

Poster Presentation Abstract: Relationship Between Conventional Crime and Political Violence in Northern Ireland

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In this project, it is argued that Northern Ireland has been (and continues to be) a country in transition. With a stretched out period of conflict, recent significant changes in the political and social landscape, and the process of disarmament of paramilitaries, this country is witnessing a transition out of violence and into peace. Other nations in transition (particularly those of the former Soviet Union) experienced a sharp increase in crime following their transition into democracy with aspirations for a more peaceful time. Northern Ireland, although never a Communist regime, is now progressing out of a history of violence and into peace, with increased political autonomy.

This project examines Northern Ireland from the 1960s to the present day, and seeks to explain what affect (if any) the conflict in this country had on conventional crime. Paying particular attention to the last twelve years or so, this project will also highlight other trends in society which may affect crime patterns, such as family stability, employment and socio-political factors. Coincidentally, these social indicators also reveal interesting issues regarding social cohesion, and how this concept is affected by changes in levels of political violence. Consequently, this study will cover the issue of paramilitary policing within Northern Ireland, and explore the level of influence exerted by these groups as a form of informal social control.

My research for this project is now reaching the end of its first year and has made interesting preliminary findings about the trends in recorded crime. Additionally, I have addressed the methodological problems surrounding the study of crime and political violence in Northern Ireland. I have also undertaken an extensive literature review which covers issues from countries in transition out of war or Communism, as well as into other research into the effects of political violence.

This project relates to the social, behavioural, and economic science research area of the DHS. It will also therefore tie in with the Human Factors aspect because even though this project is of a quantitative nature, it essentially explores how people adjust and integrate in a society after a prolonged period of violence.

I have not published anything from this project. However, I have published several book reviews as a PhD student, and have a forthcoming peer-review article which uses the Provisional Irish Republican Army and D-Company, to show the lack of current applicability for the 'Crime-Terror Nexus' theory.

I aim to use this research as a stepping stone for other political violence research from a criminological perspective, which is sorely missed especially in European Criminology. Therefore, I hope to conduct a similar (or a comparative) study to with other European nations, or perhaps other regions such as Columbia, where paramilitary squads also police their communities. As a personal career goal, I aim to work in government/non-governmental areas, seeking to reduce the effects of terrorism and political violence, particularly within areas who are experiencing a decline in conflict and who (as research would indicate) will soon suffer from other (and equally dangerous) social ills.