovannone, who was head of the SID first and then of the SISMI in Beirut, Lebanon, was central as he used his adherences, as a function of diverting the investigation, following directions from above[189]. He also appears to have had close contacts with both Abu Ayad (also given the consistently good relations between Giovannone and the Palestinians) and journalist Porena, which leads people to think that the Palestinian trail was nothing more than a red herring to shift attention to the international involvement in the Bologna massacre and divert it from the Italian neo-fascist one. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, according to a SISDE document, Rita Porena, a collaborator with the PFLP, transported Czechoslovakian grenades from Lebanon to Rome via Greece in April 1973. She also allegedly participated in a guerrilla training course in Beirut in 1975[190].

Moreover, other links have been discovered between subversive right-wing Italian groups and South Africa. In 1981 several Italian citizens or citizens of Italian and South African descent were arrested because they were believed to be responsible for several bombings in South Africa, claimed by the "Wit Commando," an underground organization formed in clear opposition to black-white integration and also anti-Semitic. This organization had been responsible for several bombings in the cities of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and the Transkei. Among its members were arrested, Massimo Bollo, Fabio Miriello, Eugenio

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[188] Sentenza R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 465.
[189] Sentenza (2020), R.G. 1-18, processo a Gilberto Cavallini, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1692-1694.
[190] SISDE. (1981). *I rapporti del terrorismo italiano con centrali straniere*, p. 7.

Zoppis, Laura Zanega, Alessandro Sangue and Flaminio Poltronieri. It has emerged from the copious documentation acquired by South African investigative bodies that Fabio Miriello who, having emigrated to South Africa in 1967, was allegedly the head of an anti-communist organization called the "Camicia Nera" or "black shirt," was in contact with numerous Italian and foreign right-wing extremists, some of whom were imprisoned for serious terrorist crimes. Miriello is believed to be the ideologue of the circulation of the right-wing periodical "Noi Europa," in South Africa, a periodical that would actually be the voice of the "Black Shirt" organization[191].

3.2.4 Connections with Latin America

In the 1970s and 1980s, Latin America was the scene of numerous coups and military dictatorships that established authoritarian regimes, often supported by the United States in the context of the Cold War. These military governments were strongly anti-communist and viewed favorably the support of right-wing extremist elements from other countries, including Italy. As already mentioned in the role of Gelli and P2 in the Bologna massacre, the Italian subversive right often cooperated with and leaned on many Latin American countries, such as Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina. As is well known, Licio Gelli played an important role in South American intelligence services in the 1970s. According to some rumors, Gelli was even considered the head of the Argentine intelligence services. His influence also extended to Uruguay and other South American countries. In this regard, reference is made to the ruling on Cavallini's trial which states: "Gilberto Cavallini è stato latitante in Argentina durante la dittatura militare, in un periodo in cui in quel Paese Licio Gelli era un'autorità." Gelli also maintained close relations with the Argentine intelligence services, as further testified by General Giulio Grassini before the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the P2 Lodge. Other statements reveal that Gelli had also affiliated Alberto Vignes, Argentina's former foreign minister, with his lodge, obtaining from him an appointment as Argentine

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[191] SISDE. (1982). *Op. cit.*, pp. 76-79.

honorary consul in Rome. In this way, Gelli was able to gain almost as much influence in Argentina as he had in Italy[192].

3.3 Italian-Libyan relations: From the 1960s to the 1980s

Relations between Italy and Libya have been a crucial aspect of Italian foreign policy ever since its unification, evolving and diversifying according to different historical phases. Bucarelli and Micheletta, in their book "Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche," describe how Italy's nineteenth-century strategic interest evolved over time. After World War II, this interest expanded to include economic and energy factors, and then, with the end of the Cold War, the main focus was on controlling migration flows.

Events that certainly marked the history of these two countries include the colonization war against the Ottoman Empire along the Libyan Mediterranean coast. Fascism then completed this project of conquest through violent military campaigns aimed at subduing a local resistance that had never quite subsided[193].

While the history of relations between these two countries before and during the World Wars is indeed fascinating, this thesis will primarily focus on the period from the early 1960s through the 1980s.

In the 20th century, Libya's rich oil reserves emerged as a key resource for industrialized countries. This abundance of petroleum made Libya a focal point in the global energy landscape. The strategic significance of controlling these oil reserves escalated, especially in the context of the Cold War. As industrialized nations, particularly those in the Western bloc, relied heavily on oil for their economic and military infrastructure, ensuring a steady supply of this resource became a priority. The Cold War era amplified the political and strategic dimensions of oil control. For Western countries, securing oil was essential not only for economic stability but also for maintaining a military edge over the Soviet Union and its allies. Oil was a cornerstone of Western economic might and military

[192] Sentenza (2020), R.G. 1-18, processo a Gilberto Cavallini, *Op. cit.*, pp. 2063-2066.
[193] Bucarelli, M. and Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*. Roma: Studium, pp. 9-10.

capability, making it a pivotal element in the geopolitical chessboard of the Cold War. The ability to influence or control oil supplies from Libya and other oil-rich regions was thus seen as crucial for sustaining the Western bloc's strength in the global arena.

This period thus saw the rise of national oil companies and the assertion of resource sovereignty by oil-producing countries, which added an additional layer of complexity to international relations. Libya, under the leadership of Muammar Gaddafi beginning in 1969, nationalized its oil industry, which not only redefined its economic policies but also altered its geopolitical alliances. Gaddafi, who rose to power in Libya through a military coup, implemented policies designed to exploit Libya's oil wealth to gain greater political influence both regionally and globally, thus affecting the strategic calculations of Western powers. Italy found itself in a complex situation during the Gaddafi regime in Libya. On the one hand, it wanted to maintain solidarity with its U.S. ally, which did not approve of Libyan policies aimed at reducing Western influence in Africa. On the other hand, Italy was trying to protect its strategic and economic interests in the Mediterranean. This situation fueled the famous joke attributed to Andreotti, namely that Italy was by then in the embarrassing situation of having a U.S. wife and a Libyan mistress[194].

Italy, as we said before, had strong economic interests in Libya, especially in the energy sector. It was a major supplier of oil to Italy, and several Italian oil companies, such as ENI, had significant investments in the North African country since 1959. This made Italy particularly careful to maintain positive relations with the Gaddafi regime, despite pressure and criticism from the United States.

However, relations between the two countries hit a cooling-off period in 1970 when, Muammar Gaddafi expelled a community of 15,000 Italians living in Libya, justifying the decision as an act to eliminate the vestiges of colonization. Moreover, in this context, ENI, which had discovered a vast oil field in Cyrenaica, had not yet obtained permission to begin extraction.

To resolve this impasse, then Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti sent Roberto Jucci, a colonel in the secret service, as an emissary to negotiate with Libya. Jucci

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[194] Gotor, M. (2020). *Estate 1980. il ruolo della Libia e di Gheddafi nella strage di Bologna.* «L'Espresso», July 9, 2020. Retrieved from: https://lespresso.it/c/attualita/2020/7/8/il-ruolo-della-libia-e-di-gheddafi-nella-strage-di-bologna/45204. (Last Access: June 6, 2024).

managed to get the go-ahead for ENI's negotiations, but in return, Gaddafi demanded one hundred M113 tanks, manufactured by Oto Melara in La Spezia under U.S. license. Andreotti communicated Libya's request to the United States. Initially, he persuaded the Americans that the Soviet Union was ready to supply Libya with similar military equipment, based on information from the Italian embassy in Moscow, obtained during a secret trip of Gaddafi's deputy Jallud to the Soviet Union. In addition, Andreotti hinted that production of the equipment by Oto Melara would take a long time, perhaps more than a year. The U.S. State Department, initially opposed selling weapons to Libya for fear of possible negative reactions from Israel and the U.S. Congress, but eventually agreed to a swap deal with Italy. The United States provided M113 tanks, manufactured by Oto Melara of La Spezia, in exchange for an Italian guarantee to purchase American-made Tow and Lance missiles.

Andreotti was aware of U.S. concerns about selling weapons to a country that, although not directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict, had expressed strong antagonism toward Israel. In addition, he was concerned that ENI, the Italian oil company, might be stymied in its negotiations with the Libyan government. Astutely exploiting these concerns, Andreotti negotiated an agreement that benefited Italy[195]. At the start of the 1970s, Libya became Africa's top oil producer, generating over 3 million barrels per day. Eni, during this time, established itself as the foremost foreign oil company active in the region[196].

This accord, and many others, not only strengthened ties between the two countries but also underscored Italy's strategic interest in maintaining Libya's stability, crucial to regional security, given its pivotal location in the heart of the Mediterranean. The Italian government had an interest in preventing instability and conflict that could result from a deterioration of relations with Gaddafi.

Nonetheless, European authorities had been deeply suspicious of the Libyan leader for nearly a decade, mainly because of his active support for revolutionary and

[195] Varvelli, A. (2013). *Il gioco di Andreotti fra Libia e Stati Uniti*. ISPI. Retrieved from: https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/il-gioco-di-andreotti-fra-libia-e-stati-uniti-7812. (Last Access: June 21, 2024).

[196] Il Sole 24 Ore. *ENI-LIBIA -1/ Una presenza lunga cinquant'anni*. Retrieved from: https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/Finanza%20e%20Mercati/2008/12/eni-libia-presenza-cinquanta-anni.shtml?refresh_ce=1. (Last Access: June 21, 2024).

subversive movements around the world. Gaddafi aimed to promote a global revolution against the Western system, which he considered corrupt and unjust[197]. In particular, Libya's support for Palestinian-Arab terrorism made Gaddafi a source of instability for international security. In fact, according to a CIA document, Colonel Gaddafi's government was:

> The most prominent state sponsor of and participant in international terrorism. Despite Qadhafi's repeated public pronouncements that he does not support terrorist groups, there has been a clear and consistent pattern of Libyan aid top almost every major international terrorist group, from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)[198].

According to the U.S. view, as reported in the CIA document, Libya's support for terrorism manifested itself in several forms, including financing terrorist operations, buying and supplying weapons, using Libyan training camps and advisers to train guerrillas, and using Libyan diplomatic facilities abroad as support bases for terrorist operations. According to this document, Libya had trained terrorists from different regions, including Latin America, Western Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. Gaddafi's main objectives, according to the United States, were focused on the Middle East and Africa. These goals included the destruction of Israel, the advancement of the Palestinian cause, and the overthrow of conservative and moderate Arab states. As a result, much of its efforts were directed at supporting terrorism in the Middle East[199]. This caused the country's gradual political and diplomatic isolation by the United States and led to the Libyan-US crisis of the mid-1980s, culminating in military clashes in the Gulf of Sirte[200]. Certainly, aversion to Israel was one of the many reasons why the United States frowned upon the Libyan government since America has always supported the Israeli state by maintaining a close and supportive relationship.

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[197] Lomellini, V. (2023). *La diplomazia del terrore. 1967-1989*. Editori Laterza.
[198] CIA. (1981). *Patterns of International Terrorism 1980. A Research Paper*. National Foreign Assessment Centre, p. 9. Retrieved from: https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-01137R000100050001-3.pdf. (Last Access: June 6, 2024).
[199] Ivi.
[200] Bucarelli, M. and Micheletta, L. (2018). *Op. cit.*, p. 13

Moreover, the Reagan administration, from its inception, identified Muammar Gaddafi as a major threat to global stability, dubbing him the "mad dog". This negative perception was further compounded by suspicions of collusion between the Libyan leader and the Soviet Union, a link that, in the context of the Cold War, was a serious national security concern for the United States and its allies[201].

Libya began to worry both Italy and NATO allies in 1980, both because of Tripoli's training of European terrorists, particularly German ones, and because, in the summer of 1980, Gaddafi issued an ultimatum to Libyan political dissidents abroad, ordering them to return home. This led to a series of political assassinations of Libyan citizens in Italy and, to a lesser extent, in other European countries[202]. As stated by the CIA document "he warned Libyan exiles that they should return home, or they would be punished in place."[203]

Allora non si sapeva che, già il 14 febbraio 1980, i nostri servizi militari, invece di continuare a proteggere i dissidenti libici, molti dei quali erano loro informatori segreti, avevano scelto di consegnare ventitré nominativi alla vendetta di Gheddafi[204].

So wrote Gotor, referring to Italy's support for Libya in this situation. As highlighted by Lomellini, Italy manifested a two-fold attitude toward Gaddafi's Libya. On the one hand, Italian authorities were obliged to guarantee security within their own territory; on the other hand, as recalled by Admiral Fulvio Martini, who was head of SISMI from 1984 to 1991, relations between Italy and Libya were often personal as well as institutional in nature. These personal ties made Italy a difficult terrain for Libyan dissent, as the Italian government offered a kind of implicit protection to the regime in Tripoli[205]. This ambivalence was also evident in the economic and political relations between the two countries. Italy, heavily dependent on Libyan energy resources, was in a delicate position, having to balance the need to maintain good relations with Gaddafi with international pressure for a stricter policy against the Libyan regime. The Italian government often preferred not to take

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[201] Ivi, p. 20.
[202] Lomellini, V. (2023). *Op. cit.,* pp. 85-86.
[203] CIA. (1981). *Op cit.*
[204] Gotor, M. (2020). *Op. cit.*
[205] Lomellini, V. (2023). *Op. cit.,* p. 87.

positions that might irritate Gaddafi, to avoid compromising economic and strategic interests in the Mediterranean. An example of this attitude is Rome's unwillingness to cooperate with other European governments in diplomatic action against the Libyan government in June 1980. Moreover, as stated by Merlati, the British archival records reveal that NATO allies were deeply concerned about the undisturbed use of Italian airspace by Libyan military aircraft during that period[206]. As stated by the CIA in a declassified document of 1983, Gaddafi manipulated Italy using both positive and negative approaches in a deliberate and consistent intimidation campaign. The Libyans have done atrocious deeds in Italy with little influence on their overall relations; "Qadhafi literally has gotten away with murder of his own nationals on Italian soil."[207]

3.3.1 The Ustica tragedy and the Libyan lead in the Bologna massacre

It is in this context that the Ustica tragedy unfolds. On June 27, 1980, an Italian civilian plane, the Itavia DC9 en route from Bologna to Palermo, exploded in the sky and then crashed into the sea, causing the deaths of 81 people. Many aspects are still not entirely clear, and many hypotheses have been formulated. An initial silence after the preliminary investigations, probably also due to the Bologna massacre that for many, like Vincenzo Vinciguerra, "ha offuscato tutto ciò che riguardava Ustica"[208], was followed by the mobilization of public opinion that led the affair to become the subject of an investigation by the Parliamentary Commission on the Massacres, chaired by Senator Libero Gualtieri, since 1989. Investigations into the Ustica massacre revealed suspicious behavior by Italian military personnel on duty at some radar centers on the night of the disaster.

The Commission of Inquiry and the Italian Judiciary found that these military personnel allegedly concealed crucial information, helping to prevent a clear

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[206] Merlati, M. (2020). *In quell'anno maledetto. il 1980 quarant'anni dopo*. Cross Vol.6 N°3.
[207] CIA. (1983). *Libyan-Italian Relations: Qadhafi's link to Western Europe*. Retrieved from: https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84S00556R000200100003-1.pdf. (Last Access: June 9, 2024).
[208] Vincenzo Vinciguerra in the trial of Paolo Bellini. Sentenza R.G. 2-2021. *Op. cit.*, p. 1181.

reconstruction of the causes of the accident. Acts of manipulation and destruction of radar recordings, falsification of documents, and failure to communicate essential data were reported. The failure to reconstruct the disaster was attributed to deliberate misrepresentation and polluting of evidence, also orchestrated by members of the Italian Air Force. In 1999, the preliminary ruling by Judge Rosario Priore declared that the DC9 incident had occurred as a result of military interception action. The DC9 had been involved in a military operation during which a missile had caused its downfall. Therefore, at the end of the investigation, the hypothesis of structural failure and the hypothesis of a bomb on board, long-considered alternatives to being shot down during a military action, turned out to be attempts to deflect both the investigation and public opinion. Therefore, a red herring[209].

As highlighted in an article on Rai News by Asta and Bonananta, there is a strong analogy between the Ustica massacre and the one in Bologna regarding the cover-ups and attempts to hinder the investigations. In both events, members of the Italian armed forces were accused of manipulating or destroying crucial evidence. Additionally, there were suspicious deaths. Marshal Mario Alberto Dettori, on duty at the Poggio Ballone radar (Grosseto) on the evening of June 27, 1980, had observed the passage of the aircraft on the radar trace. Dettori was found hanged in suspicious circumstances on March 31, 1987. Marshal Franco Parisi was also found dead, and hanged, on December 21, 1985, shortly after receiving a summons from the court to provide relevant information for the investigation. Another case of suspicious suicide concerns Major Doctor Gian Paolo Totaro, found hanged on November 2, 1994. Totaro was in contact with several military personnel directly or indirectly involved in the Ustica affair[210]. These suspicious deaths reinforce the idea of a cover-up and misdirection attempt in connection with the DC9 tragedy.

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[209] Rete degli archivi per non dimenticare. *Strage di Ustica*. Retrieved from: https://www.memoria.san.beniculturali.it/la-storia/-/event/fact/be3c59cc-71ff-4f64-a3e2-912d9595e559%231507d6c5-e237-4fa1-99ad-f205a078bd12/Strage+di+Ustica. (Last Access: June 7, 2024)

[210] Asta, G. and Bonanata, A. (2023). *La Strage di Ustica non ha più misteri*, «Rai News». Retrieved from: https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2023/09/la-strage-di-ustica-non--pi-un-mistero-957802dc-faca-4a50-8fdd-59d7b937168b.html. (Last Access: June 7, 2024).

The efforts to mislead significantly slowed down the investigations in both cases, hindering the search for truth and delaying justice for the victims.

But what role does Libya play in this affair? According to Giuliano Amato, former Prime Minister of Italy, as reported by an article by «L'Indipendente», the DC9 was allegedly shot down by the French air force with the complicity of the United States. The operation's target was a Libyan MIG presumed to be carrying Muammar Gaddafi. The plan involved staging a NATO exercise with many aircraft in action, during which a missile would be launched at the Libyan leader. The missile did not hit Gaddafi, but instead struck a Libyan fighter jet (found on July 18, in Calabria, in the Sila Mountains) and the Itavia DC-9 aircraft. Amato suggests that Gaddafi was dissuaded from boarding the plane thanks to Bettino Craxi, who warned him of the imminent danger. Amato adds that Craxi did not publicly reveal the truth to avoid accusations of disloyalty to NATO and espionage in favor of the adversary[211].

In reality, around the Libyan Mig affair, there are many theories and oddities, and some speculations suggest that the planes that crashed in the Castelsilano area were as many as two. As stated by journalist Petrasso in an article, an inspection conducted by Judge Rosario Priore revealed the testimony of Filippo Di Benedetto, a former conscript soldier. Di Benedetto claimed to have mounted guard at the remains of a plane shot down in Calabria on June 27, 1980, the same day the DC9 Itavia went down off Ustica. He guarded the pilot's body and wreckage for three days, starting at dawn on June 28, 1980.

According to his account, the military was called out around 5-5:30 a.m. and arrived at the crash site between 11 a.m. and 12 p.m., remaining there for two days and nights. Upon returning to the barracks in Cosenza, the officers ordered them to forget everything. Di Benedetto recalled seeing the pilot slumped over the controls, with a white complexion and no traces of blood. However, the next day, the body was no longer at the scene.

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[211] Baudino, S. (2023). *Dopo 43 anni l'ex premier Amato svela: strage di Ustica causata da un missile francese,* «L'Indipendente». Retrieved from: https://www.lindipendente.online/2023/09/02/dopo-43-anni-lex-premier-amato-svela-strage-di-ustica-causata-da-un-missile-francese/. (Last Access: June 7, 2024).

Several elements of Di Benedetto's testimony lead one to believe that there were two aircraft involved: the first an American fighter, the second a Libyan Mig23[212]. Other testimonies, as reported by journalist Petrasso in another article, claim that on the evening of June 27, they witnessed an aerial chase. It appears that the Libyan Mig was being pursued by two American F-14s. According to some hypotheses, the F-14s might have succeeded in downing both the Libyan aircraft and the DC-9[213]. This could explain the peculiar condition in which the body of the Libyan pilot was found on July 18. Medical examiners noted that the body was in an advanced state of decomposition, which was inconsistent with the date of discovery. According to various theories, the Libyan pilot found on July 18 might be the same one seen in the skies on the night of the incident, and the discovery could have been staged.

This suggests a complex dynamic of events and possible international involvements, which makes understanding what happened at Ustica even more intricate.

Regarding relations between Libya and Italy and the alleged role of these relations in the Bologna and Ustica massacres, it is important to note that an initial cooling of relations between the two countries occurred following the installation of a NATO missile base in Comiso, Sicily. Libya interpreted this move not only as an attempt to rebalance the nuclear relationship between the two superpowers but also as a real threat to its own territory.

Relations between Italy and Libya further deteriorated due to an agreement between Italy and Malta. In 1980, Malta was the target of Libyan maneuvers aimed at compromising its independence. In order to prevent Tripoli's aggression from extending as far as Sicily, Italy facilitated Malta in making a unilateral commitment

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[212] Petrasso, P. (2023). *I misteri di Ustica: troppe «stranezze», gli aerei precipitati in Sila "sembrano" due*. «Corriere della Calabria», September 9, 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.corrieredellacalabria.it/2023/09/09/i-misteri-calabresi-di-ustica-troppe-stranezze-gli-aerei-precipitati-in-sila-sembrano-due/. (Last Access: June 12, 2024).

[213] Petrasso, P. (2023). *I misteri su Ustica, la battaglia nei cieli di Calabria e i jet americani all'inseguimento del Mig*. «Corriere della Calabria», September 8, 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.corrieredellacalabria.it/2023/09/08/i-misteri-su-ustica-la-battaglia-nei-cieli-di-calabria-e-i-jet-americani-allinseguimento-del-mig/. (Last Access: June 12, 2024).

of neutrality, of which it became a guarantor[214]. At the roots of this negotiation, then, lay Malta's willingness to proclaim itself neutral.

Indeed, Valletta:

si impegna a non consentire l'esistenza di alcuna base militare sul territorio maltese, né a consentire ad alcuna forza militare straniera di usufruire, in Malta, di alcuna installazione militare salvo che in caso e nell'esercizio di legittima difesa[215].

The Italian government, on the other hand:

si impegna a garantire tale *status* con ogni mezzo politico e diplomatico, compresa ogni altra misura, non esclusa l'assistenza militare, che giudicherà necessaria per far fronte alla situazione[216].

As Zamberletti recounts in his book "La minaccia e la vendetta", he was in Valletta for the signing of the treaty in his capacity as Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs. According to him the agreement aimed to diminish Libyan influence on the island and represented a step forward for a more assertive Italian initiative in the Mediterranean. This move would make Italy more autonomous from the two superpowers that competed for control of the region[217]. According to historian Salvatore Sechi, who was interviewed by the newspaper «Avanti», "la garanzia dell'Italia sull'indipendenza e sulla neutralità di Malta contrastava con l'esercizio del protettorato vero e proprio esercitato fino a quel momento da Gheddafi."[218]

The agreement was signed on the morning of August 2, shortly after the Bologna station bombing. For some, this timing was just a coincidence, but for others, it represented a disturbing connection between the events. The fact that the agreement

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[214] Caffio, F. (2022). *La neutralità nel diritto internazionale: l'esempio di Malta.* «Affarinternazionali». Retrieved from: https://www.affarinternazionali.it/neutralita-ucraina-diritto-internazionale/. (Last Access: June 7, 2024).

[215] Zamberletti, G. (1995). *La minaccia e la vendetta. Ustica e Bologna: un filo tra due stragi.* Franco Angeli, Milano, p. 8.

[216] Ibidem

[217] Ivi, p. 18.

[218] Sechi, S. (2020). *L'ombra di Carlos, Gheddafi e Habash sulla strage di Bologna.* «Avanti». Retrieved from: https://www.avantionline.it/lombra-di-carlos-gheddafi-e-habash-sulla-strage-di-bologna/. (Last Access: June 8, 2024).

was concluded at a time of such chaos and tragedy raised suspicion and speculation about possible hidden links and underlying political motivations.

According to Sechi, some evidence points to the involvement of not only Libya but also the FPLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and Venezuelan terrorist Carlos in the 1980 Bologna Central Station bombing. In fact, as Sechi notes, according to a Stasi (the security and espionage organization of the German Democratic Republic) report dated July 12, 1980, Carlos made contact in June 1979 with Abu Ayad (Salah Khalaf), the number two of Al Fatah. In addition, between late May and the first half of July 1980, Carlos and one of his top lieutenants, Johannes Weinrich, stayed in Tripoli and received large sums of money, weapons, and explosives from Libya. On the night of August 1, 1980, the day before the massacre, Thomas Kram, Carlos's man and an explosives expert, stayed overnight in Bologna, a detail that had already been mentioned during the exposition of the trials. Kram headed the "Revolutionäre Zellen" (Revolutionary Cells of Berlin), many of which had merged into the Organization of Revolutionary Internationalists, founded and directed by Carlos. These details, taken from a questionnaire submitted to Carlos by the newspaper "Il Tempo" on August 3, 2014, suggest a possible coordinated international operation, exploiting the geopolitical tensions of the time[219].

Thus, it seems that both Libya and the FPLP had motives for undertaking such a tragic decision for Italy. Libya might have acted in response to geopolitical tensions and perceived Italian threats due to the Italy-Malta negotiations, while the FPLP might have sought revenge for the violation of the 'lodo Moro' and the failure to free Abu Anzeh Saleh who had been arrested following the Ortona strela missile affair. Saleh in 1981, according to SISMI documents, recently decreed by the Meloni government, appears to have been brutally beaten to the point of breaking a rib by prison officers inside the super-prison on the island of Pianosa. As stated by journalist Leoni, the chronologically compiled papers include the exchange of correspondence, telegrams, and various messages between Colonel Stefano Giovannone and the top leadership of the Italian intelligence services. However, these communications stopped abruptly a few hours before the Ustica massacre, on

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[219] Ibidem.

June 27, 1980, and did not resume until September 1980, skipping the period of the Bologna massacre completely as well[220].

Another clue that could point us to Libya's involvement in the August 2 massacre emerges from a statement by Zamberletti, who in his book recounts a meeting with Santovito, head of SISMI from '78 to '81. During this meeting, Santovito, visibly concerned, allegedly told Zamberletti:

Ma lei, ha proprio deciso di grattare la schiena alla tigre? Abbiamo già irritato Gheddafi pochi mesi fa con la nostra decisione di piazzare i missili a Comiso. La risoluzione del Governo italiano di schierare i missili nucleari di teatro, proprio di fronte al Nord Africa, non è stata letta a Tripoli solo come una decisione della Nato di riequilibrare il rapporto Est-Ovest nel campo della difesa nucleare, ma anche come una minaccia in direzione della Libia. Ora, con l'accordo che si profila con La Valletta, ci prepariamo a buttare i libici fuori da Malta. Non le pare un po' troppo? (...) Le dico che quasi certamente succederanno guai [221].

From this conversation, it can be assumed that Santovito was aware of potential consequences. However, in a conversation following the Bologna massacre, when Zamberletti reminds Santovito of what he said about the agreement with Malta and the possible consequences, the general downplays the importance of that coincidence, saying that there are no concrete elements to attribute any particular significance to it[222].

Moreover, Police Chief Vincenzo Parisi, while being heard by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the evening of June 22, 1993, also responded to some questions posed by Zamberletti, who asked Parisi what he thought about a possible connection between the Ustica massacre and the Bologna massacre just over a month later. Parisi replies that he does not rule out a connection between the two events and surmises that the Ustica episode could have been an unperceived signal. "Quando i messaggi non sono percepiti vengono replicati e reiterati finché non si capisce. Quindi potrebbe essersi trattato il 2 agosto, purtroppo, di una tragica replica

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[220] Leoni, S. (2023). *Lodo Moro: Abu Anzeh Saleh fu trasferito a Pianosa e picchiato al punto da rompergli una costola*. «Panorama». Retrieved from: https://www.panorama.it/news/lodo-moro-pianosa-abu-anzeh. (Last Access: June 8, 2024).

[221] Zamberletti, G. (1995). *Op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

[222] Ivi, pp. 36-37.

stragistica."[223] For the first time as Zamberletti declares, a man invested with the highest technical responsibility of directing the police force in Italy puts forward such a hypothesis on the connection of two massacres that visibly marked those years. "Threat and revenge," so writes Zamberletti, who surmises that someone within the military intelligence service, belonging to the pro-Libyan current mixed up the signals to avoid exploding an already high political tension in 1980, since it is hard to believe that no one perceived that signal and never suspected anything. Even representatives of the press who witness Parisi's statements fail to grasp what he is saying. According to Zamberletti, this is because Commission Chairman Gualtieri probably does everything to minimize the importance of the topic.

According to Zamberletti, if Ustica, therefore, was the unperceived signal, it means that the DC9 was shot down by a bomb on board. Parisi's statements lead us to think that the events were carried out by the same hand or at least provoked by the same mandator, which would explain the same city, Bologna, where the mandator or mandators probably had a base of operations[224]. Despite various theories, the hypothesis of a bomb on board the plane is considered by many to be a real possibility. According to various experts, including Frank Taylor of the College of Aeronautics at the Cranfield Institute of Technology and Ermanno Bazzocchi, the cause of the Ustica massacre would lie in the detonation of a bomb probably placed in the rear lavatory. Numerous clues suggest that it is unlikely that a missile caused the plane to crash. For example, the right side of the fuselage was clearly separated from the structure and free of dents or holes, a feature incompatible with a missile, which would instead have punctured the fuselage in several places. In addition, on July 21, 1993, during a visit to Pratica di Mare, where the DC9 parts had been assembled, magistrates answered parliamentarians' questions. On that occasion, Zamberletti asked Salvi, the public prosecutor who had followed all phases of the investigation with Priore, whether a comparison had been made between the explosives found in the luggage of the DC9 and those of the August 2, bomb at Bologna Station. Salvi replied that the explosives were of the same type, differing only in the triggers. However, no one seemed to grasp the

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[223] Ivi, p. 63.
[224] Ivi, pp. 60-65.

coincidence and importance of this discovery. Nevertheless, the bomb hypothesis was rejected by the investigators in 1994, a decision also shared by the Association of the relatives of the victims, who were convinced that it was a missile that brought down the DC9[225].

In fact, according to Leonardo Lecce, an aeronautical expert on the commission appointed by Investigating Judge Vittorio Bucarelli, who conducted an expert report between 1984 and 1990 with the support of the ship Nadir, the DC9 plane did not disintegrate in flight as speculated by those who support the bomb-on-board theory but, remained intact until impact with the water. The Nadir ship recovered about 70 percent of the DC9's weight, including the engine, fuselage and tailplanes. The examination found that the remains of the plane were found in an area of only two square kilometers. In the event of an explosion on board, the debris would have been scattered over a much larger area, up to 40 kilometers. In addition, no burns were found inside the plane; seats, cushions, and seat backs were still inside the fuselage, not projected outward as would have happened in the event of an internal explosion[226].

Zamberletti says it is difficult not to consider reliable the claims of Frank Taylor, the British expert chosen by Priore to serve on the expert panel. Taylor speculated that someone tried to sidetrack the Ustica massacre investigation by tampering with evidence, inserting false evidence, and trying to slow down the investigation. According to Taylor, there is a lot of evidence to support the idea of disinformation orchestrated by a group of people to obstruct the truth[227].

As claimed by former fixer Francesco Pazienza in an interview with journalist Milena Gabanelli, it appears that even the then-prosecutor Domenico Sica was convinced that the red herrings on the Bologna massacre orchestrated by the Italian secret services and P2 aimed to divert attention away from Libya in order to protect Italian business and oil interests with the Gaddafi regime. This manipulation of the investigation underscores how economic interests, especially those linked to

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[225] Ivi, pp. 107-118,

[226] La Stampa. (2023). *Ustica, il ruolo dei francesi nella strage di Ustica. Parla l'esperto: "Agirono senza avvertirci, l'aereo è arrivato integro all'impatto con l'acqua"*. Retrieved from: https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2023/09/04/news/strage_ustica_aereo-13025687/. (Last access: June 11, 2024).

[227] Zamberletti, G. (1995). *Op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

ENI and FIAT, played a crucial role in distorting the search for the truth, highlighting the complex intersections of politics, economics, and justice in Italy during that period[228].

As stated by a document from SISMI, an alleged Libyan connection in the Ustica massacre could be traced to the figure of Judge Tricomi. According to the thesis sponsored by Manucci Benincasa, the massacre may have been a targeted attack on the judge, who was investigating leftist terrorists and was supposed to have been on the crashed flight. Tricomi himself revealed to the Florence Center Chief that he had fortunately escaped the disaster, having had to postpone his trip to Palermo. The reason for the magistrate's trip was to formalize investigations previously carried out in Sicily by the judicial police into the Prima Linea terrorist group and alleged links with Libya. It is in this context that an example of red herring emerges, that is the dissemination of false information regarding the presence on the plane of the notorious Marco Affatigato[229]. After the massacre, a phone call allegedly confirmed his presence on board, claiming that the information came from the NAR, when in fact it was orchestrated by the secret services. However, it was later ascertained that Affatigato was in the south of France, thus proving that this was a real fabrication.

As pointed out by journalist Grignetti in an article, Judge Priore also believes there may be a connection between the Ustica massacre and the Bologna massacre with Gaddafi as the instigator. According to Priore, this should be investigated further[230].

As reflected in the judgment against Paolo Bellini, a further clue suggesting the veracity of Libyan involvement in the Bologna massacre emerges from a revelation received in June 1980 by Industry Minister Antonio Bisaglia. His brother, Don Mario, learned during a confession from Maurizio Tramonte, a neo-fascist and intelligence informant, that a massacre in Bologna had been planned for

[228] Gabanelli, M. (2009). *"Io, Gelli e la strage di Bologna" Ecco le verità della super-spia.* Interview with Francesco Pazienza. «La Repubblica». Retrieved from: https://www.repubblica.it/2009/01/sezioni/politica/pazienza-gelli/pazienza-gelli/pazienza-gelli.html. (Last Access: June 8, 2024).

[229] SISMI. (1990). *Appunti del sismi in merito ad interrogazioni parlamentari ed ipotesi di responsabilità libiche nella strage di Bologna.* Stragi_31FL_01SR_205UA_01.pdf.

[230] Grignetti, F. (2016). *Il giudice Priore: "È plausibile che dietro Ustica e Bologna ci fosse Gheddafi.* «La Stampa». Retrieved from: https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2016/05/13/news/il-giudice-priore-e-plausibile-che-dietro-ustica-e-bologna-ci-fosse-gheddafi-1.34998582/. (Last Access: June 9, 2024).

late July, orchestrated by a right-wing group from Rovigo with the participation of Libyan elements. Tramonte added that this group was operating as an action team for Gaddafi in Italy. Alarmed, Don Mario went to Rome to inform Antonio, who immediately alerted General Santovito of SISMI. Tramonte reported this information to the Bologna judiciary in February 2000, long before he was finally sentenced to life in prison in 2017 for the August 28, 1974, Piazza della Loggia massacre. This sentence, along with corroboration from other sources, makes his statements particularly credible[231]. It is important to note that the Bisaglia brothers died under suspicious circumstances that could be linked to the massacre: Antonio drowned under mysterious circumstances in 1984 and Don Mario was almost certainly murdered a few years later[232].

Undoubtedly of great relevance is the testimony of Judge Gualtieri who headed the working group on Ustica during the 15th session in 1995. He discovered that the U.S. Embassy had set up its own crisis group within the first ten days after the Ustica massacre. In addition, the Italian government had organized a unified institutional meeting of Ciis and Cesis three days after the Bologna massacre, on August 5. This top-level meeting was attended by Prime Minister Cossiga, and several ministers including Industry Minister Bisaglia, Foreign Minister Colombo, Interior Minister Rognoni, Defense Minister Lagorio, SISMI Director Santovito, and many others. The minutes of this meeting, however, were never turned over to the judiciary and only resurfaced fifteen years after the events. According to Gualtieri, we learn three crucial pieces of information from these minutes. The first is that a minister raised the issue of the connection between the Ustica and Bologna massacres. Second, the possibility that Libya was involved was given utmost importance, while downplaying the possible involvement of neo-fascist structures. Finally, the meeting ended with the decision not to report what was discussed to the judiciary, an element that most alarmed Gualtieri. Gualtieri pointed out that if this report had been known to the judiciary and institutional bodies, the Libyan track would have been more thoroughly investigated, as would that of the Nar, and the connection between Ustica and Bologna would have been more carefully

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[231] Gotor, M. (2020). *Op. cit.*
[232] Sentenza R.G. 2-2021, processo a Paolo Bellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 1071.

considered. This document denied to the Commission for 15 years, is of extreme importance. Gualtieri also recalls what then-police chief Parisi said about the connection between the two massacres. As we said before, Parisi was convinced that the Ustica massacre was not a secondary event, but rather the main massacre, considering it an act of terrorism in which the military services had to be involved, since it was unthinkable that such an event could take place without their knowledge[233].

According to the historiographical work of Benedetta Tobagi, the hypothesis about the Libyan track put forward by Zamberletti and many others was also revived by Prefect Bruno Rozera, Gelli's intimate and collaborator with the U.S. intelligence services. The Libyan track would thus have two possible motives. The first uses the revenge hypothesis, due to Italy's rapprochement with Malta and Libya's consequent isolation from the Mediterranean. The second hypothesis, on the other hand, sees the Bologna station bomb as a way to divert attention from the Ustica massacre. Although the first hypothesis, while supported by solid theories, has not been judicially proven, the second hypothesis was revived during the trial of Paolo Bellini[234].

According to an article published by journalist Grignetti, what could point to Palestinian or otherwise international terrorist involvement in the Bologna massacre is also a document desegregated in 2020 thanks to the Meloni government. It is a telegram, dated June 27, 1980, the day of the Ustica massacre, in which Colonel Giovannone reported that the FPLP had declared the "Lodo Moro" terminated. The FPLP's declaration of overriding this agreement indicated that Italy could no longer count on that protection, potentially exposing it to new terrorist acts[235]. It could thus indicate a connection to the Ustica massacre that occurred on the same day the telegram arrived in Rome. Although there is no in-depth study of the issue and not enough evidence to determine its significance, it is surprising how this document

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[233] Senato della Repubblica. (1995). *15° seduta. Martedì 4 aprile 1995*. XII Legislatura. Retrieved from: https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/leggi_e_documenti/raccoltenormative/30%20-%20stragi/Leg.%20XII/Resoconti/n.%2015%204%204%2095.pdf. (Last Access: June 12, 2024).
[234] Tobagi, B. (2024). *Le stragi sono tutte un mistero*. Editori Laterza.
[235] Grignetti, F. (2020). *Segreto di Stato per altri otto anni: "La verità su Ustica farebbe male"*. «La Stampa». Retrieved from: https://www.lastampa.it/topnews/primo-piano/2020/08/22/news/segreto-di-stato-per-altri-otto-anni-la-verita-su-ustica-farebbe-male-1.39216884/. (Last Access: June 11, 2024).

has not surfaced in the latest court cases, and how the international lead has not been given due prominence, which may have been set aside too prematurely.

Based on the various investigations, testimonies, and documents, one can undoubtedly try to outline the overall picture of the affair and speculate on who the perpetrators of this tragic story might be, although it is not the role of historians or academics to make the ultimate judgment. From what has emerged from eyewitness accounts claiming to have seen an aerial chase on the evening of June 27, 1980, it seems difficult to accuse Libya of involvement in the Ustica massacre, partly because there is insufficient evidence to suggest its involvement. Instead, it appears that the Americans, with the help of France, caused the Italian aircraft to be shot down during the chase, probably by accident.

However, Libya's connection to Italian "stragismo" is more plausibly linked to the Bologna massacre of August 2. It is plausible that, following the treaty between Italy and Malta, Libya, affected by this agreement, tried to send a message to Italy for what it perceived as a "betrayal." It can therefore be assumed that Ustica was not, as Police Chief Parisi said, the first message not received, but that Bologna was. The Ustica massacre would then provide a clear picture of the precarious and tension-filled international relations during those years, relations that were always on the brink, characterized by rifts but never open wars. It is plausible to consider that Gaddafi played a role as an instigator in the August 2 massacre. This is not hard to believe, given his previous support for various terrorist organizations. The involvement of the FPLP cannot be ruled out either. The Palestinian organization may have supported Libya in some way, given their friendly relations and their own motive for revenge against Italy following Saleh's capture.

It is also important to remember the tragic event of Lockerbie in 1988, which could reinforce the view of Libya as an instigator. On December 21, 1988, Pan Am Flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 people on board and 11 on the ground. "It remains the worst act of mass murder in British legal history." [236] The investigation into the bombing revealed that a suitcase containing a bomb had been loaded onto the aircraft. Following a thorough investigation, the evidence

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[236] Cowan, D. (2023). Lockerbie bombing: The ultimate detective story? «BBC». Retrieved from: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-67659046. (Last Access: June 21, 2024).

implicated Libyan intelligence agents in the crimes. Two Libyan nationals, Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, then Libyan intelligence officer and head of security for Libyan Airways, and Lamin Khalifah Fhimah, head of Libyan Airways at Malta Airport were indicted. Libya refused for years to hand them over, relenting only in 1999 after intense international pressure, prolonged negotiations, and the imposition of economic sanctions.

In 2003, Libya declared itself formally responsible for the bombing, though without admitting direct culpability[237].

All this certainly does not absolve the Italian intelligence services, the Nar terrorists, and the P2 Masonic lodge of their guilt in the Bologna massacre. The trials have already established their involvement. However, it could hint at an organization of the massacre that goes beyond Italian borders and involves other states. As Gotor argues, the goal of covering up the instigators of the Ustica massacre, who according to numerous accounts were to be located in Libya, was motivated by Italy's economic and strategic interests in that country. The crisis in these relations, which occurred after Moro's death and the fall of the Andreotti government, made the need to keep the real perpetrators secret even more urgent[238].

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[237] Il Post. (2012). Che cosa fu Lockerbie. Retrieved from: https://www.ilpost.it/2012/05/21/che-cosa-fu-lockerbie/. (Last Access: June 21, 2024).

[238] Gotor, M. (2020). *I colpevoli della strage di Bologna*. «L'Espresso», July 20, 2020. Retrieved from: https://lespresso.it/c/attualita/2020/7/20/i-colpevoli-della-strage-di-bologna/45232. (Last Access: June 17, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Right-wing terrorism, rooted in an extremist and violent ideology, has left an indelible imprint, especially in the United States and Europe. All around the world, SIEGE ideology and Accelerationism motivated terrorist acts aimed at destabilizing the government and fomenting a race war. Meanwhile, in Europe, especially in Italy during the years of lead, right-wing terrorism had a devastating impact, with neo-fascist groups responsible for numerous acts of violence to undermine the democratic system. Even as time progresses, fascist ideology has not lost vigor; on the contrary, it seems to be on the rise, fueled by populist and nationalist movements that find acceptance in the current political and social climate. This persistence and intensification of right-wing extremism pose a continuing threat to democracy and social stability, requiring immediate international cooperation aimed at eradicating its fascist, anti-Semitic, and racist ideology from its roots.

During the years of lead in Italy, black terrorism played a significant role, causing massacres and violence that scarred the nation's social and political landscape deeply. This turbulent period was marked by a series of bombings and murders, perpetrated mainly by right-wing extremist groups such as Ordine Nuovo, Avanguardia Nazionale, and the NAR. The massacres, including the Piazza Fontana massacre in 1969 and the Bologna massacre in 1980, left an indelible mark on Italy's collective memory, provoking fear, bewilderment, and outrage. The international context of the Cold War played a key role in fomenting political violence in Italy. This atmosphere of suspicion and fear became a breeding ground for extremist groups on both the left and right, who saw themselves as revolutionary forces combating an oppressive system. The climate of ideological polarization between East and West fueled tensions and conflicts, contributing to the radicalization of extremist groups and the proliferation of terrorist activities.

In this context, Gladio and stay-behind operations were a manifestation of the U.S.-backed anti-communist system aimed at ensuring national security and countering the influence and advance of communism. However, the 1980 Bologna massacre revealed a darker and more sinister aspect of Italian politics. Subsequent investigations brought to light the involvement of deviant secret services and clandestine organizations such as P2, whose goal seemed to be to destabilize the

Italian democratic system. The discovery of such connections deeply shook the Italian political landscape, undermining confidence in the integrity of government institutions and raising questions about the true nature of the alliances and interests at play. Attempts at disinformation have not only compromised the search for truth but have also inflicted deep pain on the families of victims. These maneuvers have distorted the course of justice, delaying the closure of judicial trials and further complicating the process of healing and reparation for those who have suffered irreparable losses. They have also undermined public trust in institutions and the justice system, making it even more difficult to achieve full justice and adequate reparations for the victims of the attacks. At the social level, the massacres contributed to a climate of widespread distrust and insecurity, fueling suspicion and polarization among different groups in society. Politically, the events highlighted the vulnerability of Italian democracy in the face of internal and external threats, raising critical questions about the state's ability to protect its citizens and ensure justice.

Right-wing terrorist networks did not operate in isolation; on the contrary, they were firmly intertwined with related elements in other countries, forming a kind of right-wing "international terror." Countries such as France, Spain, Latin America, Africa, and Lebanon were some of the major players with whom right-wing terrorist groups had established relationships or from whom they received logistical support and training. In this web of international relations, undoubtedly those with Libya are among the most interesting. Italian-Libyan relations have been characterized by a complex interplay of strategic interests, economic ties, and geopolitical challenges from the 1960s to the 1980s. In the 20th century, Libya's emergence as a major oil producer made it a crucial partner for industrialized nations, including Italy. Italian companies, notably ENI, played a pivotal role in Libya's oil sector, fostering strong economic ties between the two countries since the late 1950s.

The rise of Muammar Gaddafi in 1969 marked a significant shift in Libya's political landscape. Gaddafi's regime nationalized the country's oil industry and pursued policies aimed at reducing Western influence in Africa, which posed challenges for Italy, balancing its allegiance to the United States with its economic interests in Libya. Despite periodic tensions and Gaddafi's controversial international policies,

including support for terrorism and revolutionary movements, Italy maintained a delicate balance, driven by economic dependence on Libyan energy resources.

Nevertheless, relations between the two countries have experienced moments of high tension, as in the case of the Italy-Malta Treaty of 1980, which was crucial in defining bilateral relations and the management of maritime resources in the Mediterranean. This agreement, however, potentially excluded Libya from controlling certain maritime areas, raising concerns in the Gaddafi regime, which interpreted the treaty as an attempt to marginalize the country from the Mediterranean and contain its regional influence.

The signing of the Italy-Malta Treaty on August 2, 1980, occurred shortly after the Bologna station bombing, prompting speculation about hidden connections and political motivations behind the timing. According to historian Sechi, there is evidence suggesting the possible involvement of Libya, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FPLP), and the Venezuelan terrorist Carlos in the bombing. The coincidental timing of the treaty and the bombing fueled suspicions of a coordinated international operation amid geopolitical tensions. Despite the convictions of the perpetrators of the Bologna massacre, such as Mambro, Fioravanti, Ciavardini, Bellini, and Cavallini, many continue to harbor suspicions about a possible Libyan involvement in the attack.

While it is not the aim of the thesis to question the accuracy of the trials and convictions related to the Bologna massacre, it is crucial to thoroughly explore the international connections of right-wing terrorist groups with other states, particularly their ties with Libya. This line of inquiry, largely neglected during the judicial processes, could reveal key elements to shed light on the complex plot behind the events in Bologna.

The hypothesis of Libyan involvement is supported by several factors, including Libya's historical relations with international terrorist organizations and its foreign policy of supporting revolutionary movements. In addition, Zamberletti advanced the hypothesis of a connection between the Ustica and Bologna massacres, suggesting that Gaddafi was the instigator of both events. According to this theory, the Libyan leader allegedly orchestrated these tragedies as part of a broader strategy of destabilization and retaliation against Italy and other Western countries. This

theory was also corroborated by several influential figures, such as Judge Priore and Marshal Parisi, who supported the possibility of Libyan interference in the events of 1980.

Moreover, then-prosecutor Domenico Sica was convinced that the attempts at deception orchestrated by the Italian intelligence services and the P2 Masonic lodge were aimed at diverting attention away from Libya. According to Sica, this was intended to protect Italian business and oil interests with the Gaddafi regime, suggesting a possible reason why the Libyan lead was not adequately explored during the investigation and judicial process. In addition, evidence suggests that the Gaddafi regime may have had geopolitical and revenge motivations toward Italy, especially following events such as the Italy-Malta treaty, as we already mentioned. In fact, according to the historical study conducted by Benedetta Tobagi, Prefect Bruno Rozera, a close ally of Gelli and the US intelligence agencies, also adopted the theory of the Libyan track put forward by Zamberletti and numerous others. There could be two reasons for Libya's involvement. The first reason suggests that Libya would have been isolated in the Mediterranean as a result of Italy's Agreement with Malta. Whereas, according to the second theory, the explosion at the Bologna train station was intended to deflect attention from the Ustica atrocity, as stated also by Vinciguerra, it overshadowed the case of Ustica. The first hypothesis as stated by Tobagi has not been proven by a court of law, although being supported by reasonable theories. Nonetheless, the second theory was raised during Paolo Bellini's trial. The fact that the investigations and judicial processes have not thoroughly examined this lead raises questions about the thoroughness of the inquiry and the possibility that there may have been attempts at disinformation or failure to consider significant evidence. Therefore, further exploring international connections, including the possible involvement of Libya, could lead to a deeper understanding of the geopolitical contexts and global dynamics that influenced events in Italy during the years of lead. This could paint a more complex picture of actors who played a role in the tragedies of that period, potentially offering a more comprehensive understanding of the reality behind those events.

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