

Chapter 33

Prevention of Revenge Acts and Vigilantism in Response to Acts and Campaigns of Terrorism

Marie Robin

This chapter focuses on the ways in which some people react to terrorism. It first offers a typology of some of the main unlawful reactions to terrorism, classifying them along two axes - the level of violence and the level of organization. Four types of responses are then examined, ranging from non-violent/non-institutionalized reactions to violent/institutionalized reactions. This chapter then focuses on two of these situations - those that involve an actual use of violence - and it examines the dangers posed by revenge and vigilantism at the levels of the state, society and counterterrorism. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations on how to deal with private revenge acts and vigilantism. First, government should ensure that sectors of the population do not feel a need to take the law in their own hands and set up a parallel justice system. Second, leaders of civil society and those holding state power should strive to reduce polarization and inter-community tensions that can lead to scapegoating and new cycles of violence. Third, government should introduce legislation restricting the possession of arms in private hands.

Keywords: prevention, political violence, revenge, terrorism, vigilantism

“*Vous n’aurez pas ma vengeance*”¹

In the aftermath of a major terrorist attack, and even more so in situations of ongoing terrorist campaigns, some people, driven by passionate anger and grief, take up arms in order to punish the presumed perpetrators or the people associated with them. They do so in order to protect themselves and their core values when the government is perceived as unable or unwilling to act. People take recourse to unlawful actions against terrorism for a variety of reasons, including fear, despair, and a taste for adventure. Feelings of revenge play an important role as these seemingly legitimize the use of force.² Terrorist attacks generate both trauma and anger. Members of society often suffer from feelings of helplessness in the face of a hidden or distant perpetrator. Many feel a desire to “do something.” This felt need to do something can sometimes lead ordinary citizens to take up arms to defend themselves, their families and their way of life in a quest to restore normalcy and regain a sense of security. Yet the spontaneous and private recourse to arms in reaction to terrorism oftentimes contributes to a counter-productive escalation of conflict.

This chapter seeks to answer the following research question: Why and how should one prevent the outburst of vengeful reactions and vigilantism in the aftermath of a terrorist attack? It offers a typology of the vengeful reactions that might follow a terrorist attack and underlines the dangers of emotional responses to acts of terrorism. It concludes by offering recommendations on how one can prevent the surge of such reactions and thereby reduce the risk of an escalation of conflict.

Theoretical Framework

What exactly do we mean by “vengeful reactions” and what are the types of illegal actions that some individuals and groups tend to take following terrorist attacks? In this section, we offer a typology of unlawful reactions to acts or campaigns of terrorism. This allows us to define revenge acts and vigilantism, and how they sometimes manifest themselves following terrorist attacks.

Why Revenge? Durkheim’s Mechanical Solidarity

Why do some people feel a strong need to react personally to terrorist attacks, even when the victimized people live far away, on the other side of the ocean? What phenomena of identification can explain strong reactions to acts of terrorism?

The Durkheimian notion of “mechanical solidarity” might be helpful to understand the reason why. For 19th century French sociologist Emile Durkheim, mechanical solidarity emerged

¹ Translation: ‘You won’t have my vengeance’. These words paraphrase the title of a book written by Antoine Leiris, who lost his wife in the Bataclan concert hall attack in Paris in November 2015. Titled *Vous n’aurez pas ma haine* (“You will not have my hatred”), his book advocated peace and asked state and society to prevent new cycles of violence at all cost, by refusing to give in to feelings of hatred and acts of revenge. See: Leiris, Antoine, *Vous n’aurez pas ma haine*, Paris: Fayard, 2016.

² On the political impact of revenge, see: Christensen, Kit R., *Revenge and Social Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

within a society which is quite homogeneous.³ In the context of a terrorist attack, feelings of similarity and solidarity emerge from the common experience of trauma and fear as well as the grief that people share.⁴ Most importantly, the majority of people identify with the victims, thinking that they could have been one of us, and, as such, most of us feel connected to them by a bond of common vulnerability in the face of sudden unprovoked random attacks. Durkheim attributed “mechanical solidarity” to family ties and kinship. In the age of global mass media, the circle of concerned people is much larger.

Solidarity involves a bond of unity between individuals, united around a *common goal* or against a common enemy.⁵ Identifying the enemy and dealing with the enemy are crucial parts of narratives emerging in the immediate aftermath of a major terrorist attack, sometimes leading to revenge narratives.⁶

French sociologist G r me Truc studied the societal reactions to terrorist attacks.⁷ Using a framework provided by an American colleague, he explains:

“The American sociologist Edward A. Tiryakian has pointed out the way American society reacted to 9/11 is a very clear illustration of the phenomenon that Durkheim portrays in that work under the name ‘mechanical solidarity’. Faced with the attack, Americans more than ever had the feeling of being united. This reaffirmation of national cohesion, an American ‘we’ that for a while took precedence over the singular ‘I’s’ that compose that community, was particularly reflected in the flourishing, in public space, of a symbol that was, as it were, erected as a totem: the Stars and Stripes.”⁸

In one of his works, Truc studied an initiative taken by the French *M morial de Caen*⁹ and the newspaper *Ouest-France* following 9/11: French people were asked to send letters to Americans. He quoted from one of those letters, which illustrates the link between the feeling of unity, mechanical solidarity, and a desire for revenge.

“It’s the Western world as a whole that is in mourning and our hearts are weeping in unison with our American brothers. We are one family and, together, we will face up to this attack that has killed our people. We weep but we are erect and dignified, and we will stand up to the enemy. *We extend our condolences to the American people and share, in its pain, its desire for revenge.*”¹⁰

³ Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labour in Society*, (originally published in 1893), London: Red Globe Press, 2013. See also: Hassner, Pierre. *La revanche des passions*, Paris: Fayard, 2015.

⁴ See, for instance, Alperhan Babacan and Hussein Tahiri (Eds.), *Counter Terrorism and Social Cohesion*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.

⁵ Mason, Andrew. *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Santino, Jack (Ed.), *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*, New York: Palgrave, 2006; Doss, Erika, *The Emotional Life of Contemporary Public Memorials: Towards a Theory of Temporary Memorials*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008.

⁶ For instance, in 2015, the then French Minister of Defence, Jean-Yves Le Drian, wrote a book: *Who is the enemy? trying to answer this crucial question so as to explain the foreign policy orientations that followed the 2015 attacks in Paris*. See: Le Drian Jean-Yves, *Qui est l’ennemi?*, Paris: Les Editions du cerf, 2016.

⁷ Truc, G r me, *Shell Shocked. The Social Response to Terrorist Attacks*, London: Polity, 2016.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁹ ‘M morial de Caen’ is a museum based in Caen, Normandy, which focuses on the history of the Second World War and the D-Day Operation of 6 June 1944.

¹⁰ Truc, G r me 2016, p. 25.

Revenge feelings, when they surface, emerge from shared grief and a strong identification of the witnesses with the victims. Randall Collins showed how, in the immediate aftermath of an attack, members of the society gather and share their grief, reinforcing the ties that bind them together.¹¹ Faced with the same trauma, people feel as members of a single aggrieved family, of which one of them was taken away. Research in anthropology has shown how feelings of community/family belonging can lead to feelings of revenge. Evans-Pritchard, in his studies of the Nuer people and the Luo of Kenya, showed how blood ties were systematically mobilized in the context of retributive justice, especially in rituals.¹² A French psychologist, Pascaline Delhaye,¹³ also recognized that revenge constitutes one of the two obligations that can emerge from blood ties. To her, family kinship is associated with two natural obligations: the prohibition of killing a member of the family, and the obligation to avenge the murder of one of their own.¹⁴

Revenge feelings might emerge from the reinforcement of community feelings in the context of strongly felt vulnerability and fear resulting from a terrorist attack. Faced with the atrocity and in order to prevent that terrorist crimes go unpunished, people gather around the victims and their families, determined to punish the perpetrators and avenge the victims - "our brothers and sisters" - for the norm violation.

Nevertheless, 'mechanical solidarity' does not automatically lead to revenge. Truc showed that, following 9/11, "nearly 20 per cent of those French women and men who wrote to Americans did so to warn against the evil of taking an 'eye for an eye', urging them not to yield to the provocation of terrorists"¹⁵ The author of one of those letters advised: "As to retaliation, let justice be carried out wisely, without striking innocent civilians."¹⁶ In the week following 9/11, 76 percent of Europeans expressed a preference for a judicial rather than a military response to the Al-Qaeda's attacks which killed nearly 3,000 people.

In the context of a terrorist attack, due to the common traumatic experience and to the grief people share, individuals tend to become more similar; there is an increased feeling of community within society. Within homogeneous society, phenomena of "mechanical solidarity" emerge, in which members of a family express the need to protect each other and the need to avenge the offense experienced by one of their own.

Many types of reactions to terrorism can be observed, being different manifestations of "mechanical solidarity." While some people might express a desire for revenge due to

¹¹ Collins, Randall 'Rituals of solidarity and security in the wake of terrorist attack', *Sociological Theory*, 22 :1, 2004, pp. 53-87; Zelizer, B. and S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11*, New York: Routledge, 2002; Lagarde, François, 'Penser l'impensable: Le 11 Septembre des penseurs français', *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 23:2, 2005; Derrida, Jacques and Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, interviewed by Giovanna Borradori, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003; Held, David, 'Cosmopolitanism after 9/11', *International Politics*, 47, 2010, pp. 52-61.

¹² Evans-Pritchard, Edward Evan, "Nuer curses and ghostly vengeance", *Africa*, 19:4, 1949, pp. 288-292; Evans-Pritchard, Edward Evan, "Ghostly vengeance among the Luo of Kenya", *Man*, 50, July 1950, pp. 86-87.

¹³ Delhaye, Pascaline, 'Figures de la vengeance dans la postmodernité: le héros et le barbare', *Nouvelle revue de psychosociologie*, 1:21, 2016, pp. 143-154.

¹⁴ On this issue, also see: Verdier Raymond, *Vengeance. Le face-à-face victime/agresseur*, Paris: Autrement, 2004, p. 13; Bourdieu Pierre, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précédé de trois études d'ethnologie Kabyle*, Genève: Droz, 1972. Bonte and Izard, *Dictionnaire de l'ethnologie et de l'anthropologie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991, p. 736; Girard, René, *Violence and the Sacred*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1972, p.25-41.

¹⁵ Truc, G r me 2016, p. 32.

¹⁶ Ibid.

community membership or family kinship, others prefer promoting peace and unity. Before asserting what can be done in order to prevent vengeful reactions, there is a need to properly define what exactly revenge and vigilantism are and how they manifest themselves in the context of a terrorist attack or series of attacks in a terrorist campaign.

Defining Revenge and Vigilantism

A basic understanding of revenge refers to a reactive act of punishment that hurts or harms a (member of) a guilty party in retribution for having suffered a wrong or injury. According to one widely used dictionary, revenge is thus the action “to inflict injury in return for.”¹⁷ Several characteristics can be associated with revenge: the use of violence (or the threatened use of violence); the perception of a preceding wrongdoing; its appearance within a close-knit community; and a certain satisfaction resulting from harming the other.¹⁸

Although the notion of revenge is traditionally associated with strong emotions and passions, vengeance can also be understood as a strategy. Thanks to its duality – as both a vice and a virtue¹⁹ – vengeance also features prominently in the vocabulary of terrorists. Martha Crenshaw noted that “one of the strongest motivations behind terrorism is vengeance, particularly the desire to avenge not oneself but others.”²⁰ In recent years, several ISIS’s attacks were ‘justified’ as a “Vengeance for Sham.”²¹ Similarly, Brenton Tarrant, the mosque attacker in Christchurch (New Zealand), referred in a manifesto to his desire to “take revenge for the thousands of European lives lost to terror attacks throughout European lands.”²² In January 2015, the Kouachi Brothers, right after committing their deadly attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris shouted in the streets of Paris: “We avenged the Prophet.”²³ Vengeance narratives were also widely used by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) and the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA) in Algeria in their attacks against the government.²⁴ The Provisional

¹⁷ Merriam-Webster dictionary: “revenge” Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/revenge>

¹⁸ See: Christensen 2016; Hazebroucq, Marie-France, *Se venger*, Paris: PhiloAdo rue de l'échiquier, 2011, Nietzsche Friederich, *Humain, trop humain II*, Paris:Folio, 1886, réédition de 1987, p.363, pp. 88-89; Dupin, Danièle, “La vengeance peut-elle avoir une justification éthique?”, *Conférence de l'association ALDERAN Toulouse pour la promotion de la philosophie*, 2006. Available at: <file:///C:/Users/STK-Guest2/Downloads/La%20vengeance%20peut-elle%20avoir%20une%20justification%20%C3%A9thique%20-%20par%20Daniele%20Dupin.pdf>.

¹⁹ Raymond Verdier defined vengeance as “Both a virtue when it defends a person’s dignity and a vice when it becomes a passion for destruction” (translated by MR), in: Verdier, Raymond *Vengeance. Le face-à-face victime/agresseur*, back cover.

²⁰ Crenshaw Martha, “How Terrorists Think: What Psychology Can Contribute to Understanding Terrorism”, pp. 71-81, p. 73, in Howard Lawrence (Ed.), *Terrorism: Roots, Impact, Responses*, London: Praeger, 1992, ; The role of revenge as a motivation for terrorism is also stressed in Schmid, Alex P. and Albert J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: a new Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1988, pp. 94-95

²¹ On “Vengeance for Sham” operations, see: Puxton, Matteo, ‘L’Etat islamique lance une offensive sur plusieurs pays pour ‘venger le califat’’, *France Soir*, 11 April 2019. Available at: <http://www.francesoir.fr/en-coop-matteo-puxton/letat-islamique-lance-une-offensive-mondiale-pour-venger-le-califat>; Ezz, Mohammed, “Islamic State launches global attacks”, *The Times*, 15 April 2019. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamic-state-launches-global-attacks-wcr5fw5pj>.

²² The Christchurch Manifesto in the author’s (MR) archive.

²³ La redaction de Médiapart, “New footage emerges of Charlie Hebdo attackers leaving scene of massacre”, *Médiapart*, 14 January 2015. Available at: <https://www.mediapart.fr/en/journal/france/140115/new-footage-emerges-charlie-hebdo-attackers-leaving-scene-massacre>.

²⁴ On Algeria, see for instance: Martinez, Luis, ‘Why the violence in Algeria?’, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9:2, 2004, pp. 14-27.

Irish Republican Army (IRA) also often sought revenge for what it called the crimes committed by the English crown.²⁵ Already in 1878 in Russia, Vera Zasulich²⁶ had portrayed her assassination attempt on the governor of Petersburg as act of rightful vengeance. Thus, vengeance constitutes a powerful motivation for terrorism, making it also a mobilization tool for terrorist organizations looking for new members.

Attributing vengeance motives solely to the terrorist side would nevertheless prove highly misleading. Indeed, revenge can be observed on both sides in a conflict dyad. Terrorist attacks generate shock, anger, and fear among a society under attack and beyond that within the international community as a whole among all those who identify with the victims and not with the goals or methods of the terrorists. In some cases, those aggrieved by a terrorist attack might actually take - or threaten to take - up arms against those deemed responsible. Their desire for vengeance can, however, lead to additional acts of violence – creating a spiral of violence with tit-for-tat (re-)actions escalating the conflict.

Vigilantism overlaps with revenge in several ways. The British criminologist Les Johnston defined vigilantism as “a social movement composed of voluntary private agents who, on the basis of a premeditation and faced with what they perceive to be a transgression of institutional norms, wish to control criminality and guarantee the security of the members of their movement by using or threatening to use violence.”²⁷ Like revenge, vigilantism involves a form of violence, initiated in response to what is perceived to be an offense (against individuals, society, community values etc.). Vigilantism, like revenge, is also deeply tied to one’s definition of a community and the perceived limits of the in- and out-groups. Although Johnston’s definition has become widely accepted, it somehow disregards the occasionally ambiguous position that the state might take vis-à-vis vigilante movements. Those holding the reigns of the state can indeed find common interests with vigilante movements and, to some extent, accommodate and use these, leading to a complementary but problematic division of labor in exercising law and order functions.²⁸

Vigilantism, like vengeance, is an ambivalent notion. William Safire, a famous New York Times journalist, identified two opposite meanings:

“One is positive (to impose the law where it is missing) and the other is negative (to take the law into his own hands). When one uses the notion today, in an historical understanding, it refers to rough justice on the border rather than the repression of Black people on the South, and this is rather a compliment. But when it is employed to refer to contemporary practices, the vigilante notion – and even more its associated -ism – generally serves to suggest outdated and undesired methods, in a pejorative sense.”²⁹

²⁵ On Northern Ireland, see Silke, Andrew, ‘Rebel’s Dilemma: The Changing Relationship between the IRA, Sinn Féin and Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11:1, 1999, pp. 55-93; Silke, Andrew, ‘Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland.’, *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11:3, 1999, pp. 1-31; Monaghan, Rachel, “‘An Imperfect Peace’: Paramilitary ‘Punishments in Northern Ireland’”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16:3, 2004, pp. 439-461.

²⁶ De Graaf, Beatrice and Alex P. Schmid (Eds.), *Terrorists on Trial. A Performative Perspective*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016; Kucherov, Samuel ‘The Case of Vera Zasulich’, *The Russian Review*, 11:2, 1952.

²⁷ Johnston, Les, ‘What is Vigilantism?’, *British Journal of Criminology*, 36 :2, 1996, p. 220.

²⁸ On this issue, see: Fourchard, Laurent, ‘Etat de littérature. Le vigilantisme contemporain. Violence et légitimité d’une activité policière bon marché’, *Critique Internationale*, 78, 2018, p. 169.

²⁹ Favarel-Garrigues, Gilles and Laurent Gayer, ‘Violer la loi pour maintenir l’ordre. Le vigilantisme en débat’, *Politix*, 3: 115, 2016; Safire, William, ‘On Language: Vigilante ’, *New York Times*, February 10th, 1985.

According to Gilles Favarel-Garrigues and Laurent Gayer, practices of vigilantism emerge from two types of motives: a willingness to restore order, acknowledging what people deem to be the essential values of their society, and a desire for justice.³⁰ On the one hand, vigilantes want to prevent new attacks by protecting those they deem to be their fellow citizens. On the other hand, vigilantes wish to punish those whom they hold responsible for crimes to avenge the victims and the aggrieved society.³¹ Depending on the cases or contexts, one motivation or the other can dominate, leading to different reactions to the initial attack.

A Typology of Reactions to Terrorism

Reacting illegally to terrorism first requires identifying a target – *i.e.* someone deemed responsible for the initial offense and whose wrong deeds call for a response. In this paper, we consider that the choice of targets of avengers and vigilantes follow a rational choice process³² with priority being given to:

1. the terrorists themselves (provided that they are still alive).

In case they are out of reach, the avengers and vigilante will seek to target:

2. The direct accomplices, or members of the terrorist group; and finally
3. Those deemed to be associated with the terrorists due to their nationality, religion, community, following a sense of “shared accountability” along – more often than not – racist and/or xenophobic lines.

For the general preventing purpose of this chapter, we thus posit that the avengers’ preferences will follow this three-step preference ordering. Based on this first assessment vigilantism can be classified in terms of the degree of violence or in terms of the degree of organization of perpetrators.

Degree of Violence

Most reactions to terrorism do not involve the use of private violence and remain within the realm of the rule of law, at least in democratic states. French scholars G r me Truc, Christian Le Bart and Emilie N e [³³] explored the various expressions of unity that emerged in narratives

³⁰ Favarel-Garrigues and Gayer 2016, p. 9.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Although the issue of target identification is essential to vigilante and revenge activities, its analysis remains highly context dependent. We acknowledge that political opinions, xenophobic sentiments, socialization, culture, emotions and even mistakes, can play a major role in the identification of targets. Specific case studies of vigilante and vengeful behaviors will be able to deal with the choices made in this respect. For our general purpose, we posit that the avengers’ preferences will follow the three-step process described below: avengers and vigilantes will preferably target the terrorist, then the terrorist group, then what they deem to be his/her community of belonging. On this issue, see for example: Rosenbaum H. Jon and Peter C. Sederberg, “Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence”, *Comparative Politics*, 6:4, July 1974, pp. 541-570.

³³ Truc, G r me, Christian Le Bart, Emilie N e (Eds.), “L’attentat comme objet de discours : probl matique et enjeux”, *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 118, 2018; Santino, Jack (Ed.), *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*, New York: Palgrave, 2006; Doss, Erika, *The emotional life of contemporary public memorials: Towards a theory of temporary memorials*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008; Margry Peter Jan and Cristina Sanchez-Carretero (Eds.) *Grassroots Memorials: The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death*, New York: Berghahn, 2010.

in the immediate aftermath of an attack. Jack Santino and Erika Doss, on the other hand, focused on ephemeral shrines and memorials, showing how emotions were publicly expressed in the aftermath of an attack. They all find that media and political leaders usually display a narrative revolving around the notions of unity and community belonging, just like the common people who gather in public places and show their emotions. The standard narrative includes notions like “they won’t destroy us, together, we are stronger.” Following the fateful 9/11 attacks perpetrated by Al-Qaeda and the massacre carried out on 13 November 2015 in Paris by followers of ISIS, thousands of manifestations of support for the victims and their families could be seen. These lawful reactions to terrorism are not the focus of this chapter; rather it analyzes the illegal behaviors that follow some terrorist attacks.

Among the manifestations of remembrance and sorrow, some people feel a need to display more extreme behaviors, outside the realm of the rule of law. Unlawful reactions can be classified according to the level of violence involved.

Illegal reactions to terrorism can involve violence, such as attacks on members of a ‘suspect community’, or counter-violence against presumed accomplices of the original perpetrators. At the far end of the axis, are death squads engaging in extra-judicial killings, which are designed to punish perpetrators and avenge victims. One practice of paramilitary groups is the lynching of people right- or wrongfully associated in some ways with the terrorists.³⁴ However, often the display of arms is enough. Thus, in their edited volume on vigilantism against minorities and migrants, Tore Bjørgo and Miroslav Mareš found that:

“Most vigilante groups do not actually carry out acts of violence. However, they do usually display a violent capacity through a performance of force, whether they parade as a paramilitary militia (with or without weapons) or patrol the streets in groups dressed up with group symbols or uniforms. Their display of force is obviously intended to have an intimidating and deterring impact on their designated target groups (...) as well as political opponents.”³⁵

On the low- and no-violence side of vigilantism, one can find activities like computer hacking, naming and shaming, public humiliation, online collective mock trials or the burning of flags.

Degree of Organization

Reactions can also be classified according to the level of institutionalization required. Reactions to terrorism can occur within pre-existing organizations or emerge spontaneously from crowd (re-)actions. Angry individuals - lone wolves - can also carry out such actions. Researching vigilante practices in general, Fourchard found:

³⁴ Tore Bjørgo and Miroslav Mareš distinguish four different types of vigilante activities, depending on their modus operandi, namely: (1) Vigilante terrorism/pogroms/lynchings; (2) paramilitary militia movements; (3) border patrols; (4) street patrols. In this typology, only type (1) overtly uses violence. Situations (2), (3) and (4) display force capacities but an actual use of these capacities is not automatic. Some scholars have identified case (1), i.e. vigilante terrorism as a subtype of terrorism. See: Bjørgo, Tore and Miroslav Mareš (Eds.), *Vigilantism against Migrants and Minorities*. New York: Routledge, 2019; quoted from MS, p. 1; Sprinzak, Ehud, “Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegitimization”. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 7, No 1, 1995.

³⁵ Bjørgo, Tore and Miroslav Mareš, “Comparative perspectives on vigilantism against migrants and minorities”, quoted from unpublished MS, p. 8.

“At one side of the spectrum are structured organizations (criminal organizations or unions) which, for different reasons were able to - or had to - integrate police functions to their activities (...). On the other side are groups of individuals who assume police roles without seeming to do so. (...) These are the informal groups of sociability which surveil certain neighborhoods, such as the *fada* in Niamey or the groups of youth in the popular neighborhoods of Nairobi.”³⁶

Therefore, on the “spontaneous” side of the axis we find the perpetrator of the Christchurch attack against two mosques in 2019, qualified by some as “lone wolf” actions, “justified” by the perpetrator as punishments to avenge the deaths of Europeans by the hand of Muslims during recent terrorist attacks. At the “institutionalized” side of the axis are practices implemented by quasi-state organizations, which have emblems, flags and uniforms and act as a substitute for the state in assuming police functions. Bjørge and Mareš, describing paramilitary militia movements, stress the high degree of institutionalization of these groups: “What distinguishes these militias from other forms of vigilante groups is that they are modelled on a military style and form of organization.”³⁷ Their members wear uniforms, perform parades and marches; a structured chain of command and military skills are visible.

Classifying Reactions

Dividing the field of vigilante action along an axis of violence and one of institutionalization, one gets four different types of illegal reactions.

1. A Need to “Do Something”: Non-violent and Non-institutionalized Reactions to Terrorism

In this case, reactions are spontaneous. Out of mechanical solidarity, members of society who sharing trauma and grief want to do something. Actions in this category do not involve the use of violence. Rather, persons belonging to this category engage in, for instance, cyber operations in order to identify the potential accomplices of the terrorists. Such operations emerge from individual initiatives; they stem from a personal willingness to “do something,” while still staying within the rule of law. Actions by cyber activists can include identification of extremist social media accounts, surveillance of online tortious activities, hacking, suppression of content, naming and shaming, as well as social media squads chasing down suspects on the Web, and collective online trials in which so-called Internauts can vote on the best sanction to be applied for alleged terrorists and accomplices.

In situation 1, individuals offer their skills and time in order to combat terrorist groups in general. Such ‘combat’ occurs on the virtual stage, targeting reputation and prestige. However, it usually does not involve the use of violence, just like situation 2.

³⁶ Fourchard, Laurent 2018, p. 184.

³⁷ Bjørge and Mareš 2019.

The Anonymous Network's Fight against ISIS

The Anonymous network gathers individuals with IT skills in order to hack public institutions, private companies and denounce corrupted leaders. Created in 2003-2004 in the framework of the 4Chan forum, the network gathers individuals with a wide variety of profiles, motives and skills, making it a nebulous object for study. In the context of the fight against the Islamic State, the network contributed to weakening the terrorist organization through the hacking of various pro-ISIS social media accounts etc.

In April 2015, “over one hundred hackers helped to compile and release a list of thousands of Twitter account names as part of #OpISIS, a campaign to disrupt the Islamic State’s virtual presence.”³⁸ Some key influencers emerged in the online fight against the group. Thus, the website Xrsone.com organized the different vigilante efforts, by gathering media mentions, target lists and pro-ISIS account lists. Activists’ accounts include @CtrlSec as well as @Iridium_Black which regularly tweet the names of pro-ISIS accounts, asking other internauts to get mobilized so as to persuade Twitter to remove them from the platform.³⁹ In France, internauts on Twitter, gathered under the name *Katiba des Narvalos*, also track down pro-ISIS accounts.⁴⁰

Benjamin Loveluck analyzed this online form of vigilantism: “The goal is not only to alert authorities or the public opinion but also to ‘make justice’ by engaging in active forms of surveillance or targeted deterrence, especially through an increased unsolicited attention or negative publicity.”⁴¹

The Anonymous network succeeded in taking down numerous Twitter accounts and Facebook pages linked to the terrorist group ISIS. In a statement released in 2015, the network explains: “The terrorists that are calling themselves Islamic State (ISIS) are not Muslims! (...) We will hunt you, take down your sites, accounts, emails, and expose you. From now on, no safe place for you online. You will be treated like a virus, and we are the cure.”⁴²

Other online activities emerged in order to counter terrorism. Thus, following the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, members of the *Reddit* forum contributed to spreading the call for witnesses sent by the FBI by creating a section (subreddit) dedicated to the identification of suspects.⁴³ This initiative was initially praised as an innovative form of “collective intelligence.” However, it quickly turned into a fiasco with the scapegoating of an innocent

³⁸ Zech, Steven T., ‘Virtual Vigilantes: “Anonymous” Cyber-Attacks Against the Islamic State’. San Diego: *politicalviolenceatagance.org.*, 2015. Available at: <https://politicalviolenceatagance.org/2015/04/07/virtual-vigilantes-anonymous-cyber-attacks-against-the-islamic-state/>

³⁹ Recorded Future “Investigating Cyber Vigilantes in #OpAntiISIS”, 9 April 2015. Available at: <https://www.recordedfuture.com/opantiisis-cyber-vigilantes/>

⁴⁰ Joly, Gaële, ‘Katiba des Narvalos : Rencontre avec une armée d’internautes qui fait la chasse aux jihadistes’, *France Info*, 7 January 2017. Available at: https://www.francetvinfo.fr/economie/medias/charlie-hebdo/katiba-des-narvalos-rencontre-avec-une-armee-d-internautes-qui-fait-la-chasse-aux-jihadistes-sur-internet_2004741.html.

⁴¹ Loveluck, Benjamin, ‘Le vigilantisme numérique, entre dénonciation et sanction. Auto-justice en ligne et agencements de la visibilité’, *Politix*, 3:115, 2016, p. 127.

⁴² Anonymous network, cited in Steven T. Zech 2015.

⁴³ Loveluck, Benjamin, 2016, p. 139; see also: Brown, Michael A. and Daniel M. Gerstein, ‘Anonymous vs. ISIS: Wishing the Vigilante Hackers Luck Against the Murderous Jihadists’, St. Monica, Cal., RAND, 2015. Available at: <https://www.rand.org/blog/2015/12/anonymous-vs-isis-wishing-the-vigilante-hackers-luck.html>

student, Sunil Tripathi, who was left alone to face popular vindictiveness.⁴⁴ Reddit coordinators publicly apologized for this mistake.⁴⁵

Steven T. Zech examined the pros and cons of Anonymous network's contribution to the fight against the so-called Islamic State. As illustrated in Sunil Tripathi's case, the involvement of numerous private citizens in the fight against terrorism can lead to tragedies. However, scholars have shown that Anonymous and other cyber activists can prove beneficial in the fight against terrorist groups in that they seem to succeed in limiting ISIS' ability to spread its ideology and vision. In an article released in *Foreign Policy*, Emerson Brooking argued that the US should support the Anonymous affiliates already combating the Islamic State by putting them on the government payroll or by offering Bitcoin bounties.⁴⁶ However, several challenges are posed by the Anonymous participation in the fight against the terrorist organization. First, according to Steven T. Zech, Anonymous activities are not subjected to any mechanism ensuring accountability. As such, in the absence of cooperation with the intelligence community, Anonymous members might actually harm the fight against terrorism without bearing clear responsibility. Second, tolerating the involvement of Anonymous cyber activists in the fight against ISIS amounts to approving "direct civilian participation in combat operations," which raises issues in terms of International Humanitarian Law as to the status of such combatants as well as their responsibility and protection status.⁴⁷

2. A Need to "Prevent other Attacks and Protect our Society": Non-violent and Institutionalized Reactions to Terrorism

The restoration of order is one of the two main motive triggering vigilante practices, according to Favarel-Garrigues and Gayer.⁴⁸ Faced with vulnerability and impunity, order-motivated vigilantes wish to ensure the security of those they define as their fellow citizens and seek to prevent the occurrence of new attacks. To do so, these groups take upon themselves police functions, including surveillance, patrolling and/or law enforcement.

To be able to replace the state's police as law enforcement operators, these groups are generally institutionalized.⁴⁹ They exhibit discipline, hierarchical patterns, and sometimes display uniforms, as do, for instance, members of the Extreme Right vigilante group *Forza Nuova* operating security walks in Italy.⁵⁰ Although these groups possess capabilities to use force, they generally do not use them. Thus, although members of *Génération Identitaire* sometimes carry arms, they rarely actually use them.⁵¹

⁴⁴ On this issue, see, among others, Lee, Traci G., 'The Real Story of Sunil Tripathi, the Boston Bomber Who Wasn't', NBC news, 22 June 2015. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/wrongly-accused-boston-bombing-sunil-tripathys-story-now-being-told-n373141>.

⁴⁵ Linkins, Jason, 'Reddit Moderator Apologizes To Sunil Tripathi's Family', *HuffPost*, 19 April 2013.

⁴⁶ Brooking, Emerson, 'The US Government Should Pay Anonymous in Bitcoin to Fight ISIS', *Foreign Policy*, 3 March 2015.

⁴⁷ On this issue, see Zech 2015.

⁴⁸ Favarel-Garrigues, Gilles, and Laurent Gayer 2016, p. 9.

⁴⁹ See Fourchard, Laurent, op.cit; Pratten, D. and A. Sen, *Global Vigilantes: Perspectives on Justice and Violence*, London: Hurst Publishers, 2007 ; Blom Hansen, Thomas Blum and Finn Stepputat, "Sovereignty Revisited", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35:1, 2006, pp. 295-315.

⁵⁰ Gattinara, Pietro Castelli, 'Forza Nuova and the Security Walks: Squadristo and Extreme Right Vigilantism in Italy'; in: Bjørge, Tore and Miroslav Mareš 2015.

⁵¹ On *Génération Identitaire*, see the information box below.

These groups identify where the priorities and threats are in order to implement their own vision of security, defining the border lines between in-group and out-group.⁵² Targeting certain segments of population indeed contributes to defining who the enemy is, thereby re-defining the community, and exposing divisions within society. In section two of this chapter, we examine the potential implications of such divisions of the national community.

Examples of practices include surveillance of neighborhoods, patrols, intelligence gathering, but also structured online platforms. Historical examples of vigilantism generally took this form, with armed formations patrolling the streets. Such was the case of Jewish vigilantes in the West Bank,⁵³ or the street patrolling groups like the Soldiers of Odin, operating in Finland, Norway and Canada.⁵⁴

Border patrolling groups resemble the traditional image of vigilantes. Although they are generally not using violence and simply display their capacity to use force, these groups can sometimes become violent in case of resistance. Most of all, vigilante groups obeying to this model seek to restore their own version of order in order to prevent new attacks from happening, targeting, to this end, certain segments of the population that they hold responsible for certain crimes. Non-violent and institutionalized vigilante groups mostly take on police functions, thereby seeking to replace the government as the main law enforcement instrument. Consequently, these groups threaten the state politically by challenging the state's monopoly of the legitimate use of force.

⁵² See Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism", *Comparative Politics*, 13:4, 1981, pp. 379-399.

⁵³ On the vigilantism of Jewish population in the West Bank, see: Gazit, Nir, 'Jewish Vigilantism in the West Bank'; in: Tore Bjørgo and Miroslav Mareš 2015. See also: Pedahzur, Ami & Arie Perliger, 'The causes of vigilante political violence: The case of Jewish settlers', *Civil Wars*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, 2003, pp. 9-30. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13698240308402542> .

⁵⁴ On the Soldiers of Odin in Finland, see: Kotonen, Tommi, 'The Soldiers of Odin Finland: From a Local Movement to an International Franchise'; in: Bjørgo Tore and Miroslav Mareš (Eds.) 2015. The Soldiers of Odin in Norway were also researched by Tore Bjørgo and Ingvild Magnæs Gjelsvik, "Sheep in Wolf's Clothing? The Taming of the Soldiers of Odin in Norway"; in: Bjørgo Tore and Miroslav Mareš (Eds.) 2015. On the Soldiers of Odin in Canada, see: Archambault, Emil and Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, 'The Soldiers of Odin in Canada: The Failure of a Transnational Ideology'; in: Bjørgo, Tore and Miroslav Mareš (Eds.) 2015.

Patrolling European Borders: the Example of the Far-right Extremist Group *Génération Identitaire*

Génération Identitaire is a French extreme-right group which was created in 2012 as heir of the extreme-right groups “*Jeunesses Identitaires*” (2002) and “*Une autre jeunesse*” (2009). The group is mostly known for its occupation of a construction work site of a mosque in Poitiers on 20 October 2012.⁵⁵ Following this occupation, seven persons were incarcerated for material damage, the organization of a public gathering without authorization, and complicity in inciting racial hatred.

In April 2018, members of the group stood on the French-Italian frontier in order to spot asylum seekers trying to cross the border. Their goal was to prevent the migrants from entering the country. Without actually carrying weapons or using violence, the members of the group tried to discourage asylum seekers by carrying placards saying: “Closed border. Europe will never be your home. That is out of question. Go back home.” Leaders of the group faced up to six months of jail time and a 75,000 euros fine.⁵⁶

The *Génération Identitaire* movement is highly institutionalized. The group owns a flag – an inspiration from the lambda of the Spartans -, a clear process of membership selection, as well as an established hierarchy. They sometimes wear uniforms.

The group has never been convicted for acts of violence. During court trials, members of the movement faced charges of material damages and incitement to hatred but none of them was indicted for violence. Thus, in the French Alps, the group tried to stop the asylum seekers by forming a human chain at the border in order to prevent them from crossing. The group is overtly xenophobic and opposed to the arrival of Muslims in Europe. It attributes terrorist attacks occurring in Europe to the arrival of African and Arab immigrants in Europe. Although the movement is not affiliated with any political party, their ideas are close to those of Hungarian President Victor Orbán, former Italian Minister of Interior, Matteo Salvini, and French politician and European MP, Marine Le Pen.

3. A Need to “Punish them”: Violent and Non-institutionalized Reactions

Certain acts of terrorism are often hard to understand; their apparent arbitrariness can trigger rage and anger among the population, or sectors thereof. Aroused passions drive some people to take up arms and engage in ‘rough justice’. British philosopher David Hume examined the role of “hot passions”. In his *Dissertation on Passions*, Hume showed how anger and revenge trigger a mechanism (casuistic) that almost inevitably leads to actual violence.⁵⁷ Revenge is about action. Outbursts of rage easily turn to violence although they are mostly unorganized and spontaneous. Passionate reactions can be either individual or collective but, in the end, they rarely lead to a structured organization with planning, preparation and discipline. Outbursts, by definition, imply a form of spontaneity and are of short duration.

⁵⁵ Chambraud, Cécile, *Génération Identitaire poursuivie pour l’occupation de la mosquée de Poitiers*, *Le Monde*, 21 October 2017.

⁵⁶ Samuel, Henry, ‘France to boost security on Alps border with Italy after far-Right ‘block’ migrant route’, *The Telegraph*, 23 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/04/23/france-boost-security-alps-border-italy-far-right-block-migrant/>.

⁵⁷ Hume David, *A Dissertation on the Passions. The Natural History of Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1757 (ed. 2009).

Avenging European Deaths in New Zealand: the Case of the Christchurch Shootings

On 15 March 2019, a white supremacist terrorist from Australia attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, killing 51 people and injuring 49 others. The perpetrator streamed the attacks live in real time on Facebook. Known for his extremist far-right ideas and his sympathy for white supremacist groups, Brenton Tarrant (28) was arrested and charged with murder. For his attack, he had no known accomplices from organized far-right groups and/or terrorist groups.⁵⁸

The terrorist's 74-page manifesto "The Great Replacement" clearly refers to several conspiracy theories, including the white genocide theory. He explains how he started thinking about such an attack two years in advance, in reaction to jihadist terrorist attacks against Western countries, especially in Europe. His motives stemmed from anti-immigration sentiments and hatred against Muslims. He claimed he had to "*take revenge for the thousands of European lives lost to terror attacks throughout European lands.*"⁵⁹

Needless to say, the Muslim victims in New Zealand had nothing to do with victims of Islamist terrorism in Europe - but in the twisted mind of this terrorist such a link had been made. The attacks were non-institutionalized. Brenton Tarrant was a lone actor, not affiliated to any specific group. He even explained, in his manifesto, that he did not belong to a Nazi organization.

Reactive terrorism is nothing new but has seen a worrisome increase in recent years. Such reactive terrorism often leads to an escalation of conflict. In the days following the Christchurch attacks, hundreds of ISIS Telegram posts claimed for revenge for "our Muslim brothers killed in New Zealand."

Examples of practices include the burning of places of worship, lynching, and certain forms of lone wolf (re-)active terrorism. The case of the Christchurch shootings is interesting in this respect.

4. A Need to "Avenge the Victims": Violent and Institutionalized Reactions

This case is of special interest in the framework of prevention research. In the immediate aftermath of terrorist attacks by non-state actors, some enraged people get together and form paramilitary units in order to avenge the victims. A clear example of such reactions can be found in Nigeria's C-JTF.⁶⁰

Examples of planned reactions to terrorism out of revenge include the formation of paramilitary militias, death squads and organized lynching. Such reactions amount to vengeance and 'justice'-driven vigilantism.

⁵⁸ On this case, see Anderson, Charles, Christchurch shooting suspect will face 50 murder charges, say New Zealand police", *The Guardian*, 4 April 2019.

⁵⁹ Christchurch manifesto, source: the author's personal archives.

⁶⁰ Thurston 2018.

Civilian Vigilantes in Nigeria (C-JTF): Between Personal Revenge and Political Instrumentalization

In Nigeria, young people joined the paramilitary Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF) in order to “bring justice” to victims of Boko Haram.

In June 2013, in a context marked by regular violent attacks by the armed troops of Boko Haram, hundreds of civilians from the Borno state of Nigeria (in the north of the country where Boko Haram fighters were, and are, particularly active) were gathered in a vigilante organization, known as the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF). The C-JTF is designed to prevent further Boko Haram attacks and to ensure law enforcement in Borno State. The creation of the C-JTF came just one month after the declaration of a state of emergency by Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan.⁶¹ Members of the vigilante C-JTF included mostly urban youth, most of them teenagers. The leader of the group, Baba Lawal Ja’afar from Maiduguri, was 30 years old in 2013.⁶² C-JTF members wear uniforms, are embedded in a chain of command, and have a degree of discipline. They also assume police functions and overtly use force. Several mass executions have been attributed to this vigilante group. Jean-Philippe Rémy, a journalist for *Le Monde*, quoted a source saying “The C-JTF considers that if a village refuses to create its group of militiamen, they are part of Boko Haram, and thereby, a legitimate target.”⁶³

Out of the 26,000 members of C-JTF, less than 1,800 receive a salary, an indication that the motivation for involvement lies elsewhere. Recruitment in the C-JTF resulted from two main motives, according to Thurston. First, personal reasons led some Nigerian youth to join the vigilante group. One young man explained: “I joined the voluntary vigilante group to make sure that all the people feeding and aiding Boko Haram were severely dealt with. I want to see them arrested, captured, and made to face trial for their atrocities. It will mean a great deal of happiness and satisfaction to me *because I have lost friends and persons close to me.*”⁶⁴ Second, civilians joined the vigilante group in order to counter Boko Haram’s repeated destructions of schools.

Some observers have argued that the C-JTF was a big success, both for president Goodluck Jonathan and for Nigeria. Indeed, by June 2013, vigilantes had expelled most of Boko Haram’s fighters from the city of Maiduguri. These successes were made possible thanks to the C-JTF local knowledge of the territory and the ability of its members to identify Boko Haram members by name.

Several concerns arise from the involvement of civilians in the fight against Boko Haram in Nigeria. It increased the interpersonal dimension of the conflict, leading neighbors and family members to fight against each other in the streets of Maiduguri. The interpersonal dimension of the conflict increased suspicions of treason, leading to harsh reprisals and bloody revenges.

⁶¹ The state of emergency was implemented in May 2013. The activities of the jihadist group Boko Haram, seeking to establish a sharia-based Islamic State around the Nigerian city of Maiduguri motivated this decision. BH had overtly declared being at war against the Nigerian state. President Goodluck Jonathan had declared a state of emergency so as to give a free hand to the Nigerian security forces for dealing with Boko Haram. The president has been widely criticized on the international stage for the military’s indiscriminate and extremely violent operations in the fight against BH. According to Human Rights Watch, the military had burned more than 2000 homes and killed 183 people in a raid on Baga, one month before the introduction of the state of emergency.

⁶² Thurston 2018, p. 207.

⁶³ Rémy, Jean-Philippe, “Boko Haram : les monstres de Maiduguri”, *Le Monde*, 23 June 2014. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/06/23/les-monstres-de-maiduguri_4443288_3212.html.

⁶⁴ Thurston 2018, p. 207. Emphasis in italics by MR.

Second, the involvement of civilians is problematic in terms of government responsibility. Some have argued that the C-JTF was born out of a civilian desire to fight against jihadists. Other have argued that the group was a brainchild of president Goodluck Jonathan and the Nigerian military. Indeed, according to Thurston, there were reports of Borno residents being conscripted into C-JTF units as well as signs of a clear backing of C-JTF operations by Borno State's authorities. In September 2013, the government initiated the Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme which offered weapons training to more than six hundred vigilantes. By late 2013, more than 1,800 vigilantes were officially under the local government's authority, receiving a monthly salary of \$100 USD.

The involvement of the C-JTF also contributed to the escalation of the conflict. Although the state government did not formally arm all vigilantes, the C-JTF carried out several violent actions. Following Boko Haram's prison break in Giwa in March 2014 that freed many prisoners, the C-JTF carried out punitive operations. As reported by Amnesty International:

"As the military regained control, more than 600 people, mostly unarmed recaptured detainees, were extra-judicially executed in various locations across Maiduguri Eyewitnesses in Jidari Polo, also in Maiduguri, described how members of the "Civilian Joint Task Force" rounded up freed prisoners and handed them to soldiers. More than 190 people were executed, many of whom were too frail to run."⁶⁵

According to Thurston, the C-JTF also lynched several Boko members, even when the security forces objected to the practices. In Nigeria, the involvement of civilians of the C-JTF – either voluntarily or ordered by president Goodluck Jonathan – led to an escalation of the conflict as multiple cyclical reprisals occurred at the local level between neighbors, leading to mass lynching, death squads and punitive forms of justice.

Cases of violent and institutionalized violence generally involve paramilitary groups engaged in collective lynching, death squad activities and mutilations like, in the case of Northern Ireland, 'knee-capping'. These manifestations are especially problematic in that they reflect a level of planning and organization that go beyond simple passionate responses. They can have social, political, military and normative consequences for the society and the state as a whole.

In this section, we identified four different types of illegal reactions to terrorism. Situations 1 and 2, in that they are not involving direct violence, are of less interest for the following sections in which the dangers posed by such reactive manifestations of violence are discussed.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 210.

The IRA and Sinn Féin: Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland

Andrew Silke explored the relationship between the IRA, Sinn Féin and paramilitary vigilantism in Northern Ireland.⁶⁶

The IRA and Sinn Féin have taken on police activities since the beginning of their fight. The Provisional IRA thus started off its violent activities by killing two local gangsters. The groups regularly carried out “punishment attacks,” according to Silke. When the government carried out raids and arrests, militant Republicans responded by attacks of their own, designed to avenge their arrested comrades. Punishment attacks also targeted local criminals who were not respecting the values of the society. “The violence of many so-called ‘punishment attacks’ can be extreme, and a number of people have died as a result of injuries that were intended to be non-fatal.”⁶⁷

Adding to its policing activities, Provisionals also wants to ensure the “administration of an informal justice system.” Their policy to implement an alternative justice system led to many casualties. According to Silke, “in total around 40,000 people were estimated to have been physically injured as a result of political violence in Northern Ireland, indicating that vigilantism accounts for around 10 percent of the conflict’s [total] non-fatal casualties.”⁶⁸

Why Should One Prevent Revenge Acts and Vigilantism?

In the following, the focus is on situations 3 and 4, i.e., violent and non-institutionalized reactions, and violent and institutionalized reactions. Situation 3 relates to personal forms of vengeance, outbursts of passion that tend to provoke further violence. Situation 4 corresponds to immediate justice-seeking vigilantism and group vengeance, by means of organized direct action in order to avenge the victims of terrorism. Indeed, situations 3 and 4, in addition to threatening the governance of the state and social cohesion, tends to lead to further violence, thereby leading to a new spiral of violence.

In this section, we will identify the four main reasons why revenge acts and immediate justice-seeking vigilantism ought to be prevented.

Reason 1: Revenge usually does not work

Revenge acts and vigilantism do usually not succeed in achieving their objectives. The main objectives behind the reactions described above are threefold: to punish the offender, to satisfy the victim, and to protect the society from further attack. We shall assess the efficacy of revenge and vigilantism in achieving each of these three goals.

Avengers and vigilantes seek to punish those they deem guilty of the terrorist offense. The theory of utilitarianism, developed in the early 19th century, identified the main purposes of

⁶⁶ See, Silke, Andrew, ‘Rebel’s Dilemma: The Changing Relationship between the IRA, Sinn Féin and Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 11, No.1, Spring 1999, pp. 55-93; Silke Andrew, “Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland; Monaghan Rachel, “An imperfect peace’: Paramilitary ‘punishments in Northern Ireland”.

⁶⁷ Silke 1999, p. 56.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

criminal punishment. By punishing a criminal, the purpose is to bring about positive outcomes. Three objectives are to be identified:

1. Rehabilitating the criminal and ensuring that he will not commit any more crimes.
2. Deterring the criminal (specific deterrence) and others (general deterrence) from undertaking similar illegal activities, and
3. Incapacitating (through prison sentence) the criminal in order to protect the society and the state while he is in prison. Eisenstat shows that, following the utilitarian theory, only if punishment furthers these objectives, punishment is warranted.⁶⁹

Revenge, as a form of punishment, rarely succeeds in achieving these goals, especially in a context of terrorism. While it can be argued that some revenge acts and vigilantism can achieve objective 3, leading to the incapacitation of the criminal, it usually does not succeed in achieving objectives 1 and 2.

Objective 1 refers to the rehabilitation of the criminal. Hegel highlighted how vengeance only calls for new vengeance.⁷⁰ Undertaking an act of violence against the terrorist will only marginalize him even more and feed a new desire for revenge against those who injured him.⁷¹ By promoting violence, revenge does not promote rehabilitation.

Objective 2 refers to deterrence. In a thought-provoking article on counterterrorism, Tore Bjørgo, speaking about military retaliation, noted that:

“Military reprisals after terrorist attacks have also been very popular with the general public of countries such as the USA and Israel because they portray an image of the authorities and politicians taking action and not being cowed by terrorists. Herein also lies a great temptation to resort to punishment strikes even if it is doubtful that they will have a deterrent effect.”⁷²

At the local level, punishment operations against those people deemed to be responsible for terrorist crimes are unlikely to have a deterrent effect.⁷³ Revenge does not allow a rehabilitation of the criminal, nor does it appear to have a major deterrent effect on potential new recruits wishing to join a terrorist group.

However, this conclusion is insufficient to qualify revenge as useless. Revenge is linked to the presumed needs of the initial victim or those close to the victim. Revenge is thus victim oriented. Gollwitzer and his colleagues have shown that revenge brings satisfaction to the avenger, who experiences satisfaction when the offender understands revenge as a punishment for an act of violence.⁷⁴ In addition, avengers also undertake revenge in order to find some

⁶⁹ Eisenstat, Steven, ‘Revenge, Justice and Law: Recognizing the Victim’s Desire for Vengeance as a Justification for Punishment’, *50 Wayne L. Rev.* 1115, 1170, 2004, p. 1127.

⁷⁰ Hegel G.W.F., *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1808 (ed. 1986).

⁷¹ This is also highlighted by Christensen, Kit R., *Revenge and Social Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

⁷² Bjørgo Tore, ‘Counter-terrorism as a Crime Prevention: a Holistic Approach’, *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, vol. 8, No.1, 2016, p. 32.

⁷³ On this issue, see for instance the fascinating account of the 2004 Madrid attacks offered by Fernando Reinares, *Al Qaeda’s Revenge : The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings*, Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2016.

⁷⁴ Gollwitzer, Mario, Milena Meder and Manfred Schmitt, “What gives victims satisfaction when they seek revenge ?”, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41:3, 2010, pp. 364-374, p. 364. See also Hazebroucq 2011; Dupin, 2006; and Christensen 2016.

form of closure. While the original offender often remains unpunished, the avenger will find somebody associated with the original perpetrator.⁷⁵

Does revenge bring closure to the immediate victims (if they survive a terrorist attack)? Reactions to terrorism have shown that direct victims of the attacks not infrequently call for peace and justice (within the framework of rule of law).⁷⁶ One victim of terrorism interviewed explained to this author:

“There are two ways to respond to a jihadist terrorist attack. The first one is to consider that Islam is responsible for my injuries. Therefore, I hate Islam. The second option is to consider that it was hatred and intolerance that hurt me. Therefore, what I hate, is hatred. Direct victims usually go the second way and they choose to fight hatred and promote tolerance.”⁷⁷

In a remarkable book, French writer Antoine Leiris, who lost his wife in the ISIS attack on the Bataclan concert hall in Paris in November 2015, described how he refused to offer his hatred to the terrorists.⁷⁸ Revenge, because it leads to new hatred and violence, usually does not succeed in bringing closure to the direct victims of terrorism.⁷⁹

A third objective of revenge act and vigilantism is to protect the society from further wrong deeds. This protection includes incapacitating current terrorists through the use of violence; but also, more indirectly, preventing the emergence of new terrorists by providing – paradoxically - a sense of justice and law through their vigilante activities. Patrols and law enforcement activities by private groups, corresponding to situations (II) and (IV) serve particularly this goal.

In this case, studies have shown that vigilantism might “work” in that it offers some protection against attack and a form of stability, especially where states are unable or unwilling to do so. Thus, in Nigeria, the C-JTF, through the use of force, was able to effectively counter some Boko Haram fighters and activities, resulting in a severe loss of territory by the terrorist group and a reduction of attacks against citizens in the Borno State.⁸⁰ Vigilante activities may help to prevent new attacks by the display or use of force.⁸¹

In addition, like police forces, vigilantes can contribute to spreading ideas of justice and respect of the law (in spite of being illegal itself) in areas where the state authorities do not seem to do so. Researching the case of Bolivia, Daniel M. Goldstein has shown that:

⁷⁵ On this issue, one can refer to Greek mythology with a particular focus on Medea’s revenge. In order to avenge herself for her husband Jason’s treason, Medea decided to kill her children, thereby hurting herself in order to achieve her vengeance. On a similar vein, Antigone’s revenge for her brother resulted in her being buried alive. Desperate to complete his/her revenge, some avengers do not fear harming themselves as well.

⁷⁶ Interview with a French victim of terrorism, Paris, July 2019.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Leiris, Antoine, *Vous n’aurez pas ma haine*, Paris: Fayard, 2016, p.138; See also: Domenach, Emmanuel, ‘Perdons-nous la bataille idéologique contre le terrorisme djihadiste ?’, *Slate*, 19 February 2019.

⁷⁹ Navarro, Marie-Christine, ‘La victime ou sortir du cercle de la vengeance’, *Imaginaire et inconscient*, 1:15, 2015, p. 47-59.

⁸⁰ Thurston Alexander, op. cit., pp. 207-209.

⁸¹ See: Kucera Michal, “Les violences contre les roms en République tchèque”, *Revue des Sciences Sociales. Université de Strasbourg*, 46, 2011, pp. 102-113; Favarel Guarrigues Gilles, op. cit; Vysotsky Stanislav, “The Anarchy Police: Militant Anti-Fascism as Alternative Policing Practice”, *Critical Criminology*, 23, 2015, pp. 235-253.

“Such acts (are) a form of political expression for people without access to formal legal venues, a critique of the democratic state and its claim to a rule of law. Through such violent practices, the politically marginalized find an avenue for the communication of grievances against the inadequacies of the state’s official legal order, while at the same time deploying the rhetoric of justice and law to police their communities against crime.”⁸²

Vigilante activities claim to fight impunity and enforce the law. In this respect, vigilantism can therein contribute to instilling a sense of accountability and respect for the law in a society, which may then deter future unlawful behaviors.

Thus, revenge is not helpful in rehabilitating the criminal, nor does it seem to help direct victims of terrorist attacks. As such, acts of revenge can be highly dysfunctional. In certain cases, however, vigilante and vengeful activities can indeed incapacitate actual criminals – as the C-JTF did against Boko Haram – or future criminals – by giving a sense of justice and laws within communities. Its ambiguous effectiveness, however, is not sufficient when it comes to explain why one should prevent revenge and vigilantism from occurring. The reasons explaining the need to prevent revenge acts and vigilantism are to be found elsewhere.

Reason 2: Revenge Threatens the State

Not only is revenge usually not functional, it is also threatening for various reasons. Revenge and vigilantism also threaten the substance of the state.

Max Weber recognized more than a century ago that the legitimate use of force is the monopoly of the modern state.⁸³ This means that the use of violence by non-state actors is illegal, threatening this monopoly and thereby, one of the main fundamentals of the state itself. Most vigilantes consider the government unable or unwilling to enforce the rules and norms.⁸⁴ Vigilantes often act on the premise that there is a need to step in where the state is weak.

Revenge acts and vigilantism challenge the ability of the government to exercise its monopoly on the use of force on its territory.⁸⁵ Favarel-Garrigues and Gayer have noted: “Vigilante activities fundamentally emerge from an oxymoron tension: it is about violating the law in order to enforce it, to commit infractions in order to fight against other infractions.”⁸⁶ Vigilantism offers a specific hierarchy of norms, between those who have to be defended at any cost and those whose transgression is made necessary by the legitimacy of the cause (in the eyes of the perpetrators). In addition to threatening the state’s monopoly of force, revenge and vigilantism fundamentally question the hierarchy of norms within the society. Lastly, revenge and vigilantism, challenge the authority of the state and its capacity to enforce punishments. By definition, the operations under examination here are illegal. Consequently, they require an additional intervention of the state in order to punish the criminal perpetrators. However, in reality, some states actually tolerate, or even encourage vigilante groups to perform

⁸² Goldstein Daniel M., “‘In Our Own Hands’: Lynching, Justice, and the Law in Bolivia”, *American Ethnologist*, 30:1, 2003, pp. 22-43, p. 23.

⁸³ Weber, Max, *Politics as a Vocation* (Politik als Beruf), Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2004 (originally published in 1919).

⁸⁴ Bjørge, Tore and Miroslav Mareš 2015.

⁸⁵ Fourchard 2018, p. 171.

⁸⁶ Favarel Garrigues and Gayer 2015, p. 23.

police functions. As indicated in a box earlier in this chapter, in Nigeria, the C-JTF has close ties with the local state authorities and might in fact have been the result of a government initiative in order to combat Boko Haram in Borno State. Steven T. Zech, who worked on the Anonymous network's contribution to the fight against ISIS, noted: "Cases of direct civilian participation in combat operations have raised important questions about the legality and desirability of involving non-state actors in violent conflict."⁸⁷ Two questions stand out regarding the status of vigilantes: Are they combatants or civilians? and, in case of humanitarian law and human rights abuses, who is to be held responsible, the vigilantes or government backing them?

Reason 3: Revenge Weakens the Norms of Society

Revenge and vigilantism do not only threaten the authority of the state; they also contribute to weakening essential features of society – both socially and normatively. Revenge first threatens the society itself by increasing inter-communal tensions and divisions within the society. Revenge needs an enemy. When those direct responsible for a terrorist attack cannot be found (e.g., in the case of suicide terrorism or when the perpetrator manages to escape the scene of crime), avengers search for other targets (e.g., presumed accomplices). René Girard documented the phenomena of scapegoating that can lead an entire society to arbitrarily designate one person as the responsible for the crimes committed against the group.⁸⁸ The scapegoat then suffers for others, sometimes resulting in his death. The designation of a scapegoat usually follows the lines of inter-community tensions. A recent example of this could be found in Sri Lanka. The Easter Sunday attacks of 21 April 2019, targeted three churches and three luxury hotels in a series of coordinated terrorist suicide bombings, resulting in 259 deaths and more than 500 people injured. Following those tragic attacks, hostility against the Muslim community increased significantly in Sri Lanka:

“In the city of Negombo, where over 100 people were killed at the St. Sebastian’s Church during Easter prayers, many Pakistani refugees said they fled after threats of revenge from locals. Now, anger against Muslims seems to be spreading. On Sunday, a violent clash erupted between local Muslims and Christians after a traffic dispute. “The suspicion towards them (Muslims) can grow and there can be localized attacks,” said Jehan Perera of a non-partisan advocacy group, the National Peace Council. “That would be the danger.” A ban on facial veils and house-to-house searches by security forces in Muslim-majority neighborhoods across the country have added to the distrust.” Consequently, since “successive Sri Lankan governments had failed to address what he called a rise in Islamic extremism, Sri Lankans might be forced to do it on their own.”⁸⁹

In Sri Lanka and elsewhere, revenge and inter-community tensions feed each other in a vicious circle than tends to generate more hatred and further violence.

⁸⁷ Zech 2015.

⁸⁸ Girard, René, *The Scapegoat*, Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; Girard 1972.

⁸⁹ Ananthlakshmi, A., ‘ Muslims afraid, resentful as ethnic divide deepens in Sri Lanka’, *Reuters*, May, 10th, 2019. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-blasts-backlash/muslims-afraid-resentful-as-ethnic-divide-deepens-in-sri-lanka-idUSKCN1SG0TU>.

A second societal threat posed by acts of revenge and the formation of vigilante groups can be found in the normative consequences for the community. The use of private violence in reaction to terrorism challenges the existing authority and societal norms.

Reason 4: Revenge is often Counter-productive in the Fight against Terrorism

It can be argued that revenge and vigilantism, rather than deterring future terrorists, actually increase the pool of new recruits, thereby reinforcing terrorist groups and their cause. It is well known that many terrorist groups seek, by their actions, to provoke reactions that can increase internal divides in society and generate increased social tensions.⁹⁰ Provoking an over-reaction can bring new recruits to the terrorist cause and, in the end, produce more terrorism.

René Girard theorized this phenomenon as an *escalation to extremes*: violent challenges call for stronger responses to outmatch the enemy's violence, leading to a spiral of violence.⁹¹ Tore Bjørgo also noted that,

“Several studies have shown that such reprisals do not lead to a reduction in the number of acts of terrorism, rather they result in an escalation in terror activities (...) Revenge and reprisals are one of the key driving forces behind terrorism. They are also one of the driving forces behind states' retaliations for acts of terrorism. Provoking the state into overreacting is one of the classic terrorist strategies.”⁹²

Another author, John Quigley, found in his research that “Efforts against terrorism do not justify the lawlessness represented by forcible abduction. Vigilantism is no solution to terrorism. It engenders only further lawlessness.”⁹³

How Should One Prevent Revenge Acts and Vigilantism?

This section seeks to explore how one could prevent revenge acts and vigilantism in response to terrorist acts and campaigns. In order to answer this question, one has to look at the risk factors behind revenge acts and vigilantism and how these can be prevented from occurring. Tore Bjørgo and Miroslav Mareš have studied manifestations of vigilantism against minorities and migrants. They identified nine (risk) factors which contribute to the emergence of vigilante groups:

1. A widespread perception of crises and threat to our society and lifestyle.

⁹⁰ Hoffman, Bruce, *Inside Terrorism*. (3rd edition), New York : Columbia University Press, 2017; Atran, Scott, *Talking to the Enemy. Violent Extremism, Sacred Values, and what it means to be Human*, London: Penguin, 2010; Bjørgo, Tore, *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, New York: Routledge, 2005; Crenshaw, Martha and Gary LaFree, *Countering Terrorism*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017; Crenshaw 1981.

⁹¹ Clausewitz, Carl von, *On War*, London : Penguin 1982 (originally published in 1832). On the strategic dangers of revenge, see also: Bass, Gary, J. *Stay the Hand of Vengeance. The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2002 ; Braud, Philippe, *Violences politiques*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004

⁹² Bjørgo, Tore, ‘Counter-terrorism as Crime Prevention: a Holistic Approach’, op. cit., p. 32 (Bjørgo cited as sources Bruce Hoffman, 2006, p. 263-267; and Parker 2007).

⁹³ Quigley, John, *Government Vigilantes at Large: The Danger to Human Rights from Kidnapping of Suspected Terrorists*. Washington, DC: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, p. 208.

2. The threat of crime is identified with specific groups that become objects of hatred and fear.
3. Specific shocking events causing moral panic trigger vigilante activities.
4. The perception that the police and other authorities are either unable or unwilling to protect the citizens from threats to their safety.
5. Lack of trust in governmental institutions.
6. Countries with a permissive legislation for armed self-defense or civil patrols provide opportunities for vigilantism.
7. Traditions of vigilantism and militias.
8. [Existence of] a base of support of vigilantism among the public and among political parties.
9. When the police and other authorities turn a blind eye to vigilante violence.⁹⁴

Subsequently, Bjørgo and Mares identified some of the factors that can contribute to a decline of vigilantism:

1. When the perceived threat is reduced or appears less acute.
2. When the police and other authorities are able to demonstrate that they are in control of the situation.
3. Level of trust in the police and other authorities.
4. Lack of support for vigilante groups and activities from the public, politicians or the news media.
5. When the police and other authorities strike down hard on vigilante violence and hate crime.
6. Restrictive legislation on vigilantism and police enforcement of such laws.
7. The inherent tendency in extreme-right movements towards internal conflicts and splits.⁹⁵

In the specific context of terrorism, three categories of measures can be taken in order to prevent (or at least reduce) revenge acts and vigilantism following terrorist acts and campaigns:

1. Fight the need;
2. Fight the divisions, and
3. Fight the means.

Fight the Need

Both revenge acts and vigilantism belong to the realm of private justice, with certain individuals feeling the need to apply their own form of 'justice' in order to punish the group of people deemed responsible for the victimization that has occurred. In order to prevent such non-state forms of justice, institutional official forms of justice need to be strengthened.

Preventing vigilantism and revenge acts requires an increase in the level of trust of people in the police and in other state authorities. For that, it is necessary that these actors are clearly in control of the situation. Revenge and vigilantism arise because of a popular mistrust in the

⁹⁴ Bjørgo and Mares, 2015, pp. 9-11.

⁹⁵ Ibid. pp. 12-14.

ability of law enforcement to sanction those responsible for acts of terrorism. Bjørgo and Mares noted, in the context of migration control:

“A common feature of all these vigilante border patrols is that ... they make an effort to demonstrate the willingness of vigilantes to protect their “own country” in the case of worse migration flows and they want to demonstrate that the government is not able to do “its best” against migration. It is mainly a media strategy to affect the broader public and win “hearts and minds” of people for ideas which vigilantes represent – including undermining the legitimacy of the political regime.”⁹⁶

Ultimately, measures from this category mostly fall onto the State’s shoulders - including its police forces, secret services and military - in that it is the government authorities that need to be seen as willing and able to act, thereby discouraging private policing initiatives.

Prevention of revenge acts and vigilantism following a terrorist attack or campaign should thus include the following measures in order to fight the urge some people feel to take the law into their own hands:

1. The state should make sure to *present an accurate evaluation of the actual threat*. Indeed, an over-estimation could increase the perception of the threat, thereby making the direct intervention of the members of the public even more necessary in order to counter it; an under-estimation could damage the trust of the population in the authorities, feeding conspiracy theories and mistrust.
2. Offering *transparency about the actions taken by the state and its security forces* in order to show what is actually being done to combat terrorism. Showing that the state takes all necessary measures in order to combat terrorism both inside and outside the national territory will correct the misconception that the government is unable or unwilling to take action in order to deter or neutralize further terrorist attacks. In implementing such measures, those holding state power should make sure to remain within the realm of the rule of law.
3. *Rebuilding trust between state and society* by eliminating stigmatization of, and confrontations with entire segments of the population – the ‘suspect community’ from which terrorists apparently originated. Police forces and other state agents should make sure to act evenhandedly in order to (re-)build a relationship of trust, thereby making any inclination to engage in ‘private policing’ unnecessary.
4. *Encouraging recruitment to the military and the police from every segment of society* to reduce the distance between state and society.

Fight the Divisions

Terrorism requires a framework to be correctly understood. Such a framework can be a narrative which, in the immediate aftermath of an attack, gives people a sense of understanding what is going on. Erving Goffman defines a “framework” as a “cognitive and practical structure for organizing social experience, enabling us to understand what is happening to us and to take part in it.”⁹⁷ A framework is not just an interpretation, but it also frames operations

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹⁷ Goffmann, Erving, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of the Experience*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986, p. 10.

and decides on the best way to react to them. G r me Truc has shown how 9/11 resulted in an ill-defined framework.⁹⁸ Following the hijacking of the four planes, no one initially knew what was happening and whether this was an accident or a terrorist act. Several political statements and press releases then contributed to shedding light onto the nature of the events. Framing a post-attack narrative proves essential for delineating the nature of the event and helps to identify who is the adversary and how the threat should be dealt with. Such a framework also contributes to defining the borders of the in-group community, and, in doing so, points to the direction taken by phenomena such as revenge and vigilantism.

Revenge needs a clear enemy. Bj rgo and Mare  showed how specific groups (migrants, minorities) could become objects of fear and, sometimes, even hatred. In order to prevent revenge acts and vigilantism, those leading state and civil society should make efforts to reduce every form of societal divide which can generate (further) polarization. Social cohesion can help avoiding scapegoating phenomena and revenge acts. A cohesive society is unlikely to support the unauthorized use of violence against its members. Therefore, providing a framework that reduces internal divisions can help achieving what Bj rgo and Mare  referred to as “Lack of support for vigilante groups and activities from the public, politicians or the news media.”

Measures from this category should be taken by government actors, but also – and more importantly – through religious and community leaders, local authorities, and international organizations, in a citizen-oriented fashion.

Prevention of revenge acts and vigilantism should include the following measures in order to minimize internal divisions that can feed community resentment and scapegoating, thereby feeding passions calling for revenge.

1. Establishing a *clear distinction between terrorists and ordinary citizens* sharing the same faith or political cause as those who engaged in terrorism. Making an entire minority or diaspora community responsible for the misdeeds of a few of its members can only lead to more marginalization and create a ‘suspect community’, thereby providing fertile grounds for individual revenge actions and collective vigilantism. Government actors, local authorities, community and religious leaders, civil society initiatives, media and even international organizations can play a role in making this distinction clear.
2. *Promoting inter-community dialogue*, through common activities, conferences, meetings. Centuries ago, the Arab philosopher Averroes had already recognized that “ignorance leads to fear, fear leads to hate, and hate leads to violence.”⁹⁹ Reinforcing inter-community dialogue can increase understanding between the communities and show to all that there is a common interest in moderation and in rejecting extremism that leads to violence. Such measures should preferably emerge from the local, community level, in a bottom-up perspective. International organizations can also contribute to promoting such dialogue, especially through its human rights initiatives.
3. *Promoting neutral, inter-community media* that offer a balanced perspective of the conflict, without associating entire sub-categories of society with terrorists who claim to act in their name.

⁹⁸Truc, G r me 2016, p. 15.

⁹⁹ Originally in Spanish, translation MR. Averroes (Abu-l-Walid Muhammad Ibn Rushd), *Antologia*, Sevilla: Fundacion Cajasol, 1999.

4. *Properly countering statements that seek to recall again and again past terrorist attacks* in order to stigmatize and marginalize entire communities.

Fight the Means

Revenge acts and vigilante activities are mostly about using force without proper authority. Vigilantes seek access to arms, and training for using these. Some countries only have weak legislation regarding the possession of arms in private hands. In the US, the second amendment to the Constitution grants individuals the right to keep and bear arms which, historically, has greatly facilitated vigilantism.¹⁰⁰ However, in other countries – e.g. in New Zealand after the Christchurch attacks - decisive steps like the prohibition of assault weapons have been taken.

Measures in this category fall onto those holding sovereign powers, namely the legislative and judiciary branches of the State. In general, measures to prevent revenge acts and vigilantism should include the following in order to make it harder for people to obtain tools for violence.

1. *Reviewing legislation on the private possession and use of arms.* The sale of arms to a broad section of the public with insufficient background checks tends to facilitate phenomena of private justice and punishments, feeding acts of revenge and violence.
2. *Ensuring accountability and judicial sanctions against those who act as vigilantes and avengers.* People who used force for private ‘justice’ outside a rule of law framework should be brought to justice. Judicial sanctions deter other wannabe vigilantes from applying their private notions of justice. Such sanctions promote and reinforce the rule of law and strengthen respect for the rule of law.

Prevention of private revenge acts and vigilantism in response to major terrorist acts and campaigns of terrorisms should focus on alternative and constructive methods of public response. For example, after the 2011 Breivik attacks in Oslo and Utøya, the dignified public commemorations met the Norwegian people’s desires to “do something” after the killing of 77 people by a lone right-wing extremist.¹⁰¹ Ten years prior, in response to the 9/11 attacks there, were similar activities detectable. However, these responses were on a lesser scale and not spearheaded by the government. G r me Truc highlighted several peaceful 9/11 demonstrations: “Organized at the behest of American pacifist associations, Protestant churches and left-wing organizations such as the online mobilization platform MoveOn, the placards read: ‘Break the cycle of violence’, ‘War is not the answer’, ‘It’s time for reflection, not revenge’ and ‘An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.’”¹⁰² Yet, this type of reaction has not become mainstream or government policy. Instead, the American government declared a ‘Global War on Terror’ and, as a result, almost twenty years later, jihadist terrorism is much stronger than before 9/11.

¹⁰⁰ See Barnes, Collin D., Ryan P. Brown and Lindsey L. Osterman, ‘Don’t Tread on Me: Masculine Honor Ideology in the US and Militant Responses to Terrorism’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38 :8, 2012, pp. 1018-1029. Available at: <https://shareok.org/bitstream/handle/11244/24968/10.1177.0146167212443383.pdf?sequence=1>.

¹⁰¹ ‘Mass rallies for Norway victims’, *BBC*, 25 July 2011.

¹⁰² Truc, G r me, op. cit., p. 85; On the cathartic role of demonstrations, see Tartakowsky Danielle, ‘Manifestations: L’ motion est dans la rue’, *Sciences Humaines*, 141, 2003 p. 33 ; Fillieule, Olivier, *Strat gies de la rue. Les manifestations en ‘France’*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1997; Neveu, Erik, *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux*, Paris: La D couverte, 2011.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified four different types of responses that can emerge in the immediate aftermath of a major terrorist attack or in the wake of a campaign of violence. Some of these reactions, especially when they involve the unauthorized use of private violence, are dangerous for state and society, as well as for a successful counterterrorism campaign. Preventing private violent responses to terrorism will require governments to show their ability and willingness to act decisively, while staying within the confines of the rule of law. Both civil society and government actors should strive to reduce domestic polarization since that tends to feed the desire for vengeance and reprisals.

Marie Robin is a PhD candidate affiliated with the Center for War Studies at the University of Southern Denmark, and the Centre Thucydide at Université Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas. Her dissertation proposes a conceptualization of the role of Revenge in International Relations by analyzing the revenge narratives of the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram. For her dissertation, Marie received funding from DGRIS/IRSEM. She presented her research at ISA Toronto, EISS Paris, as well as various national conferences. Marie taught courses of Ethics and of International Relations at Sciences Po, at the Université de Lille, and at the University of Southern Denmark. She also organized the first edition of the Graduate Conference of the War Studies Network in January 2020. In addition to her PhD, she works as a research assistant and translators for various academic publications and centers.

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