

## Efficacy of Counterterrorism Approaches: Examining Northern Ireland

**Project Title:** Deterrence and Defiance Models of Terrorist Violence in Northern Ireland, 1969-1992

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### Overview:

Although the goal of criminal justice and military responses to terrorism is to deter, or decrease the risk of further use of terrorist violence, previous research has found that counter-terrorism activities may actually increase the use of terrorist violence through what is termed a defiance effect. The goal of this project is to test these two competing predicted outcomes of criminal justice and military responses to terrorism in the case of five major British counter terrorist interventions in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1992.

### Interim Findings:

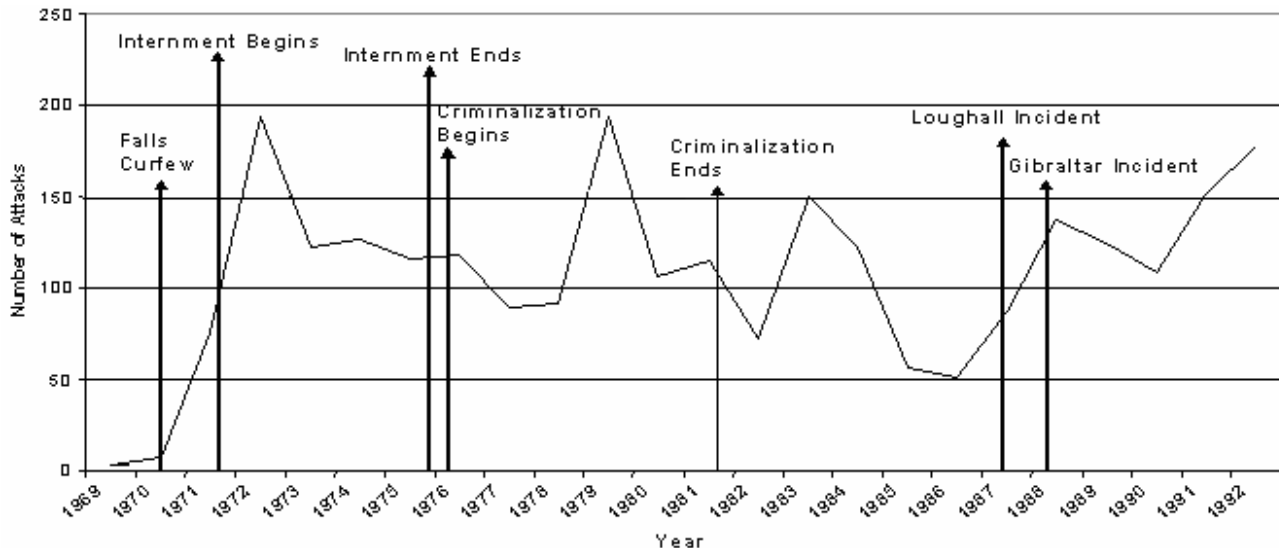
Deterrence arguments were not supported in any of the five interventions studied in Northern Ireland. In fact, in three of the five cases, the results support a defiance model: the intervention was associated with significant *increases* in the likelihood of subsequent attacks.

**Method:** Based on an extensive literature review, five high profile counter terrorist interventions used by the British to reduce violence in Northern Ireland during the period of 1969 to 1992 were identified:

- The Internment
  - In effect from August 9, 1971 to December 5, 1975
  - A total of 1,981 suspected terrorists were detained by authorities
  - Nearly 95% of those detained were Catholics or republicans
- Criminalization and Ulsterization
  - Implemented on March 25, 1976
  - Jailed terrorist suspects were treated as criminals rather than political prisoners
  - Primary responsibility for providing security in Northern Ireland shifted from the British military to the local police force (first the Ulster Defense Regiment [UDR] and later, the Royal Irish Regiment [RIR])
- Falls Curfew
  - Implemented between July 3 and 5, 1970
  - Military curfew and search operation designed to locate IRA members and weapons stockpiles
  - Four people were killed and several homes were severely damaged
- Loughall Incident

- Occurred May 8, 1987
- Involved a planned ambush carried out by the British Special Air Service (SAS)
- Eight IRA paramilitary group members were killed
- Gibraltar Incident
  - Occurred March 6, 1988
  - British SAS shot and killed three IRA members as part of a planned military operation
  - Critics claimed that the SAS gave no warning before the attack, thus suggesting that it amounted to state-sponsored assassination

Terrorist Activity by Republican Groups in Northern Ireland, 1969-1992



Data: The primary analysis is based on 2,603 terrorist incidents claimed by republican groups from 1969 to 1992 drawn from the Global Terrorism Database and supplemented by additional cases available from the Conflict Archive on the Internet. In addition, 725 terrorist attacks claimed by loyalist groups were examined during the same period.

Implications for Policy Community and Counter Terrorism Strategists: These results highlight the importance of considering defiance as well as deterrence outcomes when designing and implementing effective policies for combating terrorism. They also support the argument that **imposing harsh criminal justice and military interventions to reduce terrorism may well be counterproductive**. Future strategies should focus on alternatives that support rather than undermine the perceived legitimacy of state authority, such as recent British policies aimed at the use of bi-governmentalism, consociation and federalizing institutions.

### Future Directions:

Future studies should focus on identifying and examining key factors in counterterrorism responses that influence deterrent (decreasing future events) and defiant (increasing future events) outcomes, including:

- The perceived fairness of a counterterrorist response
  - Deterrence may be stronger and defiance weaker in situations where individuals feel that punishments or interventions are reasonable, equal and fair

- The perceived importance of the freedoms and rights authorities seek to regulate
  - Deterrence may be stronger when authorities limit or regulate rights and freedoms that are considered to be less important (i.e. not as strongly valued) by those targeted by the regulations
- The strength of the social bonds between individuals targeted by interventions and the authorities enforcing the interventions
  - Deterrence may be stronger and defiance weaker in situations in which the individuals being sanctioned and those doing the sanctioning have stronger social bonds
- Shaming versus pride and martyrdom
  - In general, when individuals feel ashamed for their actions and feel a strong social connection to the community imposing punishment, deterrence may be more likely and defiance less likely

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