

# **Ethno-nationalist Terrorism and Political Concessions: A Comparative Analysis of PIRA and ETA Campaigns**

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## ABSTRACT

Wanting to assess what makes the difference between failure and success in terrorist groups' campaigns, this research looks at two ethno-nationalist terrorist groups: Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA). This thesis, unlike the majority of contemporary terrorism scholarship focused on religious terrorism, places the spotlight on ethno-nationalist terrorism as it is the type of terrorism most likely to succeed in obtaining political concessions. The research stems from the similarity between the PIRA and ETA cases, despite having ended differently. Employing historical facts and relevant literature, three plausible hypotheses are tested as possible answers to the research question. Each one is based around a different independent variable: goals, support, and strategy. Providing that the hypotheses may all be factors in the outcome, afterwards they are compared and ranked in terms of their explanatory value. Based on the findings, support appears to be the highest explanatory variable. The argument made in this thesis is that the difference in support was likely due to the nature of ethno-nationalist terrorism that is very dependent on its ethnic constituency. Moreover, this thesis argues that what presumably accounts for the difference in support, in these two cases, arises from the nature of violence in which the campaign is embedded. Consequently, it suggests that in face of indiscriminate attacks against civilians support from the terrorist group's ethnic constituency is conditioned by the "tolerance limit" for violence that is contingent upon the level of violence the terrorist group's ethnic constituency suffers from the state and/or other rival ethnic groups.

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## INTRODUCTION

Academic interest in terrorism has increased exponentially in recent years, with academics addressing everything from the root causes of it<sup>1</sup> to crafting counterterrorist strategies to combat it.<sup>2</sup> Much of this increase, many would argue, occurred as a result of the astronomic ramifications that the events of 9/11 had on politics around the world. The images of planes crashing into World Trade Center (WTO) not only become synonymous with terrorism, but they also directed much of this research (and terrorist activity itself) towards religious terrorism. This led to less attention being devoted to ethno-nationalist terrorism. This category of terrorism possesses a distinct dynamic and differs from violence motivated by religious, ideological, or financial goals. In particular, when pitted in comparison against academically more researched religious terrorism, it lends itself to a more rational-based approach. This is not to say that religious terrorism is irrational. However, when compared to ethno-nationalist terrorism, it appears “unconstrained by the political, moral, or practical constraints that seem to affect other terrorists”.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, religious terrorism has been considered as unpredictable, with mutating forms, and vague, grand-scale, mostly unattainable goals from the start.<sup>4</sup>

Ethno-nationalist terrorism, with its clear and tangible goals, is the most appropriate category in order to evaluate terrorism as a political tool, used to influence political processes for

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 379-399; Berman, Paul, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003); Bjørge, Tore, *Root causes of terrorism: myths, reality, and ways forward* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes, *Attacking terrorism: elements of a grand strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004); Tom Parker, "Fighting an Antaeon Enemy: How Democratic States Unintentionally Sustain the Terrorist Movements They Oppose," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 2 (April 06, 2007): 155-79; Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, *Democracy and counterterrorism lessons from the past* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "'Holy terror': The implications of terrorism motivated by a religious imperative," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 18, no. 4 (1995): 272.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Nalbandov, "Irrational Rationality of Terrorism," *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 102.

the sake of attaining goals. The empirical puzzle, around which this thesis is centered, revolves around two ethno-nationalist terrorist organizations with similar goals, espousing similar ideologies, following similar strategies, operating against similar type of governments in the same international setting, and both facing other terrorist organizations against them (Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, death squads in Spain) – yet, one ends up obtaining political concessions from the government in the form of a negotiated settlement that all sides commit themselves to defending, while the other campaign ends up as a complete failure, characterized by the state as a successfully won counter-terrorist battle against the group, with the terrorist group themselves deciding to cease activities. The former is the story of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the latter is the case of *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA).<sup>5</sup>

In essence, this thesis is about why PIRA's campaign ended with a political settlement granting them concessions while ETA's did not. It draws upon existing literature to formulate hypotheses regarding the dynamics of ethno-nationalist terrorism and their impact on the attainment of political concessions. While each of the hypotheses serves as a possible answer to the empirical puzzle, analyzing the nuances of the two campaigns through the framework of hypotheses that serve as factors influencing the level of success of a campaign highlights the differences between the two that may have affected the difference in outcomes. This thesis finds that, among other possible factors that fall outside the realm of strategy (diaspora, level of autonomy or rights the ethnic group enjoyed within the state, existence of a bordering kin-state), it is credible to assert that the main difference in the outcomes was in the level of violence in which terrorist campaigns were embedded. The crucial variable of support from their ethnic kin is a function of target selection, but is also contingent on the level of violence experienced by the

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<sup>5</sup> From this point on, both groups are referred to by their abbreviations in the brackets. The abbreviations may vary if a particular faction of a group is mentioned.

ethnic group terrorists claim to represent. A group with greater support from their ethnic community is in effect more resilient in the war of attrition against the state, rendering the state more likely to make political concessions in favor of the ethnic group from which the terrorists come. What sets this thesis apart from other research is its cross-case study comparative analysis in a field dominated by single-case analyses. Moreover, as these are both cases of terrorism and ethnic conflict, literature on both terrorism and ethnic conflict are essential to observe ethno-nationalist terrorism.

The following chapter will elaborate on the distinctiveness of ethno-nationalist terrorism when compared to other types of terrorism and on the particular theoretical approach used to study it in this thesis. It will also justify the selection of these particular cases and provide a brief historical and contextual background on them. The chapter on methodology and research design serves to explain the design of the research into three separate hypotheses. Each of the following three chapters draws upon relevant literature on terrorism, and to a lesser degree ethnic conflict, to devise hypotheses regarding three variables (goals, support, and strategy) that are supposed to explain the difference in outcomes. Exploring the nuances of the PIRA and ETA campaigns, these three chapters show how similarities or differences in regards to a particular variable may have affected the outcome of their campaigns. Following this, the first part of the cross-hypotheses chapter summarizes and compares the results. The second part expands on the logic behind the explanatory variable of highest value. This, in effect, will provide an answer to the empirical puzzle. The thesis concludes with a summary of key findings and their possible implications for further research on ethno-nationalist terrorism.



# CHAPTER 1

## ***1.1 Research question and its value***

Why did the PIRA's campaign end with a negotiated settlement of ethnic conflict (granting them political concessions by the state) and ETA's did not?

The significance of answering this question, and the motivation to do so, stems from a noticed necessity to conduct research on an organizational level of analysis by way of comparative research. Instead of simply looking at how terrorism affects the obtainment of political concessions within a single context, this question looks at it comparatively, aiming to provide an answer that could be applied and tested across more (similar) contexts. Furthermore, the historical significance of these two campaigns and the fact that both are over now, dictates the importance that they are comparatively looked at to assess the conditions that shaped their outcomes.

Answering this question would not only be of importance to those especially interested in these two terrorist organizations, but would also add to knowledge in a presently neglected area of terrorism studies – ethno-nationalist terrorism. Many might jump to argue that this is justified because ethno-nationalist terrorism is a phenomena that peaked during the wave of anti-colonialism and is rightfully denied extended academic coverage today. Nevertheless, if one takes a look at the state of the world today, minority oppression and ethnic grievances still persist in various places. When they are coupled with the possibility of “overcoming” the power asymmetry by resorting to terrorism, ethno-nationalist terrorism will remain a dangerous reality. While each case of terrorism is unique and embedded into its own particular context, the answer found in the comparison of these two cases and the methods used to arrive to it, may be extrapolated and tested in comparisons of other similar ethno-nationalist terrorist groups.

This thesis' primary contribution is in the area of studying terrorism as a strategy, a political tool utilized with the purpose of obtaining desired political outcomes. The answer it provides to the research question is constructed by going beyond literature on terrorism to incorporate appropriate ethnic conflict theories. By doing so, the thesis presents an argument explaining the logic behind the relationship that ethno-nationalist terrorist groups have with their ethnic constituencies. Advancing the knowledge of that relationship is beneficial for the policymakers who, by taking the aspect of it described in this thesis, would be able to craft more effective strategies to combat this type of terrorism and avoid making mistakes that would worsen the situation.

## **1.2 What is ethno-nationalist terrorism?**

One certainly should not provide an answer to this question without presenting a definition of terrorism first. In the field of terrorism studies, the lack of consensus regarding the definition of terrorism is often mentioned. Depending on the type and aim of the research, academics have relied on, or crafted themselves, different definitions.<sup>6</sup> Since the purpose of this thesis is not to craft a definition of terrorism, I shall rely on one provided by Bruce Hoffman, who defines terrorism as a “deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change”.<sup>7</sup> To further clarify, David Fromkin outlines five key elements that constitute terrorism: violence (terrorism either uses or threatens violence), motivation (terrorism implies a political program or objective), intent (the strategic goal is fear and reaction, not destruction per se), repetition (to be effective terrorists must raise the specter of

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<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive collection of different definitions, see Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political terrorism a new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories and literature* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publ. Co., 1984), 1-38.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40.

future attacks), actors (many commentators ascribe significance to the identity of the perpetrators and/or victims).<sup>8</sup> The only thing worth adding is Hoffman's criteria that terrorism is perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entity, therefore differentiating it from "state terrorism" and "state sponsored terrorism".<sup>9</sup>

What distinguishes an ethno-nationalist terrorist group from others? The principal difference is that it is carried out in the name of an ethnic group. However, nationalism seldom appears as the sole motivational driver. Rapoport acknowledges that nationalist groups appear in all of his four waves, combining nationalism with other features.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the two groups analyzed in this thesis combine nationalism with Marxism. The ethnic group in question may or may not agree with the terrorist groups' goals and/or means. Ethnic groups can be defined as expressions of collective identities among people based on of some shared religious, regional, cultural, linguistic, or other communal identity. Ethno-nationalist terrorism, unless it is an anti-colonial war of national liberation, likely constitutes a situation of ethnic conflict. If a conflict includes two or more ethnic groups, specifically fighting for power and position within a society, regardless of what the root cause of the conflict may be, it comprises ethnic conflict.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, if placed in the context of ethnic conflict, terrorism is one of the many manifestations of violence that may occur as part of it.

Byman, in his work, points to Walter Laqueur's criteria which identifies groups by the identity of its members.<sup>12</sup> According to Laqueur, a terrorist group should be labeled as ethnic when "the color of the skin, or national identity, or religion are the decisive actors, not the 'class

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<sup>8</sup> David Fromkin, "The Strategy of Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 53, no. 4 (July 1975): 683-98.

<sup>9</sup> Hoffman (2006), 40

<sup>10</sup> David C. Rapoport, "Four waves of modern terrorism," in *Attacking terrorism: elements of a grand strategy*, ed. Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 47.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Kaufman, *Modern hatreds: the symbolic politics of ethnic war*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Byman, "The logic of ethnic terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 21, no. 2 (1998): 166.

origin' of the opponent".<sup>13</sup> As this allows possible confusion of ethnic and religious terrorist groups, it is important to note that they are to be distinguished by barriers of entry. A Protestant convert to Catholicism would find it almost impossible to join the PIRA (more importantly, such situation is very unlikely to happen in the first place), while Al-Qaeda and ISIS welcome converts.

Moreover, what separates ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism as a whole, from other forms of terrorism is the focus it places on territorial claims.<sup>14</sup> While religious and revolutionary groups seek to impose their vision of the world on others, ethno-nationalist terrorist groups aim for independence or greater autonomy on the part of territory they claim. Besides achieving the stated "territorial" political goal, the violence they perpetrate is also aimed at strengthening communal identity.<sup>15</sup> What separates ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism from revolutionary terrorism is that the latter engages in violence in order to mobilize individuals to join the revolutionary movement while ethno-nationalist/separatist groups already have an audience among the communal group they claim to represent.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, when it comes to the nature of their violence, ethno-nationalist terrorist groups engage in ethnic violence, aiming to inflict physical harm on the criteria of ethnic belonging. Their targets are often either members of security forces or people of the opposing ethnic group. Both are seen as foreign occupiers denying freedom to the ethnic group terrorist claim to

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The age of terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), 207.

<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it is in this territorial element that lies a distinction between guerilla movement of national liberation and an ethno-nationalist terrorist group. The strategy of guerilla movements rests on liberating and controlling remote and/or rural areas of the state. Here, they establish control of the territory and use it as a base for launching further insurgency. Ethno-nationalist terrorist groups do not possess control of territory or population, and launch attacks within enemy territory. See Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "The Dynamics Of Nationalist Terrorism: ETA and the IRA," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 281-82.

<sup>15</sup> Byman

<sup>16</sup> Ibid; Sánchez-Cuenca: 292.

represent.<sup>17</sup> Characterizing their targets in that way, they also seek to legitimize the violence perpetrated against them.

### **1.3 Ethno-nationalist terrorism and rational choice theory**

There are different theoretical approaches used to guide research on terrorism. Franks divides them into three strands:

1. Orthodox terrorism theory that adopts a state-centric understanding and does not engage in debate over root causes of terrorism
2. Radical terrorism theory used as a justification of violence
3. Moderate terrorism theory that aims at explaining root causes of terrorism as related to socio-economic and structural environment.<sup>18</sup>

As the primary focus of this thesis are the conflicting interests of terrorist groups and the governments against which they utilize terrorism with the aim of coercing them into concessions, the approach taken for studying ethno-nationalist terrorism is based on rational choice theory (RCT) coming from economic theory.<sup>19</sup> Such an approach indeed represents a dominant paradigm and has been referred to as “strategic model”<sup>20</sup> or “instrumental model”.<sup>21</sup> This model is the most fitting for the purpose of this research as it presumes that terrorism is used primarily

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<sup>17</sup> Vamik Volkan, *Blood lines: from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997): 157.

<sup>18</sup> Jason Franks, "Orthodox Accounts of Terrorism," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence*, edited by Marie Breen-Smith (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 33-46.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957).

<sup>20</sup> Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 78.

<sup>21</sup> Martha Crenshaw, "Theories of terrorism: Instrumental and organizational approaches," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 10, no. 4 (December 1987): 13-31.

as a tool to obtain political goals. Moreover, testing the model's explanatory power returned good results.<sup>22</sup>

This thesis contains a number of assumptions regarding the behavior of ethno-nationalist terrorist groups stemming from RCT. When assuming the behavior of ethno-nationalist groups it subscribes to thick rational choice theory which states that actors hold stable and consistent preferences over all outcomes.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in order to account for constraints, ethno-nationalist groups are utility maximizers under constraints.<sup>24</sup> As rational actors, they also respond to “incentives” from the environment, primarily from state responses in the form of counterterrorist measures.<sup>25</sup> In order to account for imperfect information, this thesis relies on the concept of bounded rationality.<sup>26</sup> Lastly, what is a theoretical starting point of big importance is the usage of RCT with the assumption that ethno-nationalist terrorist groups act as unitary actors. This assumption may be problematic in the case of ethnic groups themselves (although some argue for it).<sup>27</sup> However, since ethno-nationalist terrorist groups have a hierarchical structure and leadership that designates the course of action, they lend themselves to the possibility of being observed as unitary actors.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Claude Berebbi, "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: What Matters and Is Rational-Choice Theory Helpful?" in *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*, ed. Paul Davis and Kim Cragin (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009), 151-208; Bryan Caplan, "Terrorism: The relevance of the rational choice model," *Public Choice* 128, no. 1-2 (2006): 91-107.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Nau, "Arbitrage, Incomplete Models, and Interactive Rationality," in *Beliefs, Interactions and Preferences in Decision Making*, ed. Bertrand Munier and Mark Machina (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 217-236.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Anderton and John Carter, "On Rational Choice Theory and the Study of Terrorism," *Defence and Peace Economics*, 16 no.4 (2005): 275-282.

<sup>25</sup> Bryan Caplan, "Rational Irrationality: A Framework for the Neoclassical-Behavioral Debate," *Eastern Economic Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 191-211; Eric van Um, *Evaluating the Political Rationality of Terrorist Groups*, (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Caplan (2000).

<sup>27</sup> This is espoused by instrumentalist approach to ethnic conflict. For an example, see Monica Duffy Toft, *The geography of ethnic conflict: identity, interests, and the indivisibility of territory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Brian Jackson, "Organizational Decisionmaking by Terrorist Groups," in Davis and Cragin, 209-256.

Outlining the characteristics of the model serves a two-fold purpose. First, it establishes theoretical criteria for the selection of case studies. Secondly, it serves as a theoretical framework, providing the most appropriate analytical “angle” to observe the cases and reach an answer to the research question. At its core, a framework of examination based on RCT enables looking at ethno-nationalist terrorism as the “continuation of politics by other means”, as Clausewitz once famously described war.<sup>29</sup> Quite simply, taking into account the conflicting interests of terrorists and the state they act against, terrorist groups decide that conventional means of political communication are not enough to obtain the political concessions they desire.<sup>30</sup> In it, terrorists are rational actors who employ violence against civilians in order to obtain political concessions.

#### **1.4 Justification of case studies**

Based on everything outlined in the previous sections, the PIRA and ETA represent classic examples of ethno-nationalist terrorism.<sup>31</sup> They fit the description of ethno-nationalist terrorist groups outlined in section 1.2 and the necessary “preconditions”, outlined in section 1.3 that constitutes them as rational actors. While the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) satisfies the first condition, the nature of their umbrella organization composed of different terrorist groups raises questions about the extent to which they may be considered as a unitary actor. Moreover, one of the preconditions, stemming from the design of this research, is that the terrorist group’s campaign had to be over, in order to assess its effectiveness and success. This

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<sup>29</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On war*, trans. Michael Howard, Peter Paret, and Bernard Brodie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 50.

<sup>31</sup> See (among other works) Louise Richardson, *What terrorists want: understanding the enemy, containing the threat* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2007); Hoffman (2006), 242; Byman: 149.

disqualified the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). While the case of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) may satisfy everything outlined above, the fact that they controlled significant swaths of territory and engaged in fierce military confrontations against the Sri Lankan army, makes them more a case of guerilla movement than a terrorist organization.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the context in which their campaign was embedded was significantly different than that of the PIRA and ETA.

Indeed, it was this similarity between PIRA and ETA that was crucial in selecting these two cases. This similarity pointed to an interesting research puzzle. Why did two ethno-nationalist terrorist groups – with similar goals (secession), similar ideologies (ethno-nationalism and left-wing political orientation), in conflict against similar type of state and government (multi-ethnic liberal democracy)<sup>33</sup>, both facing terrorist organizations against them (Loyalist paramilitary organizations such as Ulster Defence Force and Ulster Volunteer Force in Northern Ireland, and paramilitary death squads like *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberacion* in Spain), both operating in similar international context (both were based in states that were part of the Western bloc during the Cold War) – end in different outcomes? They were not only very similar, but also highly cooperative and looked to each other for valuable strategic lessons that would advance their cause.<sup>34</sup> Selecting cases that have such similarities enables nuanced empirical research for slight differences that may provide an answer to the research question, and possibly tell more about the dynamics and strategy of ethno-national terrorism.

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<sup>32</sup> For the difference between the two, see footnote 17.

<sup>33</sup> It is important to note the exception in the case of ETA during the period of Franco's dictatorship. This will be discussed more prominently in the following chapters.

<sup>34</sup> Agnès Maillot, "Comrades in Arms: Sinn Féin and Basque Separatism," *Nordic Irish Studies* 4 (2005): 1-12.



## **1.5 Historical background**

### **1.5.1 The Troubles**

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was founded in 1919 and participated in the Irish War of Independence. Following the end of the war, it split into two factions. The factions that opposed the Anglo-Irish treaty retained the name (sometimes also referred to as “anti-treaty IRA”), and fought a civil war against pro-treaty forces between 1922 and 1923. Despite losing the war, they remained in existence and committed to their goals of uniting the remaining six counties, in majority-protestant Northern Ireland, with the 26 counties that comprised the Irish Free State and what became the Republic of Ireland in 1937. The Civil Rights movement emerged in 1968, protesting the political and economic discrimination of Catholics in Northern Ireland. Frustrated with the IRA’s inability to seize momentum and mobilize the Catholic population, coupled with their failure to protect Catholics from police and Protestant violence amidst heightened ethnic tensions, a more nationalist group turned to militarism, and broke away from the IRA to form the Provisional IRA in December 1969.

The PIRA’s campaign was part of the ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland, locally known as “The Troubles”. The conflict was an ethnic and sectarian one, inflamed by events of the past. It was sparked by the Civil Rights movement and the subsequent violent response to it by the Protestant government. The conflict revolved around the diverging interests of Unionists/loyalists (usually Protestant) who considered themselves British and wished to remain part of the United Kingdom, and Irish nationalists/republicans who wanted to unite Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Ulster Defence Force (UDF) were Protestant paramilitary organizations. Other than them, the British Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) also were opposed to the PIRA’s goals and acted to

prevent their achievement. The conflict ended in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement with political participation from both sides, as well as the Republic of Ireland and United Kingdom as signees. Northern Ireland remained a part of the United Kingdom, but a new government system based on power-sharing, was instituted. Other provisions in the agreement aimed at improving the position of Catholics in Northern Ireland.

### 1.5.2 Basque conflict

ETA emerged in 1959, when a group of students became dissatisfied with the moderate stances of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). Their original aims and nature were entirely ethno-nationalist, but subsequently they adopted a Marxist perspective, too. While they claimed their first victims in 1968 and engaged in terrorism during Franco's dictatorship, the most intense period of ETA violence occurred during Spain's transition to democracy. The Spanish constitution of 1978 decentralized territorial power substantially and represented a significant mark of Spanish transition to democracy. As a result, a year later the Basque Autonomy Statute was ratified by people in Basque Country and afterwards accepted by the Spanish government. Nevertheless, ETA maintained their goal of independence.

ETA's campaign was a part of the Basque conflict,<sup>35</sup> alternatively called the Spain-ETA conflict. The campaign was conducted as a means of achieving the independence of Basque Country by seceding its territory from Spain and France. Both states opposed these goals. Nevertheless, France was never targeted by ETA violence and served more as a safe-haven.

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<sup>35</sup> The usage of the term „Basque conflict“ has been deemed problematic. The argument of those against using it is that it is used by ETA to legitimize its activities. For more, see Luis R. Aizpeolea, "No hubo conflicto vasco, sino totalitarismo de ETA," EL PAÍS, March 11, 2015.

[http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/03/11/actualidad/1426103143\\_149437.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/03/11/actualidad/1426103143_149437.html) (accessed May 13, 2017).

ETA's adversaries included the Spanish government, which mostly relied on police to counter ETA, and right-wing paramilitary groups. After several instances of failed negotiations throughout the years, ETA decided to cease armed activities in 2011, which the Spanish government proclaimed a "victory for democracy".<sup>36</sup>

Before moving to the next chapter, it is worth acknowledging that, in 1974, ETA split into two organizations: ETA political-military (ETApM) and ETA military (ETAm). ETApM decided to devote themselves significantly to fostering change through politics, while ETAm subordinated its political wing to their armed struggle. As ETApM denounced violence in 1981 and ETAm accounts for ninety-three percent of total ETA killings<sup>37</sup>, ETAm is referred to simply as ETA, unless otherwise noted.

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<sup>36</sup> Sarah Rainsford, "Basque group ETA says armed campaign is over," BBC News. October 20, 2011. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-15393014> (accessed May 13, 2017).

<sup>37</sup> Sanchez-Cuenca, 292.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 Methodology

The method used in this research is that which dominates the majority of scholarship in terrorism research – case study. Nevertheless, what distinguishes this research is its comparative nature. It moves away from conventional assessments of the utility of terrorism within a single case towards making a comparison across two cases. This comparison is made on the basis of most-similar method where two cases are seemingly as similar as possible across a variety of independent variables, but different in the dependent variable. The method draws upon Mill's "method of agreement".<sup>38</sup> Other than being a relatively new way to approach terrorism research, comparative case study was also most fitting given that the research question asks "why" and enables the most similar method comparison to be conducted.<sup>39</sup> The level of analysis is domestic while units of analysis are the PIRA and ETA. Both cases are embedded into context to account for context specific conclusions.

The research combines both qualitative and quantitative data to test its hypotheses. Qualitative data includes both primary sources published by the terrorist organizations themselves and secondary sources found in the previous literature written on the two organizations. Quantitative data is secondary, obtained from literature about the two conflicts. It serves to provide further evidence for the claims made.

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<sup>38</sup> John Stuart Mill, "A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive," in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 7 and 8 (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Third ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), 7.

## 2.2 Research Design

The analysis of case studies is conducted through theory testing process tracing.<sup>40</sup> Based on the preliminary review of cases and relevant literature, this research puts forth three different hypotheses that seek to explain the difference in the dependent variable (the outcome). Each hypothesis is prefaced with the relevant literature it was drawn from. Afterwards, the chapter has two goals it aspires to meet. First, it seeks to provide evidence demonstrating whether there is a difference in how the two units measure in the independent variable. Secondly, it attempts to explain how such a difference would impact the outcome. Once all the hypotheses are tested, their explanatory value is assessed taking into consideration the particular importance a certain factor carries in ethno-nationalist terrorist campaigns. Once the variable of highest explanatory value is found, its mechanism and logic is explained borrowing from literature on violence and ethnic conflict, as well as terrorism.

It is worthwhile to briefly outline the relationship between the hypotheses themselves. The three hypotheses are compatible, meaning that theoretically all three may be accepted and carry their share of the answer. However, in case more than one hypothesis is accepted, their explanatory power is assessed taking into consideration the context and the underlying mechanism of ethno-nationalist terrorism. Consequently, the hypotheses are in competition to the extent that one may carry a higher explanatory value than the other. Lastly, they are complementary to the limited extent that conclusions obtained from one hypothesis may inform certain outcomes regarding specific aspects of another. For example, high support may indicate that the organization's political wing will do fairly well in the elections or if a group espouses

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<sup>40</sup> Derek Beach and Rasmus Pedersen, *Process-tracing methods: foundations and guidelines* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2016).

solely Marxist goals it is likely to amass little long-term support since nationalism contains a wider constituency.

### ***2.3 Operationalizing the research question***

To reiterate, the research question is: Why did the PIRA's campaign end with a negotiated settlement of conflict (granting them political concessions by the state) and ETA's did not?

The research question is operationalized by looking at the literature on terrorism and terrorist organizations. Consequently, three possible influencing factors are identified: goals, support (as a function of target selection), and predominant type of strategy. Each of the two organizations is assigned one ternary or binary value in order to be able to identify whether they differ in the variable or not. Hence, for H1 the independent variable "goal" may take the value of "nationalist", "Marxist", "Marxist and nationalist". The independent variable "support" in H2 is either "high" or "low" (in the summary of results it may appear as "high at the beginning, low at the end" in order to better represent the direction it was moving in over the course of a given time period). "Predominant strategy" is the independent variable in H3 with possible values being "military", "military and political", and "political". The dependent variable is the outcome and is "success" and "failure". It is important to note here that success is not defined in terms of the original intent of the terrorist groups, but rather in terms of how the terrorist campaign ended. If the campaign ended with a peace treaty giving political concessions to the terrorist group and the ethnic group it claims to represent, then it is deemed a "success" (as in the case of the PIRA). If the campaign ended with a terrorist group giving up the armed struggle without obtaining concessions for ending their armed campaign, then it is labeled as a "failure".

## CHAPTER 3 - GOALS

### 3.1 Literature review

Contrary to popular myths that terrorist are mad, evil, and purely seek destruction, the existing literature has managed to provide a more rational explanation for their motives. Nevertheless, this section will only focus on how motives of ethno-nationalist terrorist groups differentiate them from other terrorist groups. As previously stated, they are differentiated by the “territorial” focus of their goals. This proves to be an important distinction when one introduces a categorization of goals that different terrorist groups seek. Informed by the work of Richardson and Abrahms, it is possible to distinguish between two types of end goals: ones that seek a change within an already existing political system and the others that seek to transform the system by overthrowing the current one and installing a new system according to their vision.<sup>41</sup> The first ones shall be referred to as “system correcting” and the latter “system transforming” goals. Ethno-nationalist terrorism, unlike other types of terrorism, falls into the “system correcting” category. This type of terrorist group engages in violence to correct the pitfalls of the existing system in the name of an ethnic group, not to overthrow the system and install a new one in the name of some doctrine or deity.

The limited nature of their goals (independence instead of global revolution) is a big reason why this type of terrorist group has been the most successful and long-lasting.<sup>42</sup> Their resilience and strength stems from the clearly articulated and seemingly attainable goals they strive for. The cases of the PIRA and ETA definitely confirm claims of longevity. Cronin finds

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<sup>41</sup> Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 42-78; Richardson (2007).

<sup>42</sup> Hoffman (2006), 242.

that the average lifespan of a terrorist group is eight years.<sup>43</sup> The PIRA and ETA significantly pass that benchmark with the PIRA's campaign lasting almost thirty years and the Spain-ETA conflict being the longest running violent conflict in modern Europe, prior to ETA's decision to cease its armed activities.<sup>44</sup> However, despite being better predisposed to succeed compared to other types of terrorist groups, ethno-nationalist terrorist groups found little success in terms of achieving their end goals. The only exceptions were groups operating in the context of post-WWII de-colonization era.

This lack of success is indicative of terrorist groups' general inability to achieve stated goals. Still, authors have placed themselves on both sides of the "Does terrorism work?" debate, arguing both that it does and does not. Dershowitz argues that Palestinian terrorism was more successful in bringing international attention and sympathy to their cause compared to ethno-nationalist groups that did not resort to terrorism.<sup>45</sup> Robert Pape claims that about fifty percent of suicide bombing campaign result in political gains for terrorist groups.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the argument that terrorism does not work appears to be a stronger one. Abrahms found a seven percent success rate in twenty-eight terrorist groups examined.<sup>47</sup> Cronin investigated 457 terrorist groups active since 1968 and found a less than five percent success rate.<sup>48</sup> Jones and Libicki also researched groups active since 1968 and found that out of 648, only ten percent of them succeeded in achieving their objectives.<sup>49</sup> Not only do most fail, but the majority even fail to

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<sup>43</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 92.

<sup>44</sup> Gorka Espiau Idioaga, *The Basque Conflict: New Ideas and Prospects for Peace*, report (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Alan M. Dershowitz, *Why terrorism works: understanding the threat, responding to the challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> Robert Pape, *Dying to win: the strategic logic of suicide terrorism* (London: Gibson Square, 2006), 65.

<sup>47</sup> Abrahms (2006): 51.

<sup>48</sup> Cronin (2009), 93.

<sup>49</sup> Seth Jones and Martin Libicki, *How terrorist groups end: lessons for countering Al Qaida* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 2008), 18-19.



reach a compromise. The common characteristic of those that succeed or reach a compromise is the ethno-nationalist background and the “system correcting” nature of their goals.<sup>50</sup>

Judging whether terrorism works or not solely based on the stated end-goals of the terrorist groups would be an oversimplification. Hence, it is highly important to differentiate between short-term tactical objectives and long-term end goals that require significant political change.<sup>51</sup> This distinction is important to properly evaluate the effectiveness and utility of terrorism as a political tool. In this particular case, ethno-nationalist groups espouse territorial “system correcting” goals. They do not wish to transform the system (at least that is not their primary goal), but wish to change the existing system by achieving independence and secession. While this may be their end goal, their short-term secondary goals may fall under the three Rs: revenge, renown, reaction.<sup>52</sup> That means, their organizational objectives, besides their end goal, also include exacting revenge, getting publicity, and baiting the state into some sort of reaction (the preferred reaction would be one that is exaggerated, either capitulation or indiscriminate repression).

There is no debate whether the PIRA or ETA accomplished their end goals. Both ended their armed campaigns without achieving their goals of uniting the entire island of Ireland or all of the Basque lands into an independent country, respectively. Yet, the difference between whether the campaign amounted to any political concessions certainly exists between the two. The PIRA signed a peace agreement that brought a power-sharing constitution with its political wing participating in the government. ETA, on the other hand, ended their campaign without any favorable political outcome to point to. Based on the existing literature pertaining to terrorist groups’ goals, it is possible to forge a hypothesis that would point to a likely factor in different

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<sup>50</sup> Abrahms (2006).

<sup>51</sup> Richardson (2007), 75.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 71-103.

outcomes of PIRA and ETA campaigns. Since groups that espouse solely nationalist (territorial) system correcting goals are the only ones achieving success or at least compromise, considering that ETA did embrace a much higher degree of Marxism than PIRA, the following hypothesis ought to be tested:

H1: Unlike the PIRA, ETA failed to attain political concessions because their goals were (or appeared as) system transforming due to the higher degree of significance it placed on Marxist ideology compared to the PIRA.

### **3.2 Analysis of hypothesis 1**

The key to giving a verdict on H1 is to look at the leftist ideas present within both movements. As both organizations fall under Rapoport's third "New Left" wave of terrorism<sup>53</sup>, they adopted some degree of Marxism to their struggle. The PIRA initially opposed any form of leftist leaning, which was largely the result of how it came about as a splinter organization from what is now known as the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA). The reason behind the breakup was the dissatisfaction that more traditionally republican members had with Cathal Goulding's leadership. Namely, under Goulding the official policy moved away from armed struggle and gave primacy to attempts of uniting Ireland through mobilizing and uniting the working class (both Catholic and Protestant) in order to pave the road for a united socialist Ireland.<sup>54</sup> Those who eventually founded the PIRA felt that such a turn was significantly altering the cause of the struggle, moving it from its traditionally republican nationalist roots to Marxism. After the split the OIRA turned even more Marxist and were supported by the Soviets according

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<sup>53</sup> Rapoport.

<sup>54</sup> John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: from Palestine to Northern Ireland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 257.

to a defected high-ranking KGB official. The same defector claimed that the KGB had little fondness for the PIRA.

As time progressed, the PIRA exposed its own leftist views that played to its largely Catholic working class base. As Richard English notes socialism, inspired by ideas of “pre-eminent Irish socialist-republican political theologian” James Connolly, was a secondary goal for a large number of PIRA members.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the 1979 written publication of Sinn Fein policy that was “Marxist in everything but name”<sup>56</sup> mentions Connolly:

“Furthermore, with James Connolly we believe that the present system of society is based upon the robbery of the working class and that capitalist property cannot exist without the plundering of labour; we desire to see capitalism abolished and a democratic system of common or public ownership erected in its stead. This democratic system, which is called socialism, will, we believe, come as a result of the continuous increase of power to the working class. Only by this means can we secure the abolition of destitution and all the misery, crime and immorality which flow from that unnecessary evil.”<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, proof of the PIRA’s leftist views are the issues that the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAIID) encountered as the sole representative of the PIRA in the United States of America.<sup>58</sup> Their socialist rhetoric was a problem for NORAIID whose task was collecting funds from Irish Americans to provide financial assistance to the PIRA. Hence, they had to censor certain “leftist” parts of speeches made by PIRA and Sinn Fein leaders, in order not to alienate support from traditionally conservative and anti-socialist Irish America.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, while the majority of the PIRA and Sinn Fein were less radical in their invoking of left-wing politics, prisons were places where those more radical Marxist elements existed. Tommy McKearney, a former PIRA member who took part in the hunger strikes, notes the existence of a group of

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<sup>55</sup> Richard English, *Does terrorism work?: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 109.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Finn, "The Adaptable Sinn Fein," *Jacobin*, April 04, 2016, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/04/sinn-fein-ireland-republicanism-socialism-austerity-troubles/> (accessed May 15, 2017).

<sup>57</sup> Sinn Fein, *Eire Nua, The Sinn Fein Policy: The Social, Economic, and Political Dimensions*, (1979), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/sf/sinnfein79.htm>

<sup>58</sup> Brian Hanley, "The politics of Noraid," *Irish Political Studies* 19, no. 1 (2004): 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*: 11.

prisoners who “were firmly to the left of the movement and Marxist for the most part”.<sup>60</sup> Further claims exist that “the dominant ideology among republican prisoners in the H-Blocks in the 1980s was that of a revolutionary, left-wing, socialist, Marxist orientation”.<sup>61</sup>

Despite all of this, the establishment of a socialist government within a united Ireland had to take a back seat to the primary goal of uniting Ireland first. Other than using socialism in its rhetoric, they never had a clear strategy of how to eventually arrive at a socialist government. A legitimate question is whether they would have really established socialism even if they could have. The most likely explanation of why they advocated socialism was because it was associated with the revolutionary warfare of national liberation and various insurgency strategies that they have likely read. It is fair to believe that the majority never achieved more than a superficial understanding of Marxism. An example is Seamus Twomey, former PIRA chief of staff who said on one occasion: “At heart I am a socialist ... I have been involved in setting up trade unions and so forth. But at the same time I am a right winger.”<sup>62</sup> Their subsequent actions, such as collaborating with the Clinton administration in achieving the peace deal were somewhat of a sign that Sinn Féin is willing to work with neo-liberalism. If anyone still had doubts about whether they were really committed to socialism, Martin McGuinness’s neo-liberal political actions as a representative in the government shattered all illusions.<sup>63</sup> Socialism for the PIRA was only a fad, a trend they adopted as a result of the global zeitgeist they were living in.

ETA’s origin story is similar to that of the PIRA. It was formed by a group of youth dissatisfied with the leading expression of Basque nationalism at the time embodied in the Basque Nationalist Party (in Spanish *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* – PNV). The first political

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<sup>60</sup> Tommy McKearney, *The Provisional IRA from insurrection to Parliament* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 166.

<sup>61</sup> English (2016), 109.

<sup>62</sup> Kevin Kelley, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA* (London: Zed Books, 1988), 283.

<sup>63</sup> Finn.

program that ETA adopted also came with an “infusion of Marxist ideology.”<sup>64</sup> The formulation of the program was the work of Federico Krutwig, the son of a German industrialist, in his book “*Vasconia*”.<sup>65</sup> Another significant book was Zalbide’s guerilla manual *Insurreccion en Euskadi* which served as the foundation of ETA’s military strategy, drawing upon Maoist and Ho Chi Minh strategic thought.<sup>66</sup> These views were embraced and used to define ETA as an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist organization whose aims were liberating both the Basques and the working class.<sup>67</sup> The Fourth Assembly in 1965 proved critical for solidifying the future course of ETA’s action. Class struggle was equated with national struggle and the two were deemed inseparable.<sup>68</sup> Deciding to take this route, ETA invested in the action/repression/action strategy. The extent to which Marxism had caught on in the organization is best exemplified by the number of fierce debates regarding which particular strand of revolutionary strategy to adopt, causing the first splits in the movement. Indeed, the original members left the organization in the mid-1960s because they felt the organization was hijacked by Marxist-Leninists.<sup>69</sup> The first major split that occurred in 1966, ousted both extremist factions: the ones favoring solely nationalist or Marxist ideas. The faction that remained dominant was committing to the achievement of national liberation as part of a broad revolutionary struggle.<sup>70</sup> After the aforementioned split between ETAp and ETAm, ideological debates within the movement dwindled. Of the two, ETAp was the more Marxist, believing that armed struggle needs to be integrated with class struggle. ETAm, a more nationalist faction, believed in the primacy of armed struggle and felt

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<sup>64</sup> Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 92.

<sup>65</sup> Federico Krutwig, *Vasconia*, Second ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Norbait, 1973).

<sup>66</sup> Jose Luis Zalbide, *Insurreccion en Euskadi*, (1964). The pamphlet can be accessed electronically at: [http://www.ehk.eus/images/MLNV/III\\_BATZARRA/DOC-La\\_insurreccion\\_en\\_Euskadi\\_1964.pdf](http://www.ehk.eus/images/MLNV/III_BATZARRA/DOC-La_insurreccion_en_Euskadi_1964.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Conversi, 96.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>69</sup> Francisco Letamendia Belzunce, *Historia del nacionalismo vasco y de ETA: Introducción a la historia del País Vasco. ETA en el franquismo* (Madrid: R & B Ediciones, 1994), 304-311.

<sup>70</sup> Teresa Whitfield, *Endgame for ETA: Elusive Peace in the Basque Country* (London: Hurst, 2014), 42.

political actions ought to be subordinated to it. ETApM eventually established a working-class party and gave up armed struggle by accepting the Spanish government's amnesty in 1980, deciding to work within the political framework of the country.

ETA's endorsement of Marxism deserves a critical look. While the group certainly exhibited Marxist rhetoric almost during the entirety of its existence, the intensity of it certainly lessened over time. Besides the fact that ETA, just like the PIRA, was shaped by the international context and thus embraced leftist ideas, just like other groups did – it is likely that they embraced Marxism due to the connection they saw between it and Lenin's belief in the right to national self-determination.<sup>71</sup> For the majority of ETA's history Marxism served to legitimize the ideology that would portray Basque country as an occupied colony and ETA members as justified revolutionaries. Nevertheless, just as in the case of the PIRA, there never existed a concrete political program or guide of action on how to achieve a socialist state. Sullivan rightly argues that the absence of any such credible program is the reason why PNV (a center-right party) was not fiercely condemning ETA for their armed actions. As both organizations were primarily and ultimately striving for independence, their mainly nationalist interests converged.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the seemingly convergent goals of national independence and working-class liberation were, in fact, not. Unlike the PIRA whose supporters mostly came from urban working-class and less well-to-do rural areas, the nationalist sentiments in Basque Country were cross-class rather than significantly focused on a single class.<sup>73</sup>

ETA's belief that it could integrate the socialist cause with nationalism arguably hurt the organization by alienating those supporters of nationalism who were not fond of Marxist ideology. There had to be a choice between the two as they were not in unison for a large part of

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<sup>71</sup> John Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi, 1890-1986* (London: Routledge, 1988), 269.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 270.

<sup>73</sup> English (2016), 201.

the population. For most of ETA's history and through its various factions, it certainly favored nationalism. Still, it would be incorrect to say that Marxism did not influence the organization. Just like the PIRA, they read revolutionary warfare and were influenced by the successes of ethno-nationalist leftist movements of national liberation and by People's War Theory.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, especially in the case of ETAm, who carried out the bulk of ETA's violence as a terrorist group, they remained true to ETA's end goal as described in their 1962 Executive Committee Statement: "ETA is a clandestine organization whose only objective is to obtain as rapidly as possible and using all the means possibly – including violence – the independence of Euzkadi."<sup>75</sup>

### 3.3 Conclusion

H1 states: "Unlike the PIRA, ETA failed to attain political concessions because their goals were system transforming due to the higher degree of significance it placed on Marxist ideology compared to the PIRA." After a qualitative analysis of both groups' ideological background, it is reasonable to conclude that H1 does not stand for two reasons. First, the Marxist/socialist ideological elements of both groups were a result of the global environment they found themselves in. As Rapoport outlines in his "waves theory", groups are very likely to adopt whatever the popular global revolutionary ideology is at the time despite it not being their primary cause.<sup>76</sup> It is a sign of strategic to adapt to popular dogmas for the sake of gaining broader support. The PIRA and ETA, both primarily ethno-nationalist terrorist organizations, adopted Marxism since it was the dominant ideology among terrorist groups at the time. In

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<sup>74</sup> Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: Its Not Waves, Its Strains," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 2 (2016): 207.

<sup>75</sup> English (2016), 186.

<sup>76</sup> Rapoport.

similar fashion Chechen ethno-nationalist terrorist groups and individuals have adopted jihadism. As Cronin asserts: “Popular international ideologies spur and catalyze terrorism, but they do not fully define its goals over time”.<sup>77</sup> The main point is that the level of importance that Marxism played in their campaigns was not significantly different for the majority of the groups’ existence. ETA was certainly more closely related to it and was dominated by a faction that favored Marxism for a brief period of time. Nevertheless, since ETAm it was rather clear that independence is the goal that takes precedence above all else. Secondly, since independence was the goal, it would be an exaggeration to claim that ETA was a system transforming terrorist group that wanted global socialism. The Spanish government never felt that ETA was an existential threat. Even if hypothetically ETA achieved its goal of a united socialist Basque country that would not be the end of liberal democracy for the rest of Spain. Following this, it is reasonable to conclude that H1 cannot explain the difference in outcomes as the importance of revolutionary Marxist goals in the two organizations was not radically different for the majority of the time and ETA’s primarily nationalist focus since ETAm did not present an existential threat for the rest of Spain.

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<sup>77</sup> Cronin (2009), 41.



## CHAPTER 4 - TARGETING AND SUPPORT

### **4.1 Literature review**

Richardson argues that an important variable that plays a part in the realization of goals is the community the terrorist group claims to represent.<sup>78</sup> In the case of ethno-nationalist terrorism, terrorist groups claim to act in the name of the community they represent and even though the broader community may disagree with their means, they may share their goals. This makes the group far more resilient and hence, better positioned to achieve their goals. A useful expansion of various forms of support for terrorist groups was made by Sanchez-Cuenca, who modified Roger Petersen's scale of rebellious behavior and came up with three degrees of support for terrorism: group 1 is composed of those who disagree with the use of terrorism as a political tool and targeting civilians, but vaguely sympathize with the organization's goals; group 2 is composed of those who vote for the political wing of the organization or participate in social activities of it; group 3 are those who help the organization with logistical needs or engage in small-scale violence.<sup>79</sup>

For ethno-nationalist terrorist groups, possessing a pre-existing constituency on the basis of ethnicity is a double-edged sword. It makes them the most dangerous type of terrorist groups for governments to deal with. They may raise legitimate concerns and grievances that mobilize the ethnic group against the state. However, this also imposes certain constraints on the group. The terrorist group cannot afford to be more violent than its supporters are willing to tolerate. If they cross the line, it is likely to result in a backlash against them. As ethno-nationalist groups whose goals are system correcting, they are aware that they cannot completely alienate

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<sup>78</sup> Richardson (2007).

<sup>79</sup> Sanchez-Cuenca (2007): 300-1.

themselves from the population. If they do, their violence will stop being a means to an end of political concessions. Crenshaw recognizes this loss of support by its core constituency as a major cause of a terrorist group's failure. She points to an important dynamic between grievances and the disputed legitimacy of the state that contributes to a terrorist group being seen as legitimate representatives of the social group they claim to represent.<sup>80</sup> Cronin identifies targeting errors and backlash as one of the paths to failure for a terrorist group. She explains that by attacking targets considered by their constituency as illegitimate, the public opinion is likely to swing in favor of the government's counter-terrorist measures against the group.<sup>81</sup>

So, what targets are illegitimate? Civilians come to mind first. While constituencies might tolerate and consider attacks against the on-duty military and police as legitimate, it is unlikely that they would support the killing of innocent civilians. Nevertheless, it is difficult to precisely determine or assign a number to the level of tolerance a certain ethnic constituency might have for the terrorist groups' targeting of civilians. However, the works of Petersen and Kalyvas on violence during civil war indicates that individuals who have suffered violence by members of a different ethnic group are more likely to call for and exact revenge than ones who did not.<sup>82</sup> As the actual perpetrators are not always known or possible to find, this wish for revenge results in essentializing the entire group the perpetrators come from. Consequently, it is possible to extrapolate this to the level of ethnic group and argue that ethnic groups who have suffered violence by members of the opposing ethnic group are more likely to be supportive of, or at least tolerant of, violence perpetrated against the ethnic group that inflicted it upon them. This leads us

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<sup>80</sup> Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 16-18.

<sup>81</sup> Cronin (2009), 108.

<sup>82</sup> Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 40-84; Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 146-172.

to a hypothesis about a factor that might account for different outcomes in the terrorist campaigns of the PIRA and ETA:

H2: ETA failed compared to the PIRA as a result of a lesser level of support within its own base constituency. This occurred because its ethnic constituency (Basques) experienced a lesser degree of violence perpetrated against them by their adversaries than the PIRA's ethnic constituency (Northern Irish Catholics) did.

#### 4.2. Analysis of hypothesis 2

The first step in testing whether H2 holds or not, is to see their targeting selection over the years. The statistics on casualties and targeting preferences are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Targeting preferences of the PIRA and ETAm.

Type of target	PIRA	ETAm
Civilians	42.6 % (701)	40.7 % (315)
Police forces	17.2 % (283)	47.2 % (315)
Military	40.1 % (660)	12.1 % (94)
Total	1644	774

Source: Sánchez-Cuenca, 294.

It is observable from this that the targeting preferences were highly similar. The discrepancy between military and police forces targeting between the two cases is explained by the different counter-terrorism strategies of the two states. The presence and use of military for counter-terrorist measures enabled the PIRA to strike at the symbol of British power in Northern Ireland. As the Spanish state never deployed military, ETA targeted police forces to a much

greater extent due to their bigger presence. Judging from the targeting selection, the backlash and level of support ought to be similar.

At the outset of their campaigns, both terrorist groups enjoyed significant levels of support and legitimacy among their own constituency. This level of legitimacy for their struggle was the result of a combination of grievances and repressive government policies. The lack of effort by the RUC to prevent an attack on a peaceful civil rights march in Burntollet, the RUC's invasion of Bogside, and the British Army's Lower Falls operation were some of the repressive measures experienced by the Catholic population of Northern Ireland. The two most famous sources of grievance were internment and "Bloody Sunday". The use of internment without trial coupled with the use of coercive interrogation techniques did a lot to delegitimize the state in the eyes of the Catholic community.<sup>83</sup> So did "Bloody Sunday", an incident in which British soldiers shot 26 unarmed civilians who were protesting against internment. All of this contributed to the image of the PIRA as legitimate protectors of the Catholic community. Everything the British did as counter-terrorist measures seemed to backfire and actually strengthen the PIRA's capacity. Irish PM at the time, Jack Lynch, warned the British ambassador to Ireland about internment, saying that it would be "catastrophic; for every man put behind the wire, a hundred more would volunteer".<sup>84</sup>

As mentioned above, for ETA the context was similar. During Franco's dictatorship, expressions of Basque cultural and linguistic distinctiveness were forbidden. Anyone who disobeyed would be either imprisoned or exiled. In such a widespread state of repression, "ETA

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<sup>83</sup> Tom Parker, "Fighting an Antaeus Enemy: How Democratic States Unintentionally Sustain the Terrorist Movements They Oppose," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 2 (2007): 160.

<sup>84</sup> Newsinger, 166.

became a symbol of resistance against the excesses of the dictatorship.”<sup>85</sup> Just like in the case of the PIRA, the (Spanish) state responded militarily, by indiscriminate oppression and use of torture in interrogation. During the entire length of the dictatorship and the transitional period to democracy this was the primary counter-terrorist response. As envisaged by ETA, it worked in their favor as a continuous motivation for new recruits to join, just like it worked for the PIRA.

Just as their pattern of initial legitimacy was similar, so was the first backlash when the British and Spanish governments resorted to giving political concessions to Catholics and Basques respectively, hoping to significantly mitigate further violence. Hence, the suspension of the Stormont regime and the Basque Autonomy Statute satisfied a large number of their respective ethnic communities, causing them to no longer see the PIRA and ETA’s campaign as legitimate. Consequently, when the PIRA set off twenty-six bombs in in the center of Belfast, killing two soldiers and nine civilians while severely injuring 130 more, they had committed “irreparable damage to their cause – in Britain, abroad, and in their own communities.”<sup>86</sup> Similarly, 1978 saw the first demonstration against violence in Basque country. Although not explicitly against ETA violence, it was a sign that people’s grievances had been somewhat addressed.

The backlash against the PIRA worsened as a result of the “pub bombings”. While some may have been sympathetic to the cause of United Ireland while critical of the PIRA’s methods, the two became indistinguishable after a series of pub bombings that caused civilian casualties. In 1975, Eighty-eight percent of the British public supported the death penalty for convicted

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<sup>85</sup> Imanol Murua, *Ending ETA's armed campaign: How and why the Basque armed group abandoned violence* (London: Routledge, 2017), 57.

<sup>86</sup> David McKittrick, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died Through the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2001), 231.

terrorists.<sup>87</sup> However, it is important to keep in mind that this was a measure of broader public opinion. It is debatable whether “pub bombings” significantly decreased support for the PIRA within their core support group, the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. They were still mostly legitimized as protectors of the Catholic minority in the face of violence by loyalist paramilitaries that murdered 504 people, mostly Catholic civilians, many in gruesome manner.<sup>88</sup> For ETA, the “role” of loyalist paramilitaries was “played”, to a degree, by right-wing extremists (between 1975 and 1981) and *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberacion* (GAL) (between 1983 and 1986). Still, starting from the early 1980s, state repression became more discriminate.

The 1980s were significant for both groups. The hunger strikes and Sinn Fein’s good electoral results were a sign of a strong level of support for the PIRA and its political wing. Throughout the 1980s, Sinn Fein acquired slightly above ten percent of the vote in Northern Irish elections.<sup>89</sup> ETA’s political wing – *Herri Batasuna* (HB) also enjoyed electoral success for most of the decade, peaking in 1987, winning twenty percent of the vote for European Parliament elections in Basque Country.<sup>90</sup> Compared to HB, Sinn Fein enjoyed stability in electoral and popular support with occasional drops, such as in the case of the Remembrance Day parade bombing. The beginning of the end for ETA was the 1987 bombing of a supermarket in Barcelona which took the lives of twenty-one civilians. Motivated by this and other instances of ETA’s violence, a native Basque movement, *Gesto por la Paz*, assembled against it. ETA’s actions also played right into *Gesto por la Paz*’s attempts to delegitimize ETA. Namely, in the late 1980s and 1990s ETA started to kidnap Basque businessmen and political representatives

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<sup>87</sup> Laura O’Reilly, “The Birmingham pub bombings, the Irish as a “suspect community” and the memories of the O’Reilly family,” in *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies, and Memories*, ed. Graham Dawson, Jo Dover, and Stephen Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 287.

<sup>88</sup> Newsinger, 177.

<sup>89</sup> It is important to note that Catholics, who are presumably the electoral constituency that votes for Sinn fein, constituted roughly slightly more than a third of the population at the time.

<sup>90</sup> Sanchez-Cuenca (2007): 301.

and this was the tipping point: the Basque people did not remain passive and silent, but started publicly denouncing and protesting against ETA. As the Spanish government very well transitioned into a full democracy and implemented policies dealing with terrorism as a crime rather than militarily or through excessive police force, ETA lacked a real legitimizing cause to put forth. The PIRA, on the other hand, could still solidify its image of “protector of the Catholic minority” by pointing out that loyalist paramilitaries had actually exceeded them in the number of casualties.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, perpetrating violence without a legitimizing cause, a public opinion survey showed that ETA’s support dwindled to a mere five percent “fully supporting” ETA among Basque Nationalist Left (ETA’s traditional support base in Basque Country).<sup>92</sup> Eventually, ETA’s own constituency saw its actions as extremely detrimental to the cause of Basque nationalism.

## 4.2 Conclusion

Conventional wisdom would imply that the more indiscriminate terrorist groups are in their killings, the less support they would amass. Research on target selectivity of the PIRA and ETAm showed that the PIRA was three times more likely to commit an indiscriminate attack (15.6 % of PIRA’s casualties were indiscriminate compared to only 4.8 % of ETAm’s). De la Calle and Sanchez-Cuenca defined an indiscriminate attack, in this case, as based on “ascriptive traits of the person e.g. someone was killed simply because she was Protestant, regardless of her behavior or her job.”<sup>93</sup> However, ETAm was twice as likely to conduct control killings “related to

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<sup>91</sup> Newsinger, 192.

<sup>92</sup> Murua, 164.

<sup>93</sup> Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca, “The Production of Terrorist Violence: Analyzing Target Selection in the IRA and ETA,” *Working Paper* (Madrid: Juan March Institute, 2007), 3.

the security and popularity of the organization e.g. killings of informers (10 % the PIRA's casualties were control killings compared to 23.7 % of ETAm's).<sup>94</sup>

When it comes to the violence perpetrated by their adversaries on their ethnic kin, there is an important distinction between the two cases. The Loyalist paramilitaries (878) outnumbered Republican ones (722) in number of civilian killings. Moreover, while the PIRA committed 130 deliberate killings of Protestant civilians, Loyalist paramilitaries conducted 718 deliberate killings of Catholic civilians (counting also Protestants and others who were killed as result of being mistaken for Catholics).<sup>95</sup> In the case of ETA, paramilitaries killed 72 people, a majority of them targeted for being alleged ETA members.<sup>96</sup>

These statistics and the analysis of support imply three things. First, on average, during the entirety of their campaigns, the PIRA enjoyed a higher degree of support than ETA in the ethnic groups they claimed to represent. Secondly, it is clear that Catholics in Northern Ireland experienced a much higher degree of violence against them than did Basques in Spain. Third, percentage-wise, the PIRA deliberately targeted more members of the opposing ethnic group than ETA, but ETA targeted more members of its own group in order to make up for diminishing support. In sum, it seems that the important factor in different levels of support was the level of violence that their ethnic constituencies experienced by adversaries. Catholics in Ireland were both victims of repressive measures by the state for some time and loyalist paramilitaries throughout the entire length of the conflict. Basques, on the other hand were certainly repressed under Franco and during the transition period when the state employed indiscriminate measures against ETA and Basques, in addition to using paramilitary factions. However, the death squads and repressive measures were progressively more discriminate and targeted mostly those

<sup>94</sup> De la Calle and Sanchez-Cuenca (2007): 3.

<sup>95</sup> Malcolm Sutton, CAIN: Sutton Index of Deaths, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/> (accessed May 18, 2017).

<sup>96</sup> Euskonews, [http://www.euskonews.com/0256zbnk/gaia25604\\_01.html](http://www.euskonews.com/0256zbnk/gaia25604_01.html) (accessed May 17, 2017).



involved in terrorist activities. Nevertheless, the government started treating terrorism as a crime and dealing with it in compliance with human rights norms in the second part of the 1980s. The last death squad operations were conducted in 1987 and since then the government has taken action against them and those orchestrating them applying the rule of law. The perpetrators were jailed and the families of victims were compensated.<sup>97</sup> It is no coincidence that the beginning of the end for ETA started exactly the same year.

What brought an end to support for ETA was the fact that they started to be the ones perpetrating violence against the Basques. Rodger Mees describes the reasoning behind the Basque public turning against ETA:

“If the suffering of the relatives of the killed *Guardia Civil* had been only indirectly present in the Basque living rooms via their TV screens, the personal experience of seeing or hearing about the tears of a neighbor or a friend of that neighbor caused a much more direct and impacting experience in a small area like the Basque Country, where the network of social relations has not yet been totally disrupted by the anonymity of postmodern mass society. This was the background, which made important sectors of Basque society abandon their traditional attitude of more or less complaisant silence and show in public their disagreement, rejection or loathing for ETA violence.”<sup>98</sup>

Taking everything presented in this chapter into account, and in concurrence with the stances of Cronin, Crenshaw and Richardson regarding the fact that ethno-nationalist terrorist groups need the support of the constituency they claim to represent, it is reasonable to conclude that H2: “ETA failed compared to the PIRA as a result of lesser level of support within its own base constituency. This occurred because its ethnic constituency (Basques) experienced a lesser degree of violence perpetrated against them by their adversaries than PIRA’s ethnic constituency (Northern Irish Catholics) did”, holds and might be the answer to the research question.

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<sup>97</sup> Fernando Reinares and Rogelio Alonso, "Confronting Ethnonationalist Terrorism in Spain," in ed. Art and Richardson, 119.

<sup>98</sup> Ludger Mees, *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy: The Basque Clash of Identities* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 94.

Table 2. shows the gradual decline of support for ETA (in percentages).

	1981	1987	1996
Total support	8	1	1
Critical support	4	6	5
Aims yes, means no	3	11	12
Before yes, now no	12	19	18
Indifferent	1	2	2
Fear	1	4	7
Total rejection	23	34	51
No response	48	22	5

Source: Mees, p.94

## CHAPTER 5 - MILITARY AND POLITICAL STRATEGY

### 5.1 Literature review

Going back to the difference between terrorist groups with system correcting and those with system transforming goals, it is worthy to recognize that terrorism may not be the only option at their disposal. As they wish to obtain a limited goal while staying within the system, they may opt to turn to a measure of persuasion (politics) rather than coercion (terrorism). Indeed, as their goals are not existentially threatening to their adversaries' beliefs and values, they may be able to ensure the realization of their goals by obtaining political power in elections and subsequently enacting them as law.

There are various ways terrorism and legal political action may be connected. Leonard Weinberg, one of the pioneers who explored the relationship between terrorist groups and political parties, outlines the two ways terrorist groups may get involved in politics: either they completely abandon the armed struggle and transform themselves into legal political actors, or they establish a political wing to act as a legal actor and supplement the armed struggle.<sup>99</sup> In the cases of both the PIRA and ETA, they moved from the latter to the former. For Cronin, transition to party politics and a legitimate political process is one of the ways in which terrorism ends.<sup>100</sup> Of course, there exists the other part of the equation, that is, political parties engaging in terrorist tactics.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Arie Perliger, *Political parties and terrorist groups* (London: Routledge, 2009), 75.

<sup>100</sup> Cronin (2009).

<sup>101</sup> Leonard Weinberg, "Turning to Terror: The Conditions under Which Political Parties Turn to Terrorist Activities," *Comparative Politics* 23, no. 4 (1991).

The parallel existence of two distinctive forms of political action (participation in elections as a political party and use of terrorism), one legal and the other illegal but both utilized to achieve the same goals, points to the likelihood that there will be shifts regarding which one will be dominant at a certain point in time. Indeed, there exist shifts between the two in cases of terrorist groups and their political wings. While this makes one question what causes the shifts between the two,<sup>102</sup> it would be of more relevance for this thesis to examine how the predominance of one tactic over the other affects the outcome of the campaign. Therefore, considering the circumstances of the PIRA and ETA cases, and taking into account that both possessed political wings, it might be useful to track the strategic emphasis and shifts between the two strategies. If the two strategies were different, it might be valuable to examine how the predominance of one over the other (or possibly the equal use of both) affected the ultimate outcome. In light of this, a hypothesis can be formed:

H3: ETA failed compared to the PIRA because it prioritized armed struggle over political strategy.

## **5.2 Analysis of hypothesis III**

The paths of the PIRA and ETA were reversed regarding engagement through their political wings. The PIRA and Sinn Fein began by favoring military strategy over a political one, but eventually opted to reverse their strategy and commit themselves more seriously to achieving political concessions through a legitimate electoral process. ETA, on the other hand, went from a synchronized strategy that gave equal importance to armed struggle and elections, to a strategy

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<sup>102</sup> For work on the shifts between legal and illegal forms of violence in politics, see Susanne Martin and Arie Perliger, "Turning to and from Terror: Deciphering the Conditions under which Political Groups Choose Violent and Nonviolent Tactics," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6, no. 4-5 (2012).

that subordinated its political wing to the armed struggle of the terrorist group. In both cases, it is possible to point to a “turning point” that significantly changed the strategy in a different direction (either deciding to favor more the armed struggle or the political action through elections). These turning points were hunger strikes in the case of the PIRA and Sinn Féin, and the “great schism” between ETAp and ETAm in the case of ETA. However, presenting it so simply is insufficient and necessitates an illustration of the processes and context that led to the formation and shifts in their strategies.

The disagreement over what should be prioritized (armed struggle or peaceful political action) was the *raison d'être* behind the establishment of the PIRA. It was both an ideological (discussed in section 3.2) and strategic disagreement. Those who ended up forming the PIRA disagreed with the OIRA due to its leftist views and belief in the primacy of peaceful political means to bring about a united Ireland. The supremacy of armed struggle in the PIRA's overall strategy was a product of the context from which it emerged. It presented an alternative to the peaceful nature of the civil right movement and those who wanted to turn to party politics. The subsequent events only exacerbated tensions and further convinced the PIRA that violent action is the only way to bring about change. The primary catalyst was Bloody Sunday. As a consequence of it, a significant portion of Catholics stopped believing that peaceful politics can achieve anything. For the PIRA, it was just a confirmation that they were right all along and that terrorism ought to be taken up as the primary tactic.<sup>103</sup>

Unlike the PIRA's story of origin that is closely tied to the group's belief in the primacy of armed action, ETA's predecessor organization – *Ekin* – emerged due to a desire for more proactive political action. When ETA was established, violence was regarded as an acceptable

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<sup>103</sup> Anisseh Van Engeland and Rachael Rudolph, *From Terrorism to Politics* (London: Routledge, 2016), 57.

means of pursuing the goals of Basque independence. However, it was only one aspect of a broader movement. This is reflected in the initial six structures of the movement: secretary, groups (study and organization), Basque language (activities related to the promotion of the language), legal action, propaganda, and military actions.<sup>104</sup> In the following years, the group's strategy was crafted in a number of assemblies. The fifth assembly in 1967 outlined the overall design of the organization into four branches: the political front, the workers' front, the cultural front, and the military front.<sup>105</sup>

When comparing the two cases, it is observable that the PIRA believed armed action would force the British to withdraw from Northern Ireland and give it primacy over political action. ETA, on the other hand, saw violence as an acceptable component of their campaign, but not the only one. Its campaign gave equal importance to military and political strategy. It could be argued that both organizations shifted their strategy at the beginning of the 1980s.

Realizing that they were wrong about their initial belief that armed struggle would force the British out,<sup>106</sup> certain members of Sinn Fein realized the possible importance of engaging more seriously in elections. At the forefront of arguing for more involvement in politics was Gerry Adams, who managed to marginalize the leadership of Sinn Fein at the time. When he eventually became the head of the party, it also represented a geographical power shift, from south to north. Adams' push for more political engagement came at the same time as the PIRA reorganized its military strategy that foresaw a long war of attrition against the British. Wanting to use up the momentum gathered by election victories of prisoners and hunger strikes, Sinn Fein decided to contest the 1982 elections in Northern Ireland. This meant that armed struggle and

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<sup>104</sup> Murua, 16.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>106</sup> High ranking members of PIRA believed that as little as eighty killed British soldiers would cause the British government to negotiate. See Maria McGuire, *To Take Arms: A Year in the Provisional IRA* (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 74.

political action were given equal importance. It was best illustrated as the “The Armalite and the Ballot Box” strategy coined by Danny Morrison at the party’s 1981 conference.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, they pursued their political activities constrained by the policy of abstentionism, refusing to take the seats they would win. This policy was abandoned in 1986, allowing those elected to the parliament of the Republic of Ireland, to occupy their place. The move represented a clear commitment to serious political activity and the development of an electoral strategy. The Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985 made republicans realize that political gains can be achieved by peaceful means. Moreover, certain electoral losses may have also been a signal that the party needed to be more open to peaceful solutions to the conflict.

ETA followed a reverse path. When the group split in 1974, it was due to a disagreement over what should be prioritized. ETA’s military branch argued that military actions needed to be separate from political ones. Consequently, they separated and formed ETAm, believing that all other forms of action must be subordinated to armed struggle. ETAp, at the time the larger of the two, continued pursuing a twofold strategy of armed struggle and political action, aiming to integrate itself into the system as a legitimate political actor. Ultimately, seeing that violent actions are incompatible with their desire to work through democratic institutions, it abandoned armed struggle completely in 1981. ETAm also possessed its own political outlet in the form of a coalition of parties close to ETAm. The coalition, called *Herri Batasuna* (HB), took part in elections since 1979, never distancing itself from ETAm. Since then, ETA’s political wing (whether as coalition *Herri Batasuna*, *Herri Batasuna* party, or *Batasuna*) was always subordinated to doing whatever helped the military struggle. In the end, their close association and subordination to ETA doomed them. The population “punished” *Batasuna* in elections due to

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<sup>107</sup> Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 224-5.

ETA's killing of politicians.<sup>108</sup> They lost votes because the voters were not willing to vote for a political party that is subordinate to an organization who believes in the primacy of violent methods. The party's connection and refusal to condemn the violent actions of ETA resulted in its banning by the Spanish state.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

It is obvious that these two cases are identical in terms of coexistence of a terrorist organization and its political wing. It also appears that they pursued the same strategy, only in reverse. The PIRA went from being the predominant part of the struggle for Irish unity, to an equal "partner" with Sinn Fein after the hunger strikes. ETA went from an organization that encompassed a very broad struggle for Basque independence to being dominated by those advocating for the supremacy of violent action. Naturally, this does not have to imply causality with the outcome of the campaigns, but their strategic paths are worthy of closer consideration in light of them.

Both campaigns reached a point of stalemate and the only gains that could have been made were from negotiations. Here, there are two benefits that an organization with an equal political/military strategy has over the one dominated by militarists. First, as the entire purpose of the negotiations is to come to a solution that is a compromise, it helps when the political wing's say is of equal or higher importance than that of the military wing. It signifies a pragmatic approach and the ability to make the most out of a situation by getting whatever political concessions are obtainable at the moment. Secondly, possessing a political wing that amasses votes in the elections serves to legitimize the cause of the violent strategy, too.

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<sup>108</sup> Luis De La Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "Killing and Voting in the Basque Country: An Exploration of the Electoral Link Between ETA and its Political Branch," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25, no. 1 (2013): 94-112.



ETAm's strategic decision to prioritize military strategy over political significantly hampered its campaign's chances of success. The essential difference between HB or *Batasuna* and Sinn Fein was in the level of independence that they possessed from ETAm and the PIRA, respectively. While in the Basque case, HB and *Batasuna* were always a political wing of ETA, as time progressed since the hunger strikes, it became more and more plausible to argue that the PIRA was, in a way, the military wing of Sinn Fein (implying the changing balance of power between the two).<sup>109</sup> The separating line between party politics and terrorism was more believable in the case of the Irish than the Basques. The willingness of Sinn Fein to commit itself to pursuing the solution to the conflict by peaceful means was what *Batasuna* could never have embarked on due to it being subordinated to ETA.

When the Spanish government decided to ban *Batasuna*, it risked providing ETA with an argument that the state was banning their democratic participation, hence justifying ETA's violent struggle. However, despite the initial opposition from Basque society, the move proved to be a success. The reason why the Spanish government was able to ban ETA without significant consequences was the appearance of *Batasuna* as a mere satellite of ETA. The narrative that was constructed in the public was one in which political and military wings were conflated as one and *Batasuna* would not be able to operate as long as ETA was committed to violence. Despite the obvious link between the PIRA and Sinn Fein, the British government never banned the party once it was legalized. In a peculiar way, the party's existence proved useful in reaching the peace agreement.

Relying on the rational choice approach to studying these two cases, the ultimate outcomes of the campaigns can be explained by calculations regarding the utility of violence and

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<sup>109</sup> Van Engeland and Rudolph (2016), 52.

politics regarding their desired goals. Sinn Fein and the PIRA decided for an equal and combined political/military strategy because they realized that such a strategy would bring the most benefit. In the end, ETA came to realize the value of a dual strategy, too; however, this realization came too late. ETA realized that any further acts of violence would be counterproductive as it had lost its connection to Basque society because of the ban on its political wing. Hence, the decision to stop the armed struggle so that they could reengage in politics was a symbolic acceptance of being mistaken in their belief that armed struggle should be the primary means in their campaign.

Lastly, a great example of how beneficial coexistent political and military strategy proved to be for the PIRA, came in 1996 when the British government decided that Sinn Fein could not participate in negotiation talks unless the PIRA fully disarmed. Refusing to do so, the PIRA broke the ceasefire and carried out the London Docklands bombing. Nineteen days after the attacks, the British government dropped the demand to disarm and Sinn Fein was accepted to negotiation talks. John Major's government was accused of being "bombed to the table."<sup>110</sup> The dual strategy reinforced the two strands of the campaign, rather than obstructing each other, as in the case of Basques. Hence, for all the stated above, it is reasonable to claim that H3 holds.

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<sup>110</sup> Andy R. Oppenheimer, *IRA, the Bombs and the Bullets: A History of Deadly Ingenuity* (Dublin, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2009), 130.

## CHAPTER 6 - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND ARGUMENT

### 6.1 Cross-hypotheses analysis and argument

Looking for factors to account for the different outcome in the two campaigns observed, this research has solely focused on strategic decisions that were controlled by the terrorist organizations themselves: the nature of their goals, target selection (and popular support as a function of target selection), and their strategic emphasis. The three hypotheses that were tested were envisioned as answers to the research question. Table 3. summarizes the previous three chapters. The 1970s and 1980s (and onwards) were used as dividing lines for changes in the variables. They are used as they closely coincide with the hunger strikes (1981) and the abandonment of violence by ETApM (1981).<sup>111</sup>

Table 3. The PIRA and ETA comparison.

	Goals	Support	Predominant strategy
<b>PIRA 1970s</b>	Nationalist	High at the beginning, low at the end	Military
<b>PIRA 1980s</b>	Nationalist	High	Military and political (equal)
<b>ETA 1960s and 1970s</b>	Marxist and nationalist	High	Military and political (equal)
<b>ETA 1980s</b>	Nationalist	High at the beginning, low at the end	Military

<sup>111</sup> The schism between ETApM and ETAm was a decisive event too. However, when ETApM abandoned violence in 1981, ETAm was the the more famous and dangerous one and soon the only one when small breakaway faction of ETApM integrated in it. Hence, and also for the reason of simplicity, the 1980s are the dividing line in the table.

In the chapters above, H1 (relating to goals) did not hold, leaving H2 and H3 as factors that can be claimed to have influenced the outcome. But which one has the higher explanatory power? Consider H3 first. Certainly, the military/political strategy was mutually reinforcing and superior to ETA's military one. Secondly, governments do not want to negotiate with terrorists, at least not directly. In this case, it helps when the terrorist group has a political wing that gives the impression of being separate from the group's violent tactics. In the case of the PIRA, the change in strategy that occurred after hunger strikes made it a more realistic negotiating partner. The ability of political wing to assess the context and make a decision based on cost-benefit calculations was definitely influential in the outcome.

While H3 certainly is a contributive factor for all the aforementioned reasons, in addition to those presented in Chapter 6, H2 most likely possesses a higher explanatory power for the simple reason that it explains more about the core dynamic that was the difference in the two cases. At the heart of that dynamic is support. For ethno-nationalist terrorist groups, everything rests on the degree of the support they obtain from the ethnic group they claim to represent. If that degree is high, it sends a signal to the state that the terrorist group is not just a group of violent outcasts, but rather that a significant segment of its population has a grievance against the state. Consequently, the state can either provide certain political concessions to accommodate these grievances or wait until the terrorist group loses support and repress it into defeat. The support received by their ethnic kin benefits the terrorist group in two ways. First, if people support and identify with the cause, they may either support the group by providing assistance to its members or become members themselves, thus strengthening the terrorist group's operational capacity. Secondly, it gives legitimacy to their cause and legitimizes their political wing through

votes it may obtain in elections. The political wing of a group is useless if it does not have support that would translate into votes in an election. Moreover, even if the group possesses significant armed capacity, it is still disadvantaged when compared to the armed capacity of the state that may repress it into defeat unless the group has a part of the population that supports it, therefore giving it legitimacy and a constant pool of recruits. For these reasons, the support variable possesses higher explanatory power in the case of ethno-nationalist terrorism; indeed, it addresses the very particular dynamic that is exclusive to this type of terrorism.

The need for the support of their ethnic kin is crucial. If a terrorist group surpasses a certain “tolerance limit” for violence, people will withdraw their support (whether active or passive) despite possibly identifying with the group’s goal.<sup>112</sup> The awareness of the existence of a “tolerance limit” constrains groups’ violence by causing them to perpetrate it selectively, doing as much as possible without alienating supporters. Previous research has concluded that attacking civilians decreases support and causes failure.<sup>113</sup> While this is a factor, it does not explain why in these two cases, when in both groups civilian casualties constituted a highly similar percentage among total casualties, there were different levels of support. Here, it is worthy to look at a factor that explain the “tolerance limit” for violence.

To explain the “tolerance limit” and its relation to support in the cases of ethno-nationalist terrorism, this research proposes turning to literature on ethnic conflict and violence. Primordialist accounts of ethnic conflict blame the deep-seated, ancient hatred between the ethnic groups, passed from generation to another, for the exceptionally cruel nature of ethnic

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<sup>112</sup> Martha Crenshaw, "Pathways out of Terrorism: A Conceptual Framework," in *Pathways out of Terrorism and Insurgency*, ed. Sergio Germani and Devarayapuram Karthikeyan (Elgin: New Dawn Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>113</sup> Abrahms (2006).

violence.<sup>114</sup> Such views have been largely debunked by constructivist and instrumentalist accounts, the latter of which holds that conflicts do not occur because groups are predisposed to fight due to ancient hatreds, but rather because ethnicity is used as a mass mobilization tool to achieve a particular goal.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, constructivists argue that ethnicity is socially constructed.<sup>116</sup> Regardless of what one sees as the most logical explanation for ethnic conflict, its particularly cruel manifestation is hard to dispute.

One thing in particular that characterizes the process of ethnic violence is the creation of ethnic demarcation lines between groups. This demarcation fosters a sense of shared fate among the ethnic group.<sup>117</sup> This sense of collectivity feeds into binary interpretations of individuals as either ethnic friends or foes (members of an opposing ethnic group), effectively establishing a targeting criteria on the basis of ethnic belonging. While the PIRA was keen on avoiding this collectivizing dynamic of ethnic violence, wanting to avoid the appearance of being seen as a participant in fueling sectarian violence, it could not do so because the salience of ethnicity as a form of identity in the conflict was too strong. Such elements of ethnicity and sectarianism was missing in the Basque conflict.

The logic that ties the “tolerance limit” for violence and support as it relates to the level and type of violence perpetrated by the group is positive. That means if the members of the ethnic group have a higher “tolerance limit” for violence perpetrated by the ethno-nationalist terrorist group that claim to represent their interests, they are likely to support it even when their attacks

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<sup>114</sup> See Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Politics in the New States," in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (London: London Free Press, 1963), 255-310; Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

<sup>115</sup> Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1998).

<sup>116</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>117</sup> Daniele Conversi, "Nationalism, Boundaries, and Violence," *Millennium* 28, no. 3 (1999): 553-584.

are indiscriminate (indiscriminate in terms of one's occupation, not in terms of ethnicity or nationality) and particularly brutal. On the contrary, if the "tolerance limit" is lower, indiscriminate and ferocious attacks will cause a loss in support. However, this logic is simplified and in reality things function slightly differently. First, the "tolerance limit" cannot be written down in terms of precise numbers and it varies across individuals. Secondly, indiscriminate attacks are likely to cause some drop in support even if the "tolerance limit" is very high, though this limit does determine the extent to which it drops.

The varying degrees of support in the cases of the PIRA and ETA may be explained by the logic of indiscriminate violence perpetrated against their respective ethnic groups by the state and/or competing ethnic groups within the state. When the British army and loyalist paramilitaries or Spanish army and death squads perpetrate indiscriminate violence against Catholics and Basques respectively, the victims in the latter groups are likely to develop preferences for revenge, though extracting it is not an easy task. The desire for revenge will not result in effective armed reaction unless there is a presence of an organization that can facilitate such a reaction.<sup>118</sup> The existence of terrorist groups solves this possible impediment. Aggrieved individuals may either join the terrorist group or support it in other ways (like voting for its political wing in elections). As previously mentioned, Richardson categorizes revenge as one of the three "R's" that constitute terrorists' secondary goals. She describes it as "the most powerful theme in any conversation with terrorists ... a desire for revenge is ubiquitous among them."<sup>119</sup> The second obstacle to exacting revenge is the lack of information. If the original perpetrators of a violent act cannot be identified, then their victim will seek a substitute target through association. Such association may be on the basis of one's occupation, class, ethnic group etc. If

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<sup>118</sup> Kalyvas, 154.

<sup>119</sup> Richardson (2007), 88.

the violence was ethnically motivated and occurs in the context of a broader ethnic conflict, then it is likely that the target of reprisal will be members of the ethnic group to which the perpetrators of the original violent act belonged. As Kalyvas puts it: “If the guilty cannot be “identified” and arrested, then violence ought to target innocent people that are somehow associated with them”.<sup>120</sup> This not only helps explain why some would join the PIRA and ETA in the first place, but also what led “many Catholics who were otherwise “good citizens” to vote for Bobby Sands and Owen Carron, men who stood for violence, murder, intimidation, and, quite simply, anarchy”.<sup>121</sup>

The mechanism of finding alternate targets by association is explained by a Protestant man who witnessed the aftermath of a PIRA’s “pub bomb”:

“My mentality then would have been, whenever they blow up a location in the Shankhill (Protestant area), killing one or two people, I would want to blow up somewhere in the Falls (Catholic area) killing double. Doing twice the amount of damage that they were doing in my community”.<sup>122</sup> Richardson pointed out that when faced with the fact that it was the PIRA, not the Catholic community, that perpetrated the bombing, the man replied: “I would have linked it to other events that were taking place and would have seen it as not necessarily the Catholic community carrying it out but it being done on their behalf. So they were part of it”.<sup>123</sup>

The dynamic of ethnic violence helps explain why individuals are prone to act this way. As previously mentioned, the demarcation line that occurs during periods of ethnic violence fosters an environment in which binary essentialization on the basis of the most salient characteristic (ethnic identity in this case) becomes the basis for one’s outlook.<sup>124</sup> What makes individuals develop such an image of the world lies in the individual’s wish for self-esteem. Petersen argues that when one’s daily life is saturated with the reality of ethnic division, taking into account that realization of self-esteem can only be done comparatively, such realization is to

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<sup>120</sup> Kalyvas, 150.

<sup>121</sup> Newsinger, 184.

<sup>122</sup> Richardson (2007), 90.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>124</sup> Petersen, 3.



be done with ethnic groups as the basic reference.<sup>125</sup> Individuals want their ethnic groups to be respected and safeguarded as the sense of ethnic group identification will rise during periods of ethnic violence. Consequently, those who find themselves in a conflict of higher magnitude are likely to have a higher “tolerance limit” for the ethno-nationalist terrorist organization that they perceive as defending their community. Possessing an ethnic support population with a higher “tolerance limit” for violence, translates into more resilience for the ethno-nationalist terrorist group in the war of attrition against the state. This becomes particularly important in the case of target hardening, when terrorist groups have to move from hard targets (military, police) to soft targets (civilians). The “tolerance limit” for violence becomes the determinant of support.

This logic, applied to the case of the PIRA, is perfectly summarized in Jeffrey Sluka’s depiction of how violence against civilians in a Catholic area in Belfast had increased support for republican paramilitaries:

“Because of the stereotype that “all” people in Divis either belong to or strongly support the (P)IRA and the INLA, the Security Forces treat them all as guerilla sympathizers, and the Loyalist paramilitaries consider them all to be legitimate targets for political assassination. This has resulted in turning many who did not support the (P)IRA or INLA before into supporters, sympathizers, and in some cases even members today. One of the best ways to turn politically moderate or apathetic Divis residents into (P)IRA and INLA supporters or members is for policemen and British soldiers to unjustly harass, intimidate, and brutalize them, and for the Loyalist extremists to assassinate members of the community ... Repression of the Catholic population by the Security Forces is enough to generate enough support for the guerillas to ensure their survival”.<sup>126</sup>

Similar thoughts on the determinants of the PIRA’s strength and resilience were echoed by preeminent loyalist, Jackie McDonald: “If there had been no loyalist paramilitary retaliation to what they were doing, and no internment, it (the PIRA’s campaign) might have lasted two or three or four or five years. But there were major events that happened, that swelled the ranks of

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<sup>125</sup> Petersen, 45.

<sup>126</sup> Quote appears in Kalyvas, 160. For the original work see Jeffrey Sluka, *Hearts and Minds, Water and Fish: Support for the IRA and INLA in a Northern Irish Ghetto* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1989), 288-9, 300.

the (P)IRA ... with the UDA and UFV killing Catholics, internment; Bloody Sunday – all those things made the (P)IRA”.<sup>127</sup>

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Taking into account everything outlined in the previous chapter, one would expect that the crucial difference was in the relationship these two groups had with their ethnic “constituency”. The difference in the extent to which they adhered to Marxism certainly existed, but was not vastly different for the most part. Moreover, the fact is that both groups primarily, and throughout the majority of their existence, were separatist groups. The goal of independence had a much larger constituency than revolution and consequently that was their dominant goal. This is evidence to the overwhelming importance of support as a factor in the success of terrorist campaigns. While the PIRA’s dual political/military strategy in the second stage of The Troubles was of immense importance in capturing the momentum and ending the campaign at the “ripe moment” with a settlement, it was still reliant on support (in terms of votes) from the constituency. Hence, it is credible to assign H2 the highest explanatory value.

Lastly, this chapter expanded on Chapter 4 by explaining the logic through which support was generated in these two cases. Consequently, the suspicion for the determining difference points to the nature of the broader violence these campaigns were embedded in which, in turn, influenced “tolerance limits” and support. The violence in Northern Ireland was more intense than that in Basque Country. Around 1,000 Catholics fell victim to police/military or paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland compared to 100 Basques in Spain.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, one in five people in Northern Ireland had a family member or a close relative killed or injured in the

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<sup>127</sup> English (2016), 108.

<sup>128</sup> De la Calle and Snachez-Cuenca (2007): 16

violence, half personally knew someone that was either killed or injured, and one in seven were victims of violence themselves.<sup>129</sup> The communal violence in Basque Country was never near to the extent it was in Northern Ireland. Basque nationalists and non-nationalists never engaged in tit-for-tat violence the way republicans and unionists did in Northern Ireland. Once the Spanish state, in its transition to democracy, granted a certain level of autonomy to the Basque Country and turned to legal and discriminate counterterrorist measures – ETA was stripped of its support as Basques were less and less willing to tolerate violence perpetrated by it. Their experience as part of the Spanish state was becoming better and even if some of them still strived for independence, they did not deem ETA's means of achieving it tolerable. On the other hand, the experience of the Catholic Irish in Northern Ireland was permeated with violence by the British military/police, but even more so by loyalist paramilitaries. As a result, they were more willing to relativize innocent victims and keep support for the PIRA even in the face of the indiscriminate attacks they conducted. This difference in support, in effect, appears to have been the crucial distinction that resulted in the different outcomes of these two campaigns.

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<sup>129</sup> Bernadette C. Hayes and Ian McAllister, "Public Support for Political Violence and Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 4 (2005): 614.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to find what accounted for the difference in outcomes in the cases of the PIRA and ETA campaigns. Combining historical facts with relevant literature, it analyzed three possible factors that could influence the outcome. The results showed that different levels of support and differing direction of political/military strategy played a significant part in the outcome. Taking into account how critical the support of the ethnic constituency is for the success of an ethno-nationalist terrorist campaign, this thesis argued that support is the highest explanatory variable. Moreover, as both groups targeted approximately the same percentage of civilians, this thesis argued that different support levels depend on the “tolerance limit” for violence. Consequently, the different levels of support that may be ascribed the highest explanatory value were contingent on how tolerant the ethnic constituency was of the terrorist group's indiscriminate violence. This thesis contends that the PIRA's ethnic constituency had a higher degree of tolerance for violence, as it was a more frequent target of violence than ETA's ethnic constituency. This caused them to develop higher preferences for revenge and in turn kept the support for the PIRA relatively high. As both campaigns were in essence wars of attrition against the state, when ETA's constituency withdrew its support, it had to concede.

This thesis contributes to the literature by presenting a credible explanatory logic for the relationship between a terrorist organization, its target selection and its ethnic constituency. Moreover, it sets out a model of comparison (based on variables of goals, support, and strategy) that may be replicated for other comparisons. The strength of the argument regarding the positive correlation between being a victim of violence and “tolerance limit” for violence perpetrated by the terrorist group that seeks to obtain revenge in one's name would benefit from testing it on more case studies.

It is important to outline that this research is not an exhaustive assembly of factors that have influenced the outcome. As the primary focus of this thesis was inquiry into the decisions made by the ethno-nationalist terrorist groups themselves and their relationship with their respective constituency, some plausible factors that affected the outcome have not been discussed as they were not in the scope of the research. Those factors would be the existence and financial support from Irish diaspora in United States of America, the relatively higher level of discrimination in Northern Ireland compared to Basque Country (after Spain's democratic transition), and the existence of a neighboring state in Ireland in which the ethnic kin of the ethno-nationalist terrorist group constituted a majority. Further research comparing these two cases ought to include these factors to determine if, and to what extent, they may have influenced the outcome, taking into account the finding of this thesis.

The argument made in this thesis explained the difference in these two cases and the mechanism behind the support for ethno-nationalist terrorist organizations. In terms of its implications for decision makers, it shows that indiscriminate repression of an entire ethnic group will not result in defeating the ethno-nationalist terrorist organization. However, discriminate and legal repression of those who engage in violence combined with efforts to mitigate legitimate grievances will yield much better results, stripping the terrorist group of its legitimacy. The PIRA was well aware of the necessity not to alienate itself from its constituency, whereas ETA only eventually realized that without the support of its constituency, its armed struggle was doing more damage than good to the ethno-nationalist cause.

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