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COUNTER-TERRORIST STRATEGIES IN WESTERN EUROPE: A  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GERMANY, ITALY, SPAIN AND  
THE UK

Diego Muro



**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE**  
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A Comparative Analysis of Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK*

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## **Abstract**

What should an effective counter-terrorist strategy look like? Can any lessons be drawn from past European experiences? How does terrorism end? Having answers to these three questions would be of great help to both practitioners and scholars interested in the disbandment of home-grown terrorist groups. Preventing processes of radicalization and, if at all possible, enabling the reverse process of de-radicalization has become a priority objective for EU Member States. And yet, there is a curious gap in the literature with respect to the precipitants and facilitators of terrorist disengagement. This paper provides a qualitative analysis of how four Western European states – Italy, Germany, Spain, and the UK – dealt with groups employing political violence and terrorism, and what lessons can be learned from these policies that can be applied towards future counterterrorism campaigns. The disbandment of two ethno-nationalist groups - the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the political-military branch Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA-PM) - and two revolutionary groups - the Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Red Brigades (RB) – are examined in order to identify some of the policies that facilitate abandonment, defection, decline or defeat.

## **Keywords**

Political violence, terrorism, exit strategy, disbandment, stalemate



## Introduction

In the last decade, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of investigations and resources devoted to the study of political violence.<sup>1</sup> To a large extent, interest in the topic has been fostered by the attacks in New York (2001), Bali (2002), Istanbul (2003), Madrid (2004) and London (2005) amongst others. Since the year 2001, there has been a veritable flood of publications on terrorism - case-studies, reports, monographs and textbooks - which analyse the casualty-maximising terrorism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a phenomenon that displays both old and new characteristics. Apart from its virulence, the novelty of this new form of extreme violence is that some of the attacks, like the ones in New York or London, were not only committed by 'foreign terrorists' but also by individuals who had been born, educated and moved unobtrusively in the countries they attacked. The lines that divide domestic and international politics have been further blurred and home-grown terrorists are sometimes inspired by foreign events, international crisis and/or foreign policies. As a result, governments worldwide have become increasingly concerned about how to devise comprehensive counter-terrorist strategies which can prevent lethal harm being done to innocent and unsuspecting civilians (Katzenstein 2003).

Traditionally, the literature on terrorism has focused on why individuals or groups resort to political violence. Scholars have examined what kind of grievances, resources and political opportunity structures lead to terrorism and, once this tactic has been adopted, how underground groups are able to sustain popular support (aims, goals, discourses of legitimation, etc.). There has also been considerable research on the psychology of terrorism and on whether violence is a 'rational' choice – the result of a cost-benefit analysis by the perpetrator - or the consequence of 'emotional' politics practiced by temperamental hot-blooded men. The failure to provide a coherent definition of this intimidatory tactic has triggered numerous debates and, as today, there is no agreed characterization of terrorism. This paper uses a working definition of terrorist violence, according to which 'terrorism is political violence carried out by non-state actors, usually intended to influence an audience'.

In spite of all the scholarly activity, few scholars have carried out research on how terrorism ends.<sup>2</sup> There are very few comparative studies on counter-terrorist strategies, both cross-national and cross-temporal, which analyse government campaigns in a variety of countries. The research presented here maps public policies in four European countries and gives some pointers as to what has constituted a

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<sup>1</sup> A new field of expertise, terrorism studies, and a group of specialized experts emerged in the period between 1972, when terrorism was initially identified as a serious problem in its contemporary form, and the late 1970s, by which time something like a field of expertise had been assembled. On the rise of the 'terrorist expert' see Herman, E. and O'Sullivan, G. (1991) *The Terrorism Industry: The Experts and Institutions that Shape Our View of Terror* (New York: Routledge) and Lisa Stampnitzky (2008) *Disciplining an Unruly Field: Terrorism Studies and the State, 1972-2001* (University of California at Berkeley PhD).

<sup>2</sup> Notable exceptions include Crenshaw, Martha (1996) 'Why Violence is Rejected or Renounced: A Case Study of Oppositional Terrorism', in Thomas Gregor (ed.) *A Natural History of Peace*, Nashville, Tenn: Vanderbilt University Press; Wilkinson, Paul (1999) 'Politics, diplomacy and peace processes: Pathways out of terrorism?', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11:4, 66-82; Kurth Cronin, Audrey (2006) 'How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups-', *International Security*, 31(1); Mason, T, Crenshaw, M, McClintock, C, Walter, B (2007) 'How Political Violence Ends: Paths to Conflict Deescalation and Termination', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, August 2007; Kurth Cronin, Audrey (2008) *Ending Terrorism: Lessons for Defeating al-Qaeda*, Abingon, Oxon: Routledge for International Institute for Strategic Studies; Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan (2008) *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*, Routledge; Seth G. Jones & Andrew Libicki (2008) *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida*. RAND; and Horgan, John (2009) *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*. Routledge. Horgan, John (2006) 'Disengaging from Terrorism', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 18 (12), pp. 34-37. , Horgan, J. (2003) 'Leaving Terrorism Behind', in A. Silke (ed.) *Terrorists, Victims and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and its Consequences*. London: Hohn Wiley.

comprehensive and coherent counterterrorist strategy in each context.<sup>3</sup> The paper is structured as follows. A first section introduces the literature on how violence ends, examines different pathways to terrorist disengagement and introduces the range of policies available to state institutions. These range from repressive policies that can be implemented by a variety of security forces to political actions that deal with the social, political and economic milieu in which terrorist groups operate. A second section provides a comparative study of the disbandment of the Red Army Faction (RAF), the Red Brigades (RB), Euskadi Ta Askatasuna Político-Militar (ETA-PM) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in order to understand how specific terrorist groups have ended. The section operationalises anti-terrorist policies as the independent variable and critically examines the public order policies implemented by the governments of Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. A final section provides a set of concluding remarks.

### How does violence end?

Terrorism scholars have been more interested in studying why people become engaged in terrorism rather than why they end their involvement. Compared to other fields, experts of terrorism have devoted little attention to the ways in which political violence ends. In peace and conflict studies, for example, there have been numerous studies on how civil conflicts come to an end.<sup>4</sup> The accumulation of research on civil wars has contributed to the development of reliable datasets on civil wars that have made possible quantitative research on conflict resolution and termination.<sup>5</sup> Scholars from security studies have also studied the causes, length and resolution of civil conflicts while others have focused on the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. From a different discipline, sociologists have studied processes of disassociation, disengagement and disidentification in a variety of settings (Fillieule 2005). In particular, sociologists of religion have studied the exit strategies from religious institutions, sects and cults.<sup>6</sup> The work on Catholic convents of Helen Ebaugh, a former nun herself, needs to be highlighted for its particular resonance for terrorist disengagement. In her book *Becoming an Ex* (1988), she argues that individuals move in and out of many roles during their lifetime. Drawing on interviews with 185 people, she explores how different people including ex-doctors, ex-nuns and transsexuals cope with changes in their identity. What emerges from this diverse sample is that there is a common process of ‘role-exit’ – from disillusionment with a particular identity, to searching for alternative roles, to turning points that trigger a final decision to exit, and finally to the creation of an identity as an ex.

Besides scarcity, research on the end of terrorism has faced an additional problem, and that is to conceptualise the process that needs to be explained. The lack of a common terminology has created slightly different research agendas with scholars examining ‘exit strategies’, ‘pathways out of terrorism’, ‘disengagement from disengagement’ and ‘de-radicalization’ (Kurth Cronin 2008: 7; Jones & Libicki 2008: xiii; Bjorgo & Horgan 2009). A related issue, the methodological decision to decide what level of analysis should be studied when examining terrorist disengagement, is yet another

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3 According to Bruce Hoffman, a successful counter-terrorist campaign contains four elements: (1) an effective overall command and coordinating structure; (2) confidence-building or ‘legitimizing’ measures and anti-terrorist legislation developed to weaken the terrorists while strengthening public support for the government; (3) coordination within and between intelligence services; and (4) foreign collaboration between governments and security forces. Hoffman & Morrison-Taw 2000: 19.

4 Most notably the book by Roy Licklider (1993) *Stopping the Killing. How Civil Wars End*. New York & London: New York University Press.

5 The most important large, comparative projects in peace, conflict and negotiation studies are the Correlates of War (CoW) project (<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>), the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) ([www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se)), Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict’s COSIMO (<http://hiik.de/en/kosimo/index.html>), and the Mediation Project (<http://www.pose.canterbury.ac.nz/jbercovitch/mediation.html>). For a critical analysis of the methodology used by these datasets see Marco Pinfari’s *How Do Civil Wars End*.

6 Wright (1983) ‘Defection from New Religious Movements: A test of Some Theoretical Propositions’, in D.G. Bromley and J.T. Richardson (eds., 1983) *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal and Historical Perspectives*. New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press.



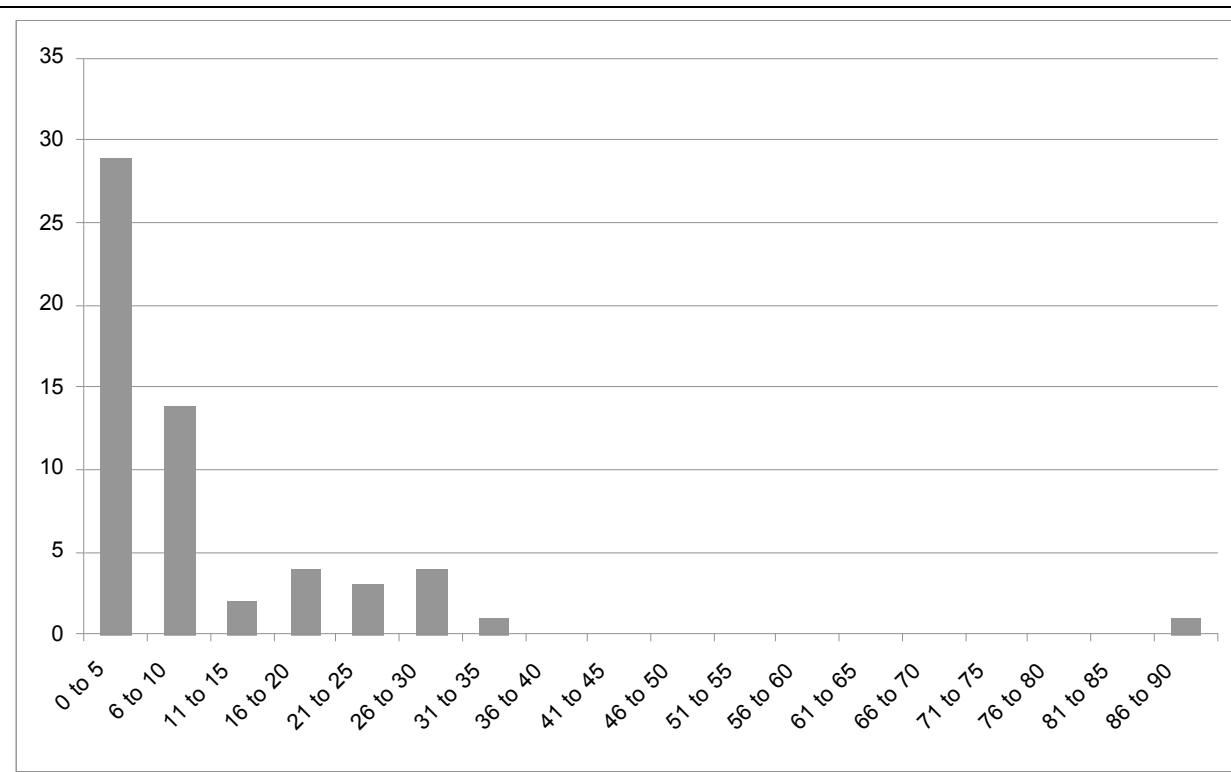
indicator of the difficulties of carrying out research in this emerging area. What should the expert eye focus on when examining the end of terrorism? Should one examine counter-terrorist policies and legal measures designed to facilitate the end of a terrorist group? Or should one instead focus on the internal group/movement dynamics that make quitting terrorist activities possible? Another possibility would be to examine social backgrounds and life-stories in order to explain both participation and disengagement from terrorist groups. According to the Italian sociologist Donatella della Porta, a comprehensive explanation of political violence lies in a research design that integrates three different levels of analysis: socio-historical contexts (macro level), organizational dynamics (meso level) and individual stories (micro level) (della Porta 1995: 9 & 187). Even though her comparative analysis of political violence in Italy and Germany focused on the interaction between the state and the underground groups in order to explain the radicalization of the latter, her work is an important reminder of the need for multi-level analysis of when explaining the end of terrorist campaigns.

Contrary to the view that terrorism is pervasive, very few groups decide to employ political violence, and even fewer groups are able to sustain its use over a long period of time. The point is that, eventually, all terrorist campaigns end. According to the list of terrorist groups publicly available at the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident database, the average lifespan of groups worldwide is between five and ten years, at the very most.<sup>7</sup> The results are consistent with the historical experience of terrorism in Western Europe. As can be seen in Figure 1, between the years 1968 and 2006, 55 European groups began and ended their armed campaigns. As the first column indicates, the majority of groups (29) lasted from 0 to 5 years (52.7%) whereas the second column suggests that 14 groups lasted between 6 and 10 years (24.5%). By collapsing columns 2 to 6, we come to the conclusion that 14 groups lasted between 10 and 35 years (24.5%) whereas the last column indicates that only one group, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), managed to conduct a long-term campaign for more than 35 years.<sup>8</sup> In Western Europe, the overwhelming majority of terrorist groups (77.2%) took less than ten years to disband giving an average age of 10.5 years.

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7 Up to 648 terrorist groups worldwide were active between 1968 and 2006 but the RAND-MIPT only registers the exact lifespan of 402 of them. Some of the less-known groups had very short lives, some disbanded voluntarily and others disappeared without a trace. In most of these cases, there is no 'official' date of disbandment and it is not possible to calculate its lifespan.

8 According to the RAND-MIPT Database, the fourteen groups that lasted between 10 and 25 years are the following: Baader-Meinhof Group (Federal Republic of Germany); Armed Revolutionary Action (Mozambique, Portugal); Red Army Faction (Germany); Armenian Revolutionary Army (Belgium, Portugal, U.S., Austria, Canada, Turkey, Armenia); Red Brigades (Italy); Masada, Action and Defense Movement (France); Terra Lliure (Spain); Revolutionary People's Struggle (Greece); Basque Fatherland and Freedom (Spain); Iparretarrak (France); Revolutionary Organization 17 November (Greece); Breton Revolutionary Army (France); Revolutionary Nuclei (Greece); First of October Antifascist Resistance Group (Spain).

**Figure 1: Lifespan of Terrorist Groups in Western Europe, 1968-2006**

Source: RAND-MIPT Database

Note: RAND defines terrorism as ‘violence calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm to coerce others into actions they would not otherwise undertake, or refrain from actions they desired to take. Acts of terrorism are generally directed against civilian targets. The motives of all terrorists are political, and terrorist actions are generally carried out in a way that will achieve maximum publicity.’ See: <http://www.rand.org/ise/projects/terrorismdatabase/about/scope.html>. Accessed on 1 July 2009.

Figure 1 indicates that underground groups employing political violence eventually end their activities but *how* does this really happen? What is the process by which violence is abandoned? Following the work of Jones & Libicki, this paper argues that terrorist groups can take one of four pathways to collective disbandment: (1) victory, (2) defeat by military means, (3) defeat by policing and (4) politicization (Jones & Libicki 2008: 10).

As can be seen in Figure 2, the **first pathway** to disbandment is victory. From the point of view of a terrorist group, the first reason why a campaign might come to an end is because the group employing political violence has obtained its strategic objectives (Dershowitz 2002; Pape 2005). Although uncommon, armed groups such as decolonization movements have disbanded voluntarily after achieving some or all of their goals. Historical examples include the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa; the Irgun Zvai Leumi in Israel, the Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston (EOKA) in Cyprus, and the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale, or FLN) in Algeria. In these cases, the strategic decision to use political violence proves itself to be a ‘rational action’ that maximizes the group’s utilities. On most occasions, however, clandestine organizations do not obtain clear victories and are forced to engage violently with the government authorities for long periods.

If a terrorist group does not obtain a decisive victory, it could be that the state has launched a counter-terrorist offensive to fight the threat. As indicated in Figure 2, 'no victory' by the terrorist group will be met by government action such as the deployment of the police or the armed forces against the source of insecurity. A detailed list of policies will be discussed in the following section but, for the time being, it is worth stating that the repertoire of available instruments ranges from leadership decapitation and deterrence, to law enforcement, infiltration and the use of diplomacy amongst others. In the case of elected governments, the most effective strategies and techniques are taken under the rule of law and in accordance with the principles of liberal democracies. Contrary to what may happen in authoritarian regimes, pluralistic systems tend to launch initiatives that are helpful in building public confidence and support for the government's counterterrorist campaign.

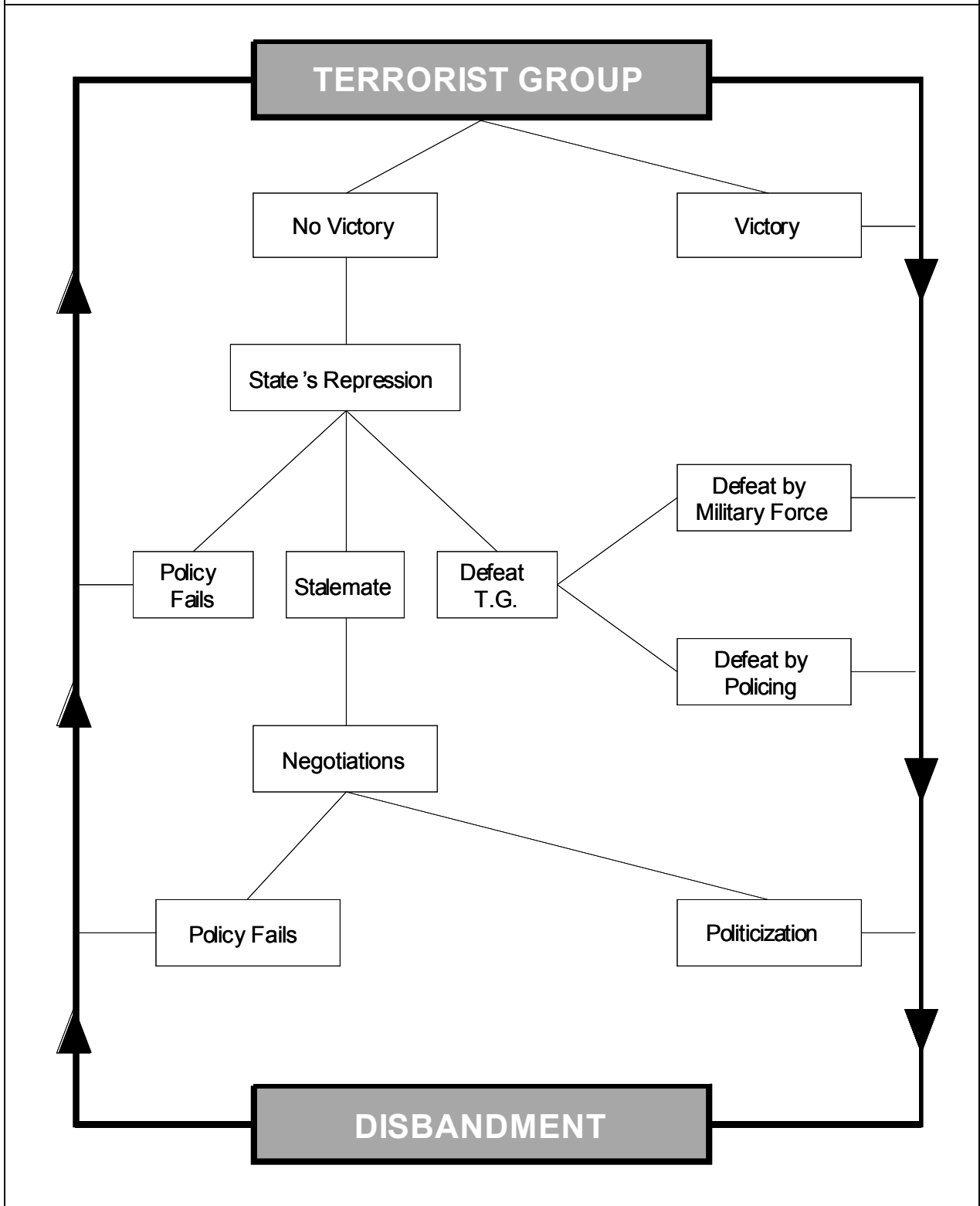
**The second pathway** to disbandment is the result of successfully deploying the military. The armed forces can be effective against a large and territorially concentrated insurgency but, as the Basque and Northern Irish cases suggests, their chances of success decrease against a small, urban and mobile guerrilla movement. With the exception of a few cases, the deployment of blunt fire-power is unlikely to lead to the disbandment of a terrorist group. In this sense, countering a clandestine group is different to fighting an insurgency or civil conflict. Military force may fail to make a strict distinction between militants and the wider population and may turn the local population against both the forces deployed and the incumbent government.

**A third pathway** to disbandment follows the use of a range of policy instruments based on policing and law enforcement. Liberal democracies tend to favour these instruments when confronting terrorism. These public order policies are more selective and are based on the expertise and intelligence that local and national police forces have on the groups. Other factors (economic sanctions, improving intelligence, etc) can contribute to the end of a terrorist group but effective policing tends to be the primary factor in pushing a group over the edge.

The **fourth pathway** to disbandment describes the process by which a terrorist group gives up weapons and joins the political process. The decision to adopt conventional methods is often a reaction to government policies and, in particular, to a socioeconomic reform, political settlement or peace negotiation. In some societies, the emergence of a terrorist group tends to be associated to a social movement that is trying to define and articulate a given problem. Hence, dealing with the socio-political side of the problem as well as with the security dimension is a 'must' for any society trying to solve a problem of home-grown terrorism. A violent group might be the tip of the iceberg, an indicator of a much wider perceived problem. Thus, in the long run, dealing with the social, political or economic nature of the given problem might be less costly than dealing with the consequences of that problem, namely terrorism.

Finally, when a terrorist group splits there might be a partial disbandment. It is not uncommon for a moderate faction to disengage from terrorism whereas a more radical faction continues to wage war against its enemy. The figure indicates this duality possibility with the bottom box which is inserted in a wider logic of circular violence.

Figure 2: Four Pathways to Terrorist Disbandment



### ***Repression vs. Politics***

Comprehensive counter-terrorist campaigns approach political violence or terrorism as a challenge that needs political imagination and an integrated security strategy. Assuming that most terrorist problems have these two dimensions, the first impulse for any government would be to use a combination of ‘carrot and stick’ policies. The tricky issue is to find out the adequate combination of these two elements but also their precise timing. Should governments start with repressive measures and follow with political ones or, rather, should politics come first and the use of force second? Regardless of the order, how do state officials know when it is time to change tactics? How do policy-makers know when the old policies have ceased to provide returns against their enemy?

Assuming that a terrorist group exists, a liberal democracy can choose from a list of policy instruments (Van Leeuwen 2003; Cronin & James 2004; Alexander 2006; Art & Richardson 2007). Historically, the first reaction of state authorities to the emergence of a violent group is to use law enforcement measures in order to dismantle an organization. The range of options may run from arresting key leaders of the group to empowering law-enforcement agencies to favour the adoption of nonviolent tactics or to supporting good policing which safeguards the rule of law and upholds the rights and safety of individuals. Choosing the right policy depends on the evaluation the state has made of each given group. Different policies are used depending on whether the group is ‘left-wing’, ‘right-wing’, ‘religious’ or ‘nationalist’ and whether its social support is geographically concentrated or whether it is reduced to a small social group or caste. The issue of ideological motivation is especially important as both religious and ethno-nationalist groups tend to have strong sources of support among the local population whereas contemporary far right groups and Marxist-Leninist groups tend to rely on smaller urban networks. The nature of the grievance also matters when entering political negotiations. Religious groups with spiritual and cosmic-like goals might be more reluctant to enter a process of negotiation than a group with a narrowly-defined goal which can be tackled by a set of public policies.

The first repertoire of policies available to a given state is extensive and ranges from very specific repressive practices that focus on the short-term to more comprehensive programmes of socio-political measures that need to be implemented in the medium and long-term:

1. **Decapitation.** The government may capture or kill the terrorist leadership. Terrorist groups are often hierarchical and they rely on charismatic leaders who are able to frame the injustices endured by the social group and articulate a doctrine of mobilization which could eventually eliminate the unjust situation. If key members are apprehended, the radical message sometimes fails to resonate amongst the group’s followers. In terms of preemptive actions, targeted killings only work if the organization is both hierarchical and oriented towards a charismatic leader. Well known cases in which a terrorist leader has been arrested or killed include the Peruvian Shining Path (Abimael Guzman), the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo (Shoko Asahara) and the Ulster’s Real Irish Republican Army (Michael McKevitt).
2. **Deterrence.** This offensive measure involves using the military to make the members of the terrorist group aware of the high risk of retaliation (capture or death) they are facing unless they refrain from aggression. By raising the costs of using terror, and making clear that the government is ready to inflict unacceptable damage, some members may be deterred from continuing their membership. The problem with this military strategy is that deterrence theory was originated in the Cold War and it involves the deployment of immense retaliation. Unless the state discriminates between civilian and terrorist targets, the use of deterrence may lead to human right violations which may seriously damage the legitimacy and credibility of the liberal democracy or worsen the security situation as militants demand retaliation.
3. **Enforce Law and Order.** A state affected by terrorism can use police and security units to infiltrate and collect intelligence on terrorist groups and pursue the arrest, prosecution and incarceration of their members. On top of enforcing the role of the police, the security services and the criminal justice system, special legislation can be approved in order to deal with terrorist suspects (typification of new crimes but also suspension of habeas corpus, detention

times, interrogation techniques, etc.). The danger of approving special counter-terrorist legislation is that it might politicize the issues at stake. Indeed, special legislation corroborates the point militants are trying to make about their self-portrayal as something other than terrorists.

4. **Divide movements between moderates and radicals.** Most social organizations are made up of individuals with different goals and with values ranging from intransigence to pragmatism. Offering incentives (aid, privileges, etc.) to those willing to compromise can underline internal divisions and lead to splintering. Also, following a ‘divide and win’ strategy, might help to marginalize the more radical elements in favour of a more moderate leadership which, eventually, could be more likely to enter into negotiation.
5. **Curb sources of funding.** Terrorist groups need considerable financial resources to remain active. Terrorist groups often resort to extortion, illegal activities or, simply, the voluntary donations of their supporters to remain ‘in business’. In this respect, it is worth highlighting the involvement of the IRA in criminal activities and drug trafficking, the ‘revolutionary tax’ of ETA or the attacks on banks by both the Red Brigades and the Baader-Meinhof. In any of these cases, disrupting the sources of funding (national or international) makes more difficult the acquisition of weaponry and the mobility of the terrorists.
6. **Erode domestic support.** Terrorist groups try to speak on behalf of a disadvantaged social group and argue that, although violence is a necessary evil, they are serving some greater good. Cutting the links with the support base and de-legitimising the violent means are essential steps that lead to the isolation of the gunmen from the wider constituency.
7. **Erode international support.** Combating terrorism is primarily the responsibility of national governments but diplomacy is crucially important. Governments can enhance international cooperation among themselves by improving cross-border sharing of intelligence and police information, extending the reach of warrants, and strengthening external border controls. There is also the possibility of creating a ‘list of terrorist organizations’ and asset-freezing orders which may affect individuals but also their family members, business partners and inner circle. Groups that receive sponsorship, training, weaponry or shelter from third states can also be targeted. In all these cases, individual sanctions (travel bans, freezing of assets in international banks, etc) that make key figures accountable are more likely to achieve the desired result than blunt sanctions. Sanctions on the whole polity or policies of ‘naming and shaming’ rogue states are unlikely to be effective and usually rally the population in support of its elites.
8. **Develop International Law.** International collaboration can be strengthened through the provision of conventions and agreements that facilitate the arrest and extradition of terrorists. The establishment of public lists of wanted terrorists and intelligence exchange mechanisms for sharing information are all measures which can aid in eroding the international support of the terrorist group.
9. **Facilitate access to political channels.** When a government recognizes that a violent movement is raising real grievances, officials can facilitate the development of a legitimate organization or political party that articulates demands for change peacefully. Also, once they have been created, institutions can be used to facilitate agreements and, if at all possible, improve the situation in question.
10. **Deal with the root causes of terrorism.** Last but not least, a government can try to understand and deal with the origins of terrorism.<sup>9</sup> Although commonsensical, this measure is also extremely problematic. First, identifying the cause of terrorism may not be a straightforward process as different actors have different views on the nature of the problem and also on how best to treat. Second, dealing with the problem that first gave rise to terrorism may not necessarily lead to the disbandment of the group as successive generations of terrorists are motivated by a different set of issues. Regardless of these caveats, security

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<sup>9</sup> For an interesting discussion on the relationship between US Foreign Policy and terrorism see Michael Mann’s *Incoherent Empire* (2003) and Paul R. Pillar’s *Terrorism and US Foreign Policy* (2001).

agencies tend to monitor the societal conditions that contribute to the reproduction of terrorism.

If the repertoire of policy instruments mentioned above do not achieve the expected results, it is quite likely that the terrorist campaign will prolong itself until the group either decides to give up weapons or until the state needs to revisit its set of security policies. The state at which both actors are in equilibrium and none can improve its situation unilaterally is, by definition, a situation of balance but not an entirely satisfactory one since none of the actors has won decisively. According to William Zartman, a political scientist based at Johns Hopkins University, this is a mutually hurting stalemate, or situation in which neither side can win, but neither side wants to back down or accept loss either (Zartman 1989, 1993 & 2001). Stalemates emerge for a number of reasons: failed tactics, depletion of resources, loss of support, and so on. The problem is that 'players' in conflict often fear recognizing that the conflict is going nowhere and find it difficult to transform the nature of the conflict and consider a settlement. Eventually, conflicts reach a point at which a sort of equilibrium sets in, in which neither side is getting any closer to achieving its goals and in which no one is happy with the situation. They come to realize that the costs of continuing the struggle exceed (sometimes greatly exceed) the benefits to be gained. This is the situation known as the mutually hurting stalemate which is often 'ripe' for the introduction of proposals for settlement.

Issues of 'perception' and 'timing' are essential elements of the mutually hurting stalemate. Spacing policies in time is crucial in deciding to change the course of a counter-terrorist campaign. Knowing the state of the opponent is crucial in order to predict the next set of moves. The ability of the security forces in planting informers in terrorist organizations can greatly reduce their morale and operational capability. An inside knowledge of the opponent and its support network always helps in designing a new course of action. Whether the opponent is a unified actor or whether moderate and radical wings exist within the same movement is crucial. Similarly, knowing what kind of opposition one has within one's own rank and file is also important. This is not only the case for terrorist groups but also for democratic governments that need to justify risky strategies (such as launching a process of negotiation with terrorists) in front of a pluralist audience made up of a parliament, the opposition parties, civil society, the media and domestic public opinion.

When starting political negotiations with a deep-rooted terrorist group, a government needs to pay attention to a series of issues (Wilkinson 2001: ch. 4). Given this is a risky strategy, the government must be united in its decision to open negotiations. Similarly, both the government and the state need to be at a strong moment in order to negotiate effectively. Ideally, the terrorist group will be at a low point, if at all possible in the middle of a crisis, with low membership levels and with a divided rank-and-file. If the organizational capabilities of the group have been diminished, it is more likely that the network of supporters will be in the middle of a process of general introspection and self-evaluation. However, it is important to point out that the measures that lead to the weakening of a terrorist group will not necessarily lead to its final disbandment. In order to make the full transition from violence to politics, violent groups must come to understand that their interests are better served through a political process rather than by the use of terror. Hence, entering a credible round of negotiations is not a short-term strategic decision but a gradual realization that the movement needs to adapt to a new situation and that ideological evolution is necessary.

Beyond a ripe moment known as mutually hurting stalemate, the state may choose from a repertoire of policies and proposals for settlement:

1. **Divide Political and Technical Issues.** When preparing peace talks, it is important to distinguish between 'political' and 'technical' issues and deal with them separately. The resolution of the issues at stake will be facilitated if the terrorist group is linked to a social movement or political party that can 'voice' its political concerns. Among the technical issues one can count the decommissioning of weapons, the prison population, release of inmates, etc.

Among the most political issues, one can count measures of decentralization, symbolic issues, communication strategies of the negotiations to the public, etc.

2. **Need for discretion, not secrecy.** Good agreements are often made by a few people behind close doors. However, discretion does not mean that complete confidentiality should dominate the process. Extreme secrecy might also lead to failure as happened during the 1993 Oslo Accords between the Israelis and Palestinians. Unless the stakeholders of the group are somehow involved, negotiators will be unsure of whether the agreement will be supported by their constituency.
3. **International and/or professional mediation.** Negotiations often benefit from the presence of mediators. Religious representatives, international organizations or other third parties can facilitate the development of trust among negotiators and provide a safe environment where agreements can be reached.
4. **Duration matters.** The length of the negotiations is important in facilitating the transition from bullets to ballots. Indeed, the longer that guns are silent, the more difficult it is for a terrorist organization to return to its old practices. If activists and supporters (but also their friends and relatives) get a 'feel' of what absence of violence means, they might be more reluctant to return to a previous life-style. More broadly, public opinion might urge a sense of responsibility on both the government and the terrorist group. The chance of 'making history' often appeals to both politicians and terrorist leaders interested in their own personal legacy.
5. **Negotiate and agree a political settlement.** The trickiest part of the process is, without the shadow of a doubt, to reach a political agreement that satisfies both parties. An essential element for agreements to be signed is the development of trust between the parties.
6. **Demobilisation of combatants and reintegration in society.** Every conflict needs to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate (DDR) former combatants or groups that have abandoned violence to pursue their goals through political means. After the signature of a political settlement, measures need to be implemented in order to facilitate the integration of combatants into society. The temptation of returning to a life of activism can be prevented by measures that make the adoption of this strategy more costly.
7. **Dealing with trauma.** In the long-term, a society affected by terrorism has to come up with a 'story' (not necessarily a history) about the recent past. The actors involved in violence need to acknowledge the suffering caused and truth-telling can be a good starting point. In the medium-term, however, a recognition of crimes does not necessarily derogate the need for justice and institutional redress. Dealing with a legacy of human rights abuses sometimes involves judicial measures like prosecution, purges and restorative justice or non-judicial measures like documenting recent events and launching truth commissions. The goal of these measures is for the parties involved in the conflict to develop empathy and some common understanding of their joint history through truth, justice and reconciliation.

To sum up, this section has presented the different policy options available to governments affected by a terrorism threat. A first range of policies mainly involves repression whereas a second one involves political measures. The point of equilibrium that might force the actors to revisit their strategies was said to constitute a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS). It is important to point out that the order of policies presented here does not indicate any desirability or range of effectiveness. On the contrary, an integrated approach for neutralizing terrorism needs to devote attention to the motives and roots of terrorist acts as well as the resources and opportunities that facilitate their perpetration.

### **Counter-Terrorism in Four Western European Cases**

The aim of this section is to map the counter-terrorist policies implemented by the governments of Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Before proceeding to examine the impact of these



public order policies (explanatory variable) on the disbandment of terrorist groups (dependant variable), however, it is necessary to establish why these four case-studies have been chosen.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of research design, it is important to acknowledge that there is a significant degree of selection bias in the kind of observations or case-studies that have been chosen. Although the focus of the current paper is counter-terrorism, the mapping of public order policies is part of an ongoing project on terrorism disengagement. This long-term project involves considerable qualitative fieldwork and interviews of both former militants and policy-makers and will establish three levels of analysis – macro, meso and micro – for the disbandment of the four terrorist groups (RAF, BR, ETA-PM and IRA). Issues of safety, practicality and political sensitivity have determined the selection of a number of observations in which the cycle of political violence had ended and, for this reason, it has not been possible to incorporate a control case in which political violence is still present. In other words, the ‘purist’ advice of selecting cases on the basis of the explanatory variable (e.g., public policies), never on the dependant variable (disbanded terrorist groups), was unrealistic on this occasion as it was necessary to find cases in which a congenial atmosphere for fieldwork could be found.

The bias induced by selecting on the dependant variable is compensated by the rich variation of the case-studies chosen. First of all, the four terrorist groups – two socialist and two nationalist - were selected because they were representative of the kind of terrorism that was prevalent in Western Europe between the 1960s and 1980s (Waldmann 1992). Two of the countries, the UK and Spain, are particularly significant for the intensity of their ethno-nationalist conflicts and for its troublesome resolution. According to a recently compiled dataset on terrorist victims, the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the Basque conflict account for 76% of all killings committed by domestic terrorist groups in Western Europe during the period 1965-2005 (De la Calle & Sánchez-Cuenca. 2009). The other two countries, Germany and Italy, were shaken by their socialist terrorist groups in the 1970s and 1980s which inspired a whole generation of ‘red’ terrorist groups in Europe. Second, another important variation concerns the different levels of support each one of the groups enjoyed. The RAF and the Red Brigades were urban guerrillas with limited support networks and no linkages to existing political parties whereas the IRA and ETA-PM were backed by their local constituencies and developed ‘political branches’ which acted as mouthpieces. The fact that these groups related differently to the local population challenges the assumption that terrorism is always the indicator of a wider felt social or political problem.

Providing an exhaustive historical overview of each one of the four terrorist groups under examination would far exceed the goals of the paper. A reader interested in the history of political violence and terrorism in Europe should do well in referring to the available literature on the topic, which is vast and comprehensive. Instead, the following sub-sections introduce the nature of each conflict and, on the basis of secondary sources, provide an analysis of the counter-terrorist policy implemented by each European government. The evidence presented below demonstrates that the Italian and German terrorist groups disbanded as a result of effective policing (third pathway) whereas the Irish and Basque groups disbanded as a result of a government strategy which combined law and order enforcement with political negotiations (fourth pathway). Finally, the sub-sections follow a chronological order according to the year of disbandment starting with the Red Army Faction (1977), followed by ETA-PM (1981), the Red Brigades (1984) and, finally, the IRA (1997).

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10 On the costs and benefits of comparative case studies, see David Collier, “New Perspectives on the Comparative Method,” in Dankwart A. Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, New York: Harper- Collins, 1991, pp. 7–31; Charles Tilly, “Means and Ends of Comparison in Macrosociology,” in Fredrik Engelstad, ed., *Comparative Social Research, Vol. 16: Methodological Issues in Comparative Social Science*, London: JAI, 1997, pp. 43–53; and Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, April 1980, pp. 174–197.

### ***Germany and the Red Army Faction (RAF)***

West Germany faced numerous attacks by domestic terrorists associated with the extreme leftist group the Red Army Faction (RAF), widely known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang, and splinter groups such as the June 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement and the Revolutionary Cells (RZ). The RAF's history can usefully be broken into three separate and uniquely different 'generations'. Each generation followed a trend of increased violence, decreased occurrences, and improved professionalism. The first generation lasted from April 2, 1968 to the deaths of the founding members of the RAF in prison on October 17, 1977. The second generation encompassed the summer of 1977 until late 1982. This generation made a determined decision to pursue armed struggle from the beginning. Finally, the third generation lasted from 1984 until a final communiqué declaring its disbandment was released to the German media in 1998.

The RAF was the most notorious 'red' terrorist group in Europe and its main goal was to destroy capitalism and replace it with a communist or socialist regime. During the 1970s and 1980s, other anti-capitalist revolutionary terrorist groups emerged in Western Europe, namely the Cellules Communistes Combattantes (CCC) (Belgium), Action Directe (France), Prima Linea and Brigade Rosse (Italy), Forças Populares 25 Abril (Portugal), First of October Antifascist Resistance Group - GRAPO (Spain) and the revolutionary group 17 November (Greece). The common point to all these revolutionary movements was that they all emerged during or in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and May 1968. The decision to take up weapons was sometimes influenced by the killings of Che Guevara in Bolivia and both Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy in the USA. However, for the German case, there were a couple of domestic events that acted as detonators for the RAF campaign. The first triggering event was the death of Benno Ohnesorg, an innocent by-stander shot by a plain-clothes policeman during a demonstration against the Shah of Iran on June 2, 1967, and the second was the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke, a prominent and charismatic student leader, on April 11, 1968.

The 'first generation' of the RAF carried out its first action on April 2, 1968 when two department stores in Frankfurt burned in the night after two explosive devices were detonated, causing considerable damage. Another event that is often pointed out as the 'beginning' of the RAF is the freeing from custody of Andres Baader by Ulrike Meinhof and their cohorts on 14 May 1970. The leadership of this first generation – Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe – committed collective suicide while in jail at Stammheim prison in 1976 and 1977.<sup>11</sup> During their campaign, from 1969 to 1979, there were 247 attacks of arson and bombing, 69 attacks on people, 25 cases resulting in death, and 69 other serious offenses. During the same period, eighteen terrorists from the Red Army Faction were killed (Merkl 1986).

While the leaders and founding members of the first generation were in jail, the RAF's second generation decided to start its activities in the summer of 1977. Led by Christian Klar, Adelheid Schulz and others, this faction was more lethal and had a weaker ideological corpus than its predecessors. The groups killed Juergen Ponto, a bank executive and political advisor, and later kidnapped and killed Hanns-Martin Schleyer, the head of the West German Employers Association. Events were to culminate in October when members of the RAF hijacked a Lufthansa jet, killed the captain and forced the plane to fly to Mogadishu in Somalia, where members of the elite counter-terrorism unit GSG 9 launched a successful rescue mission in which all but one of the terrorists were killed and all the hostages were freed unharmed. The second generation was finally disbanded by the police when both Klar and Shulz were arrested in late 1982. However, the decapitation of the leadership did not accomplish the end of the terrorist movement and, in the early 1980s, a third generation of terrorism got underway. This last generation launched a wave of murders and bomb

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<sup>11</sup> Ulrike Meinhof committed suicide first in 1976 whereas the other three leaders committed collective suicide on the night of 17 October 1977. State authorities were accused of murdering the RAF leadership after Baader and Raspe shot themselves with a gun and Ensslin stabbed herself. Prison authorities argued that the weapons had been smuggled in to them cell with the collaboration of their lawyers.

attacks against high ranking personalities, businessmen and US Air Bases and confirmed the point that excessive repression sometimes leads to the creation of successive waves of terrorists (della Porta 2009: 69).

The West German counter-terrorist strategy evolved from being generally passive to more coercive while conforming to legal norms. Given the draconian record of the German state in dealing with political dissent the authorities were most concerned not to use excessive force or to fall into an escalation trap. This exercise in restraint of state power, however, did not prevent left-wing organisations from comparing the security agenda with 1930s Nazi attempts to outlaw political opposition. Amongst the specific counter-terrorist measures that were taken one could include the considerable expansion of police resources and technologies, the restriction of constitutional rights for citizen, the use of the media, and the changes to the Basic Law and the German Criminal Code (*Strafgesetzbuch*). The state also made good use of propaganda and controlled the release of information to the media. Policies on news blackouts and reporting received the support of the National Press Council. The state was also able to exploit effectively some of the tactical errors of the RAF such as the 1972 bombing of the Springer Building, when 17 workers of the publishing company were wounded, or the 1975 storming of the German embassy in Stockholm, when 4 people (including two RAF members) were killed.

The modernization and deployment of the security services responsible for counter-terrorism together with the approval of effective legislation eventually led to the downfall of the RAF. However, it took a long time for the German authorities to isolate the public and wider left-wing movement from the terrorist group. Opinion polls of the time suggest that a significant number of Germans expressed sympathy for the 'first generation' of the RAF. The *Institut Allenbach* published a poll in July 1971 which showed that: 'twenty percent of Germans under the age of thirty expressed a certain sympathy for the Baader-Meinhof Gang. One in ten young Northern Germans indicated that they would willingly shelter a member of the Baader-Meinhof Gang for the night'. Feelings of sympathy for the first generation of RAF members further increased during the 1977 Stammheim trial against its leadership. This was partly due to the fact that public opinion saw them as a group of revolutionary idealists who were fighting a police state using excessive force. This image was sometimes reinforced by police repression of student demonstrations and the 'commune movement' and by the prison authorities' treatment of RAF prisoners which allowed them to acquire an aura of martyrdom. For example, arrested terrorists were submitted to a rather special treatment, initially solitary confinement, later in a specially constructed maximum security prison including an attached court building where terrorists trials were held (Malthaner & Waldman 2003: 119). The distinct status of RAF prisoners highlighted their political aspect and separated them from the rest of the inmates in the prison. Aware of the media interest in their special condition, RAF members terminated their lives in prison as yet another way of fighting what they considered to be an oppressive system. In particular, the death of Holger Meins by self-induced starvation on 9 November 1974 or the suicides in Stammheim prison of Meinhof and Baader in 1976-77 helped maintain the charismatic and redemptive element of the 'first generation' of RAF members.

In spite of being able to 'decapitate' the RAF leadership on several occasions, the group was able to present a moral lesson and survive organizationally. RAF supporters had a different threat perception and argued that the German government was not dealing with the root causes of their violence. Germany continued to be a capitalist economy, US troops continued to be stationed in the country and the Vietnam War followed its own course. However, the state put great effort into de-legitimizing the RAF discourse and uniting both civil society and the state against the terrorist group. There can be no doubt that the state was helped by the fact that, domestically, the RAF was a rather small group, not exceeding 20-30 members, and that its networks of support were reduced to urban centres. The international networks were more resilient and the West German state had to act diplomatically to block the support of the East German secret police, the Stasi, and some Middle Eastern countries that harboured, trained and supported RAF members.

### ***Spain and ETA-político militar (ETA-PM)***

Spain experienced both left-wing and right-wing terrorism during the 1970s and early 1980s. The intensity of 'red' and 'black' violence, however, was surpassed by Basque Homeland and Freedom (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, ETA), an ethno-nationalist terrorist group founded in 1959 with the aim of creating an independent socialist state for the Basque homeland. The group was born under Franco's military dictatorship and was responsible for 44 deaths during this period, including the assassination in 1973 of Prime Minister Carrero Blanco, the dictator's right-hand and apparent heir. A year after its most successful assassination ETA went through a process of internal debate over the strategic role of political violence which produced a split in 1974 between ETA-político militar (ETA-PM), which advocated a combination of armed struggle and political action, and ETA-militar (ETA-M), which proposed to engage in a war of attrition with the state. ETA-M appealed to mass organizations to form a 'popular front for independence' in order to prepare for the final stage of the struggle against the dictatorship. But at the same time, it stressed the primacy and autonomy of the militarist leadership of the movement. ETA-pm opted for a unified leadership combining political and military struggle against the regime. Despite these differences, both organizations had the same political objectives (independence, monolingualism for the Basque Country, and socialism) and the same basic strategy of popular revolution (Shabad & Llera 1995: 431)

The end of the Franco regime in 1975 and the onset of democratization caught ETA without having resolved its internal conflicts over the relation between political and armed struggle and the organizational and functional role of the militarist branch of the organization. The battle between the militarist and political-militarist wings intensified and the transition years were the most violent in ETA's history. ETA's political violence, together with high levels of social and political mobilization, pushed the Basque transition along a different path to that followed in the rest of Spain. Between 1968 and 1977 not a single army officer had been killed but, between 1978 and 1983, thirty-seven people of rank died at the hands of ETA which hoped to provoke a reaction from the army and the security forces (Muro 2008). As the process of democratization got under way, ETA-m continued to hold an uncompromising stance but ETA-pm sought to participate in the political process, to enter into negotiations with the Spanish state, and, at the same time, to escalate its use of violence in order to bargain from a position of strength. In 1977, several nationalist groups and parties converged in the creation of Euskadiko Ezkerra (EE), the electoral coalition that would become the mouthpiece of ETA-pm. As most radical Basque parties, EE did not support the 1978 Constitutional referendum and called for a 'no' vote. However, EE did support Basque autonomy whereas Herri Batasuna, a coalition of parties formed in 1978 and linked to ETA-M, rejected the 1979 Statute of Gernika arguing that, in spite of the transition process, Basques could not democratically exercise the right to national self-determination.

Historical events caught up with the two branches of ETA and, on 23 February 1981, there was an attempted coup-d'état by military officers disgruntled with the pace of decentralization and the killing of their officers by ETA and other terrorist groups. Masterminded by several generals, the putsch aimed to create a military junta led by King Juan Carlos in order to slow down the pace of regional devolution and preserve the 'unity of Spain'. The attempted coup, to be known as 23F or Tejerazo, did not succeed and both the process of democratization and the state institutions (particularly the monarchy) came out reinforced from this traumatic event. Ultimately, the 23F became a triggering event for the poli-mili leadership, who had been negotiating a pardon with the Spanish government for some time and, in 1981, the members of ETA-PM joined peaceful political action in Euskadiko Ezkerra (EE).<sup>12</sup> The 23F indicated that the conflict was 'ripe' for settlement and that some ETA members perceived they were locked into a mutually hurting stalemate with the Spanish state.

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12 A year later, in 1982, EE merged with the Basque branch of the Communist party (PCE-EPK) and in 1993, a majority of party affiliated approved a merger with the Basque branch of the socialist party, the PSE.

There are considerable differences in the way the Franco regime and the new democracy fought ETA. Francoism confronted insurgent terrorism through indiscriminate repression and the use of militarized institutions. Official violence was, under these circumstances and particularly when deployed against ETA, conducive to the loss of state legitimacy in the Basque Country and the growth of public opinion sympathetic to the terrorist organization. It is estimated that, in 1978, nearly half of Basque adults perceived ETA members as either patriots or idealists whereas only 7 per cent of those interviewed in public opinion surveys would call them plain criminals (Reinares 2003: 63). During the democratic transition and the years of democratic consolidation, the emerging political elites removed these old practices and reformed the security agencies, introducing new ones in accordance with the rule of law and the principles of an open society. In 1977, the National Court was created in Madrid to deal with serious organized crime and terrorist offences. A year later, special anti-terrorist legislation was approved which included provisions on increasing condemnatory sentences, extending otherwise normal detention periods and establishing limitations to the judicial control over searches of domicile and the interception of private communications. This kind of legislation proved to be ineffective and resulted in a worrying number of proven cases when detainees were subject to mistreatments and even torture enforced by state security agencies. Finally, the appointment of Juan José Rosón as Minister of Interior in 1980 marked a turning point in the fight against Basque terrorism. Under Rosón, the intelligence services were given a greater role and the counter-terrorist effort of the police and security services was centralized under the Unified Command for the Counter-terrorist Effort (*Mando Único para la Lucha Contraterrorista*, MULC) (Jaime-Jiménez 2002: 350)

In spite of Spain's rapid transformation, sections of the police and the armed forces continued to display non-democratic attitudes and methods. As pointed out by Fernando Reinares, members of the security forces deployed in the Basque Country were not only hostile to 'the process of democratization but particularly hostile to the Basques in general and to Basque nationalists in particular' and they were 'all too prone to employ unreasonable force and engage in gratuitous provocation' (Reinares 2000: 127-10). As a result, there was a negative perception of the role of the police forces, and the number of Basque citizens enlisting in the security agencies was proportionally very low compared to those coming from other parts of Spain. The contradictory nature of political change and the lack of state legitimacy could explain the different routes taken by the two ETA branches. Whereas ETA-PM was 'ripe' for negotiation in 1981, ETA-M and its support network could identify far too many elements in the political opportunity structure that suggested that democratization was not complete. The state funded activities of the Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups (*Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación*, GAL), death squads of paramilitaries which targeted alleged terrorist members and supporters, did nothing to reduce social sympathy for ETA and confirmed the widely held idea that the Basque conflict was a war between extremes. Between 1983 and 1987, the secret paramilitary group claimed a total of 27 deaths, some of them with unclear connections to ETA. The authoritarian tendencies of the police and security services reinforced their image as 'occupation forces' and made it easier for ETA supporters to persuade new generations that little or nothing had changed in the Basque Country since the death of Franco.

### ***Italy and the Brigade Rosse (RB)***

The Italian government gained considerable experience in combating domestic terrorism from the far left and the far right during the 'years of lead' (*anni di piombo*). The 1970s and 1980s became the darkest period in Italian post-war history as assassinations, kidnappings, shootings and bombings left hundreds of citizens killed or wounded. From 1968 to 1985, Italy endured socio-political turmoil and over 15,000 terrorist incidents, with 1978 as the peak year with 2,498.<sup>13</sup> According to official annual

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13 The extraordinary amount of political violence in Italy is matched by the large number of groups engaged in terrorism. The most important left-wing groups were the Red Brigades (RD), Front Line (PL) and the Armed Proletarian Nuclei (NAP) whereas right-wing groups included the New Order (the Black Order), the National Vanguard and Mussolini Action Squads (SAM)

statistics, nearly two thirds of these incidents, 60 per cent, occurred in the four-year period 1976-1980, and the bloodiest year was 1980 when there were 120 killings of civilians, police, and terrorists (Pisano 1987: 37). This was a time of ideological excess, social conflict and widespread discontent in which radical means were often idealized. The political system was clearly dominated by the Christian Democratic Party (Democrazia Cristiana, DC), the largest party in Parliament, and the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI) was permanently in the opposition. While the Italian political class was unable to offer a credible alternative to the Christian Democrats, the *brigatisti* managed to portray themselves as a 'military vanguard' or political actor that 'acted while everyone else talked' (Meade 1990: 243).

Many of the attacks of the 'years of lead' were carried out by the Red Brigades, a Marxist Leninist group which wanted to create a revolutionary state and separate Italy from NATO through the use of force. The members of the Red Brigades or *brigatisti* carried out numerous acts of violence against Italian political leaders, judges, and businessmen and anyone that became an 'enemy of the people'. The first militant action by the Red Brigades occurred in 1971, when a series of explosions targeted a Pirelli rubber plant and other factories in the north of Italy. Support for the armed group was initially concentrated in the industrial triangle of the north (Milan, Turin and Genoa) but in a few years partisan-inspired columns (*colonne*) were created in other areas which included the Veneto region, Rome, Naples and Sardinia. In spite of continuing to engage in terrorist activity until the 1990s, the attacks became less frequent over time and only a small minority continued to be active until the 2000s.

The Red Brigades' most notable attack was the 1978 kidnapping of Aldo Moro, a former Christian Democrat Prime Minister, who was murdered after being held hostage for 55 days. Moro was targeted in order to protest against the *compromesso storico* or attempt by the Christian Democrats to institutionalize the collaboration with the Communists led by Enrico Berlinguer. After killing Moro, the Red Brigades dumped his body halfway between the respective headquarters of the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party. The violent death of the former PM and his five bodyguards was an event of profound significance for the Italian political system and, while being the BR's greatest triumph against the state, it also precipitated the political death of the terrorist group as the revolutionary left became increasingly divided over the level at which the state should be attacked. The martyrdom of Moro alienated the Italian citizenry, set in motion the fragmentation of the Left and led some imprisoned ex-leaders to withdraw their support for the BR for this attack on the heart of the state. The Red Brigades also surpassed the threshold of acceptable violence with the Moro affaire and the general public became repulsed by an increasingly meaningless violence (Wagner-Pacifici 1986; Drake 1989; Caselli & della Porta 1991).

The Italian government responded to Moro's assassination by approving a new set of counter-terrorist measures at the legislative, police, and judicial levels. Specialized security institutions were created in order to co-ordinate the effort against terrorism and considerable resources were devoted to reinforce the repressive apparatus. First, Parliament amended the Criminal Code on two occasions in order to define terrorism, introduce stiffer sentences, and empower further the law-enforcement agencies. Aspects of this new antiterrorism legislative packet included provisional apprehension of suspects, mandatory arrest warrants for terrorist crimes, extension of pretrial confinement limitations, authority to search buildings without warrants and mandatory identification for banking transaction in excess of twenty million lire. Second, the state equipped itself with a new intelligence unit responsible for co-ordinating the counterterrorist effort of all police forces. The Central Directorate for Crime Prevention was granted jurisdiction over the national territory and was able to deploy a SWAT-type unit when necessary, a prerogative that was used to rescue General Dozier from the BR in January 1982. The national gendarmerie or Carabinieri continued to exercise its military autonomy under the leadership of General Dalla Chiesa but mechanisms of cooperation were established with the State Police and Finance Guard personnel to pool expertise and resources. Third, with regards to the role of the judiciary, both prosecutors and investigating judges became key participants in the counter-terrorist

effort and they were responsible for gathering a great deal of information (della Porta 1995: 117-119; Pisano 1987: 144-148)

The most effective repressive measures were the 1980s law that provided 'compensation' to those who collaborated with justice and, more importantly, the 'penitence law' of 1982, which offered varying degrees of clemency to repentant or disassociated terrorists in accordance with their contribution to the counterterrorism effort. Prisoners could benefit from 'reward measures' such as reducing prison terms (life sentences included) if they provided intelligence on their accomplices or confessed of their own involvement in offences. According to Donatella della Porta, a total of 389 terrorists retracted their doctrine (*dissociati*), repented of their crimes (*pentiti*) or collaborated with investigators in the capture of other BR members (*collaboratori di giustizia*), obtaining important reductions in prison sentences (della Porta 2009: 70-71). An important novelty of Law 304/1982 was that, whereas previous legal initiatives had aimed at raising the costs of joining a terrorist group, the goal of this new measure was to provide mechanisms for individual disengagement that would deepen the internal divisions of the Red Brigades (torn apart by the debate over the usefulness of political violence). Besides, by facilitating an individual exit strategy, the state machinery achieved two goals in the areas of intelligence and propaganda. First, prosecutors obtained high-quality information in the form of confessions that led to the arrest and even disbandment of whole organizations. This was the case of Prima Linea (PL, Front Line), the other long-running underground organization in Italy, which was disbanded thanks to the declarations and confessions of former militants. Second, terrorism investigators obtained an important moral victory as previously committed *brigatisti* publicly declared that the 'armed struggle' in Italy was over. By adopting a discriminate repressive agenda, the government was able to successfully portray Italy as a democracy under siege with the Red Brigades playing the part of the barbarians at the gates.

For those in prison, following the path of defection set up by the 1982 Law on *dissociazione* had obvious problems. Individual decisions had to by-pass the inmates' mechanisms of social control used to adopt collective decisions. Besides, being surrounded by former comrades made repentance a very costly strategy. By abandoning the organization, *brigatisti* lost networks of friends built through years of activism and risked being targeted by former colleagues. On occasions, their relatives and friends were 'disciplined' for their defection. In this respect, it is worth highlighting the arrest and 'repentance' of Patrizio Peci who turned in colleagues in Turin and Genoa and provided important information about the leadership in Rome. After refusing to retract evidence against former companions, Patrizio's younger brother, Roberto, was shot 11 times and a video was sent to the authorities, an event which also contributed to discrediting the movement and to exacerbating internal division within the movement (Jameson 1990a).

It would be highly problematic to make a causal explanation that took counter-terrorist policy as the only explanatory variable behind the disbandment of a terrorist group. A comprehensive explanation for the decline of political violence needs to incorporate other intervening variables such as group dynamics, individual exhaustion or cycles of violence (della Porta & Tarrow 1986). As della Porta has convincingly argued, the incorporation of other levels of analysis makes possible the construction of a multi-level explanation capable of identifying the impact of policy options on the society group, and individual. In the Italian case, the wide range of counter-terrorist initiatives (exit strategies and conversion opportunities included) were most successful when the Red Brigades were affected by internal division, organizational implosion and burnout of militants (della Porta 1992; 2009).

On top of the organizational disarray, a plurality of views emerged during the early 1980s within the Red Brigades, especially amongst those that were behind prison bars, and multiple divisions emerged with regards to the usefulness and purpose of political violence. Torn between accepting defeat or increasing the level of militarization, growing numbers of *brigatisti* and supporters became disillusioned with the movement. The mishandling of the Moro kidnapping and some other misgivings of the 1980s (Judge d'Urso, killing of Peci, General Dozier, etc) also contributed to internal

fractionalization, the separation of generations of militants and the erosion of its support base. As pointed out by Alison Jamieson, BR members who did not agree with the 'morality' and usefulness of violent actions gradually became disassociated. (Jamieson 1990a; 1990b). To sum up, a combination of elements contributed to the fact that, by the BR's 'strategic withdrawal' of 1983, the armed group was discredited, isolated from public opinion and organizationally defeated. In contrast, the Italian state emerged from the 'years of lead' greatly strengthened, and having achieved a clear political and military victory (Caselli & della Porta 1991: 99; Wieviorka 2004: 94).

### ***United Kingdom and the Irish Republican Army (IRA)***

The United Kingdom suffered dozens of terrorist attacks on its soil during the three decades of 'the Troubles'. Between 1968 and 1998, over 3,200 people died as a result of political violence in Northern Ireland, including about 100 individuals on the British mainland. Terrorism was perpetrated on both sides of the sectarian divide, in a context in which religious and political loyalties coincided: Republicans/Nationalists (Catholics) vs. Loyalists/Unionists (Protestants).<sup>14</sup> Two groups sought to determine Northern Ireland's position within the UK with the republicans pushing for the end of British rule and the loyalists defending the status quo.

On the Republican/Nationalist side, the most significant group was the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) which started its activities in 1970 and disbanded in 2005. Its most notorious attacks were the Brighton bombing in October 1984, designed to eliminate PM Margaret Thatcher and her cabinet, and the February 1991 missile attack on 10 Downing Street while PM John Major's cabinet was in session. The PIRA predominant target was the security and military personnel stationed in Northern Ireland but, by the 1990s, the range was expanded and incorporated 'economic' targets such as the City of London or Manchester's city centre. The aim of PIRA's violence was to wear down the British will to retain Northern Ireland as a constituent part of the United Kingdom but, from the 1970s onwards, the fight for British withdrawal and an all-Ireland socialist republic was fought on both the military level and the political one. The political 'front' was led by the republican party, Sinn Féin (SF), in a long-term game which envisaged politics as the 'pursuit of war by other means' to invert Clausewitz's famous dictum.

In response to the PIRA's campaign, the UK instituted a wide range of counter-terrorist legislative measures over the years. The British government decided to enhance the security forces' investigative and coercive powers, modified the criminal trial process in Northern Ireland and created new criminal offences. In 1974, the government introduced an initially temporary Prevention of Terrorism Act outlawing membership, support, and assistance for the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Other controversial measures followed, such as internment, which allowed suspected terrorists to be detained without charge or trial for a prolonged period of time. During the 1980s and 1990s, British anti-terrorist legislation was reviewed and modified periodically, but remained mostly focused on countering Northern Irish related groups.

In the case of the IRA, some of the counter-insurgent policies put in place by the British army proved to be counterproductive, particularly during the 1969-72 period. The short-lived policy of interning terrorists without trial alienated the public from the authorities and further polarized an already fractured political environment. Arresting militants or 'shooting terrorists did not work' either, as James Dingley has pointed out in his analysis of counter-terrorism in Northern Ireland (Dingley 2009: 3). Measures such as internment and events such as Bloody Sunday provided the insurgents with the symbols necessary to sustain a prolonged campaign against an 'army of occupation'.

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14 On the Republican/Nationalist side the main identifiable groups were the Provisional IRA (PIRA), the Official IRA, the Continuity IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). On the Loyalist/Unionist side, the main paramilitary groups were the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). See Bonner 2000.



As repression became counter-productive, and the mutually hurting stalemate was consolidated, the idea of winning 'hearts and minds' gradually prepared the ground for a political settlement. In this respect, the UK followed the evolution from using repressive to more political measures after perceiving they were locked into a mutually hurting stalemate. In 1973, the British sponsored the signature of the Sunningdale Agreement, which established a temporary measure that provided some form of devolved cross-community government for the province, aimed at *containing* the conflict in Northern Ireland. The government's political approach aimed to complement the security strategy while dealing with the hybrid nature of the conflict. Britain's strategy started to take account of the sensibilities of its opponent and, by the late 1970s, two of the most important legal anomalies were abolished, namely the use of internment without trial and the assignment of 'Special Category' status to paramilitary prisoners. The other main initiative was to reduce its military commitment and give a more pre-eminent role to the police in the security effort. In a nutshell, policymakers came to an understanding of the dual nature of the conflict and developed policies that dealt with both the political and the military dimensions.

The 1990s were dominated by the search for a political accommodation that included the political representatives of the paramilitary groups, especially the IRA. The Anglo-Irish signature of the Downing Street Declaration in 1993 and the provos unconditional ceasefire (1994-1996) opened the door for discussions over constitutional issues. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 (also known as the Belfast Agreement) proved to be an effective strategy as it secured an end to violence while dealing with the sociopolitical causes that spawned and sustained the conflict (Bonner 2000: 61). The agreement was all-inclusive and established a devolved Assembly, executive power-sharing and an institutionalized Irish dimension. On 28 July 2005, the Provisional IRA declared an end to its campaign and decommissioned its arsenal in accordance with the provisions of the Belfast Agreement.

## Conclusion

The counterterrorism experience presented above suggests that European urban terrorism did not disband following victory (first pathway) nor defeat by military means (second pathway). A complex anti-terrorism agenda made of legal, political and social initiatives was behind terrorist abandonment, defection, decline or defeat. The more repressive set of policies was adopted in Germany whereas Italy adopted a law and order approach which produced the phenomena of *dissociazione* and *pentitismo*. Terrorist groups in these two countries disbanded after a relatively successful law and order strategy (third pathway). In the case of Germany, however, the widespread perception that the government was using excessive force contributed to the reproduction of terrorism in successive waves of activists, the radicalization of its support networks and delayed the final disbandment. The cases of Spain and the UK are remarkable because governments in both countries came to be locked into a stalemate with the terrorist groups and were forced to use both repressive and political initiatives. After a long history of action-repression-action, both ETA-PM and the IRA decided to give up arms and joined the political process in various forms (fourth pathway to disbandment).

The mapping of counter-terrorist policies presented here is consistent with existing research on how terrorist groups end. According to a RAND study by Seth Jones and Martin Libicki, the evidence since 1968 indicates that out of a total of 33 European terrorist groups not a single case was ended by the deployment of military force. (Jones & Libicki 2008: 18-19). In fact, the first cause for the end of a terrorist group was 'policing' (64%), followed by politics (24%), and victory (12%).<sup>15</sup>

Since there is no single counter-terrorist strategy that can be applied to a wide variety of cases, strategies that facilitate terrorist disengagement will depend on the characteristics of the group (ideology, strength, objectives, membership, leadership, resources, etc) but also on the strength of the

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<sup>15</sup> In generating these percentages, I have excluded from the original number (1) organizations that have no official date of disbandment; and (2) those organizations that ended because of splintering because part of the membership continued to use terrorism. Out of the 33 remaining groups, 21 ended by policing (64%), 8 by politics (24%) and 4 by victory (12%).

government at a given point (parliamentary majority, positioning of opposition parties, public opinion, etc). In this respect, a set of concluding remarks can be presented here regarding the European experience of confronting terrorism:

1. **European democracies have stayed away from deploying the military when fighting terrorist groups.** Deterrence may have been effective in territorial insurgencies but it is often counter-productive in fighting urban guerrilla warfare as this technique does not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. As an illustration, none of the European terrorist groups that disbanded between 1968 and 2006 were defeated by deterrence alone.
2. **Good policing and law enforcement were the most effective strategies.** According to RAND data, the overwhelming majority of Western European cases (64%) ended because of rigorous policing with due regard for civil liberties. An assertive law enforcement and multilateral effective policing, meaning in cooperation with other countries, is often the cause for the fact that European terrorist groups have been relatively short-lived (10.6 years).
3. **The nature of the grievance mattered.** Some terrorist groups were more resilient than others and policing and intelligence was sometimes insufficient. Nationalist groups like the IRA and ETA-PM had a more stable support within the local community than left-wing groups like the Red Brigades or the RAF, which drew its support from politicized networks in urban centers. Dealing with groups that mobilize widespread grievances often required policing but also political initiatives that dealt with these grievances (peace processes, decentralization, etc).
4. **Negotiations with terrorists.** Incorporating political concerns did not mean ‘giving up’ to terrorists but facilitating a transition from ‘bullets’ to ‘ballots’ while taking seriously the militants’ ideological corpus and mobilization strategy. In some cases, the causes that facilitated the reproduction of the terrorist problem (such as Catholic deprivation or Basque demands for further autonomy) were dealt with.

The comparative analysis of the four European case-studies also suggests that further research is needed. This paper considered the ‘macro’ perspective of public policy but a more complex theoretical and methodological framework must incorporate the ‘meso’ and ‘micro’ levels (della Porta 1992; Cronin 2004). Indeed, the motivations and processes that lead to collective and individual exit strategies from terrorism might also be found in these two dimensions.

*Diego Muro*

*Max Weber Fellow 2008-2009*

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