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Why Militant Groups Fight Each Other: The Role of Support, Political Objectives and Revenge

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Why militant groups fight each other: The role of support, political objectives and revenge[1]

Eric van Um[2]

Most of the research on terrorism studies the relationship between militant groups and targeted states. This means that we actually know little about the role of violence in inter-group relationships. Previous research has claimed that such forms of violence occur regularly but underlying patterns and motives remain under-researched. This paper seeks to advance understanding of inter-terrorist group violence both among groups with shared and competing objectives. It particularly aims to analyze the characteristics of inter-group violence and also tries to determine if such violence reflects strategic decision-making or if it rather stems from expressive motives. The paper uses a mixed method approach which combines quantitative and qualitative analyses for a sample of countries. Data is primarily obtained from the *Global Terrorism Database* (GTD) and complemented with further datasets, reports and other qualitative sources. Results indicate that inter-group violence has taken place both among terrorist groups with competing and shared objectives but remained limited in absolute numbers. The low levels of incidents do not mean that disputes have not arisen but competition has rather unfolded on a verbal level or as low-level violence including intimidation and exiling. A case study on Northern Ireland is then used to elaborate on the particular drivers and dynamics of such violence. Results further show that violence among militants has mostly been driven by strategic considerations of the actors involved. When groups clashed it was usually for a purpose beyond emotional satisfaction and regularly related to a fight for support and influence.

On 13 August 1978, in the midst of the Lebanese civil war, a bomb exploded in a nine-story building in the Palestinian quarter of West Beirut. The explosion killed over 200 people including a considerable number of senior members of the terrorist group *Palestine Liberation Front* (PLF) and destroyed equipment of the group worth millions of dollar. It was widely acknowledged that the attack had been carried out by the *Palestine Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command* (PFLP-GC), a group from which the PLF had broken away one year earlier. The bombing was the climax of a feud that had been going on between the two groups since then and which crippled the PLF for years.

Researchers on terrorism have claimed that such direct forms of inter-group violence occur regularly even among groups with a shared platform (Abrahms, 2008, Hewitt, 2003, Merkl 1987). However, patterns of such violence remain under-researched and we do not know much about the underlying motives and causes. Furthermore, we lack evidence on whether or not such violence can be understood from a strategic perspective.

The political (ir)rationality of inter-group violence

Many scholars of terrorism tend to characterize terrorists as *strategic* or *politically rational* actors. This means they are considered to ultimately strive for political objectives and to act in

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an instrumentally rational manner.[3] In this view, terrorist groups use (particularly) violent means against government, security and civilian targets in order to coerce governments into making political concessions. The concept of *political rationality* behavior connects the strategic purpose of violence to the rational use of the available means. Rationality basically requires that actors take into account costs and benefits of their available options and choose the one promising the highest expected return. If groups aim to coerce targeted governments, why should they engage in inter-group violence, however? Why should terrorists who are politically motivated be fighting fellow members, particularly if they have shared or similar objectives?[4]

From a *politically rational* perspective, inter-group violence is not to be expected at first sight since only the targeted government has the power to make concessions. That such violence occurs nevertheless has been considered a puzzle not only in the terrorism research but also in studies on inter-rebel violence (often during civil wars) (Abrahms, 2008; Fjelde & Nilsson n.d.). Is it really the case that a *politically rational* understanding of terrorism fails to account for cases of inter-group violence as indicated by Abrahms (2008)? Is such violence then characterized as non-strategic but expressive[5] or do motives other than political objectives play a role when groups clash?

Scholars have suggested that inter-group violence does not necessarily point to irrational or non-strategic behaviour but could be considered rational under certain conditions. Such violence may be the result of politically rational behavior if it arises as a fight for support or as a fight to achieve hegemony in the militant's camp.[6] While terrorist groups may be considered as ultimately striving for political goals, groups cannot exist without public support from the surrounding population (Cronin, 2007: 45; Paul, 2009: 191; Sánchez-Cuenca & De la Calle, 2009: 33). Chenoweth (2009), McCormick (2003) and others argue that this need for domestic support would make in-fighting rational if groups compete for this support or "market share" including recruits and financial support of a shared community. Similar arguments have been made in the literature on civil wars and ethnic violence regarding the occurrence of violence among rebels. Here, fights for markets (of material resources and political leverage) or for control over territory have similarly been identified as key drivers of violence among militants (Fjelde and Nilsson, n.d.; Cunningham et al., n.d.). In sum, weakening or even eliminating other militants which compete for limited resources may be an effective way to strengthen the own position or to even achieve hegemony. Moreover, increasing the market share or even establishing

[3] See for instance Boyle, 2009; Butler & Gates, 2010; Crenshaw, 1981; Enders & Sandler, 2004; Enders & Su, 2007; Frey & Luechinger, 2007; Harmon, 2001; Jarvis, 2009; Kydd & Walter, 2006; McCormick, 2003; Neumann & Smith, 2008; Pape, 2003; Sandler, 2011; Schmid, 2011.

[4] One should be aware that even groups with a shared ideological platform often have similar but not completely overlapping objectives. The FARC and the ELN, for instance, have not followed the very same socialist goals. The Republican groups in Northern Ireland have all sought a unified Ireland but differed in their perception of what this Ireland should look like.

[5] The distinction between strategic and expressive violence is often made with regard to the motive of violence (see, for instance, Boyle, 2010; Merari, 1993). In contrast to strategic violence, expressive is characterized as unplanned and spontaneous with its roots in personal rivalry and grudges. Expressive violence does not seek a specific objective beyond emotional satisfaction or revenge and is largely unconnected to the cause of a conflict. One should be aware that this distinction is somewhat artificial, however, since both strategic and expressive violence often take place in combination.

[6] Support may be subdivided into active or actual material support (weapons, financing, shelter, recruits) and indirect support through feelings or expressions (Paul, 2009: 115; Hoffman, 2010: 617).

hegemony in the own ideological camp might also enhance the chances for a group to survive by establishing control of communities and areas (Steenkamp, 2008) which also makes it more likely that the group achieves its ultimate political goals.

While inter-group violence has been discussed conceptually in the literature, systematic or comparative studies have largely been missing. The topic of inter-group violence routinely comes up as a side-aspect or is referred to anecdotally at most. This is partly related to many studies' basic paradigm to consider terrorist or rebel groups as a single actor and to ignore the existence of various factions or groups involved in conflicts (Clauset et al., 2010). Moreover, previous research on competition among terrorist groups has largely focused on indirect processes of competition through outbidding but has ignored more direct and violent processes of rivalry (cf. Bloom, 2004a, 2004b; Cranmer, 2005; Findley & Young, 2010; Kydd & Walter, 2009; Sawyer, 2008).[7] Outbidding is based on the idea that terrorist groups compete for the support of a shared community. In order to signal commitment to the own audience and to distinguish themselves from other groups, they engage in increasingly violent forms of terrorism (Kydd & Walter, 2006: 78). Initially, this concept was tested empirically only for suicide bombings (Bloom, 2004, 2004a), but it seems reasonable to suggest that it can also be applied to other forms of violence (Sawyer, 2008: 34). Outbidding theory may be a well-founded concept but it both ignores aspects of direct inter-group violence as well as inter-group rivalry among groups with a competing ideology.

This raises further questions. Under which circumstances is such violence among groups with competing objectives to be expected? Does such violence reflect politically rational behavior? If terrorist groups really are strategic actors, their prime motive is to achieve their own political objectives. Simple logic suggests that groups have hence an interest in preventing competing groups from reaching their goals. While fighting with these groups does not necessarily help a group to achieve its own goals, still it helps to prevent competing political goals from being achieved and can be understood as strategic violence.

Overview of the country sample

This paper seeks to advance understanding of inter-group violence both among groups with shared and competing objectives. For that purpose, it analyzes the occurrence and characteristics of inter-group violence and, moreover, aims to determine if such violence reflects strategic decision-making or rather stems from expressive motives.

To start with, this study provides data on the occurrence of inter-group violence for a sample of countries which builds on the Common Position of the European Council. This list reflects the groups considered relevant from a European perspective. While the listing

[7] In contrast to that, recent publications in the civil war literature have increasingly discussed inter-rebel violence. Compare Working Papers by Cunningham et al. (*Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow: The Effects of Fragmentation on Conflict Processes in Self-Determination Disputes*), Eck (*Fighting Our Friends Instead of Our Enemies: Explaining Armed Conflict Between Rebel Groups*) and Fjelde & Nilsson *(Rebels Against Rebels: Explaining Violence Between Rebel Groups*).

(particularly of individuals) by the EU has been heavily criticized, the groups listed have also regularly been referred to as terrorist groups in the academic literature.[8] The chosen sample should help avoid major apparent biases.

Most of the conflicts in these countries discussed have been based on disputes over the independence of certain territories. Kurdish militants have aimed at an independent state covering territory of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran (Sözen, 2006). Spanish separatists have used terrorism to press the creation of an independent Basque country (UCDP, 2012). Irish nationalists were fighting for a united Ireland while Indian rebels have fought for an independent Punjab region (referred to as "Khalistan") or independence of the Kashmir region (SATP, 2012; UCDP, 2012). Beyond that, the list contains a number of groups that differ considerably with regard to size, use of tactics and ideology and thus allows studying different types of terrorist groups. The EU Position covers groups which have used terrorist means only (such as the ones in Greece) as well as groups that have used terrorism as a means among others.[9] Some of the groups included are structured cell-based, others as mass-movements. Groups in Italy or Greece usually did not comprise more than a few dozen members. In Colombia, in contrast, left-wing groups have usually consisted of several thousands militants. Anti-state groups have been listed as well as pro-state vigilantes. The latter have routinely emerged in opposition to existing militant groups often with support or at least toleration of national authorities reflecting state sponsored terrorism. This has, for instance, been the case in Spain and Colombia, where the bulk of inter-group violence listed refers to assassinations of left-wing militants by right-wing vigilantes. Those vigilantes were sponsored and supported or at least tolerated by state authorities.

The selection of groups limits down the number to be considered to 47 as a first criterion for selection. These groups have been subsequently listed based on their country of origin which usually reflects their main area of activity. Only those countries have then been selected for further research, in which at least two groups have been active as a precondition for prospective inter-terrorist group violence.[10] This limits the number of cases to eight countries which are also referred to in Table 1. This does not mean that other groups (not listed by the EU) have not been active in those countries, however. To account for groups that have not been referenced by the EU but have still been relevant actors to the conflict, this list has been complemented by additional groups based on a review of country based literature.[11] This means that groups not

[8] For instance, all groups listed by the EU have also been referenced in academic overviews (see, Terrorist Organization Profile (TOP); Schmid, 2011; Combs & Slann, 2002; SATP, 2012).

[9] This applies to groups such as the PKK in Turkey and the FARC in Colombia that have rather been described as guerillas.

[10] *Stichting Al Aqsa*, *Al Aqsa e.V.* and *Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development* are listed by the EU have been excluded since these are charities that serve the purpose of financing terrorist groups only but have not been directly involved in terrorist violence.

[11] The result is not necessarily a comprehensive overview of all groups that have been active but is nevertheless likely to reflect the most relevant groups in these conflicts. India as one of the cases of the sample is a difficult case to study since a variety of conflicts exist in the country and a large number of militant and terrorist groups have been active. For that reason, I have limited myself to conflicts in the country referred to in the EU list. Groups listed as terrorist organizations by the EU Common Position have been linked to two main conflicts; one in the Punjab region in North India, where groups have been fighting for an independent Sikh state they call "Khalistan" and another conflict in the Kashmir region,

listed as terrorist entities today are referenced if they have been active and considered terrorist entities before. This applies, for instance, to the M-19, a former militant group in Colombia that transformed into a political party in the late 1980s (Durán et al., 2008). One should still be aware that the selection of a limited number of cases necessarily limits any efforts to draw general conclusions on the role of inter-group violence.

Data for this analysis was primarily obtained from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The period considered ranges from 1970 to 2008 reflecting the availability of GTD data which allows covering a relatively long period of group activity. The GTD has repeatedly been used in academic research and has established as one of the few comprehensive datasets on terrorist incidents. Most important for this research, the definition of terrorism underlying GTD data does not exclude inter-group violence.

The sample of terrorist groups identified is listed in Table 1. As stated, it has been complemented with further groups that have repeatedly been referred to as relevant actors by country experts. In sum, the selection of groups builds on the EU's selection but goes beyond to also include other groups that might have played a role in inter-terrorist group competition. Characteristics for each group have been added including the period of activity and ideology as well as the share of inter-group attacks. The ideology of groups was obtained from the "Terrorist Organization Profiles" (TOP) database.[12] Group activity has been determined by the first and last attack of a group as recorded by the GTD. Finally, the share of inter-terrorist group violence is based on GTD data and refers to the number of infighting-incidents as a percentage of all attacks of a group. Potential incidents of inter-group violence have been reviewed and crosschecked in detail, since the GTD is not always accurate or consistent in listing incidents but has classified violence among terrorist groups differently. Incidents have been recorded as violence targeting "terrorists", but also as violence against "violent political parties" and "military" on other occasions. To some extent, this even applies to one and the same group. The FARC in Colombia, for instance, has both been referred to as a terrorist group and as a violent political party. Members of the Loyalist Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) in Northern Ireland that have been targeted by other militants have been recorded both as "terrorists" and "private citizens".

In all of the cases in the sample terrorism has been used to target civilians, authorities and security forces. But what can be said about inter-group violence? The results have been illustrated in Table 1 and show that a number of groups have actually been involved in inter-group violence and particularly so the groups in Northern Ireland and the Palestinian territories. However, the countries under consideration have generally been characterized by low levels of inter-group violence. Most groups have only sporadically attacked other groups if at all with no clear bias regarding size or ideology of the groups.

Why is there apparently so little violent competition among militants? Why do the results differ so much from what other researchers (Abrahms, 2008 in particular) claimed? Do militants rather cooperate and not get involved in in-fighting?

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where a large number of Muslim groups have been active. Groups have been added for these conflicts accordingly but not for others.

[12] Created by the *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism*. For a small number of terrorist groups, the TOP does not make any reference. Alternative sources have been used in these cases including SATP and the DTV Codebook.

Table 1 Information on terrorist inter-group violence for the sample

	Group full name	Abbreviation	Activities	Ideology	T_{igv}*	T_{all}**	T_{igv}/T_{all} (%)
Northern Ireland	*(Provisional) Irish Republican Army	(P)IRA	1970 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	86	2673	3.22
	*Ulster Volunteer Force	UVF	1970 - 2005	Nationalist/loyalist	39	267	14.61
	*Official Irish Republican Army	OIRA	1971 - 1979	Nationalist/separatist	9	40	22.50
	Ulster Freedom Fighters/Ulster Defence Association	UFF/UDA	1972 - 2007	Nationalist/loyalist	47	266	17.67
	*Irish National Liberation Army	INLA	1975 - 1998	Nationalist/separatist	19	125	15.20
	*Irish People's Liberation Organization	IPLO	1986 - 1992	Nationalist/separatist	10	21	47.62
	Continuity Irish Republican Army	CIRA	1996 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	0	25	0.00
	Loyalist Volunteer Force	LVF	1997 - 2000	Nationalist/loyalist	1	26	3.85
	Orange Volunteers	OV	1998 - 2005	Nationalist/loyalist	1	10	10.00
	Real Irish Republican Army	RIRA	1998 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	0	30	0.00
	Red Hand Defenders	RHD	1999 - 2003	Nationalist/loyalist	2	22	9.09
Colombia	National Liberation Army of Colombia	ELN	1972 - 2008	Communist/socialist	3	1256	0.24
	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	FARC	1975 - 2008	Communist/socialist	6	1675	0.30
	*Popular Liberation Army	EPL	1973 - 2005	Communist/socialist	2	255	0.78
	*Movement of April 19	M-19	1976 - 1997	Leftist	1	554	0.18
	United Self Defense Units of Colombia	AUC	1999 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	0	37	0.00
Palestinian territories	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – Gen. Com.	PFLP-GC	1970 - 2003	Nationalist/separatist	0	6	0.00
	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine	PFLP	1970 - 2008	Communist/socialist	0	136	0.00
	*Fatah	-	1971 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist, secular	22	53	41.50
	*Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine	DFLP	1974 - 2008	Communist/socialist	0	35	0.00
	Abu Nidal Organisation	ANO	1976 - 1998	Nationalist/separatist	16	51	31.37
	Palestine Liberation Front	PLF	1979 - 1990	Leftist	0	7	0.00
	Islamic Resistance Movement	Hamas	1990 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist, religious	25	133	18.80
	Palestinian Islamic Jihad	PIJ	1994 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	0	124	0.00
	Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade	-	2000 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	2	137	1.46
India	Khalistan Zindabad (Force)	KFZ	1994	Nationalist/separatist	0	2	0.00
	Babbar Khalsa (International)	BK(I)	1988 - 2007	Nationalist/separatist	0	10	0.00
	Hizbul Mujahideen	HM	1990 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	0	65	0.00
	International Sikh Youth Federation	ISYF	1983 - 1986	Nationalist/separatist	0	5	0.00
	*Khalistan Commando Force	KCF	1987 - 1995	Nationalist/separatist	0	20	0.00
	*Bhindrawala Tigers Force of Khalistan	BTFK/BTHK	1988 - 1992	Nationalist/separatist	0	9	0.00
	*Khalistan Liberation Force/Front	KLF	1986 - 1999	Nationalist/separatist	0	15	0.00
	* Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front	JKLF	1984 - 1996	Nationalist/separatist	0	55	0.00
	*Harkat-ul-Ansar	-	1994 - 1997	Nationalist/separatist, religious	0	11	0.00
	*Lashkar-e-Toiba	LeT	1999 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist, religious	0	92	0.00

TABLE 1 (continued)

	Group full name	Abbreviation	Activities	Ideology	T_{igv}	T_{all}	T_{igv}/T_{all} (%)
Greece	Revolutionary Organisation 17 November	RO-N17	1976 - 2001	Anti-Globalization/communist	0	112	0.00
	Revolutionary Nuclei	-	1996 - 2000	Anti-Globalization/communist	0	12	0.00
	Revolutionary Struggle	EA	1998 - 2008	Communist/socialist	0	2	0.00
Italy	*Armed Proletarian Nuclei	NAP	1973 - 1978	Extreme-left	0	28	0.00
	*Red Brigades (and successor groups)	BR	1974 - 2002	Communist/socialist	0	211	0.00
	*Prima Linea	PL	1976 - 1981	Marxist-Leninist	0	58	0.00
	Armed Units for Communism	NAC	1978	Leftist	0	2	0.00
	July 20th Brigade	-	1979	Anarchist/anti-Globalization	0	1	0.00
	*New Red Brigades/Communist Combatant Party	BR/PCC	1983 - 2003	Communist/socialist	0	8	0.00
	New Red Brigades/Union of Combatant Communist	BR/UCC	1986	Communist/socialist	0	1	0.00
	International Solidarity	-	2000	Anarchist	0	1	0.00
	Cell Against Capital, Prison, Prison Warders and Prison Cells	Five C's	2002	Anarchist	0	1	0.00
	Informal Anarchist Federation	FAI	2003 - 2006	Anarchist	0	7	0.00
	[Artisans'] Cooperative of Hand-Made Fire & related Items	-	2005	Anarchist	0	3	0.00
	*New Order [Ordine Nuovo]	ON	1977- 1984	Extreme-right	0	2	0.00
	*Armed Revolutionary Nuclei	NAR	1978- 1988	Extreme-right	0	20	0.00
Turkey	Revolutionary People's Liberation Army	DHKP/C	1970 - 1980	Leftist	0	69	0.00
	*Turkish People's Liberation Party / Front	THKP-C	1970 - 1991	Communist/socialist	0	36	0.00
	Kurdistan Workers' Party	PKK	1984 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	13	1188	1.09
	*Turkish Communist Party	TKP-ML	1990 - 2003	Communist/socialist	1	28	3.57
	*Turkish Hizballah	-	2000 - 2001	Religious	0	4	0.00
	Islamic Great Eastern Raiders Front	IBDA-C	1994 - 1997	Nationalist/separatist, religious	0	23	0.00
	Kurdistan Freedom Hawks	TAK	2004 - 2006	Nationalist/separatist	0	13	0.00
	*Turkish People's Liberation Army	THKO; TPLA	1970 -1980	Anti-Globalization	0	69	0.00
	*Revolutionary Way	DEV YOL	1980 - 1982	Leftist	0	4	0.00
	*Revolutionary Left	DEV-SOL	1979 - 1996	Leftist	2	253	0.01
Spain	Basque Fatherland and Liberty	ETA	1970 - 2008	Nationalist/separatist	11	1812	0.61
	*Anti-terrorist Liberation Group	GAL	1983 - 1989	Right-Wing Conservative	11	20	55.00
	*Autonomous Anti-Capitalist Commandos	CAA	1980 - 1985	Nationalist	0	10	0.00
	First of October Antifascist Resistance Group	GRAPO	1975 - 2000	Communist/socialist	0	215	0.00

Source: Activivity based on GTD data; Groups beyond those listed in the EU Common Position have been marked by adding asterisks.
** T_{igv}: **T**errorist **I**nter-**g**roup **v**iolence. ** T_{all}: **All t**errorist attacks including inter-group violence.*

Indicative evidence actually points to the prevalence of cooperation among groups particularly with a shared ideology. Leftist groups in Colombia have only sporadically engaged one another but more often cooperated or even been allies (Hanson, 2009). Many violent attacks have been jointly conducted by FARC and ELN. Loyalist groups (UDA and UVF) in Northern Ireland organized joint shipments of weapons (McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 158-159). In the Palestinian territories, the PFLP-GC provided training and arms for the Hamas and Islamic Jihad such as did the PKK for the Turkish Hizbullah in Turkey (Aras & Bacik, 2002). Fatah and Hamas were not only found to compete and to directly or indirectly fight each other but to cooperate from time to time (Croitoru , 2007: 147; Cordesman, 2006: 17; Schanzer, 2008: 70).

Other than that, a number of further factors may explain why inter-group violence has not occurred more frequently. First, differing results on the role of inter-group violence may also stem from the sample under consideration in the first place. Abrahms (2008), as one of the researchers who highlighted the role of inter-group violence, used a selection of groups chosen to provide evidence of inter-group fighting which included Sri Lanka, Yemen, Argentina, Palestine, Chechnya and Iraq – cases that widely differ from the sample of the present study.

Second, the low levels of inter-group violence do not necessarily mean that disputes have not arisen among militants. Most groups have, however, rarely crossed the threshold of using violent means against other groups. Instead, competition among rival groups partially unfolded on a verbal level that only occasionally turned into violence and groups have also used instruments of low-level violence such as intimidation or exiling to confront rivals. For instance, when Hamas was formed in the late 1980s, the group did not clash with Fatah instantly but the competition for support on the streets initially took on the shape as low-level intensity. Both groups competed for support on the streets particularly through non-violent "battles of words". Demonstrations were organized and leaflets were printed and distributed (cf. Croitoru, 131; Schanzer, 2008: 25; Milton-Edwards, 2008: 147). Similarly, initial confrontation between the Abu Nidal Group and the PLO which was later to escalate into a bloody feud started on a verbal level when Abu Nidal repeatedly accused the Fatah of being corrupt and too moderate towards Israel (Nasr, 1997: 93). Such confrontation was also common in most of the other conflicts considered. In Northern Ireland, PIRA's bombing campaign against protestant civilians was labelled fascist terror by the Official IRA (Kelley, 1982: 139-140; Multhaupt, 1988: 199). Verbal disputes have also been reported between the Greek *Revolutionary Popular Struggle* (ELA) and the *Revolutionary Organization 17 November* (17N) and between the Basque groups *Basque Fatherland and Liberty* (ETA) and the *Autonomous Anticapitalist Commandos* (CAA) (Chenoweth, 2008: 21).

Third, other than targeting core members of rival groups, violence has often focused on (perceived) supporters and sympathizers of other groups or the broader opposing community which can rather be understood as sectarian violence. Such violence has been identified in most of the cases considered. For instance, supporters of both Fatah and Hamas were regularly the target of militants' violence. Terrorist violence in Turkey was often not directed at core members of a rival group but against journalists or intellectuals suspected of sympathizing with a rival group (Sayari, 2010: 204). Dozens of pro-PKK activists, journalists, intellectuals and politicians were threatened, attacked or even killed by Turkish Hizbullah in the early 1990s

(Aydinli, 2000). In Colombia, both right-wing paramilitaries and left-wing rebels (FARC, ELN, and others) routinely targeted journalists, politicians, trade unionists, and other civilians suspected of supporting opposing groups (Bibes, 2001: 248-250; Ribetti, 2007: 706). In Spain, right-wing militaries launched attacks on Basque sympathizers of ETA who were in exile in France (Clark, 1984: 84).

Finally, a review of secondary literature suggests that a part of inter-group violence that has occurred is not accounted for in the GTD. For instance, much of the violence among leftist, among Kurdish and among Islamist groups in Turkey does not show up.[13] Moreover, approximately 32% of all incidents for which terrorists are listed as targets are not attributed to a specific perpetrator in the GTD. This does not allow including these incidents in the present study since actors other than militant groups might have been responsible for such acts of violence.

Northern Ireland and the Palestinian territories represent the two cases, in which terrorist in-fighting has occurred to some extent according to GTD data. In order to learn more on the characteristics of inter-group violence, I will look into the case of Northern Ireland in the next section as this case has been characterized by the most intense levels of inter-group violence according to the GTD. This may help to provide a more comprehensive picture of the processes and dynamics of such violence and help to reveal information on the motives that underlie clashes among militant groups. Beyond GTD data, alternative datasets, reports, as well as secondary literature are referred to.

Case study: Inter-group violence in Northern Ireland

The conflict in Northern Ireland has its roots in a century-long hostile relationship between the Irish and English and the political and socio-economic marginalization of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland.[14] Since Ireland had been partitioned in 1921 as a result of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Northern Ireland had remained part of the United Kingdom (Alexander & O'Day, 1991: 4; Coogan, 1996: 20). Ongoing Protestant perceived and real discrimination of the Catholic minority in housing, employment and local government (such as underrepresentation in the Northern Irish parliament) in Northern Ireland ultimately resulted in a civil rights campaign in the late 1960s demanding an equal treatment as well as reforms to improve the social, political and economic status of the Catholic minority (Addison, 2002: 79). This movement originally took on the shape as a non-violent protest movement but was soon accompanied by violent clashes between Protestants and Catholics. It was only in 1971 however, that terrorist attacks became a steady feature of the struggle (Alexander and O'Day, 1991: 5; O'Day, 1991: 9).

The British Army sent to restore order initially tried to stay neutral but got involved in the conflict and soon became a regular target for attacks of Republican militants which favored a united Ireland including Northern Ireland. In the years to come, a number of Republican militant

[13] See, for instance, Karmon (2000), Aras & Bacik (2002), Ayoob (2004) and Sayari (2010) for a discussion of this violence.
[14] A discussion of competing explanations for the emergence of the conflict can be found in Tonge (2006).

groups emerged of which the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) was the most famous and destructive. In opposition to that, a number of Loyalist groups and splinter-groups emerged. These groups proclaimed to protect the Protestant community from Republican violence and aimed to maintain the political status quo with Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom (Fay et al., 1999: 18). The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), the Ulster Defence Association (UDA)[15] and the smaller Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) as a breakaway faction from the UVF have regularly been considered the most important groups on the Loyalist side (Neumann, 2002: 128; Bruce, 2004). Loyalist groups in Northern Ireland acted as pro-British paramilitaries and, from time to time, they were even directly joining forces which British security forces. While Loyalist groups have rarely engaged the British government or members of the Northern Irish provisional government, attacks on civilians have still been a common pattern for these groups (Silke, 1999: 3).

Unrest and political violence in Northern Ireland particularly took place from the late 1960s to the end of the 1990s, a period commonly referred to as "The Troubles". It was only in 1998 when the dispute was finally settled with the Belfast Agreement. On a less regular basis, violence from Republican and Loyalist militants continued afterwards, however.

Data on inter-group violence

Inter-terrorist group violence in Northern Ireland has played a certain role with 7.63% as the number of incidents of inter-group violence as the share of all incidents of terrorist violence.[16] Unfortunately, the GTD and other datasets do not distinguish between inter-group violence and intra-group violence. For the purpose of this study this distinction is essential, however.

A detailed review of incidents listed as inter-group violence in the GTD suggests that a good deal of violence has actually taken place within groups. For most of the groups considered, the share of intra-group fighting as percentage of all attacks on terrorists makes up more than 30%. For some groups, even more than half of all violence against militants targeted members of the own group. To some extent, such violence has reflected competition among different factions within a group. Moreover, violence has been used as an instrument by Republicans in particular to punish or even kill alleged informers and to maintain control of their group. However, not all incidents listed as intra-group violence in the GTD have actually been intentional violence within a group. Instead, what is listed as intra-group violence in the GTD has sometimes also been the result of erroneous targeting and of the premature exploding of bombs, grenades and mines. In March, 1972, for instance, IRA members mistakenly shot one of their own while setting up an ambush for the British Army in Belfast. Also, a large number of PIRA operatives killed themselves especially in the early years of PIRA's existence when bombs exploded prematurely.

As a first illustration of the patterns of inter-group violence in Northern Ireland, a network-based overview of the violence among groups is provided in Figure 1 which includes incidents of inter-group violence but not of intra-group violence. The links between the groups represent violent incidents which were taking place between militant groups with the link width

[15] The UDA often used the name Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) when they claimed responsibility for attacks. As a consequence, the UDA remained a legal organization until 1992.
[16] This number is based on the weighted average of all terrorist groups.

representing the number of those incidents. Information has been extracted from GTD data which has been supplemented by additional incidents listed in the Sutton-Index as the most comprehensive and reliable dataset on Northern Ireland.[17] This has similarly been done by LaFree et al. (2009) in their study on counterterrorism efficacy in Northern Ireland.

FIGURE 1 Network illustration of inter-terrorist group violence in Northern Ireland

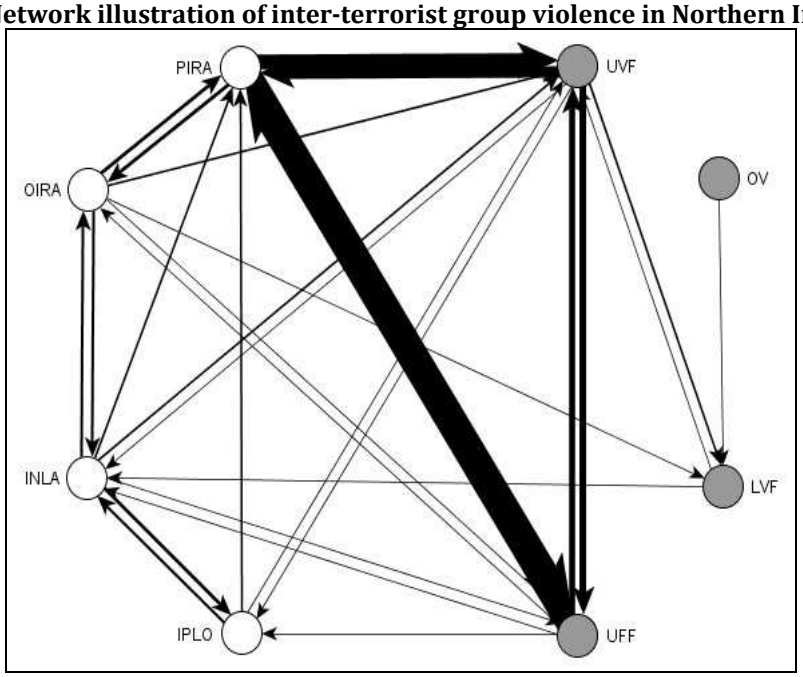


Figure: by author (period 1970-2008) // Group abbreviations: Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA); Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA); Irish National Liberation Army (INLA); Irish People's Liberation Organisation (IPLO); Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF); Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF); Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF); Orange Volunteers (OV). The Red Hand Defenders (RHD) have been considered a cover for UDA members so that violence by RHD and the UVF are used as an aggregate.

While a number of groups have been involved in inter-group violence, the figure shows that violent clashes between PIRA, UDA/UFF and UVF have most clearly shaped inter-group violence. No incident of inter-group violence has been identified for a number of other groups including the *Continuity Irish Republican Army* (CIRA) and the *Real Irish Republican Army* (RIRA).

Inter-group violence as politically rational behavior?

How can we evaluate whether violence among militants has been *politically rational*? In the introductory part of this study, it was stated that inter-group violence may be used from a strategic perspective in order to increase group's "market share" or to prevent opposing groups from reaching their goals. When is such violence particularly likely to take place?

Rational terrorists are expected to respond to a changing environment, including counter-terrorism measures and other threats (Shughart II, 2009: 2). This means that intensifying rivalry and increasing levels of inter-group violence are expected particularly whenever power shifts occur or are expected to occur. From that we may derive that violent competition among groups with a shared platform becomes particularly likely if new groups emerge. New groups have an interest in increasing their still limited share of supporters and

[17] The *Sutton Index of Deaths dataset* covers a comprehensive overview of casualties in the conflict in Northern Ireland for the period 1969 – 2001 and was originally compiled by Malcolm Sutton.

control of areas and communities whereas existing groups may fear the loss of political power or popular support if new groups come into existence. This argument has similarly been made by other researchers. Tarrow (1992: 59) argues that "as […] the number of groups seeking a share of the same constituency increases, competition for support grows". Similarly, Chenoweth (2008: 6-7) suggests that, as new groups emerge, violence both against civilians and militants of the own ideological camp is likely to become more intense. Similar arguments have been made in the field of civil war studies. Cunningham et al. (n.d.: 6) state that newly emerging groups would lead to increasing violence among factions in a fight for dominance. As a consequence, the emergence of new groups or the actual number of active groups may be a determinant of resulting patterns of inter-group violence.[18]

Violence may also take place among groups with competing objectives. As stated earlier, groups that act strategically are thought of to have an interest in preventing competing groups from reaching their goals. While fighting with these groups does not necessarily help a group to achieve their own goals, it still helps to prevent competing political goals from being achieved. One might then expect militant groups to confront rival groups particularly if those are negotiating ceasefires or political solutions to a conflict with authorities. This argument builds on previous research on *spoiling* according to which groups tend to increase the use of violent means in order to prevent undesired political change from taking place. While this violence has usually been directed against civilians and state officials, it is also conceivable that groups have used such forms of violence to deter other groups from engaging in such political processes.

How can we test whether inter-group violence can be understood as strategic violence or is merely an expression of emotionally based rivalries? To start with, statistical analysis might help to determine if a correlative relationship exists between the presumed causes (emergence of new groups, political developments) and resulting patterns of inter-group violence. This would reveal if a more general logic underlies this violence which centers on strategic group rivalry. This is not to say that personal rivalries and expressive motives will never play a role, but overall consistency in the results would indicate support for an understanding of inter-group violence as *politically rational/strategic*. The severe lack of incidents of inter-terrorist group fighting makes a regression difficult to apply, however. With an only very limited number of incidents of inter-group violence recorded, the statistical analysis would have to be based on yearly figures allowing for only a very small number of observations (n=38). The nature of the dependent variable (DV_1, DV_2), incidents of inter-group violence by Republican or Loyalist groups, would suggest using a negative binomial model to regress the number or emergence of new groups and political developments on the number of incidents of inter-group violence.

Not surprisingly, a first look at the results from the regression analysis indicates only limited support for the idea of strategic inter-group violence but also reveals partially ambivalent results. For instance, in line with expectations, the emergence of new Republican groups was found to be strongly related to increasing levels of inter-group violence among Republican groups. In contrast, Loyalist groups which emerged were not correlated with an

[18] It may also turn out that the emergence of a new group alone proves insufficient to explain variation in inter-group violence. More sophisticated indicators have been developed that go beyond the mere number of active groups (see Sawyer, 2008: 51). However, most of these indicators are difficult to operationalize and to measure.

increase in violence among Loyalist groups. In sum, the results were not conclusive which did not clarify with certainty if violence had been used in accordance with *politically rational* behavior. Obviously, this macro-perspective of inter-group violence and the limited number of observations can only provide an incomplete picture of the reasons and motives of violence. Moreover, it could be the case that factors other than political considerations may have played a role which are not reflected in a statistical analysis. Also, inner-group processes and decisions of single members may have been responsible for much of the incidents of inter-group violence, so that the approach of treating groups as unitary actors may be inadequate. How can we tackle these questions and learn more on the drivers and causes of such violence?

By moving beyond a discussion of the broader patterns of such violence and by focusing on the micro-level processes we might be able to determine patterns of inter-group violence with more clarity and reveal a more accurate picture of the underlying motives. For this purpose, the next sections aim to review the determinants of inter-group violence for the major clashes among militants. Both the relevance of political developments and emerging new groups are considered in detail but alternative factors are also accounted for. This should help clarify if support exists for *politically rational* behavior. For that I additionally rely on secondary literature and experts' assessments of the major feuds in the following. To start with, what can we say about the broader patterns of violence among militants in Northern Ireland?

Violence between Republican and Loyalist groups has been a steady feature during *The Troubles* and not been limited to certain periods. This violence has particularly occurred between PIRA and the major Loyalist groups UFF and UVF. In contrast to that, violence among militants of the same camp has most often taken on the shape of a temporally limited feud among two rival groups as is illustrated in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Overview of the major clashes among militants in Northern Ireland

Form of violence	Groups involved	Duration	Initiator
Violence between Republican and Loyalists militants	PIRA and UVF / UFF	1972-1979	UVF
		1981-1982	(Mutual)
		1986-1993	(Mutual)
Inter-Republican violence	OIRA / PIRA	1970-1972	(OIRA)
		(1974-) 1977	PIRA
	OIRA / INLA	1975	OIRA
		1977	OIRA
		1982	INLA
	INLA / IPLO	1986-1987	IPLO
	PIRA / IPLO	1992	PIRA
Inter-Loyalist violence	UVF / LVF	1999 – 2001	(Mutual)
		2004 - 2005	UVF
	UVF / UFF	1972	(Unclear)
		1975 – 1976	UFF
		1997	UFF
		2000	UFF

Source: Compiled by author (data based on the GTD and the Sutton Index).

The next sections review the drivers and motives of inter-group violence both among groups with shared and competing objectives. To start with, what can we learn from the occurrence of violence which was taking place between Republican and Loyalist militants?

Violence among groups with competing objectives

There is indicative evidence that groups were trying to spoil negotiations and developments during *The Troubles* both on the Republican and Loyalist side by attacking civilians (Cronin, 2009: 70). In the early 1970s, Loyalist militants were alarmed by secret talks between PIRA and British officials and feared that the British were negotiating a retreat from Northern Ireland. As a consequence, the UFF and other militant groups targeted Catholic civilians to antagonize the PIRA. When the PIRA responded to this violence by attacking Protestants, negotiations were abandoned (McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 51; Sawyer, 2008). Again, Loyalist violence against civilians and members of the security forces increased as a response to the implementation of the Anglo-Irish-Agreement as of 1985 which was rejected by many Loyalist militants but also Protestants. Violence was also used by Republican splinter-groups later on to destabilize the peace process in the wake of the Belfast Agreement (Stedman, 1997; Steenkamp, 2008: 166). The Omagh bombing, committed by RIRA in August 1998, was the most destructive attack which cost the lives of 29 people and injured many more. The bombing has been interpreted as a strategic effort to raise concerns particularly among Protestants in Northern Ireland (who were less in favor of the agreement than Catholics) that Republican terrorists could not be trusted and thus to lead to public rejection of the agreement.

In contrast to that, a look at the periods of significant violence between Republicans and Loyalists indicates that such violence was not particularly related to ceasefires or negotiations taking place. It was only prior to the ceasefire in autumn 1994 that inter-group violence particularly originating from Loyalist militants increased significantly. Does this mean that groups have tried to spoil the upcoming truce? The evidence suggests that this has not been the case. The increasing violence prior to the ceasefire was particularly conducted by those groups that had actually initiated and accepted the ceasefire (PIRA, UVF and UFF). Alternative explanations for this rise of violence have been offered and mostly point to the primacy of revenge violence at that time (Cronin, 2009: 45; McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 269). Beyond the ceasefire of 1994, there is no evidence that other political developments were accompanied by rising levels of inter-group violence. No such correlation could be identified and neither has such a strategy been referred to in the literature.

In sum, I find that violence against militants with a competing ideology has apparently not been used strategically and systematically in order to spoil negotiations in Northern Ireland. Political developments alone have not proven sufficient to explain the patterns of violence among militants with competing objectives. Factors other than strategic spoiling seem to have been underlying the decision of Loyalist and Republican militants to violently engage their rivals. But what was the rationale of such violence if there was one at all? Was a strategic motive underlying inter-group violence or was it just random or personal violence?

Alternative determinants considered: Previous research has suggested that Loyalist and Republican terrorist violence against civilians has often taken on the shape of tit-for-tat violence (see, for instance, Ferguson, 2012). This violence has mostly been sectarian as Loyalists particularly targeted Catholic civilians and Republicans targeted Protestant civilians.

Qualitative evidence indicates that inter-group violence has been interwoven with these broader forms of sectarian violence. Whenever a Loyalist militant was killed by Republican militants, Loyalist militants regularly responded by either targeting Catholic civilians *or* militants. When for example, in the spring of 1990 the INLA killed UDA members, the Loyalist group sent two gunmen who killed a Catholic civilian who arbitrarily crossed their way. Similarly, in July 1994, Loyalist militants responded to the assassination of one of their members by indiscriminately killing Catholic civilians (McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 269-270). Again, when LVF leader Billy Wright was killed by INLA militants in December 1997, the Loyalists did not respond by selectively targeting INLA militants but by using indiscriminate violence and by targeting Catholic civilians (ibid.: 296). In the same manner, if a Republican militant was killed by Loyalists, PIRA and other Republican groups commonly responded by targeting Loyalist militants *or* Protestant civilians. In sum, tit-for-tat violence between Republicans and Loyalists did often involve the killing both of militants and civilians reflecting sectarian violence.

Moreover, inter-group violence between Republicans and Loyalists has apparently been less discriminate than violence among groups with a shared platform. Violence between Republicans and Loyalists was much more likely to coincide with violence against civilians than was violence against among Loyalists and among Republicans. As a very rough indicator[19], the correlation coefficients of violence against militants and violence against civilians support this claim. While violence against militants with shared objectives was discriminate and not likely to coincide with violence against civilians (r=0.09 for Republicans, r=0.10 for Loyalists), violence against militants with competing objectives was likely to be accompanied by high levels of violence against civilians (r=0.47 for Republicans; r=0.43 for Loyalists). This suggests that the killing of rival terrorists was apparently often not the result of a specific targeting but rather a side-effect of sectarian violence.

The more general patterns of terrorist violence may also provide an explanation for the peaks of inter-group violence between Republicans and Loyalists in the mid 1970s and the early 1990s. Based on this line of argumentation, inter-group violence may have been rather a side-effect of a general escalation of terrorist violence. Actually, not only did inter-group attacks rise significantly but also did attacks on civilians at that time. From 1971 on, PIRA increasingly attacked police and military forces as well as civilians following a *policy of escalation*. UVF and UDA responded by increasing their attacks on Nationalist targets. Similarly, from the late 1980s on, both Loyalist violence from the UVF and the UFF and PIRA violence increased significantly with attacks on security and civilian targets. This supports the view that violence against militants of the opposing community was basically sectarian violence rather than based on a particular strategic logic.

Violence among groups with shared objectives

It was earlier suggested that violence among groups with shared objectives may have been used whenever newly emerging groups challenged the position of an established group. The emergence of new groups was hence likely to coincide with rising levels of inter-group violence.

[19] Data based on yearly figures which does not allow accurate testing of this assumption.

Also, the total number of groups active in a country was thought of as a determinant of inter-group violence reflecting arguments from market theory.[20]

A review of the major Republican feuds (Table 2) indicates that the emergence of a new Republican group has actually been related to increasing inter-group violence. When, for instance, the (original) IRA broke apart in 1969, the succeeding OIRA and PIRA clashed almost instantly (cf. Neumann, 2002: 123; Rekawek, 2011: 3). Similarly, after several members had left the OIRA in 1975 and regrouped as INLA, the two groups were involved in a feud shortly after (IMC, 2004: 13). In 1986, fighting between IPLO and INLA started shortly after IPLO had been formed by expelled members as a breakaway faction of the INLA. In contrast to fragmentation on the Republican side, Loyalist splintering has remained largely limited. This may have been related to coordinating committees[21] all of which ensured a certain coordination between the militant groups. If new groups emerged, violence did also take place to some extent, however, including a feud between the UVF and the UFF in the early 1970s after the UDA/UFF had been formed. To some extent, splintering did not directly lead to resulting violence, however, but only so after a period of escalation. Violence between the LVF and the UVF for instance, firstly erupted in 1999 on a larger scale, three years after the LVF had been founded by members expelled from the UVF in 1996 (IMC, 2004: 14; McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 313). This may indicate that violence was related to the emergence of new groups but did not erupt immediately after new groups had been founded.

This analysis makes clear that the emergence of new groups has actually been a major determinant for resulting violence among militants. Moreover, micro-level analysis showed that many of the (Republican) feuds had as their basis the splintering of groups which is also supported by previous research on Northern Ireland (Fay et al., 1999: 135). On the one hand, these findings supports the idea that violence has taken place as a fight for "market shares" and may be seen as an indication that groups were trying to eliminate rivals before those would become too strong in a competition for domestic support. From this perspective, feuding may have served the strategic objective to preserve the status quo or to challenge the position of established groups. On the other hand, the correlation between emerging new groups and increasing levels of violence alone does not establish whether or not strategic thinking was underlying such violence with certainty. In fact, other than strategic thinking it may have been personal rivalry and hatred which triggered feuding after splintering. Such personal animosity has been prevalent among many leaders of the militant groups as reported in qualitative research. The IPLO even formulated a death sentence for INLA leader John O'Reilly (Mitchell, 2000: 186). Moreover, part of the feuding was obviously not related to splintering and needs explanation.

[20] Such arguments would claim that an increasing number of groups make a market more competitive and force firms to act more aggressively.

[21] Loyalist groups first coordinated their actions under the umbrella of the *Ulster Army Council* which was set up in 1973 and replaced by the *Ulster Loyalist Central Co-ordinating Committee* one year later. In the early 1990s, the major Loyalist groups built another umbrella organization, the *Combined Loyalist Military Command.*

The motive of violence reviewed: How can we determine with any certainty whether inter-group violence has been used strategically? It is particularly difficult to determine the underlying motive of violence (Boyle, 2010; Schmid, 2011: 83). Methodological challenges particularly arise, as strategic violence may also be influenced by anger and emotions. In contrast, violence may be purely motivated by anger and emotions but the selection and use of violence may still be rational (Boyle, 2010: 191-192). Studies that focus on the strategic level of terrorism routinely refer to the objectives stated by terrorist groups in agendas and statements to evaluate terrorist motives and intentions (see, for instance, Abrahms 2006). This is not possibly for the case of inter-group violence as groups do not make public or put forward directly why they get involved in such violence. As an alternative, I refer to experts' assessments (secondary literature and reports, for instance, by the *Independent Monitoring Commission* [IMC][22]) on the specific feuds to identify the respective motives for such violence. If inter-group violence actually reflects *politically rational* violence, we should expect that is has not particularly been driven by (personal) interests to take revenge but should have been linked to a political (strategic) purpose.

A review of qualitative sources indicates that much of the violence related to newly emerging groups has actually been strategic in nature. The Provisional IRA and the Official IRA were competing for support and influence in the Catholic areas of Northern Ireland in the early 1970s. In contrast to OIRA policy, the Provisionals focused on violent means which was largely supported by the Catholic community. As a consequence, the PIRA was drawing away support from the OIRA and increasing their control of areas and communities at the expense of OIRA's own influence (Kelley, 1982: 139-140; Rekawek, 2011: 139). OIRA responded strategically to this loss of support and the loss of control of former OIRA areas and communities by engaging the rival. Feuding between the two groups erupted again in the mid 1970s. At that time, large parts of the Catholic population were dissatisfied with the ongoing high levels of violence and also rejected PIRA'S indiscriminate bombing campaigns. This led to an increase in popular support for the OIRA which also established Republican clubs in former PIRA strongholds. To this the PIRA responded by engaging the Officials violently in an effort to rule out the enemy for good (Bowden, 1976: 434; Rekawek, 2011: 24). In sum, whenever OIRA or PIRA were trying to expand control over areas and communities, feuding was likely to result (Multhaupt, 1988: 202; Rekawek, 2011: 23). Violence between other Republican factions did also often take place as a strategic decision. The formation of INLA as a breakaway faction from OIRA in 1975 was perceived as a threat by OIRA. The Officials were not willing to accept a loss of support and members as had been the case when competing with PIRA. As a result, the group decided to confront the newly established rival violently before it would become a threat following a policy of preserving local dominance (Multhaupt, 1988: 212). Finally, when expelled members from the INLA reorganized as IPLO in 1986, the militants tried to replace the INLA instantly as a rival for support and intense clashes erupted. Interestingly, violence among Republicans was largely limited to those groups directly involved in splintering. While the PIRA was essentially the most

[22] The *Independent Monitoring Commission* (IMC) was created by the British and Irish governments in 2004 as a body to supervise the Peace process. Amongst others, the IMC was responsible for monitoring activities of the Loyalist and Republican militant groups. The IMC has stopped work in March 2011.

dominating force throughout *The Troubles* and was obviously interested in maintaining this dominance, it did hardly try to rule out new groups as potential competitors for support and territory. Instead, feuds remained limited to what might be referred to as a fight for local dominance. Strategic violence has not been limited to Republican groups, however. In the Loyalist camp, the UDA/UFF was formed in 1971 and immediately challenged the influential UVF by establishing structures in Belfast particularly in areas where the UVF was also active and also by engaging the rival violently (McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 51; 339).

This is not to say that personal rivalry did not make such fighting more likely but most of this violence served a strategic purpose which was beyond purely emotional satisfaction and may be understood as *politically rational* violence. At times, alternative factors seem to have been more prevalent determinants of inter-group violence, however, and particularly so for Loyalist groups. First of all, violence has sometimes been strategic but not linked to any political objective. Instead, fighting partially emerged as a criminal turf war as was the case when the UVF and the LVF clashed in 2004 and 2005 in a competition over drug markets (IMC, 2005: 5; Bruce, 2004: 509). Moreover, expressive motives have virtually always played a certain role if only rarely been the sole driver for resulting inter-group violence. First, for some of the cases, expressive evolved as an unsanctioned decision by single members in the form of revenge killings often years after hostilities among groups had officially ceased. For instance, two years after the fighting had ended between INLA and OIRA, Seasmus Costello as leader of INLA was shot dead by an OIRA member in 1977. The killing was revenge violence related to the intense previous feuding between the two groups (Multhaupt, 1988: 212). It was not before June 1982 that the murderer of Costello was shot dead by an INLA member to take revenge (CAIN, 2012). Similar acts of revenge have been reported among Loyalists. In June 1997, a young UDA member killed a senior figure of the UVF, who had been involved in the torturing and killing of a UDA man back in 1977. McDonald and Cusack (2005: 289-290) report that "[t]he killer of 1997 was a relative of the victim from 1977, demonstrating a thirst for revenge that stretched back over the decades." These acts of personal violence were hardly if at all linked to observable political objectives but committed as expressive violence only.

Second, expressive violence has also taken place on other occasions when several members of militant groups clashed in a purely expressive escalation of violence. This was often the result of preceding non-violent or low-level violence intensity incidents such as fist fights in bars. For instance, violence erupted between members of OIRA and PIRA in April 1977 as low-level violence during the Easter commemorations in Belfast.[23] Violence started as fistfights but was soon accompanied by more lethal gun fights (Moloney, 2002: 167-168). Similarly, in May 1974, feuding between UVF and UDA intensified after a fist fight between drunken members of the two groups had led to the death of a UVF man. With tensions rising between the two groups, it was only a question of time before drunken members of the UVF and the UDA/UFF clashed again in February 1975 in a pub. During this fight a UDA man was killed and from then on, tit-

[23] Republican groups hold Easter commemorations annually which mark the anniversary of the Easter Rising as of 1916. This was when a massive uprising of Irish Republicans took place in Ireland which sought to end British rule over Ireland.

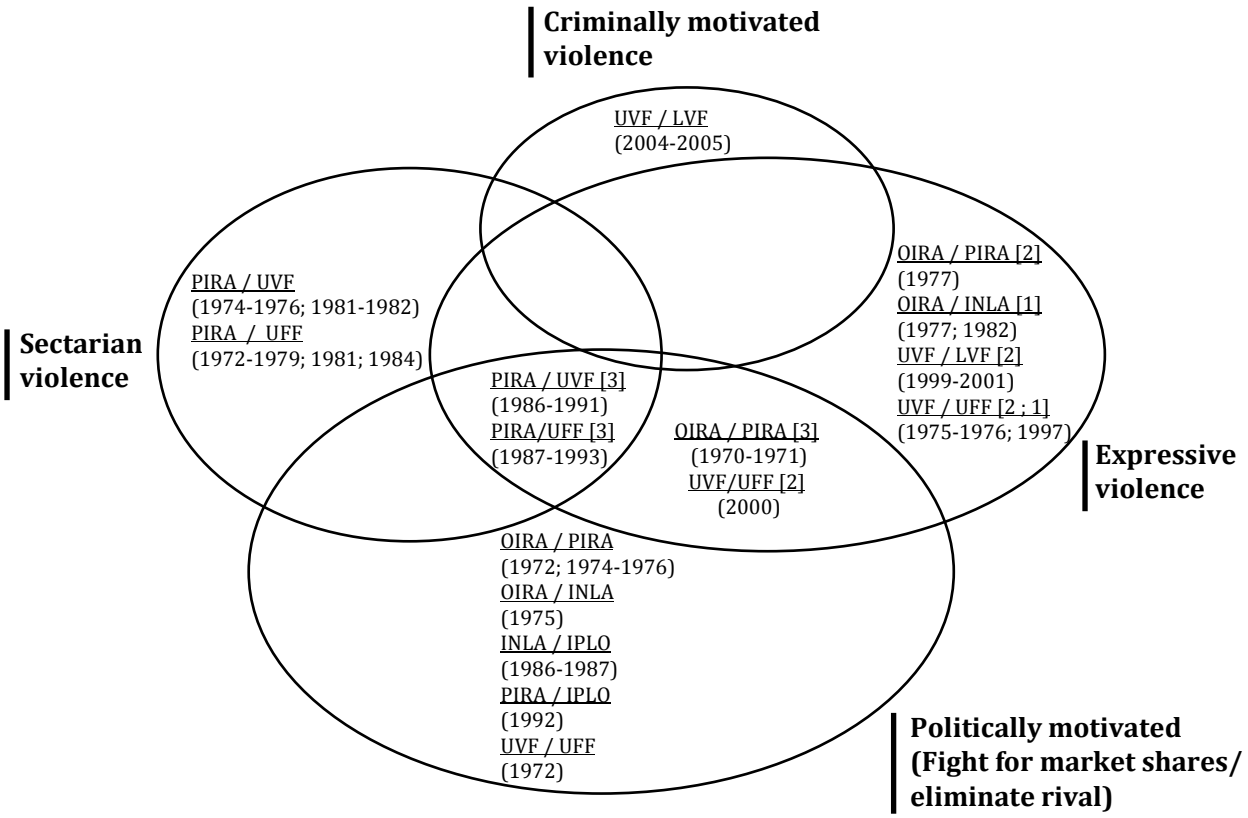
for-tat violence established and led to an escalation of violence (McDonald & Cusack, 2004: 98-99).

Discussion

A review of the major feuds illustrates that many incidents of inter-group violence have shown characteristics of both emotional and strategic violence. Accordingly, strategic elements of terrorism in Northern Ireland have been closely related to non-strategic and criminal elements particularly for Loyalist groups. Feuding between the UVF and LVF in 2004, for instance, has been described by the *Independent Monitoring Commission* (2005) accordingly: "[…] A number of explanations have been offered to us: the history of rivalry and hatred, personal animosity, the LVF's involvement in drugs, allegations and counter allegations about treachery, criminal competition, greed and power". Violence was sometimes apparently purely expressive at first sight, but strategic considerations were actually underlying the decision to engage a rival. The feuding between UDA/UFF and UVF in 2000 for instance, was apparently expressive only. Prior to that, former members from the UVF who had fallen from grace had formed the LVF in 1996; a move that was very much rejected by the UVF. The feud which broke out between UVF and UDA/UFF in 2000 was related to this previous splintering. In August 2000, fighting started between members of both groups after the UDA/UFF had broken an agreement according to which no banners from the LVF would be displayed during a band parade (Guardian, 2000a). Subsequently, fist fights between UDA/UFF and UVF members broke out and escalated into bloody shootings later on (Guardian, 2000b; McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 292). From a group perspective this escalation was probably not desired and not related to any strategic thinking. But parts of the UDA were intentionally and successfully trying to provoke the UVF to strike back violently seeking an opportunity to eliminate the long-standing rival which can very well be understood as strategic thinking (McDonald & Cusack, 2005: 336; Tonge, 2006: 164). These examples illustrate the difficulties of identifying the mix of motives which often underlie inter-group violence. Still, micro-based analysis which also considers the inner-life of militant groups seems to be an appropriate tool to study inter-group violence by allowing for a more accurate assessment of such motives. Figure 2 provides a comprehensive overview of inter-group violence in Northern Ireland and illustrates the mix of motives which was underlying such violence.

While much of this violence can be understood as *politically rational* behavior, a purely rationalist or expressive perspective on inter-group violence fails to account for the often multi-causal determinants of violence. This is also related to the relevance of multiple layers within terrorist groups and inner-group dynamics which also shape patterns of inter-group confrontation but are beyond the control of group leadership. Such processes are often ignored in terrorism studies, however.

FIGURE 2 Distribution of feuds of inter-group violence by motive



Notes: Expressive violence by [1] Single members, [2] several members or [3] as a decision by the group leadership. Scheme: by Libicki et al. (2007). Source: by author.

Conclusion

This study has aimed to determine the occurrence, role and causes of violence among terrorist groups. Inter-group violence has occurred both among groups with competing and shared objectives but has remained very limited for most groups under consideration. This suggests that most of terrorist groups' behavior is actually focused on achieving their ultimate political objectives.

Patterns and motives of violence among militants have been found to differ in the cases considered. For Northern Ireland, most of the inter-group violence has been identified among groups and breakaway factions so that the emergence of new groups and splintering in particular have been important drivers of resulting inter-group violence. Most of the violence in the wake of splintering among Republican groups was driven by strategic considerations of the actors involved. When groups clashed it was usually for a purpose beyond emotional satisfaction and regularly related to control over territory and influence. Inter-Loyalist violence has also featured strategic elements but competition for political hegemony has routinely been complemented by elements of criminal competition and turf wars and has also been characterized by expressive motives. Still, inter-group violence was only rarely found to have been purely expressive. If it was, it most often took on the shape of personal acts of revenge or of group-based non-sanctioned violence that intensified during a process of escalation. Violence

between Republican and Loyalist militants, in contrast, was rather a side-effect of the larger patterns of sectarian violence and did hardly include any particular purpose beyond that. Sectarian violence which targeted perceived supporters and sympathizers of opposing militant groups have been common in most of the cases in the sample (including Colombia and Turkey) but only in Northern Ireland has it been accompanied to a larger extent by incidents of inter-group violence. In sum, many groups have hardly used inter-group violence as an instrument to spoil political developments but to rule out competitors for shared support and to reach hegemony. However, political developments such as announced ceasefires and political negotiations have often been a key factor for splintering and thus indirectly contributed to resulting violence among militant groups.

As a conclusion, I find that much of the violence among militants with a shared platform was directly related to achieving political objectives. A review of qualitative sources, including secondary literature, experts' statements and further data including the Uppsala datasets on armed conflicts and civil wars supports the view that the bulk of inter-group violence in the other cases in the sample has been in the field of strategic violence and often reflected efforts to reach hegemony. In Turkey, for instance, radical leftist groups clashed in the 1970s in a struggle for the leadership of the leftist militancy (Sayari, 2010: 202-205). Violence in the 1970s did also occur among Kurdish groups and, as a result, the PKK was able to eliminate competing groups (Lüdemann-Dundua, 2006: 195). Similarly, fights for hegemony did also take place among Islamic groups when the Turkish Hizbullah tried to get rid of its rivals (Aras and Bacik, 2002). In India, violence between the groups *Hezb-ul-Mujahidee* (HuM) and *Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front* (JKLF) in the 1990s has similarly been described as a competition for control over Kashmir territory (UCDP, 2012). This evidence from the other cases in the sample supports the view that violence among militants was often conducted for strategic purposes. This also means that, by and large, the concept of *political rationality* seems to be appropriate to understanding terrorist behavior in the context of the apparent puzzle of inter-group violence.

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