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Switzerland in the Face of International Terrorism:

Crisis Management, Cooperation and State Security between 1969 and 1976

(Working Title)

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In my thesis, I plan to analyse Switzerland's action and reaction to international terrorism in the early 1970s, its immediate responses to specific attacks as well as the development of a longerterm counter-terrorism strategy and policy. With terrorist attacks on Swiss soil, on Swiss citizens and interests abroad, the Swiss government was dragged into international disputes. With this, the fundamentals of Swiss policy and self-identity were affected, especially its self-understanding as a neutral and democratic state.

In foreign politics, the terrorist attacks challenged Switzerland's internationally recognised status of neutrality. In order to reassert its position and be part of international efforts to counter and prevent terrorism, Switzerland engaged in various multilateral fora for counter-terrorism cooperation. This thesis argues that these efforts went far beyond the traditional Swiss policy lines of neutrality, impartiality or isolation: Bern actively took part in these efforts, even, on occasion, in a leadership role.

In domestic politics, Switzerland strengthened its state security apparatus. I will investigate how, as Swiss policymakers became more sensitive to the growing European left-wing terrorist threat, they sought to re-establish stability and security at home, and how the government, police and the military came to decide on increasing the surveillance of Swiss citizens. Swiss policymakers not only feared terrorist attacks on Swiss soil, but also Communist subversion through undermining the state from within. The thesis argues however that the state security apparatus became too strong and undermined the democratic rights of Swiss citizens.

In this vein, the main research focus of the thesis is thus to highlight how Swiss counterterrorism conflicted with neutrality in foreign politics and with individual democratic rights in state security. Both, neutrality and democracy however constitute the fundamentals of Swiss self-identity and policy. The thesis is structured along three main themes. The first two chapters will analyse Switzerland faced with terrorism – at home as a platform for

Palestinian terrorism, and abroad entangled in Latin American political violence. The third and fourth chapters investigate Switzerland's policy responses, strategies and engagement in international cooperation. The last three chapters explore how, in a climate of increasing transnational left-wing terrorist threats, the Swiss state security system enhanced its counter-terrorism capacities and developed spying techniques to closely monitor the perceived “enemies from within.”

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