

# **Engaging the Insurgent in Negotiation: Lessons from Northern Ireland Applied to Afghanistan**

**A Monograph  
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Title of Monograph: Engaging the Insurgent in Negotiation: Lessons from Northern Ireland Applied to Afghanistan

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## **Abstract**

Outreach, negotiation and cooption may be a vital tool for counterinsurgencies as they transform conflict and facilitate Amnesty, Reconciliation and Reintegration (AR2) of warring elements within a war-torn society. This monograph utilizes a two-system comparison between the Taliban and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to inquire if the Taliban are willing to participate in fruitful dialogue to initiate AR2. The suggestion for adopting a Northern Ireland approach for negotiation is compelling due to the strategic similarities the Taliban and the IRA share. The similarities, however, are the underlying reason why the Taliban will not be amenable to compromise within the short-term context compelled by the United States current strategy.

What emerged is that the Taliban is reacting to changing environmental stimuli in the same manner as the PIRA. The direct consequence of this similarity is the likelihood of negotiations and outreach to take hold. The Taliban in 2010, like their IRA counterparts in 1972, believe they have a comparative advantage over their counterparts and are not willing to compromise their ideological convictions. Thus, policy makers in Washington, London, and Kabul should cool their rhetoric surrounding negotiation and dampen expectations that talks with the Taliban will yield significant results.

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## Introduction

Throughout the summer of 2009, the conduct of the war in Afghanistan became the focus for internal reflection and debate within the governments involved in the conflict. In the United States, President Barack Obama released new strategic guidance for the conduct of the war, appointed a new commander to execute his objectives, and committed additional manpower and financial resources to accomplish these objectives. Particularly, one aspect of President Obama's new Afghanistan strategy stresses negotiation and possible assimilation of non-ideologically committed members of the Taliban into Afghan society to reduce the effects of protracted civil war. Concurrently, the United Kingdom is heavily debating the role of the British Army and the international approach utilized for establishing stable governance in Afghanistan. In response, UK politicians and pundits alike are drawing upon their experience in Northern Ireland as a possible framework for success in Afghanistan.

Outreach, negotiation and cooption may be a vital tool for counterinsurgencies as they transform conflict and facilitate Amnesty, Reconciliation and Reintegration (AR2) of belligerents within a war-torn society. As the British experience of multiple negotiations with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) over thirty years suggests however, conflict transformation is elusive. Underlying the success of the conflict transformation process is the ability of the government to recognize changes in strategic and operational behavior of the insurgent group to determine the efficacy of outreach and negotiation. As Northern Ireland demonstrates, the IRA finally agreed to a cease-fire after internal reflection and realization that it could no longer achieve its political goals through military means. Within the current context of Afghanistan, determining the likelihood of success for any negotiation leading to AR2 processes and conflict resolution is predicated upon the Taliban's internal reflection and realization of its ability to achieve its stated goals.

This monograph intends to use the IRA's strategic planning as a vehicle for understanding the circumstances surrounding successful negotiation to adduce the possibility of open dialogue and possible participation of the Taliban in Afghan politics. Initial research and comprehension of the material suggested that the Taliban are open to legitimate negotiation based on their overhaul of the strategic ways and means. Indeed, the British suggestion for adopting a Northern Ireland approach for cooption is compelling due to the strategic similarities the Taliban and the IRA share. The similarities, however, are the underlying reason why the Taliban will not be amenable to compromise within the short-term context compelled by the United States current strategy. The Taliban in 2010, like their IRA counterparts in 1972, believe they have a comparative advantage over their counterparts and are not willing to compromise their ideological convictions because this perceived advantage.

## **Methodology**

To determine the periods of strategic reappraisal, it is first necessary to define insurgent strategic formulation. This will lead to a historical analysis of the IRA's strategic and operational objectives. Underlying this examination is a consideration of civil war and counterinsurgency theories that will assist in identifying the processes for insurgent ends, ways and means formulation and recognizing the conditions necessary for insurgencies to reevaluate their overall strategy. The output of this examination is to identify landmark periods where the IRA considered adapting its overall strategy in response to strategic stimuli and if any successful negotiation resulted from it.

These periods of strategic reevaluation are juxtaposed against Hugh Miall's conflict transformation model to determine the conditions surrounding the rejection or acceptance of diplomatic overtures. Miall's model uses content transformation, structural transformation, issues transformation, actor transformation, and personal transformation. Strict definitional use of the model's components will assist in diminishing selective information gathering and application.

Furthermore, the model will help provide a comprehensive view of the contextual setting preceding both non-successful and successful attempts of outreach and negotiation prior to the initiation of AR2 processes.

The methodology applied to the analysis and evaluation of the IRA and Northern Ireland is then applied onto the Taliban and Afghanistan to determine the feasibility of outreach and dialogue in current operations in Afghanistan. An overview of any changes in the strategic environment and any subsequent changes in stated or tacit Taliban strategic goals and means will identify if the organization is in a period of strategic reevaluation and susceptible for cooption. An analysis of the contextual setting using Miall's conflict transformation model provides a comprehensive understanding of the environment. Together, the strategic reevaluation and the conflict transformation framework provide the data necessary for a two-system analytical comparison and verification of the hypothesis.

## **Strategic Reevaluation**

Strategy and conflict transformation are key components of this monograph. Due to the incredibly diverse opinions and definitions surrounding these concepts, it is necessary for this project to first address the contested nature of these concepts in the literature in order to provide a clear and unified understanding of these concepts.

### **Defining Insurgent Strategy**

Hew Strachan asserted in *The Lost Meaning of Strategy* "the word strategy has acquired a universality which has robbed it of meaning, and left it only with banalities."<sup>1</sup> Strachan's observation applies equally well to the practice of strategy which has become equally clouded due to its presence and invocation in almost every aspect of professional life. Businesses, military

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<sup>1</sup> Hew Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy," *Strategic Studies: A Reader*, ed. Thomas G. Mahnken and Joseph A. Maiolo (New York: Routledge, 2008), p.434.

organizations, political organizations and even non-governmental organizations refer to strategy when planning future operations. To each of these organizations, however, strategy carries differing connotations and practices. For the purposes of this monograph, “strategy” is meaningful only as it applies to insurgency and counterinsurgency.

Conceptually, Carl von Clausewitz offers the best definition of strategy in this context. “Strategy,” Clausewitz states, “is the use of engagement for the purpose of the war.”<sup>2</sup> Its elegance lies in its simplicity and focus, but is meaningless without a fundamental understanding of the conceptual basis for his seminal work.

To Clausewitz the driving force propelling armed conflict is the political objective, but the underlying principle is the destruction of the enemy force in order to achieve that end. The pillar supporting his thesis, however, is the autonomous political state and the supporting military and economic power it brings to bear in the international arena. Thus, in the Westphalian paradigm, strategy becomes how the nation-state utilizes the elements of national power to achieve a political objective.

The traditional Westphalian conceptualization of state-centered strategy is not lost on twentieth-century observers and practitioners. Soviet General Aleksandr Svechin noted that strategy “decides issues associated with the employment of the armed forces and all the resources of a country for achieving its war aims.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Bernard Brodie defined strategy as “devoted to discovering how the resources of the nation, material and human, can be developed and utilized for the end of maximizing the total effectiveness of the nation at war.” Culminating the modern definitions of state-centered strategy with contemporary doctrine, U.S. *Joint Publication 3-0 Joint Operations* states that “strategy is a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the

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<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 177.

<sup>3</sup> Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy*, ed. Kent D. Lee (Minneapolis: East View, 1993), 69.

elements of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”<sup>4</sup> These conceptions of strategy are relevant for the twenty-first century and beyond in dealing with state-centric or counterinsurgent strategic formulation, but add little clarity to how the insurgent defines and formulates strategy.

State-centric definitions of strategy inherently deal with symmetrical evaluations of state power and potential and a state’s ability to exploit inherent strengths and weaknesses against an adversary. Strategy thus becomes a relative examination of power and capability seeking to achieve the desired outcome at minimal cost. In the state-centered world of symmetries, the formulation of strategy looks for or creates asymmetries, and upon identification, attempts to find the least time, and resource consuming, means to achieve its objective. Along this vein, Krepevich and Watts aptly assert “Strategy is fundamentally about indentifying or creating asymmetric advantages that can be exploited to achieve one’s ultimate objective despite resource and other restraints, most importantly the opposing efforts of adversaries or competitors and the inherent unpredictability of strategic outcomes.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet in insurgencies, the direct approach in pursuing political outcomes with military force proves to be challenging for both the state and non-state actor. T.E. Lawrence elegantly expressed this view in *The Science of Guerilla Warfare*: “the Arabs [the insurgents] have no organized forces, and so a Turkish Foch would have no aim; and the Arabs would not endure casualties, so that an Arab Clausewitz could not buy his victory.”<sup>6</sup> The apparent problem with modern war strategy and practice in the context of insurgencies lies in the fact that modern states continue

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0 Joint Operations Incorporating Change 1 February 13, 2008* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, September 17, 2006), gl. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew F. Krepevich and Barry D. Watts, *Regaining Strategic Competence*, Strategy for the Long Haul Series (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 1992), 19, [http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20090901.Regaining\\_Strategi/R.20090901.Regaini ng\\_Strategi.pdf](http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20090901.Regaining_Strategi/R.20090901.Regaini ng_Strategi.pdf) (accessed September 29, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> T.E. Lawrence, “Science of Guerilla Warfare” *Strategic Studies: A Reader*, ed. Thomas G. Mahnken and Joseph A. Maiolo (New York: Routledge, 2008), 245.

practices of attrition-based warfare.<sup>7</sup> The modern insurgent faces a different problem in attempting to execute a direct approach. The insurgent fundamentally understands the asymmetry inherent in his position. In other words, the means afforded to an insurgent are much less than his much better equipped and trained adversary. Consequently, the insurgent appreciates that he does not “have the capability to invade their metropolitan opponent’s homeland. [So] it necessarily follows that insurgents can only achieve their ends if their opponents’ political capability to wage war is destroyed.”<sup>8</sup> The resulting ends-ways-means strategy formulation for the insurgent thus seeks more of an indirect approach paralleling Basil Liddel-Hart’s axiom where “in the case of a state that is seeking not conquest, but maintenance of its security, the aim is fulfilled if the threat be removed—the enemy is led to abandon his purpose.”<sup>9</sup>

Liddel-Hart’s belief in the indirect approach correlates to Mao Tse-Tung and his three stages of protracted warfare. Interestingly, the fundamental concepts of Mao’s strategic formulation parallel that of the modern nation state. Mao insists that the revolutionary character of guerilla movements is tethered to a political goal: “Without a political goal, guerilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation, and assistance must be gained.”<sup>10</sup> Che Guevara punctuated the same ideal through repetition of the importance of relating the political ideal to operations. And, as French counterinsurgent David Galula pointedly remarked, “politics becomes an active instrument of operation...and so intricate is the interplay between the political and military actions they cannot

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict” *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (January 1975): 322, [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-8871\(197501\)27:2%3C175:WBNLSW%3E2.0.CO;2-#i](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-8871(197501)27:2%3C175:WBNLSW%3E2.0.CO;2-#i) (accessed October, 14 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Mack, 310.

<sup>9</sup> Basil Liddel-Hart, “Strategy: the Indirect Approach” *Strategic Studies: A Reader*, ed. Thomas G. Mahnken and Joseph A. Maiolo, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 85.

<sup>10</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerilla Warfare*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 43.

be tidily separated; on the contrary, every military move has to be weighed with regard to its political effects, and vice versa.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the insurgent may not be able, or even desire, to engage the enemy directly in attritional warfare, the insurgent fundamentally uses the same ends-ways-means processes as modern states. However, the way and means associated with strategic development for the insurgent is vastly different. Insurgent strategy is not born out of symmetric capabilities and calculations used by states that permit direct strategies, but of asymmetric realities that drive indirect formulations for victory. “The overall strategic objective of the insurgents is to alter the relative capabilities balance in their favor.”<sup>12</sup> In the end, insurgent indirect approaches perform a precarious balancing act between sustaining momentum for their cause, avoiding direct confrontation with their adversary, and establishing conditions for their victory.

Further complicating this balancing act is the need for the insurgent to survive. Che outlined the essential task for the insurgent is “to keep himself from being destroyed.”<sup>13</sup> Mao proscribed traditional attritional head-to head fighting in order to achieve protracted warfare with the adversary.<sup>14</sup> While some may describe the insurgent’s desire to avoid battle as a tactic, it relates to the fundamental difference between state-centered and insurgent strategic formulation. Ultimately, the fear of destruction heavily influences insurgent strategic appraisal, particularly the formulation of insurgent ways and means. While the “survival of the movement is not the ultimate objective, it is indispensable to the achievement of that objective, and therefore it is a central consideration in insurgent decision making.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Praeger Security International: Westport, CT, 1964), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew M. Scott, Donald P. Clark, R. Bruce Ehrnman, John B. Salmon, Jr., Harold B. Schill, and Frank W. Trapnell, *Insurgency* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 93.

<sup>13</sup> Che Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Tse-Tung, 47.

<sup>15</sup> Scott, et al., 93.

M.L.R Smith, author of *Fighting for Ireland*, states that “the essence of the strategic approach is simply to trace the line of thinking of a particular political entity in order to comprehend how it proposes to achieve its objectives; and also to look at the ideological assumptions and values that underlie that entity's thinking and how this informs the way it formulates its strategy.”<sup>16</sup> This section of the monograph identified that insurgent strategic development, albeit a product of the nation-state system, is still viable. The insurgent can define strategy both conceptually and doctrinally with the fundamental understanding that the political goal defines the ends. The ways and means, however, are fundamentally different. The insurgent does not possess the “elements of national power” anywhere near the capabilities of its state opponent. Furthermore, and most importantly, due to the asymmetries inherent in insurgencies, ways and means development always is colored by attempting to achieve comparative advantage and the survival instinct.

Combined, the success of the indirect approach and the insurgent survival instinct informs and directs insurgent strategic formulation. Strategies are not static conceptions that retain all of their properties during the entire conduct of the war or insurgency. Instead, strategies are dynamic and reflect the realities of all environmental inputs. But, the question begs: what are the factors instigating change? The model used for examining those factors throughout this paper is the conflict transformation model. The next section will examine the transformation model and explain its different components in order to understand the parameters framing the issues surrounding strategic reevaluation.

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<sup>16</sup> M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Army* (London: Routledge, 1995), 4.

# Identifying the Components of Successful or Unsuccessful Outreach

## Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation emerged as an approach to reduce conflict in response to changes in the international environment. Examining contemporary conflict, conflict transformation theorists saw three crucial developments that warranted a new approach to achieve durable peace after conflict. First, most contemporary conflicts are asymmetrical in nature; second, most contemporary conflicts are protracted conflicts; and most importantly, the protracted nature of conflict creates warped societies, economies and regions.<sup>17</sup> In effect, contemporary conflicts create complex and lasting emergencies that defy traditional methods of resolution.

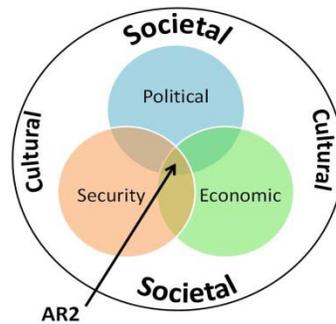
Traditional conflict management, or the imposition of political settlements through invested powerful actors, only temporarily separate belligerents without resolving the core issues that caused the conflict. The United Nations Mission in Cyprus provides an example of “first generation” peacekeeping and conflict management where an external actor, like the United Nations, physically separated the opposing factions. To conflict transformation theorists, the apparent weakness of this approach is that the underlying sources of conflict remain and tensions between opposing parties will erupt soon after the withdrawal of peacekeeping forces.

Another traditional approach—conflict resolution—not only addresses deep-rooted sources of conflict but also assumes that a drastic change in attitudes, behavior or the conflict’s structure already occurred and requires reinforcement. The Amnesty, Reconciliation, and Reintegration (AR2) model is one example of a conflict resolution method. The AR2 model conceptualizes a conflict-riddled society’s receptiveness to this process based on a congruence of balanced

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<sup>17</sup> Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 55.

approaches to security, economic and political development within a fractured polity.<sup>18</sup> (See Figure 1) Simply stated, AR2 can only begin if the conflicted society is ready to venture into the peace process. Furthermore, this process does not guarantee a conflict-free future, as any negative development among any of the dimensions or failures to change societal or cultural aspects can derail the process and perhaps restart hostilities.



**Figure 1 AR2 Model.** Michael W. Mosser, “The ‘Armed Reconciler’: The Military Role in the Amnesty, Reconciliation, and Reintegration Process” *Military Review* 89 (November-December 2007), 15.

Consequently, conflict transformation theorists identified a need to study an alternative approach that would pursue methods of transforming existing conflict into a durable peace. They embraced an approach that implies profound change in existing tensions of the system comprised of actors, institutions and the structure of the conflict as well.<sup>19</sup> Thus, contemporary conflict resolution must go beyond one issue and dig deeper into the sources of conflict to realize a sustainable peace. As one scholar emphasized, “it is simply not enough to resolve one set of issues between parties who then remain in a mental frame of mutual suspicion and antagonism,

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<sup>18</sup> Michael W. Mosser, “The ‘Armed Reconciler’: The Military Role in the Amnesty, Reconciliation, and Reintegration Process” *Military Review* 89 (November-December 2007), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Mitchell, “Beyond Resolution: What Does Conflict Transformation Actually Transform?” *Peace and Conflict Studies* 9, no.1 (May 2002), 5  
<http://shss.nova.edu/pcs/journalsPDF/V9N1.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2009).

[who are] in a relationship of involved interdependence and locked in a system from which major, salient contentions will inevitably arise.”<sup>20</sup>

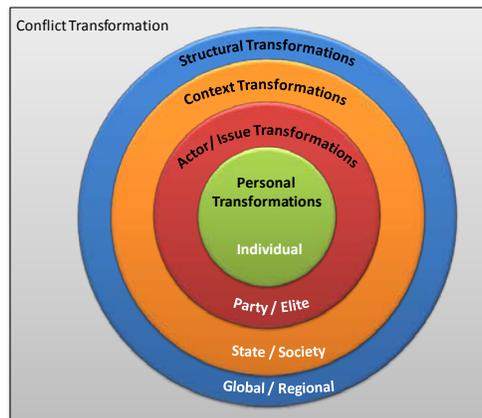
Steeped in post-modern philosophy, conflict transformation focuses on “the process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses, and if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict.”<sup>21</sup> The multitude of identities and interactions resulting from such an approach requires a workable framework to simplify this grand approach. Hugh Miall, author of *Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task*, adapts previous scholarship on conflict transformation and resolution that provides the framework for such an enterprise. Miall believes that conflict theories have a tendency to focus only on the parties to the exclusion of the environmental and contextual factors which exacerbate tensions. Thus, to successfully resolve the conflict, it is imperative to embrace a series of initiatives to fundamentally change the system in which the conflict thrives. Transforming conflict occurs, theorist Kevin Clements argued, “at all levels in the home, in the community, nationally and internationally,” displaying the qualitative change conflict transformation is trying to achieve.<sup>22</sup> Miall’s model captures the systems’ dynamics by focusing on transformations at the personal/ elite level, transforming the issues fueling conflict, changing the structure of the conflict, and by transforming the international or regional context that feeds individual and actor perceptions. In effect, it represents a multilayered and comprehensive approach resting on fundamental changes in the overall system (See Figure 2).

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<sup>20</sup> Mitchell, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Hugh Miall, *Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task* (Berlin: Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009), 4, [http://berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/miall\\_handbook.pdf](http://berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/miall_handbook.pdf) (accessed August 6, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Kevin P. Clements, “Peace Building and Conflict Transformation,” *Peace and Conflict Studies* 4, no.1 (June 1997), under “essential ingredients of peacebuilding and conflict transformation,” <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/clements.htm> (accessed August 11, 2009).



**Figure 2 Author's adaptation of Hugh Miall's Conflict Transformation layers. The top of each circle corresponds to each level of the conflict transformation model. The bottom of each circle represents the targets of transformative efforts.**

*Context transformation* occurs at the international and/or regional level. Changes in the context of conflict, in Miall's opinion, "may radically alter each party's perception of the conflict situation, as well as their motives."<sup>23</sup> Fundamental changes in this sphere directly affect the boundaries, inputs and outputs of the conflict system. For example, a party to the conflict may change its perceptions and goals if an international actor denies access to external funding support. Contextual change may also occur in less interventionist ways. International efforts to regulate "conflict diamonds" in Sierra Leone and Angola through the establishment of the World Diamond Council is another example of changing the parameters of the conflict in the international realm that does not directly involve the protagonists.

*Structural transformation*, as the name implies, refers to changing the state and societal structures that exacerbate tensions. Structural transformation appeals to changing the outcomes of economic, political or societal transactions at the state level and below from a negative-sum game to a positive-sum game. This may involve changes in power structures, but most importantly, it addresses the requirement for balancing asymmetrical relationships that often fuel conflict.

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<sup>23</sup> Miall, 9.

Power-sharing or resource-sharing agreements can fall into the category of structural transformation; however, these approaches must proceed with caution to avoid maintaining a perception of continued dominance of one party over another.

*Actor transformation* focuses on the parties and elites involved in the conflict. As a political and social entity, a viable party exerts influence over constituencies to fundamentally alter the conflict's dynamics. Additionally, elites often have a stake in maintaining the status quo or maintaining policies that maximize their influence. Actor transformation thus aims to influence the decisions made by parties and elites to seek or initiate peace, change leadership, or isolate portions of the constituency that foment conflict.<sup>24</sup> In essence, it seeks to identify alternative goals and transform internal relations of the party to establish a tone that is more amenable to resolving conflict.

*Issue transformation* also occurs at the party and elite levels and can be considered an adjunct to Actor Transformation. Its primary goal is to transform central core issues that initiated and sustained conflict. Optimally, the parties involved in issue transformation transcend the contested issue for the greater cause of establishing peace. If the conflicting parties cannot, as most often is the case, several options exist to change perceptions on contested issues. According to Miall, this can be done in several ways: by transforming the issues by redefining or reframing the problems; constructive compromise between belligerents; and by de-linking or re-linking contentious issues.<sup>25</sup> This is perhaps the most difficult of all the transformations to initiate and sustain. Identities and social narratives coalesced around the contending issue; introducing any change to the contrary must overcome individual and social perspectives forged in blood and time.

*Personal transformation* occurs within individual leaders or small groups of people. Externally, personal transformation may be achieved by "removing the sense of helplessness

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<sup>24</sup> Miall, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 10.

about the conflict among participants, particularly those at the local and grass roots levels of the parties and at increasing the sense of empowerment.”<sup>26</sup> Internally, it involves changes of heart and mind, as well as influencing the will either to continue fighting or to seek peace. This involves developing a sense that conflict is not inevitable and that individual decisions have impact.

Hugh Miall’s taxonomy is not without its shortcomings. Transformations at any level of the model are bound to take significant time to change the attitudes, beliefs and structures of the conflict and its participants. External interveners and conflict participants may not have the will or resources to pursue strategies of this nature. Furthermore, the model lacks prescriptive methodologies for executing any transformative enterprise. Yet, the power of the model is its ability to identify tensions in the relationships over the breadth of actors and structures within a particular conflict system.

“The transformational approach,” Christopher Mitchell asserted, “begins by assuming that there is nothing sacred about the status quo—indeed, it is probably the source of the conflict—so that the process starts with an analysis and critique of the existing system and an assumption that it will be necessary to create new systems, structures and relationships.”<sup>27</sup> Miall’s taxonomy of conflict resolution will thus be capable of providing a powerful analytical lens from which to view the systemic conditions surrounding successful and non-successful negotiation attempts with insurgent organizations. In the next section, this paper will identify two key periods of the IRA’s history in which changes in external conditions and internal perceptions forced the IRA to reevaluate their overall strategy. What remains to be seen is if these periods presented opportunities for outreach by counterinsurgency forces.

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<sup>26</sup> Mitchell, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 20.

## Identifying the IRA's Strengths and Vulnerabilities

Foremost in the understanding of both the zenith and nadir of the IRA's strategy is the examination of the IRA's overarching political objective. Examining this, however, requires clarity in issue and context to rid the obfuscating notion of religion. Although continuing to be a powerful factor in the social narrative of Northern Ireland, religion seemingly plays a minor role in defining the political objective of all parties in Northern Ireland. To this end, some further definitions are necessary.

Geographically, Northern Ireland is comprised of six counties that remained part of the United Kingdom when the British government granted Home Rule, and eventual independence, to the remainder of Ireland.<sup>28</sup> The partition of the island between the Free Irish State<sup>29</sup> and the devolved government of Northern Ireland under the United Kingdom centered along ethno-religious lines and thus created conditions for sustained tensions between two distinct communities. Demographically, the majority of the inhabitants of Northern Ireland are of Scottish descent and almost exclusively Protestant. The Protestant majority had effective control over the political, governmental and economic structures since the partition of Ireland in 1921. The ethnic Irish and predominantly Catholic minority population of Northern Ireland, on the other hand, have limited access to political and economic power and influence. The remainder of the island, under the sovereign Republic of Ireland, is predominantly Irish catholic.

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<sup>28</sup> United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland*, Army Code 71842, (July 2006), 1-4, [http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op\\_banner\\_analysis\\_released.pdf](http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op_banner_analysis_released.pdf). (accessed September 12, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> The Free Irish State was the precursor to the modern Republic of Ireland. Granted Home Rule from the United Kingdom under the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, The Republic of Ireland would gain full independence in 1949. Yet, "the [1921] Anglo-Irish Treaty constituted little more than a hostile and uneasy truce, for it left unresolved the unity of a partitioned Ireland, the continuation of British rule in Ulster, and the Protestant dominion over the Catholic minority in the Six Counties." Thomas J. Henriksen, *What Really Happened in Northern Ireland's Counterinsurgency: Revision and Revelation* (Halburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2008), 16.

Tethered to the social and religious constructs mentioned above, four broad categories of political orientation emerge from the partition of Ireland. The Northern Irish Protestant community is further broken into two categories—Loyalists and Unionists; for Catholics, Nationalists and Republicans. Yet, these four categories require careful consideration—they are neither static nor all encompassing—but they provide a useful reference for understanding the underlying tensions of Irish society. A brief summary of these four sub-groups follows.

Unionists are typified by a desire to maintain Northern Ireland’s position within the United Kingdom as well as continuing the existing domestic political structure. They also oppose any involvement of the Irish Republic in Northern Ireland.<sup>30</sup> Loyalists share similar views as Unionists but Loyalists are most often associated with paramilitary groups.<sup>31</sup> Most importantly, Unionists and Loyalists define themselves as minorities on the island which enables both groups to embrace a siege type mentality in the defense of their interests. This conflict-oriented outlook produces absolute convictions with respect to Unionist/Loyalist views on the purported “catholic threat.”

The Catholic community of Northern Ireland, on the other hand, constructed a social narrative based on nationalist aspirations and religious allegiance.<sup>32</sup> As their name implies, Nationalists believe that Northern Ireland is part of a greater Irish nation. Predominantly Irish-catholic, Nationalists seek political means towards the unification of Ireland and generally eschew violence as a means for achieving unification. Republicans, on the other hand, espouse force as the only means to overthrow the existing political order to establish a united Ireland. In

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<sup>30</sup> Clem McCartney, ed., *Striking a Balance: The Northern Ireland Peace Process*, volume 8 of *Accord* (London: Conciliation Resources, 1999), 7, <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-ireland/index.php> (accessed October 14, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> *Operation Banner*, 1-5.

<sup>32</sup> David Bloomfield, *Peacemaking Strategies in Northern Ireland* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 21.

the Republican movement, moreover, there is a tendency for adherents to identify with the traditions of violent struggle and sacrifice against British rule in Ireland.<sup>33</sup>

Notwithstanding more complex divisions within each group, the Catholic/Protestant divide provides a useful shorthand for the divisions within Northern Ireland. While religion indeed plays a significant role in constructing opposing social and political narratives and stressing “the concepts which are different [and] encouraged by a common fear of cultural assimilation,”<sup>34</sup> the conflict in Northern Ireland should not be characterized as religious in nature. Simply put, “the causal issues of [the] conflict are political, and centre [sic] on the question of Northern Ireland’s future constitutional position”<sup>35</sup> as a sovereign entity either part of the United Kingdom or an independent Irish nation. To this end the IRA, as uncompromising as their Loyalist and Unionist opponents, visualize only one end state for their movement—the unification of all Irish people under an Irish Republic.<sup>36</sup>

### **Oglaigh na hEireann—The Irish Republican Army 1972**

The Irish Republican Resistance had demonstrated beyond a doubt to the British, to the Unionists, to our own rank and file and to the whole world that after three years in battle against imperialism the movement was a tough a fighting force as ever and was speaking from strength<sup>37</sup>

-IRA chief of Staff Seán MacStiofáin, on events before the 1972 Whitehall negotiations.

In March of 1972, the IRA clearly had the momentum in their fight against the British and Ulster Loyalism and Unionism. Despite a stale platform and less than three hundred members throughout Ireland the previous year, the IRA’s ranks swell to over two thousand active and

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<sup>33</sup> Clem McCartney, ed., *Striking a Balance: The Northern Ireland Peace Process*, volume 8 of *Accord* (London: Conciliation Resources, 1999), 7, <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-ireland/index.php> (accessed October 14, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 8-12.

<sup>35</sup> Bloomfield, 22.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, 219.

<sup>37</sup> Seán MacStiofáin, *Revolutionary in Ireland* (Edinburgh, Scotland: R & R Clark, 1975), 269.

willing members.<sup>38</sup> The IRA additionally secures the support of many Northern Irish Catholics, who up until that time, mockingly referred to inability of the IRA to safeguard the Catholic community from sectarian violence with the derisory moniker “I Ran Away.” Most telling, however, is the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland’s decision to meet with the IRA leadership in secret talks outside of London. Although Secretary Whitelaw deemed the meeting a “non-event,”<sup>39</sup> the talks mark the highwater of the IRA’s campaign through the Troubles.<sup>40</sup> In 1972, the IRA’s strategy is fundamentally working; it has a clear political objective, enjoyed a perceived comparative advantage, and the organization’s survival is not at stake. Its operations in Northern Ireland gained enough momentum for the British government to entertain negotiations with the insurgency and the organization’s political goals seemed to be within reach.

Three years prior to the Whitelaw negotiations, Northern Ireland began its descent into violence sparking the beginning of the thirty-year period of violence known as the Troubles. Irish nationalism, influenced by the Civil Rights movement in the United States, organized political rallies and marches to protest inherent inequities in Northern Ireland’s political, economic and social systems. Antagonized, the Protestant community reacted by organizing marches and mobilizing the political and judicial means at its disposal to counter the catholic movements. The tension between the communities, already embroiled in violence, erupts in August 1969 marked with three days of rioting in Derry and Belfast’s Bogside neighborhood. Reluctantly at first, the British Army deploys troops into the cities to restore law and order by physically separating the communities. Hope prevailed in the Northern Irish Catholic population as British troops deployed in the major cities and restored order in a non-sectarian manner. Soon thereafter, however,

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<sup>38</sup> *Operation Banner*, 3-2.

<sup>39</sup> Jack Holland, *Hope Against History: The Course of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1999), 57.

<sup>40</sup> M.L.R Smith, “Fin de Siècle 1972,” *Political Violence in Northern Ireland*, ed. Alan O’Day (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1997), 30.

support for British presence waned as Catholics perceived British actions as supporting the status quo in Northern Ireland.

As violence continued to escalate between the two communities and British forces it became clear the IRA was not in position to uphold its traditional role of protector of the Catholic community. This was a result of the IRA's strategic reevaluation after the abject failure of its 1950s Border Campaign.<sup>41</sup> While not losing sight of its original political goal the IRA eschewed political violence as the primary tactic and embraced Marxist social revolution as its means for achieving unification. Yet, the Marxist approach with its adherence to an inter-communal proletariat did not gain many supporters both within and outside the IRA. With an increasing threat to the catholic minority and disillusionment with the movement, traditionalists within the IRA split and formed the Provisional IRA (PIRA) in late 1969.

The "Provos," as members of the PIRA were known, intrinsically understood that the defense of catholic areas was an imperative. As PIRA Chief of Staff Seán MacStiofáin noted, "If we provided adequate defense for an area that came under attack, our prestige in that area and in general would be greatly enhanced. We could then exploit the initiative, move over from defensive to offensive action, and concentrate on the main national objective of ending British rule in Ireland."<sup>42</sup>

Steeped in violent republican tradition and splitting from the Marxist IRA over this very heritage the PIRA could not remain on the defensive for long. As MacStiofáin alludes to, the defensive phase was only the consolidation, organization and recruitment phase of a nascent

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<sup>41</sup> Prior to the 1960s and the rise of the PIRA, the IRA leadership consisted primarily of ROI activists. At the beginning of the 1950s the southern leadership refocused their military campaign to British administrative targets in Northern Ireland in its effort to reunite the island. This campaign centered on guerilla warfare tactics and propaganda, but ultimately failed to dislodge the British and win popular support among Nationalists in Northern Ireland. IRA Chief of Staff, Cathal Goulding, believed the failure of the Border Campaign and Irish Republicanism rested in the IRAs "elitist" program. Under Goulding, the IRA would shift focus to to a broad social and economic agenda to build popular support. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland*, 73.

<sup>42</sup> MacStiofáin, 113.

broader strategy. This strategy would fully reveal itself in early 1970 and, for the purpose of the analysis of this monograph, forms the first strategic reevaluation period of the PIRA.

Intrinsically, the Provos understood they had no opportunity to match the might of the British Empire through symmetrical means. Thus, the PIRA formulated an indirect and asymmetrical strategy with intermediate objectives to create conditions necessary to negotiate a complete British withdrawal from Northern Ireland (see figure 3). By the spring of 1972, with Stormont suspended and British Direct Rule over Northern Ireland imposed, the PIRA gained an important intermediate objective.<sup>43</sup> This granted the PIRA an air of confidence—and one the British Government reinforced—by agreeing to its first meeting with the PIRA in almost fifty years.

Empowered by this knowledge, five PIRA leaders, including Sean MacStiofáin and future Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams, presented the British government's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland William Whitelaw in July 1972 with what were perceived as impossible demands: the complete withdrawal of British forces by January 1975; the release and exoneration of all "political" prisoners; and the end of internment.<sup>44</sup> Whitelaw observed that the PIRA leadership "were in a mood of defiance and determination to carry on until their absurd ultimatums were met," and did not offer any concessions to the PIRA. In fact, as one British official commented to MacStiofáin after the meeting, "I hope you're not going to start your bloody stupid campaign again...We lose more men through road accidents in Germany in one year than the losses you fellows are inflicting on us."<sup>45</sup> At this time, the British government could not derail the PIRA from pursuing their strategy nor did PIRA bombs or guns force the British to cede their ties with Northern Ireland. Soon thereafter, the conditional ceasefire imposed before

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<sup>43</sup> Stormont was the location of the Northern Irish Parliament in Belfast since the establishment of home rule in 1921 until its abolishment in 1972. Since 1998, Stormont is now the seat of the devolved Northern Ireland Assembly.

<sup>44</sup> MacStiofáin, 282.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 285.

the negotiations came to an abrupt end as the PIRA resumed its campaign by killing three British soldiers in Belfast.<sup>46</sup>

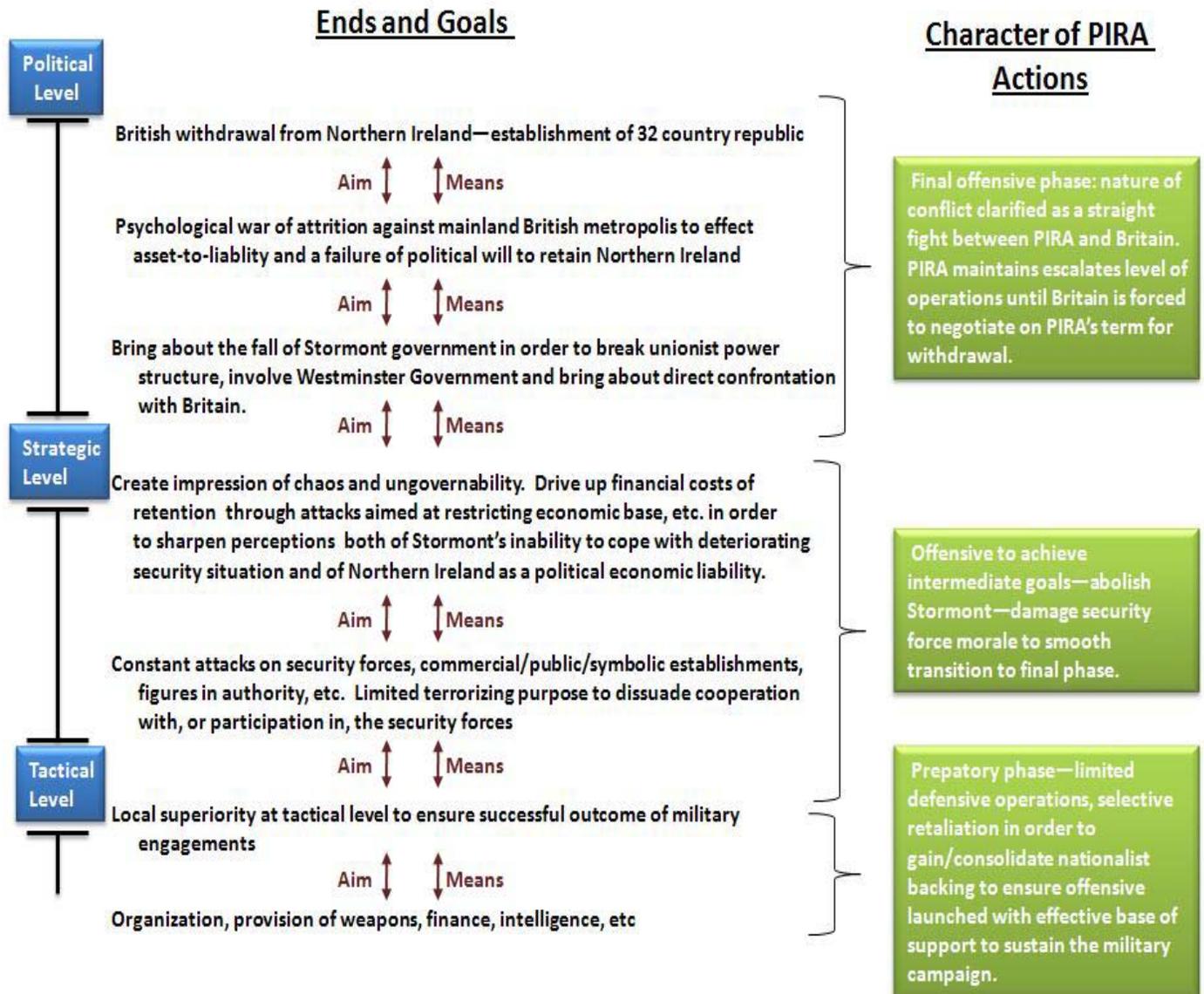


Figure 3 The PIRA's strategic calculus in 1972. Adapted from M.L.R. Smith's picture in *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995), 96. Copyright permission granted on 22 January 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Holland, 58.

The examination of the PIRA's strategy at the beginning of the Troubles reveals an organization that is not willing to reduce its demands. Moreover, even though the British agreed to meet into direct talks with the PIRA, British diplomats may have not been looking for an opportunity to end hostilities. Indeed, the purpose of the meeting from the British perspective seemingly points the conclusion that the meeting was merely an intelligence gathering opportunity to gauge the PIRA's leadership and determination. Moreover, according to historian William Polk, "both the Provos and the British thought they could win, and neither thought the other suitable for negotiation."<sup>47</sup> Yet outreach by both sides during this tumultuous period indicates a time when both sides considered changing course. Miall's conflict transformation model provides insight into the perceptions and the host of environmental inputs on the decisions of the British and the PIRA.

## 1972 Context

Historian Jack Holland commented that "international events are not usually seen as helping to shape the Ulster crisis, which of all the world's trouble spots is usually regarded as among the most local and immune from outside influence."<sup>48</sup> This would certainly be the case at the beginning of the Troubles—with one exception. The Republic of Ireland plays a significant role in both shaping the perceptions of the protagonists involved and in attempts to internationalize the conflict.<sup>49</sup> Granted full independence from the United Kingdom in 1949, Eire's constitution included provisions for the unification of all of Ireland. This fed the siege mentality of the Northern Ireland's Protestant majority. Furthermore, although Dublin outlawed the IRA after its

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<sup>47</sup> William R. Polk, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerilla War from the American Revolution to Iraq* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 68.

<sup>48</sup> Holland, 140.

<sup>49</sup> For brevity and clarity, this monograph will use "Eire," the local, short name for the Republic of Ireland where appropriate. Additionally, this monograph will refer to the Republic of Ireland as the ROI or the Irish government and Dublin to refer to the government of Ireland.

bloody civil war in the 1920s, Eire's population is largely sympathetic to the Northern Irish nationalist and republican cause.<sup>50</sup> "With limited military and economic power," however, "it would have been difficult for Dublin to intervene in any forceful manner."<sup>51</sup>

While Eire had few options available, its subsequent actions, particularly its tacit support for the Northern Ireland independence, continued to antagonize both the British and the Loyalist/Unionist parties in Northern Ireland. Eire initially established field hospitals along the border after the 1969 Bogside Riots and did little to restrain civilian movement across the border, effectively providing the growing Northern Ireland insurgency with both medical support and safe-haven. During this time, the Irish national police, the Gardai, ignored criminal and insurgent elements stemming from the north, further exacerbating British-Irish tensions.

Additionally, Eire pursued diplomatic initiatives to internationalize the conflict by requesting United Nations intervention. This effort failed as the British Government effectively blocked the action from reaching the Security Council, citing the conflict in Northern Ireland as an internal affair and outside the parameters of the U.N. convention.<sup>52</sup> In a parallel effort, Dublin also sought the involvement of the United States with its sizable Irish-Catholic domestic population to exert influence on the British to resolve the conflict. The United States official diplomatic position, however, did not contemplate any action against its ally in Britain. The United States maintained

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<sup>50</sup> Dublin's official position to unify the island under its rule was hotly contested by the IRA. Since the inception of southern Irish self-governance, the IRA considered first the Irish Free State and eventually the Republic of Ireland as an artificial construct and desired a wholesale change of governance for the island. After the Irish Civil War, the victorious Home Rule government defeated the IRA and outlawed the IRA. Thus, the Irish government generally views the IRA (and its splinter groups) as a threat. Interpretation of this threat changes over time, dependent on the political party in power in the Irish Oireachtas (parliament) and citizen sentiment for the republican cause. The government of Ireland generally supported nationalist movements and the emphasis on a political process to unify the island. The Irish government also supported joint British-Irish ventures for creating a "Whole of Ireland" approach, including joint political structures, to solve the crisis.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel C. Williamson, "Taking the Troubles across the Atlantic: Ireland's UN Initiatives and Irish-US Diplomatic Relations in the early years of the Conflict in Northern Ireland, 1969-1972," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 18 (2007), 176.

<sup>52</sup> Williamson, 177.

this position throughout the Cold War, refusing to intervene directly unless asked specifically by Her Majesty's government. Northern Ireland, from the United States perspective, would remain a British problem. To the British and the Unionists/Loyalists in Northern Ireland, however, the die was cast. Eire could not be viewed as an impartial observer and its actions early in the conflict severely hindered any attempt for Dublin to negotiate directly with Whitehall for a political settlement.

### 1972 Structure

The structure of the conflict in Northern Ireland in 1972 is one of stark political, economic and social asymmetries and of historical political absenteeism from the United Kingdom. Unfair access to jobs, housing and education hindered Catholic ambitions. Disenfranchisement limited access to the political/governmental arenas and silenced minority dissent. In effect, a de facto apartheid state existed in Northern Ireland where the majority Protestant population maintained effective control over every aspect of society.<sup>53</sup> Permitting this to occur was the structure of the political system establishing Northern Ireland as a quasi-independent state within the United Kingdom that failed to force reforms on Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, Catholics apparently accepted the parameters of the pro-Protestant Northern Irish state prior to the economic recession of the 1950s. As economic conditions worsened during the recession, however, the disparities between the two communities became more obvious to the Catholics and became the catalyst for the reform movement.

Soon after the partition of Ireland, the Protestant majority moved quickly to consolidate its power and prevent the Catholic minority from influencing Northern Ireland politics. Early in the 1920s the Protestant majority in the Belfast parliament abolished proportional representation and gerrymandered voting districts to reduce the number of Catholic representatives. Moreover, local

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<sup>53</sup> Henriksen, 17.

governments limited elections to homeowners and rate-payers thereby disenfranchising the majority of Catholic voters.<sup>54</sup>

More than controlling the political and housing apparatus, the Protestants controlled other facets of official life as well. Members of the judiciary were almost exclusively Protestant and belonged to the dominant Unionist Political party in Northern Ireland. Likewise, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police organization of Northern Ireland, was equally Protestant and Unionist. Thus, in the words of McKittrick and McVea, “The political, legal and policing worlds were thus inextricably linked: one community governed, judged and policed the other.”<sup>55</sup>

Economically, discrimination and segmentation of the labor force displayed similar inequities. Discrimination against Catholics was most apparent in the types of jobs held and the rates of unemployment for Catholic workers. Catholics traditionally worked in the low-paying service sector and were underrepresented in heavy industry, electrical, and engineering jobs.<sup>56</sup> In government services, Catholic representation appeared to be proportional to the size of its population in Northern Ireland; upon closer examination, however, protestant representation in the higher wage earning professions—managerial, professional and science—far outnumbered the catholic minority. The jobs Catholics did hold were not recession resistant and as a result of the 1950s economic downturn Catholic unemployment skyrocketed.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> In Northern Ireland, local government controls the distribution of publicly subsidized housing. Many Catholics could not afford or were not given housing beyond one family. Thus, many Catholics were forced to reside with their families into adulthood. Adults living with their family members were not afforded suffrage rights unless they paid the rent or owned the home. David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002), 38.

<sup>55</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Maura Sheehan, Douglas Hamilton, and Ronnie Munck, “Political Conflict, Partition, and the Underdevelopment of the Irish Economy,” *Political Violence in Northern Ireland*, ed. Alan O’Day (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1997), 122.

<sup>57</sup> A.M. Gallagher, *Majority Minority Review 2: Employment, Unemployment and Religion in Northern Ireland* (Coleraine County Londonderry, UK: University of Ulster, 1991), under “Section 3: Industry and Religion,” <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/csc/reports/mm211.htm> (accessed December 22, 2009).

Reflecting on this period, Nationalist and civil rights leader John Hume stated, “within what was called the United Kingdom, you had the worst injustices in the whole of Europe.”<sup>58</sup> The UK government, in fact, allowed Northern Ireland’s inequitable political, economic and social system to develop and perpetuate. Given the historical differences between the Irish and the British and the resulting tensions this produced, the British were more than happy to keep Irish politics at arm’s length and give Stormont the space to govern itself. Yet, despite Catholic pleas to Westminster and Whitehall highlighting the injustices, the British government continued a policy of “absentee arbiter” where Stormont could continue its policies free from fear of repercussion from the UK government.<sup>59</sup>

Downing Street and Westminster would vocalize concern and press for reform, but with little action taken against Stormont, the Northern Ireland government was not compelled to make any drastic changes. The British government’s laissez-faire policies became untenable, however, as demonstrations, marches and riots increased in the late 1960s. Television captured the image of police brutality during a civil rights march in October 1968 and raised awareness and sympathy in England and beyond. This event embarrassed the British and spurred the British government to begin to apply greater pressure upon Stormont for reform. After the August 1969 Bogside and Derry riots that killed ten and injured close to 900 people the British were quick to respond.<sup>60</sup> Introducing troops to restore order and an ultimatum to Stormont to enact demonstrable reform or lose its support, the British could no longer adhere to the practice of absentee arbiter but instead became directly involved in the conflict. Yet, the British still hoped for a Stormont brokered solution that would allow the British to maintain an aloof approach to the rising conflict.

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<sup>58</sup> *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Fein*. “Episode 1, Provos: Born Again,” British Broadcasting Corporation, (originally aired September 23, 1997), <http://quicksilver.screen.com/watch?video=42643> (accessed September 16, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Bloomfield, 27.

<sup>60</sup> *Operation Banner*, 2-4.

By July 1971, however, the security situation in Northern Ireland quickly deteriorated. Over 300 explosions and 320 shooting incidents, attributed to both Catholic and Protestant militant groups, left 55 dead and over 600 wounded. The British introduced internment without trial in 1971 in an effort to quell the violence, but riots, protests and inter-communal strife cost much, forcing over 2,000 Protestants and 7,000 Catholics homeless with some 2,500 Catholics fleeing south across the border to refugee camps. With tensions between the communities peaking, the British Army now taking casualties, and the horrific event of “Bloody Sunday,” the momentum for the end of the Stormont government was at hand.<sup>61</sup> Whitehall, following Bloody Sunday requested control over all security forces in Northern Ireland—when Stormont refused, British Prime Minister Heath suspended Stormont.<sup>62</sup> As noted above, the suspension of Stormont emboldened the PIRA as it had met one of its objectives in its strategy. Moreover, “ending of Stormont rule was an emotional and traumatic time for Protestants and Unionists, involving as it did the demise of the institution which they regarded as their chief bulwark against nationalists and republicans.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Bloody Sunday occurred on January 30, 1972. British Army units, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Parachute Regiment, shot and killed thirteen protesters during an illegal Civil Rights March. The Widgery Tribunal, launched immediately by the British government to investigate the incident, later exonerated the soldiers involved. The report concluded that the soldiers acted appropriately to the established rules of engagement. The impact of Bloody Sunday reverberated throughout Ireland and substantially increased national and international sympathy for the republican cause. Holland, 51. For more information on the Widgery Report see *Report of the Tribunal appointed to inquire into the events on Sunday, 30th January 1972*, House of Lords 101, House of Commons 220, April 1972, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hms0/widgery.htm#conclusions> (accessed October 22, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> At the onset of the Troubles and with Stormont still exercising power, the responsibility for all security actions within Northern Ireland ultimately rested with the political leadership in Belfast, including indirect responsibility for articulating the goals of deployed British Army troops in Northern Ireland. See the British Army’s after action report *Operation Banner* for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

<sup>63</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 81.

## 1972 Actors

While the structural conditions outlined underlying motivations for conflict, the party and elites in Northern Ireland fanned the flames. The monograph already introduced many of the actors to provide clarity to events. This section will focus on the identification of additional actors and their contributions to the crisis in 1972.

The majority of the Catholics in both Northern Ireland and Eire sought peaceful means for achieving substantial change in political, social and economic conditions in Northern Ireland. While the numbers of organizations representing this ideal were substantial, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SLDP) were the most important for achieving change. The NICRA was a loose collaboration of many different elements within the nationalist movement and the NICRA outlined several immediate reforms for Northern Ireland.<sup>64</sup> The NICRA's significant contribution was modeling its efforts on the Civil Rights movement in the United States to incorporate civil disobedience as a means of spurring national and international discourse on Northern Ireland. After Bloody Sunday, however, the NICRA's broad-based coalition quickly disintegrated to individual party's interests and self-protection. Moreover, the underlying tensions produced by the civil rights movement advocated by the NICRA contributed to rifts between different segments of society. For Catholics with Republican sympathies, the NICRA represented a worthless exercise and a drain of resources. For Protestants attempting to maintain the status quo, the civil rights campaign was an existential threat and organized rallies, marches and violence to oppose them.

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<sup>64</sup> The NICRA outlined the following goals: universal adult suffrage in local government elections; the end to 'gerrymandered' electoral boundaries; the allocation of public housing to be on the basis of need; repeal of the Special Powers Act; the disbanding of the 'B-Specials'; the end to discrimination in employment; and a system to deal with complaints of discrimination. University of Ulster, "Abstracts on Organisations," *CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet: Conflicts and Politics In Northern Ireland)*, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/norgan.htm> (accessed March 15, 2010).

John Hume, an influential civil rights leader and Member of the British Parliament, proposed a new course within the nationalist movement during this time. Hume's central platform was the unification of Ireland but it was the means by which it was achieved that proved radical to most Nationalists. Believing that the partition of Ireland was "a product of the Protestants' desire to stay out of a United Ireland [and] not of a British desire to dominate," Hume rejected the traditional basis for Nationalism.<sup>65</sup> The constitutional question of Ireland could only be solved with the consent of the majority Protestant population and power-sharing structures to ensure domestic tranquility. Hume's ideas helped form the Social Democratic and Labour Party in 1972 in a "struggle to introduce rational politics into what was fundamentally an irrational situation where the clash of conflicting absolutes drowned out reasoned argument."<sup>66</sup> While Hume and the SLDP would contribute significantly to the incorporation of the PIRA/Sinn Fein into the political process in the 1980s, the effect the SLDP's activities enlarged fissures already existing between Republicans and Nationalists and more importantly, between Catholics and Protestants.

The late 1960s witnessed radical changes in political republicanism as well. Like the IRA who split over Marxist ideology and the means for achieving unification, Sinn Fein split into the "Original" and "Provisional" splinter groups along similar lines. While there is a symbiotic relationship between the Provisional Sinn Fein (PSF) and the PIRA later in the Troubles, there is little indication of the two groups mutually supporting each other in the same manner during the early years. PSF's main contribution to this period was the release of the political platform *Éire Nua* as a general framework for a united Ireland. The *Éire Nua* program permitted Protestant representation in a unified Ireland's Ulster parliament but marginalized the Protestant majority in the proposed assembly. PSF also established and broadened American funding and arms sources for the PIRA.

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<sup>65</sup> Holland, 36.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 37.

The British government deployed Army personnel in 1969 at the bequest of Northern Ireland's Prime Minister, Edward O'Neill. Initially, both Protestants and Catholics welcomed the move—British troops were intended to act as impartial separators. In fact, the British Army would mete out rough treatment to both Catholics and Protestants in 1970.<sup>67</sup> Yet the perception of British Army unfairly targeting the Catholic population grew with the imposition of curfews in Catholic areas, the round-up of predominantly Catholic individuals during internment, and its heavy-handed response at “Bloody Sunday.”<sup>68</sup> Additionally, British concentration on the Republican movement during the Troubles further alienated Catholics in Northern Ireland.<sup>69</sup> The overall contribution of the British Army in 1972 is seemingly reactive and its actions during this period only seem to strengthen Republican and Loyalist resolve.

The change of government within the United Kingdom provides partial answers to the increased British interest and involvement concerning Northern Ireland politics. The 1964 U.K. election brought Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson to power and with him a greater interest in Northern Ireland politics and an anti-Unionist stance. Nevertheless, Wilson could do little without an overriding British interest of the problem, especially since his government enjoyed only a small majority in Westminster. Continuing to pressure Stormont for reform including the withdrawal of monetary support, especially after the introduction of British troops, the Wilson government increased tensions both between Stormont and the U.K. and as well as between Unionists and Stormont.

With the election of a more sympathetic U.K. conservative government in June 1971 and with a new prime minister in Northern Ireland as well, Whitehall pressure on the Stormont government quickly abated. More security than reform oriented, the British government permitted

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<sup>67</sup> Smith, 93.

<sup>68</sup> *Operation Banner*, 2-8.

<sup>69</sup> Loyalist militias rarely attacked security forces in Northern Ireland except in response to unpopular British political initiatives aimed at the Protestant majority. *Operation Banner*, 3-3.

the introduction of a curfew in Belfast's Falls neighborhood and granted the introduction of internment without trial. The cozy relationship between the two governments would not last for long; with increasing deaths, refugees, IRA attacks on British soil, and worldwide media attention, British Prime Minister Heath would soon lose confidence in the Northern Ireland government and its ability to impose law and order and prorogue Stormont. As a result, Protestant resentment towards British policies increased, contributing to Protestant intransigence and violence as they increasingly looked to themselves to protect their interests.

Like its Nationalist and Republican counterparts, the galaxy of Unionists include constellations of different organizations, personalities and interests. While generally opposed to any weakening of their ties with Britain, the seemingly monolithic structure of Northern Ireland Protestantism is fractionalized within itself, split over the use of violence, its ties with Britain, and the extent and shape of reforms within Northern Ireland.<sup>70</sup> Organized politically and into paramilitary groups, each organization's perception of the security dilemma presented by the majority Catholic population of the island and the means to counter the threat highlights the differences between the organizations.<sup>71</sup> The myriad of paramilitary groups, eventually comprised under the umbrella Ulster Defence Association (UDA), did not believe the British or Stormont governments could effectively contain nor restrain Catholic advances.<sup>72</sup> The paramilitaries' existence and use of violence contributed to the Catholic security dilemma as well, whose support for the Republican movement increased with every loyalist attack. The tensions between the two communities, and Whitehall and Dublin, would coalesce as the major issues in

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<sup>70</sup> See Appendix for a discussion of Protestantism and the Orange Order in Northern Ireland and its contributions to the Troubles.

<sup>71</sup> Christina Steenkamp, "Loyalist Paramilitary Violence After the Belfast Agreement," *Ethnopolitics*, 7, no. 1 (March 2008), 160.

<sup>72</sup> McCartney, 17.

Northern Ireland. The PIRA would attempt to exploit these fractures in its efforts to achieve its objective of a unified state free from British rule.

## 1972 Issues

The issues propelling and sustaining conflict during the early years of the insurgency underscored the need for structural solutions for Northern Ireland. Based on the depth of enmity and suspicion between the antagonists, it became relatively clear to the British that one “silver bullet” did not exist to eliminate the tensions and allow amnesty, reconciliation and reintegration policies to take root. Furthermore, the intensity of societal divisions in 1972, coupled with the lack of a proper government response from either Stormont or Westminster belied the notion that paramilitary organizations would cease their diverse pursuits. As time would tell, changes in fundamental tensions between the Catholic and Protestant communities, North-South relations, and relations between Eire and the United Kingdom would be an iterative process and build upon the success and failures of comprehensive approaches increasingly utilizing all the elements of national power.

Thus, these three elemental tensions—Protestant-Catholic divisions; North-south relations; and Eire-UK relations—were not central to the discussion during the secret Whitelaw-PIRA talks in London in August 1972. The imposition of Direct Rule and the relative speed in which events were happening prevented full British understanding of the depth, breadth and complexity of Northern Ireland’s problems. The PIRA represented the greatest threat to the restoration of law and order and thus became the central point for all policy and strategy in Northern Ireland. Only after the British had the opportunity to examine the scope of the problem did it become clear that successful negotiation and integration of paramilitary organizations into the political fabric required significant adjustments and concessions in the relationships of communities and nations.

## 1972 Personal

Personal transformations may be the most difficult to achieve in societies engaged in protracted sectarian conflict. Years of violence and discrimination establish attitudes and beliefs that are difficult to transform in a positive manner. Northern Ireland proved no different—violence in Northern Ireland proved to reinforce perceptions of sectarianism and the need to defend their people against attacks from the other. Political scientist Rogelio Alonso captured this sentiment in his interview with IRA member Shane O’Doherty, who left the IRA when he was fifteen years old, left, and then rejoined the IRA after ‘Bloody Sunday’:

I left, and it was only on Bloody Sunday that I thought ‘ah, fuck, we got to meet violence with violence here, even if I am going to be killed on the streets like [my friend] Eamonn at least I am defending my people.’ So it was the defence thing again that drove us back, what drove us back into the IRA in 1972.... Things like Bloody Sunday and the [1981] hunger strikes and stuff are sort of critical, crucial moments. But Bloody Sunday is a fucking defining moment for the IRA because like after Bloody Sunday they had complete legitimacy, before Bloody Sunday that didn’t have any at all.<sup>73</sup>

This stark expression of fear and insecurity highlights the perceptions of individuals who felt compelled to fight to protect their communities. It is a common theme throughout the Troubles in both communities, and leaders of paramilitary groups would capitalize on this fear and insecurity to generate membership, instill their ideology, and ultimately, perpetuate the conflict.

## **Tiocfaidh ár lá (Our Day will Come)—The Irish Republican Army 1994**

To claim...that the IRA did not win but had not lost either is demonstrably wrong. The political objective of the Provisional IRA was to secure a British declaration of intent to withdraw. It failed.

The objective of the British state was to force the Provisional IRA to accept—and to respond with a new strategic logic to—the position that it would not leave Ireland until a majority in the North consented to such a move. It succeeded.<sup>74</sup>

—Anthony McIntyre, former PIRA member and UK prisoner.

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<sup>73</sup> Rogelio Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle* (Routledge: New York, 2003), 32.

<sup>74</sup> Holland, 211.

The historical context of 1972 depicts a society in the midst of a security and governance crisis, with the PIRA exploiting those conditions in an attempt to realize its goals. In 1998, however, the conditions are ripe for an agreement not only to end the hostilities but also to establish a framework for a fragile but lasting peace in Northern Ireland. In April 1998, the signatories of the Belfast Agreement ended hostilities and provided a positive path forward for a devolved system of government within the United Kingdom resting on power-sharing principles between the two rival communities.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the Good Friday Agreement deftly handled the uniqueness of the “Irish Dimension” by addressing the Republic of Ireland’s Northern Ireland interests.<sup>76</sup> The PIRA’s revolutionary principles, ensconced in its twentieth century fight against British rule, now seem to have taken a back seat to a political process. This transformation began in the late 1970s upon the growing realization of the limits of violence in achieving their aims.

Surprisingly, the PIRA were never militarily defeated. The organization suffered many critical losses and setbacks but it endured to become a major player in the negotiation process. While never distancing itself from its original political goal, the PIRA’s strategic assessment in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a fundamental change in strategy. The “Long War” strategy which emerged from this period resulted in a desire for the PIRA to ensure its survival and relevancy in Northern Ireland and abroad. More importantly, the Long War strategy recognized and eventually implemented a more nuanced approach to the conflict. Instead of focusing primarily on military ventures, the PIRA grudgingly moved to incorporate political and information operations as additional methods for attaining their goals. This tectonic shift in its thinking paved the way for the politicization of PIRA and arguably, the assimilation of the PIRA

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<sup>75</sup> John Darby, “Northern Ireland: The Background to the Peace Process,” *CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet: Conflicts and Politics in Northern Ireland)*, under “The Good Friday Agreement,” April 1998, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/darby03.htm#agreement> (accessed 20 November, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> British politicians and academics refer to Eire’s interests in Northern Ireland as the “Irish Dimension.” Further detail provided in the “Context 1994” section.

into Northern Ireland's mainstream politics. What remains to be seen is how the PIRA and its political wing, Sinn Fein, adopted this policy.

After the Whitelaw talk ended in 1972 the PIRA spectacularly ended the tenuous cease-fire agreement with the "Bloody Friday" bombings. Twenty bombs planted by the PIRA's Belfast Brigade killed nine people and injured more than 130, and spurred the British into action. The British swiftly moved to seize any momentum gained from the PIRA and place the organization on the defensive. Militarily, the British launched Operation Motorman and within weeks cleared PIRA held "No-Go" areas established soon after the 1969 riots. Operationally, Motorman denied the PIRA its safe-haven within the Catholic neighborhoods in Northern Ireland cities. Moreover, the British counter-offensive was marked by the arrest of close to 1,800 PIRA members during 1972.<sup>77</sup> In effect, the PIRA as a military organization could no longer operate as Mao's "fishes in the sea" and influence the population as effectively as it had done previously. As a result, public support for the PIRA ebbed during this period, and this diminishing support was predicated on the response of the population to the actions of government and the Protestant community.

Changes in PIRA methods during the mid-1970s amounted to nothing more than reactionary policies informed by survival instincts. Dismembering its military organizational structure that proved inefficient and highly targetable, the PIRA restructured to a cellular Active Service Unit organizational construct. Moreover, the Provos learned the effects of its domestic bombing campaign became counterproductive in relation to its constituents. Limited by its military focus and means, the PIRA rapidly expanded its military bombing objectives to the British mainland to quickly regain its footing and erode the British government's will to sustain the conflict. Despite its efforts, the PIRA came closest to defeat than at any other time during the Troubles.<sup>78</sup> Up to

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<sup>77</sup> *Operation Banner*, 2-11.

<sup>78</sup> Seán Mag Uidhir, "A Leap into Uncharted Waters" *Striking a Balance: The Northern Ireland Peace Process*, volume 8 of *Accord*, ed. Clem McCartney (London: Conciliation Resources, 1999), 29, <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-ireland/index.php> (accessed October 14, 2009).

this time, the PIRA continued to believe that victory was in sight and relied on that message to drum up support.

In 1977 the PIRA's leadership began an intense discussion regarding the best path forward in light of the deteriorating situation. What emerged from the debate within the ranks were several epiphanies about the conduct of the war. First, the PIRA recognized the long-term temporal aspect of their struggle and that asymmetrical means and the new organizational construct could not bring decisive victory in the short-term. To ensure their survival and relevancy, the PIRA would have to engage in a long war of attrition against the British to erode their will to sustain the conflict and maintain traditional republican principles. Secondly, the PIRA recognized that it had no means available to translate military success in political victory. Military action is intrinsically a political act. Without a political voice, the PIRA's overt military campaign only seemed like senseless violence and further alienated the insurgency from the population. Thus, the PIRA would strengthen its alliance with Provisional Sinn Fein (PSF) to provide that linkage. As political scientist M.L.R. Smith states, the "PSF's new role was to inject political meaning into the IRA's campaign in order to depict the violence as a direct outgrowth of public discontent, rather than being independent, or merely a cursory reflection of it."<sup>79</sup> Finally, the PIRA developed a separate line of effort to evaluate the impact of British and international opinion concerning their operations in Northern Ireland. No longer a strategy solely based on violent action, the Long-War strategy integrated several lines of effort including a political, military and information operations. Based on its calculations, the PIRA believed that increasing pressure along each line of operation would force the British to reevaluate their own interest in Northern Ireland and eventually force British political and military withdrawal in Northern Ireland. (see figure 4). This began, as PIRA propagandist Danny Morrison coined in 1977, the infamous "Armalite and Ballot

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<sup>79</sup> Smith, *Fighting*, 147.

Box” strategy that would have significant long-term impact in ending the conflict, although not on their terms.

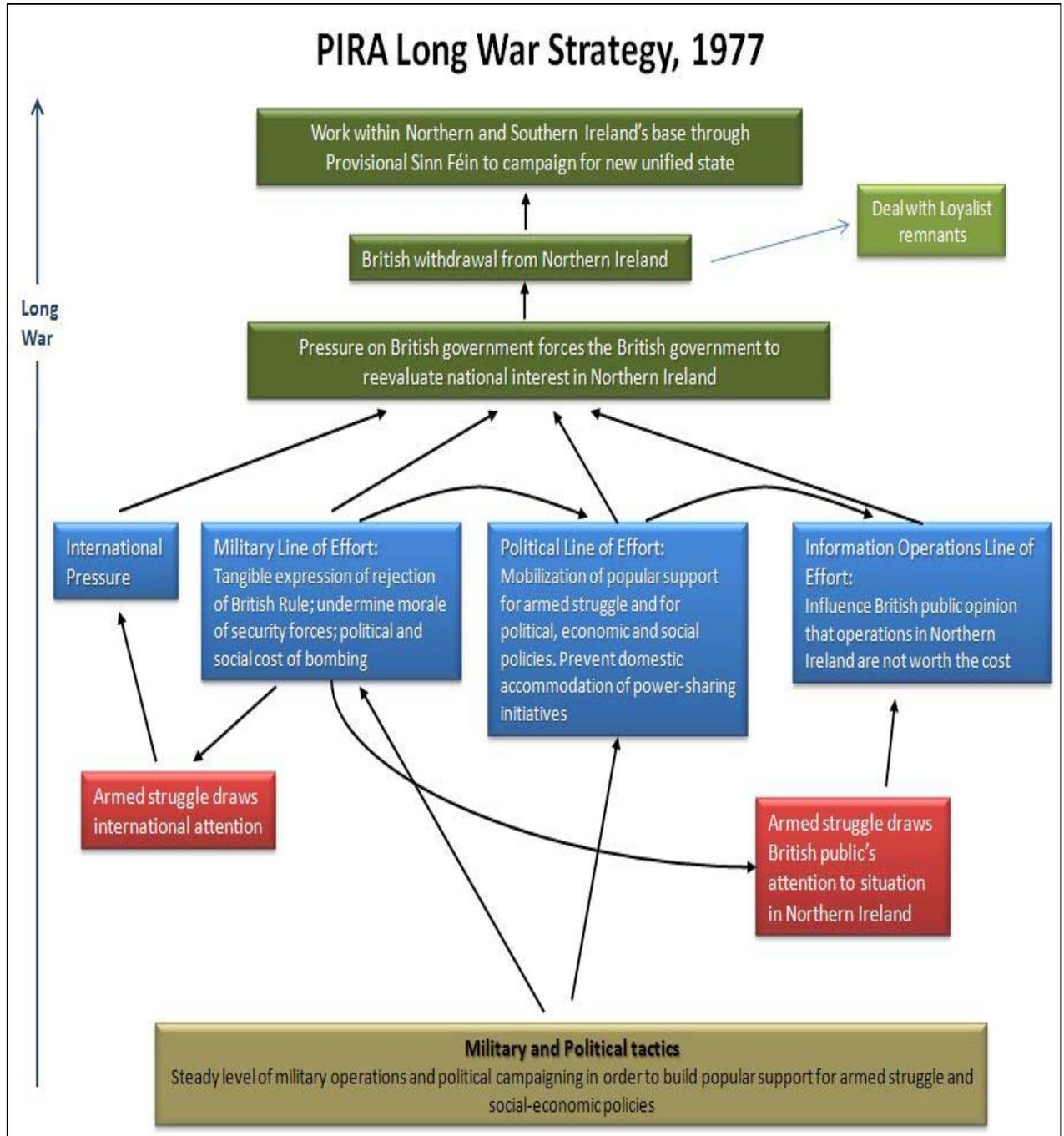


Figure 4. The PIRA's Strategy in 1977. Adapted from M.L.R. Smith's chart in *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995), 96. Copyright permission granted on April 13, 2010.

The Long War strategy demonstrated the adeptness of the PIRA to adapt to changing strategic stimuli. More importantly, it laid the foundation for flexibility and the ability to apply what the PIRA deemed as appropriate pressure along a sagging line of effort. As circumstances in Northern Ireland and Britain changed, however, the political line of effort gained greater traction within the PIRA. Indeed, as the ballot box became an integral part of the strategy, the election of incarcerated PIRA members into the British Parliament and the Irish Oireachtas sparked serious debate among members of the PIRA on ending abstention and attempting to influence changes within the political system.<sup>80</sup> As British Colonel Richard Iron states, “This was the start of PIRA’s long road to a political solution to the Northern Ireland conflict.”<sup>81</sup> In 1986, PSF ended abstentionism and began to fully participate in politics at the local and national levels in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the ROI.

Throughout the 1980s, moreover, the emphasis on bombings, sectarian killings and operations against the British Army and local authorities came under greater scrutiny from PIRA’s political wing Sinn Fein. Gerry Adams, former PIRA commander in Belfast, was elected to preside over PSF in its annual *Ard Feis* (annual party conference) in 1983. Influential within PIRA and PSF ranks, Adams brought greater emphasis on the political process while publicly espousing revolutionary and violent means. Although he never publically condemned the PIRA for its military actions, by the end of the 1980s he would cryptically voice concerns in his public statements of the negative impacts of perceived random violence. Furthermore, the PSF experienced waning electoral victories and were shunned altogether from British political

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<sup>80</sup> Abstentionism was a central pillar for both nationalist and republican parties before and during the early years of the Troubles. Abstentionism, unlike an electoral boycott, allows candidates to stand for an election while refusing sit in any assembly or participate in the assembly’s business.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Iron, “Britain’s Longest War: Northern Ireland 1967-2007” in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. by Daniel Markston and Carter Malkasian (Westminster, MD: Osprey, 2008), 172.

developments affecting Northern Ireland. Combined with British success in infiltrating the PIRA and British advances on the political front with Eire and the United States, the ability of the PIRA to carry out operations in Northern Ireland, the British Isles, and Continental Europe slowly dwindled. Public condemnation of the 1987 Enniskillin bombing from both communities in Northern Ireland and the British and Irish governments added additional pressure for the PIRA to revisit the efficacy of terrorist activity. Gerry Adams and the leadership of PSF now fully realized the steep cost of the PIRA's military operations as the multi-track Long War strategy began to break down due to the adverse reaction to military action.<sup>82</sup>

By 1993, the PIRA and PSF experienced low and temperamental public support as well as international condemnation for its military actions. Especially after the Enniskillin bombings, many in Northern Ireland felt that the time was ripe for negotiation. John Hume, nationalist leader of the SDLP and others moved quickly to prevent another catastrophic event. Approaching Gerry Adams in secret periodic talks starting in 1998 that lasted for over four years, the two rivals publically emerged with a joint declaration outlining shared principles of self-determination and national reconciliation; albeit they admitted that they did not know the process of achieving such goals aside from democratic processes.<sup>83</sup> The Hume-Adams declaration, although initially discarded by then British Prime Minister John Major's government, reemerged to provide the impetus for the 1993 Downing Street Declaration and the subsequent Belfast Agreement of 1998 that ultimately allowed the AR2 process to take root.

The period of negotiation leading towards political integration is amazing in its own right.

Historian Jack Holland notes that:

The [Hume-Adams declaration] was the most dramatic indication so far of the tremendous transformation that was taking place within the Provisional movement—or at least within its upper echelons. It represented not only the beginning of the reconciliation

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<sup>82</sup> Smith, *Fighting*, 172.

<sup>83</sup> Holland, 183.

of the two wings of Irish nationalism, constitutional and physical force, but effectively marked the ideological defeat of Provisional republicanism—the last significant exponents of the physical force tradition—and the beginning of its absorption into the wider spectrum of constitutional nationalist tradition.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, the strategic direction heralded by Gerry Adams and like-minded republicans reveals the second period of strategic reevaluation under this examination's review. Ideologically "pure" republicanism still existed within the PIRA and PSF; indeed, the Belfast Agreement resulted in the PIRA splitting into new organizations committed to traditional republican principles of violence.<sup>85</sup> Yet, for the majority of republican fighters, Gerry Adams and his deputy Martin McGuinness appeared to leading them in the right direction.

Since the PIRA was not defeated militarily, and the PSF emerged as a legal constitutional party, the incorporation of both organizations into a peaceful political process must be taken in context. Pressure to pursue a political option was not the expression of single idea, external or internal pressure, or the result of the motivation of one actor. Instead, the PIRA's pivot from its traditional ways and means resulted from a variety of stimuli, each exerting simultaneous and iterative pressure to change the environment in its own manner. Combined, these conditions would change the strategic environment over time until the PSF and PIRA recognized that its traditional reliance on violent means would no longer achieve desired results. To this end, Hugh Miall's conflict transformation model will once again provide an appreciation of the contextual conditions surrounding the PSF's entrance into legitimate politics and its ability to influence the PIRA to end its violent struggle and eventually decommission its arms.

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<sup>84</sup> Holland, 184-185.

<sup>85</sup> Traditional republicans, unhappy with the prospect of ending violent struggle, reorganized into the Real IRA immediately prior to the Good Friday Agreement. A previous split occurred in 1986 when the Continuity IRA emerged over the debate of abstentionism. The fragmentation of the PIRA in both occasions did not prove disastrous for the PIRA or the peace process.

## 1994 Context

The international context in 1994 vastly differed from the one in which the PIRA operated in 1972. Spanning both the height and the end of the Cold War, the ideological struggle between east and west had significant impact on how sovereign external actors dealt with the situation in Northern Ireland. In addition, external support from both state and non-state actors largely determined the health of the insurgency. Relations between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, both European Union nations, cooled and provided a framework for cooperation in resolving the conflict. But most importantly, the United States enabled the peace process in a manner it previously would not entertain.

The U.S. position toward the Northern Ireland conflict in the beginning of the 1980s was similar to its official policy at the start of the conflict. At the request of Margaret Thatcher's government, however, the United States clamped down on the PIRA's principal financial and arms supplier—private organizations and individuals within the United States. Northern Aid (NORAID), the largest fundraising organization in the US for Irish Republicanism was one such target of the adapted U.S. policy on Northern Ireland. The Justice Department under President Ronald Reagan rapidly built a legal case against NORAID and severed the organization's financial ties to the PIRA. Moreover, U.S. Customs and State Department officials routinely denied access of known Irish dissidents into the United States that resulted in denying PIRA communication with U.S. supporters. Subsequently, the Justice Department targeted PIRA gunrunning operations in North America to cut off the supply of increasingly deadlier weapons to the Irish insurgency.

During the 1970s weapons, including stolen U.S. National Guard and Marine M-60 machine guns, M-16 rifles (the infamous ArmaLite), and domestic weapons were found their way into

Northern Ireland via American and Dublin ports.<sup>86</sup> Although U.S. authorities could not realistically stop all the shipments of arms originating from within its borders, the scope of federal interdiction efforts effectively limited the transatlantic arms network to small arms and ammunition shipments rather than heavier, more lethal weaponry. The PIRA was forced to find other sources for advanced weaponry and funds. This search inevitably forced the PIRA to more unsavory sources in Europe and the Middle East.

Libya became the largest source of arms for the PIRA after U.S. sources dried out. Capitalizing on a breakdown of US/UK-Libya relations in the mid-1980s, the PIRA found a willing supplier of weaponry and ammunition. In addition to a £5 million donation, Libyan head of state Moammar al- Gaddafi sent three shiploads of arms, totaling 150 tons and five tons of Semtex explosive to the PIRA.<sup>87</sup> The quality and quantity of arms from Libya was a significant increase in material for the PIRA; most Provos were ill-equipped to conduct even asymmetric operations against highly capable British forces. Irish insurgents, thanks to Gaddafi, traded in their handguns for AK-47's and receive 100 lbs of bomb making material.<sup>88</sup> British intelligence uncovered plans for the final and largest shipment, however, and the interception and capture of the MV *Eskund* in 1987 was disastrous for the PIRA. Relying on this arms shipment to launch a Tet-like offensive in support of their multi-faceted Long War strategy, the PIRA scuttled the offensive and was never able to recover from the loss. This incident, combined with American operations to shut down the transatlantic arms and money pipeline, denied the PIRA the ability to launch major military operations and thus hampered its ability to pursue military objectives.

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<sup>86</sup> Andrew J. Wilson *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict 1968-1995* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1995), under "Chapter 9: Gunrunning Convictions," <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/wilson95.htm#chap9> (accessed December 2, 2009).

<sup>87</sup> Iron, 173.

<sup>88</sup> Holland, 142.

Arms and ammunition availability was not the only thing that limited the PIRA's operational capacity in Northern Ireland. Previously, the Republic of Ireland added to the insurgency's strength by turning a blind eye towards sanctuary for the insurgents. The PIRA's political aims, however, were a direct threat to the existence of the state, and operations conducted on Irish soil against British targets contributed to Eire's willingness to curb republican efforts. As a result, Dublin sought to minimize the influence of the PIRA while strengthening Irish Nationalist parties, especially John Hume's SDLP. Additionally, the PIRA's methods were counterproductive to the Irish government's goal of a united Ireland. As the British became more militarily and politically entrenched in Northern Ireland the likelihood of the British entertaining any of Eire's goals became less and less apparent. Dublin recognized that any support for the PIRA, intentional or unintentional, must end in order for Dublin to retain relevancy and influence in Northern Ireland both locally and nationally. Dublin's efforts in this regard began with the police.

Gradual improvements in the Irish Gardai's willingness to conduct operations against the insurgents made it increasingly difficult for the PIRA to operate from the Irish Republic. Confidence building measures, such as direct phone contact and regular meetings between the Gardai, the RUC and the British army remarkably dissipated mutual distrust and suspicion between northern and southern police.<sup>89</sup> Over time, the Irish Gardai along with British and American police forces, participated in joint operations against the PIRA, including the apprehension of an PIRA bomb-maker in Dublin and the seizure of an arms shipment originating from the United States.<sup>90</sup> Although the British and the Irish governments did not have the resources to prevent all insurgent crossings from the ROI to Northern Ireland, the Gardai's

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<sup>89</sup> *Operation Banner*, 3-7.

<sup>90</sup> Wilson, under "Chapter 9: Gunrunning Convictions."

reversal from collusion to prosecution had significant impact on the PIRA to operate freely within Eire and its ability to survive.

The most important development within the “Irish Dimension” context of ROI/UK relations was the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. Before the agreement, British policy confined any solution to the Troubles to domestic structural reform, military operations, and local law enforcement to alleviate the sources of tension within Northern Ireland. Although British studies during the 1970s recognized the importance of Eire in any settlement to the conflict, reciprocal distrust of motives in Northern Ireland and support for the insurgency relegated any solution to the “Irish Dimension” to unpopular and unsupportable initiatives. The Irish Republic was uncompromising as well—its commitment to Irish unification and attempts to wedge itself within the context of a sovereign problem did not alleviate British concerns. Ultimately, it was Dublin “finally acknowledging a ‘British Dimension’ to Irish thinking in parallel to the British recognition of an ‘Irish Dimension’”<sup>91</sup> that allowed the Anglo-Irish Agreement to become one of the important precursors for settlement and ultimately undermine the PIRA’s military efforts.

By giving up its claim on Northern Ireland, Dublin secured from the British an active role in for a more formal voice in Northern Ireland’s domestic administration. Most striking, however, were the unintended consequences of the agreement. Unionists could no longer ignore the “Irish Dimension” and address domestic issues solely with the British. Over time, however, Unionists found that dialogue with the South had greater impact than fighting its presence and influence.<sup>92</sup> For Republicans, this strengthened the need to bolster their political effort—both the British and the Irish governments needed to drop their incendiary rhetoric as well as violent action to ensure a republican voice in the proceedings. Sinn Fein expulsions from negotiations several times during

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<sup>91</sup> Bloomfield, 41.

<sup>92</sup> John Coakley, “Ethnic Conflict and its Resolution: The Northern Ireland Model,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), 39.

the 1980s and 1990s gained the organization's attention within and had a dramatic effect on its growing disavowal for continuing violent operations.

Perhaps the most dramatic development within the international context occurred after the PIRA's commitment to the 1994 ceasefire. The fall of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War coupled with a change in U.S. administrations substantially changed the U.S. position on Northern Ireland. President Bill Clinton, whose interest in the Northern Ireland conflict began in the 1960s, committed to putting the Ulster question on his administration's agenda.<sup>93</sup> Although Clinton did little towards this goal prior to the PIRA 1994 ceasefire, afterwards, his administration moved quickly to secure the peace. Clinton removed barriers for republican entry into the United States, and in one of the more controversial moves, invited Gerry Adams to the White House's 1995 Saint Patrick's Day celebration. While remaining skeptical of republican motives, the motivation for the invitation was to build rapport with one of the most influential actors within the conflict.

As political initiatives broke down in 1998 in response to sporadic but growing violence, British Prime Minister Tony Blair asked President Clinton to intervene personally to convince Republicans and Unionists to accept the proposals. Clinton's telephone marathon with Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and Ulster Unionist Party's David Trimble within hours of the talk's deadline was crucial to the acceptance of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998. As Special Envoy for Northern Ireland U.S. Senator George Mitchell commented, "I was there from the first day to the last. There would not have been a peace agreement without the efforts of Bill Clinton."<sup>94</sup> This is not suggest that the Good Friday Accords were the direct result of US intervention, but what it does indicate is that an unbiased, powerful third part intervener is crucial for articulating and achieving compromise; Republican and Unionist intransigence and distrust of

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<sup>93</sup> Holland, xi.

<sup>94</sup> Holland, 218.

British intentions ultimately limited the ability of the British government to effect the negotiations. Yet, without British initiatives and deftness at counterinsurgency, the Provos would have continued to be an extremely strong element within Northern Ireland and prevent peace from occurring.

## 1994 Structure

In comparison to the structural situation in 1972, the environment in 1994 was much more favorable to constructive compromise. Economically, the barriers to equitable distribution of labor and capital started to wane. Moreover, the economic situation was not as dim as it once was, as an economic boom of the late 1980s helped propel the region out of the local 1950s and the worldwide 1970s recessions. Politically, the British government iteratively established successive political agreements that progressively alleviated Catholic grievances and tempered Unionist overreaction. To be sure, sides perceiving a loss ferociously contested the structural settlements politically and in the streets of Northern Ireland. Yet the unintentional iterative approach's second order effect was the gradual acceptance of broader and deeper initiatives culminating in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Fundamentally, the British enabled the process with the prologue of Stormont in 1972 and thus eliminated the major source of contention within the Catholic community. Although the focal point of the community's grievance easily transferred to the British, British pursuit of structural reform beginning in the 1970s manifested in new constitutional and economic structures for Northern Ireland. Ultimately, the concentration on changing the structural conditions for conflict would resonate within both communities and further politicize the PIRA in its continued efforts to find more advantageous avenues to reach its political objective.

The British intrinsically understood a core Catholic motivation at the onset of the Troubles—economic discrimination and segmentation—and subsequently moved to eliminate this source of tension at the beginning. The Fair Employment Acts of 1976 and 1989 eliminated religious

discrimination and established a legal board to adjudicate complaints. While not removing discrimination thoroughly, the recognition and implementation of anti-discriminatory labor laws assisted in the strengthening of Britain's reach over Northern Ireland affairs and in bolstering the bond between governed and the state. Indeed, the strengthening of the original 1976 act in 1989 indicated the government's responsiveness to the aggrieved population and a willingness to provide an answer to it by strengthening the monitoring and adjudication bodies.<sup>95</sup>

Recognizing the interdependence of education and employment reform, the British initiated policies to shrink the educational gap between Protestants and Catholics. The 1989 Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order included a number of provisions that encouraged the development of integrated schools. Additionally, it created a mechanism for funding educational reform and imposed a statutory responsibility on local governments to support the legislation.<sup>96</sup> Overall, local response was less than enthusiastic, but the Educational Reform law points to British efforts at redefining the social environment to alleviate the sources of conflict.

It is within the political realm, however, that the British made their greatest strides. The insurgency's strength rested in the dilemma posed by the legitimacy of a democratic state committed to human rights and international law and the state's support for apartheid type political and social structures. Although the solutions became increasingly more complex, the solutions proffered by the British governments reflects its pragmatism as it skillfully included more and more actors with stakes in the outcome of the Troubles. Interestingly, the first "solution" came immediately after the UK dissolved the Northern Ireland government in 1972.

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<sup>95</sup> A.M. Gallagher, *Majority Minority Review 2: Unemployment and Religion in Northern Ireland* (Londonderry, UK: University of Ulster, 1991), under "Section 11: 1990 and Beyond," <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/cs/reports/mm211.htm> (accessed December 22, 2009).

<sup>96</sup> Alan Smith, *Education and the Peace Process in Northern Ireland*. (paper presented to the Annual Conference of the American Education Research Association, Montreal, April 1999), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/education/docs/smith99.htm> (accessed December 23, 2009).

In 1973, Secretary of State of Northern Ireland Whitelaw presided over the Sunningdale Agreement between the Unionist Party, the SDLP and the Irish government. While laying a foundation for a new legislative body responsible for items of common interest between north and south and mechanisms for an island-wide judicial system, the agreement lasted only five months. At the height of the Troubles, a settlement only involving a deliberative body could not overcome the differences between the primary actors of the conflict. Particularly, Unionist and Loyalist staged strikes against the agreement, combined with lukewarm support from a new British government, thwarted the Sunningdale Agreement.<sup>97</sup> Not surprisingly, the PIRA held a negative stance towards the agreement, and continued its military campaign.

The next agreement ignored the “Irish Dimension” completely and involved a plan to gradually return power to Northern Ireland. The “Rolling Devolution” plan of 1981 rested on the proposition that power would gradually return to Northern Ireland through an elected assembly. If the assembly gained consensus on a solution towards a particular issue, the British government would invest the power to execute the solution to the assembly. As consensus and power-sharing grew, more power would devolve to the Irish Assembly. However, without including the Irish government, nationalist support was non-existent.<sup>98</sup> Without the participation of the SLDP, other nationalist parties and Sinn Fein, the cross-community support necessary to devolve power did not exist, and the misguided effort slowly died on the vine.

The foundational agreement, noted previously, was the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. With the recognition of common ground, the two nations found ample room for negotiation and compromise. The common denominator became the threat the PIRA and Sinn Fein posed and overrode previous concerns over the question of Northern Ireland sovereignty. Sinn Fein’s electoral success in the UK and the ROI placed political leaders in both countries on the

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<sup>97</sup> Coakley, 38.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 38.

defensive. The Irish government believed Sinn Fein and the PIRA would destabilize the republic; within the Cold War context, the British felt that Ireland could become a Cuba off the western coast.<sup>99</sup> The Anglo-Irish Agreement did not come easily nor quickly as negotiations spanned several years, but what emerged ultimately began the process for the 1993 Downing Street Declaration and the subsequent paramilitary ceasefire started in 1994. Indeed, the agreement itself helped to end the differences by forcing Unionists to the negotiation table in favor of another agreement that would supersede it.<sup>100</sup>

Although Anglo-Irish relations suffered during the late 1980s because of miscommunication and latent suspicions on both sides, cooperative inroads established during the Agreement's negotiations proved remarkably resilient. Irish dedication to resolving the conflict and British openness to Irish proposals permitted the Hume-Adams talks to come to fruition with the 1993 Downing Street Declaration. The 1993 joint declaration addressed the needs and desires of all parties involved by delicately balancing principles of self-determination and majority consent for the future of Northern Ireland. It laid a path for further negotiation, and the general framework for future talks included participation of all interested parties not involved in acts of violence. With strong public support edging towards nationalist parties, the PIRA and Sinn Fein required access to the negotiations to ensure representation of their platform. With a sputtering burst of ultimately futile violence that lasted from February 1993 to July 1996, the PIRA finally announced a ceasefire on August 31, 1994.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 159.

<sup>100</sup> Coakley, 39.

<sup>101</sup> According to RUC, 80 percent of all PIRA operations in Belfast during the summer of 1994 were intercepted or aborted. Holland, 195.

## 1994 Actors

The primary actors and parties associated with the conflict did not change dramatically over the two decades between the start of the Troubles and the breakthroughs towards peace in the early 1990s. What did change, however, were the perceptions and actions of those actors that fundamentally changed the dynamics of the conflict. Sinn Fein, as previously stated, became inextricably intertwined with the PIRA and provided political direction for the Republican movement. The British Government, with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at the helm for the majority of this period, indirectly introduced stability through continuity in purpose and direction with her long tenure as Prime Minister. Attributed with “not negotiating with terrorists,” the Thatcher government retained several secret back-door channels with the PIRA and other paramilitary organizations. This process continued with both the Major and Blair governments as well. Moreover, the efforts of power mediator and Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Brooke helped establish a framework for political negotiation improving local dialogue and participation in a burgeoning peace process.

The British Army, meanwhile, conducted one of the most successful counterinsurgency campaigns in modern history and focused its efforts on adapting its tactics to meet their desired end-state. Combined with bolstering the capabilities and perceptions of the RUC, security forces in Northern Ireland slowly transformed the landscape in which the PIRA operated. Additionally, the appearance of unified Ulster Unionism continued to degrade, reducing the efficacy of majority opinion in Northern Ireland. This had the unfortunate detrimental effect of continuing reciprocal violence and increased spoiling attempts at political negotiation between Protestants and Catholics. With the exception of spoilers, however, the net effect of the actors transforming perceptions, goals, and interrelationships over the twenty-two year period had considerable impact on reducing the insurgency’s effectiveness.

Sinn Fein's flexibility towards political developments and power sharing had to overcome decades of violent republican legacy dating back to the 1920s. Indeed, "Within Republicanism Adams and others had always been wary of what the pejoratively referred to 'electoralism,' suspecting that entering the political process would blunt the IRA's revolutionary edge."<sup>102</sup> Further, Gerry Adams' political confidant and Sinn Fein second Martin McGuinness indicated in the watershed 1986 Ard Feis that the PIRA and Sinn Fein would not abdicate its traditional goal of achieving freedom from British rule.<sup>103</sup> Yet, that year's Ard Feis elected to end abstentionism in the Irish Oireachtas with an overwhelming majority, furthering the belief that the political process could achieve their goals.

By 1991, Sinn Fein sensed the success of its electoral campaign rested directly on its affiliation with violent action. As the military campaign continued, Adams and Sinn Fein found it increasingly difficult to justify violent action to their cause which was at odds with a political resolution. Other members of Sinn Fein voiced the same sentiment. In the same year, PSF Belfast spokesman Richard McAuley commented, "We're not going to realize our full potential as long as the war is going on in the North and as long as Sinn Fein is presented the way it is with regard to armed struggle and violence. I think that it is a reality that perhaps we weren't conscious or aware of back in the early '80s when we first got involved in electoral politics."<sup>104</sup> Although violence continued, support for traditional violent methods rapidly diminished and ultimately became untenable for a majority in the Republican movement.

Contributing to the growing realization of the potential of the political movement was the British Army's increasing success in conducting counterinsurgency. In the early 1970s, the policies of internment without trial and other heavy-handed tactics against Catholics severely

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<sup>102</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 158.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>104</sup> Holland, 169.

undermined their efforts in containing Ulster republicanism. Shortly after 1972, however, the British retracted internment and began what became to be known as “Ulsterisation” [*sic*].<sup>105</sup> This policy underscored the importance of police primacy and reduced military contact with the civilian population. To support this initiative, the British undertook serious reform of the RUC, including the disbandment of the highly sectarian B-Specials and encouraged Catholic enrollment into the constabulary. Moreover, the British reformed the local Territorial Army equivalent, the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR), by vetting applicants in an effort to exclude those hiding extremist views or connections.<sup>106</sup> Together, the efficiency of the RUC and UDR increased over time, and by the 1990s became a major obstacle for the PIRA.<sup>107</sup>

Most important, however, was the criminalization of insurgent activity. The British ended “special category status” which afforded insurgent prisoners political status. Now, what insurgents were no more than common criminals. To support criminalization, a forensic and judicial process became increasingly more important to pursue prosecution for those responsible for terrorism. Arguably, criminalization undermined the PIRA’s propaganda campaign, which views the conflict in terms of a colonial struggle against British Imperialism. Instead, the insurgency was now not only a movement against the government, but also interpreted as acts against the common good for the community.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ulsterisation refers to police primacy in the attempt to quell the insurgency in Northern Ireland. The strategy centered on primarily utilizing locally recruited RUC and UDR units in order to have a more “Northern Irish” face on operations. The strategy included the disengagement of British regiments as much as possible from security duties. McKittrick and McVea, 123/171.

<sup>106</sup> *Operation Banner*, 3-4.

<sup>107</sup> Due to police primacy, the RUC and the UDR became more attractive targets for the PIRA as they replaced the British presence on the streets in Northern Ireland. this countermanded the PIRA’s overall strategy to break the wherewithal of the British. Secondly, because of the overwhelming Protestant presence in the security forces, it portrayed the PIRA as narrowly focused towards sectarian revenge. Smith, *Fighting*, 143.

<sup>108</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 123.

Surprisingly, criminalization hastened the politicization of the PIRA and Sinn Fein. Both organizations fought to return special category status to PIRA prisoners throughout the duration of the Troubles. An unforeseen consequence of criminalization also gave the republican movement the political recognition it had not enjoyed since the 1950s.<sup>109</sup> Bobby Sands election in 1981 to Parliament during his Maze Prison Hunger Strike protest for special category status and his subsequent death not only elevated Sands as a martyr for the republican cause, but became the catalyst for the republican movement to realize the potential political line of effort within the “Long War” context.

Another critical consequence of the criminalization policy was the British Army’s focus on intelligence operations. Previously, the B-Specials provided the bulk of human intelligence and tips for the army and police forces to utilize in combating the insurgency. With their disbandment in 1972 and no penetration of any paramilitary organization, however, the British Army had to develop viable information to operate effectively in Northern Ireland. The need for forensic evidence to prosecute and the desire for better intelligence thus grew substantially. Initially, the Army relied on traditional soldier’s means for developing local knowledge—vehicle check points, observation posts, routine patrolling, and searches. By the late 1970s, the use of inside informants known as “supergrasses” spearheaded army and police efforts for convictions.

Subsequently, the elite Special Air Service (SAS), known derisively by the PIRA as “Special Assassination Service,” began infiltrating the ranks of the PIRA and targeting the organization with ambushes and other special operations. The intelligence gathered by all these approaches, including local police work, substantively provided the British government and the Army valuable information at strategic, operational and tactical levels. Moreover, covert SAS operations, conducted across Europe and in Northern Ireland, made the PIRA more cautious as it planned and executed its military operations. As Colonel Iron relates, the ability of the British to

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<sup>109</sup> Holland, 122.

gain effective intelligence assisted in creating advantages in negotiation, the ability to preempt major PIRA operations, and deter PIRA operatives helped to open the door to the political process.<sup>110</sup> Overall, the fear created by the British SAS, the Regular Army, and police forces, albeit not preventing all violence, created an environment where any PIRA operation conducted ensued greater and greater risk to the individual insurgent.

## 1994 Issues

The three forces sustaining the conflict—tensions between the Catholic and Protestant communities, North-South relations, and relations between the Irish government and the United Kingdom—remained in full effect in 1994. Yet, the British and Irish governments made significant strides in resolving tensions between the them, starting with the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. North-South relations also began a transformation process, as Unionists and Nationalists routinely negotiated over Northern Ireland issues. The negotiations did not always bear fruit; indeed, many more failed to reach consensus. Nonetheless, the talks assisted in eliminating previous communication barriers and helped establish a nascent form of ongoing productive dialogue. Relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities, however, failed to reach any form of consensus. It became apparent in 1994 that any settlement that would bring the two communities together would require compulsion from the British, and later, the United States.

The Belfast Agreement of 1998 provided this solution and brought all interested parties into the negotiations. The Good Friday Agreement is unique because it provided structural solutions for all three issues surrounding the conflict. Although the agreement sidelined a few intractable issues, it did so in order for all parties to accept the provisions of the agreement without

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<sup>110</sup> Iron, 183.

reservation.<sup>111</sup> The Good Friday Agreement provided for power-sharing initiatives in the government and protection of the status of Northern Ireland as a member of the United Kingdom. Significantly, the agreement promised a popular referendum to decide the unification of the island based on majority consent. Without the commitment from all the major actors, amnesty, reconciliation and reintegration programs initiated by the peace talks could not happen.

Yet, the process for resolving these issues encapsulated in the Belfast Agreement could not have occurred without PSF's commitment to the political process. PSF's influence over the PIRA allowed the 1994 ceasefire to take root despite Unionist and loyalist undermining activities including political spoiling and sectarian violence. PSF's political activism and influence over the PIRA paved the way for the PIRA's permanent ceasefire and the inclusion of the PSF into the 1997-1998 Belfast talks.

### 1994 Personal

Some scholars have argued that the peace process described above is not a true representation of how peace was attained. This contrary view holds that the elitist and top-down initiatives overshadowed the process of the personal transformation occurring at the individual and neighborhood levels. Here, it is important to note the transformation of some of the members of the PIRA and what ultimately convinced them of the futility of continued violence. Rogelio Alfonso's interview with a former PIRA member captured this sentiment perfectly.

The legitimising [sic] a campaign of violence, I don't think it can be done morally. I can see people trying to analyse [sic] it a trying to put it in a context which makes it legitimate, and you can get very close to that, and you can convince a lot of people, 'They done that because they were defending the Area or the British were in their country and they shouldn't be there, so...' I don't agree with it...I think we missed a mechanism that could have been used much more efficiently and effectively and that was the civil rights campaign at the start, that could been a mechanism for building towards a more democratic, a more egalitarian society, and their long, longer term goals or aims, like republicanism has for a united Ireland, etc., could have been closer. I'd have to say that

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<sup>111</sup> Coakley, 43.

all those years spent in prison by so many people, all those deaths, I don't think it was worth it, when you add all that up, I would say I think it was a net loss.<sup>112</sup>

Granted, this is an after action account and can be attributed the PIRA's sense of defeat.

Additionally, the modes operendi of violent republicanism was not dropped; the splinter groups Real and Continuity IRA retained violence as a method for achieving independence and these groups vowed to maintain violent struggle. Yet, the majority of old republicans, tired of fighting and living in fear of British and Loyalist reprisal, followed Gerry Adams and like-minded republicans to join society and the political process.

Previous sections of this monograph highlighted the PIRA's changes in strategy and the contextual factors surrounding its decisions to change their strategy. In doing so, this monograph tracked a distinct evolution of the PIRA's strategy from a military centric to a comprehensive multi-track approach that eventually subsumed its ability to continue military operations. Moreover, these changes propelled the PIRA/ PSF to emphasize, albeit incrementally, on political action as a means to achieve their goals. Ultimately, the PIRA's move towards politicization did not rest on the decision of one man, the actions of the British government, the counterinsurgency effort, or for the matter, any one factor in particular. Indeed, as the transformation model analysis demonstrated, the eventual defeat of the PIRA was the product of a multitude of factors ranging from the individual to the sovereign nation, each of which affected the environment in its own distinctive manner. Ultimately, the sum of these several dynamics pushed the PIRA and its political wing Sinn Fein away from the paramilitaristic and into the political process.

Reflecting on the Taliban in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the question begs: will the examination of the current Taliban using Hugh Miall's taxonomy produce the same results? A comparison of the Taliban's strategic goals and the environmental context with the PIRA utilizing the same

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<sup>112</sup> Alfonso, 194.

methodology, along with contemporary counterinsurgency theory, will demonstrate that the contextual factors are more akin to the IRA in 1972 prior to its politicization.

## The Taliban

The Taliban regime, led by Mullah Muhammad Omar, came to power in a tumultuous time in Afghan history. A bloody civil war from 1978 to the present left Afghanistan in a near hobbessian state. The Taliban took advantage of this situation to gain power by initially providing a modicum of stability and governance. The Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic *shari'a*, however, did not meet international norms of behavior. Consequently, the Taliban soon attained pariah status and international condemnation for its brutal practices. Yet, international concern over human rights did not propel any nation into direct action against the Taliban.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 brought about a fundamental change in diplomacy and international affairs. With the Taliban hosting Al-Qaeda leadership and training camps in Afghanistan, the United States immediately pursued regime change as a primary goal to eliminate Afghanistan as a safe-haven for international terrorist organizations. In October 2001, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom with a concerted air campaign and invasion of Afghanistan. In the process, the United States empowered a loose collaboration of northern Afghan warlords to assist in the dismantling and destruction of the Taliban regime and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. After weeks of fighting in November 2001, the Taliban was on the run, fleeing by the thousands across the border into Pakistan. However, as Pakistani journalist Ahmad Rashid notes, for the Taliban "it was not an escape but a return home."<sup>113</sup>

Mullah Omar purportedly escaped into Quetta to formulate a plan to drive the U.S. and NATO allies out of Afghanistan and reestablish Taliban control. Utilizing the sanctuary offered

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<sup>113</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 240.

by their traditional ally and financier Pakistan, the Taliban would gather its strength and follow the same tactics and political agenda that brought it to power in 1996. This strategy, at least at its start, did not possess an overarching political agenda. Instead, the Taliban in 1994 “emerged as a local response to the former resistance and militia forces implicated in banditry, brutality against local residents, and offenses against the local values such as *nang* (reputation) and *namus* (local honor with respect to women).”<sup>114</sup> The Taliban, like organized crime syndicates, provided protection through a system of extortion and violence and were very successful in establishing, building and exercising its power within a nation lacking basic governance structures. Taliban protection, however, came at a price. The Taliban’s radical education in Pakistani *madrassas* produced religious zealots that attempted to change the social fabric of Afghanistan with the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. The Taliban in 2001 would thus try to replicate its previous success to reestablish political and social control over Afghanistan.

Yet, the nascent Taliban insurgency in 2001 relied on a dated strategy that had little chance of success given the populations’ faith in the administration of Afghan President Harmid Karzai and the presence of NATO forces. To the Afghan population, the Taliban represented repressive social policies and the presence of several strains of internal security and stability rendered the Taliban unnecessary. Furthermore, Taliban rule uprooted the traditional Afghan structure by elevating religious leaders above the more secular elder and *jirga* based political and social system. The Taliban’s adherence to the Deobandi school also alienated many in Afghanistan who believed the doctrine did not conform with either Afghan or Islamic traditions.<sup>115</sup> With nothing new to offer to the Afghan people at the beginning of the new republic—no program, no vision, and no political agenda with the exception of driving out foreign forces from their land—the

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<sup>114</sup> Neamatollah Nojumi, “The Rise and Fall of the Taliban,” *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, ed. Robert D. Crows and Amin Tarzi (Cambridge: Harvard Univeristy Press, 2008), 100.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

Taliban could neither overcome their brutal legacy nor gain widespread public support.<sup>116</sup> With little option besides self-preservation, the Taliban employed more repressive measures against Afghans in a campaign to force its way back into Afghanistan.

The Taliban's initial insurgency strategy after the United States and NATO ousted the Taliban regime in 2002 proved to be bankrupt. In formulating their strategy, the Taliban had a clear political objective in the return of Islamic Caliphate. Its survival was not a stake as long it retained cross-border safe-haven in Pakistan, a nation out of NATO's reach. The failure in the Taliban's re-entry strategy remained in the articulation of goals to gain an asymmetric advantage over their opponents. Arguably, at the time the Taliban were in the midst of reestablishing base and support structures in Pakistan and reorganizing forces and thus are unable to mount any coordinated activity to maintain the initiative. Nevertheless, this misses the point—the adherence to ways and means of previously successful strategies marked an abject failure of the Taliban and led to a myopic focus on a military centric strategy at the expense of all other opportunities to gain the momentum. Indeed, as Canadian Royal Military College professor S.M. Maloney remarked, the most significant defeat of the Taliban during 2003-2005 was the result of its failure to participate in the series of elections establishing the new Afghan government and “thus ensuring their label as an illegitimate insurgent force in the eyes of the international community.”<sup>117</sup> The opportunity to regain the initiative after the Taliban's political defeat, however, was overlooked by both Afghan officials and NATO forces.

The Karzai government, riddled by corruption, nepotism and warlord politics, failed to gain any significant traction during its first term. Afghan government institutions failed to penetrate beyond Kabul. The boiling counterinsurgency in Iraq in 2005 sapped U.S. focus and treated

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<sup>116</sup> Rashid, 251.

<sup>117</sup> Sean M. Maloney, “A Violent Impediment: The Evolution of Insurgent Operations in Kandahar Province 2003-07,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 2 (2008), <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g793343068> (accessed November 4, 2009).

Afghanistan as an economy of force mission. Most international forces, restrained by national caveats, could not take the fight to the enemy. Currently, efforts to strengthen the national government in Afghanistan and provide government services throughout Afghanistan are slow, inappropriate in the Afghan context, and security beyond the major metropolitan areas does not exist. The Karzai government appears arrogant, out of touch with the population, unable to deliver on any campaign promise, and is quickly losing legitimacy. Given the permissive environment afforded by these circumstances, and the realization that old techniques of intimidation and coercion were no longer as profitable, a new comprehensive Taliban strategy emerges from ashes of the old.

The new Taliban strategy incorporates a multi-dimensional approach to insurgency including the addition of several lines of effort beyond a military centric approach. The lines of effort support classic insurgency theories through the deligitimization of the existing government and eroding the will of counterinsurgent forces and their constituent publics to sustain the conflict. Moreover, the new strategy eschews the Taliban's traditional adversity to modern technology and embraces modern communication to advance a sophisticated information and propaganda platform designed to counter western efforts and advance its own agenda. The most dangerous line of effort in the new strategy, however, rests within the governance sphere. Exploiting the inability of the central government to establish institutions and effective governance at the local level, the Neo-Taliban of 2005 fills the gap with legal adjudication and shadow governors. Concurrent with this process is the redefinition of the social sphere reminiscent of the Taliban's earlier policies of elevating religious leaders over traditional social leaders. Most striking, however, is in the manner the Taliban desires to accomplish social redefinition in Afghanistan.

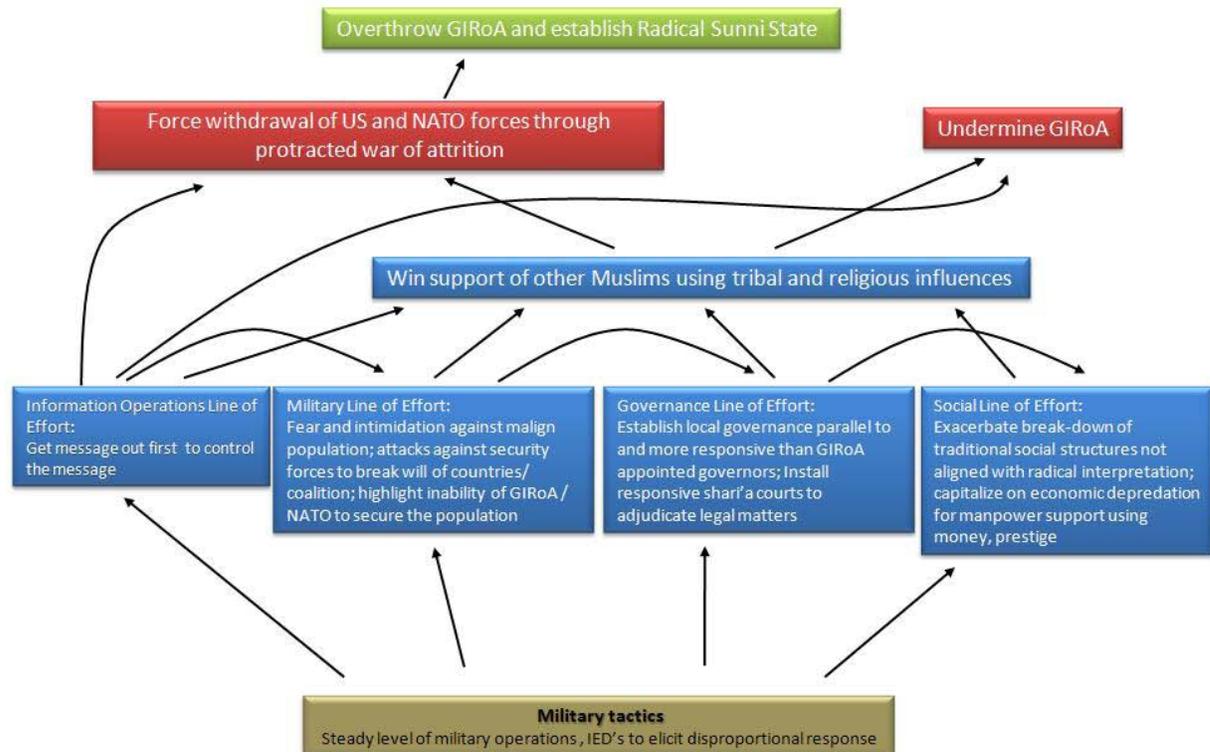
In the summer of 2008 Mullah Omar released a code of ethics handbook for the Taliban, which outlined the parameters of acceptable conduct of the insurgency in Afghanistan.<sup>118</sup> While the manual specifically proscribed actions contravening Afghan tradition in an attempt to win local support, it specifically provided that the actions of local governors and judicial systems operate under the framework of the established rules and regulations.<sup>119</sup> While seemingly contradictory, the handbook devises a method for local interpretation of the pace of social reform to gain surreptitiously the populations support while transforming Afghan social norms.

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<sup>118</sup> Jessica Weinstein, “Taliban Chief Writes ‘Handbook’ to Win Hearts and Minds of Afghans” *FOX News Online*, August 11, 2009 <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,538949,00.html> (accessed August 20, 2009).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

## Taliban Strategy 2010



**Figure 5. The Taliban's Strategy circa 2010. Author's work influenced from several sources including Antonio Guistozi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); U.S. Department of Defense Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, *State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions and Objectives*, by Major General Michael Flynn, PowerPoint presentation (Kabul, Afghanistan, 2009); and Seth Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2008).**

A response to the handbook could be that the Taliban are on the strategic defensive and looking for any advantage to remain relevant. Yet, the document appears as part of an emergent, nuanced and comprehensive strategy formulated while the insurgency has the momentum in Afghanistan. NATO reported an overwhelming increase—during the traditional summer fighting season—of insurgent attacks. Moreover, the organizational capacities and operational reach are “qualitatively and geographically expanding,” including the efficacy of Taliban installed shadow

governments in 33 of 34 provinces.<sup>120</sup> Most importantly, according to director of International Security Force-Afghanistan Director of Intelligence U.S. Army Major General Flynn, is the “speed and decisiveness of [the Taliban’s] information operations and media campaign.”<sup>121</sup> From these assessments, it becomes increasingly clear that the Taliban enjoy significant momentum with their current strategy, notwithstanding President Obama’s and General McChrystal’s current assessments. The Taliban does not lack political direction nor is the insurgency overly threatened while it can maintain sanctuary in Pakistan. What was missing from the previous strategy, an asymmetric advantage, is now addressed with a multi-track strategy designed to win the support of fellow Muslims, fill governance gaps, and other complementary measures.

### نابلط **The Taliban 2010**

What would be the topic of the talks and what would be the result? Our basic problem with the Americans is that they have attacked our country. They are offering talks, hoping that the *mujahedin* surrender before them. We see no benefit for the country and Islam in such kinds of talks.

-Mullah Baradar, de facto leader of the Taliban in 2009, in response to the question, “Would you support talks at some time?”<sup>122</sup>

Full comprehension of the contextual environment surrounding the Taliban’s current strategic rise in Afghanistan requires an examination of all levels of Hugh Miall’s conflict transformation model. Moreover, the analysis of the contextual surroundings of the Taliban will enable the discovery of similarities and differences with the PIRA and successful outreach resulting from its gradual path towards politicization. This analysis will underscore the conclusion that the

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<sup>120</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force. *State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions and Objectives*, by Major General Michael Flynn. PowerPoint presentation. (Kabul, Afghanistan, 2009), slides 16, 19.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., slide 16.

<sup>122</sup> Mullah Baradar: In His Own Words.” *Newsweek* 154, no.5 (August 3, 2009): 43. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/208638> (accessed August 30, 2009). Mullah Baradar was captured by the Pakistani ISI on February 8, 2010.

conditions permitting the Taliban's rise significantly detract from its willingness to conduct open and fruitful negotiations.

## 2010 Context

Unlike the PIRA, which had limited international contact, the Taliban's strategic environment involves a myriad of actors, each possessing its own agenda and ability to influence the entire Afghan system. Primarily, Pakistan provides the greatest input to the international context, and the complexity surrounding Pakistan's relations with both the United States and the Taliban creates significant instability in the region. Pakistan cannot be separated from India, as the strategic rivalry between the two nations finds fertile ground to perpetuate tensions in Afghanistan as well. Iran provides another problematic variable with its tremendous influence in the region, western Afghanistan, Islam, and role as spoiler to U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and the region.<sup>123</sup> The Central Asian Republics are dedicated to power sharing initiatives to ensure their ethnic cousins in Afghanistan are not relegated to majority Pashtun rule.<sup>124</sup> Saudi Arabia indirectly supports the insurgency with its financial support to Pakistani *madrassas* that educate youth in radical Islam who eventually spill over the Afghan border as Taliban. Russia and China also enter the fray and pursue interests that may be divergent from western efforts. In all, the international situation requires careful mapping of the interests and influences of each individual actor to understand the impact on the insurgency as well the counterinsurgency.

The largest impact, however, results from Pakistan. With historical ties to the origin of the Taliban during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan continues to walk a tightrope with its support of the Taliban and nominal alliance with the United States. The Pakistanis see the

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<sup>123</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force. *COMISAF's Initial Assessment*, by General Stanley A. McChrystal, Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense (Kabul, Afghanistan: 2009), 2-11.

<sup>124</sup> Ahmid Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 211.

Taliban as their best option to ensure an Afghan government partial to its interests. Furthermore, Pakistan views the insurgency as a hedge against US and NATO withdrawal, ensuring that it would have at least a proxy force in Afghanistan should the US and NATO depart Afghanistan.<sup>125</sup> Pakistani support for the Taliban can be traced as a response to Indian motivations in Afghanistan whose financial and infrastructure support are viewed by Islamabad as a direct threat to the delicate balance of power in the region.

Pakistani response to American pressure to end direct and indirect support for the insurgency waxes and wanes with the amount of pressure America places on its ally. Understanding the complexity of Pakistani internal politics, the US is cognizant of its unpopularity in the Pakistani domestic sphere and seemingly unwilling to apply too much pressure on the Pakistani government lest Pakistan begin its own descent into armed rebellion. Thus, tacit support for the Taliban continues, especially with Pakistan's unwillingness and inability to control the lawless borders of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Waziristan, and Baluchistan where the Afghan insurgent sanctuary resides.

## 2010 Structure

RAND analyst Seth Jones, in his recent book *In the Graveyard of Empires*, accurately depicts the state of the structural conditions in Afghanistan as “a growing cancer.”<sup>126</sup> Although it has been eight years since the United States toppled the Taliban regime and five years since the first Afghan presidential election, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has shown little ability to establish effective governance beyond the confines of Kabul. Numerous other factors enhance the Karzai government's crisis of legitimacy: rampant corruption, the spiraling drug trade, an ineffective justice system that is unresponsive and corrupt, and the

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<sup>125</sup> Seth Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 55.

<sup>126</sup> Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 183.

continued empowerment of warlords. Below the surface, tribal animosities and suspicions of central governance run deep and further work to paralyze basic government functions. Moreover, a lack of basic infrastructure, including electricity generation and delivery, water resources, and a paltry transportation network exacerbate poverty in a country whose primary occupation remains subsistence agriculture.<sup>127</sup>

American, NATO and Afghan efforts to improve the capacity of the central government is making measured progress. Yet, the dependent variable of successful counterinsurgencies is legitimate and responsible governance.<sup>128</sup> To illustrate, a recent Asia Foundation poll of Afghanistan shows a deeply conflicted populace. Forty-two percent of respondents believed the country is heading in the right direction, thus reversing a negative two-year trend. Looking further into the data, however, only twelve percent of the same group believed good governance was the source of their optimism.<sup>129</sup> Additional examination of the data reveals even greater pessimism in the south and eastern areas where the Taliban are more pervasive. The government's crisis of legitimacy and lack of penetration provides the Taliban with fertile ground to establish shadow governance and further challenge the central government's authority. Antonio Guisozzi's compelling opinion in his book *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop* states that "despite the role of foreign sponsors, the insurgency would not have succeeded in becoming anything more than a mere annoyance if it had not been able to exploit the intrinsic weaknesses of the Afghan state."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *CIA World Fact Book*, under "Afghanistan: Economy: Labor Force—by occupation," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed December 15, 2009)

<sup>128</sup> Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, 78.

<sup>129</sup> The Asia Foundation, "Afghanistan 2009: A survey of the Afghan People," *The Asia Foundation*, under "section 2.1," <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2009.pdf> (accessed 28 February 2010).

<sup>130</sup> Antonio Guisozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 7.

One areas of governmental weakness that Taliban have been able to exploit is the absence of any cohesive drug interdiction policy. The cultivation, production and trafficking of poppy stresses government legitimacy and affords the Taliban with lucrative revenue streams as wells as popular support. Rampant corruption allegations surrounding government officials undermine efforts towards responsible governance and the rule of law. Government eradication efforts, moreover, provide ample fuel for discontent among the population where no alternative crop or subsidy is given, providing the unintended consequence of driving farmers to the protection of the Taliban.<sup>131</sup> The Taliban are equally involved in the drug trade and intricately wound in the entire process. The Taliban offer security for drug runners, levy taxes on farmers, offer protection from government eradication programs, assist opium brokers and laboratory assistants, and export refined product to international markets.<sup>132</sup> Narcotics revenue for the Taliban estimates at \$70-100 million a year and funds an estimated thirty percent of its operational costs. The reciprocal dependency of Taliban with the poppy infrastructure ensures the Taliban will not be removed without considerable effort from counterinsurgency forces, international and domestic police and a legal system properly equipped to prosecute and detain drug related offenders. The understanding that these forces cannot undo the interdependency further bolsters the Taliban's perception of strength and diminishes their willingness to negotiate.

The last structural condition examined in depth is the ineffectiveness of the rule of law. Afghan courts suffer from systemic corruption and intimidation from a variety of sources both within and outside the government.<sup>133</sup> Empowered warlords undermine the legitimacy of the courts as they influence the courts in their jurisdictions with impunity. Combined with the Afghan

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<sup>131</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, "*Afghanistan: Post-Taliban governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*", by Kenneth Katzman (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 22 [http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RS21922\\_20100219.pdf](http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RS21922_20100219.pdf) (accessed February 24, 2010).

<sup>132</sup> Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 195.

<sup>133</sup> Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, 85.

government's seeming unwillingness to combat corruption, the population views the courts as biased, corrupt, and illegitimate. The Taliban exploit this gap in governance by carrying out "justice on the spot" courts based on their interpretation of *Shari'a* law. The Taliban's ability to dispense timely justice in areas where the courts are non-existent, unresponsive or corrupt has become one of its primary recruiting tools.<sup>134</sup>

## 2010 Actors

Setting aside the cultural, geographic, and religious differences in, the myriad of actors and interests in present day Afghanistan largely mirror the tangle of competing interests and actors of Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Hamid Karzai plays the most prominent role in Afghanistan as president of the nascent Islamic republic. His connection to the regional warlords damages his reputation, as public opinion believes that the warlords have considerably more influence than Karzai's ministers or the voting public.<sup>135</sup> The warlords themselves, Ismail Khan, Fahim, Karim Khalil, and Dostum hold positions within the government, maintain tribal militias, and remain strongly tied to their ethnic base and interests, causing further destabilization of the security and political situations.<sup>136</sup> Ethnic rivalries and fears of a Pashtun majority dominated government remain high despite constitutional power-sharing principles. Tribal and *qawm* tensions with central governance structures and authority produce frictions as the nascent government attempts to assert its authority beyond the cities. To that end, the Afghan National

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<sup>134</sup> Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 362-363.

<sup>135</sup> Kim Barker, "Letter from Kabul" *Foreign Affairs* (November 30, 2009), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/features/letters-from/letter-from-kabul-solving-afghanistans-problems> (accessed December 12, 2009).

<sup>136</sup> Christia Fotini and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban" *Foreign Affairs* 88, no.4 (July 2009), 47.

Army (ANA)<sup>137</sup> has slowly gained competence and confidence, but still lacks adequate equipment, is underpaid compared to its insurgent counterparts, and suffers high desertion rates.<sup>138</sup> Its law enforcement counterpart, the Afghan National Police, is beset with corruption, lack of training and little follow on mentoring that degrades the capacity of the police force to execute its mission effectively. Exploiting the security forces' inability to maintain security and government penetration of outlying areas, the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and Hekmatyer's Hezb-i-Islami appear to operate with impunity in the countryside. The United States and NATO are attempting to affect all of the actors with a renewed interest in a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign focused on protecting the population and redefining the nature of the fight.<sup>139</sup> Bounding U.S. efforts, however, was President Obama's promise to limit the Bush administrations open-ended commitment and pledge to evaluate the success of the current strategy in June 2011. This prompts enhanced emphasis on making marked progress in not only the counterinsurgency, but reinforcing Afghanistan's political efficacy as well.

President Obama's deadline is prompted by a growing U.S. domestic dissatisfaction with the war in Afghanistan. Before the release of his new strategy and deadline, however, President Obama's appointment of General Stanley McChrystal to lead operations in Afghanistan marked a significant shift in the fight against the Taliban and other insurgent elements in Afghanistan. General McChrystal's approach to the insurgency was not unique. Indeed, it is reminiscent of the approach used by British forces during the "Ulsterisation" campaign in Northern Ireland introduced in the mid-1970s. General McChrystal's strategy focused on the population as the strategic center of gravity. Above all, it desires to put an Afghan face on security operations

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<sup>137</sup> The Afghan National Security Force consists of the armed forces of Afghanistan, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Army Air Corps (ANAC), as well as the law enforcement organizations Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan Border Police (ABP).

<sup>138</sup> Jones, *Counterinsurgency*, 75.

<sup>139</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. *COMISAF's Initial Assessment*, 2-3.

conducted within Afghanistan. With uneven capabilities across Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and little time to man, train and equip, however, McChrystal's strategy faces greater impediments towards success than the British experienced during the Troubles.

## 2010 Issues

Outside observers and participants in the Troubles readily identified three core elements sustaining the conflict in Northern Ireland. A contemporary parallel in Afghanistan as well. Two of these issues, Pakistan-Afghan relations and Afghan government legitimacy, are crucial to resolving the conflict and allowing democratic processes to take root and flourish. The third core issue, "Western-Islam relations," however, remains the most significant and seemingly intractable issue and its continued existence fuels the insurgency and global terrorism. Comparatively, this issue does not lend itself to structural solutions; instead, Western-Islamic relations are matters based in perception.

Samuel Huntington, in his seminal work *The Clash of Civilizations*, identified several causes for the increase in conflict between the West and Islam. Consequently, Huntington's work provides insights that are important for understanding the underlying tensions of Western efforts in Afghanistan. From the Islamic perspective, Huntington attributes a renewed sense of the unique character and values of Islamic civilization in comparison to the west. Second, the Islamic perspective perceives a threat resulting from the expansion of Western values and norms and the propensity of the West to use military and economic power to continue its expansion. Most importantly, increased interaction between the Muslim and Western worlds stimulates "a new sense of their own identity and how it differs from that of the other."<sup>140</sup> All of these reasons coalesce in Afghanistan, as the Western imposed and backed government remains in power.

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<sup>140</sup> Samuel B. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 211.

GIRoA will continue to attract foreign fighters from Arab states, Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics to assist in the fight to repel foreign invaders and overthrow the existing political institution in Afghanistan. This seemingly intractable issue of west-Islam relations will continue to color the perceptions of insurgents and the Afghan population until the Afghan government gains legitimacy and is able to survive without assistance from western supporters. Finally, it requires a herculean effort from the west to discredit “jihadism as an ideology, [to] change the curriculum at *madrassas* and [to]re-educate militants.”<sup>141</sup>

## 2010 Personal

The personal context of the individual Taliban fighter remains fixated on the tensions arising from Western-Islamic relations. Westerners learned first-hand of these tensions in the PBS produced *Frontline* episode “Behind Taliban Lines.” In this episode, viewers met Fasil, an 18-year-old Taliban fighter, who captured the essence of the ideological and religious convictions of the individual Taliban fighter:

I came myself. I will carry my weapon as long as the Americans are here. It will stay on my shoulders until all the non-believers go home. Then I will put down my weapon. I can't give up my weapon without that.<sup>142</sup>

Fasil's commitment to the cause appears unwavering and, in this sense, is not dissimilar to those of the Irish Republican Army in the early days of its ideological struggle with the British. The presence of U.S. and Western armed forces in Afghanistan is a risk to the Muslim community (the *umma*). In order for the Afghan government to overcome deep-rooted commitment to radical ideology, governments must do more than reeducate individual fighters

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<sup>141</sup> Scott Stewart, “Jihadism and the Importance of Place,” *STRATFOR Global Intelligence*. (March 25, 2010), under “Geographic Factors” [http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100324\\_jihadism\\_and\\_importance\\_place?utm\\_source=SWeekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=100325&utm\\_content=readmore&elq=345bf584b69f40d69b4e0a3b1b503bc](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100324_jihadism_and_importance_place?utm_source=SWeekly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=100325&utm_content=readmore&elq=345bf584b69f40d69b4e0a3b1b503bc) (accessed March 25, 2010).

<sup>142</sup> “Behind Taliban Lines,” *Frontline*, Public Broadcasting System, (originally aired February 23, 2010).

and change the curriculum in the *madrassas*—it must include a sustained effort from the Afghan government and western forces to stifle the efforts of the insurgency to such a heavy degree that the very cause will be closely associated with hopelessness and futility. Government pursuance of reconciliation efforts before leveraging security gains and the strengthening and legitimization of the political structures in the contested area will only be perceived as weakness by the individual insurgent.<sup>143</sup>

### **Conclusion: Are the Taliban Ready to Negotiate?**

This study proceeded from the premise that the United States, its NATO allies, and the government of Afghanistan could engage the Taliban in negotiation and possibly include the Taliban within the Afghan political process. A comparative study of the Taliban's and the IRA's respective strategies provided the study's framework for analyzing the contextual conditions surrounding successful and unsuccessful attempts at negotiation. The analysis concludes with the realization that the Taliban are not ready to participate in productive negotiation. Likewise, the Taliban will continue to refuse to participate in the legitimate Afghan political process. Much like the PIRA in 1972, the Taliban's self-perception is one of strength and therefore they are not willing to compromise their strategic goals through negotiations with a government that is perceived as weak and ineffectual. Current Afghan negotiations with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami insurgent faction support this conclusion as well. Strikingly similar to the results of the PIRA-Whitelaw talks in 1972, Hekmatyar demands the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan a full year earlier than U.S. considerations for troop drawdown. Hekmatyar additionally pressed the Karzai government for a new constitution and elections for

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<sup>143</sup> Fontini and Semple, 38.

Afghanistan.<sup>144</sup> Demands of this magnitude emanate from self-perceptions of strength not weakness. This brief comparison, however, only begins the reasoning behind the conclusion.

An examination of the PIRA's and the Taliban's strategic formulation processes and contextual conditions reveal remarkable similarities as well. Closer scrutiny, however, exposes that the similarities do not lend themselves to similar conclusions as to how to end the insurgency. First, the evolution of the PIRA's and the Taliban's comprehensive strategies illuminate a critical difference between the two, which has significant impact on the willingness of insurgent organizations to accept reconciliation and outreach. The PIRA's strategy manifested from a period of apparent weakness in the late 1970s where British counterinsurgency and criminalization policies forced reorganization and a reevaluation of strategy to ensure its survival and relevancy. Moreover, the "Armalite and the Ballot Box" policy adopted by the PIRA set the stage for further incorporation into the political process and political overtures. Conversely, the Taliban's strategy evolved as its strength grew and further adopted non-traditional means to strengthen their position. Combined with the acknowledgement of Taliban momentum and scheduled withdrawal of U.S. forces, this further provides the Taliban, like the PIRA in 1972, with substantial incentive to continue to increase its pressure on the Karzai government and the international community and to reject negotiation overtures.<sup>145</sup> Secondly, both organizations' strategies evolved to include several lines of effort to extend their capabilities beyond a military centric approach. Each organization desires an overthrow of the existing social and political order and the imposition of its own desired political system.

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<sup>144</sup> "Afghan Hezb-e-Islami Militants Hold Peace Talks in Kabul," *BBC News*, March 22, 2010 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8579380.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8579380.stm) (accessed March 24, 2010).

<sup>145</sup> Gary Schmitt, "Peace, It's Wonderful: But Winning it is Hard Work," *The Weekly Standard* 14, no. 45 (August 17, 2009), <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/016/826ztevp.asp> (accessed August 21, 2009).

Yet, the decisive point is where the strategies diverge. The PIRA believed that ousting British forces and rule was the means to the end. The Neo-Taliban, however, is focused on winning the support of fellow Muslims to ultimately achieve their goals.<sup>146</sup> This objective is not narrowly focused on Afghanistan, but understands the internationalization of the movement and its dependency on external support for funding, moral support and manpower. The strategy thrives on Western and Islamic tensions to create the conditions necessary for winning the fight in Afghanistan: the creation of positive external and internal perceptions for establishing and sustaining Taliban rule in a post-western Afghanistan.

To counter this powerful narrative requires a radical reframing on how the United States and its coalition partners execute operations in Afghanistan. The lynchpin of the current US strategy recognizes this and shifts the focus from dynamic military operations to protecting the population. Indeed, over-militarizing operations is dangerous and counterproductive for protecting, and ultimately winning, the population's support.<sup>147</sup> The strategy of police primacy parallels the British approach in 1976 when the British ended internment without trial and pushed police primacy in operations and patrolling. When combined with the removal of republican "no-go" areas, the British compelled the PIRA to re-examine their strategy and coerce it onto a track towards political reforms. Current NATO offensives attempt to deny sanctuary to the Taliban and project a more positive image of legitimate governance to the Afghan public and the world, but a crucial element is not present.

Missing from the current context is a viable and credible Afghan police and army that can replace U.S. and NATO forces in Afghan security operations. Gen. McChrystal's strategy

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<sup>146</sup> Guistozi, 138.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas Johnson and Richard English, "Winning the War in Afghanistan: Echoes of the IRA?" *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 15, no.1 (Fall/Winter 2008), 278 <http://www.bjwa.org/article.php?id=j40v4R5x303ik45V6Fjc647Ys9YOnJD4qjaq5cF0> (accessed November 18, 2009).

explicitly addresses the issue of ANSF effectiveness and the need for them to take the lead in domestic security operations. Yet, the professionalization and growth of the ANSF will take considerable time and up to five years to complete the ANP.<sup>148</sup> Meanwhile, American and NATO forces will continue to take the lead and increasing the risk for insurgents to capitalize on mistakes or heavy handedness in the execution of operations. Combined with the Taliban's emphasis on information operations, the Taliban will quickly and efficiently distribute any information to degrade American, NATO, and Afghan counterinsurgency efforts.

Most importantly, the Northern Ireland example illustrates the importance of the temporal aspect. The longevity of the conflict permitted the British to develop different strategies and policies in relation to the adaptive nature of the insurgency. Structural adjustments within the political system took considerable time to negotiate and implement. The reformation of Northern Ireland's domestic security forces was an iterative process and based on trial-and-error and examination of best practices. Meanwhile, the British maintained constant military and political pressure on the PIRA and PSF that allowed Northern Ireland's security force reformation to take root. Isolating the Taliban also will take time, a commodity the Taliban knows the U.S. and NATO do not have. Thus, the Taliban can derive strength from the fact that the nascent Afghan government, with all of its structural instabilities, cannot overcome its significant shortcomings in less than a year. This provides the insurgency additional time and ability to generate resources to implement its political and social program.

Further affecting the efficacy of negotiation and possible political assimilation of the Taliban are the international variables influencing both the Taliban and GIROA. In this manner, the role Pakistan plays closely resembles that of Eire, where sanctuary and popular domestic support permitted the PIRA to gain a sense of safety, political and material support, and confidence in its ability to meet its strategic goals. Until the Republic of Ireland targeted PIRA members and the

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<sup>148</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, 48.

British actively patrolled the border areas, the PIRA moved freely through the sieve that was the border. The same is true of Pakistan, and unless the Pakistani government takes more active measures to control the frontier areas the Taliban will continue to draw strength from its ability to move across the borders with impunity. Most of all, to place the Taliban in a position of disadvantage similar to that of the PIRA in the late stages of the Troubles, the international community must find a way to end Pakistan's role of funneling and directly providing material and financial support for the insurgency. The British encouraged the United States to aggressively pursue and close financial and arms networks originating from the United States to Northern Ireland. International interdiction efforts slowly strangled the PIRA and exposed it to greater risk as it had to rely on other sources and . As a result, the PIRA had fewer military options and thus more willing to negotiation. At present, the Taliban have no such incentive and are dealing more from a position of strength, much like the PIRA of 1972. Indeed, as French counterinsurgency expert David Galula points out, landlocked countries like Afghanistan are the worst places to conduct counterinsurgencies, as government forces are unable to isolate insurgents from international support.<sup>149</sup>

The current trend towards including Pakistan within any analysis of Afghanistan also resembles British considerations of the "Irish Dimension" during the Troubles. Any advance or solution with regard to the Taliban must include Pakistan within the negotiation process. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1984 removed historic barriers for cooperation between the UK and Eire in order to find a solution to the crisis in Northern Ireland. Both parties intrinsically understood that no solution could be found if those barriers remained unresolved. As a consequence of the agreement, Eire was in a position of influence with the Northern Irish nationalist and republican parties to facilitate mediation of disputes and to assist in finding an acceptable solution. Inviting Pakistan into the negotiation process is not a far-fetched proposition;

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<sup>149</sup> Galula, 25.

given the inability of Pakistan to curb a simmering Pakistani Taliban insurgency, the incentive for Pakistan to take a more productive role is strikingly similar to the threat violent republicanism posed to Eire. The current inability to win full support from Pakistan, however, places significant risk not only to counterinsurgency efforts, but also to the ability to enter into fruitful dialogue with the Taliban.

The lack of a third party mediator in Afghanistan is perhaps of greater consequence to the facilitation of talks between the contesting parties. In Northern Ireland, for example, the Hume-Adams talks occurred with the assistance of a Roman Catholic priest. Later in the Troubles, the United States and President Bill Clinton were crucial to the final success of the Belfast Agreement. The fundamental question in the Afghan context lies in identifying the party who could act as the third party mediator. The questions beg: who is disinterested in the conflict, who is perceived as legitimate by all interested parties, and who possesses the capacity to cajole and/or coerce? The traditional players in these roles in the post-Cold War era, the United States, NATO, and the United Nations, do not fit one or all of these criteria. Arab nations could fill the role, but mutual suspicion between Western and Islamic countries may displace its worth. Albeit not a necessary condition for successful negotiation between the Taliban, Afghanistan and NATO, the Northern Ireland examples demonstrates the validity of the concern especially as cross-cultural misunderstandings and vested interests enter into the fray.

The juxtaposition of Northern Ireland's and Afghanistan's structural conditions produces several points of similarity and divergence and underscores the Taliban's reluctance to participate in negotiations. The most prominent dissimilarity is the existence of a viable state system within Northern Ireland before the onset and throughout the duration of the Troubles. Indeed, "The most striking aspect of violence in Northern Ireland is that it did not result in the total collapse of the system. Instead, the British System, with the increasing support of Ireland, sustained a 'long war'

over more than thirty years while maintaining the framework of a western democratic society.”<sup>150</sup> The ability of the political system to absorb the effects of the insurgency and eventually integrate insurgent constitutional parties points to the resilience of an established democratic system and its ability to restore public confidence. Essentially, the PIRA and PSF realized that their efforts could not uproot this tradition and, begrudgingly, they instead decided to work within the system. Yet, at the beginning of the Troubles, the PIRA held firm in its pursuit to overthrow British rule and establish a new unified state.

The Taliban resemble the early stage PIRA in this respect as well. The operational momentum gained over the past few years myopically focused the Taliban on the single objective of establishing the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan. Confidence in its ability to achieve this goal is bolstered by structural conditions of a failed state unable to sustain high levels of public support, unbridled public corruption and lack of a viable judicial system. This severely limits the ability of GIRA to criminalize the Taliban and fully transform the insurgency from an overt political act to a criminal enterprise whose aim undermines the public good. In this regard, any talks with the Taliban at the present will provide the same result as the secret 1972 Whitelaw talks with the PIRA—the demand for unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan and a continuance of hostile military, political and information operations against GIRA and coalition forces.

*The Washington Post* reported on March 11, 2010 that British Foreign Secretary David Miliband underscored the necessity for the Afghan government to engage in negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgent elements. “Now is the time,” Mr. Miliband stated, “for the Afghans

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<sup>150</sup> Duncan Morrow, “Lessons from the Peace Process: Personal Observations.” (paper presented Liberal International 55<sup>th</sup> Congress, Belfast, May 15, 2008), 3. <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/28157669/Lessons-from-the-Peace-Process-Personal-Observations-By-Dr> (accessed November 25, 2009).

to pursue a political settlement with as much vigor and energy as we are pursuing the military and civilian effort.”<sup>151</sup> Supporting Mr. Miliband’s logic is the reality that military options alone will not secure the peace the Afghanistan. Peace in Afghanistan requires a coordinated and comprehensive effort spanning all the elements of national power to reduce the capabilities and influence of the insurgency. While Mr. Miliband’s rationale is strong, it seemingly overlooks the long path to peace in Northern Ireland. At the beginning of the insurgency in Northern Ireland, British attempts at outreach did not immediately produce a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Indeed, it took thirty years of comprehensive counterinsurgency efforts to redefine the political and social environment in and around Northern Ireland for the PIRA to accept political accommodation and repudiate violence. This is not to say that outreach and negotiation are not viable tools; these approaches must remain in the menu of options available to quell the insurgency. Nonetheless, pushing negotiation and outreach during periods when insurgent movements perceive the momentum is in their favor poses significant risk for perpetuating that perception of strength.

Arguably, no two insurgencies are alike and therefore a comparison of the PIRA and the Taliban has its shortcomings. Differences in the political, social, religious and cultural variables between Northern Ireland and Afghanistan are vast and directly affect the reasons compelling each insurgency to fight for their own respective political goals. What emerges from the comparison of the strategies and the holistic understanding of the environments surrounding the two insurgencies, however, are how those seemingly contrasting variables coalesce. In this manner, the two-system comparison yielded remarkable similarities and emerging trends that transcend cursory differences. In short, what emerged is that the Taliban is reacting to changing environmental stimuli in the same manner as the PIRA. The direct consequence of this similarity

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<sup>151</sup> “British Official Urges Afghanistan to Negotiate with Taliban, Other Insurgents,” Karen DeYoung, *Washington Post*, March 11, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/10/AR2010031003888.html> (accessed March 11, 2010).

is the likelihood of negotiations and outreach to take hold. Thus, policy makers in Washington, London, and Kabul should cool their rhetoric surrounding negotiation and dampen expectations that talks with the Taliban will yield significant results in the short term.

This conclusion does not mean the dialogue between the contesting parties should not begin. Indeed, the Northern Ireland experience points to the necessity of maintaining communicative channels with the insurgency in order to provide insight into the strength of the insurgency. Most importantly, as was the case in Northern Ireland, back-channel communications provided the basis for substantive negotiations when the conditions for constructive dialogue emerged. A further point of study would be to examine the content and language of insurgent back-channel communications to find the contextual “sweet spot” where substantive dialogue begins. In the meantime, however, expectations of talks with the Taliban should be tempered by the fact that the Taliban insurgency, like the PIRA in 1972, believes it can win.

## APPENDIX—The Orange Order

The Orange Order, a protestant fraternal organization, provides the central organizing link for all protestant activity regardless of protestant religious affiliation throughout Northern Ireland.<sup>152</sup> It is deeply anti-catholic and rooted in the Protestant folk memories of the 1688 Glorious Revolution, the Irish 1641 Rebellion, and their “deliverance from popish tyranny in 1690 by William of Orange.”<sup>153</sup> The importance of the historical affiliation is that the Orange Order, and by association Unionists and Loyalists, believed in the creation of a distinct Protestant homeland in Northern Ireland. This vision would entice Protestantism and the Order to take any means necessary to secure their vision and place them directly at odds with the catholic minority in Northern Ireland.<sup>154</sup> The Order would deeply ingrain itself in the political fabric of Northern Ireland to the point that by the 1960s, only three out of fifty-four members of Unionist cabinet members between 1921-1969 were not members of the Order. During the same period, Orangemen comprised an overwhelming majority of the backbenchers in the Northern Irish Parliament. The influence of the Order as a political or social force within protestant Northern Ireland is not underrated. “In the Northern Irish context because of its dedication to the Protestant faith and the British Crown, the Orange Order has always been perceived by others and seen itself as performing a key political role in opposing any move towards a United Ireland.”<sup>155</sup> Thus, the interdependence of politics and religion in Northern Ireland enabled the protestant majority to view the deteriorating security condition catalyzed by the civil rights movement in wholly

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<sup>152</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 13.

<sup>153</sup> Jim Smyth, “The Men of No Popery: the Origins of the Orange Order,” *History Ireland* 3, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), <http://homepages.iol.ie/~fagann/1798/orange.htm> (accessed February 2 2010).

<sup>154</sup> Holland, 227.

<sup>155</sup> James W. McAuley, “‘For God and for the Crown’: Contemporary Political and Social Attitudes among Orange Order Members in Northern Ireland,” *Political Psychology* 28, no. 1 (2007), 38.

different manner. From their perspective, mobilized Catholics were a multi-pronged threat to their welfare, Protestantism in Ireland, and a direct threat to the state that ensured their primacy and livelihood. However, believing in Protestantism's monolithic stance and its commitment to violence is a mistake.

Leading the charge for militant loyalists was the minister Ian Paisley. Paisley had a unique ability to channel grassroots Protestant fears, and his violent opposition to the reform measures introduced by Northern Ireland Prime Ministers placed him at odds with the political Unionist establishment.<sup>156</sup> In essence, Paisley and like-minded followers believed any form of compromise with the Catholic population came at the expense of traditional Unionist principles. Paisley's zero-sum formulation and firebrand opposition to rapprochement with the Catholics incited protestant youth and the working class to join militant loyalist groups to counter Republican and Nationalist advances in politics and in neighborhoods. Politically, Paisley would garner huge support within the protestant community for his outspoken views and would become a political force to reckon with throughout the Troubles. Forming the Democratic Unionist Party in 1970, Paisley's DUP continues to muster political and social support to retain perceived rights under a devolved political structure in the UK.

Loyalist paramilitary violence centered on two different activities—security and punishment attacks—the former being a response to a real or perceived Catholic or security force encroachment into what they deemed as exclusively protestant affairs. Surprisingly, punishment attacks focused inwardly to their own communities and organizations in an effort to check dissenting opinion within. Like their republican counterparts including the PIRA, loyalist organizations relied on the use of terror tactics in their zeal to protect their cherished ideals and their neighborhoods.

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<sup>156</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 34.

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