

## **INTERFERING WITH DEMOCRACY: THE COALITION BETWEEN RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM INSIDE A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*WHAT I SHALL PRESENT IN MY PAPER IS THE RELATION BETWEEN MULTI-SHAPED TERRORISM AND THE INCREASE OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM, TWO CANCER CELLS THAT OVERWHELM DEMOCRACY AND FORCE IT INTO A DOWNGRADE, IN ANY MORAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS THAT WE SEE RELEVANT IN THE PURSUIT FOR IMMANUEL KANT'S PERPETUAL PEACE. THE QUESTION RAISED BY GIOVANNI SARTORI THAT CONCLUDED THE FACT THAT WE SHOULDN'T FIND OURSELVES ASKING "WHAT IS DEMOCRACY? BUT RATHER MIND: "TO WHAT DEGREE IS A POLITY AND/OR A DEMOCRACY DEMOCRATIC?"<sup>2</sup>, LEAVES US NOWADAYS IN FRONT OF A NEW DILEMMA THAT MIGHT BE BUT IN WORDS ALIKE THOSE USED BY THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCIENTIST, WHEN REFERRING TO THE LINK BETWEEN RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM AND MODERN TERRORISM.*

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**KEY WORDS:** DEMOCRACY, TERRORISM, EXTREMISM, SOFT-DESPOTISM, GLOBALISATION

### **A VIEW ON DEMOCRACY AND GLOBALIZATION**

Nowadays, to talk about democracy in any academic context is a rather dull yet often used approach when referring to any aspect of the *pan-European dimension*.<sup>3</sup> Words like *globalization*, *terrorism*, *security* and of course *poverty* represent the key issues in any political debate regarding the future of democracy and prosperity around the world.

The fact that some people point at democracy when things go bad (civil war, riots, economic crisis, poverty), marks a behavior that should worry even the most optimistic person.

Given the global society era, that we embrace without barrier, it looks like there are seemingly very few things that we can do on a larger scale, in order to set things straight in matters that treat well-known social and economical aspects such as the reach of the global market, ethnic conflicts, gender inequality, world poverty, the war on terror and so on and so forth. Thus, the fact

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<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Sartori, "Where is Political Science Going?", *Political Science and Politics* 37 (2004): 785-786

<sup>3</sup> Andrei Marga, *Religia în Era Globalizării* (Cluj-Napoca: The Foundation for European Studies, 2006), 13. See Mărcău Flavius Cristian, "Security as a determining factor of quality of life in a state from an insecure regional area," *Analele Universității „Constantin Brâncuși” din Târgu - Jiu*, nr. 4/2015, Seria Litere și Științe Sociale, Editura „Academica Brâncuși”, pp. 77-85.

that the world is now interconnected beyond precedent, to a level that if something would go wrong in Southeast Asia<sup>4</sup>, it can influence to some extent the population of the entire world, may suggest that now more than ever, social and political action is required.

Regardless of the obstacles that democracy encountered along the way, its modern form, dating back to the seventeenth century, seems to have maintained in some relevant proportion the rights and principles promoted through its numerous supporters. Having to deal with a handful of setbacks, democracy manages to thrive due to an outstanding fight for human rights, peace and constant search for prosperity and well-being for its citizens.

Immanuel Kant's perpetual peace,<sup>5</sup> although it sounded like utopia and purely unimaginable to some extent, was in some terms reached when we concluded more than twenty five years of peace and cooperation between states that now militate for a better environment and hand in hand evolution towards development and well-being.

Over the last few years, studies regarding Latin America<sup>6</sup>, Central and Eastern Europe<sup>7</sup> or Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>8</sup> have raised many discussions about the future of democratization. As we know, one of the many things that countries marked as important when considering the democratic path, along with safety and popular approval, is its capacity of stimulating cooperation and adhesion between states that don't necessary share common interests and same level of strategic power.

The world as we know it, rather than how it really is in fact, cherishes the kind of cooperation that may seem in some cases distant from our sight. Every single actor, plays an important role on the stage of international relations, no matter the size, type, or the form of organization. If we consider big corporations, they are interconnected and they rely on each other as well as they influence one another. In the case of NGOs, we have the same form of interdependence, regardless of the field they cover successfully or not. With states, contrarily to any popular beliefs, things do go as smooth as one might think. Diplomacy and the continuous search for sustainable partnerships, that usually creates the premises for results that show economic growth, social well-being and even safety, make interstate cooperation the new trend in every state's strategic planning.

All the things we admit to have been a part of the democratization process, make it solely responsible for our progress in fields that cover technology, light and heavy industry, telecommunication, infrastructure, medical care and even space discovery.

What I'm trying to show is that the more we reflect upon the grater things that came along with democratization and what followed behind it, the more eager we should proceed into promoting its continuity so that one day everyone that shares a keen ear could say: *this wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the miracle of democracy.*

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<sup>4</sup> see Moonjong Tcha, "From potato chips to computer chips: features of Korea's economic development", *Inter-American Development Bank* (2015): 1-31; and Shalendra D. Sharma, *The Asian Financial Crisis - Crisis, reform and recovery* (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 2003), 180-252

(The Korean crisis which influenced the entire global market of computer chips, with the fall of the top producer of the Dynamic Random Access Memory computer chips - D-RAM)

<sup>5</sup> see Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, trans H. B. Nisbet (New York: Filiquarian Pub., 2007)

<sup>6</sup> see Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Beyond transitions to democracy in Latin America", *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (1992): 665-684

<sup>7</sup> see Grzegorz Ekiert, "Democratisation processes in East Central Europe: A Theoretical Reconsideration", *British Journal of Political Science* 21 (1991): 285-313

<sup>8</sup> see Servaas van der Berg, "Consolidating South African Democracy: The political arithmetic of budgetary redistribution", *African Affairs* 97(1998): 251-264

Not to dwell upon what is obvious, democracy plays an important role in peacekeeping and safeguarding of human rights, although it may seem that in some amount, it goes in favor of the strong, helping them get stronger, while the poor go deeper and deeper into poverty, stimulating inequality, and spreading impoverishment - a disease with tentacles that go beyond any reach, when opposed.

Near the middle of the nineteenth century, the French philosopher known today as Alexis de Tocqueville, had written maybe the most compelling statement in favor of democracy, considering the American model as an example, and the appetite for the future, manifested by its citizens, as the most important outcome. What Tocqueville considered to be then the primary danger that would knock on the door of democratic states was a new form of despotism that might enslave the citizens of those states, down to a point of no return, without them knowing any of it.

Tocqueville's soft despotism can be easily depicted nowadays when considering some governing examples that show that some states bear witness in favor of his clear statements.

In a letter written to his fellow friend Kergorlay, Tocqueville wrote that "the road towards democracy is inevitable. Thus, what it remains the central problem is whether it is compatible or not with the doctrine of liberty and what the latter represents."<sup>9</sup>

Although it may show its face in different shapes, the idea of soft despotism brings up an interesting view on how modern autocracy manifests in the twenty-first century.

Some researchers argue that democracies are less likely to experience terrorism and extremist movements. Opposing to this view others believe that *democracies provide a fertile ground for the spread of terror, hence they are more likely to become targets.*<sup>10</sup>

Now that we've managed to set the importance of democracy as a whole, and to acknowledge a new perspective to start with, I must say that it might look foolish of me to consider in any terms of use, the association of democracy with some international actors, that are by far manifesting a lack of coherence when it comes to democracy and its principles. For the sake of comparison and solely because it is said to be the common way of thinking<sup>11</sup>, I must excuse myself from this unfortunate yet rather useful endeavor.

## **FAILING DEMOCRACY: A NEW PERSPECTIVE UPON THE SPREAD OF TERROR**

From Russia to Germany and France, reaching Spain and England, and across the Atlantic Ocean in the United States, terror has been spread throughout numerous assaults on human safety, leaving behind too many casualties and destruction. What until 9/11 seemed odd and unlucky for some countries and their inhabitants, mostly the ones already in grief and suffering, now is being taken seriously around the world, through what we call *terrorism*.

Despite all odds, most of the targets were well-developed states, usually democratic, with outstanding safety measures, and reliable security structures that possess the ultimate safety tools to ensure a safe and secure environment for their citizens. Apparently this isn't enough to put an end to its unstoppable rush. There are some theoretical arguments that reveal the fact that *high*

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<sup>9</sup> François Furet, introduction to *Despre Democrație în America*, by Alexis de Tocqueville, trans. Magdalena Boiangiu and Beatrice Staicu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Mărcău Flavius Cristian, "Central and Eastern Europe – necessary stages of democracy construction," *Research and Science Today* 2(8)/2014, November 2014, Editura „Academica Brâncuși”, pp. 93-102; Burcu Savun and Brian J. Phillips, "Democracy, Foreign Policy and Terrorism", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53 (2009): 878-879.

<sup>11</sup> Mattei Dogan and Dominique Pelassy, *Cum să comparăm națiunile. Sociologia Politică Comparativă*, trans. Laura Lotreanu (Bucharest: Alternative, 2009), 7.

*levels of executive constraints, free press, political participation*, are only some few examples of why terrorists and extremists can operate with relative ease inside democratic states.<sup>12</sup>

Along with terrorism, not as a consequence but rather as a premise for its development, right-wing extremist groups and movements clear the path for terror to siege upon.

It is safe to say that transnational terrorism includes many forms of national extremist movements that support and impose very different ideas from religious to political beliefs that later on may turn into major disasters.

It is certain that Europe has been provoked, along with the United States, to indulge in a war that has no horizon whatsoever and no valid principles to fight for, but most of all, it has no dignity and no respect for human rights. On the other hand, the increased involvement in international affairs is likely to be the reason for the constant resentment and discontent issued abroad.<sup>13</sup> The revival of extremism in Europe and in the United States over the last two decades brings out to our attention the consistency of the danger that it assumes, valuably.

The groups and networks that suppress equality are getting larger and larger in Europe as well as in other parts of the world. Facing problems such as Islam phobic violence, ethnic disputes, homosexual persecution and much more, we see how the states are blindfolded while right-wing extremist movements are getting more and more recognition and enthusiasm from young people throughout Europe and the United States. Along with the white supremacists, the Neo-nazis and the racists, the right-wing extremism consists not only of these adherent movements but of other alike them that have a need for punishment towards states, institutions, politics, governments and so on and so forth.

“For the international audience, only a few of them gained the media’s attention. For example, in Germany, a right-wing terrorist group (NSU) that activated undetected for more than 14 years, committed numerous bombings and assassinations. Similar events took place in Norway (the Breivik massacre), Russia and in the United States, with other extremist groups.”<sup>14</sup>

In Greece, “more than a third of the extreme right-wing electorate expresses indifference towards the extremist party - *Golden Dawn*.”<sup>15</sup> This serves only as an example for how mistreated and silent is this spectre that haunts us and taunts our misinterpretation of tolerance and social inclusion.

The modernization of every society brings with its well welcomed advantages some concerning issues, establishing on one hand the premises for development as well as cultural enhancement and on the other hand “*the growing potential for social, religious and ethnic conflict*.”<sup>16</sup> It has been said that we are by far more naive than our ancestors, mostly because our lack of adaptive ness that has been sterile since we no longer have to fight for our land or hunt for our meal. Nevertheless, the consistent wave of immigrants that flooded Europe, and has been washing ashore desperate people in search of a new life in peace and stability, serves as cover for many terrorists that have already pledged *death to the West*.

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<sup>12</sup> Burcu Savun and Brian J. Phillips, *Democracy*, 879.

<sup>13</sup> Burcu Savun and Brian J. Phillips, *Democracy*, 879-880.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Koehler, “Right-wing extremism and terrorism in Europe”, *PRISM* 6 (2016): 85.

<sup>15</sup> Vassiliki Georgiadou, “Right-wing populism and extremism: The rapid rise of Golden Dawn in crisis-ridden Greece”, *Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (2013): 97.

<sup>16</sup> Britta Schellenberg, “Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in Germany: developments and enabling structures”, *Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (2013): 68.

“The extreme right-wing movements in contemporary European politics share several traits with the fascist’s movements which appeared in Italy and Germany in the late twenties and thirties.”<sup>17</sup>

In today’s Italy, “it proves to be quite difficult to distinguish between the moderate right-wing, which is committed to liberal democracy’s underlying principles, values institutions and the extreme right-wing, which rejects them”.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Portugal’s Salazarist case, that diminished right-extremists<sup>19</sup>, countries such Ukraine, Romania and even Poland created an outstanding ground for extremist parties and movements to breed, some of them as a reaction to post-communist propaganda, *marking a strongly anti-pluralist vision and rejecting basic democratic values*.<sup>20</sup> This brings out the degree in which right-wing extremism, evolved.

Although both Americans and Europeans, share an important background in terms of extremism and intolerance towards some social classes, the fact that these movements grow constantly, with every year that passes without us putting an end to it, is another supporting act, in favor of their hatred .

There are many who believe that right-wing extremism is only a form of expressing democratic rights, up to a point that it might get uncomfortable if you are on the other side.

Being backed up by a sense of valuing an opposition against the state and its laws, it usually finds its advocates really easy.

Together with terrorism, “they ridicule liberal freedoms, they reject minority rights and they display a denial attitude towards egalitarian values”.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, these movements undermine every citizen’s safety, so that the governments, whom possess the social contract, stamped and signed by every individual, have an opportunity of assuring their safety throughout any obstacle they might encounter.

“Civil libertarians critiques of responses to terrorism, frequently assume that counter-terror polices are distorted by exaggerated assessments of the seriousness of the terrorist threat.”<sup>22</sup> This way it is easy to indulge in cover-up stories and motivate involvement in the affairs of other states.

The measurements regarding immigration control are scarce and ubiquitous, also disregarding social acceptance and tradition. Although there are some points in which international laws and domestic laws converge to form a desired global law, whereas both the European Union and the United States of America are entities that use globalization as an excuse for strengthening their security, immigration remains a solid issue on every government’s agenda. Furthermore, “the perception of globalization as a facilitator of immigration - including undesired mobility on the part of the receiving states - has led to the development of a series of legislative measures aimed at enhancing border controls”<sup>23</sup>, regardless of the effects imposed upon any normal foreigner that travels legitimately.

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<sup>17</sup> Bernt Hagtvet, “Right-wing extremism in Europe”, *Journal of Peace Research* 31 (1994): 241-246.

<sup>18</sup> Roberto Chiarini, “The Right, the Extreme Right and the Legacy of fascism in Italy, 2008-2013”, *Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (2013): 103.

<sup>19</sup> see Riccardo Marchi, “The Extreme right in 21st-Century Portugal”, *Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (2013): 133.

<sup>20</sup> Rafal Pankowski and Marcin Kormak, “Radical nationalism in Poland: From theory to practice”, *Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (2013): 157.

<sup>21</sup> Bernt Hagtvet, *Right-wing*, 241-242.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas Rogers, *Law, Liberty, and the pursuit of Terrorism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 12-23.

<sup>23</sup> Valsamis Mitsilegas, “Immigration control in an Era of Globalisation: Deflecting foreigners, weakening citizens, and strengthening the state”, *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 19 (2012): Duță Paul, ”Considerations on

The fierce-full believe that the spread of terror involves a lack of legislative measures in areas that affect the social inclusion of immigrants, forcing them into shame that often leads to revenge and contempt, has unfortunately some grounds of approval.

Although it may look like a conspiracy that involves most of the west's powerful countries, this I believe is untrue. For those powerful enough to impose their will, immigrant's quota is either mandatory or insignificant. They absolve the responsibility throughout other states that don't have a say in it or they accept it as a tool for bargaining future strategic and economic interests.

As we can see, terrorism and its utterance bring into light many aspects, rarely considered inside a busy and relaxed society.

Now that we've seen many disasters and massacres all over the world, caused by terrorism on one hand and right-wing extremism on the other, the problem raised by this global malfunction is indisputable.

The link between the two: terrorism and right-wing extremism is very subtle. Although in some contexts right-wing extremism is considered to be an act of terrorism, I believe a distinction between the two should be considered, as the first mostly covers political oppression and law-abiding movements while the latter consists of many forms of expression that may vary from religious persecution, ethnic comb-out, racial conflicts and now more than ever - identity and border disputes. Considering that states play a major role in its abatement, terrorism can very often create confusion, for is them who get all the "credit" when things go wrong. Insofar people reflect upon it, the ones who really suffer from it are the citizens of the countries implicated directly into combating and decreasing its forms of oppression.

Although it may be hard to believe, states themselves help with the spread of extremism. Throughout their unpopular measures regarding different rights and certain policies that often drive to scandalous social debates and provoke the masses which aren't always well equipped intellectually, in order to understand and to react in a distant way. These mistakes can be sometimes fatal to society as a whole when it reaches to a point that causes casualties and injuries which are not necessary loses to any society whatsoever.

These being said, it seems that Tocqueville's approach on despotism seems to be suitable with this period of time rather than of when he wrote his thesis.<sup>24</sup>

My belief is that now, more than ever, we are confronting a dangerous attack upon democracy and what it stands for. The coalition between two of the most hostile assailants, terrorism and extremism, has devastating effects and proves that we are crossing paths with an unprecedented crisis that mark the beginning of a new challenge for democracy. Although it is not the only thing that shakes the bases of democracy, these two manifestations of terror among citizens, make other issues like global warming, ecological threats and the fight for literacy fall behind the list of concerns regarding the future of the human race.

Many terrorist forms of expression resort to violence. Not all of them though, act accordingly to popular belief, bombing and terrorizing innocents. Some of them focus their attention on cultural and religious propaganda that may finally lead to acts of oppression.

As we know more and more about the common forms that terrorism take, as closer we get to understanding the motive behind their acts. Needless to say that terrorism, regardless of its shape, isn't the only thing democracy has to worry about. We should not forget that „terrorism is

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territorial integrity and unilateral separation”, *Research and Science Today Supplement* No. 2/2014, Academica Brâncuși Publishing, Tîrgu Jiu, 2014, pp.143-151.

<sup>24</sup> see Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin, 2003).

a tactic and philosophy that has been around for centuries and will be around for as long as there are human beings”<sup>25</sup>. My concern is that it can only be reduced but never abolished.

The controversy behind the involvement of some states in the war against terror still stands as a major debate in front of different supporters that try to aggrandize the moral duty behind their actions. This also works in favor of democracy, and makes the point of Tocqueville’s writings regarding the danger that soft despotism brings, along with the tendency for self-limitation.

“The end result of soft despotism is the deterioration of democratic people via a process through which the government gradually assumes control of decisions, directly affecting the lives of its citizens.”<sup>26</sup>

This is why governments engage in such conflicts, without public support and political/social debate on how their implication is legitimate or not. Neither the right-wing extremists nor the terrorists, regardless of their ethnic or religious motivation, share common grounds when it comes to justifying the spread of terror. It may seem, thanks to the media, that their fundamentalist approach on issues concerning religion, borders, ethnicity or even race, shares some premises that look as if they are certified by their beliefs and cultural inheritance, but this I believe is unrealistic and lacks of morality and respect for dignity.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An important debate regarding how terrorism and right-wing extremism affect democracy requires more than an answer to whether we can stop one of the most important candidate in jeopardizing the world’s security and peace.

Thus, we mustn’t forget that *as a necessary condition for an action to be terrorism, only the statutes and/or reactions of officials in the political unit need to identify the action as criminal or illegal.*<sup>27</sup> This should raise questions on grounds of how states involve in economic areas and treat issues that impose a sensible touch without controversial demeaning.

“Economic theory identifies terrorists as rational actors who use violence as means to achieve political goals”.<sup>28</sup> I argue that this statement is entirely true. To some extent, terrorists can be rational actors, but in this case I believe that states are taking the role of the leading actor in this play. Tocqueville’s idea of soft despotism can relate to nowadays issues regarding social insecurity, a product right-wing extremism and terrorism of all sorts.

The states involvement in sensible areas, driven by strategic opportunities and wealth, stimulates terrorist and extremist behavior. In addition to some other unpopular laws and government measurements, the resentment bubble is always ready to explode.

Domestic terrorism that usually disguises as far-right movements has known a serious growth over the past few years.

Corroborating sovereignty disputes and political instability, the war on terror raises many questions regarding its results. We see how immigrants bring concerns and strengthen the tension between states, segregating ethnic groups that lived in peace together for many years until now.

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<sup>25</sup> Gregory D. Miller, “Teaching about terrorism: lessons learned at SWOTT”, *Political Science and Politics* (2009): 775.

<sup>26</sup> Suzanne Smith, “Reviewed work: Rahe, A. Paul, *Soft despotism, Democracy’s Drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville and the Modern Prospect*”, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43 (2010): 511-512

<sup>27</sup> Jack P. Gibbs, “Conceptualization of terrorism”, *American Sociological Review* 54 (1989): 331

<sup>28</sup> Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierrieks, “Terrorism in the Worlds of Welfare Capitalism”, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54 (2010): 904. See Duță Paul, “Crisis analysis parameters”, *Research and Science Today* No. 2/2014, Academica Brâncuși Publishing, Tîrgu Jiu, 2014, pp. 80-93

The fight for democracy will continue, although in some cases, we are not certain of the relationship the two sides that fight the war on terror.

My impression is that it will take a joint effort in order to succeed in shifting the odds in favor of democracy and well-being. This can only be made hand in hand, with a close approach on bringing people together, regardless of their religious views, ethnicity and race, provided this will eliminate hatred and division, bringing peace and tolerance instead.



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