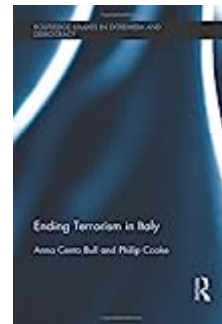




Anna Cento Bull, Philip E. Cooke. *Ending Terrorism in Italy.* Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013. xvi + 245 pp. \$140.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-60288-4.



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Italian terrorism is among the most studied cases in terrorism studies. The extensive body of scholarship addressing the motivations, trajectories, and actions of individual terrorists and terrorist groups alike is enhanced by a smaller but respectable number of studies addressing the innovative legislative measures taken by the Italian state in response to the severity of the terrorist threat in the period known as the *anni di piombo*. These studies—primarily located in the disciplinary fields of political science and history—are complemented by the recent emergence of a robust body of Italianist scholarship addressing cultural representations of Italian terrorism and its legacy.

With *Ending Terrorism in Italy*, Anna Cento Bull and Philip Cooke take the study of Italian terrorism in a new direction. This ambitious and wide-ranging book has two primary goals. The first is to fill a gap in the scholarly literature by providing the first comprehensive account of the different factors contributing to the ending of terrorism in Italy. The second goal is to provide an in-depth study of the legacy of terrorism and its ending, paying particular attention to issues of truth, justice, and reconciliation.

In accordance with its twofold mission, the book is

divided into two parts. Part 1, “Ending the Violence,” provides a comprehensive account of the various factors contributing to the end of terrorism in Italy. The scope of the interrogation includes not only the role played by the Italian state’s response to terrorism, conceived of in terms of military actions and legislative measures, but also of the contribution made by wider contextual and structural factors, among them the experience of imprisonment, the prison system, and the influence of the Catholic Church. Chapter 1 provides a short introduction to the theoretical issues involved in reviewing the Italian case in the light of emergent scholarship on disengagement from terrorism. Chapter 2 provides an exhaustive account of the legislative responses devised by the Italian state, from the very first law on terrorism in 1975, through the 1978 emergency legislation and the so-called *pentitismo* legislation of the early 1980s, to the highly controversial “dissociation” law of 1987. Particularly valuable to scholars researching Italian terrorism are the detailed attention paid to debates surrounding the dissociation legislation, both within the Justice Committee of the Italian Senate (from April 1984) and in the Senate proper, and the nuanced evaluation of the various merits and demerits of the legislation. A similarly thorough account of the impact of policies relating to im-

prisonment is presented in chapter 3. Two particular reforms are subject to detailed discussion; a sharp contrast is drawn between the overwhelmingly negative contribution made by the introduction of the harsh regime *carceri speciali* in 1977 and the notably positive contribution made by the innovative social spaces known as *aree omogenee* developed within Italian prisons in the 1980s. Of particular interest in this chapter is the original analysis of the role played by individual members of the Catholic Church—chaplains and nuns—who worked closely with prisoners, encouraging disengagement from violence, and facilitating reconciliation with themselves and their victims. The final chapter of this section (chapter 4) evaluates the hypothesis that deradicalization requires the reframing of individual or collective narrative modes and explores how different categories of terrorists narrate their withdrawal from violence in accordance with distinct narrative models.

Part 2, “After Terrorism,” interrogates the legacy of terrorism and its ending for those most directly affected, with equal weight given to the perspectives of former terrorists and those of victims and survivors. As in the first part, the introductory chapter (chapter 5) provides an overview of the Italian case in light of the existing scholarship, focusing in particular on a distinction between processes of conciliation (understood in terms of ending violence and reaching a settlement with violent actors) and reconciliation (conceived of as a wider social process). It is argued that three primary factors—divided memories, incomplete truth-telling, and conflicting claims to victimhood—have all impeded Italy’s progress from processes of conciliation to reconciliation with the terrorist past. These three factors are interrogated further in the following chapters, the first of which focuses on published memoirs and face-to-face interviews with former terrorists, both left-wing and right-wing in orientation. Attention is paid to a key distinction between the narratives of former terrorists who retain a sense of the validity of the violent past and who identify as part of a victimized political collective, and the narratives of those who have distanced themselves from their violent past and who deploy a discourse of victimhood in solidarity with their victims. The perspective of the victims, as represented by the work of victim associations and by the recent body of published narratives by terrorism survivors and the children of victims, forms the focus of chapter 7. Common themes to emerge are a sense of revictimization in relation to the role of the Italian state,

a need to rebut claims made by the former perpetrators, an attempt to rehumanize the victim of a terrorist attack, and a demand for the complete and unabridged truth on the part of former terrorists and the state alike. Chapter 8 reviews both sets of narratives in the light of narrative psychology, and identifies a clear-cut division between an approach to reconciliation advanced through individualized stories of grief and suffering and an approach to reconciliation that prioritizes the exposure of a system of injustice and demands political transformation. The book concludes with a brief but valuable comparative analysis of the Italian case and of the ending of terrorism in Northern Ireland and Spain, and argues that the process of truth recovery is central to the wider process of reconciliation so important to post-terrorist societies.

Throughout this important and timely book, care is taken to situate the evolution of debate on Italian terrorism and its legacy in relation to wider political and social factors and to distinguish meticulously between categories of protagonists at state, perpetrator, and victim levels. Discussion of individual factors relating to the ending of terrorism in Italy is developed with close reference to the most significant scholarship within the field of terrorism studies and of Italian terrorism studies more specifically. While such discussion provides nuance to existing theoretical frameworks, the primary contribution of *Ending Terrorism in Italy* lies in its original and comprehensive account of the various processes, factors, and practices contributing to the ending of terrorism in Italy and its incisive evaluation of the legacy of the same. Especially notable within that broad framework is the original contribution made by the provision of material derived from interviews with both former terrorists and victims and the unprecedented exploration of the role played by the Catholic Church in fostering deradicalization and disengagement from terrorism. Equally significant is the book’s side-by-side analysis of the perspectives and narratives of victims and perpetrators alike, united here for the first time under a single analytical frame. The breadth of the material studied and the range of scholarly perspectives engaged ensures that *Ending Terrorism In Italy* addresses several fields simultaneously. It makes an equally significant contribution to the study of terrorism in the disciplines of political science, history, and memory studies, while also being of keen interest to students and scholars whose primary concern is the cultural elaboration of the terrorist past, Italian or otherwise.

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