JOURNAL FOR DERADICALIZATION

Winter 2021/22
No. 29
ISSN: 2363-9849

Politics by Other Means in the Italian 'Years of Lead': Armed Groups, Ideology and Patterns of Violence

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Abstract
Though many studies have analysed the variations in the use of violence by armed groups, an overall understanding of the phenomenon remains challenging. Building on the work addressing the role of institutions and ideology in armed group behaviour, this paper proposes a greater understanding of the role of the programmatic content of an ideology in shaping patterns of violence, specifically in terms of targeting and repertoire. The starting point of this analysis is to provide a new perspective on the meaning of political violence and address the organisational role of ideology in influencing the institutions of an armed group. To account for this, the paper does not consider the presence of an ideology but rather its strength, as a useful lens of analysis. I argue that if an ideology matters in defining a group, then the use of violence should be reflexive of its organisation. This theoretical framework is used for a micro-comparative, most-similar case study analysis of the Red Brigades and New Order militant organisations in Italy during the so-called 'Years of Lead'. The case studies both share the presence of a strong ideological underpinning, with similar end goals and in the same context but present variations in their patterns of violence. The scope condition of the case studies is to examine whether the different patterns of violence can be explained by the variations in the programmatic nature of the ideology. Through the analysis of qualitative sources and quantitative evidence, the paper highlights the causal nexus between ideology and observed patterns of violence whereby the use of violence by armed groups represents an information and identification mechanism ideologically defined.

Article History
Received Aug 15, 2021
Accepted Dec 21, 2021
Published Dec 31, 2021

Keywords: Armed Groups, Ideology, Patterns of Violence, Targeting and Repertoire

Introduction

During the so-called 'Years of Lead' between the late 1960s and early 1980s, Italy was on the brink of a 'civil war' with different groups of armed revolutionaries attempting *coups d'état*. These left-wing and right-wing militant organisations shared mutual goals: on the one hand, to overthrow the imperialist system of the multinationals and, on the other, to do away with

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the capitalist bourgeois state. However, these common strategic aims were carried out through different patterns of violence. The *Brigate Rosse* ('Red Brigades', BR) frequently engaged in kidnappings, targeted assassinations and kneecapping of victims, while *Ordine Nuovo* ('New Order', ON) militants never engaged in kidnappings but frequently used explosives and perpetrated violent assaults on individuals.

One of the central puzzles addressed by the literature on armed group behaviour has been to understand why some armed groups engage in specific forms of violence, perpetrating more 'selective' acts, while others engage in broader and more 'indiscriminate' ones. To account for this variation, theories stemming from a strategic use of violence have highlighted how violence perpetrated by armed groups, in serving a coercive purpose, is externally driven by contextual factors (Kalyvas, 2006; Wood, 2010). Another stream of literature has focused on an organisational analysis of violence, attributing observed violence to internal characteristics of the organisation and its institutions (Weinstein, 2007; Hoover Green, 2011, 2016). However, these theoretical formulations do not fully account for why certain groups employ only specific forms of violence or 'non-strategic' ones. Furthermore, despite a growing literature on the internal institutions of armed groups, there has been limited research on the relationship with the use of violence (Hoover Green 2011, 2016; Oppeneheim and Weintraub, 2016). Only recently has scholarship shown a deeper interest in understanding the use of non-lethal forms of violence and the relevance of the role of ideology (Wood, 2009; Thaler, 2012; Ahmadov and Hughes, 2017; Sanin and Wood, 2014, 2017).

This work aims to contribute to the literature by proposing an analysis addressing the causal complexity of political violence. The paper starts by approaching the concept of political violence from a different perspective, highlighting its relative, constructivist and emerging nature (Tilly, 2003; della Porta, 2013). Secondly, the analysis argues from an organisational-level perspective of armed groups that, if "ideologies provide the blueprint of institutions" (Sanin and Wood, 2014:220) and the institutions of an armed group represent a defining element of the observed violence (Weinstein, 2007; Hoover Green, 2011), they then should have a role in shaping a group's pattern of violence (Sanin and Wood, 2017). This

paper argues that it is not the presence *per se* of an ideology but rather its strength, that represents a useful analytical tool (Zelina, 2016; Schubiger and Zelina, 2017). It shows that armed groups which present a strong ideological embeddedness within their institutions are influenced by the latter in shaping their patterns of violence. The central hypothesis lies in the assumption that the use of violence of an armed group is reflexive of its organisation (Apter, 1997; see also Sanin and Giustozzi, 2010; Hoover Green 2011, 2016). Therefore, this paper argues that ideology represents an essential explanatory variable in shaping patterns of violence, in terms of targeting and repertoire, to understand the use of violence more systematically. This theoretical framework is applied to the use of political violence by militant organisations in Italy between 1969 and 1980. From the observed variation of left-wing and right-wing armed groups, this paper shows how the different nature of the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the *Brigate Rosse* and the Neo-Fascist ideology of *Ordine Nuovo* shaped the use of violence differently. It ultimately highlights how the ideological encapsulation resulted in different and interconnected repertoires and patterns of targeting.

The Politics of Violence: Strategy, Organisation and Ideology

Within the analysis of the use of violence, the existing literature has initially considered conflict-related violence by armed groups as 'collateral damage' (Valentino, 2014:19). Nevertheless, violence should be understood as "a phenomenon in its own right" (Arendt, 1970:19). Scholars started to address this logic by highlighting motivations of 'tribal' hatreds (Kaplan, 1993), whereby violence was the act of deviant individuals (Mueller, 2004) or a quasi-criminal activity motivated by opportunism (Collier, 2000). Similarly, the literature on terrorist groups projects an image of violence driven by nihilistic sentiments and irrational behaviours (Valentino, 2014). Only a few scholars pointed out that "terrorists want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening and not a lot of people dead" (Jenkins, 1975:15; Drake, 1998). In acknowledging that violence by armed organisations is not an action aimed at "inflicting pain on one's enemy or destroying hated symbols" (Rule 1988:190; Kalyvas,

2006), the literature on civil war offers the most advanced theoretical formulations to understand the politics of violence.

From Mao's (1961) theorisation that rebels should be among the population like 'fish in the sea', one of the central assumptions has been a reconsideration of the role of popular support in terms of resources and recruits as a defining contextual factor for armed groups (Kalyvas, 2006; Valentino et al., 2004; Downes, 2006). From this perspective, Kalyvas (2006; 2012) argues that violence, and the consequent targeting of civilians, is defined by the degree of control insurgents have in an area, whereby it also represents the degree of population support. The author observes how the level of indiscriminate violence is inversely related to the level of territorial control of an armed group (*Ibid.*). However, as Sanin and Wood (2017) argue, this analysis conflates identity-based targeting and indiscriminate targeting, failing to capture what represents a 'legitimate' target for the organisation. Another perspective has focused on the external availability of resources and funding. Armed organisations with access to economic endowments are more likely to target civilians than groups that need to rely on social endowments (Azam and Hoeffler, 2002; Hultman, 2012). As Wood (2010; 2014) posits, when armed groups fail to mobilise the population spontaneously, they are more likely to engage in low-cost indiscriminate forms of violence against civilians, as they cannot provide incentives to the local population in terms of security, protection or foodstuff (Balcells, 2010). Nevertheless, these strategic theorisations fail to fully explain the variations of violent repertoires of organisations operating in the same context and with analogous strategic incentives (Sanin and Wood, 2017:34).

Other theoretical formulations have considered organisational factors, focusing on the role of authority and discipline. Weinstein (2007:300; see Cohen, 2013) argues that the use of violence is directly influenced by the origins and structure of an armed group, as it affects "the capacity of rebel groups to discipline their membership and the expectations of civilians about how soldiers are likely to behave". This 'membership bias', in turn, shapes the institutions, which are then "plagued by indiscipline" and enables its members to engage in more indiscriminate violence (Weinstein 2007:204; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006).

Conversely, resource-poor groups attract 'activist' rebels "embedded in networks of repeated interaction" who are more easily disciplined and selectively employ violence to maintain civilian support (Weinstein 2007:204; Gates, 2002). However, this analysis sees groups as either engaging in frequent indiscriminate violence or low levels of selective violence, conflating the repertoire and frequency of the observed violence (Sanin and Wood, 2017). Furthermore, most of these studies only consider violence in terms of its lethality, viewing other types generally as opportunistic or forms of 'terrorism' (Kalyvas, 2006; Weinstein, 2007). As Sanin and Wood (2017:22) point out, the narrow focus on the levels and lethality disregards the observance of the broader pattern of violence, as the observable and recognisable "configuration" in which an armed organisation engages, comprised of targeting, repertoire, frequency and technique (Sanin and Wood, 2017:21). It appears that by focusing more on the causes rather than the accounts of violence (Valentino, 2014), the literature has fostered a representation of violence as a function rather than a means for political aims.

Studies addressing the role of ideology have furthered this understanding of armed group violence (Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010; Sanin and Wood, 2014; Zelina, 2016). Analyses have focused on the consequences of a diminishment in ideological commitment (Thaler, 2012), on targeting patterns (Drake, 1998; Ahmadov and Hughes, 2017; Sanchez-Cuenca and De la Calle, 2009) and the detection of specific repertoires (Wood, 2009). For example, Wood's (2009) analysis on the restraint from wartime sexual abuse and the role of institutions has underscored the importance of leadership and the relevance of organisational norms. Hoover Green (2011; 2016) has highlighted how variations in repertoires of violence are linked to the institutions of an armed group. The author argues that "controlled repertoires of violence are more likely among armed groups […] which institutionalise regular political education, […] loyalty to the group or positive combatant identity" (Hoover Green, 2011:287). Nonetheless, this analysis only considers what determines the consistency of the repertoire, as narrow or broad, rather than analysing what forms of violence comprise these repertoires. Still, "how and why ideology matters is not clear" (Sanin and Wood, 2014:217). Schubiger and Zelina (2017) argue that research has primarily operated through broad

categorisations focusing on the programmatic orientation rather than the variations of these categories. However, the analysis of an ideology should not relate to abstract categorisations but its programmatic content. From this standpoint, this paper argues that the understanding of the use of violence by armed groups should not be simply seen as a coercive output (Kalyvas, 2006) but also as an information and identification mechanism (see Schmid and De Graaf, 1982) of the ideological encapsulation of an armed organisation.

Perspectives on Political Violence

Political violence is generally understood as "those repertoires of collective action that involve great physical force and cause damage to an adversary to achieve political aims" (della Porta, 2013:6). However, the way violence is employed changes from the targets to the repertoire used (Bosi et al., 2015). Violence cannot be conceptualised as a static concept but as one entailing a relational, constructive and emergent dimension (della Porta, 2013). To this account, Tilly (2003:20) has highlighted how violence derives from processes of interaction and exchange between individuals which "promote, inhibit or channel collective violence and connect it with nonviolent politics", also entailing a discursive nature (Schmid and De Graaf, 1982). Indeed, for Clausewitz (1911), war was politics by 'other means', victories aimed at gaining the support of the public opinion. Similarly, for Mao (1961), winning 'hearts and minds' was the precondition to victory in war. Either way, a violent act was a communicative one (Scmid and De Graaf, 1982). Indeed, violence often represents a means to achieve a higher goal, an overarching political project within armed groups. As Apter (1997) argues, the use of violence should be reflexive of the organisation of violence within a group. Its coercive nature also embodies a means of interpretation of the action, whereby "the iconography of violence, the choreography of confrontational events, the planning of actions" become a process (Apter, 1997:4; see also Kalyvas, 2006). Therefore, the relational nature of political violence refers to the "thick condition" of "a discourse community" (Apter, 1997:3).

Violence also entails a constructivist dimension (della Porta, 2013). As Tilly (2006:426) has argued, repertoires of contention, as well as violent ones, are shaped on "shared meanings and understandings of meanings". Literature focusing on the philosophy of language and cultural studies has highlighted how meanings are not simply abstract expressive properties but elements that indicate interpretations and understandings (van Dijk, 1988:204-5). Similarly, the analysis of the meaning of political violence should also lie in an interpretative analysis (Thompson, 1990). Violence further shares an emergent character, developing 'in action' (della Porta, 2013). As Kalyvas (2006:3) has observed, "almost every micro-historical account points to a host of endogenous mechanisms, whereby allegiances and identities tend to result from the war or are radically transformed by it". Consequently, violence is not the product of previous individual preferences, values and identities but rather transformed ones. Conflicts hold a more complex dimension than a master cleavage of abstract polarisations. The interaction between the political and the individual dimension needs to be considered to capture the 'intimate' nature of political violence (Kalyvas, 2003). From this perspective, the analysis of armed organisations and the role of ideology represent the focal points where the individual sphere joins the collectivity of the political one.

Institutions and Ideological Strength in Organising Rebellion

In the unstable context of conflict, insurgent organisations face numerous challenges (Sanin and Wood, 2014; Weinstein, 2007). Especially in irregular and urban warfare, they are required to develop stronger institutions to confront a militarily superior force and minimise their technological disadvantage (Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010, 2015; Schubiger, 2015). By refining their strategic tactics, insurgents may need to pursue covert operations, independent actions and operate clandestinely. An armed group will need to maximise discipline and cohesiveness to decrease the 'shirking' of its members (Schubiger, 2015; Shapiro, 2013; Weinstein, 2007). Moreover, the efficacy of an armed organisation is not only evaluated in terms of operational coordination but also through the effective confrontation of state forces

and other competing groups and their interaction with the civilian population (Schubiger, 2015; Kalyvas, 2010). The evolution of a conflict and the increasing use of violence represent wartime processes that can reshape and induce the use of broader violent repertoires (Wood, 2009; Grossman, 1995). Armed organisations, therefore, hold a tripartite necessity to engage in proactive fighting, foster commitment and support the attainment of their political goals. Insurgent groups need to promote "shared institutional mechanisms" (Weinstein, 2007:139) to minimise preference divergence among members and the operative 'moral hazard' in the use of violence (Hoover Green, 2011; Weinstein, 2007). This is ensured through recruitment, military training, political education, socialisation and discipline institutions (Hoover Green, 2011, 2016), as the "rules that structure human interaction and shape behaviour" (Arjona, 2014:2). Though institutions do not require the presence of an ideology, the latter has been considered a blueprint in defining them (Sanin and Wood, 2014; Zelina, 2016).

Broadly, an ideology represents a "set of more or less systematic ideas that identify a constituency, the challenges the group confronts, the objectives to pursue on behalf of that group and a […] program of action" (Sanin and Wood, 2014:214). Therefore, ideology represents a necessary steppingstone towards fully understanding the nature of the 'politics by other means' (Clausewitz, 1911) of armed groups. Nevertheless, it needs to be an integral part of an organisation to gain significance and shape behaviour (Barnes, 1966). To understand how an ideology matters in shaping the institutions of an armed group, it is essential to consider not the presence of an ideology *per se* but its strength, in terms of its intrusiveness and institutionalisation within a group (Zelina, 2016, Schubiger and Zelina, 2017; Ugarizza and Craig, 2013). Firstly, the degree of embeddedness is defined by the extent to which it influences the social structures of an armed group, for example, how it shapes the routine of its members or the governance of civilians (Schubiger and Zelina, 2017). Secondly, the institutionalisation within an organisation and among group members represents the degree to which it defines the institutions of screening, indoctrination, socialisation and how individuals identify with the group (Schubiger and Zelina, 2017; Ugarizza and Craig, 2013). Zelina (2016) has pointed out that ideologically strong groups will promote and maintain institutions

for political education with consistent periods of indoctrination and disciplinary measures. As such, political education will be consistent and organised with a top-down approach and will saturate all other types of institutions within an armed group, namely: recruitment, socialisation, discipline and military training (see Hoover Green, 2016).

Therefore, if ideology matters, it cannot be discarded as "mere window-dressing" (Kalyvas and Balcells, 2015:5). Ideology is more than the collectivity of ideas by representing a socially shared "belief system" (van Dijk, 2006:116) within an armed group. It can symbolise an important socialisation tool, creating a collective social identity (Lichbach, 1998:92) and transforming combatant preferences (Oppenheim et al., 2015). Studies have highlighted how the presence of an ideology increases the commitment of members fostering a "higher risk tolerance" and reducing side-switching (Oppenheim et al., 2015:8). Consequently, the understanding of ideology cannot be reduced to a "purely ideational" function (Gerring, 1997:967) but rather one must consider its explanatory, motivational and legitimising role in shaping individual preferences. It further denotes a critical framework "that provides both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured" (Joost et al., 2009:24).

An ideology shares an organisational function in influencing the strategies and structure of the organisation's institutions (Gutierrez and Giustozzi, 2010; Sanin and Wood, 2014). Accordingly, if it can account for the behaviour of an armed organisation and its strategic aims, the programmatic nature of an ideology should prescribe how such aims should be achieved. If the use of violence is part of a dialectic process within a discourse community (Apter, 1997), then "the production, construction or employment of symbolic forms, as well as their interpretation of symbolic forms by the subjects who receive them, are processes that typically involve the application of rules, codes or conventions" (Thompson, 1990:139). Therefore, the programmatic content of an ideology should shape the 'how' and the 'what' of the violence employed.

The Role of Ideology in Shaping Violence

If no political phenomenon can be explained without considering its social context (Tilly, 2003), violence cannot be fully understood without ideology. As Geertz (1973:220) writes, ideology represents an explanatory medium "to render otherwise incomprehensible social situations meaningful, so to construe them as to make it possible to act purposefully within them". Sanin and Wood (2014:214) do point out it identifies "a constituency", its challenges and goals.[2] Thus, "ideologies are aimed at an audience", both an inner and exterior one with a prescriptive intent (Gerring, 1997:972; see McClosky, 1964). Scholars have stressed how political education institutions operate to control violence preferences for armed groups (Hoover Green 2011, 2016; Wood, 2009; Oppenheim and Weintraub, 2016). In balancing a necessity of combat efficiency, these operate as the "formal instruction that explains specific social or political purposes of a particular conflict" and connects them "to specific behavioural norms" (Hoover Green, 2016:625), thereby shaping the idea of restraint by making it intrinsically rewarding for the combatant (Hoover Green, 2016:623).

Studies have considered how ideology can restrain an insurgent organisation from the overall use of violence or justify violent means over non-violent ones (Asal et al., 2015; Asal and Rethemeyer, 2008). As Sanin and Wood (2014:221) have stressed, ideologies can prohibit specific forms of violence, not because they lack a strategic benefit for the organisation's aims but because they would be at odds with the ideological commitments of the group. For example, the Tamil Tigers rarely engaged in the rape of civilians, despite perpetrating high levels of widespread violence against the population, due to an enforced ideological puritanical code of conduct (Wood, 2009). Therefore, "ideological groups practice restraint for strategic and ideological reasons, weak and non-ideological groups employ restraint almost always for strategic reasons" (Zelina 2016:21). Analyses have further shown how ideology shapes the targeting of an armed group by delineating the identification of the enemy

[2] Another useful concept, borrowed from the social movements' literature, is the one of collective action frames "as articulation mechanisms" of beliefs and meanings (Snow, 2004:384).

as a legitimate target (Drake 1998; De la Calle and Sanchez-Cuenca, 2009; Ahmadov and Hughes, 2017). The violence perpetrated by organisations appears to be an ideologically defined identification mechanism, as "the significance of ideology is not that it causes one to do but that it gives one cause for doing" (Mullins, 1972:509).[3]

An additional key point in accounting for the observed targeting and repertoire is the notion of discipline, as militants may perpetrate unordered forms of violence. Studies have underlined how ideologically motivated fighters are more likely to observe discipline (Hoover Green, 2011; Oppenheim et al., 2015; Wood, 2009). We can, therefore, consider that consistency and complementarity between desired repertoire by the leadership and observed repertoire of violence will be present in ideologically strong groups (Zelina, 2016; Hoover Green, 2011, 2016). Whereby in ideologically weaker groups it will be more common to see instances of opportunistic or unsanctioned violence. Therefore, if ideology represents a significant element in assessing the consistency of an armed group's violence, then the targeting and type of violence perpetrated should be shaped by the ideology's nature and programmatic content. As some organisations specialise in specific types of violence and others do not, what comprises an ideology and its relation to the context appears a fundamental premise (see Ahmadov and Hughes, 2017; Table 1 in Annex). De-structuring the ideological framework and understanding the 'discourse' of violence can shed further light on this variation.

A Note on Methodology: Research Design and Refining Cases

This paper follows Kalyvas' (2006:17) definition of civil war, "as armed combat within the boundaries of a recognised sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority", including "most revolutions, sustained peasant insurrections, [and] 'revolutionary' or ethnic insurgencies" (Kalyvas, 2006:19) as confrontations that objectively challenge the monopoly

[3] However, this paper does acknowledge that while ideological commitment may be stronger within the leadership of an organisation, "lay members" (Thaler, 2012:6) might only commit to portions of the broader ideology.

of power. Moreover, the insurgent organisations analysed follow the definition of a "group of individuals claiming to be a collective organisation that uses a name to designate itself, is made up of formal structures of command and control, and intends to seize power using violence" (Staniland, 2014:5).[4] In the leftist archipelago of collectives and militant organisations, the *Brigate Rosse* constituted the most prominent organisation during those years (della Porta, 1990), thus representing the focus of this analysis. Without wanting to blur ideological differences between the BR and other organisations, the Red Brigades' mentality characterised a prevailing model in the phenomenology of political violence (Orsini, 2011; Manconi, 1991).

Conversely, though the right-wing universe also presented distinct organisations, the dominant structure of the Neo-Fascist environment is better understood as a network, with most of these groups representing gravitating nuclei around *Ordine Nuovo* (Ferraresi, 1996; Minna, 1984). Therefore, this analysis focuses on ON as a central matrix. This is also justified by the recurring presence of key ideological and strategic leadership figures in other right-wing groups (Ferraresi, 1996; Appeal, 1986).[5] The urban context does not impact the examination of the patterns of violence, in terms of targeting and repertoire. As De la Calle and Sancez-Guenca (2011) point out, only the size of a group, the lethality of violence, and arguably its frequency, which are beyond the scope of this analysis, seem to be affected. Targeting is defined as "the subset of all possible civilian targets regularly attacked by the organisation" (Sanin and Wood, 2017:24) and repertoire as "the subset of all possible forms of violence against civilians in which it regularly engages" (Sanin and Wood, 2017:11).

A micro-comparative, most-similar case study approach was considered the most appropriate (Gerring, 2007). By focusing on Italy as the macro case of interest and carrying out a micro-comparative analysis of the BR and ON, the scope condition of these case studies is to assess the causal nexus between ideology and the patterns of violence perpetrated by these militant organisations. By sharing a strong ideology, with the same end goals and within

[4] The terms militant organisation, armed group or organisation are used interchangeably.
[5] ON may also be referred to in more general terms as the 'right-wing'.

the same context, the cases are comparable in all regards except for their patterns of violence in terms of targeting and repertoire. Thus, this analysis aims to examine whether the variance of this crucial variable can be explained by the variation of the programmatic content of ideology (George and Bennett, 2005). This approach is supported by the benefits of conducting paired comparisons, such as the capacity to extend the generalisation range of certain observations (Gerring, 2007). Through a process-tracing analysis (*Ibid.*), the qualitative data highlights how the programmatic contents of an ideology shape the individuation of targets and the legitimacy of the repertoires observed. Within this structure, the analysis of the quantitative data available is used to individuate a trend in the patterns of violence. Violence and ideology are considered information and identification mechanisms to highlight the causal mechanisms that link the interpretation of ideology to the observed repertoire (Apter, 1997; Schmid and de Graaf, 1982).

The design of this study has relied on existing historical and sociological literature, biographies, and journalistic reconstructions. The materials used as empirical evidence include ex-militants' interviews, documentation from legal proceedings, private letters written by militants, internal strategic resolutions, organisational documents, and leaflets claiming responsibility for violent acts, and ones on the members' political and cultural education. Unless specified otherwise, this data has been accessed at the Istituto Storico Parri (Bologna) as part of the Fondo DOTE, the Archivio Flamigni (Oriolo Romano) and the State Archive (Rome). All translations of Italian sources are mine unless stipulated. Key concepts have been operationalised as referenced in Table 1 of the Annex to facilitate the analysis of the documents used.

The 'Years of Lead': An Italian 'Civil War'

Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, commentators described how the intensity of the revolutionary violence witnessed in Italy stood out compared to other Western countries (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2009; see also Fig.1). From the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969

to the Bologna train station bombing in 1980, 362 people died, and 4,601 were wounded in 12,156 episodes of violence (Galleni, 1981:5). Though the state was never fully disarticulated, the violence, directly and indirectly, challenged its institutions. The *habitus* of violence in those years was not a historical accident but rather the culmination of contingent elements. On the wave of the economic boom, Italy became a fully industrialised nation (Graziani 2001). This shift in the production system fostered migratory trends, impacting the country's urban and social fabric (Ginsborg, 1989). The prospect of progress fostered increased criticism of institutions, trade unions and, more generally, the political landscape (Martinotti, 1966). This was exacerbated by "the deficiencies and injustices of the Italian society, in the shortcomings of the political system" (Meade, 1990:17).

This dynamic socio-political landscape shaped the partisan divisions within which militant organisations placed themselves at the very far extremes. With the end of the '68 Movement[6], the emergence of the 'left' and the 'right' did not simply represent political constituencies but a deep cleavage embodying diverse existential dimensions (Baldoni and Provvisionato, 2009; Drake, 1989). Militant organisations, youth groups and political collectives emerged to the left of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* ('Italian Communist Party') and to the right of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* ('Italian Social Movement'), shaping their respective political projects in schools, universities and factories (Baldoni and Provvisionato, 2009; Acquaviva, 1979). Ultimately, the political became personal.

The dialectic process between these new sentiments reinforced the self-serving narrative that Italy was in a revolutionary phase and thus violence was necessary for the immediacy of the struggle (Acquaviva, 1979). The emergence and continued presence of violence for more than a decade meant that in the Italian context, violence did not solely represent a coercive instrumental technique but also a "symbolic basis of the community of activists" (Moss, 1997:85). As Ferraresi (1997:30) notes, these groups placed "themselves outside or against existing political systems" and required "powerful symbolic instruments to

[6] The '68 Movement represented a global movement of social unrest which moulded a new politicised generation. In Italy, student protests led to the occupation of several universities. Youth culture challenged both the church and the Italian Communist Party, as well as the consumer society.

build or confirm the militant's persuasion and lead them to action", contributing to the explosion of a 'civil war', albeit a low-intensity one (Fasanella and Pelligrino, 2005:53-63; Bull, 2007).[7]

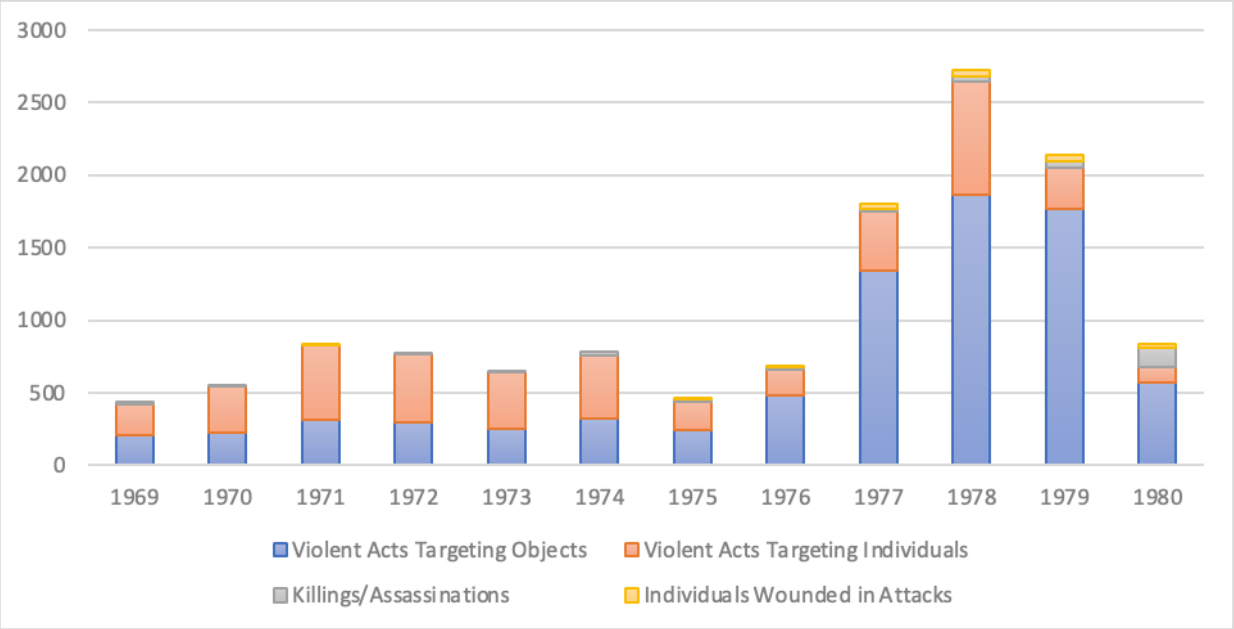


Figure 1 – Violent Incidents in Italy (1969-1980)

Note: The acts against objects refer to attacks directed to state institutions, headquarters of political parties and police forces, sabotage of public facilities and other forms property destruction. Source: Galleni (1981:49).

Ideological Strength: 'You Say You Want a Revolution?'

Assessing the ideological strength of the BR and ON represents a fundamental premise in understanding the role of ideology in their use of violence. Within the BR, socialisation was a central tenet of the organisation, and many ex-members recall that militants knew each other very well (della Porta, 1990:104). Moreover, as a sort of ritual, "[e]very new recruit, to become a 'regular' member, had to burn [identity] documents in front of the others publicly"

[7] For further information, see Table 4 in the Annex.

(Franceschini, 1988:14; della Porta, 1990:106). Recruitment was a selective process through which individuals were screened in the presence of strong bonds of trust (della Porta, 1990:147; Novaro, 1990) or through meetings between potential recruits and organisation members (Marco, 1985:46). Leaflets, organisational and political documents were sometimes discussed for months (*Ibid.*). As specified in an internal document, *Norme di sicurezza e stile di lavoro* ('Security Measures and Work Style'), the organisation's rules had to be observed imperatively (BR, 1974a in Ruggiero, 2007a:311-12). Former militants have stressed how internal documents and operations were discussed in detail, seen as a necessity for the organisation's political aims (Marco, 1985:46; Peci, 2008). The paramount importance of political education has been further highlighted by its role in indoctrination and preference re-alignment. As the *brigadista*[8] Nitta stated, it was only after embracing Marx's texts that: "my tensions lead me to identify the duty of the revolution with my need-duty to fight against evil" (cit. in Orsini 2011:39). Even though political activism was widespread, former members have stated that most of their political education took place within the organisation (della Porta, 1990:152). To this day, ex-militants recall that they fully accepted the logic of the BR and its rules (Bertagna et al., 2015).

Within ON, socialisation was also essential and organised around the political and ideological formation of young militants through educational courses, which lasted about two months (Tribunale di Roma, 1973:74). Recruitment and indoctrination were lengthy processes in which individuals were screened for weeks and given readings to discuss (Massimo Batani, 1985; Tribunale di Roma, 1973:74). Furthermore, initiation rituals fostered socialisation and many militants recalled participating in the so-called 'Hobbit Camps' (Fiasco, 1990:157). The recurring *leitmotiv* of cursed heroes and the mythical conceptualisation of the individual became a prime cohesive factor for ON members (Fiasco, 1990; Ferraresi, 1996). The strength of these relational bonds is highlighted by the fact that many ex-militants refer to the organisation and its related nuclei as a community, the "*comunità di camerati*" (Fiasco, 1990:178). Through indoctrination, "[t]hese adolescents were overwhelmed by these

[8] Term used to describe a member of the BR.

impossible ideas and were convinced that the latter could be applied to reality" (Fiasco, 1990:169; see also Sergio Calore, 1985). For both left-wing and right-wing organisations, ideology had a prominent role and the strength to reshape individual preferences and reduce 'moral hazard' (Weinstein, 2007).

Ideological Encapsulation: An Objective and Two Directions

Understanding the programmatic content of ideology and what image it projects for those who embrace it serves two primary purposes: recognising the normative and conceptual system of the organisation and the underlying motivations for the organisation's behaviour. Therefore, the political goals, the framing of the enemy and the relationship with the masses are central ideological domains in the relationship with the use of violence for the BR and ON.

A Proletarian Revolution

Following a Marxist-Leninist orientation, the immediate question for the BR concerned employing "the right tactic" (Drake, 1989:101). Lenin's (1986) interrogative 'What is to be done?' became their own. Their answer shaped the myth of the *Resistenza* ('Resistance') (Franceschini, 1988; Enrico Fenzi, 1985). It embodied the synthesis of "three distinct antagonisms: a patriotic war against foreign occupation; a civil war against Fascists; and a class war against the bourgeois supporters of fascism to achieve a social revolution" (Moss, 1977:94-5; Pavone, 1991). The Resistance and its legacy represented an essential idiom reflecting the master narrative of Marxist-Leninism into the local cleavage between the left and the right (Moss, 1997:95). The violent struggle represented a continuation of the class struggle (Casamassima, 2007:40). Its aim was the disarticulation of the state, the *Stato Imperialista delle Multinazionali* or SIM ('the Imperialist State of the Multinationals') and of the enemy's forces (BR, 1975 in Ruggiero 2007a:356). To fight the SIM was to operate as a counterpower and to "organise our proletarian power in this attack, […] because the attack and the destruction of bourgeois power, and the establishment

of proletarian power are part of the same transition in the revolutionary process" (Soccorso Rosso, 1978:87, Cpm, 1969). Though the proletariat needed to be autonomous, for it to be so, it had to be guided. Operating as a revolutionary vanguard, the BR aimed to fill the institutional void left in managing the working class (Manconi 1991). As stated in one of their internal documents, the BR were acting as 'armed propaganda' in the sense that their main objective was to gain the support of the proletariat and arm it (BR, 1971a in Ruggiero, 2007a:117). The BR openly affirmed they did not want to replace the masses in their fight against the hegemonic power but be the "expression of the mass movement" (BR, 1971a in Ruggiero, 2007a:124). Their armed action was not meant to repress or coerce the proletariat but to represent the climax of a political project that entailed the resistance movement's organisation (BR, 1971b in Ruggiero, 2007a:127).

In subverting the system's order, the BR wanted to build a "society of the just" (Orsini, 2011:7). In the words of the *brigadista* Morucci (2004:140; cit. transl. in Orsini, 2011:9), "[t]he politics on which our conduct was based […] would have led to a society without conflict. A society without the need for mediation, compromise, or filthy bourgeoisie politics". Democracy became a function of the repressive state and the representatives of the system were identified as absolute enemies (Dalla Chiesa, 1984:303; Manconi, 1991). Anything that was a function of "[i]mperialism, capitalism, a class-conscious society, and the exploitation of man by man" incarnated "the enemy to destroy" and everything was answered by "the fideist value of revolution" (Novelli and Tranfaglia, 2007:190; cit. transl. in Orsini, 2011:19). In their role of enlightened vanguard (BR, 1971c in Ruggiero 2007a:111) and as counternarrative against the hegemonic bourgeoisie, the BR extended their critique of the corrupted democratic institutions to justice and the rule of law (Manconi, 1991). Through their actions and violence the BR aimed at addressing a new form of justice *erga omnes*, rather than *super partes* (*Ibid.*).

Following the readings of Che Guevara and Carlos Marighella, their jungles were cities like Rome, Milan, Turin, and Genoa (Casamassima, 2007). Nevertheless, in their armed struggle, their actions could not be at odds with "with the spirit, the aim and the political and

unionist reasons based on which the struggle has shaped its origin and progressed" (BR, 1971a in Ruggiero, 2007a:120). The paramount condition was the necessity to accept a collective discipline and indiscipline, or improvisation, were to be set aside (Cpm, 1969). Moreover, the use of violence was not a subjective act but an imposed necessity of an already violent structure due to "the growing despotism of the working class, the militarisation of the state and the class struggle, [and] the intensification of repression as a strategic measure (della Porta, 2013:208)". As Manconi (1991:123) points out, the revolution was "rather armed because defensive". Violence was represented as a necessary defence against a possible Fascist *coup d'état*. The BR's understanding of violence was filtered through their ideological framework, whereby violence used to kill an enemy was considered an act of love, legal in their understanding of justice, while other organisations were criticised for their terrorist methods and violent *squadrismo*[9] (BR, 1972 in Ruggiero, 2007a:157-8; Orsini, 2011). The ideological encapsulation of the BR expressed a sort of pedagogic ethic of exemplariness to move the proletariat to act (Marletti, 1979:159; BR, 1974b in Ruggiero, 2007a:302).

A 'New Order'

The revolutionary project of the *ordinovista*[10] ideology rested on ideas rooted in a historical perspective of the Fascist experience and on the writings of Julius Evola and René Guénon (Ferraresi, 1996; Minna, 1984). Operating a deep critique and rejection for the false egalitarian utopia of the democratic system, ON wanted to topple the bourgeois regime and replace it instead with a *Weltanschauung*, a world vision based on the values of elitism, hierarchical structures and authoritarian rule (Ferraresi, 1996; Bobbio, 1975). As mentioned in the bulletin *Con noi* ('With Us'), theirs was "an appeal full of hate against the hypocrisy, the lies of the bourgeois society" (Tribunale di Roma, 1973:84). The revolution needed to be translated into action, but what, or better, how? The bourgeois state had to be overthrown,

[9] A political-social phenomenon that occurred in Italy starting in 1919 and entailed the use of armed paramilitary action squads that had the purpose of intimidating and violently repressing political opponents, especially those belonging to the workers' movement.
[10] Term used to refer to ON's ideology.

although the priority was not to target its core but rather "cut the communications belt" (Concutelli, 2009:37). The strategy was to use different acronyms for several groups, operating as a network, all under one 'brain' (*Ibid.*). Therefore, the organisation had to operate at the periphery, a cultural, social, political and economic one.

The bourgeoisie, the worst of all evils, was a "substance without a form" (Evola, 2002:164; cit. transl. in Orsini, 2011:280) which fostered the necessity to wipe the slate clean (Vincenzo Vinciguerra, 1985). As described in the pamphlet *Nulla nel sistema. Tutto al di fuori e contro il sistema* ('Nothing in the System. Everything Outside and Against the System') (File 3, Decree 243/73), even the emancipation and self-determination of the working class was a demagogic conviction, as the worker only really asked to become a bourgeois and benefit from that privileged status. ON's political project was to eliminate whoever impeded the revolutionary momentum and to spread among the masses a sensation of impotence, quasi-need and acquiescence towards the predesignated victory of the revolutionary faction (Graziani, 1963).

Courage, proactiveness and self-sacrifice were the core values of the 'political soldier' and his mission, reinforcing the logic of "[t]he superman's ethics over the herd morality" (Ferraresi, 1996:32). Such an understanding of the individual and ordering logic of societal relations shaped a precise structure of the world as a hierarchical environment for ON militants (Ferraresi, 1996; Minna, 1984). Their ideological mindset reinstated, through the destruction of the system, the original order of human relations that had been mystified over time by the artificial patterns of modern society (Ferraresi, 1996:32; see Franco Freda, 1985). In unmasking the *façade* of the corrupted institutions and initiating a social transformation, "violence was endlessly extolled as the major instrument" (Ferraresi, 1996:32). In this conceptualisation, violence was not a defensive necessity but a *conditio sine qua non*, to reassert the natural, the 'traditional order' (Graziani, 1963). Mussolini (1932) had already embraced this vision by stating that war was a means of heightening the tension of human energies, demonstrating the nobility of those who managed to face it. This fostered the conception of *spontaneismo armato* ('armed spontaneity'), as "the apotheosis of direct action,

the belief in the decisive deed" (Mannheim, 1960:119). This *leitmotiv* of *mythos*, the action, over the *logos* epitomised the concept of the 'legionary spirit' of the 'political soldier' (interview S.C. by Fiasco, 1985; Ferraresi, 1996). As discussed in an article titled *La nostra Weltanschauung ('Our Weltanschauung')*: "Life is…a mission […] preserving the traditions that have been passed on by the fathers: a civilisation founded on eternal heroic values and spiritual values" (Tribunale di Roma, 1973:887-89). Similarly, in Evola's (2008; see Wolff, 2016) writings, man always strives to reach an 'absolute' within his inner self; the ON militant exemplified the synthesis of the individual.

In a private letter to a fellow militant, Mario Tuti (1979), a member of the ON leadership, wrote: "the revolution is not a problem which has to be studied, but an undertaking that needs to be accomplished, […] only the action, can confirm or deny in the aftermath, the validity of the proceedings implemented". To act was the only salvation against the wave of seemingly revolutionary contestations of the 'mass revolutionaries' (File 3, Decree 243/72). Therefore, the rejection of the foundations of modern society reinforced spiritual elitism. References to the Italian people and the nation represented a revolutionary call only directed towards a selected audience of men standing among the ruins of the decadent surrounding world (Ferraresi, 1997; Evola, 2002). The *ordinovista* revolutionary vanguard did not aim to guide the masses but to impose a new system upon them because "the origin of the state cannot come from below […] but must be rooted in a high sphere of ideal, heroic, anti-hedonistic values" (Guénon 1956:87-8; cit. transl. in Ferraresi, 1996:46).

Discussing the Action Repertoire: The Use of Violence

In both organisations, ideology represented a cognitive framework shaping political aims, strategies, defining enemies and delineating their revolutionary project. Violence represented a political means of the ideology's programmatic content, delineating its normative boundaries (Ferrajoli, 1979:49). Therefore, the observed patterns of violence, in terms of

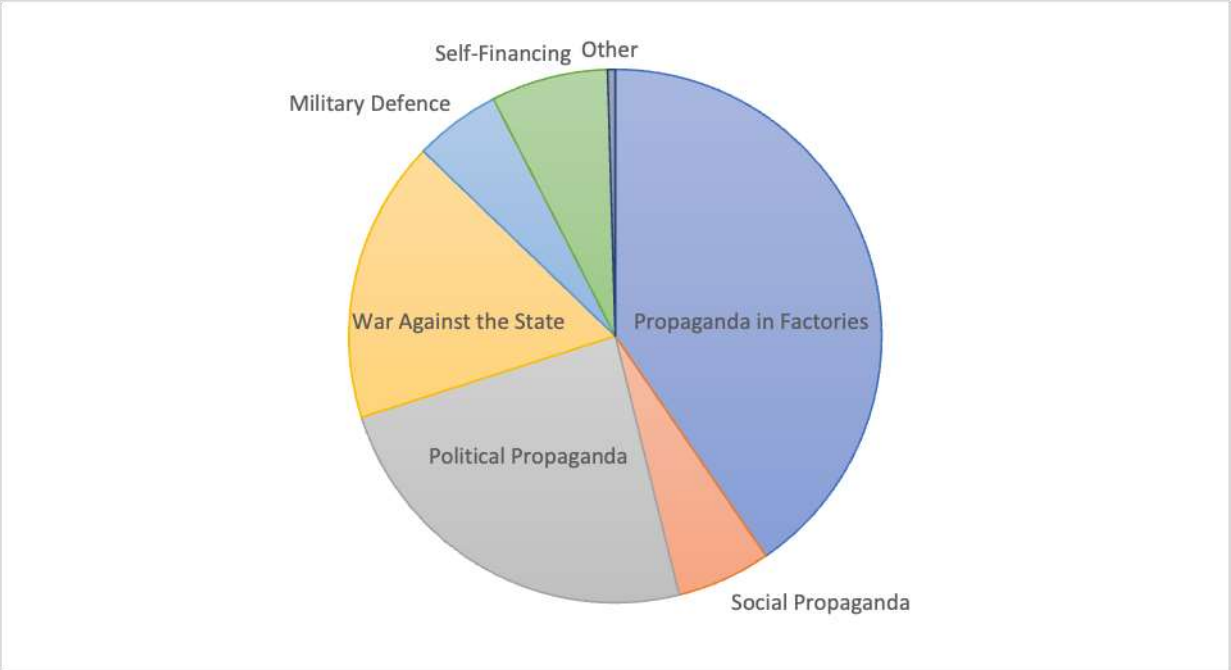
targeting and repertoire, should be shaped by the nature of the programmatic content defined by the BR's and ON's ideological encapsulation.

The Brigate Rosse's Pattern of Pedagogical Violence

Three key aspects related to the BR's ideology are functional to understand their targeting and repertoire of violence. Firstly, the constant recall of the proletariat's active and necessary role in achieving the armed struggle. Secondly, the definition of the enemy that must be targeted (Drake, 1998; Moss, 1979). Finally, the constant legitimisation of the violence employed. The most prominent characteristic of the BR's *modus operandi* is their omnipresent claim of the attacks perpetrated and, conversely, the refutation of any actions falsely attributed to them (Soccorso Rosso, 1976:85). For example, the organisation rejected allegations of their involvement in the use of explosives for specific attacks on factories and considered that such defamatory acts sought to undermine the armed propaganda of their actions (BR, 1971d in Ruggiero, 2007a:108). The necessity to claim, define actions and the aim of the armed struggle truly shaped a "dialectic rebellion" (Marletti, 1979:196). Pedagogical ethics of exemplarity, aimed at transforming the oppressed social class into a new humanity, was the premise for the BR's use of violence. As Durkheim (2008) posits, all pedagogical theories prescribe the intent to prepare for action, not to carry out the action itself. The nexus between politics and violence had to be apparent to the proletariat, the 'uneducated masses' in Gramscian terms, rendering it not simply coercive but educational. To this point, it is interesting to note that while 12,568 violent attacks were registered towards property, only 609 were directed at individuals (Moss, 1993:17; Galleni, 1981:5). The violence aimed at industrial facilities needed to "underline our presence, but also to render our political discourses more efficient and credible" to the proletariat and the enemy (cit. in Ruggiero, 2007:66). Moreover, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, the targeting had to inform the proletariat of who the enemy was and why it had to be eliminated (see also Drake, 1998).

Winter 2021/22
No. 29
ISSN: 2363-9849

Figure 2 – The BR's Reference Target for the Actions Carried Out (1970-1982)
Source: della Porta (1990:216, 2013:179)



In terms of attempting an overall assessment of the types of violence, the BR operated throughout classifiable repertoire: attacks on industrial and commercial facilities, vehicles and private property tied to institutions or individuals related to the industrial sector or political sphere, wounding acts, kidnappings and targeted assassinations (see Moss, 1993; Galleni, 1981). Kidnappings, one of the BR's signature actions, embodied the discursive function of violence. Industrial executives and *magistrati*, members of the judiciary, were among the selected targets (Moss, 1997). From an ideological perspective, they represented an important source of information for the challengers, the challenged and the potential supporters (Moss, 1989). As Moss (1989:149) explains, the kidnapped victim was "incarcerated in the 'people's prison', subjected to a proletarian 'trial', [and] received a 'death sentence' which was temporarily suspended while the conditions for his release were set". The action reproduced a symbolic pattern found in Lenin's by-line: to strike one and educate a hundred. Mario

Sossi's[11] kidnapping, for example, followed the same ritualistic pattern to target and educate the 'weakest' link of the SIM. This action was justified, as stated in *Contro il neogollismo, portare l'attacco al cuore dello Stato* ('Against Neo-Gaullism, Bringing the Attack at the Heart of the State'), to "maintain the state of a permanent insurrection and [for the proletariat to] conquer its own space" (BR, 1974c in Soccorso Rosso, 1979:187). While the first *communiqué* explained the reasons for the trial and the charges, subsequent ones focused on summarising the political reality and the statements obtained during the interrogations. The last *communiqué* explained the reasons for the release after over a month of captivity: "This battle had made us know more in-depth our enemy: his tactical strength and his strategic strength: the democratic *façade* and the bloody fascist nature (BR, 1974d in Ruggiero, 2007:297). The captive was asked to "reflect" and "carry out a sincere self-criticism" to admit his errors as he had been targeted for "persecuting the working class" (Sossi, 1975: 69-70; cit. transl. in Orsini 2011:53). The aim of the action was "to undo the bourgeoisie's plan to neutralise the initiative of the masses" (*Ibid.*). Throughout the act of kidnapping, the 'catechism' and the identification of the enemy of the BR became self-evident (Orsini, 2011). These actions were a carefully considered function, one of being a vehicle of information in confirming the existence of the SIM and the violent, repressive acts of the bourgeoisie, and another which contrasted the diffused spill-over of violence and politics of the extreme right by shaping an "exterior site from which the reality of politics could be revealed" (Moss, 1997:93). In this way, ideology was a communication mechanism for the discourse community (Apter, 1997) and the violent action an information mechanism for the group.

[11] Mario Sossi was a judge and politician. He was captured by the BR on 18 April 1974 in Genoa and released on 22 May of the same year after a prisoner swap with the Italian government.

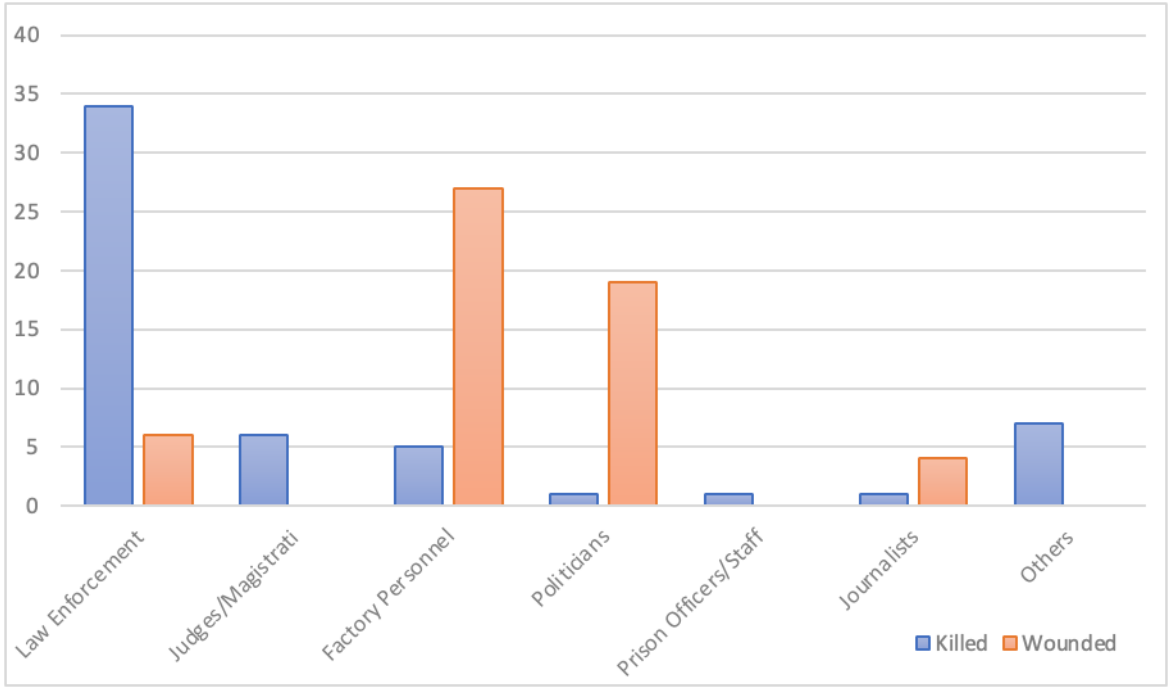


Figure 3 – Number of BR Killings and Wounding Acts in Relation to the Target (1969 – 1980)

Note: 'Others' refers to individuals not directly linked to the SIM or that have been hit as a result of crossfire. Source: Galleni (1981:175-182)

From the evidence gathered and previous reports on the killings and wounding acts perpetrated by the BR (della Porta, 1990; della Porta and Rossi, 1984; Galleni, 1981) there is a difference between the patterns of each (see Fig. 2).[12] In carrying out their revolutionary objective, the act of killing individuals responsible for the 'political slavery' of the system was for the BR an act of justice (Orsini, 2011; Lenin, 1986). As mentioned in the document detailing the kidnapping of Bruno Labate[13], denying this would mean failing "to distinguish between the violence of the oppressor and that of the slave" (BR, 1973 in Ruggiero,

[12] The analysis considers that the higher number of casualties among law enforcement is related to violent confrontations. Regardless, this does not affect the argument presented.

[13] Bruno Labate was a CISNAL trade unionist of the FIAT factory in Mirafiori in Turin and was kidnapped on 12 February 1973.

2007a:216; cit. transl. in Orsini, 2011:10). However, the "enemies are a class, they are functions, symbols to strike, not human beings" (Orsini, 2011:19; della Porta, 1990:183). This identification of a legitimate target and the type of violence it necessitates is clearly presented in the BR's programmatic document *Lotta sociale e organizzazione nella metropoli* ('Social Struggle and Organisation in the Metropolis'), whereby the enemies are not only those who openly support the system but those who contribute to its oppressive function (Cpm, 1979). A similar division is present in totalitarian systems where there is a distinction between enemies who deliberately oppose the revolutionary project and potential ones who do not operate a counter-revolutionary behaviour but are targeted because they belong to a hostile social group (Orsini, 2011:35; Arendt, 1973; Fisichella, 2002).

In the BR's ideological mindset, enemies are those individuals who represent a function of the SIM, while the potential enemies are those who appear to be a result of those functions. Moreover, for the BR's pedagogic intent, murdering an individual versus wounding one entailed two different discourses within the organisation and the proletariat (see Fig. 2). Documents related to assassinations explicitly reiterated that the victim was killed as a 'servant' of the state or a member of the 'anti-guerrilla movement' (BR, 1976; 1977 in Ruggiero 2007b:39,168). Furthermore, targeted wounding acts were carried out with a precise technique: "When the targets are standing, you first of all have to shoot them a couple of times in their legs so that they fall down. You wait for them to fall on the ground because if you shoot while they're falling, there's the possibility you might kill them so you stop and let them fall […]. […] you empty the magazine: three, five, six shots depending on the calibre, your precision and your anger" (Peci, 2008:135; cit. transl. in Orsini 2011:83-4). According to the BR, "one cannot kill people by accident" (Peci, 2008:134).

Ordine Nuovo's Pattern of Situational Violence

Conversely, the ON network presented a differentiated pattern of violence.[14] Key aspects of the ideological encapsulation are again functional in understanding the targeting pattern and the repertoire observed. Firstly, ON's political project is one outside and above the current democratic institutions to establish a Hegelian authoritarian regime (Minna, 1984; Vincenzo Vinciguerra, 1985). To achieve this, an ex-militant recalled that the objective was to carry out a *coup d'etat* and the latter became their tactic (Fiasco 1990:170; della Porta, 2013:186-7). ON also operated through a distinctive repertoire: attacks on institutions and sabotage of public facilities, violent assaults on individuals, the use of bombs, the *stragi* and assassinations (Ferraresi, 1996; Minna, 1984).[15] These were consistent with ON's twofold strategic orientation: an official level of action constituted of claimed and non-lethal attacks, and a covert level consisting of significant actions that remained undisclosed even to militants within the same organisation, to increase the level of tension (Ferraresi, 1996:131; Appeal, 1986). A defining characteristic of right-wing violence is a larger proportion of unclaimed attacks for these groups or the claiming under multiple insignia (Minna, 1984; see Fig.4). As a result, between 1969 and 1974, only 133 acts of violence were claimed even though about 1,339 non-claimed attacks presenting a similar matrix have been attributed to the ON network (Minna, 1984:50). Not claiming or covering up the perpetrators of attacks was generally aimed at side-tracking judicial investigations and undermining the role of state institutions (Minna, 1984:65).

[14] The analysis acknowledges the links between the right-wing militant organisations and the ramifications of institutional apparatuses. However, this is beyond the scope of the paper, and this analysis shares the stance of other commentators highlighting the autonomous nature of the action repertoire of these groups (Minna, 1984; Ferraresi, 1996; della Porta, 2013).
[15] The term *stragi*, refers to the large-scale bombings perpetrated by ON between 1969-1982.

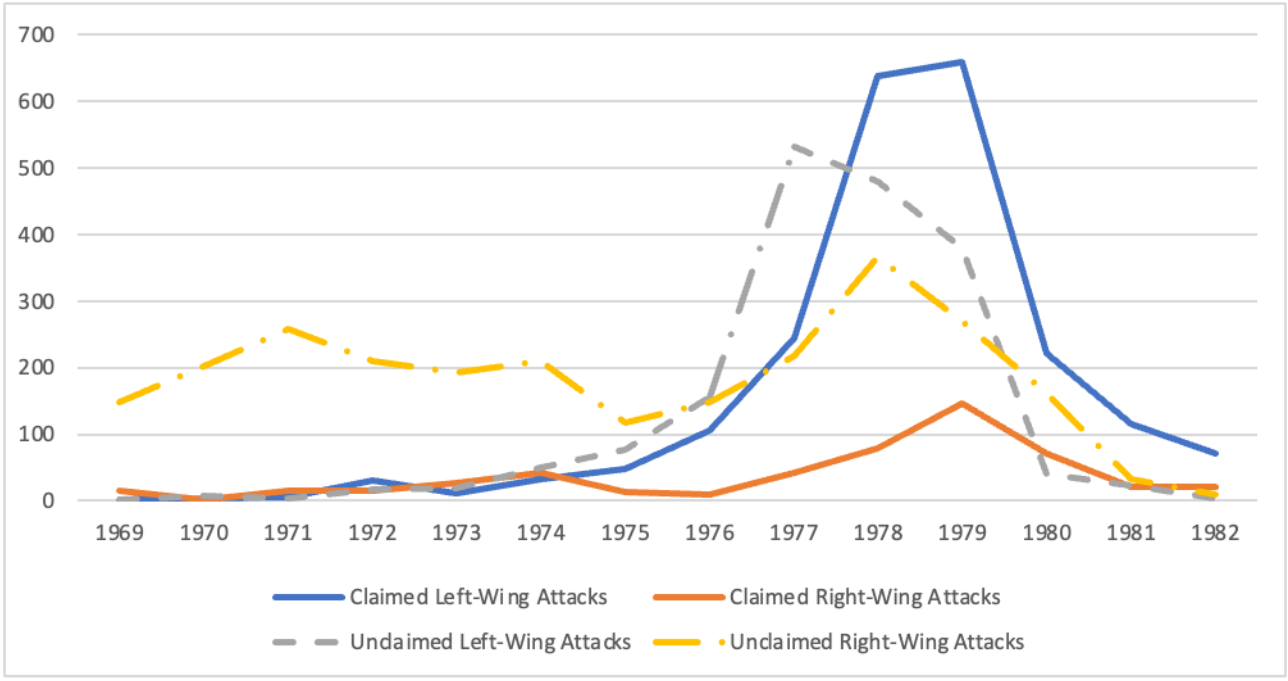


Figure 4 – Claimed and Unclaimed Attacks by Right-Wing and the Left-Wing Groups (1969-1982)

Source: della Porta and Rossi (1984:18-19)

Within ON's ideological encapsulation, the contemporary society *in toto* was a negative referent, which "lumped all their enemies together in one single, scorching rejection" (Ferraresi, 1996:56) as they refuted any naturalistic sources of group identification in concrete social and political terms. Conversely, a positive reference community (see Moss, 1997) was understood in "abstract mythical terms, without any explicit linkages" (Ferraresi, 1996:56). Such a delineation of reality shaped wider boundaries of the legitimate target. Indeed, a recurring ON form of violence was the abundant use of explosives in attacks, usually carried out at night against headquarters of political parties or other institutional buildings but also during the day against public facilities (Minna, 1984). Between 1969 and 1974, the bombing attacks perpetrated against state institutions, banks, trains and other facilities were responsible for 95% of the total victims and 83% of the deaths (della Porta and Rossi, 1984:58). In 1969

alone, ON staged a total of 312 bombing attacks (della Porta, 2013:186). The *stragi* attributed to ON's matrix saw the wounding of 551 individuals and the death of 145 (Galleni, 1981:51).

The pursuit of these actions was framed within the *strategia della tensione* ('strategy of tension') in the optic of a *coup d'état* (Ferraresi, 1996; Minna, 1984). Nonetheless, even these generally more indiscriminate forms of violence were still part of a precise revolutionary action. As stated in a letter circulated amongst all ON leaders and militants: "be sure we will not throw bombs nor shall we organise school camps only to show our camouflage suits and unleash our guerrilla instincts (File 1, Decree 243/77)". These actions operated as a precise communicative function by being a vehicle of information in demonstrating the impotence of the current institutions as well as an internal function of aggregating militants through these "resounding deeds" (Ferraresi, 1996:131; see Fig.5).

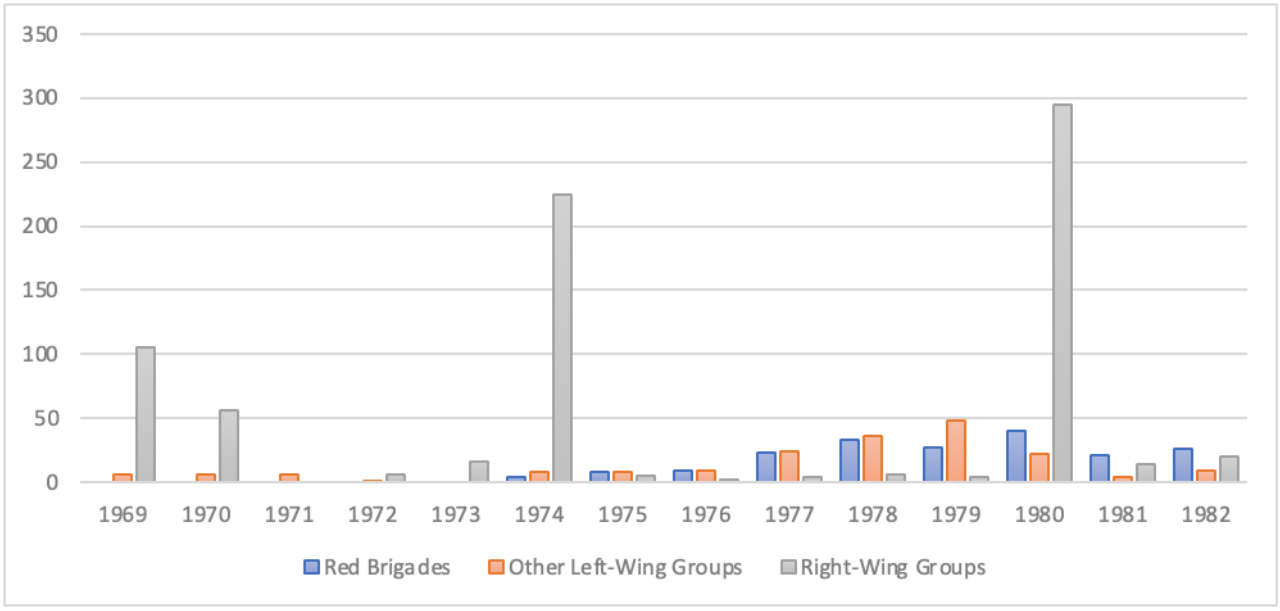


Figure 5 – Individuals Killed or Wounded by Left-Wing and Right-Wing Groups (1969-1982)
Note: Data includes the victims of the 'stragi', also the ones attributed beyond reasonable doubt to the right-wing. Source: della Porta and Rossi (1984:60-64)

It is interesting to see from the available data how direct violence was prevalent (Minna, 1984:50). Such violence also resembled what Marletti (1979:204) defines as "macabre romanticism", whereby the strife for action was a way to signal that ON militants were ready to engage by any means necessary to affirm their will. Compared to the 2,965 assaults of left-wing militancy, the right-wing perpetrated a total of 5,470 assaults against individuals (della Porta and Rossi, 1984:18). Between 1969 and 1975, the militant organisations gravitating around ON's orbit carried out 20 assassinations and no targeted wounding acts (Minna, 1984:50). The totality of violence and the anonymity characterised the violence as a diffused element and gave it a situational character (Marletti, 1979; Minna 1984).

Within the ON's militant ideological framework, the most urgent task of the 'political soldier' was to protect this purity "any hardness [is justified], disinterest any ruse, while the impersonal character give to the struggle does away with any moralistic concern" (Freda, 1980:87; cit. transl. in Ferraresi 1996:182; Appeal, 1986:458-9), because "it is difficult to make our contemporaries understand that there are matters that, by their very nature cannot be discussed" (Guenon, 1956:80; cit. transl. in Ferraresi 1996:193). Therefore, the prominent characteristic of ON's use of violence does not have a pedagogic intent but a punitive one (Minna, 1984). The use of bombs and the *violenza giustizialista* ('justicialist violence') contained and conferred different implications. In the case of the bombs, the "meaning is displayed in their taking place at all and thus providing a self-exemplified instance" (Moss, 1997:87-8). On the other hand, the *violenza giustizialista*, as a punitive action, considers that the reasons are known to the victim and need no further explanation (Moss, 1997). ON's primary action referent, the discourses or the attacks, was not within the masses but in the Neo-Fascist environment (Sergio Calore, 1985).

ON's violence further appears to mirror a will of its militants to acknowledge their diversity, and the repertoire and targeting are devoted to confirming such a sense of extraneity (Sergio Calore, 1985:73). However, even the loosest forms of violence followed a hierarchic organisation whereby one act defines the next because it states its modes and modalities

(Ferraresi, 1996). Even the *spontaneismo armato* was deemed part of revolutionary progression and not a mere call to arms. Violence had to annihilate people's moral and their confidence in the state system: "We shall rely on the impression created on both the enemy and the forces that there are at least in part favourable to us…the masses will be induced to fear and admire us, at the same time despising the state for its weakness (Requisitoria Mancuso, 1986:66; cit. transl. in Ferraresi, 1996:252; Appeal, 1986:458-9)". For ON, violence was a self-serving narrative that reinforced their ideological encapsulation and projected the image of the 'political soldier', for whom the action reinforced the ideological framework in place, which is how the individual came to understand his inner self (Sergio Calore, 1985).

The 'What' and the 'How'

The elements presented, the past reflections and the documents analysed show how the ideological expression of these two antithetical factions shaped a conceptualisation of the meaning of militancy in these groups, defining their use of violence. This analysis shows that violence is not simply the use of force but displays certain connotations that should be acknowledged to understand how groups employ it. The observation of these different configurations of violence cannot be understood through strategic and organisational considerations alone but should also include its political dimension. From this perspective, ON's ideological encapsulation and mindset shaped situational violence motivated by a precise vision of a new system in which an elite cadre of men rooted in tradition would impose power from above (Graziani, 1963; see Table 2). Essentially, violence was a liberating act to restore the natural hierarchy and archetypal world (Ferraresi, 1996).

Table 2 – ON's Pattern of Violence

Target/Crime	Killing/Assassination	Wounding	Kidnapping	Property Damage or Destruction	Theft/Robbery
Enemy Constituency	Individuals part of the corrupted bourgeoisie or the masses. Frequent use of explosives/bombs. **Frequent**	Individuals part of the corrupted bourgeoisie or the masses. Frequent use of explosives/bombs. **Frequent**	*n/a*	Institutions and headquarters of political parties. Frequent use of explosives/bombs. **Intermediate to Frequent**	*n/a*
Other	Students or other militants as a result of violent clashes. **Rare to Intermediate**	Students or other militants as a result of violent clashes. **Intermediate**	For self-financing. **Very rare**	As collateral damage. **Very Rare**	For self-financing. **Rare**

The targeting and repertoire of the BR, conversely, reflected the intents of a different, pedagogic form of violence that served to ignite and educate the proletariat towards the revolution (see Table 3). The BR followed the traditional Marxist postulate that theory and practice are inevitably interlinked. In this view, forms of violence that included no discursive meaning, as the use of bombs or *violenza giustizialista* were rejected (Moss, 1997).

Table 3 – BR's Pattern of Violence

Target/Crime	Killing/Assassination	Wounding	Kidnapping	Property Damage or Destruction	Theft/Robbery
Enemy Constituency	Individuals seen as a function of the SIM. **Frequent**	Individuals seen as a result of the SIM's function. Use of kneecapping technique. **Frequent**	Individuals that could exert pressure on the SIM, as well as ones that were a function. **Intermediate**	Industrial facilities, vehicles and any property connected to the SIM. Intermediate use of incendiary and explosive weapons. **Intermediate to Frequent**	Formally considered expropriations. **Intermediate**
Other	As the result of crossfire. **Very Rare**	As the result of crossfire. **Rare**	*n/a*	As collateral damage. **Very Rare**	For self-financing. **Rare**

Though sharing a common strategic aim in envisioning their revolutionary goals and violent struggle against a corrupt and corrupting system on the brink of a civil war, the understanding of a 'new order' varied greatly between these left-wing and the right-wing militant organisations. The BR's violence was related to the presence of a discourse community, whereby violence needed to be understood and legitimised. This was reflected in the targeting pattern and in the repertoire used, representing a more 'selective' use of violence (Manconi, 1990; Moss, 1993). Conversely, through the understanding of a differentiated community, ON militants sought no explanation (Moss, 1989; Ferraresi, 1996). This is observed in the broader use of violence in the targeting and repertoire, not in the sense that it lacked selectivity but that it was directed towards a differently identified enemy. Both understood violence as a form of political intelligence (Ventrone, 2003:181), defined by the ideological programmatic content of their politics.

Concluding Remarks, Limitations and Future Research

Understanding violence has always constituted a critical juncture in the field of political science. The prolific literature has produced a wide spectrum of consistent explanations but few generalisable answers. Therefore, instead of an additional explanation, the objective of this paper has been to provide a supplementary perspective in understanding the variation in violent tactics used by armed groups. The analysis presented a threefold conceptualisation of political violence as a discursive means rather than a solely coercive output. Building on the most recent theorisations related to the behaviour of armed groups, institutions and ideology, this theoretical analysis has highlighted the role of ideology in shaping armed group institutions (see Hoover Green, 2011, 2016; Oppenheim and Weintraub, 2016; Zelina, 2016). The argument followed has been that if ideology can shape the institutions and behaviour of an armed group, then the violence perpetrated should be reflexive of these structural and normative boundaries. While studies have accounted for how ideology and political education can define repertoire consistency, restraint and targeting patterns, the scope condition of the comparative analysis of these militant organisations in Italy has been to provide empirical evidence to show that ideology can not only influence targeting (see also Drake 1998) but also the choice of repertoire and the interrelation between the two. Moreover, this analysis seeks to raise a broader question for future research. What happens when we see changes in these observed patterns of violence? Does it entail a shift in the programmatic nature of the ideology or has the group become ideologically weak? If so, what are the implications at an individual level?

This study does acknowledge that ideology cannot provide a deterministic forecast of an armed group's patterns of violence and that the available data and context limit the findings. Other elements comprising the patterns of violence of an armed group, such as the frequency of attacks, may be shaped by contextual factors and the availability of resources. From this perspective, this paper provides a step towards recognising the need to analyse in greater detail not only the programmatic orientation of an ideology, but its content (see

Schubiger and Zelina, 2017; Ahmadov and Hughes, 2017), that too often is labelled as mere 'propaganda of the deed'.

The findings of this paper may further inform the current and future approaches to countering violent extremism (CVE) and associated deradicalisation processes.[16] While becoming involved in violent extremism can be both a bottom-up, as much as top-down process (see Khalil et al., 2019 and della Porta, 2008), understanding the ideological strength of a group, via an analysis of the observed patterns of violence, could allow us to recognise when a group's ideology is weakest and its members most receptive to CVE techniques and outreach (see Koehler, 2017). The paper may offer additional insights on the distinction between attitudes and behaviours, beyond the push and pull dichotomy, which can lead to the oversight of other relevant factors. Understanding the ideological strength at a meso-organisational level may further shed light on the degree of individual commitment and an individual's motivation, clarifying CVE mechanisms. Additionally, variations across groups could inform and prevent the misidentification of which individuals are effectively radicalised and which combatants or former combatants would better respond to a specific CVE approach, unpacking the difference between saying, believing, and doing something.

Though more than forty years have passed since the 'Years of Lead' in Italy, the memories of that period influence still today the political and social dimension of the country. Newspapers headlines talk about '*Nazitalia*', books on reconciliatory meetings between victims and former members of the BR are being published, BR fugitives are being sought to face judicial proceedings, associations are still asking for justice and individuals continue to be assaulted due to their political affiliation (L'Espresso, 2017; Rai News; 2021, Bertagna et al., 2015).[17] Therefore, in proposing an additional understanding of the use of violence by militant organisations, this analysis wants to emphasise the importance to consider a wider spectrum of violence and its meaning in wartime and peacetime processes for future research

[16] The analysis and evaluation of different models of interpreting violent extremism and terrorism is beyond the scope of this analysis.

to shape greater awareness of how they impact social fabric and may influence policy approaches to CVE.

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Annex

Table 1 – Operationalisation of Concepts in the Analysis of the Documents

Concept	Evidence/Operationalization
Institutions for Political Education	• Is there, direct, or indirect, evidence of a written and distributed political education programme by these organisations? • Did ex-militants recall the names and/or the contents of books, pamphlets, or other materials they received? • Did ex-militants report being told to what were the aims of the armed struggle? • Are there documents that connect the militants' behaviour to ideological precepts?
Programmatic Content of the Ideology	• What is described as 'the enemy'? • Who and what was framed as a 'legitimate' target? • How is the purpose of the armed struggle described? • What are the 'means necessary' to achieve it? • How is society described? • How is power understood? • What is the structure of the new system they envision?
Ideological Strength	• Do ex-militants report they understood why they were part of this armed struggle? • Do ex-militants mention their involvement in terms of individual or group purpose? • Do ex-militants report that the revolutionary struggle was 'important' or 'necessary'? • Were there discussions on the political and ideological orientation of the group?

Figure 1 – Violent Incidents in Italy (1969-1980)

Year	Violent Acts Targeting Objects	Violent Acts Targeting Individuals	Killings/Assassinations	Individuals Wounded in Attacks	Total
1969	208	210	21	0	439
1970	225	318	11	0	554
1971	310	515	6	1	832
1972	293	473	10	0	776
1973	254	383	11	0	768
1974	323	430	33	0	786
1975	239	199	21	8	467
1976	481	176	17	11	685
1977	1,338	407	23	38	1,806
1978	1,862	781	38	44	2,725
1979	1,766	289	36	48	2,139
1980	567	109	135	22	833
Total	7,866	4,290	362	172	12,690

Note: The acts against objects refer to attacks directed to state institutions, headquarters of political parties and police forces, sabotage of public facilities and other forms property destruction. Source: Galleni (1981:49)

Figure 2 – The BR's Reference Target for the Actions Carried Out (1970-1982)

Targets	**Number of Attacks**	**%**
Propaganda in Factories	262	40.4
Social Propaganda	37	5.7
Political Propaganda	155	23.9
War Against the State	111	17.1
Military Defence	34	5.2
Self-Financing	46	7.1
Other	3	0.5
Total	648	100

Note: The total is larger than the number of cases as more than one option is possible for each event. The percentages have been calculated on the number of options. Source: della Porta (1990:216, 2013:179)

Figure 3 - Number of BR Killings and Wounding Acts in Relation to the Target (1969 – 1980)

	Killed	**Wounded**
Law Enforcement	34	6
Judges/*Magistrati*	6	0
Factory Personnel	5	27
Politicians	1	19
Prison Officers/Staff	1	0
Journalists	1	4
Others	7	0

Note: 'Others' refers to individuals not directly linked to the SIM or that have been hit as a result of crossfire. Source: Galleni (1981:175-182)

Figure 4 - Claimed and Unclaimed Attacks by Right-Wing and the Left-Wing Groups (1969-1982)

	1969	**1970**	**1971**	**1972**	**1973**	**1974**	**1975**	**1976**	**1977**	**1978**	**1979**	**1980**	**1981**	**1982**
Claimed Left-Wing Attacks	1	4	6	31	11	32	48	106	244	638	659	222	115	71
Claimed Right-Wing Attacks	16	2	16	15	27	43	14	10	43	78	146	72	21	21
Unclaimed Left-Wing Attacks	1	8	3	18	20	49	76	157	533	480	380	41	23	3
Unclaimed Right-Wing Attacks	148	202	258	211	192	211	117	149	218	367	269	161	33	9

Source: della Porta and Rossi (1984:18-19)

Figure 5 – Individuals Killed or Wounded by Left-Wing and Right-Wing Groups (1969-1982)

	Total	**1969**	**1970**	**1971**	**1972**	**1973**	**1974**	**1975**	**1976**	**1977**	**1978**	**1979**	**1980**	**1981**	**1982**
Red Brigades	191	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	9	23	33	27	40	21	26
Other Left-Wing Groups	169	6	6	6	1	0	8	8	9	24	36	48	22	4	9
Right-Wing Groups	758	105	56	0	6	16	225	5	2	4	6	4	295	14	20

Note: Data include the victims of the 'stragi', also the ones attributed beyond reasonable doubt to the right-wing. Source: della Porta and Rossi (1984:60-64)

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ISSN: 2363-9849

Editor in Chief: Daniel Koehler