

Malcolm Gladwell From [David & Goliath](#) on the [RAND Report, Rebellion and Authority](#):

*The same year that Northern Ireland descended into chaos, two economists—Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr.—wrote a report about how to deal with insurgencies. Leites and Wolf worked for the RAND Corporation, the prestigious think tank started after the Second World War by the Pentagon. Their report was called **Rebellion and Authority**...*

*Fundamental to our analysis is the assumption that the population, as **individuals or groups, behaves “rationally,”** that it **calculates costs and benefits** to the extent that they can be related to different courses of action, and makes choices accordingly. ...Consequently, influencing popular behavior requires neither sympathy nor mysticism, but rather a better understanding of what **costs and benefits the individual or the group is concerned with,** and how they are calculated.*

In other words, getting insurgents to behave is fundamentally a math problem. If there are riots in the streets of Belfast, it's because the costs to rioters of burning houses and smashing windows aren't high enough. And when Leites and Wolf said that “influencing popular behavior requires neither sympathy nor mysticism,” what they meant was that nothing mattered but that calculation. If you were in a position of power, you didn't have to worry about how lawbreakers felt about what you were doing. You just had to be tough enough to make them think twice.

*The general in charge of the British forces in Northern Ireland was a man straight out of the pages of *Rebellion and Authority*. His name was Ian Freeland. He had served with distinction in Normandy during the Second World War and later fought insurgencies in Cyprus and Zanzibar. He was trim and forthright, with a straight back and a square jaw and a firm hand: he “conveyed the correct impression of a man who knew what needed to be done and would do it.” When he arrived in Northern Ireland, he made it plain that his*

patience was limited. He was not afraid to use force. He had his orders from the prime minister: the British Army “should deal toughly, and be seen to deal toughly, with thugs and gunmen.”