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The Primacy of Grievance as a Structural Cause of Oppositional Political Terrorism: Comparing Al Fatah, FARC, and PIRA

Jeffrey Ian Ross, Ph.D.
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Synopsis: This chapter applies the structural components of a previously developed causal model to three well-known and different campaigns of oppositional political terrorism: Al-Fatah, FARC, and PIRA. By doing so, the reader will have a better understanding of the causal dynamics of oppositional political terrorism. After the history of each group is provided, each of 10 basic structural factors is applied to the terrorist organizations. The evidence points to the powerful and longstanding effects of grievance to sustain the longevity of the group.

Introduction

Over the past five decades researchers, policymakers, practitioners and pundits have identified numerous kinds of terrorism. Part of the struggle, in trying to understand the phenomenon of terrorism has been coming to some sort of consensus with respect to a proper definition, and then developing typologies that are analytically meaningful. Nevertheless a considerable amount of ground has been covered with these important building blocks in the field of terrorism studies. For example, Alex Schmid has developed a consensus definition (1983), which while modified by him (Schmid & Jongman, 1988) and

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others (Ross, 1993; Ross & Gurr, 1989), seems to have considerable scholarly currency.

Additionally, Mickolus’ typology of terrorism (1981), breaking it down into four types based on whether there is government involvement and if it involves or affects citizens of more than one country, has widespread utility. One of the hallmarks of Mickolus’ typology is the identification of oppositional political terrorism. This kind of political violence/crime subsumes domestic, transnational, international and state-sponsored terrorism. Here the state and its allies are targeted for political violence. This term also distinguishes these kinds of actions from state terrorism, which consists of political violence/crimes committed by governments against their own people. Over the past four decades, not only have researchers struggled with conceptual aspects of the field, some have advanced explanations for the causes of terrorism.

Few researchers, however, have developed a general causal model or theory of the causes of oppositional political terrorism. In fact, in recent times there has been some noticeable opposition, if not hostility, connected to the notion that there may be “root causes of terrorism” (Newman, 2006). Nevertheless, these analyses have produced an important and necessary knowledge base from which to conduct a further study. Among their accomplishments are: the identification of important causal variables; specification of factors which are important in the stages of terrorism (i.e. Crenshaw, 1981; Johnson, 1982, ch. 8); description of individual factors in a historical context (i.e. Targ, 1979); partial development of a typology of causes (i.e. Crenshaw, Johnson); deduction of factors from more general theories of conflict (e.g. Hamilton, 1978); identification of processes which are contributing and sufficient (Gross, 1972); specification and empirical testing of relationships among some of the variables (e.g. Hamilton); and, the construction of models on the causes and sequences of terrorism (e.g. Gross; Hamilton). Merits aside, these works suffer from a series of problems that include, but are not limited to, the absence of a comprehensive theory or a model of terrorism (Ross, 1993, 1999).

Objective

A causal model of oppositional political terrorism would allow us to better specify the factors which contribute to terrorism and may help counterterrorist experts to minimize the frequency and intensity of this form of political violence. In terms of sequencing, it is easier to study structural factors because it is less resource intensive than a psychological approach. For the latter, it is usually necessary to interview participants (in the field, in prison, and in other places where access is difficult or dangerous).
It also follows that each type of terrorism has a different pattern of causation. Terrorism is principally a response to a variety of subtle, interacting, ongoing, and changing psychological and structural factors manifested by perpetrators, and audiences (i.e. victims, public, business community, government). Thus, the relative importance of each independent variable depends on the context, which includes: the type of perpetrator, terrorist act, target, country, audience, and time period.

A considerable diversity exists among terrorists, their organizations, and the context in which they operate. However, if analysts are to move beyond case study analysis (with the subjects often chosen at random), it is imperative that generalizations be made. In an effort to address these concerns Ross (1993) developed a structural causal model of oppositional political terrorism. The proposed model is general enough to accommodate a variety of different individuals, groups and contexts.

The model incorporates 10 basic structural factors, divided between precursors and precipitants, and is used to explain the rise of oppositional political terrorism. This model has been applied in whole or in part to the Québécois separatist-related terrorism (Ross, 1995a); the relationship between protest and terrorism in connection with the Gulf Crisis/Conflict (1990–1991) (Ross, 1995b) and has been extended to integrate psychological factors (Ross, 1999).

It is also recognized that many of these variables are necessary but not sufficient as causes, and that not all factors identified need to be present for terrorism to occur. The variables are, from least to most important: modernization; type of political system; level of urbanization; social, cultural and historical facilitation; organizational split and development; presence of other forms of unrest; support; counterterrorist organization failure; availability of weapons and explosives; and, grievances. In short, all terrorism depends upon a grievance. This simple idea, often overlooked by other writers, is crucial because it focuses our attention on the moral outrage that precedes one's search for an extremist network where conspiracies are formed. Without first appreciating the power of grievance, we can never fully understand the dynamics that individuals and groups are subject to in their decisions to engage in terrorism.

**Case Selection**

This chapter applies the structural components of the causal model developed to three different campaigns of oppositional political terrorism. Although several terrorist groups were possible candidates for inclusion, the organizations selected are geographically distinct, with slightly different objectives, and are well known to the general public, counterterrorism experts, and scholars alike. Moreover, they are still in operation at various levels of intensity. In most
respects, our approach conforms to what is typically called a ‘most-similar’ systems design (Lijphart, 1971, 1975). In short, this method restricts comparisons made among entities which share several commonalities in order to make generalizations which are relatively valid.

First, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has spawned a number of terrorist organizations, including al-Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP GC), the Abu Nidal group, and Hamas fighting for the creation of a separate homeland for the Palestinian people. One of the earliest established, most well known, and largest groups is al-Fatah (or Fatah for short). Formed in 1957, this organization, originally led by Yasser Arafat, has been responsible for 233 incidents, with 1,462 injuries, and 463 fatalities (TKB database, retrieved February 21, 2008). In 1972, although Fatah officially announced that it would no longer engage in terrorism, it still supports other groups, such as the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade (referred to in some circles as the armed wing of Fatah), which engages in suicide bombings.

Second, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), established in 1964, is one of the oldest terrorist organizations in South America. They want to replace the existing government of Colombia with a regime run on Marxist-Leninist principles. Since their inception, this group has been responsible for 656 incidents, resulting in 1,373 injuries, and 703 deaths (TKB database, retrieved February 21, 2008). In 1984, after countless deaths and injuries to police, the military and non-combatants, the Colombian government began to negotiate with FARC, with hopes of transforming this organization into a respectable political party. Although some members of FARC conceded with government requests, others remained steadfast in their approach and tactics to further the mission of the group. One of the consequences of detente, however, was that disgruntled members of Colombia’s military started an unofficial war against the legitimate FARC candidates. In 2002, FARC resumed its terrorist campaign against the government. They are reported to have about 170,000 members (Holmes, Gutierrez de Pineres, & Curtin, 2007).

Third, in Northern Ireland where the state’s legitimacy is contested by the minority nationalist (Catholic) population, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) waged an armed struggle from 1969–1997. Irish republicanism has a long history of opposing the British presence in Ireland, but it was not until 1968, with the advent of the civil rights movement, that the IRA was re-activated in response to repressive laws, police actions and Protestant antagonism. The Provisional IRA (PIRA), which emerged in 1969 as a result of a split in the ranks of the ‘Official’ IRA, carried out numerous attacks in Northern Ireland, England and elsewhere to motivate the British to leave Northern Ireland. The peace initiative of 1993 led to the Irish Peace Process. The last decade has seen the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, disarmament of the Provisional IRA and a new form of devolved consociational power sharing between the
nationalist and unionist representatives. Since its origins, the IRA has been accused of 84 incidents of terrorism (TKB database, retrieved February 21, 2008). Although the TKB database indicated that the IRA’s terrorism has resulted in 140 injuries, and 29 deaths (retrieved February 21, 2008), according to the Conflict Archive which is available on the Internet, and Malcolm Sutton’s *An index of deaths from the conflict in Ireland 1969–1993*, there have been 3,524 deaths related to the Troubles (1969–2000) plus about 30,000 injuries. It is said that the IRA is responsible for half these deaths (Sutton, 1994).

The case studies that follow examine the history of these three groups and review the relevant structural components that led to their establishment.

**Al-Fatah**

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations passed Resolution 181, which effectively partitioned Palestine (occupied by the British since the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, circa 1918) into two states: a Jewish one (Israel), and a Palestinian one for the Arab majority living in the area. Although the plan was accepted by the Jewish Agency (responsible for monitoring the negotiations), it was rejected by the Palestinians and the neighbouring Arab states acting on the Palestinians’ behalf. Violence between Arabs and Jews broke out in Palestine. On 14 May 1948, the British removed their troops. Israelis, through the efforts of their army, the Israeli Defense Force, immediately consolidated their power and repressed the Palestinians living within their borders (Chomsky, 1983; Morris, 2001). Many moved to the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

In 1957, Yasser Arafat and approximately 20 other individuals from different clandestine Palestinian groups formed al-Fatah in Kuwait (Hart 1984; Iyad 1981; Mishal 1986). They were influenced by the success of the Algerian revolution, in which nationalists used an urban guerrilla campaign to successfully force the French out of Algeria. Over time, Fatah – also known as the National Palestine Liberation Movement – has become the “largest, oldest, and most influential Palestinian resistance organization” (Long, 1990, p. 36). Fatah has approximately twelve to fifteen thousand fighters and numerous support personnel (Livingstone & Halevy, 1990, p. 72). Fatah focuses on Palestinian nationalism; it does not support any particular political ideology or religious doctrine, despite the fact that many of its leaders are Muslims (Long, 1990, p. 36). It has received resources from “Arab governments, criminal activities, and profits from its extensive portfolio and other business activities” (Livingston & Halevy 1990, p. 72).

During its history Fatah has maintained offices throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East, Europe and Asia. At the time of this writing it
It appears that their only known headquarters is in the West Bank. This terrorist organization is broken down into subunits, one of which, known as the Western Section, “was headed, until April 1988, by ... Abu Jihad. It is an operations body set up to promote armed struggle ... in the occupied territories. Once headquartered in Amman, Jordan”, and for a while in Baghdad, “it has about four hundred members. Since the death of Abu Jihad, Yasser Arafat has assumed full control of the Western Section” (Livingstone & Halevy, 1990, p. 73).

In 1964, with the support of other Arab countries, Egypt established the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the governing body of the Palestinian people. In June 1967, the neighbouring Arab countries of Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria waged a combined military attack against Israel. In what is popularly known as the Six-Day War, the Israelis not only thwarted the aggression on their own territory, but also took control of additional land in the Arab countries, securing the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank (also known as the Occupied Territories). Fatah gained control of the PLO in 1968 after the setbacks of the Six-Day War and the Battle of Karameh (Jordan) (March 1968), during which they made several military gains against an encroaching Israeli army.

In the 1960s and 1970s, both as a source of revenue and for political reasons, Fatah trained some Middle Eastern, European, African and Asian terrorist groups, who then committed violent actions in support of each other’s causes. Many Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Persian Gulf states, provided aid to Fatah during this time.

In September 1970, fearing a loss of political power, Jordan’s King Hussein expelled high-ranking Palestinians living in his country. What made this all the more strange was that Palestinians and Jordanians are ethnically very similar. Moreover, many were Jordanian citizens. The majority relocated to southern Lebanon, where Fatah established a strong presence that they used to their advantage to attack northern Israeli settlements.

At several points in time during its existence, Fatah committed terrorist actions alone or had one of its subunits commit violence against Israel targets. For example, the breakaway group Black September was born out of the ashes of the Jordanian expulsion. This organization planned and committed several spectacular terrorist events, including “the murder of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics and of two American diplomats, Ambassador Clio Noel and his deputy chief of mission, Curtis Moore, in Khartoum in March 1973” (Long, 1990, p. 38).

Shortly after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, during which Egypt and Syria backed by a coalition of Arab states, attempted but failed to retake the land lost in the 1967 conflict, prominent Palestinian terrorist organizations lost confidence in the Egyptians’ and Syrians’ ability to serve as their advocates. Fatah announced it would cease engaging in international terrorism, particu-
larly hijacking, because they believed that it was not helping their cause and blamed the sporadic attacks which happened after this declaration to be the work of offshoot organizations (Halevy & Livingston, 1990). In 1974, in a signal that both he and his organizations were achieving international legitimacy, Arafat addressed the United Nations. This was coterminous with the dissolution of Black September (Dobson, 1974).

In the mid-1970s, the Israelis (bolstered by United Nations forces) set up a security zone inside Lebanon on Israel’s northern border. Starting in 1975, however, and lasting until 1990 – with factions such as Maronite Christians, (represented by the Phalange), Shiite Muslims, Hezbollah, Druze and members of the PLO – a bloody civil war took place in Lebanon.

In 1979, the governments of Israel and Egypt (with the assistance of then-US President Jimmy Carter) signed the Camp David peace accord. The PLO (and by extension Fatah) recognized that it would have to deal with Israel directly and engage in some sort of compromise.

In June 1982, however, Israelis became exhausted with cross-border attacks by Hezbollah and Palestinian factions invaded Lebanon beyond the security zone. Within days Israeli tanks made their way to Beirut. During the occupation, the Phalange, a Lebanese political party and militia primarily composed of Maronite Christians, (who were loosely under the control of the Israeli army), made its way into the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, ostensibly to root out Palestinian gunmen. Instead, the Phalange massacred 460 to 800 individuals, 35 of whom were women and children.

In May 1983, the United States brokered an agreement for the Israelis and Palestinians to leave Lebanon, and for American, French and Italian peacekeepers to maintain order. Palestinian fighters relocated to Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, Yemen and other Middle Eastern countries (Mishal, 1986). Meanwhile, “Arafat and the PLO leadership had to be evacuated to Tunis” (Laqueur 2003, p. 102). Although the relocation of the PLO headquarters to Tunis would make it more difficult for Israelis to attack, it also meant that the leadership became increasingly out of touch with what was happening ‘on the street’ in Palestinian areas. This also paved the way for the creation of the Intifada, largely an autonomous outgrowth of the day-to-day frustrations of living under Israeli occupation.

Starting in 1987, many Palestinian activists living in the Occupied Territories engaged in what was called the Intifada (Schiff & Ya’ari, 1989). The Intifada primarily consisted of youths attacking Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank with rocks and stones. When the Israeli army overreacted by injuring and killing participants, many of the world’s media outlets were present to broadcast the army shooting what appeared to be defenceless youths. In the furor of the times, an Islamic fundamentalist group called Hamas (a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood) was born. Although Hamas, established in 1972, was originally a self-help organization (providing welfare and social
services to needy Palestinians), in 1997 it started engaging in terrorism (Mishal & Sela, 2002). Since that time, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, (another Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organization which derives its name from the Islamic word and practice 'Holy War') have carried out numerous suicide attacks against the Israeli army and Israeli civilians, inside both the Occupied Territories and Israel proper. These two splinter groups of the Muslim Brotherhood want to establish an Islamic country in these areas and do not recognize Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign state (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/978626.stm). Not only are they seen as a threat to Israel, but also to the leadership of the PLO, and many Western countries because they are perceived to be more violent and less susceptible to negotiation.

In April 1993, the PLO and Israeli Government signed the Declaration of Principles (also known as the Oslo Accords). The Oslo Accords set out a number of agreements to foster peace between the two groups and the normalization of relations with the other Arab countries. Among the concessions were that Fatah would give up terrorism, and that the Israelis would permit the Palestinians limited autonomy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Both Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat received the Nobel Peace Prize for this accomplishment. According to the plan for limited Palestinian autonomy, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA or PA for short) was formed in 1994 to administer the Gaza Strip and West Bank, with Arafat as its head.

Despite the accords, it has been alleged that Fatah financially and politically supports armed factions or wings such as Force 17, the Hawari Special Operations Group, Tanzim and the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade. In 1998, things looked promising for peace; a deal brokered by US President Bill Clinton, called the Wye River Accords, was signed by Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Essentially, per the accords, the Palestinians were going to crack down on terrorism, Israel would return land to Palestinians, and Palestinians in Israeli prisons would be transferred to the PNA. This was popularly seen as a land-for-peace deal. Due to increased tension, however, in 2000 a second Intifada began, coupled with suicide bombings in crowded areas (e.g. buses, markets, etc.) in Israeli cities.

According to Newman (2003), “Hamas and Jihad are responsible for attacks on Israeli citizens on the West Bank and Israel proper” in discos, restaurants, bus stations and shopping malls (p. 155). Israeli retaliation for the attacks killed a great number of people. “Equally for most Israelis”, Newman points out, “the failure of Arafat to clamp down on Hamas and Jihad was a clear indication that the renewed violence was taking place with the tacit approval of Arafat … . While this may have been true at the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, by 9/11, Arafat lacked total control over all the Palestinian factions and he would have been unable to prevent every suicide bombing” (2003, p. 155). In fact, by the summer of 2001, the popularity of Fatah and the PA had
finally been eclipsed by Islamic fundamentalist and other Palestinian nationalist groups (Newman, 2003, p. 156).

In the wake of 9/11, the United States has continued in its efforts to broker a new peace agreement. About a week after 9/11, “Bush forced [Israeli Prime Minister] Sharon and Arafat to agree to a ceasefire and it was announced that if the ceasefire held for 48 hours, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres would reopen peace talks with the Palestinian Leader” (Newman, 2003, p. 157).

In March 2002, the Israeli Defense Forces occupied the West Bank; surrounded the city of Ramallah (West Bank), and at various points in time encircled Arafat’s compound, which was heavily affected by shelling. Several assassinations and assassination attempts have been carried out against the leadership of al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade and Hamas. Between 2000 and 2004 suicide bombings took place on a regular basis inside Israel. Since 2005, there has been a very significant decrease in suicide bombings (although many have been foiled). They are no longer regular occurrences.

On 11 November 2004, two weeks after being transported to a hospital in France because he was suffering from an intestinal disorder, Arafat slipped into a coma and died. Many international leaders hoped that Arafat’s death would pave the way to increased peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since then, there have been some serious changes in the leadership of both the Israelis and Palestinians. On 6 January 2006 Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a major stroke and it is unlikely that he will fully recover. In his place the deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has assumed power. Later that month (26 January 2006) Hamas won the general election for the Palestinian parliament claiming 76 seats to Fatah’s 43, and with 13 going to smaller parties and independents.

After Arafat’s death the leadership of Fatah was assumed by Farouk Kaddoumi, a veteran of the organization since 1960. Most of his activities have been conducted while in exile (outside of the West Bank and Gaza). He has held senior positions in the PLO, but is opposed to the Oslo Accords, and the PNA. He is often in conflict with the PNA.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

Three so-called narco-terrorist groups operate in Colombia: the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the Armed Forces of Colombia, or Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). FARC is the largest, best trained, and most deadly of the three. FARC is an extreme, left-wing, communist-inspired group with a reported membership of twelve to eighteen thousand (Simonsen & Spindlove, 2004, 341; www.farcep.org). Established in 1964, this group is led by Manuel Marulanda (formerly known as Pedro Antonio Marin, a.k.a.
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Tirofijo (“Sureshot”) who is in his seventies, and six others, including senior military commander Jorge Briceño, a.k.a. Mono Jojoy. Although its origins are murky, the group first came to public attention in 1966 “as the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party” (Simonsen & Spindlove, 2004, p. 341).

Part of the reason for FARC’s success is that it has developed a loyal following among Colombia’s poor, especially the peasants and indigenous people who live in relatively remote rural areas (Stafford & Palacios, 2002). In some respects, FARC is better described as a guerrilla organization that uses terrorism to further its objectives (e.g. Chaliand, 1983; Marighela, 1971). However, because of its killing of civilians it should be considered a terrorist organization. This group has accumulated significant resources through the drug trade (i.e. coca, opium and marijuana), either through cultivation or through providing security for traffickers (Ehrenfeld, 1992).

Its primary objective is to overthrow the Colombian Government. Other demands include increased equality, a reduction in unemployment, land reform, an end to privatization, and a redistribution of wealth. FARC is also anti-American; it believes that the United States is an imperialist country, especially because of its intervention in Colombian affairs. Ironically, FARC wants Colombia to legalize drugs. They argue that this would reduce the violence and negative effects of these illegal substances. Because of its connection with drug trafficking, FARC maintains links to criminal gangs in Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela.

FARC engages in kidnapping, extortion, bank robbery and drug trafficking in order to finance the organization, but in terms of pure terrorism, it has been responsible for assassinations, bombings and the hijacking of an airliner. It focuses on a wide range of targets including the police, military, politicians and civilians. FARC’s attacks on government targets has led to the development of death squads, paramilitary organizations that engage in extrajudicial killings and disappearances, as well as torture of actual or suspected members of the terrorist organization or their sympathizers. Most of its violence has been confined to Colombia; rarely has FARC engaged in terrorism outside the country.

In the later 1980s, FARC established the Patriotic Union (UP), a political party, but the UP fell victim to right-wing death squads sponsored by drug lords and members of the Colombian military. Apparently, some three thousand UP members were killed, including its 1990 presidential candidate, Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1746777.stm).

In 1998, as a concession to sit down to peace talks, Colombian President Andrés Pastrana granted FARC a 42,000-square kilometre safe haven, which was essentially their base of operations. The negotiations proceeded slowly as FARC continued to build up their resources (through gun running, coca production, smuggling, etc.). In the meantime, the group kidnapped and killed several politicians including Ingrid Betancourt, a leading and well-liked presi-
dential candidate. In 2001, Pastrana once again began talks with FARC about a peace treaty: However, “as negotiations became bogged down, the Pastrana government threatened to end the deal that had created a demilitarized zone” (Simonsen & Spindlove, 2004, p. 341). In February 2002, the government ended the talks, revoked the political status of FARC, issued warrants for the arrest of its leaders, and instructed Colombia’s military to retake the area occupied by FARC. The military offensive called ‘Operation Black Cat’, used both aircraft and helicopters (Simonsen & Spindlove, 2004, p. 341).

From 2002 to 2004, FARC has been under constant attack by the mounting police and military attacks ordered by President Alvaro Uribe Velez. According to a recent Associated Press story, “Colombian forces have captured or killed top regional commanders with noms de guerre ‘El Negro Acacio’, who oversaw much of the group’s coca operations, ‘Martin Sombra’ who is alleged to have guarded hostages, including three US contractors, and ‘Martin Caballero’. In January, [2008] FARC leader Ricardo Palmera, better known as Simon Trinidad, was sentenced to 60 years in prison in the United States” (Muse, 2008).

In February 2008 FARC members were attacked by the Columbian army just inside the Ecuadorian border. In the raid Raul Reyes, considered the second in command in the FARC organization, and 17 other members were killed.

During its 40+ years of existence, FARC has also developed enemies beyond Colombia’s national government, including the National Liberation Army (ELN), the smaller of the two main Marxist terrorist organizations in Colombia. FARC seems to have very little international support and thus must rely on its own illegal businesses to support itself (www.ict.org.il/inter_ter/org.cfm; http://www.farcep.org/pagina_ingles).

**Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)**

The IRA struggle is centuries old (Bell, 1997; Toolis, 1997). In order to understand this conflict, one needs to be familiar with the history and the political and economic role of Ireland. The Irish Catholics’ desire for autonomy from British rule has waxed and waned due to a variety of circumstances. At certain points in history, the effort has appeared to have a religious basis; at other times, it has aired grievances that are simply economic and political (i.e. the subjugation of Catholics to Protestant and British rule). This has prompted some analysts to suggest that the conflict has ethnic, rather than religious roots (Bruce, 1993, 1995).

A few highlights are in order. After a popular rebellion led by such notable figures as Michael Collins, the Irish Free State (now known as the Republic of
Ireland) was established in 1921. This encompassed 26 out of 32 counties; the remaining 6 northern counties were partitioned, remained under British protection and are called Northern Ireland (referred to as Ulster by unionists and loyalists). In particular Ulster is a province of Ireland that has nine counties including the counties of Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal. The Six Counties (Northern Ireland) are FATDAD: Fermanagh, Armagh, Tyrone, Derry, Antrim and Down). Generally the republicans/nationalists refer to Northern Ireland as “the Six Counties” or “the North” or “the North of Ireland,” while their unionist/loyalist counterparts refer to it as “Northern Ireland” or “Ulster”. (Republicans do not recognize the legitimacy of the statelet so they never refer to it as Northern Ireland.) Since the creation of Northern Ireland in 1920, the minority Catholic population on its territory has endured difficult living conditions, including inadequate housing, high unemployment and disenfranchisement (White, 2003, p. 86). Since 1968, close to 3,600 individuals have died in this conflict. The dead include not only British military, but also police officers (particularly Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)) and innocent civilians (Sutton, 1994).

During the 1960s, partially inspired by the civil rights movement in the United States, both Protestants and Catholics began to press for improved housing conditions and educational opportunities. But the repression by the Northern Irish Government exacerbated matters: “Catholics were not allowed to demonstrate … if they attempted to do so, they were attacked by loyalists while the RUC and its reserve force known as the B Specials, both largely made up of Protestants, looked on without attempting to stop the violence, and at times joined in. At the same time no attempts were made to stop Protestant demonstrations. The Catholics believed the RUC and B Specials were in league with the other anti-Catholic unionists in the North” (White, 2003, p. 87). Catholics (nationalists) and Protestants (loyalists) were essentially at each others’ throats (Talbot, 2003, p. 335).

In August 1969, riots erupted in Belfast and Londonderry/Derry (Londonderry is what Protestants call it, Derry is what nationalists call it). Local police were relatively ineffective against this kind of civil disturbance. As a result, the British Government increased the numbers of soldiers stationed there. The army – interpreting the situation as a colonial war – quickly allied itself with the Protestants, which only served to polarize the population (Hocking, 1988). The British military also uncritically allied itself with the RUC. The army would surround Catholic neighbourhoods, break down doors, and throw tear gas and smoke bombs, all in a combined effort to draw out terrorists and their sympathizers. The Catholics wanted the army out, and many Protestants believed that they could act with impunity against the Catholics (White, 2003, p. 88). As a result of this sectarian violence, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) reconstituted itself and started engaging in terrorist actions. In December 1969, the IRA split into the ‘Officials’ and the
‘Provisionals’. Confusion was rampant, as both organizations had military and political wings (Silke, 1999). Then in January 1972, during a peaceful civil rights parade in Derry/Londonderry, 13 unarmed people were shot dead, while 14 others were wounded by British paratroopers. This event, popularly referred to as Bloody Sunday, galvanized many Irish Catholics against the British presence in Northern Ireland.

In the summer of 1972, the ‘Official’ IRA declared a ceasefire. It placed its energy into supporting Sinn Fein, the political party established to seek independence for Northern Ireland from Great Britain. Since that time, “the term IRA was used for the organization that had developed from the ‘Provisional IRA”’ (Simonsen & Spindlove, 2004, p. 78). Membership in the IRA increased to approximately fifteen hundred to two thousand members during the 1970s and dropped to three to five hundred after the 1994 ceasefire was signed (Simonsen & Spindlove, 2004, p. 78).

In 1973 the British Government passed the **Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act**, which allowed the military greater powers of search and detention of terrorist suspects. The army could enter anyone’s house at any time during the day without obtaining a warrant. During the same year, PIRA launched a campaign of bombings on the British mainland in cities including Brighton, Guildford and London. Since then, violence in Northern Ireland has “intensified in cyclical waves: in 1972; in 1974; in the early 1980s; in the late 1980s; and in the early 1990s” (Talbot, 2003, p. 335). Talbot says, “Loyalists have indulged in significant sectarian violence, attacked the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Army and have also assassinated Republican leaders. After early sectarianism, PIRA targeted primarily British state representatives, the RUC, the Army, Unionist and British politicians, and the British Royal Family. However, by the early 1990s Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries had become engaged in a mounting series of ‘eye for an eye’ type sectarian murders” (Talbot, 2003, p. 335).

PIRA has received financial support, weapons and intelligence from countries such as Libya, Spain and the former Soviet Union, along with aid from formerly communist Eastern bloc countries. It has received finances through its aid organizations located in the United States (Adams, 1986), extortion and bank robberies. PIRA has established safe houses in Europe and in 2002 it was discovered that they were training FARC members in bomb-building techniques.

Over the last decade and a half, several positive steps have occurred in the longstanding conflict (Dingley, 1999). In 1985, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland signed a peace agreement regarding the governance of Northern Ireland. Known as the Anglo-Irish Peace Accord, “the agreement seeks to bring to an end to terrorism by establishing a joint system of government for the troubled area” (White 2003, p. 90). In 1998, the PIRA signed a peace agreement with Great Britain popularly known as the Good Friday (or
Belfast Agreement, and in the following year, power-sharing governance was established in Northern Ireland with the institution of the New Assembly. Although devolution of powers were withdrawn by London on two occasions, the Assembly has been up and running again since 2007. The second suspension was a result of allegations that the IRA continued to engage in gun smuggling and spying on its political opposition. In 2001, the PIRA began to decommission its weapons and in 2002, Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams (respectively the PIRA and Sinn Fein leaders) were offered seats in the British Parliament. They refused, as acceptance would necessitate signing an oath to the Queen of England, which they virulently opposed. Things went from bad to worse when in December 2004 the IRA was accused of the $50 million robbery of a bank in Belfast, and in January 2005 the IRA was allegedly involved in a pub brawl in which a Catholic man was stabbed to death in Belfast.

In July 2005, shortly after the suicide bombings in London’s Tube (subway) allegedly caused by Islamic fundamentalists, and amongst scepticism from leading Northern Irish Protestants, the IRA formally declared that it will give up its three-decade-long violent struggle to unite with the Republic of Ireland and achieve its goals through peaceful means (Frankel, 2005).

Comparisons

Making comparisons among the three terrorist groups is not easy. They have different ideologies, capabilities and geographic and political circumstances. For example, whereas the PIRA and Fatah are nationalist-separatist organizations, FARC has a Marxist-Leninist ideology. Nevertheless, some insights can be garnered from comparing the degree to which the structural causes previously outlined are applicable to each group.

Permissive causes

1. Modernization (i.e. facilitates better access to vulnerable targets, destructive weapons and technology, mass media, recruits, audiences, conflicts with traditional societies, and improved networks of transportation)

All three countries in which these organizations predominantly operate have different levels of modernization (Huntington, 1968). Determining just how ‘modern’ the host countries are is not so clear-cut. Short of utilizing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), all three groups have tried to acquire and use sophisticated technology, including weaponry and communications.
The majority of their most significant attacks have occurred in urban locales, and their leadership is usually highly educated and trained professionals.

2. **Type of political system** (i.e. terrorism is facilitated in prosperous democracies)

   The majority of Palestinians (and by extension, Fatah members) live under Israeli rule (ostensibly a parliamentary democracy). Those Palestinians who live in the West Bank are living under conditions of martial law imposed by the Israelis. Otherwise, the vast Palestinian diaspora – those who have emigrated to other countries – live under a wide variety of political systems. PIRA live disproportionately under British rule, also a parliamentary democracy (with symbolic remnants of a monarchy), which as of early 2005 had draconian anti-terrorism legislation (such as the *Prevention of Terrorism Acts 1974, 1989, 2005*). The Colombian political system is in a state of flux (Stafford & Palacios, 2002); Colombia signed a new constitution in 1991 that was supposed to usher in new, expanded political participation. Although currently a presidential system with direct elections, the system is characterized by political patronage and clientelism.

3. **Level of urbanization** (i.e. cities are more likely than rural environments to facilitate terrorism)

   Our three case-study groups operate in areas with different levels of urbanization. Although it has frequently carried out terrorist attacks in the cities of Colombia, particularly Medellin, FARC has conducted its activities primarily in rural and generally remote locations, drawing a disproportionate number of their fighters from those areas. According to Holmes et al. (2007), “By the end of the twentieth century, the FARC had 67 rural and 4 urban fronts” (p. 250). PIRA and Fatah have flourished in cities (and in the case of Fatah, refugee camps scattered throughout the Middle East and occupied territories where they recruit), though they also draw their supporters and membership from the smaller towns and enclaves throughout their respective country.

**Precipitant causes**

1. **Social, cultural and historical facilitation** (i.e. shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, habits, myths, opinions, traditions, and values that permit the development of nationalism, fanaticism, violence and terrorism in a subgroup of a population)

   Since these terrorist struggles have endured for a considerable amount of time, they have numerous social and cultural traditions and a rich history on which to draw. PIRA need not look further than the Republic of Ireland for a constant reminder of what the power of political violence can accomplish.
PIRA also has many members who have achieved international notoriety (e.g. Bobby Sands and the hunger strikers of the 1980s). FARC is born out of the bloody civil war that engulfed Colombia during the 1950s and the tumultuous history of the Colombian Communist Party. Holmes et al. (2007) have even suggested that FARC “has deeper historical roots, beginning in the 1920s and the 1930s, in the early agrarian conflict of poor agricultural workers against the large landed estates” (p. 250). And Fatah can trace its origins to the British mandate (i.e. the occupation of Palestine starting at the beginning of the 20th century), and the acknowledgement that its Arab allies might not be able to come to its aid as demonstrated in their overwhelming defeat during the 1956 Sinai war. In addition to numerous publications that these groups have produced, and in some cases radio stations, all three of these terrorist groups have developed websites to manage their public image and to disseminate information and propaganda to members and supporters. (Although the IRA does not have a website, Sinn Fein, the political party, has a comprehensive website.)

2. Organizational split and development (i.e. conflicts between moderate and the more extreme wings of an anti-government organization)

Although Fatah never broke away from a larger group, it certainly has led to many splits not only in its own organization, but in the PLO. Similarly, PIRA has encouraged divisions due to its approach to the conflict; “in the fall of 1997 one faction accepting the new Good Friday Agreement, and the other, a newly formed splinter of PIRA, the Real IRA … continuing armed resistance to the British occupation of Northern Ireland” (Simonsen & Spindlove, 2004, pp. 74–75). The Continuity IRA is another such group. Their connection with the political wing of Sinn Fein is undoubtedly confusing; understanding the platforms and objectives of the respective subdivision is difficult at best. As for the relationship between Continuity IRA and Real IRA (which are both very tiny), the way that Sinn Fein explains it is that they are ALL Republicans but that those in CIRA and RIRA, though they share the same objective as Adams and his allies, their strategies differ in that Sinn Fein and the Provos are committed to pursuing a strictly political path while these two groups still advocate armed struggle. FARC itself was the result of organizational development, having grown out of an alliance between liberals and communists after the civil war that engulfed Colombia between 1948 and 1958; later, FARC stimulated the growth of several new leftist guerrilla or terrorist organizations, including the ELN and the EPL.

3. Presence of other forms of unrest (i.e. provides learning opportunities, legitimizes the resort to violent actions, and heightens grievances)

Colombia, like Northern Ireland, has been wracked with all sorts of labour difficulties and criminal violence. According to the Henning Center for Labor Relations, since the mid-1980s, 3,800 union leaders and activists in Colombia
have been assassinated by far-right paramilitary organizations (www.henning-center.berkeley.edu/gateway/columbia.html). Colombia has also been subject to violence and other forms of human rights violations by the military and right-wing paramilitary groups. Labour unrest is also a bone of contention for Palestinians. They are typically underpaid and a source of cheap labour for some Israeli businesses who care to hire them.

4. **Support** (i.e. providing finances, training, intelligence, false documents, donations or sales of weapons, explosives, composite materials, provision of sanctuary or safe housing, propaganda campaigns, ideological justification, public opinion, legal services, or a constant supply of recruits)

Fatah has been helped by wealthy Palestinians, Arab states, Eastern bloc countries and the former Soviet Union. FARC has made a considerable amount of money through kidnappings, assassinations and working for the drug cartel, especially as the cartel’s strong arm. PIRA has allegedly received training and weapons from Libya, and has engaged in kidnappings and robberies (banks and post offices) for needed funds, and Fatah has been involved in several kinds of criminal activities, including drug trafficking, extortion and protection services.

5. **Counterterrorist organization failure**

At various times, the Colombian, British and Israeli national security and intelligence agencies that monitor terrorist groups have failed to detect terrorist cells and actions. With each security lapse, these government entities try to improve policies and procedures. In most cases, new approaches are put into place, just as terrorist organizations are constantly looking for holes in the existing security systems.

6. **Availability of weapons, explosives, and materials**

In recent years Fatah has been accused of making its own bombs, while other weapons are stolen and smuggled from Israel or Egypt. They have acquired “rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns, rockets and mortars” (Lavie, 2007). Meanwhile, Hamas has been building Katyusha rockets and firing them on Israel; whether they pass this technology on to Fatah or their splinter groups is unknown. Alternatively Qassam rockets are being launched from Gaza into places like Sderot. Often these are used against Israelis. There is some credible evidence of co-operation between PIRA and FARC, in terms of sharing bomb-making expertise (Rowan, 2002). Otherwise it has been alleged that gangs in Central American countries are helping to facilitate the trafficking of weapons to FARC. The IRA have got access to arms from a number of different sources including the sympathetic (or profit-hungry) arms dealers in the United States, continental Europe, and the government of Muammar al-Gaddafi, of Libya.
7. Grievances

Although things are complicated by geography (i.e. the state of Israel lies between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), Fatah seeks to establish a sovereign homeland for the Palestinian people, a group that has been disproportionately under Israeli control since the partition. FARC wants a complete communist revolution in the state of Colombia, and PIRA wants the British Army (and Government) to leave Northern Ireland, which would then allow the Irish nationalists to establish a separate country. The entire republican movement (Sinn Fein and the IRA) want to end the British presence in Ireland but recognize that they need to work politically to achieve a united Ireland as opposed to a separate country. Undoubtedly over these groups’ respective histories, concessions have been given by their host country and other world powers (capable of doing so). But the fact remains that the level of perceived grievances is sufficiently high to sustain the different terrorist organizations.

Conclusion

By reviewing the history and motivations of these terrorist groups, we can determine similarities and differences in causal patterning. Although selected elements of all the 10 previously reviewed factors can be found in all of the 3 terrorist organizations, not all had them in equal amounts.

In the case of Fatah, it appeared that grievances, combined with the presence of other forms of political unrest (the constant cycle of violence between Israel and its Arab neighbours during its first 30 years of existence), and support by a variety of constituencies was important in the maintenance of this organization. With respect to the FARC, grievances combined with support, access to weapons and explosives clearly helped this organization endure frequent Colombian Government attempts to displace it. Finally, in the PIRA case, grievances, along with support, access to weapons and explosives has helped this organization endure and weather splits and disaffections.

In sum, what this analysis points to – the trait they share most in common – is the powerful effect of grievances. While the other factors are important, none can sustain an organization without the perception of some sort of hurt, insult or damage to an organization, religion, culture, race or ethnicity; a wrong that is widely felt, longstanding and unresolved. These grievances have been a source of contention despite changes in leaders and generations and accommodation by the states in which these groups operate. Unless some sort of meaningful change is made by the countries where they started, these conflicts will persist and possibly worsen. New generations will carry on the
struggle and both sides (victims and perpetrators) will suffer injury, senseless property destruction and death.

References

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