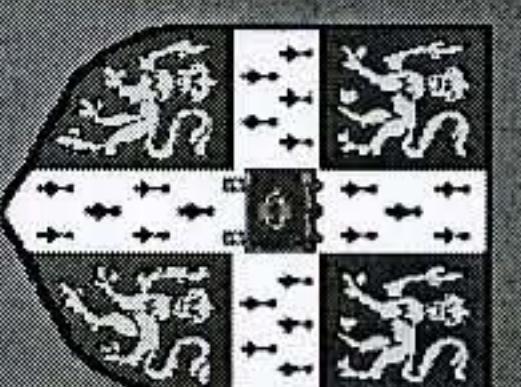


Relationship between political violence and 'conventional crime' in Northern Ireland



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INTRODUCTION

Ireland has had a tumultuous history of conflict, which eventually resulted in the partition of the island in 1921. The ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland was often reported along religious lines (Catholic versus Protestant), however the conflict was not a religious one, but rather a conflict over nationalism between republicans and loyalists. It just so happened that more often than not, republicans were Catholics, and loyalists were Protestants.

Catholicism was the dominant faith on the island, however the partition created a Protestant majority in Northern Ireland. This provided intense social cleavages within the North, and regular examples of discrimination across many socio-political spheres, including employment, policing, and housing.

PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESIS

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between political violence and 'conventional crime', by using Northern Ireland as a case study. In doing so, this research will test the hypothesis outlined in the theoretical model illustrated in figure 2. This study will examine Northern Ireland from 1969 until approximately 2007, paying particular attention to the period following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Due to the nature of the theoretical model and principle hypotheses represented in figure 2, this research will also examine other trends within Northern Ireland, such as family stability, employment, and other socio-political factors.

Figure 1: Religious minorities within the Local Government Districts of Northern Ireland (2001)



METHODS

DATA

The data used for this study is obtained from a number of sources. The Police Service of Northern Ireland have provided official recorded crime statistics, as well as data on terrorist incidents. Alternative measures of crime such as victimization reports have also been obtained from the Northern Ireland Office and the International Crime Victimization Survey. Data pertaining to social indicators are obtained from the Northern Ireland Census Bureau, as well as the Northern Ireland Office.

METHODS

The early stages of this research has involved conducting a literature review and data collection. To make initial observations, data has been standardized so it can be compared across groups and over time. At this stage, initial scatterplots are being created and correlations are being tested based on the data gathered thus far. As the completed data arrives a more comprehensive analysis will be conducted, looking at a longer time periods, and perhaps also using smaller units of analysis (i.e. local government districts as opposed to national level). It is anticipated that Time Series Analysis will be used to make observations for at least some of the data.

PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

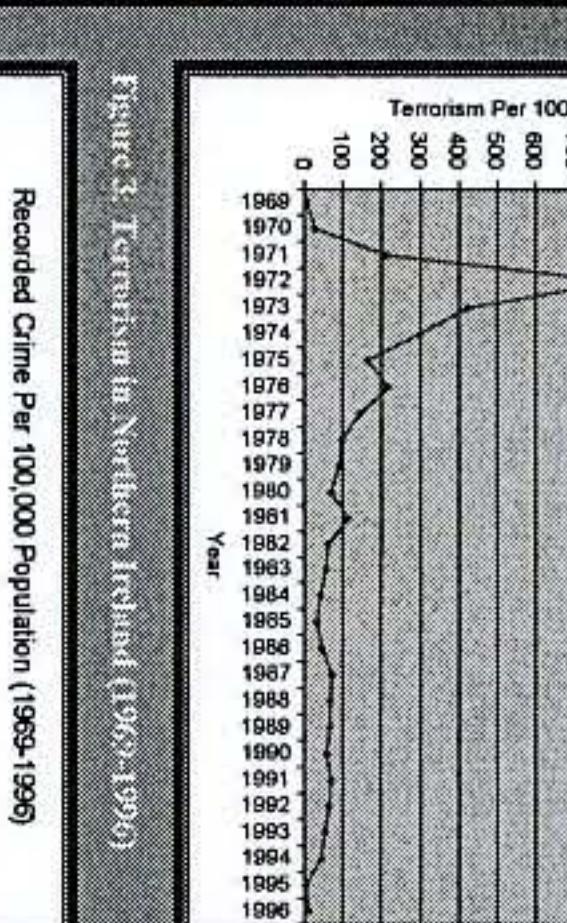
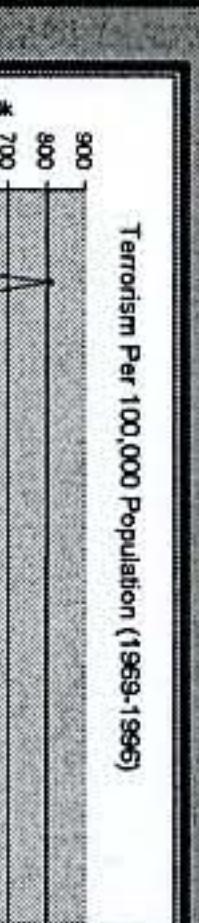
An initial problem which was discovered in the data was the change in recorded crime counting rules, which occurred in 1998. This change was twofold. Firstly, crime was now to be measured as one crime per victim, and secondly minor criminal damage offences were now recorded irrespective of value, whereas before this time property damaged which was valued at less than £200 was not recorded. Although, this would not effect the recorded crime data, it did have a significant effect on the overall appearance of recorded crime. Consequently, this has rendered comparisons from pre-1998 and post-1998 incomparable with regards to total recorded crime data. However, some crime data might still be comparable, where victims would have previously been a single unit of analysis, such as burglary, robbery, and nonifiable drug offences. In addition, other data will be used which was not effected by this change, such as victimization reports or conviction data. Alternatively, it is possible to look at the trends in the data during periods before 1998, as well as after 1998, to identify meaningful patterns.

Another problem emerges when looking at the police data on a smaller scale, due to the constant shifting patterns of policing in Northern Ireland. The Royal Ulster Constabulary shifted its police districts on a number of occasions, and then the later transformation into the Police Service of Northern Ireland resulted in another change in policing districts. One solution would be to use the periods for which the districts remained the same, and analyze these, with national level data providing an overall picture. One other possible solution is to look at areas which have remained as a consistent district such as Belfast.

INITIAL RESULTS

RESULTS CONTINUED

Looking at the basic data for terrorism and crime from 1969-1996, it is easily observable that political violence peaked in Northern Ireland during the 1970s, whereas recorded crime increased since the mid 1970s. The dip in recorded crime in the late 1980s appears to correspond to a slight increase in terrorism at this time.



CONCLUSIONS

This research seeks to examine the affect of political violence on 'conventional crime' in Northern Ireland, as well as its impact on a number of social indicators which reflect group solidarity/collective consciousness/social capital. By arguing the Northern Ireland has undergone a period of transition, somewhat akin to those of Eastern European countries, it allows for the development of assumptions about the increase in crime following 1998, and to eliminate other reduced resistance from terrorism. When this period is considered as a time of rapid social change:

Although it is too early to draw any solid conclusions from this study, initial analysis has upheld the proposed theoretical model and highlights a disparity in the reporting of crime by those from different religious groups in Northern Ireland. The next stage of this study will be to test the affect of political violence on crime following 1998, and to eliminate other confounding variables which may also have an affect on recorded crime. Additionally, social indicators will be measured, in an attempt to gauge the impact of the conflict on cohesiveness within society.

If the findings from this PhD study serves to support the theoretical model illustrated in figure 2, funding will be sought to continue this research for different geographical locations with prolonged political conflict, such as Columbia. Furthermore, findings from this study might also be considered for their applicability to countries emerging from conflict, to help reduce potential increases in criminality otherwise suppressed by conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded through the START Center of Excellence by a grant from the Department of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Directorate, Office of University Programs. I would like to thank my PhD supervisor, Dr. Manuel Eisner, for his continued guidance and my fellow students when attempting to further support my theoretical model. I propose to answer the following questions:

- Do social indicators reflect an increase in social cohesion or solidarity during the period of political violence?
- Do social indicators reflect a decrease in social cohesion or solidarity during the period of political violence?

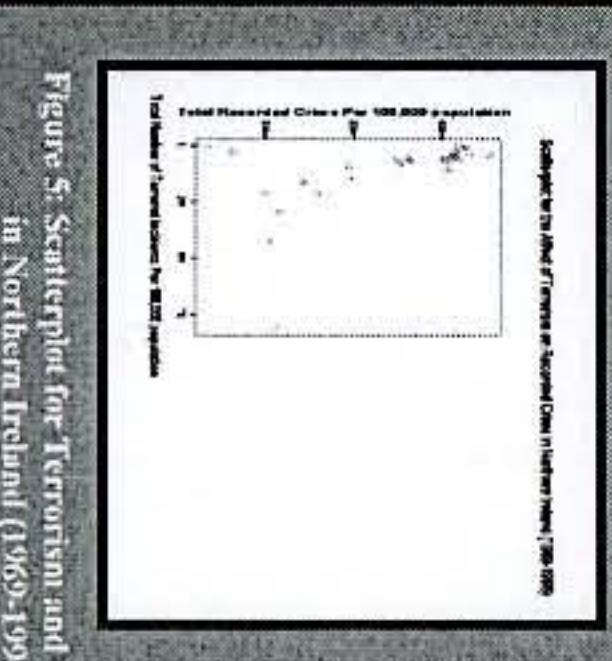
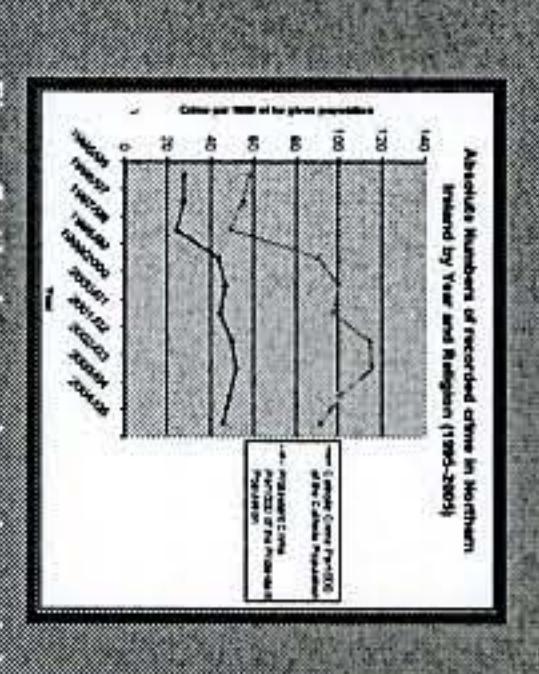
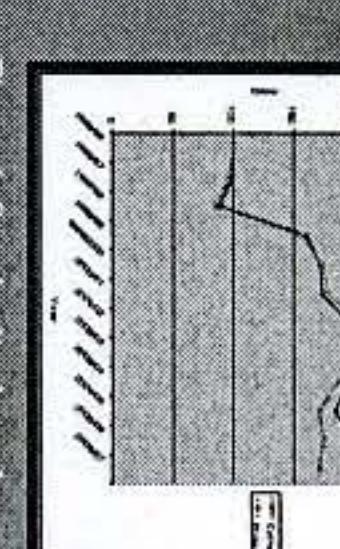
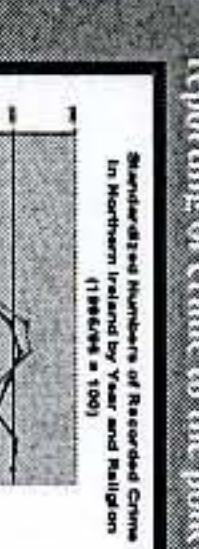


Figure 5: Scatterplot for Terrorism and Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland (1969-1996).