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nella sinistra italiana degli anni Settanta

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Percorsi di micro-mobilitazione verso la lotta armata, nelle organizzazioni della sinistra extra-parlamentare italiana negli anni Settanta

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Abstract: Nel nostro intervento analizziamo i meccanismi attraverso i quali matura la decisione di aderire alla lotta armata. In particolare, studiamo i differenti percorsi di micro-mobilitazione di quanti, negli anni settanta, decisero di entrare a far parte delle formazioni armate della sinistra extra-parlamentare. Sulla base delle motivazioni addotte dagli ex-militanti armati emergono tre percorsi dominanti: ideologico, strumentale e solidaristico. Mentre alcuni meccanismi sono comuni ai tre percorsi, le dominanti motivazioni individuali sono differenti, come lo sono il contesto politico-sociale, i tipi di relazioni che sono mobilitate, le dinamiche del processo nonché la sua velocità. Lo studio e l'analisi sociologica dei percorsi di micro-mobilitazione degli ex-militanti armati è per noi fondamentale per ricostruire anche la storia politica e sociale dell'Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta.

This study looks to improve our understanding of the motivations of those individuals who seek to affect or resist political, social and/or cultural change adopting confrontational repertoires of action oriented at inflicting material damage to individuals and/or property. Resorting to political violence is not simply a question of academic concern. Understanding why individuals engage in political violence is fundamental if we want to shed new light on the origins of armed conflicts.

In trying to explain what influences involvement in politically violence we are not looking at one simple profile or in terms of a unitary pattern of any sort, but at similarities across paths. Three different paths of micro-mobilization toward political violence will be single out, on the basis of the dominant motivation: ideological path, instrumental path, and solidarity path. While some basic causal mechanisms are common to all three paths, the dominant individual motivations are different, and so are the types of networks which are mobilized, the speed of the process and its dynamics. In calling attention to these aspects, we set this work inside an approach that speaks the language of social movements and contentious politics and has the potential to generate new insights.

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In this paper three pathways in to armed activism are identified among those who joined left-wing armed groups in Italy during the 1970s. Even though the focus will be on the personal accounts of the paths towards political violence at the micro level, the subjective perspective will be confronted with other documentary sources (trial records, newspapers, government documents, autobiographies, and documents from the organisations).

The paper is divided as follows. In the first part, we shall review the social science literature as well as presenting our own approach. In the second part, we take in consideration methodological caveats, related to the advantages and limits of our methods of data collection and analysis. The following three parts are then devoted to each of the three paths we shall single out on the basis of the dominant motivation: ideological path, instrumental path, and solidarity paths. Finally, we conclude by discussing the advantages of our approach to better understand the micro-foundations of political violence.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Review of relevant social science literature

Research on political violence has looked at various characteristics of why individuals resort to armed militantism. First studies pointed at psycho-pathologies, such as dependency, circular reaction or identity-seeking personalities, that have however never stood up any empirical examination (for review, see Silke 1998). Other theorizations stressed grievances: "terrorists" were said to come from the most deprived (frustrated and therefore aggressive) groups of the population. Here as well, empirical evidences were however at the best inconsistent. Moving from grievances to greed, recent approaches in terrorism studies stressed instead instrumentality, as a rational means of redressing poverty, inequalities, social exclusion or disenfranshisement. Profiling groups of the population that possess one, or more, of the above mentioned characteristics as "at risk of radicalization" became a widespread "counterterrorist" tactic (Goodwin 2003).

These different narratives can be found in different areas of research on political violence. For instance, in recent debate on suicide bombers, once excluded clinical disorders, opinions tend to diverge about the main motivation: some scholars have stressed how the careful choreography for suicidal missions aims at strengthening solidarity (e.g. Moghaddam 2005); others stress a moral logic (Atran 2006); still others the strategic point of view, given the success of suicidal missions in the past (Pape 2003). Similarly, researchers on revolutions have alteratively stressed the participation of aggrieved individuals, suffering from socio-economic dislocation (e.g. Goldstone 1990); opportunists, seeking personal gain or idealists, linked by dense ties to the movements.

In contrast to these approaches and to theirs caricature of armed militants as pathological personalities and socially excluded individuals, social movement theorists consider that individuals in political violent orgazinations are often highly organised, active and participatory individuals, who are relatively well-integrated within society. This analysis of political violence treats micromobilization in a rational way de-exceptionalizing violence, by locating it within broader contexts and treating it as simply politics by other means (Tilly 1978). The central focus of this approach is to see armed militantism as akin to political struggle. According to Doug McAdam's "model of recruitment to high-risk/high-cost activism" (1986: 68-71), families or other socialization agencies play a role in making individuals receptive to certain political ideas; when individuals who have thus become politically sensitive encounter political activists, they are then, motivated to become involved in an initial low-cost/low-risk activism. In this sense, the presence of a protest milieu influences the individual's rough calculations of costs and benefits by increasing the social costs of nonparticipation. Under condition of "biographical availability", --that is, for instance, for young people-- "these 'safe' forays into activism may have longer-range consequences . . . for they place the new recruit 'at risk' of being drawn into more costly forms of participation through the cyclical process of integration and resocialization" (McAdam 1986: 69). In social movement studies

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with a few exceptions, the individual dimension has been understudied, with research focusing instead either on organizations or on political opportunities. More in general, social movement studies have devoted little attention to political violence (Della Porta 2008).

Paths toward involvement in political violent organizations: ideological, instrumental and symbolical

The various interpretations in the social science literature are however not mutually exclusive, but they may cohesist in the same episode of radicalization. A Report of Independent Experts at the European Commission (2008) stated that "One of the most significant understandings gained from academic research over the recent years is that individuals who have been involved in terrorist activities exhibit a diversity of social backgrounds, underwent rather different processes of violent radicalisation and have been influenced by various combinations of motivations" (pp. 12-13).

In a similar vein, Joselyn S. Viterna (2006) has singled out three different paths of women's participation in guerrilla army in ElSavador: the politicized guerrillas, the reluctant guerrillas and the recruited guerrillas. These three types display different motivations, the first type being attracted by ideological commitment („were pulled into guerrilla participation by their strongly held beliefs in the political cause", p. 20), the second by lack of alternatives ("were pushed into the guerrilla camps because a crisis left them with no other options", p. 24), and the third by search for adventure or retribution, („were persuaded to join the movement", p. 28).

The different motivations we have mentioned until now can be easily summarized in the language of social movement studies as referring to instrumental, solidarity or ideological incentives. As Bert Klandermans (2004: 362) aptly summarized, "a demand for change begin with dissatisfactions", being therefore linked with instrumental reasoning that contentious politics could be more appropriate for obtaining the wanted change. Instrumentality is however not the only motivation to join: identity incentives are linked to the pleasure provided by „belonging to valued groups" (364). A third, ideological motivation to participate is "wanting to express one's views" (365). Following this motivation, activists are drawn to participate in contentious politics by the force of their ideas.

In this paper we are interested in going beyond this classification of individual types, linking micro, meso and macro levels of analysis. The language of incentives links the micro, individual dimension of motivation to a meso, organizational level. Looking at insurgencies, Jeremy M. Weinstein (2007) has combined these three levels within a rational choice approach in what he calls a "micropolitics of rebellion". Criticizing the lack of attention of research on civil war on the organizational dimension, he explains the different (degree and type) of use of violence against the civil population by the insurgent on the bases of the resources available for the insurgents and their effects on organizational strategy and types of membership. He argues, in fact, that "groups commit high level of abuse not because of ethnic hatred or because it benefits them strategically but instead because the membership renders group leaders unable to discipline and restraint their use of force— and membership is determined in important ways by the endowments leaders have at their disposal at the start of the rebellion" (20). The assumption is that in resources rich contexts insurgent organizations tend to attract greedy individuals, that aim at short term (material) rewards while at the same time they do not need the support of the population. Viceversa, in resource poor contexts, insurgent organizations tend to attract idealists (through long term rewards), plus they need the support of the population.

While we do not share all Weinstein's assumptions, we think it is useful to reflect on the ways in which a) the context (macro-level) and b) the organizational structure (at the meso level) do influence the types of individuals that are recruited. In Viterna's research (2006), that we have just mentioned, links are established between the types of recruits and the role played by biographical availability as well as networks. She shows in fact that politicized guerrilla show family ties as well as previous organizational memberships in political organizations, which are not important for the other two types. Biographical availability (especially young age) and location in the rebellious

...ps are instead particularly relevant for the recruited guerrillas. While politicized guerrillas are more relevant in the founding phase, recruited guerrillas tend to arrive later on.

In the same vein, in what follows we shall look at three different types of militants who joined the underground, singling out the characteristics in the context and the organizational structure that facilitate their recruitment. Beyond motivations, we shall also look at the type of networks as well as the biographical availability of the recruits. We shall note that, also in our cases, the founders are mainly ideologically driven and more likely (especially in Ireland) to show personal links (or other time of links to an historical past—as the Reggio Emilia groups in the Italian case). Once contextual radicalization increases, younger individuals tend to join through personal networks. The differences between the prototypical activist careers vary the types of networks which are mobilized, the speed of the process and in the dynamics of participation.

In previous research on radicalization in the left-wing social movements in Italy and Germany, Donatella della Porta (1995) developed an explanation of recruitment of underground organizations, from which we draw three assumptions that will lead our comparative analysis. A first assumption is that the effects of the interactions between the state and the movements are mediated by the *militants' perception of the reality* in which their political involvement developed. A second assumption is that the use of violence can be understood only within the context of an *individual's political career*, during which collective identities are built and, through collective processes, transformed. Even though transformative events can precipitate a choice, they should however been located within (shorter of longer) paths. A third assumption is that paths towards radicalization usually involve *networks* of individuals. Cognitive, affective, and relational mechanisms contribute to the identity-building process.

Us: develop from relational, cognitive, affective mechanisms, singling out some specific paths.

	Relational mechanisms	Cognitive mechanisms	Affective mechanisms
Ideological path	family & territorial traditions	Ideological, identity	loyalty, duty
Instrumental path	the political groups	aspiration to change	frustration, hope
Symbolic path	the peer group	experiential cognition	rage, joy

Methodological caveats

In this study, using a combination of data-collection techniques, we have drawn upon a variety of sources, the first three dating from the period in question and the remainder compiled later: 1) newspapers and magazine accounts; 2) archival sources (posters, leaflets, formal communiqués of the organisation, pamphlets, etc); 3) government documents (Parliamentary Debates and official government reports, public police and court records); 4) 28 life's interviews (Istituto Cattaneo during the 1980s)[i] and 18 testimonies (Novelli e Tranfaglia 2007) of former armed militants of the left; 5) autobiographical, biographical and published interviews of former armed militants;[ii] 6) the systematic consultation of secondary sources. In bringing together these sources, the 'triangulation' technique we have used provides not only a rich picture of the pathways to armed activism in this empirical case, but also complements and remedies the individual sources' weaknesses by corroborating one another.

Most literature on political violence and terrorism has features of questionable scientific merit. By and large it relies on poor research methods, a dependence on secondary and even tertiary accounts and a general failure to undertake primary research (Ranstorp 2006; Silke 2004). This has left most of the literature deeply removed from its research subject, since "*not* talking to terrorists seems to have become established as a source of scholarly credibility" (Brannan, Esler and Strindberg 2001: 7). We need instead to interact and engage, in our fieldwork research, with those who are affiliated to violent political organisations if we are looking to understand and explain this social phenomenon within its specific context (Della Porta 1992: 4). This obviously poses important ethical and methodological challenges for the researcher and his/her work, which we need to be aware of in order to defend the scientific credibility of our research (Punch 1994).[iii]

In this study, we look to contribute to rectifying the lack in empirical foundation "of primary data based on interviews and life histories" of those engaged in politically violent organisations (Crenshaw 2000: 410). Militant's interviews can be particularly helpful in understanding the critical learning process that leads individuals to participate in armed action, as well as in helping to "bring human agency to the centre of movement analysis. Qualitative interviews are a window into the everyday world of activists, and they generate representations that embody the subjects' voices, minimising, at least as possible, the voice of the researcher" (Blee and Taylor 2002: 96). These interviews were not conducted in order to denounce, absolve, condemn, legitimise, and accumulate facts or to reconstruct a possible objective 'truth' about some particular event (Passerini 1996). Instead, they were specifically designed to facilitate an understanding of the interviewees' process of radicalisation at that time, as well as of their social construction of reality, expectations, micro-networking, and the (critical) events surrounding their choice to adopt violent tactics, together with the process of ideological and symbolic justification that lay behind their decisions (Della Porta 1992; Blee and Taylor 2002). Given that the respondents were recalling why years earlier they had joined the militant groups, it is reasonable to wonder whether these interview accounts reflect present interests, selective memories and self-serving reinterpretations (Bottger and Strobl 2003; Horgan 2008b)[iv]. Such problems of validity, reliability and the time bias have been minimised in this study as the analysis relies on a combination of several data-collection techniques, as mentioned above, that permitted multiple checks (contemporary and present-day sources, as well as unobtrusive and face-to-face techniques, state and non-state sources, nationalist and unionist sources, and sources originating from different geographical locations). Furthermore, in a recent article Robert White sustained, by means of an interesting empirical verification, that is, by interviewing his respondents twice, the second time a decade after the first interview, that retrospective reports of behaviour are relatively consistent over time and that they do not seem to be influenced by present-day social contexts (2007).

Our attempt to better understand the individual pathways into armed activism in Italy during the early 1970s, by engaging in constructive dialogue with the research subjects, should not be mistaken as a form of connivance with the activities of the armed groups (Esseveled and Eyerman 1992).

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[i] R. Catanzaro (a cura di), *Ideologie, movimenti, terrorismi*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990; Id., *La politica della violenza*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990; D. Della Porta, *Il terrorismo di sinistra*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990; R. Catanzaro e L. Manconi (a cura di), *Storie di lotta armata*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995.
[ii] L. Codrini, *Io, un ex brigatista*, Firenze, Ed. Fiorentini, 1981; A. Franceschini, *Mara, Renato e io*, Milano, Mondadori, 1988; M. Moretti, *Brigate rosse una storia italiana. Intervista di Carla Mosca e Rossana Rossanda*, Milano, Anabasi, 1994; R. Curcio, *A viso aperto*, intervista di Mario Scialoja, Milano, Mondadori, 1993; S. Mazzocchi, *Nell'anno della tigre: storia di Adriana Faranda*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 1994; V. Morucci, *A guerra finita. Sei racconti*, Roma, Manifestolibri, 1994; L. Braghetti, *Nel cerchio della prigione*, Milano, Sperling & Kupfer, 1995; B. Balzerani, *Compagna Luna*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1998; V. Morucci, *La peggio gioventù*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2004; P.

_____ari, _Un contadino nella metropoli. Ricordi di un militante delle Brigate Rosse_, Milano, _____ani, 2006; P. Pergolizzi, _L'appartamento_, Reggio Emilia, Aliberti, 2006.
_____ 2006, Francesca Polletta was the section editor of a relevant forum in the journal _Mobilization_ _____led "Mobilization Forum: Awkward Movements". Concerning ethical difficulties in studying _____litical violence, see also Wood (2006); Breen Smyth (2008); Sluka (1995). In regard to more _____ethodological challenges related to this research subject, see: Bottger and Strobl (2003), Smyth and Gillian (2001), and White (2000).

[iv] For an extensive discussion of reliability and validity in oral sources, see: Della Porta (1992).

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