NYU-SPS Dean's Faculty Development Fund
2016-2017 Academic Year Application

Votes for Violence: Why Paramilitary Parties Win at the Polls

Project Statement

An investigation into the reasons why, in relatively free and fair elections, voters cast their ballots for political parties associated with terrorist or guerilla tactics (i.e. paramilitary parties) rather than non-violent alternatives.

Significance

Today, there are a number of nascent democracies where ordinary citizens routinely go to the polls and cast their ballots for political parties that engage in the use of violence. They do so, despite the fact that the use of violence by these political parties often has catastrophic effects on their short-term wellbeing. The recent success of the militant party, Hezbollah, in Lebanon is illustrative. In the 2005 general elections, Hezbollah won a majority (14) of the 27 designated Shi'ite seats to the Lebanese Parliament. Following its electoral success, Hezbollah launched a series of attacks on Israel. The attacks sparked an unanticipated level of retaliation by the Israeli forces and a conflict in the year 2006 known as the July War. Although the fighting lasted just 34 days, the July War claimed the lives of over 500 Lebanese civilians, injured 4,000 more, and destroyed over 30,000 homes. [1] Lebanese civilians, especially children, continue to be maimed or killed by unexploded cluster bombs that failed to detonate during the conflict and parts of southern Lebanon remain uninhabitable. Hezbollah's election and subsequent violent provocation of Israel had an unanticipated, but nonetheless, devastating effect on the security and wellbeing of the Lebanese people. Yet, popular support for Hezbollah remained relatively high in Lebanon.[2]

In the Palestinian territories, the story is largely the same; voters continue to cast their ballots for the List of Change and Reform, a political party associated with the militant organization Hamas, even though the party's election and subsequent use of violence has produced political and economic turmoil. In 2006, for instance, Hamas-backed candidates won a majority (74) of the 132 seats to the Palestinian Authority. The prospect of a Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority and the party's ongoing campaign of violence against Israel sparked the withdrawal of international aid, a blockade of the Gaza strip, and an Israeli invasion of Gaza in December 2008 known as the Gaza War. Thirteen hundred Palestinians died and 22,000 Palestinian homes were destroyed during the Gaza War alone. Due to the ongoing blockade, Palestinians living in Gaza lack access to humanitarian aid and basic

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[1] According to the Associated Press between 1,035 and 1,191 Lebanese civilians died in the conflict. Although there are no real estimates on the number that were civilian non-combatants, most estimates place the number at greater than 500. Data on injuries and the destruction of homes are from the Lebanon Relief Council.
[2] See, for instance, the July 29th 2006 poll by the Beirut Center for Research and Information. Hezbollah retained all but 2 of its seats in the 2009 general elections.

necessities and many, if not most, are experiencing severe deprivation.[3] In fact, 71% of Palestinians reported in a March 2009 poll that they are worse off now than they were prior to the 2008 conflict between Hamas and Israel.[4] Yet, popular support for Hamas *increased* by five percentage points over the same period, up from 28% in 2008 to 33% in March 2009. Why?

The recent electoral success of political parties associated with militant organizations that perpetrate, incite, or threaten acts of violence is quite alarming, and as the previous examples from Lebanon and the Palestinian territories demonstrate, the consequences of their election are often quite grave. Yet, the phenomenon is not a new one. Nor is it confined to nascent, weak, or developing democracies. Political parties which employ a strategy of violence, such as Batasuna in Spain, Provisional Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland, and Akali Dal in India have won over sizeable portions of the electorate in what are generally considered countries with a lengthy history of liberal democracy. What is even more surprising is that in the United Kingdom and Spain, these political parties have been rather successful *despite* the presence of a developed economy and a comparatively strong welfare state. Throughout history political parties have employed violent tactics in a broad spectrum of democracies, and in many cases, these parties have garnered a sizeable degree of support at the polls.

There is a vast and valuable literature on the reasons behind political parties' decisions to employ or foment violence in democracies (e.g., Weinberg, Pedahzur, & Perlinger, 2009; Kydd and Walter, 2002; Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972; Gagnon, 2004; Wilkinson, 2004). However, we still know very little about why individuals choose to vote for such parties rather than their non-violent counterparts when elections are relatively free and fair. Understanding when and why paramilitary parties succeed in winning over large portions of the electorate is critical to creating policies that de-incentivize, at least electorally, their use of force. A better understanding of why these parties triumph also lends insight into the social bases of support for terrorist or insurgent organizations. Both of these issues are critical to the construction of stable post-conflict democracies in places such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and the Palestinian territories where paramilitaries or former paramilitaries are likely to be part of any lasting political solution.

Methodology

This project employs a multi-method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and sub-national and cross-national analyses. The bulk of the analysis uses the sub-national comparative method to examine the reasons for the relative success or failure of paramilitary parties within both the Catholic and Protestant communities during Northern Ireland's Troubles (1969-2005). I examine not only why these parties succeeded or failed at the aggregate Northern Ireland level over time, but also have compiled an original dataset for 101 electoral areas across nine local election years, which allows me to conduct advanced statistical tests of the determinants of their performance across space and time. Some of the variables I consider are changing unemployment within the Catholic and Protestant communities (i.e. economic grievances), levels of electoral competition between the Catholic and Protestant communities, levels of British repression, number of IRA

[3] See, for instance, http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/01/19/gaza.war, accessed April 2009.
[4] See the March 5-7, 2009 poll (Poll #31) conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research.

attacks, and sectarian violence. This information is supplemented with an analysis of existing survey data and archival and interview data collected in the field during trips to Northern Ireland in 2006 and 2008.

There are a number of reasons why Northern Ireland provides an ideal venue to investigate why individuals vote for violence. First, the province is located within a country with a long history of liberal democracy and a developed welfare state. Comparatively speaking, Northern Ireland is a case where we would expect voters would be "least likely" to vote for violence when given the option. Second and related, due to the history of democracy in the region, we would expect coercion and intimidation at the polls to be minimal in Northern Ireland. Finally, there is a vast amount of data available for Northern Ireland that is not available for other cases (e.g., Lebanon, Palestinian territories) making it hard to infer causality in these cases. Lebanon, for example, has not held a census since 1932 and relatively free and fair elections are only a recent phenomenon in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. However, in order to probe the generalizability of my findings for Northern Ireland, I also examine whether the data that is available for the Basque region of Spain, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories are consistent with the results for Northern Ireland.

Need for Funding

The majority of the research for this project has already been conducted as part of my doctoral dissertation work (between my dissertation and starting at SPS, I held a post-doc where I worked on a DHS-funded study of terrorist disengagement and had little time to dedicate to this project). However, I am seeking funding to conduct additional interviews and fieldwork throughout Northern Ireland that will improve the quality and likely publication of my book manuscript. One of the key findings of my quantitative analysis is that certain types of conflict-related violence increase support for paramilitary parties and other types of violence do not. I hypothesize that such violence alters not only citizens' attitudes toward the state, but their relationship with key state institutions. This is a hypothesis that I would like to test and explore further through interviews with paramilitary party leaders and former members of paramilitary groups such as the Irish Republican Army, Ulster Defense Association, Ulster Volunteer Force. I would also like to ask them about the ways in which they mobilized voters and spread propaganda through the communities and whether or not they encouraged electoral fraud – important questions that arose later on in my research after my original time in the field. In addition, I would like to conduct interviews with leaders of community relations groups and current or former members of the police and British Army to try and verify with qualitative evidence some of the hypothesized ways in which I believe violence is affecting vote choice (e.g., breakdown in law and order, unwillingness to access state services). Finally, I would use the time in the field to revisit the archives at the Linen Hall Library and Public Records Office to see if any additional information relevant to my project has been deposited since I last visited in 2008.

In terms of qualifications to carry out this research, I have extensive experience locating and interviewing hard-to-reach subjects including former members of terrorist organizations and public officials. Further, I am extremely knowledgeable of the conflict in Northern Ireland and feel comfortable navigating sensitive topics with potential interviewees and seeking UCAIHS approval. Having lived in Northern Ireland for several months in 2006, I am fairly

comfortable with the terrain and would be ready to hit the ground running with my research when I arrive.

Outputs

The primary output from the additional funding provided by the Dean's Faculty Development Fund, if secured, will be a **book manuscript submitted for peer-review at an academic press** that combines my existing doctoral dissertation research with additional information gleaned from a recent trip to the field. This funding and additional research, I believe, will greatly enhance the quality of my book manuscript (particularly since it is a long time since I have been in the field) and increase my chances of publication at a good academic press. I believe the book manuscript is promising as the 400+ page dissertation on which it is based won the American Political Science Association's Ernst B. Hass Award.

In addition, I have a working paper related to this project that requires no additional funding and presents primarily the results of the statistical analysis of my dataset for Northern Ireland. I have already presented this paper at several conferences and it received the American Political Science Association's Award for the Best Conference Paper on European Politics & Society in Fall 2015. I received substantial feedback on this paper in January 2016 in a virtual workshop, which I am planning to incorporate this summer and then send the paper out for **peer-review journal publication**.

Once the book manuscript is hopefully accepted, I plan to write **1-2 short more mainstream articles** (e.g., Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, Political Violence at a Glance) summarizing and publicizing the book's findings and implications for current efforts to bring paramilitaries in, for example, Syria, into the political process.

The fieldwork and interviews that I will conduct in Northern Ireland will also allow me to nurture existing and develop new **connections to practitioners** in government and NGOs working on topics that are of interest to my students. There is also some discussion by other faculty in our department of proposing a Global Field Intensive to Northern Ireland and my time in the field there will help build mutually beneficial relationships between CGA and other academic, community, and government organizations.

Finally, the publication of my book manuscript, I believe, would help highlight my research and expertise and **attract outside funding** for the continued development of this research agenda and related topics I am interested in investigating (e.g., the disengagement demobilization, and reintegration of paramilitaries).

Timeline

Time Period	Activity
Summer 2016	Revisions to working paper including additional statistical analyses and submit to journal for peer review; continue to revise/work on book manuscript; submit UCAIHS approval
Fall 2016	Begin to research and arrange interviews and travel to and

	throughout Northern Ireland; set up Linen Hall and Public Records Office access & identify key documents to retrieve; meet with prospective book publishers at Annual Conference of the American Political Science Association
January 2017	2 weeks travel to and throughout Northern Ireland for interviews & fieldwork
Spring 2017	Incorporate additional research and findings from interviews & fieldwork into book manuscript
Spring/Summer 2017	Submit book proposal & full manuscript to prospective academic presses
Summer/Fall 2017	Prepare mainstream Foreign Affairs/Foreign Policy article summarizing and publicizing book's key findings and implications

Budget

Item	Description	Cost
Airport transfer from home to Newark, NJ	Will take NJ Transit to avoid airport parking fees ($24 round-trip), but will need to pay overnight train station parking ($10/day *16)	$184
Round-trip airfare Newark to Belfast	Estimate based on travel for January 3-January 19	$712
Airport transfer to hotel in Belfast	Airport express to Belfast city centre	$20
Hotel costs in Belfast	Estimate $150/night * 15 nights	$2250
Meals/Incidentals in Belfast	$75/day estimate based on actual expenses w/receipts (per diem rate is $118 from State Department website) for 16 days	$1200
Linen Hall Library Temporary Membership	For access to archival material & use of library	$54
Local transport in Northern Ireland	This includes subway & rail travel to meet interviewees in Northern Ireland (2 week Translink metro pass ($45); estimated rail & taxi transit outside Belfast to Derry & Crossmaglen – $300)	$345
Digital voice recorder	Estimate for low end recorder from Best Buy for interviews	$45
International calling	Verizon Travel Pass to allow for phone calls, use of existing data plan while abroad ($10/day for only days used – estimated 14 days use)	$140
Total		**$4950**

Estimates are based on today's (5/5/16) exchange rate of $1.45 per British pound.