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Terrorism and Political Violence

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Terrorism and public opinion: A five country comparison

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Terrorism and Public Opinion: A Five Country Comparison

Christopher Hewitt

This article examines public attitudes towards terrorism in five countries: Uruguay, Spain, Italy, Germany and Northern Ireland. It analyzes public concern over terrorism, images of the terrorists, support for the terrorists' goals, and public approval of anti-terrorist measures. There are significant differences between nationalist and revolutionary terrorism. Nationalist terrorists have a high degree of support from an ethnic constituency, while revolutionary terrorists attract a much smaller degree of support primarily from the educated young. It is concluded that public opinion towards terrorism is a product of complex historical situations, and that public attitudes are unaffected by the terrorist campaign itself.

The goal of insurgent terrorism is to alter the political situation by changing public opinion. The relationship between terrorism and public opinion is, therefore, an important issue that needs to be examined.

One purpose of terrorism is to draw attention to some cause or grievance. Schmid and de Graaf go so far as to claim that

the genesis of contemporary insurgent terrorism ... (can be seen) primarily as the outgrowth of minority strategies to get into the news. The choice of this strategy to get grievances vented and redressed is ... probably due to the fact that the significance of parliaments as an intermediary between people and the executive has declined.¹

Getting noticed is one thing – being understood is another.² Governments threatened by political insurgents usually dismiss them as common criminals, and, among the general public in England and the United States, terrorists are often seen as psychologically disturbed. For the terrorists, one of their initial problems is simply to be taken seriously, to be considered as having realistic political goals.

Even if the public regards terrorists as politically-motivated revolutionaries or nationalists, it still does not follow that they will support them or their goals. Those who advocate an urban guerrilla strategy believe, however, that terrorism itself can create a revolutionary situation. Two processes supposedly produce revolutionary consciousness. In the nineteenth century, many anarchists and social revolutionaries

believed that the masses would be inspired by the 'propaganda of the deed' to rise up against oppression. The Narodnaya Volya's manifesto claimed that 'terrorist activity ... aims to undermine the prestige of the government, to demonstrate the possibility of struggle against the government [and] to arouse in this manner the revolutionary spirit of the people and their confidence in the success of their cause'. Kropotkin said that one terrorist act could 'make more propaganda than a thousand pamphlets. Above all, it awakens the spirit of revolt.' This view was echoed a century later by Latin American revolutionaries. Regis Debray wrote that 'the destruction of one troop transport truck is more effective propaganda for the local population than a thousand speeches'. According to the Tupamaros, 'revolutionary action in itself ... generates revolutionary consciousness, organization and conditions'.³

An alternative view of how to create a revolutionary situation is the 'provocation-repression' theory. By attacking the establishment and the security forces, the insurgents provoke the state into mass repression which alienates the general public, and increases support for the rebels.⁴ The Basque insurgent group ETA believed that by attacks against the Spanish military and Guardia Civil, they would

provoke Spanish authorities into an overreaction that would inflict heavy damage on the civilian Basque population. In attempting to stop ETA, Madrid would aggravate already strong but latent hostility against its policies among the Basques, and the previously inert civilian population would then commit itself to support ETA's armed struggle.⁵

In addition to mobilizing and radicalizing their own supporters, terrorists seek to destroy the morale of their enemies. To revolutionaries, the enemy is the ruling class and their agents, to nationalists, the enemy is the nation oppressing them. This produces markedly different campaigns, where revolutionaries selectively attack politicians and businessmen, while nationalists try to raise the costs to the foreign occupiers by killing large numbers of soldiers.⁶

Most counter-insurgency writers deny that terrorism produces support for the insurgents' goals, and argue that the strategy is actually counter-productive. According to Moss, 'in most cases, urban guerrillas are dangerous less for what they do than for what they inspire: the erosion of the consensus, a hardening of the political battle lines and a backlash that strikes back too hard and too indiscriminately', and he goes on to suggest that 'the usual response to terrorism is revulsion'.⁷ Clutterbuck claims that, in both Germany and Italy, killing policemen with consequent 'TV pictures of their tearful working class families ... created widespread anger'.⁸

In the case of Uruguay, the consensus holds that public perceptions changed as the Tupamaro campaign became more deadly. Originally the Tupamaros carefully avoided unnecessary violence and attacked only the rich and elite. During Christmas they hijacked a food truck and distributed the groceries in the slums of Montevideo. They robbed the casino, but returned that share which would have gone to the employees. They broke into a financial institution and publicized its corrupt and illegal practices (which implicated a cabinet minister). When one of their kidnap victims had a heart attack, they kidnapped a specialist to treat him, and then released their prisoner when his condition worsened.

Such tactics created a favorable image for the Tupamaros, but the public supposedly turned against them once they began to murder people. 'They lost their original Robin Hood image as imaginative student pranksters who pilfered from the rich to give to the poor, by systematically murdering policemen as well as an American hostage, Dan Mitrione.'⁹ This is a common view, usually supported by citing polls which show a dramatic decline in those thinking the Tupamaros were 'motivated by a concern for social justice' from 59 percent in 1971 to four per cent in 1972.¹⁰

There has, however, been no systematic cross-national analysis of the relation between public opinion and terrorism. This article attempts to remedy the omission by examining five societies, Uruguay, Germany, Italy, Spain/Basque provinces and United Kingdom/Northern Ireland, where significant terrorist campaigns have taken place. Since these cases do not constitute a representative sample, and were selected primarily because of data availability, I shall discuss later the extent to which the findings can be generalized.

Insurgent terrorism has taken two forms. In Northern Ireland and the Basque provinces of Spain, nationalist terrorism by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) aims to drive out the British and Spanish, and to inspire the local population to support Irish unity or Basque independence. The Tupamaros in Uruguay, the Red Army Faction/Baader-Meinhof group in Germany, and the Red Brigades in Italy sought to bring about a revolution.

Terrorist groups see the public divided into two main categories: their constituency and their enemies. Their constituency consists of potential and actual supporters. For nationalist terrorists, their core constituency is defined by ethnicity: Catholics in Northern Ireland, ethnic Basques in Spain. Politically their support is organized in the militantly nationalist parties such as Provisional Sinn Fein (PSF) and Herri Batasuna (HB) or Euzkadiko Ezkerra (EE). Moderate nationalists such as the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) represent potential supporters, who hopefully can be won over to a militant position.

The revolutionary constituency is less clearly defined. Supposedly it is the proletariat, but *de facto* revolutionary terrorists draw their support from the educated young. Politically they lack an organized base, but are sympathetically, if critically, regarded by the extreme left. In a general sense their appeal is aimed at the left, whether communist, socialist or even social-democratic.

The available survey data are unfortunately, but not surprisingly, short of being ideal. On some topics we lack any information at all. If we wish to make comparisons between countries, the questions are rarely asked in the same form. Although we are interested in whether terrorism changes public attitudes, on several matters survey data exist for only one point in time.¹¹

However, we do have sufficient information to consider four topics in some detail: the level of public concern, the image that the public has of the terrorists, the degree of support for the political goals of the terrorists, and public attitudes towards government anti-terrorist policies. Furthermore, although fragmentary, the data allow us to make comparisons between countries, as well as over time, and between groups within the same country. Thus we are able to suggest why people hold the opinions that they do and to link the description of public opinion to the theoretical literature on terrorism.

Terrorism as a Problem

The first question that needs to be asked about public opinion is to what extent terrorism is seen as a problem. One standard survey question asks what is the most important problem facing the country. In Table 1 the percentage selecting terrorism or a related topic is shown.

The answers are obviously affected by the list of topics suggested and by the wording of the topic. In so far as the question forces a single choice on respondents, it does not take account of those who see terrorism as a significant but not the most important problem. In Spain, if we include those who selected terrorism as the second most important problem, the number is much higher. Furthermore, for certain groups terrorism may be more important. In Northern Ireland, Protestants were more likely than Catholics to see terrorism as the most serious issue (41 per cent and 24 per cent).

The simplest explanation for the degree of public concern is that it is directly linked to the amount of terrorism: the more terrorism the more concern. This interpretation is supported by two pieces of evidence. First, cross-national differences in the proportion saying that terrorism is the most important problem do correspond to variations in the level of terrorism. If we consider terrorism-related deaths, for the period prior to

TABLE 1
TERRORISM AS A PROBLEM

	Most Important Problem (%)	Deaths from Terrorism
(1) Northern Ireland 1982	Terrorism 34	2,340
(2) Spain 1979-82	Terrorism/public order 22	414
(3) Italy 1972-79	Public Order 16	227
(4) Great Britain 1971-2	Northern Ireland 13	678
(5) Uruguay 1968-69	Disorder/subversion 4	14
(6) Germany 1976	Public Order 8	12

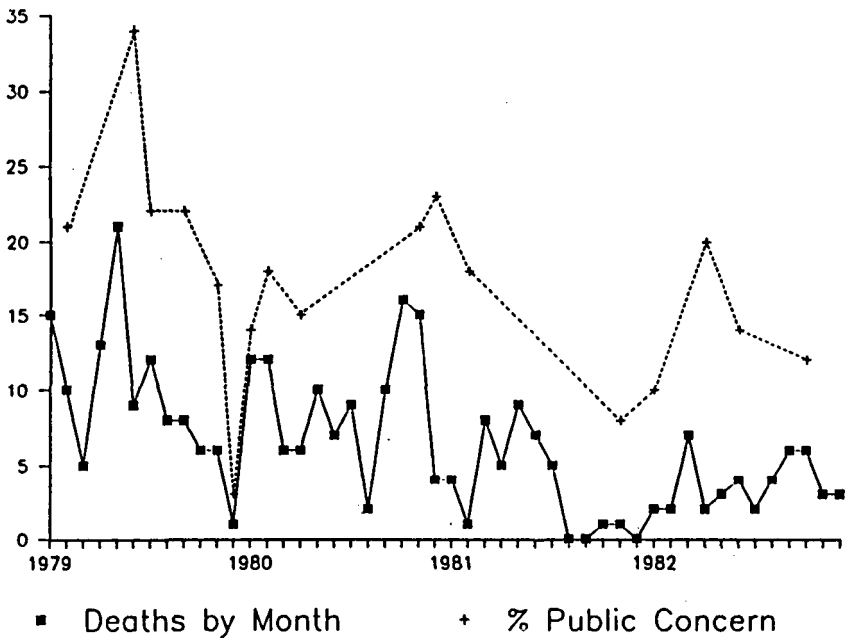
Sources: *Attitudes to the Northern Ireland Assembly* (Survey conducted for BBC by Ulster Marketing Surveys, Oct. 1982).
Revista Espanola de Investigaciones Sociologicas (1972-82).
Gallup Political Index (London: Gallup Poll).
Indice Gallup de Opinion Publica (Montevideo: Gallup Uruguay).
 Karl Cerny, *Germany at the Polls* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1978), p.137.

when the polls were taken, the rank order is correct. Northern Ireland has the most deaths followed by Spain and then Italy with Uruguay and Germany having far fewer, and this corresponds to the concern expressed.

Second, within Spain, the changing level of concern is closely linked to the monthly death totals. Indeed, it is striking how quickly public attitudes change in respect to short-term fluctuations in the numbers killed (see Figure 1). Unfortunately, in none of the other countries are there a sufficient number of observations to examine changes over time.

Clearly, however, the amount of violence is not the only factor operating on public opinion. In the case of Spain, we can also examine regional differences to see whether there is more concern where terrorist violence is highest. Contrary to expectations, it is those areas with the highest levels of violence which are the *least* likely to see terrorism as a significant problem (see Table 2). This can be explained by considering the role of ethnicity in Barcelona and the Basque provinces, where most

FIGURE 1
TERRORISM AND THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC CONCERN IN SPAIN (1979-82)



Source: *Revista Espanola de Investigaciones Sociologicas* (1979-82).

violence has taken place. Basques and Catalans have strong regional and ethnic identities, and sizeable minorities support separatist parties.¹² Terrorism is directed primarily not against fellow ethnics but against the Guardia Civil who are – as a deliberate policy – drawn from other regions of Spain.¹³

A similar explanation can be offered to explain the Northern Irish situation, where Catholics feel much less concern about terrorism than Protestants. By 1982 (when the survey was taken) the victims of terrorism were disproportionately Protestant.¹⁴ On the other hand, the Catholic rate of unemployment was much higher than the Protestant rate. Not surprisingly Protestants rated terrorism the main problem facing Northern Ireland with unemployment the second ranked problem, while Catholics reversed the order.

The importance of Northern Ireland to the British public can also be explained by considering who was being killed. During 1971-72 British concern reached a peak, with 13 per cent on average saying it was the most

TABLE 2
PUBLIC CONCERN IN SPAIN OVER TERRORISM BY PROVINCE AND DEATH RATE

	Terrorist killings/ m. population	Terrorism main problem (%)
Basque Provinces	191.9	10.5
Madrid	18.1	14.2
Barcelona	7.0	10.1
Galicia	1.8	16.5
Catalonia	0.8	15.7
Andalucia	0.8	18.4
Canaries	0.7	19.9
All other provinces	1.4	21.9

Source: *Revista Espanola de Investigaciones Sociologicas* (1979-82).

important problem for the country. The salience of the Northern Ireland issue was lower than would have been predicted given the number of deaths during the period (678). However, if we focus on the number of *British* soldiers killed (177), the concern expressed is at about the expected level. Since the early 1970s British interest in Northern Ireland has diminished considerably, paralleling the decline in the number of British soldiers killed.

How the Public Views Terrorists

In most of the cases that we examine, survey data are available on public perceptions of the terrorists. In Uruguay, respondents were asked whether the Tupamaros were well-intentioned revolutionaries or common delinquents. In Italy, the public was asked to choose one or two phrases that best applied to the Red Brigade members. Three phrases were negative (instruments controlled from on high, dangerous assassins or crazy), but the others were ambivalent (pursuing a just end with the wrong means) or very positive (fighting for a better society). In Germany the question was whether the Baader-Meinhof gang acted out of political conviction or if they had become true criminals. In the Basque provinces, surveys have asked whether terrorists are patriots, idealists, madmen, criminals or individuals manipulated by outside forces. In Northern Ireland, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with statements about the IRA and the loyalist paramilitaries. (Were the

IRA basically patriots and idealists? Were the actions of the loyalist paramilitaries a justified reaction to what has happened in Northern Ireland?) Given that the form of the question varies and furthermore that the answers change over time, somewhat procrustean procedures are necessary to compare the different cases. Table 3 shows the percentage of the public holding positive images of the different terrorist groups, and reveals that a significant proportion acknowledged the political nature of their actions.

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC HOLDING POSITIVE IMAGE OF TERRORISTS

1. Basque Provinces (ETA)	47.3
2. N. Ireland (IRA)	38.6
3. Uruguay (Tupamaros)	38.6
4. N. Ireland (Loyalists)	37.6
5. Italy (Red Brigades)	27.6
6. Germany (Baader-Meinhof)	18.0

Sources: Juan Linz, *Conflicto en Euskadi* (Espasa Calpe: 1986).
E. Moxon-Browne, 'The Water and the Fish: Public Opinion and the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism*, Vol. 5 (1981), 41-72.
Indice Gallup de Opinion Publica (1967-72).
L'Espresso (10 Jan. 1982).
Allensbacher Jahrbuch (Institute für Demoskopie Allensbach, 1971).

Some groups are more likely to hold a favorable image of the terrorists. This is particularly true with regard to nationalist terrorists who are regarded very sympathetically by their fellow ethnics. In the Basque provinces, those who consider themselves as Basque are much more likely to see ETA as patriots and idealists than those who consider themselves to be Spanish. In Northern Ireland, Catholics and Protestants disagree significantly in how they view both the IRA and the Loyalist terrorists.

Revolutionary terrorists lack such a clearly defined constituency. Their Marxist rhetoric suggests that their support should be concentrated in the working class; yet, in fact, the Tupamaros and Baader-Meinhof are viewed most sympathetically by those of higher socio-economic status, although the differences are small. Demography rather than class is a differentiating factor with men somewhat more sympathetic than women, and the young noticeably more so than the old.

Political ideology is correlated with attitudes towards the terrorists.

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGE HOLDING POSITIVE IMAGE OF NATIONALIST
TERRORISTS BY ETHNICITY

	<u>By Fellow Ethnic</u> s	<u>By Other Ethnic</u> s
Positive Image of ETA	65.9	15.5
Positive Image of IRA	46.3	34.7
Positive Image of Loyalists	43.9	25.0

Sources: Calculated from Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, p.181; Moxon-Browne, 'The Water and the Fish ...', pp.41-72.

TABLE 5
PERCENTAGE HOLDING POSITIVE IMAGE OF REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISTS BY
CLASS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	<u>Baader-Meinhof</u>	<u>Tupamaros</u>
Men	20	36
Women	16	33
Young	25	47
Middle Aged	16	35
Elderly	13	27
Educated	18	37
Less Educated	17	31
Upper Class		37
Middle Class		35
Lower Class		32

Sources: *Allensbacher Jahrbuch* (1971), *Indice Gallup de Opinion Publica* (1967-72).

In the Basque provinces, supporters of the extremist Basque nationalist parties (HB and EE) hold very positive views of ETA, and in Northern Ireland, supporters of PSF hold very positive views of the IRA. Moderate nationalists like the Basque PNV and Catholic SDLP hold ambivalent but far more sympathetic attitudes than non-nationalists. A similar ideological polarization is seen in Uruguay, where supporters of the leftwing Frente Amplio were much more likely to view the Tupamaros as well-intentioned revolutionaries than were the center-left Blancos or center-right Colorados. In Germany, however, partisan differences were very slight between the conservative Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats. The Free Democrats, a middle class liberal group, were the most sympathetic.

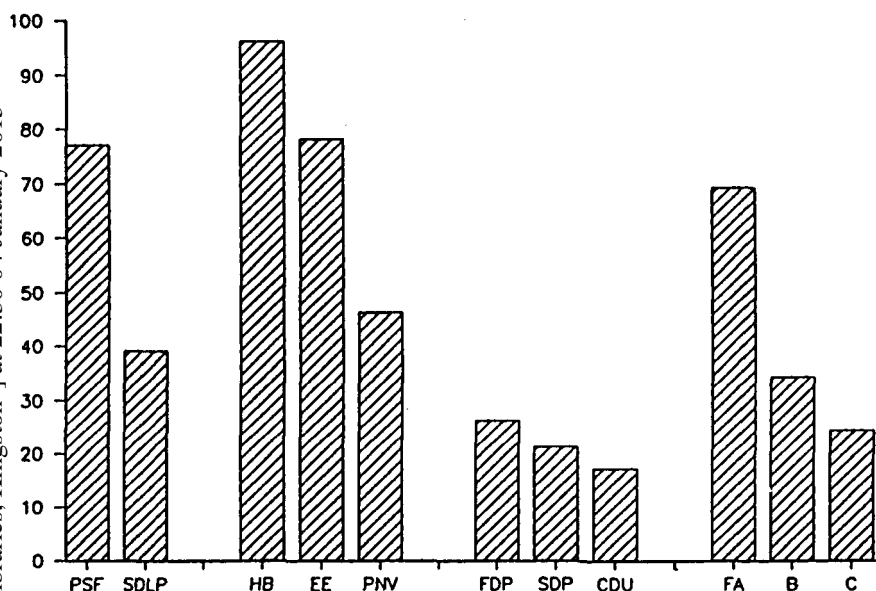
Although plausible, the view that terrorists will damage their image by killing people is not supported by the evidence. Indeed, it is those groups that kill the most, like IRA and ETA, that have the most positive ratings, while the Red Brigades and the Baader–Meinhof gang, groups that have killed far fewer, have the most unfavorable images.

Only in the Uruguayan case are survey data available that allow us to examine how public attitudes actually changed over time as a result of terrorist violence. Three questions were asked repeatedly: whether a specific action was a legitimate revolutionary act or a crime; whether the Tupamaros were well-intentioned revolutionaries or common delinquents; and, whether there was any justification for the Tupamaros 'under the political conditions of our country'.

Some evidence does suggest that a soft-line campaign helps maintain a more favorable terrorist image. For example, the proportion of respondents who believed kidnappings to be legitimate revolutionary acts, increased *after* the victims were returned unharmed, as happened in the cases of Fly and Jackson.¹⁴ When Fly was first kidnapped only 18 per cent of the individuals surveyed thought it a legitimate revolutionary act, but 32 per cent saw it as such after he was released. In the case of Jackson the figure rose from 30 per cent to 36 per cent. On the other hand, the killing of Mitrione brought about a dramatic decline in those thinking his abduction was justified. The week before his death, the public was evenly divided between those who thought it a legitimate revolutionary act (34 per cent) and those who considered it a crime (34 per cent). After his murder the division became 18 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively.

However, terrorist violence clearly has only a temporary effect. Figure 3, showing the proportion considering the Tupamaros 'well-intentioned revolutionaries' and their actions 'justified under the political conditions of the country', does not suggest any deterioration of their public image. The first killings of policemen were not until July 1969, but the public perception of them as well-intentioned revolutionaries averaged 38.7 per

FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGE HOLDING POSITIVE IMAGE OF TERRORISTS BY PARTY



Sources: *From the Shadow of the Gun* (MORI, 1984).

W. Phillips Davison and Leon Gordenker, *Resolving Nationality Conflicts* (New York: Praeger, 1980), p.47.

Allensbacher Jahrbuch (1971).

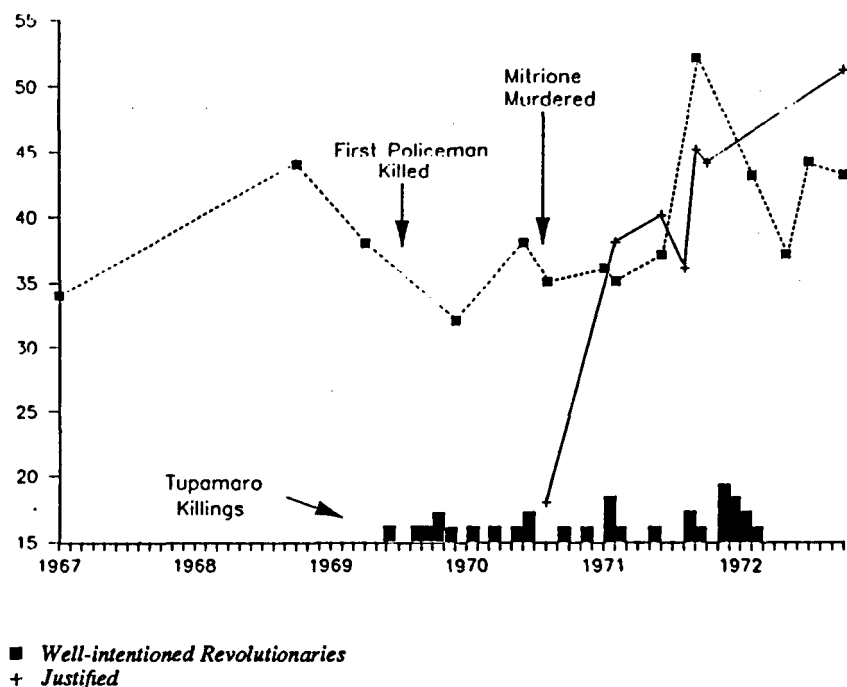
Indice Gallup de Opinion Publica (1967-72).

cent before that date, compared to 38.9 per cent afterwards. Mitrione's murder had no discernible impact on public opinion either. Nor does the actual number of killings appear to be a negative factor. The percentage of respondents thinking the Tupamaros justified under the political conditions of the country increased substantially during the period when terrorist killings were at their highest.

The often cited poll, showing a decline in public support for the Tupamaros, is doubly mistaken. Richard Clutterbuck erroneously cited statistics from an earlier article by Brian Crozier in the *London Times*.¹⁶ Crozier, citing Gallup Uruguay, referred to the percentage who thought the Tupamaros 'well-intentioned' as dropping from 52 per cent to four per cent over the year. He compared this statistic to the proportion thinking that the armed forces were doing a good job, which had increased from 33 per cent to 59 per cent. Clutterbuck mixed up the two figures when he

spoke of the decline being from 59 per cent to four per cent. However, Crozier also had gotten his figures wrong, since the actual July 1972 figure, approving the Tupamaros, is not four per cent but 36 per cent. The source of Crozier's four per cent is uncertain, but appears to be the July 1972 Gallup Uruguay poll. This poll also asked what *caused* the Tupamaros to appear, and reported that there was a decline from 11 per cent to four per cent in those who mentioned a 'lack of social justice'. Presumably this is the original source of the erroneous figure.

FIGURE 3
ATTITUDE TO TUPAMAROS



It seems, therefore, that a high level of violence does not in itself alienate the public. What appears crucial in creating a positive image of the terrorists as 'sincere patriots' and 'revolutionaries' is that they should behave like patriots and revolutionaries, and that such roles are understood within the society. Thus, the IRA operates within the context of a militant nationalist tradition deeply rooted in Irish history, and 'contemporary events so often evoke vivid and bitter memories'.¹⁷ Basque

nationalism and ETA's image are also the result of memories of past oppression by the Franco regime and popular resistance to it. In their campaigns the IRA and ETA usually behave like patriots fighting a national liberation struggle. Their targets are predominantly military, and they usually try to avoid killing innocent civilians.¹⁸ Nationalist terrorists enjoy more legitimacy than do revolutionaries, particularly among their fellow ethnics, perhaps because revolutionary ideology is less easily understood by the general public. Even in Italy, a country with a well-established Marxist tradition, the Red Brigades had a much lower approval rating than the IRA or ETA.¹⁹

German political culture offered even less ideological support for revolutionary activity and Marxism has been largely supplanted by revisionist social democracy.²⁰ Pridham comments that 'it is difficult to measure the ideological dimensions of German terrorism' since the terrorist language 'has been both confused and confusing as a means of communicating ideas'.²¹ Unlike Italy, the German system was working well, and hence demands for its revolutionary transformation were largely incomprehensible to the great majority of Germans.²²

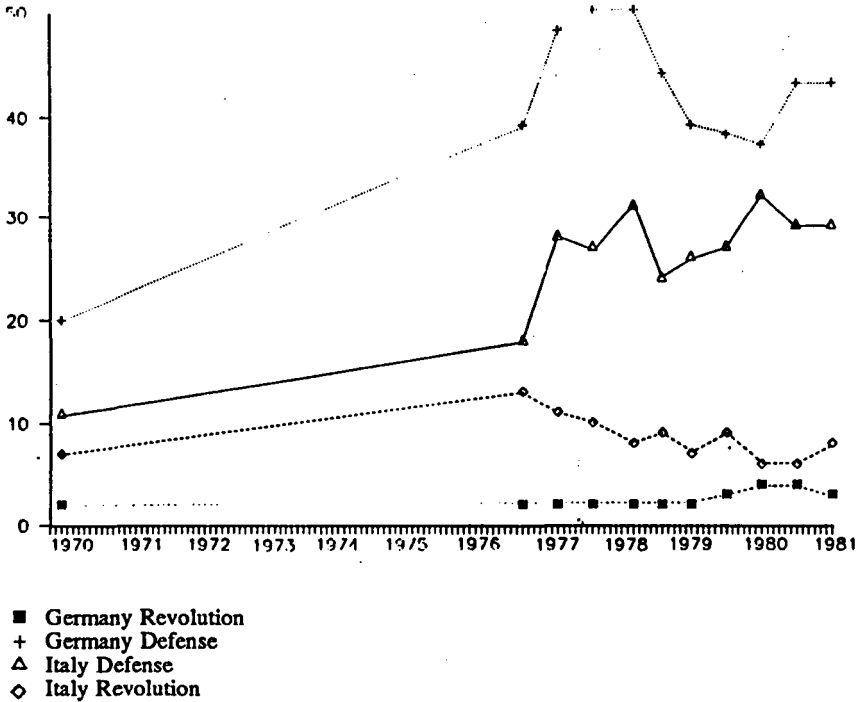
Attitudes Towards Revolution and Nationalism

Survey data are available for Uruguay, Italy, Germany and Spain on general ideological orientations and their changes over time. In Uruguay the population was asked whether they believed the solution to the country's problems lay in 'armed revolution' or 'law and order'. In Germany and Italy the options were 'radical change by revolutionary action', 'gradual improvement by reforms' and 'valiant defense against all subversive forces'. In Spain respondents were asked to locate themselves on a continuum from extreme left to extreme right. Figures 4 and 5 show the changes over time in the proportion supporting the various positions.

Does urban terrorism generate revolutionary consciousness? If it does, there should be an increase in the proportion of those defining themselves as revolutionaries or extreme leftists, but obviously this did not happen. In Uruguay and Italy, where major left-wing campaigns were mounted, the number favoring revolution declined steadily throughout the period of terrorist activity. In Germany and Spain, where leftist terrorism was conducted at a much lower level, the proportion of revolutionaries and extreme leftists remained virtually unchanged at a trivial level.

Does terrorism generate a backlash, with increased support for tough law and order measures? In Uruguay, Germany and Italy there is clear evidence of such a relationship. In Uruguay, the number of terrorist acts rose each year during 1968-72, and this is matched by a steady increase in the law and order category. The worst years for terrorism in Germany

FIGURE 4
POLITICAL ATTITUDES IN GERMANY AND ITALY



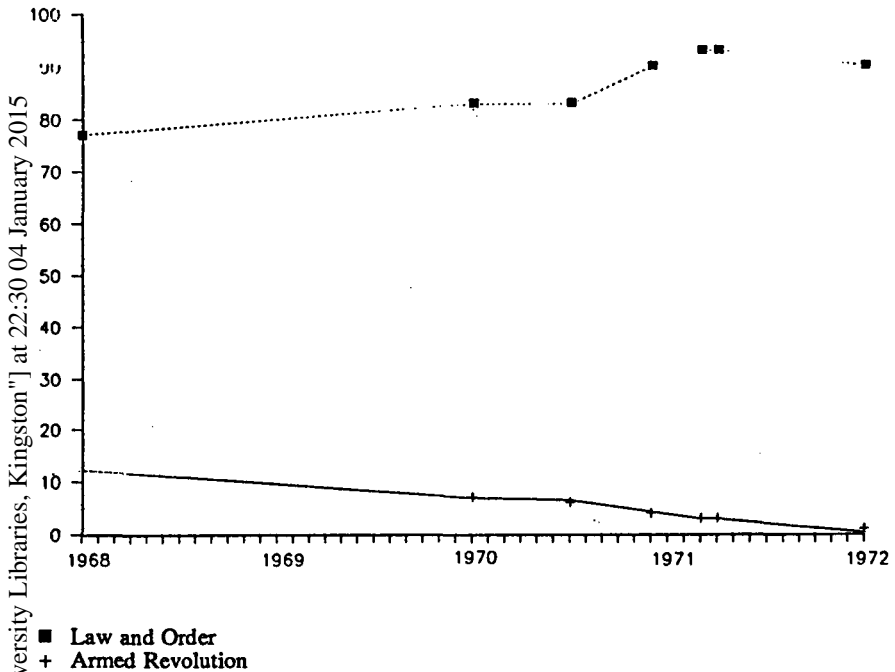
Source: *Index to International Public Opinion* (1981-82).

were 1977 and 1980 and in Italy 1978 and 1980, and during these years the percentage of the population favoring a 'valiant defense of society' reaches a maximum.

These shifts in Italy and Germany can be compared to those found in the EEC bloc as a whole to see whether the trend is due to a general change in political climate in the 1970s. In fact, the trend in the other EEC countries is different. From November 1976 to April 1981, the average of the other EEC countries (excluding Germany and Italy) shows a slight increase in the proportion of revolutionaries (six per cent to seven per cent) and no change in the proportion favoring a valiant defense against subversion (27 per cent at both dates).²³

Support for nationalism reveals a very different pattern from that for revolution, and seems unaffected by the level of violence. The people of

FIGURE 5
POLITICAL ATTITUDES IN URUGUAY

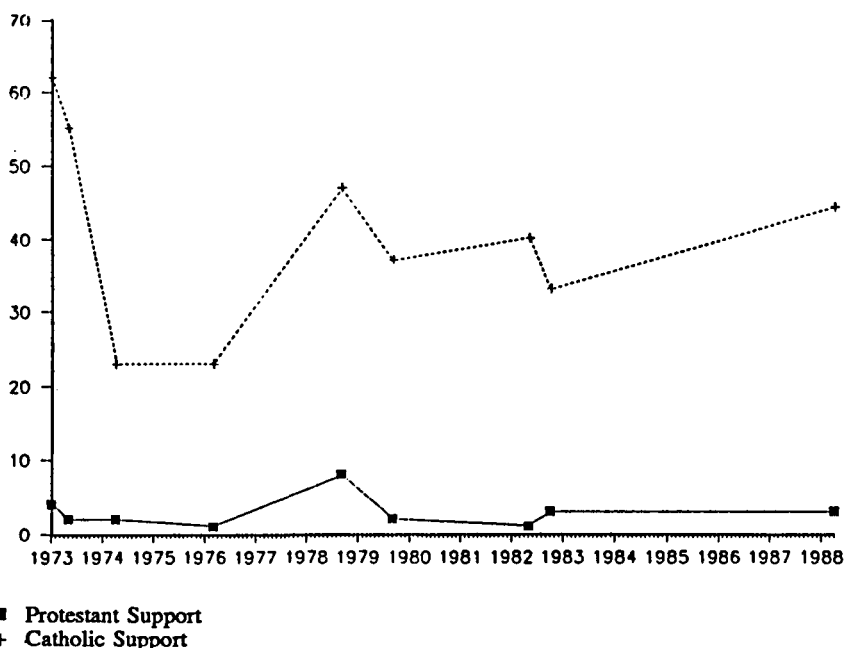


Northern Ireland have been asked repeatedly for their views on 'the best solution to the Northern Irish problem' or their 'long-term constitutional preference', etc. Despite the fact that the options and the form of the question varies somewhat between the different polls, the answers can be compared over time. (Only a handful of respondents refuse to answer or have no opinion.) There is no sign that attitudes to Irish unity have changed within either the Catholic or Protestant community since the troubles began. Among Catholics, a united Ireland is usually favored by a plurality but not a majority, and there is no clear trend in the level of support. (The low point in nationalist sentiment coincides with the attempt at 'power sharing' during 1973-74). Of equal significance is the fact that Protestants show no sign of accepting the desirability of Irish unity, and continue overwhelmingly to support the British connection.

For the Basque provinces, Clark presents data from a large number of surveys on support for Basque independence. Unfortunately, as he

notes, many respondents 'simply refuse to answer questions about ETA, terrorism, or politics in general'. There is no clear trend in the proportion that wanted full independence, although as the table points out the proportion seems to have declined after the granting of autonomy in 1979.²⁴

FIGURE 6
SUPPORT FOR IRISH UNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND BY RELIGION



■ Protestant Support
+ Catholic Support

Sources: 'What Ulster Thinks', *Belfast Telegraph* (19 Feb. 1973).

'Ulster 1973', *Carrick James Market Research*.

'Seven Out of Ten Back Power Sharing', *Belfast Telegraph* (19 April 1974).

ORC Report (5 June 1974).

Moxon-Browne, 'The Water and the Fish'.

'What the People of Ulster Think', *New Society* (6 Sept. 1979).

'Public Reaction in N. Ireland to Aspects of the Prior Proposals', *MRBI (Irish Times)* May 1982.

Fortnight (July-Aug. 1982).

Attitudes to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

From the Shadow of a Gun (MORI, 1984).

The social characteristics of revolutionaries and nationalists are shown in Tables 6 and 7, and it is clear that the pattern corresponds to that found in the previous section. Those who have a positive image of each terrorist group are similar to those who agree with the group's goals. Nationalism is

strongly linked to ethnicity, and, whatever class differences exist, can be explained by the class composition of the different ethnic groups. Thus, Northern Irish Catholics are disproportionately working class, so Irish nationalists are more likely to be working class, but ethnic Basques are disproportionately middle class so Basque nationalists are more likely to be middle class. As would be expected, those favoring Herri Batasuna or Sinn Fein are usually nationalists. The lack of a definable class base for revolutionary ideology is again apparent, although revolutionaries are disproportionately young males.

TABLE 6
PERCENTAGE SUPPORTING NATIONALISM BY ETHNICITY AND PARTY

	<u>Basques/ Catholics</u>	<u>Other Ethnics</u>	<u>HB/PSF</u>
Basque Provinces	45	5	61
N. Ireland	33	3	69

Sources: Richard Gunther, Giacomo Sani and Goldie Shabad *Spain After Franco* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), pp.325-58.
Attitudes to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

TABLE 7
CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIONALISTS AND REVOLUTIONARIES

	Sex		Age			Class		
	Men	Women	Young	Middle Aged	Older	High	Middle	Low
<u>Supporting Revolution in:</u>								
Uruguay	3.3	2.6	5.3	2.9	1.4	2.9	2.4	3.7
Italy			14.4		7.2		9.0	9.0
Germany			3.2		1.6		2.0	2.0
<u>Supporting Nationalism in:</u>								
Basque Provinces						26.0	26.0	18.0
N. Ireland	18.0	10.0	17.0	12.0	13.0	13.0	15.0	

Sources: *Indice Gallup de Opinion Publica* (1968-72).
Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).
Commission of the European Communities, *The Young Europeans* (Brussels, 1982).
Clark, *Basque Insurgents*, p.183.
Attitudes to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Public Opinion on Anti-Terrorist Policies

Faced with political violence, governments often respond with repression. People are arrested, shot by police or soldiers, stopped and questioned on the street, their houses searched, and their civil liberties and political rights restricted. Some survey data on attitudes towards anti-terrorist policies are available for all five countries, but the amount and quality vary significantly. The data for Northern Ireland, Germany and Uruguay are good, but those for Spain and Italy are fragmentary. Although precise comparisons between countries are difficult since questions are rarely asked in the same form, the data in Table 8 do suggest certain conclusions.

Usually, majorities or pluralities in all countries support getting tough with terrorists or rioters, and favor specific hard line policies. Cross-national comparisons reveal that public attitudes are more hard-line in Northern Ireland and Germany than in Uruguay, Italy or Spain. In Northern Ireland a large majority believe the Government 'should take a tougher line with the IRA', but in Uruguay those favoring a 'hard-line' approach are outnumbered three to one by those who favor a 'soft-line'. Taking a tough or hard-line approach can mean several things. Punishing terrorists is certainly popular in most countries. In Germany and Italy, there are majorities favoring more severe penalties for terrorist offenses, and in Northern Ireland, Italy and Germany for the restoration of the death penalty for terrorist murders. Uruguayans are obviously less enthusiastic about either policy. Terrorists who go on hunger strikes receive scant sympathy. More than three-quarters of those in Northern Ireland were against making any concessions to them, and in Germany, after Holger Meins starved to death, a similar proportion thought the authorities 'could not be held responsible'. Increasing the strength of the police is favored by a majority in both Northern Ireland and Germany, while a plurality is also willing to have them 'shoot to kill'. In Italy, a majority thought the police should intervene 'with force and decision' when political violence took place.

Restrictions on the legal rights of suspected terrorists are generally accepted. In Uruguay, most people approved the use of military courts, and in both Germany and Northern Ireland most thought that terrorists got a 'fair trial' despite special procedures. In Germany, measures such as supervision of defence lawyers, separating suspects and lawyers by glass panels, etc. were approved by overwhelming margins.

Attitudes towards preventive detention and internment show a reversal of the normal cross-national pattern. In Germany a proposal that terrorists who had served their sentence could be held in police custody 'when it

TABLE 8
SUPPORT FOR ANTI-TERRORIST POLICIES BY COUNTRY AND TYPE OF POLICY

	N. Ireland	Uruguay	Germany	Spain	Italy
PERCENTAGE SUPPORTING:					
Tougher/hardline policies in general	81	22	-	48	-
More severe penalties	-	43	85	-	87
Death penalty	53	21	61	43	54
Strengthening police	73	-	63	-	65
Shoot to kill policy	43	-	49	-	-
Trial procedures	53	48	60	-	-
Preventive detention/ internment	37	48	57	-	-
Hardline with hungerstrikers	77	-	78	-	-
Giving up civil liberties in interest of security	-	50	64	-	-
Censorship	-	38	77	-	-
ID checks	-	70	60	-	-
House searches	-	19	50	-	-
Positive rating of security forces	86	45	22	40	31

Sources: 'Public Attitudes to Internment', *Fortnight* (6 Sept. 1974).

Moxon-Browne, 'Water and the Fish'.

'What the People Think about Supergrasses', *Fortnight* (Nov. 1984).

'Opinion Poll', *BBC Spotlight* (May 1985).

Belfast Telegraph, 6 Feb. 1985.

John Finn, 'Public Support for Emergency Legislation in Northern Ireland: A Preliminary Analysis', *Terrorism*, Vol. 10 (1987).

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'Imagen Publica de la Policia', *Revista Espanola de Investigaciones Sociologicas* (April/June 1982).

Cambio 16 (7 Jan. 1979).

L'Espresso (10 Jan. 1982).

Piergiorgio Corbetta, 'Perche piu indulgenza per i terroristi?' *Cattaneo*, Vol. 3 (June 1983).

Fabris, *Il comportamento politico degli italiani*, pp.225-6.

appears that they will commit other terrorist acts' was strongly supported and near majorities in Uruguay thought detention 'justified and well-handled'. However, those agreeing with internment in Northern Ireland, never constituted more than a substantial minority.

Throughout the period, the great majority of Germans declared themselves willing to give up 'some of their personal freedom in order to fight crime and terrorism', and in Uruguay a majority supported 'the suspension of individual guarantees' (that is, civil rights guaranteed by the constitution.) On specific issues, the Germans were willing to submit to identity checks and house searches by police, and to news blackouts for security reasons. On the other hand, Uruguayans, although conceding the necessity of identity checks, did not believe that censorship or house searches were justified.

There were noticeable differences between countries in how the public rated the conduct and competence of the security forces. By large majorities, both army and police were seen to be 'doing their job well' in Northern Ireland. In Uruguay throughout the period, almost half of those surveyed said their conduct was either good or very good. However, most Italians saw police measures to combat terrorism as both 'inefficient and insufficient', and only 31 per cent saw them as efficient or adequate. The German police were judged even less positively with only 22 per cent saying they 'took good care of security'. In Spain, public perceptions of the police were mixed. A majority thought they 'treated the public correctly' and 'protected and defended them'. However, almost half said they felt fear when coming into contact with the police, and only a minority thought the police had improved with democracy, had adapted to political change, or respected individual rights and liberties.

One might anticipate that support for tough policies would be greatest in those countries where terrorism poses the greatest threat, but this is not the case. German public opinion is as hardline as that of Northern Ireland, while Spaniards and Italians are no more hardline than Uruguayans. Historical factors may explain these cross national differences.²⁵

An alternative view, that harsh security measures will alienate the public, is widely held. In the case of Uruguay, Moss claims that 'emergency measures alienated public opinion'.²⁶ Porzecanski says that the police 'became well known among the population for extensive and routine use of torture, as well as for heavy-handed citywide search operations'. These massive searches 'conducted clumsily at all hours of the night ... created great resentment among Montevideo's population'.²⁷ Labrousse describes how 'the population was incensed by the continual police controls'.²⁸ In the case of Northern Ireland, Moxon-Browne and Finn argue that harsh measures have 'alienated' public opinion and 'eroded' public confidence.²⁹ This view can be tested by examining differences in

attitudes to security policies between groups, and also by examining changes over time.

Whether or not harsh security measures alienate the public seems to depend upon how selectively they are applied. In Northern Ireland, those arrested, interned, or shot by the security forces have been predominantly and disproportionately Catholic. Within Catholic areas, routine identity checks and house searches affect all the inhabitants, regardless of their politics or involvement in political violence. A similar situation obtains in Spain where the Basque provinces have experienced the full rigors of Spanish counter-insurgency policies. The result is widespread alienation among Catholics and Basques, and a polarization of attitudes towards security policy between Catholics and Protestants, Basques and non-Basques.

In Italy and Germany, security measures affect the general public only temporarily and during clearly defined crises, such as the Moro and Schleyer kidnappings. At other times 'since the terrorists proclaim themselves to be revolutionary leftists, radical left wing groups are naturally suspect and become targets of intensive investigation and sometimes harassment by the security forces'.³ In Uruguay from mid-1970 onwards, mass searches and roadblocks affected the public at large, but most of those arrested and brutally interrogated were members of the radical left party, Frente Amplio. Table 9 compares attitudes towards security policy between those groups who were the targets of repression and the rest of the population. Without being overly cynical, one would conclude that those unaffected by government repression support it, while those who experience repression resent it. Indeed, there are indications that if the categories could be fine-tuned, the polarization would be even greater. Within the Basque provinces, for example, Basque nationalists are most likely to suffer detention and arrest, and are also the most hostile to hardline policies.³¹

Do public attitudes become more negative when repression continues over a long period, or when it is at a maximum? Sufficient data are available for Uruguay and Northern Ireland to explore this question. In Uruguay, four questions concerning security were asked repeatedly: should emergency measures remain in effect, should individual guarantees be suspended, did the public favor a hard-line towards terrorism, and how was the conduct of the security forces rated?

Security force activity intensified in mid-1970 and extensive house searches were conducted in Fall 1970 and Spring 1971. There was a significant increase in the level of repression in April 1972, when a state of 'Internal War' was declared, and thousands were arrested. However, a comparison of attitudes towards security shows no sign that the public was alienated by the intensification of security activity.

TABLE 9
POLARIZATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS SECURITY POLICIES

% (Supporting Hardline Policies)

	<u>Affected Group</u>	<u>Rest of Population</u>
N. Ireland (Catholics)	27	73
Spain (Basque Provinces)	30	67
Italy (Proletarian Democrats)	11	66
Uruguay (Frente Amplio)	19	60

Sources: Same as Table 8. (Average of all polls which give breakdowns by relevant variables).

In Northern Ireland, although several surveys have asked about security policies, they have not used the same questions. It is possible, nevertheless, to consider the differences between Catholics and Protestants in their support for security policies as a crude measure of Catholic alienation. Taking into account the number of civilians shot by the security forces, the number interned, and the number of houses searched, it appears that repression reached a peak during 1971-76, then declined erratically. However, the degree of Catholic alienation seems to be unrelated to the level of repression, and shows no obvious trend.³²

Conclusion

The relationship between terrorism and public opinion is not a simple one. Terrorism seems as much a consequence of public opinion as it is a cause of changes in public opinion. Since there are important differences between nationalist and revolutionary terrorism, they will be discussed separately.

Nationalist terrorism emerges where there is a strong, historically-derived sense of nationalism linked to ethnicity. Nationalist ideology legitimates terrorist action and generates a positive image of the insurgents as long as the campaign follows proper tactics and does not lead to the killing of fellow ethnics. Support for militant nationalism does not decrease because of terrorist atrocities against the ethnic enemy.³³

As a strategy for breaking the will of the occupying force, nationalist terrorism has had mixed results. The IRA's campaign has been greatly successful in affecting public opinion in Great Britain. Since 1974, the proportion favoring troop withdrawal has remained stable, with a clear

TABLE 10
CHANGING ATTITUDES TO SECURITY MEASURES IN URUGUAY (%)

Table 10: Changing Attitudes to Security Measures in Uruguay (%)

	Mild Repression (1968- Jun 1970)	Increasing Repression (Jul 1970- Mar 1972)	Intense Repression (Apr 1972- Oct 1972)
Favor Emergency measures	44	41	56
Favor Hardline		24	19
Approve Suspension of Guarantees		46	56
Conduct of security forces good	44	51	50

Source: *Indice Gallup de Opinion Publica* (1968-72).

majority favoring withdrawal and a plurality favoring a united Ireland.³⁴ The metropolitan Spaniards have been far more resistant and the most recent poll reveals that only 14 per cent favor giving in to terrorist demands or negotiating with the terrorists.³⁵

Within the Basque provinces and within Northern Ireland, terrorism has reflected and exacerbated ethnic polarization. The different ethnic groups not only disagree about nationalism, but also about who is to blame for violence and what should be done about the situation.

Revolutionary terrorists usually start off with a much lower degree of popular sympathy than nationalists. Most people find their goals incomprehensible, and dismiss them as common criminals. Revolutionary terrorism does not increase revolutionary sentiments, either by 'propaganda of the deed' or by provoking repression. The revolutionaries are unable to broaden the basis of their support, which remains restricted to a small sector of the educated youth. Given their isolation, it is possible for the authorities to repress terrorist sympathizers, without alienating the public at large. The most obvious political consequence of revolutionary terrorism is a law and order backlash, which appears to benefit the conservative parties.

Attitudes towards political violence, whether revolutionary or nationalist, depend primarily upon structural-historical features, and are, therefore, little affected by either terrorist actions or by government policies. Those who advocate terrorism as a means of generating revolutionary consciousness are clearly following a false strategy, but those

who assume that terrorist sympathizers will be alienated by atrocities are equally deluded.

As noted, the data are fragmentary and it is hoped that additional material can be collected to fill in the lacunae, and to provide information on other terrorist groups in other countries. Whether this would lead us to modify our conclusions is uncertain. Israeli-Palestinian attitudes for example, seem very similar to those found in the nationalist conflicts in Spain and Northern Ireland.³⁶ On the other hand, our interpretation does not seem to be compatible with those cases where insurgencies were successful (for example, the Irish Rebellion of 1916-21, Algeria, Irgun in Palestine, Castro in Cuba), and where participants and observers argue that public attitudes did change dramatically as a result of terrorism and government repression.³⁷ Is the impact of terrorism on public opinion different between successful and unsuccessful campaigns? I trust that this attempt at a comparative analysis of public attitudes to terrorism will lead future studies to standardize their questions, so that cross-national comparisons can be made, and to replicate past questions, so as to allow an examination of changes over time.

NOTES

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1. Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf, *Violence as Communication* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1982), pp. 215-66.
2. David C. Rapoport, 'Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions', *American Political Science Review*, 78, #3 (Sept. 1984), p. 665.
3. Schmid and de Graaf, pp. 13-14. Robert Moss, *Urban Guerrillas* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p. 218. David C. Rapoport, 'The Politics of Atrocity', in Yonah Alexander and Seymour Finger (eds.), *Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: John Jay Press, 1977), pp. 47-51.
4. The Brazilian revolutionary, Carlos Marighella, advocated this strategy in 'Mini Manual of the Urban Guerrilla', *Tri-Continental*, Vol. 6, (June 1969).
5. Robert Clark, *The Basque Insurgents: ETA 1951-80* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 40-41.
6. For a discussion of the differences between nationalist and revolutionary terrorist campaigns, and the government policies used against them see Christopher Hewitt, *The Effectiveness of Anti-Terrorist Policies* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).

7. Moss, pp. 247-8.
8. Richard Clutterbuck, *Kidnap and Ransom* (London: Faber, 1978), p. 38.
9. Moss, p. 223.
10. Richard Clutterbuck, *Protest and the Urban Guerrilla* (New York: Abelard Schuman, 1973), p. 230; Anthony Burton, *Urban Terrorism* (New York: Free Press, 1976), pp. 95-102; Stephen Goode, *Guerrilla Warfare and Terrorism* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1977), p. 80; Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency in the Modern World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), p. 178.
11. In the tables following, when more than one survey is cited, a single statistic represents an average.
12. A statewide survey by J. Jimenez Blanco, *La Conciencia Regional En Espana* (Madrid: Editorial Cuadernos, 1977), on regional consciousness found that Barcelona and the Basque country expressed the most acute grievances over administrative centralization, were most likely to support independence, and were the most likely to vote for separatist parties.
13. On the basis of names, only 30 out of 403 victims of terrorism in the Basque provinces appear to have been ethnic Basques.
14. In the five years before the survey (1978-82), 61 Catholics and 199 Protestants, were victims of terrorism. Thus, Protestants, who make up 63 per cent of the population, suffered 77 per cent of the deaths.
15. Claude Fly, an American agricultural expert, was kidnapped in 1970 and Geoffrey Jackson, the British consul, in 1971.
16. See Clutterbuck, *Protest*, pp. 230, 239.
17. Moxon-Browne provides a good discussion of the historical factors which explain Catholic support for the IRA. 'The Water and the Fish: Public Opinion and the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism*, Vol. 5 (1981), 41-72.
18. Legitimate military or political targets constitute approximately 80 per cent of ETA's victims and 65 per cent of the IRA's victims. See Hewitt, *Effectiveness of Anti-Terrorist Policies*, p. 29.
19. The attitude of the Red Brigades to the PCI (Communist Party of Italy) was ambivalent. They saw the party leadership as having abandoned the goal of revolution, but hoped to win over the rank and file. Yet, among PCI supporters, 83 per cent were in 'total disagreement' with the actions of the extreme left (*L'Espresso*, 30 Oct. 1977).
20. Sympathy for the Baader-Meinhof gang was concentrated among students, but even in this group only 18 per cent agreed that 'terrorists are freedom fighters.' See Yonah Alexander and John Gleason (eds.), *Behavioral and Quantitative Perspectives on Terrorism* (New York: Pergamon, 1981), pp. 266-7.
21. Juliet Lodge, *Terrorism: A Challenge to the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), pp. 24-5.
22. Questions on satisfaction with the way that 'democracy is working in my country' show consistently high levels of satisfaction in Germany and consistently low levels in Italy. In 1978, Germans had the highest satisfaction of all EEC countries and Italians the lowest. Survey Research Consultants International, *Index to International Public Opinion 1978-79* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 287.
23. *Index to International Public Opinion 1981-2*, p. 582.
24. Clark, pp. 168-84.
25. The simplest explanation may be that Germans support law and order because they fear the emergence of a Weimar-type situation in which a weak government allowed extremist violence to flourish, while Spaniards fear a resurgence of Francoist repression.
26. Moss, p. 217.
27. Arturo Porzecanski, *Uruguay's Tupamaros* (New York: Praeger, 1973), pp. 55-6.
28. Alain Labrousse, *The Tupamaros* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 130.
29. E. Moxon-Browne, 'Alienation: the Case of the Catholics in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 14, (Spring 1986), 74-89. John Finn, 'Public Support for Emergency Legislation in Northern Ireland: A Preliminary Analysis', *Terrorism*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1987), pp. 113-124. 30. Andrew Mack, 'The Utility of Terrorism',

- Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 14, (Dec. 1981), 218.
31. See Richard Gunther, Giacomo Sani and Goldie Shabad, *Spain after Franco* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), p. 362. Their study found that nationally 88 per cent favored moderate-to-hard antiterrorist policies, but this position was held by only 43 per cent of the Basques and only 16 per cent of those supporting HB and EE. In Italy, the young and the educated are less likely to support the death penalty for terrorists. Piergiorgio Corbetta, 'Perche piu indulgenza per i terroristi', *Cattaneo*, Vol. 3, (June 1983), 21-35.
 32. As measured in this fashion, Catholic alienation averaged 87 per cent in 1974, 83 per cent in 1982, and 73 per cent in the most recent 1985 survey.
 33. A 1984 poll found 48 per cent of Catholics agreeing that the IRA are patriots and idealists (virtually the same as in Moxon-Browne's 1978 survey; see *From the Shadow of the Gun*, London: MORI, 1984). Even the bombing of a Remembrance Day memorial ceremony at Enniskillen produced only a five per cent decline in those saying they sympathized with the IRA. (*Fortnight*, April 1988). Within the Basque provinces, surveys carried out during the 1978-80 period show no trend, and those seeing ETA as 'patriots or idealists' constituted 48 per cent in 1978, 41 per cent in 1979, and 50 per cent in 1980. (Linz, *Conflictio en Euskadi*).
 34. From 1974-1977 those favoring troop withdrawal averaged 57 per cent, and from 1978-81 those wanting to withdraw the troops immediately or within five years also averaged 57 per cent. Richard Rose, Ian McAlister and Peter Mair, *Is there a Concurring Majority about Northern Ireland?* (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1978). For attitudes subsequent to 1977, see *Index to International Public Opinion*.
 35. See Gunther, Sani and Shabad, p. 362. Earlier polls by Linz in 1978 and 1979 show a decline in those supporting negotiation or acceptance of terrorist demands from 24 per cent to 17 per cent. Leon Gordenker (ed.), *Resolving Nationality Conflicts: The Role of Public Opinion Research* (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 48.
 36. Palestinian support for anti-Israeli terrorism is certainly comparable to Catholic support for the IRA, or Basque support for ETA. A 1986 poll in the occupied territories found that 78 per cent believed violence to be justified. Meron Benvenisti, *West Bank Data Base Project: 1987 Report* (*Jerusalem Post*, 1987), pp. 45-6. See also Mohammed Shadid and Rick Seltzer, 'Political Attitudes of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip', *Middle East Journal* (Winter 1988), 16-32.
 37. Begin, for example, claims that Irgun attacks against the British produced an upsurge of support among the Jewish population. *The Revolt* (New York: Nash Publishing, 1977), pp. 193-6.