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The strategy of tension: Understanding state labeling processes and double-binds

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The Strategy of Tension:
Understanding State Labeling Processes and Double-binds

Abstract

Criminologists can enhance their theoretical grasp of their subject through an understanding of contemporary political economy because this provides insights into politics, crime and state policy within and across nation states. Understanding how this plays out is very much part of the "research agenda for global crime" (Hall and Scalia 2019). In this article, we present a comparative study of European statecraft during the Cold War and today, noting the parallels and contrasts in the construction and demonization of the enemies of the west." We present detailed analysis of how a "strategy of tension"—by which we mean the use of violent criminal actions by state agents to engender a climate of fear that blames the violence on a dangerous "public enemy"—was enacted by the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) secret services, in alliance with the Italian government, between 1946 and 1980, alongside some more fragmentary evidence of the way in which contemporary policies are framed around the "War on terror," forming the contours of a contemporary "strategy of tension."

Introduction: Defining a "Strategy of Tension"

The intertwining between criminology and political economy has been recognized by scholars of state crime:

> the study of state criminality is a political enterprise consisting of, among other things, the study of power, ideology, law, and public and foreign policy. As such, the study of state criminality is part and parcel of the emotionally charged landscape of a changing political economy (Barak 1991: 5).

The analysis of the "strategy of Tension," as it was enacted in Italy between the 1960s and 1980s (Ferraresi 1993), provides us with a circular model to discuss the political dialectic between state and society. Mainstream literature on terrorism is often based on the assumption that terrorists are fanatics who cannot cope with society's shared web of values (see, e.g., Orsini 2016). As disagreeable as terrorist actions can be, they cannot be isolated from the political and social context in which they develop, and both terrorist actions—as well as individuals and

groups involved in such activities—evolve in specific situations that usually entail a conflict over beliefs and the struggle for power. As such, we must contemplate the definition of *political violence* provided by Ruggiero (2019: 93): "Armed struggle rendered manifest the endemic violence present in political contention, and was practiced by groups fighting for the total modification of social and institutional arrangements (Italy and Germany)."

For Agamben (2013), the dialectic between the rulers and the rules is a circular one, and the return to violence as a political method is the consequence of a crisis of legitimacy resulting from the repressive rejection of specific demands by the legitimate power. In other words, violence from below is often the consequence of violent actions from above. As Ruggiero (2017:593) has argued in this journal: "The current international situation is characterized by a high degree of hostility, and the political violence we witness can be examined as action which influences, and is influenced by, the responses it receives."

Many authors, such as the zemiologists (e.g., Whyte 2016) and scholars of state crime (e.g., Barak 2017; Green and Ward 2004; Rothe and Kauzlarich 2013), emphasize that states are active criminal actors. For this reason, we consider this article as a discussion on state crime. Unfortunately, despite the growth of state crime research, the bulk of criminological literature still fails to recognize the extent of the crimes committed by "the State," by which we mean the political branch of capitalist mode of production: heads of governments, as well as their appendages in the form of police, army, and other apparatuses of social control. A recognition of a State's role as the principal actor of repression and violation of fundamental rights is ever more necessary in an increasingly illiberal climate breeding intolerance and hate crimes (Fekete 2009, 2018; Stephenson 2019). States engage in violent, terrorist-like activities, either when bombing whole populations, as in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq (Coll 2004, 2019)—to say nothing of deporting and/or starving huge segments of their own people—or indirectly, when they support terrorist groups and corrupt or rogue governments for their own purposes, such as in the case of Latin America. We are thus facing an interactive context, wherein the enemy is *cloned* (Ruggiero 2006) to the extent that it is both engendered by State terror and that it apes the state's *modus operandi.*

The view of Ruggiero, though shedding a new light on the interpretation of political violence, needs to be integrated with a more interactive approach (Heath-Kelly 2013). What we mean to do in this article is to envisage terrorism as the product of a social construction. A framework of sharp political conflicts and social inequalities results in the rise to power of specific forces,
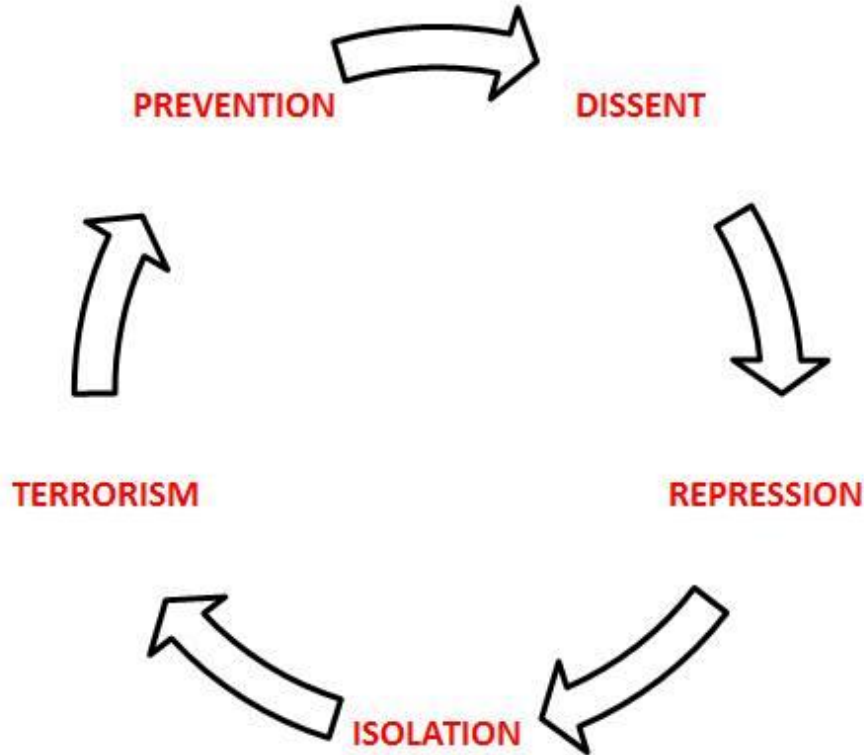
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groups and networks, who try to consolidate their position both by increasing passive political consent within society (Gramsci 1990; Poulantzas 1978, Mulinari 2019) and by preventing the possibility of radical change evolving in that society. The literature on social movements (e.g., Beck 2015; Ruggiero and Montagna 2008) has, of course, addressed many of these questions. As criminologists, we integrate some of the insights on social movements with the social reaction perspective, as proposed by Cohen (1974)—namely, that the purpose behind the creation of folk devils was realized in Italy in the 1970s through a two-phase process that began with State repression, then consolidated through incorporation of the old left and isolation of the new social movements, allowing further repression (Clement and Scalia 2016).

State "strategies of tension" are designed to produce a climate of fear within communities. They employ deceit, threats and acts of violence in order to maintain control across society through fear of the consequences of challenging the government of the day. This exercise of hegemony also produces what Wodak (2015: 66) has described as the "micro-politics of fear"—a sense that certain actions and attitudes are proscribed and opposite values are expected or encouraged. As Wodak (2015:66) explains, right wing populist rhetoric will "stress a heartland (or homeland, *Heimat*) which has to be protected against dangerous outsiders. In this way, threat scenarios are constructed—the homeland or 'We' are threatened by 'Them' (strangers inside the society of from outside, migrants, Turks, Jews, Roma, bankers, Muslims etc.)." According to right wing populist rhetoric, "they" are different, or in some way *deviant*, and are conspiring against "us" (Fekjete 2009; Kundnani 2015). Indeed, conspiracies are part and parcel of the discursive construction of fear (Wodak 2015:67). Labels such as "communist" and "terrorist" create a mentality which divides people between "established [insiders] and outsiders" (Elias and Scotson 2008; see also Silva 2018). Dominant social groups are involved in constructing a public agenda based on what Wodak (2015: 67-68) refers to as "simplistic dichotomies, and by positive self and negative other presentation," wherein techniques include "victim-perpetrator reversal and the construction of scapegoats by the shifting of blame…Lies and rumors are spread which denounce, trivialize and demonize the 'other'." While Wodak (2015) concentrates on twenty first-century European right wing populist discourse, demonstrating that "strategies of tension" are still very much with us today, we propose to develop this model by looking at the process of the classic "strategy of tension" in Italy during the Cold War. This country's geography and politics made it one of the main hotspots of the Cold War: it bordered communist Yugoslavia and also had the strongest Communist Party in Western Europe.

We call this first stage *prevention.* This preventive strategy of curbing political opponents brings about the second stage of our model—*dissent.* When dissenters are *repressed* (third stage), they are delegitimized as political and social forces—that is, they are *isolated* from the rest of society. Isolation produces a sense of embitterment manifested as political confrontation, leading to the final stage, which is terrorism. This applies to cases such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Ruggiero (2017: 597) sees the current crisis as engendering a response from governments that he labels "the radicalization of democracy," which he explains as "a response to a crisis of hegemony…The process triggers the creation of 'deep states' …recent invasions, illegal wars, torture…and the killing of civilians have been perpetuated in the name of this type of freedom."

This model of "strategy of tension," applied to Italy between the 1950s and the 1980s, can be regarded as a cycle, in which the repression of terrorism produces new preventive strategies and creates, in the long-term, the repetition of the cycle, although manifested in different ways. We will discuss below how the state-sponsored bombings of 1969 and 1970 triggered a rising arc of violent militancy from the left. The cycle of tension was characterized by the *amplification of deviance* and can be reshaped to explain the criminalization of political dissent. The marginalization of specific social and political groups emphasized both the differences and distances between mainstream and outsider politics. A refusal to negotiate by the ruling groups led to the deterioration of relations and resulted in a degeneration of political dialectics, resulting, in turn, with terrorism. This serves as an example of the "double-binds" that trapped both State actors and their political opponents, as we will discuss in more detail below. Figure 1 below illustrates our proposed model.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF POLICING: STRATEGY OF TENSION

PREVENTION → DISSENT

DISSENT → REPRESSION

REPRESSION → ISOLATION

ISOLATION → TERRORISM

TERRORISM → PREVENTION

In the rest of the article, we will develop this model further, discussing its different stages in order to reveal how terrorism is neither an anomaly of politics nor the consequence of outright repression, but the product of a process of *deviance amplification*, wherein the "strategy of tension" plays a central role in the criminalization of social movements. We will explain how this response to terrorism is more repressive than preventive, as the anti-terrorism measures enforced by the Italian government in the late 1970s to suppress prominent terrorist groups, such as the Red Brigades (BR) and *Prima Linea* (PL), through the use of supergrasses (*pentiti*) and special prisons, were aimed more at preventing the rise of a new opposition on the left than at the defeat of a terrorist movement that, after the kidnapping and killing of the Christian Democrat (CD) leader Aldo Moro in 1978, faced a sharp decline. The killing of Moro had little support on the Italian left. Since 1976, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the CD had endorsed not only austerity measures but also the repressive policing and new laws repressing dissenting opinions which drove a wedge between the "old left" of reform and historic compromise and the "new left" of revolution and protest movements. This division

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isolated and divided the opposition—and left the BR with no political space to enact a revolutionary strategy; instead, it provided the Italian government with the opportunity to enact a repressive strategy based on prevention (Clement and Scalia 2016).

In 1979, one year after Moro's killing, the State made its move with a series of mass arrests. The *7 Aprile* case was a massive miscarriage of justice against the left extra-parliamentary movements, mainly Autonomia Operaia (Bocca 1980). Initially, the police arrested about 20 people claiming that they were "dangerous terrorists" and charging one of them, Toni Negri, with being the "secret leader" of the BR. Those arrested were neither underground terrorists caught in the act nor were they found in secret hideouts with compromising documents. All the defendants had been active for many years in the political movement of the extra-parliamentary left and comprisede most of the department of Political Science at the University of Padua, as well as the editorial staff of two radical magazines (CARI 1978). This was the start of a wave of mass repression by the State: in all, 62,000 people were called before the courts and questioned by judges. This constituted a discretionary use of pre-trial detention on a massive scale (Moroni-Balestrini, 1998) and provoked a feeling of mistrust and fear among militants, boosting the retreat into private life (*riflusso*) and a general weakening of widespread political dissent.

The first stage of the cycle demonstrates how the State, rather than incorporating the claims of protesters, chose the path of repression. The manufacture of political polarization, using such illegitimate tools as massive bombs planted by State agents (*stragi di Stato*), created a climate of popular fear that damaged the left. The State was the main actor in this strategy—in Italy and beyond—however. it enjoyed the active support of some key industrialists. We can distinguish two stages of tension, then.

In the first stage, between 1946 and the early 1970s, the "strategy of tension" was aimed at weakening the institutional left—the PCI, and to a certain extent, the Socialists (PSI). The later stages of the strategy in the mid-to-late 1970s were aimed at the criminalization and neutralization of the extreme left—actions in which, tragically, both the PCI and the PSI were active collaborators, inspired by the "National Solidarity" mood of the time (Revelli 1997). As we will explain, after the final stage of the cycle, new forms of dissent developed and the removal of political dissent through prevention and repression reproduced the cycle of tension.

We will conclude by demonstrating that the concept of the "strategy of tension" still applied to State strategies in the twenty first century, albeit with some specific differences.

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First, in the Cold War period—up until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989—the national domain was the stage; today, it has expanded to become a global phenomenon. Second, pre-1989 "strategies of tension" revolved around one political narrative—capitalism versus communism; the current version relies on more of a cultural *us* and *them* narrative, such as the infamous "clash of civilizations" that drove the Iraq war (Huntington 1996).

The Cold War "Strategy of Tension" and Winning the Peace

During World War II, Winston Churchill had promised to "set Europe ablaze by assisting resistance movements and carrying out subversive operations in enemy held territory" (quoted in Ganser 2005 40). Fueled by the fear of a post-war communist takeover, the secret services in the United States (US), aided by the United Kingdom (UK), undertook a sustained campaign of counterinsurgency across western Europe. These states sanctioned and organized covertly a series of violent actions: bombings, coup attempts, police murders and political assassinations.

At this time, much of Western Europe was governed by fascists and allied dictatorships—in Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The new post-1945 democracies exhibited continuities, as well as ruptures, with the authoritarian regimes they replaced. Some, like Spain's General Francisco Franco, retained power, while other Fascists were "rebranded" and returned to high office. A notorious example is Paris Chief of Police, Maurice Papon, "whose qualifications for office included the persecution of the Jews of Bordeaux under Vichy" Caygill 2013: 1). He was in charge of the operation against Algerians that "culminated in the hunt and murder of over 200 demonstrators by the police in Paris" in 1961 (Caygill 2013:1). The threat of a military coup remained in many countries where ex-Axis figures emerged in high office. At the same time, the left had led the popular wartime resistance movements in Nazi-occupied Europe—stoking hopes of reform and socialism from large parts of the working classes of various countries. Could they "win the peace" by winning elections? For the Western world's rulers, and colleagues in the corporate boardrooms, there was a genuine fear of communism that allegedly justified much of the "strategy of tension"—namely, accommodations with the enemy—the far right who now staffed these US-funded and UK-trained "secret armies." "The greatest danger to the security of the United States," warned the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1947, "is the possibility of economic collapse in

western Europe and the consequent accession to power of communist elements" (Reynolds 1994:132).

These "secret armies" were bankrolled by the US and trained by the UK in joint intelligence service operation (Ganser 2005)—at the inaccessible Fort Monckton base which still operates from Gosport in Hampshire. They were secret insofar as they were hidden from the public, even from the governments, of the countries they were "protecting." The soldiers of these secret armies were to be ready to access hidden arms dumps supplied by the US and the UK in order to organize a resistance movement should the communists ever threaten to take over. As Wiener (2007: 63-64) describes, "[t]hrough the mountains and forests of Scandinavia, France, Germany, Italy and Greece…dropping gold ingots into lakes and buying caches of weapons for the coming battle." Naturally, many of these volunteer vigilantes were virulently anti-communist and sympathetic to the far right. Therefore, their general paranoia about the left made them likely to act against anyone they perceived to be an enemy of their extreme form of patriotism. For example, in 1953, when a man was arrested in the woods by West German police, and a huge cache of arms discovered nearby, the papers they seized were revealed in the subsequent trial and showed that the armies planned to neutralize not only communist leaders but also far more members of the Social Democratic Party of Germany— the equivalent of the Labor Party in the UK. This particular "secret army" was another group funded by the CIA, the "Young Germans"—in fact, aging Hitler Youth members—who numbered more than 20,000 in 1952 (Wiener 2007 66).

The US' arms economy doubled during the course of World War II (Kidron 1968). The US' role in the war had given them influence over a range of overseas territories. It was the start of an "American Empire" and the rulers of the US were determined that, like their British predecessors, the values of their empire must prevail. It seems that for the US and its secret services, there were no limits to the interventions they would make to prevent radicalization in Western Europe. They saw their role as shaping the post-war reformation of European states. In one state, West Germany, the degree of post-war control was remarkable. All Europe remembered the disastrous consequences of the punitive Versailles Treaty after Word War I, but still, on a continent shocked by the horrors of the concentration camps, there had been some support for preventing Germany from developing a manufacturing economy that would allow its leaders to make war in the future. The US leaders saw the development of European capitalism differently, however. They believed "[h]eavy industry powerhouses must underpin

. . . strong regional currencies, issued by potent central banks, to act as secondary pillars in support of the system's main currency: the dollar" (Varoufakis 2016: 50).

For these pillars, US leaders chose West Germany and Japan—two countries whose post-war constitutions the US wrote. Through a combination of international banking and political control—mainly the suppression of communism—the US and its corporate allies would re-forge their old enemy's economies. For example, the title of the Japanese multinational JVC actually stood for "Japanese Victory Company." As Varoufakis (2016:51) observes, "Germany, fearing a pastoral future, would breathe a sigh of relief if the United States were to patronize their economy…The fact that American forces controlled West Germany's land sea and airspace did not harm the notion either." American loans through the Marshall Plan allowed the German nation to be rebuilt and reindustrialised and the US, through its leadership of the post-war North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance, also guided key elements of their government. Communists were banned from all "sensitive" public sector jobs, such as the civil service and teaching. Although the National Socialist German Workers' Party (known in English as the "Nazi Party") was banned, the degree of forgiveness and inclusion of former members of Hitler's regime was in many ways remarkable. For example, the West German secret service was actually headed by General Reinhard Gehlen, who had led the Nazi army on the Eastern Front. They even had their headquarters in the building occupied previously by the Schutzstaffel (SS)!

While the idea of using the extreme right to counter the threat of "radicalization" was popular in pre-war Germany, it was also adopted by the new NATO alliance. The US and UK were the leading NATO powers and doubtless the statesmen at the helm of the new American Empire were learning from the example of the antics of the secret services of their predecessors. In the 1920s, to counter the "Bolshevik threat," Vernon Kell, the head of the British secret service "recruited Maxwell Knight, Director of Intelligence from the British *Fascisti*…to head MI5's B division—counter-espionage" (Smith 1996:52) During this undercover work, Knight became a leading member—teaming up with William Joyce, later to become the Nazi radio propagandist "Lord Haw Haw," to carry out burglaries and attacks on communists. His friendship with Joyce even led Knight to warn him of the government's plan to arrest him, allowing Joyce to flee to Germany. In somewhat of an understatement, Knight's biographer notes, "[a]s his colleagues got to know him better, some of them must have wondered whether his time among so many right-wing extremists had changed the way he saw the world, perhaps more than he realised" (Hemming 2017: 130). Knight has since become a British legend, the

inspiration for James Bond's boss "M," according to a new bestselling biography. Apparently, a big budget TV series is planned (White 2017).

The wartime collaboration between the US "Office of Strategic Services" and the British "Special Operations Executive"—later to become the SAS—also featured in the creation of NATO. The NATO symbol is the compass rose commonly seen below the steering mechanism on a ship, and represents how NATO leaders saw their role as to steer the ship of the State on the right course, and to correct those nations whose governments threatened to take them in other directions. In case this point sounds too conspiratorial, the compass rose also features as the central graphic on the logo of the CIA.

The "strategy of tension" may have been initiated and funded by the US, but it matured in soil cultivated by the UK in the post-war years. Shared ideals and methods in counterinsurgency were grown in British and American joint military operations to back their favored groupings against "communist" opposition in places such as Albania and Greece in 1945 (Newsinger 2015, 2016). US marines wear green berets as a tribute to their role-model— the Parachute Regiment (an elite airborne infantry unity of the British Army)—symbolizing their emergence as the shock troops of the Cold War. This is certainly one area where the "special relationship" between the governments US and the UK has endured and, in the spirit of Philip Agee (the former CIA case officer who later became a vocal opponent of its practices), this article aims to publicize some of the methods and locations used by Britain to maintain the "strategy of tension" through the period of the Cold War and beyond.

Infiltration and undercover activities are an important part of any government's prevention strategy or counterinsurgency (Agee and Wolf 1978; Newsinger 2015), evolving into a "strategy of tension" as enacted in Italy. From the end of World War II, prominent ex-fascists were recruited by the Allies, particularly American secret services, to serve as anti-communist agents. The most infamous was Licio Gelli, an ex-officer of the Nazi puppet-state *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI), who was pardoned by the partisans due to Anglo-American pressure and later became the leader of the Propaganda Due (P2) masonic lodge, an organization which the Italian Parliament in 1984 found to be the center of all the anti-democratic plots of 1970s (Italian Parliament P2 Committee 1984). The underground anti-communist network was even broader, as it also included monarchists, conservative liberals and, of course, Catholics, with the active support of the Italian business world (Giannuli 2011).

Another relevant anti-communist actor was and continues to be the Sicilian Mafia (*Cosa Nostra*), which has been playing a prominent political role in post-fascist Italy since 1943, when, thanks to its US connections, it helped the Allied forces landing in Sicily (Gaja 1990). Because the Mafioso are administrators of large land estates on behalf of prominent Sicilian landlords, the peasant movement which developed in Sicily from the 1940s was a threat to Mafia interests (Santino: 2016). In 1947, eleven peasants celebrating the victory of the left-wing coalition in Sicilian elections were killed. It took fifty years to bring to light the perpetrators of the slaughter: Mafioso, bandits led by Salvatore Giuliano, Italian and American Secret Services (Casarrubea, 2001). Its anti-communist stance guaranteed *Cosa Nostra* control of Sicily, as well as more than thirty years of relative impunity for its illegal activities.

Post-war Italy was rife with political contradictions (Crainz 2005; Ginsborg 1991). A new, democratic government had replaced the old Fascist regime. The new Constitution, voted by the large majority of the Italian Constituent Assembly, ensured a wide range of civil and political rights. The provisional government, led by the Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi, included the Communists (PCI) and the Socialists (PSI). The Communist leader, Palmiro Togliatti, was the Minister of Justice. He took the decision to enforce a general amnesty for members of the old regime, allowing some prominent fascist figures to return to public life. The reason for this decision was the social and political context of post-war Italy: at the Yalta Conference, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin established that Italy would be part of the American-led Western bloc.

The growth of the PCI, which gained 18.9% of the vote in the 1946 elections, worried both the American allies and the most conservative areas of Italian society, such as the Catholic Church, whose influence in Italian society and politics has always been significant. In addition, the referendum by which Italy had become a republic was closely fought, and won by a small majority of two million votes, provoking the accusation of gerrymandering from the monarchists. King Umberto II refused to acknowledge the ballot result, and left the country only after two weeks of street riots across Italy. Moreover, despite the end of the war, fascists and anti-fascists still resented each other, which rattled the country. The former had created the *Squadre d'Azione Mussolini* ("SAM" or "Mussolini Action Squads")—a paramilitary group particularly active in Northern Italy in sabotage actions, as well as in the killing and beating of ex-partisans and left-wing militants. Similar squads were active also on the left, partly for protection from fascist reprisals, partly because of the idea of resistance as a "betrayed

revolution," which stopped just a little short of the rise to power by the communists. In fact, some group of ex-partisans engaged in post-war reprisals against the old fascists. The most popular squad was the *Volante Rossa* (Red Flying Squad) (Bermani, 1993), a group active in Milan. The members of the *Volante Rossa* eventually fled to Prague, whereas Togliatti followed the democratic pathway he had started in Salerno in 1944 by expelling all the "adventurist" elements who had argued for an armed revolutionary uprising. Finally, post-war deprivation embittered social conflicts. Mass strikes, as well as land occupations (especially in Southern Italy and Sicily) were widespread. The amnesty issued by Togliatti was intended to defuse the climate of tension across the country, and reassure moderate and conservative public opinion about the trustworthy and democratic stance of the PCI.

The consequences of the amnesty soon proved negative, not only for the working-class movement, but also for the democratic transformation of Italy (Franzinelli 2006). Firstly, it impeded the prosecution or removal of all those public officers, such as bureaucrats, judges, policemen, and teachers, who had been appointed by the fascist regime and who were responsible for war crimes. The consequence of this was an acute contradiction between a democratic constitution and its authoritarian enforcers—a situation made worse by the survival of laws enforced by the fascist regime, which legitimized the repressive attitude of the state apparatus. Second, the former fascist militants who enjoyed the amnesty were later to be employed in such parallel paramilitary structures as *Gladio*—meaning sword—the code name for those creating the 'strategy of tension' (Ferraresi 1997), as their anti-communist attitude was regarded both by the American and by the Italian secret services as an added factor preventing a communist uprising. *Gladio* was just one element of the anti-communist network set up in Italy after 1945.

All these developments were not foreseen by Togliatti, whose idea of "progressive democracy" implied a coalition government between the Christian Democrats, the Communists and the Socialists—a DC-PCI-PSI– coalition government—which would promote radical economic and political reform (Spriano 1990; Tranfaglia 1992). His strategy proved flawed. In December 1947, following the return of the DC prime minister Alcide De Gasperi from a meeting in Washington, where Italy was granted an American loan, a government crisis broke out. A new government, which did not include the left-wing parties, was sworn in. This was the beginning of the Cold War in Italy: the consequence of the anti-fascist alliance collapse was the exclusion of the left from the government and the enactment of a prevention strategy

to marginalize the working-class parties, in particular, the communists, and to prevent their rise to power.

The general elections of April 18, 1948 ~~a~~were the watershed moment that defined Italian history until 1992. The DC gained a landslide majority in Parliament (301 seats out 578), but they chose to form a coalition with the center-parties: liberals, social democrats and republicans. The fundamental idea underpinning De Gasperi's strategy consisted of creating a "democratic front" to isolate the PCI and PSI from mainstream political spectrum and thus increase the "red scare" element within Italian public opinion—demonizing one group through the process of labeling.

This strategy received a boost after 1949, when Italy joined NATO. Communists and socialists became *internal enemies* because of their implied link with the Soviet Union and its expanding post-war bloc of Eastern European countries. The sentiment was that their rise to power, even though through regular general elections, should be prevented in order for Italy not to change political sides within the international context.

The Cold War "Strategy of Tension": Counterinsurgency

Under a sociological lens, the post-war Italy dynamics reproduce the insiders-outsiders dialectic developed by Howard Becker (1963) and elsewhere by Norbert Elias (1965). The sharp post-war political and social conflicts saw the coalitions of the right and the left fighting each other. Both of them had a public persona (parties, public opinion); each also possessed paramilitary squads. The outcome of the conflict was favorable to the moderate and conservative side, who became *the insiders* as they could rely on the support of the State apparatus, as well as criminal organizations, such as the Sicilian mafia, noted above and which we describe in greater detail below. The prevention strategy enacted in Italy was a wide-ranging one insofar as it involved the collaboration of different actors, such as civil society, entrepreneurs, and political parties and even the Catholic Church, with Pope Pius XII excommunicating all communist militants, voters and supporters in 1949. It is possible to focus on a three-pronged prevention strategy, enacted either directly or indirectly:

Surveillance: The two main Italian police forces—the *Pubblica Sicurezza* (PS, which would not be de-militarized until 1981, when it was then renamed *Polizia di Stato*) and the *Carabinieri*

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(CC)—were actively carrying out surveillance of and collecting dossiers on communists, socialists and left-wing trade unionists. Another form of surveillance was conducted by the leading industrialists of the country, mainly the automobile corporation FIAT, which adopted a strategy that was later to be followed by other companies (Guidetti Serra 1984). All the most politically active workers were isolated from the rest of their colleague and put at work in the so-called *reparti confino* (confinement lines), whose line managers were recruited among the rank of the former fascist police, Organizzazione per la Vigilanza e la Repressione dell'Antifascismo (OVRA). Other actors, such as local priests, teachers, and also ordinary anti-Communist citizens, were encouraged to cooperate with police forces in the surveillance of communist members.

Maintenance of fascist apparatus/laws: The maintenance of public officers and managers who had been trained and appointed under the fascist regime could not have been effective without keeping the old authoritarian penal laws. All the preventive and repressive action conducted by police forces and judges was legitimized by the existing laws. Amendments to the fascist heritage were deliberately delayed by the DC-led governments, in order to maintain the preventive strategy (Ingrao, 2005). The Supreme Court, for example, was not created until 1956, despite being prescribed by the new Constitution. Local and regional administrations were not instituted until 1970. The possibilities to counterbalance the anti-communist stance through constitutional means were, therefore, marginal.

Judicial/police prosecution: The survival of the fascist heritage, both in penal laws and in the State apparatus, was integral to the DC-led governments from 1948. The Freedom to Work Act, passed in 1949 (Della Porta-Reiter 2003), was, indeed, a serious restriction on the right to strike, as well as an enhancement of the rights of the employer. The overwhelming election victory, despite the suspicion of gerrymandering and the strong influence of the Catholic Church over Italian public opinion, made the DC government feel entitled to quell workers' protests, as well as silence political dissenters. The Ministry of Interior, Mario Scelba, instituted a special squad, the *Celere* (quick squad), based in Padua but able to move quickly to the hotspots of protests through the use of motor vehicles—mainly to the cities of the so-called "industrial triangle" (Milan, Turin and Genoa). In the 1948 election, the communist-socialist *Fronte Democratico Popolare*, was defeated, and this accelerated the government-authorized repression of social protests. Over 100 people who protested against electoral manipulation (*legge truffa*) were killed. These early triumphs for the right would be undermined during the 1960s, however. Public concern rose due to the threat of a military coup in 1964, which

generated fears about the return of authoritarian government. Then came the historic rise of resistance and rebellion in 1968 led by students and workers which, in Italy, spilled into 1969, and threatened to undo all the achievements of the post-war stability. From the point of view of the state machinery, social control was unravelling and it is at this point that we see the "strategy of tension" beginning to dominate Italian politics (Bull 2011).

The case-study that constitutes the primary archival research carried out for this article analyses the US National Security Council (NSC) files for Italy 1969-70, currently housed in the Nixon Presidential Library in Orange County, California (NSC/Nixon). By relating some of the details of those declassified documents, it is possible to provide a flavor of the news and opinion regarding safeguarding American government interests in the country the US deemed most vulnerable to communism during the Cold War. Clearly, the largest European leftist upsurge in the historic year of 1968 occurred in France, but General Charles de Gaulle's success in the elections that followed the May general strike reassured US rulers that despite a powerful Communist Party, French future stability was likely (Harman 1988). In Italy, on the other hand, the "red years" of 1968 and 1969 revealed not only militant workers, but also a growing mistrust of the military and lack of faith in mainstream politicians, demonstrated by actions such as the attack on the Daily American Printing Company (DAPCO) on the morning of February 18, 1969, during President Nixon's visit to Italy. The US ambassador reported: "The incident followed the breaking of plate glass windows at the American Express Co. at Piazza di Spagna (at almost the same time the Amexco office in Paris was also attacked), and the desecration of American flags in the Piazza di Spagna and the Via Condotti" (NSC 1969).

The proprietor told the ambassador that several demonstrators "forced their way into DAPCO, wounding one of our workers…set fire to many rolls of newsprint with gasoline and incendiary bombs." Windows were smashed, paving stones uprooted in this "communist inspired" action (NSC 1969).

In July 1969, a youthful Patrick Buchanan, then a special consultant to President Nixon and later a candidate for the Republican nomination in 1992 and 1996, passed on a letter to the president from concerned businessman Pier Talenti in July 1969. In the letter, Talenti asserted that "Italy is in its most dangerous political crisis." His concern was that "under your Presidency[,] for the first time in history[,] a country like Italy could go Communist by legal democratic process." To ensure that Nixon understood the dangers of this legal and democratic act—or prospect—he insisted that "a legal and overt takeover by the Communists

automatically created the possibility of a violent takeover from the Right," by which he meantalluded to the military coup in neighboring Greece in 1967. (The Greek military junta or "Regime of the Colonels," as it was known, lasted from 1967-1974.) Backing a military coup became the standard US prescription against the "threat of communism," as Nixon was to prove in Chile in 1973. To Buchanan, and many others in the Republican administration, Italy faced the same danger. Talenti appealed to the leader of the free world, currently enmeshed in an unwinnable war in Vietnam, and undergoing its own domestic radical upsurge: "When Italy has gone Communist what will happen to America's prestige worldwide, our American defense position in the Mediterranean and Europe, and to the very large business investments in Italy?"

Talenti was convinced something had to be done, acknowledging, "I realize that action can only come from you…Let me bring some of that action to Italy to save it from Communism." Now, admittedly, these are the words of only one agitated businessman, but the next significant comment stored in the NSC files came in a confidential memorandum, dated October 1, 1969, from a far more eminent source—Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Kissinger began by reviewing the position of Mario Rumor, the leader of "the current minority DC government, and the possible trials he will face on the labor and student fronts this fall." Initially, Kissinger sounded confident that American interests would prevail, claiming: "On balance I expect Rumor will eventually succeed in forming a new center-left government." But could this be only a short-term fix? Kissinger continued with an immediate caveat:

> There is some danger, however—which has been underlined by several private visitors to Washington—that over the next two or three years the Italian Communists may work their way into the government, perhaps in a new Popular Front. While this danger can be overstated, I think it would be prudent for us to look into the contingency, and I am asking Elliot Richardson to form an ad hoc group with NSC Staff participation to study the implications for US policy of possible Communist entry of the Italian Government.

The words "ad hoc" have been endorsed with a hand-written "good" in the files, presumably either by Nixon or on his behalf. The risk here was that once the American secret services became involved in "problem-solving"—with a focus on the action required to block the Communist Party gaining a bigger share of the vote—then Kissinger's measured caution about overstating the danger would be jettisoned asin the climate of public fear and anxiety set loose

by decisive covert action. Agencies such as the NSC and CIA were well-established in their practice of ~~recruiting,~~ training and empowering their recruits in Europe's secret armies to fight back against the Communist threat by any means necessary.

A positioning document written around the same time explains how America's political party of choice, the DC, were having increasing problems governing, as the shift to the left in Italian society through the 1960s radicalized their more moderate socialist and social democrat partners: "The result was a weak coalition Government wherein the social program of the Christian-Democrats was always hindered by the pro-Communist inclinations of the fellow-traveller Socialists" (NSC 694/ 2).

Ominously, the author of this briefing believed "the fellow-travellers…can rely on a covert entente with a sizeable faction of the Christian-Democratic Party headed by former premier Aldo Moro." In other words, even the very party that the Ni~z~xon regime and NSC had promoted as their government of choice was at risk of succumbing to the communist bacillus. This is evidence of the overwhelming paranoia built into the anti-communist mind-set which perceived a phantom menace lurking within the most respectable and conservative institutions, illustrated by the assertion in the next paragraph of the same document that "a Communist takeover may occur through hybrid alliances with leftist-Catholics." The document concludes by stressing "all means and efforts must be concentrated in supporting those who are determined to protect Liberty and Democracy against Communism…immediate action is required, even if limited to a statement of policy." This is a rather an~a~emic note on which to end, and it is easy to imagine that those members of any committee formulating "action" would have far bolder proposals unlikely to find their way into the declassified section of the presidential library.

A telephone report, from Rome on December 12, 1969, announced "the bombings that took place today, Friday afternoon, at 5.00 p.m. in Milan and Rome. The figures of approximately 15 dead and 90 injured at the National Bank of Agriculture in Milan and 10 injured 92 seriously at the Bank of Labor in Rome have been confirmed to us." The next day, White House aide Helmut "Hal" Sonnenfeldt sent a memo to Kissinger, which stated: "Italy remains tense in the wake of the bombings. Massive police action has included rounding up suspected terrorists on both the left and the right, although the official thinking is that the ultra-left elements (the Maoists and anarchists) are responsible."

It appears, then, that both the Italian and US governments were keen to blame the bombings on the left, hoping that this would damage communism in the court of public opinion. Of course, senior US politicians—and maybe some Italian ones as well—would have known that these actions were carried out by those right-wing vigilantes who Ganser (2005) has labelled, "NATO's secret armies."

Graham Martin, the US Ambassador to Italy from 1969-1973, was a CIA veteran entrusted with the role of keeping watch over Italian developments. He wrote to the White House in the wake of the bombings, noting the continued gains for the left in local government and concluding, "I think President Saragat believes this drift will inevitably enhance Communist influence…There was certainly a public revulsion against the senselessness of the Milan and Rome bombings. But it is difficult to translate this public opinion currently into reliable estimates of strength at election times." It may be that the public, in general, was not so sure that the left were to blame for the bombings. After all, the military had planned a coup in 1964 and the Americans were known to favor the right over the far left, as the above evidence illustrates.

Another example of US official bias can be found in a White House Memo to Kissinger on January 20, 1970 that reported Nixon's response to a newspaper editorial warning of "the growing strength of Neo-Fascist groups" in Italy: "He noted that they could be the lesser of two evils and cautioned you not to let the State Department push us Left to avoid the Right."

Fear of the left continued to guide US policy in Italy though the next year, with Martin concerned that "we are on the verge of a second Chile in the Mediterranean and that some positive action now will preclude the debacle we are wrestling with in Latin America." The "debacle" to which he referred was the election of a popular left-wing president, Salvador Allende, who would be assassinated—machine gun in hand—defending his office from General Augusto Pinochet's coup on September 11, 1973—the first '9/11.' Evidence that this coup was organized by US secret services aiding the paramilitary in Chile is now overwhelming, and the case for American secret service involvement in the 1969 bombings, is also very strong (see, e.g., Ganser 2005; Willan 1991).

Finally, the confidential reports from Martin from April 1971 revealed the details of an attempted Italian military coup in December 1970. The final act of takeover never occurred because of fears of the public reaction, and when the leaks hit the news reels four months later, the Communists understandably highlighted the serious nature of this plot to overthrow the

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government. The Americans, however, saw no need to distance themselves from the plotters, with General Roselli-Lorenzini—who was proposed to be Minister of Defense in the military regime—invited over to Washington to meet President Nixon (White House Memo 4/5/71). In fact, Martin hints that Nixon's staff knew about the coup attempt during its preparation: "Al Haig indicated awareness of air force and navy restiveness…and SID (Italian Secret Service) chief General Miceli has made veiled references to White House representatives." This led Martin to complain to the White House that "it just might make the job a bit easier if some better way could be devised to keep me personally informed."

Overall, the tremendous desire of the Americans to combat the Communist folk devil was leading to support for covert measures of a violent and terrorist nature to prevent the people of Italy from voting ~~in a fair election~~ for a party allied with their Cold War enemy—the Soviet Union.

The Contemporary "Strategy of Tension": Scapegoats and "Double-Binds"

The creation of scapegoats and moral panic is not just a legacy of the Cold War. In the twenty-first century, where governments have declared a "War on Terror"—allegedly in response to events that began with 9/11, but which are actually part of a history of war and military intervention beginning much earlier, states have ratcheted up levels of public anxiety in an escalating "strategy of tension." The bloody legacy of a century of western imperialism in the Arab world is an "Islamic" reaction, held responsible for provoking the "War on Terror" as a result of 9/11 (Welch 2006). And thus today, Western leaders have a new "suitable enemy" (Fekete 2009). For nearly two decades, this US-led "War on Terror" in the Middle East has been *the* twenty-first century "strategy of tension"—where enemies justify acts of violence by stressing the importance of suppressing the other side.

Each side struggles to match the violence of their enemy. US drones and planes shatter Middle Eastern cities, destroy buildings and kill people in so-called targeted attacks: the assassination of Iran's General Qasem Suleimani in early January 2020 is a prime example. Islamist groups, weak governments and regional powers undertake the same activities on a variety of scales. Both sides spread terror in a scale proportional to their degree of "statehood." The likes of al-Qaeda and ISIS are far from states. They claim territories, but lack the populations to inhabit them, instead terrorizing those whose lands they control.

Elias (2007:148) notes that "[a] field of states without a central monopoly of physical violence is inherently unstable. There are a hundred and one reasons why tensions and conflicts between states may arise. But whatever the particular reason, the primary driving force is provided by the intrinsic competitive pressure of the figuration—by the elementary survival struggle between the constituent units." Regional powers battle over contested areas, from Crimea to the South China seas. As Wiener's (2007) history of the CIA shows, many groups began as opposition currents finding favor with the West as they fought regimes linked to the Cold War enemy—a vicious circle leaving a "legacy of ashes." A perfect illustration of how counterinsurgency achieves perverse outcomes is the story of the caves of Tora Bora, where many believed Osama Bin Laden was hiding in late 2001. As Wiener (2007:484) explains, whilst the US was backing the Afghan resistance to Soviet invasion in the late 1970s and early 1980s:

> Tora Bora had been a place of great renown in the fight against the Soviets. A cave complex dug deep into the mountainside had been built, with the CIA's assistance, to meet NATO military standards. An American commander with orders to destroy Tora Bora would have been well advised to use a tactical nuclear weapon.

Thus, the US military had built the redoubt now hiding their enemy, just as later American and British arms supplied to the Iraqi army were captured in order to provide the fire power for the emergence of ISIS (Chulov et al. 2014).

The theory of "double-binds" helps illustrate this dilemma. As Elias (2007:148) states, "double-binds" refer to "the figuration which binds together two or more states [or elements within states] to each other in such a way that each of them constitutes, actually or potentially, a danger for the others, and that none of them is capable of removing or controlling that danger."

After a decrease in the incidents of acts of terrorism in the West, due in part to the brief emergence of more positive political prospects for the Middle East as a result of the 2011 Arab Spring (Amar et al. 2013), a new "strategy of tension" has featured prominently in the political economies of Europe and America since, at least, the Paris attacks of November 2015. 2016 began with an atmosphere of brooding resentment, where public anxieties were being stoked. Military maneuvers and overt displays of paramilitary policing across Europe were justified by rumors of terrorist plots and memories of recent enemy outrages. While many hoped these fears were exaggerated, a bloody trail of terror attacks across Belgium, France, Germany and the UK in 2016-17 appears to have confirmed them.

When the enemy is so defined, it appears that the governments of advanced economies are at war. But is it a "real" war? ISIS has earned the label of "terrorist group" because it does not control a territory legitimately—or, at least, does not have a monopoly on the means of violence. Instead, it challenges for control against the "legitimate" rulers of Iraq and Syria. ISIS certainly aspires to enemy status; it also suits the Islamists' interests if an atmosphere of rising stigmatization of Muslims as "terrorist sympathisers" in the West is so alienating that some choose to accept the label (Kundnani 2015). Thus, a climate of fear has been created which, in itself, appears to justify the sort of suspicion and panic driving many citizens to accept a range of measures that curtail civil liberties and demonize radicalism—hence, the parallels with the Cold War period "strategy of tension" from 1945 to 1990.

In the midst of that period, Agee (1978:164), discussed above, explained: "Intelligence information collection has no purpose except to be used for action, and covert action in all its varieties is the end of the cycle." In other words, we are told that intelligence pre-empts terrorism: it prevents its success. This ostensible aim is not always achieved, as proven by the recent rise in global terror attacks. We should remember, however, that covert operations are often themselves acts of violence. The "end of the cycle" could be an organized covert action perpetrated by state agents of social control. We are now at the beginning of 2020, and twenty-first century citizens in major European cities are witnessing acts of terror, such as the wave that occurred in 2017: many will doubtless reflect on the connection with wars fought allegedly on their behalf. Indeed, UK Labor leader, Jeremy Corbyn, suggested a link between the Manchester Arena terror attack and Western wars in the Persian Gulf. This was in the midst of an election campaign and Corbyn certainly did not lose any popularity by doing so (Hope 2017). But this also begs another question: if states cause wars and spread terror, should citizens accept—automatically and uncritically—their justifications of anti-terror operations and strategies?

States wish their citizens to accept the need for more surveillance, more armed police, and beefed up security for their protection, but some citizens regard the state's actions as dividing populations into so-called "allies" and "enemies," "angels" and "folk devils" (Appleby 2010). Labeling groups as "the enemy within" in order to poison perceptions, weakens opposition and thus minimizes threats to state control. In 63 BC, Cicero advanced the concept of "the enemy within" in order to label his political rival for the leadership of ancient Rome—the so-called "extremist" Catiline —accusing him of plotting to set the city ablaze (Parenti 2003). These methods of manipulating the message are as old as the Romans

and have been challenged frequently by scholars (e.g., Chomsky and Herman 1988). Becker (1974:60) was clear in this regard—: "Elites, ruling classes, bosses… exert control by accusing people of deviant acts of various kinds"— and, as he continues, "the attack on hierarchy begins with an attack on definitions, labels, and conventional conceptions of who's who and what's what." These are arguments about labeling insofar as labels create divisions, as well as drawing the borders between so called "friends and foes."

For Hall (1974: 262), "in all labelling theory, the question is, who defines which action belongs where?" He continues:

> These acts of labelling in the political domain, far from being self-evident, or a law of the natural world, constitute a form of continuing political 'work' on the part of the élites of power: they are, indeed, often the opening salvo in the whole process of political control.

Take the case of the terror attack on Paris in November 2015. We need to grasp how, as Dunning (2016: 33) puts it,

> 'established' groups in the West have an interdependent relationship with 'outsider' 'jihadist terrorists.'…an attack on Paris was regarded as an attack on Britain, Germany, the United States and other Western nation-states, and this was framed as an attack on the 'civilized' world by 'barbaric outsiders,' albeit 'barbaric outsiders' who, in the cases of these individuals who actually carried out the attacks, were from the West.

These, then, are double-binds and, as Dunning (2016:31) argues, "brutalisation processes are, in turn, "feeding back" and contributing to the double-binds within which Western nation-states and jihadist are caught."

This approach looks even more salient in the light of the terror attack by Islamist Britons, who drove a van into London's Borough Market in June 2017, and then attacked civilians with knives—many of whom, ironically, were immigrants. This incident was followed a week later by a similar attack on Muslims at a North London Mosque by an Islamophobic Briton (Dodd et al. 2017). Then,At his trial in February 2018, Darren Osborne, an unemployed Welshman, was found guilty of a brutal murder by deliberately driving his van over a Muslim man, Makram Ali, outside Finsbury Park Mosque in North London. Apparently, Osborne carried out this attack in the wake of his rapid radicalization through exposure to right-wing extremist sources on social media, such as those of English Defence League leader Tommy Robinson and Jayda Fransen of Britain First, the banned fascist organization. (Fransen, herself, has since been jailed for carrying out anti-Muslim hate crimes (Rawlinson 2018).) A member

of Britain First was also found guilty of the murder of Labor MP Jo Cox in 2016, and it was Fransen's libelous catalogue of Islamophobic hate-speech, dressed up as "evidence" of Muslim violence, that was retweeted by President Donald J. Trump in November 2017 (Dearden 2017).

Prominent British criminologists have highlighted the social harms caused by Islamophobia: "the deleterious consequences of interventions for those individuals and groups so targeted…the divisions, dualisms and duplicities reproduced by strategies of pre-emptive risk management" (Mythen et al. 2016: 1107). Thus, stigmatized groups face the prospect of state terror visited upon them, as Sivananden (2007:48) has explained:

> the convergence of the two—the war on asylum and the 'war on terror'—one, the unarmed invasion, the other, the enemy within, has produced the idea of a nation under siege, and, on the ground, a racism that cannot tell a settler from an immigrant, an immigrant from an asylum seeker, and asylum seeker from a Muslim, a Muslim from a terrorist…they have no choice but to stir up more and more fear, in order to pass more and more draconian legislation, that further erodes our liberties.

Here, Sivananden condemns the actions of a warmongering Labor government, under Tony Blair, but his words could apply just as equally to the twisted logic of the Tory government or to the Trump Administration today.

Our point, here is not to provide easy solutions to the intractabilities of global conflict, government and social justice. Rather, all that has been set forth has been in furtherance of examining how "strategies of tension" and their divisive impacts are sprawling across the world, due to a long history of various government's determination to fight "the phantom terror" in their midst (Zamoyski 2016). What can we learn from looking at the course and consequences of the likes of the Roman Republic's "ultimate decree," which promised "to see that the state comes to no harm" (Beard 2015)? Can we compare moral panics and measures of suppression related to terrorism today with those directed towards the mob, the Jacobins and the communists over previous centuries (Clement 2016)?

The twenty-first century "strategy of tension" works on a number of levels across Western society. Governments convene committees with sinister names such as the British COBRA (Cabinet Office Briefing Room A) and JPAC (Joint Personnel Administration Centre). Newscasters breathlessly report false alarms as if they were real events, such as when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) discussed a non-bombing in Munich over New Year 2016: "Nothing happened, but security services couldn't ignore a rumour emanating from two separate sources," we were told. Each rumor feeds the next, and we see moral panic

spreading and thickening across many localities in all spheres of life, sometimes defying rationality.

Later in 2016, *The Guardian* reported: "Boy's cucumber drawing sparks extremism alert." Apparently "Staff at a nursery school in Luton threatened to refer a four-year-old boy to a deradicalisation programme after he drew pictures that they thought showed his father making a 'cooker bomb'…The incident centers on a drawing in which the boy depicted his father cutting a cucumber with knife" (Quinn 2016). Teachers in the UK, who have spent the last twenty or thirty years promoting anti-racism and multiculturalism, are now being "trained" to spot radicalization by carrying out active surveillance of their Muslim pupils as part of the government's controversial "Prevent" program (Home Office 2011). Once pupils are so labeled, surely many will become alienated still further, and ultimately more likely to reject the hypocrisy of society's promise of equal treatment from which, in reality, they are being excluded.

Conclusion

Once again, long-term global trends towards greater multicultural diversity and social inclusion are being undermined by rising fears and a growing strategy of tension promoted by the State and the media. All the leading institutions (e.g., State and corporate media) are working together to sustain this moral panic. The panic has its own logic, as it divides and distracts the governed from resenting the policies of austerity and social control implemented by governments as they police dissent and combat radicalization. This exercise in social control was also prominent in the UK riots of 2011. The then-Prime Minister David Cameron, along with a raft of media commentators, sought to label the rioters as "violent" and "feral"— magnifying their "deviance" through the media lens in order to play upon the fears of those they believe are a "silent majority" of law-abiding conformists who will welcome the chance to vilify this "mob." In 2018, then-Tory PM Theresa May inflated public concern over the "Salisbury poisoning" to similar effect. In France and Germany, so-called "mobs" have been demonized in similar ways in recent years. For example, in early 2017, widespread demonstrations against the rape of a Paris teenager encountered tear gas and forceful suppression from the police force—one of whom had used his truncheon to perpetrate this assault (Bouharoun 2017). In Germany, the "mob" were—predictably—labeled as "Muslim migrants" acting collectively to sexually harass women at a New Year's celebration in

Cologne. Subsequent research has revealed that much of the detail and inferences of these reports was inaccurate, but certainly fitted the scapegoating mood of a public made fearful of the migrant invasion of Germany in the wake of Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel's decision to admit Syrian refugees and others in 2015 (Allegretti 2016). In order to better understand and confront these anti-social policies, it is worth revisiting the lessons from the period of the first "strategy of tension," and to consider how far they are informing the approaches and tactics of todays' world leaders. Ultimately, the solution is to end the tension and dangerous social divisions, although the circularity of the "double-bind" process reminds us "it is very difficult, if not impossible, for any of the countries concerned to lower the temperature—to ease the tensions of the power and status struggle on its own and, as it were, single-handed…the peoples of the world and their leaders are still too strongly caught in the circularity of their double-bind processes to be able to control more permanently the dangers that they constitute for each other and for themselves" (Elias 2007: 149).

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