THE PRODUCTION OF TERRORIST VIOLENCE: ANALYZING TARGET SELECTION WITHIN THE IRA AND ETA

Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca is Professor of Political Science at the *Center for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences*, Juan March Institute, and Associate Professor of Sociology at the Complutense University of Madrid. Luis de la Calle is a PhD candidate at the *Center for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences*, Juan March Institute, Madrid.

Abstract

One of the main shortcomings of studies of civil wars is the impossibility of analyzing in a quantitative way the dynamics and logic of violence. Most quantitative comparative work on civil wars takes countries as the unit of observation. We simply lack detailed information about who was killed and why. Unlike civil war violence, terrorist violence can be studied more systematically, given its lower magnitude and its recurrence in affluent countries. More concretely, we can collect all fatalities in a terrorist conflict with very precise information at the individual level about the circumstances of the killing, the status of the victim and the strategic reasons for why the victim was targeted. In this paper, we analyze the production of violence by Republican terrorist organizations in Northern Ireland and by nationalist ones in the Basque Country. We have reconstructed the history of 2,793 fatalities in total. We analyze the data according to a simple theoretical framework in which violence is the outcome of terrorist organizations pursuing certain goals under certain constraints. Terrorists are constrained materially by the resources they have, and ideologically by the preferences of their supporters. We test in various ways how variations in resources and in supporters' preferences produce variations in the patterns of target selection. Our results confirm our theoretical expectations.

Introduction

One of the main shortcomings of studies on civil wars is the impossibility of analyzing in a quantitative way the dynamics and logic of violence. As Kalyvas (2006) notes in his encyclopaedic work on violence in civil wars, "data are just difficult to collect in times of war." (p.49) Most quantitative comparative work on civil wars takes countries as the unit of observation. Very often, the dependent variable is simply whether the country has suffered a civil war or not. Sometimes, rough estimations about total numbers of fatalities are used, but rarely can we go beyond that. We simply lack detailed information about who was killed and why.

Unlike civil war violence, terrorist violence may be studied more systematically. First of all, terrorist organizations tend to produce less violence than guerrilla insurgencies. Thus, we do not have to sample; we can realistically aspire to analyzing all the activity of terrorist organizations. Secondly, terrorist organizations tend to act in developed countries, with strong bureaucracies and rigorous newspapers that keep record of most, if not all, incidents. This generates the kind of detailed data that is missing from civil wars. More concretely, we can collect information on all the fatalities in a terrorist conflict with very precise details at an individual level about the circumstances of the killing, the status of the victim and the strategic reasons why the victim was targeted. This kind of data makes it possible to test hypotheses about the logic of terrorist violence at the micro level. This is just impossible in the case of civil wars.

This article exploits the feasibility of a micro level analysis of terrorist violence. We focus on the issue of target selection. How do terrorist organizations choose their targets given the strategic aims and the constraints under which they act? This is a somewhat neglected issue in the literature on terrorism (Drake 1998; Goodwin 2006; Hoffman 1993). The field, as is well known, has been dominated by case studies. In the last decade, new topics have been addressed such as the decision-making process that terrorist organizations face when they bargain with state actors (Bueno de Mesquita 2005a, 2005b; Lake 2002; Lapan & Sandler 1988; McCormick 2003; Overgaard 1994), the timing of terrorist attacks and the use of certain techniques of terrorism (such as suicide missions or car bombs)

(Berman & Laitin 2005; Bloom 2005; Gambetta 2005; Kydd & Walter 2002; McCormick & Hoffman 2004; Pape 2003, 2005), and comparative studies about the onset of both international and domestic terrorism (Burgoon 2006; Engene 2004; Li & Schaub 2004; Li 2005; Sánchez-Cuenca 2006).

In this article, we analyze the production of violence by Republican terrorism in Northern Ireland and by nationalist terrorism in the Basque Country. More concretely, we focus on the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (ETA, Basque Homeland and Freedom). We have reconstructed the history of 2,793 fatalities in total. The relevant information about each fatality has been codified according to two variables: the degree of selectivity of the attack and the strategic aim behind the killing.

Based on a mix of theoretical and empirical considerations, we propose here a novel operationalization of these two variables. With regard to selectivity, we distinguish three main types of killings: selective, generic and indiscriminate. Selective killings are based on the behaviour of the victim (e.g. the victim cooperated with security forces, or was involved in Loyalist paramilitary organizations); generic killings on the occupation of the victim (e.g. the victim was in the police or in the army); and indiscriminate killings on ascriptive traits of the person (e.g. someone was killed simply because she was Protestant, regardless of her behaviour or her job). With regard to strategy, we distinguish attrition killings against the State, aimed at forcing the State to make concessions (e.g. killings of members of security forces), and control killings, which are related to the security and popularity of the organization (e.g. killings of informers).

Thanks to these two variables, we can describe with great accuracy the terrorist violence of PIRA and ETA. As we will see, there are similarities and differences in both selectivity and strategy that are worth exploring. To make sense of the data, we suggest a simple theoretical framework in which violence is the outcome of terrorist organizations pursuing certain goals under certain constraints. Terrorists are constrained materially by the resources they have, and ideologically by the preferences of their supporters. Variations in resources or in the supporters' preferences should produce variations in the patterns of violence.

As mentioned above, there is very little previous research on target selection by terrorist organizations. This is mainly due to the difficulty in getting detailed data on deaths. However, at least in the case of ETA and PIRA, this is not an insurmountable problem. These are two of the oldest terrorist organizations in the world and there is plenty of information on them (on ETA, see for instance Clark (1984), Domínguez (1998a, 1998b), Elorza et al. (2000), Reinares (2001), Sánchez-Cuenca (2001); on the IRA see, among many others, Coogan (2000), English (2003), Moloney (2002), O'Brien (1999), Smith (1995), Taylor (1997)). Both organizations have tried to inflict such a level of pain that the State would prefer to relinquish control of the territories under dispute, the Basque Country and Northern Ireland, rather than staying in them. Radical nationalists wanted to create an independent Basque State; Republicans wanted the reunification of Ulster with the Republic of Ireland. In both cases, secession was the ultimate aim.

ETA and its various splinter groups killed 832 people in the period 1968-2003. The PIRA and other Republican paramilitary organizations killed 1,961 people in the period 1970-2000. Taking into account that the population of Northern Ireland amounts to only some 70 per cent of the Basque population, it is obvious that the conflict has been much more intense in Northern Ireland than in the Basque Country. On the one hand, the army has been heavily involved in Northern Ireland, while it played no role in the Basque Country, where anti-terrorist policy has been exclusively in the hands of the security forces. The presence of the army is usually associated with more severe methods of terrorism. On the other hand, the PIRA's campaign took place within the context of an ethnic conflict between two communities divided by religion. There is no such equivalent in the Basque Country, since ETA has tried to avoid sectarian killings.

Additionally, in Northern Ireland there has been political and economic discrimination against Catholics, whereas in the Basque Country it is impossible to speak of discrimination, at least since the death of Franco in 1975. The Basque Country has long been a wealthy region, with a *per capita* income well above the average of Spain as a whole. Moreover, it enjoys a high degree of autonomy: ranging from its own police force to a fiscal system different from the rest of Spain.

Thanks to the data we have collected, we can present comparative quantitative data on how these two organizations have acted. The paper is structured as follows: in Section 1 we present a theoretical framework about how strategy and constraints drive target selection, and derive some hypotheses from this. In Section 2 we translate the theoretical framework into quantitative indicators and in Section 3 we test our two hypotheses. Some concluding remarks close the paper.

1. Strategy and victim selection

Basically, we want to understand the production of violence by terrorist organizations given some strategic aims and some constraints under which these organizations act.[1] We distinguish two different aspects of violence: the form of violence and the aims of violence.

Regarding the form of violence, we focus on how selective this is. Terrorist organizations may decide to shoot members of security forces or to explode bombs among the civilian population. Violence ranges from fully selective to fully indiscriminate.

Regarding the aims of violence, we follow McCormick (2003), who distinguishes between "influence" and "security". Terrorists want to "influence" decision-makers, and in order to do so they have to attack relevant targets; however, they also have to worry about their own "security", creating a powerful organization that solves problems of defection and denunciation. The problem for terrorist organizations is to determine the amount of resources that needs to be invested in "security" in order to have some "influence" capacity.

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[1] A complete model of terrorist target selection should start with the ideological preferences of the organization. Ideology is the founding motivation of target selection, since it has a strong influence on strategy (Drake, 1998). However, as in this paper we only focus on terrorist organizations with separatist goals, ideology is not considered. Obviously, broader theoretical efforts aiming to address target selection in any kind of terrorist organization should bear ideological variations in mind.

In the context of nationalist terrorism, "influence" can be understood as attrition and "security" as control of the population. Nationalist terrorists kill to push the State out of the territory under dispute. They hurt the State, knowing that the State is not willing to pay any cost to keep the territory under its rule. There is a point beyond which the State is better off making concessions than resisting. Because terrorist organizations are not armies, they cannot defeat the State militarily. However they can inflict so much pain that the State decides to back off. It is a matter of attrition (Sánchez-Cuenca 2004).

Unlike the military war of attrition, the exhaustion produced by terrorist violence is not physical, but economic, political, and ultimately psychological. It has been estimated, for instance, that the cost of violence in the Basque Country amounts to some 10 per cent of the region's GDP (Abadie and Gardeazabal 2003). Whether these costs are acceptable will depend on how much the State values the territory.

In turn, "security" in the context of nationalism implies that the terrorist organization tries to control the population, punishing those who collaborate with the enemy or do not abide by the terrorists' rules. Since terrorist organizations are clandestine and cannot act in the open, their relationship with the population is necessarily more superficial than in the case of guerrilla insurgencies that rule in the territory liberated from the control of the State. Nonetheless, despite this crucial difference, nationalist terrorist organizations attempt to control local life. After all, nationalist terrorists aspire to rule in the territory once the State withdraws.

According to these distinctions, we decompose violence into two variables: the degree of selectivity on the one hand and attrition *versus* control on the other. We want to understand variation in these two variables. Our explanatory factors derive from the two constraints that we think affect the functioning of a nationalist terrorist organization. We call them the preference and the material constraints. Both of them limit the production of violence.

Regarding radicalism (the preference constraint), terrorist organizations have to adjust their level of violence to the preferences for violence of their supporters. It is often the case that the community of support has more moderate preferences than terrorists themselves. For

instance, supporters may reject the killing of co-ethnics, or indiscriminate attacks against civilians. If terrorists want to conserve the support of less radical supporters, they will have to avoid some forms of violence.

Regarding resources (the material constraint), such as would-be recruits, money, intelligence, weapons, etc., it is obvious that the more resources a terrorist organization has, the stronger the challenge to the State. In the absence of help from other states or from diasporas, resources are a function of the support the terrorist organization has in the population. The greater this support, the greater the resources.[2]

Each constraint generates a different trade-off for the terrorist organization. First, terrorists may have to renounce certain killings that could yield important gains in terms of attrition, due to supporters' preferences. Secondly, if terrorists kill in the short run over their lethal capacity, as determined by resources, they will not be able to sustain their campaign for long (Slantchev 2003).

The preference constraint determines the degree of selectivity of the attacks. In turn, the material constraint determines the allocation of resources between attrition and control. Figure 1 represents the whole argument. We have violence in the centre of the figure. In the left part, we have the material and the preference constraint. In the right part, we have the form and aims of violence (degree of selectivity and attrition versus control).

Note that the two variables of violence are not fully independent. As Figure 1 shows, control killings are always selective (indiscriminate attacks are useless for inducing compliance in the community, for everyone can be affected regardless of behaviour) (Kalyvas 1999). This is not true the other way around: in the case of attrition killings, terrorists may kill selectively or indiscriminately.

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[2] Eamon Collins, a former PIRA member who became a repentant, makes clearly explicit both constraints. On the one hand, "the IRA tried to act in a way that would avoid severe censure from within the nationalist community; they knew they were operating within a sophisticated set of informal restrictions on their behaviour, no less powerful for being largely unspoken" (Collins 1997: 295). On the other hand, "we carried the guns and planted the bombs, but the community fed us, hid us, opened their homes to us, turned a blind eye to our operations." (225)

Violence may generate radicalism and support endogenously. This is a crucial feature of violence. Violence may bring about more radical preferences for violence and more support for the terrorists (and therefore more resources). We have to take this endogeneity seriously. In Figure 1 we have represented endogeneity with discontinuous arrows that go backwards from violence to preferences and resources. The effects of this feedback process can be described as follows.

Radicalism: terrorists understand that if the State reacts arbitrarily, repressing people randomly, the community may develop stronger preferences for violence and retribution. Thus, terrorist organizations may provoke the State in order to create dynamics of action-repression (de Figueiredo & Weingast 2001). The higher the level of violence on both sides, the more intense the preferences in favour of violent methods. Violence often leads to more violence.

Figure 1. Target selection in nationalist terrorist organizations
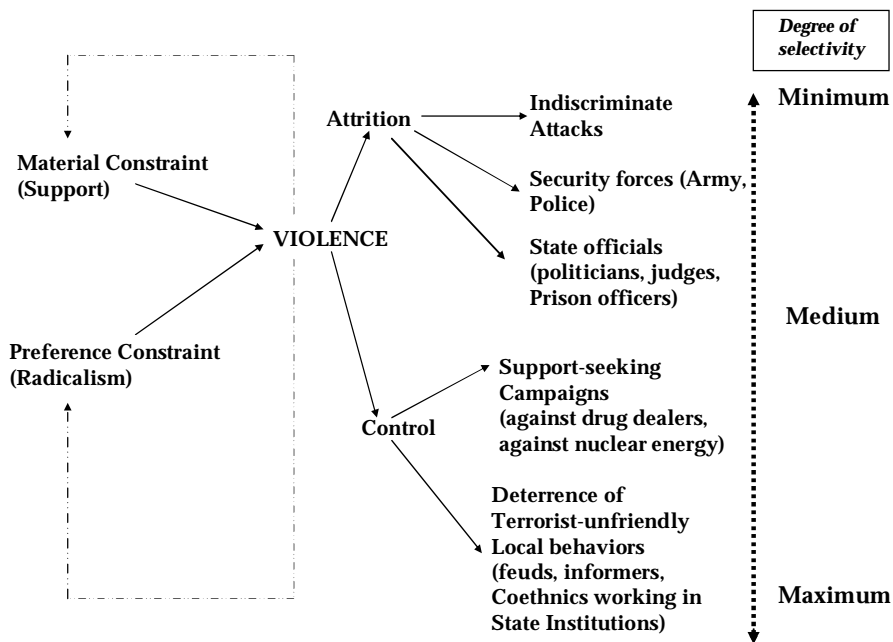
Support (and resources more generally): terrorist organizations can either deter opposition by killing those who criticize the terrorists or side clearly with the State (informers and the like), or they can attack "popular enemies". For instance, although drug-dealing has little to do with the fight for secession, both the PIRA and ETAm were involved in the killing of drug-dealers due to its popularity. By killing drug-dealers, the PIRA and ETAm sent the signal to the people that they took the concerns of the community seriously, and that they were able to put into practice drastic policies that were not feasible for the State. This pursuit of popularity was merely instrumental, for they wanted to increase their base support in order to have more strength in the fight against the State.

Two testable hypotheses are implied by this theoretical framework. First, the stronger or more radical the preferences for violence amongst the supporters of terrorist organizations, the higher the rate of indiscriminate attacks. This follows immediately from the preference constraint.

Secondly, the greater the resources of a terrorist organization, the greater the relative importance of attrition as opposed to control. This follows from the material constraint.

Next we show how the theoretical framework about nationalist terrorist violence can be operationalized, and try to test the hypotheses that follow from the theory. This is particularly hard for the first hypothesis, given that we do not have data on the supporters' preferences for radicalism. Yet, we can make some reasonable assumptions about these preferences based on the features of the conflict in each case.

2. Operationalization

The quantitative analysis of victim selection in terrorist conflicts has been very limited in scope so far. In the case of Northern Ireland, there have been several empirical efforts to offer descriptive statistics on some of the most relevant variables (such as organizations responsible for the deaths, yearly counts of killings, victim status, territorial distribution of

killings, and the like), but less so to account for variation in victim targeting or to generate analytical variables beyond pure description.[3] Despite a lower number of fatalities in the Basque Country, there has been even less quantitative work about ETA.[4]

Following the logic sketched in Figure 1, and also relying on prior research, we have constructed two variables, one that measures the degree of selectivity of the attack (we call it the selectivity variable), and another that classifies terrorist attacks into attrition and control (we call it the strategy variable).

The selectivity variable

It might seem that the selectivity of attacks is a continuous variable, from fully indiscriminate to highly selective. However, there are many difficult cases that do not fit in such a scale and therefore we have been forced to construct a variable with five categories:

(1)   Selective killings: when the killing is motivated by the behaviour of the individual (e.g. some civilian who collaborates with security forces, someone who does not abide by the rules of conduct established by the terrorists, etc.). Such killings require detailed information about the victim by the terrorists.

(2)   Generic killings: when the killing is motivated by the occupational role the individual plays (being a member of the Army or the Police, being a State official, etc.). In a sense, the individual has some leverage to avoid being targeted by changing her occupation. Nonetheless, the cost of such a change may be extremely high and it is very seldom a possibility contemplated by the individual. Generic killings require less information about the victim than the previous category.

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[3] Several works have offered descriptive statistics on the spatial and temporal distribution of victims of terrorism in Northern Ireland (see, for instance, Fay et al., 1999; Jarman, 2004; McKittrick et al., 2004; Morrissey and Smith 2002; O'Duffy 1995; O'Leary 2005; Poole 1995). But as far as we know, only the dated work by McKeown (1989) tried to shed some analytical light on the victim selection patterns of the main contenders in Northern Ireland.

[4] Clark (1984) built a dataset with the first 287 ETA killings (from 1968 to 1980) and put forward some descriptive statistics on victim selection for those early years of ETA activity. Domínguez (1998a) presented quantitative data for the period 1978-1992. Finally, De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca (2004) updated those efforts by building the first comprehensive dataset of ETA killings.

(3) Indiscriminate killings: when the killing is more or less random and can affect anyone within a group defined by ascriptive traits (religion, nationality, language, ideology, etc.). The typical example is a car bomb exploding in the middle of a city without prior warning. This requires very little information about the potential victims by the terrorists. This definition of indiscriminate attacks covers sectarian killings in Northern Ireland when the victims did not stand out for any behaviour and/or professional career against the terrorists. Thus, when PIRA activists enter into a pub frequented by Protestants and randomly shoot the clients, without having any previous information about the targets except their religion, this is an indiscriminate attack. The point here is that an attack can be indiscriminate but not fully random. This is consistent with the ordinary usage of the term. We say that 9/11 was an indiscriminate attack even if it was directed against a certain group of people, Americans, and not against humanity in general. The target was not any human being, but the people of a country that was considered by the terrorists to be inimical to their interests.

(4) Collateral killings: those that are killed unintentionally when the terrorists were trying to kill someone else. The typical example is a street by-passer shot dead because of a stray bullet during a gun battle between security forces and terrorists.

(5) Mistakes: the terrorist makes a mistake about the true identity of the victim. Typically, information-gathering terrorist units select the wrong person because she has some commodity (second-hand car, flat, etc.) previously owned by a security force member.

The strategy variable

Attrition killings are directed against the State. As the most visible presence of the State is what terrorists call the "occupying forces", that is, the military and security forces, these are the main targets of the terrorists. However sometimes they also choose unarmed State officials (judges, prison officers, politicians, etc.), either because it is less risky than attacking armed targets, or because the terrorists regard these officials as being directly responsible for the maintenance of the status quo. In order to break the morale of a society, attrition may also

include indiscriminate killings against civilians. If there is a shift in public mood, the State may feel under pressure to make concessions.

Regarding control, there are two possibilities. First, terrorists want to deter behaviour that could damage the security or the lethal capacity of the organization. They are interested in avoiding both competition (by other organizations) and defection (by people who cooperate with the State or who simply do not obey the rules of the terrorists). Thus, terrorists may be involved in internecine feuds; or they may kill entrepreneurs who refuse to pay extortion; or kill informers and people who collaborate with the security forces. The PIRA, for instance, has been heavily involved in policing activity in Catholic strongholds, trying to stop anti-social activities such as joy-riding and petty crime.

Secondly, terrorists may try to gain new supporters by intervening in popular causes. A case in point that we mentioned before is the attacks against drug-dealers. But more importantly, nationalist terrorist organizations try to infiltrate and capitalize on social movements that are not necessarily nationalist in nature. By participating in these causes (environmental, pacifist, etc.), they hope to attract more people to their cause.

The distinction between attrition and control is highly stylized. In the real world things are less clear. In Northern Ireland, the main difficulty lies with sectarian killings (killings of Protestant civilians because of their religion). On the one hand, these killings may be regarded as part of an ethnic conflict, in which the terrorists try to satisfy the demand for security and vengeance of their Catholic constituency –and that would point to control; but these killings may also be interpreted as aiming at the breakdown of the alliance between the British State and the Protestant community –and that would point to attrition.[5] Due to this

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[5] Both goals have been recognised by republican speakers. For instance, a Derry Sinn Fein spokesperson considered sectarian killings as attempts to dissuade potential bargains between the state, the Protestant community and moderate Catholics (quoted in Moloney 2002: 338). On the contrary, the retaliating nature of sectarian killings has been widely reported (McKeown 1989), even though there has been heated debate on the PIRA's intentions when they target Protestants (Bruce 1997; White 1997).

ambiguity, we have decided to create a third category, sectarian, in the strategy variable for Northern Ireland.[6]

In the Basque Country, we also have a mixed case: local politicians. Their deaths belong to the list of State officials, and therefore they fall under the attrition category. However, it is also clear that they are killed as part of a campaign aimed at terrorizing non-nationalists in the Basque Country, draining local support for the parties they represent.[7] As ETAm has also tried to exert pressure on local Basque politicians by killing non-nationalist low-echelon politicians in other parts of Spain, our intermediate category between attrition and control includes all politicians killed by the terrorist organization.

The introduction of mixed categories in each case reflects the traditional trade-off between parsimony and accuracy. While we hold the general validity of the theoretical distinction between attrition and control, acquaintance with the Irish and Basque cases has led us to reflect in the variable the idiosyncrasies of each conflict.[8]

3. Data analysis

In this section we present empirical evidence to test our two hypotheses about the effects of constraints on violence. We start with the preference constraint hypothesis, and

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[6] In so doing, we are drawing on McKeown's taxonomy of violence (1989), which distinguished four categories: first, "non-strategic" killings; second, "the armed struggle"; third, "the sectarian conflict"; and finally, "the pursuit of Hegemony". However we collapse his first two categories under our "attrition" category, and keep the last two, with the understanding that "Hegemony" basically means "control".

[7] By way of example, the killing of a local politician in Zumarraga –a Basque town with around 25,000 people- forced all the local councillors from the largest party in the corporation –the Socialist Party- to resign, since they rejected the use of bodyguards (*El País*, 5 April 2001).

[8] Not so surprisingly, sectarian killings and the killings of local politicians are space-specific targets, since we observe neither the former in the Basque Country nor the latter in Northern Ireland.

then we move to the material constraint, which we will test both cross-sectionally and longitudinally.

Hypothesis 1: Preferences determine the selectivity of terrorist violence

Terrorist organizations do not kill as much as they could when potential supporters impose limits on the types of attacks that are acceptable or legitimate. Sean MacStiofain, Chief of Staff of the IRA between 1970 and 1972, wrote in his autobiography that "No resistance movement in history has ever succeeded in fighting a struggle for national freedom without some accidental casualties, but the Republican interest in retaining popular support clearly lay in causing as few as possible." (1975: 214) Thus, the more radical the supporter's preference for violence, the greater the terrorists' discretion to carry out indiscriminate attacks.

We cannot directly test this hypothesis due to the absence of data about the preferences of supporters for violence.[9] However, we can make some reasonable assumptions about how the context of the violent conflict affects preferences for violence. If members of a social group are attacked by members of a rival group, it seems safe to assume that people in the attacked group will develop preferences for retribution (Kalyvas 2006; Petersen 2002). When there is no information about the perpetrators of these killings, or the identity is known but it is impossible to find the perpetrators, preferences for retribution and vengeance may lead to indiscriminate violence. If this is the case, the leadership of the organization will enjoy more freedom to engage in more indiscriminate violence.[10] Thus, the greater the intensity of violence affecting civilians, the more radical the preferences for violence will be.

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[9] For instance, Quayle and Taylor (1994) say that: "Awareness of sectarian difference is an underlying fact of life amongst Northern Irish terrorists. It is of course impossible to know the extent to which this is also a characteristic of many non-terrorists in Northern Ireland. It is impossible therefore to know whether its expression in the politically violent is in some sense an expression of a fundamental and largely shared view even if unacknowledged." (106-7)

[10] From a logical point of view, it can be argued that supporter's preferences for retribution do not necessarily force the paramilitary organization to act in accord with these preferences. Ideological preferences of the organization could restrain the kind of violence employed (Goodwin 2006).

The context of violence has been very different in the two territories. Whereas in the Basque Country less than 100 people have died as a result of police mistreatment or anti-ETA paramilitaries (Ormazabal 2003; Woodworth 2001), in Northern Ireland the figure goes up to around 1,000 deaths in the Catholic community (McKittrick et al. 2003). Due to the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, we posit that preferences for retribution and vengeance are higher there than in the Basque Country. Accordingly, we should observe more indiscriminate violence in Northern Ireland than in the Basque Country.

Consistent with our prediction, Table 1 shows that the percentage of purely indiscriminate killings is much higher for the PIRA (16 per cent) than for ETAm (5 per cent).[11] This difference is produced by the sectarian nature of the conflict in Northern Ireland and the preferences for retribution that it generates in each community.

Table 1. Degree of selectivity in the PIRA and ETAm

	PIRA	ETAm
Selective	13.2% (217)	26.8% (207)
Generic	59.2 (973)	54.9% (424)
Indiscriminate	15.6% (256)	4.8% (37)
Collateral	9.1% (149)	11.6% (90)
Mistakes	3.0% (49)	1.9% (15)

Note: Number of observations is included in brackets.

Traditionally, the Catholic community has openly rejected sectarian killings by Republican paramilitary organizations. However, this norm has been systematically violated: 344 out of 1,961 Republican killings can be classified as sectarian (17.5 per cent) and of these

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[11] A χ^2 test shows that this difference is significant at a 1 per cent level (n = 2,417, χ^2 = 113.11).

344 sectarian killings, 78 per cent are indiscriminate. This could be interpreted as Republican paramilitaries not taking into account the preferences of their followers. But, in fact, Republican sectarian attacks have been strongly concentrated in areas with high levels of religious polarization in which violence is intense and produces more radical preferences. Thus, in Belfast -where 41 per cent of Republican sectarian killings took place- supporters' restrictions on sectarian retribution have been much lower than in places with Catholic majorities. In Belfast, the correlation between Loyalist violence and Republican indiscriminate killings at the ward level is quite high (.58): indeed, the highest correlation of any category of our Republican selectivity variable when paired with Loyalist killings. [12] Additionally, a detailed geographical analysis of indiscriminate killings by both sides (Loyalists and Republicans) in that city shows that seven contiguous wards located in West Belfast gathered 42 per cent of all indiscriminate killings.[13] This is striking if we bear in mind that those wards represent 12 percent of the population in Belfast and 14 percent of the number of wards in the city. Finally, these findings are also corroborated from anecdotal evidence that shows stronger preferences for retribution in Belfast compared to other cities in Northern Ireland (O'Connor 1993: 138-141).

ETA supporters have showed a lower propensity to accept indiscriminate killings. For instance, in 1987 ETA planted a car bomb in the basement of a supermarket in Barcelona. It was the bloodiest attack in the history of ETA: 21 people died. Some months before the attack, HB –the political wing of the Basque radical movement- obtained 361,000 votes in the European elections. The next European elections took place two years later: HB lost around 100,000 votes. In the meantime, the Barcelona indiscriminate attack was widely repudiated by nationalists in and outside the Basque Country. ETA internally recognised that those attacks were counterproductive for the cause (Domínguez 1998b).

Looking at Table 1 we can also observe that selective killings are much higher for ETAm (27 per cent) than for the PIRA (13 per cent). This is easily explained by the greater

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[12] We have assembled a dataset with the number of killings of each terrorist organization in each ward of Belfast (51 wards). To measure Republican killings, we have used our own dataset. To measure Loyalist killings, we have used the Cost of the Troubles' Study dataset.

[13] The wards are Botanic, Falls, Duncairn, New Lodge, Shaftesbury, Shankill and Water Works.

percentage of control killings by ETAm.[14] Control killings are necessarily selective. Finally, levels of generic killings, collateral killings and mistakes are very close in both organizations.

In sum, Table 1 reveals that the weight of indiscriminate killings is rather low in both organizations, but higher for the PIRA. Here we have an obvious manifestation of the preference constraint. It is quite clear that Republican and Basque nationalist terrorists wanted to avoid the indiscriminate or accidental deaths of civilians because of the supporters' preferences. However, the existence of a sectarian war in Northern Ireland allowed the Republicans to raise the level of indiscriminate killings.

Hypothesis 2: the more resources nationalist terrorist organizations have, the more attrition killings

We test this hypothesis both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. First we compare the rates of attrition of the Republican and Basque terrorist organizations. Then we analyze how the rate of attrition changed over time in the PIRA and in ETAm when there were changes in the level of resources.

We start with the cross-sectional test. There were several terrorist organizations acting simultaneously in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. We assume that Republican paramilitary organizations on the one hand and Basque nationalist ones on the other were not seeking support in different social groups. Thus, we consider that in each case there was a single community of support with homogenous preferences. Our hypothesis establishes that the greater the support of a terrorist organization, the more resources it obtains and the higher the percentage of these resources spent on attrition. As in the case of preferences, we do not have good indicators of support. But again, we can resort to indirect measures. We use the total number of fatalities as a proxy of popular support. This makes sense, since we know that

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[14] This larger level of selective killings does not necessarily mean that the PIRA is less concerned about the control of the Catholic population. It might be that, as the PIRA is much powerful than ETA, the PIRA has other means of deterring certain forms of behaviour, such as the punishments and beatings that the PIRA administers in Catholic strongholds (Monaghan 2004). In the Basque Country, ETA has a much more superficial relationship with the community therefore may have to resort to more lethal tactics to make its threats credible.

the capacity for killing is directly related to the resources the organization has, and resources depend on popular support.

Before testing the hypothesis, we offer some descriptive data on the distribution of killings in each region and the main terrorist organizations carrying out attacks.[15] In both cases, there has been one hegemonic organization taking the lead on the number of victims, and several other organizations rounding it off. In the Basque Country 93 per cent of all killings (773 out of 832) correspond to the military wing of the original ETA. In 1974 ETA split into two organizations, the so-called political-military (ETApm) and military ETA (ETAm, or simply ETA), which represents the continuity with the original ETA. ETApm killed 24 people during the period 1975-80. The CAA (*Comandos Autónomos Anti-capitalistas*, Anti-capitalist Autonomous Commandos), a splinter of ETA led by the more leftist members of the organization, killed 32 people during the period 1978-84. There were three other killings by minor groups, making a total number of 832.

In Northern Ireland the PIRA's share is lower: 84 per cent (1,644 killings out of 1,961 total Republican killings). This does not include the Republican Action Force (RAF), a cover for the PIRA that killed 24 people during the 1975-6 truce. The Official IRA (OIRA) killed 49 people in the period 1971-83, although most of the killings took place in the first seven years, 1971-7. The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), a splinter of the OIRA, was particularly active, killing 126 people over a long period of time, 1975-98. The INLA, just like the OIRA, was more left wing oriented than the PIRA (Holland & McDonald 1994). The INLA itself suffered numerous splits and was involved in several feuds. The most important splinter was the Irish People's Liberation Organisation (IPLO), a group that killed 23 people in the period 1986-92. As in the case of the INLA, many of these killings are related to feuds. The Real IRA, a splinter of the PIRA formed in 1997 in opposition to the peace process, killed 31 people, 29 of them in the Omagh bombing on 15 August 1998. In the total count, there are 64 killings that cannot be attributed to any organization. The only thing we know is that the perpetrators were Republicans.

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[15] In order to avoid overloading the paper with tables, we have decided not to include the breakdown of killings by terrorist organizations in each conflict. However, these can be easily calculated from the marginals of Tables 2 and 3.

Now that we have seen the strength of each terrorist organization measured by killings, we can analyze how they allocate their resources between targets. Tables 2 and 3 clearly confirm our hypothesis. The two largest organizations, the PIRA and ETAm, are the ones that present the highest percentages of attrition fatalities. The only exception is the last (and short lived) splinter of the PIRA, the Real IRA. But the high percentage of attrition in the RIRA is the consequence of a single attack, the Omagh car bomb, and there is sufficient evidence that this attack was not intended to produce this deleterious effect (Dingley 2002).

If we leave aside the RIRA, we see in Table 2 that minor organizations such as the OIRA, the INLA or the IPLO had much lower percentages of attrition fatalities. These organizations focused on less risky targets than security forces or the military. Given the overwhelming presence of the PIRA, they specialized in sectarian or in control killings, that is, the dirty work that the PIRA was uneasy with in the context of its liberation war against the British.[16]

The same pattern is observed in Table 3 regarding ETAm (we do not consider, due to the low number of cases, the three killings of other, tiny organizations at the end of the table).[17] ETAm has the highest percentage of attrition, followed by ETApm and the CAA. We can see that the CAA specialized in control killings. Again, it seems that the CAA did part of the dirty work that ETAm did not want to undertake in order to preserve a certain image among its followers.

We move now to the longitudinal test of the hypothesis. Here we focus exclusively on the PIRA and ETAm. We want to ascertain if patterns of victim selection change when the resources of the terrorist organization are reduced. According to the theoretical framework developed in Section 1, the loss of resources should provoke a re-adaptation of strategy to the new circumstances. When the material constraint becomes more pressing, terrorist

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[16] The χ^2 test shows that these differences are significant at 1 per cent (Cramer's V is .32).

[17] Without the "others" category, the χ^2 test is significant at 1 per cent (Cramer's V is lower than in the Northern Ireland case, 0.09).

organizations have to adjust their strategy. Our hypothesis is that the PIRA and ETAm changed their strategy due to a very severe material constraint.

Table 2. Strategic targeting by Republican terrorist organizations

Organization	Control	Attrition	Sectarian	Total
PIRA	10.0% (164)	75.6% (1243)	14.4% (237)	100.0% (1644)
OIRA	38.8% (19)	55.1% (27)	6.1% (3)	100.0% (49)
INLA	23.8% (30)	51.6% (65)	24.6% (31)	100.0% (126)
IPLO*	39.1% (9)	13.0% (3)	47.8% (11)	100.0% (23)
Republicans	14.1% (9)	7.8% (5)	78.1% (50)	100.0% (64)
RAF	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (24)	100.0% (24)
RIRA	3.2% (1)	96.8% (30)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (31)
Total	11.8% (232)	70.0% (1373)	18.2% (356)	100.0% (1961)

* IPLO also includes a couple of victims of the so-called IPLO-BB (an IPLO splinter).
Note: Number of observations is included in brackets.

*Table 3. Strategic targeting by Basque terrorist organizations*

Organization	Control	Attrition	Politicians	Total
ETAm	23.7% (183)	71.4% (552)	4.9% (38)	100.0% 773
ETApm	20.8% (5)	66.7% (16)	12.5% (3)	100.0% 24
CAA	50.0% (16)	43.8% (14)	6.2% (2)	100.00 32
Others	0.0% (0)	100.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	100.0% 3
Total	24.5% (204)	70.3% (585)	5.2% (43)	100.0% 832

Note: Number of observations is included in brackets.

The PIRA and ETAm were powerful enough to sustain the attrition strategy during the seventies and eighties. In both cases, attrition killings represent between 70 and 75 per cent of the total number of killings. But for reasons we will explain in a moment, the attrition strategy became unsustainable in the nineties.

Figure 2 reconstructs the sequence of killings by the PIRA and ETAm. We can roughly distinguish three different phases in each case. In the first one, we observe an initial and sudden increase in the number of fatalities (1971-2 in the case of the PIRA, 1978-80 in the case of ETAm), followed by a sudden decrease (1973-6 for the PIRA, 1981 for ETAm). Then there comes a second phase characterized by a long period of stability with a slightly declining trend (1977-91 for PIRA, 1982-91 for ETAm). The final phase is one of decadence, until the end of violence: it starts around 1990 for the PIRA, and around 1992 for ETAm.

Figure 2. Yearly count of ETAm and PIRA killings, 1968-2003
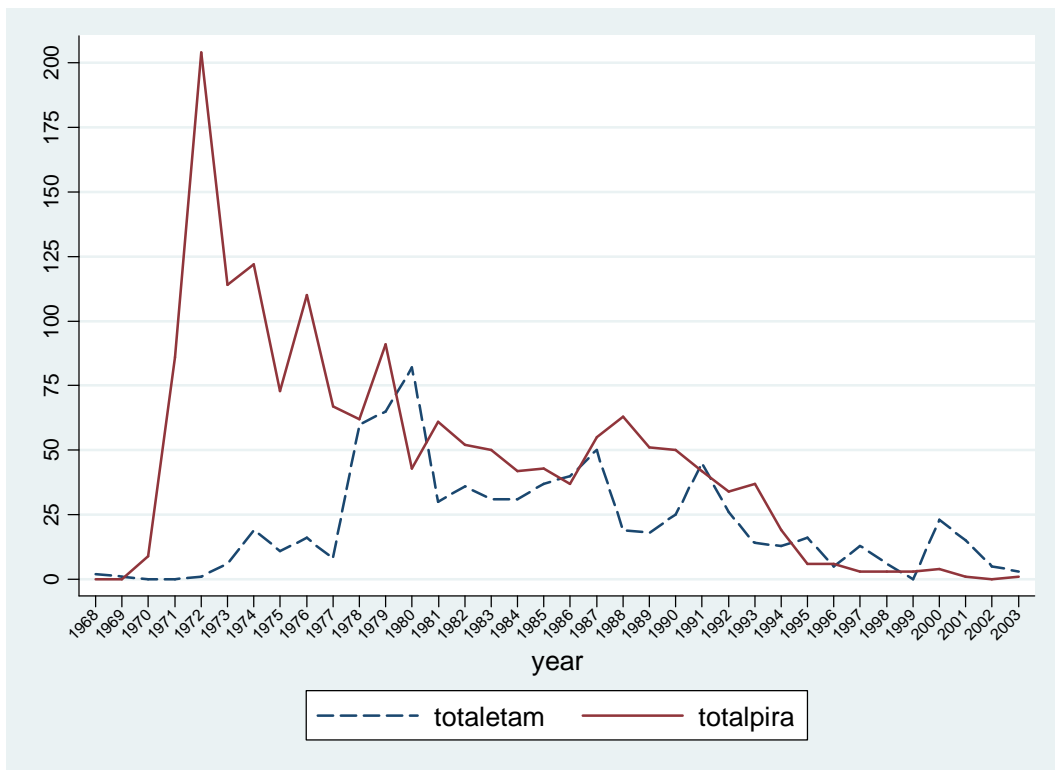
It is possible to make sense of this sequence. At the beginning the State does not have much intelligence about the terrorist organization and can do little to prevent the rising death toll.[18] But terrorist attacks lead to the first arrests. Thanks to the information provided by the initial arrests, security forces are able to halt the rising trend. After a while, terrorists realize that they cannot carry out too many attacks if they want to satisfy what McCormick (2003: 495-6) calls the "security constraint" (the rate of arrests has to be compensated with the rate of new recruits). Thus, we enter the middle phase of stability, in which the organizations kill within the limits established by the security constraint. But if the police become more effective, for instance by infiltrating these organizations, and the pool of potential supporters is kept constant or diminishes, the lethal capacity of the terrorists diminishes, to the point that they start to consider the possibility of abandoning armed struggle in favour of non-violent politics. This is roughly what happened in the last phase of each of these organizations.

We are interested now in the transition from the intermediate phase of stability to the final phase of decadence. After a long period of stalemate, we observe in the two organizations a final and desperate attempt to break the will of resistance of the State. The PIRA devised the so-called "Tet Offensive" in 1987 with the intention of increasing the number of members of the security forces killed. At the same time, it tried to depress the number of sectarian killings, basically because the political leadership considered that these killings had negative consequences in terms of support (Moloney 2002). The effort was short-lived: the jump from 32 attrition victims in 1987 to 56 in 1988 went downward again in 1989 and successive years (see Figure 3 below). After 1991, attrition victims did not go up beyond 20 deaths per year. Regarding sectarian killings, the bombing in Enniskillen on 8 November 1987, which killed 10 Protestants attending a Memorial Mass, helped to make 1987 the highest yearly figure since 1977. Under the pressure of Sinn Fein to decrease that number of sectarian victims, the PIRA managed to keep them low in 1988, but not afterwards. On the whole, the balance of the "Tet Offensive" was clearly negative.

ETAm focused all its expectations on 1992, since that year Spain was going to host the Olympic Games (in Barcelona) and the Universal Exhibition (in Seville). After the first

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[18] From the standpoint of the terrorist organization, it also makes sense to start the fighting with an escalation of attacks, since it will signal strength to would-be recruits and enemies (McCormick & Owen 1996).

official "peace conversations" with the Spanish government in 1989 failed, ETAm tried to increase the level of pressure by launching a campaign of car bombs in the largest Spanish cities. In fact, 1991 saw the highest number of killings since the early 1980s. Just like the PIRA, ETAm was unable to keep this intense number of killings up. Very relevant activists were arrested during 1991 and 1992, including the all of the longest-serving leadership of ETAm. That loss of "human capital", together with the emergence of local contestation against terrorism, dramatically reduced the yearly figures of ETAm's deadly attacks. The so-called "technical tie" between ETAm and the State started to wear away.

Did the reduction in the lethal capacity lead to a change in victim selection? From what we have seen regarding the previous hypothesis, the weaker an organization is, the fewer the attrition killings. Now we have organizations that after a certain point in time became weaker. Did they consequently modify the choice of targets?

Figures 3 and 4 reconstruct the fall of the attrition strategy during the 1990s in both organizations. The decreasing trend in attrition killings is particularly visible for the PIRA from 1989 onwards. And some significant changes are also observed in ETA after 1991 onwards, although the pattern is less clear.

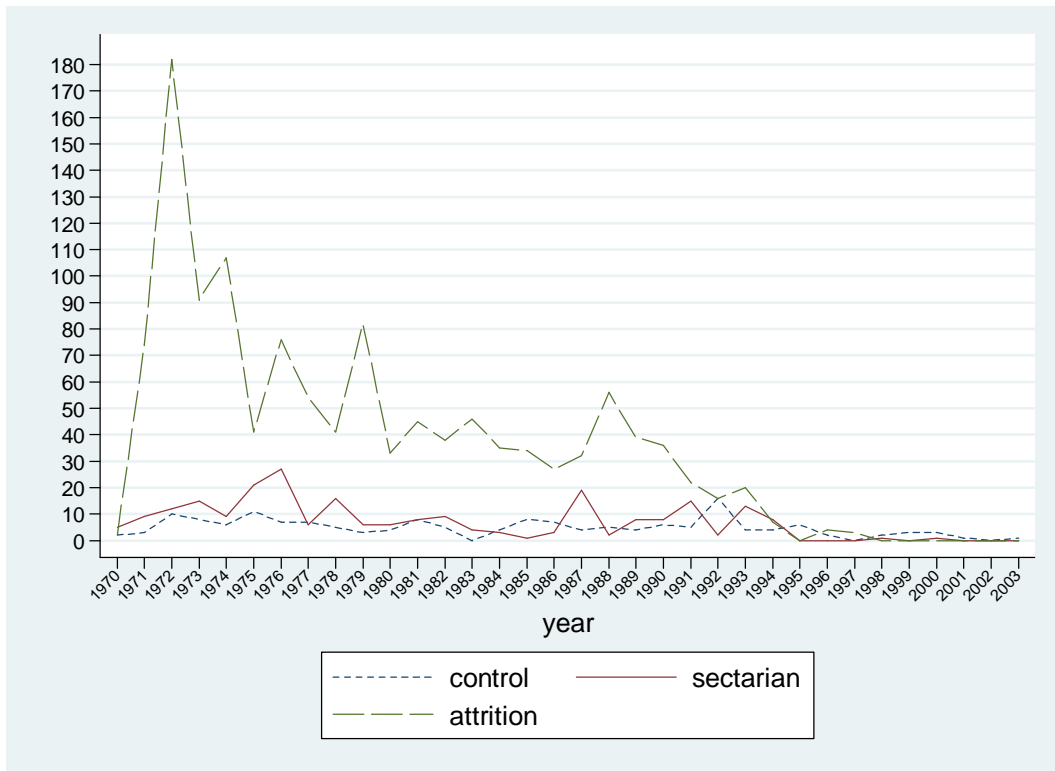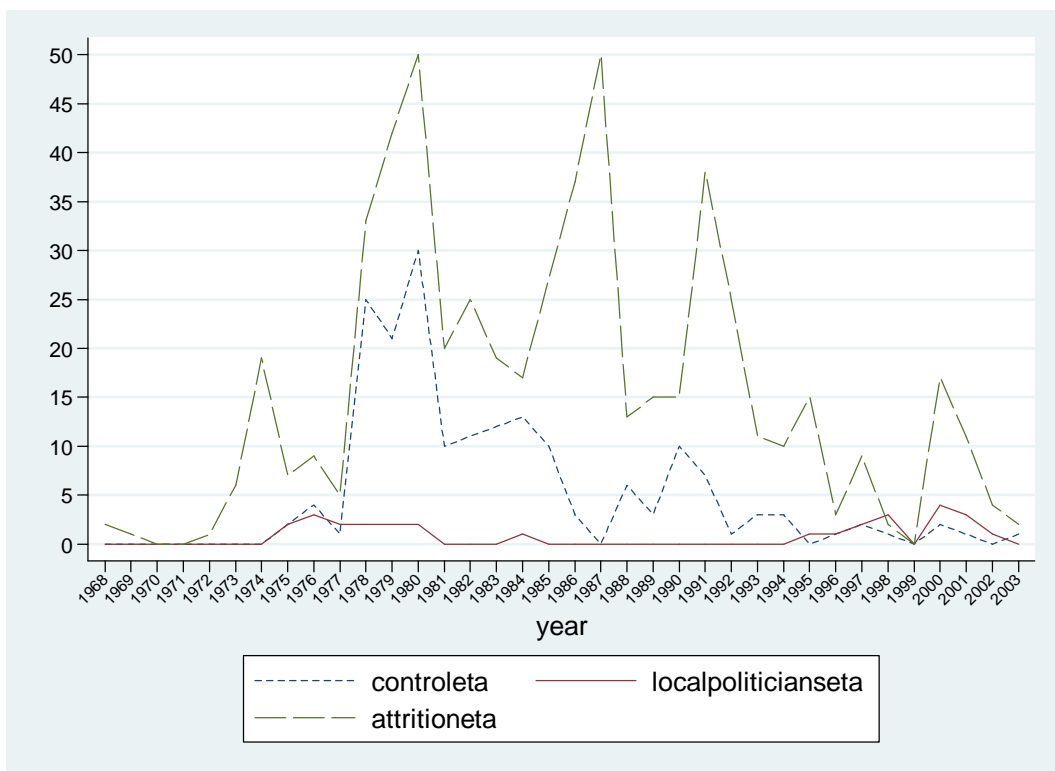*Figure 3. Time evolution of strategic targeting by the PIRA*

Figure 4. Time evolution of strategic targeting by ETAm

In the case of the PIRA, Table 4 shows a dramatic fall of 30 points in the rate of attrition (from 79 to 52 per cent) before and after 1990.[19] Likewise, there is an important increase in both control and sectarian killings. This change makes sense given what we know about the development of the Troubles at that time. On the one hand, the greater efficiency of the British Army in penetrating the PIRA made the internal search for informers especially urgent (Moloney 2002: 332-334; Toolis 1995: Chapter 4). The PIRA was thus forced to divert resources from attrition to control. On the other hand, during the early nineties there was a highly pronounced increase in loyalist attacks against Catholics. The PIRA responded with more retaliatory killings. The impossibility of pursuing the attrition strategy tipped the Republican internal balance of power towards the political side. As a matter of fact, the then emergent conversations between Sinn Fein, the moderate nationalists in Northern Ireland and the Irish Prime Minister around building a pacific nationalist front against Great Britain took the lead over violence (English 2003; Moloney 2002).

Table 4. Strategic targeting by the PIRA in two time periods

Strategy	1970-1989	1990-2004	Total
Control	7.7%	25.4%	10.0%
	(111)	(53)	(164)
Attrition	79.1%	51.7%	75.6%
	(1,135)	(108)	(1,243)
Sectarian	13.7%	23.0%	14.4%
	(189)	(48)	(237)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	(1,435)	(209)	(1,644)

Note: Number of observations is included in brackets.

The picture of ETAm is somewhat less clear, due to an impasse period right after the fall of the leadership in 1992. Between 1992 and 1995 there was a period of introspection and internal reflection within the organization, forced in part by a high turnover of chiefs of staff provoked by constant police operations in France and Spain. A new strategy emerged in

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[19] The differences are significant at 1 per cent (n = 1,644, χ^2 = 87.1, Cramer's V = .23).

1995. The so-called *Oldartzen* document theorized about the necessity of killing politicians (particularly local ones) to compensate for the weakness of the organization. First, local politicians were easy targets. Secondly, ETAm rightly assumed that attacks against representatives would have an enormous impact on public opinion. And thirdly, the killing of politicians in the Basque Country was supposed to deter public opposition to terrorism, which in those years was growing quickly and in a very visible manner. It is worth noting that there was a simultaneous increase in street violence carried out by the radical nationalist youth with the same aim. In a sense, street violence replaced control killings (De la Calle *forthcoming*). In Northern Ireland we observe a similar pattern: punishment shootings were used to compensate control killings.[20]

Thus, we have divided ETAm's activity into three periods: 1968-1992, 1992-95, and 1996-2003. Although in January 1995 ETAm had already killed one local politician, the campaign did not really take off until 1996. Table 5 shows the contrast between the first period of attrition, the impasse period, and the final period.[21] Although the difference is not as pronounced as in the case of the PIRA, there is an important and statistically significant fall in attrition (from 72 per cent to 60 per cent), and an spectacular increase in the percentage of state officials and politicians killed (from 3 per cent in the attrition period to 29 per cent in the last period).

Therefore, we can also say that in the case of ETAm there was a very important change in the attrition rate after 1992, though this change occurred after a three year period of strategic disorientation. The transformation is smoother in the PIRA probably because there had been a long discussion within the leadership of the organization on whether armed struggle was still the most efficient means of achieving reunification with the Republic of Ireland.

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[20] The correlation between the yearly number of Republican punishment shootings and the yearly number of republican killings is 0.5 for the 1973-2003 period (data on punishments come from the Police Service of Northern Ireland webpage). However, after the 1994 truce that correlation became negative (r=-0.88).

[21] The differences are significant at a 1 per cent level (n = 773, χ^2 = 97,0, Cramer's V = .25).

Table 5. Strategic targeting by ETAm in two time periods

Strategy	1960-92	1993-95	1996-03	Total
Control	25.6% (169)	14.0% (6)	11.4% (8)	23.7% (183)
Attrition	71.8% (474)	83.7% (36)	60.0% (42)	71.4% (552)
Politicians	2.6% (17)	2.3% (1)	28.6% (20)	4.9% (38)
Total	100.0% 660	100.0% 43	100.0% 70	100.0% 773

Note: Number of observations is included in brackets.

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper we have tried to shed light on how nationalist terrorist organizations select their targets. In order to analyze this issue, (i) we have constructed a dataset from the deaths caused by Republican and nationalist organizations in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country respectively; (ii) we have proposed some rules to measure the selectivity of the killings and the strategic aims that motivate the killings; and (iii) we have submitted two hypotheses about the determinants of target selection.

The two hypotheses follow from the constraints under which terrorist organizations act. According to the first hypothesis, the more radical the supporters' preferences for violence, the higher the proportion of indiscriminate attacks observed. Indiscriminate violence takes place only in a context of radicalization. According to the second hypothesis, the greater the resources nationalist terrorist organizations have for engaging in armed struggle, the greater the investment in attrition.

We have confirmed, on the one hand, that when supporters of terrorist organizations undergo more intense experiences of violence, terrorists face lower constraints on the selectivity of their attacks. Thus, due to the presence of sectarian warfare in Northern Ireland, the PIRA shows consistently higher levels of indiscriminate killings than ETAm.

Interestingly, these killings are concentrated in areas of high religious heterogeneity, in which preferences for retribution are more intense.

On the other hand, the data show that ETAm and the PIRA, the hegemonic organizations in each case, spend a greater share of their resources in attrition than their regional competitors. Additionally, and from a dynamic viewpoint, it has been shown that when ETAm and the PIRA started experiencing problems in their ability to maintain the level of violence because of lower resources, they switched their strategies and therefore the selection of targets.

Studies on terrorism have not exploited sufficiently the possibility of building comprehensive datasets of victims. Unlike civil wars, in which it is not feasible to track each and every killing, we are able to do this in the case of terrorist conflicts. We have focused on two well-known and long-lasting nationalist terrorist organizations, the PIRA and ETAm. The theoretical framework we have developed could be extended in several directions. A natural comparison is Israel, where we have a nationalist conflict with very different parameters to those of the Northern Ireland or the Basque Country: greater resources, greater repression, supporters with radical preferences, and real competition between terrorist organizations.

The possibility of building detailed datasets on domestic terrorism opens the way for future comparative and analytical research on the production of terrorist violence, a topic that has not been much frequented so far. This paper is a first step in that direction.

Appendix. The dataset on Republican and Basque nationalist terrorism

Our dataset registers deaths only. We have not tried to collect information about injuries or about attacks against infrastructures for a number of reasons. First of all, there is very little information on incidents and injuries in general, whereas there is more detailed information about deaths. Second, the number of incidents is unmanageable for the kind of micro-analysis we have presented in this article. Third, deaths are the most important result of terrorism: terrorist organizations that do not kill people do not pose a serious challenge to the State. Fourth, it seems that deaths are a good proxy of all terrorist activity: the correlation between yearly deaths and yearly total number of actions is .79 in the case of ETA; though we do not have an equivalent measure for Republican terrorism, the correlation between numbers of deaths and numbers of injured people is .80 (Morrisey and Smith (2002: 190) report an even higher correlation coefficient, .93).

Unlike what is usually done in the existing datasets on Republican violence, we do not count among the victims those terrorists that were killed by manipulating explosive devices. We consider these deaths as accidents rather than as the intended result of terrorist activity.

We have employed several sources for the elaboration of the dataset. Regarding ETA, we have used the dataset of Calleja and Sánchez-Cuenca (2006). As for the IRA, data collection combined three existing sources of killings: the *Lost Lives'* project (McKittrick et al. 2004), the *Cost of the Troubles' Study* (Fey et al. 1999), and the online version of the Sutton database of Deaths (available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/index.html). We took the first source as the baseline, and we cross-checked the information about each victim in the other two databases. Whenever there were contesting reports about a victim, we put more weight on the *Lost Lives'* version, since it usually offered the most complete account of each killing.

We took advantage of all those sources in order to generate relevant variables for hypothesis testing.[22] In this article, we have used three main variables: organization responsible, strategy, and selectivity. The first one was the easiest variable to codify as long as there was information on responsibility. Otherwise, we assigned the killing to a generic category (e.g. Republican killings). As for strategy, the main doubt was about how to define "sectarian" killings. We decided to consider that a killing is "sectarian" in Northern Ireland when the perpetrators carry out a purposive attack against a Protestant without justifying it on account of the victim's actual job. Thus, collateral killings of Protestants and indiscriminate killings, where Protestants are not directly targeted, do not fall under the sectarian category due to their non-purposive nature. On the contrary, killings of Protestant paramilitaries, Loyalist local politicians and former-members of security forces lie within the category of sectarianism.[23]

The variable of selectivity raises further issues on how to deal with sectarian killings. Our rule has been to consider that sectarian attacks are indiscriminate in nature, since victims are targeted on a religious basis without reference to the victim's behaviour and/or professional career. Additionally, we have codified a killing as a "mistake" (instead of "collateral") when there was sufficient evidence that the terrorists got the target wrong.

Finally, we have coded the date of each killing. Instead of coding for each victim the year of her death, we have opted for coding the killing in the year when the attack took place. We think this rule allows us to better capture terrorist strength in a yearly fashion.

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[22] In order to reduce the size of the appendix, we emphasize here the process of dataset creation in the IRA case. As for the Basque case, we remit the reader to our prior work on ETA targeting (De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2004).

[23] By so doing, we are relying on McKeown's definition of "sectarian" killings (McKeown, 1989).

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