

Civility and Fear in European Political Discourse: Political Thought of Guglielmo Ferrero

U radu se analizuje konstruk „straha” u evropskom političkom diskursu. Centralnu osu rada čini teorija Guglielma Ferrera (Guglielmo Ferrero) koji nadgrađuje Hobsovu teoriju o odnosu straha i političkih institucijam razmatranjem odnosa principa legitimnosti i straha. Istorija civilizacije je „škola hrabrosti”, a funkcija je principa legitimnosti da humanizira i civilizira odnos između vladodržaca i podanika. Posebno se analizira uticaj Ferrera na političku teoriju najznačajnijeg mađarskog teoretičara Istvana Biboa.

Ključne reči: strah; civilitet; legitimitet; Guglielmo Ferrero; István Bibó

‘To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.’
Bertrand Russell

Introduction

The influence of Guglielmo Ferrero¹ on European discourse on fear is remarkable, starting from World War I, until now. In his most important book on *Principles of Power*, Ferrero connected the need for legitimacy with human fear.²

Fear is not only an individual emotion, it is a social phenomenon, that can give an impetus to a self-feeding process. Ferrero de-

¹ Guglielmo Ferrero (1871–1942) was an Italian historian, sociologist, journalist and economist. Graduate in Law at the University of Turin and in History at the University of Bologna, beginning 1891 by 1894 he traveled in Europe and on 1897 he wrote a reportage *The Young Europe*. In 1893 he collaborated with the criminologist Cesare Lombroso writing the *Female Offender*. In 1902–1907 he published *The Greatness and Decline of Rome* (5 vol.), and was invited to the White House by Theodore Roosevelt in 1908. During the fascist regime (beginning from 1922) Ferrero refused to collaborate with the regime and was posed under control. On 1924 Ferrero as other antifascist intellectuals signed the *Manifesto of the Democratic Alliance* and in 1925 he wrote *Democracy in Italy* immediately censored by the regime. On 1929 Ferrero leaves Italy and he went to Switzerland; after one year he was invited to take a Chair in Contemporary History at the University of Geneva, and simultaneously hold a post in the European Institute of International Affairs. In 1936–1942 he published the trilogy: *Bonaparte in Italy*, *Reconstruction*, and *The Principles of Power*.

² Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Principles of Power*, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1942.

efined historical progress as the process of lessening fear, and power as the supreme manifestation of fear.

The root of fear in human mind is the man's death consciousness: „Fear is the soul of the living universe. The universe cannot enter into the sphere of life without becoming afraid... The highest living creature is man, who is also the most fearful and the most feared creature. He fears and is feared more than any other because he is the only creature with the idea, the obsession, and the terror of the great dark gulf of death into which the torrent of life has been pouring ever since the beginning of time; and because he is the only one that has the ability to invent and manufacture instruments to destroy life.”³

At a first look, Ferrero's approach seems to be very similar to Hobbes' argumentation of *Leviathan* when he said that: ‘Every man knows that he is stronger than certain of his fellows and weaker than others; that living alone in a state of complete anarchy, he would be the scourge of the weaker and a victim of the stronger, and would live in perpetual fear. That is why in every society, even the crudest, the majority of men give up terrorizing the weaker so as to be less afraid of the stronger – such is the universal formula of social order.’⁴ But what Hobbes did not realize was that – as Podunavac stresses – power based solely on coercion ‘could never free individuals from fear; it would be, rather, force them to live in permanent terror, limited freedom and fear. This is a key point in the instructive interpretation of fear and political power by Ferrero.’⁵

In this contribution I will focus on the three-facet Ferrerian discourse on fear: its connection with legitimacy, war, and power, and the influence of this three-dimensional vision on European discourse on fear.

1. *Fear as deficit of legitimacy*

The connection between fear and power is one of the leitmotiv of some European thinkers, as the Hungarian scholar István Bibó, the Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio, the French scholars Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Paul Ricœur, the German sociologists Heinrich Popitz and Zygmunt Baumann, and many others.⁶

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Milan Podunavac, *Fear and Politics* in „New Balkan Politics. Journal of Politics”, 2, 2000–2001.

⁶ Among them: Benjamin R. Barber, *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism and Democracy in an Age of Interdependence*, W. W. Norton & Co, New York, 2003; Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation*, Continuum, London & New York, 2004, & *Politics of Fear: Beyond Left and Right*, Continuum, London & New York, 2006; Arno Mayer, *Les Furies, 1789–1917, Violence, Vengeance, Terreur*, Pariz, Fayard, 2002; Carlo Mongardini, *Le dimensioni sociali della paura*, Franco Angeli, Milano,

Ferrero's theory of legitimacy can be firstly traced in some books written after World War I, e. g. *The Ruin of the Ancient Civilisation*.⁷ In this book Ferrero dealt with the causes of crisis of Antiquity, and identified the political causes for this crisis, tracing the phenomenon of crisis to troubles of legitimacy. According to him the Roman Senate, in terms of the *lex de imperio*, legitimized the Roman Emperors' powers. Ferrero emphasized that this recognition was not a formal but quite the opposite; however, in the eyes of his subjects it made emperor's power justifiable and *legitimate*. In other words, in the Roman Empire the principle of monarchism was tied to the principles of republicanism, more exactly to institutions of aristocratic republicanism, i. e. the senate legitimized monarch's power.⁸

After the murder of Septimius Severus (193–211) an endless *hysteria* of political violence in Roman society was established. Ferrero identified the causes of this extremely harmful social phenomenon in the collapse of the institution of Senate. According to him, the mere force cannot provide peaceful conditions for society, in other words, military forces cannot be a solid foundation for power. From this historical example Ferrero concluded that: 'where power has the first word, it will have the last one, to the point when the inner strength of the given civilization will have run dry. If force is used, it will demolish all social institutions, making human life without fear impossible.'⁹

When Ferrero wrote the *Ruin of the Ancient Civilisation*, Fascism was not still established in Italy, and his analysis should be considered prophetic in this sense. Even if he did not concealed the parallel between the crisis of Antiquity and the crisis of modern times following World War I, he was aware that after the war, the principles of legitimacy had failed to fulfil their function.

The other important book that had an enormous impact on the European discourse on fear is *Principles of Power*. In this book Ferrero distinguished two principles, the principle of dynastic legitimacy, and the modern principle of people's sovereignty. According to him the dynastic legitimacy is an ancient principle which sustained European political structures for over one thousand years.

2004; Milan Podunavac, op. cit.; Gianfranco Poggi, *Forms of Power*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001; Elena Pulcini, *Paura globale. Trasformazioni della paura nell'età della globalizzazione* in Maffettone, Sebastiano, & Pellegrino, Gianfranco (eds), *Etica delle relazioni internazionali*, Marco lungro di Cosenza, 2004, pp. 91–110; Paul Sloterdijk, *Luftbeben. An den Wurzeln des Terrors*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2002; Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Fear*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2008; Paul Virilio, *Cold Panic* in „Cultural Politics” 1(1), 27–30, 2005, pp. 27–30, & *L'administration e la peur, entretien mené par B. Richard*, Editions Textuel, Pariz, 2010; Kenton Worcester, Sally Avery Bermanzohn, & Mark Ungar (eds), *Violence and Politics: Globalization's Paradox*, Routledge, London, 2002

⁷ Ferrero, *La ruine de la civilisation antique*, Paris, 1921.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

After the French Revolution of 1789, this principle which emphasized the descending theory of power, declaring that power descends from God, was replaced by a new theory, according to which political power originated in people, i. e. was based on citizens' consensus. As Chevallier pointed out, the idea of legitimacy is the key concept of Ferrero's theory of power.¹⁰

For Ferrero, the opposition of legitimacy is usurpation; power, which is not backed by public conviction, is not justifiable power. What we have to do in order to defeat fear in the political field is to create legitimate governments: 'The government will be far less frightened of its subjects and of their revolting, knowing that it can count on their voluntary and sincere consent. Being less frightened of its subjects, it will not to have terrorise them nearly as much; less terrorized, the subjects will obey willingly and cheerfully. The principles of legitimacy humanize and alleviate authority, because it is accordance with their nature to be accepted sincerely, as just and reasonable, by everyone who rules and by the majority, at least, of those who obey. The acceptance of the principles is not always active, willed, conscious of their deeper meanings. It can be – and frequently is in the masses – a habit more than a conviction, a slothful legacy from the past, a kind of resignation to the inevitable.'¹¹

Ferrero's theory on fear and legitimacy greatly influenced the Hungarian scholar István Bibó. Bibó met Ferrero in Geneva at the University and at the *Institute des Hautes Études Internationales*, in 1934–35, when he spent an academic year attending Ferrero's lectures on the history of international relations. At that time, Ferrero was one of the most popular historians in Europe.

In 1914 the six-volume *The Greatness and Decline of Rome* was translated into Hungarian – and Bibó read this book, as Gábor Kovács says verifying some Bibó's unpublished manuscripts.¹² Bibó read other Ferrero's books, as *The Gamble: Bonaparte in Italy 1796–97*¹³, *The Reconstruction of Europe: Talleyrand and the Congress of Vienna 1814–15*¹⁴, and, of course, *The Principles of Power* (1942).

He was greatly influenced by Ferrero's theory of fear. In Bibó's most important works *On European Balance and Power* (1943–44), *The Paralysis of International Institutions and the Remedies* (1965–74), and *Reflections on the Social Development of Europe* (1971–72) we can detect the impact of Ferrero. In the book *On European Balance and Power* that Bibó dedicated to Ferrero, he wrote: 'I shall start with the existentialist thesis that man is the only living be-

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques Chevallier, *La légitimité selon Guglielmo Ferrero* in Chevallier et al., *L'idée de légitimité*, Puf, Pariz, 1967.

¹¹ Ferrero, *The Principles...*, op. cit.

¹² Gábor Kovács, *Guglielmo Ferrero and István Bibó: Comparative Interpretations of legitimacy*, Conference paper, Centro Studi sulla Storia dell'Europa Orientale, Trento, 2001.

¹³ Ferrero, *Aventure. Bonaparte en Italie 1796–97*, Plon, Paris, 1936.

¹⁴ Ferrero, *Reconstruction: Talleyrand à Vienne*, Plon, Paris, 1940.

ing aware of its mortality. The appearance of this consciousness is as likely to have caused disequilibrium in human souls as to have brought about wonderful opportunities. I am thinking back to that moment of history, long before even the most primitive human state, when man first must have realized and become conscious of the fact that he would die, and thereby formed a conscious image of his own existence to the degree that – as far as we know – no other living being is able to do. In other words: he ate from the Tree of Knowledge... Knowing that one will die brings about the possibility of an entirely new spiritual malady, which is likely to be at the ultimate root of both politics and religion: the consciousness of fear... If I wish to feel powerful and strong, in spite of the threats poised against me and the fear of death tormenting me, the best method for achieving this appears to be forcing my fellow humans to obey my will. Conversely, being forced to endure the power of others can accentuate my inherent sense of fear. This gives rise to the need for humans to be unencumbered by the coercion of others, to be liberated from fearing the power of others, that is to be free. Here I am positing the basic thought of the whole concept to be discussed later. It is important to recognize that hoping to escape the sense of fear by seizing over and coercing others is a false method... In other words. I am being misled if I attempt to escape my fears by increasing power, coercion, and force over others. Precisely the opposite is true: I can free myself from fear by neither being subject to the oppressive coercion of my fellow humans nor by holding any of them under my oppressive coercion.¹⁵

According to Bibó, the history of European civilization is the history of gradual humanization of power, and of gradual lessening fear. Like Ferrero, Bibó thinks that legitimacy is the main concern of political order. The book *On European Balance and Power* was written during the Second World War, and Bibó focused on the principles of good peacemaking as consequence of the lessening of fear. According to Bibó – and Ferrero – the Peace Treaty of Vienna was very successful, establishing an European order for long decades, and, quite the opposite, the Peace Treaty of Versailles has failed because it sowed the seeds of a new world war.

The influence of Ferrero's theory of fear and legitimacy can be also traced in Bibó's late work *The Paralysis of International Institutions and the Remedies*: 'Social theorists – he wrote – have searched for centuries for a valid justification for the legitimacy of power – one that transcends mere fluctuating military supremacy or personal tyranny. Not surprisingly, the forms of organisation, social structures, formulations of principles, and theoretical tenets connected with this problem have not developed evenly or to the same degree

¹⁵ István Bibó, *Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination* (Selected Writings), edited by Károly Nagy, translated by András Boros-Kazai, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991.

in every culture. Often the political thought and social structure of very advanced cultures stagnated due to exposure to brutal oppression. Sometimes the great thinkers in a society ignore the political and social events of their time and concentrate on more spiritual and transcendent matters. In two great cultures, the Graeco-Roman and the Chinese, both rulers and ruled defined the nature of power; and consequently, the masses who endured, supported or suspected the power élite were able to question it. Through this idea of justifying power and of needing legitimacy for power became a decisive factor in these two cultures and a force which deeply affected other societies. Sometimes the idea was used to justify existing power, at other times to provoke mass uprisings and transforming society through revolution. It is no historical chance that the most eminent and profound political philosophers in Greece, Rome and China were also involved in practical politics.¹⁶

As Kovács pointed out, in Bibó's study entitled *German Political Hysteria*, he declared that the main cause of German post-war political upheaval had been the crisis of legitimacy. In practice Germany suffered from the lack of a workable conception of legitimacy: 'The war had brought about the bankruptcy of the old aristocratic German elites, but the dynastic idea of legitimacy sank together with them. There were no new political élites capable of filling the political vacuum left by the war. The war and the German revolution demolished the territorial principalities and the aristocratic social structures, which though they had previously been the main obstacles to German social development, had also been the political authorities. They were not replaced with new, widely accepted political authorities.'¹⁷

Ferrero distinguished four steps of legitimacy: pre-legitimacy, quasi-legitimacy, legitimacy and illegitimacy, that correspond to different stages of fear, and still remain functional criteria of interpretation of the democratic processes in contemporary age. Principles of legitimacy are not formal criteria for deciding that a government legal or illegal; they are 'Geniuses of the City', and correspond to the form of living of a community; if these principles lack, the government is no more legitimate, and the fear gets hold of the power.

2. Fear in the power

When legality of social body is destroyed, 'even though the destruction may be justified by the vices or weakness of legality, fear invades everyone; the first to feel fear destroys themselves, after

¹⁶ Bibó, *The Paralysis of International Institutions and the Remedies. A Study of Self-Determination, Concord among the Major Powers, and Political Arbitration*, with an introduction by Bernard Crick, The Harvester Press, Hassocks, 1976.

¹⁷ Kovács, *op. cit.*

which it spread to others.¹⁸ In Ferrero's theory the most fateful consequence of the French Revolution is the 'spirit of fear'. Napoleonic state is the consequence of this state of fear, it is the archetype of modern totalitarian states. According to Ferrero, Napoleon weakened the idea of dynastic legitimacy because he created artificial states everywhere. He was full of fear and for this reason he was defeated. As his power was illegal and the illegal power continuously is in the state of fear, the fear *in* the power is the cause of its hyperbolic transformation, and the destructive side of the French revolution was the starting-point of this evolution.

Ferrero says that history is ruled by two principles: (i) the spirit of *adventure* and (ii) the spirit of *construction*. These two principles are continuously replacing each other during the history. In the age of spirit of adventure old institutions and values are questioned, and the world is dominated by restlessness. In the age of spirit of construction the world-order is established or re-established: it happens partly with new institutions and values, partly with old ones. When an old principle of legitimacy is not substituted by a new principle of legitimacy, fear gets hold to the power. It is what happened after the Peace Conference of Versailles when the situation changed, and the dynastic principle had lost its vigour.

Bibó too, following Ferrero, distinguished between two kinds of revolutions: (i) 'the constructive revolution' (*la révolution constructive*), and (ii) 'the destructive revolution' (*la révolution destructrice*). The constructive revolution lasts for centuries giving new impetus to society. The destructive revolution is just the opposite; a brief and devastating phenomenon, destroying the existing legitimacy with nothing to replace. In Bibó's interpretation, this process was the most important cause of the German Nazism as it was of the Italian Fascism for Ferrero.

Fear *in* power is the original formula of Ferrero's philosophy of history. Soon or later – he said – the dictators will be destroyed by the fear *in* the power itself. This status of fear is connected with the principle of authority.

The influence of Ferrero's theory of fear and revolution was very important not only in Bibó's frame of reference, being closely connected to the problem of legitimacy, but in other European scholar's visions. Another thinker who was greatly influenced by Ferrero's theory of fear and revolution is the French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie who recognised his intellectual inspiration to Ferrero's works.

Le Roy Ladurie has stressed the importance of Ferrero's *Reconstruction* and the concepts of legitimacy, fear, and revolution in various books.¹⁹ Another French philosopher, Paul Ricœur, also main-

¹⁸ Ferrero, *The Principles...*, op. cit.

¹⁹ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *L'État royal. De Louis XI à Henry IV (1460–1610)*, Paris, 1987, & *L'Ancien Régime*, Vol. I: *L'Absolutisme en vraie grandeur 1610–1715*; Vol. II: *L'Absolutisme bien tempéré 1715–1770*, Paris, 1991

tains Ferrero's thesis that the great age of authority alone can account for all authority: 'In fact, a revolution that outlived its wars of conquest became established and has endured because it was able to transform its own age into an argument for authority'²⁰. Ricoeur discusses Ferrero's vision on fear and power; the question is: 'Can we allow foundational myths, myths of great age, to replace the rational need for legitimation? Can we resign ourselves to eliminating the definition of „authority” the factor of recognition by virtue of which the creditability of power is dialectically balanced by the act of accrediting it?'²¹

Is it possible to transform an irrational principle of power (e. g. fear) into a rational principle of legitimacy?

According to Ferrero it is possible to reduce the fear in the power; he considers civilization as a 'school of courage'²². On the one hand, power is an institution that protects and keeps society united, on the other hand, however, it is a machine that oppresses its subjects.

Also the German sociologist Heinrich Popitz developed a theory on fear and power that is very close to Ferrero's vision. According to Popitz the most potent emotion is fear – fear of pain, physical violation, forceful restraint, death, at the hands of The Other – ; he emphasizes the centrality of fear in power: 'The ability to inflict physical damage on others, and the vulnerability to physical damage from others are essential components of the social process. The concern, fear, anxiety, we experience in face of one another constitute an ineliminable aspect of social experience. To exist together always means also to have fear for oneself and to protect oneself.'²³

As Poggi has stressed, the relation between fear and political power is a complex one, and Bobbio too has emphasized the role of fear during the Cold War: 'weapons of all kinds and degrees of potency' can be a serious danger for the survival of the human kind.²⁴ These thinkers are aware that technology can provide both material and social ways of organizing the collective production and use of weapons and other means of violence.²⁵

Popitz's focus on violence as the core of political power and his sustained emphasis on the boundlessness of violence accord well with Max Weber's views on the same topics, and particularly with the following three points.²⁶ First, 'the nature of political organization can only be specified by referring to a *means* which may not

²⁰ Ricoeur, Paul, *The Just*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2007, p. 104.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ferrero, *The Principles...*, op. cit., p. 215.

²³ Popitz, Heinrich, *Phänomene der Macht*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1992.

²⁴ Norberto Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987.

²⁵ Gianfranco Poggi, *Forms of Power*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001.

²⁶ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Society*, edited by Claus Wittich & Guenther Roth, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978.

be exclusive to it, but which is specific to it and intrinsic to its essence (and which occasionally becomes an end to itself) – namely, violence. As a consequence – second – it is not possible to characterize a political organization... by reference to the *ends* to which it orients its activity. On the one hand there is no end, be it the provision of food or the protection of the arts, which has not been pursued, albeit occasionally, by some political organization. On the other hand, there is no end, be it the safeguarding of the individual's security or the enforcement of laws, which has been pursued by all political organizations. Third, exactly because violence constitutes a means to so many ends, the possibility of exercising it becomes the target of multiple, competing ambitions on the part of individuals and groups. These contend with one another not just *by means of* violence, but also *over* violence itself, and particularly over the control of the dominant material and social technology of organized violence.²⁷

For man – wrote Popitz – ‘violence is not only that which occurs or has occurred and is being remembered; but also what could occur: the violence feared from the stranger, the fond wish of one's own triumphant violence. This horizon of the possible..... widely surpasses anything one can realistically project. Images of possible violence flash deceptively within all manner of day-dreams and nightmares... This imaginative activity has an un-bounding effect because it is not tied to experience, so that the purely imagined is even more restraint-less than our actual deeds. The power of the imagination can think up anything. Images of violence can force themselves upon our consciousness anytime, in response to no visible external stimulus... Finally, the imagination of one's own violence is boundless – dangerously so – exactly because it can dispense with any sense of risk... and represent itself as enormously successful.’²⁸

All these authors remind us of the harsh material basis of primordial political experience, and of the elemental nature of the emotions it addresses and it evokes.²⁹ As Ferrero has it, we fear others because we know them to be like ourselves. Fear is the very essence of political power. His vision is quite different from Max Weber who speaks of violence as the distinctive *means* of politics, not as its very essence.³⁰

To a greater or lesser extent, political power typically works to reduce the boundlessness of violence and its irrationality even if does so by building up its own potential for violence and occasionally by exhibiting it harshly and destructively. As Poggi says: ‘Suppose we reconsider a statement made earlier – „political power arises as a remedy to fear, but works by awakening fear’. If we rearrange it

²⁷ Popitz, *op. cit.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Poggi, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Ferrero, *The Principles*, *op. cit.*

and say instead that „political power works by awakening fear, *but* does so as a remedy to fear”, this new statement (also) throws considerable light on the nature of politics.³¹

As Ferrero wrote, at the very heart of the principles of legitimacy is the capacity to exercise fear, the mutual fear that always arises between power and its subjects. The most important part of society, government, can attain its perfect state, legitimacy, only by means of unspoken contract. The Principles of legitimacy are simply the different formulas of that ‘unspoken contract’.³² They are *justification of power*, i. e. the right to command. Such justification is an essential requisite of social order, since of the many inequalities between men none have so far-reaching consequences, and hence such need for justifying the inequality deriving from power (Ferrero 1942).

3. *The ‘great fear’, war, and totalitarianism*

Therefore for Ferrero the French Revolution was the period of the ‘great fear’,³³ (Ferrero 1939), that carried on to the revolutionary governments, i. e.: *illegitimate* governments. The „great schism”, and the war that followed the „great fear” consolidated an entirely new form of political domination that endangered civility and political liberty. Also the ‘European’ War (World War I) was an age of ‘great fear’, and consolidated another hyperbolic form of government based on terror: *totalitarianism*.

Totalitarianism’s distinctive principle is not properly fear, it is *terror*. Ferrero add to the category of despotism, conceived by Montesquieu as a form of government based on fear, a new category, that of ‘totalitarian’ power based on terror. The word totalitarianism was mentioned for the first time in Italy on 1923 by Giovanni Amendola as adjective, and on 1925 by Lelio Basso as substantive, during the antifascist debate. At the beginning the term had a negative meaning as it does now; it means hegemony, absolute dominion of the state and/or one party.³⁴ Ferrero probably heard of the term during the National Congress of Amendola’s Union on 1924; in his famous speech on democracy he analysed the reasons of the Italian and European political crisis in terms of lack of legitimacy. On 1925 Mussolini changed the meaning of the term into a positive significance; totalitarianism was conceived as the total inclusion of the society into the state by means of the fascist regime.

³¹ Poggi, op. cit.

³² Ferrero, *The Principles...*, op. cit.

³³ Ferrero, *Totalitarisme* in ‘La Dépêche’, June 23, 1935.

³⁴ Jens Petersen, *The History of the Concept of Totalitarianism in Italy* u Mair, Hans, & Bruhun, Jodi (eds), *Totalitarianism and Political Religions*, Routledge, London, 2004

Ferrero used for the first time this term on 1935 in an article in 'La Dépêche' where he wrote that totalitarianism is an exclusive, almost theocratic power without control, exercised by a party or a group.³⁵ Totalitarianism is also for him a regime in which the 'great fear' becomes 'terror'. Arendt will take this element as the distinctive principle of this kind of regime in her book on totalitarianism.³⁶

According to Ferrero the great contest in Europe for more than 200 years has been the battle for an imposed order and a given set of values through the power of the state versus the liberal society of free individuals who are at liberty to find their own purposes for living.³⁷ He explains the reasons for the social disruptions and civil wars that European society had gone through from the time of the French Revolution in 1789. The general conclusion is that the revolutions and civil wars of the 19th century and then the 'Great War' of 1914–1918 were in one way or another concerned with the problem of *political legitimacy* and fear. For ages, political legitimacy had been based on hereditary monarchy; but with the American and French Revolutions, the claim was made that political legitimacy derives from the consent of the governed, with each individual possessing certain inherent 'rights of man'.³⁸

More recently some French scholars have pointed out that the revolution cannot be confused with terror and totalitarianism. Arno Mayer tries to justify 'les furies révolutionnaires' starting from a comparative study on the French and the Bolshevik revolution. Mayer postulates that the revolutionary violence and terror derive from the fear of the masses and their traditions and religion: 'Mais on ne peut nier qu'historiquement, la terreur a été une propriété essentielle de la révolution, inhérente de surcroît à sa dynamique. A l'instar de la violence, la terreur est interactive, et l'on peut affirmer sans risque que dans le sillage des révoltes de 1790 et de 1917, il n'y aurait pas eu de terreur si la résistance intérieure et extérieure, ne s'était montrée aussi opiniâtre et aussi intransigeante.'³⁹

He resumes the conception of Ferrero about fear and power asserting that Ferrero considers the fear as a factor of acceleration of the deconstruction of a social order. This condition has been also underlined in a recent book titled *Violence and Politics: Globalization's paradox* by Worcester, Bermanzohn, and Ungar. The authors speak about the 'Triangle of Fear', considering the particular connexion between fear and democracy in a globalized world.

Starting from Ferrero's conception of fear, the authors state that the main question is to define fear itself: 'Few keywords in the field

³⁵ Ferrero, *Totalitarisme*, op. cit.

³⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt, 1951.

³⁷ Ferrero, *The Principles...*, op. cit.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Arno Mayer, *Les Furies, 1789–1917, Violence, Vengeance, Terreur*, Paris, Fayard, 2002, p. 86.

of politics have been so negative as „fear”... fear as a concept tends to be used as „face-value” term – as a concept that does not merit even a definition because it is presumed that everyone who has experienced fear in their lives, or has learned about it from others, knows what it is.⁴⁰ They stressed that a definition of fear is necessary for the democratic theory and consider fear as an ‘ideal-typical’ concept: ‘fear is the name that should be given to a particular type of psychic and bodily abreaction of an individual or group that is produced within a triangle of interrelated experiences. This triangle of experiences within which fear arises in certain times and places among human beings... is historically variable... The corners of this triangle are marked by: a) objective circumstances that are perceived by a subject or group of subjects to be threatening, b) bodily and mental symptoms that are induced by that object and experienced as such by the individual subject or group, and c) the individual’s or group’s abreaction against the object that has induced those symptoms in the first place.’⁴¹

Today we are afraid of terrorism, global warming, and financial meltdown. These are new kind of fear, ‘liquid fear’ as Baumann puts it.⁴² (Baumann 2006). They are not only – as the Norwegian philosopher Lars Svendsen asserts – ‘a by-product of luxury’.⁴³ Fear still remains a constitutive principle of power, it undermines that essential social glue: trust, which is the constitutive element of legitimacy. This oscillation between fear and legitimacy is the condition of human political life, now and then.

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⁴⁰ Worcester et al., op. cit., p. 231.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006.

⁴³ Svendsen, op. cit.

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