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ST ANDREWS HISTORICAL JOURNAL

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The Journal of the St Andrews University History Society is published twice annually by the University of St Andrews History Society.

The University of St Andrews History Society is affiliated to the University of St Andrews' Students Association, a registered charity (No. SC019883).

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Preface

The St Andrews Historical Journal was re-launched in 2013, allowing students the opportunity to research topics of particular interest to them for publication. This journal showcases exceptional works from dedicated students who are, in the spirit of the University, "Ever to Excel."

The editorial team, in conjunction with the committee of the St Andrews History Society, agreed upon the theme of Crisis and Collapse in the autumn of 2019, not knowing what the world would soon face. The coronavirus pandemic, accompanied by economic and social turmoil across the globe, has created crisis and collapse as far as the eye can see. Even as this journal is published, the situation continues to evolve and change, causing many to wonder if this crisis will ever end – the actors involved in our contributors' articles surely wondered the same. Never before have the lessons of history been more important.

The editorial team would like to thank the St Andrews History Society for their guidance and the School of History at the University of St Andrews for their generous financial support. We would like to thank the contributors for their perseverance in this time of worldwide crisis.

Historically yours,

Hampton Toole, Editor-in-Chief
Grant Wong, Deputy Editor

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Brooke Siegler is in her final year at the University of St Andrews where she studies International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies. When she's not studying she can be found debating with the University Debating Society or volunteering around town with the Student Volunteering Service! She is interested in researching any Middle Eastern topic, but is particularly curious about modern Iranian politics

Elliot Macmillan – Contributor
Elliot Macmillan has recently completed a MLitt in Early Modern History at the University of St Andrews. His historical interests revolve around exploring literature and its relation to wider culture and politics. This was seen in his recent MLitt thesis that investigated the relationship between Scottish travel literature and projects of 'improvement' following the Battle of Culloden.

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Elliot Jordan studied History at St Andrews and is starting an MPhil in Early Modern at New College, Oxford. He focuses on war and the state in 16th-18th century Europe, looking at operational and strategic warfighting in the era of the fiscal-military 'Revolution', with a special interest in the Spanish Empire.

Lucia Guercio – Contributor
Lucia Guercio is a third year Art History student at the University of St. Andrews from Salerno, Italy. She has always had the most diverse interests including subjects such as politics and social history. Her passion for travel and intercultural discourse inspires her to highlight both pivotal moments of Italian history widely unknown to the foreigners but also the heritage of Italian culture in a wider migration discourse. She hopes to bring more awareness about the reality of her home country, advocating for a more realistic representation over the conventional "postcard ideal."

Hampton Toole – Editor-in-Chief
Hampton Toole is a fourth year undergraduate at the University of St Andrews studying International Relations and Modern History. Hampton enjoys studying diverse topics, making her particularly devoted to her past and current editing roles. She mainly focuses her research on postcolonial studies, both through the lens of history and of current events.

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Grant Wong is a fourth-year Modern History student attending both the University of St Andrews and the College of William & Mary. He is particularly interested in intellectual, cultural, and public history, as well as the history of memory. Grant's many research interests include Cold War Thailand, Chinese America, the intellectualism of Kang Youwei, and as of this year, the history of the Beach Boys, the topic of his undergraduate dissertation.

The Roots of Interfaith Conflict : the Sunni-Shi'a Split

Brooke Siegler

The years 632-680 A.D were formative for the Muslim faith and for the Muslim political community. In just under five decades, the religion underwent a major crisis, and the community experienced political collapse. The period began with the death of Muhammad, who is considered God's final messenger to humanity, in 632 AD, leaving behind a large community of grieving followers with no designated successor or heir. At the time of Muhammad's death, his religion and political authority reached polities stretching from Egypt to Iran. The crisis of Muhammad's death precipitated a schism in the religion that fuelled two civil wars and the subsequent political collapse of the first Islamic Caliphate, the Rashidun Caliphate (632-661 AD). Thus, the latter half of the century constituted, for the Muslim community, both a crisis of faith and political collapse. Out of this crisis and collapse emerged two distinct sects of the Islamic religion that continue to hold grievances towards one another today. This paper will first briefly outline the differences between the Sunni and Shi'a sects. Secondly, it will describe the religious crisis that prevailed following the death of Muhammad. Thirdly, it will detail the political collapse that was precipitated by the religious crisis. Finally, this paper will conclude by assessing the impact of this crisis and collapse on the Muslim faith and offer commentary on how ancient events can be utilised to understand modern-day situations.

Major Differences Between Sunni and Shi'a Islam

The schism in Islam sprouted from Muhammad's death in 632 A.D and was, at first, concerned with the question of leadership rather than any fundamental theological differences. Muhammad had failed to designate a clear successor, and thus there were

competing claims for political and religious leadership of the community. The community, 'was torn on who should replace the last Prophet of Allah'.[1] Tayeb El-Hibri clarifies,

> 'It is after the Prophet's death…that old patterns of biblical tragedy come back in full colour. The central issue around which discord occurred was the question of succession, which would divide the community between those who favoured allegiance to successors from the family of the Prophet, particularly 'Ali, and those who looked back to the political leaders of the pre-Islamic era as the more worthy candidates'.[2]

The dominant Sunni story maintains that because Muhammad did not designate a successor, one had to be elected. The successor must be from Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh, and someone who demonstrated leadership abilities and had a personal relationship to the Prophet. Abu Bakr was elected Caliph by the community, including the Prophet's Companions, or original and ardent followers of Muhammad's religion, to begin the line of Rashidun Caliphs. Abu Bakr was followed by 'Umar, another of Muhammad's Companions, who was succeeded by 'Uthman, and finally 'Ali. The Sunnis believed that the Caliphal position should be distinctly secular in that the Caliph would serve as a political, military and judicial leader, but he was not the primary source of religious authority. The Shi'ites, however, tell a radically different story. The Shi'ites believe that Muhammad did in fact designate a successor, and that successor was his son-in-law and cousin 'Ali, who was married to one of the Prophet's daughters, Fatima.[3] Shi'ites believe that the only source of instruction for the community came from infallible religious leaders, or an Imam, in which the infallibility was only attainable through blood relation to the Prophet. Put simply, 'The

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[1] James Moore, 'The Sunni and Shia Schism: Religion, Islamic Politics, and Why Americans Need to Know the Differences,' *The Social Studies* 106 (2015), p.229
[2] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islam* (New York, 2010), p.3
[3] Neal Robinson, *Islam: A Concise Introduction* (London, 199), p.20 and Carole Hillenbrand, *Islam: A New Historical Introduction* (London, 2015), p.143

differences between Sunnis and Shi'ites centred originally on the question of the kind of person who should lead the Muslim community—what qualifications he should possess and what duties he should perform,' with Sunnis believing the leader should be a faithful devotee of Muhammad and primarily a political leader, and the Shi'ites believing the leader should be a descendant of Muhammad, which would confer upon him the infallible qualities of a leader, and should be a religious and political leader.[4] The split became further entrenched with the murder of Husayn in 680, the Prophet's grandchild and 'Ali's son, by aiding in the development of a distinct religious sect of Islam: the Shi'ites. Other religious differences evolved overtime such as the Shi'ites' veneration of saints and the religious distinction of the Imam. The schism in Islam started as a political rift and crisis of faith following the death of Muhammad but developed into two distinct sects of Islam with different law, theology, and rituals.[5] Shi'ism has influenced many forms of political rule, such as the medieval Fatimid Dynasty and the modern Islamic Republic, as well as motivated many sub-sects of Shi'ism, such as Wahhabism and Sufism.

Crisis of Faith

In 632 A.D, after approximately sixty vibrant years of life, Muhammad, God's last messenger on earth, died peacefully. His death was expected, as he had fallen ill several days before his death, but still shocked the community. When Muhammad fell ill, he was immediately taken to Aisha's house, who was both one of Muhammad's wives and a daughter of Abu Bakr, where the Prophet was isolated from the outside world.[6] During this time, Muhammad, according to the dominant narratives, failed to name a successor, and his failure to do so caused a crisis of faith among his many followers. Not only was the

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[4] Hillenbrand, *Historical Introduction,* p.143
[5] *Ibid.,* p.230
[6] John McHugo, *A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is* (Georgetown, 2018), p.35 and El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics,* p.20

community concerned with the question of leadership, but they were also left questioning the Prophet and their faith. The community was left wondering, 'why did the founder of [our] religion with a clear past of political experience…not name a successor?[7]' Many scholars maintain that Muhammad deliberately left his successor unnamed as he wanted the crisis to be an exercise in faith and leadership. At the time of Muhammad's death, Islam had spread throughout much of the Arabian Peninsula where Muhammad had also become the de-facto political-religious leader of the region he controlled. His death, therefore, not only initiated a religious crisis—as God's last messenger and leader of Islam had passed—but also sparked a political crisis as without a male heir or designated successor there was no one to lead the newly founded polity[8]. John McHugo explains, 'Losing [Muhammad] was deeply shocking for the Muslim community and left it facing an unprecedented crisis[9].' Gabriel Reynolds expounds, 'With the death of Muhammad the Muslim community still needed a political successor, a Caliph—a leader to ensure that the religion of God would not disappear with the disappearance of God's prophet[10].' Wilfred Madelung confirms writing, 'No event in history has divided Islam more profoundly and durably than the succession to Muhammad. The right to occupy the Prophet's place at the head of the Muslim community after his death became a question of great religious weight which has separated Sunnites and Shi'ites until the present[11].' The crisis of Muhammad's death was intensified by the fact that there was a disagreement regarding who should lead the community. Those who would come to be known as Sunnis envisioned a more democratic approach and thought that the leader should be a leading figure in the community and close Companion, or original follower, that was known for his devotion to faith. Those who would come to be known as Shi'ites had a more

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[7] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics,* p.29
[8] Robinson, *Concise Introduction*, p.20
[9] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.33
[10] *Ibid.,* p.60
[11] Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1997), p.13

monarchical vision in that they thought the leader should a descendant from the bloodline of the Prophet[12]. These alternative interpretations of leadership presented a real threat to the community, as it indicated the possibility of a schism, threatening the legitimacy of the new religion.

With two main claims for leadership came two widely recognised competing testaments to what happened following the death of Muhammad. On the one hand, Aisha presents her father, Abu Bakr, as the Prophet's choice as successor. Aisha claims that as the Prophet was getting ill, he had asked Abu Bakr to lead prayer on his behalf and this was an indication that the Prophet had indeed chosen a successor and it was Abu Bakr[13]. Abu Bakr was one of Muhammad's first male converts outside his family and had accompanied Muhammad on the Hijrah, or journey from Mecca to Medina. The competing claim comes from Abdullah bin Abbas, the Prophet and 'Ali's cousin, who claims that Muhammad had clearly designated a successor and that successor was 'Ali. The is predicated upon the assertion that Muhammad is said to have proclaimed on 16 March 632 A.D, 'O people, know that what Aron was to Moses, 'Ali is to me, except that there shall be no prophet after me, and he 'Ali and my guardian for you after me. Therefore, for whomever I am their lord, 'Ali is their lord.'[14] With this proclamation, Abbas sees Muhammad as explicitly designating 'Ali as his successor to the Muslim community. 'Ali was the son of Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, and had married the Prophet's daughter Fatima, giving him two grandchildren, Hasan and Husayn. 'Ali, as a member of the Prophet's family, was one of the first converts to the Prophet's new religion, making him a follower of Muhammad's teachings long before Abu Bakr. The competing claims continue to diverge as they recount the Prophet's final hours. Aisha maintains that the Prophet died in her arms whilst Abdullah counterclaims that he died

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[12] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.20

[13] Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London, 2016), p.20

[14] Hillenbrand, *Historical Introduction,* p.146

in the arms of 'Ali. Aisha respond's by saying this is impossible because the Prophet was isolated from friends and family upon falling ill and thus 'Ali could not have been present during the Prophet's death.[15]

With competing claims already circulating, the Ansar— or the Muslims during the time of the Prophet who were natives of Medina and helped Muhammad and his Meccan followers make a life in Medina[16]— met among themselves following the Prophet's death at the portico belonging to the Banu Sa'ida clan.[17] 'Umar and Abu Bakr, two of Muhammad's close Companions, joined the conversation. The meeting was tense, with different members of the Ansar nominating different successors. The Ansar became polarised into two competing interpretations regarding who the leader should be and what kind of role he should take on. The supporters of Abu Bakr— who throughout history evolved into the Sunni sect— believed the leader of the community was to be a largely political role and he ought to be one of Muhammad's early supporters who clearly demonstrated leadership and strength. On the other hand, the supporters of 'Ali, largely comprised of the Prophet's family, felt the leader ought to be of blood relation to the Prophet, as this would signal both religious and political legitimacy. As a testament to the importance and critical nature of the discussion, McHugo notes that 'an atmosphere of distrust between the supporters of Abu Bakr and 'Ali can be clearly detected[18].' After listening to the tense deliberation, Abu Bakr stated to the Ansar that 'as a purely practical matter, the leader of the community after the Prophet's death had to come from the Quraysh, or he would not be accepted by the Arabs across the length and breadth of Arabia[19].' Here, Abu Bakr speaks from and advocates for the Sunni position of leadership. Abu Bakr emphasised the importance of maintaining political legitimacy in light

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[15] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.35
[16] *Ibid.,* p.35
[17] Gabriel Reynolds, *The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective* (Minneapolis, 2012), p.60
[18] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.41
[19] *Ibid.,* p.36

of the likely scenario that political upheaval that would follow the death of Muhammad, who though treaties and mutual recognition used his position as the Prophet of God to keep neighbouring tribes at bay. Abu Bakr then said that he was prepared to swear allegiance to either 'Umar or Ubaidah bin al-Jarrah, two Companions of the Prophet. 'Umar, in return however, pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr and the rest of the Ansar followed suit[20]. The appointment of Abu Bakr marked the beginning of the Rashidun Caliphate. It is important to note that whilst this election was taking place, however, 'Ali was piously engaged in preparing the Prophet's funeral rites.

Following the election of Abu Bakr, some still did not agree with the election of Abu Bakr as Caliph, which over time resulted in the inability for the Islamic community to cohere religiously and politically, resulting in continued tensions within the community and especially between the Prophet's family and supporters and supporters of Abu Bakr[21]. The Prophet's family excluded Abu Bakr from the funeral of the Prophet while 'Ali took the leading role in preparing the funeral rites for Muhammad. In retaliation, Abu Bakr denied the Prophet's family, and his clan—the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe—their share of inheritance of land that had been acquired throughout Muhammad's conquests of non-Muslims[22]. Aisha, however, was able to keep her portion of inheritance, while it was denied to the entirety of the Prophet's family, including his daughter and grandchildren. Tension between Muhammad's successors and the family of the Prophet were prominent throughout the Rashidun Caliphate. Moreover, Abu Bakr's prediction regarding political upheaval proved correct, as tribes across Saudi Arabia attempted to wrestle control from the Caliphate, but Abu Bakr proved himself as a decisive leader by putting down these rebellions in the years following the Prophet's death. Abu Bakr died in 634, only two years after becoming

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[20] Hillenbrand, *Historical Introduction*, p.143 and McHugo, *A Concise History,* p. 36
[21] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, p.11
[22] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.42

Caliph, and designated 'Umar as his successor, who somewhat forcefully persuaded the community to elect and accept him as Caliph[23]. 'Umar focused on expanding the Caliphate and led successful campaigns in modern-day Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and portions of Iran[24]. Moreover, the Prophet's family and the Ansar were further alienated and tensions between Companions and supporters of the Prophet's family intensified, an important consequence for the future of Muslims of the election of Abu Bakr. Moreover, despite the impressive expansion of the Muslim Caliphate, McHugo notes that 'Islam was not yet securely established as a new religion, and internal tensions that threatened its unity and survival can already be detected, despite impressive expansion of the Arab conquerors riding under the banner of the new faith.'[25] The divide can be demonstrated by 'Umar's call to elect his successor before his death in 644, where 'Umar called together six Companions to decide whether 'Ali or 'Uthman bin Affan would be elected Caliph. 'Uthman's religious credentials stemmed from his marriage alliances with the Prophet as well as his early conversion to Islam. 'Uthman was also married to two of the Prophet's daughters: Ruqaiya and upon her passing 'Uthman married Umm Kulthum.'[26] 'Uthman was thus chosen as the successor to 'Umar.[27] This choice would prove fatal, however, as the election of 'Uthman in 644 hastened the political collapse of the Rashidun Caliphate and would sharpen the divide of the Muslim community as a whole.

Political Collapse

The election of 'Uthman in 644 marked the beginning of decline for the Rashidun Caliphate. Many of the emerging historical narratives pertaining to the years after the Prophet's death

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[23] *Ibid.,* p.42 and Robinson, *Concise Introduction,* p.20
[24] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.44
[25] *Ibid.,*
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 45
[27] *Ibid.,* p.46

point to 'Uthman's reign as the catalyst for disaster and political collapse. Tayeb El-Hibri writes, 'the sources rebuke 'Uthman through the words of his critics for moral and political failings, such as his favouring of his kinsmen in political appointments, his weakness in reining in their indulgencies, and his general failure to know what was happening in his name.'[28] As a member of the Umayya clan, 'Uthman began to favour members of his family and clan by granting them positions of power, regardless of their merits. This favouritism led to jealousy across the empire, and specifically from the Quaraysh, causing widespread discontent and dissent[29]. Moreover, 'Uthman inherited the challenge of maintaining unity across the newly vast and expansive empire. With this, he struggled as provincial governors began to wrestle more power from the Caliph causing internal pressures while the need for further expansion to avoid Arab conquerors turning against each other mounted an external threat[30]. Because of these mounting pressures and threats, 'Uthman overhauled the direction of revenue, taking it away from provincial governors and directing the revenue towards the central government, which did not serve to alleviate any of the mounting internal pressures but rather intensify the power conflict between governors and the Caliph. In 656, following years of 'Uthman replacing positions of power with members of his clan and redirecting provincial revenue to the central government, an angry and potentially violent crowd, many of whom were from Egypt, gathered outside 'Uthman's home in Medina with a list of demands. The crowd demanded 'Uthman's resignation, but 'Uthman countered that he had addressed the grievances of the crowd and repented for his sins.[31] Concerning the events that then took place, Gabriel Said Reynolds elucidates,

> 'Uthman, the sources tell us, agreed to [the protestors demands], but as the protestors
>
> made their way back to Egypt, they intercepted a messenger of the Caliph who was

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[28] El Hibri, *Parable and Politics,* p.6
[29] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.50 and Reynolds, *Emergence of Islam,* p.72
[30] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p. 47
[31] *Ibid.,* p.51

carrying orders for the execution of their leaders. Immediately they returned to

Medina and laid siege to the Caliph's palace. 'Uthman claimed that the orders were

forged, but he could no longer pacify the rebels. They broke into the Caliph's

residence and stabbed him to death[32].'

Violence between Muslims had, up until this point, been unheard of, a foreboding sign that

the religious crisis was creating substantive disputes within the community. 'Uthman's

murder 'brought violence to the heart of the community's political life…both the community

itself and its new empire were unstable' as old rivalries began to emerge once again.[33] In the

chaos that followed 'Uthman's death, the Companions finally turned to 'Ali to lead the

community. After twenty-four years of waiting, 'Ali finally became Caliph in 656. Up until

'Ali's Caliphal appointment, the rifts between the Muslim community had been largely

concealed by previous Caliph's attempts to unite the empire via expansion as well as

suppression of insurrection. But, with the accession of 'Ali, the trouble that sparked the

division in the community—the issue of succession— finally becomes apparent and

seemingly prevalent[34]. 'Ali struggled to achieve legitimacy among many in Mecca as well as

'Uthman's family and supporters. His most ardent antagonists were Aisha and Mu'awiya, the

governor of Syria who had been appointed by 'Umar; both antagonised 'Ali and refused to

pledge their allegiance to the Caliph. After a failed attack on 'Ali carried out by Aisha and

her supporters, civil war broke out between Mu'awiya and 'Ali in 657.[35] The main cause of

this civil war was Mu'awiya's refusal to pledge his allegiance to 'Ali, as well as Mu'awiya's

demand that 'Ali punish the murderers of 'Uthman. 'Ali had refused to punish 'Uthman's

assailants because they were his principal supporters. The majority of the decisive fighting

lasted a short three days, with minor skirmishes happening throughout the year, but 'the civil

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[32] Reynolds, *Emergence of Islam,* p.72
[33] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.51
[34] El-Hibri, *Parable and* Politics, p.4
[35] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.57

war in the community—for that was what the struggle between ['Ali] and Mu'awiya had become—was a scandal, and as such raised a question mark over ['Ali's succession].'[36] Recognising that the war and the killing of Muslims on both sides threatened to split the community, 'Ali submitted to an arbitration.[37] This decision proved fatal, however, as many of 'Ali's supporters were upset by 'Ali's submission. Those upset by 'Ali's decision abandoned 'Ali on the battlefield and became known as the Kharijites. The arbitrators were themselves divided on how to handle the conflict between 'Ali and Mu'awiya, and 'Ali now faced another force of opposition from the Kharijites, who he continued to engage in battle. As he prepared to invade Syria in 661, 'Ali was attacked by a Kharijite with a poisoned sword and died two days later. This first civil war, or *fitna*, ravaged the Muslim community and served to split the community into several competing factions. Moreover, the civil war brought the end of the Rashidun Caliphate as Mu'awiya established the new Umayyad Caliphate in its place. Many were dissatisfied with the new rule and were distraught at the murder of 'Ali. They were placated, however, by Mu'awiya's promise to Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet, that upon his death Hasan would succeed him as Caliph. The second civil war, which solidified the split in the Muslim community, took place after the death of Mu'awiya in 680. Hasan was meant to be Mu'awiya's successor but died under suspicious circumstances in 670. Mu'awiya intended for his son, Yazid, to succeed him, but there were widespread pressures and hostility over a succession that would formalise Umayyad rule, which many asserted had no obvious claim to religious pre-eminence.[38] The death of Mu'awiya facilitated an even further widening of the gap between those community members who supported the family of the Prophet, and those who did not, and the death of the Umayyad ruler 'was a moment that gave those who were discontented with the rule of the

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[36] *Ibid.,* p. 60
[37] Reynolds, *Emergence of Islam*, p.75
[38] McHugo, *A Concise History,* p.69

Umayyad family the opportunity to look for an alternative focus.'[39] The story is familiar, as

with the succession of Muhammad, there were to lead contenders: Husayn, the other

grandson of the Prophet, and Yazid. Those who opposed Yazid's succession rallied to the

support of Husayn, while the local governors supported Yazid. The succession challenge was

played out in the second *fitna* in 680 at the Battle of Karbala, where Husayn was decapitated,

and his head taken to Yazid in Damascus. Husayn's death was a principal event in the

formation of the Shi'ite sect because it represents the murder of the last direct relative of the

Prophet as well as the usurpation of the throne by an entity without religious credentials.

Shi'ites regard Hussein as a 'prince of martyrs,' and his death is remembered to this day[40].

Syed Akbar Hyder comments, 'the martyrdom of this scion of the Prophet's lineage…[is] the

single most significant historic event in the lives of millions of Muslims[41].' The murder of

Husayn destroyed put a nail in the proverbial coffin of Rashidun Caliphate and permanently

established the Umayyad Caliphate.

Impact on Islam

The events that took place in 632 at the portico of the Banu Sa'ida clan had

reverberating consequences that divided the once coherent religion into two distinct sects

with large resentment towards one another. Robert Betts contends, 'the followers of 'Ali

never forgave the Umayyads for shedding the blood of Husayn…the slaughter of the

Prophet's younger grandson marks the defining moment of the Sunni-Shi'a divide.'[42]

Following the murder of Husayn, those who supported 'Ali became known as Shi'at 'Ali, or

followers of 'Ali, and referred to themselves as People of the Mantle, after the tradition that

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[39] *Ibid.,*
[40] McHugo *A Concise Hstory,* p.70 and Hillenbrand, *Historical Introduction,* p.146
[41] Syed Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (Oxford, 2006), p.1
[42] Robert Brenton Betts, *The Sunni Shi'a Divide: Islam's Internal Divisions and Their Global Consequences* (Washington D.C, 2013), p.16

'the Prophet blessed 'Ali, Fatima, and their two sons by holding his mantle or cloak over them while praying to God that they might be purified[43].'The Shi'a refused to recognise Umayyad rule, and instead looked to the descendants of 'Ali for guidance. Moreover, widely different historical interpretations began to emerge from Sunni and Shi'a scholars regarding the events that unfolded in 632 and thereafter. The result is a diverging interpretation of events in which ancient Islamic scholars 'unconsciously and retrospectively impose their own views and formulations' onto the period of the Prophet and directly following the death of the Prophet[44]. Moojan Momen expounds, 'thus works that purport to examine the history or teachings of an earlier period are in reality more a reflection of the period in which they are written than true expositions of that earlier period[45].' A frustrating impact of this phenomenon for modern-day historians, is a vast plethora of competing sources interpreting the foundations of Islam.

Many modern-day conflicts between Muslims can be traced back to the death of Muhammad and the events that immediately followed. It is thus important for historians and society to understand these events and their implications on the Islamic community before making rash judgments about the religion as a whole. This is not to say, however, that the religious foundations and events that took place between 632 and 680 are the only source of modern-day conflict between Muslims, but it is a historic contribution that defined the religion and has influenced relations between Muslims to this day. It is crucial to understand and comprehend the modern implications that ancient events can have.

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[43] *Ibid.,* p.17
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[45] *Ibid*, p. 61

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The Fall of the Templars

Elliot Macmillan

'There has recently echoed in our ears [...] a thing horrible to contemplate,
terrible to hear, a heinous crime, an execrable evil, an abominable deed, a hateful
disgrace, a completely inhuman thing [...] a pernicious example of evil and a
universal scandal.'

- Order for the Arrest of the Knights Templar, 14 September 1307.[1]

Originally founded in 1119 as a means to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land, the
Order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon (more commonly known as the
Templars) became a sophisticated international organisation over the course of the twelfth
and thirteenth centuries.[2] However, less than two hundred years after their establishment,
Philip IV of France (r. 1285-1314) issued an order for the arrest of all members in France, in
which, as seen above, he recoiled at the alleged activities of the Templars. The arrests, carried
out on Friday 13th October, marked the 'spectacular annihilation' of the Templars.[3] Members
were subsequently tortured and placed on trial to answer to one hundred and twenty seven
charges that focused on heresy, idolatry, sodomy, and secrecy.[4] In the eyes of the Council of
Vienne in March 1312, the Templars were deemed guilty, and, by the papal bull, *Vox in
excelso*, the Order was expunged.[5]

In addressing the causes for the collapse of the Templars, historians in the late-
nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries agreed with the above sentiments of Philip. Both

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[1] 'Order for the arrests (14 September 1307)', in Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate (eds), *The Templars* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 244-247.
[2] Evelyn Lord, *The Knights Templar in Britain* (Edinburgh, 2004), p. 12.
[3] Dan Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors* (London, 2017), p. 4.
[4] Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 9.
[5] 'Papal bull, *Vox in excelso* (22 March 1312)', in Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate (eds), *The Templars* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 309-318.

Morshead and Martin identified them as a group of individuals bent on self-aggrandisement.[6]

Over the last fifty years, however, the historical conception of the Templars has been subject

to a series of 'mushrooming myths.'[7] In striving to appeal to the non-specialist public, a

popular strand of historiography has seized upon the secrecy charges to portray members of

the Order as practicing magicians or as guardians of the Holy Grail, whose legacy can be

traced to the present day.[8] Emerging from the more rigorous treatment of the extant evidence

is the recognition that the arrests in France resulted from a century that had seen challenges to

the prevailing beliefs and values of Western Christendom.[9] Seizing upon this understanding,

this essay will provide an overview of various arguments that historians have considered

significant in influencing the fall of the Order. These circulate around evidence for an internal

decline – both in terms of fighting personnel and in morals – of the Templars, as well as the

personal responsibility of Philip IV. From this, an understanding will be gained as to how a

series of crises caused the collapse of the Templars.

Representing a fusion of ecclesiastical and martial ideas, the Templars were

predominantly viewed by contemporaries as protectors of the faith.[10] As such, the loss of the

last Christian stronghold in Outremer in 1291, Acre, has naturally been seen as the primary

instigator for their dissolution, because it left them vulnerable to criticism from Christian

rulers, the Papacy, and rival religious orders.[11] With no foothold from which to attempt a

recapture of Jerusalem without a further significant expenditure (i.e. another crusade),

contemporaries in France are viewed as having lost faith in the need for the existence of a

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[6] G.J. Morshead, *The Templar Trials* (London, 1888); E.J. Martin, *The Trial of the Templars* (London, 1928).
[7] Helen Nicholson, 'The Changing Face of the Templars: Current Trends in Historiography', *History Compass*, 8 (2010), p. 653.
[8] For an overview see Peter Partner, *The Murdered Magicians: The Templars and their Myth* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 156-180.
[9] Sophia Menache, 'The Templar Order: A Failed Ideal?', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 79 (1993), p. 10.
[10] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (London, 1984), p. 49.
Malcolm Barber, 'The Social Context of the Templars', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 34 (1984), p. 27.
[11] Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 286.

failed military order. Prior to this, critics – mainly in the form of chronicles by ecclesiastics such as William of Tyre and Matthew Paris – claimed that the Templars failed to supply the adequate manpower to the defence of the Holy Land.[12] This has provided a basis for historians to investigate the military resources of the Templars. Barman has traced a decline in fighting personnel from as early as the Battle of Hattin in 1187, during which Jerusalem was lost. Defeat cost the lives of an estimated two hundred and thirty knights which represented the start of the Order's 'agonising death throes,' as the Templars could no longer be considered a significant militant force.[13] However, more recent scholarship has resisted this notion and instead argued that the Templars were not in such a parlous state at the turn of the fourteenth century in relation to other orders, such as the Hospitallers.[14] Although the loss of Acre did prove damning to the Order's primary purpose, it was not readily apparent that all involvement in the Holy Land was at an end. Indeed, the Templars relocated their military headquarters to Cyprus, from which the Island of Tortosa was captured in 1300 (although lost again in 1302). They also continued to operate in the Spanish realms. For example, James II of Aragon and Valencia sought their service against Castile in 1300 and 1301. It is therefore difficult to sustain Barman's notion that the Templars' existence throughout the thirteenth century was achieved only through exhibiting a 'facade of strength.'[15]

Nevertheless, the fluctuating military fortunes of the Templars allowed for critical reflection of their purpose, both from within and without their ranks. Support as expressed in contemporary written accounts was naturally never going to be universal due to the predilection of the (usually) ecclesiastical writer favouring their own religious order. Matthew Paris's *Chonica Majora* (1259) has been likened to 'tabloid journalism' due to the

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[12] Alan Forey, *The Military Orders: From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1992), p. 206.
[13] Edward Barman, *The Templars: Knights of God* (London, 1986), p. 10.
[14] Alan Forey, 'Notes on Templar Personnel and Government at the Turn of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', Journal of Medieval History, 35 (2009), p. 150.
[15] Barman, *Knights of God*, p. 143.

author's desire to favour his own order, the Benedictines.[16] Yet, his general attitude towards

the Templars anticipates the charges at the trials. Exploits in Spain over the century were

denounced as 'so wretched a slaughter' because the blood of fellow Christians was spilt.[17]

The continuation of military activity in the Spanish regions after the loss of Acre was

therefore easy to be construed as heresy. The Templars had not only failed in their primary

objective to defend Christians in the Holy Land but had diverted their efforts to attack them

in Christian territories. Meanwhile, having seen Arsuf taken by the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt

in 1265, a Templar knight, Ricaut Bonomel, reflected on their losses in a poem.[18] Bonomel

alluded to martial failure as a result of a decline in God's support.[19] In speculating that God,

'who used to be so vigilant, is asleep' Bonomel expressed an uncertainty and a weakness in

faith, which was no doubt exacerbated by the fall of other Christian strongholds.[20] Although

Bonomel's poetic effusion should be tempered by artistic licence, this poem represents a

questioning of the Templars' purpose. Furthermore, an insinuation arises that providence had

not only failed to intervene on the Templars' behalf, but instead granted victory to the enemy.

In order to avoid further defeats, the Templars required a correction in their ways by which

their faith, alongside their military prowess, would be restored.

      The desire for reform of the Templars was most powerfully expressed at the Council

of Lyons (1274). This not only discussed plans for a new crusade, but also the amalgamation

of the Templars with their traditional rivals, the Hospitallers. There were signs that Pope

Gregory X was genuinely considering the proposition, as displayed by his request for

treatises that considered both sides of the argument. The Templar Grand Master, Jacques de

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[16] Sophia Menache, 'Re-writing the History of the Templars According to Matthew Paris', in Michael Goodich, Sophia Menache, and Sylvia Schein (eds), *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period: Essays Presented to Aryeh Grabois on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (New York, 1999), p. 186.
[17] As quoted in Forey, *Military Orders*, p. 208.
[18] Poem of Ricaut Bonomel (1265)', in Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate (eds), *The Templars* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 232-234.
[19] Ibid. p. 233. Line 17.
[20] Ibid. Line 23.

Molay, only briefly considered the benefits of union, with a meagre nineteen lines being far outweighed by a total of one-hundred and fifteen that argued against.[21] Although expressing legitimate concerns about the practicality of amalgamation, it was Molay's alternative recommendation however, that has been considered to have been decisive in the fall of the Templars.[22] Molay proposed a grand crusade, a *paddagium generale,* consisting of fifteen thousand knights and five thousand soldiers; with the Templars as its vanguard. Molay has been charged by historians for being unimaginative and inflexible in light of new proposals.[23] This sentiment was shared by contemporaries and was only amplified following the fall of Acre. The 1292 Council of Canterbury also considered the Order's consolidation with others, whilst Pierre Dubois, an advisor to Philip, demanded united properties and a common treasury in *De Recuperatione* (1306).[24] The sustained call for reform thus creates an image of a military order that was ill-equipped spiritually, if not practically, to continue protecting the Holy Land. Moreover, part of their unsuitability manifested itself in their leader, whose intransigence in the face of innovative recommendations by both church authorities and royal advisors undoubtedly caused resentment amongst the French royal household and the papacy. In effect, the charges against the Templars were against Molay.

    In contrast to their fortunes in the Holy Land or in the minds of their contemporaries, the Templars played an increasingly pivotal role in the newly emerging monetary economy of Europe. Members were employed as agents for the payment of ransoms as well as being responsible for annuities. Both the New Temple (in London) and the Paris Temple are estimated to have each seen over a million livre tournois channelled through their respective institutions over the course of the thirteenth century.[25] With this responsibility, there

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[21] Barman, *Knights of God*, p. 155.
[22] Read, *The Templars*, p. 263.
[23] Read, *The Templars*, p. 251.
[24] Barman, *Knights of God*, p. 153.
[25] Lord, *Britain*, p. 234.

developed an international reputation for efficient book-keeping and financial expertise, based on trust, that would only be superseded by Italian bankers in the fourteenth century.[26] It is therefore surprising that there were charges relating to greed and avarice at the trials. Furthermore, the inventories of Templar houses at the time of arrests in France and England do not suggest an affluent lifestyle.[27] As such, it is difficult to insist on internal financial greed on either a personal or an institutional level that contributed to the downfall of the Order.

A charge of greed has instead been levelled by historians on Philip IV. Jones views the arrest and trial of the Templars as an 'unwavering mission for assets.'[28] Upon his accession, Philip inherited a debt of one and a half million livre tournois from his father's war in Aragon.[29] This was exacerbated by his own costly war with Edward I of England in Flanders, which had only ended in 1298. Every expedient to raise funds was consequently deployed, which included the expulsion of Jews from Paris in 1306. As such, the trial of the Templars can appear as a continuation of Philip's economic policies, born out of necessity. Indeed, the French government did profit from the seizure of Templar lands, as they retained their property for the duration of the trials (1307-1311), as well as being compensated following their release. However, the French monarch nor the majority of his advisors vigorously pursued the control of the Templars' finance as a key objective. In a court session in 1308, ministers questioned 'to whom should the control, management and administration of such property belong?'[30] Moreover, Philip's stance regarding Templar assets paled in comparison to Edward I, who refused to hand over his share of the properties until 1324.[31]

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[26] Ibid. p. 220.
[27] Forey, *Military Orders*, p. 214.
[28] Jones, *Rise and Fall*, p. 7.
[29] Read, *The Templars*, p. 255.
[30] Forey, *Military Orders*, p. 236.
[31] Lord, *Britain*, p. 262.

Evidently, there was a pressing financial need, but to state that Philip was solely motivated by improving the Crown's wealth ignores the possibility that Philip believed in the charges.[32]

Philip's ideology reveals a concern for the wellbeing of the Christian community. Brown, for example, describes the king as 'sternly moralistic', who feared the consequences of his temporal deeds.[33] It has been claimed that the spectre of his grandfather, Louis IX, haunted Philip.[34] Canonised in 1297, St Louis and his association with the Seventh Crusade would no doubt have questioned the king's spiritual conviction, especially when his brother pressed his claim to the symbolically holy city of Constantinople. An argument can therefore be made that as an heir to generations of crusading kings, Philip wished to continue a Capetian tradition. Personal correspondence also reveals that following the fall of Acre, Philip considered the notion of replacing Molay as he saw himself as the 'hereditary grand master.'[35] Subsequent frustration at the relative failure of the Templars under Molay may have prompted the king to displace their leader. In addition, Philip's determination for spiritual reform escalated after the death of his wife, Joan I of Navarre in 1305. His failure to protect her led him to become preoccupied with salvation and view himself as responsible for the spiritual welfare of his subjects.[36] Philip's economic policies can therefore be reconsidered. As opposed to a 'seizure', Brown proposes that Philip's acquisition of Jewish and Templar assets was an act of 'confiscation.' Rather than born out of material greed, Philip was instead acting from a moral basis in which he perceived his actions as spiritually justifiable.[37] The liquid wealth of the Templars was not an affront to Philip's power, but a temptation. As such, an emotional crisis in the form of his wife's passing, and the spiritual

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[32] Barber, *Trial*, pp. 39–40, 43–58.
[33] E.A.R. Brown, 'The Prince is Father of the King: The Character and Childhood of Philip the Fair of France', *Medieval Studies*, 49 (1987), pp. 282-334.
[34] Read, *The Templars*, p. 267.
[35] Nicholas Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: the Demonization of Christians in medieval Christendom* (London, 1993), p. 85.
[36] Forey, *Military Orders*, p. 239.
[37] E.A.R. Brown, 'Taxation and Morality in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Conscience and Political Power and the Kings of France', *French Historical Studies*, 8 (1973), pp. 1-28.

pressure from the 'haunting' of his grandfather, exerted itself on Philip's psyche and

contributed to the collapse of the Templars.

An awareness of elements that influenced Philip's ideology provides a significant

nuance to the long-standing argument that the fall of the Templars was an episode of the age-

old rivalry between the French monarchy and the Papacy.[38] There had indeed been conflict in

Philip's reign, as in 1296, the king prohibited the transfer of funds to Rome until Pope

Boniface VIII repealed a ban on taxation of the clergy without papal consent. Bearing in

mind Philip's fiscal difficulties, such a dispute influenced a negative view of Boniface to

such an extent that upon the election of his successor, Clement V, Philip proposed a

posthumous trial to reveal Boniface's corruption. The employment of the 'spectre of

Boniface' has been considered as a tool for Philip to commence dominating Clement.[39] As

such, the arrest of the Templars without papal consent, who since 1129 had been an officially

recognised institution of the Church, can represent Philip establishing his desired dominance

over ecclesiastical affairs. However, as Forey indicates, a case that revolved so explicitly

around heresy and idolatry was still perceived as a matter for the Pope, and therefore were

not the best issues for Philip to pursue in his alleged attempts to assert temporal authority

over the spiritual realm.[40] Furthermore, the fact that Philip used one papal institution (the

Inquisition) to arrest another (the Templars) highlights that the monarch was not distinctly

separating the two realms of temporal and spiritual power, but, was instead assisting to

'realign' the latter. The arrest of the Templars and the confiscation of their assets were thus

part of a greater process of rationalism that the French monarchy as a whole has been

perceived to have been undergoing at this time.[41] This included the consolidation of faith and

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[38] Thomas Parker, *The Knights Templar in England* (Tuscon, 1965), p. 85.
[39] Lord, *Britain*, p. 237.
[40] Forey, *Military Orders*, p. 237.
[41] Menache, 'A Failed Ideal?', p. 16.

the expelling of 'foreign' elements from the royal administration and the community, represented in the actions taken against the Lombards, the Jews, and the Templars.[42]

Underlying this reasoning for Philip's actions is a suggestion that there was a crisis in Christendom, or at least one in the mind of Philip. For a papal institution to not only be seized but punished as heretical, signals a fear of a decline in papal theocracy. The failure of the Pope to persecute the Templars displayed a failure, or at best, an indifference, from the head of the Church, that risked transmittance to the rest of society. Consequently, the confessions obtained from the Templars as well as the trial testimonies can be reconsidered. It has been viewed that a minute survey of these sources 'will prove a vain search for consistency of guilt', not to mention the fact that the use of torture means that they were produced under conditions not conductive to objectivity.[43] Yet, as a whole, the confessions convey a similar sense of uncertainty in a collective faith. Especially as the charges they responded to were accusations that had been levelled against others in the recent past, such as Boniface VIII.[44] Recycling such charges was not a sign of the Templars' specific degradation, but a reflection of a perceived general lapse in beliefs. These confessions, fabricated or otherwise, were therefore necessary for the king's (and Christendom's) spiritual victory in the face of a weakening of faith in society.[45]

Investigating the underlying causes of the suppression of the Templars permits no one factor to be overbearing in instigating their collapse. The desire for Molay to place them at the centre of crusading efforts, along with the essential financial services they provided, makes any suggestion that the Templars were outdated by the fourteenth century difficult to

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Forey, *Military Orders*, p. 232.

Jonathan Riley-Smith, 'Were the Templars Guilty?' in Susan Ridyard (Ed.), *The Medieval Crusade* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 109.

Toby Burrows, 'The Templars' Case for their Defence in 1310', *Journal of Religious History*, 13 (1985), p. 248.

[44] Forey, *Military Orders*, p. 234.

[45] Barber, *Trial*, p. 290.

sustain. However, there was a general feeling of a need for reform that was shared by

chroniclers, ecclesiastical figures, and Philip. Initially, as opposed to an overt suppression,

continuity and adaption were desired, albeit with a stricter moralism. It is apparent, however,

that Philip's personal spiritual convictions propelled him to issue the warrant for the

Templars' arrest. As Christian theology dictated that the devil was constantly seeking to

spread corruption by targeting the weakest members of the Christian community, Philip in

response, had remained vigilant and acted to 'cut out the canker.'[46] Read claims that once

'rescued from Philip's diabolism', historians, 'are left with something quite dull.'[47] Asserting

this, however, would fail to do justice to the mentality of the epoch which had a profound

impact upon Philip. There was a shift in Christian values, as represented in the collapse of the

Templars, that can be surmised as 'a process of alienation.'[48] With the failure of Western

Christendom as a whole to maintain a distant Christian outpost and a multitude of debates

surrounding the purpose of the Order, the Templars' demise was part of a society that felt that

they were becoming increasingly distant from God.[49] As such, the late thirteenth and early

fourteenth centuries were not part of an age of steadfast faith, but of one marked by cultural

instability and neurotic tension.[50] If not strictly a crisis, there was a loss of confidence in the

divine order which contributed significantly to the collapse of the Templars. Standing at the

threshold of the European witch hunts, the fall of the Templars similarly represent how

uncontrolled private fears can morph into uncontrolled public disasters.[51]

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Read, *Templars*, p. 309.
[48] Partner, *Magicians*, p. 40.
[49] Paul Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade: A Study of Public Opinion and Crusade Propaganda* (Amsterdam, 1990).
[50] Partner, *Magicians*, p. 32.
[51] Ibid. p. xx.

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Agnadello: The Effect of Military Collapse on a Renaissance State

Elliot Jordan

In 1508, France, the Papal States and the Holy Roman Empire – the key players in the Italian Wars — set their differences aside and declared themselves the 'League of Cambrai', allied to end the increasingly ambitious hegemony of the Republic of Venice on the Italian *Terraferma*.[1] At 2200h on the 15th of May, 1509, the Doge and his key subordinates were summoned to an emergency meeting to be informed that their mainland army had been surprised and routed by Louis XII near Agnadello.[2] A Venetian diarist witnessed the event:

> '*And there began a great weeping and lamentation and, to put it better, a sense of panic. Indeed, they were as dead men. They wanted to keep the news a secret as long as possible…in a very short time, within an hour of when the news had arrived, the entire Ducal palace had filled with patricians and others…the Doge descended half-dead.*'[3]

With the compact nature of the Venetian socio-political system, the aftermath of Agnadello poses a fascinating opportunity to study the effects of defeat on a Renaissance state. This article will examine how this was felt firstly in the more obvious political and strategic spheres, before examining how the effects of the battle also extended into the world of

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[1] M. E. Mallett and J. R. Hale, *Military Organisation of a Renaissance State* (Cambridge, 1984), p.221
[2] John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (London, 1988), pp.399-400
[3] Marin Sanudo, Diaries 15/05/1509, in Linda L. Caroll (trans.), *Venice: Cita Excelentissima* (Baltimore, 2008), p.174

culture and society, demonstrating how Venice, supposedly the 'Most Serene Republic' (*Serenissima)*, reacted to the psychological effects of military collapse.

Indeed, any practical or moral lessons to be learnt from the defeat would inevitably have been heightened by geopolitical context. Traditionally, Venice had long been orientated towards the sea, the source of the Republic's prosperity, with the *Stato da Mar* extending through the Adriatic and the Eastern Mediterranean.[4] Venetian pride at this extension of sea power was visibly demonstrated in the rich urban art and pageantry of the Republic, displaying the plundered treasures of Byzantium in the city and symbolically celebrating naval superiority in the annual 'Marriage of the Sea'.[5] Yet at sea, as on the mainland, Venice expanded out of strict necessity to defend and supply the city, only taking key transalpine passes and mainland approaches.[6] However, over the fifteenth century Venice increasingly looked towards the *Terraferma* to expand, taking a more active role in Italian geopolitics. As Venetian adventurism mounted, foreign attitudes increasingly expressed the trope that Venice aimed to dominate Italy.[7] These warnings frequently verged on hysterical: even as the Republic reeled from Agnadello, the French ambassador ranted at the Imperial court that 'they are secretly dividing the world with the Turks'.[8] Much anti-Venetian rhetoric of the period reflects simple envy at Venice's world-renowned prosperity – Louis XII's court satirist drew attention to how '...*bourgoys veniciens/...avez trop des tresors anciens'.[9]* Moreover, as Rubinstein has argued, it was clearly in the interests of Venice's rivals to exaggerate the danger posed by the Republic, especially after the outbreak of the Italian Wars

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[4] Benjamin Arbel, 'Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period', in Eric R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797* (Leiden, 2013), p.137

[5] Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, 1981), p.122

[6] Michael Knapton, 'The Terraferma State', in Eric R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797* (Leiden, 2013), p.85

[7] Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Italian Reactions to Terraferma Expansion', in J. R. Hale (ed.), *Renaissance Venice* (London, 1973), pp.197-217

[8] Lord Hélian to the Diet of Augsburg (1510), in Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (London, 1980), p.36

[9] Pierre Gringore, in Norwich, *History of Venice*, p.390

in 1494.[10] Yet serious military thinkers believed that Venice's push south was upsetting the balance of power on the Peninsula: in 1503, as Venetian troops marched into the Romagna, the Florentine military command warned their man in Rome that 'the Venetians carry on with a campaign which is leading them to the monarchy of Italy'. The recipient, one Niccolò Machiavelli, reported that 'one finds here a universal hatred of them'.[11] It was this that prompted the creation of the League of Cambrai out of factions that ordinarily would have been enemies, the force that destroyed the only Venetian mainland combat force at Agnadello. The defeat thus contained the classic ingredient of any morality tale – hubris before a fall.

As suggested, the first effect of Agnadello was chaos on an impressive scale in both the military and the civilian spheres. The bulk of the Venetian army escaped destruction, yet as it retreated it was refused admission by the major *Terraferma* cities: immediately after military defeat the cracks were already showing between the Venetian centre and periphery. Desertion was so endemic and rapid that as the patchwork of urban identities in the *Terraferma* disintegrated, many soldiers were home in time to participate in surrender ceremonies of their own cities to the French.[12] In Brescia, a city which had formerly been known as Venice's 'most loyal', urban patricians voted to open the gates and welcome Louis in.[13] As Mallett and Shaw argue, the strategic decision to consolidate troops into an offensive strike force left the *Terraferma* cities un-garrisoned, making their defence militarily impossible and decreasing any loyalty that might have been felt to the imperial centre. Moreover, they suggest that political and economic dominance by Venetian officials in mainland cities such as Padua may have increased feeling that fealty to the distant Louis or

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[10] Ribinstein, 'Italian Reactions', p.198

[11] Machiavelli's Correspondence with Florence, in Rubinstein, 'Italian Reactions', p.197

[12] Michael Mallett and Christine Shaw, *The Italian Wars* (Harlow, 2012), pp.90-3

[13] Stephen D. Bowd, *Venice's Most Loyal City: Civic Identity in Renaissance Brescia* (Cambridge, 2010)

Emperor Maximilian would be preferable.[14] Although there was considerable partisan warfare by rural peasants against the invaders, which Venice was quick to boast of, in practice this simply reflected the worse discipline of the French and Imperial troops[15] while Knapton highlights that this demonstrated the serious levels of general antagonism between the peasantry and the urban centres.[16] Meanwhile, in Venice itself, news of the defeat created chaos, with the geographically and socially compact nature of the ruling elite magnifying the shock: 'they wanted to hang someone tomorrow morning; a lot of people were saying that [Captain-General] Count of Pitigliano would be brought to Venice to have his head cut off'.[17] Now that the mask of serenity had been ripped away, militias were formed and 'suspicious' urban inhabitants interned as refugees flooded the city.[18] When the annual Corpus Christi procession arrived, three weeks after the battle, it took place with a subdued atmosphere under heavy guard:

> *'There were about one thousand men armed with swords and shields and breastplates under their cloaks...then the Doge, dressed in crimson velvet, followed [the procession], trembling...the area encircling the Signoria was full of these armed men, for fear of disturbances, which gave the city much to talk about. Nevertheless, it was said that there would be an uprising, and many avoided going to the Piazza'.*[19]

The contrast with the usual Venetian image of prosperous stability, and the rapidity into which the city slid into austere repression and fear, is itself remarkable.

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[14] Mallett and Shaw, *The Italian Wars*, p.92
[15] *Ibid.*, p.92
[16] Knapton, 'Terraferma State', p.96
[17] Sanudo, 23/05/1519, p.175
[18] Norwich, *History of Venice,* p.401
[19] Sanudo, 07/06/1509, p.370

Meanwhile, in the following months and years, is possible to trace significant constitutional and political changes in the makeup of the Republic. Just as the Venetian image of stability and public opulence had been shattered, the traditional homogeneity of the patriciate was also abandoned as a wartime emergency measure due to the need to make rapid decisions. The result was a loss of power at the expense of the Senate and the traditional Great Council (the latter made up of all eligible male patricians), and the transfer of *de facto* responsibility to the smaller, more closed *Collegio* and the Council of Ten. This process is summarised by Gilbert as 'a small group of men...desperately struggling with an endless number of unexpected and diverse tasks'.[20] This alone was a significant retreat for Venetian 'democrats'— Agnadello demonstrated the weaknesses in republican government in particular, rather than the monarchical systems that Venice had been quick to criticise.[21] The constitutional patriciate was further undermined by the decision in 1510 to begin selling offices- in return for war loans, nobles could guarantee shortcut admissions to the Senate or Great Council. The social effects of this would have been magnified by the decision in 1515 that prior to the Council going to vote for elected positions, the amounts loaned to the state by the candidates would be published – the result of the election demonstrated that large financial reserves had become a necessary qualification for hopeful careerists.[22] This is seen by Gilbert as contributing to a split in the patriciate between a wealthy minority able to monopolise key offices and the rest, which would have been encouraged by other factors such as the apparently self-conceived duty of wartime officials such as the future Doge, Andrea Gritti, not to draw salaries, an option not available to poorer nobles.[23] It would be wrong to see this as an entirely new phenomenon, with Venetian 'democracy' having always

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[20] Felix Gilbert, 'Venice in the Crisis of the League of Cambrai', in Hale, *Renaissance Venice* (London, 1973), p.281

[22] Gilbert, 'Crisis of the League of Cambrai', pp.284-5
[23] *Ibid.*, p.287

been influenced by wealth and personal connections. Nonetheless the wartime solidification

of a small, closed group dominating policy-making was clearly in Gasparo Contarini's mind

when he aspired to government 'where all corrupt means to aspire are curbed/and Officers for

virtues' worth elected'.[24]

Meanwhile, after Agnadello we can identify a clear strategic turn in response to the

defeat. Within days of the news arriving, the decision was taken to abandon the Romagna to

the Pope and the Neapolitan ports to Spain, and attempts were made to yield to Imperial

territorial claims.[25] These decisions to reverse the most ambitious mainland claims were not a

knee-jerk reaction to defeat, but a more profound change in outlook. This has been

effectively elaborated in a study of Doge Andrea Gritti's mainland policies, in which Finlay

implies that Gritti's tough, no-nonsense attitude as immortalised in Titian's famous portrait

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[24] Contarini, *Commonwealth and Government of Venice* (London ed., 1599), in Frederick C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973), p.258
[25] Mallett and Shaw, *The Italian Wars*, p.93

made him ideally suited as a leader in a time of total war.[26] In contrast to earlier Venetian aggression, Gritti exploited the divisions between the other key players in the Italian Wars, and strongly discouraged adventurism. Popular comparisons likened Gritti to Fabius Maximus, the Roman General famed for having retreated, delayed and avoided battle to string out Hannibal during the Punic Wars – fittingly, contemporaries likened the victory of Louis XII at Agnadello to Cannae.[27] It was Gritti's careful management of resources and alliances that allowed a contemporary historian to summarise Venetian participation in the Italian Wars as 'defeated in all their battles but nevertheless prevailing as victors in the general war'.[28] This philosophy would eventually be extended to sea power – though this required another defeat, at the hands of the Ottomans, by the 1560s a Venetian diplomat could conclude that 'wars are always to be avoided for the disadvantages they bring'.[29] Moreover, the deeper fiscal-military structures of the Venetian system were also laid open to question in the aftermath of defeat. It was a trope in popular culture during the Italian Wars that the lagoon-bound elite relied on *Condottieri* mercenaries for land defence, due to distaste or inability for hard warfare. As Mallett and Hale point out, like all aspects of Venetian mythology this has 'a core of truth', with wartime Venetian forces depending on mercenary contingents for infantry striking power. In military terms, though the merits of this system were debated, a swathe of financial and diplomatic ties with the mercenary-producing Swiss cantons in the 1510s and 20s demonstrated that there was no intention to end it.[30] However, from the perspective of this article, it is how such a fiscal-military system was *perceived* that

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[26] Robert Finlay, 'Fabius Maximus in Venice', in *Renaissance Quarterly,* Vol.53, No.4 (Winter, 2000), pp.988-1031

[27] *Ibid.*, p.994

[28] Paulo Giovio, *Delle Istorie del suo tempo* (1581), in Finlay, 'Fabius Maximus in Venice', p.1006

[29] Bernado Navagero, Report on the Turkish War, in Mallett and Hale, *Military Organisation of a Renaissance State*, p.216

[30] Mallett and Hale, *Military Organisation of a Renaissance State*, pp.313-5

matters, and it is here that the effects of battlefield disaster cross from the purely military sphere to far more subtle and fascinating effects.

In Renaissance thought, battlefield victory or defeat could never be taken at face value, with self-titled experts inevitably seeking moral reasons for military events. It is here that the most unique effects of Agnadello are visible. Such beliefs were summed up by Machiavelli, a constant critic of mercenary warfare on moral and practical grounds,[31] as the patriciate's 'cowardice of spirit, caused by the quality of their institutions'.[32] This was echoed within Venice itself, with notions that Agnadello had demonstrated serious weaknesses in the Venetian philosophy expressed widely in the years after the defeat. Crucially, this was extended beyond the apparent lack of martial valour to everything supposedly wrong with Venice. Almost every possible attack in contemporary morality was applied by Girolamo Priuli to the city in his diaries from 1509: the arrogance of the senior government, the laxity and luxury of the patriciate, prostitution and effeminate dress, with the implication that Venice had incurred divine disfavour.[33] Such beliefs rapidly filtered into political life, and in the years immediately following Agnadello the Senate began a bombardment of correctional legislation to tighten urban morality. This initially revolved around the extension and enforcement of sumptuary laws, with *Provveditori sopra la pompe* appointed to 'curb, correct and punish' over-luxurious dress, including the neckline of shirts (neatly around the neck) and the value ladies hairpieces (not to exceed 100 ducats). This was described as specifically to 'placate the anger of Our Lord' and though it may also have reflected worries about unrest as well as pure morality, it nonetheless demonstrates the wideness of Agnadello's reach in Venetian public life.[34] Yet these concerns of moral health extended into the constitution of

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[31] David Parrott, *The Business of War* (Cambridge, 2012), p.28

[32] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses*, trans. Bk. III c.XXXI, trans. Julia and Peter Bondanella (Oxford, 1997), p.329

[33] Girolami Pruili, *Diarii*, iv, 29-45, in Gilbert, 'Crisis of the League of Cambrai', pp.274-5

[34] Gilbert, 'Crisis of the League of Cambrai', p.279

the republic, with unprecedentedly stringent attitudes toward the patriciate. Contarini may have sought to glorify the Republic, but as Gleason argues, this was in the context of a new level of scrutiny of the '*Virtu*' and worthiness of the aristocracy, and accordingly sumptuary laws were only one dimension of a far deeper reorganisation.[35]

Traditionally, the 'right to rule' of the Venetian patriciate had been enshrined in the so-called 'first Serrata' around 1300.[36] During the ensuing stagnation of the fourteenth century, the continued distinction between noble and *cittadini* was an important root of the Venetian reputation for stability.[37] However, in recent years, historiography has focused on an alternate 'Third Serrata', a period of legislation enacted from the 1490s to the 1530s to regulate the social life of the Patriciate, culminating in new, strict qualifications for nobility.[38] This period fits neatly within the chaos of the Italian Wars, seen by Machiavelli as rendering Italy 'despoiled, town, overrun'.[39] Moreover, as Chojnacki argues, this posited 'Serrate' centres on the 'shattering of the Republic's power and self-confidence' in 1509.[40] Though the famous *Libro d'Oro* was created in 1506 as an unequivocal record of all Venetian aristocratic marriages and births, wartime austerity can be seen as contributing to the strictness with which it was enforced, with the Council of Ten even during a period of intense geopolitical upheaval finding the time to examine cases of illegitimate birth 'to keep immaculate and pure the rank and order of the nobility'.[41] Such an idea of *renovatio* can be traced in aristocratic art and architecture. This could be superficial – the Doge 'castigated himself' for removing his arsenal of display-only weapons to accommodate larger banquets – or more profound.[42]

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[35] Elisabeth Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini* (Berekley, 1993), p.121
[36] Norwich, *History of Venice*, p.200
[37] Gerhard Rösch, 'The *Serrata* of the Great Council', in John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano (eds.) *Venice Reconsidered* (Baltimore, 2000), pp.67-88
[38] Stanley Chojnacki, 'Identity and Ideology in Renaissance Venice: The Third *Serrata*', in Martin and Romano, *Venice Reconsidered*, p.264
[39] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* trans. George Bull (London, 2003), c.xxvi
[40] Chojnacki, 'the third *Serrata'*, p.265
[41] *Ibid.*, p.274
[42] Patricia Fortini Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven, 2004), p.19

Notions of *mediocritas,* in the spirit of tightened sumptuary legislation, dampened residential construction and discouraged architectural luxury. However, this was followed by a broader reaction of a return to *Romanitas*, with the civilisational exceptionalism of Rome conflated with the early *virtu* of Venice. That the two could be combined in the post-Agnadello *Renovatio* is demonstrated by Fortini-Brown's study of Venetian private lives- Gritti constructed an ostentatiously austere *Casa* for himself yet invested heavily in classical urban renewal around the Piazetta of San Marco.[43]

In conclusion, the defeat at Agnadello and the ensuing stresses of the War of Cambrai are fascinating not simply due to the events on the battlefield, but to the effects of the shock throughout the Venetian establishment. This was firstly visible in the chaotic aftermath in the battle, with the disintegration of the army paralleled by the rapid political dissolution of Venice's *terraferma* state and reversion to urban-commune and rural-peasant loyalties, while within Venice itself the psychological effects of shock and corresponding appearance of paranoia are clearly visible. The latter contributed to the restriction of political decision-making to a small, closed minority surrounding the *Savi* and the Council of Ten, with the sale of offices magnifying stratification within the patriciate. Meanwhile, a clear alteration of geopolitical strategy is visible, with mainland adventurism giving way to the 'Fabian' tactics of Doge Andrea Gritti. Military re-evaluation placed the reliance on mercenaries and supposedly under-militarised nobility under scrutiny, with the latter acting as a conduit for the shock of defeat into cultural and social life. Ideas of divine punishment for laxity, especially in the upper classes, encouraged a campaign of tight sumptuary laws, which when taken to their logical conclusion resulted in an increasingly strict attitude to patrician identity. In short, this article has attempted to give an overview of the effects of military disaster on a

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[43] *Ibid.*, p.37

particularly compressed Renaissance state, and to demonstrate how then, as now, collapse on

the battlefield can have astonishingly wide-ranging psychological and social effects.

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A total crisis: the "Anni di piombo" and the Moro affaire

Lucia Guercio

(Protests in Turin 1977, available at: https://www.futura.news/2017/11/30/torino-77-gli-anni-di-piombo-nella-citta-fabbrica/)

Abstract

From 1965 to the early 1980s, Italy experienced a difficult period: dealing with a resurging economy after the disastrous effects of World War II, reorganising the country's political establishment and mediating between left- and right-wing extremists. From the Golden Age of the early 1960s, Italy had fallen into a vortex of uncertainty and violence. Analysing the political background and one of the most shocking kidnapping cases of the last 50 years, the article presents the main political divisions of second-half of the twentieth-century Italy. This was a time of profound crisis, which apparently led the country to its biggest collapse after

World War II. Through the voices of Italian scholars and reports of contemporary media, the paper presents a touching reality of Italian politics, whose echoes still matter today.

Overview

Italy, defeated and destroyed by the end of the Second World War, began to experience an extraordinary period of economic growth, partially thanks to the economic aid received from the United States which led to huge improvements from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. From being a predominantly agricultural country with a high rate of illiteracy and infant mortality, Italy turned into one of the eight world economic powers. This growth is often referred to as the "Italian miracle". Even from a cultural point of view, Italy became one of the most important countries in the world as Fellini, Pasolini, De Sica, Leone became some of the most loved Italian names. The extraordinary success of the Rome 1960 Olympics and the beauty of Italian cities of art all contributed to making Italy a popular destination for travel. Nonetheless, soon after Italians faced the so called "*anni di piombo*" (Years of Lead), ranging from 1965 to the early 1980s, one of the most dramatic eras of the recent history of Italy. A country that was still recovering from the horrors of the Second World War just become a Republic in 1946, was now torn between left and right extremist movements. Such tensions expressed in open attacks against innocent crowds in various "piazze" and culminated with the kidnapping and subsequent murderer of the president of the four-time Prime Minister (Presidente del Consiglio) Aldo Moro in 1978.

This paper proposes to break down the major elements involved in the situation, explaining how the "*anni di piombo*" should be considered as a proper political crisis, indeed Italy never risked so closely a total collapse of its internal political order since the 1943 *Resistenza* and civil war. Three main reasons are identified to confer crisis status: first, a repeated confrontation of paramilitary groups not controlled by the government, the *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades) and the *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order). A second index of crisis is the

disorganized public administration and the void in government control, especially during the development of Moro's case. Departing from Giovagnoli's *Aldo Moro e la democrazia italiana[1],* an account of the potential impact of his proposed policies and the drawbacks following his kidnapping will be explained. Moreover, as Selva and Marcucci underline in *Aldo Moro: quei 55 giorni,[2]* some conspiracy hypotheses will be integrated in explaining one of the most controversial periods of Italian political history. Finally, the third main point analyses the reactions to such critical situations, identifying well-known psychological mechanisms common in many violent crisis.

The idea of crisis will be, therefore, presented through the eyes of Italian scholars along with contemporary witnesses who experienced first-hand the confusion and pain of those years. A conclusive evaluation will highlight how this series of violent and abrupt attacks is still relevant to Italian politics and culture, which has been profoundly signed by facing such a crisis.

Political background and terrorist attacks

(Protesters of Autonomia Operaia, available at: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anni_di_piombo)

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[1] Agostino Giovagnoli, *Aldo Moro e la democrazia italiana*, trans. by the author (Roma, 2003)
[2] Gustavo Selva; Eugenio Marcucci, *Aldo Moro: quei 55 giorni,* trans. by the author (Soveria Mannelli, 2003), p. 121.

The political scenario during the Years of Lead was dominated by two major parties: first, the Christian Democrats, a Catholic inspired party which was strongly supported by the United States and had ruled the country, with the support of smaller parties, continuously since 1948; and second, the Communist Party with links to the Soviet Union. These were the Cold War years and Italy's strategic geographical position in the centre of the Mediterranean and the ever-growing number of NATO bases hosted meant that the United States of America financed every party that could help prevent a Communist Party victory and rise to government.[3]

The major drawback of this situation was the period of continuously alternating governments between 1960 and 1980. The majority of Christian Democrats, strongly influenced by the Church, were unable to understand the new demands of society, such as the role of women, better working conditions for factory workers or the new needs of young people. There was unequal growth between the north and south of the country. On the other hand, the Communist Party distanced itself further from Moscow, until its clean break in 1968, when it unambiguously condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Under the enlightened leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, the Communist Party became a party for progressives and governed many of the main Italian cities.[4]

This agreement caused a bilateral fear: on one hand, conservatives felt the Communist Party was achieving a seat in the new executive cabinet; on the other, all the socialists realised this same party was abandoning the principles of class struggle in favour of Western 'Americanphile' democracy. As a consequence, armed groups willing to have a more aggressive and active take on the national political agenda started emerging from the late

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[3] Giancarlo Caselli, Armando Spataro, 'La magistratura italiana negli anni di piombo' in *Storia e memoria del terrorismo italiano,* trans. by the author (2010), p. 410.

[4] Montanelli, Indro; Cervi, Mario, *L'Italia negli anni di piombo*, trans. by the author (Milano, 1991), p. 55.

1960s and began carrying out bloody attacks.[5] For many, the first act of the "*anni di piombo*"

was the Piazza Fontana massacre in Milan. On December 12, 1969, a bomb exploded in a

bank headquarters killing 17 people and injuring 88. No armed group ever claimed

responsibility for this attack which was initially attributed to a left-wing anarchist groups and

even led to the arrest of Giuseppe Pinelli – an anarchist who, during his interrogation and

under unclear circumstances, accidentally fell from the window of the police station.[6] His

death had great repercussions also in the public and entertainment spheres, inspiring the

Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo to write the play *Accidental death of an anarchist*.[7]

Investigations, however, then revealed that the attack had been designed and carried

out by an extreme right-wing group, with the likely support of some secret service agents.

The aim had been to intimidate the country, to create a sense of panic in order to justify

emergency measures and thus guarantee power to the most reactionary sectors of the political

class.[8] The massacre in Piazza Fontana was followed by other attacks, some even more

serious, such as *Italicus* train bombing in 1974 and the Bologna station bombing on 2 August

1980.[9] Neo-fascist groups carried out this terrorist strategy, with the likely support of

deviated members of the Italian secret services and possibly other international actors, above

all the American 'ally' agency, the CIA. Meanwhile the left extremists, who had deviated

from Marxist ideals, ideologically compared their violent actions with those of South

American liberation movements.[10]

Despite their extremist take on politics, initially the Red Brigades did not face

excessive hostility: they were overlooked by the government who did not consider them a

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[5] Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomia delle Brigate Rosse*, trans. by the author (Soveria Mannelli, 2009), p. 117.

[6] Giorgio Bocca, *Gli anni del terrorismo*, trans. by the author (Roma, 1989), p. 56.

[7] Dario Fo, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, trans. Simon Nye (London, 2003)

[8] Guido Panvini, *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa. La violenza politica nell'Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta*, trans. by the author (Torino, 2009), p. 9.

[9] Bocca, Gli anni del terrorismo (1989), p. 58.

[10] Vladimiro Satta, *I nemici della Repubblica*, trans. by the author (Milano, 2016), p. 74.

threat, and even gained some sympathizers within university milieus and other youth organizations. However, this complaisant attitude gradually disappeared after the ever-increasing kidnappings of industrialists, managers and relevant political figures by the members of the Red Brigades, who successively escalated in carrying out several murders. On the right, there was the neo-fascist-inspired Youth Front, and on the left the *Lotta Continua*, inspired by Marx.[11] Newspaper articles on the clashes in factories, universities and even high schools were commonplace. Some members of these extremist fringe groups joined ranks with openly declared terrorist groups and in some cases the clashes became fatal.

The Moro *Affaire*

(Aldo Moro in the first picture shared by the Red Brigades after his kidnapping, available at:

https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caso_Moro)

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[11] Ibid.

The most striking act of the "*anni di piombo*" was undoubtedly the kidnapping and subsequent murder of Aldo Moro, president of the Christian Democracy at the time. He was one of the key politicians to understand the great efforts that the Communist Party was making to free itself from its Soviet influence and gradually became more involved in governing the country. More than other members of his party, he understood the great social changes that were underway and the urgent need to modernize the country from a social point of view too.[12]

As Giovagnoli highlights, Moro played a pivotal role in moving a still conservative country and a leadership group towards more progressive and modern notions without betraying Italy's loyalty to its American ally.[13] He promoted the parliamentary law for the legalisation of divorce, confirmed by the 1974 national referendum and worked tirelessly to overcome many conservative and obsolete past regulations, symptoms of a country heavily controlled by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. He helped bring about some of the first achievements of factory workers, such as the right to union representation, better dismissal terms and an improvement of wages.[14] Both Moro and Enrico Berlinguer were instrumental in the demise of the unwritten tacit agreement known as *conventio ad excludendum* which prevented the left socialist strand from coming to power whatever the electoral outcome of the Communist Party. These socialists felt betrayed by the Communist Party, since they always believed it would have never compromised with a conservative bourgeoise government: the faith in progression and an eventual turnover of Italian bigoted policies was slowly vanishing. On the other hand, the Christian Democracy voters, the vast majority of Italians, were suspicious towards this agreement with the Communist Party: they represented the middle-aged Italian workforce and bourgeoise, who after the horrors of the war, were just

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[12] Panvini, *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa* (2009), p. 15.
[13] Giovagnoli, *Aldo Moro e la democrazia italiana* (2003), p. 137.
[14] Danilo Campanella, *Aldo Moro, filosofia, politica, pensiero,* trans.by the author (Milano, 2014), p. 47.

looking for a steady conservative management of national politics.[15] These circumstances made Moro a very serious danger for both poles. It was within this context, that one of the most serious institutional attacks ever to take place in post-war Italy unfolded.

On March 16, 1978, a new government led by Giulio Andreotti was about to be presented sworn in Parliament when a Red Brigades commando intercepted the car driving Aldo Moro to Parliament in the centre of Rome, killing his five body guards and kidnapping the statesman. The news rapidly spread across the country and created a huge emotional impact: students gathered everywhere in extraordinary assemblies, the shops in Rome lowered their shutters, many offices closed and all television shows were interrupted to broadcast special editions of the news.[16] The whole country was stunned: it was true that there had been many previous attacks causing other victims, but there had never been such an important one right at the heart of the state. Aldo Moro represented the heart of the state as an admired statesman, deemed to be close to the people thanks to his mild character and focus on dialogue.[17]

His captivity lasted 55 days, emotionally described in Selva and Marcucci's *Aldo Moro, quei 55 giorni*.[18] In exchange for Moro's release, the Red Brigades demanded the release of those who had been condemned for committing previous massacres. Selva and Marcucci effectively present the peculiar common front and agreement of both the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party against negotiating with the kidnappers.[19] The Communist Party, trying to dissociate itself from such violent acts, was quick to brand the Red Brigades as a terrorist group, a true enemy of the working class and of the people. From his captivity Moro sent 86 letters in which he asked for the state to intervene to save his life.

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[15] Bocca, *Gli anni del terrorismo* (1989), p. 66.
[16] Sergio Flamigni, *La tela del ragno. Il delitto Moro,* trans. by the author (Roma,1988), p. 27.
[17] Franco Angeli, *Il caso Moro: cronaca di un evento mediale*, trans. by the author (Milano, 2016), p. 13.
[18] Selva, Marcucci, *Quei 55 giorni* (2003),
[19] Ibid.

In some of them he turned to party comrades asking them to evaluate a possible negotiation, in one letter he even queried, "Is there an American and German claim in holding on to me?"[20] Pope Paul VI also intervened to ask for a gesture of piety. In his appeal, broadcast by Vatican Radio he begged the men of the Red Brigades to "return the honourable Aldo Moro to his freedom and back to his family, I turn to you, unknown and implacable adversaries of this innocent man and I beg you on my knees to free him unconditionally "[21] The Pope's appeal also fell on deaf ears and the terrorists continued to demand the release of thirteen detainees whom they called "communist prisoners held hostage in the regime's prisons"[22] On this basis, it was obvious that no party, even those who had timidly tried not to completely close the door on a possible negotiation, could be seen to agree or to deal directly with the Red Brigades. Moro was subjected to a ridiculous trial by the *brigadisti* which ended with a death sentence. Aldo Moro's body was found in a car in the centre of Rome, parked symbolically halfway between Christian Democrats and Communist Party headquarters.[23]

Why had Moro been chosen? This was the most important question, which notable scholars, politicians and writers tried to answer. One of the most valuable accounts is from Sicilian novelist and journalist Leonardo Sciascia's stands out. He emphasised how Mario Moretti, one of the leaders of the Red Brigades who organized the kidnapping, during the trials claimed that Moro was one of the main leaders of the Christian Democrats, therefore a cornerstone of the imperialist state and the multinationals as well as being instrumental in the Communist Party's rapprochement to institutions.[24] The Red Brigade's logic had therefore been to interrupt that process and accordingly lay their own foundations to become vanguards

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[20] Aldo Moro, Lettera Aldo Moro allegata al comunicato n.5 delle Brigate Rosse, trans. by the author, 1978. Available at: https://www.panorama.it/sequestro-moro-tutti-comunicati-delle-br-nei-55-giorni-di-prigionia
[21] Relazione Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul sequestro e l'assassinio di Aldo Moro, *Documento XXIII* (5), trans. by the author, 1978. Available at: http://www.senato.it/leg/08/BGT/Schede/docnonleg/30470.htm
[22] Ibid.
[23] Flamigni, *La tela del ragno. (*1988), p. 210.
[24] Leonardo Sciascia, *L'Affaire Moro,* trans. by the author (Palermo, 1978)

of a revolutionary process. However, the questions do not end there, as there is suspicion regarding whether the Red Brigades were unwittingly being used by others. There is no answer to this question, but undoubtedly many aspects of the story appear obscure.

Social Impact and collective memory

(Protesters holding a copy of the Corriere della Sera, whose first page states "Moro murdered", available at:

http://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/di-la-tua/238-senti/60898-il-caso-moro-il-ruolo-della-stampa.html)

Many questions arose through the years, and many newspapers and magazine titles revealed Italians' uncertainty. Could it be possible that a few discreetly organised people might have been able to keep the forces of law of an entire country in check? Is it possible that secret service agents, even non-Italian ones, were unable provide invaluable help? And lastly, how could this possibly have happened right in the midst of a season marked by a series of scene attacks and massacres in which vigilance was on high guard?

Despite the strength of the attack on the heart of the state, its institutions remained solid. Of course, the political consequences were enormous. The death of Moro led to a new season where there was potential agreement between Catholics and communists, and

subsequently an Italian anomaly persisted, one that essentially never saw alternating governments.[25] The Moro case remains vivid in the collective memory of Italy, but as various authors have rightly pointed out "very strangely the memory of the event differs from person to person and often does not coincide with historical truth."[26] Some people remember that Moro was executed with a blow to the head (which is not true), some say he was tied up (also not true) while others imagine complicity between the Red Brigades and leading Italian politicians.[27] Why are there so many different interpretations? As Anna Lisa Tota suggests in *La città ferita: Memoria e comunicazione pubblica della strage di Bologna, 2 agosto 1980,* "the social and psychological trauma of the decade have still not been healed"[28] Here, she refers also to the popular collective memory that initially tried to erase these events, only to subsequently leave place to a profound "dolore", in a similar way as other traumatic and violent historical events.[29]

Collective and individual memory become deeply intertwined when it comes to dealing with traumatic events. The Moro *affaire* affected both the private and public sphere as every Italian at the time felt deeply involved with the investigations, coming in their houses with the first 24 hrs television reportages and an innumerable quantity of articles and newspapers.[30] Everyone's sorrow was shared and amplified by the media: it was a national tragedy, mirroring the everyday suffering due to economic uncertainty, conservatism and understanding of a new modern world. This case had a very strong emotional impact, as one that everyone experienced not just as a political drama unfolding, but as a personal drama with an involvement that then led everyone to "personalize" the facts, enriching these with

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[25] Francesco Barbagallo, 'Il doppio Stato, il doppio terrorismo' in *Studi Storici*, trans. by the author (2001), p. 30.
[26] Filippo Cavallaro, *Memorie a confronto,* trans. by the author (Bologna, 2007), p. 92.
[27] Ibid. p. 101.
[28] Anna Lisa Tota, *La città ferita: Memoria e comunicazione pubblica della strage di Bologna, 2 agosto 1980,* trans by the author (Torino, 2003), p. 132.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Angeli, *Il caso Moro* (2016), p. 150.

details which were often invented. In people's minds, facts can detach themselves from

historical events which in turn can create a personal reconstruction with symbols processed

individually.[31] In a certain way, this event could be seen as the Kennedy case of Italy, an

assassination in a country that was unprepared and one in which there was a general sense of

insecurity that lasted and remained rampant for many years.

Signs of crisis sparked from the brutality of the extremist movements to the

ambiguous behaviour of the Italian government; nonetheless Moro's death, which seemed to

represent the final collapse of the young Italian Republic, presented a new challenge to

Italians, both scholars and non, who, united in grief and desire for rebuilding a new modern

country, changed Italian political attitude. Moro *affaire* was not a collapse, rather a wake-up

call for new political groups who came to constitute the basis of Italian "second Republic" in

the 1990s era of parliamentary renewal.

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[31] Tota, *La città ferita* (2003), p. 172.

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