

The 'Northern Ireland model' and the end of Provisional IRA terrorism

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The lessons of Ulster

- ‘After all the horror and bigotry of the past, since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 progress in Northern Ireland has been an inspiration to other parts of the world that the journey towards lasting peace can be completed’ Peter Hain, former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Talking to terrorists

- ‘One of the lessons that comes most starkly out of the Northern Ireland experience is the importance of maintaining contact. It is very difficult for governments in democracies to be seen to be talking to terrorists who are killing their people unjustifiably’
- Jonathan Powell, *Great Hatred Little Room: Making Peace in Northern Ireland*

Critique

- Maintaining contact only works in specific circumstances, in others it simply encourages terrorists to keep going
- Example: throughout 1975 and 1976 contacts were institutionalised and publicly known
- Broken off because the emergent Adams' leadership was not interested in dialogue

A stalemate?

- Did the contacts initiated in early 1990s result from a 'hurting stalemate'?
- 'By the early 1990s both sides of the sectarian divide seemed to sense a stalemate...the British shared this view, resolving not to give into terrorism by withdrawing but also believing that the violence could not be ended by military means'

Audrey Cronin, *Terrorism: How to Respond*

The British Army view

- 'The British Army is unique in Northern Ireland in its success against an irregular force. ...the Army did not 'win' in any recognisable way: rather it achieved its desired end-state, which allowed the political process to be established without unacceptable levels of intimidation. The violence was reduced to an extent which made it clear to the PIRA that they would not win' (Operation Banner document, 2006)

Why did it take so long?

- Unique constitutional position of Northern Ireland
- Inter-institutional conflicts
- The Republic of Ireland acted as 'safe haven' for IRA
- Delegitimisation of security forces by non-violent nationalists

Intelligent use of hard power: the RUC Special Branch

- By early 1980s intra-institutional conflicts surmounted
- RUC Special Branch given decisive role in intelligence gathering and evaluation
- Through the Tactical and Coordinating Group it coordinated the executive arms of surveillance and armed response

The manoeuvrist approach

- Aimed at denying the terrorist the initiative
- Objective not simply killing terrorists as in Loughgall ambush in 1988
- Prevention of operations was key
- ‘Denying terrorists the opportunity to commit terrorist activities will tend to undermine ..motivation’ Operation Banner

Result

- 'If they (IRA) could have intensified the war they would have intensified it...but from my time when I was operating in this district, it was hard to fuckin' move. I would say for every twenty jobs we went out on only one came off'
- IRA volunteer interviewed by Rogelio Alonso

What was peace process about?

- ‘To proceed to resolution the thing needs to be gripped and focused on. Continually. Inexhaustibly. Relentlessly. Day by day by day.’
Tony Blair
- ‘Tony’s fundamental view was that “the process was the policy” even if you don’t know what the process will achieve’ Peter Mandelson, former SoS NI

Result: weapons

- Despite Adams accepting the Mitchell principles IRA held on to weapons until 2005
- 'it (PIRA) could continue to act as a criminal mafia, terrorise and dominate entire communities, eliminate rivals, threaten and bully ...and offer a continuing implicit threat to democratic institutions'

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, first NI Victims Commissioner

Marginalisation of moderates

- As the actors with guns Sinn Fein were centre stage and replaced SDLP as main nationalist party
- David Trimble's moderate UUP was undermined for going into government with Sinn Fein without IRA decommissioning
- By 2007 the two parties that had contributed most to sectarian polarisation rule NI

Legitimation of terrorism

- Republican and loyalist terrorists responsible for 88 % of deaths
- NI model has led to focus on police and army
- Eames-Bradley report devotes considerable space to 'collusion' but does not once use the word 'terrorism'
- Dissidents encouraged by Adams depiction of IRA campaign as legitimate

Conclusion

- It is possible to learn lessons from what happened in Northern Ireland
- Intelligent use of hard power was the key
- The 'peace process' demonstrates how mismanagement of negotiations can allow a terrorist movement to achieve major political and ideological gains despite military defeat