



# State Terrorism and Human Rights

International responses since the end of the Cold War

Edited by Gillian Duncan, Orla Lynch,  
Gilbert Ramsay and Alison M.S. Watson

# State Terrorism and Human Rights

This book aims to improve understanding of the broad trends in the utilisation of political violence by examining the use of state terror in world politics.

The ending of the Cold War and the overthrow of communism in Eastern Europe led many to assume that this presaged the demise of the one-party terror regime and acceptance of Western concepts of democracy, freedom and human rights throughout the international system. But of course this did not end state terror. The totalitarian one-party state still exists in North Korea and China, and there are numerous military regimes and other forms of dictatorship where the use of terror techniques for internal control is routine.

The late Professor Paul Wilkinson conceived and began this project with the intention of analysing the major types of international response to state terror, as well as their outcomes and their wider implications for the future of international relations. In keeping with this original premise, the contributors explore the history of terrorism, as well as reflecting on the need for international cooperation based on the protection of civilians and a consistent approach to intervention in conflict situations.

This book will be of much interest to students of terrorism studies, political violence, human rights, genocide and IR in general.

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# Political Violence

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**State Terrorism and Human Rights**

International responses since the end of  
the Cold War

*Edited by Gillian Duncan, Orla Lynch,*

*Gilbert Ramsay and Alison M. S. Watson*

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# Dedication

It is still difficult to imagine the field of terrorism studies without Paul Wilkinson. Paul is rightly remembered for his voluminous scholarly and popular publications and for his commanding presence as one of the field's leading scholars and pioneering figures. But beyond this statement of the obvious, Paul's signal contribution was as its pre-eminent ambassador and foremost visionary.

Throughout a career spanning nearly half a century, Paul championed the study of terrorism as a bona fide scholarly pursuit. For this alone, successive generations of terrorism scholars are profoundly in his debt. But equally significant was his unerring conviction in the relevance of academic research to the formulation of sound government policy – ineluctably and indisputably predicated on core Western liberal and democratic values. 'It has never been my view', Paul famously declared in the preface to *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, first published in 1977,

that it is improper or demeaning for academics to interest themselves in the urgent practical problems of the day. Indeed in discussing the problem of terrorism with members of the public, politicians, officials, members of the security forces and fellow academics, one is impressed by the widespread desire for serious analysis and long-term thinking concerning the nature of the terrorist phenomena, their causes, effects and policy implications for Western Governments and societies.<sup>1</sup>

In everything that Paul did, this conviction was at the forefront of his aims and ambitions. This was never clearer than in the monumental three-day conference titled 'Contemporary Research on Terrorism' that Paul organized and chaired at the University of Aberdeen in April 1986. To this day, the conference is unique in the annals of terrorism studies. It was the largest, longest, grandest and certainly the most successful international conference on the subject ever held. The conference attracted several hundred delegates from around the world. It resulted in a 634-page collection of nearly 40 papers co-edited by Paul that represented only a sample of the extraordinarily rich and diverse presentations heard at both the plenary and individual panels held throughout the conference.

It was also an event where the reality of terrorism and the challenges of counterterrorism were stunningly demonstrated. Ten days before, Libyan agents

of the Qaddafi regime had bombed a Berlin discotheque frequented by American servicemen. On the morning that the conference began, eighteen US bombers flying from airbases in the United Kingdom struck Libyan targets in Tripoli and Benghazi. Later that same day the many US government and military personnel attending the conference received orders to return home. A US Air Force cargo plane was dispatched to Aberdeen airport to collect the group, who departed the following morning. In the conference's closing oration, Paul seized the opportunity to remind the attendees that our field was not a purely theoretical one and could never be divorced from the realities of a world menaced by this particular form of political violence.

However, what I remember best from the conference were the myriad close friendships and lasting professional associations that were established among the delegates. This was also very much Paul's life-long ambition and intention: to build a community of scholars in the field that would contribute to the identification of practical measures to counter terrorism. For many, these friendships and associations continue to this day. Indeed, it was at this same conference that I first met Paul.

It is not a cliché in Paul's case to note that he put his life on the line for both his beliefs and the attainment of these aims. Four years later, at a conference on 'Terrorism and Democracy' held at the Royal Overseas League in London that Paul also organized, we were nearly blown up by a time bomb that an IRA agent had placed beneath the speaker's lectern. A sound technician laying cables to broadcast the event just minutes before it was to begin discovered the explosives concealed in a plastic lunch box and alerted the authorities. It was entirely in keeping with Paul's character that, in comments to the press afterward, he calmly observed how delighted the police must surely be 'to have an intact device to study'.

The culmination of Paul's efforts to forge an intellectual community for the study of terrorism; to build bridges in the struggle against it; and to ensure the field an academic base from which rigorous, objective analysis of the phenomenon could be conducted, was without doubt the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence in 1994. The centre represented the crystallization of his tireless efforts to bridge the gap between both theory and policy and the academy and government. Its importance to him is reflected in Paul's strong and immutable commitment to educating successive generations of terrorism scholars and his belief in the need to provide them with both the intellectual tools and the data and information sources necessary to conduct their research. There is without doubt no one in the field responsible for interesting more students in terrorism studies and indeed for producing more scholars of terrorism and practitioners of counterterrorism than Paul.

This collection on state terror and human rights embodies Paul's core belief in the resiliency of the liberal democratic state to terrorist threats both domestic and external and the importance both of upholding these values and government's responsibility to protect fundamental freedoms and preserve human rights even in the face of a concerted terrorist onslaught. He never shied away from condemning



state terror as well as terrorism. Indeed, Paul was praetorian in his defense of the innocent from harm and depredation of any kind – whether from the state or non-state sources – and the fundamental preservation of the civil liberties and rights afforded to all under the United Nations, International Criminal Court of Justice, The Hague, and Geneva and other conventions governing the laws of warfare and protected status of civilians.

In 2010 Paul himself had proposed exactly such a volume to Routledge. He intended it to be the capstone work of his long and rich career in academe and policy advising and as the apotheosis of all that he believed in and had consistently championed – even when such views were unpopular or dismissed as irrelevant to contemporaneous times and challenges. That its chapters are instead now written by his colleagues, including some of his former students, is a fitting and lasting testament to the legacy Paul bequeathed to the field of terrorism studies.

To conclude this dedication, I would like to highlight one of Paul's most important – and singularly memorable – arguments along these lines. It appears in *Terrorism and the Liberal State* and is also at the very heart of the present volume, which has been conceived and offered in his honour. 'Contemporary terrorism in its severe forms,' Paul wrote,

constitutes what is arguably the most testing and immediate challenge to the will and courage of liberal democracies. It would, I believe, be disastrous if we failed to meet that test. Courage and a determined will to uphold liberal values and institutions, far from being irrelevant qualities more suited to the heroic past, are now more than ever needed if liberty is to survive, and contemporary barbarisms are to be vanquished.<sup>2</sup>

That statement of principle in the struggle against terrorism could easily have been written at any time during the past decade. That Paul wrote it in 1977 – at the dawn of a new era of violence that until he came on the scene was poorly understood and largely dismissed, bereft of scholarly rigour and academic standing – tells us who exactly Paul was and what he stood for. It also reminds us how much we all miss him and how much we all benefited from his powerful intellect, his skills and passion as a teacher, and – most of all – his friendship.

Professor Bruce Hoffman  
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Georgetown University, Washington, DC

## Notes

- 1 Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), p. ix.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

# Foreword

For many of us around the world interested in terrorism, the name Paul Wilkinson was synonymous with St Andrews. He put St Andrews on the map in the world of terrorism studies, and he put terrorism studies on the map in the academic world, long before it was discovered by politicians and security specialists the world over.

His constant mantra, that we must never lose sight of our liberal principles when combating terrorism, was as relevant and as important and as compelling, when he first started saying it 40 years ago, as it is today. And it never tires of repetition.

For someone interested in such a brutal subject, and who never shied away from its more violent and grotesque implications, Paul was a very gentle man. He was fond of Spenser who has told us that nothing so well betrays a man than his manners. In his manners Paul was a gentleman, soft-spoken and unfailingly courteous to whoever he met. He was also a courageous and trenchant critic of both perpetrators of terrorism and governments whose counter-terrorist policies violated their own liberal principles.

This book on *State Terrorism and Human Rights* was intended by Paul to be his final monograph. His untimely death prevented it being so. His ideas, however, pervade the book. Seeking both a fitting memorial and a means of advancing his ideas, several of Paul's friends, colleagues and former students decided to complete the work Paul planned. His outline for the manuscript served as the template on which the editors developed the structure and content. Together with the contributors they have produced a wide-ranging book that would have made him proud and that will generate lively discussion amongst his students and colleagues.

Paul Wilkinson's legacy is evident in the practices of policy-makers influenced by his thinking, in the publications of scholars inspired by his ideas, and in the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews where the frontiers of knowledge on this subject are pursued and future generations of thinkers taught.

This volume was intended to be his final manuscript but it will not be the final book inspired by his cogent analysis and his lifetime of exploration of the intricacies of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

Louise Richardson  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of St Andrews

# Acknowledgements

This volume represents our efforts to complete a book Paul had planned as his final volume in terrorism. Without knowing Paul's intentions, the task was an impossible ask, but we have managed, with the assistance of Paul's friends and colleagues, to put together this volume in the hope that it would meet Paul's approval.

We could not have completed this task without the support of a number of people, not least the chapter authors but also all the staff at CSTPV, in particular Professor Richard English for his advice and assistance.

We would also like to thank the many people who contributed to this volume in other ways, including Mrs Sue Wilkinson and the rest of Paul's family for their insight and support during this process. Finally we would like to thank Paul's colleagues at Routledge, Andrew Humphrys and Annabelle Harris, for their patience and dedication.

Gillian Duncan, Orla Lynch, Gilbert Ramsay, Alison M. S. Watson  
University of St Andrews

# 1 Introduction

*Alison M. S. Watson*

Paul had said that this would be his last single-author book. His desire to understand the phenomenon of terrorism, and to communicate that understanding, remained undiminished, however his death means that the outline that Paul wrote for this book would be his last, and in contributing to this volume we are creating something that will now stand as one of many tributes to him. In bringing the writers of this volume together we are staying true to the hopes that Paul himself had for what this book would achieve. This introduction will outline, in Paul's words, these hopes, and will also examine their significance within the context of his wider body of work. The introduction will also outline the individual contributions to this volume. As editors we have been keen to remain close to the outline that Paul provided – the words in each of the individual chapters may not be his, but the subjects of them, and their placing within the context of the volume, are.

Throughout his career, Paul's work was pioneering in so many ways: *Political Terrorism*, published in 1974, provided the first theoretical understanding of terrorism, and it also highlighted his belief in the primacy of human rights and the maintenance of the rule of law, ideas that were to remain fundamental to Paul's writing throughout the next four decades. At that time Paul quoted Roucek (p. 23) who stated that 'the most horrible forms of brutality have been sanctioned for the use of legal authorities' [118] (p. 168) noting that Roucek quotes Charles Merriam's catalogue of a few of those devices used by the state: restraint, the lash, torture in many forms, mutilation, humiliation ... For Paul, the role of the state was a significant one. In his 1981 review for *International Affairs*, Paul posed the question 'Can a State be Terrorist?' and clearly stated his position (p. 468):

Most academic writers on terrorism either explicitly or implicitly disapprove of the use of terrorism within liberal democratic societies. Some would argue, however, that there are circumstances when it might be morally justifiable as a weapon against tyrannical or oppressive regimes. For example, it is sometimes held that terrorism is the only weapon left to the opponents of such governments, or that the terror of the state forces the opposition groups to resort to terrorism in self-defence or that terrorism is more effective than other forms of struggle and is a 'lesser evil' because it may gain victory without costing so many lives. The present writer's position that terrorism,

because it involves taking innocent lives, is never morally justifiable whatever the provocation, and that there is always some other means of resistance or opposition even in the most oppressive societies, such as the Soviet Union, may not be widely shared. Of course one does not have to accept any moral universal about terrorism in order to study terrorist phenomena. On the other hand one is not left with a simple choice between accepting moral universals and abandoning ethical judgements altogether. As Ted Honderich has observed ‘if we cannot with confidence make overriding judgements about violence, we can make lesser judgements, and they are of some value as guides to action.’

These responses became even more significant in the post-9/11 world. In the introduction to the second edition of *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, for example, published in 2006 he asked (p. xvi): ‘is the case for a principled liberal democratic response to terrorism still sustainable in the face of the most lethal form of non-state international terrorism the world has ever seen?’ His answer was unequivocal:

The author would argue that in reality it is those who advocate or condone the use of ‘terror to defeat terror’ who are truly guilty of being ‘soft on terrorism’, because by their supporting or condoning serious violations of basic human rights they undermine respect for international and national laws and agreements and place themselves on the same moral level as the terrorists.

Nor did Paul think that a combined state response was always an appropriate one. At its forty-eighth session, the then UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, emphasized the relationship that exists between terrorism and human rights by reiterating:

The unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism regardless of their motivation, in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomever committed as acts of aggression aimed at the annihilation of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threatening territorial integrity and international peace and security destabilizing legitimately constituted governments, underpinning pluralistic civil society and having adverse consequences on the economic and social development of States.

At the time that this resolution was adopted, and for the period up until the events of September 11, there appeared to be a growing consensus regarding the nature both of human rights, and of human rights norms. In the wake of 9/11, however, policy became more fuzzy and Paul ‘noted yet again the difficulty of getting concerted action by the international state system on even the most fundamental human rights problems’ (p. 129),<sup>1</sup> and the difficulties inherent in this lack of response: