TERRORISM AS WAR OF ATTRITION: ETA AND THE IRA

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca

Estudio/Working Paper 2004/204
June 2004

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca is Professor of Political Science at the *Center for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences*, Instituto Juan March and Associate Professor in Sociology at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid.

Introduction[1]

In this article I consider a particular kind of terrorism, namely that carried out in the name of national liberation. I do not claim that the findings reached about this brand of terror can be extended to all forms of terrorism. Terrorist organizations vary so much in terms of their aims and strategies that the aspiration to formulate a general theory of terrorism is probably misplaced. However, if we limit our scope to national liberation violence, it is possible to provide a clear and simple picture of the logic of terrorist violence.

Basically, I argue that terrorist organizations seeking to liberate a territory from the control of the State engage in a war of attrition with the State. In a war of attrition, the party with the greater capacity to assume the costs imposed by the conflict wins. It is a question of resisting longer than the enemy. Private information about costs makes prolongation of the conflict rational.

War of attrition is not only a well-developed model in game theory. It is also a common expression in the scholarly literature on terrorism and even in the writings of terrorists themselves. Unlike many other applications of rational choice theory, here we find a striking continuity between the self-understanding of the actors and the analytical reconstruction of the social scientist. The difference is merely a question of degree: the social scientist can formulate the underlying logic in more rigorous terms.

I employ the logic of the war of attrition model to describe the aims and strategies of national liberation terrorist organizations, illustrating this logic through reference to two well-known cases, those of the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna*, Basque Homeland and Freedom). The IRA and ETA are two of the oldest terrorist organizations in the world. The Provisional IRA engaged in armed struggle from its creation in December 1969 until 1998. ETA was founded in 1959, although it only claimed its first mortal victim in 1968. It is still active, although clearly in a terminal phase. In both

[1] I would like to thank Belén Barreiro, Luis de la Calle, James Fearon, Margaret Levi and Andrew Richards for their comments.

cases, therefore, the terrorists' behavior can be analyzed over a considerable period of time. Although we generally have much less information about terrorist activity than about almost any other political phenomena, ETA and the IRA are exceptions in this respect: there is no shortage of data, including statistics, interviews, internal documents, activists' memoirs, and measures of popular support. This makes a detailed comparison possible. Intriguingly, this paper constitutes the first known attempt to carry out a systematic comparison of these two organizations.

The war of attrition model not only constitutes a useful framework in which to understand terrorist strategies. It also offers a good basis from which to generate some interesting hypotheses that are discussed in the paper. In a war of attrition, each party wants to hurt the enemy as much as possible to force its withdrawal. Nonetheless, we rarely observe the full destructive potential of terrorist violence. Events such as September 11 are exceptional by terrorist standards. Bombs are not usually used to destroy schools or hospitals, and terrorists usually tend not to kill people randomly or indiscriminately. Why do terrorists not try to employ their lethal power to the full? Why do they not maximize the number of casualties?

Terrorist organizations act under constraints in a war of attrition. Some of these constraints derive from the reaction of the State. The greater the number of attacks, the more information the organization gives away about itself, the more exposed it becomes, and therefore the greater the number of arrests by the security forces. This pattern is statistically confirmed by data from both Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. Thus, the maximization of attacks in the short term may lead to fewer attacks in the future.

Various other constraints involve popular support. According to a second hypothesis, a terrorist organization has to exercise considerable self-restraint if its supporters are in some way more moderate or disapprove of certain kinds of attack (for instance, on civilians unconnected to the conflict). I distinguish here between three different kinds of supporters, and I provide some measures of popular support for ETA and the IRA, showing the trade-off between killings and support.

Thus, the general framework of the war of attrition model makes it possible to formulate some hypotheses about how constraints determine the intensity and selectivity of terrorist violence. These hypotheses help to explain the differences between the IRA and ETA. The IRA is a more powerful organization in terms of its membership and arsenal, and has stronger popular backing: hence, the conflict is more intense and the percentage of civilian casualties is higher than in the case of ETA.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section opens with a classification of the various forms of political violence, moving on to describe terrorism in terms of a war of attrition. The second section compares the two empirical cases, and shows how in each case the conflict was perceived as a war of attrition by the terrorists themselves. The third section analyzes the constraints under which terrorists act, formulating some hypotheses about the intensity of violence and the patterns of victim selection. The fourth section offers a general discussion on the shortcomings of the war of attrition model, and how the model could be improved by incorporating other factors.

1. Terrorism as war of attrition

There is no consensus as to how to categorize the various forms of political violence we know. For instance, the violence carried out by Peru's *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) has been conceptualized as civil war (Fearon and Laitin 2003), as revolution (Goodwin 2001: Ch.7), and as terrorism (Palmer 1995). I propose here a general rule to classify forms of political violence. This rule sheds some light on why terrorism usually develops as a war of attrition with the State.

Schelling (1966) draws a distinction between traditional military strength and the power to hurt. Military strength serves to weaken the enemy, to seize its property, its arms or its territory, whereas the power to hurt serves as a bargaining tool. By hurting the enemy, you try to make war unbearable for the other side. Similarly, Wagner (2000), drawing on Clausewitz, distinguishes between absolute and real wars, the former involving military

power, the latter bargaining and the power to hurt. In an absolute war, bargaining does not take place. Simply, the party with the greater brute force wins by disarming or destroying the enemy. The fact that most wars end in some sort of agreement seems to suggest that they are mostly real ones, that is, that most wars are costly forms of bargaining, in which the power to hurt is an essential variable.

This distinction proves useful when creating a continuum of political violence with two extremes, military power on the one hand and the power to hurt on the other. The relative mix of these two components along the continuum defines the different forms of violence. Pure military power corresponds to traditional warfare as exemplified by the great wars of the twentieth century, culminating in the Second World War. The pure power to hurt is embodied in terrorism. Terrorist organizations never try to destroy the enemy. They do not have the military brute force because they are not armies, but they try to inflict as much pain as possible. Between traditional warfare and terrorism, we find real wars and insurgencies. Real wars take place between States and combine military brute force with bargaining and hurting. Insurgencies occur within a State and are characterized "by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas" (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 75). The relative importance of hurting as opposed to disarming the enemy is a function of the imbalance in the relationship between the contending parties. The more unequal the conflict, the more likely it is that the weaker party will concentrate on hurting the enemy.

For our purposes, the contrast between insurgency and terrorism is particularly relevant. Insofar as an insurgent force tends to control a rural territory and in some ways resembles a small army, it can penetrate the enemy zone and attempt to break the governments' grip on the zone through acts of sabotage and military operations against the security forces and civilians who do not cooperate with the insurgent movement. It can also aspire to extend the liberated territory, expanding the area beyond the control of the State, to the point that the State finally collapses. Military strength is not then irrelevant. Although the power to hurt may be the dominant factor in a guerrilla strategy, there is some room for more traditional forms of warfare.

This is not the case of terrorism. Terrorism does not require liberated territory and is a mainly urban phenomenon. The only feasible strategy for terrorist organizations is to hurt the enemy by means of specific attacks against the security forces or civilians. Schelling correctly highlights that terrorism is "violence intended to coerce the enemy rather than to weaken him militarily" (1966: 17). Among forms of political violence, terrorism constitutes by far the most uneven type of combat. Terrorist organizations are much weaker than insurgents in terms of armament and militants. Hence, their only chance is to hurt the State without touching its military strength.

However, the distinction between insurgency and terrorism becomes a little more blurred because insurgents may resort to terrorist tactics. The FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), Shining Path, or the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) are typical insurgent movements that sporadically engage in urban terrorism, for example, bombing a building or shooting a politician or state official. This kind of operations can be carried out even in the absence of liberated territory. The other possibility, that of terrorist organizations being involved in guerrilla activity, is more unusual. In the case of the IRA, for instance, and particularly during its early years in the period 1971-1973, some Catholic quarters of Belfast and Derry were liberated from British control (thereby becoming the so-called "no-go areas"). Moreover, in the same period the IRA also attempted to wage some forms of rural guerrilla. As we are talking about a continuum of political violence, we should not exclude a degree of over lapping.

With regard to terrorism, it is crucial to make a further distinction. Roughly speaking, we can conceive two broad varieties of terrorism. Both of them are characterized by violence and the power to hurt, but the purpose of the violence nonetheless differs. In the first type, the main function of the armed struggle is to mobilize supporters in order to prepare a revolutionary uprising. Much of the anarchist and revolutionary terrorism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century belong to this category. Terrorist actions are seen as instrumental in proving that the social order is fragile and in setting an example that should be followed and extended by others. Likewise, the left-wing terrorism seen in Western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, such as that of the Red Brigades in Italy or the Red Army Faction in Germany, did not have concrete demands: the armed struggle was conceived as a

necessary phase of destruction of bourgeois society and its hypocritical life, prior to the revolutionary moment which would bring a new era and a new society. Utopianism and millenarism are common features in these cases.

In the second type of terrorism, violence is used to force the State to make some decisions. In this case, the addressee of the terrorist activity is clearer. The terrorists do not want to suppress the State, or to create a new one from the ashes of the old social order. Rather, they want the existing State to do something specific, typically to surrender control over a particular territory. As the aim of terrorism is less utopian than in the previous case, the strategic dimension becomes more relevant and the rationality of political violence can be more easily established. It is, of course, into this category that we would place different instances of national liberation terrorism: Zionist terrorism against British occupation of Palestine, the Cyprus EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters), Hamas in Palestine the IRA in Northern Ireland, ETA in the Basque country, etc. (for an overview see Hoffman 1998: Ch.2).

National liberation terrorism can easily be interpreted in terms of a war of attrition. The terrorist organization hurts the State by killing people, by intimidating entrepreneurs and businessmen, and by destroying infrastructure and buildings. Its aim is to make the situation so unbearable that the State will opt to abandon the territory under dispute rather than stay in it. On the other hand, the State combats the terrorist organization, trying to capture (and sometimes to kill) as many terrorists as possible. The two parties, therefore, inflict pain on each other, so that the persistence of terrorism is costly for both. The party that resists longer under these circumstances wins the prize (the control over the territory).

In a typical illustration of a war of attrition game, there are two firms and each one tries to expel the other from the market, the winner becoming the new monopolist. The two firms launch a ‘price war’, that is, they produce over the duopoly equilibrium level in order to depress the price of the good. When the price falls, the firms have negative benefits, and therefore staying in the market any longer is costly for them. Yet, if one firm resists longer than the other, the future benefits of being the monopolist may offset the costs of engaging in the war of attrition.

One standard way of presenting the war of attrition model is as an iterated Chicken game (Fudenberg and Tirole 1991: 119-121). The one-shot game can be described as follows: suppose Players 1 and 2 compete for a prize valued *v*. Each player has two strategies, either to stay or to exit. If Player 1 stays and Player 2 exits, Player 1 obtains the full prize, *v*, while Player 2 obtains 0. If both players exit, they obtain 0. And if they both stay, they both have to pay the cost *c* of the conflict. The game has two asymmetric equilibria and a symmetric one with mixed strategies. In the asymmetric equilibria, one of the players has full commitment capacity: one player makes it clear to the other that she is going to stay for sure and therefore the other player exits. In the symmetric equilibrium, both players play the mixed strategy $p = \frac{c}{v+c}$, where p is the probability of exiting. When the game is indefinitely iterated, producing a war of attrition game, the equilibria are the same. In the asymmetric equilibria, the game ends in period 1, as the player without commitment capacity exits in the first round. The game continues over time when both players follow their mixed strategies, which can be understood as exit rules: if the other player has not exited in round *t*, then exit in round $t + 1$ with probability p.

There are other ways of depicting the war of attrition model. For example, it can also be understood as a Chain Store game with two-sided incomplete information (Kreps and Wilson 1982). More interestingly, war of attrition resembles a second-bid auction in which both the winner and the loser pay the second bid (Fudenberg and Tirole 1991: 216-7). The loser has to pay the price for having been involved for a certain period of time in the war of attrition game. The bidders have their own exit rules and the content of these rules is private knowledge. The bidder prepared to pay the higher price wins the auction. For instance, the firm with the greater capacity to resist in the price war becomes the new monopolist. The revelation of information is trivial: if a firm has not exited within a certain period, this simply reveals that the firm has not reached the threshold value of the exit rule that leads the firm to drop out at that period. To put it in another way: if the firm has stayed in, the cost of staying is low enough not to have forced it to quit earlier.

It is only a very small step to extend the model from two firms in a duopoly to terrorism[2]. The production of violence is itself a natural monopoly (Tilly 1985: 175). The State, to employ a variant of Weber's classic definition (1978: 54), has effective control over a territory when it is the monopolist in the market of organized violence. If a terrorist organization emerges, the State is challenged and the situation becomes one of a duopoly. The State and the terrorists compete violently for control of a territory in a war of attrition. Rather than a price war, we have an exchange of killings and detentions. The war of attrition applied to terrorism almost exactly mirrors Maynard Smith's (1984: Ch.3) original model of war of attrition involving two animals fighting over a territory.

In terrorism, the sides that compete for a territory have private exit rules. Each side fights in the hope of having a longer exit rule than its rival. The exit rule is the number of casualties each side is willing to accept. Eugenio Etxebeste, alias *Antxon*, formed part of ETA's leadership in 1985 when he held a secret interview with some official from the Spanish Ministry of the Interior in Santo Domingo. He referred to State's exit rule rather crudely:

In 25 years we have proved we are right. If things are going badly, it is because we are winning. Unless there are 10,000 deaths in the Basque Country, we will not get much. People do not realize that there ought to be 10,000 or 20,000 deaths in the Basque Country. We have already had 1,000 deaths. More people should die. That's it. (Quoted in Barrionuevo 1997: 415-6)

Antxon was guessing about State's capacity to resist, that is, about its exit rule. In his view, the State was not going to give in until ETA had caused 10,000 deaths. Even if the numbers are clearly arbitrary, the structure of his argument reveals how terrorists frame their strategy in terms of exit rules.

[2] Most formal models of terrorism are static (see e.g. Lapan and Sandler 1993; Overgaard 1994; Kydd and Walter 2002): they cannot explain why terrorist activity persists. An interesting exception is Konrad (2002), where terrorism is understood as a form of extortion.

Whether or not sustained violence will induce the State to exit will depend, among other things, on the value assigned to the territory under dispute and how the violence affects the State. Keeping everything else constant, the higher the value of the territory to the State, the greater the State's resistance capacity. This principle is partially confirmed by the comparative evidence. When the degree of involvement of the State is low, a relatively low level of violence can provoke a withdrawal. Irgun's terrorism against the British in Palestine constitutes a good case in point. After the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946 (91 persons killed and 45 injured), the British understood that it was not worth maintaining control over that territory, due both to the economic costs of the occupation as well as to the lack of public support for remaining in Palestine. Likewise, the international troops in Lebanon abandoned the territory soon after Hizbullah launched several suicide missions in 1983. When the State is challenged not about colonial possessions, but about its own territory, resistance is much greater, even when the level of violence is extremely high, as in the case of the LTTE in Sri Lanka, or Hamas in Israel. While Israel continues to resist the creation of a Palestinian state despite suffering an extreme degree of violence, it abandoned Southern Lebanon in response to a lower level of violence just because Israel values these two territories very differently.

Moreover, the State's resistance capacity is also a function of the impact violence has on the State. Violence may become a heavy burden in economic terms for any kind of political regime, for instance if terrorism destroys the tourist industry. On the other hand, the military or the security forces could press the political authority to withdraw if the human cost of resistance proves simply unbearable. In a democracy, the public's attitude towards violence is crucial. If public opinion is terrorized and feels that the cost of resisting is not worth paying, the State will be unable to resist for long.

As for the terrorist organization, the decision to abandon the armed struggle will be a function of its resources, the most important of which is the size of its community of support. Quite clearly, terrorist organizations with little popular support do not survive for long, or if they survive they are unable to inflict a large number of attacks and killings. This is obvious in the case of revolutionary organizations such as the Red Brigades or the Red Army Faction, but it is also the case of some nationalist organizations that alienate public support, such as

the FLQ (*Front de Libération du Québec*) in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Ross and Gurr 1989). I will come back to the constraints that the scarcity of resources imposes on the terrorist organization in Part 3.

2. The war of attrition in practice: ETA and the IRA

ETA and the IRA represent quite pure instances of the war of attrition logic. However, unlike many other examples of national liberation terrorism, their conflicts cannot be considered colonial, even if colonial wars were a source of political and strategic inspiration for both organizations, and particularly for the IRA (English 2003: 344-68). Although Republicans in Northern Ireland have claimed that they were colonized by the British, they cannot ignore the fact that more than half of the region's population feels British and has had roots there since the eighteenth century. In the case of ETA, the colonial perspective clearly does not apply. The Basque Country has always been part of Spain and it is territorially integrated with the rest of country. Precisely because these territories are not colonies, we can expect that the respective States will value them highly, thereby leading to a protracted conflict.

ETA was founded in 1959, during the Francoist dictatorship[3]. It was a splinter group of the youth organization of the PNV (the Basque Nationalist Party, the hegemonic force in the Basque Country). Although in its origins it was a purely nationalist organization, ETA soon incorporated a socialist or Marxist dimension. ETA killed relatively few people under dictatorship. The first mortal victim came totally unexpectedly in 1968, when an ETA leader was stopped by the police and opened fire against them. A few hours later, the terrorist was shot dead by the security forces. This started a spiral of killings that has continued until today.

[3] Key studies on ETA include Clark (1984), Domínguez (1998a, b), Letamendía (1994), Sánchez-Cuenca (2001), Shabad and Llera (1995).

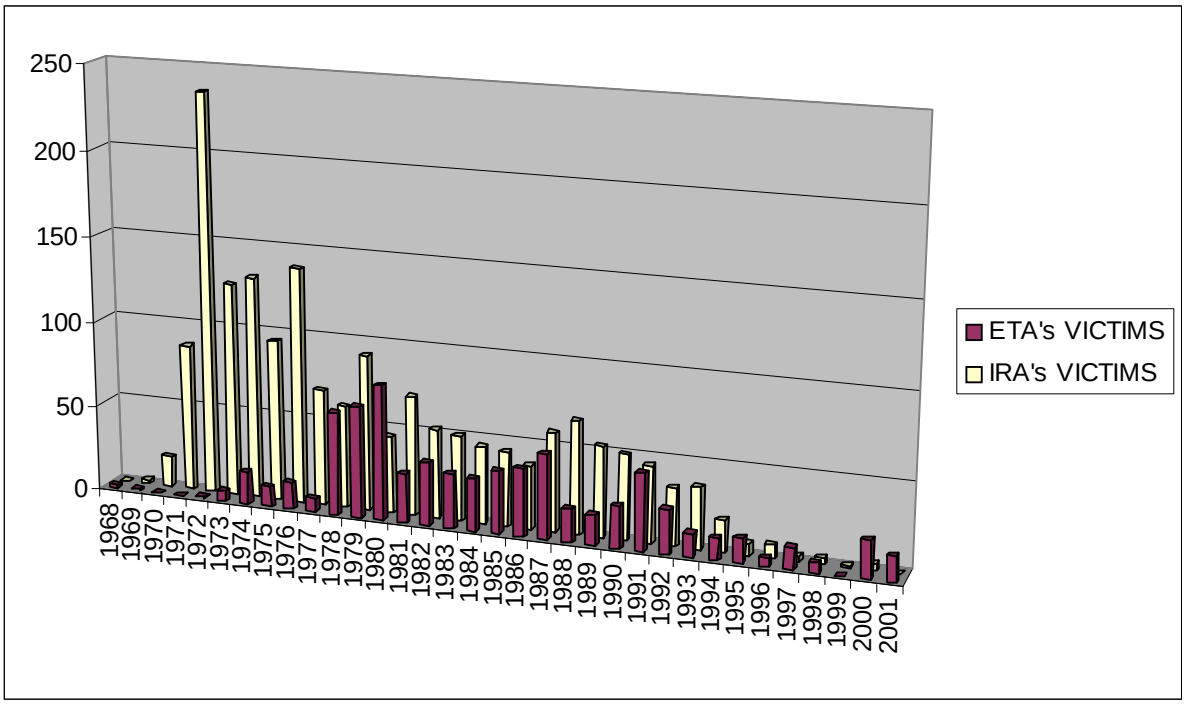
In total, the different wings of ETA have killed around 830 people since 1968. Interestingly, most of the killings took place during the transition to democracy, particularly in the period 1978 to 1980 (Figure 1). In 1978 the new Spanish democratic constitution, which provided for a major decentralization of territorial power, was approved in a referendum (in the Basque Country, only 30.9% of the population voted in favor, as compared to 60.7% in the rest of Spain). One year later the Basque Autonomy Statute (the so-called Statute of Gernika) was ratified in a referendum in the Basque Country with the support of 53.1% of the population. Thanks to the Statute of Gernika, the Basque Country has its own Parliament, police, fiscal resources, education in the Basque language, health system, a public TV channel, etc.. The PNV, in power in the region since 1980, assumed that all these reforms would encourage ETA to abandon the armed struggle, but ETA has stated over and over again that it will only be satisfied with independence.

In 1974, on the eve of Franco's death, ETA split into two organizations, the so-called political-military ETA (ETApm) and military ETA (ETAm). The issue behind the rift was the strategy to be followed after the end of the dictatorship. For ETApm, armed struggle and political participation in the new democratic system would complement each other. In contrast, ETAm considered that the organization should invest all its resources in the armed struggle, subordinating its political wing to this. In a sense, ETAm was right. ETApm, then the larger and more powerful organization, succumbed to electoral politics and renounced the use of violence after the failed coup in February 1981. Except when necessary, I will refer to ETAm simply as ETA.

The IRA was founded in 1919, during the formation of the Irish State. Its essential goal was the reunification of Ireland through the incorporation of the six counties of Northern Ireland, where there was a Protestant majority. By the 1960s the organization was almost dead. When the Civil Rights movement appeared in 1968 in protest against political and economic discrimination of Catholics, the IRA was unable to lead the mobilizations or to protect Catholics from police and Protestant harassment. The ethnic tensions intensified and in August 1969 British Army troops were deployed in Northern Ireland. The more nationalist members of the Republican movement, dissatisfied with the IRA's strategy, split in

December 1969, creating the Provisional IRA, as opposed to the Official IRA. From now on, unless I indicate otherwise, here the IRA means the Provisional IRA[4].

Figure 1. Fatal victims of ETA and IRA violence



The Provisional IRA killed around 1,740 people between 1969 and 2001, that is, more than twice as many mortal victims than ETA in a similar period of time, in spite of the fact that the population of Northern Ireland represents only some 70% of the Basque population (see Figure 1). As Table 1 reveals, the conflict has been much more severe in Northern Ireland than in the Basque Country. Apart from the number of mortal victims, both the rate of injured people and the arrest rate testify to the higher level of violence in Northern Ireland than in the Basque Country. Whereas in Northern Ireland the injury rate was 16 per thousand people for the period 1978-2001, in the Basque Country the corresponding figure is much

[4] Key texts on the IRA include Coogan (2000), English (2003), Moloney (2002), Smith (1995), and Taylor (1997).

lower, less than one per thousand. Likewise, the rate of arrested people as a consequence of political violence is much higher for Northern Ireland than for the Basque Country.

Table 1. Some comparative data about the conflict in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country

	Northern Ireland	Basque Country
Population (1981)	1,532,196	2,134,763
Total number of deaths (1966-2003)	3,665[a]	1,150[b]
Deaths caused by Republican terrorist organizations and Basque nationalist terrorist organizations	2,148[a]	829[c]
Deaths caused by Provisional IRA and ETAm	1,778[a]	773[c]
Non-fatal casualties 1968-2001	45,949[d]	NA
Non-fatal casualties 1978-2001	24,887[d]	1,881[e]
Injury rate 1978-2001, per thousand	16.24	0.88
Arrested people 1972-2001	20,206[d]	8,011[f]
Rate of arrested people, per thousand	13.2	3.7

Notes

[a] McKittrick et al. (2001). An alternative source, with similar figures, is Michael Sutton's database updated and revised at CAIN (Conflict Archive in the Internet, at www.cain.ulst.ac.uk .

b Ormazabal (2003).

[c] My own calculations.

[d] Data from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (former RUC), at www.psni.police.uk . Only available since 1972.

[e] Data from www.covite.org. Only available since 1978.

[f] Data from the Spanish Civil Guard (www.guardiacivil.org).

These differences can partly be explained by the nature of the conflict in each case. First, the IRA's war of attrition took place in the context of an ethnic conflict between two communities divided by religion. The IRA fought against Britain, but also against loyalist paramilitary organizations such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Many killings of Protestant civilians and paramilitaries involved retaliation and sectarian warfare[5]. In the Basque Country ETA has tried to avoid sectarian killings and there has not been a clash of communities between nationalists and non-nationalists[6]. Terrorists have mainly acted against a single enemy, the Spanish State.

[5] On sectarianism, see White (1997) and Bruce (1997).

[6] The Basque Country received 468,000 immigrants from the rest of Spain in the period 1950-75. The population in 1950 was just 1,061,100.

Second, the political and economic situation of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland and Basques in the Basque Country was very different. In Northern Ireland, the Catholics have constituted a permanent minority in a system dominated by Protestants with some elements of political discrimination (gerrymandering, disenfranchisement). Moreover, there was certainly discrimination against Catholics, for example in access to civil service jobs or public housing. There was also economic inequality between these two groups, with Catholics enduring much more unemployment and deprivation[7]. In Spain, if we focus on the democratic period, that is, the period in which ETA has waged its major offensive against the State, it is impossible to speak in terms of political or economic discrimination against the Basque Country or any subpopulation within it. Of course, there was discrimination against the Basque language under Franco.

Finally, repression by the State has been harsher in Northern Ireland than in the Basque Country. This is revealed not only by the rate of arrested people, as shown in Table 1, but also by several other factors. For instance, Northern Ireland saw the systematic use in prison of various forms of physical and psychological torture; in Spain the use of torture was widespread in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but, arguably, it was not as "institutionalized" as in Northern Ireland. More importantly, there too we find some unparalleled instances of indiscriminate repression, such as "Bloody Sunday" (January 30 1972), when thirteen unarmed civilians were shot dead in Derry by British troops, fuelling a massive influx of recruits into the IRA and contributing to legitimize the armed struggle for many years. Even if not comparable to "Bloody Sunday", the "Dirty War" waged from within the Spanish State apparatus against ETA in the period 1977-1986, which resulted in the death of around 60 people (some completely unconnected to ETA, see Ormazabal 2003: 22-3), played an important role in boosting the ranks of the terrorist organization during the 1980s.

Over and above these differences between the conflict in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country, the strategy followed by the IRA and ETA was very similar, and can easily be interpreted in terms of a war of attrition. In fact, in their internal documents both ETA and

[7] Note that I am not suggesting that discrimination was the cause of violence: rather, discrimination can help to understand levels of violence. In any event, some authors have downplayed the role of discrimination, particularly of a political kind: see Hewitt (1981).

the IRA presented the war of attrition as a necessary strategy given the impossibility of destroying the State.

At the end of the Franco's dictatorship in 1975, ETA realized that the aim of creating a revolutionary movement based on the masses was no longer realistic: if the revolution had not broken out under the dictatorship, still less was it going to happen under democracy. Without a popular uprising against the regime, the destruction of the State was simply impossible. The alternative for ETA was a war of attrition. The first internal documents about the war of attrition were produced by ETApm in its VI Assembly in 1975 (ETA 1981: Vol.17, 353), but it was still assumed that the war of attrition would only be a passing phase of a revolutionary war. The pure war of attrition strategy was developed by ETAm, the organization that deliberately decided to break all organic links with political action, in 1978:

The function of armed struggle is not to destroy the enemy, for that is utopian, but it is indeed to force him, through a prolonged war of psychological and physical attrition, to abandon our territory due to exhaustion and isolation (quoted in Letamendía 1994: Vol.II, 114).

This strategy remained in place for the next twenty years. For instance, in 1988 an ETA spokesperson said in an interview that the organization had "opted for a prolonged war of attrition, the aim of which is to outlast the enemy. We know that ETA cannot destroy the Spanish State, and that is not our aim. (…) But the Spanish State cannot destroy us either" (in Unzueta 1988: 251).

In the case of the IRA, the war of attrition came not as the result of a failed revolutionary strategy[8], but rather as the natural consequence of the transition from ethnic conflict with Protestants in 1970-1971 to a more offensive strategy aimed at the expulsion of British forces as a necessary step towards a reunited Ireland. As Coogan (2000: 375) says, "the ultimate object of the campaign that began to get off the ground was not to gain an

[8] The IRA had aspired to trigger a revolution by guerrilla warfare in the 1950s (see Smith 1995: 67).

outright victory over the British army, which was clearly impossible, but to render the existing state inoperable so that the army would have to withdraw." Terence Clark, an IRA activist at that early time, recalls in these crude terms the essence of the strategy: "I hadn't a political thought in my head other than I knew what we were doing was right because it was to get the 'Brits' out of Ireland. The more you hurt them, I thought, the more fed up they'll get and want to get out" (quoted in Taylor 1997: 104). The IRA's discourse had not changed much in 1989. In an interview published in the Republican newspaper *An Phoblacht*, an IRA spokesman said that "the IRA strategy is very clear. At some point in the future, due to the pressure of the continuing and sustained armed struggle, the will of the British government to remain in this country will be broken" (quoted in Patterson 1997: 217).

A more reflective view on the war of attrition appeared in the IRA's famous *Green Book*, a detailed internal document that new recruits had to study before becoming active members of the organization[9]. This explicitly states that killing people, damaging financial interests, and rendering the territory ungovernable, all form part of the same underlying strategy, namely to make the British presence in Northern Ireland unsustainable (Coogan 2000: 555).

In the literature on the IRA this issue is often misunderstood. For example, it is suggested that the war of attrition, also called "the long war", only began after the long truce between February 9 1975 and January 23 1976[10]. In the *Staff Report* seized by the police in 1977, the IRA recognized that victory was a long way off and that Republicans should be prepared for a "long-term armed struggle" complemented by more political activity (Smith 1995: Ch.6; Taylor 1997: Ch: 15; Horgan and Taylor 1997). This statement, however, does not indicate a strategic change; more simply, it can be taken as a rational updating of the initial beliefs about the British exit rule. At the beginning of the war of attrition, the IRA had wrongly guessed that a relatively small number of deaths would be sufficient to expel the

[9] The *Green Book* is still secret, but Coogan (2000: Ch.33-4) offers an exhaustive description with long quotations.

[10] See for instance White (1997: 40, 45). Although Smith provides the subtlest strategic analysis of the IRA, he is rather ambiguous about the significance of the shift to the "long war" strategy (1995: 156-7).

British. Maria McGuire, then involved in the IRA , gives a good sense of the naivety of the IRA leadership:

The Army Council's first target was to kill thirty-six British soldiers –the same number who died in Aden. The target was reached in early November 1971. But this, the Army Council felt, was not enough: I remember, Dave [O'Connell], amongst others, saying: 'We've got to get eighty.' Once eighty had been killed, Dave felt, the pressure on the British to negotiate would be immense (McGuire 1973: 74-5).

Yet even when the IRA killed 235 people in 1972 alone, the British did not withdraw. Before the 1975 truce, the IRA had announced each year that the next would bring the Republican victory (Smith 1995: 135; Moloney 2002: 150). The "long war" doctrine simply corrected these mistaken expectations, but it did not change the nature of the war of attrition against the British.

It seems, then, that both in the spontaneous answers of activists and in the more reflective documents produced by ETA and the IRA, terrorist activity is conceived in terms of a war of attrition. These organizations seek to hurt the State so much that the State would be better off exiting from the territory than staying in it. The idea is that if the level of violence is sufficient to overcome the resistance threshold of the State, the State will withdraw. It is a matter of hurting the enemy, not destroying it. As Danny Morrison, a highly influential member of the IRA in the 1980s, put it, "it isn't a question of driving the British army into the sea. It's a question of breaking the political will of the British government to remain" (quoted in English 2003: 245). But if this is the rationale of national liberation terrorism, why do these organizations not try to maximize the amount of pain that they can inflict on the State? Why not kill British or Spanish citizens indiscriminately? Why not bomb schools or hospitals? These actions would hurt a lot more than killing members of security forces. In general, these organizations never maximized the amount of harm that they could have inflicted on the State. The reasons, as shown below, spring from the constraints under which terrorists operate.

3. Constraints

Terrorist organizations have limited resources. By resources, here I mean such disparate things as weaponry, money, information, recruits, and popular support. In the first place, a terrorist organization has to decide how to allocate its resources to the war of attrition and other activities. For instance, the IRA decided from the 1980s onwards to spend an increasing amount of its resources on electoral politics, to the detriment of the armed struggle. This strategy did not go uncontested: Ivor Bell, a former Chief of Staff in the IRA, was expelled from the organization in 1985 due to his opposition to diverting resources from the armed struggle to politics (English 2003: 246). Even when electoral politics is a marginal concern, terrorist organizations usually invest part of their resources in promoting social movements willing to support the armed struggle[11]. These movements are crucial both in order to produce a pool of potential recruits that will guarantee the survival of the organization and to create the impression that the terrorists' demands have some social backing.

Given the resources devoted to the armed struggle, neither the IRA nor ETA launched as ambitious campaigns as that might have. They were aware that the more attacks they carried out (the more intense the war of attrition), the more information they would reveal and, therefore, the greater the likelihood that the police would arrest members of the organization. In fact, by looking at Figure 1 it is possible to discern a common pattern, namely a rapid rise in the number of mortal victims up to a peak (1970-3 in the case of the IRA, 1978-80 in that of ETA) followed by a sudden decrease and then a more or less prolonged period of stability in the annual number of killings. Thus, as a consequence of the 1980 offensive, the number of arrested members of ETA skyrocketed in 1981. Likewise, on 31 July 1972, the British, in "Operation Motorman", dispatched thousands of troops to Northern Ireland. During the period 1972-3 they arrested the largest number of people in the whole history of the Troubles.

[11] For a comparison of the social movements existing around ETA and the IRA, see Irvin (1999).

The hypothesis that the more intense the campaign of the terrorist organization, the more exposed the organization becomes and therefore the more arrests it suffers can be statistically proven[12]. I have estimated a Vector Autoregression (VAR) model with the annual natural logs of mortal victims and arrested people both for the IRA and ETA (see Table 2). Although the number of arrests has a negative influence on the number of deaths (the more arrests, the fewer the deaths), this effect is not statistically significant. However, the number of mortal victims produces a statistically significant increase in the number of arrests, particularly in the case of ETA (in that of the IRA, there is a one year time-lag). A Granger-causality test reveals that in both cases more deaths lead to more arrests, while the converse does not seem to hold true, that is, more arrests do not necessarily imply fewer killings.

It might be thought that this constraint could be easily eliminated. If more lethal attacks are carried out, the organization could increase the number of victims, while keeping the number of attacks constant. That is, the information revealed by the organization through its attacks could be more or less the same, but more people would be killed. Rather than shooting people, the organization could bomb places and buildings. But bombings tend to be more indiscriminate than shootings, and civilians and other "non-legitimate targets" may be killed. The fact is that organizations such as ETA and the IRA rarely support indiscriminate attacks. Terrorists act with some degree of self-restraint. Eamon Collins, a former member of the IRA (who was subsequently killed by the organization), wrote that the IRA "fought with one hand tied behind its back: in general it did not carry out the indiscriminate campaign of all-out war which it would have been capable of fighting" (1997: 8). And the few times it did, it tended to deny responsibility for the massacre. Two important instances of this pattern are the bombs that exploded in two pubs in Birmingham on November 21 1974, killing 19 people and injuring 182, and the bomb that exploded in Enniskillen on November 8 1987, killing 11 Protestant civilians. In both cases, the IRA denied responsibility. Likewise, ETA did not claim responsibility for the bomb that exploded in a restaurant in 1974 killing 13 and injuring over 70 people.

[12] There is also qualitative evidence in favor of this hypothesis. See the interview with Danny Morrison in Alonso (2003: 255).

Table 2. VAR models and Granger-causality test

	ETA	IRA
Equation 1. Var.dep. IRA Casualties		
Deaths (t - 1)	0.576**	0.400
	(0.245)	(0.254)
Deaths (t - 2)	0.460	0.779**
	(0.329)	(0.291)
Deaths (t - 3)	-0.086	-0.095
	(0.291)	(0.342)
Arrests (t - 1)	-0.440	-0.529
	(0.493)	(0.540)
Arrests (t - 2)	-0.264	0.892
	(0.462)	(0.560)
Arrests (t - 3)	0.427	-0.297
	(0.343)	(0.476)
Constant	1.695	-0.985
	(2.379)	(1.608)
Equation 2. Var. dep. Arrests		
Deaths (t - 1)	0.365***	-0.248**
	(0.110)	(0.104)
Deaths (t - 2)	0.214	0.292**
	(0.148)	(0.120)
Deaths (t - 3)	-0.261*	0.090
	(0.131)	(0.141)
Arrests (t - 1)	0.178	0.580**
	(0.222)	(0.222)
Arrests (t - 2)	0.095	-0.063
	(0.208)	(0.247)
Arrests (t - 3)	0.228	0.198
	(0.155)	(0.196)
Constant	1.785	1.187*
	(1.072)	(0.662)
N	24	26
Granger Causality Test	F significance test	F significance test
H_0: Arrested don't Granger-cause deaths	0.5212	0.5037
H_0: Deaths don't Granger-cause arrested	0.0021	0.0384

*** significant at 1% ** at 5% * at 10%

The source of this self-restraint, and the reason for the denials when it is violated, lie in public support. Terrorist organizations can survive as long as they do not completely alienate their potential and actual supporters. If they do not resort to more radical tactics, it is because they are very concerned about the consequences of their actions in terms of popular support. The need terrorists feel to justify civilian casualties clearly reveals their dependence on public support. Sean MacStiofain, the first Chief of Staff of the Provisional IRA, openly admitted as much: "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).

Here, it is necessary to distinguish between different forms of support. Drawing up a modified version of Petersen's (2001) scale of rebellious behaviour, we can define three degrees of support for terrorism: (1) those who disagree with the armed struggle and the killing of innocent victims but vaguely sympathise with the ends pursued by the organization; (2) those who vote for the party associated with the terrorist organization and may participate in the social movements that develop around the organization; and (3) those who help the organization in various ways (by providing information, housing, money…) or engage in lesser acts of violence.

Group (3) is probably the least sensitive to the number and kind of victims of the armed struggle. The support of group (3) is essential for the maintenance and reproduction of the organization. The problem facing many terrorist organizations is that they also need the support of group (2) and, ultimately, at least the non-rejection of group (1), in whose name the terrorist organization kills. Otherwise, terrorists cannot claim any sort of legitimacy for the ends they fight for and soon become a marginal group out of touch with political reality.

The crucial point is that when groups (1) and (2) are more moderate than the terrorists there is some kind of trade-off between an organization's offensive capacity and popular support (Kalyvas and Sánchez-Cuenca forthcoming). In order to gain the support of groups (1) and (2) they have to reduce their potential offensive capacity and therefore their tactics in the war of attrition are not as violent as they could be. Under such circumstances, the more indiscriminate the attacks are, the greater the pressure on the State, but also the smaller the popular basis. And the more isolated the terrorist organization, the less threatening armed struggle is for the State.

This trade-off does not always exist. For instance, there is widespread support for terrorism among Palestinians. Around 90% of respondents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip approve of armed attacks against soldiers and settlers in the occupied territories and more

than 50% support the killing of civilians within Israel[13]. In contrast, time series data on attitudes towards ETA in the Basque Country since 1981 gives a very different picture. Open support for armed struggle was highest in 1981, when it stood at 12%, while indirect support was around 15%. Even when the two groups of respondents are combined, we find less than 30% support for ETA violence[14]. In Northern Ireland, in 1973, 25% of Catholics agreed with the statement "violence is a legitimate way to achieve one's goals"; 25 years later, though measured differently, support for the use of violence still stood at 28% among Catholics (Hayes and McAllister 2001: 913-4).

These figures clearly indicate lower levels of support for terrorist violence among Northern Irish Catholics and Basques than among Palestinians. Hence, ETA and the IRA act under tighter constraints than organizations such as Hamas. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Hamas' attacks are much more radical in terms of both the number and types of victims. This helps to explain the pattern of victim selection in each case. As it can be seen in Table 3, the percentage of civilian deaths caused by ETA and the IRA is relatively low when compared to the percentage of Israeli civilian deaths produced by all Palestinian terrorist organizations during the Second *Intifada* (from November 2000 to April 2003). In fact, if we discount from the IRA victims those who were themselves Republicans or members of the IRA (162 people), it turns out that the percentage of civilians (43%) is nearly identical to that of ETA (40%). In contrast, civilians account for a much higher percentage of the mortal victims of Palestinian terrorist organizations (69%). This difference can be attributed to the fact that groups (2) and (3) in Palestine are more radicalised than their counterparts in the Basque Country or Northern Ireland.

[13] See the public opinion polls carried out by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research between 2001 and 2002 at www.pcpsr.org.

[14] Open support includes two possible answers about ETA: full support and critical support. Indirect support includes those who agree with the ends but not the means and those who think that the armed struggle was justified in the past but not in the present. See Table 20 in the time series of *Euskobarometro* at www.ehu.es/cpvweb.

Table 3. Types of mortal victims of three cases of terrorism

	ETAm (1968-2003)	Provisional IRA (1969-2001)	All Palestinian terrorist organizations (2000-2003)
Civilians	40.4% (312)	48.1% (855)	69.0% (527)
Security Forces	59.6% (461)	51.9% (923)	31.0% (236)
Total	773	1778	763

Sources: For ETAm, my own calculations. For the Provisional IRA, McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney and Thornton (2001: 1504). The following categories are included under civilians: civilians, loyalists, prison service personnel, and IRA and other republicans who were killed by the IRA itself. For the Israeli figures, see the Israel Defence Forces (at www.idf.il). The Palestinian figures are only for the current Second *Intifada* (November 2000-April 2003).

The trade-off faced by ETA and the IRA with respect to group (2) can easily be detected if we look at electoral data. The political wings of ETA and the IRA, HB (*Herri Batasuna*) and Sinn Fein respectively, obtain around 16% of the vote in the Basque Country and around 12% in Northern Ireland (in the period before the 1997 truce). But if we measure electoral support among potential supporters (the nationalist bloc in both areas), Sinn Fein seems more powerful: whereas HB obtains around 30% of the nationalist vote, Sinn Fein represented around 37% of the nationalist vote in the British general elections in the 1980s and 1990s. The trade-off is now made apparent in a number of ways. On the one hand, HB's share of the vote began to decline after the 1987 European elections, coinciding in time with the worst massacres of civilians carried out by ETA. On the other hand, the electoral performance of both HB and Sinn Fein improved dramatically when the terrorist organizations launched a truce, implying that in the absence of armed struggle some people from group (1) shifted to group (2). Just before the truce, HB won 12.9% of the vote. During the October 1998 – November 1999 truce, support rose to 17.7% (the biggest increase in the history of the party), before dipping to a mere 10% in the regional elections of 2001, after the truce was called off. In the case of Sinn Fein, we also find a spectacular increase in the party's electoral fortunes after the truce. Confining ourselves to the elections to the Westminster parliament, Sinn Fein's vote went up from 9.9% in 1992 to 16.1% in 1997 and 21.7% in 2001.

These changes in the size of group (2) reveal the constraints faced by terrorist organizations whose supporters are more moderate than the organizations themselves. Pulling together the different threads of the argument, it can be summed up as follows: given the resources devoted to the armed struggle, terrorist organizations understand that if they launch too many attacks in order to maximize their short-term capacity to hurt the State, the organization could be decimated by police arrests, since attacks reveal useful information about the organization and its members. The natural solution to this problem is to launch more lethal attacks. However, this tends to produce massacres and civilian casualties that are rejected by groups whose support is crucial for the survival of the organization. Consequently, such terrorist organizations cannot use all their destructive power in their war of attrition with the State. The hypothesis states, therefore, that the intensity of violence in the war of attrition will be a function of the roots that the terrorist organization has in the community in whose name it kills.

4. Discussion

What keeps the war of attrition going is the lack of information players have about the rival's capacity to bear costs. In terms of Fearon's (1995) theory of rational war, terrorist violence is the consequence of incomplete information rather than non- credible commitments. Yet, Fearon himself (2004) points out that the war of attrition logic does not fit cases of protracted violent conflict. After a certain time, players reveal through their behaviour all the necessary information. In the case of terrorism, this is certainly so when the conflict enters into a stable phase in which the number of deaths and arrests fluctuates around a mean value. In fact, this is what happened in the Basque Country and Northern Ireland in the 1980s, after the initial wave of expansion of the terrorist organizations (see Figure 1). While in the initial wave it makes perfect sense to expect that the increasing damage inflicted on the State could reach a level at which the State is better off withdrawing, this expectation becomes more doubtful once the terrorist organization and the State enter into the stability phase.

First, it should be made clear that despite the protracted nature of the conflicts, the information generated by the conflict was processed, albeit slowly and painfully, by the terrorist organizations. Both organizations learned that the State had a greater capacity to bear the costs than expected at the beginning of the process. They finally admitted they were not powerful enough to win. In fact, it is possible to identify the moment at which ETA and the IRA understood that they could not win the war of attrition and changed strategy. The strategic shift was similar in the two organizations: given their own weakness, their only hope of achieving the goal of secession lay in forming a coalition with other non-violent forces, creating a broad nationalist front[15]. The nationalist front was a political venture, and therefore required a political approach that was hardly compatible with the war of attrition logic of armed struggle.

For the IRA, the Nationalist Front would include the SDLP (Social Democratic and Labour Party), the Dublin Government, and, in a secondary role, the Irish lobby in the United States. The first truce, declared on 31 August 1994, broke down after 17 months. The second, which came into effect on 20 July 1997, culminated with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1988, when the IRA renounced its most basic demand, British withdrawal from the island. This amounted to a defeat in the war of attrition. In fact, this was admitted in a famous document written by the IRA in August 1994, called TUAS ('Tactical Use of Armed Struggle'), in which the new nationalist front policy was justified in these terms: "The strategic objectives come from prolonged debate but are based on a straightforward logic: that republicans at this time and *on their own* do not have the strength to achieve the end goal" (my italics)[16].

In the case of ETA, a coalition with the moderate nationalist parties was attempted in August 1998. One month later ETA declared an indefinite truce, the idea being that the nationalist front would transform the Basque parliament into a sort of Constituent Assembly which would unilaterally declare independence. ETA, in an interview held in May 1999, said

[15] For a detailed account of the nationalist front strategy, see Sanchez-Cuenca (2001: Ch.6) on ETA, and Moloney (2002) on the IRA.

[16] The TUAS document is reproduced as Appendix 6 in Cox, Guelke and Stephen (2000).

that "the strategy of the nationalist left was conditioned by the negotiations between ETA and the Spanish State. But while the negotiation did not come, the task of constructing an independent Basque Country was relegated"[17]. Despite the convoluted phrasing, the real significance of this statement lies in the recognition that the war of attrition (the negotiation with the State) was over, and that the only alternative was the nationalist front (the construction of a Basque State with the help of non-violent nationalists).

Nonetheless, even if we accept that it was learning about the State which led both organizations to abandon the war of attrition, it could still be argued that the learning process was extremely slow. Although it is hard to say what counts as "too long" without a model with measurable parameters, let us consider nonetheless two hypotheses about the excessive duration of the violence.

A first possible suggestion is that these conflicts are driven by commitment problems rather than by private information. This is the line pursued by Fearon (2004). Once the relative power of the parties was disclosed in the initial period, they were willing to strike a deal, but this was not feasible due to the fact that the promises made by the State were not credible in the eyes of the terrorist organization. After terrorists disarm, the State could renege. Certainly, credibility problems must play a role, since during the war of attrition many conversations and meetings took place between the parties[18], but in the case of ETA no deal was struck, and in the case of the IRA the 1998 Good Friday Agreement came after the organization had abandoned the attrition strategy.

However, the credibility of commitments cannot explain the curious fact that the IRA signed the 1998 Good Friday Agreement while it rejected a very similar deal in 1973, the so-called Sunningdale Agreement (English 2003: 360; Moloney 2002: 465, 481). Both were based on power-sharing between Catholics and Protestants as well as the creation of joint North-South bodies. These features explain why the enemies of the Good Friday Agreement

[17] The interview was published in the pro-ETA newspaper *Gara*, May 16 1999.

[18] On ETA, see Sánchez-Cuenca (2001: Ch.4); on the IRA, see e.g. Moloney (2002) and Taylor (1997).

have dubbed it “Sunningdale Mark II” or “Sunningdale for slow learners”. The question is: why was it accepted in 1998 but not in 1973? It is hard to answer in terms of credibility, since the State’s incentives to renege did not change in that period. It seems more plausible that in 1973 the IRA still entertained hopes of winning the war of attrition incompatible with those of the British State, whereas in 1998 it had lost any hope of winning.

Yet, why did it take the IRA 25 years to learn that Britain was not going to withdraw from Northern Ireland? Even if the issue is not one of credibility, some alternative explanation is required. It might be relevant here to bring in internal organizational factors. The fear of a split, or the repression of moderates by hard-liners within the organization, may have prevented both ETA and IRA from reacting in the short run to their defeat in the war of attrition. Clandestine military organizations survive thanks to a very rigid internal hierarchy and functioning. Moreover, internal unity is fundamental, since any split can fatally weaken the organization.

The latest studies of the IRA (English 2003; Moloney 2002; Patterson 1997; Taylor 1997) all tend all to locate the leadership’s realization of the failure of the war of attrition in the early 1980s. It took a while for Gerry Adams and his supporters to prepare the movement for something as the Good Friday Agreement. Essentially, Adams did not renounce the armed struggle until he had found a non-violent way of fighting for reunification with the Irish Republic. As Patterson (1997: 295) has pointed out, the main difference between 1998 and 1973 is that in the 1990s the IRA was associated with a strong political force, a party like Sinn Fein with considerable electoral support, whereas in the 1970s the party was completely marginal. Given this political alternative, as well as his increasing control of the movement over the last 15 years, Adams could opt for an agreement that fell short of the core principles of Republicanism without provoking a serious split of the type experienced in 1969.

ETAm has not followed the path taken by the IRA. In fact, ETAm concluded from the collapse of ETApm in the early 1980s that political manoeuvring is completely inimical to an armed organization. Within ETAm, hard-liners have always been in charge and generation after generation moderates have either left the organization or been expelled from it. In these circumstances, no serious discussion about the pros and cons of armed struggle has taken

place. Moreover, as in the case of the IRA, ETA's leadership is very worried that a truce might split the movement, ruining the prospects of a victory through violence forever.

In any event, what I am suggesting here is that the attrition logic alone is unable to account for the long duration of some armed conflicts. Something else is necessary. I have discussed two possibilities, that credibility problems prevent deals between the terrorist organization and the State, and that organizational problems, particularly those related to the risk of a split, delay recognition of failure in a war of attrition. Fragmentary evidence seems to point, at least in the case of ETA and the IRA, to the importance of organizational factors hypothesis.

5. Conclusions

The war of attrition model is useful to make sense of terrorism carried out in the name of national liberation. Of course, the model cannot explain why in some territorial conflicts terrorism is present while in others it is not. But once terrorism occurs, the model captures the strategic thinking of the contending parties, the terrorist organization and the State, competing as they do for the control of a territory. The situation created by terrorism can be conceived in terms of a duopoly in the market of organized violence. The terrorist organization hurts the State in the hope that the time will come when the State will prefer to withdraw than stay.

The war of attrition model is simply a refinement of the strategies actually followed by the terrorists, who see their actions in terms of hurting the State. There is striking continuity between the model and the actors. In fact, I have provided abundant evidence from ETA and the IRA showing how they themselves understand that they are engaged in a war of attrition. In this sense, I have combined some analytical sophistication with detailed empirical analysis, trying to overcome the divide in the literature on terrorism between formal models with little empirical evidence and case studies lacking a theoretical perspective.

The war of attrition model is also useful to generate hypotheses that could be used for future comparative analysis. I have argued that in order to account for the differences in the intensity of violence and in the patterns of victim selection, we have to look at the constraints on terrorist organizations, that is, we have to focus on their resources and their popular support. Some preliminary evidence about ETA and the IRA has been provided.

Finally, I have briefly discussed the limitations of such a simple model as the war of attrition. The extremely long duration of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country seems to suggest that private information cannot be the whole story. Other factors such as the difficulties that the parties encounter in their bargaining, or organizational constraints related to the avoidance of splits, should be taken into consideration in future work on this topic.

REFERENCES

Alonso, Rogelio. 2003. *Matar por Irlanda. El IRA y la Lucha Armada*. Madrid: Alianza.

Barrionuevo, José. 1997. *2001 Días en Interior*. Barcelona: Ediciones B.

Bruce, Steve. 1997. "Victim Selection in Ethnic Conflict: Motives and Attitudes in Irish Republicanism". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9, 1: 56-71.

Clark, Robert P. 1984. *The Basque Insurgents. ETA, 1952-1980*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Collins, Eamon. 1997. *Killing Rage*. London: Granta.

Coogan, Tim Pat. 2000. *The IRA*. London: HarperCollins.

Cox, Micahel, Adrian Guelke, and Fiona Stephen (eds.). 2000. *A Farewell to Arms? From "Long War" to Long Peace in Northern Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Domínguez, Florencio. 1998a. *ETA: Estrategia Organizativa y Actuaciones. 1978-1992*. Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco.

Domínguez, Florencio. 1998b. *De la Negociación a la Tregua. ¿El Final de ETA?* Madrid: Taurus.

English, Richard. 2003. *Armed Struggle. A History of the IRA*. London: Macmillan.

ETA. 1981. *Documentos Y*. 18 volumes. San Sebastián: Lur.

Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War". *International Organization*, 49: 379-414.

Fearon, James D. Forthcoming. "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last so Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research*.

Fearon, James D. and David D.Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War". *American Political Science Review*, 97: 75-90.

Fudenberg, Drew and Jean Tirole. 1991. *Game Theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Goodwin, Jeff. 2001. *No Other Way Out. States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hayes, Bernadette C. and Ian McAllister. 2001. "Sowing Dragon's Teeth: Public Support for Political Violence and Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland". *Political Studies*, 49: 901-922.

Hewitt, Christopher. 1981. "Catholic Grievances, Catholic Nationalism and Violence in Northern Ireland during the Civil Rights Period: A Reconsideration". *The British Journal of Sociology*, 32, 3: 362-380.

Hoffman, Bruce. 1998. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Horgan, John and Max Taylor. 1997. "The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command and Functional Structure". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9, 3: 1-32.

Irvin, Cynthia L. 1999. *Militant Nationalism. Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kalyvas, Stathis. 1999. "Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria". *Rationality and Society*, 11, 3: 243-285.

Kalyvas, Stathis and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca. Forthcoming. "Accounting for the Absence of Suicide Missions". In D.Gambetta (ed.) *Suicide Missions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Konrad, Kai A. 2002. *Terrorism and the State*. Discussion Paper FS IV 02-15, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin.

Kreps, David M. and Robert Wilson. 1982. "Reputation and Imperfect Information". *Journal of Economic Theory*, 27: 253-279.

Kydd, Andrew and Barbara F.Walter. 2002. "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence". *International Organization*, 56, 2: 263-296.

Lapan, Harvey E. and Todd Sandler. 1993. "Terrorism and Signalling". *European Journal of Political Economy*, 9, 3: 383-397.

Letamendía, Francisco. 1994. *Historia del Nacionalismo Vasco y de ETA*. 3 volumes. San Sebastián: R & B Editores.

MacStiofain, Sean. 1975. *Revolutionary in Ireland*. Edinburgh: Gordon Cremonesi.

Maynard Smith, John. 1984. *Evolution and the Theory of Games*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McGuire, Maria. 1973. *To Take Arms. A Year in the Provisional IRA*. London: MacMillan.

McKittrick, David, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney and Chris Thornton. 2001. *Lost Lives. The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles*. Edinburgh: Mainstream.

Moloney, Ed. 2002. *A Secret History of the IRA*. New York: Norton.

Ormazabal, Sabino. 2003. *Un Mapa (Inacabado) del Sufrimiento*. Bilbao: Fundación Manu Robles.

Overgaard, Per Baltzer. 1994. "The Scale of Terrorist Attacks as a Signal of Resources". *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 38, 3: 425-478.

Palmer, David Scott. 1995. "The Revolutionary Terrorism of Peru's Shining Path". In Martha Crenshaw (ed.) *Terrorism in Context*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, pp.249-308.

Patterson, Henry. 1997 2nd ed. *The Politics of Illusion. A Political History of the IRA*. London: Serif.

Petersen, Roger D. 2001. *Resistance and Rebellion. Lessons from Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ross, Jeffrey Ian, and Ted Robert Gurr. 1989. "Why Terrorism Subsides: A Comparative Study of Canada and the United States". *Comparative Politics*, 21, 4: 405-426.

Sánchez-Cuenca, Ignacio. 2001. *ETA contra el Estado. Las Estrategias del Terrorismo*. Barcelona: Tusquets.

Schelling, Thomas C. 1966. *Arms and Influence*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shabad, Goldie, and Francisco José Llera. 1995. "Political Violence in a Democratic State: Basque Terrorism in Spain." In Martha Crenshaw (ed.) *Terrorism in Context*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, pp.410-469.

Smith, M.R.L. 1995. *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, Peter. 1997. *Provos. The IRA & Sinn Fein*. London: Bloomsbury.

Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime". In P.B.Evans, D.Rueschemeyer and T.Skocpol (eds.) *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 169-191.

Unzueta, Patxo. 1988. *Los Nietos de la Ira. Nacionalismo y Violencia en el País Vasco*. Madrid: El País-Aguilar.

Wagner, R.Harrison. 2000. "Bargaining and War". *American Journal of Political Science*, 44: 469-484.

Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

White, Robert W. 1997. "The Irish Republican Army: An Assessment of Sectarianism". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9, 1: 20-55.